

take a chance on me

gossip girl
the carlyles

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poppy

LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY

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We know what we are, but know not what we may be.

—Hamlet, William Shakespeare

hey people!

It's mid-October, otherwise known as Indian summer—the schizophrenic time of year when girls wear their favorite Alice + Olivia frocks layered over their wool Tibi leggings, when coffee orders suddenly switch from iced to hot, and when certain people (you know who you are) *still* think it's acceptable to bust out their Malia Mills bikinis and sunbathe in Sheep Meadow on weekend afternoons, hoping the pickup soccer game—playing St. Jude's boys might notice.

According to historical legend, Indian summer was known as the time of year when tensions were *especially* high between natives and newcomers. And here on the Upper East Side, history seems to be repeating itself. Case in point? **O** and **R**, the former best guy buddies whose city bromance was one for the books, swam together, ran together, drank together—they seemed inseparable. And they were . . . until **R** caught **O** hooking up with his girlfriend. **O** got a bloody nose . . . and the girl. Now that **O** has completely stolen **K** from **R**, the two won't so much as talk. Sad. I guess sharing isn't caring, after all.

And that's not the only skirmish we've witnessed this fall. The freckly-faced ballerina **J** and socialite-in-training **A** have already had territorial battles over everything from couture to classmate loyalty. And even though **A** seemingly gained ground when her sister **B** dated **J**'s ex, now **B** is flying solo and **A** is *fighting* solo. Good thing **A** is going to be spending her afternoons safely ensconced within glass-walled offices for her highly coveted media internship. And since **J**'s back with her boyfriend, maybe

she can forgive and forget. Miracles *can* happen, right? And not just on Thirty-fourth Street?

So what to do if you're feeling a chill in the air that's *not* related to a dropping thermostat—one that can't be fixed by your new DVF A-line herringbone coat? Well, why not take a cue from one sparkly-eyed bohemian nymph and skip town? **B** has been avoiding stateside drama in favor of exploring the beaches, shops, and cafes of the Spanish seaside in Barcelona—solo. Is she second-guessing her hasty breakup with a certain Manhattan mogul-in-training, doing some soul searching, or looking for a certain Spanish boy who was recently visiting NYC? One thing's for sure: She may be single, but she's not alone. She's been spotted all over Barcelona, constantly trailed by an army of admirers. Some girls have all the luck!

sightings

A at a newsstand on Seventy-second and Lex, picking up copies of *Vogue*, *French Vogue*, *Italian Vogue*, *Harper's*, and *Tatler*. Boning up on the competition before her big *Metropolitan* internship? Or just making a really ambitious collage? . . . **O** and **K** making out next to a rack of chips at a bodega on Madison and Sixty-second. And on a bench in Central Park. And on the downtown 6 train. Either these lovers don't know about secluded rooftop terraces, or they seriously get off on PDA. . . . The recently reunited **J** and **J.P.**, sharing a latte at **Corner Bakery** on Ninety-third, with **J.P.**'s three puggles in tow. **R** throwing dozens of ripped-up photographs into the East River, crying the whole time. Brings new meaning to drowning your sorrows . . . And a smiling **B**, on La Rambla in Barcelona, being catcalled by everyone in her path. Hola, bebé!

your e-mail

C:

Chismosa,

I have heard a rumor of a beautiful brown-haired girl in Barcelona, looking for a man she met in New York. I believe that was me. Please to tell her that I am in Majorca, on my submarine, and I would love to see her.

—Latin Lover

a:

Dear LL,

Sadly, I don't know where your tousled bohemian beauty is either, but we're hoping she comes home soon.

—GG

C:

Dear GG,

I'm a senior at Barnard and I was supposed to score this amazing internship at *Metropolitan*, the legendary New York fashion mag that totally propelled the career of anyone who's anyone in the industry? And suddenly I hear some girl who's a junior in *high school* scored the internship? WTF? I guarantee you she doesn't even know her Joan Didion from her Mary McCarthy. What's wrong with this world? Seriously, I'm just about ready to give up on New York.

—editennui

a:

Dear EE,

Unfortunately, sometimes it really *is* who you know, so maybe this girl had some legendary connections. But look on the bright side: Perhaps you don't want to know those people anyway?

—GG

clothes call

These are strange days, where one morning it feels like you should be sunning in Sagaponack rather than slaving away at pre-calc, and the next it's back to frigid. For my part, I'm off to Barneys to stock up on cozy TSE cashmere cardigans. You may not be able to control public opinion, but you *can* control your own comfort. No matter how cold it gets—or how icy your former besties are acting—don't let it stop you from being hot.

You know you love me,

gossip girl

the love you make is equal to the love you take

“Ow!” Owen Carlyle grunted as a bagel hit him, hard, square in the center of his broad shoulders. He whirled around and furrowed his blond eyebrows at the swimmers hanging out on the steps of the Y. Scrawny Chadwick Jenkins and linebacker-size Ken Williams smiled back at him angelically, as if they were choirboys at St. Patrick’s Cathedral rather than testosterone-laced high schoolers.

“Quit it, okay?” Owen grumbled, looking away from them and toward the gridlocked Second Avenue traffic. Owen was all for swim team bonding, particularly before their first meet of the season. But it was a little embarrassing to be surrounded by these guys when they were acting like Ritalin-pumped kindergarteners. Especially when his new girlfriend, Kelsey, was supposed to meet him any moment.

“Hey baby.”

Owen whirled around and saw Kelsey walking toward him. It had been pouring all morning, but by early afternoon the rain had finally devolved into a misty light drizzle. Kelsey’s strawberry blond hair was slightly damp, as if she’d toweled off after a

shower, and her pink rubber rain boots matched her fitted pink trench coat, belted loosely at her tiny waist. From a distance, it looked like she wasn't wearing anything underneath. Owen's mind started to work overtime.

Right, *just* his mind.

Every time he saw Kelsey, Owen's heart thudded hard in his chest. He'd felt it ever since he first saw her, back in July, at a party in Nantucket. He'd been hanging at the outskirts of one of the typical summer beach parties, and she'd come with some friends from the Cape, on vacation from New York. They'd seen each other at the same time, and by the end of the night, they'd wound up on the other side of the beach, losing their virginities to each other. It was kind of wild, but also the most romantic night of Owen's life. When he moved to New York a couple months later, he kept hoping to run into her. And in a ridiculous twist of fate, he had. On the first day of school Rhys Sterling, the St. Jude's swim team captain and Owen's new friend, introduced Owen to Kelsey—as his *girlfriend*. A few weeks and one bloody nose later, Owen had lost a friend and gained a girlfriend. He'd never been happier.

Or more Shakespearian?

Kelsey tapped Owen on the temple with a slim, pale peach-polished fingernail. "Hello?" she asked, acting mock-hurt at his spaciness.

"Sorry!" Owen quickly tore his thoughts away from fantasy Kelsey. The real thing was so much better. He pulled her to him, rubbing his hands up and down her back. He planted his mouth lightly on hers. Her lip gloss tasted like Swedish fish.

Behind them, the guys started whistling and cheering. Owen reluctantly broke apart from Kelsey and glared at his teammates.

“God, you guys are so lame,” Kelsey called out good-naturedly, sticking out her tongue at the team. Owen kept grinning like an idiot. When Kelsey was here, everything was just *better*. Of course, there was the ever-present nagging feeling of guilt that he’d totally screwed up his best friend’s life.

There’s always something. . . .

“I missed you today. I was thinking about you,” Kelsey whispered, playing with a delicate silver flower-shaped necklace that landed in the center of her chest. Drops of rain gave her skin a dewy, glowy look, and Owen wished they were in his flannel-covered bed instead of the middle of the street. He tore his gaze away from the hint of cleavage and instead locked it on her coral-colored lips. God, she was sexy.

He pulled Kelsey closely to him again, nuzzling his nose into the top of her honey-colored, slightly damp hair.

“Fresh roasted nuts!” the street vendor on the corner hawked. Behind him, the swim team guys snickered as if it was the most amusing thing they’d ever heard. Owen pulled away from Kelsey in frustration.

“Let’s take a walk,” he suggested, flicking his gaze back and forth as if he were a spy on lookout. Ninety-second Street was pretty empty, with only one woman hurriedly walking her slobbering black Lab past each fenced-in tree.

“Okay. But I don’t want you to be late to the meet.” Kelsey bit her lip. Owen smiled, loving how concerned she was. It was nice to feel taken care of.

“I won’t be,” he said definitively, wrapping his fingers around her wrist. He caressed the well-worn silver surface of her Tiffany ID bracelet, memorizing the grooves in the loopily engraved letters KAT. It was the bracelet Kelsey had left on the Nantucket

beach that summer. Owen had brought it to New York with him and used to sleep with it under his pillow, trying to somehow conjure Kat, his dream girl. He hadn't known then that K. A. T. were her initials: Kelsey Addison Talmadge. The mystery behind her name somehow suited her, the way she'd just *appeared* in his life.

As soon as they rounded the corner, out of sight of the swim team boys, he gently pushed Kelsey against the redbrick wall of the Y and leaned in to kiss her. He didn't even care if it was in broad daylight. After weeks of having to keep their desire a secret, he and Kelsey could *finally* be together. He could feel her long eyelashes against his cheek and she just felt so *good* and—

“Classy, Carlyle!” A voice interrupted Owen's reverie. He broke away from Kelsey, wiping his mouth self-consciously with the back of his hand. Walking up the street, jauntily swinging his maroon Speedo St. Jude's swim team bag in one hand and stroking a full blond beard with the other, was Hugh Moore, a fellow junior and varsity swimmer. While all the swim team guys had grown ridiculous facial hair as part of a pact, Hugh was the only member who hadn't eventually shaved. He'd kept the beard because it made him look a few years older and got him into the divey bars that peppered Second Avenue without an ID.

“Hey Hugh,” Owen mumbled, and turned back to Kelsey. He ran his fingers through Kelsey's hair and leaned in toward her. He kissed her neck and held the small of her back, not caring if Hugh was there, probably recording the whole thing on his iPhone to upload to YouTube. Perv. He pressed his body against hers, and she pressed eagerly back. They were kissing passionately, and Owen had practically forgotten where he was, when he

heard an awkward throat-clearing sound from Hugh. Annoyed, he looked up.

There, rounding the corner, was Rhys Sterling. His maroon St. Jude's blazer was wrinkled and his face looked drawn and gray. His broad shoulders were slumped, and he didn't even try to avoid the puddles of rain on the sidewalk.

Hugh doubled back and clapped a hand on Rhys's shoulder, propelling him past Owen and Kelsey. "Ready to kick Oriole ass, dude?" Hugh asked jovially.

Rhys squirmed away from Hugh's meaty hand and stood, rooted to the sidewalk. He knew Hugh was trying to distract him from the scene in front of him. As if he could possibly forget what he'd seen: his former girlfriend and his former friend, together. Kelsey's strawberry blond hair tumbled down her back, and she was smiling. It felt like she was smiling just to spite him.

"Ready to *rock*?" Hugh repeated, clearly sensing Rhys's discomfort. He offered his hand for a high five. Rhys awkwardly tried to slap it, as if he couldn't care less that his ex-girlfriend and his ex-best friend were practically having *sex* on the sidewalk.

"Hugh, we're running late," Rhys announced in an artificially loud voice, just because he didn't know what the hell else to say. As soon as he heard his words, he cringed. He sounded like a neurotic soccer mom. He squinted down at the ground, forcing himself to move one John Varvatos limited edition shoe in front of the other. Maybe he should just keep walking until he reached Canada, or any other goddamn place where he wouldn't be reminded of how his girlfriend—the person he'd loved more than anyone in the world—had taken him for a fucking fool and betrayed him.

“Rhys?” Kelsey turned toward him, her large, ocean-blue eyes pleading.

“I’m not talking to you, Kelsey,” Rhys spat angrily. He cringed. *That* was the best he could come up with? He wanted to kick himself as he trudged toward the door of the Y, avoiding eye contact with Owen.

“I should . . .” Owen shrugged apologetically as he let go of Kelsey’s hand.

“I’ll see you later. If you win, I might have an extra-special surprise for you,” Kelsey teased, her eyes gleaming. Owen grinned from ear to ear, the guilt almost gone.

Out with the old, in with the . . . lewd?

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