

love the one you're with

gossip girl
the carlyles

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poppy

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*It is in vain to say human beings ought to be satisfied
with tranquillity: they must have action;
and they will make it if they cannot find it.*

—Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*

hey people!

It's November, the time of year when fall drifts to winter and we all start wrapping our cashmere sweaters more tightly around us and thinking about the holidays. In New York, we allow the tourists to enjoy the city, whether they're wobbling around Wollman Rink wearing their blindingly bright puffer jackets or gawking at a larger-than-life SpongeBob SquarePants balloon during the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. It's cold, it's dark, but the windows in Bergdorf's are sparklier than the Marni dresses inside, and all of us Manhattan natives are just itching to celebrate the season in style.

the one thing in our way

Thanksgiving. Who'd have thought a holiday all about gratitude (my short list: sample sales, Corner Bakery coffee, St. Jude's swim team boys running in Central Park without shirts) would have evolved into a four-day calorie-fest all about forced bonding with strange relatives? Luckily, many New Yorkers avoid the awkwardness by heading out of town for the holidays. And who can blame them? Why listen to your drunk uncle drone on about his glory days when you could wear your slinkiest, sexiest Malia Mills string bikini on the beach or your new fur-trimmed boots on the slopes?

So take my advice: Find out who's going AWOL for the holidays, and make sure you get invited along!

sightings

A and **J** sharing a dressing room at Barneys, trying on Stella McCartney dresses. They've gone from bitches to besties in the time it takes most people to lose their late-summer tans. . . . **J**, later, at a playground on Bleecker Street, with her on-again boyfriend **J.P.** and two freckly-faced toddlers. Babysitting, or an early visit from the Ghost of Christmas Future? . . . **R, O**, and the rest of the swim team guys, drinking pitchers at one of those sticky-floored dives on Second that don't card, ignoring the pack of cougars surrounding them. . . . Lastly, **B** and her best friend, the pierced, tattooed **S**, taking photos in Brooklyn. They're certainly taking *Rancor* seriously!

your e-mail

q: Dear Gossip Girl,
What's going on for T-Day? You're totally invited to my house.
'Rents are out of town. Suh-weet!
—ponyparty

a: Dear PP,
While that sounds delightful, I plan to spend my holidays hanging out with people I actually know. But enjoy the free house!
—GG

q: Dear Gossip Girl,
So, I'm, like, super in love with one of the St. Jude's swim team guys, but they're *always* hanging out together and I feel sort of weird just approaching him in front of all the guys. What should I do?
—swimfan

a:

Dear SF,

A hint: Guys are like wildebeests, always traveling in packs for protection and more scared of you than you are of them. They're not nearly so frightening close-up. Try hunting one down on his own and see what happens.

—GG

Just thought of a few more things to add to my list of things to be thankful for: Hot boys, tiny Missoni bikinis, and islands with no drinking age. That's right, I'm joining the legions of New Yorkers getting out of town. Where, you ask? Wouldn't you like to know? But don't pout. You should be thankful that no matter where I am, I'll be keeping track of what anyone who's anyone is doing—on this island *and* any other island worth visiting.

You know you love me,

gossip girl

all in the family

“So, what’s up for Thanksgiving? What does your family usually do?” Avery Carlyle asked her friends Jack Laurent and Jiffy Bennett. They were wedged into a cozy leather booth at Amaranth, the café popular with any socialite who needed a cappuccino or a vodka gimlet as a post-Barneys perk-up. It was exactly the type of place Avery had always imagined hanging out in New York.

“Any parties going on?” she continued hopefully, sipping her cappuccino.

In truth, Avery could have done without Thanksgiving. It was just a four-day interruption of her life, which already had everything she could possibly be thankful for.

Well, almost everything.

In September, when she left her childhood home in Nantucket and began her junior year at the ultra-exclusive Constance Billard School for Girls, it seemed like Avery was destined to be one of those unfortunate girls who spend the entire lunch period in the library because they have nowhere else to go. To start with, she and Jack had taken an immediate dislike to each other after fighting over a limited-edition Givenchy satchel at Barneys the

day before school began. Tensions quickly escalated until they were outright enemies at Constance Billard, and Avery was completely ostracized by her classmates. Then when Avery scored a coveted internship at *Metropolitan* magazine and was asked to rat out Jack's secrets to a pushy gossip reporter, she'd proved to herself and her Upper East Side peers that she was better than that. She'd finally won them over.

Now she and Jack were friends, and for the past month Avery had *finally* been living the New York City life she'd imagined, full of cocktail parties, gallery openings, and café dates like the one they were having now.

"God, I don't even want to think about Thanksgiving. I have to go with my parents to Beatrice and Deptford's house in Greenwich. If Deptford doesn't die first, that is." Jiffy shrugged as she shoved a slice of avocado in her mouth. She was a petite pug-nosed girl with long bangs that fell over her brown eyes, and five stubborn pounds that kept her from fitting into her older sister Beatrice's discarded couture. Beatrice was thirty-two, a constant fixture on the society circuit, and had her own column in *Page Six* magazine, where she overshared details about her marriage to her seventy-five-year-old fiancé.

As if we really want to know.

"I'll be in hell with the stepbrats." Jack stabbed her napoleon pastry with a fork. The chocolate crumbled on the delicate white plate in a cloud of cocoa powder.

"It can't be that bad, right? I mean, at least they have a nanny," Avery offered, eyeing her friend. Jack was always beautiful, but lately, she'd had shadows under her eyes that even La Mer under-eye cream couldn't hide.

Jack's life was sort of like an H&M dress: From far away, it

looked really fashionable and put together. Not only did Jack actually make bitchiness and vanity seem like character attributes, but she was practically a professional ballerina and was dating J. P. Cashman, the son of one of the wealthiest real-estate moguls in the world and a genuinely nice guy. But up close, Jack's life was basically coming apart at the seams, particularly her home life. Her mom was a French former ballerina who was currently filming a reality show in Paris, and Jack was now living with—and serving as an unpaid babysitter to—her dad, stepmom, and two stepsisters in her dad's West Village town house.

“Hey gorgeous!”

Avery looked up, even though she automatically knew it was J.P., there to pick up Jack. He was the only guy Avery knew who could use the word *gorgeous* and not sound totally lame or totally gay.

An important quality in a boyfriend.

J.P. plopped down on the empty chair next to Jack. He had brown hair and brown eyes, and was wearing a black wool overcoat and black dress pants. He looked like a young stockbroker rather than a Riverside Prep junior. “So, what are you guys up to?” he asked conversationally, his fingers playing in Jack's auburn hair.

“J.P.!” Jack's tone was playful, but she batted his hand away and carefully hooked her auburn hair behind her ears.

“Discussing Thanksgiving plans.” Avery smiled shyly. Even though she was happy J.P. and Jack were back together, she always felt a pang of loneliness when she saw such a cute couple. Why couldn't *she* find someone who loved her like that?

“We were actually just heading out,” Jack said, already scraping back her chair. She rifled through her mist gray leather Chloé wallet and tossed her AmEx on the table. Instantly, a white-shirted waiter picked it up.

“Sure.” Avery glanced at her reflection in the gold mirror above the bar and pulled a black-and-white checkered wool Marc Jacobs hat over the tips of her ears. Even though it was only November, the temperature had been freezing, and the weather reports had been forecasting snow all week.

The four of them tumbled outside into the cold twilight.

“Brrr!” Jiffy shivered and pulled her green felt Marc by Marc Jacobs coat closer around her shoulders. “Do you guys want to come to my place?” she asked hopefully.

“We’ve got to go. We’re grabbing a cab downtown.” Jack grabbed J.P.’s elbow and held up her leather-gloved hand. “See you guys!” she called as a taxi screeched to the curb.

Avery watched as J.P. opened the cab door and Jack eased her willowy body onto the cracked vinyl seat. It was like a carefully choreographed dance they’d done many times before.

Unlike some things, which they haven’t done at all.

“So, what are you doing for Turkey Day?” Jiffy asked Avery as they turned up the street.

“I don’t know. I guess it’ll just be our family.” Avery wasn’t really certain. Ever since her mom had gotten serious with her new boyfriend, the triplets weren’t sure what the holidays would be like, and so far no one had had the guts to ask. Plus, Avery had been having too much fun getting to know the real New York to nose into her mother’s plans. For the past month, she’d been spending every minute not at school with Jack, Jiffy, Genevieve, and Sarah Jane. She loved everything about it: finding the cool restaurants, the parties, the bars and clubs that didn’t card. But recently, she’d had an antsy feeling that *something* was about to change.

By *something* does she mean a boyfriend?

“Are any of your brother’s friends single?” Jiffy asked, as if reading her mind.

“A couple,” Avery replied.

They walked companionably uptown, past the plate-glass windows of the Madison Avenue stores, all of which were already decorated in festive reds, silvers, and greens. Jiffy hurried to catch up to Avery’s long stride, switching her two shiny black Barneys bags from one arm to the other. “Do you like any of them?”

“Not really,” Avery said evasively. She didn’t want to tell Jiffy that she actually had a teeny-tiny crush on her brother’s best friend, Rhys. It wasn’t that she didn’t trust Jiffy. It was more that she was worried if she actually admitted that she liked Rhys, nothing would happen.

Avery was a romantic at heart, and lately she was beginning to think it was something of a curse. Back when she was thirteen, she used to write actual messages in bottles and throw them into the ocean, certain that *some* European royalty would find her message, washed up on some faraway shore on the other side of the Atlantic. Obviously, she wasn’t writing messages in bottles anymore, but for some reason, she couldn’t figure out how to find guys. Sure, there were tons of guys around, but she went to an all-girl school, and it wasn’t like she could just *advertise* that she was looking for a boyfriend.

Is the Internet the modern way to send a message in a bottle?

“Well, we can’t all be like Jack and J.P.” Jiffy shrugged. “You know, Beatrice knows some good guys.”

Avery cringed, imagining the types of guys Beatrice would try to set her up with. Eighty-year-olds? Ninety-year-olds? No thank you. She might be desperate, but she wasn’t *that* desperate.

Yet.

“Maybe,” Avery said noncommittally. They were already on Seventy-second Street. “Have a great Thanksgiving! Call me if you get bored.” She air-kissed Jiffy on both cheeks, then hurriedly walked west toward Fifth, her head bowed against the cold and her shoulders hunched in her bright blue Theory peacoat. She pushed through the revolving door of her building, enjoying the blast of hot air that greeted her in the lobby.

“Miss Carlyle.” Jim, her favorite doorman, offered a grandfatherly smile.

“Hi,” Avery said as her patent leather Miu Miu Mary Janes clicked on the polished surface of the floors. The sprawling yet tasteful green-marble-and-gold lobby was already decorated for the holidays, with a small tree in the corner and garlands of holly winding around the doorman’s desk. She *really* didn’t want to spend her first Christmas season in New York alone. Maybe Jiffy was right and she did need a boyfriend plan.

Perhaps the doorman has a son . . .

“Hold the elevator!” a male voice boomed from several feet away. Avery stuck her hand between the doors.

“Avery!”

“Hi!” Avery squeaked, looking up at Remington Wallis, her mom’s six-foot-two boyfriend. His face was ruddy from the cold and his arms were laden with vegetable-filled plastic bags. His salt-and-pepper hair was almost George Clooney-ish and he wore Patagonia khakis, a pink button-down shirt, and a black Gore-Tex vest. He looked like he’d just returned from Aspen, though judging from his haul of groceries, he’d been at the Union Square greenmarket. No one would ever imagine that his net worth was in the billions and that he was a regular on *Fortune’s*

list of wealthiest people. He just looked like a goofy suburban dad.

“The bag is ripping. Can you do me a favor and hold this?” Remington asked as he plucked an oblong butternut squash from the bag and held it toward Avery. “Your mother loves squash.”

Avery smiled fondly. For other Upper East Siders, that sentence would have referred to the game, not a root vegetable. But Edie was different, always preferring homemade batiked dresses to a closet of couture.

Remington and Edie had known each other growing up in New York City. They’d dated in high school, but after graduation, Edie had headed to San Francisco to follow the Grateful Dead and had soon gotten pregnant with the triplets after a freewheeling summer of selling hemp jewelry with some hippie friends. Remington, on the other hand, had followed in the footsteps of his Wallis forefathers: Yale for undergrad and Harvard for business school. He’d set up a hedge fund and became a Wall Street wunderkind, married a socialite, then divorced her once her notorious cheating blew up in scandal. After that he retired, spending time with his daughter and using his money to fund art projects—the more eccentric, the better. He and Edie met again when Remington underwrote a Brooklyn exhibit that featured one of Edie’s abstract installations of oversize chinchilla-shaped sculptures.

“Of course.” Avery smiled as she awkwardly attempted to balance the squash against her cranberry-colored pebbled-leather Marc Jacobs bag. Even though she was still getting used to her mom *dating*—which Edie had never done when the triplets were growing up—she could see that Remington really cared for her.

The elevator slowly made its way up to the fourteenth floor.

The door slid open and Remington gestured for Avery to step out first.

“Hello, darlings!” Edie opened the door to the Carlyles’ penthouse apartment as if on cue. Her earrings, made from tiny silver salt spoons, jangled loudly. She wore a belted white dress that looked like a bathrobe and a pair of red clogs that no one, not even Norwegian folk dancers, should ever wear. But because she was still a rail-thin size two and had large blue eyes and blond hair with only a few streaks of gray, even Avery had to admit her mom could kind of get away with ridiculous fashion choices.

“Oh, Remington.” Edie shook her head fondly when she caught sight of the squash, still cradled in Avery’s arms like an oddly shaped newborn. “You always know how to surprise me!” Edie tenderly took the squash from Avery and threw her arms around Remington.

Avery politely looked away, concentrating on the abstract red-and-white painting that had appeared in the foyer overnight. Avery squinted. Was that a Picasso? It was either the real thing, or something Remington had discovered by some no-name artist in Brooklyn.

She trailed a safe distance after her mother and Remington down the winding, polished floor of their cavernous penthouse and into the kitchen.

“Hey!” her sister, Baby, called. Baby’s wavy, unbrushed brown hair was pulled into a loose ponytail and she was hunched over the marble countertop of the island in the center of the kitchen, looking through pictures on her digital camera. Their brother, Owen, was rummaging through the refrigerator, his white-blond hair still damp from swim practice, wearing his threadbare gray

Nantucket Pirates T-shirt. He was probably looking for a can of Red Bull. He drank at least three a day.

“Hey Ave!” Owen called cheerfully, holding up the silver and blue can in mock salute.

“Remington and I are going to make dinner!” Edie announced grandly. She flung open the walnut cabinets flanking the far wall and began pulling out brightly colored Le Creuset casserole dishes. “Some sort of harvest medley. I’ll figure it out.”

Avery sighed inwardly. Sometimes her mother’s off-the-cuff recipes tasted delicious, but more often than not, she treated cooking as just another artistic experiment.

“How about you let me handle it?” Remington asked. “I could do squash ravioli with sage,” he mused, pulling a variety of spices off the spice rack and furrowing his salt-and-pepper brows. He turned to the triplets. “It’s a special occasion—my daughter Layla is in town from Oberlin and is coming over for dinner,” he explained.

“We’re so excited for you all to meet her,” Edie said. She gazed at her children as if imagining her brood expanding. “And yes, why don’t you do the cooking, darling. Remington went to culinary school,” Edie explained proudly, resting her chin on Remington’s shoulder as she peered over the counter.

“Just a year or two ago. Once I stopped working full-time and Layla went to college, I decided to just spend some time exploring my passions. That’s also about the time I got involved with the Brooklyn Art Collective. But of course, now I have my one favorite passion!” Remington wrapped his beefy arms around Edie’s slim waist and gave her a long kiss on the lips.

Okay, we get the point.

Avery sat down at the kitchen island next to Baby. “Do you know what we’re doing for Thanksgiving?” She lowered her voice

as she glanced from Baby's deep coffee-colored eyes to Owen's bright blue ones.

"I don't know." Owen shook his head. "Is *he* part of our plans?" he asked, an edge to his voice as he glanced sideways at Remington and Edie.

"No idea. But you can bet it'll probably be the usual mix of randoms," Baby said with an affectionate eye-roll. Back in Nantucket, Edie would always invite stray people who didn't have anywhere else to go for the holidays. Last year, the dinner party guests had included a stern sea captain from Sweden named Oleg, a 93-year-old Boston society hostess who'd been uninvited to her own Thanksgiving after telling her entire extended family she was giving her estate to the Feral Cat Society, and a couple in their thirties who drove from state to state, occasionally setting up lawn chairs next to a sign that said TALK TO US!

"What are we talking about?" Edie floated past on her way to the Sub-Zero to put away the greenmarket produce she wasn't going to cook.

"What are we doing for Thanksgiving?" Avery asked innocently. "Because if we're not doing anything special, I think I might go keep Jack company. She's going through a rough time with her family," Avery explained.

"I could come if Jack needs strength in numbers," Owen offered, grabbing a brownie from a plate on the counter and stuffing it in his mouth.

"Remington actually has a little announcement to make. Remington?" Edie called to the other end of the kitchen, where Remington was manning the six-burner stove.

"Ah, yes!" He wiped his hands on the back of his pants and walked over to the counter.

“As you know, your mom is very important to me. And you kids have all become important to me.” Remington awkwardly leaned over to try to ruffle Owen’s blond hair. Owen, who at six foot two was not exactly hair-ruffling height, ducked away. “So, I thought we could all go away together. You three, Edie and I, and Layla—it’ll be a great way for us to all get to know each other. I’ve booked us a few villas on Shelter Cay. I used to own the island. I sold the property years ago, but it’s still one of my favorite places.” Remington drifted back to the stove, as if he’d just announced they were going out to dinner.

“Your island?” Avery asked in confusion.

“Just a small one in the Bahamas. It was one of my first investments. But they still treat me well there.” Remington smiled.

“Isn’t that terrific?” Edie said, her eyes shining. “Of course, if you kids have anyone you want to bring—like maybe your friend Jack?—you’re welcome to. The more the merrier! Everyone should have *fun* on Thanksgiving,” Edie said definitively.

“Sure, thanks!” Avery said, excited. A tropical vacation and she could bring Jack? She pushed the plate of brownies away as if it was contaminated. She had so much to do! She needed a new bathing suit, and a few new Lilly Pulitzer dresses, and a self-tanner appointment at Bliss. . . . She quickly pulled her pink Filofax out of her bag.

“Great,” Owen muttered, practically stomping out of the kitchen.

“Wait!” Avery commanded, hurrying after him.

“Owen,” Baby said, sliding off her chair and following her brother and sister down the hallway like the loyal sibling she was.

“I can’t believe this!” Owen exclaimed once they were in his bedroom. Back when they were little, they used to have triplet

meetings in their backyard tree house. They hadn't had one in ages. Now, standing on Owen's dirty laundry-covered floor, Avery felt both old and young. "He's been dating mom for, like, a *month*," Owen spat angrily.

"Calm down. They're in love. You don't need to be an asshole just because this year there won't be any tofurkey to cook. Is that why you're upset?" Baby teased. Ever since Owen was twelve, he'd taken it upon himself to be in charge of Thanksgiving dinner.

"No." Clearly, Owen was not in the mood. "It's just . . . who is this guy, telling us what we're doing for Thanksgiving?" He plopped down on his flannel-sheeted bed and looked at his sisters, who both had their arms crossed and were staring down at him like mismatched bookends.

"So, let me get this straight. Would you prefer if Mom invited her Brooklyn artist friends and had us all spend the day doing performance art?" Baby asked.

"We probably won't even see them once we get there, right?" Avery pointed out. "Anyway, it's nice that they want us to invite friends. You should bring Rhys," she suggested, changing the subject.

In the most subtle of ways.

"I guess so. Look, I think I'm going to skip the 'family' dinner and head over to Hugh's. He's having some people over." Owen went into the bathroom and closed the door. The triplet meeting was clearly over.

"Fine!" Baby said in a singsongy voice, not wanting to indulge Owen's pouty mood.

"Fine," Avery echoed. Owen was being seriously immature, but if he was going to hang out with the swim team guys, he'd

have the perfect opportunity to invite Rhys on vacation. Avery could picture herself on a beach, in her Milly bikini, the salty air blowing through her hair as a bare-chested Rhys offered her a daiquiri with a dainty straw. “Fine,” she said again, but it was better than fine. It was *perfect*.

Here’s hoping Mr. Manners doesn’t have plans of his own.

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