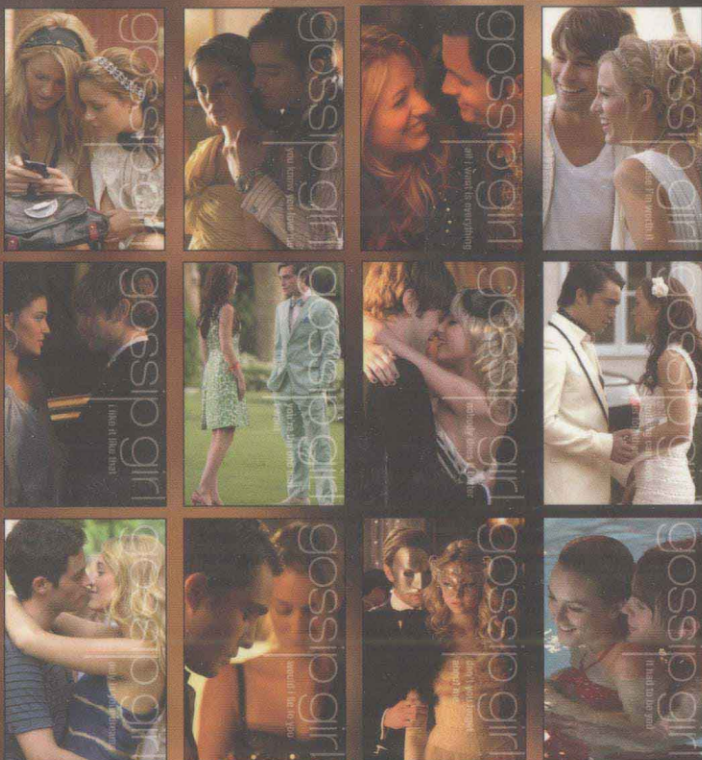


posh girl

don't you forget  
about me

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don't you forget about me  
a gossip girl  
novel

Created by  
**Cecily von Ziegesar**



**poppy**

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*There is only one thing in the world worse than being talked about,  
and that is not being talked about.*

—Oscar Wilde





*Disclaimer: All the real names of places, people, and events have been altered or abbreviated to protect the innocent. Namely, me.*

## hey people!

It's finally August, and you know what that means: New York City is officially *hot, hot, hot*. Not that I would actually know. My friends and I have spent the last month hiding out in our quaint beach houses in the dunes of Montauk and in little country cottages on Gin Lane in Southampton—and by *little* I mean eight bedrooms and five baths, of course—soaking up the summer sun and working on our Bain de Soleil tans.

So who are we? If you really have to ask, then the question is, Darling, where have you *been*? We're the girls in batik-print Marni sundresses, nursing our hangovers with Veuve Clicquot mimosas under wide-brimmed straw Philip Treacy hats while we watch the show-jumping at the Hampton Classic. We're the crowd skinny-dipping on Main Beach at daybreak, waking up at 2 p.m. and going to bed at 6 a.m.—who has time to sleep when there are so many poolside soirees to attend? We're the ones you love to look at—not to mention talk about—and we're at our summer best.

But summer's almost over, and change is in the air. The Hamptons are emptying out, the jet-setters are jetting back from Europe (by private jet, of course), and our families' decorators are already out there collecting samples for us to choose from for our dorm room décor. Yup, the countdown has officially begun: in just

ten days the most recent graduates of Manhattan's most exclusive private schools are headed to college. Pretty soon you'll find us settling into our dorm rooms on Ivy League campuses across New England, the first fallen leaves crunching beneath our new, camel-colored Coach riding boots as we stride purposefully to classes with names like Explorations in the Romantics and Chaos Theory. No more back-to-school coffees on the steps of the Met, no more sneaking out of AP French class for a cigarette, and no more itchy poly-blend uniforms . . . unless you're planning on driving all the frat boys wild by dressing up as a pigtailed schoolgirl for Halloween.

College is the time to reinvent yourself (read: your chance to pretend you weren't a colossal loser in high school), so with only a little over a week left before we leave for those institutions of higher learning, it's time to figure out who you're going to be next. What color is your parachute, my dears? The options are endless, but let me help you eliminate one: the role of observant, fabulously chic Web-logging gossip is already taken.

And while we're all busy reinventing ourselves, there will be a whole new set of gorgeous girls in our school uniforms and TSE cashmere cardigans trying on oversize tortoiseshell sunglasses at Barneys after school. It's hard to believe, but we'll soon be—*sigh*—replaced by the guys and girls who have been carefully studying us from afar. So consider this our last hurrah: it's our chance to take the silver Range Rover LR3s we got for graduation for a ride at daybreak around Manhattan's silent streets. Our last chance to wake up the investment banker next door with rooftop parties at our Fifth Avenue townhouses. To spend a fortune on Chloé bags and Marchesa gowns at Bergdorf's on daddy's black AmEx card. Ah, heaven. Speaking of which . . .

## **trouble in paradise . . .**

Everyone who's anyone saw or has heard about the spectacle of **B** and **N** at **S**'s birthday party up at her country house in Ridgefield, Connecticut, last month. But was I the only one who saw **S** standing out by her pool that night, dipping her toes in the water and wiping her face with the back of her hand after **B** and **N** disappeared upstairs? Were those real tears? Seems mighty close to a certain perfume ad if you ask me. . . . And what did she think of their early a.m. departure on her birthday morning? **B** and **N** may have sailed off into the sunset—literally: their sailboat was last seen due south of Hyannis—but how long can they really stay at sea? Something tells me there's more drama on the sun-splashed horizon.

## **. . . and trouble on the home front**

No one's ever accused **D** of being happy, but I'll be the first one to call him out on being pretty darn . . . gay. And not just the metrosexual, let's-go-shopping at Thomas Pink kind—although his wardrobe could do with a little spruce-up—but the kissing-other-boys-kind. Is he ready to come out? Or will he succumb to **V**'s prickly-headed charms and go hetero once again? If not, I can always hire him to redecorate my bedroom . . . or not.

## **your e-mail**

Dear GG,

**Q:** I was at **S**'s legendary pre-birthday bash in Ridgefield last month, and I could've sworn I saw her sneak out to **N**'s Aston Martin at, like, 6 a.m. and shove something in the glove compartment. Okay, so I'd had way too many Tanqueray gimlets, but it looked awfully suspicious. Whatever she had in her hand looked a lot like an envelope—but full of what, I wonder. Whatever it was was probably totally illegal, but I passed out before I could find out. Any ideas?

—Confused and Still Hammered



**A:**

Dear CSH,

Confused is right. Our sweet **S** may have dated a rock star, but she does not party like one—at least not lately. I'll bet anything what you saw in **S**'s hand was a simple letter. So the real question is, What did it say? I'm one curious cat, and believe me, my kittens, when I find out, we'll all be purring with contentment.

—GG

**Q:**

Dear GG,

My dad is a producer here in Beverly Hills, and last night he screened a rough cut of *Breakfast at Fred's* in our screening room, and all I can say is . . . wow! I always thought that **S** was just another ditzy, genetically blessed socialite, but that girl can really act!

—Beverly Hills Brat

**A:**

Dear BHB,

Tell me something I don't know. The buzz over *Breakfast at Fred's* has reached the East Coast, too—I overheard two studio execs at an Amagansett cocktail party (and, no, I'm not divulging which one) agree that *BAF* is going to be the breakout hit of the fall season—can you say pull-out *Vanity Fair* cover? Buzzzzzzzzzz. . . .

—GG

## sightings

**S** wandering all over New York City in a pair of enormous, quilt-patterned black Chanel sunglasses, feeding the ducks in **Central Park** and going to old movies at the **Angelika** by herself, looking rather lonely. I'm sure there are more than a few boys out there who'd be happy to keep her company. . . . A thirty-foot boat that looks a mighty lot like the *Charlotte* approaching the wharf at **Battery Park**, one

brunette girl and one sandy-blond boy aboard. S might have company sooner than she thinks. . . . **V** at **Barnes & Noble** on Eighty-third and Broadway, standing nervously in the checkout line, a book entitled *Love Me, I'm Gay* tucked under one arm. A little light summer reading? Our old friend **J** at the airport in Prague waving goodbye as a wild-haired woman in a turquoise caftan boarded a New York-bound plane. Isn't **J** the one who's supposed to be heading back? Maybe it's an exchange program. . . . **K** and **I** in **the Conran Shop** on 60th and 1st, selecting dorm room furniture to be shipped to Rollins next week. Umm, word to the wise, girlies: you might not have room for that cherry-red Eames sofa in your ten-by-ten double unless you're both planning on sleeping on it. . . . With those two, you never know.

Okay, my darlings, I'm off to the SoHo House rooftop pool with my favorite gossip rags in hand to enjoy the last days of this hot and sultry summer. Want to join me? Oops, too bad, it's members only. Maybe you can sneak up the back stairway. After all, it's almost time for that pre-college, back-to-school shopping spree at Barneys, and I want to look my tanned and freckled best for my dressing room debut. I've had my eye on a little ivory wool Stella McCartney jumper for months. And, as always, you know I have my eye on *you*.

You know you love me.

gossip girl

## *a new york state of mind*

“Hello, Manhattan!” Blair Waldorf cheered, hopping off the *Charlotte* and onto the Battery Park wharf. A huddle of unnaturally tan bikini-clad girls stood next to their private yacht, the *Miami Mama*, glaring at Blair while their hot, polo-shirted crew unloaded their bulging Coach duffels onto the weathered gray wood of the dock. The high-rises of Battery Park City stood in the distance, the bright August sun reflecting off thousands of windows. Across town, the South Street Seaport boardwalk bustled with tourists wearing unflattering horizontal-striped polo shirts with overstuffed fluorescent fanny packs, and aggressive rollerbladers weaving their way through the crowd.

Blair licked her red and completely bare lips—who needed lip gloss when you’d been kissed that much?—and glanced back at the *Charlotte*. Nate Archibald’s lanky frame appeared on deck, tanned, bare-chested, and grinning, his wavy brown hair streaked with gold, his eyes perfectly matching the green Billabong board shorts hanging low on his hips.

Yummy.

Blair resisted the urge to get right back on the boat and drag him down to the *Charlotte's* ridiculously tiny bedroom. Even though they'd been together 24/7 for the last month, drinking frosty-cold mango margaritas all day and getting hot and sweaty all night, she still couldn't get enough of him.

Apart from enjoying each other's company, there had also been the requisite visits to charming New England seaside towns like Rockport and Camden for cups of clam chowder—she'd actually learned to enjoy it, despite the fact that chowder was just hot, heavily salted cream with little pieces of chewed, gumlike clams in it—and adventurous forays up rivers and inlets so Nate could feel like the sailor he was.

Blair closed her eyes and inhaled the scent of Guerlain sunblock still coating her skin, taking in the feel of the fine grains of sand still stuck between her toes, and the cool ocean breeze that tickled her cheeks. She sighed happily as she remembered last night, stretched out beside Nate, who was wearing light blue linen pajama bottoms, on the *Charlotte's* miniscule bed, falling asleep with the sound of his heartbeat in her ears. She ran her hands through her sea-spray-tangled hair and watched as Nate tied the last knot on the bowline and jumped onto the dock.

"Well, don't you look happy?" He wrapped his arms around her tiny waist, burying his face in her dark, wind-blown hair. "You even smell nice, for once."

Blair squealed as he began to tickle her, squirming away. "Thanks a lot!"

Nate just grinned as he slid his feet into the black worn Teva flip-flops he'd worn every day at sea.

"I wish I could say the same for you!" She punched him lightly on the arm, fantasizing about the L'Occitane honey-and-almond body wash and Frédéric Fekkai shampoo awaiting her at home. The shower on the *Charlotte* was so fucking small she almost smacked herself in the face with the glass shower door every time she turned around. Though she'd been happy to make space for one more when Nate wanted to join.

Scrub-a-dub-dub!

Despite the memory of the dollhouse-size bathroom, Blair felt a tinge of sadness as Nate threw her apple green Hervé Chapelier tote over one shoulder and grabbed his own dirty monogrammed canvas L.L. Bean tote. This had been the most blissful month of her life. After a few days at sea, she'd almost forgotten why she'd been in such a hurry to get aboard—and stay aboard—the *Charlotte* in the first place: the love letter to Nate that her *supposed* best friend Serena had slipped into the glove compartment of his father's Aston Martin before they left. Blair had found it while Nate was at a rest-stop bathroom, read it, and promptly shredded the thing to bits. Not that it mattered now. She could totally find it in her heart to forgive poor, lonely Serena—after all, who could *not* fall in love with Nate? Besides, and most of all, Serena had no chance of coming between them ever again.

She and Nate were more in love than ever and heading to Yale together in just ten days. Sure, Serena was going to be there too, but she and Nate would barely even see her once they ditched their separate and totally-unsuitable-for-living-happily-ever-after dorm rooms and found a shabbily elegant New Haven town house to move into. Once they were

settled, they could reenact their cozy time on the *Charlotte*. She'd laugh at Nate for not knowing how to cook anything—not that she could make much more than caviar on toast points—and he'd have gin gimlets waiting for her when she got back late from one of her pre-law lectures. It was going to be *perfect*.

“Your house or mine?” she asked with a sultry smile. Nate's emerald green eyes glittered in the sun, and Blair affected a little pout, which she knew he couldn't resist. She turned around to face the water and closed her eyes, basking in the sun like a contented cat.

*Meow.*

Nate dropped the totes he'd been carrying and put his hands on Blair's smooth, tanned shoulders. She leaned back into him and he nuzzled her neck, looking out at the shimmering blue water. He thought about the last few weeks. He'd been so happy out on the waves, with nothing in front of them but the clear blue sky and the roaring ocean.

A ringing noise erupted from his pants and Nate jumped back. *Shit*. His cell. They hadn't had a connection out at sea, and he hadn't heard the damn thing ring in weeks. Nate pulled the Motorola Pebl from his rumpled khaki cutoffs and looked at the screen: HOME. *Double shit*. He pressed IGNORE and resisted the urge to throw the thing into the water behind him. Then he grabbed Blair's soft shoulders, a little tighter this time, already worried about the unavoidable confrontation with his dad over his future, which was kind of a mess now due to some recent mishaps.

The message Coach Michaels had left him before he climbed aboard the *Charlotte* repeated itself on a loop in his



head. He wouldn't be getting his diploma from St. Jude's; Yale was out of the question. Of course, Coach had probably broken the news to Nate's strict former Navy captain father by now, which meant he'd be getting a serious reaming as soon as he walked in the door. Knowing his dad, he'd probably been calling to rip him a new one every day for the last month, and this was the first time the signal had come through. Obviously he should have dealt with the situation, like, weeks ago, but surrounded by all that ocean and Blair's bikini-clad body, who could think straight?

Nate pushed his parental worries aside and refocused on Blair. He hadn't told her about the diploma—or lack thereof—yet, and he wasn't looking forward to it. He wondered if he could just head to New Haven with her and Serena and sneak into the occasional class on Western films or nude portraiture and tell everyone he had a lot of AP credits so he was taking an easy load this semester.

A load, indeed.

Nate sighed. The truth had waited this long—what was one more day? He bit down on his chapped bottom lip and tried to concentrate on how tan and smooth Blair's shoulders were under his fingers. All he wanted was to crawl back down into the *Charlotte's* tiny bedroom, get under the covers with her, and never come out, except maybe to smoke a joint.

It's good to see that he has his priorities in order.

"Let's go to your house," he suggested, releasing her. "Myrtle makes the best quesadillas, and I'm freaking starving."

She turned around and grinned at him. "Okay, then, let's get the hell out of here, sailor."

Nate headed back to the boat to grab the rest of their bags, whistling as he jumped on board. He'd avoided his moment of truth with the Captain—and Blair—for so long, maybe he could keep on avoiding it a little while longer.

Blair slid her enormous tinted Prada aviators over her eyes and starting walking down the gray wooden dock. Things couldn't have worked out better—Blair and Nate, the couple always most likely to end up together, heading off to Yale in ten short days. It was almost too good to be true.

Yes, quite.

## *the devil wears dolce*

Serena van der Woodsen sat in the Waldorf Rose living room, flanked on either side by Blair's mother, Eleanor Waldorf Rose, and Davita Fjorde—party planner to those residing on Manhattan's Golden Mile. Serena had no idea why she'd been invited to Blair's house, but when Eleanor called she couldn't very well say no to her so-called best friend's mother, whose wedding she had been a bridesmaid in less than a year ago.

"Now, I want it to be surprising and wonderful and luxurious, of course, but I don't want anything too over-the-top. Nothing *vulgar*." Eleanor wrinkled her ski jump of a nose and straightened the hem of her skintight bronze silk Valentino skirt. After giving birth to baby Yale that spring, she was on a strict Pilates-and-no-carbs diet, and it was clearly working. "Although Cyrus just *loved* the belly dancers in Corfu."

"Eleanor, my dear, stop worrying. This party will be *fabulous*," Davita drawled, scribbling notes in her hot pink, leather-bound notebook with a gold Montblanc pen, her