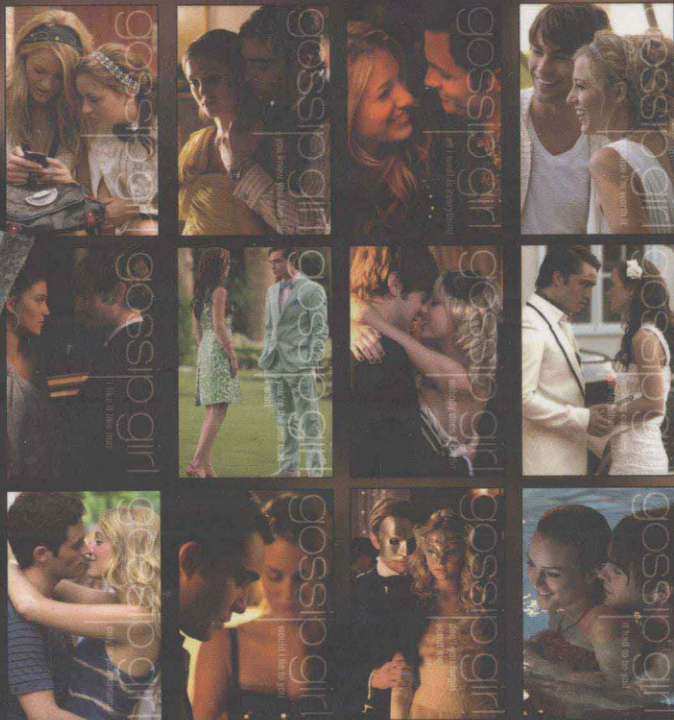
A romantic close-up of a young man and woman looking at each other. The woman is on the left, wearing a large hoop earring and a dark, textured top. The man is on the right, wearing a white shirt. They are both looking towards the center, creating a sense of intimacy. The background is dark and out of focus, with some light reflecting off the man's hair and the woman's face.

# possip girl

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I like it like that  
a gossip girl  
novel

by  
Cecily von Ziegesar



**poppy**

LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY  
New York Boston

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*No gossip ever dies away entirely, if many people voice it: It too is a kind of divinity.*

—Hesiod, ca. 800 B.C.



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

## hey people!

Thank you one and all for coming to my party last week. I would have written sooner but honestly, it's taken me this long to recover. I realize it *was* a little crazy to have a party on a Monday night, but didn't the week *zoom* by afterward?! I'm pretty sure you're all still trying to figure out if I was the skinny blond girl in the emerald-green Jimmy Choos or the tall black guy with the amazing sapphire-blue fake eyelashes. And it was so sweet of you to bring me gifts—especially the adorable caramel poodle puppy—when you didn't even know who I was! The truth is, I kind of like being an international woman of mystery, so for now, I'm going to keep my identity to myself, frustrating as that may be. Think of it as a diversion from the *endless* days of waiting to find out if we got into college, a distracting puzzle to piece together while we endure the stress and boredom of these bitter March weeks.

Not that we really need diversions. We've got plenty to entertain ourselves with—gorgeous couture clothes, huge Upper East Side apartments *with staff*, various “country” houses and holiday retreats, limitless credit cards, pretty diamonds, hot cars (although most of us don't even have our driver's licenses yet), and doting parents who let us do absolutely whatever we please as long as we don't embarrass the family. Plus, spring break is just around the corner, giving us lots of free time to get *busy*.

### Sightings

**S** walking up **Madison Avenue** drawing mustaches over her face in those gorgeous poster ads for **Les Best's** new perfume,

**Serena's Tears. B** in **Sigerson Morrison** on **Prince Street**, indulging her shoe fetish. **N** depositing a shopping bag filled with rolling papers, roach clips, bongos, pipes, and lighters into an East Eighty-sixth Street waste bin. **D** smoking a cigarette on the subway platform at Seventy-second Street and Broadway late at night, challenging the transit cops to arrest him and provide him with some much-needed new material for his poetry. **J** with her new best friend, **E**, and boyfriend, **L**, poking around the Chelsea art gallery district—pretty darned sophisticated for a bunch of ninth-graders. Wait, I think he might actually be in tenth—does anyone really know *anything* about that guy?? **V** and her rocking big sister dumping garbage bags on the sidewalk outside their Williamsburg apartment building. Spring cleaning? Or maybe **D**'s dead body all cut up? Ew! Sorry, that was nasty.

#### Your e-mail

**Q:**

Dear gossipgirl,  
so I'm getting frustrated that ur like never going to tell who u r. r u? cuz i'd really like to meet u in person. who knows, maybe i already have! so far i think u have basically admitted that ur a senior girl who goes to constance. right?  
—qrious

**A:**

Dear qrious,  
I'm not going to go ahead and give you my home address right here and now, or even tell you what grade I'm in. If you were cool enuf to be at my party, you might have seen me, although usually I'm so completely surrounded by my . . . entourage, it's hard to even get a glimpse. Stay curious, though. Eventually you might find me out.  
—GG

**Q:**

Dear GG,  
Are you hot because if you are not, it's going to be really tough for you once everyone knows who you are. Like, she was just some jealous ugly girl!  
—wise

**A:**

Dear wise,

You don't even know the meaning of hot until you've met me, which you most likely never will.

—GG

**Now about that *thing* that's been secretly nagging more than a few of us . . .**

*To go to college a virgin, or not?*

Do we do something about it now, with a boy we've known for years? Do we get rid of it over spring break? Over the summer? Or do we settle into our dorm rooms just as we are, bold but innocent, and ready to lose it with the first campus player to say, "Come hither"? Maybe we should just listen to our mothers and older sisters and "wait till the time is right," whatever *that* means. Of course some of us girls nipped this particular issue in the bud long ago, opting to spend our college years focusing on more important things, like geology and Freud. *Not*. Face it, even if you're not a virgin anymore *now*, you're going to feel like one all over again the minute you step on campus. And that's a good thing.

Thanks again for my presents! Big smoochies—you rock!

You know you love me.

gossip girl



## *there's no place like home*

"What island are we going to, anyway?" Blair Waldorf asked her mother. Eleanor Waldorf Rose was perched on the edge of Blair's bed, watching her daughter get ready for school while they discussed spring break.

"Oahu, dear. I thought I told you. We're going to that resort on the North Shore, so the boys can learn to surf." Eleanor cupped her hands around her almost-seven-months-pregnant belly and frowned at the cream-colored walls as if trying to channel the baby's preference about wallpaper. She was due in June, and Blair would be off to college soon afterward. Today Eleanor and her decorator would discuss her plan to turn Blair's room into a baby girl's nursery.

"But I've already *been* to Oahu," Blair wailed dramatically. She'd known for weeks that they were going to Hawaii for spring break, but until now she hadn't thought to ask where. She kicked her antique mahogany dresser drawer shut and stood in front of the full-length mirror on the back of her closet door, primping. Her close-cropped brown hair was neatly tousled; her white cashmere V-neck was just deep enough to suggest a hint of cleavage without her having to worry about being sent home by Mrs. M, the headmistress,

for dressing like a slut; and her new turquoise Sigerson Morrison flats looked so excellent with bare legs, she decided not to put on tights, even though it had been an unusually frigid March and she was going to freeze her ass off. "I want to go someplace *new*," she added, pouting into the mirror as she applied a second coat of Chanel lip gloss.

"I know, sweet pea." Her mother slid off the bed and squatted down to eyeball a particularly dangerous-looking electrical outlet in the skirting board near the window. Once the decorating was finished she would have to hire someone to baby-proof the entire house. "But you've never been to the North Shore. Aaron says the surfing is the best in the world."

To Blair's dismay, her mother was wearing beige velour track pants with the word *Juicy* on the butt.

Hello, inappropriate?!

"So do I, like, not exist anymore?" Blair demanded. She dragged her baby blue shearling Dior saddle bag out of the closet and dumped her school stuff into it. "First you're kicking me out of my room, and now I have no say about where we go for vacation?"

"The boys are buying some surfing things for our trip right now. You might want to have a quick look on Aaron's computer. See if there's anything you want," her mother answered distractedly. She was on her hands and knees now, circuiting the room, checking for any dangers that might be lurking from a baby's point of view. "You know, I *was* thinking apricot for the color scheme—so it's girly, but not too pink? But now I'm thinking maybe a greeny yellow might be even nicer. *Endive*."

Blair had had enough. She didn't want to go to the North Shore of Oahu, she had no interest in buying surfing equipment, she didn't want to talk about color schemes for the

stupid baby's nursery, and she certainly didn't need to look at the word *juicy* on her mother's wide-load, pregnant ass for a moment longer. With a final spritz of her favorite Marc Jacobs perfume, she left for school without even saying good-bye.

"Yo, Blair. Come here a minute!" her seventeen-year-old stepbrother yelled from his room as she stomped by.

Blair stopped and poked her head into the room. Aaron and her twelve-year-old brother, Tyler, were sharing Aaron's natural-fiber desk chair—all brotherly—while they ordered surfing gear online with Cyrus Rose's credit card. Tyler had stopped combing his hair in an attempt to grow dreadlocks just like Aaron's, and he looked as if he had some sort of foul hair fungus. Blair could hardly believe this was the room she was going to have to live in until she went off to college. Aaron's hemp bedspread and natural sea-grass carpet were littered with old reggae album covers, beer bottles, and Aaron's dirty clothes, and the room stank of his herbal cigarettes and those revolting soy hot dogs he was always eating—*raw*.

"What size are you?" Aaron asked. "We can order you a wet shirt. It keeps the board from chafing."

"They come in cool colors," Tyler added enthusiastically. "Neon-green and stuff."

Like Blair would ever be caught dead in neon-green, let alone a neon-green wet shirt.

She could feel her lower lip trembling with a mixture of horror and overwhelming sorrow. Here it was, only seven forty-five in the morning, and she was already on the verge of tears.

"Found 'em!" Cyrus Rose, her eyesore of a stepfather, boomed from behind her. He waddled down the hallway

from the master bedroom, wearing only a red silk bathrobe tied with a dangerously loose knot. His bristly gray mustache needed a trim, and his fat face was red and oily. He waved a pair of enormous orange swim trunks at Blair. They had little blue fish printed all over them and would have been kind of cute on anyone but him. "Love these. Boys are going to order me a wet shirt to match!" he announced happily.

The idea of spending Easter break watching Cyrus make a fool of himself on a surfboard wearing his orange swim trunks and a matching orange wet shirt was enough to drive Blair to real tears. She slunk away down the hall to the foyer, yanked her coat out of the coat closet, and hurried off to meet her best friend. Hopefully Serena would think of something—*anything*—to cheer her up.

As if that were even possible.

## *s has a stroke of genius*

Serena van der Woodsen sipped her latte and squinted gloomily down at Fifth Avenue from her perch on the steps of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Her abundant pale blond hair overflowed the hood of her belted white cashmere sweater coat and spilled onto her shoulders. There it was again on the side of the M102 bus—the ad for Serena’s Tears. She had no problem with the way she looked in the picture. She liked how the cold wind had whipped her yellow sundress up between her St. Barts-tanned knees, and how even though she’d been wearing only sandals and a sundress in the middle of Central Park in February, the goose bumps that had studded her arms and legs had been carefully airbrushed out. She even liked how she wasn’t wearing lipstick, so her perfectly full lips looked sort of chapped and bruised. It was the tears in her enormous dark blue eyes that bothered her. Of course that was what had caused Les Best to name his new scent Serena’s Tears in the first place, but the real reason Serena had been crying in the photo was because that was the day—no, the very *minute*—Aaron Rose (whom she was pretty sure she’d been in love with, at least for a week) had broken up with her. And what bothered her, what made her feel like

crying all over again, was that now that they were broken up, she had no one to love, and no one to love *her*.

Not that she didn't love almost every boy she'd ever met, and not that every boy in the world didn't totally love *her*: It was impossible *not* to. But she wanted someone to love her and shower her with attention the way only a boy who was *completely* in love with her could. That rare sort of love. *True* love. The kind of love she'd never had.

Feeling uncharacteristically dark and melancholy, she pulled a Gauloise cigarette from out of her rumpled black corduroy Cacharel bag and lit it just to watch it burn.

"I feel as ugly as the weather," she murmured, but then broke into a smile when she saw her best friend, Blair, walking up the steps toward her. She picked up the extra latte she'd bought, stood up, and held it out. "Kick-ass shoes," she remarked, admiring Blair's latest purchase.

"You can borrow them," Blair offered generously. "But I'll kill you if you spill anything on them." She tugged on Serena's sleeve. "Come on, we're gonna be late."

The two girls ambled slowly down the steps and up Fifth Avenue toward school, sipping their coffee as they went. Cold wind blasted through the bare-limbed branches of the trees in Central Park, making them shiver.

"Jesus, it's cold," Blair hissed. She tucked her free hand into Serena's white cashmere sweater-coat pocket the way only a best friend can. "So," she began to vent. She'd gotten control of her tears, but her voice was a little unsteady. "Not only does my mother walk around, like, stroking her ovaries, but today the decorator is coming to turn *my* room into Baby Central, in shades of radicchio and ass!"

All of a sudden, Serena's longing for true love seemed kind of trivial. Her parents hadn't gotten divorced because

her dad was gay, her middle-aged mom wasn't pregnant, her stepbrother hadn't come on to first her and then her best friend and then ditched them both, and she wasn't being forced to move out of her room. Not only that, she wasn't still a virgin at the grand old age of seventeen, and she hadn't kissed her Yale interviewer and then almost lost her virginity to her Yale *alumni* interviewer, completely messing up her chances of getting in. As a matter of fact, when she really thought about it, her life was just peachy compared to Blair's. "But you get Aaron's room, right? And it's just been redecorated for him—it's nice."

"If you like hemp curtains and ecofriendly ginkgo-leaf furniture," Blair scoffed. "Besides," she added, "Aaron is an idiot. Going to Oahu for spring break was totally his idea."

Serena didn't think Oahu sounded so bad, but she wasn't about to contradict Blair when she was in a bad mood and risk getting her eyes poked out. The two girls crossed Eighty-sixth Street against the light, banging against each other as they ran to keep from getting mowed down by a taxi. When they reached the sidewalk, Serena suddenly stopped in her tracks, her huge blue eyes gleaming excitedly.

"Hey! Why don't you move in with *me*?!"

Blair crouched down to hug her frozen bare calves. "Can we keep moving?" she asked grumpily.

"You can live in Erik's room," Serena continued excitedly. "And you can totally screw Oahu and come skiing in Sun Valley with us!!"

Blair stood up and blew into her coffee, squinting at her friend through the steam. Ever since Serena had come back from boarding school Blair had completely hated her, but sometimes she totally loved her. She took one last sip and

tossed her half-empty cup into a trash can. "Help me move in after school?"

Serena slipped her arm through Blair's and whispered in her ear, "You *know* you love me."

Blair smiled and rested her trouble-weary head against Serena's shoulder as the two girls turned right on Ninety-third Street. Only a few hundred yards beyond stood the great royal blue doors of the Constance Billard School for Girls. Ponytailed girls in gray pleated uniform skirts milled around outside, chattering away as the notorious pair of seniors approached.

"I heard Serena got a huge modeling contract after she did that perfume ad. She's going to bring her baby back from France. You know, the one she had last year before she came back to the city? All the supermodels have babies," chirped Rain Hoffstetter.

"I heard she and Blair are going to get an apartment downtown and raise the baby themselves instead of going to college. Blair decided not to *ever* have sex with guys, and obviously, Serena has had enough sex to last her whole lifetime. Just look at them," intoned Laura Salmon. "Total lesbos."

"I bet they think they're making some big feminist statement or something," Isabel Coates observed.

"Yeah, but they won't feel so good about it when their parents are, like, forced to *disown* them," Kati Farkas put in. The first bell rang, summoning the girls into school.

"Hey," Serena and Blair called over as they passed the group of girls on their way inside.

"Cool shoes!" Rain, Laura, Isabel, and Kati sang back in reply, even though only Blair was wearing new shoes. Serena was wearing the same old scuffed brown suede lace-up boots



she'd been wearing since October. Blair always had the best shoes and the best clothes, and Serena always looked gorgeous, anyway, even in her frayed, cigarette-burned boarding school clothes. Which was yet another reason to hate the pair, or to love them, depending on who you were and what mood you were in.