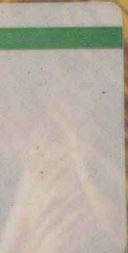


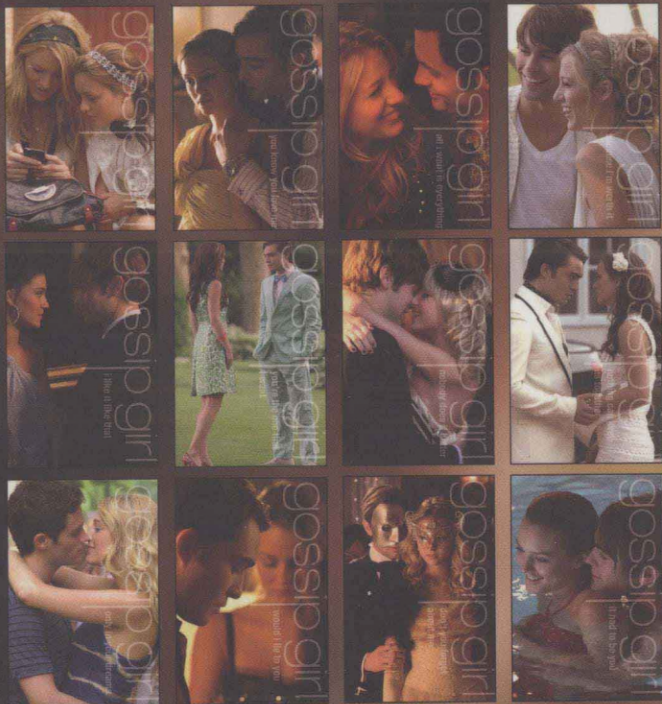
gossip girl

you know you love me



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you know you love me  
a gossip girl  
novel

by

**Cecily von Ziegesar**



**poppy**

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

## hey people!

Welcome to New York City's Upper East Side, where my friends and I all live in huge, fabulous apartments and go to exclusive private schools. We aren't always the nicest people in the world, but we make up for it in looks and taste.

Winter is coming. It's the city's favorite season and mine, too. The boys are out in Central Park, playing ball or doing whatever boys do this time of year, getting all mussed up with bits of dried leaves on their sweaters and in their hair. And those pink cheeks . . . talk about irresistible!

It's time to break out those credit cards and hit Bendel's and Barneys for some cool new boots, sexy fishnet tights, little wool skirts, and delicious cashmere sweaters. The city feels a little sparklier this time of year, and we want to sparkle with it!

Unfortunately, it's also time to fill out our college applications. We all come from the sorts of families and go to the sorts of schools where not applying to the Ivy Leagues is not an option, and not getting into them would be a total embarrassment. The pressure is on, but I refuse to let it get to me. This is our senior year of high school and we're going to live it up and make our mark and still get into the colleges of our choice. We've got the finest blood on the East Coast—I'm sure we can figure out how to have our cake and eat it too, just as we always have.

I know a few girls who aren't going to let the pressure get them down. . . .

## Sightings

**B** with her dad, shopping for sunglasses in **Gucci** on Fifth Avenue. He couldn't decide on the pink tinted lenses or the baby blue so he bought them both. Wow, he really is gay! **N** and his pals looking up the best party schools in the *Insider's Guide to Colleges* at **Barnes & Noble** on 86th and Lexington. **S** getting a facial at **Aveda** downtown. And **D**, dreamily watching the ice-skaters in **Rockefeller Center** and writing in a notebook. A poem about **S** no doubt—what a romantic. Also, **B** getting a Brazilian wax at the **J. Sisters Salon**. Prepping herself for . . .

## IS **B** REALLY READY TO TAKE THE NEXT STEP?

She's been talking about it ever since summer ended and she and **N** were back in the city, together again. Then **S** showed up, **N**'s eyes began to wander, and **B** decided to punish him by making him wait. But now **S** has **D**, and **N** has promised to stay faithful to **B**. It's time. After all, no one really wants to go to college a virgin.

I'll be watching closely.

You know you love me,

gossip girl

## *having her cake and losing it, too*

“To my Blair Bear,” Mr. Harold Waldorf, Esq. said, raising his glass of champagne to clink it against Blair’s. “You’re still my little girl, even though you wear leather pants and have a hunky boyfriend.” He flashed a suntanned smile at Nate Archibald, who was seated beside Blair at the small restaurant table. Mr. Waldorf had chosen Le Giraffe for their special dinner because it was small and intimate and trendy, the food was fabulous, and the waiters all had the sexiest French accents.

Blair Waldorf reached under the tablecloth and squeezed Nate’s knee. The candlelight was making her horny. *If only Daddy knew what we’re planning to do after this*, she thought giddily. She clinked glasses with her father and took a giant gulp of champagne.

“Thanks, Daddy,” she said. “Thanks for coming all this way just to visit me.”

Mr. Waldorf put his glass down and patted his lips dry with his napkin. His fingernails were shiny and perfectly manicured. “Oh, I didn’t come for you, darling. I came here to show off.” He cocked his head to one side and pursed his lips like a model posing for a picture. “Don’t I look great?”

Blair dug her fingernails into Nate’s leg. She had to admit

her father *did* look great. He had lost about twenty pounds, he was tan, he was wearing gorgeous French clothes, and he seemed happy and relaxed. Still, she was glad he'd left his boyfriend at home in their chateau in France. She wasn't quite ready to see her father engaged in public displays of affection with another man, no matter how good he looked.

She picked up her menu. "Can we order?"

"I'm having steak," Nate announced. He didn't want to make a big fuss over what he was having. He just wanted to get this dinner over with. Not that he minded hanging out with Blair's flaming father: it was actually kind of entertaining to see how gay he'd become. But Nate was anxious to get back to Blair's house. She was finally going to give it up. And it was about time.

"Me too," Blair said, closing her menu without really looking at it. "Steak." She didn't plan on eating much anyway, not tonight. Nate had promised her he was completely over Serena van der Woodsen, Blair's classmate and former best friend. He was ready to give Blair his undivided attention. She didn't care whether she ate steak or mussels or brains for dinner—she was finally going to lose her virginity!

"Me three," said her father. "Trois steak au poivre," he told the waiter in a perfect French accent. "And the name of the person who cuts your hair. You have marvelous hair."

Blair's cheeks flamed. She grabbed a bread stick from the basket on the table and bit into it. Her father's voice and mannerisms were completely different from when she'd seen him nine months ago. Then, he'd been a conservative, suit-wearing lawyer, all clean lines and sharp edges. Perfectly respectable. Now he was totally camp, with his plucked eyebrows and lavender shirt and matching socks. It was so embarrassing. After all, he was her *dad*.



Last year, Blair's father's coming out and her parents' ensuing divorce had been the talk of the town. Now everyone was pretty much over it, and Mr. Waldorf was free to show his handsome face wherever he pleased. But that wasn't to say that the other diners at Le Giraffe weren't taking notice. They definitely were.

"Did you see his socks?" an aging heiress whispered to her bored husband. "*Pink-and-gray argyle.*"

"Think he's got enough crap in his hair? Who does he think he is, anyway? Brad Pitt?" a famous lawyer asked his wife.

"He's got a better figure than his ex-wife, I'll tell you that much," one of the waiters remarked.

It was all very amusing, to everyone except Blair. Sure, she wanted her father to be happy, and it was okay for him to be gay. But did he have to be so obvious about it?

Blair looked out the window at the streetlights twinkling in the crisp November air. Smoke billowed out of chimneys on the roofs of the luxurious townhouses across Sixty-fifth Street.

Finally their salads came.

"So it's still Yale for next year?" Mr. Waldorf said, as he stabbed at a piece of endive. "That's where you've got your heart set on going, right, Bear? My old alma mater?"

Blair put her salad fork down and sat back in her chair, leveling her pretty blue eyes at her father. "Where else would I go?" she said, as if Yale University were the only college on the planet.

Blair didn't understand why people applied to six or seven colleges, some of them so bad they were called "safeties." She was one of the best students in the senior class at the Constance Billard School for Girls, a small, elite, all-girls, uniforms-required school on East Ninety-third Street. All Constance's girls went to good colleges. But Blair never settled

for just plain good. She had to have the best of everything, no compromises. And the best college, in her opinion, was Yale.

Her father laughed. "So I guess those other colleges like Harvard and Cornell should send you letters of apology for even trying to get you to go to them, huh?"

Blair shrugged and examined her newly manicured fingernails. "I just want to go to Yale, that's all."

Her father glanced at Nate, but Nate was looking around for something else to drink. He hated champagne. What he really wanted was a beer, even though it never seemed appropriate to order one in a place like Le Giraffe. They always made such a fuss about it, bringing you a cold frosted glass and then pouring in the Heineken like it was something special, when it was just the same old crap you could get at a basketball game.

"What about you, Nate?" Mr. Waldorf asked. "Where are you applying?"

Blair was already nervous about losing her virginity. All this talk about college was just making things worse. She pushed her chair back and stood up to go to the bathroom. She knew it was disgusting and that she had to learn to stop, but whenever she got nervous, she made herself throw up. It was her only bad habit.

Actually, that's not exactly true. But we'll get to that later.

"Nate's going to Yale with me," she told her father. Then she turned and strode confidently through the restaurant.

Nate watched her go. She looked hot in her new black silk halter top, with her straight, dark brown hair hanging between her bare shoulder blades, and her skintight leather pants hugging her hips. She looked like she had already done it, many times.

Leather pants tend to have that effect.

“So it’s going to be Yale for you, too?” Mr. Waldorf prompted when Blair had gone.

Nate frowned at his champagne glass. He really, really wanted a beer. And he really, really didn’t think he could get into Yale. You can’t wake and bake and take a calculus test and expect to get into Yale—you just can’t. And that was what he’d been doing lately. A lot.

“I’d *like* to go to Yale,” he said. “But I think Blair’s going to be disappointed. I mean, my grades just aren’t that good.”

Mr. Waldorf winked at him. “Well, just between you and me, I think Blair’s being a little hard on all the other schools in the country. No one says you have to go to Yale. There are plenty of other schools out there.”

Nate nodded. “Yeah. Brown seems pretty cool. I have an interview there next weekend,” he said. “Although that’s definitely going to be a stretch, too. I got a C on my last math test, and I’m not even taking the AP,” he admitted. “Blair doesn’t think Brown is even a real school. You know, because they have less requirements, or whatever.”

“Blair has impossibly high standards,” Mr. Waldorf said. He sipped his champagne, his buffed pinky pointing outward. “She takes after me.”

Nate glanced sideways at the other diners in the restaurant. He wondered if they thought he and Mr. Waldorf were together, boyfriends. To squelch such speculation, he pushed up the sleeves of his green cashmere sweater and cleared his throat in a very manly way. Blair had given him the sweater last year, and he’d been wearing it a lot lately to reassure her that he wasn’t about to break up with her or cheat on her or do whatever it was she was worried about. “I don’t know,” he said, grabbing a roll from the bread basket and breaking it

violently in half. "It would be great to just take a year off and go sailing with my dad or something, you know?"

Nate didn't understand why, at seventeen, you had to map out your entire life. There would be plenty of time for more school after taking a year or two off to sail around the Caribbean or go skiing in Chile. And yet, all of his classmates at the St. Jude's School for Boys were planning to go straight to college and straight to grad school after college. The way Nate saw it, they were signing their lives away without thinking about what they really wanted to do. For example, he loved the sound of the cold Atlantic spraying against the bow of his boat. He loved the feel of the hot sun on his back as he hoisted the sails. He loved the way the sun flashed green before it dropped into the ocean. Nate figured there had to be more stuff out there like that, and he wanted to experience it, all of it.

As long as it didn't require too much effort. He wasn't big on making an effort.

"Well, Blair's not going to be happy when she finds out you're thinking of taking time off." Mr. Waldorf chuckled. "You're supposed to go to Yale together and get married and live happily ever after."

Nate's eyes followed Blair as she walked back to the table, her head held high. All the other diners in the restaurant were watching her, too. She wasn't the best-dressed or the skinniest or the tallest girl in the room, but she seemed to sparkle a bit more brightly than the rest of them. And she knew it.

Their steaks came and Blair tore into hers, washing it down with gulps of champagne and mounds of buttery mashed potatoes. She watched the sexy way Nate's temple throbbed as he chewed. She couldn't wait to get out of there. She couldn't wait to finally do it with the boy she was planning to spend the rest of her life with. It couldn't get more right than that.

Nate couldn't help noticing how intensely Blair was wielding her steak knife. She cut the meat into huge hunks and gnawed on them ferociously. It made him wonder if she'd be that intense in bed. They'd fooled around a lot, but he'd always been the more aggressive one. Blair always just kind of lay there, making the sorts of mewling sounds girls made in the movies, while he roamed around, doing things to her. But tonight Blair seemed impatient, *hungrier*.

Of course she was hungry. She'd just thrown up.

"They don't serve food like this at Yale, Bear," Mr. Waldorf told his daughter. "You'll be eating pizza and Combos in the dorms with the rest of them."

Blair wrinkled her nose. She'd never eaten a Combo in her life. "No way," she said. "Nate and I aren't going to live in a dorm, anyway. We're going to have our own place." She stroked Nate's ankle with the toe of her boot. "I'll learn how to cook."

Mr. Waldorf raised his eyebrows at Nate. "Lucky you," he joked.

Nate grinned and licked the mashed potatoes off his fork. He wasn't about to tell Blair that her little dream of them living in an off-campus apartment together in New Haven was even more absurd than the idea of her eating Combos. But he didn't want to say anything to upset her.

"Shut up, Daddy," said Blair.

The plates were cleared. Impatient, Blair twisted her little ruby ring around and around on her finger. She shook her head to coffee and dessert and stood up to head for the ladies' room once more. Twice in one meal was extreme, even for her, but she was so nervous she couldn't help it.

Thank goodness Le Giraffe had nice, private bathrooms.

When Blair came out again, the entire waitstaff filed out of

the kitchen. The maître d' was holding a cake decorated with flickering candles. Eighteen of them, including one extra for luck.

*Oh God.*

Blair stomped back to the table in her pointy stiletto boots and took her seat, glaring at her father. Why did he have to make a scene? It wasn't her fucking birthday for another three weeks. She downed another glass of champagne in one gulp.

Waiters and cooks surrounded the table. And then the singing began.

*"Happy birthday to you . . ."*

Blair grabbed Nate's hand and squeezed it tight. "Make them stop," she whispered.

But Nate just sat there grinning like an asshole. He kind of liked it when Blair was embarrassed. It didn't happen very often.

Her father was more sympathetic. When he saw how miserable Blair was he increased the tempo and quickly finished the song. "*You smell like a monkey, and you look like one too!*"

The waitstaff clapped politely and went back to their posts.

"I know it's a little early," Mr. Waldorf said apologetically. "But I have to leave tomorrow, and seventeen is such a big birthday. I didn't think you'd mind."

Mind? No one likes to be sung to in public. *No one.*

Silently Blair blew out the candles and examined the cake. It was elaborately decorated with marzipan high-heeled shoes walking down a spun-sugar Fifth Avenue, past a rock-candy model of Henri Bendel, her favorite store. It was exquisite.

"For my little shoe fetishista," her father said, beaming. He pulled a wrapped present out from under the table and handed it to Blair.

Blair shook the box, expertly recognizing the hollow, thudding sound that a pair of new shoes makes when they're shaken in their box. She tore into the paper. MANOLO BLAHNIK, said the type in big bold letters on the lid of the box. Blair held her breath and pulled off the lid. Inside was a pair of beautifully crafted pewter leather mules with adorable little kitten heels.

*Très fabulous.*

"I got them in Paris," Mr. Waldorf said. "They only made a few hundred pairs. I bet you're the only girl in town who has them."

"They're fantastic," Blair breathed.

She stood up and walked around the table to hug her father. The shoes made up for him humiliating her in public. Not only were they unbelievably cool, but they were exactly what she was going to wear later that night when she and Nate had sex. Those and nothing else.

Thanks, Daddy!

## ***what the steps of the metropolitan museum of art are really for***

“Let’s sit in the back,” Serena van der Woodsen said as she led Daniel Humphrey into Serendipity 3 on East Sixtieth Street. The narrow, old-timey hamburger-and-ice cream parlor was crowded with parents treating their kids while the nanny took the night off. The air was punctuated with the shrill cries of sugared-up children, as tired waitresses hurried to and fro carrying huge glass bowls of ice cream, frozen hot chocolates, and extralong hot dogs.

Dan had planned to go somewhere more romantic with Serena. Somewhere quiet and dimly lit. Somewhere where they could hold hands and talk and get to know each other without being distracted by angry parents scolding deceptively angelic-looking little boys in button-down shirts and khakis from Brooks Brothers. But Serena had wanted to come here.

Maybe she was really craving ice cream, or maybe her expectations for the evening weren’t quite as big and romantic as his were.

“Isn’t this great?” she burred exuberantly. “Me and my brother, Erik, used to come here like once a week and eat peppermint sundaes.” She picked up a menu and examined it. “It’s still all exactly the same. I love it.”



about all the fun she'd had in Europe this past summer. So much fun that she hadn't returned in time for the first day of classes at Hanover Academy in New Hampshire. The school had refused to take her back.

Her old school, Constance Billard, was more forgiving. Well, the *school* was. The girls were not. Serena didn't have a single friend in New York anymore, so she was thrilled to meet Dan. It was fun getting to know someone so different from herself.

Dan wanted to pinch himself every time he looked into Serena's dark blue eyes. He had been in love with her since he first laid eyes on her at a party in ninth grade, and it was his hope that now, two-and-a-half years later, she was falling in love with him, too.

"Let's get the biggest sundaes on the menu," Serena said. "We can switch bowls halfway through so we don't get bored."

She ordered the triple peppermint sundae with extra hot-fudge sauce, and he ordered a coffee banana split. Dan would eat anything with coffee in it. Or tobacco.

"So," Serena said, pointing at the paperback sticking out of Dan's coat pocket, "is that good?"

The book was *No Exit*, by Jean Paul Sartre, an existentialist tale of misfits in purgatory.

"Yeah. It's kind of funny and kind of depressing," Dan said. "But there's a lot of truth to it, I guess."

"What's it about?"

"Hell."

Serena laughed. "Whoa," she said. "Do you always read books like that?"

Dan extracted an ice cube from his water glass and put it in his mouth. "Like what?"

"Like, about hell," she said.