

gossip girl
| the carlyles

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poppy

LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY

New York Boston

I do desire we may be better strangers.

—William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*

hey people!

Surprised to hear from me? Don't be. Something's happened on the Upper East Side, and I can't keep quiet about it. There's a new threesome in town, and they're far too exquisite not to talk about. . . .

But first, I need to back up a little.

As we all know, this summer our beloved Avery Carlyle passed away. Benefactress extraordinaire, she gave away pieces of her fortune to museums, libraries, and parks the way other people donate last season's dresses to St. George's thrift shop. At seventeen, she made headlines dancing on tables at Elvis's first New York show. At twenty-one, she married (for the first time) and moved into the famous peach-colored town house on the corner of Sixty-first and Park. And at seventy, she still drank scotch and soda and was always surrounded by fresh-cut white peonies. Most important, she knew exactly how to get what she wanted—from husbands, society hostesses, heads of state, *anyone*. A woman after my own heart.

And why should you care? Keep your panties on, I'm getting to that. Avery Carlyle's wayward daughter, Edie—who ran away years ago to Nantucket to find herself through art—was called back to New York to sort through her mother's affairs. Judging by the bookcase of leather-bound journals (and the six annulled marriages) the elder Mrs. Carlyle left in her wake, that process may take a while. Which is why Edie recently shut down the Nantucket house and moved herself and her fatherless triplets into an infamous penthouse located on Seventy-second and Fifth.

Meet the Carlyles: **O**, ruggedly handsome, buff bod, golden blond hair, an ever-present Speedo . . . looks good so far. Then there's **A**, wheat blond hair, cobalt blue eyes, a fairy-tale goddess robed in Marni. And lastly **B**, which simply stands for Baby. Aw. But just how innocent is she?

Of course, our UES friends are up to some new tricks. There's **J**, last seen drinking Tanqueray gimlets on a yacht in **Sagaponack**. But why was she there, when she was supposed to be performing arabesques at the Paris Opera House? Did the pressure get to her, or was she just homesick for her tycoon-in-training boyfriend, **J.P.** . . . ? Don't forget the impeccably mannered **R**, swimming laps in the rooftop pool at **Soho House** while his mother filmed a piece on summer entertaining for her television show *Tea with Lady Sterling*. We all know Lady S can't wait to plan his fairy-tale wedding to longtime girlfriend, **K**, but will young love endure? Especially when **K** was seen in the confessional at **St. Patrick's**? They say confession is good for the soul.

What will the old crowd think of these three new additions to our fair island? I, for one, can't wait to see whether they sink or swim. . . .

your e-mail



Dear GG,

So, my mom went to Constance Billard like a million years ago with the triplets' mom, and she told me the reason they moved here is because **A** slept with the entire island—boys and girls. And then **B** is, like, this crazy, brilliant genius who's mentally unstable and never washes her clothes. And **O** apparently swims up to Nantucket on the weekends in a Speedo. Is that true?

—3some

a:

Dear 3,
Interesting. From what I've seen, **A** looks pretty innocent. But we all know looks can be deceiving. We'll see how brilliantly **B** does in the city. As for **O**, Nantucket's a long way away, so I doubt he can swim that far. But if he can . . . I've got one word for you: *endurance*. Exactly what I look for in a man.

—GG

Q:

Dear GG,
I just moved here and I love New York!!!! Do you have any advice to make this year the best year ever?

—SMLLTWNRL

a:

Dear STG,
All I can say is, be careful. Manhattan is a pretty small place itself, albeit much more fabulous than wherever you came from. No matter what you do, and no matter where you are, somebody is watching. And it's not going to be gossiped about in your high school cafeteria—in this town, it's bound to hit Page Six or Gawker. If you're interesting or important enough to be gossiped about, that is. One can only hope.

—GG

Q:

Dear GG,
I bet you're just saying you deferred college because you didn't get in anywhere. Also, I heard that a certain monkey-owning dude never made it to West Point, and I think it's pretty mysterious that he's still here and so are you. Are you really a girl?? Or are you even a senior? I bet you're just some nerdy thirteen-year-old with no boobs, so people can't tell if you're a girl or a boy. I mean you're definitely not the real thing. Even the site looks different.

—RUCHUCKB

a:

Dear RUCHUCKB,

First of all, it's called a makeover! Get with the program. Second, I'm flattered that my continued presence is spawning conspiracy theories. Sorry to disappoint, but I am as feminine as they come, without a pet monkey in sight. My age? As the venerable elder Avery Carlyle would say: A real lady never tells.

—GG

sightings

This just in, from the newbies: **O** running in **Central Park**, without a shirt. Does he *own* any shirts? Let's hope not . . . ! **A** trying on a silver sequined YSL minidress in the dressing room of **Bergdorf's**. Didn't anyone tell her Constance has a dress code . . . ? And her brunette sister, **B**, in **FAO Schwarz**, clinging to a guy in a barn-red Nantucket High hoodie, putting stuffed animals in inappropriate poses and taking pictures. Is *that* what they do for fun where they're from?

Okay, ladies and gents, you all probably have to go back-to-school shopping—or, for those of you who've headed off to college, read Ovid and chug a PBR in your new eight-by-ten dorm room. But don't worry; I'll be here, drinking a glass of Sancerre in the corner booth of Balthazar, reporting on what you're missing. It's the dawn of a new era on the Upper East Side, and with these three in town, I just know it's going to be another wild and wicked year. . .

You know you love me,

gossip girl

welcome to the jungle

Baby Carlyle woke up to the sound of garbage trucks beeping loudly as they backed up Fifth Avenue. She rubbed her puffy eyelids and set her bare feet on the red bricks of her family's new terrace, pulling her boyfriend's red Nantucket High sweatshirt close to her skinny frame.

Even though they were all the way on the top floor, sixteen stories above Seventy-second and Fifth, she could hear the loud noises of the city coming to life below. It was so different from her home in Siaconset, Nantucket, better known as Sconset, where she used to fall asleep on the beach with her boyfriend, Tom Devlin. His parents ran a small bed-and-breakfast, and he and his brother had lived in a guest cottage on the beach since they were thirteen. He'd surprised Baby with a visit to New York over the weekend, but he'd left last night. When she couldn't sleep, Baby had dragged a quilt onto the terrace's hammock.

Sleeping alfresco? How . . . au naturel.

Baby shuffled through the sliding French doors and into the cavernous apartment she was now expected to call home. The series of large, cream-colored rooms, with their gleaming

hardwood floors and ornate marble details, was the opposite of comfortable. She dragged the Frette duvet behind her, mopping the spotless floors as she wound her way to her sister Avery's bedroom.

Avery's golden-blond hair was strewn across her pale pink pillow, and her snores sounded like a broken teakettle. Baby pounced on the bed.

"Hey!" Avery sat up and pulled the strap of her white Cosabella tank top up on one tanned shoulder. Her long blond hair was matted and her blue eyes were bleary, but she still looked regally beautiful, just like their grandmother had been. Just like Baby wasn't.

"It's morning," Baby announced, bouncing up and down on her knees like a four-year-old high on Honey Smacks. She was trying to sound perky, but her whole body felt heavy. It wasn't just that her whole family had uprooted themselves from Nantucket last week, it was that New York City had never felt—*would never feel*—like home.

When Baby was born, her emergence had surprised her mother and the midwife, who thought Edie was only having twins. While her brother and sister were named for their maternal grandparents, the unexpected third child had simply been called Baby on her birth certificate. The name stuck. Whenever Baby had come to New York to visit her grandmother, it was clear from Grandmother Avery's sighs that while twins were acceptable, three was an unruly number of children, especially for a single mother like Edie to handle. Baby was always too messy, too loud, too *much* for Grandmother Avery, too much for New York.

Now, Baby wondered if she might have been right. Everything,

from the boxy rooms in the apartment to the grid of New York City streets, was about confinement and order. She bounced on her sister's bed some more. Avery groaned sleepily.

"Come on, wake up!" Baby urged, even though it was barely ten, and Avery always liked to sleep in.

"What time is it?" Avery sat up in bed and rubbed her eyes. She couldn't believe she and Baby were related. Baby was always doing ridiculous things, like teaching their dog, Chance, to communicate by blinking. It was as if she were perpetually stoned. But even though her boyfriend was a raging stoner, Baby had never been into drugs.

It doesn't really sound like she needs them.

"It's after ten," Baby lied. "Want to go outside? It's really pretty," she cajoled. Avery took in Baby's tangled long brown hair and puffy brown eyes, and knew immediately that she'd been crying over her loser boyfriend all night. Back in Nantucket, Avery had done everything possible to avoid Tom, but this past weekend it had been impossible to escape his grossness, from the stained white Gap athletic socks he'd ball up and give to their cat, Rothko, to play with, to the one time she had caught him doing bong hits on the terrace wearing only a pair of Santa-print boxers. She knew Baby liked that he was *authentic*, but did authentic have to mean appalling?

Short answer? No.

"Fine, I'll come outside." Avery pulled herself out from under her six-hundred-thread-count Italian cotton sheets and walked barefoot onto the terrace, and Baby followed. Avery squinted in the bright sunlight. Below her, the wide street was empty except for an occasional sleek black town car whooshing down the avenue. Beyond the street was the lush expanse of Central

Park, where Avery could just barely make out the tangled maze of paths winding through its greenery.

The two sisters sat together, swinging in the hammock and looking over the other landscaped Fifth Avenue terraces and balconies, deserted save for the occasional rooftop gardener. Avery sighed in contentment. Up here, she felt like the queen of the Upper East Side, which was exactly what she was born to be.

Is that right?

“Hey.” Their brother, Owen, six foot two and shirtless, stepped onto the terrace carrying a carton of orange juice and a bottle of champagne, wearing only a black Speedo bathing suit. Avery rolled her eyes at her swimming-obsessed brother, who could easily drink anyone under the table and then beat them in a 10K.

“Mimosa anyone?” He took a swig of orange juice from the carton and grinned at Avery’s repulsed grimace. Baby shook her head sadly as her tangled hair brushed against her shoulder blades. Always tiny, Baby now looked absolutely fragile. Her messy brown hair had already lost the honey highlights that always showed up during the first weeks of a Nantucket summer.

“What’s up?” he asked his sisters companionably.

“Nothing,” Avery and Baby answered at the same time.

Owen sighed. His sisters had been so much easier to understand when they were ten, before they’d started acting all coy and mysterious.

He took a swig of orange juice, wondering if he’d ever understand girls. If they weren’t so irresistible in general, he might have given them up and become a monk. Case in point: The only reason he was up so early was the semi-pornographic dream that had forced him out of bed and on an unsuccessful hunt for a pool.

Dream about *whom*? Details, please.

He placed the unopened bottle of champagne in a large, daisy-filled planter and took another swig of OJ before squeezing into the hammock next to his sisters. He glanced down at the mass of trees, not believing how small Central Park seemed. From up here, everything looked miniature. Not like Nantucket, where the expanse of dark ocean went on forever. Sconset was the nearest point in the country to Portugal and Spain, and Owen always wondered how long it would take him to swim there.

“Helloooooo!” The sound of their mother’s voice and the jangling of her handcrafted turquoise and silver bracelets carried out onto the terrace from inside. Edie Carlyle appeared in the doorway. She wore a flowy blue-patterned Donna Karan sundress, and her normally blond-streaked-with-gray bob had been knotted into a hundred tiny braids. She looked more like a scared porcupine than a resident of Manhattan’s most exclusive zip code.

“I’m so glad you’re all here,” she began breathily. “I need your opinion on something. Come, it’s inside.” She gestured toward the foyer, her chunky bracelets clanking against each other.

Avery giggled as Owen dutifully slid off the hammock and padded into the apartment, following Edie’s long stride. For the past week, Owen had been acting as Edie’s de facto art advisor. He had been to an opening almost every night, usually in an overcrowded, patchouli-drenched gallery in Brooklyn or Queens, where he’d drunk warm chardonnay and pretended to know what he was talking about.

The expansive, wood-paneled rooms of the penthouse that had once probably housed toile Louis XIV revival chaises and Chippendale tables were now barren except for a few castoffs

Eddie had found through her extensive network of artist friends. Avery had immediately ordered a whole ultramodern look from Jonathan Adler and Celerie Kempbell, but the furniture hadn't yet arrived. In the interim, Eddie had managed to find a moth-eaten orange couch to place in the center of the living room. Rothko was furiously scratching at it, his favorite new activity since moving to New York. Most of the Carlyles' pets—three dogs, six cats, one goat, and two turtles—had been left in Nantucket. Rothko was probably lonely.

Not for long. Sitting next to Rothko was a two-foot-high plaster chinchilla, painted aquamarine and covered in bubble wrap.

"What do you think?" Eddie asked, her blue eyes twinkling. "A man was selling it for fifty cents on the street down in Red Hook when I was coming home last night from a performance. This is authentic, New York City found art," she added rapturously.

"I'm out of here," Avery announced, backing away from the plaster sculpture as if it were contaminated. "Baby and I are going to Barneys," she decided, locking eyes with her sister and willing her to say yes. Baby had been moping around in Tom's stupid sweatshirt all weekend. It had to stop.

Baby shook her head, pulling the red sweatshirt tighter against her body. She actually kind of liked the chinchilla. It looked just as out of place in the ornate apartment as she felt. "I have plans," she lied. She'd decide what those plans were just as soon as she was out of her family's sight.

Owen gazed at the statue. One of the chinchilla's heavily lidded eyes looked like it was winking at him. He really needed to get out of the house.

"I, uh, need to pick up some swim stuff." He vaguely remembered getting an e-mail saying he needed to pick up his uniform

from the team captain at St. Jude's before school started tomorrow. "I should probably get to it."

"Okay," Edie trilled, as Avery, Owen, and Baby scattered to opposite ends of the apartment. School started tomorrow. It was the dawn of a new era.

Edie tenderly carried the chinchilla sculpture into her art studio. "Have fun on your last day of freedom!" she called, her voice echoing off the walls of the apartment.

Like they don't *always* find a way to have fun?

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