

you just can't get enough

gossip girl  
the carlyles

Created by

**Cecily von Ziegesar**

Written by

**Annabelle Vestry**



**poppy**

LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY

New York Boston

*It is better to be feared than loved, if you cannot be both.*

—Niccolò Machiavelli

## hey people!

### a new era

News flash: This year's juniors are the people to watch. Seniors and college applications? Who cares? Who wants to waste time on boring will-they-or-won't-they-get-in speculation when there's so much partying without consequences going on? Now that our Alice + Olivia frocks are tucked away and it's getting darker earlier, it's time to really get down to business. There are benefits to host, hearts to break, relationships to consummate, facial hair to shave (yes, I'm specifically addressing a certain swim team here), and a whole city to play in. So go out there and shake things up. Talk to that cutie in the Riverside Prep cap. Forge new friendships. Maybe even some rivalries. Throw a wild party, and just as it's heating up, make it *wilder*. And who better to emulate than the newbies taking NYC by storm?

### The NKOTB

The Carlyle triplets certainly know how to have fun. We've got **A**, blond, blue-eyed, and innocent on the outside. Who would have guessed she has a knack for throwing crazy parties—so crazy that she wound up behind bars? Luckily, she's already won the hearts of the whole junior class, as well as of the board of overseers at Constance Billard. Talk about a people person. And then there's six-foot-two, Adonis-like, Speedo-clad **O**. He's surprisingly still single, despite the bevy of available girls following him everywhere, from swim practice to Red Bull runs at Duane Reade. Is he

holding out for a certain someone? And does anyone know who that certain someone could be? Finally, there's our little **B**, who seems to have shifted her allegiance from one tiny sandy eastern seaboard island to *our* little island. Can you blame her? Especially when she has golden boy **J.P.** as a tour guide? But after breaking the rules at Constance and being asked to take a much-buzzed-about week of "garden leave" (aka private-school suspension), will she be allowed to stay? Or will her unconventionality prove too much for 10021?

### sightings

**J** at scholarship auditions for the School of American Ballet. Great tours jetés, but is that enough? **R** having afternoon tea with his mom, **Lady S**, at Soho House. **A** going to a waxing appointment at Elizabeth Arden Red Door Salon with **S.J.**, **G**, and the rest of **J**'s posse. Is this how we bond now? Waxing together? And mysteriously absent from the happy crew? **J** herself. Why bail on a waxing trip? Has someone gone all European on us? **O** running solo, up Hudson River Park. He really should stretch afterward. I can help!

### your e-mail

**q:**

Dear GG,

So, I sort of extended this South American trip and missed the first two weeks of school, and now everything is freaking crazy! Are **B** and **J.P.** really together? And what about **J**? Is she with anyone? What's happening to our world?

—Existential Freakout

**a:**

Dear E.F.,

Extending a trip into the school year is so last year. Anyway, to get you up to speed, **B** and **J.P.** got to know each other when, lover (of

animals!) that **B** is, she volunteered to walk **J.P.**'s dogs. Now the dogwalker is back from her whirlwind marriage and honeymoon to her employer's gardener, so **B** is out of a job, but she and **J.P.** are still hanging out. We'll see how long they can keep their paws . . . uh, hands, off each other. As for **J**, she's alone . . . for now. But don't cry for her, Argentina (or wherever you trekked off to), because she can take care of herself.

—GG

**o:**

Dear Gossip Girl,

I've never written on this site before, but I'm a paralegal working on a very important historic property, and I'm absolutely appalled that, during a party there last week, a very valuable copy of *The Collected Works of William Shakespeare* was stolen. If you have any information at all on how this could have transpired, I would be grateful.

—LawandOrder

**a:**

Dear L&O,

Doesn't Shakespeare speak the language of love? Maybe someone took it to get ideas. Start with the bachelors and work your way from there.

—GG

And that's a wrap! I'm going to soak up the last days of summer with a glass of sparkling wine at the roof garden at the Met. Yes, it's old school, but with so much action taking place on the museum steps or in Central Park, how can I resist?

You know you love me.

gossip girl

## *sealed with a kiss . . .*

“Do you think I should give Mrs. McLean the sculpture?” Edie Carlyle gestured to the bulky, misshapen bag slung over her shoulder.

Baby Carlyle peered dubiously into the hemp bag. A bubble gum pink bowl was nestled inside, undoubtedly one of her mother’s latest art projects. An MTA city bus roared by, causing Baby’s green linen dress, purchased from a cart near Central Park for ten dollars, to billow around her skinny knees. Baby shrugged.

“Well, I don’t want you to get kicked out,” Edie fretted as they crossed East Ninety-third Street toward the Constance Billard School for Girls.

Baby was technically still enrolled in the small, elite, uniform-required institution that her mother had also attended years ago. But after skipping several mandatory after-school service hours for minor French class infractions, she’d been placed on “garden leave” for a week. It turned out “garden leave” was just a fancy private school term for suspension. For the past week, she had spent her days drinking chai on a bench in Central Park, reading

Nabokov, and waiting for her new friend J. P. Cashman to get out of school at Riverside Prep. Then they'd spend the afternoon in Central Park, playing with his three dogs, reading books to each other, and having long, rambling conversations about their childhoods. Now, though, Baby bit her cherry-ChapSticked lower lip nervously. What if she actually got expelled?

A week ago, that was *all* she had wanted. While her brother, Owen, and sister, Avery, had seemed to feel at home as soon as they set foot in Manhattan, Baby, the smallest and most independent Carlyle triplet, had just felt . . . lost. She'd been overwhelmed with homesickness for their ramshackle house back in Siasconset, Nantucket, and her boyfriend, Tom Devlin. So she'd done what had seemed like the logical thing at the time: intentionally gotten herself into trouble at school, hoping her mom would realize how unfit she was for Constance and New York. But when she surprised Tom by showing up back in Nantucket, and realized that he was not only a raging stoner but a raging *cheater*, she began to reconsider New York City. Especially after J.P., a boy Baby had written off as a typical spoiled Upper East Sider, flew up to Nantucket in his father's helicopter to ask her to come back to Manhattan.

Beats a text message.

Baby sighed and pushed her long, wavy brunette bangs off her high forehead. If she did get kicked out, she didn't know what she'd do. Surely none of the other schools in Manhattan would take her, except maybe Darrow, a small school down in the Village where all the students, from kindergartners to seniors, were taught in the same classroom. She wrinkled her nose, imagining finger painting with five-year-olds while listening to Joni Mitchell songs. She was bohemian, but not *that* bohemian.

And we're all very thankful for that.

Eddie banged open Constance Billard's royal blue doors, the silver energy chakra-balancing pendants dangling from her neck clinking against one another.

"Wait." Eddie held the door open for her daughter as she deftly moved the hemp bag from one skinny arm to another. She took off one of her large, ugly, blob-shaped necklaces. "Wear this for luck," she commanded, her blue eyes flashing.

Baby offered a small smile and clasped the pendant around her neck. It looked like an amoeba, multiplied a million times under a microscope.

"It's this way," Baby mumbled, guiding her mom down Constance's polished, empty halls. They were eerily quiet, since everyone was in their last-period classes.

Eddie followed, her unfashionable Birkenstocks thwacking against the freshly buffed marble floors of the school. They paused at a heavy oak door with HEADMISTRESS written on it in intimidating gold block letters.

"I remember this place." Eddie ruffled her daughter's already tangled brown hair. "I spent enough time here myself when I was a student."

Baby nodded. It was hard to imagine her bohemian mom wearing the stiff, knee-length seersucker skirts that were part of the mandatory Constance uniform, even as a teenager. Baby glanced at a plaque on the wall, engraved with the names of past class presidents. Her sister, Avery, would kill to get on that plaque. Baby was just glad there wasn't a plaque for Constance delinquents. She was sure her name would top that list.

Unless, of course, her mom already held that honor.

“Baby Carlyle?” The stringy-haired secretary looked up, her eyes disapproving slits as she gave Baby a quick once-over. Baby nodded and smiled thinly. Her heart thumped against her chest.

“Go right in—Mrs. McLean is expecting you.” The secretary blinked her eyes and then looked back at her computer. She began typing furiously, undoubtedly sending an all-points bulletin to the rest of the faculty that French class—interrupting, school service—hour skipping, Mason Pearson hairbrush—boycotting Baby Carlyle was back.

Judgment day!

“Ah, thank you for coming.” Mrs. McLean stood up from behind her large oak desk as Baby and Edie shuffled inside. She wore a black pantsuit that was two sizes too small. One button midway down the jacket was hanging on to the material by a thread, like a baby koala clinging to a eucalyptus tree.

“Sit,” she commanded as she practically pushed Baby down onto a dark blue love seat. The velvet fabric was stiff and scratched the back of Baby’s bare legs.

“Mrs. McLean, I’m Baby’s mother, Edie.” Her mom grabbed the headmistress’s hand and pumped it vigorously. “So nice of you to take this time to meet with us. Here—I made this for you,” Edie announced as she rooted through her hemp bag. She pulled out the misshapen bubble gum pink bowl and plunked it upside down on Mrs. McLean’s desk. It had a small nub in the center.

Surprise registered in Mrs. McLean’s large, freckled face. She was probably used to mothers with kids in trouble plunking down checks, not homemade, lumpy pottery. “Thank you for . . . that, Mrs. Carlyle.”

“Oh, call me Edie! But I see it doesn’t go with the décor,” Edie realized sadly, shifting her gaze from the sculpture to the office’s red, white, and blue furnishings.

“Um, that’s quite all right.” Mrs. McLean settled back into her oak chair. “Let’s begin. Now, I know *Baby* . . .” Mrs. McLean paused, a sour expression on her Raggedy-Ann face. In a school populated by girls with names like Beatrice and Madison, the headmistress had made it clear she didn’t find *Baby*’s name completely appropriate. But it wasn’t *Baby*’s fault her mother had thought she was only having twins, and had just stuck the name *Baby* on her birth certificate. According to the story, Edie had always meant to give *Baby* a more formal name, but, in her anything-goes tradition, she’d simply never gotten around to it. Because she was the baby of the family, and of such diminutive stature, the name had naturally stuck.

“I know *Baby* had, ahem, an *unconventional* upbringing,” Mrs. McLean continued. “Which most likely contributed to her difficult transition at Constance her first week of school. During her time off, my hope was that *Baby* would take the week to reflect on her behavior while we came to a conclusion about her future, and whether or not her future included Constance Billard.” Mrs. McLean carefully pushed the lumpy bowl to the edge of her desk. The headmistress had a splotch of maroon-colored lipstick on her front teeth, and all of a sudden *Baby* felt a tug of sympathy for her. Maybe she felt as out of place at Constance as *Baby* did. “So, *Baby*, did you find your week off productive?”

“I did,” *Baby* replied, glancing around the office. She wasn’t sure why she wanted to stay at Constance so badly, but for the past week it had been all she could think about. As much as she

missed Nantucket and all its shoreside beauty, that was all in the past. New York was her home now.

Wonder what—or *who*—changed her mind?

“Ma’am,” Baby added, then blushed. Next thing she knew, she’d be curtsying.

Or saluting. Yes, sir, Mrs. McLean, sir!

“Well, I’ve looked through your transcript, and I’ve reached a decision.” Mrs. McLean crossed her arms over her voluminous chest.

Baby wasn’t looking forward to begging her way back into the world of bitchy girls with Oscar Blandi–highlighted hair, Gucci ponytail holders, and Montblanc pens. But she was ready to do it. She licked her lips and locked her dark eyes with Mrs. McLean’s muddy brown ones. “Mrs.—”

“Baby will be permitted to stay at Constance,” the headmistress interrupted.

Baby breathed a sigh of relief.

“But to prove to me that adjusting to Constance’s strict codes of conduct will be possible for her, she will need to do Constance community service,” Mrs. McLean continued. “In earnest this time. Since she comes from such an, ahem, artistic background, I have what I believe to be an appropriate task for her. . . .” Mrs. McLean bent down, her voluminous behind swaying in the air as she rifled through a shiny metal cabinet. When she stood up, she handed Baby a black-and-white magazine with a photo of a dead pigeon on the front. *Rancor* was written across the front in angry-looking capital letters.

“This is our student-run art magazine. Its creator and editor graduated last year.” Mrs. McLean squinted her cowlike eyes. “*Rancor* requires an artistic sensibility, and I’m hoping you’ll

be willing to take it on,” she finished. Edie clapped her hands excitedly, as if Mrs. McLean had designed the task for her and not her daughter.

Baby took the magazine and flipped through its pages. Despite the edgy cover, the inside was full of cheesy poems about ice-skating in Rockefeller Center and the smell of flowers in spring. Baby tried to imagine working on the magazine but couldn’t. Unlike her spirited sister, who was currently the student liaison to the board of overseers at Constance, school spirit had never really been her thing.

“Well, I am so glad that this is all straightened out, and of course Baby is grateful for the opportunity,” Edie said abruptly. “But now I have to go—I absolutely *must* get back to my studio.” She swooped down and planted a kiss on the top of Baby’s head. Baby could smell her mother’s patchouli-infused essential-oil scent. She grinned to herself, careful that Mrs. McLean didn’t see her smirking. Her mother’s randomness was so over-the-top that it could seem almost like an act.

“Of course.” Mrs. McLean nodded, as if she understood the pressing nature of Edie’s art. “Baby, we’ll see you tomorrow, bright and early. And I don’t need to remind you that you need to be in uniform,” she added.

“Yes, of course! Thank you, Mrs. McLean,” Baby said gratefully. She grinned and kept on grinning as she left the office and scampered out the school’s royal blue doors. She leaned against the redbrick building to collect herself, knowing she only had a moment before the bell would ring and girls would come pouring out in droves. Even though she wasn’t thrilled about revamping some neglected student magazine, she couldn’t help but feel like she’d dodged a bullet. Yes, Constance was a little uptight and full

of prissy girls, but Baby's life had felt unstable ever since she'd been uprooted from Nantucket, and now it felt like things were getting back on track.

"Hey there!"

Baby whirled around to see J.P., clad in khakis and his blue Riverside Prep blazer, standing at the corner. He was holding a rainbow sno-cone in one hand, his BlackBerry in the other.

Baby loved how J.P. seemed so buttoned-up but wasn't really. Not when you got to know him. And now that she was officially here to stay on the Upper East Side, she intended to get to know him a whole lot better.

As in, know him in the biblical sense?

"Celebratory sno-cone? Did everything go okay with your meeting?" J.P. pushed his floppy brown hair from his eyes nervously.

"I'm not going anywhere," Baby said triumphantly. "You can tell the dogs not to worry," she teased.

"Good." J.P. grinned. "I wouldn't want them to lapse into their bad habits without you." Baby instinctively looked down at J.P.'s feet. Before she'd started walking his dogs, Nemo had had an attitude problem and had taken to pooping on J.P.'s shoes. Today J.P. wore soft leather moccasins that looked like they'd been stolen from a Native American exhibit at the Museum of Natural History, but Baby knew they'd been picked out by a personal shopper at Barneys—all of J.P.'s clothes were.

Rule of thumb: The uglier a boy's shoes, the more expensive they are.

Baby grabbed the sno-cone and licked it, enjoying the rush of cold and sugar on her tongue. She felt giddy and relieved. She

wasn't sure what was making her happier: that she was staying at Constance, or that J.P. cared enough about her fate to leave school early and surprise her.

Just then, the bell rang, and hordes of uniform-wearing, shiny-haired girls came streaming out the royal blue doors. They moved toward the sidewalk or stood in clusters on the school's steps, gossiping about their days. A few stared at Baby and J.P., whispering behind their Bliss-manicured hands.

Baby spotted Jack Laurent, J.P.'s bitchtastic ballerina ex-girlfriend, exiting the double doors. She stopped walking when her green eyes landed on Baby, her back ramrod straight. With her lightly freckled nose held high and her glossy, pin-straight auburn hair, she looked like she belonged on the catwalk rather than the steps of Constance Billard.

Baby shrugged and turned her back to Jack, facing J.P. instead. Who even cared about Jack Laurent? All that mattered was that she'd spent the past week hanging out with an adorable boy who got more adorable every day. And she intended to spend the next year doing the same thing.

Impulsively Baby leaned into J.P. and planted her lips on his. His eyes widened in surprise, but he eagerly kissed her back. Baby wrapped her thin arms around him. His lips tasted like eucalyptus. She felt a shiver go up and down her spine and settle into her stomach as she kissed him again. His arms felt strong around her, and his mouth tasted so clean and uncomplicated.

"Thanks for the sno-cone," Baby whispered as she finally drew back, still in J.P.'s arms. She felt another shiver run down her spine. Wow. Why hadn't she done that sooner?

"Let's get out of here," J.P. whispered huskily, pulling her

down the school's steps. Baby took his hand, her hip bumping against his as they walked west toward the goldfish-colored sun and the lush greenery of Central Park.

Maybe it's time to trade in the tie-dye for an I LOVE NEW YORK tee?

Copyright © 2008 by Alloy Entertainment

All rights reserved. Except as permitted under the U.S. Copyright Act of 1976, no part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, or stored in a database or retrieval system, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Poppy  
Hachette Book Group USA  
237 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10017  
Visit our Web site at [www.pickapoppy.com](http://www.pickapoppy.com)

First Edition: October 2008

The characters, events, and locations in this book are fictitious. Any similarity to real persons, living or dead, is coincidental and not intended by the author.



**alloyentertainment**

Produced by Alloy Entertainment  
151 West 26th Street, New York, NY 10001

Cover design by Andrea C. Uva  
Cover photo by Roger Moenks

ISBN 978-0-316-02065-7  
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1  
CWO

Printed in the United States of America