



**A WAVERLY OWL DOES NOT DISCUSS  
HALF-NAKEDNESS WITH STRANGERS.**

**S**omebody's plaid Jack Spade duffel slammed into Jenny Humphrey's shin and jerked her out of a dream. The 10 A.M. Amtrak Empire Service to Rhinecliff, New York, had stopped in Poughkeepsie, and a tall, twentyish, stubbly chinned boy in dark brown square Paul Smith glasses and a Decemberists T-shirt was standing over her.

'Anybody sitting here?' he asked.

'Nope,' she responded groggily, scooting over. He threw his bag under the seat and settled in next to Jenny.

The train groaned along at about a mile an hour. Jenny sniffed at the stale, slightly sweaty train car air and jiggled her foot, thinking about how she was going to be super-late

for check-in at Waverly Academy. She would've been early if her dad, Rufus, had driven her up here in his blue beater Volvo wagon – he'd practically begged Jenny to let him – but Jenny hadn't wanted her unshaven, peacenik father to drop her off at her brand-new, haute boarding school. Knowing him, he'd have tried to start up an impromptu poetry slam with her new classmates and shown off old pictures of Jenny when she was a lame seventh grader and wore nothing but fluorescent green and orange Old Navy fleeces. Um, no thanks.

'Going to Waverly?' the boy asked. He raised his eyebrows at the *Waverly Academy Guide to Ethics* that sat unopened in Jenny's lap.

Jenny brushed a brown tendril out of her eyes. 'Yeah,' she answered. 'I'm starting there this year.' She couldn't hide the enthusiasm in her voice – she was so excited to start her brand-new boarding school that she felt all jiggly inside, like she had to pee.

'Freshman?'

'Nope. Sophomore. I used to go to Constance Billard. It's in the city.' Jenny was a little pleased that she had a relatively chic past to refer to, or that it at least sounded that way.

'So you wanted a change of pace, or what?' He fiddled with the strap of his worn leather watchband.

Jenny shrugged. This boy looked like he was her brother Dan's age. Dan had just taken off for Evergreen College on the West Coast two days ago, taking nothing with him except for two duffel bags, his Mac G4 laptop, and two

cartons of cigarettes. Jenny, on the other hand, had already shipped four oversize boxes and a couple of giant duffels to Waverly, and had lugged a giant suitcase and an overstuffed bag with her. In her hyperexcited preparation for boarding school, she had practically bought out the hair, cosmetics, and feminine products aisles at CVS – who knew what she'd need at boarding school! She'd also gone on a buying spree at Club Monaco, J.Crew, and Barneys with the credit card her dad had lent her for back-to-school shopping. 'Kinda,' she finally answered.

The truth was, she'd been asked to leave Constance – apparently because she was considered a 'bad influence' on the other girls. Jenny hadn't thought she was being a bad influence at all – she was just trying to have fun, like every other girl at school. But somehow, all of her moments of extreme fun had also been highly publicized and embarrassing: a picture of her boobs in a sports bra had shown up in a magazine (she'd thought it was a sportswear model shoot), a Webcast of her practically naked butt had been spread around the school, and she'd made some bad decisions about which boys she should make out with at various parties – and of course everybody had found out.

The final straw had come after Jenny had spent a night at the Plaza Hotel with her brother's old band, the Raves. A photograph of her leaving the Plaza in nothing but a fluffy white bathrobe had appeared online on Page Six the next day. Rumors had flown that Jenny was sleeping with *all* the Raves, *including* her brother. Ew! Concerned parents quickly called up the Constance headmistress, aflutter about

Jenny's promiscuity. After all, Constance had a reputation for excellence to uphold!

Although Jenny hadn't even been with *one* Rave, let alone all of them, she hadn't exactly wanted to *deny* the rumor – she kind of loved that everyone was talking about her. So as she'd sat with the Constance Billard headmistress, Ms McLean, in her patriotic red, white and blue office back in the city, Jenny had realized something huge: it wasn't the end of the world to get kicked out of Constance. This was her chance to start over, to reinvent herself as the blunder-free sophisticate she'd always wanted to be. And where was the classiest place to start over? Boarding school, of course.

Much to her dad's chagrin – she was pretty sure Rufus wanted her to live with him in their Upper West Side apartment forever – Jenny had rabidly researched a whole bunch of schools and toured a few. The first school had turned out to have a strict disciplinary code and had been too boring for words. Within minutes of getting to the second school, on the other hand, she'd been offered Ecstasy and had taken her top off. But just like the third bed for Goldilocks, the third school that Jenny had tested, Waverly, was just right.

Well, to tell the truth, she hadn't actually visited Waverly – she'd run out of time, applied way past the deadline, and taken some creative liberties with her application – but she'd looked at thousands of pictures online and memorized all the building names and campus maps. She was certain it would be perfect.

'I used to go to Waverly's rival,' the boy said, pulling a book out of his bag. 'St Lucius. Our school hated your school.'

'Oh,' Jenny replied quietly, sinking into her seat.

'I'm kidding.' He smiled and turned back to his book. Jenny noticed it was Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*, one of her dad's favorites. According to Rufus, it had been banned because it was too right-on in its vicious social commentary about love and sex in New York City. Hello, sex scenes. Jenny felt her cheeks growing pink.

Then she realized: she was acting like her old, unsophisticated self. And one thing was for sure: Old Jenny obviously wasn't working for her.

Jenny studied the boy carefully. She didn't know him and would probably never see him again, so why did she care what he thought of her? At Waverly, Jenny was going to be stunning, amazing New Jenny, the girl who belonged at the center of everything.

So why not become New Jenny starting *right now*?

Mustering up her courage, she uncrossed her arms to reveal her rather large double-D chest, which seemed even bigger, since she was barely five feet tall, and sat up straight. 'So, um, any good parts in that book?'

The boy looked puzzled, his eyes darting back and forth from Jenny's innocent face to her chest to the worn paperback's cover. Finally, he wrinkled his nose and answered, 'Maybe.'

'Will you read some to me?'

The boy licked his lips. 'Okay. But only if you read me

a line from that book you've got there first.' He tapped the maroon cover of her beloved *Waverly Academy Guide to Ethics*.

'Sure.' Jenny opened the rule book. She'd received it a few weeks ago and had devoured it cover to cover. She loved its plush leather binding, its creamy paper stock, and the nursery-rhymey, slightly condescending, slightly British style in which it was written. It sounded so wonderfully proper and upscale, and Jenny was sure that by the time she'd even spent a few weeks at Waverly, she'd be as polished, graceful, and perfect as Amanda Hearst, the young socialite, or the late Carolyn Bessette Kennedy.

She cleared her throat. 'Here's a good one. "Waverly Owls may not dance in a sexually suggestive manner in public.'" She laughed. Did that mean they could dance in a sexually suggestive manner in *private*?

'Do they really refer to you as Waverly Owls?' The boy leaned over to look at the page. He smelled like Ivory soap.

'Yes!' As she said it, Jenny grinned. She, Jenny Humphrey, was going to be a Waverly Owl!

She turned the page. "Waverly Owls are not permitted sexual intimacy. A Waverly Owl must not engage in activities that might be dangerous, such as jumping off the Richards Bridge. A Waverly Owl does not wear spaghetti straps or miniskirts above midhigh."

The boy snickered. 'When they're talking about a girl, shouldn't it be an Owlette?'

Jenny slammed the book shut. 'Okay. Now it's your turn.'

'Well, I just started, so I'll read from the beginning.'

The boy smirked and opened to the first page. “From the very beginning, I have trained myself not to want anything too badly.”

*Funny*, Jenny thought. She had the opposite problem – she wanted everything *way* too badly.

“I was corrupt,” he continued. “Corrupt from the start.”

‘I’m corrupt!’ Jenny blurted out. ‘But not from the start.’ Old Jenny couldn’t believe what New Jenny was saying.

‘Yeah?’ He closed the book. ‘I’m Sam, by the way.’

‘Jenny.’ She looked down to see if Sam wanted her to shake his hand, but it was still wedged under his leg. They both smiled awkwardly.

‘So, does your corruptness have anything to do with why you’re leaving New York for boarding school?’ Sam asked.

‘Maybe.’ Jenny shrugged, trying to be coy and mysterious at the same time.

‘Spill.’

She let out a sigh. She could admit the truth, but *Everybody thought I was sleeping with all the guys in this band, and I didn’t deny it* sounded kind of slutty. Definitely not mysterious or chic. So instead she decided to take some creative liberties. ‘Well, I was in a sort of risqué fashion show.’

Sam’s eyes glittered with interest. ‘What do you mean?’

She thought for a moment. ‘Well, for one look, I just had this bra-and-underwear set on. And heels. I guess it was a little too much for some people.’

This wasn't entirely a lie. Jenny *had* modeled last year – for a Les Best spread in *W* magazine. Clothed. But clothes didn't seem too interesting at the moment.

'Really?' Sam cleared his throat and readjusted his glasses. 'Have you heard of Tinsley Carmichael? You should know her.'

'Who?'

'Tinsley Carmichael. She goes to Waverly. I go to Bard now, but I met her a couple times at parties last year . . . She came to school in her own seaplane. But someone told me she decided to leave Waverly because Wes Anderson offered her the lead in his next movie.'

Jenny shrugged, feeling strangely competitive with – and a wee bit excited about – this Tinsley girl. She sounded like the ideal New Jenny.

The exhausted-looking train conductor stomped down the aisle and grabbed the ticket off the top of her seat. 'Rhinecliff, next.'

'Oh. This is me.' Jenny took a deep breath. It was really happening! She looked out the window, expecting to see something truly magical, but saw only lush green trees, a wide field, and telephone poles. Still, trees! A field! The only field in Manhattan was Sheep Meadow in Central Park, and it was always filled with drug dealers and really skinny half-naked girls sunbathing.

She stood and reached for her red and white polka-dotted soft-shell LeSportsac bag and the old-school brown Samsonite suitcase she'd borrowed from her dad. It had a big HUGS NOT BOMBS sticker next to the handles. Not very New Jenny.

As she struggled to bring the case to the ground, Sam stood to help her, pulling it effortlessly off the rack.

‘Thanks,’ she said, blushing.

‘No problem.’ He pushed the hair out of his eyes. ‘So, do I get to see pictures of you at . . . at the fashion show?’

‘If you search online,’ Jenny lied. She stared out the window and saw, across a field, an old rooster weathervane on the top of a large, faded farmhouse. ‘The designer’s name is, um, Rooster.’

‘Never heard of him.’

‘He’s kind of obscure,’ Jenny answered quickly, noting that the polished, pink Polo-wearing boy sitting behind them was definitely listening to their conversation. Jenny tried to see what he was typing on his BlackBerry, but he covered the screen when he noticed her watching him.

‘You . . . you should come to Bard sometime,’ Sam continued. ‘We have some killer parties. Great DJs and stuff.’

‘Okay,’ Jenny replied over her shoulder, raising her eyebrows just a touch. ‘Although, you know, a Waverly Owl isn’t allowed to dance in a sexually suggestive manner.’

‘I won’t tell on you,’ he answered, not taking his eyes off her chest.

‘Bye, Sam,’ Jenny waved, using her most flirty, musical voice. She stepped off the train onto the platform and sucked in a deep breath of fresh country air. *Whoa.*

New Jenny would take a little getting used to!

**OwlNet**

Instant Message Inbox

**RyanReynolds:** Hey, Benster. Welcome back, girl!

**BennyCunningham:** Hey, sweetie! How's life?

**RyanReynolds:** I had the worst ride up here in our plane. My dad has this maniac pilot and they were yakking at each other the whole time and going faster and faster . . .

**BennyCunningham:** Next time you should fly with me. I'll let you snuggle with me under my pashmina.

**RyanReynolds:** God, you're a tease. Hey, did u c Callie's pic in Atlanta Magazine?

**BennyCunningham:** No, but I heard it nearly ruined her mom. She had to do damage control on Good Morning Atlanta!

**RyanReynolds:** Yeah, C looks bombed in the pic.

**BennyCunningham:** Is she still with EZ? I'm going to jump him if she's not.

**RyanReynolds:** Dunno. Someone told me they saw him dancing with some gorgeous girl with really blue eyes and black dreads in Lexington.

**BennyCunningham:** Sorta sounds like Tinsley. Except for the dreads.

**RyanReynolds:** I know. Too bad she won't be at the party tonight.

**BennyCunningham:** Seriously.