

WHERE THE GRASS IS GREEN

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The Devil Wears Prada

Everyone Worth Knowing

Chasing Harry Winston

Last Night at Chateau Marmont

Revenge Wears Prada: The Devil Returns

The Singles Game

The Wives (also published as

When Life Gives You Lululemons)

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*To Dana Zuskin, my sister. My shrink. My other life partner. The one
who will never fail to laugh at the inappropriate, the unfortunate,
and the unsuitable with me. I love you.*

*In memory of Susan Kamil. Our time together was far too short,
but I'll be forever grateful for your guidance, support, and belief
in this book – and me.*

Chapter 1

Spinning for Boys

‘I think the reservation is under Marcus,’ Skye told the statuesque, Nordic-looking blonde who grudgingly acknowledged her at the door of Le Bilboquet. Presumably the hostess didn’t see a lot of people come in wearing maxi skirts and Birkenstocks at this A-list restaurant.

‘Mmm,’ the girl said, gazing at the screen in front of her, the kind that couldn’t be read unless someone was standing at exactly the right angle. ‘Is that so?’

Skye flushed. An hour earlier she’d been happily sharing coffee with her old teacher friends in Harlem, but here she was nothing but an aging hippie. ‘It would be under Peyton Marcus, from ANN?’ She hated the way she sounded as she said it.

The hostess’s head shot up. ‘Oh, I’m sorry, did you say *Peyton* Marcus?’

Skye forced a smile. ‘She’s my sister.’

‘Of course!’ The girl beamed. ‘We normally don’t seat anyone until the full party has arrived. And naturally, we don’t hold reservations for more than seven minutes, but please, follow me.’

She led Skye past a cluster of tightly packed tables to a two-top positioned perfectly between the dining room and the sidewalk. With unobstructed people-watching on Madison Avenue, it was the type of table Skye would never, ever have been shown to on her own.

The hostess placed two menus on the table. ‘How funny,’ she said, smiling at Skye. ‘There isn’t even a hint of a family resemblance.’

‘Yes, I hear that a lot,’ Skye replied.

‘I mean, Ms. Marcus is just so fair! Her hair, her skin, her eyes . . .’

‘Mmm, isn’t that true.’

‘Well, anyway! I’ll send her over as soon as she arrives,’ the young woman said before finally leaving.

Skye maneuvered herself into the seat with the inferior view and dropped her bag on the ground next to her. Instantly a uniformed waiter produced a tiny wooden stool and proudly placed the worn suede bag on it. Then, in either a bad fake French accent or a completely charming authentic one – Skye could never tell – he dramatically revealed a champagne flute and filled it with a bubbling, golden liquid. ‘With our compliments,’ he crooned, before sashaying away.

Skye tasted the champagne: dry and unbelievably delicious. The fizz went to the back of her nose, the warmth hit her stomach, and she sat back to enjoy the all-too-rare feeling. She wondered why she didn’t drink more? Every now and then she’d pour herself a glass of wine on a random Tuesday night and feel rebellious and crazy, but then she’d inevitably

fall asleep or get a migraine or both, and her freewheeling drinking would end for another couple weeks.

Skye felt a tap on her back and jumped. At the adjacent table, a blond woman with bass lips smiled at her. 'Pardon me,' the woman said. 'But is your bag Saint Laurent?'

It took Skye a moment to understand. 'Oh, this?' Skye pulled her imitation suede bag from its throne. 'No, it's actually from Urban Outfitters.'

The woman raised her eyebrows and forced a chuckle. 'Oh! My. Well, *irregardless*, it's lovely.' She turned back to her dining companion, a man half her age who had used the fifteen-second interaction to check his phone.

It's 'regardless', Skye thought, feeling the blush cover her neck. *And you should get a full refund for those lips.*

Finally, her sister hurried in. 'Hello, darling!' she said, smiling and leaning across the table to kiss Skye's cheek. Twice.

'Seriously?' Skye asked.

'What? We're French, at least for the afternoon!' Peyton pulled out her AirPods. 'How long has it been since you've heard "Don't Know What You Got"? Twenty years?'

'Is that Cinderella?' Skye laughed. 'Way more than twenty. I made out with Harry Feldman in the temple coat closet at Samantha Weinstein's bat mitzvah to that song.'

'Life was so much easier in the time of power ballads.'

Skye laughed. 'There was no emotion Whitesnake couldn't quantify.'

'Exactly.' Peyton sipped her champagne. 'Now everything's gone to shit. My life is a hot mess.'

Her sister looked more put together on a casual Saturday morning than Skye did ever. Peyton's coral-colored jacket, likely Chanel, topped a white silk T-shirt, skinny crop jeans, and peep-toe Louboutins in a gorgeous nude patent. Her blond

hair looked freshly cut, colored, and blown straight so that the slightly turned-out ends grazed her chin and disguised her oversized ears, the one fault that Peyton hadn't yet corrected. She pulled off her Tom Ford sunglasses and tossed them into her bag, which was, of course, the authentic white leather Saint Laurent version of Skye's cheap imitation.

'Yes, I can see that. Remind me how, exactly?'

'The usual,' Peyton said breezily. 'The higher our ratings go, the more everyone freaks out trying to protect them. Jim, my very favorite sexual-harassing co-host, is being even more of a dick than usual. I've been working on keeping a list of really excellent on-air experts – I don't always love the ones the producers book – and that's been challenging to navigate. And there's so much to do to get Max ready for school. I mean, who would have thought my own daughter can't so much as book herself a hair appointment?'

'There's a difference between "can't" and "doesn't care".'

The waiter swept in to refill Skye's champagne glass and swoon over Peyton, who asked for a bottle of pinot grigio.

'A bottle? It's eleven-thirty,' Skye said.

'Thanks for the time check, Mom.' Peyton turned to the waiter. 'I'll have the Niçoise, please. Dressing on the side.'

'Of course, Ms. Marcus.'

He turned to Skye.

'I'll have the same, please. And also an order of fries.'

The waiter nodded and disappeared. Peyton wrinkled her nose. 'Fries?'

'You don't have to eat them.'

Another waiter materialized, this one a young woman who was trying very hard not to stare at Peyton while she struggled to open the bottle of wine. Her fingers slipped. 'Ohmigod, I'm sorry. I'm new, and . . .'

Peyton made a motion for the girl to give her the bottle and opener. 'Here, let me.' She expertly inserted the corkscrew, twisted it, and pulled it straight out with a refreshing pop. 'I used to wait tables, when I was first starting out.' She handed the bottle back.

'Thank you,' the girl said. 'That's so nice of you.'

While she was pouring, a heaping plate of fries landed on their table. Crispy and hot, they were topped with sea salt, and Skye immediately popped two into her mouth. 'Apparently, only brunettes with shit-brown eyes would ever order fries around here,' she said through bites. 'The hostess was very taken with our lack of physical resemblance.'

'You may have gotten the shit-brown eyes, but I'd trade my baby blues in a heartbeat for the genetic aberration that allows you to eat like you're eighteen every day of your life. Do you even realize how rare that is after forty? I will gain a pound today by simply sharing a table with those fries,' Peyton said, watching Skye chew.

Skye laughed. 'I turned forty less than a year ago. You only have nine months to go. May as well enjoy them while you can.'

'Dreading it. My metabolism is shot, just like my vagina,' Peyton said, taking a long drink of the wine. 'Have I mentioned that?'

'Only a thousand times.'

'One lousy, completely uncomplicated childbirth all those years ago and still, it's never recovered.'

Skye held up her hand. 'Do not. The last time you likened it to the hanging slabs of deli meat at Gold's, I couldn't eat for two days.'

'I won't, I won't,' Peyton said, waving her hand. 'I found a new physical therapist, who gave me a set of weights. Did

I tell you this? You're supposed to start with the smallest one and work your way through the whole set. Apparently, by the time you can hold in the heaviest one, you're not peeing when you sneeze anymore.'

Skye smiled. 'And?'

'And I couldn't keep in the starter weight!' Peyton leaned forward. 'Literally, the lightest one. For, like, *beginners*. You're supposed to wear it ten minutes a day and walk around, do your normal stuff, but it kept slipping out! My therapist said she'd never heard of anyone who couldn't keep in the lightest one.'

'That's reassuring. She sounds really great.'

'Right? Like, "Wow! You have the widest, most gaping vagina of anyone I've ever worked with, and I'm a pelvic floor specialist, so that's really saying something."'

Skye wiped tears from her eyes. She often thought how unfortunate it was that the viewing public never got to see this wickedly funny, outrageous side of her sister.

'It doesn't make any sense,' Peyton continued. 'One average-sized baby a hundred years ago. Thank god I didn't breastfeed.' She cupped her breasts. 'These are still passable.'

'You'd be hung today if anyone else heard you say that.'

'Please. Mothers today have it so easy. You get your hair blown out, your nails done, and you take a comfy Uber XL to the hospital at a mutually convenient time. It's all so civilized.'

'It's supposed to be one of the most meaningful and beautiful experiences in a woman's life.'

Peyton took another long drink of her wine. 'Meaningful? Maybe. But the kind of women who think it's *beautiful* are the ones having babies in bathtubs in their living rooms. Hard pass.'

Skye laughed. 'Esther said her bathtub birth was really special.'

Peyton rolled her eyes. 'You know I love Esther, but please stop reminding me about her living room deliveries? It makes me judge her.' She speared her salad. 'How is she, by the way?'

'She's good, I think. Still not dating anyone, but trying.' Skye pulled an iPad from her overstuffed bag, trying not to spill anything. 'She's been advising me on the legal issues for the girls' residence, which has been extremely helpful. Want to see my mood board?'

'Yes, just don't call it that,' Peyton said. She took the tablet and started to swipe and zoom through the different sections for carpeting, wall decor, furniture, and bedding she was considering for the five-bedroom home that was being converted into a residence for underprivileged girls, who would then attend Paradise's award-winning public high school.

'Wow, this looks *amazing*.'

'It's really coming along.'

'I'd say. What's your move-in date?'

'Labor Day weekend at the latest, if I want the girls to have an uninterrupted school year. If the funding comes in any day from Isaac's friend, we'll be fine.'

'Henry can be a prick, but he'll come through with the money. It's the only thing he's good at.'

'He's been nothing but wonderful so far,' Skye said, forking the last of her salad into her mouth.

'He may only be funding this to meet some corporate responsibility requirement,' Peyton said.

'That's fine with me. He can do it for whatever reason he wants, just so long as he does it.'

Peyton grabbed the bottle of pinot grigio by its neck and hauled it out of the silver ice bucket. 'I'm proud of you for getting this girls' residence idea out of your head and off the ground. And you're getting back to work after so many years off.'

Skye stared at her.

‘What?’ Peyton asked. ‘I’m not *judging* you for your extremely extended maternity leave. I’ve just heard you drone endlessly how you’re done with Girl Scouts and looking forward to something a little more . . . stimulating.’

‘How about you?’ Skye said. ‘Max leaving for school? Your one and only baby girl, grown and flown?’

Peyton scrunched her nose. ‘More like irritable and entitled.’

‘You’re too tough on her.’

‘On the child who’s devastated to be heading to Princeton?’

Skye sighed. ‘Film school would have ruined her life? That’s all I am saying.’

‘Can we not rehash this? My god, it’s *Princeton*. Anyway, she’s all yours this summer.’

‘I can’t wait,’ Skye said. ‘Maybe you and Isaac could come up and stay, too?’

‘Max definitely wouldn’t want us there. And I’ll be in the studio even more than usual this summer, making sure we can keep ratings firmed up going into fall.’ She pointed to Skye’s phone. ‘You just got a text,’ she said, at the same time that her own phone vibrated to indicate a new email.

‘How does Mom always know when we’re together?’ Skye muttered, glancing at the notification. ‘If she knew how to download the app – any app – I’d think she was tracking us.’

Peyton swiped open her email and read, ‘Subject line: talcum powder.’

‘Oh, please don’t,’ Skye said, placing two fingers and a thumb on the side of her forehead.

“‘Dear girls,’” Peyton read in her best Marcia voice. “‘There is some evidence, parentheses, not conclusive, end parentheses, that talcum powder increases the chance of quote ovarian cancer, end quote. I used it with both of you often.

You may want to mention it at your next doctor's appointments. Love, Mom.'"'

'What a useful email to get on a random afternoon in June! Thanks, Mom,' Skye said.

Peyton snorted. 'Why do you think she put "ovarian cancer" in quotes? Like, it's not a real thing?'

'It still doesn't come close to her email about Aunt Hattie,' Skye said.

"Dear girls,'" Peyton started, reciting it from memory. "I'm sorry to have to tell you that Aunt Hattie died last night. I'll email you as soon as I have the shiva information. In other news, I finally decided on colors for my new Camry. Silver cloud for the exterior, charcoal gray leather on the inside. Love, Mom.'"'

Both women were in tears. Despite the fact that they'd recited this particular email to each other no fewer than a hundred times, it never got less funny.

'We should laugh while we can,' Peyton said while dabbing her lips with a sheer gloss from a brand Skye had never heard of. 'Because it's only a matter of time until we do this to our own daughters.'

'Speak for yourself. I think it's well established that I'm the cool mom,' Skye said.

'I would have made a good boy mom, I think.' Peyton nodded thoughtfully.

'I'm pretty sure in Paradise they're spinning for boys. There is no way that many families are having all those boys naturally.'

'Your town is so fucked up.' Peyton tucked her blond hair behind an ear. 'Why would anyone want *boys* that badly?'

'Sports, I think. The more boys you have, the more seasons you can cover and the more fields you can sit on and car-pools you can drive and practices you can attend and teams

you can coach. My working theory is that it's a way for unhappily married couples to avoid having to spend a second of time together on the weekends.'

Peyton laughed. 'I did warn you when you moved to the suburbs.' She held her hands up. 'I know, I know – outstanding schools, Gabe's job. But what did you expect? It's a tough crowd.' She pushed back her chair. 'Let's get out of here?'

They paid the check and wove through the restaurant, past the now friendly hostess, and out onto the sidewalk. A mother and daughter pair did a simultaneous double take when they spotted Peyton, who offered an enthusiastic wave and a bright smile.

'I don't know how you do it,' Skye said, watching the exchange. 'What?'

'Constantly cater to your adoring public. Don't you ever want to go somewhere and not be recognized? Especially on a weekend.' Skye knew the answer, but even after all these years, it was hard to believe.

'Nope.'

Skye laughed. 'You're a lunatic. I love you.' She hoisted her scruffy bag onto her shoulder and held out her arms.

'Love you, too,' Peyton said, walking into Skye's outstretched arms. 'Send me ideas for Mom's present. And we have to get on a birthday plan for her soon.'

'Copy that,' Skye said. 'By "we", I'm assuming you mean me?'

'Yes.' Her sister made a mock-guilty face. 'You're so much better at this stuff.'

They hugged goodbye, blocking the flow of pedestrian traffic on Madison Avenue. Skye pulled back quickly, unwilling to inconvenience strangers. Peyton laughed at her.

'Love you,' Peyton said, offering a little flat-palmed wave like Queen Elizabeth at the Trooping of the Guard.

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‘Love you, too.’ Skye stepped out of everyone’s way and watched her sister stride down the street like it was a runway in Paris. Peyton could be self-absorbed and showy, sometimes downright impossible, but Skye couldn’t deny that she loved that crazy bitch.