

## THEN

**T**ogether we ruled. Our realm unfurled, grassy campus and its tangle of parties. We marked the territory as our own, matchstick legs capped in sharp heels striking the ground, mouths witchy with lipstick and upturned with laughter. There were boys whose names I forgot, boys I might have passed by and not known were ever inside me. When I did pick out a king, the crown was too heavy for his head.

Then a fist closed around our world and knuckled out the light. We stood in front of the dorm with everyone else, taking in the same scene, a carnage that had started within us. Our ability to create waned in our instinct to ruin.

Her voice in my ear, never scared enough. *We have to stick to the same story.*

I wanted to run, but she wasn't done moving her pawns.

Our reign was short and bloody.

What came after it was worse.





**NOW**

To: "Ambrosia Wellington" *a.wellington@wesleyan.edu*  
From: "Wesleyan Alumni Committee" *reunion.classof2007@gmail.com*  
Subject: Class of 2007 Reunion

Dear Ambrosia Wellington,

Mark Your Calendar!

The Wesleyan University Ten-Year Reunion for the Class of 2007 will take place May 25–28, 2017. Join us for a weekend of catching up with former classmates and attending exciting events, including the All-Campus Party and formal class dinners.

Online registration is available through May 1.

If you're planning to attend, a full list of area hotels can be found on Wesleyan's local [accommodations page](#). A limited amount of on-campus housing in our dorms is available. Most rooms are doubles—perfect for reaching out to your old roommate to relive some memories!

Sincerely,  
Your Alumni Committee

I delete it instantly, just like I do the sale emails from Sephora and Michael Kors and the reminders from Fertility Friend that ovulation

is right around the corner. Then I empty my recycling bin, because I know better than to think anything is ever really gone.

Two weeks later, a second email arrives. *We haven't received your RSVP! We really hope you're joining us.* It's the written equivalent of a wagging finger. I delete that one, too, but not before scrolling down far enough to see her name, bolded, right under the list of Alumni Committee members. Flora Banning.

I forget about the two emails, because out of sight really is out of mind. It's easy when each day is a variation of the same—taking the N from Astoria to Midtown; stopping at Key Food for groceries, reusable cloth bags cutting into my forearms. Happy hour shouldered in with hipsters at the Ditty, a second glass of wine, despite Adrian's half-teasing *Maybe you shouldn't*. But then I come home from work on Friday, shoulders sagging from the weight of the week, and there's an envelope on the counter addressed to me.

"Hey, babe," Adrian shouts from his position on the couch, tablet in hand, where he's undoubtedly working on his fantasy football league instead of the perpetually unfinished novel he likes to talk about. "How was your day?"

"You left the door open again. Can you please start locking it like I asked?" One of the myriad things I nag Adrian about on a regular basis. *Lock the door. Close the cereal bag. Pick up your dirty laundry.* Sometimes I feel more like a parent than his wife.

"Relax. It's a safe building. Hey, something came for you. I think we got invited to a wedding. Except somebody doesn't know you got married and changed your name." My new last name, a point of male pride that Adrian pretended wasn't important to him. *I don't care, but do you really want the kids to have two last names? And yours is so long,* he said during wedding planning, the first puncture in my newly engaged bliss. *The kids*, a brightening certainty on his horizon, my concessions for them expected and inevitable.

The envelope on the counter is addressed to Ambrosia Wellington, in neat calligraphy. Not Ambrosia Turner, the woman I became three years ago when I walked down a tree-shaded aisle at the Mountain Lakes House toward Adrian, his eyes already tear filled. I let him think

Turner was for us, for *the kids*. He has no idea why I was so eager to get rid of Wellington.

Adrian turns around to watch me open it, expectant. He loves weddings, or rather, he loves the receptions, where he can get drunk and pose for pictures with people he's just met, instant best friends, and invite them to dinners and barbecues we all know will never happen.

"Well, who is it?" he says. "Let me guess. Bethany from work. Is she still dating that really tall guy? Mark. The lacrosse player."

Adrian and his friends, five and six years younger than me, still post engagement photos on Facebook and Instagram: girls with long hair and Chanel espadrilles, gel manicures to show off pear-shaped rocks, posing next to boys in plaid shirts. The PR girls who work under me at Brighton Dame are the same.

*So basic*, we used to call them, back when there was no way we would turn into them.

"Bethany's twenty-two," I murmur when I pull the card out. I ignore Adrian's response, because I'm fixated on what's inside. It's not a wedding invitation. Nobody is requesting my presence at Gramercy Park or telling me the dress code is black tie or mandating an *adults-only reception*.

It's more calligraphy, red and black against cream card stock. Wesleyan colors. The letters tilt slightly to the right, as if whoever wrote them was in a rush to get them out.

*You need to come. We need to talk about what we did that night.*

There's no signature, but there doesn't need to be. It can only be from one person. My face is hot and I can tell my neck is marbling red and white, the same way it always does when my anxiety flares up. I grip the countertop. She knows I deleted the emails. I shouldn't be surprised; she had a way of knowing everything.