

“Don’t Even Waste the Stationery”

In the autumn of my junior year, my parents took me to visit my brother, Ken, a sophomore at Dartmouth College. It was my first experience at an all-male Ivy League school, and I was excited. Dressed in a coordinated blue outfit, I felt confident amidst the picturesque autumn scenery of Hanover. However, my high school boyfriend, concerned about my safety, surprised me by arriving from Boston, which annoyed me as I sought independence. I convinced him to leave, relishing the newfound freedom with another boy from Dartmouth joining me for a movie.

As I admired the library’s architecture, I caught the attention of freshman Jeffrey Garten, who was captivated by my presence. He consulted his roommate Roger, who revealed I was out with Roger later that night, complicating Jeffrey’s first impression. Keen to know more about me, Jeffrey sought permission to write to me, starting an exciting correspondence after some initial hesitation from Roger.

Letters exchanged were full of charm and wit, with Jeffrey asserting his interest and challenging me to respond. Intrigued by his confidence and good looks, I felt a spark and felt compelled to write back. He crafted stories from his life at Dartmouth, contrasting with my more structured upbringing. Although I struggled with letter writing, Jeffrey’s letters were engaging, keeping our budding relationship alive.

Our first meeting occurred in March during Jeffrey's job interview trip to New York. He seamlessly introduced himself to my family before we ventured out together. Misguided by my underage status, I suggested we visit a bar, only to discover I lacked proper identification. An awkward situation unfolded with the bouncer, highlighting my naivety. Jeffrey, however, aptly suggested heading to a coffeehouse instead, allowing us to bond over conversations and music.

Our differing family backgrounds intrigued each of us: mine epitomizing stability, while Jeffrey’s was filled with military unpredictability, shaping him into an independent figure. Reflecting back, Jeffrey noted that my fearlessness attracted him, feeling an instinctive desire to protect and care for me. Thus began a journey full of excitement and life lessons, marked by the capricious nature of fate that led me to Jeffrey Garten.