

Meet the Parents

In "Meet the Parents," the narrative centers on the protagonist's evolving relationship with Jeffrey, who invites her to Dartmouth for the Green Key weekend after their first date. Although hesitant about her parents' acceptance, she contemplates a visit in the future. As she applies to colleges, she focuses on choosing a school where she can enjoy her independence—prioritizing a party school over a more academically inclined option, reflecting her desire to break away from her childhood anxieties and expectations.

Meanwhile, she takes a summer job with a local architect, reinforcing her ambition to pursue architecture, much to Jeffrey's admiration. Their interactions bring out the best aspects of her family life, with her parents showcasing warmth and happiness during Jeffrey's visits, contrasting her reality of parental coldness and conflict.

As she secures her acceptance to Syracuse University, discussion about a homecoming visit to Dartmouth stirs her father's anxiety. He loves that Jeffrey is a promising young man but fears for his daughter's safety in unfamiliar territory. After much deliberation, her father reluctantly allows her three trips to Dartmouth that year, prompting a flurry of excitement for her first trip, which buzzes with vibrant college life and her blossoming connection with Jeffrey.

The evolving relationship showcases their plans to spend weekends together and stay close through letters and phone calls while navigating the complexities of the late 1960s societal changes and her personal inclinations towards independence. With Jeffrey's father injured in Vietnam, the dynamics shift further, as the protagonist's visit to meet his family becomes a crucial moment for both of them, emphasizing feelings of support during trying times.

Summer presents challenges for the couple, including her mother's insistence that she needs space to explore, urging her to date other people. This unexpected advice sparks outrage from both, but they ultimately strategize to maintain their connection as she transitions into college life. This chapter reflects on self-discovery, familial expectations, and the tender moments shared between young love amid societal upheaval.