

Deleted Scene: *College Weekend*

On Friday after school she started packing for her visit with Darlene. Her parents were going to drive her up to New Hampshire, then they would all go out to dinner and then Bethany would stay until Sunday.

The car ride to Darlene's college seemed to take forever. Mr. Caleb put on his favorite John Tesh CD, and Bethany realized she hadn't brought her walkman. She rested her head on the cold glass window, wincing every time a bump made her head smack against it. Somehow she hoped she would go deaf by the time they got there. Her parents had insisted that Bethany dress up for dinner so she had changed into a black sheath dress her mother had given her, and added a fringed shawl, her boots, and her black studded bracelet and dog collar. Mrs. Caleb had blanched when Bethany came downstairs with her bag, but didn't say anything. Bethany's mood brightened only marginally by this small victory.

The drone of the highway gave way to quiet country roads. The trees went from scrawny pines to colorful maples and elms. Then the college campus appeared: buildings sprawled over immaculate lawns, the browns of the dormitories color-coordinating with the fall foliage. Even at 7:00 on a Friday evening, the campus traffic was light, with groups of two or three students talking on the library steps or walking toward the student union. As the Calebs' BMW eased along at the campus speed limit of 10mph, Beth remembered how it was a few months ago when they had moved Darlene in. The same clean-cut guys, wearing faded khakis and flannel shirts, the girls wearing Abercrombie & Fitch college casual. Bethany closed her eyes until the car stopped.

Darlene was waiting in the lobby for them, pretty in a flowered skirt and white sweater. She had the same blond curls that Bethany used to have until Bethany dyed hers black. She unlocked the door to the hallway to the Calebs could drop off the bags of groceries for her. Somehow Bethany had to carry the bag

with all the canned food as well as her overnight bag. The three flights of stairs up to Darlene's room were treacherous in four-inch heels.

Darlene's roommate was in the room sleeping, so they just quickly dropped the bags off and left. "Sleeping? At 7 on a Friday night?" Mrs. Caleb whispered.

Darlene shrugged. "I guess she's just resting up for all the partying she'll do tonight."

"Well, I certainly hope you aren't partying too much to get all your studying done."

"Don't worry, Mom," Darlene said, waving a hand. Behind their mother's back Darlene gave Bethany a smile. Bethany tried to smile back, but she felt like an ugly black insect in this perfect campus populated by J.Crew models.

When Mr. and Mrs. Caleb dropped their daughters off back at the dorm, there was a barrage of questions and advice.

"Do you need any money? Do you have our cell phone number? Don't stay out too late.

Call if you need anything. We'll be here on Sunday at 6 sharp."

Finally they left and Darlene took Bethany up to her room. The roommate was not there, although Bethany had to glance twice at the pile of blankets on the bed to tell. It was 9:30.

"Do you want to change?" Darlene asked, stripping off her sweater and skirt. Bethany turned and pushed the door fully shut. "No, don't change. Your outfit is so cute. Like a little gypsy or punk girl or something. I told all my friends about you." Bethany could see all of Darlene's ribs as she reached up into her closet. She pulled on another sweater, this one green with a yellow diamond pattern across the chest, and dug around in her laundry basket for a pair of jeans. Now Darlene looked just like everyone else, except that Bethany knew she was different. Darlene wasn't shallow like she imagined the others were.

"I look too dressed up," Bethany complained.

Darlene looked at her. Bethany felt hopelessly ugly. "You're fine. You look like an

individual.” She smiled and put her arm around Bethany. “Let’s go.”

The party was across campus, in the apartments. Now Bethany could hear music blasting down from the upstairs windows, and she noticed if a couple of girls walking by were drunk already. She shivered and pulled her coat tightly around her. Her knees were freezing.

Darlene didn’t even knock at the apartment marker 232. She just went in and started climbing the stairs up. The stairway was dark, hung with Pink Floyd and Jimi Hendrix posters. As Bethany neared the top of the stairs, she could see that blacklights illuminated the room. Darlene’s white sneakers took on a florescent glow. Nothing Bethany was wearing glowed. She felt invisible.

In the apartment a group of guys sat on the couch, an uncomfortable blue college-owned things. They were watching some Adam Sandler movie, laughing and repeating certain lines over and over. “Hi, guys,” Darlene said, running over and jumping into the lap of a boy with dark hair

and a blue baseball cap. Bethany hung back by the top of the stairs.

“This is my sister Bethany,” Darlene said.

“Hi,” Bethany said. Some people coming up the stairs pushed past her, and she tried to step to the side, but a beanbag chair occupied by an overweight girls with short, bluntly cut brown hair blocked the way.

Bethany stood for what felt like forever, allowing herself to get absorbed in the stupid movie playing on the TV. Finally Darlene came back and dragged her into the kitchen. She opened the fridge and pulled out a couple bottles of hard lemonade. Then she led Bethany into one of the bedrooms, where a group of mixed boys and girls (who all looked strangely alike) were playing cards. Darlene and Bethany squeezed into a space on the floor and the game started over again.

“What game in this?” Bethany asked Darlene.

“Asshole. It’s easy to play. I’ll help you.”

As the cards were dealt, Bethany tried to open her bottle. She couldn’t get it. The guy in

the chair next to her took the bottle from her. “Lemme help you,” he said, pulling a bottle opener from his baggy pockets. The cap popped off easily, with a brief hiss.

“Hey, everybody, this is my sister Bethany,” Darlene said. “Bethany, this is Travis, Alyssa, Steve, Sean, Ben, and Jamie.” Travis was the boy sitting next to her. Bethany didn’t think she could remember anyone else’s name, and she didn’t really want to remember his.

During the game, the girls started discussing the latest episode of “Dawson’s Creek.” Bethany took longer and longer swigs of her drink. As the conversation turned into a debate over which character had the best clothes, Bethany tipped her bottle back for the last inch or so of liquid and ended up spilling half of that down her chin. “Hey, take it easy,” Travis said, taking the bottle from her. “I mean, how old are you anyway? Fourteen?”

“Fifteen,” Bethany muttered. She got up and went into the kitchen area for another drink. For a moment she looked longingly at the

Adam Sandler movie playing in the living room.
Then she went back into the bedroom.

“Katie Holmes has the best clothes of all the girl characters,” said the blond girl in the gray GAP sweatshirt.

“She also has the best hair,” said the other girl, who had straight brownish hair with more blond highlights than a natural blond.

After that Bethany lost track of the conversation completely. She didn’t even play Asshole anymore. She just pounded back drink after drink. After her fourth she had to go to the bathroom. After her sixth, she threw up for the first time. For the rest of the night she could remember only laying on the beanbag chair, gazing at the Christmas lights taped to the ceiling, smiling for no reason, always a drink in her hand and getting up every now and then to pee or puke.

Later, she would remember having a lot of fun that night, but at the time she seemed to be just waiting for the night to end.

The sunlight filtered through the blinds, dimming the room like evening. Slowly Bethany woke up, tangled in a sleeping bag. She sat up to see her sister standing on a chair leaning over the awkwardly high mirror over the built-in dresser, putting on makeup. Bethany watched her blend on eye shadow.

“Hey, it’s about time you woke up,” Darlene said when she noticed her. “We missed brunch at the cafeteria. You wouldn’t have been able to eat there anyway because you don’t have a meal plan or whatever. But my friend Jamie has a car and we’re gonna go into town and get something. Okay?”

“Sure,” Bethany mumbled. She showered in the scary dorm bathroom. The shower stalls did not lock; only a barely opaque white plastic curtain separated her from whoever decided to use the bathroom. But despite the long row of four showers and four toilets, no one else came in, except Darlene.

“Just me,” Bethany heard over the spray of water.

“Hey,” Bethany greeted her.

“Jamie said Travis wanted to come out with us. Remember Travis from last night?”

“Yeah.”

“Jamie thinks he likes you.”

“Why?”

“Is it okay?”

“I guess.”

Darlene went into a toilet stall. “You were pretty wasted last night,” she said.

How can you talk when you’re taking a piss? Bethany thought, but said, “Yeah, I don’t really remember a lot. Just throwing up and playing that card game.”

“Do you remember Travis kissing you?”

“No! He did?”

“Yeah, it was pretty funny.” The sound of toilet paper being pulled off the roll. “He put his arm around you all sneaky when we all went in to watch ‘Billy Madison,’ then he kissed you, and you just like laughed and pushed him away and said, ‘Whatever.’ You sounded like some valley girl or something.”

Bethany shut off the water and started drying herself off. "I completely don't remember that." She was more than a little glad.

Bethany wore a pair of dark blue jeans with furry leopard print cuffs, a black leather tank top, and a long fuzzy black sweater. Instead of the dog collar, however, she wore a necklace made out of nails. That's keep Travis away, Bethany thought as she put it on.

"Won't you hurt yourself on that?" Darlene asked, actually looked concerned.

"The points stick out," Bethany said. "Only hurts other people." She started with her make up and hair. "James made it for me."

"Oh, James," Darlene said, and left the room. Bethany supposed she had heard far too much about James last year and over the summer. She wished she didn't think about him so much. Carefully she applied yellow mascara on chunks of her black hair, making it look like leopard spots. After all, wasn't she really dressing like this for him?

Once they were ready, Bethany and Darlene walked down to Jamie's dorm, then they

walked across campus, where the freshmen parked their cars. They picked Travis up at his dorm along the way.

“Hey, girls,” Travis drawled, then said quickly, “Hi, Bethany.”

Bethany looked away from him just as quickly. He was wearing glasses that made his bloodshot eyes look small, and his sandy-colored hair was greasy and unwashed beneath his faded American Eagle hat.

“I guess you always dress like that? It wasn’t just special for the party?” Travis said.

Bethany didn’t even favor him with a reply. She looked at the spread of the campus while she waited for Jamie to open the car doors. Unfortunately, she had to sit in the back seat with Travis.

“I had a really good time last night,” Travis said, staring at her staring out the window.

“I don’t really remember last night,” Bethany said. In front, Darlene punched through the pre-programmed radio stations and then put a Bare Naked Ladies CD into Jamie’s Lincoln Navigator’s built-in CD player.

They drove along a curving country road, the houses on either side slowly getting closer together but not smaller. Finally a line of shops appeared, looking colonial with quaint window displays and shingle-type signs. Jamie parallel-parked near a Gothic-style Catholic church, and they crossed the quiet street to a small white building with a red and white striped awning. The shingle named it, “Carla’s Café.”

Inside they sat by the big window and ordered coffee and bagels.

“So where are you guys partying tonight?” Travis asked. Bethany thought he seemed to be forcing conversation out of his mouth. He was probably a real geek in high school.

“We’re going to the big frat party on Common Drive,” Jamie said.

“There’s only one frat house at this dumb school,” Darlene told Bethany. “It’s actually the business majors’ fraternity and it’s not an official frat house because only academic frats are allowed here. Isn’t that stupid? Now I can never be a sorority sister.” Darlene faked like her dreams had been shattered, placing her hands

over her heart and throwing her head back dramatically. Bethany smiled, but noticed Jamie looked truly disappointed.

“I’ll be at that party, too,” Travis said. “I’m a business major but I’m not in the frat yet. You pretty much have to be a sophomore to get in, unless you take all business classes your first year.”

No one had much to say to that. Bethany used her fork to tear the paper placement. Their food came. Bethany eagerly involved herself in spreading cream cheese on her bagel.

Jamie asked Travis about some guy she hoped would be at the party. Bethany watched all the conservatively dressed college students and retirement-age town residents walk by. It occurred to her that these people might look in at the café and think Bethany looked sociable, edgy, a real risk-taker and partier. They would never know that Bethany’s mind was a million miles from the conversation going on around her, and she felt like a complete outsider to the group she was with. But maybe these passers-

by saw that, too, if only from how differently she was dressed.

After breakfast, they walked along the commercialized area of the street for a while. Travis talked about someone Jamie and Darlene knew who he hooked up with a couple weeks ago. “So just before we got into bed, she asked, ‘Are we going to make love or are you going to fuck me?’ I don’t really remember what I said, I was pretty drunk. But I think I chose the latter.”

Jamie laughed and hit him. “You’re a jerk!” Travis grinned back and said, “Well, I was drunk.”

Darlene kind of smiled and shook her head. Bethany didn’t smile. She just looked away and tried to be somewhere else. Then she saw it: a store painted bright purple. “What’s that?” Bethany asked.

“That’s the witch store,” Jamie said. They walked closer and Bethany saw the name of the store painted on the glass window: The Crystal Mirror.

“Let’s go in,” Bethany said. She crossed the street to the store and the other three followed behind her helplessly, looking nervously for traffic.

“It’s, like, Satanic,” Jamie said. “I don’t want to go in there.”

With bravery most likely fueled by his crush on Bethany, Travis said, “Don’t be a wuss, Jamie. It’s just a store.”

The bell over the door tinkled as they entered. New Age music played softly and the air smelled serene, like incense. Bethany wandered to the back, where she could see a display of jewelry and scarves. All the time she shopped she could see Travis and Jamie wandering around looking hesitant. Once she heard Travis say, “Yeah right it’s Satanic.” But she noticed he didn’t touch any of the Tarot cards, crystals, or books on display. She fingered a necklace made out of curvingly bent nails and thought, The only place I fit in, no one else does.

She had been expecting something out of an 80s Brat Pack movie, a house crammed with people drunk and having sex, the kind of party where the house would be completely trashed the next day.

Instead, when she walked through the door, she could hear music blasting but there was no one in the front hall with the stairs. There were only a couple of people in the kitchen, beefy-looking guys standing around a metal keg.

They hung their coats in the front closet, which was already crammed with coats, and went into the living room area, where the music was coming from. In the corner, five boys who looked like clones of the two in the kitchen, were playing video games and yelling loudly. In the middle of the room, one guy was drinking beer through a funnel as everyone around him poured their drinks in, cheering, “Drink, drink, drink!”

Grimly Bethany surveyed the room for any interesting people. The only thing that struck her was the appalling number of people wearing

orange, her least favorite color. Equally appalling were the number of garments with a logo marring them.

Travis greeted some of the guys in the room. Bethany felt their eyes stick on her.

Squealing, Jamie dragged Darlene off to the bathroom. Darlene rolled her eyes at Bethany as she was pulled away. Travis pulled Bethany off to the couch and somehow got her a drink on the way.

For a while Travis and Bethany just sat on the couch, watching MTV Spring Break wannabes do keg stands and shots out of one girl's navel. One guy tried to pick up a shot glass in his mouth and shoot it that way, and ended up getting vodka up his nose and gagging until he threw up, to the laughter of his fellow frat brothers. Bethany wondered when Darlene would come back and save her from Travis's stabs at conversation.

Then a dark-haired girl walked over to them. Travis kind of pulled his hat down more over his eyes, trying to block her out.

“Travis. Travis, I need to talk to you.” The girl’s tone of voice reminded Bethany of Shannon.

“Not now, Rachel.” Travis slumped in his seat. Bethany thought he looked whipped. She settled back to watch.

“Fine, I’ll say it in front of her. Why are you here with this freak? You’ve gone through everyone in business so now you’re digging into the art majors?”

Bethany felt oddly complemented by being considered old enough and freakish enough to be an art major. She noticed a few nearby people stop to see what Rachel was yelling about. Travis just tried to hide further under his hat.

“What, are you doing this to make me jealous, or something?”

Then Travis stood up, his head down, and pulled Rachel out of the room. The onlookers watched them go, then glanced Bethany over. They turned back to the alcoholic antics with smirks on their faces. Bethany got up and walked down the hall. The bathroom was

empty. She stood contemplating the open door, drinking her beer.

Eventually she decided to explore the second floor. No one was in the hallway that she could see.

In the upstairs hallway clothes and food crumbs littered the dingy blue rug. One door was closed almost all the way. Bethany peered in to see two guys kissing. She went to the only other open door on the floor. Inside were Darlene and Jamie. Darlene saw her standing in the doorway and ran over, weaving from side to side. "Hey, Bethany, sorry I left you alone. Did you and Travis hook up yet?" Darlene's lips and tongue were bright red.

Bethany looked at her watch. "We've only been here for 45 minutes," she said.

Darlene thought that was really funny. She collapsed, laughing, at Bethany's feet. "I'm so drunk!" she said.

"No kidding."

When Darlene pulled herself together, she dragged Bethany over to the big double waterbed that everyone else was sitting on. Darlene fell

onto the bed, floundering to gain stability. Beth carefully sat down. "We're drinking grain alcohol," Darlene said. "You want some? It's mixed with Kool-Aid so it tastes good."

"Who's your friend?" a girl with sandy blond hair asked. Bethany couldn't tell if she had seen this girl somewhere before.

"This is my sister Bethany," Darlene said.

"Oh," the girl said pointedly.

Darlene didn't notice. "Bethany, this is Adam, Melissa, Melinda, Mike, and Stacy." Bethany couldn't tell if the girl who had asked was Melissa or Melinda. Mike poured her a cup of red liquid and Bethany downed it, despite remembering hearing that grain alcohol could blind you.

After about five drinks of red stuff, Bethany just lay back on the bed, letting herself feel dizzy and disconnected. When she closed her eyes, the gentle movement of the waterbed almost made her feel like she was back in the womb. "Watch out for that necklace," someone said, someone not drunk enough. She ignored them and watched as more people came into the

room and a game of spin the bottle was initiated. Bethany sleepily didn't volunteer herself, but soon enough she heard a voice say, "Hey, Bethany, the bottle's pointing at you." She sat up and looked down at the floor where everyone was playing. It was Travis. He came over and started kissing her, and she didn't even mind. He kissed like James, tentatively, softly first with his lips then their tongues touched and his hand stroked her cheek just like James used to.

Bethany wasn't even aware of everyone in the room cheering as Darlene told her later on.

Bethany had her eyes closed and for all she knew she could have been back in James's basement, hardcore metal blaring from his beat-up stereo. And Bethany just enjoyed it. Kissing Travis felt like floating.

She woke up at five in the morning, according to the digital clock on the milk-crate table beside the waterbed. At first she couldn't figure out why she woke up so early, but then she moved and heard water slosh around. Her clothes were soaked. Travis lay beside her, spooning her with an arm around her waist, and

Darlene and some guy were asleep in a pile of blankets and pillows on the floor. Bethany quietly disentangled herself from Travis and kicked Darlene in the leg. "Hey. Hey, Darlene, wake up."

"Mmm?"

"We gotta go," Bethany whispered. "We have to leave right now."

Darlene slowly crawled out of the blankets and rubbed her eyes. When she saw Bethany, she said, "What happened to you?"

"Shh! The waterbed is leaking. We need to leave now."

"Okay," Darlene whispered.

They woke up Jamie and Travis. Jamie sleepily handed Darlene the keys to the car and crawled into the backseat. They parked and began the walk down to the dorms. "Was the waterbed because of your necklace?" Travis asked as they walked. Bethany nodded.

Somehow they had ended up holding hands, and Bethany didn't mind. She wasn't really drunk anymore, and she was holding hands with a guy who had probably made fun of girls like her in

high school. "I really had to watch out for that thing last night," he said.

When they parted ways to go back to Darlene's dorm, Travis gave Bethany a soft kiss on the lips and squeezed her hands before he continued. "Ooh, what did you two do last night?" Darlene joked.

"Not like you didn't watch it all," Bethany said.

"Do you want his email so you can keep in touch?"

"No," Bethany surprised herself by answering. It was true, she really didn't care if she ever saw Travis again. He probably was only using her to get back at that girl Rachel or whatever. He didn't know anything about Bethany at all.

"What? You guys are such a cute couple. I'm giving him your email if he asks for it."

"Whatever," Bethany said.

They went back to bed at Darlene's dorm. When Mr. and Mrs. Caleb came to pick up Bethany, they took the girls out to dinner, and didn't ask any questions beyond the superficial

ones. The car ride home was quiet, except for John Tesh.