



**restless virgins**

**love, sex, and survival at  
a new england prep school**

**abigail jones & marissa miley**





abigail jones and marissa miley

 HarperCollins e-books

*For our families*

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## preface

Meet the girls and boys of *Restless Virgins*: Annie, Whitney, Jillian, and Isabel; Reed, Brady, and Josh. Classmates at Milton Academy, a prep school near Boston, Massachusetts, they give us a very personal, intimate look at their daily lives in their senior year of high school. This book is about fitting in, taking risks, hooking up, and breaking up. It's about best friends, boyfriends, girlfriends, and parents. It's about settling and survival, and always the search for love. Their stories are laugh-out-loud funny, uplifting, heartbreaking, over the top, and outrageous. While many scenes may seem possible only in fiction, everything that happens here is true.

High school is a monster story; where could it possibly begin? In *Restless Virgins*, it begins in early September 2004, when these seven students arrived on campus for their senior year, and it ends in June 2005, when they stood on the picturesque main quad, girls in white dresses and boys in navy blazers, ready to graduate. They began the year wondering if their personal histories were a divination of what was to come—or if, in their final year of high school, something might change. Yet the 2004–2005 school year was hardly typical at Milton. A sex

scandal involving a girl and several boys and a daring on-campus locale splashed the school across the news. As the story unfolded, we were both surprised and intrigued, because we were curious young women who graduated from Milton in the late 1990s.

We weren't so far away from our own high school days. We played sports and musical instruments, studied hard, had lots of friends, even a boyfriend or two. But the scandal was entirely unfamiliar ground for us. Young lives were changed and a prestigious school was publicly embarrassed. The circumstances around the scandal may have been unusual but, as we soon learned, the behavior was hardly an exception. How were we to understand teenage life today? The cultural image of the typical high school student in America runs the gamut from *Prep's* nerdy and jaded Lee Fiora to the sparkling beauties of the hit TV series *The OC*. But these fictional treatments took us only so far. We sought out students from Milton's class of 2005 to find answers.

For two years, Annie, Whitney, Jillian, Isabel, Reed, Brady, and Josh, along with more than twenty of their classmates, shared their lives with us. All had graduated from Milton when we first met, and some had already started their freshman year in college, from the Ivy League to small New England schools to larger universities. We talked with some for a few months and others for much longer. The students told us stories in great detail, lifting the blanket of silence that shielded their world from parents and teachers. An unimaginable divide emerged: These girls and boys had their own values, rules, and boundaries, a culture that most adults did not grasp.

Milton Academy educates the best and the brightest. Its quintessential Georgian brick buildings and rolling lawns blend with its sleek, contemporary additions, evoking the power and status that define New England tradition. But this book is not just a prep school story, nor is it about the scandal in particular. It's an American story about teenagers surviving high school, confusing lust with love and sex with power, and searching

for self-worth. Their experiences are the stories of privileged adolescence, but we hope there is not a single reader who won't identify with some part of this book. In these girls and boys we found captivating, complex individuals, each struggling with who they were in high school, and who they wanted to become. *Restless Virgins* is their story.



## a note on methods and sources

*Restless Virgins* is a work of nonfiction. The experiences and conversations portrayed here are based entirely on interviews with students from the class of 2005 at Milton Academy. We met with 28 out of the 181 students in that class over a period of two years, from the summer of 2005 through the spring of 2007. We conducted some interviews as a team and others separately, some with one person and some with groups of friends, some in person and others by telephone. We also interviewed a few parents and teachers, as well as Milton graduates from other years, but most of the material in this book comes from the girls and boys of the class of 2005. Altogether, we held 280 interviews, ranging from thirty minutes to three hours each.

To protect the privacy of our interviewees, as well as certain other students and individuals who appear in the book and were not interviewed, we changed their names and some of their identifying details and characteristics, including, for example, hair color, physical description, extracurricular activities and hometowns. Despite these changes, we retained the integrity of each person's experience and personality. No one who appears in these pages is a composite portrait. We also

changed the names of Milton's dormitories and blurred their locations and descriptions. Any similarity between fictitious names and characteristics and those of real people, living or dead, or fictitious dorms and real dorms, at Milton or elsewhere, is purely coincidental.

School officials and public figures appear as they do in real life. All descriptions of Milton Academy's history, campus, and traditions are real, based on independent research, our own observations of Milton, and the experiences of the girls and boys.

Scenes are re-created from interviewees' recollections. Some scenes are rendered from the account of one individual, and in these cases, we write from the point of view of that person. Others are the product of multiple interviewees' accounts of the same event. Where accounts differed, we did our best to provide the fullest and most comprehensive accounts based on our interviews.

Dialogue passages are written as the students remembered them, and some are direct quotes from conversations students had with one another during our interviews. Dialogue is printed in italics here. Internal thoughts are expressed in the third person. Instant message conversations are either direct quotes from saved conversations the students gave us, or re-creations from the students. Journal and newspaper excerpts are direct quotes. We have retained the original spelling and grammar in instant messages, journals, and newspapers except if needed to clarify meaning. Citations from published sources, such as newspaper articles, are set off or italicized. Quotations from the trial proceedings in the case against the three Milton students are from the tape-recorded transcript obtained from the clerk's office of the District Court of East Norfolk, Quincy, Massachusetts.



**september 2004-**  
**june 2005**



## chapter one

### **everyone's watchin'**

Everyone's watchin', to see what you will do  
Everyone's lookin' at you, oh

—Lyrics from “Working for the Weekend,” by Loverboy,  
the song chosen by the class of 2005 for Senior Walk In

 **ighties music blasted** from a dorm room down the hall. Annie could hear it from her own room, where she sat up in bed and forced her eyes open, her wavy blond hair everywhere. It was early morning on orientation day at Milton, and she could already hear the other girls in Pryce House clogging the dorm's narrow hallways. They ran between bathrooms and bedrooms, screaming about summer romances and hugging as though it had been forever. I love your haircut! How was your trip? Did you go back to camp? Who do you wanna hook up with this year? Annie stared at the bare walls of her tiny single room, wondering how much she'd changed that summer and what would become of her that year.

Her first few days as a senior had been packed with the usual

excitements and stresses: younger Pryce girls bombarded her with questions, orchestra and dorm commitments beckoned, and so did senior tasks, like checking in with the college office to continue calculating the ever-looming future. But Annie couldn't even begin to grasp the enormity of what she had to do that year: get good grades; perform with the full orchestra and chamber orchestra; take the SATs; pick a college; apply early to that college, which meant writing essays, filling out forms, and having an interview; wait to find out if she got into that college; prepare additional applications in case she was rejected or deferred; pass exams; love senior year; find a way to drink and party over spring break; perfect her senior solo for the spring concert, which would take up at least three hours of practice a day; relish senior spring; make new friends; change her image; not obsess over boys; find a steady hookup, make him a boyfriend, lose her virginity, fall in love, or at least *in like*; and generally live up to the standards set by her civic-minded parents. Over the first few weeks of school, there were times when Annie came back to her dorm room at night, closed her door, and cried.

But everything always looked better in the morning, so Annie bounced out of bed, stumbling over piles of black-and-white posters of the 1920s and glossy Absolut vodka ads that she hadn't had a chance to hang on the walls. She put on vintage Madonna and riffled through her clothes. In about an hour, Senior Walk In would begin, a coveted rite of passage at Milton that took place at the first morning assembly of the school year, which was held on the basketball courts in the Athletic and Convocation Center (ACC). Seniors charged onto the makeshift stage from behind a curtain, wearing outrageous costumes, pumping their fists, proclaiming the start of the school year in front of the upper school. Annie remembered the first Senior Walk In she saw. She was a freshman and sat on the bleachers with the rest of the underclassmen, watching the seniors in Pryce prance out like confident leaders who knew exactly what they were doing.

Now, after three years at Milton, Annie knew that appearances mattered. She wanted to assemble an outfit with the right blend of appropriateness (for the teachers), hotness (for the guys), and individuality (for herself). She was fleshy, a Rubens girl with a curvaceous body, breasts the size of baby melons since they'd first cropped up in fifth grade. She accepted her full figure. She had even come to terms with her acne, applying foundation over the pimples that marked puberty on her face. She'd always been reticent about her breasts, and still didn't understand how even they never garnered her attention from the guys at school.

She inherently accepted her social status: the aspiring socialite who had yet to expand her celebrity since middle school. Senior Walk In was her last chance to make another first impression at Milton. This was a moment of possibility. Some seniors' reputations already had been made, but change was not impossible. This was also a moment of vanity. Seniors considered who they had become (the jock, the academic, the prude) and what lasting impressions they wanted to leave with their friends and teachers. Because Senior Walk In was, after all, the genesis of their final teenage fate—the last year of high school.

Annie squeezed her thighs into a short black skirt and pulled a simple black shirt over her chest. She shuffled up to the mirror. The dimple in her chin was adorable and her cheeks were, as usual, a shade redder than she wanted. Annie liked her outfit. While some Walk In costumes materialized out of closets that very morning, Annie and the other senior girls in Pryce had started planning their outfits that summer, communicating over e-mail (*Get your bumblebee headbands! Get something crazy!*), and agreeing to be bumblebees because they'd each been willed a perky antennae headpiece with glittery yellow-and-black-striped balls from the girls who'd graduated the year before. Wills were a serious business among boarders. The night before graduation, seniors in each of Milton's eight single-sex dormitories passed down personal tokens to favorite underclassmen. Many boarders waited their

entire Milton careers for this ritual, while underclassmen loved receiving coveted bequests that they then carried with them until it was their turn to pass them on.

Annie went to the closet to find the finishing touch to her costume, the bumblebee antennae she'd received the previous spring. They rested on a shelf above her hanging clothes, and were important because they were a status symbol that tied her to a specific dorm and a specific group of girls. On the morning of Senior Walk In, they quivered delicately each time she took a step, bobbing like a marionette, just enough to remind Annie that she, too, belonged.

Milton's 125-acre spread of manicured quads, rolling hills, and prep school charm woke up from desolation just as Annie was getting ready in Pryce. Students arrived by bus or carpool, or from houses and dorms a few minutes away. They headed toward the ACC for Senior Walk In, cutting across various quads and fields, often jaywalking on Centre Street, the main road that cuts the campus in half. With understated elegance, the academy sprawls out in its own cushy corner of Boston's intellectual history and affluent past. The picturesque landscape is a place where the relics of early America still endure, the old stone chapel, white picket fences, and redbrick buildings upholding the New England values of virtue and purity.

Established in 1798, Milton is one of the oldest prep schools in the United States. It's a breeding ground of privilege, where students from all over the country and the world are groomed to go on to some of the best colleges and universities. The girls' and boys' successes feed the school's public image—the elite prep school that has educated luminaries like the Kennedys and Roosevelts; and T. S. Eliot, Buckminster Fuller, and James Taylor. Milton promotes an open approach to education, where teachers lead students in pint-size, seminar-style classes held around large Harkness tables or among clusters of individual desks. Annie was just one of the many talented