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3 WILLOWS

*the sisterhood
grows*

ON SALE 1.13.09



Traveling Pants

~ ANN BRASHARES ~

PROLOGUE

Once upon a time there was a pair of pants. They were an essential kind of pants—jeans, naturally, blue but not that stiff, new blue that you see so often on the first day of school. They were a soft, changeable blue with a little extra fading at the knees and the seat and white wavelets at the cuffs.

They'd had a good life before us. You could just tell. I guess a thrift shop is like the pound in some ways. Whatever you get there owes a lot to its previous owners. Our pants weren't like the neurotic puppy whose parents left it alone, barking itself hoarse from morning till night. They were more like the grown-up dog whose family loved it but had to move to an apartment building or maybe to Korea (is it Korea?), where people sometimes eat dogs.

I could tell the pants hadn't come to our lives because of tragedy. They'd just witnessed one of

those regular but painful life transitions. That, it turns out, is The Way of the Pants.

They were noble pants, but unassuming. You could glance over them and just think, "Okay, pants," or you could stop and really look at the beautiful complexity of colors and seams. They don't force you to admire them. They are happy just doing their basic job of covering your butt without making it look fatter than it actually is.

I got them at a thrift shop at the outer reaches of Georgetown that's sandwiched between a store that sells water (I don't know about you, but I get that free at home) and a health food store called Yes! Whenever any of us mentions Yes! (and we work it in whenever possible) we always shout Yes! at the top of our lungs. I was tagging along with Lena and her younger sister, Effie, and their mom. Effie was there to buy a dress for the sophomore prom. Effie isn't the kind of girl who just gets a red spaghetti-strap thing at Bloomingdale's like everybody else. She has to get something *vintage*.

Mainly I got the pants because Lena's mom hates secondhand clothing stores. She says used clothes are for poor people. "I tink that is dirty, Effie," she kept saying every time Effie pulled something off a hanger. I secretly agreed with Mrs. Kaligaris, which gave me a certain feeling of

shame. Truth was, I yearned for the clean mindlessness of Express, but I had to buy something. The pants were folded innocently on a shelf by the counter where you pay. I figured maybe they'd been washed. Also, they were only \$3.49 including tax. I didn't even try them on, so you can tell I wasn't serious about owning them. My butt has specific requirements for pants.

Effie picked out a little mod dress that was aggressively antiprom, and Lena found a pair of beat-up loafers that looked like they'd belonged to somebody's great-uncle. Lena has big feet, like size nine and a half or something. They are the only part of her that isn't perfect. I love her feet. I couldn't help wincing at those shoes, though. It's bad enough to buy used clothes, which are theoretically washable, but *used shoes*?

When I got home I put the pants in the back of my closet and forgot about them.

They came out again the afternoon before we all went separate ways for the summer. I was going to South Carolina to hang out with my dad, Lena and Effie were spending two months in Greece with their grandparents, Bridget was flying off to soccer camp in Baja California (which, turns out, is in Mexico. Who knew?). Tibby was staying home. This was our first summer apart, and I think it gave us all a strange, shaky feeling.

The International Bestseller

A BOOK SENSE BOOK OF THE YEAR

★ "An outstanding and vivid book."

—*Publishers Weekly*, Starred

★ "A feel-good novel with substance. . . . Move over, Ya-Ya Sisters."

—*Kirkus Reviews*, Starred

"Uplifting."

—*Seventeen*

Once there was a pair of pants.
Just an ordinary pair of jeans. But these pants,
the Traveling Pants, went on to do great things.
This is the story of the four friends —
Lena, Tibby, Bridget, and Carmen —
who made it possible.



A lover of summer, pants, and travel, ANN BRASHARES lives in New York City with her husband and their three children. Her Sisterhood novels — *The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants*, *The Second Summer of the Sisterhood*, *Girls in Pants: The Third Summer of the Sisterhood*, and *Forever in Blue: The Fourth Summer of the Sisterhood* — comprise an internationally bestselling and award-winning series that reached #1 on the *New York Times* best-seller list and inspired two major motion pictures. Visit the author at www.annbrashares.net.

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