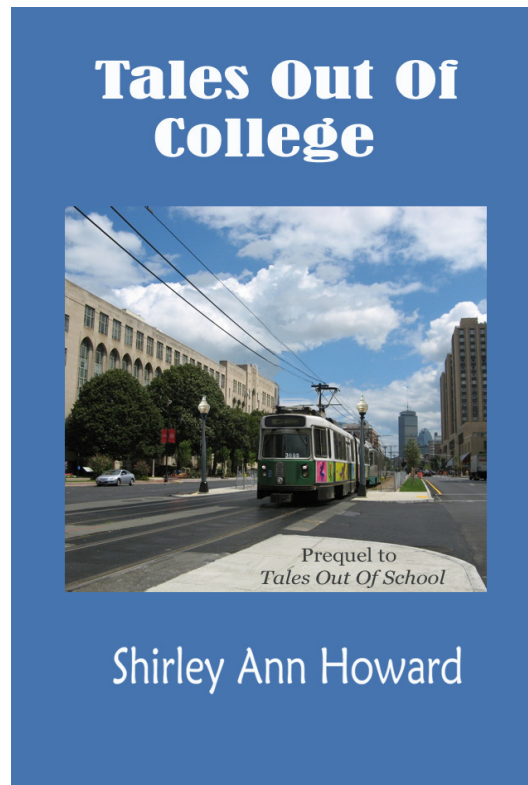


Tales Out Of College
Shirley Ann Howard



Prequel to Tales Out Of School

© 2009 ISBN 1-60076-134-8

www.ShirleyAnnHoward.com

A young woman searches for self and love...

TALES OUT OF COLLEGE is the prequel to Shirley Ann Howard's *TALES OUT OF SCHOOL* and chronicles the three years leading up to Sandra Scott's first full-time teaching position. The College Tales portray Sandy in a variety of roles: assertive editor of Boston University's student newspaper, talented reporter for *The Boston Herald*, and student teacher beset with self-doubt. We see the germination of her red-hot, yet tension-filled relationship with Lenny Bachenweiler, a brilliant and sexy graduate student in biochemistry.

Sandy know what she wants—a fulfilling career and true love—and we know from *The School Tales* that she does not give up easily.

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously and are not to be construed as real. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, organizations, or persons is entirely coincidental.

Address questions to:

PublicRelations@ShirleyAnnHoward.com

www.ShirleyAnnHoward.com

*For my family—
For all the support they gave,
For all the questions they answered,
My deepest love and gratitude.*

~S~

Chapter 1

A tall, light-haired man—leaning against the shaft of a thick Doric column—was fully engaged in observing a young woman speak. She was beautiful and articulate, intelligent and passionate. He'd met her once before.

On this day she was standing on a table in the middle of the Student Union, protesting Boston University's policy on what should be published in the school newspaper. She said it was censorship, a violation of first amendment rights. There was quite a crowd watching and listening.

Her faded jeans hugged her curvy backside. Her short, tight sweater hugged her curvy bust, exposing a bit of mid-section every time she raised her arms. She had long flowing hair the color of honey, but the campus police were not as impressed as he, as they broke up the gathering, forced her down from the table, and led her away.

The man returned to the Student Union the next day. Outside the entrance to the store was a towering stack of BU newspapers with the woman's photograph on the front page.

The caption underneath it read, "Sandra Scott, Student Editor-in-chief of *The University Union*, was detained yesterday by campus police for conducting a rally without a permit and inciting a riot." The black and white picture did not nearly convey the vitality she had radiated in person.

After buying his essentials, he wound his way to the back corners of the student center where university organizations have offices, including the newspaper. She was there, madly typing away at her computer, looking just as hot as the day before. Sitting next to her was a dark-haired male student, smoking and staring at his own computer screen. Not as intent on the work as she was, he stopped when he perceived the tall blond gentleman standing in the doorway.

The light-haired man continued staring at the young woman until she looked up, acknowledging his presence.

“Sandra Scott,” he said in a mellow voice she’d heard before. “I saw you speaking yesterday... and wanted you to know I agree with your position.” She locked a gaze on him and addressed him by name.

“Leonard Bachenweiler, what are you doing here? I thought you graduated.” Her Boston accent emphasized the broad A in *Babk-en-nyler*.

“I’m back as a graduate student in biochemistry. I’m surprised you remember me.” It thrilled him.

“I’d never forget the first person I interviewed for the paper... and how nice you were.” She smiled. “And how you caught me when I slipped on the chunk of pineapple.”

They shared a little chuckle. He added friendly to her list of attributes. “What happened when the cops took you away yesterday?” he asked with genuine concern.

“They threatened to arrest me on stupid, trumped-up charges—as per the Chancellor’s orders—if I didn’t agree to squash controversial articles. My parents insisted I cooperate so I caved, but I’m writing an editorial about it for Friday’s edition.” Their conversation was interrupted by the throat-clearing of the other guy in the office.

“I’m sorry, Donny,” Sandy apologized. “Lenny earned the Outstanding Achievement Award in Natural Science a few years ago. He was given a reception, well attended and well deserved.” She introduced Lenny to Donald Sanderson, the layout editor. The men eyed each other with suspicion. Lenny couldn’t help wondering if Donny was laying out the Editor-in-chief in addition to the pages of *The Union*.

As Lenny walked slowly to his car and drove the few blocks to his apartment, a small brick walk-up on Boylston Street, he realized he was drawn to Sandy. There was something about the way she presented herself that left an imprint in his mind. He couldn’t stop thinking about her—how she talked, looked, and smelled—a perfect blend of femininity and confidence.

He remembered that same scent from the day she interviewed him by the buffet table and the same penetrating

expression of her clear blue eyes. That night he fell asleep imagining he was stroking her hair and filling his senses with her beauty.

His courses were grueling, laden with complex math and long labs. Thermodynamics of the Cell was all math, and it was cold studying alone as the days of September got shorter in New England. Still, he was glad he had made the decision to return to this city by the sea to pursue a Ph.D. It would take four years, but he was committed and he could and would do it.

Friday morning Lenny picked up a copy of the paper and read Sandy's article portraying top university administrators as paranoid tyrants bullying an idealistic undergraduate English major. She described her capitulation as intimidation, forced by threats of banning her from working on the news.

Knowing the paper came out again on Tuesday, he took a chance she'd be working late in the office Monday night and he visited once again. She was there with Sanderson.

Lenny told her she'd become a folk hero on campus; he had heard people talking about it in the coffee shop. He offered the coffee he brought. Sandy tilted her head a little and smiled. "Thanks," she said, surprised to see him again. "This will certainly help as we often work past midnight."

Sanderson lit a cigarette, snapping up the flame of his lighter with a harsh flick of his thumb.

~~~

Lenny was determined to talk to Sandy without Donny around. He called the number in the campus directory, ready to discourse on Tuesday's news, but he got her mother who explained that Sandy rarely came home during the week and lately she hadn't been coming to Newton much on weekends either.

"Does she have a phone on campus?" His inquiry was courteous.

"She doesn't like me to give it out... for safety reasons. But I'll be happy to give her a message."

“Thanks very much.” He gave her his phone number, spelled his name, and asked for Sandy to call.

Helen Scott’s interest in her daughter’s activities always reached the highest level. “Is there anything you’d like me to mention to her?” she asked.

“This is a social call,” Lenny said softly, trying to convey trust.

There was a bit of hesitation, then Mrs. Scott blurted out, “I think she already has a boyfriend, Mr. Bachenweiler, but I’ll pass along this information.”

Several weeks passed and the days became colder. His course work became incredibly demanding. He stuck his nose in his books and was captivated by his work, but he did not hear from Sandy. So as October drew to a close, he walked by *The Union* office on a Thursday night with two large cups of soup. She was there with the boor.

“Hey,” Lenny announced his arrival. “I thought you two might like some hot soup to keep you going until midnight.”

Sandy turned to him, smiling widely, as she seemed to do every time she saw him. “Aren’t you nice? How did you know I was craving chowder? One of those containers smells like chowder.”

“It is,” he said, flashing his own happy smile in her direction. “This other one is today’s special, cream of chicken vegetable.”

“I like that too.” Her voice sounded like music angels would play. “Do you feel like soup, Donny?” He sneered and refused, keeping himself occupied with his computer.

So Sandy and Lenny enjoyed the two soups together, sitting at a table in the middle of the small office, daring occasionally to dip their spoons in the other’s cup. They talked about her series of articles on the new undergraduate admission process, which she discussed with enthusiasm.

“Applications are up, average SATs are up,” she said with enthusiasm. “Boston University continues to attract top students from all over the world.”

After a long exasperated stare from Don, Lenny said goodnight and he and Sandy shared a parting stare of their own, but it was anything but exasperated.

After he left Donny grumbled, “What the hell is up with him? Why does he keep coming around here?”

Sandy concentrated on finishing her article about the increase in admission requirements for the four thousand fortunate freshmen BU would accept.

~~~

Late Friday afternoon Sandy dumped her book bag on the floor of her new high-rise dorm suite, rested her back against the small kitchen table, and watched her roommate prepare to depart for home. “I hope your brother is better, Kathy. It’s nice of you to visit him and help your parents deal with his situation.”

“Sorry to leave you alone, as if you and Donny care. I’m sure you’ll keep yourselves occupied.” Kathy was stuffing her backpack with books, a sweater and jeans, and a green plastic bag of sample-size Clinique cosmetics.

“I’m behind with my reading so I plan to stay in and catch up for the next two days,” Sandy said, surveying the contents of their refrigerator. “No excessive eating either.”

“As soon as Donny gets here, you’ll be glad I’m not around.” Kathy slung the strap of her oversized bag around her arm. Her curly auburn hair cascaded to her shoulders—half wild, half fabulous. Her body was athletic, but feminine.

“I’d prefer your brother were not ill,” Sandy said. “What would your parents do without you? What would any of you do if you weren’t so knowledgeable in psychology?”

“My being a psych major is no help. In fact the best doctors at McLean Hospital aren’t helping very much. Bipolar Disorder—or whatever is Jared’s diagnosis du jour—isn’t easy for doctors to treat or families to deal with... especially when the patient is non-compliant.”

Kathy’s frustration was growing: with her brother, the medical establishment, and all society’s ills.

“Please give Jared and your parents my love. Tell them I’m thinking of them and praying as well.” Sandy put down the dish she’d pulled out of the fridge and gave Kathy a hug.

“Maybe Jared’s medication will finally kick in,” Kathy said. “Maybe he’ll stop abusing alcohol and marijuana.” She let go of her friend. “I have to go. I told my mom I’d be there for dinner.” She put quarters, dollar bills and a T subway pass into her jacket pocket, well prepared for the trolley, train, and bus that would take her to Lexington, twelve miles northwest of Boston.

Sandy bolted the door and heated leftover chicken, broccoli, and pasta in a buttery cream sauce. She watched the evening news with a big mug of tea and sat on the small couch with *The Brothers Karamazov*.

The reading was lengthy. She flipped through the pages, feeling overwhelmed. In this, her senior year, in addition to her course work and the newspaper, she also had to interview for a professional journalism position. She fell asleep with her book open, dreaming about the scent of Lenny’s musk. She imagined he was stroking her hair and filling her senses with his gentle masculinity.

She awoke with the lamp on, her heart pounding a beat in her ears. She sat up and rubbed her face. It was five a.m. She stepped into a hot shower and used a simple bar of soap instead of her usual scented body wash. She brewed a small pot of coffee and inhaled the caffeine, trying to eradicate the thoughts she’d had last night.

The Brothers Karamazov, she reminded herself, and then *Anna Karenina*.

~~~

Sandy persevered with a long day of reading despite the noise and commotion typical in the hall, especially on a Saturday. Time for a break; time for a Diet Coke and a roast beef roll-up with lettuce and mayo. She phoned her parents; she hadn’t been in touch with them since they sided with the University that night at the Campus Police Station.

“Sandy, where have you been? Why haven’t you called?”  
As usual her mother yelled louder than necessary.

Sandy stretched her legs onto the wicker coffee table. “Is something the matter?” she asked.

“We miss you. I’m baking pork chops tomorrow, with apples and sweet potatoes. Can you come to Sunday dinner?” Helen Scott was an outstanding cook and her appreciation of culinary delights showed in her waistline, her plump arms, and round face.

“I have way too much work to do. There’s soooo much reading.”

“You’ll get caught up.” Her mother was rarely generous with sympathy.

“How’s Dad?”

“He’s working hard too. He and Al acquired prime land on the Cambridge side of the Charles River and already did most of the engineering on it. Looks like they’ll get in quite a few condos.”

“I’d like to see the plans when he has them. I know he’ll maximize the view and keep the area beautiful. Have you heard from anyone?”

“Mrs. Randall and Sarah both called about your playing the Christmas music. And a fellow named,” Helen checked her notepad, “Leonard Bachenweiler was looking for your phone number.”

“Jesus, Mother, why didn’t you tell me?” Sandy stood up, knocking over the table.

“Not very nice language from someone who plays the piano in church.”

“What did he say? What did you say?” Sandy ran her hand through her hair.

“He wanted to talk to you. He left his phone number. I told him you already had a boyfriend.”

“You what? How could you?” Sandy yelled louder than her mother, while scribbling Lenny’s number on a scrap of paper.

“The last time you were here, you could hardly wait to get back to Donald, so what did you expect me to say?”

“I expect you wouldn’t tell a man about another man. I have to go.”

Sandy hung up and paced the floor with Lenny’s phone number burning her hand. She tucked it in her pocket, then splashed cold water on her face. Donny’s call interrupted her thoughts. He asked if she needed a break from reading, if she needed—him. She tried to put him off, said she was tired. He wanted to come over.

“Please, Donny, I have too much on my mind—too much reading, *The Union* to get out every Tuesday and Friday, Christmas music to prepare, a career to launch.”

“You deserve a distraction.”

“So do you, but I promised myself I’d catch up this weekend. If you come over, it’ll blow tonight... and most of tomorrow.” She plopped back on the couch.

“I’ll study better tomorrow after being with you tonight.”

“Please Donny, I’m really stressed, not fit company for anyone.”

“So I’ll have to comfort myself with beer instead of you?”

“Please don’t say it like that. I’ll see you Monday afternoon.” She heard him pop open a cold one before hanging up. She lay down and buried her face in a throw pillow, holding it tight. And when she arose, she was surprised to find the cushion wet.

More reading. And more reading. Quite interesting really. The four Karamazov brothers were intense. The novel was dark and detailed. Most likely related to the long Russian winters, Sandy thought. The brothers embodied all of humanity; thank God there was redemption.

*Anna Karenina*—sad, powerful, current. Sandy read until three in the morning. Anna was in love with Count Vronsky.

~~~

“Hey, Sandwoman,” Kathy said, walking in late Sunday afternoon. She kicked the door shut with the back of her foot

and saw her friend with an eight hundred page book. “You’re a model student.”

“Welcome back. How’s Jared?”

“At home he’s a great kid. When he meets up with his druggie friends, he’s a completely different person—angry, argumentative, abusive.”

“I’m sorry, Kath. Do you want a piece of cornbread?” Like her mother, Sandy enjoyed cooking. It relaxed her and she liked the comfort of the food.

“Sure. Did anyone stop by?”

“No. Were you expecting someone?”

“One can always hope.” They sat at the small butcher block table, flanked by a large window overlooking the continual hubbub of Commonwealth Avenue down below.

They drank tea and commiserated as only women and roommates can do. They smoked thin menthol cigarettes and used obscenities about the men and misery in their lives.

“I’m thinking about breaking up with Donny,” Sandy announced to her friend.

“When did this revelation occur to you?” Kathy fanned smoke out the window.

“I don’t think I should waste my time with him. I don’t think Sandra Sanderson sounds like a name I want. And... he does not make my heart race.”

“So who does? I’d settle for a guy with a pulse.”

“I do not want to settle.” Sandy’s voice trailed off.