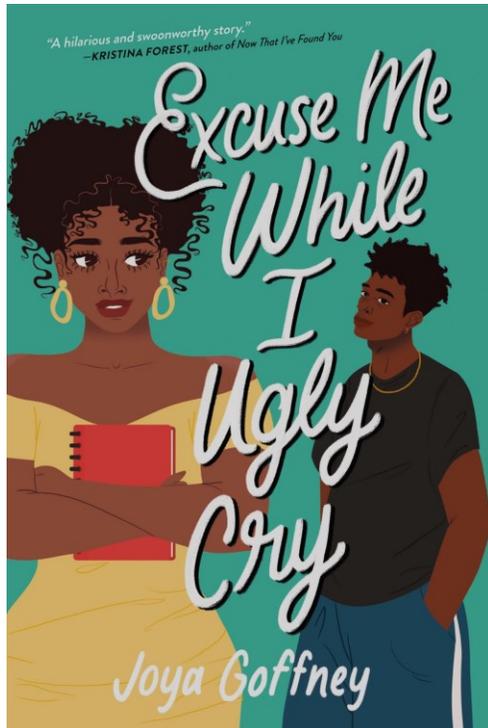


EXCUSE ME WHILE I UGLY CRY



Young Adult

By Joya Goffney

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Book Summary:

A high school senior loses her written list of lies and thoughts of importance to her.

Summary of Concerns:

This book contains explicit sexual activities; sexual nudity; references to racism; controversial political, social, and racial commentary; alcohol use by minors; and profanity and derogatory terms.

3 /5

Minor Restricted
BookLooks Review Rating

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3	3. A “real Black guy,” as I’ve heard it put around the halls of our predominantly white private school, which makes me wonder about the authenticity of my own Blackness. I’ve never heard anyone call me a “real Black girl.” In fact, I’ve only ever heard the opposite. I bet he never has to deal with white people telling Black jokes around him. Must be nice.
4	8. A player? I’ve heard rumors about him and Emily Hayes getting busy at a party last year. ...9. Kinda antisocial. He doesn’t typically hang around the white kids at school, which means he doesn’t have many friends. I only see him talk to Olivia Thomas. Every time I see them laughing together, it makes me wish I had Black friends too.
6	“I mean”—he shrugs, making his way toward me, gazing at the living room furniture—“getting into Columbia doesn’t mean you’re smart. It just means you’re rich.” ...He says, “Which, obviously, you’re very rich,” motioning to the multi-thousand-dollar vase on the mantel and the sixty-inch landscape electric fireplace. He sounds bitter about it. Then he eyes me from my flip-flops to the top of my poofy hair. “Girls like you ain’t gotta work nearly as hard as somebody like me.” My jaw tightens. He has no idea what I’ve had to work for. And even if I am rich, I’m still one of only five Black kids at our school. I have to deal with the same racist bullshit he does.
9	“Your dad’s home,” he says, smiling, but then his smile falters, like he’s having a hard time holding it up. “When he saw me, he thought I was a burglar.” Carter drops his eyes, pressing his lips tight. “Guess he’s not used to seeing a real nigga in his house.”
18	Six, he could never fully understand why I feel the way I do, because he’s white.
20	This is about the list of boys I’ve kissed, the list of reasons I’m in love with Matt, and this..
21	7. I used to embrace being called an Oreo (white on the inside, Black on the outside), until I realized the implications—I realized far too late. ...His name comes up several times in my journal. First, in my fuck/ marry/ kill trials, where I typically choose to fuck him, on the hot side of my Hot or Not list, on my Boys with Whom I Wouldn’t Mind Repopulating the Earth after the Apocalypse list, which, I admit, is basically a replica of the hot side of my Hot or Not list.
43	FIVE LIES PEOPLE BELIEVE ABOUT ME 1. I’m cool with my white friends saying the N-word around me.
44	“What happened?” Kaide asks. “Affirmative action couldn’t save you?” I freeze. The two Dartmouth girls laugh, but Lucy’s taken aback. “That’s racist.” “How is it racist? It’s just a question. Isn’t that what affirmative action is for? To give a pass to people who aren’t white, for not being white?” ...Embarrassed, sure, but more ashamed than anything. Ashamed that I don’t open my mouth and tell him how much harder my parents had to work just to be considered alongside less qualified white people. No. I let them walk away with those ideas in their heads, like always. Speaking out against racism when you’re the only Black kid in class sounds like a bad idea to me, especially given the circumstances: that they all got accepted into Ivy League schools while I’m the Black girl who lied about it.
49	Harvard Kaide commented below that: I should probably stop singing along to Drake and Vontae and DaBaby and literally every rapper ever when I’m around you? What makes you so special?

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	Apparently, you have to run all your music choices by her, because she's black. Not even affirmative action can make up for how much you suck.
69	Carter immediately asks, "Does she not like Black people?" Funny. That's where my mind went too. Auden shakes his head. "No, she loves Black people." We both raise our eyebrows at him. "I mean, she doesn't love—she loves Black people the same amount that she loves other races."
76	3. I think he's more fuck material than marriage or murder. ...5. How intricately I write about fantasy sex with Matt.
81	"He's letting you retake that quiz tomorrow morning, but you better understand that you won't get many chances like this, especially not with skin as dark as ours. You have to work twice as hard as everyone else." ..."Figure out what you want to do in life, Quinn. Pick a major. Pick an apartment. This undecided mess is just"—she waves her hand dismissively—" a luxury only rich white boys can afford. You are not that. You have to be better than that if you want to compete."
83	You made a Black boy feel unsafe in our home. My skin is as black as his, so I can't be sure what you think of me. Am I a criminal too?
87	"I always thought that he was conscious . . . you know?" "No, I don't know what you mean." "Like, conscious of race issues and stuff." Matt's face folds and stays folded. The mention of race makes him uncomfortable. "I feel like maybe he doesn't love his skin color as much as I thought, and maybe—" "Wait, why would you think that?" He looks up. "That's crazy. I've known your dad for a long time. I know he prides himself on being the first Black chief surgeon at his hospital. It's like the second thing he tells people, behind his name. Then after that is the fact that he went to Columbia." ...My dad can be proud that he's the first Black chief surgeon, but that doesn't mean he's proud to be Black.
94	6. She's gotten into several fights over our four years at Hayworth, all of them with white boys she's claimed were racist, entitled pricks.
97	"Right. I almost forgot you were into white boys."
99	This just in: Head photographer gives amazing head. Olivia Thomas is open for business. Shooting heads and blowing them, too!
102	"You played 'Strange Fruit' by Billie Holiday," I say. When I look up from my hands, he's just as surprised as I was. "It was a bold statement in a classroom full of white kids, but I don't think anyone knew that song." ..."The back door was open. I bet teenagers go in there all the time—" "Do drugs and shit," Olivia says.
104	Days My Blackness Has Been on Trial
106	"Why can't I stay in the car?" "Why? Are you afraid of Black people, just like your dad is?" ...I'm not used to being surrounded by people with my skin color. It makes me feel like they can see how other I am. But they can't, right? I could blend in if I tried. I could embrace the

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	country in my accent. I could say ain't and y'all and the N-word and they wouldn't know a thing.
107	But I mean, I look just like them. I should feel safer here than in my neighborhood. White people used to lynch people who look like me, so why on earth would I feel safer around them?
111	She directs me to a poor excuse for a park crowded with Black bodies day-drinking and celebrating?
123	My seat is rising, the visor shading the side of my face, and my eyes are falling to his lips right-fucking-there. In a low voice, he asks, "Better?" His arm is sorta kinda resting atop my thighs, and his eyes are sorta kinda taking me apart.
124	<p>I ask, "Do you really think he hates the color of his skin?"</p> <p>..."I don't know. I think it's a little harsh to say he hates being Black. Maybe he's just . . ."</p> <p>..."All my life, he's taught me what challenges I'll have being Black—he's warned me about unfair grading and harsher punishments and stuff like that. But I never really experienced any of it. That kind of stuff isn't what I needed . . . preparation for."</p> <p>Carter leans in. "Those were the challenges of their generation." He crosses his arms over the console. He looks excited to be talking about this with me. "And it's definitely still a threat for our generation, but not as much."</p> <p>..."My parents never warned me about the fact that the way I talk and the way I act might lead people to call me white."</p> <p>..."Being the exception to Black stereotypes automatically means that you're not as Black."</p> <p>...I never thought he had to deal with being the exception too. What with the way he talks and the way he carries himself and the fact that everyone at school considers him a "real" Black guy. I let all those assumptions color my view of him. I'm no better than the white kids.</p> <p>..."I didn't think you minded being called an Oreo."</p> <p>My eyes narrow. "I never used the word Oreo." I only used the word Oreo in my journal. "You didn't have to," he says. "I've been called an Oreo before."</p>
126	<p>Olivia throws a hand over the back of my seat, landing on my shoulder. "You too—get to my house by eight. We need to get you a fake ID."</p> <p>"What?" I spin around.</p> <p>"If we're doing this, we're doing it right."</p> <p>...I look at him. "Fake IDs? No one said anything about fake IDs."</p> <p>"Quinn, it'll be fine. Just think about how to get out of the house tonight. We're gonna be out all night."</p> <p>...Going downtown is one thing, but fake IDs? I'm eighteen. I could go to prison.</p>
128	<p>4. He's either cheating on Mom or he doesn't require much sex.</p> <p>...6. His father disowned him for leaving. He came back after his father died.</p>
130	We're surrounded by white people, as usual in this part of town.
134	<p>AS SOON AS THE DOOR OF OLIVIA'S APARTMENT OPENS, she shoves a fake ID in my hands.</p> <p>"You're twenty-two. Memorize the birthday."</p>
135	Olivia leads me past the couch into a dark kitchen, where she grabs a six-pack of Dos Equis from the fridge. I'm stunned still at her gall to drink in her mother's home, while her mother is home.

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136	<p>I look at the photos to the right of Kristina. The entire line is pieced together just as it was when the photos were first vandalized, spelling out: This just in: Head photographer gives amazing head.</p> <p>...“I don’t know. They make me feel like a real artist amid a sexual revolution or something.”</p> <p>...“Get one of these,” she says, pointing to the beer.</p> <p>“Oh, I—that’s okay,” I stammer. “I don’t really drink.”</p> <p>“You don’t go downtown, either,” she says with a smile. “Have you ever drank before?”</p> <p>“I’ve had a few sips here and there.” Usually unwillingly.</p>
139	<p>I take a gulp of beer, anxious.</p> <p>...“We gon’ get this shit laid, mamma. Get you lookin’ fine as hell.”</p> <p>I laugh, taking another gulp of beer. It tastes like apple juice, minus the apple? It tastes like it looks—bronze. And it makes me feel like I’m wading through wet cement. I finish my first one while Olivia is working on her second.</p>
141	<p>I finish off my second beer; she hands me a third and then starts on my makeup.</p>
143	<p>“My lips feel like they’re going numb. What kind of lipstick is this?”</p> <p>“That’s not the lipstick. That’s the beer.”</p> <p>“Beer makes your face numb?” I ask, appalled.</p> <p>She laughs. “When you drink enough of it. And when you’re a lightweight.”</p>
144	<p>I can’t stop looking at my body, cleavage popping, curves running, melanin radiant and exposed through the cutouts and the extra-high slit.</p> <p>...Olivia turns me around. “Look at that ass! Girl, you have to model for me someday.”</p> <p>...1. Maybe then I would feel more welcome in Black spaces. Hanging with Olivia makes me feel okay to show the parts of me that are rooted in my Blackness. Like, for once, I’m not trying to come out of my skin.</p> <p>...2. Maybe then I wouldn’t be so judgmental toward people of my own race, namely Carter. Because Olivia has this way of embracing and defying stereotypes all at the same time.</p> <p>...3. Maybe then I wouldn’t have let anyone call me an Oreo or say the N-word in my presence. Because Olivia is Black and white, all mixed up, but she still feels enough obligation to beat up racist white boys on the fly.</p>
148	<p>“Everything all right?” He glances at Olivia, but then his eyes fall right back to me.</p> <p>“We’re just a little tipsy,” Olivia says, laughing.</p>
149	<p>“Damn, Quinn!” Olivia laughs. “You’re such a lightweight.”</p> <p>I smile. It’s not the alcohol. I’m simply weak in the knees.</p> <p>...“What if they find out my ID is fake?”</p> <p>“They’re not even gonna look at it.” Olivia turns in the passenger seat. “You’re hot. You’re good to go.”</p> <p>...“You’ve gotten caught?”</p> <p>“They asked for my address, and I was so drunk that I messed up the street name. But I was like, ‘Oh, what does it matter? It’s not like I’m going home tonight anyway.’ Then I batted my lashes at the bouncer, and he let me go.” She shrugs.</p>
153	<p>I’m swathed in the smell of his shower soap, staring up at his kissable neck.</p>
155	<p>She smiles, hugging her chest against my arm. “We’re both twenty-two.”</p> <p>“ID and ticket?”</p>

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	Audacious, she cups her left boob and pulls both our IDs and paper tickets out of her bosom.
156	<p>“What do you want?” Olivia asks.</p> <p>“Beer?”</p> <p>She smiles. “How about shots?”</p> <p>“I don’t know.” I widen my eyes, feeding off her excitement.</p> <p>“Less liquid, more power,” she says, raising her brows. “Shots’ll have you dancing around here, screaming, getting naked.”</p> <p>“What?”</p> <p>She laughs. “I’m just kidding . . . sorta.” I laugh, too, glancing at the bartender.</p> <p>...When the bartender gets to us, Olivia orders four shots of tequila. She throws a stack of tens on the counter, takes one of the shot glasses, and downs it.</p> <p>...He and Carter step up to the bar, both of them grabbing shot glasses. I grab mine too. It’s a clear liquid in a tiny glass. No big deal. I’m just curious to see how much “power” it has. I try doing like Olivia and throwing it back all at once, but I’m no pro. I swallow it in three gulps, leaving the alcohol in my mouth for too long. It burns, and oh God, it’s nasty.</p> <p>Olivia rubs my back as I cough. “You did it! I’m so proud of you.”</p> <p>I smile, feeling the liquor warm my stomach and pulsate outward. Auden’s shot glass is empty, too, but Carter’s still holding his. He’s trying to convince Auden to take it for him.</p> <p>“Does Carter not take shots?” I ask in Olivia’s ear.</p> <p>“He’s our DD. He’s being responsible,” she says, smiling big. “You should go offer to take it for him.” She raises her eyebrows, mischievously.</p> <p>...“It would be so hot,” she says.</p> <p>...I take the shot from him, attempting to woo him with my steady eye contact, because, for once tonight, I feel confident enough to hold eye contact. He watches me, amused. I lick my lips, then slowly pour the liquor into my mouth. My cheeks fill with the disgusting poison, and my eyes water. I swallow it down, then scowl at the lingering taste.</p>
158	<p>“My play for what?”</p> <p>“Getting Carter,” she says, like it’s obvious. She flips her braids over her shoulder and pulls up the top of her strapless dress.</p> <p>“Getting him in what way?”</p> <p>She rolls her eyes. “Getting him in bed, duh.”</p> <p>I pull my lips back in panic. “I don’t—what? Are you serious?”</p> <p>“Oh. Are you a virgin?”</p> <p>I press my lips tight and nod.</p> <p>“So start slow. How are you gonna get Carter all up on your mouth?”</p> <p>I scowl. “I hardly know him.”</p> <p>She sighs, turning back to the bar. “I’m getting another drink. Want one?”</p>
159	Olivia gets her drink, shouts, “Let’s go!” then shoots it back. She turns to me, her expression showing exactly how drunk she is—the same look that’s probably on my face right now.
162	<p>Finally, the bartender makes it over to us. Carter leans forward. “Two shots of tequila.”</p> <p>“Make that four shots!” Auden shouts, pulling out his wallet. He throws money on the counter as the bartender pours four shots for us.</p> <p>...Auden ignores me, throwing back one shot and then another. I pour one into my mouth with my eyes closed.</p>

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	<p>...Taking tequila shots is easy when you're already drunk. I need to add that to my list of life lessons. Honestly, though, everything is easy when I'm drunk, except standing, walking, using the restroom, and talking coherently. I'm three beers and four shots in. I've gone to the restroom twice. I'm swerving when I'm supposed to be standing straight.</p>
163	<p>"Wow, you're really drunk." ..."I'm not that drunk. I'm not as drunk as Auden."</p>
164	<p>It isn't until the crowd sings along that I realize how much of a minority Carter and I are here. How most of the crowd is white, and how they have no problem rapping every word, even the N-word. I know that it's just the lyrics. I know they're not calling me the N-word, but every time I hear it chorused, I recoil. And I can't do anything about it. I'm not supposed to be, or even allowed to be, offended by it. My blood boils because I am offended by it. My skin slicks with sweat because I'm also scared. ...I know the N-word is slipping between their lips too, just like everyone else.</p>
165	<p>Carter sits on one side, Auden on my other. "What happened?" Auden shouts. Carter says over my head, "You see how those people look more like you than they look like us?" I squeeze my eyes shut at how good it feels to hear him say us. It makes me feel better, like I'm not alone, which just makes me want to cry, because if only I hadn't been alone at that party last weekend, maybe things would be different now. "Did you hear the lyrics and the fact that they were all singing along?" ..."I'll go get you some water." "Not water. Beer. Dos Equis." He fights a smile, but the smile wins. "I second that," Auden slurs behind me. "Y'all are crazy if you think I'm getting you more alcohol. I will get you water." ..."You know, Quinn, I'll never understand why white people fight tooth and nail to be able to say that word. I just don't see the appeal."</p>
167	<p>"I know from experience that there are places where that word is still used hatefully." I scrunch my eyebrows. "What do you mean you know from experience?" "My parents are from a tiny town in East Texas. The backwoods." He looks down to his hands in his lap. "When we visit, I have to sit through my family's racism." He looks back up. "It was particularly bad when Obama was president." I flick my eyebrows up. "I bet." "I don't think white people should say the 'friendly' version of that word, knowing that somewhere, someone is still using it as hate speech. Doesn't seem fair to Black people that every time they hear it, they have to figure out whether or not they're being insulted." ...I've never felt this seen by a white friend. I feel like buying him a gift. ...Auden and I cheer, snatching our beers from him. "Y'all are gonna be so messed up tomorrow," he says, watching us drink.</p>
168	<p>"We are not going back to my house," Auden says, pointing his beer at us. ..."I don't know that. Fear is dangerous. Fear kills Black men."</p>
169	<p>He's smiling, and I'm thinking back to what Olivia said about finding a way to get him "all up on my mouth." Then I'm leaning in.</p>

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170	<p>“Do you think it’s because I’m white? Maybe she doesn’t like white guys.”</p> <p>“She’s half white.”</p> <p>“That doesn’t mean she likes white guys.”</p>
179	<p>I’m reminded of how close I got to kissing him last night, how much I still really want to. I must still be drunk.</p>
182	<p>He glances at me with a smile. “You were wild. You kept begging me to sleep with you.”</p> <p>...“You were wild last night, though. You were all over me, talking ’bout, ‘Do you think I’m sexy, Carter?’ Trying to kiss me and—”</p> <p>...“Hush.” I scowl at him. “I was drunk.”</p>
192	<p>I can’t remember if he was Black or white. Maybe he was a racist neighbor who wanted to stop Black kids from going to school . . .</p>
197	<p>His eyes look like they remember we almost kissed a few minutes ago. I drop my gaze, because I don’t have the courage that I had back there, when it was raining and it felt like we were on our own little island.</p>
198	<p>2. Go to Houston and face my judgments about my own race.</p> <p>3. Talk to Carter Bennett about my dad and stereotypes and Oreos.</p>
200	<p>Then, reading my mind, he asks, “What are you wearing?”</p> <p>A surprised smile pops up on my lips. “Carter, that is so inappropriate.”</p> <p>“What?” He laughs. “Like you weren’t thinkin’ it.”</p> <p>I totally was.</p> <p>“Don’t play with me,” he says.</p> <p>“Why do you want to know? What are you wearing?”</p> <p>“Nothing,” he says.</p> <p>...“Nah, I’m wearing underwear and socks. Honestly, I don’t know how people wear entire outfits to bed. That’s too much fabric for me.”</p> <p>“I agree.”</p> <p>...“You agree? So, what does that mean? What are you wearing, Jackson?”</p> <p>“The same thing you are, minus the socks.”</p> <p>“Whoaaa,” he howls. “Shit.”</p>
202	<p>“I was there with Destany and Gia. We were outside, and Gia was venting to a whole group of people about a Black lady who had accused her of stealing at the Gap, which she had been.” I roll my eyes. “But while she was venting, she kept calling the Black lady the N-word.” I whisper it, feeling ashamed all over again. “And I just sat there and let her say it.”</p> <p>...“That’s not the worst part. After they realized I was there, Destany, my best friend, said to them, ‘Don’t worry about Quinn. She’s practically white anyway.’”</p> <p>...“I think I walked away without explaining because I was ashamed of myself. I mean, that wasn’t the first time they’d said racist shit, but that was the first time I realized they could be talking about me. You know what I mean?”</p> <p>“I know exactly what you mean.” He takes his time choosing his words. “I believe there comes a time when you have to learn what it means to have our skin. It’s like an awakening.”</p> <p>...“About how my white friends would think of me as an exception to their stereotypes?”</p> <p>“Yeah.”</p> <p>“I was about nine or ten, and my best friend, Derrick, was throwing a pool party.”</p> <p>“Uh-oh.”</p>

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	<p>“Yep.” He laughs. “You already know where this is going. He said that everyone was invited, but I noticed I was the only Black person on the guest list. I asked him why, and guess what he said.”</p> <p>“Tell me.”</p> <p>“He said, ‘I figured none of them would come.’ He was like, ‘Because Black people can’t swim, and doesn’t it mess up y’all’s hair or something?’”</p>
204	<p>“So,” he says, “panties and bra, or just panties?” I take that back. I am no longer comfortable.</p>
205	<p>I should not pick up my phone and text him: Only panties. But I do.</p> <p>...3. I imagine him in his bed, thinking about me in my underwear. 4. Which requires reciprocal thinking about him in his underwear.</p>
209	<p>“I see an amazing, smart, talented, beautiful Black girl.”</p> <p>“And when you look at other girls who look like me, is that what you see?”</p> <p>He frowns. “Of course, Quinn.”</p> <p>“Okay, so please explain what happened with Carter.” I lean into him with pleading eyes.</p> <p>“I made a mistake.” He shrugs, eyes unsettled. “I hadn’t slept in a while, and I honestly don’t think I’ve ever seen a boy who looks like Carter step foot in my house. Ever.”</p> <p>“So you thought he was trying to rob us?”</p> <p>He looks down at his hands in his lap. “I don’t know what I thought. But, yeah, maybe.” He looks up and meets my gaze. “But please don’t question my love for you and just how much I value you. I made a mistake with Carter, and honestly, it was a wake-up call. I need more Black friends.”</p> <p>“Have you ever had Black friends?”</p> <p>...“All I had were Black friends at Columbia. I was a member of the BSO. I’ve talked about this before.”</p> <p>...“Anyway, I need more Black people in my life. I didn’t realize, until now, how important that is. There’s something about having Black friends that makes you feel . . . whole.”</p>
211	<p>His eyes meet my gaze, and then he glances at my legs exposed in these extra-short shorts, and my cleavage in this low-cut tank top.</p>
212	<p>“I haven’t had a single Black person, outside of my family, in this house in years.”</p> <p>...“On this side of town, it’s hard to come by Black families. And this one,” Dad says, looking at me, “has only had white friends. That’s no excuse, of course. That’s probably my fault, too, when it comes down to it. Fighting off prejudices is a conscious effort, even for Black people, and I realize I haven’t been fighting for a long time.”</p>
217	<p>“I’ve let them get away with so much worse in the past, and now all of a sudden I have a problem with Gia’s racism?”</p>
219	<p>I filter through all the imaginary scenarios that kept me up last night. Every single one of them ended with us kissing. But the transition into that was always smoother than this. I leaned in, and he leaned in, and just like that, we were kissing.</p> <p>...“What do you want, Quinn?”</p> <p>“I want to kiss you.”</p> <p>...He says, “Okay,” and leans in, grabbing my chin. My heart stops. “So do it.”</p> <p>Then I make the mistake of looking at Carter’s lips. His lips are all I’ve wanted for the past twenty-four hours. Forty-eight hours. Hell, seventy-two hours. I find myself leaning in too.</p>

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	<p>His breath shakes out from between his lips, beating in light waves against mine. I lean closer, closing my eyes, brushing the tip of his nose with mine. ...And without giving it a second thought, I press my lips against his.</p>
221	<p>HOW IT FEELS TO KISS CARTER</p> <p>1. Like everything in me is rushing to my lips to get a taste of him, too. ...5. Like it doesn't matter if this is all a game, because I must be winning if I get to kiss him. 6. Like I really hope that this isn't just a game to him, because kissing him doesn't feel like a game at all.</p> <p>...His lips caress mine, softer than I thought possible. Then I press harder against his mouth, and he reciprocates. I feel breathless and weightless, tingles spreading all the way down, taking over my body. I push against him until he's lying on my bed and I'm falling on top of him.</p> <p>His fingers slide up my back, lifting my T-shirt so he can press his hands against my bare skin. I shiver, opening my mouth against his lips. His tongue slips inside. I've never been kissed like this. My list of boys I've ever kissed is extremely short and all occasions happened in elementary school, but Carter doesn't know that. And I hope he doesn't suspect by the way I kiss him back. I go with his flow, let him lead, dissolve into a bunch of sensory receptors and natural urges.</p>
222	<p>Then she throws her arms around our shoulders. "I'm so glad y'all are finally doing it." I pull from under her arm, standing up. "We only kissed." She gives me a look. "I've seen kissing. That was more than kissing."</p>
224	<p>I attach a photo that Carter snapped of us kissing. Then I press send.</p>
225	<p>4. Spread rumor that she only hangs with boys because she doesn't want competition for the dick.</p>
227	<p>He leans down, and like a magnet, his lips pull me in. He pecks me once, twice, three times. Then he pulls away.</p>
230	<p>Austin kind of shields me from that—the conservative, country, rural side of Texas. We drive past a sign showing support for Donald Trump. "Wow," Carter croaks, staring at the trailer house and the wooden fence, also holding an infamous "Come and Take It" flag, printed with a black rifle and a single black star at the top. "I'd love to live next door to them," Auden says sarcastically in the back seat. "Bad first impression," I say, glancing at Carter.</p>
237	<p>The way he kisses, he's had to have had practice. "Um. What about the seven hundred girls your sister was talking about?" He laughs. "First of all, that is a gross exaggeration on Imani's part. Second, those girls were just girls." "What does that mean?" "They weren't serious." "You used them for sex?" He narrows his eyes. "It was always a mutual relationship." "So they used you for sex too?"</p>
238	<p>He kisses me slow and deep, running his hands up the sides of my neck into the back of my hair, getting his fingers tangled in my coils, and it doesn't even bother me. I'm sure he's no stranger to Black-girl hair. I let him tip my head back as Brandy whispers through my speakers, singing beneath the sounds of our lips parting and rejoining.</p>

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	<p>"You should probably go. Huh?" Carter asks after a while.</p> <p>I nod, closing my mouth against his again, closing my eyes. He kisses me back for a minute, because it truly is the best thing in the world, and it's so hard to stop.</p>
250	<p>"Because I'm 'practically white anyway.'"</p> <p>She furrows her brow, then her eyes light up. "Are you serious? Because of that? That was just a joke, Quinn. I mean, obviously you're not white."</p> <p>"Obviously," Gia says, sneering at my dark skin.</p> <p>I take a step back. "A joke? You think Gia degrading that Gap employee's humanity by repeatedly referring to her as 'that fucking N-word' is a joke? And the second I thought you might tell her to stop, you denied my right to be offended, you dismissed my identity as a Black girl, and completely erased my voice in the conversation, all with just four little words. That was a joke to you?"</p> <p>"Quinn, you always blow this race stuff out of proportion," Destany says.</p>
261	Because I want to kiss him, but I need to know the truth.
263	I want him on my lips. But I know I shouldn't want that.
266	And he had me convinced that he somehow knew that my favorite music is '90s R& B, that he somehow knew how much I hate Vontae, and that he somehow knew about my usage of the term Oreo, but all this time it was because he'd read my journal.
272	"I have to get raw and naked with you." He hurries to clarify, "Not physically, but emotionally naked, like I forced you to get with me."
274	<p>She's telling Dad about the case she's working on right now, and he's listening with a glass of wine in hand, sitting on the floor.</p> <p>..."Quinn, baby, can you bring us that wine bottle that's on the bar," Mom says, motioning to the kitchen. "Oh, hi, Olivia."</p>
299	<p>"I find it interesting that two Black students were bullied on school grounds, and you don't seem to think anything can be done."</p> <p>...She turns back to Principal Falcon. "Here's the thing: two Black females were harassed under your watch by two white females, one of whom is being protected by a donor. This is a discrimination lawsuit waiting to happen."</p>
302	<p>"I never knew that the . . ." She looks down. "The race stuff, I didn't know it bothered you. I mean, we were all joking. And you were always different. We were never talking about you." She looks at me, tears pouring down her face.</p> <p>She doesn't understand that she can't talk about Black people without talking about me too. She doesn't understand that using the N-word in any context is never a joke. Not for me, it isn't.</p>
304	"I wish I had known everything so much sooner—Columbia, the racism, the blackmail. I can't believe you kept all this from me."
314	Unfortunately, I couldn't stop thinking about all those sexual fantasies you wrote about him.
338	I can't imagine only wanting him for sex and nothing else.
340	"I was a little surprised, but it was nothing compared to reading your sex fantasies. You put so many details in . . . you should write erotica."
342	"I want you to be able to celebrate our differences. I need you to be aware that our differences will get us different outcomes in life. And I need you to know that just because

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	<p>I don't fit into your stereotypes, that doesn't mean I'm any less Black." ..."Quinn, I was just joking about the 'practically white' thing." "But you understand how that's not funny? And how inappropriate that joke was in that moment? Gia was repeatedly using a racial slur, and that hurt me. That word hurts me."</p>
347	<p>He glances down at my lips, but then he looks away, exhaling. We haven't kissed again. Not since we started "building trust." We've both wanted to, but it hasn't felt right. The sour taste in my mouth still lingers, even after the nasty words have gone. It's taken a minute for it to fade back to sweet desire.</p>
352	<p>"Are you sure you're ready?" he says, looking down at my lips. "Yeah." I lean in. And at the feel of his mouth, I take a deep breath. Kissing Carter feels like I'm right where I need to be.</p>

Profanity/Derogatory Term	Count
Ass	20
Bitch	11
Dick	1
Fuck	9
Nigger/Nigga	2
Piss	10
Prick	1
Shit	46