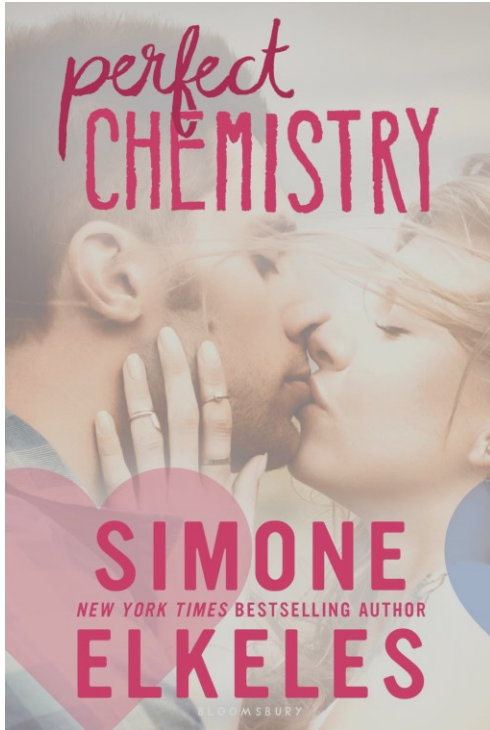


# PERFECT CHEMISTRY



*Young Adult*

**By Simone Elkeles**

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## CONTENT WARNING

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### Book Summary:

Two high school seniors with different lifestyles, fall in love.

### Summary of Concerns:

This book contains explicit sexual activities; sexual nudity; alcohol and drug use by minors; excessive/frequent profanity; derogatory terms; violence; controversial racial and social commentary; and alternate sexualities.

**3** /5

**Minor Restricted**  
BookLooks Review Rating

Page	Content
8	<p>“Alex wants to pretend he’s white,” Carlos chimes in. “You can change your name, bro, but nobody’d mistake you for anythin’ other than Mexicano.”</p> <p>...“Mojado,” Carlos sings, egging me on by calling me a wetback.</p>
10	<p>Her short black skirt shows off her incredible legs, and her shirt is tight, accentuating her small but perky chichis. Once I would have done anything for her, but that was before I caught her in another guy’s bed over the summer. Or car, as it was.</p> <p>...Carmen hops on my motorcycle and deliberately places her hands on my thighs while pressing against my backside. It doesn’t have the effect she was probably hoping for.</p>
16	<p>He holds me tight, kisses me lightly on the lips, and pulls back.</p> <p>...“Forget about it. Forget everything except being with me.”</p> <p>“It’s easy when you look so damn hot.” Colin kisses me again.</p>
19	<p>Paco had this crazy theory about cold water affecting white guys’ dicks differently than Latinos’.</p>
20	<p>The girl uses her smokin’ bod to manipulate everyone who comes in contact with her.</p>
23	<p>I hear most weekends Alex spends drugged out, passed out, or doing some other illegal activity.</p>
28	<p>Okay, so I shouldn’t have fucked with her on the introduction thing. Writing nothing except, Saturday night. You and me. Driving lessons and hot sex . . . in her notebook probably wasn’t the smartest move.</p>
29	<p>“This summer she went to the mall, bought new clothes so she could expand her wardrobe, and spent her daddy’s money on plastic surgery to enhance her, ahem, assets.”</p>
31	<p>She folds her arms across her chest, but then looks down as if she realizes her stance makes her chichis stand out, and drops her hands to her sides.</p> <p>I’m doing my best not to focus on those chichis as I take a step forward.</p>
40	<p>Darlene stands with her hands on her hips. “Well, that was until he called and said all the pledges in the fraternity had to sleep at the frat house for some crazy initiation thing. As long as Tyler’s penis is intact when it’s all over, I’m happy.”</p> <p>At the mention of “penis,” I search for my keys in my purse. When Darlene gets to talking about penises and sex, stand back because she never stops. And since I’m not one to share my sexual experiences (or lack thereof), I’m out of here.</p>
46	<p>Colin clears his throat. “We’ve never had phone sex.”</p> <p>...He’s a teenage guy and I know guys are focused on sex and fooling around. This afternoon I pushed away the feeling in the pit of my stomach when I read Alex’s words about having hot sex. Little does he know I’m a virgin.</p> <p>Colin and I have never had sex, period. Phone sex or real sex. We got close in April last year at the beach behind Sierra’s house, but I chickened out.</p> <p>“Phone sex?”</p> <p>“Yeah. Touch yourself, Brit. And then tell me what you’re doing. It’ll totally turn me on.”</p> <p>“While I’m touching myself, what’ll you be doing?” I ask him.</p> <p>“Choking the gopher. What’d you think I’d do, my homework?”</p> <p>I laugh. Mostly it’s a nervous laugh because we haven’t seen each other in a couple of months, we haven’t talked all that much, and now he wants to go from “hi, nice to see you after a summer apart” to “touch yourself while I choke the gopher” in one day. I</p> <p>...“Come on, Brit,” Colin says. “Think of it as practice before we do the real thing. Take off your shirt and touch yourself.”</p>

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52	<p>“Hell, I bet you my RX-7 you can’t get into her panties before Thanksgiving break,” Lucky challenges me, breaking my wayward thoughts.</p> <p>“Who’d want those panties?” I say.</p> <p>...“Every single dude in this school.”</p> <p>...“She’s a snow girl.” I’m not into white chicks, or spoiled chicks, or chicks whose idea of hard labor is painting their long fingernails a different color each day to match their designer outfits.</p> <p>...Before I can switch it off, I say, “In two months I could have a piece of that ass. If you really wanna bet your RX-7, I’m in.”</p> <p>...Little Miss Perfecta said she’d never date a gang member, but I bet no Latino Blood ever tried to get into those designer pants.</p> <p>...I wonder how hard she’ll fall on that tight white ass when I’m done with her.</p> <p>I hold out my hand. “Deal.”</p> <p>“You gotta show proof.”</p> <p>I take another drag of my cigarette. “Lucky, what do you want me to do? Pluck out one of her fuckin’ pubes?”</p> <p>“How’d we know it’s hers?” Lucky responds. “Maybe she’s not a real blond. Besides, she pro’bly gets one of those Brazilian wax jobs. You know, where everythin’ is—”</p> <p>“Take a picture,” Pedro suggests. “Or video. I bet we could make muchos billetes on that thing. We can title it Brittany Goes South of the Border.”</p>
54	<p>“I bet Alex my car for his motorcycle he can’t get into Brittany Ellis’s pants by Thanksgiving.”</p> <p>...“Brittany Ellis is out of your league, amigo. You might be a pretty boy, but you’re one hundred percent Mexicano and she’s as white as Wonder Bread.”</p>
55	<p>Somehow I think she’s used to those from her boyfriend and other assholes trying to get into her pants.</p>
56	<p>“If your fingers get anywhere close to my dick, I’m gonna personally shoot you in the huevos,” I growl through clenched teeth.</p>
57	<p>“I don’t have a girlfriend. You want to interview for the position?” I scan her from top to bottom, focusing on the parts she relies on so heavily.</p>
72	<p>Carmen is in the backseat, her eyes bloodshot from either drugs or alcohol; I can’t tell which. And she’s been messing around with whoever is back there with her, because I know all too well what Carmen looks like when she’s been messing around.</p> <p>...I can smell the mota radiating off her.</p> <p>...Carmen whips around, stalks back to the car, and slides into the backseat. I watch as she pulls Sam’s head toward her. The sounds of heavy kissing and moaning fill the auto shop.</p>
78	<p>Before we seal our plans with a kiss, Alex clears his throat in front of us.</p>
85	<p>If she can’t handle a little streak of my blood, how’s she gonna handle having sex with me? Unless we’re not naked, so she doesn’t have to see my various scars. Or if it’s dark, then she can pretend I’m someone white and rich. Fuck that, I want the lights on . . . I want to feel all of her against me and want her to know it’s me she’s with and not some other culero.</p> <p>...Should I tell her I was spacing out while thinking about us having sex?</p> <p>...That turned me on, because emotional chicks scare me.</p>

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89	<p>First, I need to stop thinking about getting naked with her in front of Miss Koto.            ...My hard-on is officially deflated.            ...“And don’t sweat about what lip gloss to wear on Saturday. You’ll just have to reapply it after we make out.”</p>
91	<p>I hug Colin and give him a kiss, a real one on the lips.</p>
92	<p>“No offense, but your mom is strange. She’s a hot MILF, but totally off the wall.”            I take my hand back. “Eww! Colin, you just called my mom a MILF! I’m completely grossed out.”            ...            “Your mom looks more like your twin sister than your mother. She’s hot.”</p>
94	<p>“I gotta go,” I tell him, leaning over for a quick kiss.            “Stay here a few minutes,” he says against my lips. “We haven’t fooled around in, like, forever. I miss it.”</p>
105	<p>Right now I’m standing inside the warehouse where the Latino Blood hang every night. I just finished my second or third cigarette—I’ve stopped counting.            “Drink some beer and stop lookin’ depressed,” Paco says, throwing me a Corona.            ...El büey can control his liquor about as well as he controls his drug use, which isn’t much.            ...“Just kiddin’, man,” a drunken Javier slurs.            ...“Paco, on second thought toss that Corona over here.” After I catch it, I down the beer and crush the can against the wall after it’s empty.            ...I’m reluctantly listening to Paco as I grab another beer.</p>
107	<p>Brittany’s got seemingly innocent, light blue ones you can practically see through. Will they be that way when I make love to her?            Shit. Make love? What the hell possessed me to think about Brittany and love in the same sentence? I am seriously losing it.            I spend the next half hour ingesting as much beer as possible.            ...There’s something not right here, but I can’t pinpoint it. And when Chocolate’s lips are on mine, I don’t care about anything except wiping Blue from my mind. Even if I remember Chocolate as being bitter.            “Sí,” I say when my lips separate from hers. “Let’s party. ¡Vamos a gozar!”            An hour later, I’m standing in water up to my waist. It makes me long to be a pirate and sail the lonely seas. Of course in the back of my hazy mind I know I’m gazing across Lake Michigan and not an ocean. But right now I’m not thinking clearly, and being a pirate seems like a damn good option. No family, no worries, nobody with blond hair and blue eyes glaring at me.            Arms like tentacles wrap around my stomach. “What’re you thinkin’ about, novio?”            “Becoming a pirate,” I murmur to the octopus who just called me her boyfriend.            The octopus’s suction cups are kissing my back and moving their way around to my face. Instead of scaring me, it feels good. I know this octopus, these tentacles.            “You be a pirate, I’ll be a mermaid. You can rescue me.”            Somehow I think I’m the one who needs rescuing because I feel like she’s drowning me with her kisses. “Carmen,” I say to the brown-eyed octopus-turned-sexy mermaid, suddenly aware that I’m drunk, naked, and standing in water up to my waist in Lake Michigan.            “Shh, let go and enjoy.”            Carmen knows me well enough to make me forget about real life and help me focus on the</p>

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	<p>fantasy. Her hands and body wrap around me. She feels weightless in the water. My hands go to the places I've been before and my body presses against familiar territory, but the fantasy doesn't come. And when I look back at the shore, the sounds of my rowdy friends remind me we have an audience. My octopus/ mermaid loves an audience.</p> <p>I don't.</p> <p>Grabbing my mermaid's hand, I start walking back to shore.</p> <p>Ignoring the comments from my friends, I tell my mermaid to get dressed as I pull on my jeans. When we're dressed, I take her hand once again and we weave through the crowd until we find a vacant space to sit among our friends.</p> <p>I lean against a big rock and stretch out my legs. My ex-girlfriend straddles me, as if we'd never broken up and she'd never cheated on me.</p> <p>...She takes a drag of something stronger than a cigarette and passes it to me. I look at the small, wrapped joint.</p> <p>"This ain't amped, is it?" I ask. I'm wasted, but the last thing I need is narcs in my system on top of the marijuana and beer. My goal is to be numb, not dead.</p> <p>She puts it to my lips. "It's just Acapulco gold, novio."</p> <p>Maybe it'll work to wipe out my memory for good and make me forget shootings and ex-girlfriends and bets of having hot sex with a girl who thinks I'm the scum of the earth.</p> <p>I take the joint from her and inhale.</p> <p>My mermaid's hands move up my chest. "I can make you happy, Alex," she whispers, so close I can smell the alcohol and mota on her breath. Or it might be mine, I'm not sure.</p> <p>"Give me another chance."</p> <p>Being high and drunk makes me confused. And when the image of Brittany and Colin with their arms around each other at school yesterday forms in my head, I pull Carmen's body closer.</p> <p>I don't need a girl like Brittany.</p> <p>I need hot and spicy Carmen, my lying little mermaid.</p>
110	<p>While Sierra and I are setting up blankets on the sand, Darlene is lagging behind with the guys, who are unloading stashed beer and bottles of wine from the back of Colin's car.</p> <p>"Doug and I had sex last weekend," Sierra blurts out.</p> <p>..."Yeah. I know I wanted to wait until we were in college, but it just happened. His parents were out of town, and I went over to his place and one thing led to another and we just did it."</p> <p>"Wow. So, how was it?"</p> <p>"I don't know. To be honest it was kinda weird. But he was really sweet afterward, asking me over and over if I was okay. And at night he came to my house and brought me three dozen red roses. I had to lie to my parents and say they were for our anniversary. I couldn't very well say the flowers were in celebration of his taking my virginity. What about you and Colin?"</p> <p>"Colin wants to have sex," I tell her.</p> <p>"Every guy over the age of fourteen wants to have sex," she says. "It's their job to want to do it."</p>
112	<p>Pulling her away from him, I lean close and say so only she can hear, "Don't fool around with Shane."</p> <p>"Why not?"</p> <p>"Because you don't like him like that. Don't use him. Or let him use you."</p>

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113	<p>I grab the bottle of Chardonnay the guys brought. The boys have been drinking beer and the girls have been drinking wine because Sierra hates the taste of beer. I bring the bottle to my lips and finish it off. I'm feeling buzzed, but I probably need to drink an entire bottle myself in order to feel completely carefree.</p> <p>...Colin takes my hand in his and leads it to his crotch. He lets out a slow, moaning breath. "Yeah," he says into my neck. "Lots."</p> <p>When I take my hand back, his arms snake around to my front. He squeezes my boobs like they're water balloons. I've never minded Colin's touch before, but now I'm annoyed and creeped out by his roving hands. I shrug out of his grasp.</p> <p>...I reach over and grab a beer. "It feels forced," I tell my boyfriend as I open the can and take a sip. "Can't we sit here without fooling around?"</p> <p>Colin lets out a long, dramatic deep breath. "Brit, I want to do it."</p> <p>I try and down the entire can in one gulp, but end up spewing out some of it.</p> <p>..."What can be more natural than doing it outside, in the sand?"</p> <p>"What about condoms?"</p> <p>"I'll pull out."</p>
114	<p>"Maybe I realized our relationship has to be more. Geez, Brit. Whoever heard of a senior being a fucking virgin? Everyone thinks we've done it, why don't we just do it? Shit, you even let that guy Fuentes think he can get into your pants."</p> <p>..."You think I'd rather sleep with Alex than you?" I ask, my eyes getting watery. I don't know if it's the alcohol making me emotional or if it's because his words hit the target.</p>
115	<p>"She's drunk," Doug says, eyeing the empty bottle and beer can beside me.</p> <p>"Am not," I tell them. I snatch another beer and open it as I walk down the beach.</p> <p>...Closing my eyes as the sand sinks between my toes, I breathe in the scent of the fresh, cool Lake Michigan breeze washing over my face and drink more beer. Forgetting everything except the sand and my beer, I continue walking, pausing only to look out over the dark water with moonlight shining across it like a line splitting the water in two.</p>
116	<p>Alex. He's here. Sitting in his lap facing him is Carmen Sanchez.</p> <p>...Another guy advances on me. "Don't you know this side of the beach is for Mexicanos only?" he says, moving closer. "Or maybe you've come sniffin' for some dark meat. You know what they say, baby—dark meat's the juiciest."</p> <p>...I stagger backward. I'm not too drunk to know I'm in danger.</p> <p>...The guy who I can't get out of my mind, no matter how drunk I am.</p>
117	<p>I notice his bloodshot eyes. "You're high, Alex."</p> <p>"Yeah, well you don't look too sober yourself. Maybe now's a good time to give me that kiss you owe me."</p> <p>...Kiss Alex? Never. Although I've been thinking about it. A lot. More than I should. His lips are full and inviting. Oh, boy, he's right. I am drunk.</p> <p>...Like how I want to know what his lips feel like against mine.</p> <p>"Fine. Kiss me, Alex," I say, stepping forward and leaning into him.</p> <p>...He's dangerous and he mocks me. But he's sexy and dark and beautiful. Being this close to him makes my body shiver with excitement and my head spin.</p> <p>...I throw up and heave again. Disgusting gurgling and gagging sounds come from my mouth, but I'm too drunk to care.</p>
119	<p>I'm alone . . . with a very drunk Brittany Ellis. I'm not used to being alone with sloppy-drunk white chicks, especially ones who turn me on. I can either take advantage of her and win</p>

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	<p>the bet, which would be a slam dunk in her condition or . . .</p> <p>“Let me get someone to drive you home,” I say before my fucked-up mind thinks of a million ways I could violate her tonight. I’m buzzed from alcohol and high, too. When I have sex with this girl, I want all my faculties.</p>
120	<p>So how come right now she looks so innocent? Sexy as hell, but innocent. All eyes are on me when I get close to my friends. They see a limp, rich white girl in my arms and they immediately think the worst.</p> <p>...“What did you do to her?” Paco asks.</p> <p>Lucky stands, totally pissed. “Shit, Alex. Did I lose my RX-7?”</p> <p>“No, dumbass. I don’t do passed-out chicks.”</p> <p>...Isa takes one look at Brittany. “What do you want me to do with her?”</p> <p>“Help me get her out of here. I’m wasted and can’t drive.”</p> <p>Isa shakes her head. “You do realize she has a boyfriend. And she’s rich. And white. And wears designer clothes you’ll never be able to afford.”</p> <p>...I’m too drunk and high to explain it now.</p>
122	<p>She snuggles up, using me as her personal pillow, her blond curls sprawled over my crotch. I close my eyes for a second, trying to get the image out of my head. And I don’t know what to do with my hands.</p> <p>...I hesitate. Who am I kidding? I’m not a virgin. I’m an eighteen-year-old guy who can deal with having a hot, passed-out girl next to me. Why am I afraid of putting my arm where it’s comfortable, right over her midsection?</p> <p>...She cuddles closer and I’m feeling weird and light-headed. Either it’s the aftereffects from the joint or . . . I don’t want to think about the “or.”</p>
125	<p>“You’ve got a hangover,” a girl says to me.</p> <p>...I vaguely remember drinking, then walking on the sand and finding Alex and Carmen together.</p>
150	<p>“To hand warmers,” I agree. And sex, I add silently.</p> <p>...Shit, is she gonna kiss me? I’m taken off guard here, which usually doesn’t happen. She bites her bottom lip, as if she’s contemplating her next move. I’m totally game to making out with her.</p>
154	<p>“I heard Samantha Jacoby was found kissing someone in the custodian closet on Tuesday.”</p>
155	<p>“Are you kidding, Brit? Alex does drugs before school, and in the guys’ bathroom when he ditches study hall. And I’m not just talking about pot. He’s into the hard stuff,” Darlene states like it’s fact.</p> <p>“Have you seen him do drugs?” I challenge.</p> <p>“Listen, Brit. I don’t have to be in the room with him to know he snorts or shoots up. Alex is dangerous. Besides, girls like us don’t mix with Latino Bloods.”</p>
158	<p>She cocks her head, gives me sad eyes, and pouts. I shouldn’t concentrate on her pouty lips, it’s dangerous. But I can’t help it.</p>
159	<p>“You can always strip and go in naked. I’ll watch to make sure nobody comes in.”</p> <p>She walks up to me, the pole gripped firmly in her fingers. “You’d like that, wouldn’t you?”</p> <p>“Uh, yeah,” I say, stating the obvious. “I have to warn you, though. If you have granny undies on, you’ll blow my fantasy.”</p> <p>“For your information, they’re pink satin. As long as we’re sharing personal info, are you a boxers or briefs guy?”</p>

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	<p>“Neither. My boys go free, if you know what I mean.” Okay, I don’t let my boys go free. She’ll just have to figure that out herself.</p>
163	<p>The first time we kissed was during a spin-the-bottle game at Shane’s house our sophomore year. We made out in front of everyone, Colin taking me in his arms and kissing me for a full five minutes. Yes, the onlookers timed it.            ...“I was remembering the first time we kissed.”            “At Shane’s place. Yeah, we sure put on a show for everyone, didn’t we? Even the seniors back then were impressed.”</p>
164	<p>“I hate to break the news, but I hear he’s gay.”</p>
165	<p>“How can you say that? Who took you to the hospital when you sprained your wrist? Who ran onto the field and kissed you after your first touchdown? Who came to visit you every day last year when you got chicken pox?”</p>
167	<p>Before I can think further, he eases my dress and bra up to my chin. I’m trying to get into the mood and convince myself my hesitation stems from my nervousness. “Did you lock the door?” I ask, filing my uneasiness into the dark recesses of my mind.            “Yeah,” he says, totally concentrating on my breasts.            Knowing I need to participate but having a hard time motivating myself, I feel him through his pants.            Colin lifts himself up, pushes my hand away, and unzips himself. When he lowers his pants down to his knees he says, “Come on, Brit. Let’s try something new.”            ...“I thought you locked the door!” I say angrily to Colin as I quickly pull my bra and dress back down.            ...“Brit, tell me the truth. Are those real?”            ...I hear him take a deep breath. “I’m sorry, Brit. I’m sorry I didn’t lock the door tonight. I’m sorry for wanting to have sex. I’m sorry one of my best friends thinks he’s funny when he’s not. I’m sorry I can’t stand watching you and Fuentes in Peterson’s class. I’m sorry I changed this summer.”</p>
173	<p>Getting drunk to drown my busted ego was a dumb idea.            ...The memory is a hazy one, but I remember Carmen in the lake, wrapping her body around me. And sitting on top of me by the fire as we smoked something much stronger than a Marlboro. In my inebriated and stoned ego-busted state, any girl would have felt good to me.</p>
176	<p>I wish her long, lean legs weren’t sticking out from her shorts. They’re a distraction.            ...So what if she has sexy legs?</p>
193	<p>“You think it’s a breeze being the man of the house? Shit, makin’ sure my mama doesn’t get mixed up with some loser or that my brothers don’t start shootin’ shit up their arms or smokin’ crack is enough to keep me here.”</p>
194	<p>“Do you want to kiss me, Alex?” I whisper.            “Dios mío, I want to kiss you . . . to taste your lips, your tongue.” He gently traces my lips with the tips of his fingers. “Do you want me to kiss you? Nobody else would know but the two of us.”</p>
195	<p>Brittany’s tongue snakes out to wet her perfect heart-shaped lips, which are now shiny and oh, so inviting.            “Don’t tease me like that,” I groan, my lips inches from hers.            ...“Mi vida, if I kiss you, I guarantee there’s gonna be tongue.”</p>



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	<p>She hesitates.            “I promise it won’t mean anythin’,” I assure her again.            ...But as her eyelids close and she leans closer, I realize it’s going to happen. This girl of my dreams, this girl who is more like me than anyone I’ve ever met, wants to kiss me.            I take over control as soon as she tilts her head. Our lips touch for the briefest moment before I lace my fingers in her hair and keep kissing her soft and gentle. I cup her cheek in my palm, feeling her baby-soft skin against my rough fingers. My body urges me to take advantage of the situation, but my brain (the one inside my head) keeps me in check.            A satisfied sigh escapes Brittany’s mouth, as if she’s content to stay in my arms forever.            I brush the tip of my tongue against her lips, enticing her to open her mouth. She tentatively meets my tongue with her own. Our mouths and tongues mingle in a slow, erotic dance until the sound of the front door opening makes her jerk away.</p>
196	<p>From the stern look on mi’amá’s face, I know she’s not pleased at catching us making out like there was a promise of more to come.</p>
197	<p>“My home is not a whorehouse.”            “Por favor, Mamá,” I say, exasperated. “We were only kissin’.”            “Kissing leads to making niños, Alejandro.”</p>
200	<p>Okay, so my boyfriend’s been acting pushy lately, interested only in sex.</p>
202	<p>I also want Alex. I can’t stop thinking about having him hold me again and kiss me until I’m breathless.            ...My gaze travels to Alex’s hands. Those hands that are now busy measuring the right amount of silver nitrate and potassium chloride are the same ones that traced my lips intimately.</p>
204	<p>“Since you came back from summer break, our entire relationship is about fooling around. We never talk anymore, and I’m sick of feeling guilty for not ripping my clothes off and spreading my legs to prove I love you.”</p>
205	<p>“I had sex with Mia,” he blurts out.</p>
208	<p>“Do you like him?”            “I don’t know. I never thought about him that way before, but being with him was kinda nice. How was the kiss with Alex?”            “Nice,” I say, thinking about how sensual it was. “Actually, Isabel, it was more than nice. It was fucking incredible.”</p>
214	<p>I would die for some of the guys in Latino Blood, but to move up? Selling drugs and guns are a few of the illegal dealings going on at the top. I like it where I am, riding the dangerous wave without actually plunging headfirst into the water.</p>
215	<p>Yesterday flashes before my eyes. The image of Brittany, her lips on mine, her sweet breath mixed with my own, is the only picture that lingers in my mind.</p>
218	<p>My eyes cling to his. “I think about you all the time, Alex. And I really, really want to kiss you again.”            ...Alex keeps his hands at his side, but when I part my lips, he groans against my mouth and his wrench drops to the ground with a loud clink.            His strong hands wrap around me, making me feel protected. His velvet tongue mingles with mine, creating an unfamiliar melting sensation deep within my body. This is more than making out, it’s . . . well, it feels like a lot more.            His hands never stop moving; one circles my back while the other plays with my hair.</p>

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	<p>Alex isn't the only one exploring. My hands are roving all over him, feeling his muscles tense beneath my hands and heightening my awareness of him. I touch his jaw and the roughness of a day's growth scratches my skin.</p>
222	<p>"Man, she was kissin' you like it was the last kiss of her life. If she kisses like that, I wonder how she—"</p>
229	<p>"Do I make you nervous?" His gaze travels from my eyes to my breasts and down to where my dress meets my thighs. "In that dress you do."</p>
230	<p>If I keep looking at her long legs I'm gonna have an accident.</p>
243	<p>"I see you dressed up for the wedding, Mario," I mutter. "Cabrón, monkey suits are for white guys," Mario says, ignoring the fact that my date is in fact white. "</p>
245	<p>"Forget about that and kiss me," I say. I weave my hands in her hair. She wraps her arms around my neck as I trace the valley between her lips with my tongue. Parting her lips, I deepen the kiss. It's like a tango, first moving slow and rhythmic and then, when we're both panting and our tongues collide, the kiss turns into a hot, fast dance I never want to end. Carmen's kisses may have been hot, but Brittany's are more sensual, sexy, and extremely addictive. We're still in the car, but it's cramped and the front seats don't give us enough room. Before I know it, we've moved to the backseat. Still not ideal, but I hardly notice. I'm so getting into her moans and kisses and hands in my hair. And the smell of vanilla cookies. I'm not going to push her too far tonight. But without thinking, my hand slowly moves up her bare thigh. "It feels so good," she says breathlessly. I lean her back while my hands explore on their own. My lips caress the hollow of her neck as I ease down the strap to her dress and bra. In response, she unbuttons my shirt. When it's open, her fingers roam over my chest and shoulders, searing my skin. "You're . . . perfect," she pants. Right now I'm not gonna argue with her. Moving lower, my tongue follows a path down to her silky skin exposed to the night air. She grabs the back of my hair, urging me on. She tastes so damn good. Too good. ¡Caramelo! I pull away a few inches and capture her gaze with mine, those shining sapphires glowing with desire. Talk about perfect. "I want you, chula," I say, my voice hoarse. She presses against my erection, the pleasure/pain almost unbearable. But when I start to pull her panties down, she stills my hand and pushes it away. ..."I. . . I'm not ready for that. Alex, stop." I move off her and sit back in the seat, waiting for my body to cool down. I can't look at her as she adjusts her straps, covering her body again. Shit, I went too fast. I told myself not to get too excited, to keep my wits when I'm with this girl. Raking my hand through my hair, I let out a slow breath. "I'm sorry."</p>
246	<p>"Stop sayin' that. Listen, no matter what happened, I'm not with you just to get into your pants. I got carried away with the way we clicked tonight, your vanilla scent that I wanted to keep inhalin' forever and . . . shit, I really messed this up, didn't I?"</p>

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252	<p>“Because the truth is too painful? I’m in a gang to protect you and my brothers, Mamá. You know that, even though we don’t talk about it,” I say, my voice getting louder to match my frustration. “It’s a choice I made a long time ago. You can pretend you didn’t encourage me, but,” I pull off my shirt, revealing my Latino Blood tattoos, “look at me real good. I’m a gangbanger, just like Papá. You want me to deal drugs, too?”</p>
257	<p>“No, it’s not. I grew up too fast, too. I didn’t even graduate high school because I got pregnant with you.” She looks at me, as if seeing herself as a teenager not that long ago. “Oh, I wanted a baby so bad. Your father wanted to wait until after high school, but I was going to make it happen sooner. All I wanted in this world was to be a mom.”</p> <p>“You regret it?” I ask.</p> <p>“Being a mom? Never. Seducing your father and making sure he didn’t use a condom, yes.”</p>
267	<p>I take a long drag, thankful for nicotine. I feel calmer immediately. Okay, so my lungs are probably shriveled up, but I have a good idea I’ll probably die before my lungs decide to quit on me.</p>
270	<p>“Very sexy, babe,” Sierra says, eyeing Doug’s Speedo.</p> <p>Doug is walking like a penguin, waddling while trying to get comfortable. “I swear to God I’m taking these off as soon as I get in the hot tub. They’re choking my balls.”</p> <p>“TMI,” Brittany chimes in, covering her ears with her palms. She’s wearing a yellow bikini, leaving very little to the imagination. Does she realize she looks like a sunflower, ready to rain sunshine on all who look down upon her?</p> <p>...I’ve never been in a hot tub before, and am not sure about hot-tub protocol. Are we going to sit here and talk, or do we break off into couples and make out? I like the second option, but Brittany looks nervous.</p> <p>Especially when Doug tosses his Speedo out of the tub.</p> <p>I wince. “Come on, man.”</p> <p>“What? I want to be able to have kids one day, Fuentes. That thing was cutting off my circulation.”</p> <p>...“You guys can stay in here,” Sierra says. “I’ll make him put the marble bag back on.”</p>
271	<p>My eyes roam over her kick-ass bikini-covered bod. “I’ll have you know I’ve been intimate with girls wearin’ a lot more.”</p> <p>She slaps me on the butt. “Behave yourself.”</p> <p>When her hands move over my back, I let out a groan. Man, this is torture. I’m trying to behave, but her hands feel too damn good and my body has a mind of its own.</p> <p>“You’re tense,” she says in my ear.</p> <p>Of course I’m tense. Her hands are all over me. My answer is another groan.</p> <p>...After a few minutes of Brittany’s mind-numbing massage, loud moaning, groaning, and grunting from the hot tub floats into the room. Doug and Sierra have obviously skipped the back rub portion of the evening.</p> <p>“Do you think they’re doing it?” she asks.</p> <p>“Either that, or Doug’s a very religious guy,” I say, referring to the guy screaming Oh, God! every two seconds.</p> <p>“Does it make you horny?” she sings quietly into my ear.</p> <p>“No, but you keep massagin’ me like that and you can forget about that goin’ slow bullshit.” I sit up and face her. “What I can’t figure out is if you know you’re a tease and are fuckin’ with me or whether you really are innocent.”</p> <p>“I’m not a tease.”</p>

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	<p>I cock an eyebrow, then look down at my upper thigh where she's parked her hand. She snatches it away. "Okay, I didn't mean to put my hand there. Well, I mean, not really. It just kinda . . . wh . . . what I mean to say is—"</p>
279	<p>I don't answer, because I feel Alex's hands around my waist and back and it feels so right to have him here with me. I think he liked me calling him my boyfriend, and it felt so good to say it out loud. I lean my back against his chest and close my eyes, letting the rhythm of the music and the movement of our bodies mold together.</p> <p>...After the picture is taken, he pulls me into his arms and kisses me.</p> <p>...His angry eyes meet mine, then he makes a big show of kissing the girl standing next to him. It's Darlene. And she's kissing him back with all she's got while he grabs her butt and grinds against her.</p>
283	<p>I agreed to do a drug deal and now I'm heading into upper-class suburbia for apparently no reason.</p>
285	<p>"Hear me out," Paco insists. "I've got the keys to the car in my pocket and I'm not goin' nowhere until I finish hittin' all of these balls, so you might as well listen. I'm not smart like you. I don't have choices in life, but you, you're smart enough to go to college and be a doctor or computer geek or somethin' like that. Just like I wasn't meant to hit golf balls, you weren't meant to deal drugs. Let me do the drop for you."</p>
295	<p>My mouth closes over hers. The smell of rain and cookies eases my nerves.</p> <p>My hand braces the small of her back. Her hands grip my soaked shoulders, urging me on. My hands slide under her shirt, and my fingers trace her belly button.</p> <p>"Come to me," I say, then lift her until she's straddling me over my bike.</p> <p>I can't stop kissing her. I whisper how good she feels to me, mixing Spanish and English with every sentence. I move my lips down her neck and linger there until she leans back and lets me take her shirt off. I can make her forget about the bad stuff. When we're together like this, hell, I can't think of anything else but her.</p> <p>"I'm losing control," she admits, biting her lower lip. I love those lips. "Mamacita, I've already lost it," I say, grinding against her so she knows exactly how much control I've lost. She moves her hips in a slow rhythm against me, an invitation I don't deserve. My fingertips graze her mouth. She kisses them before I slowly slide my hand down her chin to her neck and in between her breasts.</p> <p>She catches my hand. "I don't want to stop, Alex."</p> <p>I cover her body with mine.</p> <p>I can easily take her. Hell, she's asking for it. But God help me if I don't grow a conscience.</p> <p>...And may God strike me down right now because I want to make love to Brittany, not fuck her on my motorcycle like some cheap whore.</p> <p>I move my hands away from her cuerpo perfecto, the first sane thing I've done tonight. "I can't take you like this. Not here," I say, my voice hoarse from emotion overload. This girl was going to gift me with her body, even though she knows who I am and what I'm about to do.</p>
296	<p>"Are you going to do this drug deal?"</p> <p>..."I've got to," I say, my back to her.</p> <p>..."Didn't you know gang members deal drugs? It's part of the job."</p>
300	<p>"My boobs are lopsided."</p> <p>"They're big, Brit. Guys are obsessed with big boobs. They could care less if they're</p>

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	lopsided." ...“Come on. It’ll make you feel better. Look right in the mirror and yell my boobs rock!”
303	“I got to tell ya, interferin’ in your life is what keeps me goin’. Hell, even the beatin’ my old man gave me last night when he was shit-faced drunk doesn’t give me as much entertainment as your life.”
305	Her date will kiss her tonight, I’m sure of it. Who wouldn’t want to kiss those sweet, soft, frosted lips?
306	Enrique’s Camry is nowhere in sight, so I know Alex is alone. I’m going to seduce Alex. If what I’m wearing doesn’t capture his attention, nothing will. ...I open my long, silver satin jacket and the cool night air rushes onto my exposed skin. When the creak of the door alerts me to Alex’s presence, I slowly open my eyes. But it’s not Alex’s black eyes staring at my scantily clad body. It’s Enrique—who’s staring at my pink lace bra and pom-pom skirt as if he’s won the lottery. ...“I showed him what I was wearing under my coat.” Alex’s eyebrows shoot up.
309	“With your tongue in the water like that, actually, it’s erotic. Want another bite?” he asks mischievously, acting like the Alex I know. ... “Ouch,” he says, laughing. “You know, I heard once that kissin’ reduces the fire.” “Is that your cheap way of telling me you want to kiss me?” He looks into my eyes, his dark gaze capturing mine. “Querida, I always want to kiss you.” “I’m afraid it won’t be that easy, Alex. I want answers. Answers first, then kissing.” “Is that why you came here naked underneath that jacket?” “Who says I’m naked underneath?” I say, leaning close. ...“Let’s play a game, Alex. I call it Ask a Question, Then Strip. Every time you ask a question, you have to remove an article of clothing. Every time I ask, I have to remove one.” ...This time he lifts his shirt over his head. He flings it to the side, baring his bronzed, washboard stomach. I kneel next to him, hoping to tempt him and throw him off balance. ...“Did you ever have sex with Colin?” he asks. “No.” He takes off his right shoe, his eyes never leaving mine. “Did you ever do it with Carmen?” I ask. He hesitates. “You don’t want to hear this.” “Yes, I do. I want to know everything. How many people you’ve been with, the first person you slept with . . .” ...“That’s a lot of questions.” He hesitates. “Carmen and I . . . so, um, yeah, we had sex. The last time was in April, before I found out she was sleepin’ around. Before Carmen is a bit of a blur. That’s when I went through a year-long period where it felt like I dated a different girl every few weeks. And slept with most of ‘em. It was fucked up.” “Did you always use protection?” “Yeah.” “Tell me about the first time?” “My first time was with Isabel.”

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	<p>“Isabel Avila?” I ask, totally stunned.</p> <p>He nods. “It’s not what you think. It happened the summer before freshman year and we both wanted to get the virgin thing over with and find out what all the hype about sex was. It sucked. I fumbled around while she laughed most of the time. We both agreed doin’ it with a friend who you treated like a sibling was the worst idea. Okay, I’ve told you everythin’. Now please take that jacket off.”</p> <p>“Not yet, muchacho. If you’ve slept with so many people, how do I know you didn’t catch a disease? Tell me you got tested.”</p> <p>...“Do you ever think about makin’ love to me?” He slides off a sock before I even answer his question.</p> <p>...“Yes,” she answers. “Do you think about making love with me?”</p> <p>I lie awake most nights, fantasizing about sleeping next to her . . . loving her. “Right now, muñeca, makin’ love to you is the only thing on my mind.” I check my watch. I’ve got to go soon. Drug dealers don’t give a shit about your personal life. I can’t be late, but I want Brittany so damn bad. “Your coat’s next. You sure you want to keep goin’?”</p> <p>I slip off my other sock. The only things preventing me from being naked are my jeans and briefs.</p> <p>“Yes, I want to keep going.” She smiles wide, her beautiful pink lips glistening in the light.</p> <p>“Turn off the lights before I . . . take my coat off.”</p> <p>I turn off the shop lights, watching as she stands on the blanket and unbuttons her coat with trembling fingers. I’m in a trance, especially when she looks at me with those clear eyes shining with desire.</p> <p>As she opens her coat slowly, my eyes are fixed on the present inside. She walks toward me, then trips on a discarded shoe.</p> <p>I catch her, then place her on the soft blanket and settle atop her.</p> <p>...I ease her jacket open and lean away. A pink lace bra stares back at me. Nothing else.</p> <p>...“Is our game over?” she asks nervously.</p> <p>“It’s definitely over, querida. ‘Cause what we’re gonna do next is no game.”</p> <p>Her manicured fingers are on my chest. Can she feel my heart beating against her palm? “I brought protection,” she says.</p> <p>If I’d known . . . if I had any idea tonight would be “the night” . . . I would have been prepared. I guess I never wholeheartedly thought this would be a reality with Brittany. She reaches into her coat pocket and a dozen condom packages spill onto the blanket.</p> <p>“You plannin’ on makin’ this an all-nighter?”</p> <p>Embarrassed, she puts her hands over her face. “I just grabbed a bunch.”</p> <p>...Slipping the jacket off her shoulders, I know I’m going to hate leaving her tonight. I wish we could have an all-nighter.</p> <p>...“Aren’t . . . aren’t you going to take your jeans off?” she asks.</p> <p>“Soon.” I wish I could take my time and make this night last forever. It’s like being in heaven and knowing the next stop is hell. I slowly trace kisses down her neck and shoulders.</p> <p>“I’m a virgin, Alex. What if I do everything wrong?”</p> <p>“There is no wrong here. This isn’t a test in Peterson’s class. This is you and me. The rest of the world is shut out right now, okay?”</p> <p>“Okay,” she says softly. Her eyes are glistening. Is she crying?</p> <p>...“My body is yours tonight, Alex,” she whispers against my lips. “Do you want it?”</p> <p>“God, yes.” As we make out, I shrug off my jeans and briefs and hug her tight, devouring</p>

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	<p>the softness and warmth of her body against mine. "Are you scared?" I whisper in her ear when she's ready and I'm ready and I can't wait any longer.</p> <p>"A little, but I trust you."</p> <p>"Relax, preciosa."</p> <p>"I'm trying."</p> <p>"This won't work unless you relax." I pull away and reach for a condom, my hands shaking.</p> <p>"You sure about this?" I ask.</p> <p>"Yes, yes, I'm sure. I love you, Alex," she says. "I love you," she says again, saying it almost desperately this time.</p> <p>I let her words seep into my body and hold myself back, not wanting to hurt her. Who am I kidding? The first time for a girl hurts, no matter how careful a guy is.</p> <p>...I need to make this perfect. Because I may never get another chance and she needs to know how good it can be.</p> <p>I focus on her completely, desperate to make it special. Afterward, I pull her close. She nestles into me while I stroke her hair, both of us content to stay in our private world for as long as possible.</p> <p>I can't believe she shared her body with me. I should feel victorious.</p>
315	<p>"Everything's different now, Alex. We made love."</p> <p>"What we did was great. But it doesn't change anythin'."</p> <p>She stands, collects her clothes, and starts dressing in the corner. "So I'm just another girl you can add to the list of girls you've slept with?"</p> <p>"Don't say that."</p> <p>"Why not? It's true, isn't it?"</p> <p>"No."</p> <p>"Then prove it to me, Alex."</p>
316	<p>I attempt to hide Brittany behind me, but it's no use. Plain as day they can spot her sexy, bare legs sticking out of her coat.</p> <p>"What is he saying?" she asks.</p> <p>I have the urge to take my pants off and give them to her. If she finds out about the bet, she'll think that's why I slept with her. I have to get her out of here fast.</p> <p>..."I had to find out if Enrique was shittin' me. You really did screw Brittany Ellis, didn't you? Did you videotape it?"</p>
332	<p>"You and me . . . it was a game. I bet Lucky his RX-7 that I could fuck you before Thanksgiving."</p> <p>When Alex referred to our lovemaking as a "fuck," I cringed. Calling it sex would have left a bitter taste in my mouth. Calling it a "fuck" makes my stomach churn.</p>
337	<p>One night an American girl staying at the hotel brought me up to her room. At first I thought it would take having sex with another blond girl to erase that one night I had with Brittany. But once I was about to do it, I froze.</p>
346	<p>"I'm so proud of you, Douggie," Sierra says, throwing herself on him. They start making out immediately, not caring who's watching or about Fairfield's PDA policy.</p> <p>..."Get a room," another classmate calls out.</p> <p>But they keep kissing until music plays from the loudspeakers.</p>
347	<p>"He used me. He had sex with me to win a bet. And I still love him. Sierra, I am pathetic."</p> <p>"You had sex and didn't tell me? I mean, I thought it was a rumor. You know, of the untrue kind."</p>

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354	Our lips almost touch before he pulls away from me, but then he—
361	“Yeah, yeah, whatever. You’ve got flawless skin and a perky nose to match your tits. If I wasn’t gay I might be tempted to—” ...“Perky tits, scratch. Perky breasts, scratch.” He makes a big deal of crossing both those out. “Replace with . . . perky privates,” he says, writing each word down as he says it.

Profanity/Derogatory Term	Count
Ass	72
Bitch	15
Cock	1
Dick	8
Fuck	63
Mierda	7
Piss	24
Prick	2
Shit	89
Tit	2
Wetback	1