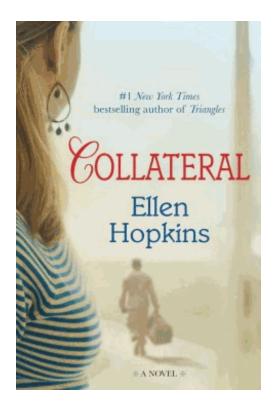


COLLATERAL



Adult

By Ellen Hopkins

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Book Summary:

A young marine and his girlfriend's relationship becomes stressed with his multiple deployments overseas.

Summary of Concerns:

This book contains obscene sexual activities; sexual nudity; profanity; alcohol and drug use and abuse; and violence.









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5	who, at age twenty-six drunk more liquor than most people in a lifetime.
	But those they leave behind, devoted shadows, understand that each booze-soaked night is a short-lived retrieve from uncertain tomorrows, unspeakable yesterdays.
15	Out of this apartment, and into the land of drunk living.
18	We chose an Oceanside hotspot, too busy for the bartender to give our fake IDs more than a quick glance. We ordered margaritas, found two seats at a table not too close to the speakers pounding base-infused music.
22	I wasn't exactly a virgin
	He said something about Don't Ask, Don't Tell, and though I verge on radical liberalism, and cringe at male posturing, when he said he had enough things to worry about without having to wonder why some guy was looking at him in the shower,
	Did a cheerleader or two out in the garage, too. The smell of motor oil is one heluva turn-on! Then he reached for Darian. Want to find out? I think Cole's truck needs rings. We could take a little drive. Ended Up
	We all went for a little drive to the beach. Cole and I left Darian and Spence inhaling motor oil fumes- and each other- in the backseat while we took a walk near the ocean's edge beneath a silver spray of moonlightTequila is good for eroding inhibitions and I didn't think twice about accepting his offer.
	Tequila also makes you say things you wouldn't say sober.
44	Sex? A nice warm body beside me in bed? Of course. That's pretty normal.
	Darian didn't much like her father, a hard-nosed rodeo cowboy who traveled the circuit and came home only enough to rest his horse, screw his wife, and try to corral his wild child.
	I have no idea where Cole and I would be today, if it wasn't for our friends hooking up that night, and staying hooked up for the next four days, until the guys' leave was over and the next phase of training beganSpence slept with Darian.
	So, while Darian and Spence disappeared inside her room, the door of which did little to muffle all the moaning and yessing behind it, Cole and I talked through the dark hours, toward daylight.
50	Bart heard rumors about her sleeping around. He followed her one night. Waited long enough for her to get naked and knotted up with another guy, then calmly blew out both their brains with his favorite .357 magnum.
	He started to answer just about the time Darian came stumbling down the hall in the kitchen, hair like an eagle's nest, and wearing nothing but a T-shirt that barely covered her crotchShe grabbed a couple of beers from the fridge.



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54	When I slipped into the hall, the place was silent except for the creak of Darian's bed behind her closed door. God. How many times could you do it in a twelve-hour period?	
56	You smell good. His lips brushed my neck, and it was like stepping outside in a thunderstorm- a hint of lightning initiating goose bumps in places both seen and hidden. I turned into him, and he lifted me, sat me on the counter. Wrapped my legs around his ripped torso, pulled me into him until the pulsing between my legs rested against the throbbing beneath his breast bone, zero between them but silk and skin. Swept away, unable to swim and barely finding air, I would have let him carry me into the bedroom, make love right then and there.	
58	That Kind of Foreplay Without follow-through is a huge turn-on. While Darian and Spencer spent the day following through, Cole and I wandered the hills of the San Diego zoo.	
63	He grabs for her, but she isn't nearly as drunk and easily sidesteps his reach. Fuck off! You couldn't get that teeny pecker up if you tried.	
67	Not true in Spencer's case, at least not if you're talking about cock size.	
68	I have to admit I got a kick out of Dar's "teeny pecker" comment tonight. "Teeny cock" wouldn't have had quite as much power, in my modest opinion.	
71	1 take three strong swallows of tequila, seeking courage.	
73	Not like I can live without sex, and no piece of vibrating plastic is going to cut it for me. I've slept with a couple of guys. I'm not as strong as you, and maybe I lack morals. I don't know. It's just every now and then, I need a warm body next to mine. I need someone real and strong and caring to pull me into him, hold me close, and tell me he lo-"	
74	Before Cole, I never understood the meaning of making love. My previous sexual adventures came in two categories. One: tepid fumbling- no play, no passion, no real point to the effort. Certainly, no orgasm, at least not for me. Or, two: overheated romps- no concern, no caring, no real connection. Lightweight orgasm, yes, and short-term fun, but nothing worth holding on to. Either way, I always ended up disappointed. Sex and love were two distinct entities in my mind, as separate as east and west.	
77	All Resistance Weakened All barriers lowered, when we got back to the apartment, Darian and Spence were hot and heavy through the door. They didn't waste a second, went straight back to her bedroom. Which left Cole and me alone in the front roomI slid my arms up around his neck, invitation heavy in the kiss I gave him. He lifted me as if I were weightless. Our lips never disconnected as he carried me to my room, eased me onto my bed. It was romantic. Sexy. And even sexier when he stopped, too, off his shirt. Marines have to be fit. But Cole was a whole different level of fit- every muscle chiseled and skin smooth as suede. I started to unbutton my blouse. No Let me. Please? I love how he asked permission, all the while taking complete control. I also loved how he didn't hurry. Each time he loosened a button, he kissed the skin beneath it. When my entire	



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> top half was exposed, his tongue explored it, inch by goose bum-covered inch. And by the time he unzipped my jeans, slid them off my quaking legs, my panties had soaked through. Jesus. Some things are worth waiting for, my California girl. The "My"

Took me over the top. In that moment, I wanted to be his, and so gave him things I'd always resisted. BD (Before Cole), oral sex had been offered, and received, with definite boundaries. That night, we exchanged it with abandon. I opened my legs wide, pushed his face in between, urged his tongue deep inside me, asked his fingers to follow. I let him bring me right to the edge. Stopped him. "My turn." He was down to boxers by then. BC, I'd been with a grand total of four men. And if I were to describe "size," I'd have to say three average, one little. Comparing breast size, three B-cups, one double-A. Cole is a C-plus, and while that didn't surprise me, neither did I expect it. They say size doesn't matter, but in my estimation, it makes things both problematic and sort of amazing. I quickly learned to relax my jaws, coax him inside my mouth little by little. It was intense, and all I wanted in those moments was to make him feel like the most important man in the world.

...SIZE DEFINITELY MATTERED

When he finally slipped inside me. If I hadn't been so wet, it would have been uncomfortable. As it was, he filled me up completely, a sensation I had never known. He flipped onto his back, pulled me on top of him. His eyes never left my face as he lifted my hips, slid me backward, against his critically hard erection. A gentle push and when my own eyes jumped wide, he smiled. There was no pain, but extreme pressure against that deep internal spot some people argue does not exist. It does; at least I definitely have one, and Cole was the first guy ever to find it. I am not a moaner by nature and, in fact, have always believed all real-life sexsqueals were put on, some sorry attempt at porn soundtrack noises or something. But, totally unplanned, unforeseen, and unbidden, a minuscule ah-ah-ah began in the back of my throat, grew into a steady ooooh as I climbed toward orgasm. It swelled into a small scream as I reached the plateau. A foreign place. Almost surreal, and he wasn't finished yet. A shift of bodies, and then he was on top, rocking fast and faster into me.

I locked my legs around his waist, lifting my hips to make him touch that elusive spot again. He took a long time. A very long time. We reached the pinnacle together. When our bodies were quite finished, still we stayed joined until we had no choice but to slip apart. Then Cole turned me on one side, urged me into the bowl of his body, held me there. Exceptional, he whispered into my hair. Extraordinary.

- 82 | grabbed some clothes, hurried into the bathroom to shower off the remnants of sweat-soaked sex.
- 83 He said he owed you. Darian smiled. He didn't say what for, but I've got a pretty good idea. Girl, I've never heard you, like, howl before! Then she laughed. My face ignited, but I laughed, too. Well, a little. They heard? "Compared to you, it was more like a whimper. But..." I never shared the details of my sex life- or lack thereof. But I knew she really wanted them at that moment. I didn't know what to tell her, except, "Cole is amazing." In more ways than one.





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84	But sex that night was even better because with the basics already accomplished, Cole and I made it all about nuance.	
86	The tall, serious one from Wyoming, who enjoyed staring me down with amber eyes and making me come, first with his tongue, and then the magic was only he knew how to do.	
89	I curl my legs under me, watch her refill our drinks. Glad I'm staying over. I'm fuzzy-headed and an artificial warmth snakes through my body.	
93	In that moment, what I really wanted to say was, "I'd tell him let's do it right here. And then, let's do it where Darian can't help but see us." Okay, the closest I'd come to doing "it" was actually enjoying my first kiss. So when I said, "I'd deep throat him and walk away," what I meant I'd tease my tongue down his throat, zero follow-through, because Dar was my BFF, and I'd never mess with that. I swear, I had no idea "deep throat" could mean oral sex, but it did to Darian.	
95	I sip tequila, relish the crawl of heatI'd be living in a trailer, chasing a pack of kids around while Carson sucked down beer. "He did like his Budweiser, didn't he?""If he was around all the time, I'd have sex a lot more often."	
100	We did manage some alone time, though. Sex, ever better, was my reward for patience, and "liberty" for Cole meant plummeting toward commitment for me.	
102	2 But those first weeks, Ativan fogged every morning.	
104	The wedding night was incredible, at least for Cole and me, who had our own honeymoon suite right on the beach, waves serenading us as we made loveWe were starved for each other, barely through the door before tux and dress fell to the floor in an elegant heap. There was nothing elegant about what came next, either. It was desperation, made flesh. He picked me up with steel-muscled arms, kissed me, bit me, licked me. Tried, it seemed, to swallow me. And I screamed for him to climb inside me and he did, with his lips and tongue and fingers- one, two, three. And then he filled me up with fire and stone and when he poured into me, I cried. Because I knew.	
105	When I confessed my fear and he made love to me the second time, it was tender, driven by tears. And he whispered into my ear, my hair, the plush skin of my breasts, my belly, my thighs: Don't be sad, Ash. As long as you want me, I will always come back to you.	
	Round Three Was the best one of all. Something to remember, for sure. For him. And me. Exhausted, but not close to satiated, we poured memories into the predawn hours, enough to last for the long months apart dangling in the horizon.	
118	To be fair to myself, it has been a few months since I've seen Cole, but I've successfully sequestered the thought of sex with him, or anyoneIn that moment, I wanted to fuck Mr. ClingerSome tiny, niggling splinter of me was desperate to fuck Jonah Clinger and all the rest of me believes that shard is a no-good traitor.	
119	Maybe if it was tequila I'd have half a chanceBrittany, who's all sass and easy sex, no desire for commitment, ever (at least until she finds someone actually worth committing to?).	



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	I can read my poetry out loud, but this is pure performance. Rhythmic. Bold. Passionate. Sort of like great sex.
135	The wise ask no questions, understand that a soldier battles fear with violence, masks the omnipresent scent of death with reminders of living- cold tavern beer, a hot pussy chaser. He harbors no illusion of love for the whore. She is expendable, unlike the woman who waits at home, pretending not to worry about such secrets.
137	That time, I caught Dad just-post-coitus, naked in the hall. Two drinks in hand, he was on his way back to the bedroom, where the other not- Mom person waited for seconds.
148	I finally settled on a turquoise sundress that showed off my legs and just enough cleavage to be tempting without shouting, "Hey, check out these babies!"
150	And then we were kissing, and we kissed without stopping until we really couldn't find air, and I was glad he was wearing his uniform because at least then everyone waiting for suitcases didn't think we were just plain horny or something. In fact, they clapped and one old guys whistled. "Careful," I whispered. "I think he just saw my panties." Cole tugged down my skirt in back and we laughed and kissed until his duffle came rolling around.
152	AFTER ALL THAT HURRYING Cole actually slowed us down. He stopped me just inside the door. Stay right there, where I can look at you. He sat on the bed, unlaced his boots, unbuttoned his shirt. His eyes never strayed from me once. Take off your dress. Slowly. It's been a long time. I want to savor every second. He watched as I slid the sundress up over my head. Very slowly. Working the tease as if I had a real clue what to do. I stood there, in nothing but my prettiest pair of thong panties. Turn around. Easy. Not too fast. Now, come here. I floated toward him, and when I got close to the bed, paused. He reached out. Touched my breasts with hands much too gentle for their size. Then they slid around my back, coaxed me forward, and his lips circled my right areola, sucked it like a baby might. Hungry. He sat me on his lap, his incredible erection straining against his pants, pushing his zipper into the thin strip of cloth covering my crotch. "Cole, I exhaled. "God, baby, I need you. "The statement was truth, and felt that way. He sighed, laid back against the quilt, loosened the closures on his camos. I kissed his eyes, his mouth, his neck, down his chest to granite hard penis, urged it into my mouth. I am no expert, but did all I could to bring him all the way off. He came very close, but stopped short. No. I jerked off this morning, twice in fact, thinking about you and what we'd do. Does that make you pissed? It shouldn't. I did it for you, because I want you to come before I do. Twice, in fact. He smiled. Took total control. And he made me come before he did. More than twice, FOR THE NEXT WEEK We had sex three or four times a day. Halfway through, my body ached, but I couldn't say no. Cole bordered on desperate. When I go back, I'll just have morning wood and my fist. I want to fuck you till I'm black and blue. I need to remember you. This. Pretty sure it was me who wore bruises. His muscles were concrete, and he gripped my arms as if he let go, I might try to escape. Not mean. Just determined. His eyes n



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	beautiful, beautiful Ash. It was cadence. Beautiful. Beautiful. Ash. I loved listening to his voice. After a while, orgasm was the last thing on my mind, but the rhythm of his voice kept me going.	
	And cognac. Lots of cognac. By the time we stumbled back into our room, took a hot (hot!) bath together, and fell into bed, I did not dream at all.	
	When he opens his mouth, the condition of his teeth confirms my suspicion that he is into much more than weed. Don't want to go down? I can take you up. Way up. He reaches into his pocket, extracts a small plastic bag. Asian ice. Pure as is it comes. One little hit keep you going for days.	
	But, oddly enough, rather than fortify my courage, the alcohol only bolsters my fearBy the time he gets here, a double scotch on the rocks is waiting for him.	
	We sit very close and under the table my leg is hooked around his. Touch is what we need to catch up on, not gossip about our family or friends.	
	I'm surprised you don't know. Darian was pregnant with Spence's baby. She got rid of it while he was gone. He only found out because they got drunk and she confessed the whole story, just to hurt him. It worked.	
	Could I have been so naïve as to construct my entire life around him, when all he really wanted was steady, easy sex?	
	Instead, I followed Cole through the door of the guest room. It wasn't makeup sex. It was "fuck me so I can sleep tonight" sex.	
192	He was so drunk, he could barely spit the word "ejaculate."	
193	Instead, he went straight to the bar, called for whiskey, neat. The double was already half gone when he plopped into the chair next to me.	
196	Skipped dinner and went straight to the motel for a couple of rounds of makeup sex.	
	Find my way back to the hotel, sober enough to walk a straight line, drunk enough not to worry about the creep who accosted me earlier.	
	He comes through and, without a word, comes straight to me, lifts me off the floor, sweeps me into the bedroom, throws me onto the bed. Anger may feed what follows. He rips himself out of his pants, lifts my shift, yanks off the bikini bottoms. His hands lace into my hair, hold my head against the pillow. He is inside me before he says, Don't you ever leave me like that again. Do you understand? He punctuates each word with a thrust of his hips. I lift my own, wrap my legs around him, open myself to accept his metered plunging. "Yes," is the most I can	
	manage as he drives the air from my lungs. The smell of rum and whiskey clings to him, and his face is sticky. I lick away the dried mai tai, stoking his building frenzy Too soon, we crest, hard, sticky wet, together. Too soon, but there will be an encore. And tonight, I'll sleep with him circled around me, one hand claiming my breast as his.	
	This time I make love to him. Long. Lazy. Unselfish. Giving. Ask me, that kind of sex is better than the kind you demand.	





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	I went to the bar, ordered well tequila. For some reason, the guy- Jaden- standing next to me noticed. Have you ever tried Trago? It's brilliantNext thing you know, I was drinking shots of the best tequila I'd ever tastedwith a gorgeous guy, so not my Cole.	
217	The Thing About Tequila Is it creeps up on you. Good tequila is even sneakier. Especially when you're totally enjoying the company of the guy who keeps pouring shots for you. He bought the whole bottleThe last thing I wanted to do was sit there, drinking alone, with increasingly drunk guys hitting on me"I should probably go and let you tempt some other girl with the rest of this tequila."	
218	Turned out he had regular fuck buddies.	
-	If I were a girl, they'd make me wet. As it is, they make me hard. We make the best of it, and the celebration continues with local mahi burgers, the last bottle of champagne, and Cole's crazy idea for dessert- banana cream pie, using our bodies as plates. I shudder to think what sort of magazine or movie might have made him come up with that. But I have to admit it's kind of fun, especially since I don't have to wash the sheets. The bed is a small double, and after we finish, we lie sticky (in more ways than one) in each other's arms.	
232	Are you hungry, or? We agree to the "or." It will be the last time for many months, so we take special care to make it memorable. I even wear my engagement ring, though I have to put it on my middle finger so it doesn't fall off. By the time we finish, exhaustion has claimed me- muscles, bones, brain.	
233	I put the pillow over my head. Inhale the darkness, pungent with the smell of Cole's sweat and our sex.	
234	Two soldiers stand back, let me look inside. A boy is chained there, on his knees. Naked. A huge Doberman is mounting him. And the soldiers laugh. "Bastards!" I run along the chain link, eyes in front of me. Suddenly, a German shepherd lunges at its gate. When I turn, I see it has something in its mouth. Red drool drips, and the dog bites down, crunching bones.	
264	You didn't marry Spence because you were pregnant, ri-?" Holy crap. This is so not the time to bring up her possible pregnancy. Besides, if they got married because of that, why would she have had an abortion?	
	I can't see the label from here. Alcohol to smudge the edges- the grunt wayDar nibbles a little, drinks a lot. Gin, it turns out. Not my favorite, especially straight, but I go ahead and join herI had an abortion, Ash.	
	By the time they took off for their hotel, the Jägermeister bottle was drained.	
302	I Have to Admit I've helped drain a lot of bottles since I met Cole. Not that I was even close to a teetotaler before we hooked up. In high school, there were plenty of postgame Friday-night parties. Keggers up in the hills. Jell-O shots at friends' houses whenever their parents took off for a couple of days. And, once Dar and I started school in San Diego, oh those frat parties. Weekend benders.	





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	Never did I imbibe to deal with stress. Never to help me fall asleep, dunk me deeper than nightmares could follow. Never ever to make me forget.	
303	The things they try to scrub from their brains, through self-medication. I've seen it too often at the VA hospital. But dope only masks their memories. I'm sure many of their significant others are much like me- we drink, too. We drink, playing hide-and-seek with the omnipresent fear. We drink to find a pathway to sleep. We drink to believe The Reaper cannot harvest us. To attempt common ground with our soldiers. We are too young, most of us, to go looking for hope in a bottle.	
304	But it isn't hard to find liquor. Some guys get it in care packages. They're not supposed to, but it comes, looking like mouthwash. And local moonshine is plentiful. We were drinking together at the time	
305	That night, I also saw him pop a pill. Prescription. Maybe his, maybe not. I couldn't see the label, but I recognized the ProzacGrabbed a little girl, like thirteen or fourteen. Gang raped her. Jesus, man. She didn't even have titties. And then, when her father tried to stop them, they up and killed him. The girl, too. Blew 'em away, left them bleeding in the street.	
306	Some guys can't handle it, and it's how they blow off steam. Anyway, some of those women ask for it, the way they wear short and all.	
340	Is an orgasm the same with every partner? Sitting here, buzzed, I imagine being with Jonah. My hand slips down between my legs where fantasy has made me wet.	
347	I'd been drinking more than I knew was wiseI didn't drink every day, didn't often drink to excess or binge.	
350	"But, if you get paint on your shirt, she'll really get mad," I coaxed. "We'll just turn them up a little." She let me, and the finger-shaped bruises on her arms were apparent immediately. I prodded one gently. "Does that hurt?" In answer, an obvious wince. "Are there more?" She trusted me enough to give a small nod. "Can I see, please?"She turned away from me, lifted her shirt. The bruising began in the small of her back, disappeared beneath the waistband of her jeans. It was dark. Fresh. "Who did this?" Her voice was mouse-quiet. Mommy. She's very sorryI went home. Popped a Xanax.	
352	I had a hunch Soleil's mom was using some sort of controlled substance. Crystal meth, maybe.	
397	His mouth roamed my body freely, and every time his tongue made me squirm, he gripped harder. His kisses were laced with lust. Only later did I question the stimulus of his passion. I don't know if I'll ever trust him completely, but I did in that moment. I had to. He was taking me places I'd rarely seen before, even with him. He plunged his face between my legs, driving into me with tongue and teeth and fingers until I begged him to stop. No. It was a growl. Give me your cream. I had no choice, he made me come, but then I pleaded for, "More. Fuck me." I'd never said those words before. Not to Cole. Not to anyone. He hesitated, and I	



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. ugc	worried I'd made him angry or turned him off. Not even close. He smiled.		
	Say it again. Louder. I did, and when I did, in a single strong move, he slide one arm under me, flipped me over onto my stomach, tugged me to the foot of the bed. He stood there, just looking at me, for what seemed like a very long time. Suddenly, he was inside of me, driving into me with animal ferocity. Wilderness, personified. There was lust there, yes. And moreIn one gigantic shudder, it was all released, right there in me. We crept up onto the pillows, covered our nakedness with quilts.		
	"Can I have a drink?" I don't wait for an answer. Tequila. And a lot of it. I pour a fat glass for me. "Want one?"		
405	"I knew, goddamn it. I knew she was using. Now they're saying it was drug related."		
406	I sip my tequila, relish the slow warm trickle down my throatOne more small taste, wishing the slender buzz could make me forget about her purpling back, the way she reached deep for courage, showed me the corded welts.		
410	We finish dinner, take it relatively easy on the tequila.		
416	Decorum Is my middle name, at least in public situations, sans alcohol and scaffolded with Xanax.		
418	I fixed him a plate, found him a beer.		
420	Bolstered by what I'd already said, emboldened by alcohol, still I calculated my words carefully.		
426	Twenty-two-year-old Chandra Baird was arraigned today, on a half-dozen charges, ranging from child endangerment to trafficking methamphetamine.		
435	The Party Goes Until the champagne is gone. Dad has been drinking right along with the younger crowd, getting sloppy and slurring and outright flirting with a few of the girls.		
444	Much easier when, buzzed and needy, you tumble into a familiar bed together.		
	The sex was muted. Low-volume fumbling. Satisfaction-free. At least, for meI was sick of playing passive. I wanted to try on the power role, and so I didn't crawl to one side of the bed and wait for Cole to make love to me. I pushed him backward into the bedroom. Dropped to my knees in front of him, unbuckled his belt, unzipped his jeans, slid them off. Watched him stir, helped him grow completely hard with my hands. Mouth. I brought him right to the brink. Stopped. Stood. Took off my own clothes. "Lie down. And don't move." Oh yes, I like taking control. I kissed my way up on top of him. Licked his face. His neck. His chest. I straddled him, pushed him in, rocking hard. Harder. Not enough, with him still inside me, I turned around, faced the other way, and that angle created exquisite pressure. I made it last as long as I could. We both howled.		
474	"I'm not sure I can deal with this pharm-free. Xanax is calling me."Instead, go take a pill. With tequilaI need order. I drink tequila.		
476	My stomach growls, but when I look at the beaten eggs, it kind of turns. Tequila might be better.		





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486	I really need to let it all go. And I'm starting with dark beer. We eat. Drink.	
	Drink some more.	
	Wow. I'm buzzed.	
	Darn dark beer. I think I should drive you.	
487	He reeks of whiskey, tobacco, and anger sweat.	

Profanity	Count
Ass	11
Bitch	4
Cock	3
Fuck	59
Piss	14
Shit	10