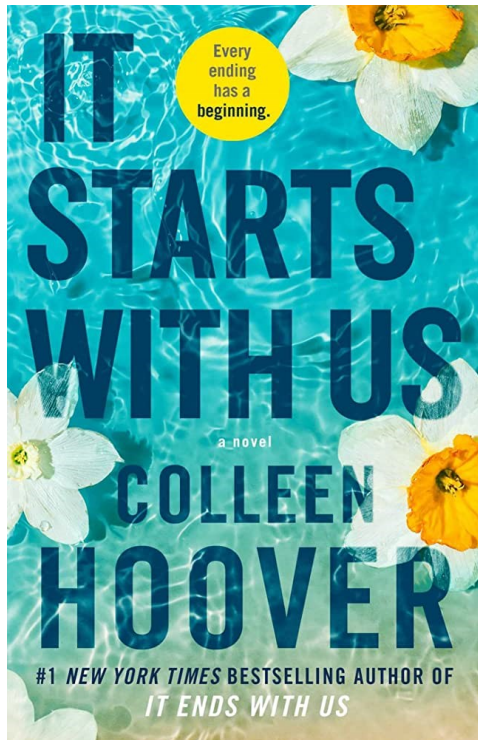


IT STARTS WITH US



Book Summary:

Two former teenage lovers meet again as adults and fall in love again.

Summary of Concerns:

This book contains obscene sexual activities; nudity; profanity; and violence including assault.

Adult

By Colleen Hoover

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CONTENT WARNING

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4 /5

Not For Minors
BookLooks Review Rating

Page	Content
41	He seems so at ease with this conversation, it makes me want to pull him back into the closet and kiss him so that maybe some of his assurance and patience will seep into me.
66	<p>“I think I just flashed you.”</p> <p>“You did, but it’s not something you should apologize for. I should thank you.”</p>
82	<p>He moved his fingers up and through my hair, and then he leaned forward and planted a kiss on my forehead. I was breathing so hard, I had to open my mouth to catch more air. I could see his chest moving just as hard as mine was. He looked down at me and I watched as his eyes went right to my mouth. “Have you ever been kissed, Lily?”</p> <p>...Then—almost as if I were made of eggshells—he lowered his mouth to mine and just rested it there.</p> <p>...His lips closed over mine and I could kind of feel his hand shaking. I did what he was doing and started to move my lips like he was. I felt the tip of his tongue brush across my lips once and I thought my eyes were about to roll back in my head. He did it again, and then a third time, so I finally did it, too. When our tongues touched for the first time, I kind of smiled a little, because I’d thought about my first kiss a lot.</p> <p>....He pushed me on my back and pressed his hand against my cheek and kept kissing me. It just got better and better as I grew more comfortable. My favorite moment was when he pulled back for a second and looked down at me, then came back even harder.</p> <p>I don’t know how long we kissed. A long time. So long, my mouth started to hurt and my eyes couldn’t stay open. When we fell asleep, I’m pretty sure his mouth was still touching mine.</p>
97	I’d probably kiss him, too, and pull him into the backseat, because no one has ever said such heartbreakingly sad things in such a sweet way to me before.
99	“Paris. Rome. London. I have no desire to sit on a hot beach somewhere. I want to see all the romantic places in Europe and make love in every city and take pictures kissing in front of the Eiffel Tower. I want to eat croissants and hold hands on trains.”
102	<p>“Of course not. I’m just feeling inferior after reading about our first kiss.”</p> <p>...He groans a little, like he already wants to change his mind about the kiss. The groan makes things feel a little more serious. He moves fluidly away from the car until he’s standing right in front of me. I press my back against my car door and look up at him, hoping he’s about to kiss the hell out of me.</p>
125	<p>Atlas takes the journal with one hand and then slides his other arm around my lower back and tugs me against him. Then, quickly, he steals a peck. It’s so soft and fast, it doesn’t even fully register that he kissed me until it’s over.</p> <p>...Atlas pulls me even tighter against him and then he lowers his lips to the spot near my collarbone where my tattoo is hidden beneath my shirt. The tattoo he doesn’t even know is there. He kisses it unknowingly, and then, sadly, he leaves.</p>
132	<p>And then he kissed me.</p> <p>Ellen, I know you’re an adult and know all about what comes next, but I still don’t feel comfortable telling you what happened over those next couple of hours. Let’s just say we both kissed a lot. We both laughed a lot. We both loved a lot. We both breathed a lot. A lot. And we both had to cover our mouths and be as quiet and still as we could so we wouldn’t get caught.</p> <p>When we were finished, he held me against him, skin to skin, hand to heart. He kissed me and looked straight in my eyes.</p>

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133	My father heard me in there talking to someone, and when he threw open my door and saw Atlas in bed with me, he was angrier than I'd ever seen him. And Atlas was at a disadvantage by not being prepared for what came next.
134	My father became revered for his heroic act—saving his little girl from the homeless boy who manipulated her into having sex with him. ...She just rolled her eyes and said, “Jesus, Lily. Did he brainwash you? He was a dirty, thieving homeless kid who was probably on drugs. He used you for food and sex and now you’re defending him?”
176	“She probably will as long as you refrain from saying anything cheesy, like, Look at the ships, let’s lock lips!”
178	He leans in and kisses my cheek, and I want to tilt my face just enough so that his lips land on mine, but hopefully I won’t have to be patient for much longer.
179	Atlas has never seen the heart tattoo on my shoulder—the one I got because he always used to kiss me there.
180	I wait for him to lower his head and press a kiss there like he’s done so many times before. I wait for him to kiss me. To press his mouth to mine in a silent thank-you.
185	Atlas silently soaks up everything I’ve said for maybe five seconds, but then he closes the distance between us and kisses me. Finally. Finally. His right hand curls around my waist as he tugs me against him, his tongue sliding gently and warmly against my lips, coaxing his way past them. His left hand snakes its way through my hair until he’s molding his palm to the back of my head. A spool of yearning begins to unravel inside me. He doesn’t kiss me with any trepidation. His mouth meets mine with confidence, and mine responds to his with relief. I pull at him, wanting his warmth to sink into me. His mouth and his touch are familiar since we’ve done this dance before, but completely new at the same time because this kiss is made up of a whole new set of ingredients. Our first kiss was made of fear and youthful inexperience. This kiss is hope
186	Starting with this kiss that we can’t seem to stop. Every time we pause to look at each other, we go right back to kissing like we have to make up for all the lost time in this one kiss. I trail kisses down her jaw until I meet her collarbone. I’ve always loved kissing her there, but until I read her journal, I didn’t know she was aware of how much I loved kissing her there. I press my lips to her tattoo, determined to make sure she remembers the good parts of us in all the future kisses I’m going to give her in this spot. If it takes a million kisses for her not to think about the scars that surround her heart tattoo, then I’ll kiss her there a million and one times. I press kisses up her neck, then her jaw. When I’m looking at her again, I slide the shoulder strap of her dress back in place because as much as I could stay right here for hours, I’m supposed to be taking her to a wedding. “We should go,” I whisper. She nods, but I kiss her again.
187	I didn’t know anyone there, and after finally kissing Lily tonight, it was hard to focus on anything other than wanting it to happen again.
188	I turn around just as she drops her shoes and starts to kiss me again. Picking up right where we left off, I guess.

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189	<p>I wrap my hand around Lily’s waist and pull her to me. When I kiss her, she tastes like the red wine she poured. I kiss her deeper to get more of that taste. More of her.</p>
190	<p>I haven’t had sex postbaby, and I haven’t had sex with Atlas since I was sixteen, and both of these thoughts start swirling together to create this monstrous invasive-thought tornado in my mind.</p>
192	<p>And then suddenly we’re kissing.</p> <p>It just happened, as if we moved toward each other at the same time. One of his hands slips around to the back of my head, and the other goes directly to my lower back, so low that his fingers are skimming over my panties.</p> <p>I wrap both my arms around his neck and pull him to me so hard, we stumble into a line of clothes. Atlas rights us again, but I can feel his smile in his kiss. He pulls far enough away from my mouth so that he can speak. “What is it with you and closets?” Then he kisses me again.</p> <p>We make out in the closet for a few minutes, and it’s everything I remember about all the times we used to sneak make-out sessions when we were younger. The desire, the thrill, the newness of doing things you’ve never done, or in this case, haven’t done in a long time. It reminds me of how much I loved being in a bed with him. Whether we were kissing or talking or doing other things, the memories I made with him in my bedroom are some of my absolute favorite memories. He’s kissing my neck when I whisper, “Take me to my bed.” He doesn’t hesitate. He slides his hands down my ass and grips my thighs, hoisting me up. He carries me out of the closet, across the bedroom, and then plants me onto my mattress where he proceeds to climb on top of me.</p> <p>The feel of him against me only makes me more desperate for him, but he treats this like he used to treat our make-out sessions. With patience and appreciation—like making out is enough, and that it’s a privilege just to be kissing me.</p> <p>I don’t know where he finds that patience, because I kind of want him to take off his clothes and treat me like this is his only chance to have me.</p> <p>Maybe he would if he thought that—but we both know this is just the beginning. He’s taking it slow because I asked him to. I’m sure if I asked him to go faster, he would do that, too.</p> <p>Considerate Atlas.</p> <p>We eventually come to a point where we have to make a decision. I have a condom in my drawer, and he probably has a little time before he needs to leave, but when we stop kissing long enough to look at each other, he shakes his head. We’re both breathing heavily, and a little worn out from being so worked up for so long, so he rolls off me and falls onto his back.</p> <p>He’s still dressed. I’m still in my bra and underwear. We never got further than that.</p>
194	<p>Atlas laughs, and then I feel him move closer. He kisses the corner of my mouth and says, “I don’t have to leave yet.” When he says that, his index finger slips beneath the hem of my panties, right below my belly button. He drags it back and forth, waiting for a reaction. I lift my hips, hoping that’s enough of a conversation.</p> <p>Every part of my body feels like it’s on fire when he slips two more fingers into my underwear. Then, when his entire hand makes the move, I’m a goner. I release a trembling breath and grip the sheet at my sides, arching my back and my hips up and against his hand. He brings his mouth to mine, but he doesn’t kiss me. He remains close to my lips, using the movement of my hips and the sounds of my moans to guide him toward the finish.</p>

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	<p>He's extremely intuitive. It doesn't take me long at all before I'm tensing around his hand, pulling his neck down so that I can kiss him through the end of it.</p> <p>When it's over, he slides his hand out of my panties but then cups me there, leaving his hand over me while I recover. My chest is heaving as I try to catch my breath.</p> <p>Atlas is breathing heavily, too, but I need a minute to recover before I can do anything about it.</p> <p>"Lily." Atlas kisses me gently on the cheek. "I think you..." He pauses, so I open my eyes and look at him. He shifts his eyes to my breasts, and then back at my face.</p>
195	<p>He kisses me and then leaves the room as if it's completely normal for a man to make out with a woman who is breastfeeding a baby that isn't even his.</p> <p>..."Lily." He can sense my embarrassment, so he reaches for me. "Come here." He settles against the couch and pulls my leg over his so that I'm straddling him. He slides his hands up my thighs, to my waist, and lets his head fall lazily against the couch. "Everything about tonight was perfect. Don't you dare apologize."</p> <p>...Atlas slides a hand around the back of my neck and pulls me to him. "Yeah, while we were making out. Trust me, I don't mind one bit." He kisses me after that, which might be a mistake because here we go again.</p> <p>It's going to be impossible for him to leave at this rate. I probably should have put on another bra, but I honestly thought I was going to the living room to tell him goodbye.</p> <p>...We're situated so perfectly, we don't even have to adjust to get the most out of this position. He groans during our kiss, and that just urges me on even more.</p> <p>One of Atlas's hands slides up the back of my shirt, and I can feel him hesitate when his hand never meets a bra. He pauses our kiss and looks me in the eye. I'm still moving against him, and the way he's looking at me is piercing my core. He starts to move his hand from my back around to my breast. When he cups it in his hand, that seems to flip a switch in him. In both of us.</p> <p>Our kiss turns feverish as I start to unbutton his shirt. Nothing else is said. We just frantically remove every piece of clothing left between us, and we don't even bother moving to the bedroom. We barely pause the kissing when he reaches for his wallet and pulls out a condom and puts it on.</p> <p>And then, as if it's the most natural thing in the world, Atlas kisses me while he pushes into me, and I feel every bit as loved as I did the first time this happened between us. There are so many feelings that come out in this moment, I'm not sure I've ever experienced anything so chaotically beautiful when we're finally connected.</p> <p>He sighs against my neck, like the same feelings are running through him. He starts to move in and out, slowly, kissing me gently the whole time. But several minutes later, the kisses are frantic and we're both sweaty, and I am so completely and wholly in the moment, nothing else matters to me other than the fact that we're together again, and it's right. Everything about this is so right.</p>
205	<p>"You won't leave her with me overnight, but you'll drop her off somewhere else when you want to get fucked?"</p>
223	<p>Her lips grin against mine. She's nodding when she kisses me.</p>
227	<p>I read through the barrage of text messages, knowing full well he was drunk when he sent them last night. The first one was sent at midnight, and the last one, from two in the morning, reads, have fun fucking the homeless guy.</p>

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241	<p>She raises an eyebrow. “When you say ‘hug,’ do you mean...”</p> <p>“I mean get naked—we’re down to fourteen minutes.” I push her onto her back and kiss her, and we don’t stop for fourteen minutes. Then seventeen. Then twenty.</p>
246	<p>He lifts my chin and bends to kiss me, then he backs away and returns to what he was doing before I walked in.</p>
249	<p>As soon as I climb out of the car, Atlas dips an impatient hand into my hair and kisses me. It’s the kind of kiss that screams I’ve missed kissing you.</p>
251	<p>He’s suddenly an inch lower and even closer to my mouth. He feathers his lips lightly across mine, sending fireworks popping beneath my skin. “Then...” He kisses the corner of my mouth. “I take a shower.” He pushes off the wall and backs away, his eyes locked on mine in a dare.</p> <p>He disappears into his bedroom.</p> <p>I’m inhaling a steadying breath when I hear his shower start running. I slip off my shoes and leave them next to his, then I follow the path he took down the hallway.</p> <p>...I pass over everything in search of the bathroom door.</p> <p>He left it open. His shirt is on the floor by the doorway.</p> <p>I don’t know why my heart is pounding like it’ll be my first time seeing Atlas without clothes. It’s not like I’m brand-new to this, or him, or even to showering with him. But every time I’m with him, it’s like my heart gets amnesia.</p> <p>I make it to the doorway of his bathroom, disappointed to see that his shower is hidden behind half of a stone wall. I can hear the breaks and splashes in the shower stream, and I feel a tightening in every curve of my body.</p> <p>I don’t leave my clothes with his. I stay dressed and slowly make my way over to the shower. I press my back flush against the long wall of his bathroom, and I inch closer to the shower opening, leaning my head in just enough to get a peek at him.</p> <p>Atlas is standing under the stream of water, his eyes closed, the water coming down directly on his face as he runs his fingers through his hair. I stay quiet and still and continue leaning against the wall while I watch him.</p> <p>He knows I’m here, but he ignores my presence and allows me to soak up the sight of him. I want to run my hands over the rise and fall of muscles across his shoulders, and I want to kiss the dimples in his lower back. He is absolutely beautiful.</p> <p>Once he rinses all the soap out of his hair and off his face, he looks toward me. His eyes catch mine, and they narrow. Darken. Then he faces me, my gaze falling, falling...</p> <p>“Lily.”</p> <p>My eyes move back up to his, and he’s smirking. Then, so quickly, he strides across the wet tile and yanks me away from the wall until I’m wrapped in his arms. He pulls me into the shower with him, and I gasp from the rush of it all.</p> <p>He catches my gasp in his mouth as he grips my thighs, pulling my wet-blue-jean-covered legs around him. My back meets the shower wall, taking some of my weight off Atlas so that he can free up a hand.</p> <p>He uses that free hand to unbutton my shirt.</p> <p>I use both of mine to help him. We stop kissing long enough for him to lower me to my feet so that he can slip the shirt down my arms. The shirt plops against the shower floor with a small splash just as Atlas’s fingers meet the button on my jeans.</p> <p>His mouth is hungry and back on mine as he slides his hands between my hips and my panties, tugging my clothes down one difficult inch at a time.</p>

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	<p>He grips the waistband on the sides of my jeans and lowers himself down my body as he works to slide them off me. Once they're around my ankles, I help him by kicking them off, then he places his hands on the backs of my calves and slowly works his way back up me. When he's fully standing again, his fingers gather behind my back at the clasp of my bra. My stomach clenches as he begins to unfasten it. His mouth finds mine again, but this kiss is gentle and slow, like the removal of this last piece of clothing deserves to be savored. I feel his hands slide to my shoulders, and then he tucks his fingers beneath the straps and slips them down my arms. My bra begins to fall away from me, and Atlas pulls away from my mouth long enough to admire me. His hand curves over my hip, and then slides over my ass, squeezing me.</p> <p>I wrap my arms around his neck and slide my lips across his jaw, settling my mouth over his ear. "Then what?"</p> <p>I watch as chills break out over his arms. He groans, and then lifts me higher up the wall until we're aligned at the waist. I roll my hips into him, wanting to feel him hard against me, and he meets my movement with a quick thrust, forcing me to gasp. It's obvious we both want this, but he still looks at me for permission before he takes me right here in the shower. We've had the proper conversations about my being on birth control, and both of us having been tested, so I just nod and whisper a desperate "Yes."</p> <p>I grip his shoulders tighter in an attempt to take more weight off his arms so that he can position himself to push into me. He uses his left arm to hold me up and his right hand to grip himself, and then he rolls his hips forward and up until I feel the pressure of him inside of me.</p> <p>He sighs into my neck at the same time I release all the breath in my chest. It comes out like a moan, and that sound encourages Atlas to get that noise out of me again.</p> <p>My legs are tight around his waist, but he thrusts against me hard enough for them to unlock at the ankles. I start to slip down him, but he hoists me back up and repositions himself until I'm filled with him all over again.</p> <p>I release another moan, and he rolls into me a second time, and a third time, and it may not be as graceful against a water-soaked shower wall as it is in a bed, but I can't get enough of the unruly side of him.</p> <p>He gives me that unruly side of him for several minutes before we're both too weak and breathless to continue this without the support of a bed. He doesn't say anything after he pulls out of me and lowers me to my feet. He just turns off the water and then grabs a towel. He starts at my hair, squeezing water out of it with both his hands, and then he slowly works his way down my body with the towel until I'm dry enough. He does a quick swipe of himself with the towel before grabbing my hand and walking me out of the bathroom.</p>
255	<p>Atlas lowers himself and we're no longer easing into these kisses. It's an immediate deep and hungry kiss that starts with the dive of his tongue and ends with him impressively reaching for a condom and putting it on without interrupting the strength of his kiss. Atlas grips the inside of my thigh and pushes my leg aside to make room for himself. Then he's above me, pushing into me, and he moves against me until I find myself in the middle of a beautiful falling apart.</p>
258	<p>I'm smiling as I roll off him and lay on my side. I snuggle into the crook of his arm and run my fingers over Atlas's chest, and then trail them over the ridges of his stomach. His muscles clench and twitch beneath my fingernails.</p>

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	<p>...“I don’t need compliments. You’re naked and in my bed. Not much else you need to do; you won me over years ago.”</p> <p>...He shakes his head, smiling lazily. He runs his thumb over my bottom lip. “Pretty sure I am filled to capacity. I think I may have even reached enlightenment tonight.”</p> <p>I keep my eyes locked with his, but I readjust myself, and then I slowly start to slide down his body. “I think I can still impress you,” I whisper. He releases a deep exhale when I press a kiss to his stomach. My gaze is still on his face, and I love that his expression begins to tighten while he watches me.</p> <p>He swallows when I start to move the sheet aside, until he’s no longer covered below the waist. His eyes darken. “Fuck, Lily.”</p> <p>He allows his head to fall back against his pillow as soon as my tongue slides up the length of him.</p> <p>He groans when I take him in my mouth, and then I prove him very wrong.</p>
260	<p>I can’t get enough of her, but I think it’s okay because she can’t seem to get enough of me. She woke me up this morning by sliding on top of me and kissing my neck. She ended up on her back seconds later with my mouth between her thighs.</p>
262	<p>“Yeah, but kiss me first. I taste better than I did this morning.” She stands on her tiptoes and I wrap my arms around her and lift her the rest of the way to my mouth. I kiss her while I walk her out of the bathroom and then drop her onto my mattress. I hover over her.</p>
271	<p>He cradles my head in both of his hands, and he tilts my face up to his and he kisses me. When he pulls back, he looks at me longingly, like I’ve already left and he’s already sad about it.</p>
299	<p>I had no idea you remembered that kiss, or all the times I kissed you in that spot after that day.</p> <p>...And every time I kiss you there, I want you to remember why I kissed you there the first time.</p>

Profanity	Count
Ass	20
Dick	2
Fuck	15
Goddamn	4
Piss	1
Shit	21