

PLAN A



Young Adult

By Deb Caletti

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3 / 5

Minor Restricted
BookLooks Review Rating

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3	<p>Oh my God. Or oh somebody's God. I wish he were mine, but the way people around here talk about God, he too often seems like the worst bad boyfriend—moody, mean, and impossible to please.</p> <p>...It's about a woman in the 1870s who gets raped and has a baby, and then her whole town basically ostracizes her.</p>
7	<p>My skin feels all exposed, because when you're in that aisle, the one way in the back, it's the aisle of disgrace, where you stand there and publicly admit that you had sex or are about to have sex or that you get your period or can't control your bladder.</p> <p>Past the adult diapers and the tampons and the pads and the K-Y Jelly and the condoms and the urinary tract whatever, there they are, the pink boxes. Pink says, These are for you, ladies. Not your business, dudes. I was hoping for a sale, because those things are expensive.</p>
10	<p>What isn't seen at all, anywhere: contraception a female can use. I didn't even notice this until my own cousin Savannah pointed it out when she and her family were visiting, bringing the news from another foreign land (Oregon). Apparently, there, even if she's underage, and even if she's unmarried, a female can just get birth control. Here, if you're not married before you're eighteen, you need to be brave enough to tell your parents you want pills or whatever, and they have to be brave enough to tell your doctor. But, hey, the dudes can protect themselves. With options, Savannah had said, pointing to the wide choice of condoms, purple foil, gold, red cellophane, ribbed, glow-in-the-dark, even.</p>
18	<p>Paris is a funny place for Mom to end up. Grandma Lottie, Mom, that whole side of my family—they aren't religious, and here, Christianity is as common as hot sauce. And just like hot sauce, it can either add a nice touch or be overpowering enough to make your eyes water. They've got us surrounded, Mom says, which is literally true.</p> <p>...Belief can be hard, though. Maybe especially here, because things keep wrecking it. Like Faith and Nate and the swearing, or the times during Mom's illness when Mrs. Euwing would say, Just give it to God. This was honestly confusing, in my opinion, since if we're going that route, he's the one who gave it to her. So giving it back—it's basically cancer hot potato.</p>
29	<p>I have "a bundle of cells" (according to some sites online) inside me, and it makes me think of the bundle of cells inside my mom last year, and suddenly, bundles of cells seem like the most important things on earth, even if you don't necessarily want them in you. Bundles of cells are life-or-death. It feels a bit like an alien invasion, something happening in me without my permission, full steam ahead, whether I want it or not, same as The Beast, which is what we called my mom's cancer.</p>
32	<p>He's wearing his softest pair of Levi's, and that American flag shirt that his dad gave him to help him fit in. Lorenzo's not sure how he feels about that flag. When you see me wear it, he told me, know I wear it ironically, which is something he shouldn't say to anyone else.</p>
35	<p>At school or soccer practice or something, and maybe we'd go back to our own home, and take our clothes off and get in bed together.</p> <p>...Except maybe that time the vice-principal caught him and his girlfriend Marissa in the stairwell, her shirt unbuttoned, thanks so much for telling me. I prefer not to think about Marissa (blond, pretty, her house on some horsey ranch—an actual ranch, wow, spotted on social media), given how close they were until he moved out here.</p>

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39	<p>You can tell, though, that there's more to her than her serious skirts and layered gray hair and sensible shoes. Last year she got in huge trouble for hanging a pride flag in her room—parents complained, and she had to take it down.</p>
47	<p>I can't even say it—abortion. The land is so flat here, the word might escape, roll across the ground, lift skyward and flow through every kitchen window, whispering and whispering. He doesn't grill me or ask a million questions or give me a million of his own opinions, which he has every right to do. He only says, "Your mom would let you, right?"</p> <p>... "Six weeks," he says. Abortion is against the law here after that amount of time.</p> <p>"Six weeks and, like, a day. At first I didn't even wonder about being late, you know? Who would even do it? It'd be a felony."</p> <p>... "Then we'll figure it out. I don't know how. I mean, look where we are." He doesn't mean this big field with an Eiffel Tower in the middle of it. He means Texas. "I would take you... wherever we needed to go."</p> <p>"Thank you. Really."</p>
52	<p>We're all connected like a rope, or a wire, intertwined, coiled, and this thought basically destroys me when I think about the bundle of cells and what could be but won't be.</p>
57	<p>"Is there any part of you that doesn't want to have the, uh...?" My mom trails off and then shrugs in a helpless How can I put this? way. "Procedure?" She can't say the word, either. "I mean, is there any part of you that wants to keep...?"</p> <p>"I know what you mean," I snap. "No. Of course not. No." The thought of it—my eyes squeeze shut again. I could be sick. My hands feel gross, and I wipe them on my shorts. It would be so wrong, and not just for me. No one should have a beginning like that.</p> <p>"Well, we'll go to Oregon. We can stay with Grandma Lottie. We'll do it there."</p>
60	<p>"I've seen a lot of life, Ivy. And this whole thing that happened to you a few weeks ago... I've done that very same thing, for the same reasons."</p> <p>"Really?" These are not things you want to visualize, but it's still a small relief.</p> <p>"More than once. I wish I hadn't. I wish you hadn't. But probably every female has experienced a version of this. You know what else? I get the uglies, too, when I remember those times." Maybe disappointing your parents isn't forever, because her eyes are soft and kind.</p> <p>... "Ives, I told you... this is not your fault."</p> <p>"I didn't even know you could get pregnant that way," I say.</p>
65	<p>"Haven't we had enough of her? Tess was a bimbo." Throughout this whole unit, he's become weirdly more and more aggressive, and I'm worried he's going to tell his parents about the things Ms. La Costa says in class. More than once, she's talked about men using their power to make "God" say things that serve them, like how they're the head of the household. She actually made air quotes with her fingers, which seems dangerous. People around here believe those things. And after the pride flag, she's probably on thin ice.</p>
67	<p>It could happen to anyone, right? Not if you kept your legs closed, not if you stayed a virgin. Being a virgin was all the birth control you needed, according to Jason Maxwell's dad and the leaders of City of Hope Church of God, Life Horizons Baptist Church, Fellowship Pointe Christian, and New Redeemer Christian. We heard them say this on TV and saw it in political pamphlets left on our doorstep during all the debate before the six-week abortion law came into effect. We needed to keep our legs closed, but guys could get condoms, boys will be boys, and this was confusing, you know, because a lot of the time, they were having sex with us.</p>

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68	Quentin Giles, no innocent himself, he who trails the smell of pot like that Peanuts character with the dirt—I can never remember his name—looks in the direction of Olivia and me and the stick, and he snorts.
74	Mrs. Euwing’s pride and joy—he’s had a reputation since elementary school for being the kind of guy who’s always talking about “tits,” and who draws pictures of naked girls in his notebook, and stares at your boobs, and gets “crushes” that mean you can’t get rid of him. ...He’d brush up against her and accidentally bump into her until she finally told him that her (nonexistent) boyfriend was going to make him regret it if he didn’t leave her alone. And then he moved on to Ava Surrey, and then to Brie Chen.
80	It’s weird because we said that to her, too, and there are these strange overlaps, the unwanted cells and the unwanted cells, each on the opposite ends of existence, life and death.
81	It’s hard not to think of the way people also celebrate those cells, the kind I have. Long for them and do every possible thing to have those very cells dividing inside of them. Of course I think about this. Of course I think baby, even though the word is embryo.
92	Telling them the truth will mean chaining my ankle to Drake’s and the whole Euwing family forever, because if this got out, they’d try to stop any abortion, I’m pretty sure.
96	“Yeah, congratulations for not using protection.” ...Because when they blame the guy, they say he got the girl pregnant, like on his end, the pregnant is the worst part, not the sex. When they blame the girl, she should have kept her legs shut, like the sex is the worst part, not the pregnant.
100	Mom’s sitting at the table with a bottle of Shiner beer, picking at the yellow label, and he’s sitting across from her, looking like he’s been to our house a million times.
102	She opens a second beer. She rarely even drinks. I had no idea we even had beer.
104	“I’ve been thinking. Thinking a lot. But after today... it just keeps pounding on me, how much has been taken from you. And, you know, I realized that this choice shouldn’t be. Your choice, what you want right now. I can’t even believe I’m saying this.” ...“I have choices, too,” he says. “Choice,” Mom says, like the word is sacred. “Choice is the thing.”
108	“If we’re choosing choice, we’re doing choice all the way,” Lorenzo says. ...Lorenzo kisses me. I forgot how good it is, just us doing this. ...Lorenzo, see—we haven’t even had sex yet. And I never have. Not the sex you see in movies like Rockaway Weekend, anyway. Two people in bed, actually in love and making love and wanting each other. I haven’t had anything close to that with him or anyone.
116	It’s strange, but we haven’t been kissing a ton since I found out. I worry about this, like maybe he doesn’t want me anymore, or want me like he used to. ...The old Ivy was way younger than I feel lately, and she was carefree and hopeful about all the great things that kisses could lead to. I miss it. I miss when things were just hot between us, and I hope it comes back.
121	“Right after I heard I had to have a biopsy, I stopped my birth-control pills. Just cold, out of fear. I’d been on them for years, and with the estrogen and breast cancer link, I was full of terror, and I stopped. I’d maybe missed three of them, four at the most, and I just figured, I don’t know. I’m old, too. The chances of getting pregnant at my age, practically in menopause... So Terry and I...”

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	<p>...“And when I later realized I was pregnant on top of everything else... cancer, an upcoming surgery, radiation... Terry gone, Terry, with his anger and his, uh, fondness for alcohol... I didn’t see any other choice. Not a choice that would be healthy for a baby, or remotely wise for me, or you both...”</p> <p>“Yeah, no.”</p> <p>“So I ordered some pills online. To induce a miscarriage. Ivy, I had an abortion, too.”</p> <p>...“Why can’t I just get those pills?”</p> <p>“It’s illegal now. You could get prosecuted. And I want you to see an actual doctor.”</p> <p>“Okay,” I say.</p> <p>“This is a health-care matter.”</p> <p>“Okay, okay.”</p> <p>“I just... I wanted you to know. It seemed wrong to sit here and hold my secret and pretend we’re somehow different. We’re two women, you know. We have bodies. Bodies that require all kinds of health care, Ives. Mammograms, antibiotics, sometimes chemotherapy. Sometimes an abortion.”</p>
130	<p>“Stoned 4 Survival,” he says, and looks at me as we pass a low-lying green building with a tin roof and a marijuana leaf painted on the top.</p>
131	<p>He mostly sounds like our friend Ian, the time Ian ate his brother’s pot brownie by mistake. ...Lorenzo kisses me. He pushes me up against the truck, but I worry we’re being watched in such a small place.</p>
139	<p>We’ve joked and told funny stories. I offered the one about me and Javier during PE, where we hid under the bleachers during a whole season of baseball and no one noticed, and Lorenzo told me some Lorenzo-and-Mateo adventures, a lot of them involving beer and horses and laughing so hard, they couldn’t breathe.</p>
150	<p>He kisses me. Boy, I wish we could.</p> <p>He pulls away. Gives my butt a squeeze. “Waiting is good, too,” he says.</p> <p>...I pinch his butt.</p> <p>He gives my hair a sexy tug. “Good night, Lorenzo.”</p>
154	<p>Alarm shoots up my body. Maybe it’s the two “honeys” or that I’m suddenly remembering that Peru is a mostly Catholic country, and remembering, too, a story we heard many times, about Esilda and Dave’s wedding, Catholic again, where the priest drank too much before the service.</p>
155	<p>“You can probably guess what I’m about to say. And the details might be, um, triggering, so you don’t need them. But this guy... He did a lot for us. For my family. Money, food, a job for one of my brothers. And so one day, when I brought this bag of clothes to his house for his son, some of my brother’s shirts my mom wanted him to have because we couldn’t give him nearly what he gave us, and he wanted to have sex... I don’t know. I thought I’d better. I didn’t want to cause trouble, to cut off the flow of help, to seem ungrateful. I tried to get out of it at first, shoved him away, because of, well, the awful details of him. His breath, his whiskers, his hangy neck, my disgust, my horror. But then I just did it.”</p> <p>...“Your mom tried to tell me that if he forced himself, if I hadn’t said yes, then he raped me. I couldn’t believe that or understand that, and I didn’t want to. That was not a fact I wanted for myself. And I hadn’t screamed or kicked or all the things you imagine with that word. It seemed complicated. It still does. When I ended up getting pregnant...”</p> <p>...I think I might be sick.</p> <p>“Are you okay? Is this okay for me to say? I might want to tell you this, but it’s your choice if</p>

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	<p>you want to hear it. We should have all the choices, every possible choice, when so much hasn't been our choice. For centuries, you know? Me, you, every woman, honestly—so much hasn't been our choice. Agency over your own body is, like, the smallest, most basic right.”</p> <p>...“We lived in Oregon, so abortion was legal. It was a different time—there wasn't this new wave of legislation happening everywhere. Your mom came with me. I didn't feel guilty or torn, in spite of my upbringing. I only felt nervous about people finding out, my family, especially. And relieved. So relieved! Your mom wanted me to tell my own mom about what happened, but I couldn't. I didn't want to risk what she might say. Where we're from, in Cusco, back then and still now—unless your life is in danger, anyone who gets an abortion can go to prison, same as a lot of places here today. Even if you've been raped—jail. Many of the women there don't even have access to contraception. Men have God-given rights, supposedly. And back then, too, where we were from? Women were even sterilized against their will. Held down and forced. An abortion... I couldn't tell them. And I didn't want my mom or my brothers to confront that man, either. I just wanted it all to go away. And right or wrong, that was my choice. And like your mom said to me then, and as I just said to you, that, at least, should be in your hands.”</p>
163	<p>“Is it my scintillating company?” Lorenzo says. “I never know if it's skin-tillating or sin-tillating.”</p> <p>“Whoa. Skin, sin.” I wiggle my eyebrows. I feel sort of embarrassed after I do it, because that's the extent of me trying to be sexy. Tonight's our first night in a motel together. Alone, the two of us, all night—I can hardly believe it. I'm nervous, but I can't wait. For a minute there, lost in the dream of it, I completely forget I'm pregnant, until the buzzing pain in the sides of my breasts reminds me. I unhook my bra and slip it through the sleeve of my T-shirt.</p>
164	<p>I lean way over into the back, and Lorenzo gives my butt a squeeze. Motel, skin, butt squeeze. I suddenly remember ninth grade, when we had to recite the Gettysburg Address, and Nate mistakenly said, Foreplay and seven years ago. Five hours until that motel—it sounds like a lot of hours.</p>
165	<p>When someone paints a cross/ positive pregnancy test on your locker, when you're heading across seven states to get an abortion, you can feel vulnerable, I guess. Like you're small and naked, wrong and bad, a target.</p>
179	<p>If this were a movie, there'd be a drug deal or a murder here, for sure, or we'd listen to the couple next door having sex all night, but instead Lorenzo just says, “I have to pee so bad.”</p>
180	<p>Images I've seen on those signs—the fetuses in the womb with their sea-creature tails and tiny paddle-finger hands—which are burned into my brain from protests and political ads and even that billboard in the desert on the way to visiting my dad. And there it is again, that longing. A longing for God, a connection to a larger goodness, something simple like that. A deep desire to love God and be loved back, a desire that seems more and more impossible. I'm just not sure I trust him when the people who claim him the loudest can be so cruel.</p>
181	<p>“There is something in the Bible that says, ‘Do not judge, or you, too, will be judged,’ though.” Lorenzo looks pissed. Any idea of this being a romantic or sexy night with me and Lorenzo under those sheets is gone.</p> <p>...I'm not angry at him and he's not angry at me, but we're both so angry in general that touching feels too kind and soft and loving. We don't even have to talk about it. He sets his</p>

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	<p>toes against mine at one point, and I have my hand on his hip at another, but neither one of us wants our first time together to be tonight, not after this.</p> <p>At around midnight the couple next door starts having sex, and the headboard bangs against the wall, just like you always see. One thing you can count on—if a couple is having sex in a motel in the movies, there will be another couple on the other side of the wall who isn't, and I guess this is true.</p> <p>What they never show—a girl on the other side of the wall, wondering if both people in that bed really want to be there.</p>
184	<p>He kisses me, because kindness and softness and love have returned. They're ours. No one can take them away, I think, though that kind of certainty in a movie means Watch out. Lorenzo tastes like chocolate and fake peanut butter. When the kiss is over, he leans back against the windshield, and so do I.</p>
196	<p>"I'd like to do you," I say, and kiss him. It's becoming pretty clear that the old Ivy, the one who wants him bad, is still here, all right. It's strange, though. I wonder if maybe I should be more traumatized about sex after what happened, and in my "condition." Like, in the movies I'd be crying or pushing him away instead of going right over to him and straddling him, like I do now.</p> <p>..."You have the cutest little ass." He grabs it. But then he thinks better of it and gives me a little shove.</p> <p>...I know we have to talk about this, because telling someone they're beautiful or getting an erection doesn't necessarily mean they want you, want you. I'm scared to ask, to even say the worry out loud, because if Lorenzo thinks I'm too wrecked to have sex with, he's going to break my heart.</p>
197	<p>"It's better than what's happening to you. And if people believe it's some guy from, I don't know, out of state, out of town, anything, the Euwings will never guess. Drake was laughing when he heard about me. He's not going to figure it out! It won't even occur to him. Honestly, why would it? You're not going to think a person could get pregnant that way. I didn't even think so. It won't be anyone's first thought, anyway. First thought is you, my boyfriend. If it's not you, they'll just think I sleep around."</p>
199	<p>"And hey, we should get away from this guy." I flick Mark Twain. "He thought that women voting was disgusting. He said the 'natural bosses,' men, should do it. For a lot of years, anyway, he was a big misogynistic butthead." It's another thing I suddenly remember from Ms. La Costa's class and the suffrage unit.</p> <p>Lorenzo stands up, like he's been burned. "Racist, too. What the hell was I thinking."</p> <p>As we head to the truck, without looking back, Lorenzo raises his arm and gives Mark the finger.</p>
205	<p>"Dwight would kill me if you two kids were messing around in there. He wanted one of you to stay with us, but I told him Ivy was always a good girl."</p>
212	<p>"Well, yeah, I got pregnant, but I had the baby."</p> <p>"Oh." Okay. Never mind the whole sea idea.</p> <p>"I'm not saying this to change your mind. I'm just kind of glad I caught you out here. What happened, as I said... I've never told anyone."</p> <p>"Was it Dwight?"</p> <p>"Before Dwight. I was just a few years older than you. I had this boyfriend, Mike. He didn't want to use contraception. He was religious and said he was against it, and that he didn't like condoms. He said, you know, he'd pull out. I don't know why I didn't stick up for myself.</p>

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	<p>He was just moody and kind of controlling, and I just went along. And then..."</p> <p>She shakes her head. Looks off into the star blanket.</p> <p>"You got pregnant."</p> <p>"And he didn't want me to have an abortion. He forbid it. Forbade it, whatever. I went to this clinic anyway. But in Utah—you have to get counseling, you know?"</p> <p>I shrug. I have no idea.</p> <p>"Yeah. Counseling to discourage you from getting an abortion, and then you have to wait seventy-two hours before going back. For me... To go back there again, to stand up for what I wanted—it was too much. I was legally an adult, but I just couldn't do it. I could barely talk back to my mother, you know? And Mike said he'd be around to help."</p> <p>"And he wasn't?"</p>
221	<p>Lorenzo could be at home, having a great summer, hanging out at the pool or something, not going on a weeks-long trip to help his pregnant girlfriend get an abortion. Not doing something illegal, and taking on a responsibility and a reputation that aren't his.</p>
224	<p>I picture this bundle of cells inside of me gone, too, but I also picture my right to do this gone, narrowing until it disappears altogether. My right, my choice, buried by a lava that is inching out in every direction, with a wave of girls and women running to the coasts before they're buried, like in those movies about an apocalypse.</p>
235	<p>I trail my hand under Lorenzo's T-shirt, and then he trails his hand up mine, and then we are kissing softly, and then not softly at all, and Lorenzo puts his hand between my legs, and I tug him so he'll get on top of me.</p> <p>I scoot out of my shorts and underwear and grab the elastic of his and yank down. It's gotten so hot, I toss the covers off, and Lorenzo scoots the rest of the way out of his shorts, his bare ass up to the sky.</p> <p>"Are you sure?" he whispers.</p> <p>"Yes, I'm sure. I'm so sure. Are you? I sometimes worry you don't want—"</p> <p>He interrupts me with a kiss. "Oh, Ivy, I want. If it ever seemed like that, I was just worried that you might not want to, after—"</p> <p>Now I interrupt him with a kiss. I thought we needed to have some big talk, but it turns out we don't. He cared about me, I cared about him; that's what was going on. And he's still caring about me. He leans over to rummage in the pocket of his shorts for a condom, because protection means all protection.</p> <p>"You're okay?" he asks.</p> <p>"I'm so okay," I say. "I'm great." I don't want to even think about bad things. I just want to be with him, here. I'm the old Ivy, the new Ivy, the right-this-minute Ivy. He's making me impatient with all this talking. I wrap my legs around him and pull him toward me.</p> <p>And there, that night, in the real Bliss, I have sex—sex that I want and with a guy I love—for the first time.</p>
239	<p>"Wow again," Lorenzo says, but his rumpled self means me this time. He's staring at me like I'm a fine sight. Sometimes I don't want to be wow, I just want to be me, but I kiss him anyway.</p> <p>...Last night I had sex for the first time, or what felt like sex for the first time, miraculous and plain old nature also, with someone I love, always miraculous.</p>
242	<p>I'm learning something new about Lorenzo—high levels of frustration cause him to snap and huff and swear, though maybe this only comes when his pregnant girlfriend is racing to get an abortion as his father closes in on them.</p>

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248	I saw his firm belief that abortion is wrong, and how he wants to stop mine. But I didn't see the guy, a real guy, who knows Lorenzo so well that he can look at a map and pinpoint exactly where his son would stop. I didn't see their relationship, their conversations.
251	These human pieces of Mr. Bastimentos are hard to take. It was easier when I thought of him only as a rabid antiabortion dude, like all the others. Ugh! Easy assumptions and judgments go both ways, and, God, I hate when things go both ways.
253	<p>"Was it that girl Patty? The one you had sex with for the first time?"</p> <p>"Nah. Patty didn't mean anything to me. This was someone I loved. Like I said, I've never even mentioned her name. Too painful. But... Rosemary."</p> <p>...Three people are here discussing something I should do with my entire life, three people are here discussing my pregnancy, which means we are discussing what happened because a guy stuck his penis near enough my vagina for sperm to make their unwanted journey to my egg.</p> <p>..."She just understood me like no one else ever has. She had these bright eyes, and the softest skin, and this pure, sweet singing voice—she was in choir. Always got the solos because she sung like an angel. We were in love. Like you two are. I had a, um, condom, but we got, uh, carried away. When she got pregnant... I wanted to get married. I would have, in a second. Her parents, though. Her mom and dad—they pushed her to get an abortion. Pushed, I mean, they told her that's what she was going to do. Her dad and her mom—there was no discussion."</p> <p>"What did she want to do?" Lorenzo asks.</p> <p>"I don't even know. They wouldn't let me talk to her. I tried. I tried everything I could. I had no say. I had no choice."</p>
254	<p>I even get how a story of choice can be the reverse of what we expect—a girl being told by her parents that she would not have a baby, because who knows what Rosemary wanted. Choice, choices, all the ones a person could make for themselves—respect goes both ways.</p> <p>...It's Patty, the other girl he had sex with, the one who didn't matter.</p> <p>Right then, right then... I see it all with such clarity. Why does it suddenly seem like there's a sea of abortion stories? Because there's always been a sea of stories about women and sex. Stories about women and the choices they make, and don't make—those, too.</p> <p>...I'll be his Patty, I'll be their Tess, their Bethany "B.J." Grigg. I'll be the slut, the one who sleeps around, the one who is condemned and then discarded.</p> <p>...I'll be the slutty slut, I don't care. I choose it. I want to stand right there with Tess, with Patty.</p>
257	How I thought we were headed to the back parking lot where Mr. Smiley was and where Drake would be picked up because he couldn't even drive yet, but how he yanked me toward the baseball fields. How he backed me up against the chain-link fence and started kissing me, gross, gross, and I just went along because Drake said some laughable, ridiculous thing, like I'll give you something to remember me by, which meant this was the end of it, thank God. How he had somehow already unzipped his pants, and his penis was out, and he jammed my hand on it, gross, his hip bone locked hard against me. How I gave him a little shove and said, Drake! but he was panting hard, so I thought, fine, whatever, just get this over with, he's going to come any minute, I could tell, because he sounded just like Caleb when we fooled around once or twice. How I thought, this is going to be over with, just get through it, and then I can leave and forget all about this humiliating experience and still keep my job, but how he stuck his penis through the leg of my underwear, up against me,

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	<p>not in me, and in seconds, seriously seconds, I felt the wet stickiness all over me. How Drake said, That was awesome, and how embarrassed and ashamed I felt, God.</p> <p>...How, when I got home, I did the thing you see in the movies where a girl washes her hands over and over again. How I used a washcloth between my legs but got in the shower, too. How the uglies descended while the water poured over me. How I'd finally managed to shove it all into a corner of my brain, when my period was late and I couldn't even imagine why. How I looked up Can you get pregnant without having sex? How it said, yes, yes, yes, but it was difficult, though easier if you were young.</p>
262	<p>I don't see how cute he is right then, or how sweet, or how thoughtful. I see him as part of Gene/ Bob Euwing/ Jason Maxwell/ Drake/ Dwight/ Terry/ church leader dudes/ senator dudes.</p>
263	<p>"The girl he had sex with, the one who didn't matter."</p>
266	<p>Lorenzo puts his hands on either side of my face. "Abortion road trip love story," he says.</p>
267	<p>"Abortion road trip love story," I say. And, hey, I don't crumble into a pile of dust. Look at that. Abortion—I'm still here. Abortion, abortion, so are one in four women.</p>
276	<p>God, summer is just so great when you can forget you're pregnant and on a road trip to get an abortion that's illegal in your state.</p>
280	<p>"The great-great-grandma in the fur?"</p> <p>"Yeah. That's Mary. Grandma Lottie's grandma. Do you know anything about her?"</p> <p>"Not really. Only that she married a lot. Three times, like you said. That's about it."</p> <p>"Well, I'll tell you something else about her." Aunt Betts pauses. "I hope you don't mind. Like I said, I'm not very good at pretending."</p> <p>"Okay."</p> <p>"She had several abortions."</p> <p>"Several?" Oh wow. Poor Mary.</p> <p>"Several. Look, her own mom had eighteen kids. And Mary—sometimes married, sometimes not, working in manufacturing, barely making enough to survive... She already had Grandma Lottie's mom, and a little boy. How would she have taken care of more? At least, this is what I heard from a cousin of mine. You think I'm into genealogy? She traced her dad's side of the family back to a king or something."</p> <p>"Still. Several. It seems shocking. I mean, it was illegal then, right? Like, everywhere?"</p> <p>"You probably shouldn't get me started on this stuff."</p> <p>"Genealogy?"</p> <p>"Abortion!"</p> <p>I make a face.</p> <p>"I'm not kidding," she says. "I read all about it when I heard Mary's story, because several seemed shocking to me, too. It's fascinating, you know, how woven into our history abortion is."</p> <p>I don't know. I just stand there, because the history she's referring to is happening to me right now. Will happen, in two days. "Woven into our history, like how? Like we have a DeVries abortion curse?"</p> <p>She laughs. "Our history, DeVries, yeah, but the larger 'our,' too. History-history. We didn't have a curse, and Mary wasn't even shocking; it's just how things were. Are. So yeah, us, too."</p> <p>"You're saying people have just been getting abortions forever?"</p> <p>"Pretty much, yeah. I mean, look." Aunt Betts waves her hand at our tree. "When you have</p>

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	<p>lots of people having sex, you get lots of people getting pregnant, and lots of people who don't want to be. Basically, the human race from the beginning of time. And in terms of it being illegal? It wasn't in half the states in Mary's day, and in all places—you had what was illegal, and then you had what was commonplace. We're talking about Mary in the 1920s to 1930s, but even before, back to the 1900s, even 1800s... abortion was simply a part of everyday female life. That's what I learned. Most ordinary people? They didn't think of it as a criminal act or anything. It was just a tolerated fact of life. Women talked about it to each other, giving advice, passing on information. Friends, daughters, nieces, granddaughters—you told her where the abortionist lived. You went with her if she had to get one, took care of her after. It was what women did for each other. Do still."</p> <p>"Mom's friend Esilda?" I stopped for a second. I had to think about how to say this without sharing Esilda's private business. "She said that all the women who have abortions are like a secret underground network."</p> <p>"Yeah. And you find out about networks like that when you're suddenly in one."</p> <p>"Oh my God! It's so true. You wouldn't believe it. I just keep hearing all these stories now."</p> <p>"I haven't had an abortion," Aunt Betts says, "but the same thing happened when I had a miscarriage. So many people told me they'd had one, I was shocked. I had no idea it was so common." Aunt Betts shakes her head. "All the shame women hold in their bodies... Damn. Which reminds me, something else surprising about Grandma Mary's time? Well, the abortion story line is usually about shameful single girls having sinful sex and getting pregnant, like they somehow do it by themselves, right?"</p> <p>"Right."</p> <p>"In those days, it was mostly married women who got them. Women trying to do the best thing for their families, worried that their other children would suffer with another mouth to feed. And the women getting abortions then, and even way before, they were from all walks of life, too. The poorest of the poor, the wealthiest of the wealthy. Same as now. And women from every religion. Every single one. Same as now. But the biggest thing that's the same? The numbers. From the time people ever first thought to keep track, around the 1900s on... twenty to thirty-five percent of women had abortions. Can you believe it? Those are the numbers now! One out of four, twenty-five percent."</p> <p>"It's been like that for a hundred years?"</p> <p>"A hundred plus years, same, same, same."</p> <p>"One out of four, forever." It's hard to imagine. I mean, I had no idea.</p> <p>"The number that changes? How many women die when they don't have legal options, because women have always found a way to get what they need, laws or no. Which brings me to..."</p>
284	<p>"So, in terms of illegal... Just a generation up, when Mary was having her abortions, it was mostly the abortionists who went on trial if they got caught, usually if a woman died. Her punishment was death itself, obviously, but also public shame, because they'd put her name in the paper. Her picture, too. Sometimes, they would go after the abortionist's other patients. God, honey, they'd barge in there and question women who were on their deathbeds, searching for evidence against the doctors. They'd track down a patient's mother or sister, too. Picture some chump dude with authority, demanding that you tell him when you last menstruated, who you had sex with, if the doctor put various instruments inside of you. Asking your sister what your flow was like when you menstruated."</p> <p>..."Fast forward to the 1940s, when your grandma was a little girl, Mary her grandma now, and in the 1950s, too... That discipline—it wasn't enough, apparently, because around then</p>

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	<p>they started really going after the women, raiding clinics. Abortion was becoming safer, it wasn't killing as many people, so, damn, those women were really getting out of line. So officers would storm in, sometimes catching and arresting the patients who were right there on the tables, grabbing the records of all the others."</p> <p>..."They'd scare you, threaten to expose you by forcing you to testify. Jail you if you didn't. Any doctor who referred a woman to a clinic was threatened, too, and viewed as equally guilty. I've got to tell you, reading about this stuff is hard and sad. I mean, the fear. And women dying, you know. Doing it themselves. This history—it's mine, and yours, and all of ours, because Alice. So many Alices! None of us knew her. Grandpa Larry barely knew her. She died when he and his brother were just little boys. Trying to give herself an abortion." "Oh my God." I feel sick. I look at her picture. She's a real woman, with a plain face and hair pulled back. A real woman with no options doing a desperate thing. Two boys with no mother.</p> <p>"Ivy, I hope that isn't an awful thing to tell you right now. Because the first thing you need to understand is that abortion as a health-care procedure... it's safer than childbirth. It's safer than dental procedures and colonoscopies. Safer than getting your tonsils out. But I just wanted to say... Well, you know how I told you about grandmas and aunts and moms passing on information about being a woman? I want to do that now. For you. I want to tell you where you, we, came from. Information about being a woman? How about this? We get a load of shame as females. But look at us all, connected here." She points to the great-great-great-grandmother. "She had eighteen children." Next she points to Mary. "She had several abortions." Now she points to Grandma Lottie's mom, Lana. "She had a baby out of wedlock when she was just seventeen. A baby she named Lottie." She moves over to Grandpa's mom. "She had an abortion after having two children and didn't make it. Left two little dudes without a mom. Look at this family history. This is just truth. The plain old truth of being a woman and having a body. And truth should be stronger than shame."</p>
286	<p>"Sometimes," Aunt Betts says, "I look at this tree, and I think our whole family history is people having sex, women and girls getting pregnant, having or not having babies. But then I realize, that's every family's history."</p>
287	<p>That night, Lorenzo and I spend the night in the bed in Aunt Betts's sewing room because Aunt Betts doesn't like to pretend that people don't have sex, and that girls and women don't get pregnant, and that girls and women don't have abortions, a jillion million girls and women, across centuries. I'm aware, very aware, of Lorenzo's body there next to me. I want to roll right over and start kissing him, but I'm also aware of the noises in the house—Uncle Jess clearing his throat, coughing, like maybe he once smoked cigarettes. The hum of the dishwasher, Aunt Betts's low voice saying stuff to her husband. I trail my fingers along Lorenzo's chest, slip my fingers under the waistband of his pajama shorts. He moans and says, "Ivy. We can't."</p> <p>In the film version we wouldn't be able to help ourselves, and we'd do it anyway, as quietly as possible, barely moving, but this isn't what happens.</p> <p>...I learn that holding back can be just as hot as giving in.</p>
288	<p>"This is going to sound strange maybe, but I just need you to know that... even if this was you and me being pregnant? Not because of some awful moment with Drake Euwing, but because of love? I'd still want to do the same thing. The abortion." I say the word, because those women are above me.</p>

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	<p>...“Of course,” Lorenzo says. “We’re not ready to be parents.” He rubs his toe on mine, and for whatever reason I feel an immense sense of relief. “I can’t even cook.”</p>
294	<p>He glares, as if I have no right to doubt his leadership abilities, which is the absolute truth. I mean, he’s been leading us around the world on our abortion road trip love story. He’s a winner in my book, that’s for sure.</p>
295	<p>I’m a pregnant teenager, about to be not pregnant anymore. I should be suffering, according to the movies, but the closer we get, the more relief starts to fill me. ...I won’t have to be the pregnant girl much longer, the girl who got pregnant, because the getting seems to be worse than the being in people’s minds. I’ll be returned to myself. No, I’ll be a new self, who now understands about the cage and the Pillars of Rome both.</p>
304	<p>I know this will be a story about a woman and sex and pregnancy, another story, because one out of four, and like Aunt Betts said, you don’t know about the secret network until you’re in it. “I had an abortion,” she says. There—another woman on that family tree. I wonder if Aunt Betts or Mom even knows it. “You did?” “Back in the early sixties, in Chicago. Before I met your grandpa. My girlfriend Betty, she introduced me to this guy, Joey.” Grandma Lottie puts her hand to her chest, and her eyes even light up a little. She purses her lips and blows out a whew, like Joey must have really been something. “Cute?” “Oh my God,” she says. “But, wait, before I get to him, I’ve got to go back to Betty. Betty! She looked like a prissy two-shoes, but that girl was something! I wish you knew her. She was always standing up against some kind of injustice, at a time when people didn’t do much of that yet. One thing she used to do... It took balls. Back in the late fifties, early sixties, when Betty and I were close, if you went to a bar as a single woman, you could get arrested.” “What?” I’ve never heard of this. I look over at her, because maybe she’s making this up or exaggerating. “Like, arrested-arrested?” “Arrested-arrested. Harassed by police, jailed without bail. If you were out, drinking or socializing with a male stranger, you were violating not just some moral order but actual law.” “What about him?” “Him? Whatever about him? He got to do what he wanted, same as always. The laws were for him. To protect him. A woman who did that, went to a bar, maybe even flirted, God forbid—men were in danger from her! She might exploit you, right, with her deviousness and sexuality? This law, it was called the American Plan. Perfect, huh? So patriotic. Government policing female bodies and female sexuality, it has a long history. Just that law, it went way back, like 1910 or something, but it got all spun up again after the war. It was enforced in some places well into the 1970s. You know what else that law did? If you were even suspected of having a sexually transmitted disease, they could detain you and check, Ivy. Forcibly. All these dirty women might infect our glorious troops, you know?” ...“Yeah? Well, look it up. If women were in bars, or not acting proper, or ‘misbehaving’ ” — Grandma Lottie makes air quotes—“ they could be forcibly ‘examined.’ ” More air quotes. “Also beaten and thrown into solitary confinement. Tens of thousands, maybe even hundreds of thousands of women, this happened to. But Betty—she grew up with these</p>

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	<p>progressive parents. I think they were even named as communists at one point, something, can't remember exactly. But in their house, they encouraged going up against the system. So she'd go to these bars with a friend, just to make a point, and this was before 1969, 1970, when women started really protesting this shit."</p>
306	<p>"Joey. And I got pregnant because neither of us was thinking about birth control. We were just too carried away. Both of us were. I wanted it, him, and bad. I would have never admitted that then, and, hey, with shit like the American Plan all around, no wonder."</p>
308	<p>"A couple times, even as a married woman, I worried I was pregnant, too, after the girls were born. Funny, because we think about these big moments when you find out you're pregnant, but every month, if you're sexually active, every single darn month, it's yes, I am; no, I'm not. You have plenty of scares, let me tell you. That's a lot of months, Ivy, for half the population, and a lot of things happen that we don't say."</p>
312	<p>"I'll fill you in on everything later, but I just wanted you to be here with us." I feel all teary again. It's music, and love. It's music and love and hormones, probably. After tomorrow I'll be on my way to my old self. Goodbye, hormones. Except, wait. I remember what Grandma Lottie said about every month, every single month, the possibility of yes or no, the thing you want or the thing you don't. We carry that—that responsibility, that fear, that promise. We do, inside our own bodies, day after day. I think of those protests, where you see the people with signs chanting, "My body, my choice," and I suddenly feel what they mean. Really feel it, because my body.</p>
314	<p>At the last minute I decide that I don't want Lorenzo to come. I keep imagining everyone's eyes on him, thinking he's some wrongdoer. I also keep imagining what always happens in the movies, and happens in real life, too—a bunch of protesters at the entrance, spitting venom, threatening, making you feel ashamed or terrified so you'll change your mind. I see a girl rushing in, me, a coat over her head to protect her identity. I just want to be with Grandma, someone who knows, a woman connected to all the other women on that tree. Women who survived venom and fear and threats and shame. They'll be my protective coat, surrounding me and preserving my identity.</p> <p>...There's no big drama. In the movies—if he got me pregnant and wanted me to have an abortion, it would only be to show what an awful guy he is.</p> <p>...When we reach the Tillamook Women's Center, there are no angry protesters. There's just a boring old building, a woman going in, a woman coming out.</p> <p>...Right before I get out, it happens. I have a moment where I feel uneasy. I worry if I'm doing the right thing. I worry that maybe God will hate me.</p> <p>In the movies we're at the part where no "good girl" would go through with it. She'd decide to have the baby after all, or something would happen so she wouldn't have to go through with it. Something to preserve her goodness. Right then she'd start bleeding or something. A miscarriage to save the day.</p> <p>Instead Grandma opens her door, and so do I.</p>
316	<p>There is no evil antiabortion figure, a fake nurse, shoving pamphlets at me, and there are no evil or heroic proabortion figures, either. There are just kind women, doing their jobs.</p>
317	<p>The doctor knocks. She has short blond hair and crinkly smile wrinkles by her eyes. She squeezes my hand. When I lie back, there's a poster of a tropical island with a palm tree on the ceiling. The nurse returns, and she gives me a blanket that's been warmed and that has a comforting bleach-y smell. I get some medicine that makes me sleepy but not asleep. I scoot my butt to the end of the table, place my heels in the stirrups. I look at the clock: ten-</p>

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	<p>thirty. Drowsy, pleasant palm-tree island, the vague awareness of a machine, and the nurse asking if I'm okay. And then I'm sitting up. The clock reads ten-forty-five. It's over.</p> <p>A short while later Grandma and I are back in the car. In the film version I'd be tormented, crying, racked with a guilt that would never leave me. I'd start to bleed, maybe bleed to death. The scene would happen in a Victorian bed with blood-soaked sheets, or on the gory floor of a motel bathroom. But I'm only a little drowsy, vaguely crampy, and I'm wearing a pad, and there's regular old blood, nothing theatrical, nothing unfamiliar, even. What I feel is a quiet understanding that it's over, and that I am mine again. What I am is hungry. Starved. It's barely eleven-thirty, but Grandma stops at the Dockside Drive-In, and we get enormous cheeseburgers and fries and onion rings and vanilla malts, and Grandma stirs her with the straw and tells me about the book she's reading, about a woman who befriends an octopus.</p>
319	<p>You also think the story is done, but it's not. You are relieved it's over, but it's not over. I'm sure I've put the worst of this behind me, but the worst is coming. You can think that trauma is the big thing that happened, when it's really what comes after that. In the film version the decision is always the end of the story. There's a satisfying conclusion, and the credits roll.</p> <p>...But sleep just pulls me under, sleep like down feathers, sleep like meringue, soft and comforting. It's the medicine, but not just. It's relief. All of the knots that have been inside of me untie. All of the things I've been gripping let loose. I rest. I'm certain. I'm safe, I think. I'm wrong.</p>
320	<p>We stay at Grandma's for a few days. At first I feel crampy and awkward with that pad, undesiring, undesirable, a body registering all that's happened to it. Emotional, too.</p>
321	<p>It's Tess's fault, probably. It's hard to forget how Angel, her husband, the guy she loved, left her after finding out that Alec D'Urberville raped her. You were one person; now you are another, he said.</p>
339	<p>"The day after Mrs. Euwing did. The woman... She just came right up to me, when I was cutting some fabric for a customer. She plunked down her purse and said, 'I cannot believe what you're doing. Promoting the abortion rights agenda in your own home, with your own daughter.' "</p> <p>..."I didn't do anything. I didn't have time. She left. The customer was waiting, so I kept cutting, and then I handed her the fabric. I was in shock. I mean, 'the abortion rights agenda,' what the hell."</p>
340	<p>"We should sue her butt," Mase says with his new man-voice. "Aren't we supposed to have freedom of religion? It sure doesn't seem like it when their religion is our laws."</p> <p>...What flashes in my mind are those women, the tens of thousands of them, who were "examined" against their will, who were suspected of defiling or scamming men because they went out alone. What did they feel inside when that was happening? Did their chests heave as if they were going up the longest, hardest hill? Did they feel dread dauphinoise?</p>
343	<p>"People have sure been obsessed with the idea of girls having sex," I say. "For eons."</p> <p>"That's for sure."</p>
349	<p>I see that Quentin Giles, who was stoned pretty much throughout all of last year, somehow got a job as a lifeguard.</p>
356	<p>Maybe it's because, right then, I am sure that this argument, about women and their bodies, about women and their rights, about abortion in general, won't move an inch from</p>

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	<p>where it is now. Not when kids this young already burn with righteousness. And not when I burn with shame.</p> <p>All at once I burn with anger instead. Sure, it's easy to be angry and to stand up to this kid, but whatever.</p> <p>"Do you think an eleven-year-old girl who gets raped should have to have a baby?" I snarl. He narrows his eyes. "That would never happen." He looks unsure.</p> <p>"Check your facts, you little twit," I say.</p>
360	<p>Even when the patio tables and chairs the city put out around the fountain were stolen. Even when you sometimes saw drug deals there.</p>
361	<p>"Those people can be dangerous, Ivy. Shit. They threaten women. They blow up clinics." ... "I have to show you something," Lorenzo says. He comes over to my side of the sprinkler, waving his phone. "There are these escorts, right? At abortion clinics? People who go with patients to their appointments so they can get in there safely. You know, through any protesters? You've gotta see."</p> <p>"Sure," I say.</p> <p>"I can't stop watching what's happening. Those people—the protesters, you wouldn't believe what they do. They shout stuff into megaphones... Aim their cameras onto private property, filming patients going in. They take their pictures and put them on the internet. You see these women, reading from the Bible, or holding signs, screaming about murder... and dudes—old dudes, looking like some retiree you'd see on a golf course, posing as a fake doctor, or screaming stuff at the escorts and the women going in, how they should act like ladies. How they've become hard and callous and unfeminine women, wrapping themselves up in 'fake manhood'... Young dudes, too. It's scary, man, the way they just stare, all intimidating, or shout threatening stuff about Jesus right in people's faces..."</p> <p>... "But look..." Lorenzo says. He pushes the #clinicescorts hashtag, and when he does, I don't just see hate and harassment. I see people of all ages and genders wearing rainbow-colored vests, silently and calmly guarding clinic entrances, shielding patients using rainbow-colored umbrellas. I see the people in those rainbow vests dancing to songs, wearing cozy hats and scarves to stay warm in the cold, faces as still as those palace guards in London as people scream that they're going to hell, that they need to repent, screaming about spread legs. Praying that terrible things will happen to them.</p> <p>Now here's an old, old guy, eighty years old at least, a clinic escort in his rainbow vest. He's playing polka music with an accordion to drown out the protesters.</p> <p>"Rainbows and accordions," I say. In terms of weapons in a battle, they're sure not violent. They're not even very fierce.</p> <p>"I never knew polka could be so reassuring," Lorenzo says.</p>
366	<p>I've been watching those videos now, too. So many videos of girls, women, transgender men, nonbinary people, fierce and brave and up-front about their abortions. They have a mission. I want to be like that. I think I want to be like that. It seems like what I'm supposed to do. "Yeah," I say.</p>
369	<p>They know, too. How, when they don't even hang out with any of the kids in my class? Same as I know Kevar's mom got two DWIs.</p> <p>"I'd do her," Kevar says.</p> <p>"You'd do her homo brother," Terrence says, and Kevar shoves him.</p> <p>... "You know I'm probably gay, right?" he says.</p> <p>... "You and Mom are going to love me no matter who I have sex with in the future." It's not</p>

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	<p>a question. ...“You and Mom are going to love me even if I never have sex after all of this.”</p>
370	<p>“They’re just words,” he says again. “And ‘homo,’ really? Why is that bad? If it didn’t come out that creep’s mouth, I wouldn’t mind it. I’d like it. There’s nothing wrong with that word except for the way assholes say it. Words with double o’s actually sound very friendly.” “Probably why you liked ‘hoco poco’ and ‘abrocadabro,’” I say. I’d make those two fuckers disappear if I could.</p>
374	<p>“I got some papers. From an attorney’s office. Someone is suing me. For, um, helping you. Get an abortion.” ...“What are they going to do next, huh? Ban birth control?” “They can’t do that,” I say. “Why would they do that?” Lorenzo just makes an Ivy, don’t be naive face. ...“That’s all I know. I’ve been watching all these videos, and I’ve been learning so much. So much, like I was one person and now I’m another. And I just can’t, Ivy, I can’t live in a place where it’s practically the Middle Ages or something. I’m sorry I didn’t call yesterday, but I’ve been really busy. I had to get a lawyer, and my dad only knew this guy who handles tax stuff, so I called Lottie—”</p>
375	<p>“I know. There’s so much to do. And in every spare second, I’m filling out as many forms as I can on the anti-choice whistleblower site.”</p>
376	<p>“The whistleblower site?” “Where people can write in tips about anyone like me who has helped anyone like you. The TikTokers are flooding the site with BS information. I filled out one form using just the word ‘butthole’ over and over again. I filled out another with Bob Marley lyrics. Then I just started copying lines from the Junior Paleontologist Activity Book we got in Dinosaur. Then the ingredients on the back of the Raisinets box, like tapioca dextrin.”</p>
380	<p>The Triumph is parked in front of our house. Last night it was empty, aside from the two of us, limbs entwined, bare skin against bare skin, except for that condom. My head was wedged up against the back-seat door handle, and his leg got a cramp in it, and the whole time, I was praying that the Paris police wouldn’t drive up to that far, dark corner of the Eiffel Tower.</p>
381	<p>We kiss. We kiss some more.</p>
382	<p>I don’t even need to play the videos of the fierce TikTokers facing the hate in those clinic protests or talking about their own experiences with such bold bravery. They’re in my head now, I’ve been playing them so often.</p>
387	<p>“You ought to pray that Drake keeps his pants zipped.” ...“Drake,” I say, just to be sure he does. “I wonder if you would’ve forced him to give birth.”</p>
392	<p>“Ivy?” she asks. “Can I talk to you?” There’s something in her voice. It’s not anger or judgment. It’s need. I open the door. “I’m sorry,” she says. “I just wanted to say I’m so sorry. It was really wrong of me not to stand up for you.” Olivia Kneeley’s eyes fill with tears. I don’t tell her it’s okay, because it isn’t. I don’t give her something I don’t want to give. Instead I just wait. “My parents are the only ones who know what I’m about to tell you,” Olivia Kneeley says. And this time I’m not shocked when someone tells me this story. I’m not surprised that</p>

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	<p>there's another one. I'm not struck that it keeps on happening, this sharing. It's what is and always has been.</p>
400	<p>"Wait. Your vest," I say. It's hanging over a kitchen chair—a rainbow vest, with the words Clinic Escort on the front. This is what he wears on Saturdays, on the days he isn't working at Rockaway Auto Supply and Repair. On weekdays he's in class at Tillamook Bay Community College, studying things like airway management and trauma assessment and what medication to administer when.</p> <p>"Ah, thanks!" he cries. He snatches it, then gives me a quick kiss. "Abortion road trip love story," he says.</p> <p>"Abortion road trip love story," I say back. I say the word: abortion. That's what I do now, say it. Me, I'm strong by getting through what I got through, and I'm fierce by enduring. Lorenzo, he's strong by putting that vest on, and he's fierce by walking beside the women as they go through the doors of the Tillamook clinic.</p> <p>...Outside on the street below me, I see a family emerge from Rae's Waffle Hut after a Saturday morning breakfast. A mom and a dad, a grandma, two daughters, one son. Three middle-aged women go inside, too. A car parks, and several young couples pile out. I count. One, two, three, four. See those women? And those and those? Her and her and her and maybe even him. I imagine their mothers and their grandmothers and their great-grandmothers. Her and her and her and her, in Paris or Paris, Rome or Rome, Florence or Florence, big city or small, across every continent over the world, and across the generations. Layer upon layer, unspoken stories embedded in earth, embedded in the layers of our body, gone and not gone. Her and her, facing other people's will, facing commands of Here's what you will do and saying, I get to choose. I do. Saying, Even if I have to do it unlawfully, even if I have to do it in shame and in secret, I do. Saying, I have to, or I can't, no matter what you think of me or what happens next.</p> <p>Her and her and her, staying silent and holding secrets, or quietly whispering, or loudly shouting. Saying it, the last unspoken word, abortion, or doing what I am doing now, after I've moved away from the window—writing it down right here for you, Ms. La Costa. Why history matters. You said it could be however long it needs to be, and it needs to be long. Very long. Four hundred and two pages long. Thirty-nine chapters.</p>

Profanity	Count
Ass	10
Fuck	36
Piss	14
Shit	62
Tit	1