

HIGH SCHOOL



Young Adult

By Tegan Quin and Sara Quin

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Book summary:

Twin sisters tell their stories from high school involving drug use, sexual experiences, aspirations of being musicians, and others.

Summary of Concerns:

This book contains sexual activities; excessive/frequent profanity; alcohol and drug use by minors; self-harm involving bulimia; violence; reference to suicide; and alternate sexualities.

3 /5

Minor Restricted
BookLooks Review Rating

Page	Content
29	The photograph on this page depicts a young woman drinking from a shot glass. <i>See Figure 1.</i>
31	The photograph on this page depicts a young woman holding a liquor bottle pressed to her lips. <i>See Figure 2.</i>
37	<p>Kayla, Sara, and I had dropped acid a few times that past summer, and it had unexpectedly mended the broken parts of our friendship with Kayla. But I also noticed that while we were high, Sara and I got along.</p> <p>...The two of us talked almost constantly, when Mom and Bruce weren't around, about where we could find acid again and when we could do it next. After nearly an entire summer of not talking, we had found a way to connect with each other again. Acid provided a small square of neutral territory, relief from the war that had been raging between us since Sara and Naomi had bounced me from their union. But the LSD also provided a bridge. And it seemed that in order to get past where we'd been stuck for so long, Sara and I needed one. For all intents and purposes that bridge was drugs, specifically acid, which we couldn't have been more thrilled about.</p> <p>..."If my sister finds out I did acid, no—check that, if she finds out any of us tried acid, she'll fucking kill us."</p> <p>"Well, don't tell her," Sara said.</p>
39	At lunch, in the student center, I watched them stroke their boyfriends' faces and sit in their laps, while our teachers watched from the perimeter. In the halls between classes, my eyes locked on these girls' chests, on the delicate jewelry disappearing into their cleavage, on the track jackets they draped off their bare shoulders.
40	That same summer I found myself unable to turn away from the older girls who lay out confidently in their bikinis near our family's cluster of deck chairs. I was nervous that one of them might catch me looking in their direction, so I squinted and played dead when their eyes occasionally met mine. These roots of attraction didn't yet register as sexual.
42	"Lily said you guys have floppy tits," a friend told Tegan and me at a sleepover.
55	<p>She was sneaking out to go smoke a joint with a new friend crush, Emma, who lived a forty-minute walk away.</p> <p>...I imagined the headline: A fifteen-year-old girl on acid was last seen walking alone at midnight along the highway.</p> <p>...Tori Manis sold me my first tab at an amusement park on the outskirts of the city six months earlier. I remember the drug taking effect from beyond my periphery, closing in on me from all sides. I spent the long days of summer in the blacked-out basement watching films with story lines heavily influenced by drugs: Kids, Dazed and Confused, Rush, The Doors. Some part of me wanted to be scared by these stories, but what they inspired in me was entirely the opposite. Tori had warned me that I'd end up with a "spine full of the shit" if I did acid too often, but I couldn't stop plotting the next time.</p>
57	<p>"Isn't it weird that he's collecting mushrooms?" Tegan said, turning toward me. "Mario is stoned, too."</p> <p>...When the grip of my high relaxed, Tegan placed a hit of acid in her mouth and my focus shifted. It was her turn and I wouldn't let anything bad happen to her. The drug felt like an antidote, a magnet that pulled us back together.</p> <p>...Chasing the burn of weed smoke with stolen alcohol, we'd lie back in the field looking at</p>

Page	Content
	<p>the stars, spooking each other with unreliable sightings of coyotes in the distance. ...I didn't have to admit she was high, just stupid.</p>
59	<p>Christina was upset that Sara and I bought two tabs at lunch to take after school before her Halloween party. She was even more furious when we got to her house and Sara realized she had somehow lost her wallet, with her tab of acid inside, and suggested the dealer come by to sell her a replacement. ...I stuck out my tongue, where my square of acid was still seeping into my bloodstream. "I'll literally kill you two if my dad finds out you're on acid tonight."</p>
60	<p>Around eleven Mom picked us up and I made effortless small talk in the front seat, while Sara and Kayla giggled in the back. "Did you guys smoke pot?" "No." We all laughed. "You can tell me, and I won't care."</p>
61	<p>"I'm gonna do it." She unwrapped the tinfoil fast and popped the paper in her mouth. Smiling at me like a crazy person, she grabbed Kayla and pulled her into the kitchen.</p>
62	<p>"Forget it. We have to go downstairs right now. So you better figure out how not to seem like you're on two fucking hits of acid, because you look really fucking high right now." "I am really fucking high right now," Sara said. ..."Did you guys get high at Christina's?" Mom asked, muting the movie she and Bruce were watching. "Didn't you already ask us that in the Jeep?" "If you guys smoked pot, we won't be mad. Experimenting is normal."</p>
63	<p>We were getting so good at pretending we weren't high. The next Friday we smoked up with Kayla while Bruce was at hockey and Mom was at work.</p>
64	<p>As if in a horror film, Mom spun slowly around in her office chair, the plastic bag of weed we'd bought earlier suspended between her hands. "Hi. Is this yours? I asked those two, but they aren't sure whose it is. We've been waiting for you, hoping you could help us figure it out."</p>
65	<p>"Okay, well, let's smoke some now, together. Since it's someone you know, it should be totally fine." "Mom, come on." "No, seriously. It will be great, Tegan. Let's all get high together. I haven't smoked since New Year's Eve." "Mom, gross. Knock it off," Sara warned. "Why? Weed's cool. It's so cool to get high." "Mom," I said. "You can't smoke pot with your teenagers and their friend." "I'll smoke with you, Sonia," Kayla said. "Kayla!" Sara and I shouted. "She's joking." "Oh," Kayla replied, giggling. Mom stood up, the weed still in her hand. "You'll have to tell the guy you were holding it for that your mom smoked it all. I'm not giving this back; Bruce and I are going to get stoned while you're at your dad's tomorrow." There was no universe where that would happen.</p>
66	<p>The next morning when Dad arrived to pick us up, Mom told him she'd caught us with weed. "Well, if I remember correctly, you used to smoke a lot of weed when you were their age,</p>

Page	Content
	<p>Sonia,” he joked. “Oh, is that right? And you didn’t?” He chuckled. “Never.” “I seem to remember you and your brother picking me up and getting me high on the way to school in grade twelve, hot boxing that little Bug he had.”</p>
68	<p>We smoked a pinch of weed I spilled into a crushed Coke can punctured with pinholes. “Hurry” is all Tegan mustered as I flicked the lighter with my frozen thumb, forcing sparks but no flame. “Give it to me; we’ll die out here.” Sucking deeply, she passed the can back and I inhaled the smoke lacing out of the hole. When we got inside, I should have done homework, but I went straight to the basement, where I used Mom’s computer to write secret letters about the girl I liked. It was still a shock to feel desire for girls, addictive thoughts that stole hours of my time at school and in bed before I fell asleep.</p>
69	<p>“Mom, I don’t want to hear again about how you kissed a girl at boarding school!” ... I wasn’t just kissing girls. I was in love with my best friend.</p>
70	<p>Eventually, the sexual tension between Naomi and me was increasingly hard to mask, and I began to leave Tegan out of our sleepovers.</p>
71	<p>“I just like kissing you.” I’d repeat it like a warning. “But I want to do more,” she replied one night. And, so, like with our first kiss, she led me exactly where I wanted to go.</p>
72	<p>After I hung up, I joined Tegan and Christina in the living room, where they were calling around to find acid. ...Tegan called our friend Garrett, who offered to drop the drugs off at the apartment. ...I was too high; the panic expanded in my chest.</p>
75	<p>I didn’t consider it a lie when I promised her that if I were gay, I’d tell her. Because I didn’t think I was gay.</p>
78	<p>I was pleading with her, but for what? Reassurance? Sex? How did I become the only one who wanted this? ... For a long time, she didn’t answer. Then she said, “I like boys. But sometimes I like you, too.” ...I couldn’t bear to look over at her, but eventually, she turned and rolled on top of me. “I want to,” she whispered. In the morning we ignored what happened the night before.</p>
81	<p>Smirking, Bruce turned around and under his breath said, “I mean he was a fag.” ...By the time we hit high school, we’d learned the word’s real meaning, and it had become passé to say, at least in our group of friends, who were growing increasingly political and protective over those experimenting with their sexuality. ...“You can’t say the word ‘fag.’” “Why not?” “You know you can’t say that word. I can’t believe you’re homophobic.”</p>
82	<p>“You know people call us weird every single day. We get made fun of for being different all the time. When we were little, people called us boys and made fun of us for having short</p>

Page	Content
	<p>hair. Would you like it if someone were calling us dykes? Because they already call us freaks and fuckups because of how we look.” ...“People like you see people like us and don’t even try to understand us.”</p>
85	<p>I didn’t tell her that when I was fourteen I spent the summer writing suicide notes to the girls who’d bullied me for two years.</p>
86	<p>I’d started calling the help line because of Naomi and the shame I experienced for the feelings I had for her. They became too difficult for me to contain, especially after a night of drinking. With the room and my head spinning, I found gravity in the voice of a stranger.</p>
87	<p>The shrine she’d built to Kurt Cobain had grown substantially in the two years since his suicide, and every inch of her walls was covered with his face. Kurt and our step-grandfather, Ed, committed suicide two days apart when we were fourteen. On the morning of Ed’s funeral service, spread across the front page of the local newspaper was news of Kurt Cobain’s suicide. Dead at twenty-seven from a self-inflicted gunshot wound. It was a gut punch in all the ways the news about Ed wasn’t.</p>
95	<p>Her hair was wahed-out ketchup color, and her blue eyes locked onto mine. She asked if we wanted to drop acid after school and go on an adventure with her and her best friend, Zoe. We accepted her invitation and began discussing blowing off the rest of the tryout.</p>
96	<p>Zoe wore a faux-fur coat that dropped below her knees, and my instinct as soon as we were high was to bury my face in its depths. Her eyes were wolfish and sad, and up close her skin was unblemished, nearly opaque. With perfect posture, they both seemed to tower over Tegan and me. They’d slipped a tab of acid inside a folded note for each of us, our names scribbled in bubble cursive on the outside. In the bathroom stall, my heart pounded as I carefully untucked the paper, afraid to drop the tab in the toilet. A burning sensation boiled up from inside my chest as I threw the foil in the garbage can on the way back out the door. ...The drugs twisted my self-esteem into self-loathing. Jonathan and Zoe soared above me. The ooze of the acid trip made them look utterly matched, and I couldn’t stop staring down in disgust at my lumpy hoodie and baggy pants.</p>
102	<p>I pointed back to the hallway, “Bathroom?” We retraced our steps and entered the bathroom. Sitting on the counter with her back to the mirror was Penny. She was wearing only a sports bra and no shirt, the skin of her chest and neck sparkling with sweat and glitter. “Hi!” She pushed herself off the vanity and hugged each of us. There were boys there, too. Everyone was using the stalls to distribute and openly consume drugs. Penny directed us to a guy with bleached hair whom we’d seen on the bus. “This is my boyfriend, Nick,” she told us. The metal barbell in Nick’s mouth clicked the back of his teeth, causing a heavy lisp. “I hope you girls have a good night,” he said, and placed the pills in the palms of our hands. I hadn’t snorted anything in my life, but the three of us shuffled into a doorless stall, and on the tank of the toilet I crushed my pills into powder. “Wow,” Christina said. “So, we’re doing this?” “Fuck!” I said. “Yes, we are.” I inhaled the pile of dust into my nose like I’d seen people do in the movies. My head shot back in shock, my eyes filled with tears. Christina crushed her pills and followed my lead. We looked like pros. When Zoe and Stephanie arrived in the bathroom, my pulse raced, and it was hard to know if seeing Zoe was the cause or if it was the drugs. She had her own pills and expertly crushed them and snorted the dust right off the tile on the bathroom counter.</p>

Page	Content
116	Daniel turned on the bedside lamp and lit a cigarette. The walls were covered with band posters and psychedelic artwork. I could smell the skunky weed from the plastic bag near his stereo.
137	We didn't mind pitching in, especially when the painters were there. We sucked in the fumes to get tipsy while we worked, laughing and singing so that our voices echoed through the house.
138	I'd become so accustomed to her surprise attacks of guilt about our sexual relationship that when I realized that she wasn't breaking up with me, I felt light-headed with relief. I pulled her back down onto the bed with me.
140	Examining the wooden bench seat near the window, we agreed it would be a terrific place for us to hide drugs. ..."I hope she likes the same music as us." "And the same drugs." ...Instead, I'd watched her face stiffen as she considered for the first time the risks this living arrangement might pose. In junior high when rumors about girls kissing other girls at sleepovers spread through the school, I immediately felt implicated.
154	It made me feel guilty, but I was glad I might not have to give up every single Saturday night for the rest of high school to sit with Dad and Sara in his apartment watching Golden Girls when I could be at Grace's drinking, or at Alex's watching movies in her basement.
157	Naomi and I had only been having sex for a few months when she suggested that we write down our sexual fantasies. ...While we wait, I start kissing your body all over, paying close attention to "that place." The doorbell rings but neither one of us gets up cuz suddenly we aren't all that hungry for pizza. We both agree that a shower would feel great. In the shower, not surprisingly, we don't rest. We still go at it making each other feel unbelievably good. When we get out of the shower, we decide we're kinda hungry now so we each have a piece of chocolate cake. We have it all over each other and then lick it off. Good cake, especially the icing. We return to my bedroom still making each other feel wonderful. We fall asleep in each other's arms, naked.
158	In her second letter she'd made a list of everything I did during sex that she liked. And there on the page was evidence that I possessed a knowledge of how to turn her on and proof that I did so regularly. #1 When you touch me in certain areas and then pull away, you make me want it so much more. #2 Put my hand somewhere on your body, that way I know what you like. ...Sometimes I imagine your drama teacher is watching us when we have sex, I wrote in my wobbly handwriting, then tore the paper into pieces, my face flaming hot. That was my fantasy. I wanted a witness. A year later, we finally had one.
166	"My mom said I look like a dyke."
168	We stuffed our bags and coats behind the penalty box and did a lap of the arena floor. Tegan and Spencer planted themselves in front of the subwoofer and smoked a joint, letting the vibration from the bass bounce their skulls violently against the boards.
170	"We know they don't sell alcohol there, but there are plenty of drugs to shove in your face."
175	"Would you like it if Madison or Ashley were using their tits to sell Hooters wings?" Mom asked. ..."The fuss is that the women have to dress in a certain way to sell the food." I zoomed in as

Page	Content
	<p>I said it. “And men go there to watch them do it,” Sara added. “It’s gross.”</p>
178	<p>“I saw a girl with pink hair,” Sloane added. “Interesting.” My uncle chuckled. “Yeah, and she was kissing another girl.”</p>
180	<p>“Oh my god. I miss you so much. You won’t believe what happened. Sloane saw two girls kissing.”</p>
181	<p>ALEX: (From off camera) Do you know or associate yourself with any homosexual people? (Everyone laughing) SARA: As much as possible. ...ALEX: Do you know any homosexual people? SARA: Yeah. ...ALEX: Yeah. What do you believe causes a person to become homosexual? SARA: (Turning to look at Tegan) I believe that they are born that way. ...ALEX: Do you know any homosexual people? SARA: Yeah. ...ALEX: Just like, maybe ask them, I don’t know, about experiences about being homosexual? Or like, effects that it’s had on their life. It doesn’t necessarily have to be like a sexual question. TEGAN: Yeah, we have. ...ALEX: I don’t necessarily mean a sexual question, like “What’s it like to have gay sex?” or something. Just ask them about their homosexuality. ...ALEX: What do you believe causes a person to become homosexual? SARA: Born! ALEX: You think they’re born that way? You don’t think it has anything to do with environment or life experience? We’ve had a lot of answers about like, um, people saying, like, bad experiences with men. SARA: That doesn’t necessarily mean you’re gay. It might mean you don’t like the opposite sex. ALEX: Okay. Based on your upbringing how do you feel about homosexuality? Like, based on what you’ve been taught. TEGAN: Open-minded about it. My mom’s always had lots of gay friends and stuff, so. SARA: Tegan’s gay. ...ALEX: How do you feel about slang such as “faggot” or “dyke” toward homosexuals? SARA: I think that it’s mean, it’s like using a racial term. ...SARA: (To Tegan) You be the boy. Typical boy, ready? What do you think of gay people and stuff? TEGAN: (Pitching her voice low) It’s gross! It’s gross! It’s nasty, man! It’s nasty, gross! Girls are okay! ...ALEX: A lot of adults hear about a teenager deciding that they’re gay, or thinking that they’re gay, or worrying that they’re gay and they’ll be like, “Oh, they’re just confused. There’s no way they’re old enough to understand.”</p>
188	<p>When I next talked with Naomi over the telephone, she admitted that she and Frederic were having sex and that she was on birth control. ...Naomi was having sex with a boy. She was irreversibly different from me. ...“You fell,” Tegan told me when I asked what happened to my wrist.</p>

Page	Content
	<p>She and our friends filled the gaps in my memory with embarrassing details. I'd broken a wine cooler; I'd run away. They'd found me in the park down the street, hands bleeding, smoking a joint with a group of boys none of us knew.</p>
193	<p>We returned to drinking, dancing together to Björk in the near dark. ...Stephanie and Zoe were sitting on the floor, facing each other. Stephanie's hands were flat on either side of Zoe's face, her thumbs were hooked around each of her ears. They were kissing. ...Zoe leaned awkwardly toward me, slipped a hand around my neck, and replaced Stephanie's lips with mine. ...I briefly worried that Stephanie might be angry with me for interrupting, when Zoe snapped the fluorescent light off and found my face again in the dark. Twisting my hips, she pushed me down onto the floor and spread my knees, pressing her full weight into me.</p>
194	<p>Zoe was lying beside me, her eyes wide open, staring at my face. Everything was in focus. Our faces met. She pressed her thigh between my legs, and I felt her hand pull on my zipper. I had wanted this for months. Zoe's tongue was in my mouth, her hand in my jeans. There was no talking, no flirting, no hesitation. But when I woke up in the morning, she was gone.</p>
195	<p>The air was thick with a mix of body odor and cigarette and pot smoke. The mashed-down green carpet was littered with beer bottles, cigarettes, and guys who looked to be in their twenties. Posters on the walls were half torn and hung at different heights.</p>
199	<p>Someone offered Sara a fresh beer and asked what happened. She jumped up and took the drink and started retelling the story.</p>
202	<p>Upstairs, Rick sat in the corner of his bedroom, stoned, his skin washed with blue light, his eyes cut like slits across his face. ...Rick lit a joint, and generously passed it around. Leah pulled frozen bottles of beer from her bag.</p>
203	<p>While Leah and Sara made awkward small talk on the landing at the top of the stairs at Rick's, I casually pretended to sip my warm beer next to them.</p>
206	<p>Though I'd been livid that she had told them, she left out the fact that I was on acid when it happened, which I felt grateful about.</p>
207	<p>That was until Leah and Tess surprised us with the acid. Then we decided we'd do it—one last time. Sara and I were picky about who we did drugs with, and the second I placed the paper on my tongue I regretted our quick decision to take it with Tess. She didn't have the right energy for acid. In the fading daylight on the bus she seemed cagey and kept saying she wasn't feeling it. "It takes a bit of time to work," Sara said, rolling her eyes at me and Leah as Tess paced in the aisle on the bus.</p>
219	<p>Her skin smelled spiced and familiar. I'd spent hundreds of hours with my face pressed in that exact spot between her shoulder and neck. I stepped into the entrance and pulled my boots off. We made our way up the stairs to her bedroom. With the door closed, she kissed me full on the mouth. ...But, fumbling through that awkward kiss, I felt a growing insecurity that she might be comparing me to Frederic. How did he kiss her? Touch her? How did I compare? Imagining them having sex filled me with shame; I wanted my body to look like his.</p>

Page	Content
	<p>...“Did you promise him you wouldn’t hook up with anyone?” “I promised him I wouldn’t hook up with another boy.” “What about hooking up with me?” “You’re a girl, it’s different.”</p>
221	<p>“You were the one fucking some guy for three months!”</p>
222	<p>“I heard you throwing up.” The words felt dislocated from their meaning. Throwing up was the result of a flu or a night of too much drinking. My mind scrambled. She was pale, the whites of her eyes were bloodshot. “Sometimes I feel better if I—if I do that.” “You made yourself do that?” “Yes,” she said. I was dumbfounded, trying to comprehend how our argument could cause Naomi to make herself sick. I’d heard rumors about girls at school who threw up to control their weight, but I’d never heard of someone purposely throwing up because they were upset.</p>
233	<p>“Have you and Spencer had sex yet?” ...After Emma asked if Spencer and I were having sex, she took a drag off her cigarette and I tried to figure out how to answer her question. While I did, I imagined her in her kitchen, the long, tangled tan cord of the phone knotted on the floor in front of her. ...A year earlier we’d edged right up to that kind of intimacy, but it hadn’t happened. We’d been together in her bed after a party, coming down off acid, and she had started talking about two girls we hung out with who I assumed were hooking up but had never admitted it to us. I’d frozen the second Emma brought them up, shocked by her candor but also enticed by what she was dangling in front of me in the dark. It felt like an opportunity. “I don’t know why they don’t just tell us they’re getting it on. It’s not like any of us would care or be bothered by it.” I had wanted to tell her about Sara and Naomi then. To explain that these friends of ours weren’t the only ones hiding in plain sight.</p>
234	<p>We’d been high, and the lines of reality were hazy to me. Stoned and caught up in the moment, I’d felt sure of my feelings, but sober in the light of day, I felt less sure. ...Emma calling about Spencer a year later to inquire about our sex life, or lack thereof, reminded me of the intensity of the feelings I’d had for her in grade ten.</p>
235	<p>Though she didn’t come right out and press me for an explanation of why Spencer and I weren’t having sex, she circled it like a patient vulture for the next hour. I eventually admitted to her that it hadn’t come up, that Spencer and I never talked about sex. “Not even once.” “Really?” “I don’t know if we’re ready,” I said, immediately regretting it. I sounded lame, and it was a lie. I knew Emma was having sex.</p>
236	<p>The next day I went to Spencer’s thinking about Emma’s question. About sex. About her. About what I was unable to say a year earlier, and what I had not been able to explain the night before. “You’re quiet,” Spencer said. We sat next to each other on the couch. “You’re always quiet,” I said. He suggested we smoke a joint in his room, and afterward we lay down on his plaid comforter. I curled up next to him.</p>

Page	Content
237	<p>He was a little stoned.</p> <p>...“I just know that you might expect or want ... sex.”</p> <p>“I just want to get to know you,” he said, and then leaned in to kiss me. His mouth tasted like smoke.</p>
239	<p>He just started tagging along with Tegan and me to the movies and to our friends’ houses, calling me every day, and showing up with extra of whatever he was drinking or smoking.</p> <p>...There was a humiliating attempt to discuss birth control, which I shrugged off, but later felt relieved about. That she suspected I was having sex with Cameron ensured a respite from her probing questions about Naomi.</p> <p>...He spread our towels on the rocks and stripped off his tank top. I pulled my shirt over my head and bunched it self-consciously on my lap. I was still wearing shorts and a bathing suit, but I’d never felt more naked.</p> <p>“You look hot,” he said, kissing my shoulder.</p> <p>...I finally submerged myself with a scream. He pulled my arms around his neck, and shivering, I wrapped my legs around his waist. It was a gesture that should have been sexual but felt paternal.</p>
241	<p>We’d never fooled around sober.</p> <p>...We made out, and a lightheaded urgency that often preceded sex with Naomi washed over me. I was surprised to find that I was turned on—evidence that I wasn’t entirely what I feared. I pulled off my jean shorts and swimsuit, and he scooted back toward my hips and placed his mouth between my legs. The keen desire that had gripped me seconds before evaporated. It wasn’t different from when Naomi did it, but it felt utterly wrong. I pulled him up by the ears, hoping he caught the drift that what I wanted down there wasn’t his face. He kissed me, and then rested his full weight on the bed; his arm stretched across my hips. His face was flushed, serious.</p> <p>“It seems like, maybe...” He got quiet. “Like you want to go further than we normally do.”</p> <p>“Maybe.”</p> <p>“I just don’t think you should do anything you’re not ready for.”</p> <p>Did he think he knew more about what I wanted than I did?</p>
242	<p>He should be with one who knew when the right time to have sex was, who wanted to spend a day alone at a secret swimming spot and laugh with his family over pizza.</p> <p>...Plus, his best friend, Zach, was gay, and I’d heard him tell people off for using the word “fag” in front of him.</p> <p>“I’ve done that with Naomi,” I said, listening hard at his breath on the phone.</p> <p>“Oh.”</p> <p>“I haven’t really told anyone that—”</p> <p>“Hmm.”</p> <p>“We used to do stuff with each other a lot, actually.”</p> <p>“And you liked it?”</p> <p>“Yeah. Are you grossed out?”</p> <p>“No! It’s hot. I mean, not like, ‘It’s hot,’ but like ... Whatever.”</p> <p>...“I don’t care that Zach’s ... gay. Like, at all.”</p> <p>I was unsure what to say next.</p> <p>“Can I ask you something?” he said.</p> <p>“Yeah.”</p>

Page	Content
	<p>“What we did today—how did I compare to Naomi?” I buried my head in my pillow. “Oh! Yeah, it was great.”</p>
259	<p>Then without warning, she leaned down and kissed me. She held her lips to mine for no more than six seconds, but those six seconds rearranged me, completely. ...I grabbed her sweater and pulled her toward me so I could kiss her again. When Alex’s ride arrived, she left me with the note and a hickey the size of a nickel. I gasped when I saw it in the mirror of the plywood changing room at Value Village an hour later. Pressing my finger into the bruised skin, I leaned in, immediately paranoid someone had seen it. How would I explain a hickey after a weekend alone with Alex? My fingers drifted back and forth over the misshapen purple spot; I imagined Alex’s mouth where my fingers were. I leaned against the cheap wood and raced through excuses I could give if Mom or Sara mentioned it.</p>
270	<p>“So!” she said, smiling brightly at us. “Let’s talk about sexually transmitted diseases!” “Can’t get AIDS unless you’re a fag,” Troy shouted between his hands from the back of the room. ...“Seriously, why the fuck do we need to learn about this shit?” Troy said. “Nobody in here is a fucking faggot.” ...I turned around and yelled, “Shut up, Troy!” “I’ll say whatever the fuck I want.” His smile curled. “Fags get AIDS.” He shrugged as if he were only stating a fact.</p>
274	<p>The rumpus room in Naomi’s basement felt muggy. We’d been drinking greedily all night, exercising our freedom in the absence of Naomi’s parents, who were away for the weekend. ...When Naomi’s parents would go out of town, he’d supervise, which usually meant throwing a party where his older friends would ply us with alcohol and cigarettes.</p>
277	<p>He darted around other adults in costumes who were smoking and drinking in the living room. ...They looked so tall and drunk, but the costumes made it seem less serious somehow, and I told myself to relax.</p>
278	<p>“One day we’ll say the famous Quin sisters played a gig with us,” Kevin said, grinning with all his teeth showing. “Stay for a beer.” “We should go.” “Yeah, I guess it’s no fun partying with a bunch of old guys, huh?” He chuckled. “Nah, you guys are cool. But we promised our mom.”</p>
281	<p>Kids spilled into Wendy’s parents’ bedroom and onto a pullout couch, clawing at one another and disrobing, oblivious to any audience.</p>
282	<p>I’d watched him drunkenly mime having sex with a male friend, while an audience of Aberhart kids I didn’t know well laughed. He’d left his malt liquor sheathed in a brown paper bag, and I couldn’t decide what offended me more—mocking gay sex, or a rich kid hiding his cheap beer like he was poor. Later I’d told Naomi that he seemed gay. “You think everybody’s gay,” she said, and rolled her eyes. ...Inside, a dozen people were smoking pot, sitting cross-legged on the carpet, jamming on acoustic instruments.</p>
291	<p>In those rooms, those two days, the simplest of things felt pleasurable without the fear of being caught: cuddling on the couch, making out while we cooked, taking a bath together.</p>

Page	Content
	...For two days I didn't strain to listen for anything but sounds of pleasure from Alex—her laugh, her heartbeat, her sighs, and her breath against me.
339	"There's so many crazy things happening to you guys, huh?" Zoe was drunk, one of her eyes half closed.
340	He was a born-again Christian and didn't swear or drink alcohol. He'd started showing up at raves with Diego the previous summer. When he and Zoe started dating, I took solace in the fact that his religious beliefs prevented him from having sex with her. Over the summer we'd gone to see All Over Me in the theater. It had a gay story line, and during the scenes where the two leads were having sex, Dustin kept his head bowed, refusing to watch.
357	Just when I thought she was preparing to leave, she leaned over and kissed me.
358	It was her mother, calling from work. "I saw you two in bed together."
359	"Oh my god, you gave me a hickey!" she whispered. "No!" "Yes!" She laughed. "A coworker spotted it the second I walked in." ... I was Zoe's girlfriend and I had given her a hickey. I was the luckiest person on earth. After my shift, Mom picked me up at work. Just over the hump of my hangover, I rested my head on the window, nodding off a bit. ..."Does she go out to bars a lot? Hook up with random guys? Or—" ..."I'm just wondering how it is that she ended up with a hickey on her neck if you're the only person she's spending time with. Did you give it to her?" My heart boomed in my ears. "Yes." "So, you're a lesbian." ..."I don't know any girls who aren't lesbians that give other girls hickeys." "I'm not a lesbian! I guess—I don't know. Maybe I'm bi." It felt like half the truth.
362	Flicking the light of the bathroom on, I saw on the counter a small wicker basket spilling over with dental dams and a brochure about safe sex for lesbians. ..."Why did you leave that stuff in the bathroom?" "If you're going to have lesbian sex, you should be having safe lesbian sex." ..."I had to figure it out from a hickey on her neck." "It just happened!" "Like a slut, parading through the kitchen, showing off."

Profanity/Derogatory Term	Count
Ass	7
Bitch	5
Dyke	4
Fag/Faggot	18
Fuck	105
Goddamn	2
Piss	4
Prick	1
Pussy	2
Shit	18
Tit	2



Figure 1



Figure 2