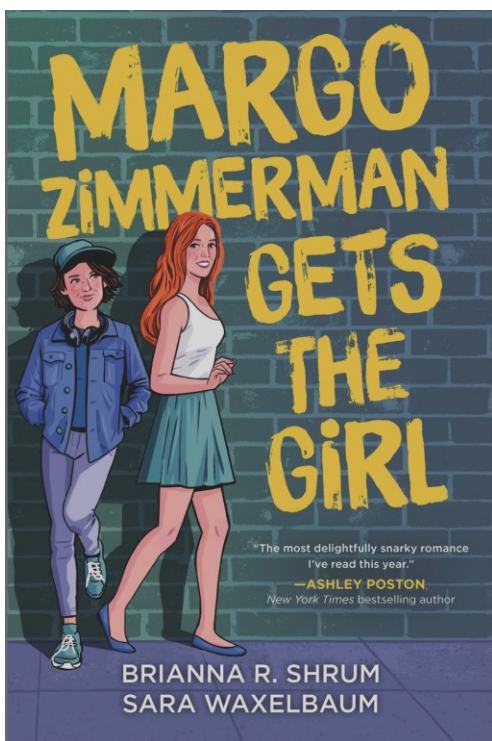


MARGO ZIMMERMAN GETS THE GIRL



Book Summary:

A high school senior discovers her sexuality and befriends a lesbian to learn more about her sexuality.

Summary of Concerns:

This book contains obscene sexual activities; sexual nudity; excessive/frequent profanity and derogatory terms; alternate sexualities; alternate gender ideologies; and controversial social commentary.

Young Adult

By Brianna R. Shrum and Sara Waxelbaum

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4 /5

Not For Minors
BookLooks Review Rating

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9	<p>I've also always totally wanted her boobs, let's be real. But like. What girl hasn't? It's just that it's awkward. I'll see her on Monday post-tongue down her throat and we'll have to do this Haha remember what my mouth tastes like? ...Chad is aggressively fine at making out, but surprise, surprise, I've never kissed a dude who didn't use way too much tongue. Like. Do their tongues actually expand? TARDIS style? Do they get bigger on the inside of a girl's mouth? Christ. Maybe the finesse comes later. And that's when it's all sparks and fireworks and not practically being waterboarded by saliva. In college, oh, wow, the kissing will be... fine-plus, at the very least. Anyway. All that is to say, I can't just... make out with a girl in front of my boyfriend. Even if... "Chad," I say. "I swear to god, are you videoing this?" ...Oh my god, her hair brushing over my neck, tickling my collarbone. Oh my god, the softness of her arms pressing into mine, her bare knees slipping against the hem of my shorts. I'm going to die. Right here at seventeen years old in Robbie Kendrick's basement. Oh my god, Viv is like, really into this. Is she gay? Oh my god. Oh my god, I'm gay.</p>
12	<p>Query: how to be gay. Query: gay tips. Query: queer culture? Did you mean "queen culture"? ...Mendel spends a third of his time fighting fires, a third hanging out with the family or in his room—a fireman's salary does not pay an apartment's rent—and a third practicing communism in the FROG.</p>
13	<p>What's the point of being gay and having an older sibling who's queer in like nineteen different ways if you can't use them as a resource? ...I lower my voice. "About being gay." "What?" he fake yells. "You're gay?" "Mendel, god. Yes. That. So I just... Here's the thing. I know I like girls. I know about rainbow flags and stuff and marriage equality and that kissing Viv Carter was a revelation, because—uh. Anyway. I guess I'm just... looking into the rest of it." "The rest of what?" he says. I shrug. I don't even know how to explain what I'm looking for. "Just... you know. The whole culture. The lifestyle. How do you like... become a part of that?" Mendel scratches his head. "Is this one of those autistic things where you're like, I need to know everything about this before I participate? I'm not going to homo until I can homo right?" I roll my eyes. "No." Then, "Yes, probably. Just—I don't know, how do you do this? How do you even signal that you're gay?"</p>
16	<p>I whirl around to find the source and see Abbie Sokoloff, resident Queer Girl™ at S.W. Moody High and fellow swimmer. Add to that: confoundingly hot. ..."This is a gay club. A gay club. For gay girls. Where we can be gay. Gayly." ...I go the gay hell home.</p>

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	<p>...And he says, "Because you're a... gay man?" I do a double take. "I'm sorry, what?" He throws his arms up in an exaggerated shrug and says, "You're wearing short pastel shorts and a leather necklace and fucking Sperrys, Margo. You're clearly a youthful male homosexual." "Ha. Ha ha ha hahahaha, that is hilarious, Mendel. I just went to the lesbian bar and you know what? You know what, Mendel?" ..."Did you... Did you ask the lesbians about Sean Cody?" "Yes! Like you told me!" Mendel almost falls out of his chair laughing. "I absolutely did not. This—Margo, Sean Cody is... There's a reason girls don't know about that. It's a website that's... Well. It's not for girls, dude. Definitely not gay ones." ..."You can't just learn gay culture off a few websites that, honestly, all cater to cis, gay dudes. That's... I think that's what happened here." ...I want to have a wife with long flowing hair and a maxi skirt and a golden retriever, hanging up herbs to dry in the kitchen or whatever it is that cottagecore lesbians do, so I researched how to do it. ...I see her looking perfectly, comfortably, gorgeously gay, like she belongs. Like she's gay and it's real, and no one would question her presence at a lesbian bar. Not like me. I need help.</p>
20	<p>She's standing there, clearly waiting for me, hands on her hips (like I need anything to direct my attention to her hips, Jesus), her auburn hair pulled back into a tight French braid, her tiny olive green bikini damp but not dripping. ...She says, "Hey. You're gay."</p>
21	<p>If I were straight, I wouldn't want to watch a girl squeeze her own boobs. ...I know the I've been practicing this look. "I'm gay." ..."This is a joke, right? You're Margo. Margo's—you're gay?" "I am Margo and I am gay."</p>
22	<p>"Because. I want you to teach me." "Teach you? What, exactly?" She wrinkles her pretty ski-slope nose and rolls her eyes. Like it should be obvious. "To be gay, Abbie." I blink. "You just—I don't know. You're just gay. You said you're gay, so you're gay. I don't know what you're asking for. If you're gay, you're gay. Congratulations, you gay." ...Her professionally polished too long to be gay nails tap at her thigh, then her thumbnail goes to her teeth.</p>
23	<p>And then Margo Zimmerman asked me how to be gay? Like, I don't know, dude, buy some high-top sneakers and tell everyone you think Kristen Stewart is hot. Congrats, you've nailed being gay.</p>
26	<p>You're gay. I rehash it in my head approximately ninety-seven times. ...And my brilliant decision to declare, You're gay. ...Just, HEY YOU UTTER LESBIAN. YOU'RE GAY is absolutely Rickrolling me while I wait for AP US History to start, my forehead becoming intimately acquainted with the fake wood of my right-handed desk. Less risk of having to make eye contact with Abbie, Who Is Gay.</p>

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29	<p>This hall is too crowded to be flinging around sentences like I'm gay before I'm sufficiently adequate at it. I finish, "That I'm."</p> <p>...And well, let's be honest. Abbie has probably gotten a number of girls' numbers in her life. Maybe even this exact way.</p>
31	<p>I type, Hey. You're gay.</p> <p>...Well with your help I will be.</p> <p>And immediately on top of that: I mean I am. Three more buzzes, right in a row: Gay. Not that I need your help.</p> <p>Well, I do.</p> <p>But I'm gay.</p>
33	<p>Calm down, Zimmerman, both my best friend and field hockey are pretty fucking gay, so yes, that is where Queer 101 starts.</p>
34	<p>If she wants to observe some gays in their natural habitat, this is a pretty low-stakes place to start.</p> <p>...Even from here, her legs look ten miles long in her denim shorts, the edges of the pockets hanging out. That's not usually a look I go for, but listen: swimming does a body good.</p>
35	<p>"I'm not saying it doesn't. And I'm not saying you can't—okay. Look. I'm not saying you can't do this whole like... high femme thing. I'm just saying you might be in the minority in a lot of circles. Queer circles. You know?"</p> <p>...I feel like I should be self-conscious, or flattered, or something, but it's for science, so I force myself to hold still and be observed in my I woke up this gay muscle tank and Owl House snapback.</p>
37	<p>"And while you're taking notes, inexplicably, write this down—if you don't want people to think about your sexuality, maybe don't awkwardly announce how you're not dating the queer girl you're talking to, without any prompting whatsoever. Do you need me to repeat any of that?"</p>
38	<p>"Listen, I know what I said the other day sounded like I was being an asshole, but I don't know, man. I don't know how to teach anyone to be gay. Shit, sometimes I don't know if I'm being gay correctly. I figured we could come out here, hang out, absorb some gay via osmosis or whatever. It's a field hockey game. It doesn't get a whole lot gayer than this."</p>
40	<p>Not in front of her—a girl who knows everything, who knows who she is, who's gotten a million girlfriends with her absolutely Giant Dick Energy and won't stop swinging it around for everyone to trip over.</p> <p>...Like I was straight. Because I flat-iron my hair.</p> <p>...Even the familiar murmurs of my favorite people in the background (You've already got the best ass in this entire store; you can't buy THOSE and totally wreck our self-esteem forever.</p> <p>...I keep seeing Abbie, flicking her eyes from the top of my high ponytail to the big cushy soles of my flip-flops, and I can hear her thinking: this girl likes girls? Please. Even her hair is straight.</p> <p>Maybe the problem isn't that she can't teach someone how to be gay; it's that she can't teach me.</p>
41	<p>I think, holding it up against my chest and looking in the mirror, I'd fuck me.</p> <p>But then I hear Abbie's voice in my head again: I'm not saying you can't do this whole high femme thing. I'm just saying you might be in the minority in queer circles. But all I can focus</p>

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	<p>on are the words you can't do this whole high femme thing, and that's great because I don't even know what "high femme" means.</p> <p>...Because I do feel like the minority in queer circles.</p> <p>I don't even have a queer circle.</p> <p>I go on the internet and it's like everyone is speaking a completely different language and using phrases like "high femme" and I've never even kissed a girl outside of a game of spin the bottle. And maybe I'm wrong.</p> <p>Maybe I'm not even queer at all, because it sure as hell just feels like... like I bought a rainbow hair band and when I wear it, I'm lying.</p> <p>...I clench my nails around this stupid I'd fuck me plaid shirt and they dig into my palms.</p> <p>...She deserves the beautiful heterosexual dress.</p>
43	<p>They'd probably be more confused that I'm looking at plaid than that I want to bang girls.</p> <p>...There's already Student Council Margo (very smiles and type A), Swim Team Margo (competitive, yet encouraging), Party Margo (playing make-out games knowing full well everyone in the room has a tiny video camera in their back pocket)—why can't there be Gay Margo?</p>
44	<p>On Sunday, I go to Jamal's; it's kind of a tradition. Neither of us goes to church on the Lord's Day (I'm Jewish; my Lord's Day is Saturday, and Jamal is agnostic; he says his Lord's Days are Tuesdays, Thursdays, and every other Wednesday if it's raining) so we switch off hanging at each other's places instead.</p>
48	<p>Is this how straight girls talk to each other? Because yikes. I'm so glad I figured out I'm bisexual before I got accidentally wrapped up in that melodramatic shit.</p>
50	<p>Rarely have I been so clearly, so unsubtly, so thoroughly eye-fucked by anyone like I am being right now by Margo Zimmerman.</p> <p>...Under that, I write Queer 101.</p>
52	<p>I turn back to the board, pick up a piece of chalk, and write, even larger than I wrote my name, HOMOSEXUALITY.</p>
53	<p>HOMOSEXUALITY.</p> <p>Homo. Sexuality.</p> <p>Honestly, screw you, Abbie Sokoloff, I know what homosexuality means and I know what lesbians are and I DEFINITELY know what French kissing is, Jesus.</p> <p>Homosexuality.</p> <p>...Excited to learn about queer history and sexuality and dress code and Sitting Like A Gay, whatever that means. And secret gay slang. And Thor: Ragnarok—a scientific study in Tessa Thompson and Thor, Lesbian Ally.</p> <p>...Not as unsettling as the feeling in the pit of my stomach watching her in those suspenders. The lines of her chest and her waist and... god.</p>
54	<p>Our school library doesn't have a queer section at all. This is the Bible belt. There's no way our governor—who doesn't even want us to say the word gay—would let any public school library have a whole labeled section of books for people like me, so I'm pretty surprised that I find any of the books on Abbie's reading list.</p> <p>Then I get curious: I google "under the radar queer YA" and spend some time poking through the shelves, finding a surprising number of titles that haven't been banned by PTA Pam and the Campus Crusade.</p>

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55	<p>My mouth actually falls open—the way a straight girl would when presented with her very attractive, regular, platonic friend.</p> <p>...I’m still staring like a lesbian deer in the headlights when she turns around, swimsuit mercifully pulled completely up over her chest.</p> <p>...“Oh, I know,” she says, that infuriating smirk on her face, “it’s just that only gay girls use the bathroom stalls to change.”</p> <p>“You didn’t,” I say, as if that will score me any points.</p> <p>“Were you watching me change, Zimmerman?”</p> <p>“Shut up.” My face is probably bright red, and would be even if I hadn’t watched her slide those straps up over her shoulders, even if the memory of it didn’t make my throat close up.</p> <p>“I wasn’t watching you change. But I could have, because you didn’t change in a stall, and if you didn’t change in a stall, then changing in a stall can’t be—” and I do like, jazz hands, I guess “—queer culture or whatever.”</p> <p>“I said gay girls were the only ones that did it, not that gay girls were incapable of doing anything else.”</p> <p>...“Yes, you are the expert,” I say, deadpan. “Let me grovel before your superior knowledge and wisdom. I know nothing. Please diagram the clitoris for me again.”</p>
57	<p>Just, gay as hell, looking at where her fingers are pointing.</p> <p>...I swallow it and summon the boldness that ran through my veins when I thought I liked boys.</p>
58	<p>“Yup,” I say, which is all I can say, because his nightmare medium-slung sweatpants are ruining my bisexual life.</p>
59	<p>I turn to him and why is everyone in this room so attractive? The eternal bisexual struggle.</p>
62	<p>Or the one who was waiting for me to come out of the pool and shouted you’re gay at me.</p>
63	<p>I’ve only read a few of the books I put on there; most of them came from some “40 Queer Books To Read Before You Die” list Google showed me.</p>
64	<p>“Nineteen copies of Lord of the Flies but nary a rainbow spine in the library.”</p>
65	<p>Then it becomes about identity again, and people, and her experience as a Black woman. It’s a story that I can get swept away in, and Audre Lorde, it turns out, is a lesbian.</p>
66	<p>As though I’m going to come home and go, “Sorry, Mom and Dad, I really screwed up Bein’ A Gay 101. I’ll never get a scholarship to college now.”</p> <p>...She’s assigned several essays for me—of course she has—and the first one hits me like a baseball bat: How I Knew I Was Gay.</p> <p>It’s patronizing on purpose. In the same vein as “HOMOSEXUALITY,” and defining the acronyms LGBTQIAP (which I actually thought was more patronizing than it was; that’s kind of a long acronym, and the primer was helpful. Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual-Transgender-Queer/ Questioning-Intersex-Asexual/ Aromantic/ Agender/ Definitely Not Ally-Pansexual) and the perhaps more inclusive and less of a mouthful GSRM (Gender-Sexual-Romantic-Minorities).</p> <p>...I know I kissed a girl in a game of spin the bottle.</p> <p>...What was wanting to be a pretty girl and wanting to be with one?</p> <p>What was... when? When was I just Gay?</p>
68	<p>I wonder if he can hear me thinking this. Thinking: I’m gay, I’m gay, I’m gay, and you don’t know and hardly anyone knows and all of this feels HUGE. It feels like a sign on my head.</p>
69	<p>It’s not like there’s a guide to coming out. There should be maybe; maybe I should have asked Abbie about that to begin with. Or Mendel. I’m so nervous. Coming out to Mendel</p>

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	<p>was nothing because, I don't know. He's queer, too. And he's my brother. Abbie ...What comes out of my mouth is, "I'm gay." ..."Of course you're gay," he says. ...Jamal raises an eyebrow at me and says, "Dude, I've known you since middle school. You've been gay forever." ..."Seriously, have you seen the way you look at girls? And you just... I don't know. It's a vibe. You're gay. Of course you're gay, M." ..."What about Chad? And all my other boyfriends?" He goes super deadpan. "Please, dude. Chad was always a fuckin' beard and you know it." I snort. "Or whatever that term is for girls."</p>
71	<p>I am gay, and Jamal knew, which makes it valid, somehow, and I am going to get myself some gay as hell gear and Gay with the best of them. Because I am Margo Zimmerman and I. Like. Girls. ...Jamal mutters under his breath, "I'm gay," in this mocking tone of voice that's like it was the most obvious thing in the world.</p>
72	<p>It's me at one end, two boxes of pizza in the middle, and my mom and dad very obviously halfway to second base at the other end. This is how it is: they're either yelling, not speaking at all, or fucking.</p>
73	<p>My dad chases my mom, laughing from the dining room down the hall, goosing her to make her squeal. The bedroom door slams shut. ...I can hear way too many sounds coming from my parents' room, so I put on some music, loud, while I wait for Charlie's response.</p>
75	<p>"Yes, Abbie, I know, you're bisexual, bisexuals exist, I get it." ...She always does this, because she's a gold star lesbian, and somehow that always makes me feel like the asshole, like I'm trying to convince her to be bisexual or something.</p>
76	<p>That I'm giving gay lessons to last year's Homecoming Queen. But I can't, because you don't out other people. I should include that in the lesson plan: Keeping Queer Secrets. ...Knowing Margo is gay is the biggest secret I've ever kept from Charlie. ...And I feel all this pressure to Be Good At Being Gay so I can mentor this Baby Gay correctly. But half the time I feel like I'm not that good at being gay—because I'm not gay. I'm bisexual, and the amount of baggage that exists in the queer community about bisexuals is exhausting. We're crazy, we're greedy, we're slutty, we're actually lesbians, we're actually straight, we're just doing it for male attention. (I swear to god Charlie once told me I was appropriating lesbian culture.) Everyone at school knows I'm bi, but the last thing I want is for Margo Zimmerman, the lesbian, to look at me the way Charlie does. To feel like my attraction to people who aren't girls is some kind of covert straight girl op to infiltrate the gay community, and... ...Charlie says... something, but I don't know what it was because I was too busy thinking about the checklist of things I gave Margo to change about herself in order to be a proper gay.</p>
80	<p>I'm sitting here in my normal, apparently heterosexual clothes with a change in my bag, waiting to spring some real homosexuality on her, and I can't stop thinking about it. About... all of it. ...I'm so focused on being a freaking lesbian that even after being totally called out in front of everyone, I can't stop looking at Viv's legs. Her shorts. Are so short. And thick thighs, my god, they save lives.</p>

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	I can't stop looking at her mouth. Even twisted in disapproval, I can't stop thinking about how my tongue was in it, and it was good.
81	<p>And great; I am literally too gay to function because now I'm thinking about how hot Sydney Arollo is, too.</p> <p>...“Yeah, I'm fine. Just got some stuff on my mind.”</p> <p>Like your ridiculous perfect face and Viv's ridiculous perfect legs and a thousand strategies to cope with this lesbian nightmare of a Student Council meeting.</p> <p>...Then she came back in the tenth with a new wardrobe and a new haircut and new pronouns and a new name, and I thought, Well, I'm not into girls, so I must have been misinterpreting my own hormones.</p> <p>No, Margo. Nothing had changed. You wanted to touch her because she was always a girl, whether or not you knew it.</p> <p>And you were always gay.</p>
84	<p>How do the Gays get volume, dammit?</p> <p>...Abbie's in a too-big vintage adidas T-shirt and black skinnies and high-top black Vans, which is at the very least medium-key gay. It's high-key I-Can't-Stop-Looking-At-Her even though it's not like anything she's wearing is designed to draw attention to any particular part of her.</p> <p>...It's like... what I have put on in order to dress queer.</p> <p>It's different.</p> <p>...Watch me make eye contact, gayly.</p>
85	<p>“You do realize there's not like... a literal uniform, right? Like, you can dress however you want and still like girls.”</p> <p>...“You know, I wasn't planning on covering gay fashion, but it seems like...” Her eyes sort of narrow, like she's thinking, and says, “Okay, so there's a few different like, vibes.”</p> <p>...“High femme, which is... well. You. Makeup and heels and dresses. Lipstick lesbians. There's tomboys, which is more me. It's more of a gender-neutral thing. You might hear the phrase chapstick lesbian.”</p> <p>“Chapstick lesbian. Got it.”</p> <p>“And butch. Think Kasie Callihan.”</p> <p>...“Great. Let's move on and talk about how to move like a gay.”</p> <p>“I'm sorry—how to move like a gay?”</p> <p>...“I don't know. I don't usually walk up to girls and ask their sexual orientations.”</p>
87	<p>“Look, even if I didn't have a reputation, I doubt very much you would assume I was heterosexual, right? So, no, you've never seen a straight girl stand like that. Straight girls don't have Big Dick Energy.”</p> <p>I write down the phrase, “Straight girls don't have Big Dick Energy,” and grin into my notebook. “Is it Big Dick Energy if you claim it out loud?” I ask, arching an eyebrow.</p> <p>“Yes,” she says emphatically. “Why do you think the word is cocky?”</p> <p>...I'm trying. I'm GAY-ING.</p>
90	<p>“Behold,” I say, one side of my mouth ticking up. “My Big Dick Energy.”</p> <p>...“Walking is easy—just walk fast. But you do that anyway, so good job, you gay.”</p> <p>I say, “Thank you. I've often been told I walk homosexually fast.”</p> <p>...I manage to cross one leg over the other under this tiny desk, and say, “All right. Yes, you are sitting wrong. I'm not sure what this has to do with being gay?”</p> <p>...“Don't ask me why. But I've caught myself so many times in so many uncomfortable</p>

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	positions because like hell will I put my damn feet on the floor like a heterosexual." ...My feet hover and my calves start burning quickly but here we are: grown up, gay, and the floor is Heterosexuality.
93	That's it. That's visual homosexuality. ..."You really do look like a freaking Gay."
94	Maybe I'm giving a bad rap to bisexuals everywhere, but sometimes you just have to close your eyes and let someone else's hands and mouth be the only thing you think about for a while. ...I don't feel like having a stranger press their hip bones into mine, even if there's not an unwelcome boner. ..."You might change your mind. Besides, it's been a while since you've gotten any, hasn't it?" It hasn't, actually, and Charlie knows that, but because the person I hooked up with two weeks ago wasn't a girl, Charlie doesn't count it.
96	"Dude, my options aren't just go home or make out with a stranger." "Are they not? Listen, I'm not trying to be an asshole here, but making out with a stranger is kind of your stress relief MO." ...It's not going to make her less biphobic.
97	Charlie's already making her way back to her girlfriend and I watch them put their arms around each other and kiss briefly, their hips swaying in unison while they dance.
99	The desk is a minimalist's wet dream. ...I swallow and even though it's almost midnight and probably past her bedtime, I reply: Good job, homo
100	I decide to tell her (mostly) the truth: Trolling for bitches.
103	My phone buzzes, and it's Margo. Too hungover for history? ...Please, what kind of girl do you think I am? The kind who spends her Thursdays *trolling for bitches* and getting too hungover for history? ...It's stupid, and I hate it, and I hate this conversation, and why did I agree to teach the hottest girl in school how to be gay.
107	"He was a total feminist. Like, he and his wife, Theodosia, were super into Mary Wollstonecraft, who by the way, was Mary Shelley's mom. The woman who wrote Frankenstein? Which, did you know that Mary Goth-Ass Shelley lost her VIRGINITY on her mom's GRAVE? Anyway. Crap. What was I... Mary Wollstonecraft. She wrote this whole book of really radical feminist essays and Aaron Burr was basically an evangelist for it. Anyway. I just thought you should know." I stop and take a breath. "You know. That Aaron Burr gets a bad rap and that Mary Shelley fucked on her mother's grave." ...When she leaves I say, "Bye," like a normal person, instead of "Did you know that Herman Melville and Nathaniel Hawthorne were banging it out? All authors throughout forever are apparently queer and banging and Nathaniel Hawthorne was an absolute thirst trap; did you know that weird thing about history, Abbie?" like a batshit person. ...I am certain it's because she's a ridiculously attractive girl, and she's paying attention to me, and she knows I'm gay. ...It's because I'm gay.

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109	<p>“Have you ever been a lesbian, Mendel?”</p> <p>“I cannot say that I have.”</p> <p>“It’s complicated.”</p> <p>“It’s Abbie.”</p>
110	<p>It comes out a little strangled, which, great. What does that mean? Why does that thought make me want to die just a little? It shouldn’t; she’s gay.</p> <p>Right, that’s the reason it shouldn’t make me want to die.</p>
111	<p>He was the first person I told.</p> <p>The night I broke up with Chad, Mendel came outside to the front porch and found me on the swing crying, and I said, “I broke up with Chad,” and he said, “Thank G-d,” and I said, “I’m gay,” and he said, “Welp.”</p> <p>...I sat in that porch swing and I cried and I told my big brother I was gay, and he said, “G-d, Margo, I love you. Okay? You’re my favorite person. My favorite gay, gay, lesbian person.”</p>
112	<p>I say, in his room, “I know. But I just don’t know what I’m doing. I don’t even know how to speak the language. I don’t even know how to tell people I’m gay because I feel like I should have to take a test. Like there should be some kind of official assessment or like, a brain scan.”</p> <p>...“Yes. Like I could make an appointment, go in, and the person in charge would say, Oh, wow. Wow, yeah, there’s no questioning these results. You’re DEFINITELY gay. Congratulations.”</p> <p>...“You’ll figure it out. You know yourself. You’re gay and you don’t need a test. You don’t need someone else to tell you who you are. You just need to trust yourself. I trust you.”</p> <p>...“You haven’t freaked out like this in months. Not about like, being gay,” he says.</p>
114	<p>I could tell you that it was when I wound up with my tongue down Viv Carter’s throat during a game of spin the bottle over the summer and for the first time maybe EVER, I actually felt something below the waist when I kissed someone.</p> <p>...I could tell you that it was the first time my first boyfriend knocked braces with mine and I thought, This is like doing algebra.</p> <p>...It’s tongues and teeth and math.</p>
115	<p>Did you just come out of the womb knowing exactly who you were and exactly who you wanted to kiss and exactly who you didn’t?</p> <p>I don’t know how I knew I was gay, Abbie.</p>
116	<p>That’s why she had the confidence to stand in front of me at a public pool and say, You’re gay.</p>
120	<p>But she’s the one who wants to be Gay™, so I text her immediately, even as she walks away, her flat-ironed hair blowing in her wake.</p> <p>...Gays won’t recognize you in the wild if you wave at them like a nervous five-year-old.</p> <p>...Waving is homophobia, Margo.</p>
124	<p>“Mendel’s firehouse T-shirt,” she says, all tension in the timbre of her voice. “Noted as homosexual. And it’s not even plaid.”</p> <p>“It’s a man’s shirt,” I tell her temple, pulling out into the street. I face forward again and Margo’s body deflates in what I assume is relief. “And you’ve tied it off. That’s pretty gay.”</p>
126	<p>“Shit yeah, I love Wake to a Blowjob.”</p> <p>“Who’s not into a little Morngasm, buddy?”</p>

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127	"So," I say to Margo, "this is the educational part of the trip. We've already established that comfort, naps, and being tired is gay."
129	"This is your gay lesson," I say. "Iced coffee is gay culture."
136	I blink at the ground and manage to say, "Just because she's gay, doesn't mean she wants to bang every girl in existence, okay?"
138	The thing about being publicly queer is that your sexuality and interests and pursuits are always a popular topic of conversation. It doesn't matter that your crushes work the same way as The Straights'; being queer in high school is like living on the wrong side of the fence in a zoo. And I was never really in the closet—when we moved here, I already knew I didn't just like boys, and I didn't care who knew. If straight kids don't care who knows they're straight, then why should I have to care who knows I'm bisexual? In a perfect world, sure. But this isn't a perfect world. It's Florida. We can't even say "gay" here.
145	"Don't even get him started on the royal baby." I raise my eyebrows and Margo says, "I'm messing with you. Mendel doesn't give a crap about royalty. He's a communist." I blink. "I don't know if you're joking or not." Margo does some flawless awkward bisexual finger guns.
148	"So," he says, and tosses a giant handful of popcorn into his mouth, "what are we watching?" "But I'm A Cheerleader," I blurt, because I don't know what else to say. There aren't a lot of queer girl movies, and even fewer that aren't just like, soft lens and directed by aging French straight men. Bonus: this one doesn't have, like, egregious on-screen sex.
152	I probably should have known, honestly, that I was gayer than not when all the other sixth graders were doing essays on Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King Jr., and Jesus, and I was busy absolutely fawning over this bisexual sword fighter from the 1700s. I always wanted to be her. Or well... do something about and/ or with her.
153	Maybe to be queer in a time like that, you had to be completely radical. Maybe to be queer now, you have to be... I don't know. What I know is that it's a crime that Julie D'Aubigny isn't the first person we learn about in European history, because she had the audacity to have sex with women.
156	The particular sound of wheels on cement gets louder the closer we get, and I don't know how many of these people are gay, but there's sure a lot of them. It's a very different crowd than I'm used to hanging out with. The baggy jeans and baggier Anarchy T-shirts and snapbacks and weed kind of crowd.
157	But this is about being gay in the wild. I sit. I try to signal, through this, that I am a Homosexual™, and I do succeed in sitting a little awkwardly (the way I would have instinctively sat, anyway, I think; who knew?) but not in drawing any fellow queers to me.
159	Another girl sidles up to her, and I shoot her some bisexual finger guns. ..."That queer girl life, man," she says. "Girls are impossible to talk to. Margo, right?"
162	I say, over Robin Hood, "I'm—I'm gay." ...They've gone to protests for queer rights and my mom has commented happily more than once on the couple of gender-neutral bathrooms in our synagogue.

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	<p>...And they were cool when he told them he was poly a couple years back. I believe Dad said, "You're taking this communism thing a little far now, aren't you, kid?" And that was it. So I'm not actually worried, but also I am? Because sometimes... sometimes people are cool about everyone else's kids and weird about their own, or cool with gay boys but not gay girls, or cool with being gay but not trans, and I'm sure that's not my parents but... what if. ...And I say, more clearly, more resolutely, to my parents, "I'm gay. I'm just... I don't know what else to say. I'm gay."</p>
163	<p>I watch Robin Hood: Men in Tights homosexually. Which, as it turns out, is the same as watching it heterosexually or bisexually or any other kind of sexually.</p>
171	<p>I finally, finally make myself turn my head—and it's absurd, how nervous this makes me, as if I haven't kissed girls before, as if I haven't done more than just kiss on bedroom floors—and she's so close, if I move at all, we'll be pressed together. So. I move. I put my hand on her neck and my mouth on hers and it takes no time at all for her mouth to open and for mine to mirror it and Jesus Christ, I'm kissing Margo Zimmerman. Her hands are in my hair and on my waist and everywhere all at once, and I feel her teeth scrape my lip and her fingers tighten on my hips and she's pulling me into her lap and I let her because why wouldn't I? Her legs are bare under mine and I've never been so bummed to not be wearing shorts. But it's okay, because there's so much of her to touch, soft and hard and everything between. ...I clamber out of Margo's lap—I WAS STRADDLING MARGO ZIMMERMAN?—and when I look over at her, her face is furious for a split second before she says, sweetly, "Come in." ...Her tongue was just in my mouth. Why wouldn't we shake hands?</p>
175	<p>She pulled me into her lap. That's not the same Margo Zimmerman that arranges and rearranges her pencils on her desk, or the same Margo Zimmerman that almost fell out of her chair trying to sit wrongly enough. Like as soon as kissing was on the table, she switched gears and became this whole other person. ...I thought about that kiss all the way home, and I'm still thinking about it when I brush my teeth and when I wash my face and when I slide under the covers. I'm still thinking about her bare legs in those shorts, and the way her hands tightened on me, and the way her teeth scraped over my lip, and the way she responded to me, to my hands and my mouth and— And I'm still thinking about it when I roll over onto my side and pull my nightstand drawer open. My vibrator is small and bright green, maybe the size of a tube of lipstick. It doesn't have any bells and whistles, just a soft tip and three speeds that pretty reliably get the job done. I'm so wound up, and what I want to do is think about anything else. I always feel kind of weird thinking about a specific person, especially if it's someone I know and someone I'm not dating. ...So it would be really weird of me to think about the dip of her waist and the muscles in her thighs when I switch the vibrator on, and it would be even weirder of me to think about the sweep of her tongue and the press of her hips when I slip it between my legs. I want to think about something else, about faceless perfect humans that are doing exactly what I want, about celebrities I'll never meet and definitely never bang. But I can't. I try, but I can't. I'm thinking about Margo and her big eyes and her shiny hair</p>

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	<p>and her strong shoulders and long legs, and I'm thinking about how her lips would feel on my neck, how her teeth would feel there, how her breasts would fit in my hands, how her fingers would feel between my legs. If she'd be conscientious or wild.</p> <p>I want to think about anyone else, but Margo just Margos her way into my brain and soon I'm too close to the edge to feel guilt or remorse or anything but fucking Margo Zimmerman. My back arches and that sweet champagne fizz rushes through me and I have to bite my own hand to keep from making enough noise to wake the neighborhood.</p> <p>And then I do it again. And a third time. And I'm so exhausted I pass out with the vibrator still in my hand.</p>
179	<p>I'm thinking about girls and everything I know about them and I'm thinking about Abbie Sokoloff's tongue in my mouth. I'm thinking about the dip and knot in my stomach when I managed to choke out, "Did you want to show me?" and the press of her hips into my stomach when she wrapped her legs around me, the softness of her thighs, her lip between my teeth.</p>
181	<p>It's enough people, and I kissed a girl last week and I loved it and I've learned how to exist in this space as this person.</p> <p>...I say, "I'm gay, Chloe."</p> <p>..."I'm gay. I'm gay. I'm just... well, that's it."</p>
184	<p>I reply, Christ I am so bisexual, because where do I look?</p> <p>A minute later, she responds, Wait, bisexual?</p> <p>...She told me it was because she was so surprised, she wasn't sure how to approach the situation, because, as she eventually said, But Abs, I thought you were gay.</p> <p>...One of the perks of being openly bisexual in high school is, theoretically, everyone knows you're bisexual, with all the positive and mostly negative trappings that go with</p> <p>...And of all the people to give me shit for being bisexual, I thought teach me everything about queer culture Margo Zimmerman wouldn't be one of them.</p> <p>...She says, Oh, you've just said you were gay so many times?</p> <p>No, Margo, you've said I'm gay so many times.</p> <p>Because she didn't say lesbian, she said gay. Which I am. Sort of.</p> <p>...It's just that I've dealt with so many intensely biphobic lesbians—and biphobic bisexuals, and biphobic heterosexuals—and I really thought Margo wasn't one of them.</p> <p>I hope she isn't, anyway.</p> <p>Besides, I've been openly bisexual since the eighth grade. I thought she knew, is the thing, because I thought everyone knew. Everyone knows I'm not just into girls. Everyone remembers that I went on dates with two of the three openly nonbinary people in our grade because it was, for some reason, a huge deal.</p> <p>And Margo The Lesbian has dated boys.</p> <p>...Except I'm tired and mad and embarrassed and maybe feeling a tiny bit passive aggressive, so I say, Here's a free lesson: "gay" isn't just homosexual.</p>
186	<p>"I didn't mean it like... like OH GROSS NOT A BISEXUAL. NOT A GIRL WHO HAS KNOWN THE TOUCH OF A MAN. I've dated boys. You know I've dated boys. I just meant... I just meant that you've said you were gay like a million times, and I've said you were gay a million times, and I was just. Confused. It's okay if you're bi. Not that you need me to say it's okay. Or something. Fuck. Jesus. Am I making this worse?"</p> <p>..."All right," I say, "so here's the thing about what just happened. Biphobia is pretty rampant in the lesbian community, and I've been turned down by more than my share of</p>

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	lesbians because I've been theoretically tainted by dick. Even though they don't know whether or not I've ever actually touched one, because it's none of their business. And, to be honest, it's not really any of yours, either."
187	<p>"I don't care! If you've touched a dick! Why would that matter to me? You just told me it was none of my business and I'm agreeing with you that it's none of my business."</p> <p>... "No. I'm not. I'm just—I don't know. Pretty gun-shy. I guess. Everyone gives bisexuals shit about being bisexual, including other bisexuals. Because no matter what, you're doing it wrong. You're transphobic, or you'll fuck anything that's breathing, or whatever. There's no right or good way to be bi and it's just pretty exhausting. Is all."</p>
189	<p>"It's true," I say. "I'm a slutty, slutty bi."</p>
190	<p>I don't think Abbie would have said, "Queer sex," so loud.</p> <p>If it weren't empty in here.</p> <p>... "Sex isn't just putting a penis in a vagina," she says.</p> <p>"Oh, thank you, Captain Obvious. Now I know that I, a lesbian, do not have to die a virgin."</p> <p>"Virginity is just the commodification of female reproduction."</p> <p>"You've been dying to say that somewhere besides TikTok, haven't you?"</p> <p>"Shut up." But she's smiling, so I don't completely panic. "I'm saying this because I know you know, but it never hurts to hear, out loud, that sex and virginity is viewed through a heteronormative lens, and that's bullshit. Now, heteronormative is—"</p> <p>I cut her off because she's being a jerk on purpose and it's making me smile but also: "I know what heteronormative means, thank-you-very-much."</p> <p>... "Stop stalling and tell me what you know about sex." I smile when I say it, aiming for something between cheeky and flirty, but it's not because I'm feeling cheeky or flirty—it's because this room is like twelve degrees too hot with Abbie talking about sex and she's so freaking pretty and I'm not so unaware of my own face that I can't tell I'm blushing furiously.</p> <p>Alone. In this empty house.</p> <p>Talking about sex.</p> <p>After she—we kissed. I don't know who started it, but I haven't been able to think about anything but that kiss since it happened. That kiss is my new special interest.</p>
191	<p>"Okay, so, first of all, who's the boy and who's the girl is something you're going to hear about lesbians, but that's not a thing. Queer relationships can't be defined by the same terms as heteronormative relationships. And even then, the idea of masculine being dominant and feminine being submissive is bullshit, no matter what genitals are present in the equation."</p>
192	<p>"Some people define sex as having had an orgasm, or genital contact, or tenderly interlocking fingers while John Mayer sings about your body being a wonderland."</p> <p>... "Well, Abbie, do girls actually fuck? Because I hear all we can do is make love."</p> <p>"I guess it depends on who you ask, Margo. I'd venture to say that we as an inclusive gender contain multitudes and are capable of having whatever kind of sex we want." She smirks and says, "I myself prefer fucking."</p> <p>I laugh, and I know I'm blushing again. I can feel it on my face. Because now I'm thinking about Abbie fucking. And not just generally.</p> <p>Extremely. Specifically.</p> <p>I scrape my teeth over my lip. "Well, thank god, because I hate John Mayer."</p> <p>Then I realize what I said, or what it sounded like I said. I think I was going for: it's a good</p>

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	<p>thing girls can do sexing how they want, and we don't have to be soft and romantic and laid gently upon rose petals in order to come. But what it sounded like was: Thank god you like to fuck, Abbie, because that's what I like.</p>
193	<p>"Margo, he's an excellent blues guitarist. It's not all gently drawing the back of your hand down someone's cheek, you know. I bet John Mayer can fuck, too." "John Mayer doesn't fuck; he slow dances." She snorts. "I think we've lost the thread here. The point is, sex is what you define it as. Don't let someone else tell you what does and doesn't count. And, listen—you're pretty headstrong, but no one talks about this so I'm going to—don't let anyone of any gender bully or coerce or force you into doing anything you don't want to do. Consent knows no bounds. You don't have to have a penis to be a rapist."</p>
194	<p>"I assume you know about condoms?" "Duh." "Dental dams?"</p>
195	<p>She just says, "So dental dams are rectangular pieces of latex you use for oral sex. They're made out of the same stuff as male condoms, and in fact, if you want to have a safe dinner out and all you have are male condoms, you can just cut it from opening to tip and use that." My pencil slips briefly at safe dinner out, my god. "Dental dams. Condoms. Okay." I am trying so hard, so very, very hard, but I have to put my pencil down, have to do something with my hands or my body or something so I don't literally explode. ... "Pro tip," Abbie says, "if you have to go the DIY route, non-lubricated condoms are best. So when you've got your piece of latex, you just cover the vulva in question, and go to town. Any questions?" "Yeah, actually," I say, though my head is kind of screaming, NO ACTUALLY, because hearing Abbie talk about sex in this much detail has obviously been murdering me, but I realize now that hearing her talk about it clinically in this much detail is murdering me in a completely different way. You don't talk about sex like this, like a medical professional, to someone you want to have it with. ... "Why do you keep saying male condoms?" "Male condoms are the kind you're probably familiar with, the kind that go on penises, male or otherwise," she says. "The other kind is a female condom, even though it was originally developed for anal sex. They're more expensive than male condoms, because of course they are, and instead of fitting snugly on a penis, they are inserted and secured in the orifice to be penetrated." Orifice. To be. Penetrated.</p>
196	<p>"You need something to drink, or...?" "No. I mean, yes, I'm okay. No, I don't need a drink. I can talk about sex and orifice penetration, thank you, Abbie." "Good, because unless you have any more questions about safe cunnilingus, we'll move on to finger banging." I'm no longer red because of words like orifice. I'm back to square one. Which is: red because Abbie Sokoloff is sitting in her living room</p>

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	<p>with me about to educate me on finger banging. ...YOU'RE GAY. Congrats, me. I did this to myself. "Safety and hygiene is important even when you're not rubbing mucous membranes together, so if you want to put your fingers into a vagina or an anus, you'll want to have clean hands." ..."Look, if you're going to be putting your fingers into areas of delicate tissue, you've got to be careful about, like. Injuring the other person. So you can wear gloves or you can cut your nails. At least, you know, the ones you plan on putting in people." "Oh." I stare at my fingers. The cool, not at all, I can't breathe thing about this line of discussion is that Abbie is not talking about people's fingers in people; she's talking about mine. She's looking at mine. I wish that my nails were magically short. "I can... Yeah, I can cut them. I'll cut them." ...But once it became Margo's fingers and Margo's sex, it became overwhelming. It became too personal, like, profoundly personal, and I can feel the intimacy on my skin and it's too bright and too loud and too much, just much too fucking much.</p>
197	<p>When I stop, my hands are ringing like bells, and I feel a hundred times better—except the part where I just did my stimmiest stim in front of this girl who's teaching me about sex, this girl I really want to kiss again, and I guess I just hope I haven't completely shot myself in the foot.</p>
198	<p>I find myself saying out loud, "I'm just... I'm nervous about all of this." "Well, yeah," she says. "Of course you are. It's sex. Sex is terrifying, dude. It can be great and it can be terrible and it changes everything. Don't feel weird about being nervous. Listen, I know—" ..."I know I've got a reputation. And it's—I don't know. It is what it is. But for what it's worth, most of what I just told you I know because I looked it up. Not because anyone told me. Because no one talks about queer sex beyond like, scissoring. And that's not realistic. So don't worry about it. I got most of my education from Scarleteen and Planned Parenthood. No shame." ..."I haven't done what I would call sex. But I've given like, hand jobs. And penises are pretty simple, is the thing. So I'm worried. I'm worried I'm gonna like... I'm worried I'm going to get with a girl and she's gonna be like, NOPE. NOPE, NOPE, NOPE. YOU ARE BAD AT THIS, MARGO ZIMMERMAN. GOOD AT KNOWING KNOWLEDGE BUT BAD AT SEX. Please get your neatly trimmed nails out of me." I have said this to a girl I am now pretty irrevocably sure I myself want to put my neatly trimmed nails into. ..."Sorry if this is too forward," she says, and my throat closes up. "But I know you pretty well, I think, and if I know anything about you, it's that you pay attention. And the thing about being a good lay is you just have to pay attention. If you do a thing, and your partner makes a positive noise—they're pretty easy to identify, I promise—then do the thing again. If they make a negative noise, don't do the thing again."</p>
201	<p>The only thing that saved Margo from the rumor mill was her serial seemingly heterosexual monogamy. And when I say any human who's attracted to boys, yes.</p>
203	<p>What a bisexual nightmare.</p>
206	<p>I give him. Awkward bisexual finger guns.</p>

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207	There's a difference between private and public stims, I guess, and what she did, sitting on my living room floor while I talked about sex, was definitely a private one.
209	<p>"You're the authority on other people's sexualities, so if you say Margo Zimmerman's straight, she definitely must be."</p> <p>..."Fine," she says, her voice hard, "she's gay."</p>
210	<p>"A phase. Do you know how many people have told me my being gay is a phase?"</p> <p>"You're not gay." Charlie laughs, but there's an edge to it I don't like. "You're not gay, Abbie."</p>
212	But you better sit down with yourself and figure out your beef with femme girls. And why bisexual girls aren't gay enough.q
213	I want these little lace shorts, and a spaghetti strap tank, and this freaking adorable yellow mini dress that I think makes my boobs look as great as it does my complexion.
215	<p>"Gross," I say. "Gross, gross, gross. Gross."</p> <p>"Margo, you take that back. There is nothing gross about the physical expression of love."</p> <p>...I'm so busy puzzling over his choice to walk up the steps while still facing me that I don't realize until he's gone that he was balancing three glasses of water.</p>
216	<p>"Polyamory is kickass and more people should try it."</p> <p>I say, "I don't want to think about my brother having sex. That's what I'm being a dick about. I don't care about the polyamory stuff. What else did you call it?"</p> <p>"Ethical non-monogamy?"</p> <p>"Yes! Ethical non-monogamy."</p> <p>..."So you're polyamorous and/ or ethically non-monogamous, and... bisexual, right?"</p> <p>"Pansexual. I guess I've never used the word with you."</p> <p>I frown. "So that means... what? You want to bang everyone?"</p> <p>Mendel says, "No. G-d, not everyone."</p> <p>I cock my head and he says, "Capitalists."</p> <p>...Then his mouth curls and he says, "Well. No relationships with capitalists."</p> <p>I blow out a breath.</p> <p>"Cops," he says. "Republicans."</p> <p>"Mendel."</p> <p>"Anti-vaxxers. Climate change deniers."</p> <p>"Oh my god."</p> <p>"People who talk on speaker phone in the middle of Starbucks and they take up the table next to the outlet but they don't even have a laptop and you're like, bitch, you don't even need that outlet! I'm at eight percent!" "</p> <p>That sounds like one specific person."</p> <p>"Whom I would never fuck."</p> <p>..."I'd fuck whatever gender," he says finally. "That's what I mean. Gender is propaganda, probably."</p> <p>I chuckle and lean my head back on the couch. "Spoken like a true agender human," I say. Mendel refers to himself as genderqueer, nonbinary, agender, in basically equal measure. He doesn't really give a shit about brother or sister or sibling or pronouns; a few of his friends are nonbinary and care very much about their own pronouns and titles, and Mendel, in turn, cares a lot about that.</p> <p>I say, "Honestly, I can wrap my head around the pan thing more than the polyamory, I think."</p>

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	<p>“Well,” he says, “sounds right. People are weird about communism.”</p> <p>...He says, “Seriously, people are weird about it. Like monogamy makes so much goddamn sense. Like people are a monogamous species who don’t just make each other miserable half the time and get monogamously divorced every day! And I’m the weird one for coming up with an arrangement in which everyone is happy.”</p> <p>...I stare at the silent TV, and say, “This is the future liberals want?”</p> <p>He says, “Leftists, Margo. This is the future leftists want.”</p>
219	<p>That I could like girls, or boys and girls, or boys and girls and enbies, or not have a gender, or want sex or not want sex, or only have ever kissed boys and never girls, or only love high heels and straight girl makeup, and STILL. BE QUEER?</p> <p>...I’m fucking gay, Abbie, I’m fucking queer, and in a couple hours, I guess I’ll see you at school in my gay, queer, flat-ironed ponytail.</p>
224	<p>In the next one, she wrote about Julie D’Aubigny, eighteenth-century French bisexual icon. Then she wrote about being queer, and about her queerness, and that her heels and makeup and hair straightener doesn’t make her less queer, and she’s right.</p>
232	<p>“Uh, my dude? We’re at a gay club. She’s probably going to go find someone to dance with. Which is what you should do.”</p> <p>...And Margo—kisses her.</p> <p>She just kisses some other girl.</p> <p>Right... right in front of me.</p>
235	<p>And then her hands are on my shoulders, and I’m stumbling back into the wall. She curls her fingers around the back of my neck and—</p> <p>G-d.</p> <p>She’s kissing me.</p> <p>Abbie is kissing me and not because I asked her to teach me anything? It takes me a full two seconds to even figure out how to react because going from this girl who is not into me is PISSED to well wait hold on her tongue is in my mouth, allow me to reconfigure to well. I think she was lying. About the not liking me is kind of a whirlwind.</p> <p>But well.</p> <p>I figure out how to react.</p> <p>I slide my hands down her waist to pull her hips into me and I kiss her back. Like we never left my room.</p> <p>Her hands, and her gayly trimmed nails, are slipping up over my dress, curving over my breasts, and I almost think she’s surprised by it. Because her breath hitches. She makes this little sound in the back of her throat when I kiss her, like she hasn’t done this a million times with other people. Like, I don’t know. She’s nervous.</p> <p>About me.</p> <p>What the hell. Me, who’s so clueless that I had to hire someone to teach me to be gay, for god’s sake, I’m the reason Abbie Sokoloff can’t keep her breath under control. Is it possible that kissing me is making her feel like it’s making me feel? Like I’m drowning, like I can’t figure out how to make it from one breath to the next, like I can’t even think.</p> <p>But what I can do is push her suspenders off her shoulders, so they’re hanging down over her hips. Jesus Christ. She scrapes her teeth over my jaw, and I pull back just for half a second, to look down at her, and she’s flushed, hand sliding back down to my waist.</p> <p>“Hey,” she says, a smirk curling one corner of her mouth, “you should probably go tell your friend you’re leaving.”</p>

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	<p>I legitimately bluster out a laugh. I'm so freaking flustered. Or. Well. Something. The important thing is that my mouth is laughing, but my finger is curled in Abbie's belt loop. She says, "Tell her you're leaving with me." Heat flares in my stomach and I choke out, "Yeah, I'm not planning on telling her anything." Abbie's smile slides a little higher, a little less even, and we head back out into the club.</p>
237	<p>Margo Zimmerman tastes like Cherry Coke. I'm speeding and I don't care because I need to get us somewhere with a closing door that's not a public bathroom. I'm speeding and Margo's hand is on my thigh. I pull up in the driveway and I guess I hit the brakes pretty hard because the car sort of jolts when I put it into Park. I don't even know if either of my parents are home but honestly I don't care. The adrenaline must really be messing with me because I drop my house keys twice before I manage to get the front door unlocked. ...Inside, the house is dark, so I feel like, sure, maybe I can do this, and I press Margo against the front door and kiss her again because honestly, how am I supposed to not? She kisses me back like she wants to spend the rest of the night right here in the vestibule, but I finally make myself break away and grab her hand, except I miss and grab her wrist and I don't care, I'm dragging her back to my room. I slam the door, I guess, but when I reach for Margo again, she takes a half step back. I don't even consider being offended; I just sort of appreciate the moment to take a whole actual breath. She runs a hand over her mouth. "Are your parents home?" I say, "I don't give a fuck." Margo smirks and grabs my tie, winds it around her wrist, and drags me toward her. I let her. She kisses me, slower but no less desperately than before, her hands sliding up my waist. They're moving, but they're also shaking, like every motion is punctuated with a question mark. But she stops again, kind of laughing, and smooths her hands back over her hair. "Seriously," she says. "Are your parents home?" She's stopped, but she hasn't moved away. I say, "I don't think they are, but I don't know for sure. Do you want me to text them, or...?"</p>
239	<p>I reach for her hand again, but I don't take it, just slide my fingers up her arm, over her shoulder. "How about this? Is this all right?" She says, "Yeah. Yep." My fingers drag across the slant of her collarbone, to the hollow of her throat. "This?" I can barely hear the "Mhmm." My hand travels up the length of her neck. "And this?" She nods. My fingers find the elastic holding up her perfect ponytail and give it enough of a tug to show my intention. "How about this?" "Okay." Our faces are so close I can feel her breath on my skin. So close I can see the unevenness of her perfect liquid liner. I don't kiss her. I slide the elastic down the length of her ponytail and let that perfectly straightened auburn hair sweep down over her shoulders. It smells like coconut. I drop the elastic on the floor and push my fingers into her hair at the nape of her neck and then I kiss her. She makes this little sound in the back of her throat that curls my fingers in her hair and</p>

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	<p>then she gasps and shit, that's not playing fair.</p> <p>Somehow we end up on my bed and I'm straddling her hips and Margo's hands don't feel so timid anymore. They're not even trembling as they pull on my tie to unknot it.</p> <p>Or, I don't know, maybe we're both just shaking at the same vibration now.</p> <p>She unbuttons the top button of my shirt and says, "Is this all right?"</p> <p>My laugh is weak because I know what she's doing, rhetorically, but also, Jesus, I know what she's doing and—" Yes. Extremely."</p> <p>She makes quick work of my buttons and I sit up and pull my shirt off and drop it over the side of the bed. The way she's looking at me, like I'm the only person in the world—and for all intents and purposes right now, I am—her hair all splayed across my pillow, it's just. A lot.</p> <p>But not enough.</p> <p>I scoot backward on my knees until I'm over her bare thighs and hook my thumbs in the hem of her dress, one on the outside of each leg. "All right?"</p> <p>"Jesus. Yes."</p> <p>She laughs and half sits up, moving to help me with her sleeves, about knocking me in the head with her elbow. She laughs harder. "I'd be lying if I said you were the first girl I'd almost injured helping me out of this dress."</p> <p>I'm laughing, too, because this is fucking ridiculous. "Just—hold on. Don't help."</p> <p>"I am holding on. These sleeves are not loose. What do you want me to do with my hands?"</p> <p>"Boy, that's not how I thought that particular question would go," I say. "Make your hands regular. In your sleeves. Like they were earlier tonight, when you were fully clothed."</p> <p>"Abbie. I don't know how to break this to you," she says, pulling her hands to their previous, regular positions, "I'm still fully clothed."</p> <p>"Don't rub it in. Here. Sit up." She does and I pull on the dress until it gets stuck on her boobs, and I am Hashtag Blessed. "Margo, goddammit, get your stupid, amazing dress off."</p> <p>"Oh shit," she says. "This... this hidden zipper. I always forget about it." Her voice is kind of muffled because she has a whole-ass dress around her face. "I got it. Wait. Help me with the hook and eye. Come here."</p> <p>"Come here? Margo, I'm literally sitting on you. Where is this stupid zipper?"</p> <p>"I've got the zipper, Abbie, god. It's the hook and eye. In my dress over my head, come here. In my dress."</p> <p>"Look, if anyone's coming in your dress, it's you."</p> <p>...Somehow I get both my hands in there and after too many minutes of struggling, I get the stupid hook unhooked and the stupid dress undressed. The fabric pops off her like a champagne cork and I almost fall backward. Margo, for her part, is flushed, her hair an absolute disaster, leaning her elbows on her knees while she catches her breath.</p> <p>In her matching robin's egg bra and underwear.</p> <p>She seems to realize it about two seconds after I do, and makes an elaborate effort to arrange herself into a sexier pose, and it just makes me laugh harder.</p> <p>I, too, am in my bra. What a pair we are.</p> <p>"I'm sorry," says Margo. "That fabric is just notoriously difficult to shed. You wanna know why?"</p> <p>"Is it like, polyester or something?"</p> <p>"No, no. It's just... girlfriend material." She flashes me the biggest, cheesiest smile that will fit on her face. I let my head fall back in fake disgust and groan, and she says, "Listen, Sokoloff. After all the effort you went through to get me naked, are you gonna do</p>

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	<p>something with it, or...?”</p> <p>My eyebrows pop up, and I cross back to the bed in two strides and climb on top of her, pushing her off her elbows and onto her back. “I plan to do plenty, Zimmerman.” I kiss her again and our teeth click together and it doesn’t even matter. I kiss my way down her throat, and I can feel her moan vibrate against my mouth. My hands find the front closure of her bra and pop it open, and I push the straps off her shoulders. The smile I give her must be hungrier than I intended because she swallows hard enough that I can see it.</p> <p>I lean down again, dragging my mouth down her chest to her nipple. I suck it into my mouth, and her back arches, and one of her hands grabs my hair and pushes me harder against her. I take the hint and scrape my teeth over her skin, over her nipple, hard enough to make her jerk against me.</p> <p>Margo’s whispered, “Shit,” makes me bolder, makes me think I’m doing it right. And I want to do it right.</p> <p>One hand stays near my mouth, and the other is on her thigh—fuck, her thighs are great—and it slides up and up and up and it brushes the lace edge of her underwear and I say, “Okay?”</p> <p>“Yes.”</p> <p>Thank god. I slide my hand inside her underwear and I can feel her wetness against my fingers and the backs of my knuckles. Her hand is still gripping my hair and I can’t see what I’m doing, but I don’t need to. The way she moves against me, the way her breath hitches and rasps gives me all the direction I need. When she comes, her thighs squeeze my wrist and her voice catches as it slides down the register.</p> <p>I don’t stop; why would I? I make her come again before I give her a break.</p> <p>And with a little direction, Margo returns the favor. More than once.</p>
243	<p>Well, holy shit.</p> <p>I just had sex.</p> <p>With a girl.</p> <p>Well, not just with a girl. With the girl.</p> <p>Jesus, I just had sex with Abbie.</p> <p>I’m lying here next to her, in her room. In her bed. With just... zero clothes on.</p> <p>...I say, “Well. I’m so glad I didn’t wear anything under my graduation gown.”</p> <p>Abbie doesn’t respond, just starts humming “Pomp and Circumstance” under her breath but doesn’t get very far before we’re both laughing, and I push her hard enough that she kind of rocks away, and instead of returning to her original position, she drapes herself over me and I guess I have naked Abbie Sokoloff just. Draped over me.</p>
244	<p>I roll my eyes at me and just kiss her again.</p> <p>She laughs and kisses me back but breaks away sooner than I’d like—I don’t freak out, I don’t—and says, “I gotta go to the bathroom. I’ll be right back.”</p> <p>Good thing I wasn’t freaking out.</p> <p>She comes back out of the bathroom, still naked—Jesus—and says, “You know, Margo, I don’t think I was really fair to you.”</p> <p>...“It was your first time, and, well—” She flicks the light off, leaving us in dim yellow lamplight. “I didn’t even play any John Mayer.”</p> <p>I literally snort.</p> <p>“So let me fix that for you.” She picks up her phone from where she dropped it on her desk and pokes it.</p>

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	The opening bars... are definitely not "Slow Dancing in a Burning Room." I don't recognize it at all until I hear Andy Samberg. Bragging. About just having had sex. ...Abbie crosses the room to me, arms spread like you're fucking welcome, and jumps back onto the bed and I grab her and kiss her and she laughs into my mouth and kisses me back and at some point, we go from making out to Lonely Island to lying there in lamplight. And at some point, I go from lying awake on her arm to well... lying asleep there.
245	She says, "It's fine. He won't care that you're here. Just try to look... I don't know. Less freshly fucked."
247	"Congratulations, Margo Zimmerman, you graduated. You fucked a girl. That's what you wanted. And now you're done, I guess. Why don't you go home to your perfect fucking family and get on with your life?" ...And she knows, she knows she's not just a girl I fucked. ..."The part where you wanted to fuck a girl, or the part where you did?" ..."Margo, please, you don't even want to fuck me again."
257	"Jesus. Fuckin' lesbians." Margo groan-laugh, and I just throw my hands in the air. She says, "Abbie's not a lesbian, Mendel."
267	What they're not used to is me sliding my arm around Margo's waist and tugging her against me and pressing a kiss against the hinge of her jaw.
268	I turn around and say, loud enough for them to hear down on the field, "SHE'S GAYER THAN YOU ARE, JAN."
269	"But not because you're girlfriends." "No, we're feminists." Robbie nods emphatically. "Yeah, we're feminists, bro." "We love that there's a woman vice president." "I mean, we don't love that she's a cop." "No, buddy, we do not." "But we love that she's a woman." "A woman's place is in the House," Manny says, and Robbie jumps in to help him finish: "And the Senate!"
270	"Who cares? They're you, and you're gay, so they're gay, and Brooke's an asshole." ...She kisses me, kind of laughing into it. It's probably the best way to be kissed.

Profanity/Derogatory Term	Count
Ass	41
Bitch	11
Dick	14
Fuck	98
Goddamn	9
Piss	5
Queer	69
Shit	114