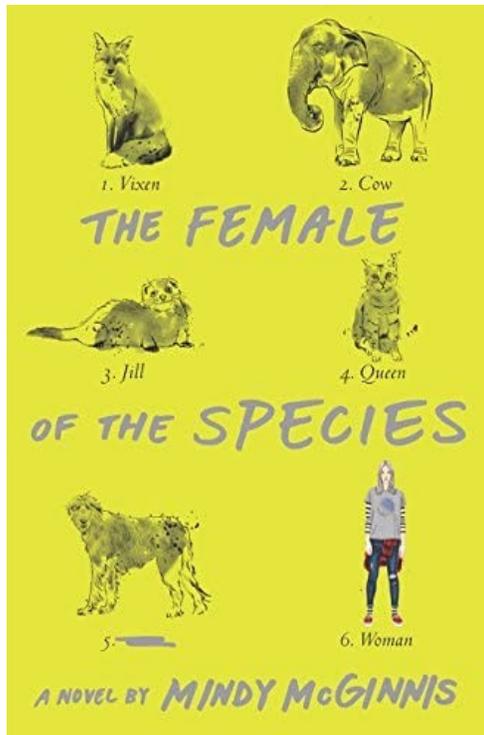


THE FEMALE OF THE SPECIES



Book Summary:

The story of three teenagers whose lives become intertwined and changed forever after a tragic incident.

Summary of Concerns:

This book contains excessive/frequent profanity; sexual activities; violence; sexual nudity; underage alcohol use; drug use; and sexual assault.

Young Adult

By Mindy McGinnis

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CONTENT WARNING

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3 /5

Minor Restricted
BookLooks Review Rating

Page	Content
3	<p>Everyday the sun rises and the wine bottle empties and he sits there wondering where his life went wrong until it sets again.</p> <p>...Because immediately following that pure smile of a human being who craves the company of another human being, his eyes flick down to my tank top, where my breasts heave up and down as I catch my breath. And we're not two human beings anymore.</p> <p>We're male and female.</p>
5	<p>She sat on my lap that night, happy to squirm right where she knew I liked it. And I didn't stop her. I've never stopped Branley. Still haven't learned how.</p> <p>So our here was the girl who brought Doritos to chase our weed, and a few yards away from where we sat, an actual hero found the body. Parts of it, anyway.</p> <p>...Branley's "Find Anna" shirt shoved up over her tits, my pants around my ankles, all of us with red-rimmed eyes and big oh shit looks on our faces.</p>
6	<p>A screencap of increasingly dirty sexting that should alternate between Adam and Peekay but instead says Adam and Branley.</p>
9	<p>But I'm also not supposed to drink, beer or know what a dick smells like, so language is the least of my sins.</p>
11	<p>It's cold enough that it makes a fog in front of my mouth when I say it, and even though I brushed good this morning I can smell stale beer. So there's the word and the beer, all hanging there together in the air, and my daddy would probably be really disappointed in me right now. Also because I know what dick smells like. Or what Adam's does, anyway.</p> <p>But just his.</p>
24	<p>I can do those things and look good before, during, and after, knowing the whole time that I'll have at least one tit shot texted to me that night.</p>
32	<p>Branley, who everyone knows is a Friend to All Penises, isn't making much of an effort to control her volume, and her natural soprano is grating on my nerves.</p>
48	<p>I definitely did not have Alex on my mind when Adam realized he'd missed her calls and I had to run out the back, sweat sticking my T-shirt to my shoulder blades, Branley trying to finger-comb the sex-bump out of her hair before she answered the door.</p>
49	<p>There are about a thousand sex jokes Park would trot out right now about girls wearing other girls' clothes and naughty overnights.</p>
51	<p>The cheerleaders' skirts are short enough you can easily pinpoint where leg makes the curvy transition into ass.</p>
52	<p>It's been like that since I saw her face the night I ran away from a dead body in the woods, shame tearing through the high of weed and sex to punch me so hard that I had to stop to catch my breath fifty feet away from that circle of flashlights.</p>
56	<p>The the man took her.</p> <p>A man took her before I learned any of these things. He took her and kept her for a while, put things inside of her. Of course the obvious thing, but also some others, like he was curious if they'd fit. Then he got bored . Then he got creative.</p>
58	<p>I cram a couple of empty beer bottles under my driver's seat with my heel while pretending to check my phone for texts after I park.</p>

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59	The secretary goes to my church so I'm allowed to call her by her first name, which I admit I kind of lean on for a second, like maybe if I'm really nice to her she'll hide me under her desk when the cop comes to quiz me about where I was and what I was doing last night. Answer: at Sara's, pretty sloshed.
60	"Drug assembly," she says. "You know..." She holds her fingers up to her mouth, and totally surprises me by using the right indication for pot instead of cigarette.
62	"Back then the rough kids smoked pot and the National Honor Society kids drank. Now the NHS kids are smoking pot and the rough kids are on heroin." ..."And the preacher's kid drinks," to which I say "Damn straight" and give her a fist bump.
63	"So you're drinking, no big deal," Nolan says. "Except maybe it is, not because you're under twenty-one and it's illegal, but because of what happens next." ..."What happens next is you're more likely to be a victim of sexual assault," he says, and I feel Alex tense beside me.
64	"Ninety percent of rapes are acquaintance rapes- that means you know your attacker, girls. And guys, that means you know the girl you damaged physically, emotionally, and mentally. One in six of you boys is going to be sexually assaulted too, by the way."
65	"We can't do anything about that unless you report it. We can't stop your friends from driving drunk and killing themselves or someone else unless we know they're behind that wheel ahead of time. Girls, we can't prosecute that guy who spiked your drink unless you tell us it happened."
67	I'm willing to bet some of the girls are going to use Nolan's number for reasons other than reporting underage drinking and sex crimes, but it's cool that we've got this moment, everyone with their phones in the air.
74	"...People look for escape in different ways: through drugs, through alcohol, and through sex."
75	"There's been an influx of heroin in the country." "Bad heroin," Mom clarifies, and I know Sara is trying just as hard as I am not to laugh at the idea that apparently she classifies some heroin as good.
88	I'm in bed with Branley again. She dragged me upstairs even though I was so drunk I didn't think it would be worth her effort. But the girl knows me, and while the party music from downstairs pumps so loud I can feel it vibrating the floor in Park's bedroom, Branley climbs on top and does what she wants. She's over-the-top with a push-up bra and her hair a wild mess while she makes noises straight out of low-budget porn. I'm man enough to know I shouldn't let her do this shit to me, but enough of a boy to be completely turned on.
90	She's gotten a lot better since then, and I'm still a drunk idiot fumbling in the dark. ...I'm so drunk that when I touch skin all I have to do is imagine freckles and they might as well be there. And then they are. They just are. And I pull her down to me and roll onto her, wishing the smell of rain and cold air into the room with the misfiring of a synapse. We're skin to skin, and I'm into this with an urgency that didn't exist

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	before and she's making noises I've never heard. Never heard because they've always been practiced and perfect, and I've taken her by surprise. She's loving it and I am too. But I'm not just in it for the fuck right now. I want this. I want her.
91	"Guys fuck other girls and think of me," she says.
95	It's like Adam and Branley got married over the weekend and now we all get to watch the honeymoon. "She'll be pregnant by fourth period at this rate," Sara says, tossing her books onto the desk. "I mean, I don't know if you saw, but he had her pressed up against-"
101	"People fantasize about sex with someone they can't attain, or what they would do with the money if they won the lottery. It's wish fulfillment, a break from reality."
102	When I'm done, I find Alex waiting for me in the hallway. She's pressed against the wall underneath the sign for the girls' bathroom that someone drew on- an erect penis with eyes glaring up her plastic skirt.
113	Mom never took the calendar down. It hung on the refrigerator, a silent testament to his failure, a constant reminder whenever we wanted a drink.
117	Sara shoves a beer into my hand, the cold glass clinking against one of my rings. "Good to see you in church, Preacher's Kid," she says, her breath sugar-laced, lips tinged red with her own drink. "Cheers," I say, clinking my bottle against hers. ...The conversation starts up again, the anomaly of Alex's presence fading fast while everyone chases their own goals for the night, whether it's at the bottom of a bottle or in someone else's pants.
120	I lean in, surprised at the contact, and what's left of my beer sloshes onto my pants.
121	I glance back down at my bottle. "I'm empty." "Here." Alex switches out our bottles, hers heavy and cold, mine light and warm from my grip. "I'll get you another one," Jack says.
122	Alex flaps her arms maniacally in response and he busts out laughing, the sound carrying as he heads to the altar, where there's a collection of coolers and a keg.
126	That's when I realize exactly how drunk I am. ...I might as well have popped an IV in my arm and hooked up to the keg as soon as I got here. There's no food in my stomach and the alcohol is passing straight through its lining into my blood, soaring through my body to infect my brain, my heart, my organs. Everyone around me is talking but my mouth doesn't want to participate by doing anything other than wrapping itself around a beer bottle. I want to ask Jack if he'll get me another one but he's entirely lost in Alex, his eyes drinking her up like she's the keg and he's an alcoholic.
129	I put on a push-up bra tonight, opened my top two buttons, and zipped my down coat right up to the bottom of my cleavage. My tits couldn't be more on display.

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130	<p>I lean against him as I drink, not caring that the present version of Ray has slightly greasy hair and an obvious drug problem.</p> <p>...A hand is on my spine, pushing down into my pants and past my panties, fingers twisting in search. I know it's not Ray because he's practically carrying me now. There's a voice in my ear that says, "Come on, Preacher's Kid. We'll take you to church for real."</p> <p>They've almost got me out into the darkness, and a nearby fire pops, bringing a brief flash of light as my eyes slide shut. I see a cartilage stud in Ray's ear as my head falls forward onto his shoulder.</p> <p>And then I'm gone.</p>
133	<p>I'm halfway toward being drunk and swimming in her when I go to get Peekay another beer, partially to be a gentleman, but also because Branley ahs taken it upon herself to transfer all her body heat to Adam (even though she can't be retaining much- put on some clothes, Branley, it's November) and I know that can't be easy for Peekay.</p> <p>...I pull two beers from my cooler and am headed back from the altar when Branley snags me, her fingernails digging past T-shirt and down into skin.</p>
134	<p>"So, it's more realistic to you that I would want to bang a guy than her?"</p>
136	<p>"Is that even possible?" she asks, her mouth going up in a teasing smile I haven't seen before, her gaze directed at his crotch.</p>
137	<p>"He was drunk," she says slowly.</p>
140	<p>"She's just drunk," one of the other tweakers says, the lilt of panic in his voice giving away the lie.</p>
141	<p>"You roofied her," she says.</p> <p>"I'd like your mouth better with my dick in it, bitch," the blond says, and I go for him, but Alex's arm is across my chest.</p>
142	<p>"By which you mean I should let you rape my friend," Alex says.</p> <p>...Her shirt is torn open so far I can see her bra. Her jeans are unbuttoned, already pushed a few inches below her underwear. Yet the word rape still jolts people, like maybe these guys were just dragging her out to the woods to help Peekay take a piss.</p>
146	<p>They told another girl they would put their dicks in her mouth.</p> <p>...They would have hurt my friend. They would have left bruises on her, like the one that will radiate from his coccyx. Theirs would have been thumb-shaped and pressed into her waist where they held her down. Instead of a warm rush down her legs when she first stood in the morning, I drew blood from his face.</p>
149	<p>Hands on me. Hands touching. Hands twisting. Hands on all the places I warned our church campers about during the awkward hour of stranger danger, where I said the places your bathing suit covers instead of vagina or penis or butt.</p> <p>...What will I tell them about the hands that were definitely in places they shouldn't be? Places that even a damn thong would cover.</p>
151	<p>My brain is like a slide show on fast forward, images flickering so quickly I can't get a grasp on what his face looked like but I do remember in great detail that he had dirty hands and long fingernails, a cake of grime packed under each one.</p> <p>I gag as I riffle through Alex's cupboards, looking for anything to get me clean.</p>

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	<p>Rubbing alcohol is the first thing my hands find and I dump it directly onto my crotch, the sting and the panic forcing the solids behind the gag up into my throat. I make it back to the toilet in time, the cool porcelain calming against my cheek as I vomit over and over, losing everything I drank and whatever the hell they gave me.</p>
152	<p>"All I have is a scratch," I explain. "One little, tiny..." I break down again. Because it's not just a little tiny scratch, and I know that. The softest parts of my skin are under a stranger's dirty fingernails, my DNA embedded there along with fast-food grease and his own dandruff. Some of my cells are with him right now and I don't want them all right where they belong and I can't even imagine if it were the other way around, if I'd woken up with a miasma of them deep inside of me, and the thought sends me retching again, the sound almost drowning out the buzzing of my phone.</p>
155	<p>"Some guys put something in my drink," I tell her. "They drugged me and it could've been really bad, but Alex was with me and she..." I pause, because I don't know what happened in between me falling onto Ray's shoulder and waking up in Alex's bed. I just know what didn't happen.</p>
157	<p>"Why me, then?" I ask. "Why not Branley? She's way hotter and was just as drunk as I was." ..."I'm telling you, Claire. It doesn't matter. What you were wearing. What you look like. Nothing. Watch the nature channel. Predators go for the easy peasy." I think Branley, gorgeous and soaked in beer, but surrounded by admirers. Then there was me, drunk and sulking, wandering around and practically begging for attention. Easy prey, indeed.</p>
158	<p>"Wait till she bangs your boyfriend," I mutter.</p>
162	<p>"God, no. It's a small town, kid. I probably dated the dads of half the girls you've-"</p>
173	<p>But we're talking and then we're kissing like it's how a run is supposed to end, and it's electric and fluid and totally normal all at the same time. I pull her into my lap and she wraps her legs around my waist as if she knows exactly what she's doing, even though she's clearly an inexperienced kisser. Which I'm thrilled about. I can tell I'm the first guy to kiss her, the first guy to bury his hands in her hair and crush her against him, torso to torso.</p>
186	<p>Alex is my girlfriend, but the word doesn't do justice to what is between us. It's been applied to other girls- okay, lots of other girls- and it's always appropriate, an indication that this is the female I call or text, the one whose hand I hold in the hallway, and the name that gets tossed around in the locker room when we're talking pussy.</p>
188	<p>And for some reason I interrupted our heavy make out session to tell her that if she's not ready to do it, that's okay. ...If Anna is there, I think she's more in my head than Alex's, because my girlfriend likes to touch and be touched.</p>
189	<p>Right now her hands are all over me, and mine on her, and with any other girl it'd be time to bring out the condom, but with Alex I don't even consider reaching for my wallet. Instead I pull back to put some space between us. Because I'm not</p>

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	exactly thinking with my heart right now, and my dick is trying to undo my zipper from the inside.
190	There's a naked bulb at the top of the staircase and enough light reaches us that I can see her breasts going up and down, the ridge of her bra pressing against them.
192	I can't afford Alex Craft. Hell, I can't afford any girlfriend, but there's an unspoken agreement that Branley pays my way wherever we go, and I've always managed to string other girls along until I'm bored with them as a hookup and cut them loose.
195	I put down my burger, what I have eaten a lead ball in my stomach as I think of all the times Branley was in too much of a hurry and I was too horny to bother with a condom. ...I get it. Decent guys backslide into meth and gang rape. Good guys knock up their girlfriends and flip burgers.
197	And while Alex might know me well enough to get it, starting the conversation means telling her about how I've convinced myself that I can earn it by being a good guy, that getting out and staying out is how karma is going to reward me for not hitting the next joint and turning down every drunk girl who crawls into my lap at a party.
200	"Too cold to show off cleavage, so instead she goes for jeans so tight I can see her thong."
201	There's a boy in the corner humping a basketball and pretending to climax, his face going through a complex series of contortions. It's lewd in its accuracy and I can't stand that I won't be able to get it out of my head now, what this stranger looks like in his most intimate moment. And I hate that he's going back to do it again, egged on by his friends, who seem to find some high cleverness in the fact that now he's behaving as if the basketball is performing oral sex on him.
202	I shake my head to clear it, finally breaking my line of sight as he finishes, as if it's vital that he get to the end of his pretend sexual encounter with sports equipment. I wonder what would happen if I went down there, took a ball out of the cage, and pretended to have sex with it. ...But boys will be boys, our favorite phrase that excuses so many things, while the only thing we have for the opposite gender is women, said with disdain and punctuated with an eye roll.
209	But beyond that I couldn't tell you if he's the kind of guy who's telling all the others about how far he gets with Alex, or if he keeps pussy talk on the down low. I don't know, and I don't know if Alex even understands that shit like that happens, that it's possible the feel of her nipples might be public knowledge now, or that the sounds she makes when she's in the dark alone with him might get reenacted in locker rooms. Alex will mutilate people who slip things in my drinks, and I can't do that for her.
210	"Sex seems so intense," Alex goes on. "A lot of people are casual about it, like putting part of someone else's body inside of your own isn't that big of a deal. I don't understand that. It's your genitals touching someone else's genitals."

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211	"I hear what people say and I bet half of it isn't even true. And even if it is- fine. She's no different from you and me; she wants to have sex. So let her." "Easy to say when it's not your boyfriend she's having sex with."
221	"Come here," she says. "Have some scotch." I don't want scotch and I don't want to drink with her, but it's the only olive branch she has to offer, so I take it, the alcohol heavy and hot as it rips down my throat. She throws her back like water and pours another for both of us. ...I take another drink of scotch, hoping it will make words come more easily.
223	I take another drink. ..."I've been trying to get him out of my life for ten years," she says, refilling her glass again.
229	But I can't. Because she's a crowbar in a door I'm trying to shut and she'll wedge her way in and use the leverage to get me in bed and goddammit I don't know if I could tell her no. I miss Branley, but I miss sex too, and I'm trying to be a good guy and why can't the two of those things be separate anyway?
230	Read as: The Guy Who Used To Bang Branley and His Occasionally Violent Girlfriend Who Doesn't Know Branley Still Sends Nudes To Him, Peekay's Ex-Boyfriend Who She Might Not Be Over and The Girl Who Still Sends Nudes To The Guy Who Used To Bang Her, and The Girl Who Almost Punched Branley In The Face Not That Long Ago and A Pretty Clueless Guy Who Thinks This Is A Good Idea. ...We'll be alone, the way we both like it, and I have a surprise for her, and I I said that to Branley she'd think it was my dick even though it's, like, five degrees outside and I am human after all.
231	"Christ it's cold," Branley says as she walks in, Adam trailing behind her. She's wearing the thinnest jacket possible; it hugs her tiny waist and accents the explosion of her boobs.
232	We've got a fire that gives off heat, and seats and beer for everyone.
233	I settle for running a strand of her hair through my fingers as I crack open a beer. The fire is hot and the beer is cold enough to have ice chips floating in it, and I'm settling into a comforting haze when Peekay's phone goes off.
239	Maybe she was supposed to point it out as I drove past, choking on words so harsh she can't say them even with beers slicking her throat. Guess I was lucky, she says. I live in a world where not being molested as a child is considered luck.
258	Branley is highest on my recent calls list, Alex's number buried somewhere behind some sophomore girl who found the courage to call me in the bottom of a bottle.
264	"We're going to drink too much and eat too much. Fuck the world," I say.
269	"Hey, Alex, did you know that you're a slut?"
272	"Hey," he calls as soon as he sees me, raising the box in the air. "We've got it backward, babe; you're supposed to be the one delivering pussy."
286	I know I'll end up in bed with her. Tonight I'm going to get drunk, probably be an asshole to a few people, and then I'm going to screw Branley because she wants me to.

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	...I shouldn't go because if I do I'm the same Jack Fisher who started senior year, the guy who was led around by his dick and drank too much.
288	Technically prom is supposed to follow dress code, but the teachers know that if they toss some kid who spent hundreds of bucks on a prom dress they'll have to deal with a pissed-off parent, whether it shows her areola or not. ...I brought a flask and I've been helping myself a little more than is probably smart, but I don't know how else to deal with this night.
289	Alex is weaving through the crowd in a brown dress that probably looked like a bag on the hanger but looks better than sex on her. ...I grab my punch flask and tip the flask into it under the table, almost dumping half the drink when Peekay flops into the chair next to me. ...It's not the most flattering invitation I've ever had, but I know Park brought his own flask and it looks like Peekay got in on that action early.
294	My phone goes off and I've got a pic from Branley. She's sprawled on a bed, wearing a little red nothing, rose petals strewn on the sheets around her. She's seductive, gorgeous, amazing. The wet dream of 99 percent of the male population. I'm ready. Are you coming?
299	She's nearly naked and fisting a wine bottle that looks to be empty, all her eye makeup now streaking down her face in a multicolored river of tears.
300	Here eyes catch mine and I will her to be drunk enough not to recognize me.
301	The girls are using one hand to cover sly smiles and the guys aren't even trying to hide the fact that they're taking pics of Branley in her lingerie.
303	"...How long before my husband gets bored and bangs a younger version of me because I don't have it anymore?" ...I don't tell her these things because she's drunk as shit and barreling on and probably wouldn't remember anyway.
307	I was just using her for sex (I could claim the same), I never cared about her at all (I almost wish that were true), I was a player and a liar and a son of a bitch.
313	Alex doesn't say anything, but takes a left at the next crossroads, which makes my head sing with alarm bells on top of the beer buzz.
315	Branley who is sprawled across the altar when I walk in, push-up bra obvious under her cheerleading uniform, lacy panties flashing in my face.
316	"Goddammit, Branley," I say under my breath, but she's smiling at me, the perfect mix of the girl I know so well and one every straight guy in the world wants to fuck.
317	"Dammit, Jack," she hisses. "All I want you to do is fuck me."
318	"She ain't scary at all," he says. "Bet you could bend her over in two seconds, Ray."
319	"We don't want any trouble," I say. "Neither do we," Ray says, and now his chest is inches from mine, the stink of his breath in my face. "But some pussy'll do," he says to Branley.

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320	<p>I hear Branley screaming but all I can do is struggle. Billy is stronger than he looks. I get my feet under me but he's on his too and gets my arms pinned behind my back. I buck and kick, swearing a blue streak as I see Ray drag Branley toward him across the altar, her skirt pulling up to show a tiny red thong that covers absolutely nothing.</p> <p>He smacks her bare ass, leaving a welt. "You came up here looking for something, girl," he says. "And you're getting it."</p> <p>I'm fighting and twisting, anything I can do to get free, but Billy's got a grip I can't break.</p> <p>"Ray gets his mind set on something, not much you can do to stop him," Billy says, his tone weirdly conversational. "He's had a bit to drink too. Let him have his fun and nobody'll get hurt. It won't take five minutes."</p> <p>Five minutes. Like the fucking problem is that we're on a schedule and not that Branley is about to be raped right in front of me. She's kicking and screaming but he's already got her panties off and is going for his belt when I hear the sound of a shotgun being pumped.</p> <p>There's a moment when I lock eyes with Alex, calm and collected, gun in her hands. I've got the space of a breath to tell her not to. And I don't.</p>
322	<p>I hear Jack screaming and Branley crying and a vacuum of silence where Peekay's voice should be, as blood flows down my shoulders so thick it feels like hair, wet and heavy.</p> <p>This is how I die.</p> <p>And I am not surprised.</p>
323	<p>There's bone sticking out of her arm and her shoulders don't look quite right, but it's what's above that rips a sound from my throat as I go down beside her, hand clutching hers. The back of her head is caved in and the blood flows down the rocks, bright red contrasting with the light pink of her brain.</p>
325	<p>I didn't call the cops after Ray Parsons tried to rape me, so he tried again on someone else.</p> <p>I didn't tell Branley she's more than tits and ass and legs, so she still believed it.</p>
338	<p>Somebody drew a dick on her locker. Anonymous. Erect. Demanding.</p> <p>..."Dick." She points with her pencil at another drawing, this one on the wall down by the science room.</p>
339	<p>I laugh for the first time in a while when Sara tells some other girls about what she dubs Penis Patrol.</p> <p>"I don't get it," Marilee Nolan says. "It's not like I doodle pussy everywhere."</p>
340	<p>stay away from Blake C. - date rape 3/26 me too- 2/4 chad will roofie you don't party with him.</p>

Profanity	Count
Ass	13
Bitch	11
Dick	19
Fuck	74
Goddamn	8
Piss	11
Pussy	5
Shit	109