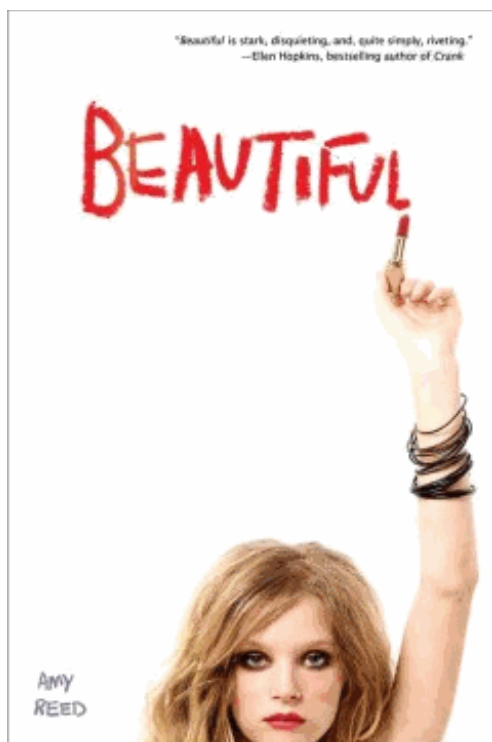


BEAUTIFUL



Young Adult

By Amy Reed

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CONTENT WARNING

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Book Summary:

A thirteen-year-old girl becomes addicted to drugs and alcohol while trying to fit in at her new school.

Summary of Concerns:

This book contains sexual activities; sexual nudity; drug abuse by minors; alcohol use by minors; excessive/frequent profanity; and self-harm including anorexia.

4 /5

Not For Minors
BookLooks Review Rating

Page	Content
5	<p>“So, are you straight?” he says. “I mean, do you do drugs and stuff?” “Yeah, um, I guess so.” I haven’t. I will. Yes. I will do anything he wants.</p>
14	<p>“Most of them are high schoolers,” Alex tells me. They are smoking and drinking out of paper bags. ...There’s a fat guy sitting in the middle of the sidewalk with a rat crawling across his shoulders and down his back, over his lap and up his chest. It settles on top of his head and looks at us with the same beady eyes as the boy. The rat is purple like the fat boy’s hair. It settles in like camouflage. “Purple Haze,” says Alex. “What do you want?” he says. ...“Four hits,” she says, and I have no idea what she’s talking about. ...“Can we have the acid now?” says Alex “Do you have the money?” ...“She does.” He looks me up and down and the fat under his chin wiggles like Jell-O. “I’ll give it to you for free if you two make out,” he says, and the smoke from the cigarette goes too far into my lungs and I start coughing. “I’m not a dyke fucker,” says Alex. ...“Just give us the acid,” Alex says, exhaling smoke like she knows what she’s doing. ...“Have you ever taken a shit that was so good it was better than an orgasm?” says Purple Haze.</p>
18	<p>In the shadows Alex says, “Where’s the acid?” I hold my hand out with two little cellophane packets. “You take one and I’ll take two.” She opens a packet and licks it. The two tiny white paper squares stick to her tongue. She opens the second packet and presses her finger inside. One square sticks and she points it at me. “Here,” she says. “What?” I say. “Eat it.” I lick her finger and its salty. “Am I supposed to swallow it?” “Just let it dissolve.” “Where are we going now?” “James’s house.” I say “Shit,” and it sounds ridiculous coming out of my mouth. “You look good,” Alex says. “Don’t worry. He already wants you.”</p>
23	<p>James looks at me like I’m something salvageable, like the something that got ruined is still there somewhere. He helps me up and says, “So you’re not so straight,” and I say “No,” even though I still don’t know what it means. And he says, “How are you feeling?” and I feel my feet leave the ground and the air in my lungs feels heavy and warm and full of mud, and he says, “I took some, too. I’ll be like you soon.” The boys from the lunch table are shadows on the other side of the empty yard, watching and grinning like they know something I don’t. They are drinking something brown out of a bottle and smoking something that does not smell like cigarettes.</p>

Page	Content
25	<p>The walls are dripping because I am on acid. He is not yet on acid. The tab is still on his tongue, dissolving, tasting like spit wad.</p> <p>I'm thirteen and I'm on acid. He's fifteen and he will be on acid soon. I'm on his bed and under The Wall and listening to Pink Floyd. I do not know why James listens to music my dad likes. I do not know why I am looking at his stereo, the real kind, with different levels stacked on top of each other and blinking lights — green, red — with speakers as big as I am, playing Pink Floyd and reminding me of snow.</p> <p>He is wearing a baseball cap and I want it off his head. It makes him look like a normal boy. I want his hat off because he is not that kind of boy. I would not be on my back like this for that kind of boy.</p> <p>I pull off his baseball cap because I need him to be someone else. His hair is flat and straight like a girl's and falls into his eyes. He takes the hat out of my hand and puts it back on his head. He says, "Stop it," and I laugh, and I do it again and he grabs it again and I think it's a game but he does not, and he says, "Fucking stop it," and pins my wrist onto the bed, and I stop it. Then his tongue goes in my mouth and this is nothing like a first kiss is supposed to be.</p> <p>Alex opens the door and says, "Can I use the phone?" James waves his hand and I can't tell if he's giving her permission or shooing her away, but she comes in and sits on his desk and picks up the phone and starts dialing. He takes off his hat because it is getting in the way of our faces and I know better than to ask why it's okay if he does it now but not when I wanted him to, and I cannot see what he looks like now because I'm closing my eyes.</p> <p>Alex is on the phone talking to everyone she knows. I can feel her sitting on the desk next to the stereo blinking red and green, stop, go, and James's tongue is in my mouth and it taste like something dusty, small, darting around and hitting my teeth like it's looking for a way to get inside me, a trap door, searching for something hidden and unlocked. And Alex is watching and telling everyone she knows, "Cassie is on the bed with James and they're slurping." she keeps saying "slurping" and it sounds like something ugly, and her cackle ricochets off the wall, the white bricks like the album cover, and it is too loud in here, it is too bright, and the slurping makes spit and the spit makes choking and I close my mouth and lock his tongue out and he says, "Get the fuck out, bitch," and I think he's talking to me, but Alex cackles and hangs up the phone and James says, "Turn off the lights," and she does, and "Close the door," and she does, and my teeth open and his tongue goes inside and I try to keep up but I have no idea what I'm doing and I'm scared because it's just me and him and I can't see anything but the green and red lights, and he's the only one who knows his way around here in the dark.</p> <p>There's a mouth on mine and teeth scraping and I'm thinking of cheese. I'm thinking, why does expensive cheese stink? I'm thinking of my stubbly armpits that he's touching with his big hands. The sound of a zipper unzipping. The sound of Pink Floyd. And I'm thinking of snow. I'm thinking of driving fast through it, nothing but white shiny sometimes texture, patterns that shift and cackle because the sky is cloudy and the shadows are lying. And I'm wearing a white cotton bra that is not a bad-girl bra. He laughs. He says, "Is this a training bra?" and I look at the lights — red, green — and they tell me nothing about what I should answer. So I shrug as well as I can shrug with his body on top of mine and my right arm</p>

Page	Content
	<p>under his hot hand and my left arm not wanting to move at all and my shoulders cold and shuttering under Pink Floyd snow.</p> <p>His fingers are inside me and I am trying to make my mouth move. I feel something that feels like sickness, something all through my body, like poison slowly filling me up. I don't know if my mouth is moving because I can't feel anything except the poison. There is something running in my brain. I cannot see it but I know it is coming. I can feel the pounding of the footsteps shaking everything. I hear pants unzipping, somewhere far away, and I don't know how long this is supposed to take but I hope it is fast because I want to go home. I want this feeling to stop. I want to give him what he wants and leave.</p> <p>...I zip up my pants and put on my bra.</p> <p>...I feel the ghosts of his fingers inside me.</p>
29	<p>It is the closest thing I can say to something I'm not allowed to say, something not, "No," not "I want to go," not "I don't want to be in your bed, not with your dripping walls, not with your hat off, not with you touching me, not with your fingers inside me or anything else from your body." I cannot say that.</p> <p>...The lunch-table boys: "Cock tease."</p> <p>...The lunch-table boys: "Cock tease. Little girl."</p>
34	<p>"You look hot. Fuck James. You could get a high schooler."</p> <p>"Fuck James," I say even though I feel like crying every time I saw him at school this week, with that other girl on his arm and that look on his face like, "Look what you're missing."</p>
36	<p>"We should go soon," she says.</p> <p>"Go where?" I ask.</p> <p>"Portland. As soon as we get some money. What you have to do is steal a little out of your parents' wallets every day, not too much or they'll notice."</p> <p>"What will we do for money when we get there?"</p> <p>"I don't know. My brother makes a lot of money. I could help him."</p> <p>"What does he do? "</p> <p>"Sells drugs."</p> <p>"Oh," I say. She keeps pulling my hair tighter.</p> <p>"He has a friend who could get you a job."</p> <p>"Doing what?"</p> <p>"Giving blow jobs."</p> <p>I don't tell her I still don't know exactly what that is.</p> <p>"You don't have to have sex with them," she explains. "That way, you keep your self-respect."</p> <p>"What if I'm not good at it?"</p> <p>"It doesn't matter. Old guys would pay a fortune to have you just look at their dick."</p> <p>"I don't want to look at an old guys dick. I don't want to look at anyone's dick."</p>
46	<p>"He got kicked out of Rose Hill for selling weed," she says.</p>
47	<p>James the asshole has his arm around the slutty girl and he grins at me before he starts sucking on her ear, and she's looking at me and giggling like his dirty mouth on her ear makes her better than me.</p>

Page	Content
58	<p>She points to a broken light fixture on the ceiling. "And that's where- drumroll, please- my dad hung himself." ..."Yeah. He just left him up there and packed up his shit and was gone. The funniest part is he left a note right next to the suicide note. It said, 'Dad's hanging in the basement. I'm leaving. Bye.' What a weirdo."</p>
59	<p>I am tracing the outline of my lips with blood red pencil and I can see Alex behind me in the reflection. She is sitting on the toilet, peeing, and her thighs are covered with bruises. "What happened?" I ask her. "To what?" She says, wiping herself. "To your legs?" She laughs at me like I'm a stupid child. "Wes just likes it rough." "Likes what rough?" "Sex, stupid," she says. "But you wouldn't know anything about that, would you? Not Cassie the sweet little virgin."</p>
61	<p>Lenora is passed out when we leave, so Alex steals a pack of her cigarettes and a bottle of vodka, just puts them in her backpack like it's no big deal, like she's not even afraid of getting caught. We walk to the lake and it's freezing. I drink fast so I'll get warm, so I don't have to think about that house and the things that happened in it, so I won't be scared of where we're going. "My half-sister is moving in next week," Alex says, her voice torn by the shot she just drank. "How old is she?" "Eighth grade." "Is she cool?" "She's all right." "Why is she moving here?" "Her dad's fucking her," she says, and the vodka gets stuck in my throat, gagging me, pulling everything inside me out. "We have the same mom," she says. "But Sarah's dad was some guy my mom had an affair with so my dad made my mom get rid of her."</p>
62	<p>"Who are those guys?" I ask. "High schoolers." I want to turn around. The vodka's not working. I drink more and it's still not working.</p>
63	<p>I sit and he sits next to me and everyone else sits and soon we are all in a circle, and Alex is passing around the bottle of vodka and it is getting emptier and emptier and I am suddenly very angry. I am furious. That is our vodka, I want to tell her. They are drinking it and it will be gone and there won't be enough for me. ...I drink extra when the bottle comes around so I won't think about the fact that I'm not talking. It does not take long for me to get drunk enough so my mind does not have to be here anymore.</p>
65	<p>There are arms around me, a hard chest against mine, hands on the small of my back, breath in my ears. This is when I'm supposed to put my arms around his neck, when I'm supposed to put my face close to his. This is when I'm supposed to kiss him, when he's touching me and his warmth is getting inside my clothes. I'm</p>

Page	Content
	<p>supposed to do it now or he won't be interested later.</p> <p>...I must kiss him because what he wants is my mouth, my hands on his back, my body closer, closer. I must turn my head, feel his breath on my face, move my lips to his mouth. Open. Tongue in. Out. Close my eyes. They like it when you close your eyes.</p> <p>"Damn, girl," he says, licking his lips.</p>
69	<p>We're sitting on the floor, passing a joint around, and we want something stronger.</p> <p>"Doesn't that nasty kid in your smart class take Ritalin?" says Alex.</p> <p>"I love Ritalin," says Sarah, and her face lights up.</p> <p>..."Call him," says Alex.</p>
70	<p>We sit in silence for a while, thinking about money and getting high. I am thinking about Ritalin. I am trying to guess what it could do, why something so great could be a kid's prescription. My stomach turns over and my body tingles. Of course he will give it to me. He probably won't even make me pay. I will have an endless supply of something new to feel.</p>
75	<p>A thirty-something guy in a stained white undershirt gives us nothing, but tells us we're pretty and says he'll give us some whiskey if we stick around. I consider it, but Sarah starts walking.</p>
80	<p>This is when we pass a joint back and forth and I let him talk and let him think I'm interested in what he's saying. We are talking about the things you are supposed to talk about before you have sex.</p> <p>...It is the middle of the afternoon and my mother is sleeping. She doesn't know we are here, in my bedroom, on my bed. She doesn't know his hand is under my shirt and rubbing while he talks. He does not know that I feel nothing.</p> <p>...He says this as he's unbuttoning my gentile pants, as he slides his hand into my gentile underwear.</p> <p>...He knows that my mom sleeps like the dead in the late afternoon, that we have bulk quantities of snacks, that my door locks, that I'm a good kisser, that I let him do anything he wants.</p>
82	<p>He knows that my underwear and bra are pink and lacy. He does not know about the old white cotton bras and underwear hidden in the back of my drawer. He does not know my face without makeup.</p> <p>He knows what it feels like to be on top of me, that I don't move, but I am small and thin and pliable, that my breasts are the perfect size for his hand.</p> <p>I am thinking, this is supposed to be special. I am thinking, everybody's lying about this being special. I am strangely not scared. All of this seems vaguely familiar, like I've seen it in movies, like I've seen myself doing it. I wonder why I can hardly feel anything else, how I can know that it hurts but not even feel it, how I don't even have to be here, how I can drift away to somewhere else, float up to the ceiling and watch how ridiculous we look: him thrusting into me like his life depends on it; me lying there looking like I'm wood, something hard and unbendable, when really I'm nothing, when really I'm just skin wrapped around fog.</p> <p>"Does it hurt?" He asks me.</p> <p>"It's okay," I say.</p>

Page	Content
	<p>“Does it feel good?” he asks me.</p> <p>“Yeah,” I say. I am lying. It feels like nothing. I wish he would stop talking. I wish he would stop making me speak. It is hard to speak when I’m on the ceiling, in the corner. It makes me have to come back down, feel his weight on top of me, feel him hard inside me, punching my insides. I come down long enough to see what he wants to hear, then float away again. It is not difficult, this flying from place to place. It is like I was born knowing how to do it.</p> <p>“Oh, shit, I’m gonna come,” he says, and I hear him and my ears bring me back to the bed just in time to feel him shutter, hear him grown. He holds his breath in the world pauses and I feel like I’m holding the whole thing up with my skinny arms and bent knees, my legs spread wide open, then everything lets go and he falls on top of me and I sink into the mattress until I am nothing.</p> <p>He lies like that for a while, like he’s dead, and I think for a moment that he is. I would not be traumatized if he died on top of me, his shrinking, shriveling dick still inside of me. Anything could happen and it would not matter.</p> <p>...I feel too naked. He rolls onto his side and faces me, puts his arm around me. He kisses my shoulder, my neck, my jaw, my ear, making annoying cooing noises as he does it. I want him to stop. I want to crush my cigarette on his eyelid. I would rather he keep fucking me for the rest of the night than lie here staring at me and tracing my ribs with his fingertips, acting like what happened meant something.</p> <p>...“I love you,” he says, and it sounds ridiculous. Everything about him is ridiculous: the messy hair, the forest of zits on his chin; the thin, pathetic attempt at a mustache; the white thigh; the penis laying against it, shriveled and small with the condom still on.</p>
85	<p>Maybe this is all love is and all it will ever be- boys fucking girls and pretending it’s love, girls getting fucked and pretending they like it, saying “I love you, too,” and wanting to throw up.</p>
86	<p>Finally he says, “You didn’t bleed,” in a small voice. He does not seem angry, but I don’t know what else he could be.</p> <p>...“Virgins are supposed to bleed,” he says, and I realize he is pouting, looking at the white sheets like they let him down, searching for blood like it’s some kind of trophy.</p> <p>...“You’re a virgin aren’t you?”</p> <p>“Yes. Of course I’m a virgin. Why wouldn’t I be a virgin?”</p> <p>“Thirteen is pretty young to not be a virgin.”</p> <p>“I am a virgin.” Of course I’m a fucking virgin</p>
87	<p>I don’t care if he thinks I wasn’t a virgin. I don’t care if he thinks I’m a slut, if he thinks I’ve fucked a million boys before.</p> <p>...I want no memory, no feeling, no one, nothing inside me.</p>
88	<p>“You’re my girl, right?” He says softly.</p> <p>“Right,” I say. What else would I be? You are the most popular guy at school and I’m nobody. I will keep letting you fuck me until you get tired of it, until you find someone better to fuck.</p>
91	<p>He’s got his arm around her and what they’re doing could be called kissing but it’s more like sword fighting with tongues. They are by the pile of discarded clothes, across the concrete from me and Sarah, on the other side of the world.</p>

Page	Content
92	<p>He is my boyfriend now. Because I let him fuck me, I can do whatever I want with his sweatshirt.</p> <p>...“What are you doing?” she says. Her face is covered with slime. She looks proud of herself, even though she’s the one who told me about Wes’s reputation for fucking anything, including a couple of retards from Special Ed.</p>
93	<p>I can do it because Alex is busy getting her face sucked off.</p>
95	<p>I hand her the pipe and she inhales, holds her breath, exhales slowly.</p> <p>...“You like her?” she says, motioning toward Alex, who is under the sleeping-bag coat, kneeling in front of Wes with her face in his lap.</p> <p>...“You miss where you used to live,” Sarah says as she reloads the pipe.</p> <p>...“How?” she asks, passing me the pipe. I inhale, I feel the smoke softening the tightness in my throat and my chest.</p>
98	<p>“I thought we were gonna go driving later,” he says, which really means parking behind an abandoned building or at the end of a rural road so he can fuck me.</p>
99	<p>I have to kiss him now. I have to make him forget the voice that came out. I have to remind him that I am who he wants me to be, not someone who tells him “No.” I pull him close. I bite his ear. I put my mouth on his. I put my hand on his crotch, squeeze gently, feel him hot and sweaty through baggy pants.</p>
100	<p>“I’d look unhappy too if I just had Wes’s crusty dick in my mouth for the last half hour,” I say, and Sarah smiles and we put our hoods over our heads.</p>
109	<p>“They said he’d been raping me since I was little.”</p> <p>...“They said the doctors could tell by the scars.”</p>
114	<p>All I want is a drink and a joint and a quieter corner to sit in until Alex decides it’s time to go home.</p> <p>Wes is standing outside drinking a forty. Alex throws her coat off in my direction, runs up to him, and throws her arms around his neck. They stick their tongues in each other’s mouths while I stand at the curb, holding her jacket and watching people I don’t know smoking cigarettes and drinking out of paper bags.</p>
115	<p>The guys leaning against the apartment building looking at me with their droopy, stoned eyes, whispering things and making each other laugh.</p> <p>...“Is Ethan here?” and all of a sudden I want nothing more than to be in the back of his car behind the reservoir, looking at the ceiling while I let him fuck me.</p>
116	<p>Forties are piled on a table, and Wes hands each of us one.</p>
117	<p>“Did you get it?” Wes says to Alex.</p> <p>“Of course I did,” Alex says.</p> <p>“That’s my girl,” Wes says as he dumps out a pile of white powder on the glass table. The boy named Jarvis takes out his school ID card and starts chopping it up. Wes and another guy do the same, and the rest of us sit and watch and listen to the tap, tap, tap of white powder becoming finer. Wes makes lines for all of us and they seem enormous, bigger than the ones I’ve seen in movies.</p> <p>...Jarvis rolls up a dollar bill, snorts a line, and doesn’t die. He runs his finger across the glass and rubs his teeth. He closes his eyes and says, “Come on, baby.” He passes the dollar bill and everyone takes their turn. By the time it gets to me, I imagine the bill covered with snot, but I do like everyone else did- I put my finger on one nostril, put the dollar bill in the other, lean over, and breathe in as hard as</p>

Page	Content
	<p>I can.</p> <p>It feels like little thin needles in my nose for two seconds, then nothing. Then a terrible taste in my throat like liquid chemicals dripping. I pull a cigarette out of Alex's purse, light it, take a drag, and wait for something to happen.</p> <p>...I hear Alex whisper into Wes's ear, "Cocaine makes me horny," and that's when it hits me, when the lights suddenly seem brighter and the bed is softer and everyone's more beautiful, and my body is lighter and stronger and sexier and more awake, and the hangover's gone and the music is beautiful and everything is perfect.</p> <p>Wes and Alex are making out on the floor. Jarvis and another guy are talking about how one of their teachers at school is a child molester.</p> <p>...I gulp down my cheap, warm beer and it is the most wonderful thing I have ever tasted. I take a drag from my cigarette and feel the smoke lift me.</p>
121	<p>"What's going on in here?" Anton says. He is staring at the pile of white powder on the table.</p> <p>"You want some, man?" Jarvis says from the corner.</p> <p>"Yeah," he says. "It's been a while."</p> <p>"Me too," I say, and Anton laughs.</p> <p>"Hold on girl," he says.</p> <p>Everyone's perked up and waiting for Anton to cut the lines. I realize my nose is dripping and I wipe it with the back of my hand. He is not going fast enough. I drink the remains of the forty I left on the floor and he is still not done.</p> <p>...He lets me go first.</p> <p>...The line he cut is not big enough. I pick up the card he left on the table and pull out more from the pile that has gotten much smaller.</p> <p>"Take it slow, Cassie," Wes laughs.</p> <p>"You just calm down, young man," I say, and everyone laughs like it's the funniest thing they've ever heard, and I snort the two lines I've made for myself and pass the dollar bill to Anton and savor the chemical sludge in the back of my throat.</p> <p>"This white girl's funny," one of the guys says, and I realize that this is the best night of my entire life.</p>
123	<p>I am high on cocaine and sitting next to a six-foot-tall black man who just got out of prison and has a gun in his lap.</p>
131	<p>This is where Justin gives me his medicine and asks for nothing in return. Just time.</p> <p>...Ritalin makes him normal and it makes me invincible. I took four every day, then six, then eight, now I can't keep track and nobody has any idea. Alex and Sarah think he only gives me half his normal prescription, that we're all getting the same tiny amount to save up for the weekends. They don't know they're getting nothing compared to me. They don't know he gets his prescription filled four more times than he's supposed to and his mom doesn't notice and nobody notices because Justin is invisible.</p>
134	<p>He looks at me with his squinty eyes and leans over and whispers even though there's nobody around here, just me and him and the memory of drool bubbles, and pills in my pocket and erection in his.</p> <p>"What do you mean?" He says, and his breath smells like beef jerky.</p>

Page	Content
	<p>I say, "Anything." I am leaning closer, pressing my breasts against his shoulder. "Anything you want."</p> <p>He thinks for a moment. His mouth opens slightly, then closes. Finally, he looks at me. Finally, he leans over and whispers, "I want to touch you." He snuffles. "I want to touch you down there."</p> <p>"Okay," I say. This is easy. This is nothing.</p> <p>He is shaking and he flinches at the sound of the zipper. He flinches when I grab his wrist and lead his hand down into the sexy underwear I only wear when I know I have a date with Ethan. He lets his hand lie there for a while, not moving at all, and his eyes are closed and his nostrils flare with heavy, wheezy, snotty breaths, like this is the most important thing that's ever happened to him. His hand is lying there so gentle and scared and I want to slap him. Just do it, I want to say. I want to slap him.</p> <p>"You are so pretty," he says.</p> <p>"Fuck pretty," I say.</p> <p>"Why are you so angry?" He says.</p> <p>"Fuck you," I say.</p> <p>His fingers move a little. He stops breathing. His face is red and still and he smells like mildew, like eggs and toast, like computers, and the bell rings, and I want to slap him even more, not just slap but punch and kick and bite until he bleeds and jump on his ribs until they are all broken. His eyes shoot up like he's heard the thoughts inside my head, and he takes back his hand and runs off without his backpack, holding his hand to his chest as if it is broken, running like a boy with asthma runs, trailing dirty boy smells behind him, smells of mildew, smells of something musty from myself.</p> <p>I zip up my pants and smoke a cigarette even though I am already late for class.</p>
139	<p>I have not been hungry in weeks. Usually Sunday is the day I eat. I take a bunch of sleeping pills the night before and spend all day on the couch drinking coffee and eating everything I can find, taking periodic breaks to go to my room to smoke pot and cigarettes. Ethan does not know this. Nobody knows this. But he has been saying things lately, like he can see my ribs poking out, like he can feel my pelvic bones stabbing him when he fucks me. I just shrug and bat my eyes and kiss him. We had an assembly at school about eating disorders that I skipped to smoke pot behind the gym.</p>
142	<p>He lies on the bed. He says, "Come here," and I do. I let him undress me. I move my arms when it is time to take my shirt off. I move my hips and legs when it is time for my pants. I do this with the sleepy-lidded eyes I know he likes, even though I haven't taken a pill since lunchtime, even though I can see my purse across the room, holding what I need to feel good. I could get up now and go get it. I could tell him to stop and say I have to pee. But I don't. I know this will not take long. I know he will be dozy afterward and he will not question my need to go to the bathroom.</p> <p>He fucks me and I lay there looking at this new ceiling that looks like every other ceiling I've seen – white, bumpy, blank, neutral. I rub my hands on his back so it seems like I'm paying attention. He finishes, falls on top of me with a sigh, rolls over next to me. I wait a few seconds and start to get up, sure that he's nodded</p>

Page	Content
	<p>off. "Wait," he says pulling me close to him. "What?" I say. He pauses for a moment. He looks at me with his droopy eyes. "Do you like it?" He says. "Like what?" I say. "Like sex," he says. "Do you like sex with me?" "Of course I do, baby." I kiss him. "But you just lie there," he says. "You don't even move. It seems like you don't like it." "I do," I say. "I really like it." "Do you...?" "What?" I am losing my patience. There are pills in my purse waiting for me. "You don't have an orgasm," he says. What are you talking about? Is what I want to say. Girls don't have orgasms, I want to say, but I already know I have no idea what I'm talking about. These are not things I know, not things I've thought about. They are things I've accepted by not thinking about them. I vaguely remember reading something about them. I vaguely remember reading something about orgasms in the book Mom gave me, something about the best feeling in the world. But all I care about is getting out of here and getting to my bag and getting those pills in my throat and feeling the only best feeling in the world I know.</p>
155	<p>"Have you ever had an orgasm?" I say. ..."I mean, do you, like, like sex?" ..."I've never had sex," she says. "Not really. Not, like, with a boyfriend."</p>
160	<p>She looks through her purse, takes out a small red envelope and hands it to me. To Cassie, it says. Love, Sarah. I open it carefully and pull out a little cellophane packet with four hits of acid. I look at her. "For us to do together," she says. "Just you and me." She is smiling, hopeful, like she just asked me to marry her. "Let's do it now," I say. She looks down at my hand holding the cellophane, then up at me with her same old pathetic face. "Okay," she says, but I can tell she doesn't want to, and I don't care. I pick up the two hits with my fingernails and stick them on my tongue. I hand the rest to her. She licks them out of the wrapper like someone's holding a gun to her head, and I think if she doesn't want to do it, she should just give the rest to me.</p>
163	<p>I could make Justin invent the pill. I could marry him and pretend all sorts of things and he would make me the pill and it would be worth all the lies and slimy, smelly sex I would have to have with him.</p>
175	<p>I lie there for a while, looking at the ceiling. I would do anything to sleep right now. I would do anything to be home in my own bed, five or six sleeping pills in my stomach. I would do anything to never have to wake up again.</p>
186	<p>She's always smoking and drinking whiskey, snorting things up her nose or shooting things in her arm.</p>

Page	Content
187	<p>What I'm supposed to do now is smoke pot and eat sleeping pills and sleep tonight without dreams. I am supposed to wake up, do the rest of the Ritalin, then panic in a few hours when it starts to wear off. I will call Justin even though I already know he's gone for the holidays because no one's picked up the phone at his house in days. I will call Alex because she can get anything and I don't know the people she knows and I'm afraid to go to the arcade by myself. We will get fucked up and she will be my best friend and if I'm devoted enough she might let Sarah hang out with us as long as we don't pay too much attention to each other. Sarah will be quiet and spacey and her eyes will have nothing in them. We will go to parties full of people I don't know. We will go to Ethan's house and watch the boys play video games. We will drive to the park and snort coke, and Alex will give Wes head in the front seat while Ethan fucks me in the back, and I will go to class and smell Justin all day long sitting next to me, feel his knotty finger inside me, and I will think of letting him do it again if it means I don't have to think or feel anything.</p>
192	I do not tell her that I've been avoiding her calls, that I've been lying in bed smoking pot since Christmas.
213	There's James making out with his slut, and there's Ethan pouring whiskey into his Coke, looking sad in public and not caring who sees.
214	Everyone laughs except Ethan, who is pretending he doesn't see me, who is drinking whiskey out of a bottle now, not even bothering to disguise it in his Coke.
215	"Justin," I manage to say. "Do you have any of those pills?"

Profanity	Count
Ass	13
Bitch	8
Cock	2
Dick	5
Dyke	1
Fuck	56
Goddamn	1
Piss	7
Shit	17
Tit	1