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138	"Ah, party virgin, eh?" Todd asks. "I guess." He says "virgin" like it's a bad thing. Todd leads me over to the area of the counter covered in at least three dozen different bottles, all of them left open. What sort of animals are my classmates? "Well, can't have that, we need to break you in. What's your poison?" he asks. Break me in? "I'm fine, I promise. I don't—" Todd doesn't let me finish though. "Come on, I can tell you're a man of more refined taste. Here, try this." Todd hands me a small shot glass with a pink liquid that's a few shades away from epto. "What is it?" I ask, swirling it around in the small glass. "Strawberry tequila," Todd says. Someone from the counter crowd shouts, "Todd, I think that might be a bit too strong!" "Just try it," Todd smacks my back again. He really needs to find other ways of displaying affection. "Here, I'll do one with you." Todd pours his own shot. All my research told me that mixing one beer with a low dosage of my meds wouldn't be a big deal, but I know for a fact tequila is stronger than beer. A lot stronger. But everyone's staring at me now, expecting me to take the shot. I don't need to do this, why should I care what these people think about me? But there's that shame again, this desire to impress these people. I down the shot and holy shit, it burns, and whatever sweet taste is implied by "strawberry" definitely isn't there. But it makes Todd and the rest of the crowd cheer, so I guess I did something right? "You want another?" Todd asks, already holding two more. "I don't think so." But another one is already in my hand. "Come on, one more." Todd slips his arm around my shoulder, and I don't ever think I've been more uncomfortable with someone my own age so quickly.
139	My head already feels fuzzy, and there's this weird warmth in my stomach. Just after one shot? Do people really pay to feel this way? "So, Benny boy, you having a good time?" Todd's grip around my neck tightens, his words slurring. He doesn't wait for my answer before he's yelling to everyone else. "This here is Benny's first party, everyone!" There are a few fake cheers, actually they sound more like pity cheers. "You look like you're having a good time." Todd looks back at me. "But I don't think you've ever looked this good," Todd belts out again, and I get another face full of liquor breath. "Got to show off the goods for the ladies, right? I know the feeling." Then he slaps my ass. I need to get out of here. Has it been a half hour yet?
140	"Oh, geez, Em." Todd starts to laugh. "Go ahead and blow him already, we'll give you two some privacy." "While we're at it, we'll give you and your left hand some alone time too." Em rolls her eyes, and the room fills with "ooooos." Todd seems unbothered though. He just plucks another drink off the counter and wraps his arm around my shoulder. "Come on, Benny boy here's very attractive." Todd winks at me and then looks at Em. "And you're newly single." "Hey, um ..." I tap on Todd's bicep, hoping he'll let go. But I'm pretty sure his grip only tightens. "Todd, I can't—" Breathe. I can't breathe.
151	"Can't spell 'subtext' without 'butt sex.'" He's laughing so hard that he can barely get the words out, and that makes me laugh. And after a few seconds we're both struggling to catch our breath, all the while, our hands never leaving each other's.
166	"Because, okay, so." I take a deep breath. "For a while I thought I was gay." I would see other guys, and I was really attracted to most of them. But it still felt like I was missing something. Something about myself. Like who you're attracted to and who you are as a person are two totally different things. It's hard to explain not being confident in your own body.

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167	"That gets a little complicated." "That gets a little complicated?" Hannah asks. "In all honesty, I'm still working through that." Because I'm still attracted to the more masculine-presenting people, but nonbinary-ness isn't something you can tell outright, so the boy at the coffee shop who I think is cute could actually be nonbinary. But I'm still attracted to him. And besides, I don't exactly have a gender, and being gay implies being interested in the same gender. Like I said. It's complicated.
172	"Oh," I say. I'd never really thought of myself as ace or aro. I mean, sex isn't really something I have a strong desire for, but it's something I might be open to. And I've had sort-of-romantic feelings for people before. I suppose I'm also currently having those romantic feelings.
212	"You'll come home after you graduate," Dad says, and I notice it's more of a command than a request. "We'll take you to the therapist we've been seeing, maybe he can help you work through some of the things you've been dealing with. And help you with this nonbinary business."
234	"Ah-ah." Dad lets out a low chuckle and eyes Mom, but she isn't laughing. "Now who's misgendering someone?" "Un-fucking-believable." "Well, then maybe you understand how it isn't a fucking joke?" I say just loud enough so they can still hear me.
235	"Oh, so now you can support them? After you kicked Ben out of the goddamn house?" I feel Nathan step closer, his arm wrapping around my shoulder. "Do you understand what you've put Ben through, the panic attacks, the anxiety? You kicked out your own child, for god sakes."
236	"Listen here, you little bitch—" Dad almost raises his hand. I can see the twitch of his wrist, stopping himself when he remembers we're in public. He never hit Hannah. Never. At least, as far as I knew ...
237	"Leave me alone," I try to say, but when Mom grabs my wrist, I can't help but seize up. Her nails quietly dig into my skin. "No," I say, my voice sounds strange. Even to me. "I'm not going anywhere with you."
239	I don't get out of bed much over the next few days. I just lie there under the sheets, my fingers tracing the faded crescent shapes on my wrist Mom left behind. They still sting if I press hard enough.
253	Told me I was a disappointment, that he "didn't raise a whore." That was the only time he ever hit me, and that was the night I decided that I couldn't be there anymore, and I figured after graduation was as nice a time as any.
289	"I ... I want to kiss you," he tells me. "Can I do that?" "Yeah," I whisper. He leans in, and well, it's sort of terrible. Our lips meet, but we move too fast and bump noses, and Nathan catches my bottom lip.
290	The second kiss is better. I move my arms so they drape off his shoulders, and both of his hands are on my back now, pushing us as close as possible. Then he grabs me by the collar of my shirt and we slowly fall back on the pillows, the music echoing through the night.
293	"Love you too." He leans over and kisses me. "It's your fault, anyway. It's what you get for booking your flight late." "Shut up." I kiss him again.

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294	Nathan had suspected that he's bisexual for a while. And when he started going to the safe space meetings with me, everything sort of clicked for him. His parents took it well. Honestly, they really didn't care who he was dating as long as whatever we did involved condoms, a talk neither of us was really too thrilled to have.
297	"Trying something new, schookums." He kisses my neck again. I angle myself so I can kiss him. Those soft lips have quickly become my favorite part of Nathan.

Sacrilegious & other offensive language usage	Count
Damn	14
God / God damn etc.	45
Hell	20
Jesus	9
Lord	2
Christ	1
Total	91

Profanity & Sexual or Derogatory Terms	Count
Ass / Jackass / Asshole etc.	20
Bitch	1
Dick	2
Fuck, Fucked, Fucking etc.	39
Shit / Bullshit etc.	19
Whore	1
Total	82