

## EXCERPT

“Are you a virgin?” I ask.

“Well . . . yes.”

“Then why are you complaining? You qualify.”

Sarah’s eyes flash with annoyance. “Because I’m more than my hymen, Henry! To base the value of an accomplished, intelligent woman on a flimsy piece of skin is degrading. How would you feel if your worth rested on your foreskin?”

I think it over. And then I grin. “I’d be all right with that, actually. I’ve heard it was an impressive foreskin—all the nurses were fawning over it. It’s probably being showcased in a museum right now.”

She stares at me for a beat, then she laughs out loud—a rich, throaty, sensual sound.

“You’re a terrible human being.”

“I know.” I shake my head at the calamity of it all.

“And you’re an even worse feminist.”

“Agreed. That’s something I need to work on. You’ll help me, won’t you? We should spend as much time together as possible—every minute of the day and night. I’m hoping you’ll rub off on me.”

Sarah pushes my shoulder. “You’re just hoping I’ll rub you off.”

Now it’s my turn to laugh. Because she’s not even a little bit wrong.

“But there’s never been anyone? Really?”

Sarah shrugs. “Penny and I were tutored at home when we were young . . . but in year ten, there was this one boy.”

I rub my hands together. “Here we go—tell me everything. I want all the sick, lurid details. Was he a footballer? Captain of the team, the most popular boy in school?”

“He was captain of the chess team.”

I cover my eyes with my hand.

“His name was Davey. He wore these adorable tweed jackets and bow ties, he had blond hair and was a bit pale because of the asthma. He had the same glasses as me and he had a different pair of argyle socks for every day of the year.”

“I am so disappointed in you right now.”

“He was nice,” she chides. “You leave my Davey alone.”

I shake my head. “So what happened to old Davey boy?”

“I was alone in the library one day and he came up and started to ask me to the spring social. And I was so excited and nervous I could barely breathe. And then before he could finish the question, I . . .”

I don’t realize I’m leaning toward her until she stops talking and I almost fall over.

“You . . . what?”

Sarah hides behind her hands.

“I threw up on him.”

And I try not to laugh. I swear I try . . . but I’m only human. So I end up laughing so hard the car shakes and I can’t speak for several minutes.

“Christ almighty.”

“And I’d had fish and chips for lunch.” Sarah’s laughing too. “It was awful.”

“Oh you poor thing.” I shake my head, still chuckling. “And poor Davey.”

“Yes.” She wipes under her eyes with her finger. “Poor Davey. He never came near me again after that.”

“Coward—he didn’t deserve you. I would’ve swam through a whole lake of puke to take a girl like you to the social.”

She smiles so brightly at me, her cheeks maroon and round like two shiny apples.

“I think that’s the nicest thing anyone’s ever said to me.”

I wiggle my eyebrows. “I’m all about the compliments.”