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Opening extract from

A Bad Boy Can Be Good For A Girl

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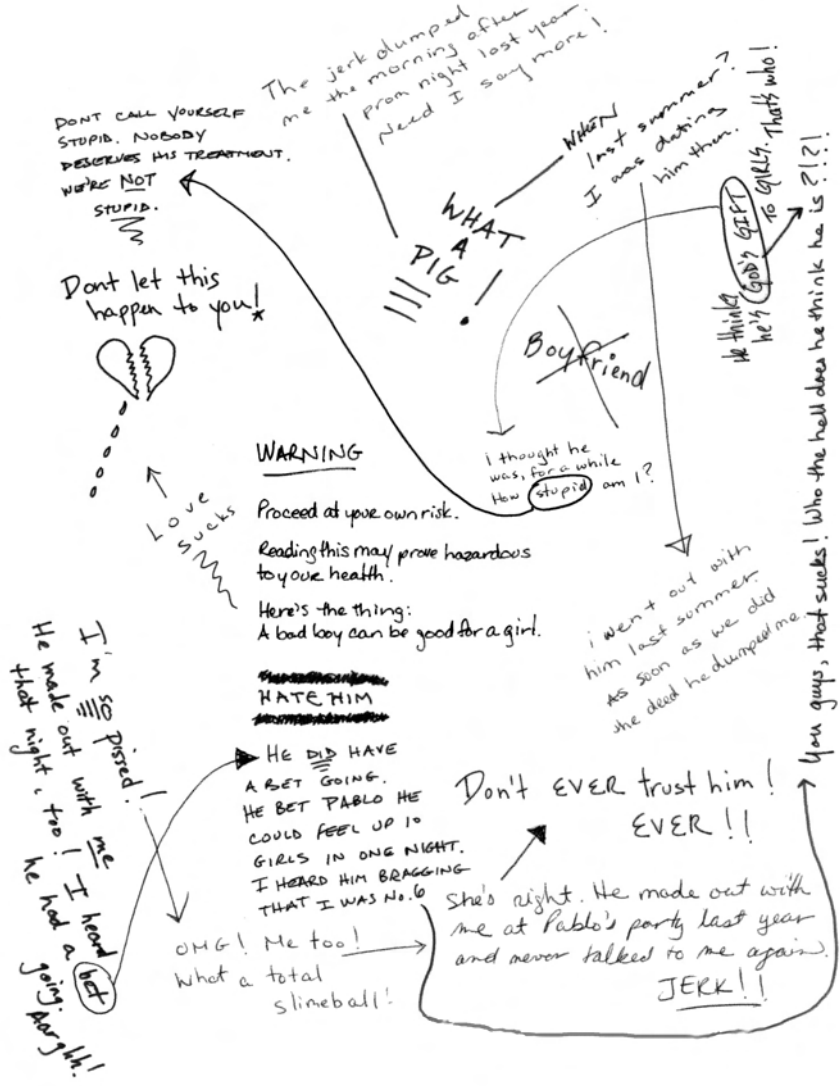
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For Alan, the *best boy* a girl could ever love


DONT CALL YOURSELF STUPID. NOBODY DESERVES HIS TREATMENT. WE'RE NOT STUPID.
The jerk dumped me the morning after prom night last year. Need I say more!
WHEN last summer? I was dating him then.
WHAT A PIG!!!
He thinks he's God's GIFT to GIRLS. That's who!
Dont let this happen to you!
Boyfriend
I thought he was, for a while. How stupid am I?
WARNING
Proceed at your own risk.
Reading this may prove hazardous to your health.
Here's the thing:
A bad boy can be good for a girl.
Love Sucks
I went out with him last summer. As soon as we did the deed he dumped me.
HATE HIM
HE DID HAVE A BET GOING. HE BET PABLO HE COULD FEEL UP 10 GIRLS IN ONE NIGHT. I HEARD HIM BRAGGING THAT I WAS No. 6
I'm still Pissed! He made out with me that night, too! I heard he had a bet going. Arrgh!
OMG! Me too! What a total slimeball!
Don't EVER trust him! EVER!!
She's right. He made out with me at Pablo's party last year and never talked to me again. JERK!!
You guys, that sucks! Who the hell does he think he is?!?!



FOR THE RECORD

I'm not stuck up.
I'm confident.
There's a big difference.

If I was stuck up
I'd be one of those
'Oh look at me, I'm so pretty'
girls
instead of just appreciating the fact that
my cinnamon skin looks good year-round
and I can hop in the shower after football or lacrosse,
throw on a clean sweatshirt,
sweep on some mascara,
let my hair loose from its pony,
and give any girl
a serious run for her money.

And while I totally deserve my spot in Honours English
I'm happy to take my proper place
in Algebra I, suffering alongside the rest of the
mediocre maths heads.

So,
as far as high-school boys go,
I'm not so floundering in self-esteem issues
that I need
someone's arm to hang on or
someone's jersey number to cheer for
to be a legitimate person,
like some people I know.

Man, to listen to Kim and Caroline
chatter away all summer
you'd think we've been waiting our whole pathetic lives
just to graduate middle school
and get to Point Beach High
so we could date high-school boys.

As if high-school boys
hold some kind of magical key
to who we
all
really
are.

THE WHOLE TRUTH

All that stuff I just said is absolutely
swear-to-God true,
but the rest of the truth
the whole truth
is
lately
I don't have as tight a grip
on my confidence
as usual.
I mean, this is *high school*.
Sure, I was pretty popular in middle school,
but you never know
how these things are going to
turn out.

What if
what Kim and Caroline call
my natural look
is considered totally lame in high school?

What if
wanting to read
during lunch
makes me a
total geek?

What if
I don't
fit in
at
all?

JIGSAW

It's funny how one night can change
the way you look at certain things.

I mean, I believe 100 per cent
that high-school boys don't hold any magical key
or anything
but that's not the same as saying they're all bad.
Some of them aren't so bad.
Like, maybe,
this
one.

I saw him across the gym before he saw me.
He was scoping things out at the Fall Fling,
looking for that one lucky freshman
to win the prize

of dancing
with the studly senior.

I think he picked me
because I looked
right at him
as if I couldn't
care less.

I couldn't care
more.

My heart was pounding,
palms sweaty.
Hit me like a surprise party you cross-your-heart
had no idea
anyone was throwing you.

Now, I have *never* understood all that
he's-my-other-half
soul mate stuff
or when people sometimes talk about
having an empty space inside
or that they're missing pieces or something.

But then
he walked over
and fit himself
right into my puzzle.

FIRST (REAL) DATE: PART ONE

I think Mum is a little bit worried
the first guy I'm dating
is a senior.

She should know me
better than that.
I never do
anything
I don't want to do.
That's not going to change.

I mean, when everyone thought
it was so cool
to sit on the seawall
and puff through a pack of Marlboro Lights,

I had a blast sitting there laughing,
telling them how truly stupid and
uncool
they really were, actually,
coughing and sputtering and wanting to puke,
yeah, *real* sexy,
dopes.
Give me some credit.
I never do
anything
I don't want to do.
Period.

He picks me up in his brand-new
Mazda Miata.

I hate to admit it,
but he kind of cracked my
cool-as-a-cucumber exterior
I tried to pull off
at the dance
(even though I'm hoping
he didn't notice I talked way too fast)

but now
all *he's* talking about
is how many horsepowers his stupid car has
and the torque

and how he almost picked cherry red
but he's so stoked that they had this
sweet ocean colour
come in at the last minute
and I'm starting to think
maybe
I made
a
big
mistake,
but I just smile and nod,
like the idiotic bobblehead
planted
in the middle of his dashboard,
pretending
this is the most
interesting conversation ever.

Man, I hope he doesn't keep this up too long.

We pull in to Smiles.
The parking lot is
alive,
too many radio stations
blaring
kids making out in cars
sitting on hoods
eating hot dogs

high-fiving
smoking various things
drinking various things
talking too loud
about
nothing.

Real fun.

Inside
the scene isn't all that different,
except
it's another kind of dark
punctuated
by the bright lights
of too many pulsing
video games
jammed up
against each other.

We walk over to a big bunch of seniors
by the batting cages
he drapes his arm around me
real possessive,
which should have immediately brought out my
I-can-take-care-of-myself attitude,
but instead stirs this
way-foreign tingly

'Oh my God, he really likes me' rush.
(Lame! Did I just actually think that?)

'Dude!'

'Who's the babe? Fresh*meat*?' one of the jocks says,
right in front of my face.

'Get it? Fresh*men*, fresh*meat*?'
He's laughing hysterically,
like this is the most hilarious thing
anyone
has ever
heard.

'Yeah, got it.
Guys, this is Josie.'

A round of Hi's, How's It Goin's, and What's Up's
are tossed in my general direction.

'Hi.'
I never thought this scene
would interest me
but actually,
I feel really,
I don't know,
included, I guess,

with his arm wrapped around me
pulling me into a group –
and not just any group:
the coolest, most popular group of *seniors*,
even though the guys are fairly juvenile.

'Hey, we're all heading over to Lindsey's in a while,'
one of the boys says.
'Time to party!'

'Okay. We'll hit that, too. All right, Jos?'
'Okay. Sure.'

Although I'm not at *all* sure
because my Mum would
freak
if she knew I was going to a
senior party.

FIRST (REAL) DATE: PART TWO

We hang out at Smiles for a while,
eat some truly nasty pizza,
then head over to Lindsey's.

On the drive over
he rests his hand on my thigh,
'Are you having a good time?'

'Yes.'
'Good, I'm glad. I want you to have fun.'

His hand
is still
on my
thigh.

He's going on and on about something,
his car again, I think,
but I can't concentrate
with his fingers moving back and forth like that
and even though he's acting real
innocent,
like he's got no *goal* or anything,
the heat from his fingers is
searing through to my skin
like one of those iron-on transfers.
I could almost bet
when I look later
his handprint
will have been permanently
imprinted
on my leg.

Then he raises the stakes.
He moves his hand onto mine
picks it up
and puts it on
his thigh.

He takes his eyes off the road
for a second
looks at me
and smiles.

Like the big bad wolf.

If I was in a comic strip,
there'd be a bubble coming out of my head
with the word 'Gulp' in it.

FIRST (REAL) DATE: PART THREE

We did *not* have parties
like this
in middle school.

Kids are doing, I'm not even sure what,
in rooms that aren't
really part of the party.

Lindsey lives in Morningside
along the shoreline
where the seawall is made of giant slabs
of granite and quartz.
Some are slippery smooth and catch the moonlight.
Some are rough with little crags and crevices
perfect for

wedging
the toe or heel of a sneaker in to keep from slipping
down the wall.
I spot couples
sprawled out in different spots
on the huge quilt made of stone.
Her parents must be
way out of town.

'Cool party, huh?' he says.
'Uh, yeah.'

Apparently, I wasn't convincing.

'Relax, Josie, people are just having fun.
You're a big girl now,' he says.

'Gee, thanks for telling me,
otherwise I wouldn't have known,' I say.
(Who the hell does this guy think he is?!)

'Oh, don't be that way. I'm sorry.
I didn't mean anything by it. Dance?'

We move onto the dance floor,
if you can call a living room with all the furniture
pushed up against one wall
and plastic cups tipping stale beer

all over the place
a dance floor.
With every step
my shoes stick a little to the
spilled drinks coating the wood like slightly used tape.

A lot of boys don't dance,
they're too cool.
Not this one.
He's *way* too interested in getting his body
up against mine.

As he pulls me into him,
full contact,
I feel like my brain's going to explode
from all the fighting going on inside it.
I mean, this is the kind of guy
Caroline would fall for,
not *me*.
I'd be the one to point out to her later
that this was the exact moment
she should have gotten the message
and walked.
But instead
I smile
wrap my arms around his neck
and sink into his chest.
Damn.

Why does he have to
smell
so . . . so . . .
Yum.

Now we're basically just hugging to the music,
as opposed to *actual* dancing
and as he starts kissing me
I realize
I better get home
before things get out of hand
on our first (real) date.

FALLING

This boy is slick.
For a few weeks now I've felt like part of me
is watching
a really stupid 'teen' movie
thinking,
I can't believe he actually said that!
while the other part of me is
totally soaking it up.

Like when he told me I was so gorgeous
I could wear a burlap sack
and still be better looking than
any other girl in my class.

I hate to admit this,
but I think my actual response was to giggle and blush.

Or when he was waiting for me
at the main entrance one morning
and kissed me for five minutes
in front of the entire school.

I can't help it.
There's just something about him.

Like the way he seems so super confident
about sex,
always saying how good he wants to make me feel
and how his older brother (who's in college)
told him all about how to make a girl really happy
in bed,
and when was I going to let him show me.

So of course I'm wondering what he means by that,
it's a turn-on because he's got me really curious,
but really nervous at the same time,
and I keep hearing that expression in my head
'like a moth to a flame'
and wondering if that's what it means
as I feel myself
totally

out-of-control
falling
for
him.

HOME

How can I feel
so completely
connected
to someone
I practically just met?

Where did this
Oh! There he is!
feeling come from?

He smiles at me
and I'm home.

He touches me
and I'm home.

He kisses me
and I'm home.

BOOSTER SHOT

It's not just how he makes me feel
that's so different.

I mean, I've always been considered pretty cool,
but this is high school,
so my coolness factor was pretty much up for grabs
the second I entered the building.

When I'm walking down the hall with him,
everybody knows I'm somebody.

Kim and Caroline are puffed up by it too.
We're the freshmeat girls.

Not loving that name,
but I'll let it slide for now.

THE DEEP END

After school
if the swim team isn't using it
the pool is open to anyone.

We could just go down to the beach I guess,
but it's a little too chilly now
and besides, there aren't any
sharp mussel beds to slice your feet on here.

Swimming was his idea.
He has half an hour to kill before football practice.

I've spent half my life
messing around with my friends
in the Sound.

But playing in the water with them
was never like this.

First of all, I'm extremely aware
that I'm practically half-naked
even though I did pick out this ratty old one-piece
instead of a
make-his-tongue-hang-out bikini.
I was trying not to send any mixed messages –
but he's still looking at me like he wants to
eat me alive.

He says things like 'You're so soft, you feel so good,'
lame things
that shouldn't work on anybody
but actually work on everybody.

I'm concentrating more on
dodging his hands
than swimming,
since I don't think there's a spot on me
he hasn't grazed
in the name of good old-fashioned water-play.

He pulls a dolphin move,
popping up again near the diving board.
'C'mere, babe. There's no one around.
Come get me in the deep end.'

I shake my head and climb out
on the edge,
sticking only the tips of my toes
in the water.
That's as far as I'm going
today.

PUSHING MY LUCK

I said I didn't want to
cut class
but he was whispering in my ear,
chipping away at
my common sense.
'Yeah you do, honey.
You *really* do.
We'll have a blast. I *promise*.'

Down the hall
around the corner
through the doors
and out.

We're OUT!

We run behind this gargantuan oak tree
ducking out of sight.
He lifts my whole entire body right up in the air
slides me down him
pulls me in
kisses me hard
we stumble to the ground.

But as I fall
I hear a voice rise from deep inside,
hurtle closer, faster,
then slam into my ears,
'What are you *doing*?
This isn't you.'

I untangle myself from his arms,
and run.

I reach the doors
as the bell rings,
slipping into the seat
that is expecting me.

Safe.

But the knot in my stomach
betrays me
to me.

I know
I'm
pushing my luck.