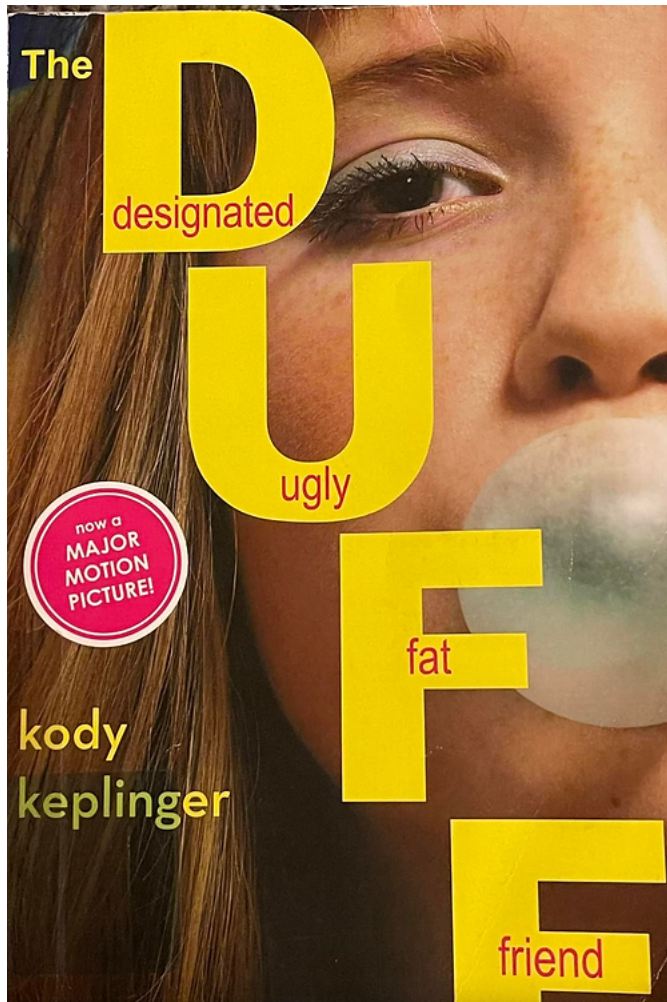


BOOK REVIEW: *DUFF The Designated Fat Friend* by Keplinger

PARENTAL ADVISORY EXPLICIT CONTENT

SEXUALLY EXPLICIT CONTENT AVAILABLE AT TEXAS INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICTS



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to sleep with...
God, I just wanted to stop thinking. I kissed him harder, pulled him closer, trying to re-create that mind-numbing feeling I'd had before... with Wesley. But it wasn't working. I couldn't stop thinking.

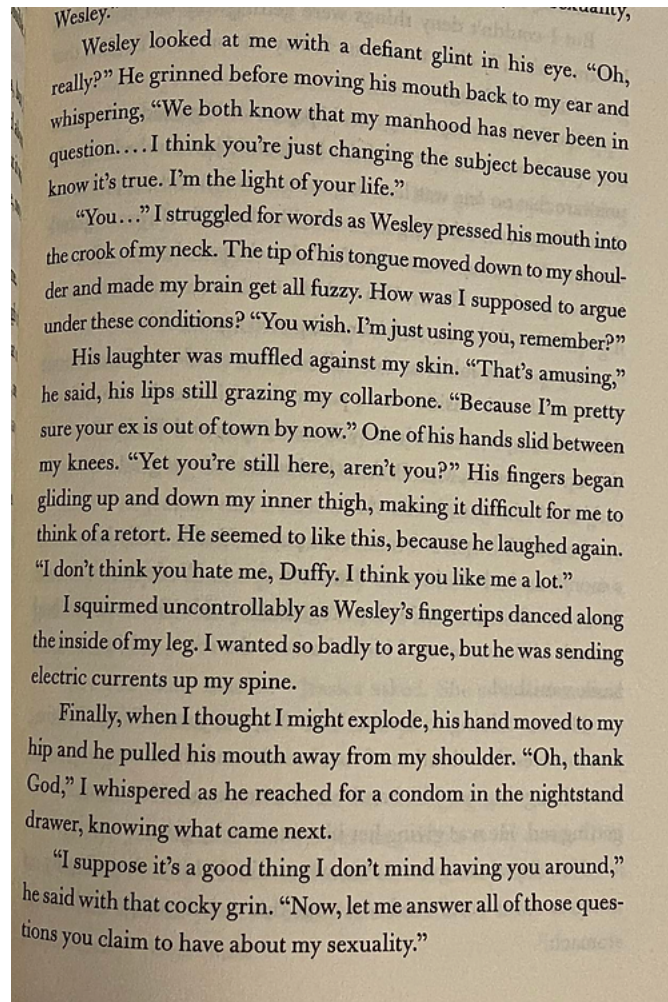
I undid the rest of the buttons on Toby's shirt and helped him throw it onto the floor. He was kind of scrawny with hardly any muscle—Casey would have called him “skinny chic” or something. Tentatively, his hands began to lift the hem of my T-shirt. He moved slowly in case I wanted to stop him. Just like how he kissed me, always worried he might have crossed the line. I hooked my leg around his waist and ground my body against his. No lines. Maybe there were no lines. Maybe I'd never had any to begin with.

God knows how long we spent making out on my bed, pieces of clothing being removed at a snail's pace. I was already breathless by the time he had the nerve to pull my T-shirt over my head and toss it to the carpet. While part of me appreciated his patience, I couldn't help thinking, *Took you long enough.*

I could feel his right hand inching—like a turtle—toward the clasp of my bra. At this rate, it would have been midnight before he got it off, and for some reason, I felt urgent and anxious. I wanted him to get it off. I wanted to feel attractive and desired. I wanted to *stop thinking*. So I pushed him away and sat up, my legs still wrapped around him. We both breathed heavily, gazing at each other.

“Are you sure about this?” Toby whispered.

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moved from my seat. I was laughing so hard I could barely breathe. Not fair. So not fair. I made a halfhearted attempt to kick him away, but he trapped my leg between his and proceeded to tickle me harder.

Just when I thought I might pass out from lack of oxygen, I felt something vibrate in my back pocket. "Stop, stop!" I cried, shoving Wesley away. He rolled off me, and I stumbled to my feet, trying to catch my breath, and took my phone out of my pocket. I expected it to be Mom, letting me know how things had gone with Dad—putting any worries I might still have at ease—but when I glanced at the ID, my stomach lurched.

"Oh, shit. Casey." I looked down at Wesley, still lying on the floor, his hands tucked behind his head. His T-shirt had ridden up a little, and I could just make out his hip bones, peeking out beneath the green fabric. "Don't say anything," I told him. "She cannot know I'm here." I flipped open the phone then and said, as smoothly as I could, "Hello?"

"Hey." She sounded pissed. "What the hell happened to you tonight? Jess said the three of us were meeting for Valentine's Day, but you never showed."

"Sorry," I said. "Something came up."

"Bianca, you've been saying that a lot lately. Something is always coming up or you have plans or..."

Suddenly, I felt Wesley's breath hit the back of my neck. He'd gotten up from the floor and slid up behind me without me realizing it. His arms slid around my waist from behind, his fingers undoing the button of my jeans before I could stop him.

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Vikki... I'm sorry. It's really messed up the way people are talking about you. Just remember that what they say doesn't matter." Again, I thought of Wesley and what he'd said to me in his bedroom. "The people who call you names are just trying to make themselves feel better. They've fucked up before, too. You're not the only one."

Vikki looked surprised. "Thanks," she said. She opened her mouth like she might say something else, but then closed it again. Without another word, she left the bathroom.

For all I knew, Vikki might go out and hook up with another guy that same night. She might not have learned anything from his experience. Or maybe she'd change her behavior altogether—at the very least, she might be more careful. I might never know what was her choice. Her life. And it wasn't my place to judge.

It was never my place to judge.

And as I walked down the hall, five minutes late for English, I decided that I'd think twice before calling Vikki—or anyone else—that matter—a whore again.

Because she was just like me.

Just like everyone else.

That was something we all had in common. We were all slut bitches or prudes or Duffs.

I was the Duff. And that was a good thing. Because anyone

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my shirt, and he didn't attempt to unzip my jeans.

Actually, Toby didn't try *anything* risky. I had the feeling I was going to have to make all of the big moves, like loosening the buttons on his shirt, which I did.

For an instant, I wondered if he was hesitating because of me. Because I was the Duff. Because he didn't really find me attractive. Despite all those compliments he paid me, it didn't feel like he wanted me. Not the way Wesley had.

No. I knew that wasn't right. It wasn't that Toby didn't want the big things—he was a teenage boy, after all—but he was a gentleman. A patient, respectful boy who didn't want to cross any lines. And we'd only been dating for a couple of days.

Did that make me a slut? The fact that we'd only been dating for, like, four days and I was already rolling around with him in my teeny-tiny bed? Had my thing with Wesley totally twisted my perception of sex?

Or did every girl do it?

Vikki slept with most of her boyfriends on the first date.

The whole school thought Vikki was a whore, though.

Casey had slept with Zack only a week after they'd started going out.

Casey had been fifteen at the time, and Zack was her first real boyfriend. She was naive and stupid, and she didn't hesitate to admit that it was a major mistake.

But I knew I wouldn't feel that way about Toby. I mean, I was the one pushing this forward. I *wanted* to go farther with him. Because I liked him. Because he was cute and sweet. Because he

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with a giggle. His lips moved lower and lower, and I was surprised by how much I was anticipating their final destination.

I'd heard Vikki and even Casey talk about their boyfriends going down on them and how good it felt. I'd heard, but I didn't entirely believe it. Jake and I had never done that, and I'd always just assumed it was gross and weird.

It was kind of weird at first, but then it wasn't anymore. It felt... strange—but in a good way. Dirty, wrong, *amazing*. My fingers curled in the sheets, gripping the cloth tightly, and my knees shook. I was feeling things I'd never felt before. "Ah,...oh," I gasped with pleasure and surprise and—

"Oh, shit."

Wesley jumped away from me. He'd heard the car door slam, too. That meant my dad was home.

I pulled up my underwear and fastened my jeans quickly, but it took me a minute to find my bra. Once I was completely dressed, I flattened my hair and did my best not to look like a kid with her hand caught in the cookie jar.

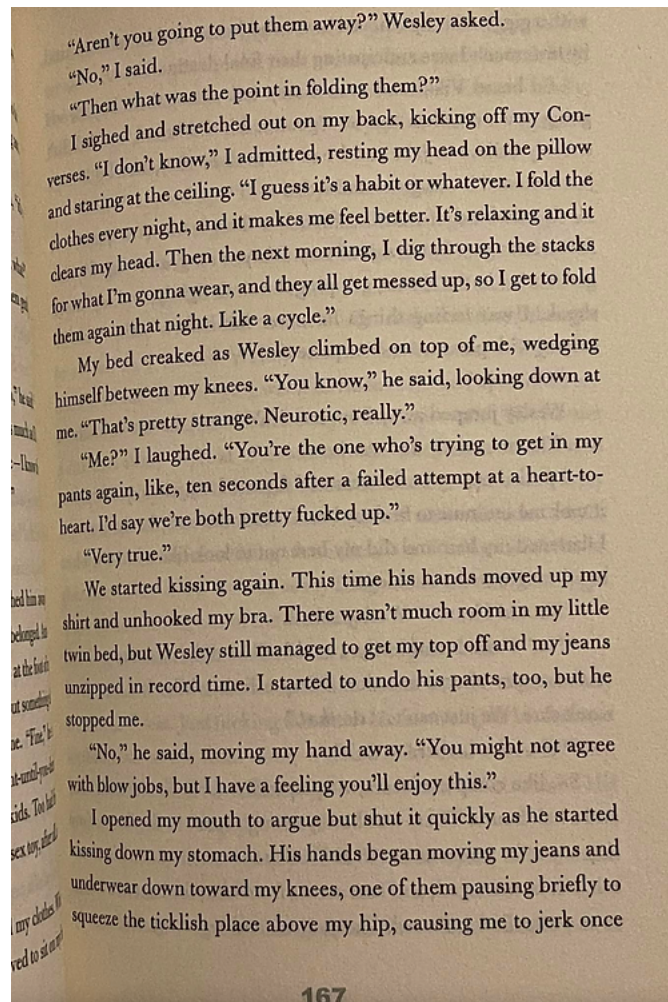
"Should I leave?" Wesley asked.

"No," I said breathlessly. I could tell he didn't want to go back to the empty almost-mansion. "Stay a little while. It's fine. Dad won't care. We just can't... do *that*."

"What else is there to do?"

So, like complete losers, we played Scrabble for the next four and a half hours. There was barely enough space in the floor of my tiny room for someone as tall as Wesley to stretch out on his stomach, but he managed, and I sat across from him, the board between us as we spelled out words like *quixotic* and *hegemony*. Not exactly

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RED FLAGS

Sexual Content

CONCLUSION

Not appropriate literary content for K-12 schools