BOOK REVIEW  
*Hooked By Catherine Greenman*

PARENTAL ADVISORY – EXPLICIT CONTENT

SEXUALLY EXPLICIT CONTENT  
AVAILABLE AT TEXAS INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICTS

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“What?” I was sitting up now, braced.

“I think I just sold my first flat. The two-bedroom on Astor. Can you believe it? The client made an offer and the seller accepted. I just got the call.” She waved her cell phone around, then combed her fingers into the front of my scalp, “lifting” my hair. “Would it kill you to wear your gorgeous hair down one day? It looks so groovy when it’s in that godforsaken mess at the back of your head.”

“Anyway, congratulations,” I said, falling back onto the couch, taking in the whole picture of what she was wearing: a short black skirt that was possibly shorts, black tights and high-heeled boots that went up to her knees. It was her signature look: a Barneys version of Madonna’s Danceteria phase.

“You wore that to the showing?” I asked.

“I stumbled into the kitchen and she handed one to me. Her fire-engine-red grin ate up the postage stamp-sized photo in the upper left, and in the middle, in royal-blue italics, were the words “Fiona Galehouse, Sales Associate.”

“Galehouse!” I asked, flabbergasted.

“It sounds nicer than Addison,” she sniffed, dropping an ice cube into her glass. I slumped at the kitchen table. Only my mother would take her husband’s surname once they’d finally divorced. “It has a better ring for sales.” She avoided my eyes and I realized the real reason for the switch: she wanted to distance herself from the whole tax-evasion thing. My mother had gotten into some kind of trouble when I was twelve and Fiona’s, her nightclub, was winding down from its heyday. It had to do with taxes, and all I know is that Mom secretly blamed Dad for it, for not being “aggressive enough,” even though it was never really clear to me that he’d had anything to do with it. He worked at an investment bank and never spent time at Fiona’s, or with us, for that matter. It didn’t help that the tax thing coincided with the summer Dad stopped drinking. Everyone was weird on edge that summer—Mom screaming on the phone all day, Dad coming home from work with five bottles of Clamato—but then after making such a huge deal about getting Dad to quit drinking, Mom went and divorced him anyway.

After they did the intervention on him and Dad went away to rehab, Mom realized that she was pissed as hell that it took Dad’s boss to get him to stop, when she’d been pleading with him for years. She’d tried leaving—I remembertrecking out in the middle of the night many times with my hamster and staying at her friend Maryanne’s—but we always ended up coming back to the same routine. Mom in the bedroom with her plate of cheese and crackers, her phone and the TV, Dad in his leather swivel chair in the living room, ignoring us, with his headphones and piles of paper. They had an uncanny habit of never being in the same room together. But when the almighty Bill Minderhoff told Dad he’d get the ax if he didn’t sober up, only then did he take it seriously. Bill Minderhoff. I’d never met him, but the picture of him in my head was crystal clear: red tie with little blue polka dots, white shirt, feet up on his desk, wielding his untold powers over Dad.

Apparently we don’t factor in nearly as importantly as the
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Will. First was Bo Brown, the summer after seventh grade. We fooled around a lot. Never anything past second, but he basically had his hands and his mouth all over my boobs all summer. I never got tired of it. We swam out to the rocks that led into the Charter Island harbor once and Bo did his thing, his spit, metallic-casting from his braces, washing over me with the salt water. It must have been the weekend, because Dad was there. I remember seeing his big, bald head from the water, shining in the sun. He was up on a ladder, painting something on the side of the house.

"Thea Galehouse, for Christ's sake, are you aware that there's a riptide?" he yelled at the house, not at me, which made him look deranged. "It could have swept you right out. Jesus!" I hoped he'd seen us.

Michael Cunningham was the second. I was fifteen and he said he was nineteen, but it turned out he was actually twenty-four. I met him hitting tennis balls against the backboard in the park across the street from our apartment. But he was a stoner, and after a while it started to freak me out. There's smoking pot and there's smoking pot. Mom got it way before I did, after meeting him for a split second in our lobby.

"Tell me it's just marijuana," she said.

"Hu?" I asked.

"What's on it?"

I shook my head. Too dumb to play dumb.

"I'd rather you didn't spend time with him. Irrelevant, I realize, but don't do drugs with him. Come to me if you want to get high!"

But the stuff with Bo and Michael had been nothing like this. I get it now, I kept thinking as I lay underneath Will, I get it. After a while I felt a wet spot by my hip.

"I told you, I'm a class act," he said, embarrassed. "Sorry." I nudged him to my side and we lay like that forever, in a little astrodome of lips and rough, salty skin amid the fading Friday-afternoon light.

"Galehouse Rock," he said, running his finger along my hairline. "G-Rock. Your eyes are always open. Every time I open my eyes, your eyes are open."

"Like bug-eyed?" I asked. "Like I'm a meth addict?"

"No, you freak." He laughed, prying my eye wider with his thumb and index finger. "You're just taking it all in. You don't look like you have a lot of judgment going on in there. I like it."

"I judge," I said.

"I know you judge yourself. I'm going to bet you give yourself the business. Anyone who has Fiona Galehouse for a mother can't help but be a little cracked."

"Thanks," I said.

"I mean it as a compliment," he said, bumping his nose against mine. "You're welcome."

We ate hummus and carrots, drank Mom's white wine and talked, finally falling asleep on the rug under the coffee table. We woke up Saturday and fooled around all day, did everything but, then did it for the first time Sunday. We were going to do it, then we weren't, and then we finally did, right before he was about to leave.

"You don't want to wait a little longer?" he asked, sliding a condom on dexterously with one hand. It was clear to me he'd done it before.

"Nope," I answered.

"Big of me to ask, though, right?"

It was a big deal, but not in the way I expected. I was...
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I had to ask Ms. Jedel for a recommendation to get into an English seminar at NYU. I'd sent the application in, but the recommendation was way late. When would I ask her? At the end of the day or the beginning? Which day was the best day to ask for something like this? Friday? Inside the classroom or outside? What would I say? "Ms. Jedel, I know I haven't been doing so terrifically, but I wondered if you would consider..."

Ms. Jedel had a very formal demeanor, and she wore tailored pencil skirts and navy patent-leather pumps, which made her stand out even more next to the bedraggled male teachers in jeans and sneakers. When I had her freshman year, she stood at the blackboard, holding the chalk in her fingers like a cigarette. "If you cannot spell separate, you are not up to par," she would say. I'd imagine her going home at night to her apartment with a single paper grocery bag nestled in her arms—

between fake birds-of-paradise. I took a seat and pulled out my yarn, thinking my scarf-in-progress could stand in as a security blanket. My hands were shaky and I pulled at the yarn like a skittish kitten. A door swung open and I spotted three empty cots in a row. They reminded me of giving blood with Vanessa in the basement of school freshman year. I remembered sitting next to her, both of us squeezing the red balls, racing to fill up our bags. Then we ate four-packs of Fig Newtons and drank apple juice while the nurse had us recline for twenty minutes. Vanessa said the apple juice looked like urine.

A redhead in a flowered pajama top and a name tag that said Annie Kay walked by. The young-looking woman across from me in a khaki pantsuit burred. I focused on my yarn, embarrassed for her. I looked up again and she was staring at the wall, clearly worried. I thought of Mom's sister, Pat, who'd had a hysterectomy when she was thirty, and I began to wonder why the fuck I'd come alone. Annie Kay stepped into the doorway and called my name into the room, like we were all there for an audition and it was my turn to read.

"Do you have someone here with you to take you home?" she asked me, scanning the seats around me.

"Yes," I lied. "She's downstairs getting a magazine." I wondered if I was making a big mistake but thought I could always call Vanessa and have her come get me if I was dying from the pain or out of it. Annie Kay made a motion to follow her down the hall and I hoped that was the end of it.

Dr. Moore was the kind of person you'd want to get an abortion from. Blond hair cut very straight above her shoulders, and skin that clearly got frequent, maybe compulsively so, peels. She stepped quietly into the room, followed by a nurse, and everything immediately grew very serious.

Dinner for one—and I imagined her pushing her glasses daintily up her nose as she undressed next to the closet door. I always pictured her wearing a beautiful cream silk slip under her skirt and blouse, and imagined her getting undressed down to that, then padding off to the kitchen to ladle her take-out risotto onto a white plate and eating it sitting down with a tall glass of water. In some weird way, she gave me hope that my adulthood would be elegant.

"Ms. Jedel, I have a big favor to ask you. . . ."

Then senior year something happened. I took her film class and she discussed Dog Day Afternoon and Raging Bull, in her same skirts and pumps, and she was too fat removed from real life. She was a nerd. And a spinster. I ended up getting a B-plus for the fall semester.

"Ms. Jedel, believe it or not, after my less-than-stellar performance so far in the film class, I'm actually thinking of majoring in film. I know, I know, but this year has been hard for me. I'm deeply in love, and now I'm with child, actually. Could you cut me a break, Ms. Jedel? Could you?"

I endlessly put off asking her, until I finally got up the nerve on February twelfth, my eighteenth birthday. I thought that asking her on my birthday, even though she didn't know it was my birthday, would somehow mean she'd say yes. I was wrong. Vanessa was waiting outside in the hall.

"What'd she say?"

"I can't believe it," I said. "She turned me down."

"Not!" she said, her eyes widening. "So obnoxious. I'm sorry, Thee. I can't believe it. Come with me later and we'll do birthday ice cream, and you can help me buy tennis sneakers. I'll cheer you up."

"Okay," I said, thinking. This birthday is turning out to be
PROFANITY COUNT AND OTHER SENSITIVE WORDS

Pregnant – 18  Drinking – 11  F*ck – 1
D*ck – 1  P*ssed – 11  H*ll - 24
Sex – 10  Boozing it up – 1  Getting high – 1
Pot – 6  Beer – 10  Vodka – 4
Champagne – 2  Wine – 8  God (in vain) 31
Jesus (in vain) 9

RED FLAGS

Teen Pregnancy
Discussion of an abortion
Sex
Language
Drinking

CONCLUSION

Not appropriate literary content for K-12 schools