



Cherry

By Lindsey Rosin

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Layla started it. She announced it super casually to the rest of the girls between bites of frozen yogurt, as if it was just simply another addition to her massive, ever-evolving To Do List. She is determined to have sex for the first time before the end of high school. Initially, the rest of the crew is scandalized, but, once they all admit to wanting to lose their v-cards too, they embark on a quest to do the deed together... separately.

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Alex has already done it. Or so she says.

Emma doesn't know what the fuss is all about, but sure, she'll give it a shot.

And Zoe, well, Zoe can't even say the *o* word without bursting into giggles.

Will everything go according to plan? Probably not. But at least the girls have each other every hilarious, heart-warming, cringe-inducing step of the way.

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Editorial Review

Review

Prepare for TMI (in a good way) as Rosin takes you on a page-turning, laugh-inducing roller coaster ride into the hearts, minds, and pants of four high school girls on a quest to lose their virginity by graduation. *CHERRY* is ripe with the seminal moments every teenager experiences and adult remembers – friendship drama, first love, and finding your way in the world. With an uncanny knack for capturing the comedy, emotion, and lingo of this boy-crazy yet fiercely loyal gaggle of girls, Rosin’s debut novel will leave you with no regrets and all of the feels. (Aaron Karo, comedian and author of *ME YOU US* and *LEXAPROS AND CONS*)

If *American Pie* was gender-flipped, you’d get *Cherry* by Lindsey Rosin. It’s so much more than that, though, because, duh, young women and sexuality is far more intriguing a concept with a lot more stereotypes and hate to overcome. In their senior year of high school, four best female friends make a pact to lose their virginities. Layla has a serious boyfriend, Alex claims she has already done it, Zoe blushes at the idea of sex, and Emma doesn’t get caught up in all this sex stuff. Rosin’s debut is LOL-worthy, but it also has a lot to say about female friendship and sexuality. (Bustle)

About the Author

Lindsey Rosin is a screenwriter, playwright, and director. She is a proud graduate of Harvard-Westlake High School and the University of Pennsylvania. A fourth generation Los Angeles native, Lindsey lives in West LA—in close proximity to her favorite froyo spot, The Bigg Chill—along with her husband, Josh, and their adorable poodle-mix named Dodger. *Cherry* is her debut novel.

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Cherry

The beginning . . .

To be honest, the sex pact wasn’t always part of the plan.

Layla Baxter started it.

She announced it super casually to the rest of the girls—Alex, Zoe, and Emma—between bites of froyo, as if it were simply another addition to her massive, ever evolving to-do list. “I added a new bullet point today,” she said as she mixed a fresh spoonful of Sno-Caps into her frozen yogurt. Every Sunday afternoon at exactly 4:00 p.m. The Crew (as the girls were commonly known) would meet at their favorite froyo spot, The Bigg Chill, and huddle around their regular table for an important hour of sugar and gossip.

“Oh yeah?” Zoe asked, humoring Layla.

“Yeah. Well. Actually . . .” Layla smiled. “I added three new bullet points. Three felt like the right number.” Layla swept her long blond hair up into her signature bun, which was always equal parts messy and adorable. With Layla, everything was an “always.” Everything had an order or a pattern or some sort of special meaning. True to form, she always—always—ordered the same frozen yogurt combination: a chocolate, peanut butter swirl with Sno-Caps on the side.

Zoe Reed also always ordered the same flavor: classic, plain vanilla. Vanilla really was Zoe's favorite flavor, but beyond that the truth was she also made most of her life choices with the hope of drawing as little attention to herself as possible. She blamed the habit on her bright red, almost orangeish hair. It was frizzy, dry, and nearly unmanageable, but unless Zoe wanted to rock some sort of buzz cut—which was obviously out of the question—there wasn't much she could do to improve the situation. She was stuck with it. With the hair. And the red. And the frizz. Which meant that everything else about Zoe had to be toned down accordingly. Even her frozen yogurt flavor: always vanilla.

"Lay, you gonna actually tell us about your new bullet points," Alex prodded, "or are you just gonna be a cocktease about it?"

"Alex. I am not being a tease—" Layla fought back playfully.

"Except you totally are. . . ." Alex smirked.

Unlike Layla or Zoe, Alex Campbell wasn't into the "always." She preferred randomness. Chaos, even. Alex was always looking for something new and exciting. Case in point: She had never (ever) ordered the same flavor twice. The Bigg Chill changed its flavors every week, and so every week Alex would make a big deal about trying all of them and then inevitably end up with the most eccentric option of the bunch, something like Chocolate Pistachio or Oreo Cheesecake. Today, it was Caramel Custard.

When you looked as naturally good as Alex, it was easy to pull off the boldest kind of choice. Alex had soul piercing blue eyes, light chocolate skin, and endlessly long legs. The overall combination was, in a word, stunning.

"Okay, okay . . .," Layla said, getting back on track. "At some point between this very moment, right now, and approximately six months from now, on graduation day—"

"Really? Hi," Emma interrupted. "I thought we weren't talking about that."

"About what—graduation?"

"La, la, la," Emma sang, sticking her fingers in her ears.

"Oh, come on," Layla said. "Our high school graduation"—more la, la, las from Emma—"is happening whether we talk about it or not."

"I know it's happening, but that doesn't mean we need to dwell—"

"I'm not dwelling—I'm just saying it's the due date for my new bullets."

"Okay. But then I'm just asking why it has to be the end of the school year?"

"It seems fitting and thematically appropriate. One door closing, another door opening." Layla had clearly already given the timeline a great deal of thought. Of course, Layla didn't do much of anything without giving it a great deal of thought.

"Don't worry, Em," Alex chimed in, "I'm sure Layla will just add even more bullet points to her list soon. Then there'll be a new due date anyway."

“You know, some people say that success means never getting to the bottom of your to-do list,” Layla retorted.

“Because those people never actually finish anything?” Alex laughed.

“No, because they’re always busy adding more things to do.”

“That makes no sense.”

“It actually makes so much sense. And I’d very much appreciate if you could please stop hating on my life - system?”

“Only if you stop saying supercool things like ‘life system’?”

“Oh, you love it—”

“Layla, I love you, but that’s not the same thing—”

“Yes, okay,” Emma said, interrupting Layla and Alex’s familiar back-and-forth. “That’s great and all, but can we please just stop talking about it?”

Emma O’Malley plunged her plastic spoon into her Cookies ’n Cream froyo, piling on an oversized bite. Emma’s weekly order was typically somewhere right between Alex’s peculiar and Zoe’s plain. In other words, she liked to keep things interesting, but she didn’t feel the need to stray too far from the status quo. Emma’s “always” was an extra order of rainbow sprinkles, which she got on the side for everyone to share. Emma was especially thoughtful like that.

However, at this moment, all Emma could think about was trying not to think about graduation . . . and she was failing.

Under normal circumstances, Emma was the most laid-back member of The Crew, the girl most likely to go with the flow, but senior year was throwing her off her game. Emma liked the way things were right now—her friends, her parents, her classes, and her job as senior photo editor of the school yearbook—and she didn’t really understand why any of it had to change.

“Ooooo-kay,” Layla said, starting her announcement over again. “Before the-day-that-Emma-will-not-let-us-name, I am going to, in no particular order: get an A in Mr. Moore’s AP Lit class . . .”

“Yes. Super doable,” Zoe interjected.

“Put blond highlights in my hair . . .”

“Ugh, finally,” Alex approved. Layla had been talking about getting highlights almost literally forever.

“Aaaaand,” Layla said, pausing slightly for dramatic effect, “I am going to have sex with Logan.”

Layla’s exclamation made Zoe spit rainbow sprinkles across the table.

A saliva-covered red sprinkle landed on Alex’s hand. “Ew. Zoe, c’mon.”

“Sorry—sorry,” Zoe said as she scrambled to pass Alex a napkin. “I was very much not expecting that.”

“The highlights?” Layla asked playfully.

“The Logan.”

Layla and Logan had been together for more than two years, so it wasn’t entirely surprising that Layla was ready to do it . . . but actually hearing the words “I am going to have sex” come out of her mouth was a whole new sensation. All of a sudden, sex was something The Crew actually did. Or at least it was something Layla did. Or was going to do. Or something.

“I’m ready,” Layla added definitively.

“Wow,” Zoe said. Or maybe she only thought it. She wasn’t sure if the “wow” had actually managed to come out of her lips or if it was still stuck, rattling around inside her head.

“I like this,” Alex said. “But why not just go for it?”

“I am gonna just ‘go for it.’ That’s exactly what I’m saying.”

“No, I know, but then why do you need to do it with a due date?”

“Oh. Have you met me?”

“Yes. You plan everything—”

“Ev-er-y-thing.”

“Right, but what if this time you were just, like, Hey. Logan. I want you inside me.”

“Ohmigod, Alex.” Zoe blushed.

“What? I have a feeling he’d be down.”

“Yes, I feel that too”—Layla laughed—“but I can’t just say that—”

“You could, actually—”

“You know spontaneity makes me nauseous. Besides, a due date is an essential element of any well plotted plan. Otherwise it’s just, like, what’s the point of having a plan in the first place?”

“That’s exactly what I’m trying to say,” Alex explained. “Maybe you don’t need a plan.”

“Again: Have you met me?!” Layla countered as one of the cell phones vibrated from the phone stack in the middle of the table. “I think that’s mine. Probably Logan,” she said.

The Crew had decided—well, Layla had decided and everyone else agreed—that froyo Sunday would be a phone free zone. The girls would always stack their phones on the table when they first sat down, and the only way they were allowed to check a text message before they got up was if someone else in The Crew

read it first.

“You want me to check?” Emma offered.

“All good,” Layla said. “I think his flight just landed. I’m sure he’s fine.”

“More than fine. He’s about to have sex.”

“Not, like, immediately about to . . .”

“Right, ’cause spontaneity makes us nauseous,” Alex teased.

“Exactly.” Layla winked, knowing full well that Alex was making fun of her.

“But for real, Lay,” Alex said, trying again. “The first time you attempt to have sex you can’t just, like . . . force it. I mean . . . there are moving parts involved. Body parts.” Alex was the only member of The Crew who wasn’t a virgin. She’d done it only one time before, but that was still one more time than anybody else at the table.

“I know it’s gonna take time to figure it all out,” Layla insisted. “That’s why the ultimate due date is six months away—plenty of time to work out the kinks.”

“So basically you’re saying you want to have a lot of sex.” Alex grinned.

“A lot of good sex,” Layla clarified.

“I think it’s supposed to be good even when it’s bad,” Emma chimed in.

“No-o—it can definitely be bad,” Alex maintained.

“Right. But I think it’s also like pizza: Like, when it’s good, it’s really good, and then when it’s bad it’s still pretty good,” Emma said with a laugh, which made Alex and Layla laugh too. Zoe joined in halfheartedly, but the entire conversation was making her anxious.

“I’m gluten free,” Zoe managed to add.

“What does that have to do with anything?”

“It makes it harder to find good pizza.”

“Zoe, it’s a metaphor.”

“I know . . .” Zoe stuck some more vanilla froyo in her mouth.

“I’m thinking Logan and I will do it for the first time on Valentine’s Day,” Layla said proudly, as if she were the first person in the history of premeditated sex dates to select the national holiday of flowers and candy and Hallmark cards. “It’s gonna be perfect.”

“Were you always this corny?” Alex laughed.

“I am not corny—”

“I bet you want rose petals and candles too.”

“Who doesn’t want rose petals and candles?”

“Me, for starters,” Emma said.

“Me, for seconds,” Alex agreed.

“Okay, okay,” Layla said, turning toward Alex, “We can’t all be lucky enough to lose it on make-out rock behind the boathouse at Camp Waziyatah.”

“It was make-out ledge, thankyouverymuch.”

The girls knew that Alex’s camp boy was named Cameron, and that he was “tall” and “hot” and “lived in Massachusetts,” but that was pretty much it. Alex wasn’t really a big talker no matter what the subject was, but she definitely didn’t like to kiss and tell. Probably because then she’d have to be talking all the time. More often than not, she was tired of her boy-of-the-moment before the end of their first make-out session.

“Okay, fine. Make-out ledge,” Layla corrected. “I’m sure it was magical.”

“Yeah, well . . .” Alex paused, searching for the right words to explain what had happened. She knew “magical” certainly wasn’t going to be one of them. “I think the first time’s gonna be awkward no matter what you do.”

“So you’re saying I should plan for awkward,” Layla said, translating Alex’s advice into a language she could understand.

“If you must . . .” Alex grinned, knowing full well that Layla obviously must. “All I’m trying to say is that it’s probably smart not to expect . . .”

“An orgasm?” Layla offered.

“Ohmigod,” Zoe said, squirming in her chair.

“Oh my God, yes, Zoe, we’re talking about orgasms,” Alex teased.

“I realize that, but . . .” Zoe’s face turned red, and she couldn’t finish the rest of her thought. She was still wrapping her head around Layla’s sex date, and the thought of Alex’s orgasms, or anyone’s orgasms, or really just the entire concept of an orgasm was a lot right now.

“Just think of them like . . . fireworks,” Layla said.

“Fireworks . . .,” Alex repeated, trying the word on for size.

“I actually love fireworks.” Emma laughed.

“Okay, okay. Thank you, but now I hear you all saying ‘fireworks,’ and it just sounds like ‘orgasm’ anyway,

so . . .”

“Zoe, if it really sounded like an orgasm—”

“Ohmigod, Alex, I swear, if you start moaning right now . . .”

Alex, Layla, and Emma exploded into another fit of giggles, as Zoe shook her head and heaped another spoonful of rainbow sprinkles onto her vanilla frozen yogurt.

“I like that we’re talking about this,” Layla said once all the laughter had quieted down again.

“Me too,” Emma agreed.

“Me three,” Alex piled on.

Layla, Emma, and Alex all turned toward Zoe.

She shook her head.

“Is that a no?” Layla asked.

“We’ve already established that I’m bright red, and I’m pretty positive I have massive pit stains and a rash on my chest . . .”

“That’s your answer?”

“I don’t know . . .”

“Oh, c’mon, Zoe,” Layla pushed. “We’re having a bonding moment like we’ve never had before, and all you’re gonna give us is an ‘I don’t know’?”

“I love-hate this conversation. Is that a possible correct answer?”

“Zo, it’s not a test,” Emma said through a fresh wave of giggles.

“Okay, well, whatever it is, I’m one hundred percent having a love-hate relationship with it,” Zoe managed to say before getting swept up into Emma’s laughter. Alex and Layla were already there too, laughing so hard they couldn’t breathe, and it was simply impossible to tell whose laughter was whose because it all just mixed together so perfectly.

That’s how it worked.

Layla, Zoe, Alex, and Emma had been an inseparable foursome ever since the fateful day they were all randomly assigned to the same desk cluster in Miss Morgan’s first-grade class. All these years later they were still just as close as ever.

“Most people aren’t this lucky,” Layla said, as always.

“Not even close,” Alex, Emma, and Zoe answered.

Then Layla swirled another spoonful of Sno-Caps into her frozen yogurt—and a brand-new thought bubbled up into her brain . . .

Zoe was the first to see Layla's face light up. "Oh no," she said knowingly.

"'Oh no' what?" Layla laughed.

"I see you, Layla. I see all the gears in your pretty little head spinning like crazy. Like that time you decided we should toilet paper Xander Murphy's house. Or the night you made us go skinny-dipping at Zuma—"

"Hey, I did not make you do anything—"

"Layla," Zoe said, wiping her clammy hands onto her jeans, "I know what this face means . . ."

"That I often have good ideas?" Layla asked, loving everything about this moment.

"Wait, what is a good idea?" Emma asked.

"Yeah, what are you talking about?" Alex asked. "Unlike Zoe, I don't have psychic powers."

"Layla thinks we all should have sex," Zoe blurted.

"Together?" Alex laughed.

"Ohmigod, no," Zoe squeaked, too nervous and awkward and rashy to even entertain that kind of joke.

"Wait. But what if we really did?" Layla asked, getting all sorts of excited. "I swear I wasn't thinking that when we first sat down this afternoon, but now that I hear Zoe say it out loud—"

"Please don't blame me—"

"Zoe. There's no blame. This is brilliant."

"Wait. You're serious?" Emma asked.

"Yes. We should all have sex. Before graduation."

Emma shook her head at Layla's use of the G-word.

"I think we're forgetting that Alex has already had sex," Zoe said, as if that somehow made it impossible or unnecessary for the other girls to do it too.

"Yeah, but she still hasn't had good sex, no offense—"

"Okay, but no," Zoe said, still fighting the idea. "You have a boyfriend. Alex always has a million options. Emma's adorable. And then there's me over here with my frizzy hair and freckles and permanently red cheeks. I just got my braces off two weeks ago!"

"Luckily, 'braces off' exponentially increases your sex appeal," Alex teased.

“No. No one looks at me and thinks about wanting to have sex.”

“That’s not true,” Alex pushed back. “I could be thinking about it right now . . .”

“Yeah, yeah . . . ,” Zoe said, shaking her head again.

“Zoe,” Layla insisted, “you could totally have sex if you want to.”

“I do want to!”

It took Zoe a moment to realize that those four little words had actually come out of her mouth and into the sugarcoated air of The Bigg Chill. Now the words were echoing off the froyo machines and the wall of glass windows and all the tables and toppings and people in between. “Ohmigod . . .”

“Ohhhh my God yes,” Layla replied, all singsongy.

“No. Stop. No more smiling . . . ,” Zoe said. “My point is that—”

“Your point is that you want to have sex,” Alex piled on.

“No—”

“Don’t you mean yes?” Emma joined in. “I’m positive I already heard you say yes.”

“No, still no. My point is that I don’t exactly have a lot of options.”

“That is false,” Emma said.

“If you want to have sex, you can find a way to have sex,” Layla insisted.

“The last thing I wanna do is just ‘find a way.’ I’m not gonna sleep with a random or lower my standards because Layla had a stupid idea—”

“It’s not a stupid idea. In fact, I think the sex pact might be the single greatest idea I’ve ever had.”

“Sex pact? Since when is there a sex pact?” Zoe was now officially freaking out.

“Well, now that we’ve established we all want to have sex—”

“Good sex,” Alex interjected.

“Duh, yes. Now that we’ve established we all want to have good sex, I think we all should.”

“I’m down.” Emma laughed.

“Totally,” Alex agreed.

“Ohmigod . . .” Zoe blushed.

“Is that a yes?” Layla asked.

Zoe couldn’t quite believe it, but the truth was “yes” it was.

“It’s hap-pen-ing,” Layla declared triumphantly. “I think step one is to put the positive intention out into the universe.” Layla loved step-by-step instructions almost as much as she loved her lists and due dates. “Before high school ends, we are going to do this together.”

“But not together together,” Alex teased.

“Right. We’ll do it . . . concurrently. With the right person in the right place at the right time . . .” Alex and Emma nodded firmly in agreement. Zoe managed to tip her head forward slightly, which was more than good enough for Layla. “We’re having sex!” she exclaimed.

And that was it.

One serving of frozen yogurt later, sex was no longer simply a daydream or a wet dream or a piece of juicy gossip that happened to somebody else.

All of a sudden, it was something the girls actually did, something they all wanted to do—and were going to do, together—before high school graduation.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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