

RACHAEL BIGGS

## **GREEN**

JACQUELINE'S BEAUTY WAS EVIDENT EARLY ON. Although she was tall, she was never gangly as most models complain with fake modesty. She carried herself with poise and dignity, and she was sought after by males from the age of twelve. This worried her father a great deal, and he took it upon himself to show her personally what sort of things boys would try. This role-playing was especially uncomfortable when her father was drinking. It made her mother uncomfortable too, and she would go in her room and close the door without even cleaning up the dishes from dinner.

When she was fourteen, Jaqueline found a photographer online and gave him a hand job in exchange for a photo shoot. She sent those pictures to several modelling agencies, and she chose the one that offered to put her up in an apartment in New York with four other girls her age. She continued to send a Christmas card to her grandmother every year, but she deliberately lost contact with her parents.

By the time she met Finn she had dated too many men, and each one only reminded her of someone else who had disappointed her. Finn was a 26-year-old bartender, who was born and raised across the bridge and had never moved beyond a ten-mile radius of his parents. He was handsome in an understated way, and Jaqueline liked that one of his front teeth was slightly bigger than the other. He lived with two of his three brothers; the other one was married with a baby on the way.

She sat down at Finn's bar one evening after a grueling editorial shoot. She was still wearing heavy make-up and her hair was wildly over-styled, so it was obvious that she was in the business of being sexy. He did his best to seem nonchalant about it, as is necessary if you want to have a respectable conversation with someone who is sexy for a living. He poured her a scotch and soda, and they talked about the impending election. She was impressed with his political prowess and that he blushed when she touched his arm. She wrote her number on a napkin and exited smiling.

Their romance burned bright and hot, and it ignited a desire that she had never felt before. Up until then her gentlemen suitors had been anything but gentlemen. They were usually businessmen of considerable means, so as to level the playing field with her beauty, or hotshot artists who slept with models as validation or because it was hip. Finn had a lovely innocence by comparison, and he stayed in her hotel room for thirty-nine consecutive nights. They would sleep all day, and when he came home from work at 3am they would walk around the city laughing, kissing, and never letting go of one another's hands. She only took one job that month because it was in Rome, which sounded very romantic, and she bought him a ticket and insisted he feign strep throat in order to join her. One enchanted evening after they had shared gelato, he took her face in his hands and told her he loved her. She cried, and he made her laugh by taking off his shirt and offering it to her to wipe her nose.

Everything seemed possible, and she even indulged her daydreams by looking at homes to buy online—a sprawl in North Carolina with willow trees that were ideal for a swing, a quaint Victorian in San Francisco with more varieties of flowers in the garden than she had ever seen, and a classic Cape Cod with a rowboat out front.

When they got back from Italy, Finn wanted to spend the night at his own place.

“Why?” Jaqueline protested vehemently.

“I haven't hung out with my brothers in nearly a month,” he replied.

“But I'll be so lonely,” she insisted. She put on her best pouty face, which was really top of the line because she had rehearsed it so many times for photo shoots.

“It's just for one night, babe. I've been with you non-stop since we met. Be cool, Sugarbear.” He took her in his arms and tried to console her as she started to cry.

“So I'm not cool enough for you now? You think you can do better?” She pushed him away and locked herself in the bathroom, though she hated herself for being so embarrassingly weak.

Finn was puzzled as he tried to reason with her through the bathroom door, but he eventually grew frustrated with her immaturity and let himself out.

She tried to call him three hours later, when she finally got it together, but the call went straight to voicemail. She realized that she'd overreacted,

but she didn't want to tell that to his voicemail, so she decided to try again in case he hadn't heard the ring.

When Finn saw her number for the fourth time, he switched his phone to silent. He just needed a minute to breathe. He had never experienced a woman like this. He'd had three serious long-term relationships in his twenty-six years, and all of them had remained friends. Jaqueline was different. There was nothing simple about her, and the complexities that were initially titillating seemed more and more out of his league with each missed call.

By morning she had experienced rage, humiliation, sadness, fear, desperation, and yearning, and she was finally left with a gut-churning loneliness that made her teeth itch and her skin feel tight. It had always been there, but it had been safely stowed away for a very long time, and it made the most ordinary things seem impossible.

In an effort to preserve her self-respect, she eventually gave up calling Finn and instead got in touch with a drug dealer, who helped her spiral further into depression. But the agony was unbearable, and she just *had* to see him. She rented a car, waited for him to get off work, and then followed him home. She did this every night for two weeks, and on his nights off she sat outside his apartment hoping to catch a glimpse.

One night Finn came out of his house with a mousy blonde girl. She was short, barely reaching his bicep, and she wore a gaudy jacket. At first Jaqueline convinced herself that the girl must have been a relative or a friend, but then she saw him walk the mousy bitch to her car and kiss her on the lips. Tears welled up in Jaqueline's eyes, but she refused to be her mother. She wiped the tears away, and a jealous rage took over. The mouse pulled out, and Finn stood at the curb waving as Jaqueline revved her engine and screeched into traffic.

The mouse was blissfully content, singing along to her music, while Jaqueline's heart was racing. She felt dizzy, but her focus remained on the car in front of her—so much so that she didn't even notice that it was about to stop at a light, and she ran right into the back of it at a startling speed. Smashing her face into the steering wheel shook her from her craziness for a moment, and she realized that if she got out and exchanged information with this nothing of a woman it would get back to Finn, which was unthinkable. Before the mouse could get out of her car, Jaqueline reversed, did a U-turn, and headed back to the city. Being that it was rental, she had to pay

a considerable sum of money to have the car fixed before she took it back, but she made considerable sums of money so that was not an issue.

When Finn did not hear from his sweetheart, he grew worried. They had a pact since the 10th grade that she would call as soon as she got home, washed her face, brushed her teeth, and got into bed. He had relearned exactly the time this took over the past week, and he knew that nearly two hours was much too long. He called her all night, and in the morning he went to her apartment and rang the buzzer. When there was no answer, he called her mother, who was sobbing and had to pass the phone to her father, who informed him that she had been in a hit-and-run accident. Her neck was broken, and she died instantly.

Finn flashed back to the white Porsche Cayenne that had screeched down his street the night before. He went through his call log and dialed Jaqueline's number, but the hotel receptionist said that she had checked out. She was nowhere to be found, and he felt a desperation similar to hers when he would not take her calls just six weeks ago.