

FREYA & FLETCHER

## DANGEROUS

Freya moves the phone from one ear to the other.

–So, she says, –what are your plans for Thanksgiving? Going over to Esmat's again?

–No, Fletcher says. –My parents are around this year, so I'll be going back to the old hometown.

–Me too, Freya says.

–Maybe I'll pass you on the highway, Fletcher says.

–Yeah right, Freya says.

–You'll be eating my dust.

–Yeah right.

–Trust me, you'll see.

–Sure.

–Jakob going with you?

–Yeah. That poor guy. He tolerates my family with the patience of a saint.

She thinks about her family for a second. Really the only one she wants to see is Tim, her half-brother. She used to feel like she really had a big sister thing going with him, that she was *showing him the ropes* or whatever, but she has trouble believing that anymore. He got busted for selling porn at school a while back, and she wasn't really ever able to talk to him about it. Ever since then she's felt pretty distant from him. She no longer has a sense of what is going on in his world, of how she can help.

–Hey, Fletcher says. –When you see Jakob, tell him to call me. I haven't heard from that dude in forever.

—It's his new job, Freya says. —It's kind of bumming him out.

Fletcher looks across the room, at a box that is piled to overflowing with ungraded student research projects. —Tell him to join the club, Fletcher says.

—Yeah, really.

Fletcher doubts that it's really just the job. If he were to graph his friendship with Jakob he would chart a steady ascent all through the fall semester of Jakob's first year in the grad program, followed by a long, steady decline beginning that spring. Specifically beginning in the moment when Jakob began sleeping with Freya. He feels like he was played, like maybe Jakob only made friends with him to gain access to an array of available women. Sometimes he finds himself thinking that if he'd known that Jakob and Freya's relationship was going to be so successful he would never have introduced them. If he'd only known that Freya was ready to settle with a smart, bookish guy he would have made his own intentions more plain. It was his *turn*, damnit, he was *next in line*. But now it's too late. Now Jakob and Freya are in *love*, and Fletcher is on the outside, feeling discarded.

—Hey, he says. —Can I ask you something?

—Sure.

—It's about this personal ad that I put up.

—Oh yeah, Freya says. —I meant to ask you how that was going.

—OK, I guess. If you'd consider *no responses* to be OK.

—You only put it up a couple of days ago, right?

—Yeah, Fletcher says, —and I'm still toying around with it. That's my question for you, actually.

—I'm listening, Freya says.

—What do you think women are looking for?

—Oh, God, Freya says.

—Do you think they're looking for someone . . . dangerous?

—Uh, Freya says.

—Because I can *do* dangerous.

—You can?

—Sure, I mean, I'm Jewish—that should count.

—Oh, Freya says. —You mean because of the whole international-conspiracy, you-killed-our-God thing?

—Well, there's that, Fletcher says. —Or, you know, the current situation in the Middle East. We're kicking *ass* over there, you know. You ladies gotta start paying attention!

—Uh, Freya says. —I don't think women want dangerous in the sense of Ariel Sharon dangerous.

—Women, Fletcher says. —Who can tell *what* you want?