

## All the Dirty Parts

Daniel Handler

“There are love stories galore, and we all know them. This isn’t that,” 17-year-old Cole warns at the outset of his sex-obsessed confession, a millennial *Portnoy’s Complaint*. “The story I’m typing is all the dirty parts.” And how! In trying to capture the horny teenage mind, Handler (who has written for a younger audience as Lemony Snicket) wisely holds nothing back. Cole brags openly and in ribald detail about his sexual conquests, numbing any feeling of creeping loneliness through the instant gratification of online pornography. That he has gained a reputation around school doesn’t seem to bother him, as he sleeps with a number of girls whose only function is to hone his sexual craft—and even experiments with his best friend Alec. It isn’t until he meets Grisaille, an exchange student who is every bit his match, that Cole is forced to grapple with the emotional consequences of sex. Like David Levithan’s *The Lover’s Dictionary*, much of Handler’s short novel takes place in the blank space between each episode, and it’s in what the otherwise braggadocious Cole *doesn’t* tell us that his story achieves its poignancy. **VERDICT** Its unabashedly graphic language will keep this novel off of the young adult shelves, but it is exactly that readership who might benefit most from its surprisingly subtle exploration of sexual ethics.

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