



Virgin

By Radhika Sanghani

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For those who grew up on Judy Blume—and graduated to Lena Dunham—a “hilarious”* debut...

“Bridget Jones and Carrie Bradshaw, meet your wisecracking, vagina obsessed match. Sanghani’s debut is a hilarious, irreverent look at smart-alecky, painfully self-conscious, 21-year-old Ellie’s relentless mission to rectify a disastrous first attempt at performing oral sex, get deflowered, find the perfect Brazilian wax, avoid her tradition-bound Greek mother’s nagging, graduate summa cum laude, be a writer, and fit in...This story for millennials is a wonderful blend of modern angst with old-fashioned sweetness.” - *Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

“Even *Bridget Jones’s Diary* could take a page from this novel.”—*Joan Rivers

Okay, I admit it...I didn’t do it.

Yet.

This is normal, right? I mean, just because everyone I know has talked like they’ve already done it doesn’t mean that they’re telling the truth...right?

It’s not like I’m asking for that much. I don’t need the perfect guy. I don’t need candlelight or roses. Honestly, I don’t even need a real bed.

The guys I know complain that girls are always looking for Mr. Right—do I have to wear a sign that says I’m only looking for Mr. Right Now?

Sooooo...anyone out there want sex? Anyone? Hello? Just for fun?

I am not going to die a virgin. One way or another I am going to make this happen.

Hey, what have I got to lose? Besides the obvious.

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Virgin By Radhika Sanghani Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Review

'Bridget Jones and Carrie Bradshaw, meet your wisecracking...match' - Publisher's Weekly 'Laugh out loud...Bridget Jones could take a page from this novel' - Joan Rivers

About the Author

Radhika Sanghani is a journalist for "The Daily Telegraph" where she specialises in writing about women and women's issues. She has an MA in Newspaper Journalism from City University London, a BA in English Literature from University College London, and recently came second in "GQ"'s Norman Mailer writing competition. This is her debut novel. She is currently working on a sequel which follows Ellie into 'The Slut Years.'

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Ellie Kolstakis

21 years old

Nonsmoker

VIRGIN

I stared in horror at the words on Dr. E. Bowers' computer. The status of my hymen was plastered across her screen in capital letters.

V-I-R-G-I-N

The letters glowed luridly on the green computer screen, the kind used before Steve Jobs figured out Apple. They imprinted themselves into my mind in an eighties blur. A lump of anxiety lodged itself into my throat and my cheeks started burning. I felt sick.

My humiliating secret was all over my medical records and Dr. E. Bowers was going to see it. I didn't even know what the E in her name stood for but she was about to find out that in the two and a half years I had spent at uni, not a single boy had wanted to deflower me. Not one. I was twenty-one years old and I still had my V-card.

"Ms. Kolstakis?" she asked, pushing her rimless glasses up her nose. "You're a final-year student at University College London, and you're here to register, is that correct?"

I forced my paralyzed face into a smile and tried to laugh politely. "Yep, I don't know why I didn't join earlier. I, uh, I think it's because I've just never been sick, you know?"

She stared blankly at me.

“Um, also, you can call me Miss Kolstakis, or just Ellie, if you want,” I added.

She turned her head back down towards the forms, creasing her brow as she struggled to read my messy attempt at writing in block capitals.

I wiped the sweat from my palms onto my jeans and told myself to be calm. She was a doctor. She wasn’t going to be shocked by meeting a twenty-one-year-old virgin. Besides, she was probably just going to ask me about the Kolstakis family history, and the worst thing I would have to tell her would be about Great-Granddad Stavros smoking a pack of cigarettes every day from the time he was nine. He didn’t even die from lung cancer in the end; he choked on an almond at the age of eighty-nine.

She breathed in sharply. “Mm, oh dear—this isn’t very good at all. You have more than seven alcoholic drinks a week?”

Oh, God. If she figured out I had deliberately rounded down by three drinks, I would probably be on the first bus out of here to rehab.

Dr. E. Bowers cleared her raspy throat.

“Oh, sorry.” I giggled nervously in a way I hadn’t since Girl Guides. “I don’t always have seven drink a week; obviously it’s just during term-time. We normally go out on Thursdays. Oh, and Mondays. Sometimes Wednesdays, but that club night is kind of full of freshmens these days so we don’t go as much.”

Dr. E. Bowers furrowed her forehead and pursed her lips together. She started tapping away at her keyboard and I held on to the edges of the chair with anxiety. I focused my gaze on her computer. The six letters were no longer there. She had scrolled down the page without commenting on them. I breathed out an audible sigh of relief.

A sentence appeared at the bottom of the screen. Over seven drinks a week, heavy drinker, binge drinks.

“Wait, I’m not a binge drinker!” I cried. “In fact, I’m not even a heavy drinker. I’m a normal drinker—I barely drink anything compared to my friends.”

“Ms. Kolstakis, seven drniks a week is still rather a lot. You should think about cutting down, or you’ll be back here asking for a new liver in ten years,” she said severely.

She tucked her Princess Diana–circa-1995 hair behind her ears and continued. “I see you’ve left this section about sexual health blank on your forms. Are you sexually active?”

I died.

Am I sexually active?

I couldn’t even talk to my friends about just how un-sexually active I was, let alone Dr. E. Bowers. Someone who wore glasses with no frames was never going to understand how traumatic it was to be a final-year student who had never had sex. I bet she lost hers through a hole in a bedsheet like they did in the Middle Ages. She stared into my eyes as though she could read my mind. I felt my body perspiring. I wished I’d worn a black top.

I fidgeted in my seat. “Oh right, well, I’m actually not really very sexually active so . . . I didn’t bother filling

in that section. I'm not pregnant, never have been and never will be at this rate!"

Her lips stayed in a thin line and she blinked her anemic-looking eyes at me.

I made a mental note to stop trying to distract her with failed attempts at humor and quickly added, "Honestly, I definitely don't have any STDs or anything. It's completely impossible."

"Ah, so you've been tested recently for chlamydia and so on?" she asked.

"Well . . . no. I just can't have chlamydia. I'm . . . well, I'm a . . . I mean . . ." My voice broke and my words trailed into silence. I couldn't bring myself to say the word out loud. My best friends grew up just knowing this stuff and I'd spent the last three years hiding it from everyone I'd met at uni. I opened my mouth to try again but no words came out.

"Yes?" Dr. E. Bowers blinked and looked directly at me. "You're a . . . ?"

"I'm a v . . . a vi . . ." Great. On top of everything, I'd managed to develop a stutter.

I took a big breath and tried again. This time the words tumbled straight out of me. "I've never had sex before so I can't have any STIs. Or STDs. Well, neither."

She blinked again. "But you are sexually active?"

Um. Does one failed attempt at a blow job and a few fingers jabbing into my vagina count as being sexually active?

"I don't know," I replied miserably. "I mean, I've never had sex but I've kind of been to third base."

She sighed. "Ms. Kolstakis, are you sexually active or not? This is a confidential space. I just need to know whether or not to give you a chlamydia test."

My stomach plummeted straight down into my Keds, taking my jaw with it. My own doctor didn't believe I was a virgin. "No! I'm telling the truth, honestly. I've never had sex. I don't need a chlamydia test."

She squinted at me as though she was looking for any traces of a postcoital glow on my face. "Do you have a boyfriend at the moment?" she finally asked.

I lowered my eyes in shame. What kind of student was I, who had never had a boyfriend and was unable to answer a single question about sex when I was in my sexual prime?

"No," I mumbled.

She turned to her screen and scrolled up without warning. I started in panic as the six letters emerged on the monitor. I threw my hands up to my face, shielding my eyes from the V-word.

She sat looking at the screen for twenty-seven seconds before she clicked it away and turned back towards me. Slowly, I lowered my hands from my flushed face.

She looked at me with something resembling pity. "Right, then, Ms. Kolstakis, I'm going to give you this chlamydia test to do at home. It is self-explanatory, but essentially you just use the cotton bud to swab your vagina and mail it to the address in the pack. You should hear within a couple of weeks. Is that all right?"

I stared at her with my mouth gaping open. “I . . . What?! I just told you that I’ve never had sex—why do I need a test?” I cried out.

“We offer free chlamydia tests for everyone over the age of twenty-one who is sexually active or has been in close contact with someone else’s genitalia.”

“But you know I’m not actually sexually active.” I blushed furiously. “I have never been, well . . . penetrated.” I stumbled over the last word.

Dr. E. Bowers raised her eyeballs to the ceiling. “Ms. Kolstakis,” she said, “I am now well aware that you are a virgin. However, I advise that you take this free test I am offering you to ensure that you do not have chlamydia. It is still possible—though very rare—to catch it in other ways.”

“But what other ways? Surely fingers can’t give you chlamydia?” I blurted out.

“No, they cannot. However, you can catch it from oral sex or if a penis has been around your vagina, even without penetration.”

How Dr. E. Bowers knew that James Martell’s penis had touched my VJ but never actually gone in, I will never know. I stared at her mutely, impressed for the first time by her medical abilities.

She pressed the packet into my hands with a knowing look. I stood up, clutching it. I could barely see past the bright green letters flashing in my head so I walked in an undiscerning daze back out through the waiting room. My throat felt parched and scratchy from mortification so I stopped off at the water cooler. As I poured myself a plastic cup of water, I felt something fall behind me.

I turned around in surprise and saw an upturned cardboard box lying in the middle of the room surrounded by small silver packets scattered all across the waiting room floor and under the waiting patients’ seats. Oh God. My satchel must have knocked it off the shelf behind me.

I closed my eyes briefly in shame before forcing myself to bend down and pick it up. The waiting patients in the room were staring so I pulled my jeans up, hoping my faded knickers weren’t on show. Crouching on my knees and trying to pull my jumper down to hide my VPL, I started picking up the packets. I was half-finished shoving them carelessly back into the open box when it suddenly hit me. These weren’t just shiny silver packets that I was picking up from under people’s feet. They were condoms.

The irony was not lost on me as I fled the doctor’s office, my eyes swimming in hot tears. I ran out into the street and chucked the brown envelope straight into the first bin I saw. My face burned red-hot as I watched it sink in with the empty McDonald’s paper bags, taking my dignity down with it.

I was nothing but a twenty-one-year-old VIRGIN.

Chapter Two

Life as an adult virgin is more complicated than you might think. Obviously it is normal, there are thousands of us, and there is absolutely nothing wrong with it. Choosing when to have sex is a completely individual decision, and everyone is different. Some people choose to wait till marriage, and some just want to wait for the right person. Others are religious, and others are just too busy being successful in every other area of their lives to worry about something as minor as intercourse.

At least, that's what the Internet said when I Googled it the second I got home from the doctor's office.

I knew Dr. E. Bowers hadn't even believed I was a virgin to begin with, because clearly no average-looking third-year university student who had seven-plus drinks a week could still be a virgin. Except me.

I buried my head in the duck feather pillow I'd spent a week's food budget on. I pulled my duvet over myself to try and block out the six letters blinking over and over in my head: V I R G I N V I R G I N V I R G I N.

I hated the word. I hated it just as much as I hated the fact that I was one. It wasn't fair—why did I have to be the only non-deformed, non-religious girl who got stuck with an untouched inner lotus at the age of twenty-one?

I sighed loudly and let my mind go over the familiar responses to the "Why am I still a v*****?" question that visited me as regularly as my period.

1. It was my parents' fault. They were education-obsessed immigrants who moved from Greece to Surrey and sent me to an all girls' school. Their plan was for me never to meet any boys so I wouldn't be distracted from their one and only goal for me: Oxford University. Result? I didn't get into Oxford and I didn't meet any boys either.

2. I was a very unfortunate-looking teenager. By the time I figured out how to make myself look passable and wear a bra that gave me enough support to show off my 36D assets, it was too late. All the boys from the school next door already had girlfriends, and to them I would always be the slightly unattractive and quiet girl with big boobs hidden behind massive jumpers, and long dark curly hair that was more horizontal than vertical. It didn't help that all the other girls had figured out how to pluck their eyebrows and flirt while I was locked up in my bathroom with a bottle of bleach, battling my moustache. By the time I got to uni, I realized I had missed out on learning how to talk to boys. After a few minutes of my blunt humor and self-deprecation, they usually moved on to talk to real girls. Girls with minimal body hair, button noses and socially appropriate senses of humor.

3. My dysfunctional family. I was an only child, which meant most people assumed I had spent a spoiled, lavish upbringing pleading with my parents never to have another child so I could have all their attention. The reality was that I spent my whole childhood avoiding my mum and dad whenever they were in the same room, which meant most of my formative years were spent on the swing in the back of the garden with my imaginary older brother, or reading books under my duvet. Consequently, I moved up to the top reading set at school, developed an overactive imagination and became obsessed with my friends' functional families. I couldn't figure out how all this linked to the "why am I still a virgin?" question, but it must have had some kind of psychological impact on me. My latest theory was that it gave me a pathological fear of men.

4. I was a late bloomer. I spent every lunchtime listening to my friends talk about their first kisses and boyfriends but their lives always seemed so far removed from mine. Over the years, they moved on to second base, third base, and when they were all finally losing their virginity, I was still the only girl who had never kissed anyone. I sat on the socially acceptable side of the senior class common room. I hung out with the cool people and eventually managed to wear the right clothes, but somehow I didn't kiss a single boy until the ripe old age of seventeen. I didn't stop there, either—I begged him to have sex with me. He said no.

5. The Bite Job. It happened just before the First Kiss refused to deflower me and it is the reason why I have a fear of penises (penii?), second base, third base, rejection, teeth and pubic hair. It is my worst memory.

We were at Lara's eighteenth birthday and I was wearing a dress so low-cut you could see my bra. It was just like any other party, except this time an actual boy came over to speak to me. James Martell. He was no

Mark Tucker (senior year's own Brad Pitt from the boys' school), and his nose was, surprisingly, bigger than mine—but he was funny and had floppy blond hair. He took me upstairs to Lara's older brother's bedroom and drunkenly pushed me onto the bed.

We snogged. I mirrored what he was doing with his tongue and wondered why none of my girlfriends had ever mentioned how much saliva was involved. Then his hands started creeping into my pants. Any self-respecting girl who was having her first kiss would have yanked them back out, but not sexually starved Ellie. I let his fingers venture down into my VJ and let him poke away. I carried on shoving my tongue down his throat at full velocity and after a few minutes of discomfort in my sacred zone, he stopped. We went back downstairs holding hands and swapped email addresses.

We ended up chatting on the computer every night for two weeks, until one Saturday evening when he invited me over. I was so nervous I ended up sitting on the loo excreting my nerves for an hour beforehand. After a second shower, I got the bus to his place.

We sat in awkward silence for half an hour until he swooped in and started kissing me. We snogged on the sofa for a while before he put his hand down into my pants again. This time I was more prepared and didn't wince in pain when he started waggling his fingers around. The next thing I knew, he was pulling my dress over my head and I was naked except for my pink polka dot underwear.

He pulled his clothes off, undid my bra and slid my knickers off. He stared in shock. After a few seconds of total silence when I wanted to curl up in a ball and die, he threw his head back and howled with laughter.

I froze. Why was he laughing at my vagina? I stood, paralyzed with humiliation, and waited for him to speak.

His laughter died down. "Wow, I knew you had some hair down there but I didn't realize you had a full-on bush. You're the first girl I've ever met with an unshaved vagina."

I hadn't shaved. Why hadn't I shaved? Why hadn't I known I was supposed to shave?

He didn't seem to care very much because he carried on kissing me. Then he pulled his boxers off and I saw his naked penis staring at me. It was the first one I had ever seen and I kept trying to sneak a peek at it while we snogged. I felt it gently prodding my thighs and as we writhed on the sofa, I realized it was rubbing around my VJ.

I reached out and touched it. It felt alien and alive. I was about to move my hand away when he moaned in pleasure and I realized I was going to have to give him a hand job. I tried to remember what the girls at school had said, and with fear settling in my throat, I slowly began to move my hand up and down.

It looked like an extra limb and had the texture of an old cucumber. I had no idea how tightly to hold it, or at what speed I should be moving my hand up and down. What if he thought it was awful? What if he didn't come? What if he laughed at me again? I panicked. Without thinking, I took my hand off his penis, broke away from the kiss and crawled down the sofa. I took it into my hands and slipped it into my mouth.

I felt my face getting hot as thoughts raced through my head. I tried to make my mouth fit around him and began moving my head backwards and forwards. The minute I started I knew it was a mistake. I had thought it would be easier than the hand job but I could not have been more wrong. I had absolutely no clue what I should be doing. I opened my mouth wider and pushed forward, when suddenly I heard a loud yelp.

I stopped what I was doing and dropped his penis in shock. I looked up and saw him try to pull his face into a

smile.

“What’s wrong?” I asked, though I didn’t want to know.

“It’s just, um, you bit me.”

I felt bile rise in my throat and wanted to throw up and cry in the corner. Feeling my skin prickling with humiliation, I laughed shrilly and said, “Oh, sorry.”

I wanted to leave but there was no escape. If I ran away, everyone at school would know. I took a deep breath and went back down to his penis. I tried to carry on like before but this time I wrapped my lips around my teeth. It was so uncomfortable it had to be wrong. I tried to go down deeper and then gagged. I swallowed the urge to throw up and carried on. How was I going to finish?

I pulled away from his penis. “James, let’s have sex.”

He laughed awkwardly. “Um, are you serious? I thought you were a virgin.”

I flushed fuchsia. “So? I’m seventeen. I’m ready.”

He looked at the floor. “Ellie, we’ve only kissed a few times. I can’t take your virginity.”

“But . . . I want you to. Please?”

He squirmed. “I can’t. Not like this. Your first time shouldn’t be like this.”

Standing, I pulled on my pink dotted knickers and did my bra clasp with numb fingers. I ignored his protestations and left.

I never saw James Martell again. I avoided the parties that I knew he would attend, and I blocked him on instant messenger. He didn’t try to call me and I never did anything more than kiss someone ever again.

Once I got home from the doctor’s office, I lay down on my bed and felt a familiar wave of disgust flood over me. Only this time it wasn’t just because of The Bite Job. It was mixed up with Dr. E. Bowers.

I always knew it was weird that I was a twenty-one-year-old virgin, but it hadn’t really hit me until I saw those green capital letters screaming at me from my medical records. I wasn’t even eligible for a chlamydia test. Dr. E. Bowers had either given it to me to make up a quota or because she thought I was a religious nut job who didn’t want to go the whole way but secretly gave head to every guy around. If only.

I sat up straight in my bed. This was it. I was in my final year of university and I would never be surrounded by so many horny men again. This was my last opportunity to lose my virginity and I had to grab it now. I had to ditch my V-plates by the time I graduated in the summer—which meant I had four months to finally understand what an orgasm was and to learn how to give blow jobs.

I took a sharp intake of breath and visualized my future.

In June, I would go back to Dr. E. Bowers, get a chlamydia test, and make her swap VIRGIN on my records for SEXUALLY ACTIVE. The next time I came into contact with a condom, it would not be falling off a shelf in the doctor’s office; it would be on an actual penis. And this time, it wouldn’t just rub around my vagina à la James Martell; it would be going straight in there.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Lori Morgan:

The experience that you get from Virgin may be the more deep you rooting the information that hide inside words the more you get thinking about reading it. It doesn't mean that this book is hard to be aware of but Virgin giving you buzz feeling of reading. The author conveys their point in particular way that can be understood simply by anyone who read the idea because the author of this publication is well-known enough. This kind of book also makes your vocabulary increase well. It is therefore easy to understand then can go to you, both in printed or e-book style are available. We propose you for having this particular Virgin instantly.

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Toni Sargent:

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