

## **Praise for *You Deserve Each Other***

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“This book is the perfect dose of sweet, hilarious joy. It’s masterful comedy plus tenderness, unique voice plus rich characters. Nicholas! Swoon! We are in love.”

—Christina Lauren, author of *The Honey-Don’t List*

“Laugh-out-loud funny and heartfelt, *You Deserve Each Other* is one of my favorite books of the year.”

—Jennifer L. Armentrout, author of *Wait For You*

“An achingly sweet and laugh-out-loud funny story about how the road to happily ever after is rarely a straight, smooth ride. Anyone who has ever been in a relationship will recognize a part of themselves in this book. Packed with emotion, humor, and sexy tension, this book is a welcome punch straight in the feels.”

—Lyssa Kay Adams, author of *The Bromance Book Club*

“A sharp and witty look at how relationships take work to succeed, and how being true to yourself and each other is at the very core of a romantic connection. Earthy, authentic, and laugh-out-loud funny. I read this in one sitting. A refreshing and unputdownable debut!”

—Samantha Young, author of *Fight or Flight*

“A snarky heroine, wickedly funny banter, and a cast of quirky characters make this a laugh-out-loud read.”

—Maisey Yates, author of *Secrets from a Happy Marriage*

“I could not get enough of this fresh, insightful, and totally hilarious book! Sarah Hogle is a master of comedic dialogue and sexual tension; she had me rooting for Naomi and Nicholas from the very first page.”

—Kristin Rockaway, author of *How to Hack a Heartbreak*

“Laugh-out-loud funny and a love story with incredible heart. I absolutely loved *You Deserve Each Other*.”

—Katie McGarry, author of *Echoes Between Us*

# YOU DESERVE EACH OTHER



Sarah Hogle



PIATKUS

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**For my husband, Marcus, and for our children.  
You're my happy place.**

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YOU DESERVE  
EACH OTHER





## PROLOGUE

I think he's going to kiss me tonight.

If he doesn't, I just might die. It's our second date, and we're parked at a drive-in theater pretending to watch a movie while sneaking looks at each other. This movie is two hours and five minutes long. We have spent one hour and fifty-five minutes not kissing. I don't want to sound desperate, but I didn't contour a third of my body with this much highlighter to not get any of it on his shirt. If all goes according to plan, he's going to be limping home tonight with ravaged hair and enough shimmer powder on his clothes to make him reflective to passing cars. He's going to smell like my pheromones for a week no matter how hard he scrubs.

I haven't been shy with the hint-dropping, drawing attention to my lips by licking, nibbling, and idly touching them—advice I got from *Cosmopolitan*. My shiny lip gloss was developed in a lab to magnetize the mouths of men, effective as fanning

peacock feathers. Nicholas's primitive instincts won't be able to resist. It's also a magnet for my hair and I keep getting the eye-watering taste of extra-hold hair spray in my mouth, but sometimes beauty requires sacrifice. On top of all this, my left hand drapes across my seat palm-up for maximum accessibility in case he'd like to pick it up and take it home with him.

My hopes begin to wither when he looks at me and then quickly away. Maybe he's the kind of person who goes to the drive-in to actually watch the movie. As much as I'd hate to consider it, maybe he's simply not feeling this. It wouldn't be the first time a smooth-talking charmer dropped me off with a good-night kiss and ghosted right when I thought things were getting good.

And then I see it: a signal that eating my hair all night has not been in vain. It arrives in the form of an empty mint wrapper sitting in the cup holder. I subtly sniff the air and heck yes, that is definitely wintergreen I smell. I check the cup holder again and it's even better than I'd thought. Two empty wrappers! He's doubling up! A man doesn't double up on mints unless he's preparing for a little move-making.

My god, this man is so handsome I'm half convinced I somehow tricked him into this. I like every single little thing about Nicholas. He didn't wait three days to call after the first date. All of his texts are grammatically correct. I have yet to receive an unsolicited dick pic. Already, I want to reserve a ballroom for our wedding reception.

"Naomi?" he says, and I blink.

"Huh?"

He smiles. It's so adorable that I smile, too. "Did you hear me?"

The answer to that is no, because I'm over here admiring his

profile and being way too infatuated for it being so early in our . . . I can't even call this a relationship. We've only been on two dates. *Get it together, Naomi.*

"Zone out a lot?" he guesses.

I feel myself flush. "Yeah. Sorry. Sometimes people talk to me and I don't even register it."

His smile widens. "You're cute."

He thinks I'm cute? My heart flutters and glows. I give an inner thank-you speech to my false eyelashes and this low-cut (but still classy) blouse.

He cocks his head, studying me. "I was saying that the movie's over."

I whip my head to face the screen. He's right. I have no idea how the movie ended and couldn't tell you what the major plot points were. I think it was a romance, but who cares? I'm much more interested in the romance happening here in this car. The lot is now deserted, granting us enough privacy to make my imagination go wild. Anything could happen. It's just me, Nicholas, and—

The pink cardigan folded neatly on his back seat, which obviously belongs to a woman, and that woman isn't me.

My stomach drops, and Nicholas follows my gaze. "That's for my mother," he says quickly. I'm not quite convinced until he shows me a HAPPY BIRTHDAY card beneath it, which he's signed and added a personal message to. *Love you, Mom!* I inwardly swoon.

"That's so nice," I tell him, acutely aware of how isolated and intimate it feels in his car. I'm a mess of nervous butterflies, and the discarded mint wrappers keep snagging my eye. The movie's over, so what's he waiting for? "Thanks for taking me

here. Not many drive-ins left these days. Probably only a couple in the whole Midwest.” It’s even rarer to find one that operates year-round. Luckily, we were provided with a complimentary electric heater to offset the insanity of doing something like this in January. We’ve got a few blankets spread over us, and for an out-of-the-box winter date it’s been surprisingly cozy.

“There are eight left in the state, actually,” he says. The fact that he knows this piece of trivia right off the top of his head is impressive. “Are you hungry? There’s a frozen yogurt stand near here that has the best frozen yogurt you’ve ever had in your life.”

I’m not a fan of frozen yogurt (especially when it’s cold out), but no way am I being anything but agreeable. We don’t know each other that well yet, and if I want to score a third date I need to come off as low-maintenance. I’m easygoing Naomi, fun to hang out with and *definitely* fun to make out with. Maybe after the frozen yogurt he’ll kiss me. And possibly unbutton his shirt. “That sounds great!”

Instead of fastening his seat belt and driving away, he hesitates. Fiddles with the radio dials until static fuzz tunes in to an upbeat indie song called “You Say It Too.” It hits me that he’s fallen so quiet because he’s nervous, not disinterested, which surprises me because up until now he’s exhibited nothing but confidence. There’s a charge in the air and my pulse accelerates with intuition of what’s to come. The rhythm of my blood is a chant. *Yes! Yes! Yes!*

“You’re beautiful,” he says earnestly, turning to face me in full. His eyes are hesitant as he bites his cheek and I’m stunned that *he’s* the nervous one here. My heart skips as he leans toward me an inch. Then another. His lips part, gaze dropping to my mouth, and just like that I can no longer remember any other

men I've ever dated, he's eclipsed them all so utterly. He's intelligent and charming and perfect, absolutely perfect for me.

My heart is now lodged firmly in my throat. His fingers stroke through my hair, tilting my head up to meet his. Nicholas leans in that final inch and lights up my world like a shooting star, anticipation and wonder and a feeling of tremendous rightness barreling through my veins. He kisses me and I'm a goner, just like I knew would happen.

What a magical, extraordinary night.



# CHAPTER ONE

ONE YEAR AND NINE MONTHS LATER

What an ugly, crappy day. Rain pelts off the windshield of my coworker's likewise crappy car, which smells like cold McDonald's French fries and pine trees. Leon taps his fingertips on the steering wheel, leaning forward a bit to see out. His windshield wipers are stroking back and forth with all they've got, but the rain is pouring like someone slit the sky down the middle and an ocean started roaring out.

"Thanks again for the ride."

"Sure, anytime."

I roll my lips inward and inhale a bloom of pine. Whatever he misted in here before I got in is going to follow me around for the rest of the day. I don't know too much about Leon, so it's fully possible there's a corpse in the trunk and the pine spray is to cover it up.

"Raining pretty hard," I say. Brandy couldn't take me home because her sister picked her up early. Zach took his motorcycle

today, which I bet he's regretting. Melissa offered to give me a lift, clearly hoping I'd decline, which is why I did. I kind of hate myself for still wanting her to like me. She's been unreasonably prickly toward me ever since I set her up with my fiancé's friend, who turned out to be a serial cheater. She thinks Nicholas and I knew he was the cheating type from the get-go and shredded her trust in men on purpose.

"Yeah, it's supposed to rain all week."

"That's too bad for the trick-or-treaters."

Leon turns to face me for a moment, before his eyes slide back to the road. Or what he can see of it—frankly I don't know how he's still inching along because I can't see a thing. We could be mowing through a field for all I know. It's the tail end of October and forty degrees. Last week I was wearing shorts. The week before that, it was so cold that it almost snowed. Autumn in Wisconsin is a joy.

"You passing out candy?" Leon asks.

The answer should be a given. I love candy and I love kids, especially obnoxious little boys because I think they're funny. I also love the fall. All month I've been using the shimmering copper pan in my eye shadow palette, trying to give my eyelids the same glow of sunset gently slanting over a pumpkin patch.

My bedroom floor is a mess of soft pullover sweaters that make me feel like a sea captain, knee-high boots, and infinity scarves. Every meal contains some hint of pumpkin spice. If I'm not ingesting pumpkin, I'm breathing it in like an addict, lining every available surface of my home with candles that smell like food. Apple pie, pumpkin pie, pumpkin spice, apple pumpkin.

My aesthetic is aggressively, unapologetically basic. Some of it stems from a lady at a MAC counter telling me I'm an au-

tumn, because of my amber eyes and long, stick-straight hair the color of pecans, but I know in my leaf-ogling, beanie-loving, pumpkin-gorging soul that I'd be a basic bitch even if I had neutral undertones. It's in my DNA.

And yet I don't feel like passing out candy on Halloween. I haven't even decorated, which used to be one of my favorite things to do at the start of a season. I might end up spending the evening alone in sweats, watching bad TV while Nicholas is off playing *Gears of War* at a friend's house, or we might turn in before nine p.m. after passing out cheap, travel-size toothbrushes and floss to disappointed children.

"Maybe," I say at last, because I no longer care what I do. I could be riding a roller coaster or writing a grocery list and my enthusiasm level would look the same. The thought depresses me, but what depresses me more is that I'm not going to do anything about it.

"I would if I lived on a busier street," he replies. "I don't get any trick-or-treaters out where I live."

There's no such thing as a busy street in Morris. We're so small, you'd be hard pressed to find us on a city map of Wisconsin. We only have two stoplights.

Headlights roll by, tires spitting up waves of water like Moses parting the Red Sea. If I were driving I definitely would have pulled into a parking lot forever ago and waited this out. But Leon is completely at ease. I wonder if he retains this same pleasant expression when he chops people up into bits and slides their oozing remains down a cutting board into his trunk.

Not that Leon has ever given me any reason to be particularly wary of him. I should be making polite inquiries about where he lives or something like that, but I've got one eye on the

emerald numbers of his digital clock and I'm wondering if Nicholas is home yet, because I'm hoping desperately that he isn't. The Junk Yard opens at ten and closes at six every day except for Saturdays, when it's open from eleven to seven.

Nicholas is a dentist at Rise and Smile Dentistry on the main road we're on now, Langley, and he gets off at six. Usually I beat him home because he stops at his parents' house to give his mother a coffee or to read over some confusing letter she got in the mail or whatever it is she's squawking at him about on any given day. If she goes more than twenty-four hours without seeing him her operating system fails.

This morning I found one of my tires completely flat. Standing there staring at it, I was transported to a year ago when Nicholas remarked that he ought to teach me how to change a tire. Offended by his assumption that I didn't already know how to change a tire, I set him straight and informed him that I've known for years how to do that. I'm a modern, responsible, self-sufficient woman. I don't need a man to help me with vehicular maintenance.

The thing is, I do not actually know how to change a tire. The weather this morning was pleasant and I had no clue it was going to rain, so I decided to walk—which is what brings me to my current predicament in Leon's car, because no way was I going to walk home. This sweater is cashmere.

My small lie about tires got a bit out of hand when Nicholas's dad, who has deplorably antiquated beliefs, commented that women don't know how to change their oil. In return I said, "Excuse you! I change my oil all the time." I said it for feminism. No one can blame me. Then I may have boasted that I once put my own shocks and brake pads on and have never

needed assistance from a car mechanic, ever. I know Nicholas is suspicious and has been trying to catch me at it whenever my car needs work done. Conveniently, I am an expert mechanic only when he is at work, so he never sees me in action. I sneak into Morris Auto like a criminal and pay Dave in cash. Dave is good people. He's promised never to rat me out and lets me take credit for his labor.

Every building on Langley is a cold, bluish smear in all this rain. We pass a Claude Monet version of Rise and Smile, and I pray Nicholas doesn't have the vision of a hawk and can miraculously see me in the passenger seat of a strange car. If he gets wind that I didn't drive today, he's going to ask why. I have no legitimate excuse. He's going to find out I was lying about my car know-how, and his smug I-knew-it face is going to piss me off so bad that I'll get an acne breakout. He has no business being suspicious of my repairwoman prowess, anyway. It's sexist to assume I wouldn't know how to fix leaky hoses and sanding belts and whatever else makes a car go vroom. He should assume that all of my lies are true.

I want Leon to hurry up, even though it's slippery and I would very much prefer not to die in this car that smells like it's huffed an entire forest up its grille. I wonder how I can phrase the request to put his life in mortal peril so that I'll have time to look up YouTube tutorials before Nicholas gets home. Is it worth the possibility of skidding off the road in order to maintain this con? Yes. Yes, it is. I haven't been cultivating it for this long to have it blow up in my face over some rain.

I pick up a to-go cup off the floor and turn it over. "Dunkin' Donuts, huh? Don't let Brandy find out."

Brandy's sister owns a coffee shop, Blue Tulip Café, and

Brandy is her Junk Yard ambassador. She doesn't let anyone at work get away with patronizing big coffee chains.

Leon chuckles. "Oh, I know. I have to hide it like it's a dirty secret. But the coffee at Dunkin' Donuts tastes better, and then you've got to consider my allegiance to the name. When you share a last name with Dunkin' Donuts, that's where your loyalty goes."

"Your last name is Donuts?" I reply like a complete idiot, a split second before I realize my obvious mistake.

"My last name is Duncan, Naomi." Leon slides me a glance, and his expression wants to be *Are you serious* because this is a detail I should probably know by now, having worked with him since February at the Junk Yard, which is not literally a junkyard. It's a mom-and-pop store. But his manners are infinitely superior to mine, so instead his expression is *Oh, that's a perfectly understandable thing to say, I suppose*.

I want to open the door and roll out, but I resist. It's a monsoon out there and I'll have copper shimmer streaking down my cheeks. With this visibility, I'll wander into traffic and get run down. My black-and-white engagement photo will appear in the newspaper, with a notice that in lieu of flowers, my fiancé's family requests donations be made to their for-profit charity, Rows of Books, which sends dental hygiene textbooks to underprivileged schools.

I seethe for a moment because that is *exactly* what would happen, and I'm spiteful enough that I think I'd rather take the flowers.

Finally, finally we pull onto my street. I'm already unbuckling the seat belt when I point at the little white house with my dependable old Saturn and a gold Maserati out front, mismatched as can be.

Nicholas is home, goddamn it.

Standing on the porch with today's mail and a leather satchel tucked under his arm, unlocking the front door. The one time I need him to dote on his mother after work, and he comes straight home instead like a jackass. I check out my car and wheeze; the tire is so flat, the whole thing is lopsided. It'll be a miracle if Nicholas hasn't noticed. The Saturn looks pitiful next to Nicholas's flashy car, so out of place in Morris that everyone knows who it belongs to whenever it whizzes through the stoplight just as it turns red.

Conversely, Leon's vehicle is a Frankenstein's monster of Japanese parts. Most of it's a dull gray-blue, except for the driver's-side door, which is red and eroded from rust, and the trunk, which is white and doesn't close properly. It's been bumping the whole ride, which probably accounts for my visions of somebody bound and gagged back there. Poor Leon. I know they say it's the quiet ones you've got to watch out for, but he's never been anything but nice to me and doesn't deserve the side-eye. He is *probably* not Jack the Ripper.

"See you tonight," he says.

Brandy hosts a game night most Friday evenings. She invites Zach, Melissa, Leon, and me, with a standing invitation for our significant others. Nicholas has never gone to one of Brandy's game nights, Zach's barbecues, or Melissa's mini golf outings, which is just fine by me. He can go do his own thing with his own friends, whom he doesn't even like but hangs out with anyway because it's hard to make new friends when you're thirty-two.

I'm halfway across the yard when Leon unexpectedly yells, "Hey, Nicholas!"

Nicholas gives him a confused wave. My coworkers tend to

ignore him whenever they come into contact, and vice versa. “Hey?”

“You coming to game night?” Leon asks him.

A laugh that sounds like “Bagh” escapes me, because of course Nicholas isn’t coming. Nobody there likes him and he’d just be defensive and sulky the whole time, which would suck all the fun out of it for me. If he went, my friends (I am still counting Melissa as a friend even if she’d rather I didn’t, because I’m holding out hope she’ll be nice to me again someday) might catch on that we’re not the yin-and-yang lovebirds I’ve been pretending we are in my Instagram stories. In a way, it’s convenient that Nicholas avoids my friends and doesn’t stray close enough for them to inspect. Knowing that our relationship looks enviable from the outside is the only thing we’ve got going for us, since in reality what we have isn’t enviable at all.

“What’s that laugh for?” Nicholas asks, looking offended.

“You never go to game night. Why’d he even ask?” To Leon, I call, “No, he’s busy.”

“That’s too bad,” Leon replies. “You know you’re welcome to swing by if your schedule opens up, Nicholas.”

Nicholas’s narrowed eyes never leave mine as he responds, “You know what? I think I’ll go.”

Leon waves cheerfully, which is at total odds with the shock I hasten to cover up. “Cool! See you, Naomi.” Then he drives off.

Someone has said the simplest thing, *See you, Naomi*, and I have a strange thought.

It’s been a long time since anyone has seen me, since I keep so much about myself hidden. *Me*, who I am really, an individual who has been alive for twenty-eight years, twenty-six of those not knowing Nicholas Rose existed. I’ve been slowly

bleeding out the Westfield parts of myself to become pre-Naomi Rose. Almost Mrs. Rose. I've been one half of a whole for nearly two years and lately, I don't know if I'd even count as a half.

But when someone calls me Naomi with kindness in their voice, I feel like that girl I was before. During the brief time it takes for Leon's car to disappear down the street, I am Naomi Westfield again.

"You don't want me to come," Nicholas says accusingly.

"What? Don't be ridiculous. Of course I do."

I give him my biggest smile. To be convincing, I need to make the smile travel to my eyes. A true smile. Whenever I do this, I like to imagine that I'm looking at him in my rearview mirror, peeling out of Morris, never to see him again.