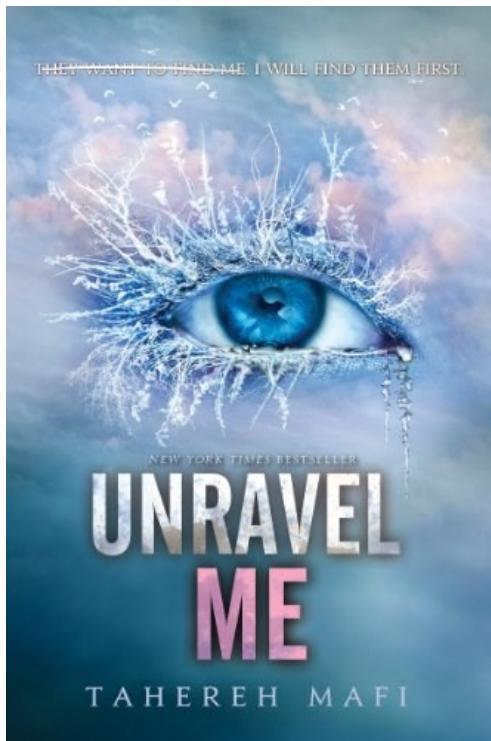


# UNRAVEL ME



*Young Adult*

**By Tahereh Mafi**

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## CONTENT WARNING

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**3 / 5**

**Minor Restricted**  
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11	<p>A girl.    So power hungry that she killed a small child. She tortured a toddler. She brought a grown man gasping to his knees. She doesn't even have the decency to kill herself.</p>
16	<p>My skin is hypersensitive, finally finally finally awake and thrumming with life, humming with feelings so intense it's almost indecent.    I can't even hide it.    He sees what he does to me, what happens to me when his fingers graze my skin, when his lips get too close to my face, when the heat of his body against mine forces my eyes to close and my limbs to tremble and my knees to buckle under pressure. I see what it does to him, too, to know that he has that effect on me. He tortures me sometimes, smiling as he takes too long to bridge the gap between us, reveling in the sound of my heart slamming against my chest, in the sharp breaths I fight so hard to control, in the way I swallow a hundred times just before he moves to kiss me. I can't even look at him without reliving every moment we've had together, every memory of his lips, his touch, his scent, his skin. It's too much for me, too much, so much, so new, so many exquisite sensations I've never known, never felt, never even had access to before.    ...All I know next are his arms, the desperate edge to his voice when he says my name, and I'm unraveling in his embrace, I'm frayed and falling apart and I'm making no effort to control the tremors in my bones and he's so hot his skin is so hot and I don't even know where I am anymore.    His right hand slides up my spine and tugs on the zipper holding my suit together until it's halfway down my back and I don't care. I have 17 years to make up for and I want to feel everything. I'm not interested in waiting around and risking the who-knows and the what-ifs and the huge regrets. I want to feel all of it because what if I wake up to find this phenomenon has passed, that the expiration date has arrived, that my chance came and went and would never return.    ...I don't even realize I've pressed myself into him until I feel every contour of his frame under the thin cotton of his clothes. My hands slip up under his shirt and I hear his strained breath; I look up to find his eyes squeezed shut, his features caught in an expression resembling some kind of pain and suddenly his hands are in my hair, desperate, his lips so close. He leans in and gravity moves out of his way and my feet leave the floor and I'm floating, I'm flying, I'm anchored by nothing but this hurricane in my lungs and this heart beating a skip a skip a skip too fast.    Our lips    touch    and I know I'm going to split at the seams. He's kissing me like he's lost me and he's found me and I'm slipping away and he's never going to let me go. I want to scream, sometimes, I want to collapse, sometimes, I want to die knowing that I've known what it was like to live with this kiss, this heart, this soft soft explosion that makes me feel like I've taken a sip of the sun, like I've eaten clouds 8, 9, and 10.    This.    This makes me ache everywhere. He pulls away, he's breathing hard, his hands slip under the soft material of my suit and he's so hot his skin is so hot and I think I've already said that but I can't remember and I'm so distracted that when he speaks I don't quite understand.    ...His fingers are tracing secret messages on my body. His hands glide down the smooth, satiny material of this suit, slipping down the insides of my thighs, around the backs of my knees and up and up and up and I wonder if it's possible to faint and still be conscious at the</p>

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	<p>same time and I'm betting this is what it feels like to hyper, to hyperventilate when he tugs us backward. He slams his back into the wall. Finds a firm grip on my hips. Pulls me hard against his body.</p> <p>I gasp.</p> <p>His lips are on my neck. His lashes tickle the skin under my chin and he says something, something that sounds like my name and he kisses up and down my collarbone, kisses along the arc of my shoulder, and his lips, his lips and his hands and his lips are searching the curves and slopes of my body and his chest is heaving when he swears and he stops and he says God you feel so good</p> <p>and my heart has flown to the moon without me.</p> <p>...My eyes fall closed and he kisses one, then the other. Then my chin, my nose, my forehead. My cheeks. Both temples.</p> <p>Every inch of my neck and he pulls back so quickly he bangs his head against the rough wall.</p>
40	<p>"You are moody. It's always 'Shut up, Kenji.' 'Go to sleep, Kenji.' 'No one wants to see you naked, Kenji.' When I know for a fact that there are thousands of people who would love to see me naked—"</p>
98	<p>His hands are at my waist, trembling just a little, waiting for my permission. "Please."</p> <p>And I don't protest.</p> <p>He's breathing harder now, leaning into me, resting his forehead against my shoulder. He places his hands flat against the center of my stomach, only to inch them down my body, slowly, so slowly and I gasp.</p> <p>There's an earthquake happening in my bones, tectonic plates shifting from panic to pleasure as his fingers take their time moving around my thighs, up my back, over my shoulders and down my arms. He hesitates at my wrists. This is where the fabric ends, where my skin begins.</p> <p>...His eyes are deeper now. Desperate. Hungry. He's searching me like he's trying to read the words etched inside of me and I can already feel the heat of his body, the power in his limbs, the strength in his chest and I don't have time to stop him before he's kissing me.</p> <p>His left hand is cupping the back of my head, his right tightening around my waist, pressing me hard against him and destroying every rational thought I've ever had. It's deep. So strong. It's an introduction to a side of him I've never known before and I'm gasping gasping gasping for air.</p> <p>It's hot rain and humid days and broken thermostats. It's screaming teakettles and raging steam engines and wanting to take your clothes off just to feel a breeze.</p> <p>It's the kind of kiss that makes you realize oxygen is overrated.</p> <p>...I'm pulling at his shirt, desperate for a raft or a life preserver or something, anything to anchor me to reality but he breaks away to catch his breath and rips off his shirt, tosses it to the floor, pulls me into his arms and we both fall onto my bed.</p> <p>Somehow I end up on top of him.</p> <p>He reaches up only to pull me down and he's kissing me, my throat, my cheeks, and my hands are searching his body, exploring the lines, the planes, the muscle and he pulls back, his forehead is pressed against my own and his eyes are squeezed shut when he says, "How</p>

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	<p>is it possible," he says, "that I'm this close to you and it's killing me that you're still so far away?"</p> <p>And I remember I promised him, 2 weeks ago, that once he got better, once he'd healed, I would memorize every inch of his body with my lips.</p> <p>I figure now is probably a good time to fulfill that promise.</p> <p>I start at his mouth, move to his cheek, under his jawline, down his neck to his shoulders and his arms, which are wrapped around me. His hands are skimming my suit and he's so hot, so tense from the effort to remain still but I can hear his heart beating hard, too fast against his chest.</p>
101	<p>This moment. These lips. This strong body pressed against me and these firm hands finding a way to bring me closer and I know I want so much more of him, I want all of him, I want to feel the beauty of this love with the tips of my fingers and the palms of my hands and every fiber and bone in my being.</p> <p>I want all of it.</p> <p>My hands are in his hair and I'm reeling him in until he's practically on top of me and he breaks for air but I pull him back, kissing his neck, his shoulders, his chest, running my hands down his back and the sides of his torso and it's incredible, the energy, the unbelievable power I feel in just being with him, touching him, holding him like this. I'm alive with a rush of adrenaline so potent, so euphoric that I feel rejuvenated, indestructible—</p>
145	<p>"Listen, Juliette," he says through another laugh, "I'm not blind, okay? On a purely physical level? Yeah, you're pretty sexy—and that suit you have to wear all the time doesn't hurt. But even if you didn't have that whole 'I kill you if I touch you' thing going on, you are definitely not my type. And more importantly, I'm not some perverted asshole," he says.</p>
259	<p>"And then he just...I mean he was never around when I was growing up," Adam says, "and he was always an asshole. But after she died he just ... lost his mind. He used to come by just to get piss-drunk. He used to force me to stand in front of him so he could throw his empty bottles at me. And if I flinched—if I flinched—"</p>
267	<p>That Warner has already touched me, that his hands have known the shape of my body and his lips have known the taste of my mouth—never mind that it wasn't something I actually wanted—I just can't do it.</p>
268	<p>And then I hear him telling me he loves me, feel him kissing me with such unexpected passion and desperation that I don't know I don't know I don't know what I'm walking into.</p>
272	<p>"And I do," he says, reciting the words from memory now, his head resting back against the wall, eyes pressed shut as he whispers, "I do wonder, I think about it all the time. What it would be like to kill myself. Because I never really know, I still can't tell the difference, I'm never quite certain whether or not I'm actually alive. So I sit here. I sit here every single day."</p>
354	<p>I don't tell him how Warner told me he missed me, how he told me he loved me and he kissed me, how he kissed me with such wild, reckless intensity.</p>
392	<p>Then I feel his lips against my shoulder, soft and scorching and tender, so gentle I could almost believe it's the kiss of a breeze and not a boy.</p> <p>Again.</p> <p>This time on my collarbone and it's like I'm dreaming, reliving the caress of a forgotten memory and it's like an ache looking to be soothed, it's a steaming pan thrown in ice water, it's a flushed cheek pressed to a cool pillow on a hot hot hot night and I'm thinking yes, I'm</p>

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	thinking this, I'm thinking thank you thank you thank you thank you before I remember his mouth is on my body and I'm doing nothing to stop him.
394	"I want so many things," he whispers. "I want your mind. Your strength. I want to be worth your time." His fingers graze the hem of my top and he says "I want this up." He tugs on the waist of my pants and says "I want these down." He touches the tips of his fingers to the sides of my body and says, "I want to feel your skin on fire. I want to feel your heart racing next to mine and I want to know it's racing because of me, because you want me. Because you never," he says, he breathes, "never want me to stop. I want every second. Every inch of you. I want all of it."
396	<p>And he kisses me.</p> <p>His lips are softer than anything I've ever known, soft like a first snowfall, like biting into cotton candy, like melting and floating and being weightless in water. It's sweet, it's so effortlessly sweet.</p> <p>...He kisses me again, this time stronger, desperate, like he has to have me, like he's dying to memorize the feel of my lips against his own. The taste of him is making me crazy; he's all heat and desire and peppermint and I want more. I've just begun reeling him in, pulling him into me when he breaks away.</p> <p>...He's searching me, searching my eyes for something, for yeses or nos or maybe a cue to keep going and all I want is to drown in him. I want him to kiss me until I collapse in his arms, until I've left my bones behind and floated up into a new space that is entirely our own.</p> <p>No words.</p> <p>Just his lips.</p> <p>Again.</p> <p>Deep and urgent like he can't afford to take his time anymore, like there's so much he wants to feel and there aren't enough years to experience it all. His hands travel the length of my back, learning every curve of my figure and he's kissing my neck, my throat, the slope of my shoulders and his breaths come harder, faster, his hands suddenly threaded in my hair and I'm spinning, I'm dizzy, I'm moving and reaching up behind his neck and clinging to him and it's ice-cold heat, it's an ache that attacks every cell in my body. It's a wanting so desperate, a need so exquisite that it rivals everything, every happy moment I ever thought I knew.</p> <p>I'm against the wall.</p> <p>He's kissing me like the world is rolling right off a cliff, like he's trying to hang on and he's decided to hold on to me, like he's starving for life and love and he's never known it could ever feel this good to be close to someone. Like it's the first time he's ever felt anything but hunger and he doesn't know how to pace himself, doesn't know how to eat in small bites, doesn't know how to do anything anything anything in moderation.</p> <p>My pants fall to the floor and his hands are responsible.</p> <p>I'm in his arms in my underwear and a tank top that's doing little to keep me decent and he pulls back just to look at me, to drink in the sight of me and he's saying "you're so beautiful" he's saying "you're so unbelievably beautiful" and he pulls me into his arms again and he picks me up, he carries me to my bed and suddenly I'm resting against my pillows and he's straddling my hips and his shirt is no longer on his body and I have no idea where it went. All I know is that I'm looking up and into his eyes and I'm thinking there isn't a single thing I would change about this moment.</p> <p>He has a hundred thousand million kisses and he's giving them all to me.</p> <p>He kisses my top lip.</p>

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	<p>He kisses my bottom lip.</p> <p>He kisses just under my chin, the tip of my nose, the length of my forehead, both temples, my cheeks, all across my jawline. Then my neck, behind my ears, all the way down my throat and his hands slide down my body. His entire form is moving down my figure, disappearing as he shifts downward and suddenly his chest is hovering above my hips; suddenly I can't see him anymore. I can only make out the top of his head, the curve of his shoulders, the unsteady rise and fall of his back as he inhales, exhales. He's running his hands down and around my bare thighs and up again, up past my ribs, around my lower back and down again, just past my hip bone. His fingers hook around the elastic waist of my underwear and I gasp. His lips touch my bare stomach.</p> <p>It's just a whisper of a kiss but something collapses in my skull. It's a feather-light brush of his mouth against my skin in a place I can't quite see. It's my mind speaking in a thousand different languages I don't understand.</p> <p>And I realize he's working his way up my body.</p> <p>He's leaving a trail of fire along my torso, one kiss after another, and I really don't think I can take much more of this; I really don't think I'll be able to survive this. There's a whimper building in my throat, begging to break free and I'm locking my fingers in his hair and I'm pulling him up, onto me, on top of me.</p> <p>I need to kiss him.</p> <p>I'm reaching up only to slip my hands down his neck, over his chest and down the length of his body and I realize I've never felt this, not to this degree, not like every moment is about to explode, like every breath could be our last, like every touch is enough to ignite the world. I'm forgetting everything, forgetting the danger and the horror and the terror of tomorrow and I can't even remember why I'm forgetting, what I'm forgetting, that there's something I already seem to have forgotten. It's too hard to pay attention to anything but his eyes, burning; his skin, bare; his body, perfect.</p> <p>He's completely unharmed by my touch.</p> <p>He's careful not to crush me, his elbows propped up on either side of my head, and I think I must be smiling at him because he's smiling at me, but he's smiling like he might be petrified; he's breathing like he's forgotten he's supposed to, looking at me like he's not sure how to do this, hesitating like he's unsure how to let me see him like this.</p>
404	His fingers graze my shoulders, my arms; his hands slide down the sides of my body, tracing every inch of me and I'm pressing my mouth shut to keep the truth from falling out but I'm failing and failing and failing because the only truth I know right now is that I'm mere moments from losing my mind.
410	All I can think about are all the casualties and Warner's lips on my neck, his hands on my body, the pain and passion in his eyes and the many possible ways I could die today. I can only think about Warner touching me, kissing me, torturing me with his heart and Adam sitting beside me, not knowing what I've done.

Profanity	Count
Ass	22
Dick	1
Goddamn	5
Piss	8
Shit	58