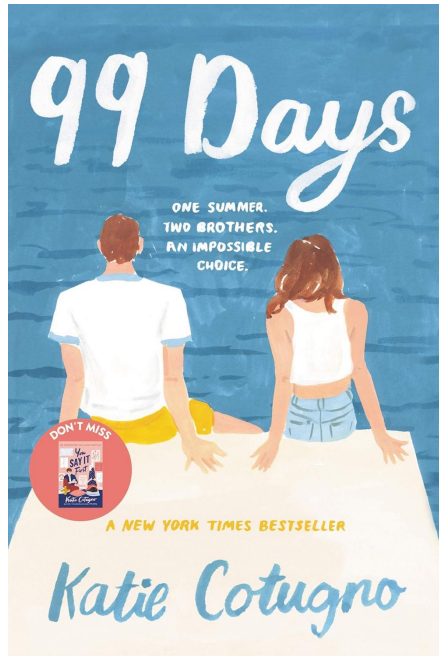


99 Days



Book Summary

Follows the story of Molly and Dash, two best friends who make a pact to date other people for 99 days to help Molly move on from her previous relationship.

Summary of Concerns

This book contains; alcohol, bullying, cheating, death/grief, derogatory terms, profanity, and explicit sexual activities/sexual nudity.

Adult

By Katie Cotugno

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Adults Only

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28	He was my best friend. He was my first love. I had sex with his big brother. I broke his fucking heart.
142	I start, an electrical shock jolting through me. Did he just say—? “Because —” I break off, try again. Suddenly, his face is so, so close. “Because—” That’s when Patrick kisses me. It’s clumsy at first, his face butting at mine so hard and unexpected he almost knocks me backward. I taste blood and can’t tell if it’s his or it’s mine. It used to be that Patrick was kind of shy when he kissed me, all bashful and hesitant like he was scared he was going to break me if pushed even a hair too hard. This . . . does not feel like that. This feels like a fire in the forest, like one of those carnival rides where the floor drops out and centrifugal force is the only thing keeping you stuck to the wall. Patrick’s hands are everywhere at once. I wind my arms around his neck to keep steady, heart slamming with a shocking violence against my rib cage and his sharp teeth biting at the edges of my tongue. His smell is the only thing that’s the same. I fist my hands in his shirt and lean into him, standing on my tiptoes to get as close up into his space as I can manage. I’d climb inside him if I could, set up house in there, walk around for the rest of the summer. Walk around for the rest of my life. And then I remember Gabe. “Stop,” I say before I realize I’m going to do it, heart pounding in a different way altogether, pulling back all at once. “I just,” I say, holding my hands up in a panicky flutter. “I can’t. Patrick. I can’t. Not when—I can’t do this again, please.” Patrick looks completely baffled for a moment. Then his eyes narrow. “Because of my brother?” he demands, backing off fast enough that it feels like he’s shot me, a ricochet and shatter in my bones. I flinch. “Are you serious right now?” “Patrick, please,” I start, but I can feel him receding, feel that I’ve ruined this all over again, the whole world immolating in front of my eyes. The panic is hot and awful and immediate. I grab his arm before he can turn away. “Wait,” I demand, bossy and urgent. I press my traitorous mouth to his one more time. Patrick makes a sound, a hum or a growl. Kisses back until I can’t imagine anything but this.
155	I’m headed to the cooler for a beer of my own when Patrick grabs my arm like it’s an emergency. “What?” I demand with alarm. He doesn’t answer, just yanks me back behind a giant oak where no one can see us, dark enough that I can barely see him. “What the hell are you doing?” I open my mouth to say but never get the words out because right away he’s kissing me hard just like the other night on his doorstep, hot and messy, his tongue sliding into my mouth. He tastes like beer and like Patrick. His hands burn like brands through my shirt. I should push him away. Oh my God, I need to push him away, Tess and Gabe are twenty feet from where we’re standing, on top of which it’s wrong, it’s terrible, but it’s like I’m outside my body watching myself do this horrible fucking thing and I can’t stop, the bark of the oak tree scraping roughly at the skin of my back and the sting as Patrick bites down on my bottom lip. In some enormously messed-up way, the pain almost feels good. Not almost. It does feel good. Patrick doesn’t say anything, just keeps on kissing me, nudging his knee between my thighs and rocking a little, all this heat bleeding through his clothes and mine. He reaches up and cups the back of my skull so it doesn’t hit the tree trunk, surprisingly gentle, then tilts my head back and sucks my neck so hard I’m almost sure he’s going to leave a mark. It feels like there’s a series of bombs going off one after another inside my body, like somehow he improvised a chain of explosions along my spine when I wasn’t paying attention.
160	A burst of laughter rips me out of the memory, spooking me so hard I startle a second time, though at least I don’t send any more silverware flying. Gabe’s still got his palm on my knee. He squeezes a bit, then slides his hand farther over, fingertips picking at the seam on the inner thigh of my jeans. That’s when Patrick nudges his leg against mine.
161	I can’t tell if he’s doing it on purpose at first, just the barest hint of pressure, heat seeping through his layer of denim and mine. I try to concentrate on what Imogen’s asking, about who’s around to help stretch canvas for her art show, but I feel like I’m listening from the bottom of the lake. My breath comes fast and ragged all of a sudden, and I concentrate on slowing it down so nobody will hear. The worst part is I can feel myself responding in other ways also, the low swoop of want in my stomach and the skin all over my body tightening up— and I don’t even know who I’m responding to.

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161	What is up with me, how messed up am I, that I think it might be both of them? Gabe's fingers play idly along my inseam, oblivious. Patrick pushes a little bit harder now, the muscle of his thigh insistent enough that there's no way it's not intentional. I feel like I'm on fire, engulfed in hideous flame while everyone else sits around and eats French fries. I feel horrified by my body and my heart. "I gotta pee," I announce, popping up in the booth and cutting Imogen off mid-sentence, scrambling out of the booth and leaving both Donnelly boys behind.
165	I'm not sure which one of us leans in first. It's not like the other night against the tree trunk, that desperate scrabbling—this is slow and measured, his long eyelashes brushing my cheeks. I make a quiet sound against his mouth. "Shh," he says again, warm hands wandering up inside my T-shirt, skimming along the stretchy band of my bra until I'm shaking. Finally, I pull away. "What is this?" I demand. It's worse that it wasn't a fast, messy blur this time. Somehow that makes it even worse. "What are you doing with me, Patrick? Tess is my friend." "And Gabe is my brother," Patrick says, mild as milk toast. "But here we are." "Should I break up with him?" I blurt, then immediately feel my cheeks flame. It feels horrifying to articulate the idea out loud—just as horrifying as it feels to be doing this to begin with. I care about Gabe. I'm falling in love with Gabe. So what the hell am I doing here? "Should I?" Patrick shakes his head. "I'm not breaking up with Tess," he says decisively. "Not again." I stare at him, pulse fluttering like the inside of a hive at my wrists and my collarbone. The damp summer air presses down. He leans forward to kiss me again, eases me back against the arm of the sofa. I close my eyes and sink in.
168	"Molly," Gabe said, and his voice was so quiet. Down near the pocket of my denim shorts his fingertips brushed mine. His eyes had flecks of brown in them I noticed. I'd never been close enough to tell. When he ducked his head down to kiss me, his mouth was plush and friendly and warm. "Holy shit," I said, pulling back a minute or twenty later; my thoughts were careening everywhere, Gabe's hands creeping up under my T-shirt right there in the kitchen of his house. I had never known that before, that having my stomach touched was a thing that could feel that good. I had never known I was this kind of person. "Okay, we should—" God, this was wrong, it wasn't supposed to happen like this; it was supposed to be me and Patrick, a perfect moment right out of one of my mother's dumb books. Not like this. Already I'd come too far to ever go back. "Holy shit, Gabe." "You want to stop?" he asked, a little breathless. His lips looked very red. "We can stop, fuck, we should probably . . ." He trailed off, nervous and almost panicky. I'd never seen Gabe anything less than sure. "What do we do?" I looked one more time toward his bedroom, back up the stairs to where I'd left Patrick what seemed like a lifetime ago. Everything felt inevitable all of a sudden, a book that had already been written. I shook my head. "Let's go," I muttered softly. Gabe nodded, took my hand.
178	I'm almost asleep, that foggy in-between that's not quite dreaming, when my phone buzzes loudly on the nightstand: You home? Patrick wants to know. I push my hair out of my face, sit up on the mattress. Yeah, I key in, trying to ignore the dark thrill in my stomach that tells me this can't possibly lead to anything good. Where are you? In your driveway. I creep downstairs and let him in the back door wordlessly, lead him up to my third-floor tower with his warm hand tucked in mine. As soon as the door's shut, he presses me up against it. My T-shirt hits the carpet with a barely audible whoosh. I never turned a light on and it's dark in here, nothing but a silver puddle of moonlight on the carpet and the feel of his warm mouth wandering over my collarbone and ribs. We stumble back toward my mattress, a tangle of arms and ankles. Still neither one of us has said a single word. His weight presses me down into the sheets for half a second, mouth glancing clumsily off mine before he's gone again, fingers hooked in the elastic of the boxers I went to bed in, pulling my bottoms down my legs. "What are you doing?" I ask, popping up on my elbows to look at him.

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178	“Patrick.” “I wanna try something.” His rough cheek scrapes against my inner thigh, gentle. “Will you let me try something?” “Uh-huh,” I say, more of a gasp than anything. I reach down and scratch my short nails through his hair. It feels insane; it feels like my bones have come apart and only my skin is keeping them from flying away entirely. I make a damp fist in the sheets. “Come up here,” I say finally, pulling at his shoulders until he listens. I’m shaking everywhere, needing something to hang on to. I think my nails are digging into his skin. “Come here.” Patrick crawls up my body, presses his mouth against mine. “Are we doing this?” he asks me quietly, an echo of two years ago in his family room, the way it was all meant to happen before everything fell apart. “Mols. Are we —?” “Yeah,” I say, nodding into his shoulder. He wants to, I can feel that he wants to. I want to do it, too. “Yeah, yes. We’re doing this.”
179	“I’m not talking about that, Molly,” Patrick snaps at me, up off the bed and flicking the lamp on, the room flooded with harsh white light. I pull the sheet more tightly around me. “I’m talking about sophomore year, when you fucked my goddamn brother like some kind of filthy whore.” Like some kind of— Okay. Patrick shakes his head and we’re both on the verge of tears then, like we’ve finally destroyed each other, finally eaten each other alive. We’re never coming back from this; I know it. Both of us have finally gone too far.
184	“You did,” she says matter-of-factly. “You messed up huge. But so did Patrick. On top of which, I think virginity is kind of an antiquated concept, right? Like some boy sticking it in you changes who you are as a human being?” “I don’t know if it was so much about the concept of my virginity as it was about me losing it to Gabe,” I point out.

Profanity & Sexual or Derogatory Terms	Count
Ass / Jackass / Asshole etc.	12
Bitch	3
Dick	4
Fuck, Fucking, Fucked, etc.	36
Penis	2
Piss	10
Shit / Bullshit etc.	27
Whore	2
Slut	12
Sacrilegious & other offensive language usage	Count
Damn	4
God / God damn etc.	50
Hell	21
Jesus	7
Christ	4

