

Please Please Please



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It takes about 15 lines of Renee Swindle's comic first novel for the reader to realize that this is something special. Maybe it's the voice of Babysister, the main character, a bright young African American woman of almost unbelievable selfishness, who sets her sights on her best friend's new man, Darren. Or maybe it's the sharply observed details, or the ricocheting plot line, or the intelligence underlying Swindle's lively and versatile prose. Or maybe it's because, in a field of books described by their publishers as "hilarious," *Please Please Please* actually is. Some of the best moments arise when Babysister, a spoiled brat with the ethics of a 10-year-old, tries to locate her stunted sense of right and wrong: I didn't start feeling guilty until after we made love and Rob held me from behind. There was something about the way he was trying to get me to play it'sy-bitsy spider with him that made me feel awful. He was acting so

sweet, yet the whole time we were making love I couldn't stop thinking about Darren. I had no business having sex with Rob, I thought. And later, as he fed me lumpy spoonfuls of oatmeal with his dopey love-struck smile and little bitty head, I swore to myself--swore--romantic side or no romantic side, I would not have sex with him ever again. Period. A handjob is one thing, but it was simply not my style to sleep with two men. Babysister's kind, indulgent father and weakling brother are equally well drawn, as is her poor friend Deborah, who has a Bible verse for every occasion except for when her best friend steals her fine-looking boyfriend. Not the wedding invitation, not even the wedding ring, can turn Babysister away from what she wants. This is a naughty and refreshing page-turner from a wonderful new writer.
--Regina Marler

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