



Keeping Secrets: Two Books in One: Saving Zoe and Faking 19

By Alyson Noël

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A beautifully repackaged two-in-one reissue of *Saving Zoe* and *Faking 19* by #1 *New York Times* bestselling author Alyson Noël

Secret wishes, hidden heartaches and painful truths. Everyone has them?but some secrets are harder to hide.

We usually tell our best friends everything. Our crushes, our embarrassing stories, our secrets?but sometimes there are truths so deep and dark that we can't tell anyone. Not our parents, not our sisters...not even our best friends. Some secrets are so unspeakable that we keep them safely locked away so no one will ever discover them.

But what happens when they become more than you can handle alone? In these two magnificent novels, two girls can't tell anyone about the terrible burdens they carry. But as they're about to learn, it's not our secrets that matter most?but those who still love us once they learn the truth.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Alyson Noël is the #1 *New York Times* bestselling, award-winning author of *Faking 19*, *Art Geeks and Prom Queens*, *Laguna Cove*, *Fly Me to the Moon*, *Kiss & Blog*, *Saving Zoë*, *Cruel Summer*, and the Immortals series including *Evermore*, *Blue Moon*, *Shadowland*, *Dark Flame*, and *Night Star*, as well as the Immortals spin-off series beginning with *Radiance*. With over 2 million copies in print in the US alone, her books have been published in 35 countries and have won awards including the National Reader's Choice Award, NYLA Book of Winter Award, NYPL Stuff for the Teenage, TeenReads Best Books of 2007, and Reviewer's Choice 2007 Top Ten, and have been chosen for the CBS Early Show's "Give the Gift of Reading" segment, and selected for *Seventeen Magazine*'s "Hot List" and Beach Book Club Pick. She lives in Laguna Beach, California.

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FAKING 19

FIVE CELEBRITIES I'D SLEEP WITH IN A SECOND

1. Richard Branson
2. Tobey Maguire
3. Edward Norton
4. Jake Gyllenhaal (sp?)
5. That guy with the dark hair and sunglasses that I saw at Java Daze that time with M that I know is famous but I just don't know what I've seen him in.

Okay, so maybe my list isn't the same as yours. You're probably going, "What's with all the old guys?" or "Richard who?" or "What about Justin Timberlake?" or maybe just, "Eww!" Well, technically, I'm a virgin, so the whole list is sort of hypothetical anyway. My best friend M thinks the Richard Branson thing is really sick. She thinks I'm obsessed and swears I've gotten all Freudian since my dad abandoned me. Personally I think M is taking her psychology class a little too seriously.

My parents divorced when I was twelve. I knew it was over when my dad mumbled something about having to find himself as he walked out the door. I swear he was just like Burt Reynolds in *Boogie Nights*. I wish I could tell you about how much I miss him, but the truth is I just wasn't sorry to see him go. That was five years ago, and now at seventeen and a half I can honestly tell you that the only real difference is that these days we're kind of poor, when before we had stuff. Really, that's it. Sometimes it sucks, but for the most part it's totally worth it. I mean, nobody screams in the middle of the night anymore. There's just nothing worse than living in a house where people scream.

I don't remember much about being a little kid. I guess it was an average California childhood. I mean some days I was in trouble and other days I was riding the Matterhorn at Disneyland. I just wanted to go to school, see my friends, ride my horse, eat dessert, and stay up past my bedtime. Those were my goals. Then when a

few years passed, and I got a little older, I would just burrow deep under the covers when the screaming started. My sister swears it was really good once. Really happy, just like the Nickelodeon channel. But I can't remember that part. She's eight years older than me, so I guess all that happiness was before I was born. I've pretty much always assumed that I'm a product of make-up sex.

Having divorced parents isn't so bad; when you grow up in Orange County it just makes you normal. Nearly everyone's parents are split, and those who aren't, are like totally on the verge. People here are stuck in a state of permanent adolescence. Most of my friends' mothers take yoga classes and raid their daughters' closets for cool stuff to wear, and their dads watch us a little too closely when we swim in the pool. It's like a continuous midlife crisis, and the parents are like teenagers with credit cards and no curfew. California is like a high school where no one graduates. I'm not kidding.

Anyway, getting back to my "Branson thing," it's not problematic like M says. I'm not obsessed. I just really like him, admire him, and yeah, I think he's sexy. I mean who's supposed to make the list? *NSYNC? The Backstreet Boys? I'm sorry but I just can't go for that prepackaged, focus group, made-for-teens junk. Those guys are like shrink-wrapped with a Mattel stamp on their ass. I like to think I've developed a more mature, refined taste, but M just swears I've got a daddy complex.

It all started one day last year when M and I were shopping around in this thrift store in Los Feliz (that's in LA). M was in the fitting room squeezing into a pair of old wrecked Levi's and I was just trying to entertain myself when I noticed this book titled *Losing My Virginity* displayed on this gruesome, green coffee table. Thinking it was some kind of "how-to" guide, I eagerly picked it up and started to read. But halfway into the first paragraph I realized it was just a clever title. It's actually Richard Branson's autobiography.

It's not like I hadn't heard of him before, 'cause I think he was on a *Friends* episode or something, but before I saw the book I guess I never really gave him much thought. Well, M decided not to buy the jeans, but I bought the book and I finished it in like a night or two. I guess you could say I'm like a Branson expert now. You could probably ask me anything you want about Virgin Records or Virgin Airlines and I'd know the answer. I know it seems kind of weird, but I can't help it, he's just *so cool*! I mean, he totally sucked at school (like me), so he dropped out and became an entrepreneur. But even though he's worth like billions of dollars now, he's not just some boring business guy that's all about work. It's like, when he's not busy running the Virgin empire, he spends his free time either flying around the world in a hot-air balloon, or hanging out on *his very own* Virgin Island with all of his rock star friends! And he keeps it all organized by making lists every day (also like me), *and* he's a total hottie! (Well, for an old guy.)

But one more thing about Richard Branson, before I forget, I want to make it clear that I don't love him because he's one of England's wealthiest, most famous, men. I'm really not that shallow. I love him because he has the guts, freedom, and imagination to do whatever the hell he wants and that, to me, is incredibly sexy. I guess because sometimes I feel so trapped.

So I daydream, and I admit, sometimes it's a problem. I have a hard time paying attention to boring stuff like economics and all the other senior-year required courses. I used to think that meant I had attention deficit disorder. I mean, I was seriously worried about that for like six months. So one day I finally bit the bullet and made an appointment with my guidance counselor at school. After what seemed like extensive testing, trying to stay in the circles with a number-two pencil, she told me that I'm okay, I'm just extremely undisciplined, that's all. She also told me, that it's quite possible that I'll never amount to anything if I don't start doing better in my classes. Never mind that, I was just relieved that I wasn't going home with a prescription for Ritalin.

One of my favorite fantasies is about Richard Branson and me in Paris. Just because I've never been to

France doesn't mean I can't imagine it. So sometimes during a really long, boring, AP History lecture, I'll sit staring at the chalkboard so my teacher thinks I'm listening. I'll even nod occasionally and scribble stuff on paper like I'm actually soaking in real knowledge, but what I'm really doing is imagining myself, in the Virgin Megastore cafe in Paris.

I'm seated at a small table in the back and I'm wearing a devastatingly sexy little black dress, strappy high-heeled sandals and black Gucci sunglasses, which are like completely "de rigueur en Paris." I'm delicately sipping a glass of champagne, nibbling on a salmon burger, and reading Paris Match when Richard Branson walks in. I look up, our eyes meet . . .

But the truth is, I'm nowhere near Paris. I'm at school, standing in front of my vomit-green locker and I've got exactly three minutes between now and my lunchtime appointment with my mom and my guidance counselor, Mrs. Gross (I swear that's her name). You see, Mrs. Gross wants us all to meet and discuss my "academic goals," that's how she worded it, and I'm wondering if I should tell her that I really don't have any.

Well, my mom is pretty unhappy about having to take time off work 'cause I screwed up, and I know this because she doesn't even want me to meet her in the parking lot and walk her to the office. This morning when I was leaving for school she just gave me that look, the one that tells me she's "this close" to giving up on me, and said, "I'll see you in the office at noon, Alex." Then she lifted her coffee cup and fixed her gaze on an earlier disappointment of mine, a faded, red circle in the middle of the kitchen table, the result of a spilled bottle of Revlon Cherries in the Snow nail polish.

I slam my locker shut and head for the administrative offices, and when I pass the student parking lot I briefly contemplate making a run for it, even though I know I can't really do that. So I tell myself I'll just go in, sit down, let the adults talk, nod my head a lot because they always read more into that than there really is, and soon it will be over.

I see my mother as I'm entering the building but I just glance at her nervously and follow her inside. I mean, we don't smile and hug or even say hello because it's not like I'm about to receive an award or anything.

When we go into the office I just stand there all nervous as I watch my mom and my counselor exchange names and shake hands. Mrs. Gross says hello and motions to two chairs facing her desk. And as I sit down and look around, I give myself a mental lecture for letting it get to this point.

It's your basic school administrator's office. You know, sickly looking plant in the corner, college degrees in gold shiny frames on the wall, and an obsessive-compulsive, fake walnut desk that holds a picture of what looks to be a very happy, if oddly posed family.

Mrs. Gross walks over to a filing cabinet and I watch her fingers deftly crawl over several manila folders until she comes to a big, overstuffed one that she lifts with both hands and places solidly in the middle of her desk. It has my name on it and it lies between us, heavy and foreboding. And I can't stop staring at it while I wonder what I had possibly done up until now that could fill up a folder like that. I mean, I'd always considered myself and my high school experience as pretty mediocre.

She starts leafing through it, giving us a briefing on my entire academic career, and it feels like the moment right before you die when your whole life flashes in front of you. The beginning is all good.

"Well, as I'm sure you know," she says, mauve finger nails scraping between the layers of papers, "Alex was maintaining an A average, even with a challenging schedule of AP classes and several extracurricular activities such as ninth-grade-class vice president, tenth-grade-class president, homec...

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Christina Moss:

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