

## **An excerpt of The Flour Baby**

**By**

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Sally yanked open the kitchen cabinet, grabbed a brand new sack of unbleached flour, then plopped it on the countertop, a cloud of puff startling her.

“Stupid baby lesson,” she mumbled.

But Sally kept on doing what her health teacher had required because she was on the verge of flunking eighth-grade and, no matter what, the devil wouldn't catch her inside Clover Middle next year. Sally had big plans: she was getting the hell out CT and going to LA. She duck taped the sack, found a baby picture on the Internet, printed it, cut around the face, then, as the directions explained, glued it to the top of the flour bag. Tomorrow, she was to carry the five-pound thing all day under a shirt (yeah right), birth it at night, and hold it the next day as if it were an actual newborn. Her newborn. Everyone in eighth grade had to. Boys and girls. *A lesson to be learned*, the health teacher had explained. *What lesson?* Sally asked herself now. The end product looked so ridiculous that she marched into her

mother's living room and showed it to Bo, who's size 13 feet were splayed on the Restoration Hardware coffee table.

The big screen TV was blaring. Shades were down. Sally glided over to him and dropped the sack with the baby's face stuck to it onto his lap. God, Bo was hot. From his easy grin, to the way his basketball shoulders curved, to his pencil-narrow waist, he made Sally blush like crazy. Sally was glad she'd laid out the day before yesterday and shaved today because Bo was staring not at the decorated flour bag atop his crotch but at her legs, at the slightly sunburned skin peeking beneath the fringes of her jean shorts.

"Nice," he said.

He grabbed the bag, felt its heft, pressed his lips to the photo stuck to it, and smooched the baby's face the way he'd smooched Sally earlier, her back pushed against her mother's fridge. Same sound and all.

"Gross," Sally said, shoving her bare foot on Bo's knee, her need to touch him like hunger, urgent. "It's supposed to be a newborn!"

"Gross," Bo repeated in her exact high tone then, still smirking, he lobbed the flour baby onto the coffee table. "Come here," he said.