



First Friday

How virginity almost killed me

By Tory Hartmann

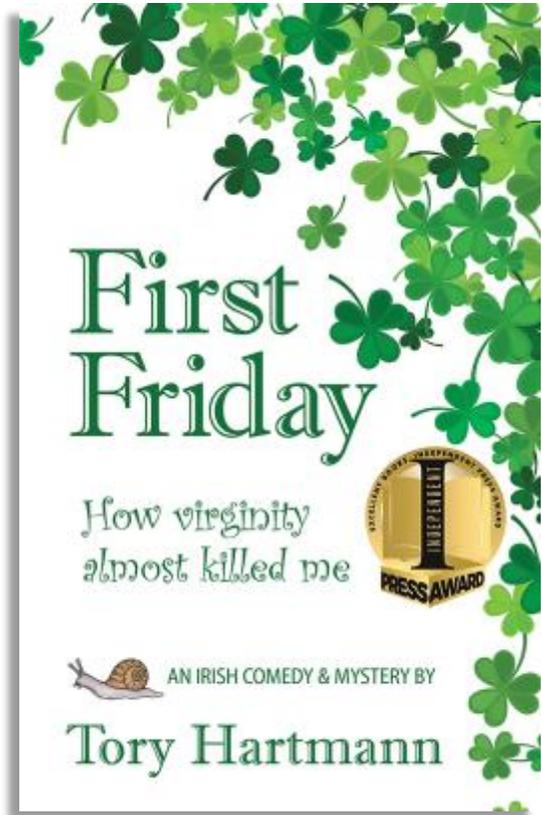
Agnes Anne O’Neil, 28 and still living at home, mounts a five-point plan of escape from her ultra-Catholic parents. Still suffering psychological trauma from a high school attack by the guy who became her brother-in-law, she is plagued by a stutter, an unfortunate nose, and low self-esteem. Nevertheless, her brother-in law is besotted. He now claims he married the wrong sister and is fixated with her virginity. Agnes prays to the Virgin Mary for guidance and bravely works toward her goals. But after each part of her plan is enacted and she becomes better looking, the harassment gets worse. And when she begins to date a nice Jewish accountant, her parents explode and lecherous Bruno can’t control his jealousy. We applaud Agnes’ transformation, but can it happen fast enough to save her from her scheming brother-in-law?



WINNER, Gold, Chick Lit/Women’s Fiction Independent Press Association, 2017

In this debut novel, Hartmann takes what appears at first to be a romantic comedy and turns it, unexpectedly, into a thriller. As a result, there are many slapstick and laugh-out-loud funny moments throughout the tale, such as an elaborate prank in a church, but there’s also a darker undercurrent—a constant dread that Anne’s misgivings about Bruno might actually be right on the money. Still, the novel is filled with hilarious misunderstandings and moments of family strife, including a disastrous dinner in which Sheldon first meets Anne’s family. Overall, this fast-paced, plot-heavy tale is as riveting as it is cheeky. A witty, sensitive story that will satisfy discerning fans of family dramas.

Kirkus Reviews



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Tory Hartmann is the former managing editor of *Parenting on the Peninsula*, a monthly magazine distributed on the San Francisco Peninsula and throughout Silicon Valley. Currently, she is the managing editor of Sand Hill Review Press, LLC, a publisher of novels. Her fiction has appeared in *The Sand Hill Review*, various editions of the yearly anthology *Fault Zone*, plus *The Hurricane Review*, *The Homestead Review*, *Descant* as well as many others. Her story *The Jalopy* was nominated for a Pushcart

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