

Elena and I glanced at each other. We still didn't know what *breath sisters* meant.

Just then, a group of in-crowd girls came by. They nodded and smiled at us. Usually, Elena and I are outright ignored, but without Alicia and Courtney around, some of the girls were actually nice, so I decided to smile and nod back. And the most wonderful thing happened! The girls acknowledged me, and Liz even said, "Stay cool."

"That was weird," Elena said. "Liz *never* pays attention to us." But it wasn't weird at all. If we were friends with Nina, and Nina was friends with Liz, didn't that mean Liz was friends with us? I couldn't be one hundred percent sure, but it was starting to feel that way.

After school, I stuffed my backpack with homework, and then made a pit stop at Elena's locker. Nina showed up, too. Once Elena had grabbed all her bags, we headed toward the exit.

"Do you walk home or take the bus?" Elena asked Nina.

"I take the bus."

"Really?" Elena said. "What's your bus number? I've never seen you in any of the lines."

"I ride the city bus," Nina explained. "I don't live in this district."

“You don’t?” I said. “Then why do you come to school here?”

“Long story. Let’s just say the teachers and parents wanted to take me away from my breath sisters.”

This was the second time she mentioned breath sisters today. I was desperate to know what it meant.

“Is that some kind of sorority?” I asked. “I’ve heard of sororities in college, but not in middle school.”

“I guess you could call it a sorority,” Nina said. “Have you heard of blood brothers?”

Elena and I nodded.

“Breath sisters are just like blood brothers.”

I still didn’t get it. I knew blood brothers cut their palms and shook hands, but I couldn’t imagine how to become a breath sister.

“My bus gets here in five minutes,” Elena said.

On the days Elena didn’t come to my house after school, I walked her to the bus line and then went home by myself, but the city stop was on the opposite corner of campus.

“I think I’ll wait with Nina today,” I decided. Before Elena could protest, I added, “So she can finish telling me about her speech.”

“I still need to give my speech, too,” Elena said.