

# WORTHY

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*Point*

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# THE HORNET

Online Forum for Students of Huntsville High School

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- You are cordially invited to an **ENCHANTED EVENING**. Huntsville High School's **JUNIOR-SENIOR PROM** will be held on Saturday, April 10. Tickets now on sale in the cafeteria!
- Do you love to write? Are you a Huntsville sophomore or junior? Then you're eligible to enter the 13th Annual Marty Speer Literary Prize for Young Writers contest, presented by the *Thompson Review*, one of the country's most respected literary magazines. If you are the winner or one of the two runners-up, you will see your story published on the *Thompson Review's* website. In addition, the winner will receive a full scholarship to the *Thompson Review* Young Writers Workshop in Austin, Texas, this summer. Go to [martyspeerlitprize.com](http://martyspeerlitprize.com) to enter!
- Congratulations, Kat Lee, SHHS Media Center Aide and the March Hornet Award Winner!
- Are you **WORTHY**? Check out this HOT NEW app just for Huntsville High School students! Everybody's going to be talking about this tomorrow! Don't be left out. Free download *HERE*.

# CHAPTER ONE

Shoes can tell you everything about a person. My best friend, Nikki Aquino, says I'm too quick to judge, even though it was a pair of shoes that brought us together in the first place. On the first day of kindergarten, I couldn't stop staring at Nikki's pink glittery high-top sneakers. By lunchtime, she'd convinced me to try them on. She's been convincing me to do things ever since. Today is no exception.

I wait for Nikki by the junior lockers, scrolling through my phone. I open the Hornet, which is our student-run online forum, kind of like a virtual bulletin board where kids can post stuff. The news of the upcoming writing contest makes my stomach jump. My English teacher mentioned that prize yesterday and I'd gotten my hopes up—a chance to go to Austin! My writing published online! But suddenly, I'm nervous. I don't know if I should enter or not. The familiar doubts start to bubble up in my mind. Maybe I'm not good enough.

To distract myself, I click on the link at the bottom of the page. Some potentially stupid new app starts downloading to my phone.

I look up. Still no Nikki.

This after-school meeting was not in my plans and, even though it was all her idea, Nikki is nowhere to be found. I'm not tall enough to see over the top of the crowd so I just wait it out, tapping my red Lucchese cowboy boots—an incredible find at Bobbi's Thrift Shop—against the tiled hallway of Huntsville High School. I lean back against the wall and try not to get swept away by students rushing for the exits.

If I had a superpower, invisibility would definitely be it. Why else would at least ten people bump into me every single day as I walk to and from my classes? When I finally see Nikki waving at me from the end of the hall, I smile in spite of myself.

Unlike me, Nikki walks through the crush of moving bodies with absolute confidence. Nobody jostles her. No one crowds her. In fact, the push of students mystically parts around her and makes way. I don't know how she does it.

Nikki doesn't care if people say a girl her size shouldn't wear leopard-skin tights. *That* is her superpower. Today those tights are tucked into black leather booties that match her size 2X black leather jacket. Nikki calls herself fat without blinking an eye. I call her spectacular.

Unlike Nikki, I'm just average. I have straight, dirty-blonde hair, fair skin, and brown eyes. I'm average height, average weight. And nobody stands out for being average in high school. But being in the middle, blending in, feels comfortable to me. It's like getting into a swimming pool.

I like to walk in slowly from the steps in the shallow end and get used to the water touching my toes, my knees, my waist, my chest. Nikki, of course, always dives in without a moment of hesitation. And sometimes she pulls me in behind her.

Now Nikki stops in front of me, smiling. “You’re still coming with me, right?” she asks. She flips her dark hair over one shoulder and narrows her eyes at me. It’s a look I know all too well.

I frown and then nod, reluctantly. “Yeah, but I can’t stay long. I need to get to work.”

“Mrs. Longshore won’t care if you’re late. Besides, those books are still going to be there no matter when you show up,” Nikki says.

My after-school job at the Huntsville Library only pays minimum wage, but at least it’s something. And one day I’m going to write one of those books on the shelves. Maybe I’ll even come back from wherever famous authors live and put the book up there myself in some kind of big ceremony where everyone claps and asks for my autograph.

It could happen.

But not today, because Nikki is grabbing my arm and pulling me away from the lockers to head to the Junior Prom Planning Committee meeting. Nikki’s been on the committee for a month now and she’s been begging me to join too. I finally gave in.

“It’s our responsibility to help plan the best prom ever,” Nikki told me earlier this morning as we walked into

school. “When we’re seniors, someone is going to be doing all this for us, right?”

Nikki knows what appeals to me. I like to plan. Maybe it was because I was such a fearful child that I became a planner. Most of my childhood was spent afraid of the dark, afraid of bugs, afraid of roller coasters that might make me sick, afraid of dancing and looking like an idiot, afraid of almost everything. But I learned something. If I planned out what was going to happen, with little room for surprise, then I wasn’t so afraid.

Proms don’t seem as scary as some other things, but it still never hurts to plan.

The one thing I’m *not* planning on is having a date. With no prospects in sight and prom only a few weeks away, I just can’t imagine it happening.

I squint down the corridor and sigh. “Okay. Let’s get this over with.”

“Come on. The meeting is in Mr. Landmann’s room,” Nikki says, continuing to yank me down the hall toward the history wing.

We make it to the door, but just before we can go inside, Jake Edwards comes up behind Nikki and puts his arms around her, pulling her to his chest. She looks up at him and my heart drops a notch. Not because I’m jealous, but because I’m worried.

*This is not a good idea, Nikki.*

Nikki and Jake just started dating about a month ago.

I look at them standing side by side. Nikki is a gorgeous, plus-sized Filipina girl with brown skin and thick black hair. Jake looks like a big, blond, blue-eyed Norwegian god or something. They make a striking couple. But Jake is also a star football player and the senior class favorite to be prom king. And he's popular. Much more popular than Nikki.

It makes me nervous.

"Hey, beautiful," he says, kissing Nikki on the forehead and smiling down at her. She smiles back up at him.

*He's going to break your heart, Nikki.*

"Where are you two going?" Jake asks both of us, but he only looks at Nikki.

I clear my throat. "We have a meeting."

"But I'll see you later?" Jake asks, and Nikki nods, laughing and leaning into his broad chest. She smiles the smile that causes her eyes to crinkle up at the corners and makes her even more beautiful. Sometimes it's hard to be her best friend. She's the sun and I'm Pluto.

I avert my eyes and pull my phone out of my pocket, not wanting to be some kind of third-wheel dork. I see that the new app has finished loading. It's called Worthy, and the icon has a little question mark inside a heart. Weird.

I glance up to see Nikki and Jake kissing. I don't even try to hide my eye roll. I might only be five foot four inches tall, from the top of my messy blonde bun to the tips of my Lucchese boots, but I can throw some shade with the best of them.