

Geektastic: Stories from the Nerd Herd Study Guide

Geektastic: Stories from the Nerd Herd by anthology

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Section 1: Once You're a Jedi, You're A Jedi All the Way

Section 1: Once You're a Jedi, You're A Jedi All the Way Summary

Arizhel, a Klingon, wakes with a hangover in a strange room because she drank too much last night. She is shocked to realize that she spent the night with Thomas, a handsome guy in a Jedi uniform. They joke about being attracted to their enemies. Thomas is fascinated by Arizhel, but he wishes she would tell him that her real name. He worries that she will not be impressed by a Jedi apprentice, and he is devastated when she informs him that she plans to pretend that she does not know him when they go to the convention later. When she makes sure that he knows Klingons do not mate for life, Thomas does not know how to tell Arizhel that they did not mate since he felt it was wrong to have sex with an intoxicated Klingon girl, especially since Jedis are supposed to be celebrate. After Arizhel leaves, Thomas rushes to the Jedi lightsaber demonstration, but when Arizhel walks by, he is distracted and gets beaten in the fight, so he has to fall because he has been killed. When Arizhel's friends express concern about how she spent her night, she insists "my honor is mine to defend. I'm a warrior and I can take care of myself" (p. 10). At the convention, Arizhel sees Thomas as he falls due to being distracted by her appearance, and when one of his fellow Jedis makes an insulting remark about Arizhel, it leads to a battle between the Jedis and the Klingons. Arizhel and Thomas fight, but Thomas realizes Arizhel just wants to save face in front of their friends. After they get kicked out of the convention, Thomas invites Arizhel to a coffee shop nearby where he admits that nothing happened last night at the same time she confesses she does not remember what happened. Mentally, he begs her to tell him her real name, and when she confesses that her name is Chung Ae, Thomas thinks "Damn! That Jedi Mind Trick does work" (p. 16).

Section 1: Once You're a Jedi, You're A Jedi All the Way Analysis

This novel begins with the Editor's Note where Holly and Cecil explain that they knew they were "of the same tribe" (p.vii) the moment they met at Comic-Con 2007 while standing in line for burritos. When they realized they both wanted to attend a panel on living the day as a Klingon, they thought about a romance between a Jedi and Klingon, but though they needed to write the story, they realized no one would publish it; thus, they opted to create an anthology of geektastic stories so their story would have a home, and thus "Geektastic" was born and includes stories that sing to their geek hearts. The Editor's Note is dated June 4, 2008 in Amherst.



"Once You're a Jedi, You're a Jedi All the Way" by Holly Black and Cecil Castellucci is separated into four parts and begins with I. Klingon in which Arizhel wakes with a hangover and no pants in a strange hotel room. Since advancing in the Klingon ranks requires being a badass, she had to drink or be seen as a wimp, but as she swallows some ibuprofen with water in the bathroom, an Irish voice calls to her, making her think of the costumed people at last night's party. She knows he is not a Klingon since there is no makeup in the bathroom, but she is appalled when she returns to the room to find a handsome boy wearing a Jedi uniform, Thomas. He teases her for being a tough girl that likes a goody-goody show like "Star Trek", and she notes it is weird that he is attracted to such a girl. Of course, she is attracted to her enemy because she is a Klingon. In II. Jedi, Thomas blames the alcohol for his odd predicament as he knows a Jedi is supposed to be in control and never yield to his passions. Thomas is not adverse to other universes, and this Klingon girl is unlike any girl he has ever met, though he still does not know her real name. Still, he worries that she will not think much of a Jedi apprentice, and he cannot believe his thoughts when he thinks that her walk makes the dark side sexier. When Arizhel says she is going to pretend she does not know him when they get downstairs, Thomas is secretly crushed, and he does not know how to tell her that they did not mate when she informs him that Klingons do not mate for life. He was set to lose his virginity to her, but having sex with an intoxicated Klingon girl seemed wrong since Jedis are supposed to be monastic and celibate. This is the best time he has had at a convention so far, but he does not want her to know how much last night's conversation meant to him. The fact that Thomas gets beaten in his lightsaber demonstration because he is so distracted by Arizhel's appearance indicates how much he likes her. In III. Klingon, Arizhel wants to sleep for the rest of the day, but Kadi, D'ghor and Noggra are dressed and waiting for her. They are worried about how much she drank and who she spent the night with because she is the youngest Klingon in their group, but she shows her pride and unwillingness to talk about Thomas by insisting she can defend her own honor.

She thinks of Thomas as she showers, and when she sees him in the convention center, she sees a beautiful warrior, though he is a Jedi. Their eyes meet, and he falls. One of the Jedis asks if Arizhel is his girlfriend, noting he must have had beer goggles on, and Noggra reacts by grabbing the Jedi by his throat and baring her teeth. In IV. Jedi, the spectators clap, thinking it is part of the show as the Jedis and Klingons rush each other, but Thomas just wants to find Arizhel. As he moves toward her, Padawan Pete says this is all Thomas's fault, but Thomas knocks Pete to the floor and keeps moving, ignoring Pete's threats to report him to the Jedi Council. There is an anger inside Thomas; he has turned to the dark side, but he does not mind at all. Arizhel spins him around and punches him in the face because it is her way.

When she insists that this is the time to fight, not share their feelings, Thomas realizes that she likes him but is trying to save face in front of their friends. They fight until the stormtroopers surround them and demand they surrender or be kicked out. Outside, their friends are so furious about being kicked out that they do not notice that Arizhel and Thomas are holding hands. Thomas asks her to grab food, and she agrees, so they leave their arguing friends and head to a coffee shop. They both have something to tell one another, and as Arizhel admits that she does not remember what happened last

night, Thomas tells her that nothing happened. When Thomas mentally begs Arizhel to tell him her real name and she complies, he is convinced that Jedi Mind Tricks really do work.



Section 2: One of Us

Section 2: One of Us Summary

Head cheerleader Montgomery K. Bushnell approaches Ezra, David, Mica and Ellen, the four most prominent geeks at her school, to ask them to teach her about their science fiction shows, movies, video games and comics because she wants to impress Ryan, her boyfriend who is interested in "Star Trek". The geeks agree, suggesting her final exam can take place at Locacon, a local sci-fi and fantasy convention. Ellen barely manages to maintain her composure while tutoring the vapid cheerleader, but Ezra's advances are creepy and irritating during his sessions of watching "Star Wars". As David teaches Montgomery about manga, he offers to let her leave with her friends who happen to pass by, but Montgomery chooses to focus on her studies since Locacon is approaching. Ezra and Mica argue about who gets to teach Montgomery about "The Lord of the Rings" and when Montgomery refuses to spend another evening alone with Ezra, Ellen's face shows her commiseration. Montgomery finds it strange to be alone with Mica, but at least it is not dangerous. When she mocks the movie, he complains about her making fun of one of his favorite things in the world, a concept Montgomery understands as she hates it when Ryan mocks her favorite TV shows. When Mica asks if Ryan is doing the same thing for Montgomery, she refuses his relationship advice, but when she starts talking about Mica's past relationship with Ellen, he tells her that he definitely does not need relationship advice from someone who is watching a movie she hates to impress her boyfriend.

Montgomery gets irritated when she notices her best friend, Susan, flirting with Ryan. When Montgomery goes to Ellen's house for her lesson in sci-fi TV, she walks in to find Ellen's dad yelling at her about not being normal, so since Ellen does not want to watch TV at her house, Montgomery suggests going to see a movie and then going to the mall, like normal friends. During the video-game portion of her tutoring, Montgomery excels at virtual shopping, and all of her tutors are present since Mica is teaching the lesson which is held at Ezra's house, David wants to play, and Ellen is there to chaperone since Montgomery refuses to go to Ezra's house without Ellen. All of the geeks present Montgomery with presents signifying her graduation when her tutoring is finally finished. At Locacon, Montgomery is pleasantly surprised to see how great Ellen looks dressed up, but she is agitated when Ryan comments on Ellen's appearance repeatedly, and her irritation grows when Susan joins them, dressed in a scanty vampire costume, to flirt with Ryan. Everyone at school knows about Ryan and Susan hooking up at a party before Montgomery finds out. Montgomery hears about it when David tells her that he is sorry about her jerky boyfriend, so she insults him in an extremely geeky way and then rushes off to slay a particular vampire. At home, Montgomery finally gets it and calls Ellen to explain that she now understands that they turn to their obsessions because it is their home. Though she does not love it, she appreciates their love for sci-fi, and she likes them. She invites Ellen to come hang out with her and her other friends, but Ellen suggests going to the mall instead, and she is appalled when Montgomery asks her to bring Mica along.



Section 2: One of Us Analysis

The comic preceding the story is titled "Top Five Words or Phrases You Need to Know In Klingon". The translations for these Klingon phrases are "Am I supposed to eat this?", "Where's the bathroom?", "You're hot. Want to make out?", "Duck!", and the worst insult in Klingon which should only be used in extreme circumstances. In Tracy Lynn's "One of Us", 'The Setup' begins with head cheerleader Montgomery K. Bushnell nearly hearing her entrance narrated by the freakish minds she approaches. It is obvious that she does not want to be there as she hands money to Ezra and asks to hire the services of the four most prominent members of Springfield High's Genre and Nonsense Club: Ezra, David, Mica and Ellen. They stare at her in shock as she offers them \$100 to teach her about their science fiction shows, movies, video games and so forth. Montgomery wants to learn about their world because Ryan, her boyfriend, is into it, and she hopes they would fight less if she understood these things, so she tries to convince herself that this is not the worst idea ever. When Ezra asks what area she is interested in, Montgomery says that Ryan likes "Star Trek". As she decides this is a terrible idea, Ezra insists they can do this, promising to organize and come up with a syllabus that will include minimal interaction. He suggests they can take her to Locacon, a local sci-fi and fantasy convention, for her final exam. He doubts she will be able to impress Ryan without being bored after the course, so he suggests that a more realistic goal is to just get through the day without losing patience or insulting one another; Morgan agrees.

In 'Trek 101', Ellen begins with the basics, and Montgomery tries not to look too bored, though she does not understand why they are doing this at school instead of at Ellen's house where Ellen probably has plenty of props. They start with the Five Rules of Girls so that Montgomery can tell the difference between the various Star Treks, and Ellen praises Montgomery for knowing who Kirk is since Mica pointed out that Montgomery is less likely to continue paying them if they constantly insult her. Montgomery takes the compliment, forcing a smile as she compliments Ellen's shirt, but this causes Ellen to nearly break the yardstick in her hands. In 'Star Wars and the World of Lucas (not including a Very Wookie Christmas or Willow)', Ezra welcomes Montgomery to his home, but Montgomery is rude as he offers her a drink, thinking that movie night might actually be fun if it was held at anyone else's house. Ezra practically sits on top of her as he introduces "Star Wars". When she tells him she has seen the movies, he asks if she has ever really watched it. Montgomery warns Ezra that she will hurt him if he touches her, but his attitude changes once the movie starts; Ezra completely ignores Montgomery and becomes engrossed in the film other than when he rubs against her during his bathroom breaks and reaches across her chest for popcorn until she dumps the entire bucket in his lap.

In 'The Smackdown: Manga, Anime and Comics', David gives Montgomery a bootleg copy of "Ranma ½", claiming it is easy to start with after taking her on a shopping spree in the comic store. He explains that he likes manga because it is a whole different way of experiencing a book with art. When Susan and some of Montgomery's other friends walk by, they look questioningly at Montgomery and laugh meanly at David. David offers to let Montgomery take off with her friends, and though she wants to join her friends for



gossip, she chooses to stay with David because Locacon is quickly approaching. In 'LOTR, Part I', Ezra argues that the Rings fall under his jurisdiction because it is an epic movie, but Mica argues high fantasy literature is his, plus Ezra has been monopolizing this week's classes. Montgomery enters as the boys argue, and when Ellen tells her what they are discussing, Montgomery refuses to spend another evening alone with Ezra, earning an understanding look from Ellen. In "LOTR, Part II", it is weird but not dangerous to be alone with Mica. Mica urges her to pay attention to the upcoming important part, and when she mocks the ridiculous way they talk, he explains it is supposed to be archaic and asks her not to make fun of one of his favorite things in the world. She apologizes because she hates it when Ryan makes awful comments about the shows she likes. Mica asks why she is doing this, so Montgomery explains that she really likes Ryan and hopes this will help her understand him better. Mica wonders if Ryan is doing the same for her, but Montgomery insists she does not need relationship advice. She asks why Mica and Ellen never dated, so Mica admits they did but it did not work out; however, he refuses Montgomery's relationship advice since she is watching a movie she hates in order to impress her boyfriend.

In 'Lunchbreak', Susan asks how Montgomery's secret project is going, and after whispering that it is going well, Montgomery tells Ryan there is a "Star Wars" special on History Channel tonight and invites him to come over and watch it. Susan objects that they have to come to Reese's party tonight, flirting with Ryan as Montgomery grows irritated by her best friend's forwardness. In 'SF TV: The Sci-Fi Channel Vs. PBS and the Major Networks', Montgomery takes the bus to Ellen's house for a boring afternoon. Ellen promises to begin slowly with socially acceptable nerd TV, such as "Buffy", and move into serious sci-fi. Montgomery is eager to see Ellen's house as she finds it interesting what this project reveals about the personal lives of people she did not used to care about. When Montgomery goes upstairs, Ellen tries not to see her as she cries while her dad yells at her and mocks her for not being normal. Montgomery and Ellen have a moment of perfect understanding; this is horrible! Ellen no longer wants to watch TV at her house, so Montgomery suggests going to the movies, and Ellen agrees that she is willing to see anything except a chick flick. After deciding on a classic, they realize they agreed to see a normal movie together like friends. When Montgomery suggests going to the mall afterward, Ellen growls at the idea of a makeover, but Montgomery insists she needs to pick up her asthma prescription... and maybe a new pair of pants for Ellen. In 'All Together Now', video-game night is held at Ezra's, though Mica teaches it, and David joins in because he wants to play. Ellen chaperones since Montgomery refuses to go to Ezra's house without her. Montgomery finds the games surprisingly pleasant, and she particularly enjoys the virtual shopping. Her tutors are surprised that she seems to understand their geek speak.

In 'Finals', Ryan is excited that Montgomery offered to go to Locacon with him, but he does not notice her desire to be prepared for the convention because he is texting busily. At 'The Graduation', Montgomery does not know what to say as the formally dressed geeks congratulate her on graduating and hand her gifts. Her favorite is a wooden stake from Ellen. She thanks them and admits she will miss them, especially Ellen, but her eyes dart to Mica who smiles back quietly, foreshadowing Montgomery's interest in him. In 'The Con', Mica, Ezra and David spy on Montgomery at the



convention. Montgomery is shocked to see how great Ellen looks in her cat suit, but she is irritated as Ryan ignores her to comment on her friend's appearance. Susan joins them, dressed in a scanty vampire costume, batting her eyes at Ryan. In 'The Inevitable Climax', everyone knows about Ryan and Susan hooking up at a party before Montgomery does, but it is obvious that her friends are trying to protect her from something. When David tells Montgomery that he is sorry about Ryan and Susan, Montgomery freaks out and uses such a geeky insult against Ryan that everyone knows what she is. She then rushes away because she has a vampire to slay. In 'The Denouement', Montgomery makes it home before crying, but realizing something, she calls Ellen to say she gets it. It is who Ellen turns to; it is her home! Montgomery does not love it, but she likes the geeks and appreciates their passion. Her friends are coming over for support, so Montgomery invites Ellen as well, but Ellen refuses because she doubts Montgomery's other friends would like it. Instead, Ellen suggests going to the mall on Saturday, even saying she might let Montgomery pick out makeup for her. Montgomery agrees and asks Ellen to bring Mica, fulfilling the earlier foreshadowing. Ellen is horrified at the mention of Mica, but she is impressed when Montgomery understands her allusion to "The Call of Cthulhu".



Section 3: Definitional Chaos

Section 3: Definitional Chaos Summary

The narrator is excited when ConCom sends him on a mission to deliver \$48,000 to a hotel booked for a convention before they lose their spot, knowing they chose him because of his collection of guns and his consistent alignment, but he is furious when he learns that Lexia Tollman, his ex-girlfriend who killed Temptress Moon, his avatar on Mayhem, will be accompanying him. On the train, Lexia bickers with the narrator because she wants to count the money, but he does not trust her. She insults his tepid alignment, leading to the resumption of their old argument about whether each of them are chaotic good or neutral. The narrator refuses Lexia's offer to share her vodka, but when he finally gives in and drinks after her, he begins to feel dizzy; Lexia admits that she drugged both of them, but she will wake first since she uses the pills regularly. They both fall asleep, and the narrator wakes from a dream of Temptress Moon being mocked by her victim for drinking the vodka to find himself handcuffed to his chair while Lexia stands in the doorway holding his gun and the briefcase full of money. She claims she is still here because she did not have time for a goodbye kiss the last time she poisoned him, but when the narrator claims this proves his claim that Lexia is not chaotic good because she is too self-interested, Lexia insists this is part of her social experiment. As the narrator draws his other gun, Lexia notes that this is getting really chaotic now, and she answers his question about why she keeps doing this stuff to him by asking if he means killing Temptress Moon. The narrator agrees because he finds that betrayal more mystifying because there was nothing for Lexia to gain. Lexia claims she killed Temptress Moon because the other players hated her since she controlled everything and allowed there to be no atrocities to avenge in a game supposed to be focused on vengeance. The narrator fires at Lexia's leg to realize his gun is unloaded, and though he grabs his other gun and aims at her face, he drops his arm and sighs. Lexia tells him that the experiment is over now; she plans to deliver the money to the convention hotel, but she wanted to spend some time with her ex-boyfriend. The convention goes according to plan, and though the narrator does not reunite with Lexia, he begins playing Mayhem again as an evil assassin with the intention of getting vengeance against Lexia soon when he visits the keep they built together.

Section 3: Definitional Chaos Analysis

The comic, *How to Tell If Your Dice Are Lucky*, provides the indications of perfect and fickle dice. One should never try to pawn unlucky dice on a different player because dice respond differently in new hands, and it is possible that the dice will want to get back at you.

In "Definitional Chaos" by Scott Westerfield, he wanted a mission, and the ConCom gave him one. Everyone thought someone else had wired the \$84,000 due to the convention hotel two weeks ago, but now the owner is threatening cancellation unless



the money is delivered to her winter home within 48 hours. His trip is booked three hours after the call came. In addition to his collection of guns, the Convention Committee chose him because of his consistent alignment across all known gaming systems. He believes he is the only person for the job until he sees Lexia Tollman waiting with ConCom. He cannot believe they want him to take his ex-girlfriend who killed him for company! As he checks her bags to make sure she is not armed, he hides his reaction to the handcuffs taped with a note asking if he remembers them. He could refuse the mission, but he does not; perhaps he has a twisted desire to be trapped on a train with the woman who killed him, but there is no way he is sleeping on the ride to Florida. Taking their seats aboard Amtrak's Silver Star, the narrator and Lexia bicker because she wants to look at and count the money. He refuses because he does not trust her. He is irritated that she keeps calling him Temptress Moon, the little paladin girl he spent two years leveling up in Mayhem only for Lexia to kill her. Lexia insults his tepid alignment which was the underlying conflict of the last months of their relationship, and they resume their old argument about neutral good versus chaos. During this conversation, Lexia alludes to the story of "Robin Hood", glorifying the concept of stealing from the rich to give to the poor.

As they get closer, Lexia asks if they are in the kissing frame, causing the narrator to jerk back and note she has not changed much in the past year. He points out that this is a nice time for her to glorify stealing when they are babysitting someone else's \$84,000. He refuses her offer of a drink of vodka, trusting her even less after all she has said. He still does not know why she killed Temptress Moon, suggesting she wanted to bring chaos to established order. Defining their alignments in terms of this mission, Lexia insists she is chaotic good and the narrator is chaotic neutral. He joins her for a drink as she claims helping ConCom fill downtown Miami with 17,000 costumed geeks is chaotic enough for her. When the narrator mentions that she has not taken a drink since he did, Lexia claims she slipped something in the bottle before giving it to him. Taking a swig, she insists she is just joking; however, she notes that should be enough to put him down and admits she slipped roofies in the bottle. She drugged herself also, but she will wake first since she uses the pills to sleep. The narrator threatens to shoot Lexia, but she points out ConCom will still be screwed, refuses to wear the handcuffs and goes to sleep. The narrator dreams of Temptress Moon being mocked by her victim for drinking the vodka before waking to Lexia kicking him with a gun in her hand and the briefcase in the other. He is also handcuffed to the armrest. Lexia is still here because they did not have time for a goodbye kiss the last time she poisoned him. The narrator claims he has finally won the argument: Lexia is not chaotic good; she is nothing but self-interested. She argues that she plans to use the money for a social experiment. As the train pulls to a stop, the narrator draws his other gun and tells her not to move. Lexia shuts the door and notes this is getting chaotic as they face off. She insists she did not bring the handcuff key because she does not plan to let him go, and when he threatens to shoot her, she points out that she will be able to kill him before she dies. She offers him 40% of the money, but he wants 100% of the money delivered to its rightful owner. Staring at one another, they could shoot, but that would have happened at the beginning if anyone really wanted to pull the trigger. The narrator asks why Lexia keeps doing this stuff to him, and when she asks if he means killing Temptress Moon, he agrees because that betrayal was more mystifying since there is \$84,000 at stake now. Lexia claims she



killed Temptress Moon because everyone wanted her to. They hated Temptress Moon because the game is Mayhem, but there were no atrocities to avenge when Temptress Moon controlled everything. When Lexia claims she is leaving, the narrator shoots at her leg to find her gun is empty. He grabs the gun she discarded and aims at her face, but he drops it, sighing. Lexia says this was all an experiment and is over now. She really does intend to deliver the money to the hotel, but she needed quality time with her ex-boyfriend because she is chaotic for good. The convention goes on without a hitch, but the narrator does not reconcile with Lexia; however, he does begin playing Mayhem again, but this time, he is an evil assassin instead of a goody-goody. For now, he is anonymous, but he will soon visit the keep that he and Lexia built together and "revenge will be mine" (p. 76).



Section 4: I Never

Section 4: I Never Summary

Jane thinks that this meet-up thing is a bad idea as she and Lisle walk up to Xena's condo and introduce themselves as Catherine Earnshaw and Faith the Slayer, respectively. She is very uncomfortable and nervous about meeting Ben, the boy with whom she has developed an online relationship with while playing the Game which Lisle convinced her to begin. Jane agreed to play if she could be her favorite character from her favorite novel, but the Game was boring until Ben began sending her love letters as Heathcliffe. They carry on a flirtation online which leads to Lisle's insistence that she and Jane attend Xena's suggested meet-up since Ben will be there. Jane does not know how to react when Ben arrives with another boy, so she rushes to the bathroom where Lisle follows her. When they return, Ben is mixing drinks while two girls flirt with him, Jack and Ennis. Ben's friend, Noah, begins talking to Jane, and he invites her to take a walk since she is the only person who does not seem to be having fun. Down by the lake, he tells her that she does not seem like a geek, but when he adds that people are not always like the characters they play online, Jane suspects that he is referring to Ben, so she rushes back to the condo to find Ben surrounded by girls. Ben pulls Jane away to a bedroom, but he insists on calling her Cathy as he gropes her, so Jane gets annoyed and pushes him away. Noah knocks on the door to tell them that Xena wants everyone to play I Never, a game in which a person makes a true statement about something they have never done and everyone who has done it drinks. Ben gives Noah a look to indicate that he has been hooking up with Jane, and Noah looks very unhappy. As the game turns to statements of a sexual nature, Jane gets embarrassed and leaves the room again, but when she convinces herself to return and claim her spot next to Ben, she finds him making out with Ennis in one of the bedrooms. He rushes after her and apologizes sarcastically for not being exactly like some character in a book; however, Jane tells him that the problem is that he is selfish and self-absorbed, exactly like Heathcliffe. As Jane begins gathering her bags, Noah joins her and admits that Ben wanted to hook up with a lonely geek girl and was willing to turn to someone else if Jane was not willing. Jane cannot comprehend how a guy like Ben wrote the beautiful love letters he sent her, but her confusion is cleared up when Noah admits that he wrote the letters. Jane kicks Noah out of the room and goes to sleep. In the morning, Jane cleans and cooks breakfast with Jack's help. When she sees Ben with Ennis, she is not jealous because she did not like him; she liked the person who wrote those love letters to Catherine Earnshaw. After breakfast, Jack motions Jane toward the back porch where Noah sits, and when she asks why he wrote those letters for Ben, Noah explains that he wrote the letters for a school project and he did not know Ben had used them until after the fact. Noah was not amused by his friend's antics because he really liked Jane which is why he invited her to walk by the lake. When Noah insists he did not tell her because she came to the meet-up to see Ben, Jane insists she came to see the person who wrote those love letters, proceeding to list all of the things she has never done which ends with wanting Noah to kiss her. Noah and Jane kiss in the rain as everyone cheers, except Ben who scowls as he watches.



Section 4: I Never Analysis

The preceding comic, "I Totally Shouldn't Post This, But...", shows the dangers are how posting secrets online can ruin someone's own life. Examples include killing biology teacher with an axe, hooking up with a friend's boyfriend, posting pictures of the party held while one's parents are out of town and posting detailed instructions of how one cheated on the SATs.

In Cassandra Clare's "I Never", Jane wants to tell Lisle that this whole meetup thing is a bad idea as they walk to the front door, but Lisle would not listen anyway. A middle-aged woman opens the door and introduces herself as Xena, Warrior Princess, to which Lisle introduces herself as Faith the Slayer and Jane is Catherine Earnshaw. Entering the living room, Jane is nervous because Ben has only seen her left eye, her hands and her feet. Joining the others, she feels uncomfortable like she has crashed a party where she does not belong. Ben is not there yet, but when the doorbell rings, Xena returns with two teenaged boys, one of whom Jane immediately recognizes as Ben. Humiliated, she rushes to the bathroom, and Lisle follows. Jane and Lisle have been best friends forever, but Jane playing Catherine Earnshaw in an online multiplayer game was Lisle's idea. Lisle became obsessed with the Game, so Jane has no choice except playing or finding a new best friend. She chosen Catherine from "Wuthering Heights", her favorite character from her favorite book, but since there was no Heathcliffe, the Game was boring until Ben, as Heathcliffe, sent Catherine a love letter. They continue to have flirtatious conversations, causing Lisle to scheme for them to meet. When Xena suggested the meetup, Lisle insisted they were going since Ben would be there. They tell their parents they are spending the weekend with Lisle's older sister in college, but they go to Xena's condo instead.

Lisle notes that Ben is hot before they return to the living room to find Ben making drinks in the kitchen while Jack and Ennis flirt with him. Lisle goes to see what is up with Ben as Jane listens to the others discuss their characters, mystified. The boy who came in with Ben tells her that it is a dorkument, an argument between dorks to clarify the finer points of geek culture, and introduces himself as Noah. Noah invites Jane to walk to the lake with him, assuring her that Ben will not be done for at least half an hour. As they walk, Noah explains that he invited Jane for the walk because she was the only one not having fun. He tells her that he plays Mr. Kool-Aid on the Game because he is a party guy. Jane notes he does not seem like a party guy, and he retorts that she does not seem like a geek, adding that people are not always like the characters they play online. He does not answer when Jane asks if he is referring to Ben, so she rushes back to the condo, ignoring Noah as he calls her name. Ben is surrounded by girls when Jane returns, so she sits on the couch and is excited when Xena suggests playing charades as an ice breaker; however, Ben motions her toward the hallway, promising no one will notice. He asks if she is upset, but she just hoped they would get a chance to talk alone. Ben knows that he is the reason she came, and Jane finds his arrogance annoying, so she insists Lisle is the reason she came. As he starts groping her, Jane is irritated that he insists on calling her Cathy, and she pushes him away as Noah knocks on the door to tell them Xena wants everyone to play I Never. Noah looks unhappy



when Ben gives him a look to indicate that he has been hooking up. The game starts out tame, but Jane notices Ben place his hand on Lisle's leg for several minutes until Lisle brushes him off. When Lisle says she has never been turned on while role-playing online, she looks at Jane pointedly, but Jane thought she and Ben had an amazing connection so she rushes to the bathroom, feeling sick. Telling herself to claim her place next to Ben, Jane returns to the living room, but Ben is not there. Lisle glances toward the hallway, so Jane finds Ben and Ennis making out on a bed. As she rushes away, Ben grabs her wrist and says he is sorry if she is upset but he is just having fun, and he is sorry if he is not just like a character in a book. Jane says that is the problem; he is selfish exactly like Heathcliffe who does not care about anyone except himself and Catherine, but Jane is not Catherine, so Ben has only himself to care for. She gathers her bags, planning to leave, but Noah appears and asks her to stay, seeming concerned. He tells her these people are nice people who love their characters enough to want to be them sometimes. It was not Cathy that Jane loved, but she hesitates because Noah will just defend his friend. Noah admits that Ben planned to hook up with a lonely geek and was willing to find someone else if Jane was not compliant. When Jane does not understand how a guy like Ben wrote those beautiful things to her, Noah confesses that he wrote the love letters. Jane realizes the difference between the letters and the chats, and she feels betrayed that Noah did not tell her because he wanted to help Ben hook up with a geek. Jane tells Noah to leave and falls asleep. When she wakes the next morning, she starts cleaning, and Jack helps her cook breakfast for everyone. Jane is not jealous when she sees Ben with Ennis because she never really liked him; she liked the person she thought he was, the person who wrote those amazing love letters. After breakfast, Jack insists on cleaning up, smiling toward Noah as he sits on the back deck. Thanking Jack, Jane joins Noah and asks if he wrote the letters because Ben asked him to, but Noah wrote the letters for a class project and did not know Ben had used them until later. Ben thought it was funny, but Noah did not because he liked Jane's responses. He admits that he invited her for a walk because he felt like he knew her. He also confesses that he does not really play the Game. When Jane says that he should have told her, Noah argues that she came to see Ben, but she insists she came for the person who wrote the letters. Noah looks doubtful as Jane says she has never been mad at someone for telling the truth, made a mistake about someone she liked and realized it too late, and she never wanted him to kiss her. Ben scowls as Noah kisses Jane, but everyone else cheers as Catherine Earnshaw and Mr. Kool-Aid kiss in the rain. It feels right, no matter how strange it seems.



Section 5: The King of Pelinnesse

Section 5: The King of Pelinnesse Summary

While reading about Caelwin, the Skull-Reaver, Jim Hucker takes a bus to Boothbay Harbor without telling his parents where he is going. He recalls how his mother dumped all of his books in the garbage, insisting they are trash. When he arrives in Boothbay Harbor, he calls Mom to tell her where he is, hanging up when she realizes why he is there and calls him stupid. Jim walks to R. P. Flint's front door, and Flint invites him inside when he realizes Jim is a disciple of the Skull-Reaver. Jim tells Flint that he had an affair with his mother. Two months ago, Jim found a letter to his mother from Flint, but his mom refused to discuss it, and later, he found another letter from Flint, torn up and thrown in the trash can. Jim pieced it together and read about Flint's sexual encounter with Mom. When Jim accused Mom of having an affair, she told him it was during the war but refused to discuss it any further, so a few days later, Jim took the bus to Boothbay Harbor. During lunch, Jim harasses Flint about his affair with Mom, but Flint only tells him that "a great love is necessary for a great art" (p. 125). Finally, Flint confesses that he knew Jim's beautiful mother in high school, but they never had a sexual relationship; he began writing her several years ago because he worships her as the paragon of women and will remain faithful even if she never deigns to kiss him. When Flint cannot recall Jim's last name, Jim realizes that Flint really does not know Mom, and he wonders how many woman Flint writes to avoid being alone. On the bus home, Jim decides to call Mom from Portland to ask who she really had the affair with.

Section 5: The King of Pelinnesse Analysis

"How to Look Cool and Not Drool in Front of Your Favorite Author", the comic preceding the story, readers are advised not to throw up, profess their undying love, enact their favorite scene or criticize a scene in order to appear intelligent.

In "The King of Pelinnesse" by M. T. Anderson, Jim reads about Caelwin, the Skull-Reaver vanquishing his enemy and rescuing the Princess of Yabtub as he reaches the bus station to wait for the 6 a.m. bus up Route 1. He knows his mother is looking for him, but he cannot call until he reaches Boothbay Harbor or the police will track the call and take him home. He catches the first bus of the day to Boothbay Harbor and resumes reading on the ride. Jim recalls how Mom dumped his books in the trash and dumped bacon grease all over them because she insists they are trash. When he reaches Boothbay Harbor, Jim calls Mom to tell her where he is, and though he feels bad because he can tell she has been crying, he hangs up when she realizes why he is there and says he is being stupid. Forty-five minutes later, Jim has walked to R. P. Flint's door, and when Flint opens the door and realizes Jim is a disciple of the Skull-Reaver, he invites him inside to see the lair where it all begins. Jim feels stupid and confused as Flint talks about himself and asks his opinion about the story he is currently writing. Jim announces that Flint had an affair with his mother. Two months earlier, Jim



found a letter in the mailbox addressed to his mother from Flint, so Mom explained that she went to cool with Flint, but she refuses to answer Jim's questions about his favorite author, insisting Jim will never meet him and she never wants to hear his name again. Jim begins leaving his books around the house so no one could forget Flint, but soon after, he finds another letter from Flint, torn up in the trashcan. He pieces it together and reads Flint's views on a recent sexual encounter with Mom. Downstairs, he accuses Mom of cheating, and she admits it happened during the war but claims her husband is not a saint either. Mom refused to talk about the affair any more, and a few days later, Jim gets on a bus for Maine without telling anyone. As Jim and Flint go out for food, Flint talks about how people need to court their spirits, but when he asks if Jim's mother is coming up too, Jim admits that she did not know he was coming until he got there. Jim imagines Flint and Mom together in the world that Flint makes seem so big in his stories. During lunch, Jim asks Flint to tell him about his affair with Mom, and eventually, Flint confesses that he knew her in high school, but they never really had an affair as he has not seen her since they were teenagers. She was beautiful then, though, and when Flint found out where she was a few years ago, he started writing her because women need romance. Furthermore, perhaps she did have an affair during the war, but it was not with him as he has invented everything in his letters. Jim does not know what to believe. As he and Flint go down to the docks and watch the boats come in, Flint says that a man needs a great passion to create great art, so he worships Mom as a paragon of women and will remain faithful even if she never stoops to kiss him. He does not react when Jim tells him that Mom tears the letters up. Flint has to leave so he can continue writing, but when he forgets Jim's last name, Jim realizes that Flint really does not know Mom. He wonders how many women Flint writes, allowing him to never be alone. On the bus ride home, Jim cannot focus on his book. He decides to call Mom from Portland to tell her that he is okay and to ask who she really had an affair with, knowing there will be more stories after that of parents he cannot imagine on this stupid Earth.



Section 6: The Wrath of Dawn

Section 6: The Wrath of Dawn Summary

After Dawn gets grounded because her mother is angry that she does not make more of an effort to befriend her new stepsister, Megan, she is stunned when Megan invites her to the Buffy Sing-Along that she has been dying to attend. She thinks Megan is teasing her at first, but Megan explains that her boyfriend's cousin, Eric, is going to be with them, so she wants to set Dawn up on a double date to keep Eric occupied. Since Mom agreed to let Dawn go if she attends with Megan, Dawn agrees as long as Megan pays for everything. When Eric arrives at 7 p.m., Dawn is happy that he is not bad-looking, but on the way to the Waterloo Cinema, they get into an argument because he disdains Dawn from "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" who Dawn idolizes. Dawn is having a great time at the interactive event until Dawn from "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" takes the stage and Eric jeers her, causing Dawn to realize he is also booing every lesser sibling who gets blamed for everything; he is mocking her! Dawn has had it, so she grabs the microphone and rushes to the stage, informing the audience that they are all like Dawn as they have all felt out of place and been scorned. When she urges the audience to embrace their inner Dawn, Megan stands and claps, encouraging the rest of the audience to join in, including Eric.

Section 6: The Wrath of Dawn Analysis

The preceding comic, "How to Identify the Living Dead", explains that zombies have a rotting smell, while mummies will be wrapped in gauze, but make sure the person is not just wearing a bathrobe and enjoying a facial treatment. Ghosts can be recognized because you can see through them, but this is not valid if you are in a movie theater. Vampires have fangs, but make sure the supposed vampires are not just kids making out. If someone digs out of a grave, there is no other explanation so the type of living dead does not matter as you can kiss yourself goodbye.

In "The Wrath of Dawn" by Cynthia and Greg Leitich Smith, Dawn's mother asks where the dry-cleaning is because Dawn's stepfather needs his gray suit, but when Dawn says that Megan, her stepsister, took the car before she could run errands, Mom insists that Dawn should have told her she needed it. It is important for everything to be Dawn's fault, so she does not bother pointing out that she tried and Megan ignored her. Mom insists Dawn should give Megan a chance, but Dawn tried in the beginning and was treated like a lesser species. Mom grounds Dawn when she gets sarcastic, so Dawn resumes her online reading until Megan enters her room to invite her to the Buffy Sing-Along tonight. Megan knows that Dawn is dying to go, so she assumes Megan is teasing her because she is grounded. Megan explains that Ryan, her boyfriend, is working, and they have plans for afterward, but Eric, Ryan's cousin, is coming with them and they need someone to keep him occupied. Dawn objects to being stuck babysitting again, but Megan clarifies that she wants to set Dawn up on a date, insisting he is into



the same geeky stuff as Dawn. Furthermore, Mom agreed to let Dawn go if she goes with Megan, so Dawn agrees, provided Megan pays for everything. The doorbell rings promptly at 7, and Dawn is pleasantly surprised to find that Eric is not bad-looking. On the ride, Eric and Dawn discuss Buffy and Battleship Galactica while Megan mocks them for their knowledge, claiming it is no wonder they cannot find their own dates. Dawn and Eric argue a bit when they discuss Buffy's younger sister, Dawn, because Eric dislikes her, but Dawn likes her. When they reach the Waterloo Cinema, Dawn is pleased with how packed the venue is, but Megan is irritated by the geek culture surrounding her. The show is interactive, and Megan looks baffled as the audience blows bubbles, waves lighters and sings along. When Dawn, the character, appears on stage, Eric boos her, causing Dawn to realize he is jeering her name and every lesser sibling who gets blamed for everything just like her. She has had it, so she grabs the wireless microphone and runs to the stage, telling the audience that they are all Dawn. As the crowd jeers, she points out that many did not like Wesley or Tara in the beginning, and they have all felt out of place like Dawn does. Here, they are among their own people, but out there, pointing at Megan, people like her judge and scorn them. Only a few heads nod, making Dawn wonder what she was thinking. There is silence as she claims they must stand together and embrace their inner Dawn, but then Megan stands and claps as if they are actually sisters. Eric joins her as Megan whistles, encouraging the rest of the crowd to join in, cheering for Buffy's Dawn, Dawn and Megan who whistles again with more feeling.



Section 7: Quiz Bowl Antichrist

Section 7: Quiz Bowl Antichrist Summary

Alec is mortified that Sung Kim, the leader of their quiz bowl team, petitions to be allowed to get a varsity jacket. Alec is the team's alternate who was drafted by Mr. Phillips, their coach, for his knowledge of English Literature, and he agrees because it will look good on college applications, he enjoys his literary knowledge, and he has a crush on another member, Damien Bloom. Alec is hopeful that he will get to share a hotel room with Damien when their team goes to Indianapolis for Nationals, but as Nationals draw near, Sung begins quizzing everyone in the hallways, irritating Alec who reacts by purposefully answering questions incorrectly until Damien chides him for his behavior. Alec is furious when he learns that Sung will be rooming with Damien while he is stuck with Wes. At the Quiz Bowl Social their first night in Indianapolis, Alec's mind is preoccupied with Damien who seems worried about something else while the rest of their team has a good time, so Alec and Damien go to Damien's room to watch a movie. The next day, Sung's team wins their first three matches, but during the last match of the day, Alec buzzes in for a science question and answers it incorrectly. Their team manages to win, barely, so Sung calls an emergency meeting where he yells at Alec for answering a science question. This leads to an argument which results in Alec telling Sung that quiz bowl does not matter since they only memorize the knowledge instead of doing anything useful with it.

Alec goes to dinner with Damien and Wes while the rest of the team goes out to eat with Sung. Alec feels badly about answering the question wrong, so Damien and Wes try to cheer him up, teasing him by calling him the Quiz Bowl Antichrist. As Alec talks to Wes, he realizes that Damien is one of the reasons he joined quiz bowl, and he hopes that Damien finds him interesting. After dinner, Damien and Alec decide to watch TV in Damien's room again, but they walk in on Sung making out with Frances. Alec mocks Sung until Damien pulls him away and accuses him of having no heart. Alec is distraught that Damien would say such a thing, but since he cannot tell Damien what is really in his heart, he rushes to his room and locks himself in the bathroom. Thinking of Frances, Alec feels bad and wonders if he really doesn't have a heart, but when he asks Wes, Wes says he is just very angry and suggests that Alec believes no one will see him as a quiz bowl geek if he makes fun of Sung, the ultimate quiz bowl geek. Wes also notes that Damien likes girls. Practice is tense as half of the team is mad at one another, but Alec feels like he might be worth saving when he looks at Wes. After practice, Damien apologizes to Alec for the way he talked to him, and Alec agrees that he should not have been so mean to Sung and Frances. Their team loses the semifinals, but the local newspaper still takes their picture in which Wes and Alec look happy, as if only they are privy to some private joke.



Section 7: Quiz Bowl Antichrist Analysis

"How to Cheat Like a Nerd" details the idea, cost and time of cheating like a nerd in Math, Science, English, Phys Ed and History. In David Leviathan's "Quiz Bowl Antichrist", Alec is haunted by Sung Kim's varsity jacket because he is the first person in the school's history to have a varsity jacket for quiz bowl, and Alec is mortified by quiz bowl leader Sung Kim's betrayal of their team because Alec should be the one to betray the quiz bowl team from the inside since he is the alternate. Alec was drafted by the coach, Mr. Phillips, for his extensive knowledge of English Literature, and he is always rotated in despite being the alternate. He agreed because he needs it for his college applications, he enjoys his knowledge of literature, and he has a crush on Damien Bloom who is also on the quiz bowl team, though he is popular from his involvement with the track team. Sung, Damien, Frances, West and Gordon celebrate when they win States, but Alec tries to hide behind Wes when their photo is taken for the local newspaper. Sung wants all of them to get varsity jackets, but all of them claim they cannot afford it, except Alec who simply refuses. Alec works hard to keep from gloating, and Damien keeps him in check since he wants to be a good guy around Damien. Alec is enthusiastic when he learns the team is going to Indianapolis for Nationals because he assumes he and Damien will share a room, but as Nationals draw neared, Sung becomes more of a dictator and starts quizzing everyone in the hallways. Damien respects that Sung is just being Sung, and Alec respects it because Damien does; however, he ends up arguing with Sung that day when he purposely answers all of his questions wrong. He is rewarded by Mr. Phillips announcing that Sung is rooming with Damien while Alec is stuck with Wes.

On the flight to Indianapolis, Alec jokes with Damien, and their first night is devoted to the Quiz Bowl Social so Sung tells the team to scope out South Dakota's intelligence since that is their first competition. As everyone else dances, Damien obviously has something on his mind, and since Alec's mind is preoccupied with Damien, he suggests leaving, so they go to Damien's room and watch TV. Alec questions Damien about his involvement with Julie, but Damien quickly lets the topic drop. When Sung returns, they watch the rest of the movie in silence before Alec returns to his room where he finds that Wes is already in bed. The next day, Alec's team beats North Dakota, Maryland and Oklahoma, but Sung warns them not to get cocky, advice that Alec finds ironic since Sung is the most arrogant of them all. During their last match of the day against Clearwater, FL, Alec does well until he buzzes in for a science question and gets the answer wrong. His team barely manages to win, so Sung calls an emergency team meeting where he yells at Alec for answering science questions, resulting in Alec telling Sung that he is tired of being treated like an English freak raining down on their Math and Science parade. None of this matter; all they do is memorize knowledge that they do nothing with. He continues to mock Sung for wearing a varsity jacket.

The team splits up for dinner with Damien and Wes opting to dine with Alec. Alec admits that he thought the question was about books, and though he knows it is true when Damien points out that they still won, Alec is not feeling it. Damien and Wes try to cheer Alec up, joking about how he is the Quiz Bowl Antichrist. Damien watches as Alec and



Wes talk, but Alec cannot stop staring at Damien as he realizes Damien is one of the reasons he is here. He talks to Damien through his conversation with Wes because he wants Damien to find him interesting. When Wes goes back to his room, Damien and Alec return to Damien's room to find Sung making out with Frances. Alec laughs and teases Sung until Damien says that is enough and pulls him away. In the hallway, Damien tells Alec that he has no heart, but Alec cannot defend himself because he cannot explain what is inside of his heart since he is not sure himself and he knows that Damien will not want to hear it. With Damien chasing him, Alec runs to his room, telling Wes not to let Damien in as he locks himself in the bathroom. Though Alec laughs at the thought of Sung's face, he feels bad when he thinks of Frances and begins to wonder if he really does not have a heart. Alec asks Wes if he is really cold, but Wes says he is just so angry, suggesting he thinks that ripping Sung, a Quiz Bowl geek, apart will mean no one else thinks of him as a Quiz Bowl geek, but no one is a Quiz Bowl geek; they are all just people. Wes asks how Damien fits in, pointing out that he likes girls, and he also notes that practice should be interesting since Gordon is totally in love with Frances. Practice is tense as Gordon glares at Sung who glares at Alec who is busy avoiding Damien's eye. When Alex looks at Wes, Wes makes him feel like he might be worth saving. Practice goes well, and afterward, Damien apologizes to Alec, but Alec agrees that he should not have been so mean to Sung and Frances. Damien does not know why he reacted that way, and it will take him four months to figure it out by which time it will be too late. Their team loses the semifinals, and Alec knows that Sung will always blame him for destroying his invisible plans at Quiz Bowl domination. Alec has never hated any piece of clothing as much as he hates Sung's varsity jacket during those few weeks, but "you can't hate something that much unless you hate yourself equally as much" (p. 179), as Wes taught him. Though they lose the semi-finals, the local newspaper still takes their picture. Sung looks serious, Gordon appears awkward, and Frances seems calm. Damien is oblivious while Wes and Alec look happy, as if they are in on their own private joke.



Section 8: The Quiet Knight

Section 8: The Quiet Knight Summary

Tony does not talk much because as a child, he drank bathroom cleaner which burned his throat and left him with a scratchy, low voice. Tony mimics driving to Dad as a way to ask to borrow the car, and Dad agrees since he thinks Tony is going to basketball practice, but Tony has no intention of going to practice. After checking that he has his full costume, Tony drives to Dave Nash's property where tonight's role-playing game will be held, in their usual spot. Tony parks a half mile down the road and dons his knightly apparel, walking to the shed where the game will begin. He is surprised to see an unusual car, but he quickly realizes it belongs to the only two strangers at the event, a girl around his age and a younger boy. The gamemaster, Dave, welcomes Sir Silent, the Quiet Knight, and introduces the newcomers: Sorayah the Bard and Horace the Halfling Rogue. He asks Sir Silent to take responsibility for guarding the unarmed bard, and Sorayah curtsies to Tony to express her gratitude. He bows in return, glad that she cannot see him blushing through his helmet.

Tony returns home at midnight, just in time for curfew. He wanted to stay with the others to talk around the fire, specifically to Sorayah who he finds attractive, but he knows she will pity or scorn his voice, so he prefers to keep her respect as the Quiet Knight. The next day as Tony takes the bus to school, he thinks about the fact that he has no friends because friends would expect him to talk, but he has no idea that most of the students have warped his unwillingness to speak into a tragic tale that makes them terrified of him. When Tony notices Soraya and Horace being harassed by a group of snobby girls, he decides that he must talk to Soraya, even if she laughs at him, so he follows the students and demands that they release Soraya and Horace because they are under his protection. Once the others leave, Soraya thanks Sir Silent for rescuing her and her brother, explaining that she recognized Tony's eyes. Though Tony feels foolish and wants to vanish, he fights the urge to run because he wants to talk to Soraya even more. Soraya waits patiently as Tony clears his throat and introduces himself.

Section 8: The Quiet Knight Analysis

The comic, "How to Cosplay with Common Household Objects", gives examples of random things around the house that people can use for roleplaying games, such as grandma's blue wigs, a trashcan from the kitchen, suits from Dad's closet, toilet paper from the bathroom and a chainsaw from the garage.

In "The Quiet Knight" by Garth Nix, Dad tells Tony he cannot leave until he chops the wood, but Tony gestures to indicate he has already done it. He nods when Dad asks if he has basketball practice, so Dad teases him about how his team never wins a game. Tony mimics turning a car key, but Dad claims it would not hurt him to talk, so Tony mumbles an apology. His voice is low and scratchy because he burned his throat as a



kid by drinking bathroom cleaner. Dad allows Tony to borrow the car, telling him no drinking after practice, and Tony agrees since he is not planning to go to practice anyway. Tony's backpack holds his armor, belt, helmet and mask, and after checking that his PVC pipe sword is still in the back of the truck, he heads toward Dave Nash's property where tonight's game will be held in their usual place. Tony parks a half mile away so the other LARP gamers will not see him or the truck, and after dressing, he walks to the woodshed where the game begins. There are a half dozen cars parked there, and Tony recognizes all of them except one. Tony sees seven regulars and two strangers who must own the unknown car, a girl around his age and a younger boy. Dressed in wizard's robes as gamemaster, Dave greets the Quiet Knight, Sir Silent, and introduces the newcomers, Sorayah the Bard and Horace the Halfling Rogue. Dave sets the scene, explaining they seek passage through the ancient tunnels, and he sends Horace ahead to scout while tasking Sir Silent with guarding the unarmed bard. Sorayah curtsies to Tony who is glad she cannot see him blush as he bows in return. She thanks him for his protection, and he leads the way up the stairs as the adventure begins. Tony does not get home until midnight, his curfew. The game was great, and the participants gathered around the fire afterward, and though Tony wanted to stay to talk to Sorayah, he stopped because of his inability to talk; he knows she will scorn or pity his voice, and he prefers to keep her respect as the Quiet Knight, laughing at the thought of preserving what they have since all they have is a game and he knows nothing about her. The next morning, Tony takes the bus to school. He does not have any real friends because friends would expect him to talk, but he is unaware that he is a legend to the younger students who turn his reluctance to speak into a story of backwoods tongue mutilation and bloody revenge. A commotion at the doors draws Tony's attention as he sees Soraya and Horace being harassed by five spoiled girls. As Soraya looks around for help, her gaze passes over Tony, just another invisible student who will not help. Pausing, Tony follows as Soraya and Horace are ushered up the stairs. Though he tells himself that he cannot intervene, he asks what the Quiet Knight would do and decides he must talk to Soraya, even if she laughs. The students evade Tony's path as he lifts Ellen, the leader, and places her on the stairs. He orders the group to release Soraya and Horace and never speak to them again because they are under his protection. After Ellen and her minions scurry away, Tony turns back to Soraya who smiles, curtsies and thanks Sir Silent, explaining she recognizes his eyes and the bruise on his arm. Tony feels like a fool and wants to disappear, but he always wants to stay and talk so he fights the urge to run. Soraya tells him that Soraya is her real name and waits patiently for Tony to clear his throat and introduce himself.



Section 9: Everyone But You

Section 9: Everyone But You Summary

Felicity's family is poor because her brother, Carl, was born brain damaged, and Dad left because he could not deal with the situation. When Mr. Hunter has a stroke on an airplane and Mom, his Emergency Room nurse, is credited with saving his life, he proposes to her, so Mom marries the rich old man on the verge of death. Felicity worries about moving from Asher, OH to Mr. Hunter's home in Maui, HI. She is very popular in Asher because of her talent at baton twirling. During her first day at Kahanamoku Academy, Felicity is distraught to learn that the school does not have a band. Felicity tries to make friends by demonstrating what she has to offer, twirling her baton as she walks through the hallways, but after two days of having her baton taken, she leaves it at home. Felicity does not understand her new school since being peppy makes her unpopular, but she develops a crush on Kai Risdale, a beautiful, popular student. Felicity grows excited when Kai announces that everyone is invited to a party at his house, but when she tries to join them, Kai clarifies that he meant "everyone but you" (p. 208). Kai also insists that Felicity's name is "Fellatio" which is soon shortened to "BJ". Felicity is miserable, but she turns her focus to her studies, determined to get accepted to a good college.

During the last semester of her junior year, Felicity spends her afternoons twirling in the park. One day, she drops it because she sees Kai and his friends, but when Kai tries to grab it, she whacks him upside the head with her baton. Kai says she is lucky he does not hit girls, but Felicity retorts that he is lucky she does not hit girls either, so Kai laughs and says she is alright. Later, an old man named Jimmy asks if Felicity has ever twirled fire, suggesting Auntie Alea's Luau where Felicity becomes the youngest baton flame twirler and the only white one. She also befriends another employee, Danny, who happens to be in her AP English class. When Kai and his friends come to the luau, they are impressed with Felicity's skills, but when Kai tries to hit on Felicity, she dumps a bottle of water over his head. After graduating as one of four valedictorians, Felicity is reluctant to leave the island, but her mother insists she should go places since Mom and Carl are grounded to Hawaii. Mom and Carl see her off at the airport, but Carl becomes agitated as Felicity explains why she has to leave. Finally, she hands him her lucky baton, though she knows she will never get it back. It now belongs to the brother she kisses goodbye. Felicity does not plan to continue twirling in college because she wants to see what else is out there.

Section 9: Everyone But You Analysis

The preceding comic, "What Your Instrument Says About You", depicts the various instruments in a typical high school band and explains how others view the players of these instruments. Flute players are hot, and boys will like them, whether the flute player is male or female. Tuba players are the bouncers of the band, so no one will



mess with them. Guitar players sleep with everyone else in the band, while piano players want to write their own music. No one thinks that drummers know what they are doing, but they know more about music theory than anyone else. Triangle players should realize that using this extracurricular activity on a college application does not look nearly as good as they think it does.

In Lisa Yee's "Everyone But You", Felicity is raised in Ohio and has never even seen the ocean until she finds herself adrift on an island. Scared to be poor, her mother marries Mr. Hunter, an old man on the verge of dying. At first, Felicity is thrilled at the idea of moving from Ohio to Hawaii, but she knows it will be hard to leave her friends and Asher, OH where she is known and accepted. She was voted Asher High Miss Pep for the past two years and is well-known for her baton-twirling skills. Felicity wakes early for her first day at Kahanamoku Academy, excited to make new friends, and she takes her lucky baton to school, hoping to convince the band director to let her join the majorettes; however, Headmaster Field soon informs her that there is no band as the school is more academic than sports-oriented. Furthermore, Felicity has trouble understanding the other students as they speak "pidgin" English, a casual local dialect. Before Mom met Mr. Hunter, there was never enough money because Carl, Felicity's brother, was born brain damaged, so Mom became a nurse until it became so hard to care for Carl that she was forced to put him in a special home. Dad could not deal, so he left his family to become poor. When Mr. Hunter had a stroke on an airplane and an ER nurse was credited with saving his life, he proposed to Mom. Mr. Hunter's house in Maui is amazing, and Mom cares for Mr. Hunter and even grows to love him in exchange for his kindness. Eating lunch alone does not deter Felicity from trying to make friends. She demonstrates what she has to offer by twirling in the hallways, but she is teased and her baton is taken, so she leaves it at home after two days. Felicity's new school is twice the size of Asher High, and the students are incredibly beautiful, especially Kai Risdale. Unfortunately, the peppier students are the least popular, a concept confusing to Felicity since Asher High was the exact opposite. Things begin to look up at the end of the week when Kai invites everyone to a party at his house, but when Felicity runs to catch up, he edits his invitation to exclude her. Nearly two months after Felicity starts at Kahanamoku Academy, Kai asks her name and begins calling her "Fellatio" which quickly translates to BJ, short for "blow job". Regardless, Felicity tells Mom that school is great because she does not want to worry her. It is hard to talk to her old friends because of the six-hour time difference, plus they are disinterested when Felicity tells them how miserable she is, refusing to believe she could possibly be miserable in Hawaii. Felicity avoids the beach where the other students hang out, opting to spend most of her spare time in the library, studying, as she is determined to get into a good college. She is proud of herself when she gets all A's, but when she realizes that Kai got the same grades, she realizes that actual work does not factor into grades at Kahanamoku Academy. Felicity hates Kai, but she hates herself more for thinking about his constantly.

During the last quarter of her junior year, Felicity begins going to the park every day to twirl again since it makes her happy. An old man in a gecko costume, Jimmy, says Felicity is amazing and asks if she has ever twirled fire. With his recommendation, Felicity becomes the youngest baton flame twirler at Auntie Alea's Luau, in addition to being the only white person, and Auntie Alea names her Kalani, meaning heaven and



sky. Felicity feels at home at the luau and is surprised to find Danny from her AP English class works there as a waiter in order to save money for college. Danny befriends Felicity and introduces her to other kids from school that she had never noticed. Recently, Kai and his friends come to the luau, but they do not recognize Felicity at first. Kai asks if Felicity wants to get lei-ed, but she does not have time to tell him off because the music starts. Kai and his friends are amazed by her routine, and afterwards, Kai tells Felicity that she was great and invites her to a private party at his house. Felicity insists he say her real name before dumping a bottle of water over his head. Shortly before Mr. Hunter dies, Mom brings him and Carl to the luau, and they both cheer and clap ecstatically. Soon after this, Felicity returns to Asher, OH and stays with Natalie, but nothing is the same. She ran into Dad but told him that Mom coming into a fortune is just a rumor. Felicity is happy to return to Maui, but it is hard to leave the luau at the end of summer. Felicity is one of four valedictorians, and Danny receives a scholarship to NYU. While he is eager to leave the island, Felicity is reluctant, yet Mom insists Felicity go places since she and Carl are grounded to the island, so Felicity attends Rogers College in southern California. She does not continue twirling because she wants to see what more there is. When Mom and Carl escort Felicity to the airport, Carl throws a fit, and the only way for Felicity to calm him down is to give him her lucky baton.



Section 10: Secret Identity

Section 10: Secret Identity Summary

Billie Faggart writes an email to Paul Zell to tell him about their first attempt to meet in person. They met online in FarAway, but Billie pretended to be her older sister because she is only sixteen years old and Paul is thirty-four. When Billie gets to the hotel in New York City where she is supposed to meet Paul for dinner, the hotel clerk, Aliss, glares at a guy behind her whose name is Conrad who apologizes insincerely for standing her up. Aliss and several other people ask Billie if she is there to audition for sidekick as there is a superhero convention going on at the hotel. When Aliss hands Billie her hotel key and room number which Paul supposedly left for her, Billie takes the elevator upstairs with Conrad who tries to be charming in vain. In the room, Billie goes through Paul's suitcase, finding a diamond engagement ring buried at the bottom of his bag. After a nap, she talks to Aliss for a bit and is threatened not to hook up with Conrad. Billie arrives at the Golden Lotus where she is supposed to meet Paul at 6 p.m., but when he has not arrived by 7:30, she returns to the room and gets drunk off the liquor in the minibar, donning the engagement ring on her toe. Billie has vague memories of someone caring for her in her drunken stupor, but when she wakes, Paul's suitcase is gone and the room is empty. After she showers, Billie goes to Starbucks where Conrad joins her and insists on talking to her because Aliss can see them and he knows it will make her jealous. Billie tells Conrad about her plans with Paul, so he takes her to the kitchen where she meets Ernesto who provides her with a cure for her hangover. Conrad and Ernesto tease Billie about coming to meet a pervert she met online, but they believe Paul Zell and Billie are both superheroes, so frustrated, Billie eventually concedes that everyone is a superhero. Conrad invites Billie to a party later before going to school, and Billie spends the afternoon alone at Bryant Park, watching the chess players, which she and Paul had planned to do.

Back at the hotel, Aliss harasses Billie about Conrad, but Billie shows her the ring and tells her that Conrad was planning to give it to Aliss tonight. Aliss convinces Billie to go to Conrad's party with her, but Billie is uncomfortable when Conrad insists on introducing her as his sidekick for the night. When she tries to leave, Conrad follows and insists on showing her Ernesto's butter sculptures in the freezer; however, when he breaks the sculptures and launches butter at her, Billie locks him in the freezer for a bit. She releases him for fear that he will destroy all of the sculptures, but when Conrad claims that he and Ernesto are not friends like he and Billie are, Billie argues that they are not friends. Conrad insists that they will meet again, either as nemeses or in order to team up and save the world. Billie leaves a note for Ernesto, apologizing for ruining the butter sculptures, and she catches a bus home. At home, Billie receives an email from Paul Zell claiming he never made it to New York because he had an emergency appendectomy, and though she is relieved at first that they can pretend none of this happened, she realizes that would make Paul Zell pretty pathetic, so she writes him. She tells him that one day she will be older, and she has to believe that Conrad was right about people meeting again because Billie travelled to New York because she



loves Paul Zell. On her eighteenth birthday, she plans to return to Bryant Park with her chess set and wait all day, ending her letter with "Your move, Paul Zell" (p. 268).

Section 10: Secret Identity Analysis

In the comic "What to Remember When Going to a Convention," the reader is advised to wash their clothes, stay hydrated, and eat to avoid being overly emotional, sleep so they do not see things that are not there, bring spending money, and make sure their costume has breathing vents.

In Kelly Link's "Secret Identity", Billie Faggart writes a long email to Paul Zell describing their first attempt at a meeting in person. They met online in FarAway, but Billie wants to pretend they are meeting for the first time face-to-face at a hotel restaurant in New York City. He drinks wine because he is 34 years old, but she is only 16 so she orders a Coke. She decides to try again, starting farther back before she showed up for dinner and he did not. Billie stands at the registration desk in the hotel lobby, but the clerk, Aliss cannot find anything. Billie Faggart is skipping school, but Paul met thirty-two-year-old Melinda Bowles in FarAway because Billie used her older sister's name when she signed up for an account. Aliss glares at a normal-looking guy behind Billie before asking if Billie is here to audition, but Billie has no clue what she is talking about. Billie forms a backup plan to return home to Keohuk, Iowa because it would be easier to tell Paul that she got cold feet than to proceed with plans. Aliss receives an insincere apology from the guy behind Billie, Conrad, before handing Billie an envelope with a key and room number on it. Billie used to have two other avatars in FarAway, but she sold one for bus fare, and she may sell the other one if anyone is interested in buying her. Billie takes the elevator upstairs with Conrad and a reeking superhero. Though Conrad is charming, Billie is immune to his charm. When he asks if she is here to audition, she wonders why everyone keeps asking that and explains she is here to meet a friend. She is glad that Paul never asked for a picture because she would have sent a picture of Melinda since she is not gorgeous or a freak; of course, Paul saw her and knows what she looks like. Knocking on the door though she knows Paul Zell is not there, Billie does not know why she came all this way other than Paul asked her to. In the room, she sees Paul's suitcase and goes through it, finding a jewelry box with a diamond ring tucked into the bottom. Billie takes a short nap, and when she wakes, she dresses and goes to the front desk to ask Aliss about the internet cafes and Conrad. Aliss says Conrad is a slut, but Aliss will beat Billie if she hooks up with him. Billie insists he is too old for her which is ironic since Paul Zell is nineteen years old than she is. The other problem in her relationship with Paul is that she lied, but she wonders if it could have worked out if she had not lied since she is not going to fall in love again.

Billie goes to the business center and signs into FarAway for a bit, signing off a little before 6 when she is supposed to meet Paul at the Golden Lotus. A superhero asks if she is here with Miracle, but Billie insists she is not a sidekick before hurrying away. Billie rushes to the Golden Lotus and waits until 6:18 when she checks the room for messages. She returns to the restaurant and waits until 7:30, but Paul Zell never shows up, so she returns to the room, orders room service and gets drunk off the bottles in the



minibar, donning the diamond ring in Paul's suitcase on her big toe. This is the first time Billie has ever been drunk, and she is not good at it. She has a gap in her memory which consists of someone taking care of her and moving around, but when she wakes to vomit, she finds that Paul has taken his suitcase with him. After showering, Billie goes to Starbucks where Conrad joins her and insists on exchanging life stories. He tells her that he sleeps with Aliss when there is nothing better to do, but though he always treats her badly, Aliss always forgives him. Billie confesses why she is in New York to Conrad who takes her to the kitchen for a hangover cure since he is rich and lives in the hotel. In the kitchen, Billie meets Ernesto who creates sculptures out of butter and is eager to show them to Billie later. Conrad and Ernesto tease Billie about her situation, but they think Paul Zell is a superhero, and they insist Billie may be a superhero when she grows up because she sticks out and perhaps she can do something she does not know about yet. Her hangover gone, Billie agrees that everyone is a superhero, feeling horrible about Paul Zell. Conrad invites her to a party later, but he leaves for school now. Alone, Billie goes to Bryant Park to watch the chess players, which is what she and Paul Zell talked about doing. Not intending to go to Conrad's party, Billie walks down Broadway and tries not to think about Paul Zell.

When Billie returns to the hotel, Aliss asks if she is going to her boyfriend's party, but Billie tells her that Conrad just wanted to talk about her and give her a ring, showing her the ring she took from Paul Zell's suitcase. Aliss convinces Billie to go to the party with her, though they cannot act like friends or Conrad will suspect something. Aliss also admits she got fired because management suspects her relationship with Conrad, but she does not want Conrad to know. At the private party, Conrad introduces Billie to everyone as his sidekick for the night, and when she tries to leave, Conrad follows and insists she needs to see Ernesto's art before he lets her go to bed. Conrad leads Billie to the kitchen freezer where he shows her Ernesto's butter sculptures, but he proceeds to break them and throw butter at Billie until she runs out the door and locks Conrad inside the freezer. She finally lets him out for fear of what he will do to the rest of the sculptures. Conrad says he only hangs out with Ernesto when he is bored; they are not friends the way Conrad and Billie are. Billie insists they are not friends, leaving as Conrad claims they will meet again either as nemeses or to team up and save the world. Billie leaves the ring for Ernesto with a note apologizing for the butter and suggesting that Paul Zell may come back and offer a reward for the ring. Billie catches a bus home where she receives an email from Paul Zell that he never made it to New York because he had an emergency come up, and at first, she is relieved that they can pretend none of this happened and resume their online relationship; however, that would be weird as it would make Paul lonely and pathetic to settle for a fifteen-year-old liar, and since he is better than that, she wrote him this letter. Now, Paul knows what happened. Billie offers to sell her avatars and pay him back if he gives Ernesto a reward for the ring. He can also ignore the letter, pretend none of this ever happened and meet Billie in FarAway to chat and flirt, but Billie will be older one day and may even find her superpower, though she does not think she wants to be a sidekick, even Paul Zell's, unless she is lying and would be willing to be his sidekick if that is all he offered. Conrad is a bad person, but he was right about one thing: sometimes people meet again, and Billie has to believe she and Paul will meet again as she came to New York because

she loves him. Billie intends to return to Bryant Park on her eighteenth birthday to wait for Paul Zell, leaving the ball in his court.



Section 11: Freak the Geek

Section 11: Freak the Geek Summary

Hoover Preparatory School for Girls has a large number of traditions which Lauren hates. Therefore, she is furious when someone walks past her and her best friend, Kayley, and whispers "freak the geeks" (p. 275). Each year, the entire class votes on two geeks to harass for one day, and this year, Lauren and Kayley have been chosen. They hurry to Lauren's car to find it surrounded by fifty girls and a paintball gun. They run away, through the woods, losing the rest of their class. Lauren jokes about the term freak usually being used sexually, and Kayley adds that perhaps their classmates want to do sexual things to them. When Lauren and Kayley reach the bridge over Hoover Creek, Kayley is furious at being named one of the least-liked people in their class, and she blames Lauren's meekness for why their peers prey on them. Lauren furiously walks away, and when Kayley catches up, Lauren tells her that this is their peers' faults, not theirs, and "the only thing that holds anything together for me is having someone else on the Not Demented Team" (p. 281). Kayley apologizes, and the girls reconcile. When they return to Lauren's car, the rest of their class is gone, and though the paintball goo on Lauren's car does not wash off for months, she does not mind because "it is not my scarlet letter. It's theirs" (p. 283).

Section 11: Freak the Geek Analysis

The comic, "What Your Lunch Table Status Means: Just Because you're a Geek Doesn't Mean You Don't Still Have to Choose a Lunch Table" clarifies what it means about someone's nerdiness and Chic Geek points if they sit at the band table, the theater stage crew table, the fandom table, the chess club table, or the computer tech table.

In "Freak the Geek" by John Green, as Kayley and Lauren walk past the only bit of stone wall that survived the epic fire of 1922, Kayley touches the wall because it is tradition, but Lauren hates traditions. Hoover Preparatory School for Girls has a large number of stupid traditions, but Lauren thinks it is idiotic to do things solely because they were done in the past. The weirdest things are cool here which is why she takes no stock in being cool. Her fury doubles when someone walks by and whispers "freak the geeks" (p. 275) because students only hear those words when they are one of the geeks about to get freaked. Though Lauren likes being a geek, no one wants to be one of The Geeks; every year, the entire class votes on two geeks to torment for one day. Lauren and Kayley run to Lauren's car to find it surrounded by fifty girls, one of whom fires a paintball gun at them, so they turn and run through the woods, having the advantage since no one knows these woods as well as Lauren and Kayley. When the Freakers lose ground, Lauren mocks the phrase, noting that freaking someone is usual a sexual term. Kayley laughs and suggests that maybe they picked the two cutest girls in their class because they wanted to do unspeakable things to them sexually. Kayley is beautiful, and Lauren is alright looking, but at this school, being pretty involves much



more than just being pretty and neither girl has time for all that. Though it is not fun to be picked as The Geeks, Lauren is glad that at least she and her best friend were chosen together. They head to the bridge over Hoover Creek and sit together, but Kayley is angry at being declared one of the two least-liked people in their class, and she claims their peers prey on Lauren's meekness. Lauren angrily starts to walk back to the car, announcing she would rather be paintballed, but Kayley apologizes. Lauren says Kayley is a know-it-all and rude at times, but this is their peers' faults, not theirs, and "the only thing that holds anything together for me is having someone else on the Not Demented Team" (p. 281). After Kayley apologizes again, they return to the bridge and discuss whether trolls are people, debating other mystical creatures as they walk back to Lauren's car. The Freakers are gone, but there is some paintball goo on the front grill of Lauren's car that does not wash off for months. She does not care, though, because she sees the mark as evidence of her classmates' stupidity.



Section 12: The Truth About Dino Girl

Section 12: The Truth About Dino Girl Summary

Katherine is obsessed with dinosaurs, and she believes boys are like dinosaurs since she does not know nearly enough about either of them. Katherine is in love with Jamie Terravozza, a junior on the baseball team who is also in her biology class, because he did not laugh when one of his friends made fun of her. The problem is that Jamie dates Andi Donnelly, the gorgeous captain of the soccer team who is in Katherine's gym class. Katherine's best friend, Sooz, hates Andi because Andi made a girl cry in the bathroom for an hour, but Katherine thinks Andi is perfect and often fantasizes about dating Jamie and befriending Andi. All Katherine has ever wanted is to be a paleontologist, until she met Jamie, and now she does not know how to get what she wants. She often sketches pictures of the flame tattoo on Jamie's arm while she fantasizes about him and trying to figure out how to make herself more attractive to Jamie.

While leaving gym class one day close behind Andi, Katherine is knocked over when Andi turns around quickly, dropping her notebook which falls open to a sketch of Jamie's tattoo. Katherine begs Andi not to tell anyone, but Andi laughs at her and tells her that she has no chance with a guy like Jamie because that is the natural order of things. Katherine spends the rest of the day crying in the bathroom. The next day, Katherine is relieved that no one seems to know about her crush on Jamie, but when Jamie pulls his sleeve down when he catches her looking at his tattoo, she is mortified that Andi told Jamie about her crush, but it hits her that "the dinosaurs are more powerful, but the lizards survived" (p. 307). Lizards still exist, and though they cannot evolve into a dinosaur, prey can become a predator. Katherine tells Sooz that she is going to destroy Andi, and she is relieved when Sooz agrees to help. Katherine's experience with paleontology allows her to patiently wait three months until soccer season, and then she sneaks into the locker room and discreetly takes photographs of Andi. Later, she and Sooz Photoshop the pictures because Katherine is determined that since she cannot have Jamie, Andi will not have him either. After waiting a few more weeks so no one will remember her presence and suspect her, Andi and Sooz hang posters throughout the school and all over town of Andi half-naked from the shower with text claiming she loves sex. Rumors spread that Andi is a prostitute, and Jamie dumps her because he is certain that she cheated on him because there is no other way that someone would have semi-nude photographs of her. No one sits with Andi at lunch that day. When Katherine gets up from her table, the earth shakes with her footsteps and she finally "knew what dinosaurs sounded like. They sounded like me" (p. 315).

Section 12: The Truth About Dino Girl Analysis

The comic preceding "The Truth About Dino Girl" is entitled "How to Hook Up at the Science Fair." It suggests wowing her with specimens and putting ribbons in one's hair. Girls should know that boys who wear glasses never make passes, so the girl will have



to make the first move. Boys can hypothesize about romantic dinners he can cook her on his Bunsen burner, but they should never go for the girl who made the volcano, no matter how hot she is.

In "The Truth About Dino Girl" by Barry Lyga, Katherine, a nerdy freshman, notes that boys are like dinosaurs as she does not know nearly enough about them. Informed speculation is still guesswork, and though she knows so much, she still knows absolutely nothing about dinosaurs, just like she knows nothing about guys. Katherine explains this to her best and only friend, Sooz, but Sooz notes this is about Jamie Terravozza, and she is right. Katherine is in love with Jamie, a junior on the baseball team who is in her biology class. She fell in love with him when he did not laugh at a lame joke another baseball player made when she answered a question, but the problem is that Jamie has a girlfriend, Andi Donnelly, who is a gorgeous junior and captain of the soccer team. The next day at lunch, Sooz nudges Katherine when Jamie enters the cafeteria with Andi, and as usual, Katherine fantasizes about Jamie while sketching his flame tattoo in her notebook. Sooz hates Andi, but Katherine wants to be Andi because she is perfect and has Jamie. She often imagines that Jamie is her boyfriend and Andi becomes her friend. Sooz says that Katherine needs to get Jamie out of her system; Katherine has always been single-minded, but Sooz is more comfortable with her dinosaur obsession. Katherine has wanted to be a paleontologist since kindergarten, and she did so well on her eighth grade science project that Dr. Marbury invited her on a dig he has scheduled the summer of her junior year. Nothing else mattered as that was all she wanted until Jamie, and then "suddenly, I wanted something else. And I had no idea how to get it" (p. 293).

When Andi gets bored with her food and plays with a hacky sack, everyone at her table applauds, even Jamie. Sooz points out that Katherine is chewing like a theropod, and when Katherine demonstrates her error with her burger, Sooz tells her that she should not do dinosaur stuff where everyone can see. Sooz does not understand how Katherine could like Andi because she made a girl cry in the bathroom for an hour because she is so mean, but Katherine insists there must be something good about Andi since Jamie likes her. Plus, Andi is a dinosaur while Katherine is just a lizard who wishes she were a dinosaur. Deciding she needs a biological advantage to make herself more evolutionarily attractive, Katherine examines herself in the mirror that evening. She considers spending some of her college savings on contacts and new clothes. When she tells Dad that she wishes she was good at a sport, he reminds her that she is good at dinosaurs, but that is not good enough because it will not make Jamie love her. Katherine has gym with Andi three days a week, and she tries to be nice to her because she is desperate for Andi to like her. Katherine's fantasies about Jamie become impossible on the worst day of her life. She is following close behind Andi as they leave the gym, but when Andi turns and bumps into her, her notebook falls open to a sketch of Jamie's tattoo. Katherine begs Andi not to say anything, but Andi laughs and informs her that girls like Katherine do not get guys like Jamie, especially when they are already with girls like Andi. Frozen by Andi's anger, Katherine feels like a lizard, but she is a human being. She tells Andi she understands as Andi walks across her notebook, leaving a footprint. Katherine is proud of herself for making it to the bathroom before crying. Though Andi is mean, it is worse that she is honest because of course Jamie will



never like a geeky girl who knows too much about dinosaurs. Katherine spends the rest of the afternoon in the bathroom, and the next day, she is prepared to be tormented, fearing Andi has told the whole school about her crush, but no one even looks at her weird; however, as biology approaches, Katherine begins to fear that Andi told Jamie, and her fear is confirmed when he catches her looking at his tattoo and rolls his sleeve down. Katherine does not know why Andi could not just ignore her instead of being mean enough to tell Jamie about her crush, but on the way home, she realizes that she can turn from prey to predator.

When Sooz asks what Katherine is going to do about Andi, Katherine surprises herself by saying she is going to destroy her. Sooz says it is about time and admits that she was the girl that Andi made cry for an hour. Katherine is glad that Sooz is on board because she needs her experience with Photoshop. She will need to use some of her college savings, but revenge is worth it. Maybe it is insane to take Andi on because she is more popular and more important, but every good paleontologist knows that even the biggest can die; you are either a predator or prey in this world, and there are many ways that dinosaurs caught and killed their prey. It just requires being patient and attacking when least expected, and years of studying paleontology has prepared Katherine to be patient. She waits three months for soccer season to begin, and on a gym day, she "accidentally" leaves her Math book in her gym locker, so Mom has to take her back to school to retrieve it. Katherine sneaks a small camera in, hidden in an empty blush compact, so she can discreetly take pictures while looking in the mirror. She wants Jamie, but since she cannot have him, she will make sure Andi cannot have him either. Sooz giggles uncontrollably as they look at the pictures, and she perfectly Photoshops the best one. They wait two weeks so no one would remember Katherine being in the locker room and suspect her. They spend the entire night hanging posters all over town and throughout school, and though she gets no sleep, Katherine cannot skip school and miss what everyone is talking about which is a picture of Andi, half naked from the shower, with text advertising her love for sex. The first time Katherine sees Andi that day, she is rushing to the bathroom in tears because now everyone in Brookdale knows what her boobs look like. Rumors spread that Andi is a prostitute or a nymphomaniac and cannot stop cheating on Jamie. By lunch, the real story has spread; Jamie dumped Andi because she could not explain why someone had a naked picture of her. Apparently, Andi cried again, and Katherine wishes she had seen it. Andi sits alone at her usual table, but no one joins her. Katherine finally feels like she has evolved into a dinosaur.



Section 13: This Is My Audition Monologue

Section 13: This Is My Audition Monologue Summary

Because Rachel Banks has auditioned for every play since her freshman year and has never gotten a part, she writes her own audition monologue this year because she is determined to be memorable. Scotty King was electrocuted while running the light board, but what no one seems to realize is that it should have been Rachel. Because she always marks "yes" to the question on the audition form asking if she is willing to work backstage if she is not cast in a role, Rachel is assigned to the light board. Though she acts well when she practices in her room, she blows every audition she attempts. She knows she is not like the actors which is why Mr. P assumes she must be a techie since she is here, but he is wrong. She understands that he does not know what to do with her since she will never be that type, and since most people cannot even remember her name, she is performing an audition piece with the goal of telling Mr. P who she is because she can assure him that she will never be one of them the way he expects her to be. Yet, she knows that it does not matter because someday someone will not be blind to her just because she is not aggressively different. If she leaves school and gets a part in the real world, it will be because she loves it, has paid her dues and was willing to check "yes" to backstage work so she could learn. Plus, she is passionate about acting. Rachel left Scotty on the light board because she wanted to spend more time with the actors, but she did not know that the roof was leaky. Though the accident was not her fault, she feels things might have gone differently if she had been there, and Rachel sees Scotty's death as a sign to stop offering to work backstage. She determines to stop being cowardly and "stop being willing to stay behind the scenes when what you want is to be in the scenes" (p. 327). If Mr. P cannot find a role for her to fill, Rachel will walk away. She is no longer content to hide in the shadows; she is determined to be remembered.

Section 13: This Is My Audition Monologue Analysis

The preceding comic, "Theater Types", explains that an ingénue is a wide-eyed freshman and warns them to watch out because no one is as friendly as they seem. Character actors' poison ring is not just for show, and they will be the star with a little muscle relaxant. Though the part belongs to the leading lady for now, she should be wary because there is always an understudy in the wing. The hero should not be made because everyone knows how he got the part last year, and though the villain may wear black and tie people to train tracks, at least he is honest.

Sara Zarr's "This Is My Audition Monologue" begins as Rachel explains that she wrote this audition piece because, though she knows they are supposed to pick something like Shakespeare or Chekhov, none of them shows her range and she needs to be



memorable since Mr. P has had trouble remembering her name since she first auditioned her freshman year. She obviously needs a new approach, so her goal is to be memorable. She warns him that she is going to go over the time limit as she tells a story, starting now. Scotty King recently was electrocuted while running the light board, and though Mr. P was there, what he does not realize is that it was supposed to be Rachel. She is not trying to turn Scotty's tragedy to herself because she is not an attention whore as someone wrote next to her picture in her friend's yearbook. She has never gotten a part because she always makes the mistake of checking "yes" to being willing to work behind the scenes if she is not cast in the play, but she does not check "yes" this time because she believes she may get a part if she makes herself memorable. She has come to the conclusion that she is never even cast in the parts that no one wants because she is willing to work backstage; she normally panics and marks "yes" because she prefers to mop up the actors' sweat than to have nothing to do with the play. The problem is that there are too many girls at her school who think they want to be actresses, but Rachel would have no problem getting a part if she were a guy. In fact, she is willing to play a guy as it would be easy to cut her hair and flatten her chest, and she hopes this is a way to make herself memorable. "Miracle Worker" was supposed to be Rachel's big break because she fit the part of Helen Keller perfectly, but as usual, she blew the audition.

Rachel is an excellent actress when she practices in her room alone, but she is bad when she gets on stage for the audition which is why she always agrees to help out backstage. That is how she ended up running the lights which is a job for people like Scotty King who are passionate about running lights. Her intent was not to kill when she chose Scotty King to be her lighting assistant; he was supposed to be her errand boy, but she let him take care of the lights so she could spend more time with the actors. Rachel knows that she is not like the other actors and actresses, but she is passionate about acting, and she believes that someone will recognize her passion, someday. What Rachel has that other girls don't have is passion; she has memorized every play her school has put on since she was a freshman. One might say she shirked her responsibilities by leaving Scotty on the board at the last minute, but she planned it weeks ahead of time and showed him what to do, figuring it would not matter that she was not the one actually running the lights since Mr. P cannot even remember her name. She warned Scotty about drinking near the board since a spill could cause him to get electrocuted, but she never thought about other means of electrocution, like a leaky roof. Rachel knows it was a freak accident and not her fault, but she cannot help thinking things might have gone differently if she had been there, and she also sees Scotty's death as a sign to stop checking the "yes" box. Rachel only has one more year left of high school, and she has proven her dedication by the fact that she is still here after everything that has happened because the show must go on. She will take any part, but if Mr. P cannot find a part for her, she will walk away because she will not hang in the shadows any longer; this time, he will remember her name.



Section 14: The Stars at the Finish Line

Section 14: The Stars at the Finish Line Summary

In third grade, Tabitha Bell, the new smart kid at school, says she wants to be an astronaut, so Peter Berman says he does too since he does not know what else to say. Thus begins their academic competition. Now, at the end of their junior year, Peter and Tabitha rarely speak because of this competition though they have nearly every class together. Peter does not really want to be an astronaut, but he credits Tabitha and their competition for his straight A's. Moreover, Peter has been in love with Tabitha since fifth grade. After Tabitha approaches Peter and asks why he did not tell her about the Messier Marathon being held tomorrow, she begins to cry, saying how stupid she is for ignoring basic observational astronomy and insisting Peter take her with him. Peter warns Tabitha that the Messier Marathon requires finding 110 objects on a list in the night sky, but she insists she has three days to prepare.

As Peter and Tabitha head toward the Messier Marathon, he objects to her GoTo telescope since it will show her the objects on the list if she inputs their coordinates, but Tabitha insists it does not matter how she finds the objects. When Peter mentions their competition, Tabitha pretends she does not know what he is talking about before claiming that their competition is the reason she never gets to do anything fun. Once they reach the lot and set up their station, they have a small tiff, but Peter quickly forgives Tabitha for being so annoying because she has such a cute butt. He offers to help her with the Marathon, but he gets embarrassed when he attempts to kiss her, and he hopes she did not notice. Peter leaves Tabitha alone to find the next few objects on her own, and he lies on the ground and looks up at the stars. Tabitha soon joins him, and they lay under the sleeping bag together. After Tabitha explains to Peter why she wants to be an astronaut, he admits that he does not want to be an astronaut; he only said it because Tabitha said it. Tabitha kisses him, and they spend the rest of the night watching the stars together. The next morning, they rush back to their telescopes to find the final object, but when Tabitha tells the director of the event that they missed 80 objects, he invites them to try again tonight. Peter and Tabitha agree, planning to spend the two hours when no new objects rise or fall making out. Tabitha spends the afternoon reading Peter's star atlas, and Peter spends that time simply watching her. When she finishes, she thanks him so sincerely that he picks her up and carries her across the field.

Section 14: The Stars at the Finish Line Analysis

The preceding comic "The Best Ways to Stay Awake for Gaming" provides these helpful hints: don a coffee hat, sit in a portable ice bath, use a shock-training dog collar, place toothpicks under fingernails, and cut off eyelids; these hints are also useful for finals week.



In "The Stars at the Finish Line" by Wendy Mass, 2563 days ago with three kids until his turn, Peter Berman does not know what he is going to say, but he is expectant when it is new student Tabitha Bell's turn because she is really smart and took his place as the smartest kid in their class. Since Tabitha says she is going to be an astronaut, Peter claims he is too, so Tabitha glares at him and tells him to bring it on. At the age of nine, their competition had begun. Now, it is the end of their junior year, and Tabitha and Peter have spoken exactly 238 words since then though they are in every Honors class together. As Honors English is about to start, Tabitha approaches Peter holding a flyer and asks why he did not tell her. Peter was never concerned with his grades until he began to feel competitive with Tabitha, but he should have told her that he does not really want to be an astronaut because he gets car sick. Still, he owes his straight A's to her as they will probably allow him to get a scholarship to college, something his family could not afford otherwise. Even though Tabitha is extremely annoying, Peter has been in love with her since fifth grade. Tabitha is annoyed that Peter did not tell her about the Messier Marathon being held by the local astronomy club since he is the youth advisor, and when she starts to cry because she realizes how stupid she has been to ignore basic observational astronomy, she insists Peter is taking her with him. Peter explains that the Messier Marathon requires finding 110 objects in the night sky from a list which is very difficult, but Tabitha insists she will practice for the next three days. He offers to help her but realizes it is a mistake as soon as he says it because they do not help each other; she is only talking to him because she needs something from him, but Peter can live with that.

As Peter loads his telescope in the VW van that Tabitha borrowed for their trip, he objects to her using her GoTo computerized telescope since it is cheating because it will show her the objects on the list if she types in the coordinates, but Tabitha argues that the object is to see all 110 objects and it does not matter how, plus she only had three days to prepare. Peter explains how things will work once they get there, and when he warns Tabitha that it will be cold, she responds by saying she has lived there for eight years. She grows suspicious when Peter specifies that she moved to his town eight years, two months and three days ago, but he explains that that is when their competition started. Tabitha acts like she does not know what he is talking about before admitting that of course they are in a competition which is why she never gets to do fun stuff. Peter is surprised because he credits Tabitha for all the things he gets to do while she blames him for the things she does not get to do. He asks why they can't both get what they want, but she points out that there is no precedent of two astronauts coming from the same high school. This would be a good time for Peter to admit that he does not want to be an astronaut, but he does not want Tabitha to lose focus senior year by dropping their competition. When they reach the makeshift lot, they set up their station. Peter explains he will use a night vision flashlight to check the charts, upsetting Tabitha when he comments that he thought she did not want his help. She is so annoying, but Peter cannot stay mad at her because her butt is so cute. He tells her that he is happy to help, and Tabitha admits she is out of her league and needs his help. The two of them begin moving through the objects on the list, and Peter's heart beats like crazy each time Tabitha smiles at him. He wants to kiss her, but she urges him to show her more objects, so he hopes she does not realize he was trying to kiss her.



As more time passes without them talking, Peter wants to crawl into a hole more and more, so he finally leaves Tabitha to find the next few objects on her own with her GoTo telescope. He feels guilty because it is not Tabitha's fault that she does not feel the same way about him, but he assures himself she will be fine. He lies on the ground and looks at the stars until Tabitha appears with a blanket and sleeping bag which she uses to cover both of them. Tabitha asks Peter to tell her a story, so he recites a poem, "The Song of the Stars", which causes her to tear up as she explains she decided she wanted to be an astronaut when she was eight to get a true perspective of things so her problems, such as her parents' fighting and moving again, would not matter so much. Peter agrees; that is why he likes taking pictures of the sky so much. When Tabitha asks why Peter wants to be an astronaut, he admits that he does not and never did, and he also confesses that he just said that because she did; if she had said she wanted to be a chimney sweep, he would have said the same thing, but he is glad she said she wanted to be an astronaut or else he would have never learned about the stars. Saying Peter is crazy, Tabitha leans over and kisses him. They spend the next bit of the night joking, but when Peter suggests they might be able to catch up if they work with both telescopes, though they are two hours behind, Tabitha suggests laying down and watching the stars instead, so he agrees. Peter wakes at 5 a.m. unable to believe Tabitha fell asleep in his arms. When an announcement sounds that they are nearing the finish line, Tabitha and Peter narrow their eyes and run off; they may have missed most of the Messier Marathon, but neither of them are willing to miss a challenge. Tabitha configures her GoTo, but Peter's telescope is not powerful enough to see the final object, so Tabitha offers to let him look through hers. When a man brings a stack of completion certificates, Tabitha tells him that they made it to the finish line, but they missed 80 objects before that, and when the man suggests they could try again tonight, Tabitha and Peter agree to really do the Marathon, other than the two hours between 12 and 2 when no new objects rise or set. When Tabitha asks what they will do during that time, Peter leans in to kiss her, forgetting the man is still standing there. They tell him they are in, and he walks away. Tabitha tells Peter that she plans to spend her day reading his star atlas so she can teach him something tonight, and he decides to spend the time watching her read, insisting it will be an exciting use of his time. For the next four hours, Peter watches Tabitha learn about astronomical history, and as she finishes him, she thanks him so earnestly that he wants to scoop her up and run across the field with her, so he does.



Section 15: It's Just a Jump to the Left

Section 15: It's Just a Jump to the Left Summary

Best friends Agnes and Leta have been going to "The Rocky Horror Picture Show" every Friday for months, and they are furious when Jennifer Pomhultz starts attending and acts like she has been a Rocky devotee for years. The two eighth-grade best friends made a pact to get their first kisses by the end of the school year, and Leta hopes hers will be with Tom Van Dyke, a junior who works at the concession stand in the Cineplex. Leta makes a fool of herself when ordering her food from Tom, but she is furious inside the theater when she sees Jennifer mimicking Columbia's moves because Columbia's role belongs to Leta. As Agnes and Leta wait for their ride home, Roger asks Agnes on a date, and Agnes accepts. Two weeks later, Agnes and Leta get into a fight when Agnes tells her friend that she cannot go to see "Rocky Horror" next Friday because she is going to a party with Roger instead. After student teacher Miss Shelton asks how Steely Dan's music makes her class feel, Cawley Franklin tells Leta that he does not know how the music makes him feel because he was busy looking at Miss Shelton's breasts. The next day, Leta tells Agnes that she let Roger finger her, but she makes her best friend promise not to tell anyone; however, Leta tells Cawley when she sees him at the Popcorn Players Community Theater where she spends her Wednesday afternoons. Cawley asks if Leta has ever done that, and when she admits she has never been kissed, he takes her to a rarely used men's restroom and kisses her. Leta feels awkward with Cawley afterward and rushes to her mom's car, pretending not to hear him calling after her. When Leta tells Agnes about the kiss, Agnes laughs at the thought of Leta kissing "Creepy Cawley", and by the end of the phone conversation, Leta finds the thought of Cawley to be intolerable.

When Leta goes to "Rocky Horror" alone on Friday night, she runs into Miss Shelton and her college friends who invite Leta to sit with them. Tom questions Leta about who she was talking to, and he joins them near the end of the movie, flirting with Miss Shelton. After the film, Tom says they should do this again, and Leta agrees, but Tom insists Miss Shelton be there too. On Wednesday, Cawley invites Leta to "Rocky Horror" on Friday, claiming she has to take Jennifer down because Jennifer is planning to dance with the regulars as Columbia. Leta claims she cannot make it, but that night, she dyes and cuts her hair to match a picture of Columbia. On Friday night, as Leta looks for Tom's car, Cawley startles her when he approaches and suggests they can sit together, but she tells him she is waiting for another guy, so he leaves her alone. Leta finds Tom in the field behind the Cineplex where he gets high with some older kids. Miss Shelton joins them, but when Leta insists on making it to the movie on time, Miss Shelton and Tom leave together. Leta is upset that she sneaks in late and does not get to show off her new hair and clothes. Later that night, Leta finds Agnes sitting on her porch. Agnes tells her that she lost her virginity to Roger, but she cries because "I'm different now. I can't go back" (p. 399). Agnes asks to stay the night at Leta's house, and after Leta agrees, the girls spend the night catching up on gossip.



Section 15: It's Just a Jump to the Left Analysis

The last comic in "Geektastic" is entitled "What Kind of Geek Are You", and it lists the differences between geeks of the gaming, music, science, fantasy and comic book genres.

In Libba Bray's "It's Just a Jump to the Left", Agnes and Leta cannot stand Jennifer Pomholtz because she recently started going to "The Rocky Horror Picture Show" which they have been going to for months, but she acts like she has been a Rocky devotee for years. The girls consider her a fake since she switches characters every week. Leta and Agnes have been best friend since third grade, but they are fourteen now and in eighth grade, and they made a pact to have their first kisses by the end of the school year. Leta hopes her first kiss will be with Tom Van Dyke, a junior in high school who works at the concession stand at the Cineplex. When Leta orders her food from Tom, she talks about her ulcer until Agnes pulls her away, saying she will never get kissed at this rate. As they take their seats in the third row, Leta panics when Jennifer mimics Columbia's moves; everyone knows Columbia's role belongs to Leta! While waiting for their ride after the show, Roger approaches Agnes and asks her to the movies tomorrow. As Agnes agrees and gives him her number, her smiles makes Leta uneasy.

"Dammit Janet" takes place two weeks later on Saturday as Leta spends the night at Agnes's house. Agnes chides Leta for making a joke about excrement, warning her that guys will think she is gross if she says things like that around them. She also informs Leta that she cannot go to see Rocky on Friday because Roger invited her to a party, and when Leta objects that they always go together, Agnes tells her to grow up. Leta notices the changes in Agnes's room décor which is obviously influenced by her new relationship. They do not speak for the rest of the night, and the next morning, Leta leaves without saying goodbye. In "The Sword of Damocles", Leta's student teacher, Miss Shelton, discusses the band, Steely Dan, with the class, and after class, Cawley Franklin catches Leta in the hallway to say he does not know what he thinks about the music because he could not stop looking at Miss Shelton's boobs. Leta says he is weird, but she laughs at him. In "Over at the Frankenstein Place", Leta checks on her brother, Stevie, when she gets home, adjusting his TV for him but staying clear since he has seizures since his gun accidentally discharged and a bullet hit him in the temple. In the kitchen, Leta tells Mom that it is her turn to drive to Rocky, but Mom tells Leta she cannot drive so Leta will just have to skip it. Refusing to see what Stevie wants when he starts yelling, Leta sneaks into the back bedroom that was her father's study until he moved to Hartford, CT four months ago when his company relocated. Mom, Stevie and Leta stayed here because the housing market is in a slump. At first, Leta missed Dad, but now she sometimes forgets he even exists which makes her realize he was never really around much in the first place. Leta returns to her room and blares the "Rocky Horror" soundtrack in order to drown out Stevie and Mom.

In "Touch-a, Touch-a, Touch Me", Agnes waits at Leta's locker the next day, and Leta is happy to see her since they have not spoken in a while. Agnes convinces Leta to ditch gym so she can tell her that she let Roger finger her, but she makes Leta promise not to



tell anyone. Leta wants to know if they did anything else, but she does not want to know either. In "Wild and Untamed Thing", Leta spends Wednesday afternoons at the Popcorn Players Community Theater, as does Cawley. Cawley shows her a gold lame tuxedo jacket she can use for "Rocky Horror" and asks where Agnes is. Leta tells him about what Agnes let Roger do to her, making him promise never to mention it. When Cawley asks if Leta has ever done that, Leta admits she has never been kissed, so he offers to kiss her, leading her to a rarely used men's bathroom to give her an awkward first kiss. They return to the theater separately, and Leta rushes out at 5, pretending not to hear Cawley calling after her. In "Hot Patootie- Bless My Soul!", Agnes squeals at the thought of Leta kissing "Creepy Cawley", and when Leta objects that he is funny and nice, Agnes insists he is a weirdo. By the end of the conversation, Leta sees Cawley as intolerable and cannot seem to reverse it. Agnes tells Leta that she and Roger nearly did it today, admitting she wants to have sex with him. Agnes gets off the phone when her dad gets home, and Leta realizes they did not finish talking about her first kiss. She pretends her pillow is Tom and makes out with it. Later, she hears Mom and Stevie screaming and rushes to Stevie's room to see him give Mom a bloody lip before settling down.

In "Science Fiction/Double Feature", Leta goes to "Rocky Horror" alone on Friday night, and she is surprised to see Miss Shelton who introduces her to her college friends and invites Leta to sit with them. Tom asks Leta who she was talking to and tells her to save him a seat because he will come find them later. Leta feels cool hanging out with Miss Shelton and her older friends, and when Tom slides in next to her near the end of the movie, he offers Miss Shelton anything from the concession stand, including himself. At the end of the movie, Tom says that they will do the Time Warp again, so Leta says she will see him next Friday, and he insists Miss Shelton must come too. At the Popcorn Theater on Wednesday, Cawley tells Leta that Jennifer Pomhulz is going to dance with the regulars this weekend as Columbia, so Leta has to show up and take her down. Leta claims she cannot go to "Rocky Horror" this weekend, getting angry when Cawley insists she has to go. Later that night, Leta dyes and cuts her hair to match a picture of Columbia, covering it with a cap so Mom will not see it before "Rocky Horror", not caring if she gets grounded after tomorrow.

In "Superheroes", this is the first time that Leta and Agnes have been together on a Friday night in nearly two months, but soon after Agnes's sister drops them in the parking lot, Roger picks Agnes up. As Leta looks for Tom's car, she is startled when Cawley approaches her and puts his arm around her, suggesting they can sit together, but Leta tells him she is waiting for a guy, causing Cawley to walk away sullenly. Leta finally finds Tom in the field behind the Cineplex with a group of older kids who mock her for passing on the joint and being dressed for the movie. When Miss Shelton joins them, Tom invites her to get high in his car, and she drags Leta along. Eventually, Leta worries they will be late for the movie, but Tom says it is just a stupid movie she has seen a million times, so Leta gets in line alone as Tom drives away with Miss Shelton. The movie has already started by the time Leta sneaks in, and she is upset that she missed making her grand entrance with her new hair and clothes. During "The Time Warp", Jennifer goes onstage and owns the part of Columbia, leaving Leta feeling lost and small as she sits alone. The manager says Leta has a phone call, and learning that



Stevie is in the hospital, Leta rushes to see him, but he is fine by the time she gets there. She is upset that Mom told Dad not to come home because she wants her family to sit down together and discuss how everything has changed but it is no one's fault. Mom is shocked by Leta's hair, but Leta assures her it is not permanent, apologizing if she and Stevie are too much for Mom. Mom notes that is a horrible thing to say and assures Leta they just had a scare but are okay now. As Mom talks to the doctor, Leta cries for the way things were, how Agnes has changed and because of Jennifer's perfect dance steps. Later, Leta takes a cab home and is surprised to find Agnes waiting on her porch. Agnes tells Leta that she and Roger did it. He was super nice, but Agnes starts to cry because "I'm different now. I can't go back" (p. 399). Leta understands. Agnes wants to stay the night with Leta, and Leta agrees, so they go to Leta's room to gossip. When Agnes falls asleep, Leta looks at the glittery flecks on the ceiling and imagines they are stars winking out a message that only she can understand.



Characters

Alec appears in Quiz Bowl Antichrist

Alec is the narrator and a member of his school's quiz bowl team. Alec is mortified that Sung Kim, the leader of their quiz bowl team, petitions to be allowed to get a varsity jacket. Alec is the team's alternate who was drafted by Mr. Phillips, their coach, for his knowledge of English Literature, and he agrees because it will look good on college applications, he enjoys his literary knowledge, and he has a crush on another member, Damien Bloom. Alec is hopeful that he will get to share a hotel room with Damien when their team goes to Indianapolis for Nationals, but as Nationals draw near, Sung begins quizzing everyone in the hallways, irritating Alec who reacts by purposefully answering questions incorrectly until Damien chides him for his behavior. Alec is furious when he learns that Sung will be rooming with Damien while he is stuck with Wes. At the Quiz Bowl Social their first night in Indianapolis, Alec's mind is preoccupied with Damien who seems worried about something else while the rest of their team has a good time, so Alec and Damien go to Damien's room to watch a movie. The next day, Sung's team wins their first three matches, but during the last match of the day, Alec buzzes in for a science question and answers it incorrectly. Their team manages to win, barely, so Sung calls an emergency meeting where he yells at Alec for answering a science question. This leads to an argument which results in Alec telling Sung that quiz bowl does not matter since they only memorize the knowledge instead of doing anything useful with it.

Alec goes to dinner with Damien and Wes while the rest of the team goes out to eat with Sung. Alec feels bad about answering the question wrong. Damien and Wes try to cheer him up, teasing him by calling him the Quiz Bowl Antichrist. As Alec talks to Wes, he realizes that Damien is one of the reasons he joined quiz bowl, and he hopes that Damien finds him interesting. After dinner, Damien and Alec decide to watch TV in Damien's room again, but they walk in on Sung making out with Frances. Alec mocks Sung until Damien pulls him away and accuses him of having no heart. Alec is distraught that Damien would say such a thing, but since he cannot tell Damien what is really in his heart, he rushes to his room and locks himself in the bathroom. Thinking of Frances, Alec feels bad and wonders if he really doesn't have a heart, but when he asks Wes, Wes says that he is just very angry and suggests that Alec believes that no one will see him as a quiz bowl geek if he makes fun of Sung, the ultimate quiz bowl geek. Wes also notes that Damien likes girls. Practice is tense as half of the team is mad at one another, but Alec feels like he might be worth saving when he looks at Wes. After practice, Damien apologizes to Alec for the way he talked to him, and Alec agrees that he should not have been so mean to Sung and Frances. Their team loses the semifinals, but the local newspaper still takes their picture in which Wes and Alec look happy, as if only they are privy to some private joke.



Felicity appears in Everyone But You

Felicity is the narrator who moves from Asher, OH to Maui, HI when Mom marries Mr. Hunter. Felicity's family is poor because her brother, Carl, was born brain damaged, and Dad left because he could not deal with the situation. When Mr. Hunter has a stroke on an airplane and Mom, his Emergency Room nurse, is credited with saving his life, he proposes to her, so Mom marries the rich old man on the verge of death. Felicity worries about moving from Asher, OH to Mr. Hunter's home in Maui, HI. She is very popular in Asher because of her talent at baton twirling. During her first day at Kahanamoku Academy, Felicity is distraught to learn that the school does not have a band. Felicity tries to make friends by demonstrating what she has to offer, twirling her baton as she walks through the hallways, but after two days of having her baton taken, she leaves it at home. Felicity does not understand her new school since being peppy makes her unpopular, but she develops a crush on Kai Risdale, a beautiful, popular student. Felicity grows excited when Kai announces that everyone is invited to a party at his house, but when she tries to join them, Kai clarifies that he meant "everyone but you" (page 208). Kai also insists that Felicity's name is "Fellatio" which is soon shortened to "BJ". Felicity is miserable, but she turns her focus to her studies, determined to get accepted to a good college.

During the last semester of her junior year, Felicity spends her afternoons twirling in the park. One day, she drops it because she sees Kai and his friends, but when Kai tries to grab it, she whacks him upside the head with her baton. Kai says she is lucky he does not hit girls, but Felicity retorts that he is lucky she does not hit girls either, so Kai laughs and says she is alright. Later, an old man named Jimmy asks if Felicity has ever twirled fire, suggesting Auntie Alea's Luau where Felicity becomes the youngest baton flame twirler and the only white one. She also befriends another employee, Danny, who happens to be in her AP English class. When Kai and his friends come to the luau, they are impressed with Felicity's skills, but when Kai tries to hit on Felicity, she dumps a bottle of water over his head. After graduating as one of four valedictorians, Felicity is reluctant to leave the island, but her mother insists she should go places since Mom and Carl are grounded to Hawaii. Mom and Carl see her off at the airport, but Carl becomes agitated as Felicity explains why she has to leave. Finally, she hands him her lucky baton, though she knows she will never get it back. It now belongs to the brother she kisses goodbye. Felicity does not plan to continue twirling in college because she wants to see what else is out there.

Billie Faggart appears in Secret Identity

Billie Faggart is the fifteen-year-old narrator who travels to New York City to meet her online boyfriend, Paul Zell, in person. Billie Faggart writes an email to Paul Zell to tell him about their first attempt to meet in person. They met online in FarAway, but Billie pretended to be her older sister because she is only sixteen years old and Paul is thirty-four. When Billie gets to the hotel in New York City where she is supposed to meet Paul for dinner, the hotel clerk, Aliss, glares at a guy behind her whose name is Conrad who



apologizes insincerely for standing her up. Aliss and several other people ask Billie if she is there to audition for sidekick as there is a superhero convention going on at the hotel. When Aliss hands Billie her hotel key and room number which Paul supposedly left for her, Billie takes the elevator upstairs with Conrad who tries to be charming in vain. In the room, Billie goes through Paul's suitcase, finding a diamond engagement ring buried at the bottom of his bag. After a nap, she talks to Aliss for a bit and is threatened not to hook up with Conrad. Billie arrives at the Golden Lotus where she is supposed to meet Paul at 6 p.m., but when he has not arrived by 7:30 p.m., she returns to the room and gets drunk off the liquor in the minibar, donning the engagement ring on her toe. Billie has vague memories of someone caring for her in her drunken stupor, but when she wakes, Paul's suitcase is gone and the room is empty. After she showers, Billie goes to Starbucks where Conrad joins her and insists on talking to her because Aliss can see them and he knows it will make her jealous. Billie tells Conrad about her plans with Paul, so he takes her to the kitchen where she meets Ernesto who provides her with a cure for her hangover. Conrad and Ernesto tease Billie about coming to meet a pervert she met online, but they believe Paul Zell and Billie are both superheroes, so frustrated, Billie eventually concedes that everyone is a superhero. Conrad invites Billie to a party later before going to school, and Billie spends the afternoon alone at Bryant Park, watching the chess players, which she and Paul had planned to do.

Back at the hotel, Aliss harasses Billie about Conrad, but Billie shows her the ring and tells her that Conrad was planning to give it to Aliss tonight. Aliss convinces Billie to go to Conrad's party with her, but Billie is uncomfortable when Conrad insists on introducing her as his sidekick for the night. When she tries to leave, Conrad follows and insists on showing her Ernesto's butter sculptures in the freezer; however, when he breaks the sculptures and launches butter at her, Billie locks him in the freezer for a bit. She releases him for fear that he will destroy all of the sculptures, but when Conrad claims that he and Ernesto are not friends like he and Billie are, Billie argues that they are not friends. Conrad insists that they will meet again, either as nemeses or in order to team up and save the world. Billie leaves a note for Ernesto, apologizing for ruining the butter sculptures, and she catches a bus home. At home, Billie receives an email from Paul Zell claiming he never made it to New York because he had an emergency appendectomy, and though she is relieved at first that they can pretend none of this happened, she realizes that would make Paul Zell pretty pathetic, so she writes him. She tells him that one day she will be older, and she has to believe that Conrad was right about people meeting again because Billie travelled to New York because she loves Paul Zell. On her eighteenth birthday, she plans to return to Bryant Park with her chess set and wait all day, ending her letter with "Your move, Paul Zell" (page 268).

Leta Miller appears in *It's Just a Jump to the Left*

Leta Miller is the main character of "It's Just a Jump to the Left." Best friends Agnes and Leta have been going to "The Rocky Horror Picture Show" every Friday for months, and they are furious when Jennifer Pomhultz starts attending and acts like she has been a Rocky devotee for years. The two eighth-grade best friends made a pact to get their first kisses by the end of the school year, and Leta hopes hers will be with Tom Van Dyke, a



junior who works at the concession stand in the Cineplex. Leta makes a fool of herself when ordering her food from Tom, but she is furious inside the theater when she sees Jennifer mimicking Columbia's moves because Columbia's role belongs to Leta. As Agnes and Leta wait for their ride home, Roger asks Agnes on a date, and Agnes accepts. Two weeks later, Agnes and Leta get into a fight when Agnes tells her friend that she cannot go to see "Rocky Horror" next Friday because she is going to a party with Roger instead. After student teacher Miss Shelton asks how Steely Dan's music makes her class feel, Cawley Franklin tells Leta that he does not know how the music makes him feel because he was busy looking at Miss Shelton's breasts. The next day, Leta tells Agnes that she let Roger finger her, but she makes her best friend promise not to tell anyone; however, Leta tells Cawley when she sees him at the Popcorn Players Community Theater where she spends her Wednesday afternoons. Cawley asks if Leta has ever done that, and when she admits she has never been kissed, he takes her to a rarely used men's restroom and kisses her. Leta feels awkward with Cawley afterward and rushes to her mom's car, pretending not to hear him calling after her. When Leta tells Agnes about the kiss, Agnes laughs at the thought of Leta kissing "Creepy Cawley", and by the end of the phone conversation, Leta finds the thought of Cawley to be intolerable.

When Leta goes to "Rocky Horror" alone on Friday night, she runs into Miss Shelton and her college friends who invite Leta to sit with them. Tom questions Leta about who she was talking to, and he joins them near the end of the movie, flirting with Miss Shelton. After the film, Tom says they should do this again, and Leta agrees, but Tom insists Miss Shelton be there too. On Wednesday, Cawley invites Leta to "Rocky Horror" on Friday, claiming that she has to take Jennifer down because Jennifer is planning to dance with the regulars as Columbia. Leta claims she cannot make it, but that night, she dyes and cuts her hair to match a picture of Columbia. On Friday night, as Leta looks for Tom's car, Cawley startles her when he approaches and suggests they can sit together, but she tells him she is waiting for another guy, so he leaves her alone. Leta finds Tom in the field behind the Cineplex where he gets high with some older kids. Miss Shelton joins them, but when Leta insists on making it to the movie on time, Miss Shelton and Tom leave together. Leta is upset that she sneaks in late and does not get to show off her new hair and clothes. Later that night, Leta finds Agnes sitting on her porch. Agnes tells her that she lost her virginity to Roger, but she cries because "I'm different now. I can't go back" (page 399). Agnes asks to stay the night at Leta's house, and after Leta agrees, the girls spend the night catching up on gossip.

Chung Ae appears in Once You're a Jedi, You're Always a Jedi

Chung Ae, AKA Arizhel, is the Klingon girl who gets drunk and spends the night with Thomas, eventually accepting the fact that she likes her enemy.



Thomas appears in Once You're a Jedi, You're Always a Jedi

Thomas is the Jedi apprentice who likes Chung Ae and is okay with his new attraction to the dark side.

Montgomery K. Bushnell appears in One of Us

Montgomery K. Bushnell is the head cheerleader who hires a group of geeks to teach her about science fiction so she can impress her boyfriend who is into "Star Trek." She studies hard and befriends the nerds, learning to appreciate their love for their obsessions with sci-fi.

Ryan appears in One of Us

Ryan is Montgomery's boyfriend for whom she learns about sci-fi from a group of geeks at their school, but he cheats on Montgomery with her best friend.

Mica appears in One of Us

Mica is one of the geeks who tutors Montgomery, and she develops a crush on him.

Ellen appears in One of Us

Ellen is one of the geeks who tutors Montgomery, but they become friends, and Ellen offers to let Montgomery give her a makeover.

Lexia Tollman appears in Definitional Chaos

Lexia Tollman is the narrator's ex-girlfriend who joins him on his mission to deliver money to a Florida hotel for a sci-fi convention. She conducts a social experiment by pretending to steal the money.

Temptress Moon appears in Definitional Chaos

Temptress Moon is the narrator's avatar in Mayhem until Lexia kills her because she forces order in the world of the game.



Jane appears in I Never

Jane is the narrator of "I Never". She pretends to be Catherine Earnshaw in the Game and meets up with Ben who plays Heathcliffe at Xena's condo, but she soon learns that Ben's friend, Noah, actually wrote the letters she fell in love with, so she kisses him.

Benappears in I Never

Ben plays Heathcliffe in the Game, but he goes to the meetup in order to hook up with a lonely geek girl, not caring if it is Jane or someone else. Since Jane rebuffs him, Ben hooks up with someone else, but he is angry when Jane kisses Noah.

Noahappears in I Never

Noah is Ben's friend who actually wrote the letters Ben sent Jane. He likes Jane and tries to warn her that Ben is not the same in person as he is online during their walk to the lake. Jane kisses Noah.

Jim Huckerappears in The King of Pelinnesse

Jim Hucker is the narrator who takes a bus to Boothbay Harbor to question R. P. Flint about his supposed affair with his mother, only to find out it never really happened.

Dawnappears in The Wrath of Dawn

Dawn is the narrator who goes on a blind date with Eric, but she gets angry when he mocks Dawn from "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" so during the Buffy Sing-Along, she delivers a defense of the character.

Ericappears in The Wrath of Dawn

Eric is Dawn's blind date who mocks her favorite character from "Buffy the Vampire Slayer".

Sung Kimappears in Quiz Bowl Antichrist

Sung Kim is the leader of the quiz bowl team who Alec teases for wearing a varsity jacket.



Damien Bloom appears in Quiz Bowl Antichrist

Damien Bloom is a track star and a member of the quiz bowl team who Alec has a crush on, but Damien likes girls.

Wes appears in Quiz Bowl Antichrist

Wes is on the quiz bowl team, and he is Alec's roommate on their trip to Nationals in Indianapolis. He realizes that Alec likes Damien, and it seems that Wes shares Alec's sexual orientation.

Tony appears in The Quiet Knight

Tony, AKA Sir Silent, the Quiet Knight, does not speak often since his voice is rough because he burned his throat as a child by drinking bathroom cleaner. Tony meets Sorayah while participating in a role-playing game, and at school the next day, he defends her against bullies, offering his protection.

Sorayah appears in The Quiet Knight

Sorayah is a new kid in town who attends the same role-playing game as Tony. When some bullies pick on her and her younger brother at school, Tony announces they are under his protection.

Kai Risdale appears in Everyone But You

Kai Risdale is an attractive, popular guy at Felicity's new school in Hawaii who invites everyone but Felicity to a party at his house. He also nicknames Felicity "BJ." When Kai hits on Felicity after seeing her twirl fire at Auntie Alea's Luau, Felicity dumps a bottle of water over his head.

Paul Zell appears in Secret Identity

Paul Zell is the guy Billie meets online, falls in love with and goes to visit in New York. Her email is written to Paul.

Conrad Linthor appears in Secret Identity

Conrad Linthor is a rich jerk who lives at the hotel where Billie is supposed to meet Paul Zell. He befriends Billie to make his pseudo-girlfriend jealous.



Lauren appears in Freak the Geek

Lauren is the narrator who has been chosen, along with her best friend, Kayley, to be one of the two geeks that be "freaked" this year. Her classmates surround her car and chase her and Kayley to the bridge. At the bridge, Lauren and Kayley get into a fight, but they make up and Lauren decides that the others' decision to taunt them is not her problem.

Katherine appears in The Truth about Dino Girl

Katherine is obsessed with dinosaurs and Jamie Terravozza. She compares boys to dinosaurs because she does not know much about either one. She tries to befriend Jamie's girlfriend, Andi, but when Andi sees Katherine's sketch of Jamie's tattoo and tells Jamie, Katherine and her best friend, Sooz, decide to ruin Andi by posting a semi-nude picture of her all over town and school, claiming she loves sex. This leads to Jamie dumping Andi.

Rachel Banks appears in This Is My Audition Monologue

Rachel Banks is the narrator who performs her audition monologue which she wrote herself because she is determined to be memorable.

Peter Berman appears in The Stars At The Finish Line

Peter Berman is the narrator. He has been in an academic competition with Tabitha Bell since third grade because he said he wants to be an astronaut like her, though it is not true. Peter is in love with Tabitha, and he offers to help her with the Messier Marathon. They wind up making out after he confesses that he never really wanted to be an astronaut.

Tabitha Bell appears in The Stars At The Finish Line

Tabitha Bell is the girl with whom Peter has an academic competition. She wants to be an astronaut, and she accompanies Peter to the Messier Marathon where they hook up.

Agnes appears in It's Just a Jump to the Left

Agnes is Leta's best friend who loses her virginity to Roger.



Tom Van Dyke appears in It's Just a Jump to the Left

Tom Van Dyke is the junior boy that Leta has a crush on, but during what Leta believes is a date with Tom, Tom leaves with Miss Shelton.

Cawley Franklin appears in It's Just a Jump to the Left

Cawley Franklin is a weird boy in Leta's class who is the first person to kiss her.



Objects/Places

Convention appears in Once You're a Jedi, You're Always a Jedi

The convention is the main setting of this story and is where Thomas and Chung Ae meet. They are kicked out of the convention when their romance leads to a battle between the Jedis and the Klingons.

Springfield High appears in One of Us

Springfield High is the setting of "One of Us" where the characters attend school. This is also where Ezra, Mica, David and Ellen do most of their geek tutoring to teach Montgomery about geek culture so she can impress her boyfriend.

Mayhem appears in Definitional Chaos

Mayhem is the game that the narrator and Alexia played until Alexia killed Temptress Moon, and this betrayal led to their break-up.

Amtrak's Silver Star appears in Definitional Chaos

Amtrak's Silver Star is the main setting of "Definitional Chaos" as this is the train the narrator and Lexia take to Miami, FL to pay the hotel for the upcoming convention.

Xena's Condo appears in I Never

Xena's condo is the main setting of "I Never". When Xena holds a gathering for players of the Game, Jane attends because she wants to meet Ben, but she soon learns that Noah is the one who wrote the love letters she fell in love with.

Boothbay Harbor, ME appears in The King of Pelinnesse

Boothbay Harbor, ME is the main setting in "The King of Pelinnesse". This is where R. P. Flint lives, so Jim takes a bus to Boothbay Harbor to meet the man he believes his mother had an affair with.

Austin, TX appears in The Wrath of Dawn

Dawn and her family live in Austin, TX.



Waterloo Cinema appears in The Wrath of Dawn

The Waterloo Cinema is a fancy theater where the Buffy sing-along is held. Megan convinces Dawn to go on a double date, but Dawn ends up giving a speech in defense of the character Dawn from "Buffy the Vampire Slayer."

Indianapolis appears in Quiz Bowl Antichrist

The national quiz bowl competition is held in Indianapolis. Alec's team competes but loses.

Dave Nash's Property appears in The Quiet Knight

The role-playing event that Tony attends is held on Dave Nash's property, as usual. This is where Tony meets Soroyah as he participates as Sir Silent, the Quiet Knight.

Asher, OH appears in Everyone But You

Felicity and her family live in Asher, OH where she is popular as a baton twirler until her mother marries Mr. Hunter.

Maui, HI appears in Everyone But You

Felicity and her family move to Maui, HI after Mom marries Mr. Hunter.

Kahanomoku Academy appears in Everyone But You

Felicity attends Kahanomoku Academy when she moves to Hawaii. It is very different than her high school in Asher, and her high spirits make her unpopular.

FarAway appears in Secret Identity

FarAway is the online game where Billie meets, plays chess with and falls in love with Paul Zell while pretending to be her older sister.

New York City appears in Secret Identity

New York City is the main setting of "Secret Identity." Billie goes to meet Paul to see if what they have is real, but he does not show up for their scheduled dinner date at the Golden Lotus.



Hoover Preparatory School for Girls appears in Freak the Geek

Hoover Preparatory School for Girls is the main setting of "Freak the Geek." It is the all-girl school that Lauren and Kayley attend, and this year, they are chosen as the two geeks to be freaked. They escape harassment, but Lauren's car is assaulted with a paintball gun.

Brookdale appears in The Truth About Dino Girl

Brookdale is the main setting of "The Truth About Dino Girl." It is also where Katherine and the other characters live.

Theater appears in This Is My Audition Monologue

The theater is the setting of this story as it is where Rachel performs her audition monologue for Mr. P.

Messier Marathon appears in The Stars At the Finish Line

The goal of the Messier Marathon is to identify all 110 objects on French astronomer Charles Messier's list. Tabitha and Peter attempt it, but they miss most of the objects because they are preoccupied with making out, so they decide to try again the next night.

Popcorn Players Community Theater appears in It's Just a Jump to the Left

Leta spends her Wednesday afternoons at the Popcorn Players Community Theater, as does Cawley. This is where Cawley gives Leta her first kiss.

Cineplex appears in It's Just a Jump to the Left

The Cineplex is the local theater where Leta and Agnes go to see "The Rocky Horror Picture Show" every Friday night until Agnes starts dating Roger. Tom works at the concession stand. Leta meets Tom and Miss Shelton there, thinking she has a date with Tom, but Tom leaves with Miss Shelton, leaving Leta alone and lonely.



Themes

Types of Geeks

The most obvious theme in "Geektastic" is the concept of examining different types of geeks. In "Once You're a Jedi, You're a Jedi All the Way," the idea is comparing two popular geek genres, Star Wars versus Star Trek. In "One of Us", Montgomery learns about sci-fi for her boyfriend, and Ezra, David, Mica and Ellen teach her about movies, epic books, video games and manga. "Definitional Chaos" presents two video game geeks whose conflict in Mayhem leads to a break-up in real life. In "I Never," Jane plays online games with Ben who is eager to hook up with a lonely geek girl. Jim from "The King of Pelinnesse" is a geek when it comes to his favorite author, R. P. Flint. "The Wrath of Dawn" offers devoted fans to "Buffy the Vampire Slayer". In "Quiz Bowl Antichrist", all of the characters are quiz bowl geeks, and Alec constantly mocks Sung Kim, hoping that no one will see him as a quiz bowl geek if he teases the biggest quiz bowl geek of all.

In "The Quiet Knight", Tony and Sorayah are into roleplaying games. Felicity from "Everyone But You" is popular in Ohio for her baton-twirling skills, but the same skills make her a dork when her family moves to Hawaii. In "Secret Identity", Billie meets Paul Zell in an online game, plus the hotel is filled with costumed superheroes and their sidekicks. "Freak the Geek" shows how Lauren and Kayley are taunted for being geeks, though the specific genre of their geekdom is not specified. Katherine is obsessed with dinosaurs while Sooz, her best friend, is an art geek in "The Truth About Dino Girl," and Rachel from "This Is My Audition Monologue" is a theater geek. In "The Stars at the Finish Line", both Peter and Tabitha are astronomy geeks, and Leta from "It's Just a Jump to the Left" is obsessed with "The Rocky Horror Picture Show". This anthology offers a wide range of geeks, though it by no means encompasses every area of geekiness out there.

Being Teased For Being Different

As is appropriate for a book about geeks, a major theme in "Geektastic" is the concept of being teased for being different. A large percentage of the characters in this anthology are tormented because they are different. In "Once You're a Jedi, You're a Jedi All the Way", Chung Ae and Thomas are embarrassed by their mutual attraction because they are supposed to be enemies since she is a Klingon and he is a Jedi. In "One of Us", Montgomery learns to appreciate the geeks and their passions, and Ellen's dad yells at her because he wants her to just be normal, whatever that means. In "I Never," Jane does not see herself as a geek, but Ben comes to the meet-up at Xena's condo with the intention of hooking up with a lonely geek girl. Jim mom's in "The King of Pelinnesse" mocks him for reading R. P. Flint's works. In "The Wrath of Dawn", Dawn argues with Eric about his opinion of Buffy's sister, Dawn, and she defends Dawn to the entire audience during the Buffy Sing-Along. In "Quiz Bowl Antichrist", Alec mocks Sung



Kim, hoping that picking on the biggest quiz bowl geek will make others less likely to pick on him. It is also possible that Alec's homosexuality plays a role in his insecurities.

In "The Quiet Knight", Tony has no friends because he does not talk, and Sorayah and Horace are picked on for wearing their roleplaying clothes to school. In "Everyone But You", Felicity is teased at her new school in Hawaii for her baton-twirling skills which made her popular in Ohio. In "Secret Identity", Aliss and Conrad assume Billie is at the hotel to audition for a sidekick role at the superhero convention. In "Freak the Geek", Lauren and Kayley are dubbed the geeks this year, and their peers torment them, even paintballing Lauren's car. Andi, from "The Truth About Dino Girl", mocks Katherine's knowledge about dinosaurs and tells her that guys like Jamie do not date girls like Katherine, especially when they already have a girl like Andi. In "This Is My Audition Monologue", Rachel is relegated to working backstage because she does not fit the stereotype expected from actresses. Peter and Tabitha from "The Stars At The Finish Line" both have limited social lives in high school because they are in constant academic competition with one another, and in "It's Just a Jump to the Left", Tom is cruel about Leta's obsession with "The Rocky Horror Picture Show" as Leta treats Cawley poorly because her best friend, Agnes, thinks he is weird.

Leaving One's Comfort Zone

One of the most important things that make many of the characters in this novel admirable is their willingness to leave their comfort zone and experiment with other things. "Once You're a Jedi, You're a Jedi All the Way" demonstrates this clearly as Chung Ae and Thomas accept their attraction to one another despite being enemies as a Klingon and a Jedi. In "One of Us", Montgomery hires the geeks to tutor her in their culture, and after she befriends them, Ellen steps outside her comfort zone and agrees to let Montgomery give her a makeover. In "Definitional Chaos", the narrator returns to Mayhem as an assassin, instead of a goody-goody, with the intention of getting revenge on Lexia for killing Temptress Moon. In "I Never", Jane begins playing the Game because of Lisle, and though she goes to the meet-up at Xena's college to meet Ben, she ends up kissing Noah instead when she finds out that he is the one who wrote the love letters that she fell in love with. In "The King of Pelinasse", Jim takes a bus to Boothbay Harbor to confront R. P. Flint about his supposed affair with Jim's mom. In "The Wrath of Dawn", Dawn takes the stage to offer a defense for Dawn from "Buffy the Vampire Slayer."

Alec incorrectly answers a science question in "Quiz Bowl Antichrist", and in "The Quiet Knight", Tony speaks in order to extend his protection to Sorayah and Horace. He even manages to introduce himself to Sorayah. In "Everyone But You," Felicity tries twirling fire at the luau, but she stops twirling batons in college because she wants to see what else is out there. In "Secret Identity", Billies travels to New York City to meet Paul Zell, her online boyfriend, and she also attends Conrad's private party. In "The Truth About Dino Girl", Katherine forces herself to transform from a lizard to a dinosaur by fighting back against Andi's cruelty. Rachel, from "This Is My Audition Monologue," refuses to mark "yes" to helping back stage, and she writes her own audition piece because she is



determined to be memorable and get a part this year. In "The Stars At The Finish Line", Peter admits that he does not want to be an astronaut, and he kisses Tabitha who he has been in love with for seven years. Finally, in "It's Just a Jump to the Left", Leta goes to "The Rocky Horror Picture Show" on her own, without Agnes. This theme is perhaps the most important theme in this anthology as it demonstrates the importance of expanding one's world and being willing to experience new things.

Style

Point of View

The point of view in this collection vary but are fairly consistent. Most of the stories are recounted from a first-person point of view. The exceptions include "One of Us," "The Quiet Knight," and "It's Just a Jump to the Left" which are all told using a third-person point of view. "Secret Identity" is unique as it is told from a first-person perspective, but the narrator switches to third person when telling her story of her trip to New York. Similarly, the majority of these stories use a limited point of view which is proven by the fact that the narrator is only able to share information they have personally experience. The exception is "One of Us" where the narrator is semi-omniscient, proven by the fact that he is able to share most of the characters' thoughts and feelings.

All-in-all, this book contains a fairly equal distribution of exposition and dialogue, though the distribution varies from story to story. The viewpoint of "Once You're a Jedi, You're Always a Jedi" varies between Chung Ae and Thomas. "One of Us" focuses on Montgomery's viewpoint with few variances. "Definitional Chaos" is narrated by an unidentified male whose avatar in the game Mayhem was Temptress Moon until his ex-girlfriend killed her. "I Never" is narrated by Jane, "The King of Pelinasse" is narrated by Jim Hucker, and Dawn narrates "The Wrath of Dawn". The viewpoint of "Quiz Bowl Antichrist" focuses on narrator, Alec, while Tony is the viewpoint in "The Quiet Knight". Felicity narrates "Everyone But You", Billie Faggart narrates "Secret Identity", and Lauren narrates "Freak the Geek". "The Truth About Dino Girl" is told from Katherine's perspective as "This is My Audition Monologue" is told from Rachel Banks' point of view. The viewpoint of "The Stars at the Finish Line" is that of Peter Berman, and Leta Mill's viewpoint dictates the narrative of "It's Just a Jump to the Left".

Setting

All of the stories in "Geektastic" are set in the real world, though the setting is frequently online. The main characters are considered geeks by their peers, though they specialize in various genres of geekiness. The convention is the main setting of "Once You're a Jedi, You're a Jedi All the Way", and this is where Thomas and Chung Ae meet. They and their friends are kicked out when their romance leads to a battle between the Jedis and the Klingons. Springfield High is the setting of "One of Us" where the characters attend school. This is also where Ezra, Mica, David and Ellen do most of their geek tutoring to teach Montgomery about geek culture so she can impress her boyfriend. Amtrak's Silver Star is the main setting of "Definitional Chaos" as this is the train the narrator and Lexia take to Miami, FL to pay the hotel for the upcoming convention. Xena's condo is the main setting of "I Never". When Xena holds a gathering for players of the Game, Jane attends because she wants to meet Ben, but she soon learns that Noah is the one who wrote the love letters she fell in love with. Boothbay Harbor, ME is the main setting in "The King of Pelinasse." This is where R. P. Flint lives, so Jim takes



a bus to Boothbay Harbor to meet the man he believes his mother had an affair with. In "The Wrath of Dawn", Dawn and her family live in Austin, TX, and the Waterloo Cinema is a fancy theater where the Buffy sing-along is held. Megan convinces Dawn to go on a double date, but Dawn ends up giving a speech in defense of the character Dawn from "Buffy the Vampire Slayer".

In "Quiz Bowl Antichrist," the national quiz bowl competition is held in Indianapolis. Alec's team competes but loses. The role-playing event that Tony attends in "The Quiet Knight" is held on Dave Nash's property, as usual. This is where Tony meets Soroyah as he participates as Sir Silent, the Quiet Knight. In "Everyone But You", Felicity and her family live in Asher, OH where she is popular as a baton twirler until her mother marries Mr. Hunter, but they move to Maui, HI after Mom marries Mr. Hunter. Felicity attends Kahanomoku Academy when she moves to Hawaii. It is very different than her high school in Asher, and her high spirits make her unpopular. New York City is the main setting of "Secret Identity". Billie goes to meet Paul to see if what they have is real, but he does not show up for their scheduled dinner date at the Golden Lotus. FarAway is the online game where Billie meets, plays chess with and falls in love with Paul Zell while pretending to be her older sister. Hoover Preparatory School for Girls is the main setting of "Freak the Geek." It is the all-girl school that Lauren and Kayley attend, and this year, they are chosen as the two geeks to be freaked. They escape harassment, but Lauren's car is assaulted with a paintball gun. Brookdale is the main setting of "The Truth About Dino Girl". It is where Katherine and the other characters live. "This Is My Audition Monologue" as it is where Rachel performs her audition monologue for Mr. P. In "It's Just a Jump to the Left," Leta spends her Wednesday afternoons at the Popcorn Players Community Theater, as does Cawley. This is where Cawley gives Leta her first kiss. The Cineplex is the local theater where Leta and Agnes go to see "The Rocky Horror Picture Show" every Friday night until Agnes starts dating Roger. Tom works at the concession stand. Leta meets Tom and Miss Shelton there, thinking she has a date with Tom, but Tom leaves with Miss Shelton, leaving Leta alone and lonely.

Language and Meaning

The language used in all of the stories in this "Geektastic" collection is casual and informal. The authors frequently use jargon appropriate to the specific type of geekdom that their story focuses on, but this jargon is frequently explained, and when it is not explained, this is done intentionally as the jargon is so ingrained in pop culture that most modern audiences will understand it, such as allusions to "Star Wars" or "The Lord of the Rings."

The distribution of exposition versus dialogue varies from story to story. "Once You're a Jedi, You're Always a Jedi" mostly contains exposition, as does "Quiz Bowl Antichrist" and "The Quiet Knight". Contrastly, "The Wrath of Dawn" consists primarily of dialogue. "This Is My Audition Monologue" is comprised of a monologue the narrator performs as her audition piece for the school play, and "Secret Identity" is written as an email, so it is mostly exposition with some inclusion of remembered dialogue. The remainder of the stories in this collection are written using a fairly equal distribution of exposition and

dialogue. Overall, this book is fairly easy to read; though some concepts are a bit hard to grasp for people not involved in the specific geek worlds, the jargon is explained fairly well.

Structure

"Geektastic" is comprised of 401 pages and fifteen stories, fourteen comics and an Editor's Note. The stories range from 13 to 49 pages in length, averaging around 25 pages in length. Most of the stories are slow-paced and easy to read. Exceptions to the slow pace are the following quick-paced stories: "Once You're a Jedi, You're a Jedi All the Way," "The Wrath of Dawn," "The Quiet Knight," "The Truth About Dino Girl," and "The Stars at the Finish Line." "Definitional Chaos" is harder to read than some of the others as the alternation between the past and present can be confusing. "Quiz Bowl Antichrist" is frequently dull as the narrator is very introspective, and the writing style of "Secret Identity" is often very confusing as the narrator switches between telling a story and addressing the recipient of her email. "It's Just a Jump to the Left" is also quite convoluted.

Most of these stories are linear with a bit of background information, but "Once You're a Jedi, You're a Jedi All the Way" and "The Wrath of Dawn" are linear without any backstory. "Definitional Chaos" alternates frequently between the past and present, and the narration of "Secret Identity" is very disjointed as it switches from the past to the present without warning. Overall, this collection is fairly entertaining and enjoyable, though it is likely that readers may not identify with all of the stories as well as they will with a particular one or two.



Quotes

"I'm a Klingon. Of course I'm attracted to my enemy." Arizhel, "Once You're a Jedi, You're a Jedi All the Way" (p. 4).

"I can't believe I just thought that. Annakin went to the dark side for love and look what happened to him. I don't care how cool this girl is. I'm not about to let that happen to me. I'm a Jedi." Thomas, "Once You're a Jedi, You're a Jedi All the Way" (p. 6).

"You're paying us a hundred bucks so we can teach you to speak geek so you can communicate with your boyfriend better?" Mica, "One of Us" (p. 22).

"Hey. Monty. Shut your freaking trap and watch the elf, okay? You're watching a movie you hate to impress your football-playing BF. Ix-nay on the relationship advice-ay. When I want pom-pom advice, trust me, I'll go straight to you." Mica, "One of Us" (p. 35).

"I GET IT!!! I GET IT...I get it! The spaceships and the quoting lines and memorizing stupid details about High Elvish and arguing over pronunciations! Before I thought you were all weird for the sake of, you know, just being weird. But I GET IT NOW! You just really love it. It's where you go to. Who you turn to. It's your...your home" (p. 48).

"You are, in fact, the last person I'd trust...Because you're vain and self-centered and you do pointless, destructive things for fun. You're chaos personified" (p. 60).

"Either one of us could have started shooting, and the other would've been too late to retaliate. But that's the reality of standoffs with guns, I suppose. If anybody really wants to pull the trigger, it happens right at the beginning" (p. 73).

"It's a dorkument... It's an argument between dorks meant to clarify some finer point of geek culture. They've sort of grown out of the long-held comics tradition of arguing about which superhero could beat up which other superhero. You know: who would win in a fight, Batman or Superman? Alien or Predator? They made a whole movie about that last one" (p. 92).

"Look, Cathy. Sorry if you're upset, but it's a game. It's the Game. We're just having fun" (p. 101).

"I know I ought to feel jealous, heartbroken, all those other things. But I don't. I never really liked Ben. I just liked the person I thought he was. I liked the person who wrote those letters" (p. 106).

"You may wonder about me. I'm from Ohio. I write out my first drafts in blue pen - always blue - then I type them. I roll up my sleeves when I write, because I really dive into my world. I'm up to my elbows in sediment" (p. 119).



"They're stuck inside their little houses. STUCK INSIDE THEIR LITTLE HOUSES. When people say, 'I don't get out much anymore', they don't just mean out the door. They mean outside their own skin. They're sewed up in their hides. They're trapped in there. Kid, they need to go out on the town. They need to take their spirit out on a date. YOU NEED TO GO STEADY WITH YOUR SOUL" (p. 124-125).

"Besides, it's not just my name he's jeering. It's every newbie, every little sister who wasn't there before. It's the lesser sibling...the one blamed for everything...my God, it's me" (p. 148).

"I'm just joking. If you can't joke about quiz bowl, what can you joke about? It's like mime in that respect" (p. 161).

"Nobody's a quiz bowl geek. We're all just people. And you're right, what we do here has no redeeming social value whatsoever. But it can be an interesting way to pass the time" (p. 178).

"Tony had wanted to stay too, to talk to Sorayah, and it wasn't the curfew that stopped him. It was his inability to talk. He knew that as soon as he opened his mouth and she heard his hoarse crow-voice her face would show scorn, or even worse, pity. He didn't want that. She respected him as the Quiet Knight; they had enjoyed playing their parts; it was best to keep whatever they had in the game" (p. 192).

"They are under my protection. You will never even talk to them again, understand" (p. 195).

"That's funny, because no one invited you... Yes, I did say that. But what I meant was everyone but you" (p. 208).

"Felicity, you have to go. I'm grounded here and so is Carl, but you can go places. Do this for us" (p. 217).

"All right, I'll go first. Let's swap life stories. That girl at the desk when you were checking in? Aliss? I've slept with her, a couple of times. When nothing better came along. She really likes me. And I'm an asshole, okay? No excuses. Every time I hurt her, though, the next time I see her I'm nice again and I apologize and I get her back. Mostly I'm nice just to see if she's going to fall for it this time, too. I don't know why. I guess I want to see where that place is, the place where she hauls off and assaults me. Some people have ant farms. I'm more into people. So now you know what was going on yesterday. And yeah, I know, something's wrong with me" (p. 246-247).

"When I'm eighteen, I'm going to take the bus back to New York City. I'm going to walk down to Bryant Park. And I'm going to bring my chess set. I'm going to do it on my birthday. I'll be there all day long. Your move, Paul Zell" (p. 268).

"I'm not ashamed that I love Dr. Who, or that I've read ten thousand pages of HP fanfiction online. I'm not even ashamed about my Pokemon addiction. (Okay, a little.) I



like being a geek. But no one- not even the hard-core geeks who have g-e-e-k tattooed on their knuckles- wants to be one of THE geeks" (p. 275).

"No one would think of me as pretty at Hoover. Or even Kayley. Being pretty here involves so much more than just being pretty, and frankly I don't have time for it" (p. 279).

"There's a single lipstick-red splotch of paintball goo on the front grill of my car. It doesn't wash off for months, but I don't mind. It is not my scarlet letter. It's theirs" (p. 283).

"Okay, follow me for a second: Guys are like dinosaurs. We don't know much about dinosaurs. We know a lot, but not nearly enough. Just like with guys" (p. 287).

"Yeah, but dinosaurs wouldn't make Jamie fall in love with me. I already knew that" (p. 299).

"Look, Dino Girl. There's, like, a natural order to things, okay? It's the way the world works. And girls like you do not get to go out with guys like Jamie, okay? Especially when the guy is already with a girl like me. Do you get it? Did that get through your little lizard head" (p. 303).

"I'll take any part, I will, and if it's Onlooker #8 I will be the best Onlooker #8 this town has ever seen. But if you can't find a part for me I'm going to walk away. I'm not going to hang around in the shadows anymore. This time you'll remember my name" (p. 328).

"So just to get this straight, you're blaming me for all the things you didn't get to do? And to think I've been crediting you for all the things I have been able to do" (p. 342).

"We'll never have a true picture of reality; it just doesn't exist. But I'm real, and you're real, and those fiery balls of gas up there are real, and right now that's all I need to know" (p. 356).

"Roger invited me to a party...Friday night...Yeah, sorry. I'm not gonna be able to go this weekend... Oh, Leta, grow up." (p. 369-369).

"It was fine, I think. It was nice. He told me I was pretty. I just... I'm different now. I can't go back. You know" (p. 399).



Topics for Discussion

In "Once You're a Jedi, You're a Jedi All the Way," why does Arizhel want to pretend that she doesn't know Thomas at the convention?

How does Montgomery change during "One of Us?"

Explain why Lexia killed Temptress Moon in "Definitional Chaos."

Compare and contrast Ben and Noah from "I Never."

Why does Jim visit R. P. Flint in "The King of Pelinense?"

In "The Wrath of Dawn", what does Dawn talk about when she takes the stage, and how does the audience react?

Why does Alec hates Sung's varsity jacket in "Quiz Bowl Antichrist?"

In "The Quiet Knight," why does Tony rarely talk, and how does he use this in his role-playing game?

How does Felicity from "Everyone But You" change after her family moves to Hawaii?

In "Secret Identity", how does Billie meet Paul Zell, and why does she lie to him about who she really is?

Whose fault and problem does Lauren from "Freak the Geek" decide it is that she is dubbed a geek?

In "The Truth about Dino Girl", why does Katherine decide to destroy Andi, and how does she do it?

Why does Rachel from "This is My Audition Monologue" decide to write her own piece for her audition?

In "The Stars at the Finish Line", how does Peter and Tabitha's relationship change, and what causes these changes?

Describe the love triangle in "It's Just a Jump to the Left."

Which story in "Geektastic" are you best able to relate to? Why?