

**nerd
girls**



Also by Alan Lawrence Sitomer

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THE RISE OF THE
DORKASAURUS

ALAN LAWRENCE SITOMER

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For Sienna and Tracey . . .
and the inner nerd that lives in us all.

acknowledgments

With gobs of appreciation to the best two folks
with whom a nerdwad could ever hope to work,
Wendy Lefkon and Al Zuckerman.

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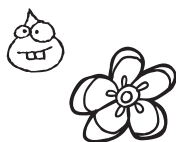
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I have a 3.73 grade point average and my body looks like a baked potato. My eyes are brown, my hair is brown, and sometimes when I snack on too many fig bars and run real fast in PE, I end up with brown streaks in my underpants, too.

I'm not just un-cool; I'm anti-cool. I mean, I even know how to properly use a semicolon in a sentence. What could be more pathetic than that?

I'll tell you what's more pathetic: the entire life of Allergy Alice Applebee, that's what. She's got *Guinness Book of World Record* "sensitivities," the kinds that make her have to travel with a list of **Things to Avoid**. If she touches a mango she breaks out in a rash. If she eats wheat, her vision blurs. And if she, heaven forbid, comes into contact with any sort of nut, dried seed, or botanical kernel, her throat swells, her esophagus contracts, and her glands begins to expand as if she had been stung by a swarm of bumblebees.

Today the ThreePees are going to sit next to Allergy Alice in the cafeteria and eat peanut-butter-and-banana sandwiches on whole wheat toast with mango marmalade for lunch. Some students think Allergy Alice might explode. Literally, they think she's going to internally combust like one of those overfilled water balloons that blasts apart when kept on a water faucet for too long. But instead of H₂O flying everywhere, spleens, gastric valves, and parts of her pancreas are going to splatter against the lunchroom walls. At least, that's what they're hoping for. Word buzzing around class is that this will be totally YouTubal, the kind of video that could go viral. The ThreePees think it might even break the one million hit mark.

Gawd, I hate the ThreePees. They rule the 8th grade.

And they know it.

The ThreePees is a name that stands for, well . . . the three P's: Pretty, Popular, and Perfect. They're the girls who have all the friends, all the glamor, all the clothes, and all the attention. They have everything. It's not fair, especially to a dorkasaurus like me.

To parents and teachers, the ThreePees come off like innocent little angels, shining examples of everything a young lady can be. But inside the cruel cage of middle school, when there aren't any grown-ups around, the ThreePees are mean, power hungry, and bossy. They think they're better than everyone else, and all my life they've made me feel like a loser/geek/doofus/turd.

Of course, I've helped them out a bit.

Like once, in fourth grade, I was so eager to answer a math-a-thon question that I smashed the silver bell too hard and it broke into a thousand pieces, sending a hunk of flying metal

across the room that drilled Brace Face Stace in the center of her cranium.

Everyone laughed, even as Brace Face Stace was being wheeled away on an ambulance stretcher with a Harry Potter–type lightning bolt etched into her forehead. I think she was woozy with a concussion, too, because all Brace Face Stace kept mumbling about as the paramedics rolled her out of class was, “Corns and cheese. Corns and cheese.”

Another time, when I made a homemade halogen light for the science fair, I left the ground wire exposed, and when the teacher, Mr. Upton, went to inspect my handiwork, he got shocked so bad by the electrical current that his contact lenses caused a burn ring to form around his pupils. Now he looks like a man who is always staring at students with googly eyes, like he’s from outer space or something.

Mr. Upton used to just be weird. I made him spooky.

But the worst was my birthday party in fifth grade, when I realized that if I pinched my nose and closed my mouth, I could blow a soft stream of air out of my right ear. So, thinking it’d be cool to blow out the candle on my birthday cake with ear air instead of mouth air, I turned my head sideways and prepared to dazzle my classmates with my supernatural, extraterrestrial, spectaculabulously amazing, one-of-a-kind abilities. However, being that I couldn’t produce a very strong stream of ear air to blow out the flame, I had to lean in really close to the candle.

That’s when I set my hair on fire. My classmates started screaming. I just thought they were excited about my supernatural, extraterrestrial, spectaculabulously amazing, one-of-a-kind

abilities. Our teacher, Mr. Hanson, thinking quickly, ran over and began slam-dunking my head into the birthday cake. I had no idea what was going on as he smashed my noggin up and down and around and around into the frosting. He must have dunked me at least twenty times, rotating my ears so that the front of my face, the back of my brain, my cheeks, and even my eyebrows were free from any further flare-ups.

I almost drowned in cake icing.

Of course, the smoke from my burning hair ended up causing the fire alarm to go off. Oh, the joy of walking single file out to the soccer field with cake mush covering my entire skull. Per district policy, the entire campus had to wait thirty minutes until the fire trucks came and gave us the all clear to return to class. I wasn't even given a paper towel.

"Hey, what are you doing?" I said, pulling away from this weird sensation I felt tingling in my ear.

"I like frosting," Tommy Tardo answered. He pulled a finger full of white stuff out of my earlobe and plunked it into his mouth.

"*Ew!* Gross," I said.

Tommy Tardo licked my vanilla-flavored earwax and grinned. He had crooked teeth and a wandering eye. "Burned hair smells like toasted marshmallows. I like campfires. More, please."

"Excuse me?" I said.

"More, please?" he repeated with an outstretched finger. "Vanilla is the color of white dogs."

We haven't seen Tommy Tardo at school in a while. Rumor is, he was transferred to a school with soft walls.

It's like that with a lot of kids around here. From the outside,

Grover Park, California, might seem like a normal place with normal people and normal families, but once you're on the inside, forget it. This community is filled with wackos. It's like there was a crazy magnet put into the center of the earth, and all it does is pull the cuckoo birds here. From kids to parents to teachers, most everyone is nuts.

But nuts in their own “special” ways. *Sheesh!*

Back in class, I looked up at the clock on the wall. It was three minutes to lunch. Three minutes to eleven thirty. Three minutes until Allergy Alice's doom.

One of the ThreePees, Kiki Masters, spoke.

By the way, what kind of a name is Kiki? It sounds like some sort of Hawaiian fruit drink or something. Why the ThreePees always have the most exotic of everything when my name is Maureen—how boring is that?—is just another way that my life is totally and completely not fair.

Kiki (giggling): This might cause the biggest allergic reaction ever documented.

Brittany-“Brattany” Johnston (inspecting her pedicure): Urrgh, is my polish chipped?

Sophia “Sofes” O'Reilly (giggling back): Yeah, like more allergic than when that guy tried to jump his motorcycle over all those cars and totally crashed.

Kiki (paused and puzzled): A guy crashing a motorcycle isn't the same as an allergic reaction, Sofes.

Sofes (now puzzled herself): Oh . . . yeah.

Brittany-Brattany (still inspecting her pedicure): Urrgh.

Kiki rolled her eyes, Brittany-Brattany picked at her toes, and Sofia O'Reilly flipped her hair and went right on being Sofes, a

girl who would lose an intellectual battle of wits with a bottle of glue.

But goodness, did she have a nice nose. Just perfect. Sofes had the kind of nose that people put on Christmas cards. If there were justice in the world, one day a stray volleyball would fly through the air in gym class and smash her into pudding.

Okay, maybe that's mean. But the ThreePees are mean. Mean as snakes. Besides, I hate volleyball. That's because once in sixth grade they made us play and I went running to save a point, tripped over my shoe, hit a pole, and ended up getting tangled in the net like some kind of bluefin tuna.

Like I said, total dorkasaurus.

I looked up. Two minutes to the bell. Two minutes to lunch-time. Two minutes to the end of Allergy Alice Applebee as we knew her.

Unless . . . I thought to myself.