

# nick and charlie

ALICE OSEMAN

# **Copyright**

HarperCol ins Children's Books is a division of HarperCol insPublishers

1 London Bridge Street,

London SE1 9GF

## www.harpercol ins.co.uk

First published as an ebook by HarperCol ins Children's Books 2015

Text © Alice Oseman

Cover design © HarperCol ins Publishers

Alice Oseman asserts the moral right to be identi ed as the author of this work

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Al rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. By payment of the required fees, you have been granted the non-exclusive, non-transferable right to access and read the text of this e-book on-screen. No part of this text may be reproduced, transmit ed, downloaded, decompiled, reverse engineered, or stored in or introduced into any information storage and retrieval system, in any form or by any means, whether electronic or mechanical, now known or hereinafter invented, without the express writ en permission of HarperCol ins.

Ebook Edition © 2015 ISBN: 9780008147877

Version: 2015-07-09

"Yes, very indif erent indeed," said Elizabeth, laughingly. "Oh, Jane, take care."

"My dear Lizzy, you cannot think me so weak, as to be in danger now?" "I think you are in very great danger of making him as much in love with you as ever." - Pride and Prejudice, Jane Austen Contents Cover Title Page Copyright **Epigraph** <u>One</u> <u>Two</u> **Three Four Five** Six **Advert for Solitaire** <u>One</u> <u>Two</u> **Author Biography** Other Books By

About the Publisher

### **ONE**

### **CHARLIE**

As Head Boy of Truham Grammar School, I've done many things. I got drunk on the

parents' wine at parents' evening. I've been photographed with the mayor three times. I

once accidental y made a Year 7 cry.

But none of that was quite as bad as having to stop everyone in Year 13 from enjoying

their nal day of school, which is what our head teacher, Mr Shannon, is trying to make

me do right now.

It's probably worth mentioning that my boyfriend of two years, Nick Nelson, is one of

those Year 13s.

"You don't mind, do you?" Mr Shannon leans on the common room table where I'm

supposed to be revising for my AS Levels but am actual y watching Mac DeMarco

concerts on my phone. "It's al got a bit out of hand and I think they'd be more likely to

listen to you than me, if you see what I mean."

"Erm..." I shoot at look at my friend Tao Xu who's sit ing next to me eating a packet of

Galaxy Minstrels. He raises his eyebrows at me as if to say, 'Sucks to be you'.

I don't real y want to say yes.

This year, the Year 13's nal day of school is High School Musical themed. They hung

a giant 'East High School' sign over the Truham sign at the school gate. They've been

playing the soundtrack on classroom computers, so wherever you are in the school you

can hear a High School Musical song playing from somewhere, but you're never quite

sure where. They participated in a 'What Time Is It' ash mob on the footbal eld at

breaktime. And they have al turned up to school either in red basketbal out ts or

cheerleader out ts. Disappointingly, Nick went for basketbal er.

To top it al of, on a non-HSM-related note, they've built a fort out of cardboard boxes

on the tennis courts and are having a barbeque inside it.

"I just want them to put the barbeque out," says Shannon, obviously detecting how

reluctant I am to walk into a box fort of one hundred and fty people older than me and

tel them to stop having fun. "You know. Health and safety stuf. If someone gets burnt, I'l be the one dealing with angry parents."

He chuckles. Mr Shannon has come to trust me completely over the several months I

have been Head Boy. This is hilarious because I rarely do anything he tel s me to do.

Keep the teachers on your side and the students on your side. Don't make enemies or

too many friends. That's my advice for get ing through school.

"Yeah, sure, no problem," I say.

"You're an absolute life saver." He points a nger at me as he walks away. "Don't revise

too hard!"

Tao looks at me, stil shoving chocolate into his mouth. "You're not actual y gonna go

confront the Year 13s, are you?"

I laugh. "Nah. I'l just go see what they're up to and tel them to watch out for

Shannon."

My other friend, Aled Last, looks up at me from the opposite side of the table. He's been

colour coding his maths revision notes for the past hour. "Can you please get a photo of

Harry Greene in a skirt? It's urgent."

I stand up from my chair and put my blazer on. "I think we al need to see that, to be

honest."

The Year 12s have already left for study leave and the only reason I'm here is because I

revise bet er at school than at home. Tao and Aled thought the same. None of us real y

want to be here though. It's the hot est day we've had this year and I just sort of want to lie

down somewhere with an ice pack on my head.

Nick and I have plans for this weekend. He's nal y free from school, I'm taking a

weekend of revision. It's Thursday today; I'm staying over his tonight. Tomorrow night

we're going to Harry's party for everyone in sixth form. Saturday we're going to the beach.

Sunday we're going to London.

Not that we don't spend every weekend together anyway.

Not that we don't see each other every single day.

If you'd told me three years ago I'd be in a two-year-long relationship by the time I was

seventeen, I would have laughed in your face.

"CHARLIE SPRING!"

As I walk through the box fort entrance underneath a banner that says 'WILDCATS!'

Harry Greene approaches me, arms outstretched. He is wearing a twelveyear-old's High

School Musical cheerleader costume and is exposing a lot more thigh than is probably

appropriate for school.

The fort is huge – they've taken over two tennis courts. Along with the hilarious

amount of cardboard, they've also stolen at least ten tables from various classrooms and

have a ful y functioning barbeque set up in between the two courts. A couple of people are

handing out burgers and buns. Vampire Weekend is playing from a wireless speaker in a

corner. Most, if not al, of Year 13 are here. It's a huge year group compared to the rest of

the school – most of the Higgs girls from that year group moved to Truham after their

school burned down.

Harry puts his hands on his hips and grins up at me. "Thoughts?"

Harry Greene, a fairly short guy with very tal hair, is probably the most notorious

individual in the entire school, partly due to how many parties he throws and partly due

to the fact that he never, ever shuts up.

I raise my eyebrows. "About the fort or about your thighs?"

"Both, mate."

"Both are great," I say, deadpan. "Good job. Keep it up."

Harry steps to one side and lunges. "I knew the skirt was a good decision. I should do

this more often."

"De nitely."

Stil in a lunging position, he asks, "Did Shannon send you? Have you come to shut

down our fun?"

"Technical y, yes."

"Are you going to?"

"Obviously not."

Harry nods. "You're gonna go far, mate. You're gonna go far."

Nick is usual y very easy to spot in a crowd, but today almost everyone is wearing red.

There are a few people who clearly couldn't be bothered, one of whom being my sister

Victoria, who's in her black Truham uniform, sit ing on the blue asphalt in a corner talking

to her friend Rita. But apart from her and a couple of others, everyone blurs into one

giant mass of red.

"Nick's over there."

I look back at Harry and he's pointing towards the far left corner, grinning at me. Then

he starts walking towards the corner, humming 'We're Al in This Together', and I fol ow

him. "NICK, MATE!" Harry shouts over the crowds of Year 13s, al holding food and red

plastic cups and taking photos of each other.

And there he is.

He turns round from a smal group of people, a slightly dazed expression on his face as

if he's not quite sure whether he's imagining Harry's voice.

I have been going out with Nick Nelson since I was fourteen. He likes rugby and

Formula 1, animals (especial y dogs), the Marvel universe, the sound felttips make on

paper, rain, drawing on shoes, Disneyland and minimalism. He also likes me.

His hair is dark blond and his eyes are brown and he is two inches tal er than me, if you

care about that sort of thing. I think he's pret y hot, but that might just be my opinion.

When he spots us, he waves enthusiastical y, and when we nal y reach him, he looks

at me and says, "Al right?"

Nick's High School Musical costume consists of a pair of bright red gym shorts and a

red tank top. He's pinned a piece of paper to the front with a very badly drawn wildcat on

it. If I'm honest, he's had worse out ts.

"You didn't text me back, bitch," I say.

He sips his drink. "I was way too busy get ing my head in the game."

Then he holds up a disposable camera and, before I have the chance to smile or make

sure I look in any way presentable, takes a photo of me.

A second too late I hold up my hand in front of the camera. "Nick!"

He lets out a loud laugh and starts rewinding the camera before put ing it in his pocket.

"Another one for the Derp Charlie col ection."

"Oh my God."

Harry's already wandered of to talk to another group, so Nick steps a lit le closer and

our hands automatical y touch, his hands tapping mine like we're playing a clapping

game. "You sticking round here for a bit? Or are you revising?"

I glance round. "I wasn't real y revising. I was watching Mac DeMarco concerts."

"Mac DeMarco?" Nick laughs. "I thought you said he was a dickhead."