

IT'S  
NOT ME,  
IT'S

YOU

stephanie kate strohm

Point

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# THE BEGINNING

AVERY DENNIS, *me*: I had an epiphany in the place one is least likely to have an epiphany: American history class.

MS. SEGERSON, *surprisingly stylish history teacher*: To be honest, Avery is not always completely engaged in class. She takes copious notes, but they seem to be more of an excuse to use an entire rainbow spectrum of pens than to actually record the lecture. But there was something different about the day we first discussed oral history.

AVERY: Oral history is basically talking. It's like when you interview people about events they witnessed, and then you learn about the events from lots of different perspectives. See? I do take copious notes.

MS. SEGERSON: The assignment was to interview several adults about an event in American history that they had lived through.

AVERY: But the assignment was the least important thing. Especially because we're seniors. It's spring semester. Like, who cares?

MS. SEGERSON: Oh, I cared *very* much about the assignment. And Avery's final GPA cared about the assignment. And I bet the Admissions Committee at Pepperdine would care, too, if I happened to give them a call.

AVERY: I cared *very* much about the assignment. Especially when Ms. Segerson said that oral histories could help us understand *why* certain events had happened. And that there's no time limit on history. Like, even if something just happened, it can still be history. Especially if what had just happened was an event of such horrible and epic proportions, it could barely be spoken of aloud.

MS. SEGERSON: At least Avery was keeping things in perspective. Imagine if she'd overreacted.

*Editor's Note: Ms. Segerson hadn't been this sarcastic in September.—AD*

AVERY: I had aged years in only a matter of days, and it was all because of . . . the incident.

# THE INCIDENT

NATALIE WAGNER, *random freshman*: Avery Dennis was the closest thing to a legend the senior class had.

BECCA HORN, *random freshman*: Avery Dennis was a known clone. It was like she'd watched a bunch of '90s high school sitcoms and invented herself. The world did not need a third Wakefield twin.

*Editor's Note: The Wakefields are fictional California teens from a book series. Although this remark was clearly intended as a burn, they seemed pretty awesome when I googled them. Also, I was starting to understand what Ms. Segerson meant about history being subjective. And the perils of unreliable sources.*

NATALIE, *random but very wise freshman*: Like, I'm not saying that if Avery Dennis wore army pants and flip-flops, I'd wear army pants and flip-flops, but everybody knows who Avery Dennis is.

BECCA, *random and very disgruntled freshman*: Yeah, I know who Avery Dennis is. Everybody knows who everybody is because this stupid school only has like sixty kids in each grade.

NATALIE: Avery Dennis was definitely popular. And, like, why is anybody popular, you know? Is that really something you can even define? Like, what *is* popularity? Why are popular people popular? Popularity is just like this ineffable thing. You're either popular or you're not. And Avery Dennis definitely was.

BECCA: Sure, I guess you could say Avery Dennis had it. If by *it*, you mean a lobotomy.

*Editor's Note: Unreliable sources.*

NATALIE: She and her friends ate lunch every day in the best spot outside. She went to, like, every party that was actually a good party. She'd broken some kind of state tennis record. Her hair was like a golden veil.

BECCA: There is absolutely nothing remarkable whatsoever about Avery Dennis.

NATALIE: But perhaps most crucially of all, Avery Dennis had never been single. Ever. And I don't mean just in this year that I'd been in school with her. Everybody knows that Avery Dennis has always had a boyfriend. Even when she was, like, in utero.

BECCA: Truly boring people are terrified of being alone. That tells you everything you need to know about the dating history of Avery Dennis.

NATALIE: She'd dated all the hottest guys at San Anselmo Prep. And most of the hottest guys at Sir Francis Drake High. And a certain TV star. And even, if you believe the rumors, a minor-league soccer player and the heir to the throne of a small European principality.

*Editor's Note: Sometimes rumors are just rumors.*

NATALIE: It was almost surprising that she *hadn't* dated Luke Murphy before senior year, you know? They just went together perfectly. Avery Dennis couldn't have even built herself a better boyfriend in a lab! I mean, if there was a lab where you could, like, build boyfriends. Once they finally got together, you would see them walking down the halls and be like, yes, that is the golden couple.

BECCA: No, I wouldn't have called Luke Murphy and Avery Dennis the golden couple. Firstly, that's not a phrase I would use. Ever. And secondly, two people aren't a golden couple just because they're both blonds. Also, two blond people shouldn't date. It looks weird, like they're going to start singing "Tomorrow Belongs to Me."

NATALIE: I think it was all part of a master plan. Like, she didn't want to date Luke Murphy too soon, because she had known since kindergarten that he would be the *perfect* senior prom date. Some people just have heads that were built to wear a crown. Luke Murphy has a prom king head. Maybe it's his jawline?

BECCA: I didn't even know that Luke Murphy and Avery Dennis were dating until after she went crazy. Because I have my own life. I cannot be bothered to keep up with the unending carousel that is Avery Dennis's Boyfriend of the Month.

NATALIE: They had their differences, though. Luke was the captain of the lacrosse team and the Student Council president. Avery was the captain of the tennis team and head of the Prom Committee. Very different.

BECCA: Luke Murphy could be president. Avery Dennis could be the fascist dictator of a small country.

*Editor's Note: I could easily run a large country. Also, I'd be benevolent.*

NATALIE: Luke Murphy is arguably the most popular guy at San Anselmo Prep. But he's different than you'd expect, because he's just so *nice*. Like he does some charity thing with tutoring special-needs kids or helping old people or something. He's really nice. Teachers love him. Students love him. Babies and grandmas probably love him, too. Everybody loves Luke Murphy.

BECCA: I really can't think of anything bad to say about him. Really, the man *should* be president. Especially after what he did to Avery Dennis.

NATALIE: I still can't believe that we were there when it actually happened. Like, *I* was a witness to the Dumping of Avery Dennis. Oh—this is the other thing to know about Avery Dennis. She's never been single. But she's also never been dumped.

BECCA: Oh, I believe that Avery Dennis has never been dumped. Probably because she usually only dates other people with reptile-size brains.

NATALIE: I was sitting in the library with Becca, working on my math homework.

BECCA: I was *not* sitting with Natalie Wagner. We were sitting at the same table. We were *not* sitting together. I just want to make that clear.

NATALIE: Avery Dennis and I have the same free period. So there I was, just casually minding my own business and doing homework. Avery and Luke were sitting at the table next to mine. I could hear her giggling and I think she was, like, kicking him under the table but in like a footsie way, not in like an aggressive way.

BECCA: I wasn't paying attention to Avery Dennis and Luke Murphy, because I am a normal person with homework of my own to attend to. Also, Ms. Dickerson was trying to secretly eat

a sandwich at her desk, so I was staring at her. Just to make her uncomfortable.

MS. DICKERSON, *librarian*: I most certainly was not eating a sandwich at my desk. School policy expressly forbids food in the library.

*Editor's Note: She was most definitely eating a sandwich. It was totally obvious. At least when Ms. Segerson eats Chipotle during class, she owns it. But she never shares.*

NATALIE: And then he started whispering. Then she whispered a little. Then he whispered a lot more. And then there was some furious simultaneous whispering. And then Luke Murphy whispered for a long, long time, and Avery Dennis was silent. Well, she was silent for a while . . .

BECCA: Avery Dennis let out an unholy screech. Like the kind of thing you would hear from a particularly vitriolic demon.

NATALIE: I looked over and she was standing. Her mouth was hanging open like she was still screaming, but no sound came out. The entire library was totally silent—everyone was staring at her in shock. Even Ms. Dickerson didn't come over and yell at her for screaming in the library.

BECCA: At this point, I was looking at them because, hello, she had just screamed her tiny head off.

*Editor's Note: I have a very normal-size head.*