

## ***Falling Over Sideways***

**By Jordan Sonnenblick**

I always get a gigantic zit right near the tip of my nose when I'm about to get my period. It's like a built-in warning light, but more painful and disgusting. So naturally, on the night before my first day of eighth grade, I looked in the mirror and noticed the cherry-red Queen of All Acne Land holding court in the exact center of my face.

Apparently, I hadn't had enough to be self-conscious about yet. Over the summer, I'd gotten contact lenses, which meant I would be facing a whole makeover review board based on just that alone. Then there was my schedule, which had come in the mail the day before. As kids compared schedules by text and social media all day, I had found out that Roshni was basically the only person I really liked or trusted in my homeroom, which was a big deal, because in our school, your homeroom traveled with you to all of your major classes. Then there were two girls, Jennifer and Desi, who were sort of okay. I mean, they were the kind of girls who are fun to be around ninety-three percent of the time, until they suddenly and randomly say nasty stuff about people for the other seven percent of the time- I never knew when it might be my turn to get the seven percent treatment.

The rest of the homeroom was like the group you'd put together if you wanted to shove them all onto a deserted island and then film an extremely dramatic reality TV show as they bickered, then fought, then eventually started killing one another off one by one.

And then there were the teachers. Every single one of them had taught by genius-role-model-of-a-student older brother three years before, so that meant they would all make comments about how

wonderful it was to have another Goldsmith in class, and how wonderfully they knew I'd do. This would accomplish two things: put me under stupendous pressure, and make everybody else in the class despise me for sucking up- even though all I had done was show up and have a brother.

Aaaaaannnndddd. . . for the bonus round. . . Satan was in my homeroom!

Picture the Lord of the Underworld. Eternal Tormentor of the Damned. Hissing, evil, catcalling destroyer of all things pure and good. Now shrink that boy down to about five feet and expand him greatly outward in all directions, and you've got Ryder Scott. He's been in my classes on and off since elementary school. You might even say we've grown up together, but- well- Ryder hasn't. His maturity level froze when we got to middle school, and he seems to have a special problem with tall, thin girls.

Like me, for example.