

## Keep A Secret

Summerville High School was just the average small-town school, aside from the abundance of puns that can be made with the name. With a graduating class of 100, it is safe to say that everybody knows everybody. In fact, the same graduating 100 seniors were also the same 100 kindergarteners who graduated together. In a town this small, it is hard to have secrets. Human nature conquers logistics, however. When there is no outlet for deeply hidden secrets or a place to rant about back-stabbing friends, kids get creative. So creative that *Shh* was invented.

*Shh* is an anonymous blog where anybody can sign in and post whatever they want. Since there was no way of knowing who posted what, things got very interesting on *Shh*. During homeroom, it was customary for all the students to check *Shh* and see the latest gossip. Today is the first day back from winter break, so there is an plenty of new posts. Viewers can like or dislike a post, and the posts with the most likes are the first to show on the homepage. Today's gossip is especially juicy.

*Carla is totally banging the chem teacher. It's the only possible way her dumbass is passing!*

*Jennifer, top student or top addict? The valedictorian def has an Adderall problem. I mean, how else can she be acing eight honors courses?*

*Coach Denver is doping up the football team. There is no way Summerville could've beat Lincoln without a little help (or a lot) from steroids.*

*Do NOT trust Conner. He is cheating on Annalise with every girl that will spread her legs. Too bad Annalise is too far along to abort his baby. He should NOT procreate.*

*Anybody else find is suspicious that Principal Leahy spent winter break in Chicago and so did Melody?? #SomethingsFishy #AndItsNotJustTheCafeteriaFood*

I roll my eyes and shut off my phone as the first bell rings, sending us all to class.

“Heather, wait up!” Nicole calls, sprinting to catch up with me. “Have you seen what’s trending?”

“What kind of question is that? Of course I have,” I joke, twirling my finger through one of Nicole’s red curls.

She swats my hand away in feign annoyance. “Do you believe any of it?” She asks, similar to how a small child asks her mom if Santa is real.

Before I get the chance to answer, Annalise storms down the hall, hands wrapped protectively around her seven month stomach. Conner is following closely behind her, begging for her to stop and let him explain.

“It was an accident, Annalise! It didn’t mean anything! You know that I love you! Please, let me explain!” Conner pleads, but Annalise refuses to acknowledge him.

I turn towards Nicole, “Looks like at least one of the posts is true.”

We walk the rest of the way to Chemistry in silence, anticipating whether or not Carla will be class today and whether or not Mr. Keswick will address the rumors.

In true Carla fashion, she rolls into class as the late bell rings. Her brunette hair is straightened and bounces on her shoulders. Her cashmere pink sweater rides up and her leggings slip low, showing off her stomach piercing and the panty line of her black thong. The heels of her boots make a clicking sound with every step as she settles herself into her desk, closest to Mr. Keswick’s desk. Mr. Keswick pretends not to notice as she flutters her blue eyes at him.

I sneak a glance at Nicole and see that her freckles have combined on her nose, making a perfect stink face. Her green eyes don't even attempt to hide the disgust. She darts her eyes towards me and we both crack up laughing.

Mr. Keswick speaks for the first time, to chastise us. "Nicole and Heather, care to share with the rest of the class what is so funny?"

Nicole's face turns as red as her hair, so I answer. "No, sorry. Just catching up from winter break."

If Mr. Keswick is aware of the rumors, he doesn't show it. Instead, he stands up and lectures about ions for the entire class period, pretending he can't feel the awkward tension in the air.

After chemistry, Nicole and I part ways until lunch. My next class is calculus, which I have with Jennifer. Jennifer is already seated and is working on the math homework for tonight, even though we haven't covered the topic yet.

I stand awkwardly, debating if I should say something to her. We aren't exactly close friends, but I would say we're at least acquaintances. She pauses from solving differential equations long enough to find out who is staring at her.

I give her a half smile and sit down beside her, pulling out my textbook. "How was your winter break?" I ask, deciding to let her choose if we talk about the Adderall rumor or not.

A look of relief passes over her when she realizes I'm not going to ask questions to things she does not want to discuss. "I heard back from Columbia University and got accepted, so I'm pretty stoked."

This time I give her a genuine, full smile. Ever since I could remember, which is a long time considering that I've known her since preschool, Columbia has been her dream school.

"I'm sure they'll resent their acceptance once they find out how you get such good grades," Mark jabs, taking a seat behind Jennifer.

Mark is... hard to describe. He was always the prankster in elementary school, then the bully in middle school, and now the burnout in high school. His various vices have been featured many a times on *Shh* so the irony doesn't escape Jennifer.

"Pretty sure that an ivy league college wouldn't believe an anonymous blog over a straight A student. Nice try though. Tell your mom and whichever tweaker she's dating this week that I send them my love," Jennifer retorts, blowing him a sarcastic kiss.

Mark looks ready to jump his desk and pull out one of Jennifer's corn rows, but class starts before he has time. He does make a remark about affirmative action under his breath, but Jennifer is too engrossed in taking notes at that point to care.

The rest of the class goes by without incident, and Jennifer gives me a quick smile before rushing out the door when the bell rings. My next class is gym, so I hurry to the locker room.

As I'm twisting my blonde hair into a messy bun, I hear the other girls talking about the steroids.

"I mean, just think about it," one of the girls says, "'roid rage would totally explain why Conner has been sleeping around so much. He's got all this excess testosterone or whatever that he has to release somewhere. Carla isn't putting out because of the baby, so he has to find someone else."

“That is, quite possibly, one of the stupidest things you have ever said, Lizzy,” another girl replies with laughter. “Steroids make you uncontrollably angry, not uncontrollably horny. Conner is just a sleaze ball, not the Incredible Hulk.”

“Are you sure? He definitely seemed incredible to me the other night...” Lizzy laughs.

I walk out of the locker room before I can hear how her friends respond to that one, deciding to just tie my shoes in the gym instead.

I sit down on the mat to tie my shoes when I realize that Principal Leahy is in a heated discussion with Coach Denver. They’re in Coach’s office, but the door is ajar and it’s almost a screaming match.

“Just answer the question, Jeffery. Did you or did you not give the football players steroids?” Leahy demands.

“Just answer the question, Robert. Did you or did you not spend winter break with Melody?” Denver demands back in a mocking tone.

“How dare you insinuate I would do something so inappropriate! Chicago is a big city and only a couple hours from here. The odds of Melody and I running into each other there are a hell of a lot larger than the odds of our football team doing a 180 overnight and defeating our rival school for the first time in five years, especially after having not won a single game the entire season!”

Leahy then noticed the crowd of gym students who had gathered by the office door, all listening intently. He took a deep breath and calmly stepped out of Denver’s office and closed the door with a soft click. “Have a good gym class, students. And remember, say no to drugs.”

Coach Denver doesn't bring up the fiasco that just unfolded, but instead instructs us all to play dodgeball like nothing is wrong. Of course, the irony is not lost on me that in order to dodge allegations, we play dodgeball.

After gym class, I'm changing back into my regular clothes when the commotion begins. At first, it's hard to figure out what exactly is going on, because everyone is talking over each other. The hallway is buzzing with activity and I make my way to the cafeteria thoroughly confused.

I spot Nicole and run up to her. "Nicole! What is going on? It's like the whole school has gone crazy!"

She glances up from her phone just enough to sneer at me. "Check the app," is all she says before storming away.

I pull my phone out of my pocket and notice then the million notifications. I've got twenty texts, thirty tweets, and over a hundred reacts on *Shh*.

Wait.

Notifications from *Shh*? That never happens. It's all anonymous so no one gets notifications like they do from uploading a selfie to Facebook.

My heart begins to race and my hands begin to shake as I click on the app. It is then that the voices of everyone around me seem to fade away as I realize my life is over.

*Shh* just released the name of who posted each and every anonymous post since it was created.

I posted over half of the anonymous gossip.

