

Hot Ticket
(Sample Chapter)

by
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Juliet Robinson is the only sixth grader in John Jay Jr. High who hasn't received a "hot ticket" from the mysterious ticket dispenser. When one of the dorkiest kids in school - Crammit Gibson - receives a ticket before she does, Juliet decides that the ticketing system has to stop. With the help of her best friend Lucy, a Daria-esque Madeline and her almost-crush Crammit, Juliet is determined to climb a few rungs on the middle school social ladder and catch the ticket dispenser once and for all!

HOT TICKET is the first book in the Hot Ticket Trilogy, and is available at Amazon, Barnes & Noble and Smashwords.

Hot Ticket

Chapter 1

I didn't punch Cindy Newsome in the face on purpose.

I sat in the chair outside the principal's door, swinging my legs back and forth and wondering how I could possibly convince Principal Kim the same thing. I knew it'd be hard, because *a lot* of people *did* want to punch Cindy Newsome in the face. And, this wasn't *exactly* my first trip to the Principal's.

The door opened, and Cindy Newsome walked out, an icepack held gingerly over her nose. She glared and gave me a “humph!” I looked down at my shoes.

“Juliet Robinson, this way please.” Principal Kim waved me towards the seat in front of her. She sat in her large mahogany chair, and leaned across the desk. She put her head in her hands.

“Okay Juliet, what happened this time?”

“I was late, well not *late* late, but going to be late for Herbert's class-”

“Mr. Herbert, Juliet,” Principal Kim said.

“Okay, *Mr.* Herbert's class. Anyway, my backpack was really heavy and I couldn't run with it so I was trying to drag it down the hallway and then when I went to pull it in front of me, Cindy walked around the corner and my grip wasn't very good so my backpack went flying and my fist that *had* my backpack also went flying... and it landed in Cindy's face.”

I looked at Principal Kim.

“It was an accident, I swear.”

Principal Kim sighed.

“I believe you, Juliet. But do you understand that you could have broken Cindy's nose?”

I nodded, though if I *had* broken her nose, there would have been a loud CRACK when my fist hit her. I know because my dad broke his nose. (I swear I had nothing to do with that either. Really.)

“And you understand that because you were late, again, you ran in the hallways, which is not allowed,” Principal Kim continued. I nodded.

“And, because you were using your backpack incorrectly, you lost control of your backpack and body-”

Principal Kim paused. I noticed her black, straight bangs were slightly crooked. I pulled some of my hair in front of my face. I hadn't had bangs since second grade... but maybe...

“Juliet? Are you paying attention?”

I let go of my hair and looked up at Principle Kim. Her face was getting a little red.

I better speed this up before I get lunch detention for the rest of the year!

“I understand,” I said, “and I won't run in the hallways anymore. And I'm sorry I didn't break Cindy's nose. I mean, you know, I'm sorry my fist flew into her face.”

Principal Kim looked at the clock.

“Good. I'm giving you lunch detention today and I want you to write an apology note to Cindy to give to me at the end of the period. Understood?”

“Understood.”

“Good.” Principal Kim ushered me out of her office. “Don't take this the wrong way Juliet, but I don't want to see you in my office for the rest of the year.”

“Yes ma'am,” I said.

At lunch detention, all I could think about was how I better get a shame ticket for accidentally punching Cindy.

There's just no way the ticket dispenser could ignore the fact that I just punched the most popular girl in school in the face, right?

But still, I worried that the dispenser was going to ignore me again. I'm basically the only sixth grader without a hot ticket. This wouldn't be a big deal if I didn't go to John Jay Jr. High. (Triple J, for short.) Everything is hard enough as a 6th grader. We're the lowest on the totem pole. The tadpoles of the pond. But it's even worse to be a tadpole without a hot ticket.

Hot tickets could be awarded for doing something cool, saying something funny, or sometimes even just wearing something the ticket dispenser liked. All authentic hot tickets were two inch by six inch rectangles made from this orange cardboard material, with "HOT TICKET" written in big bold letters at the top. Hot tickets first started becoming popular about a month after school started. Then there was this rash of copycat tickets on regular paper, but people just tossed those in the trash. Everybody could figure out it was one of their friends that made it anyway. But an authentic ticket – that was something you kept.

Some people had their lockers decorated in hot and shame tickets. Some people kept their hot tickets at home to prevent theft.

If I got a hot ticket, I would definitely keep it taped on the inside door of my locker. Right now my locker only had a locker mirror, a picture of Lucy and I from my birthday party at Six Flags and these annoying cat stickers from the person who had my locker before me.

Fifth grade did not prepare me for this at all.

Lucy, my next door neighbor and best friend, came up to my locker between periods. Her smile was so big I could see the bread from her lunch stuck all the way back between her molars.

“Why weren't you at lunch?” she asked.

“Detention, again. I sorta punched Cindy in the face,” I said.

Lucy's jaw dropped. “Holy crow! You punched Cindy Newsome in the face, and you're still alive?! She already hates you because --”

“I know, I know,” I said. “What's up? You're like, super smiley.”

“Oh yeah!”

Lucy pulled a piece of orange cardboard out of her back pocket.

“You didn't!” I shouted, prompting stares from the girls next to us.

“I did,” she said, turning the cardboard over to reveal the words ‘Hot Ticket’ in big, bold print. “I found it in my locker after sixth period – another hot ticket!”

Lucy passed it over and I read the smaller print beneath.

“For the joke, 'Even Einstein would have trouble in Carmody's class.'”

I looked up as a couple of sixth graders pointed to Lucy's hot ticket as they walked by. They smiled at Lucy, but she was still looking at her ticket.

“Totally ridic, right? Who could have heard me say that?” she asked.

“It must have been someone standing next to us in the hallway yesterday.”

“That could be anybody,” Lucy said as she flipped her hot ticket over in her hand.

The bell rang and Lucy and I trudged to our last period, the only class we had together.

“So who do you think it is?” asked Lucy.

I shrugged as another group of sixth graders pointed to the hot ticket in Lucy's hand. They started guessing what cool thing she could have done, commenting on her new shoes, and how awesome she did in gym class today. Suddenly it felt like *everybody* in the hallway was saying Lucy's name.

“Who cares?” I said.

But I *did* care. And if I didn't have at least a shame ticket tomorrow for punching Cindy, then it was time to find out.
