



How to Be a Star

M. Doty

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High school is the time to shine.

Tired of playing sidekick to her superstar-athlete best friend, Kimi Chen has decided it's time to step into the spotlight and snag her own place at the coveted center table of the cafeteria. When her low-budget music video hits the Web and goes viral, forget about being just popular -- Kimi is famous! Boys want to date her, girls want to be her, and she is even asked to perform on her favorite TV show. After years of feeling stranded on the bottom rung of the social ladder, Kimi finds that things are finally looking up.

But when fame gets in the way of her friendships, Kimi's celebrity begins to lose some of its sparkle. Being a star, it turns out, may be more than she bargained for.

Discover the high price of fame and stardom in this second novel in the Surviving High School series, based on the hit mobile game from Electronic Arts.

How to Be a Star Details

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From Reader Review How to Be a Star for online ebook

Rachel says

Tell Kimi Chen that she would be three quarters into her freshman year of high school and still be an absolute nobody, at first she wouldn't have believed you. But in the second book of the Surviving High School series, set roughly two months after the first novel, Kimi struggles with mean girls and boys after the fallout of her "rating-every-guy-in-school" debacle the semester before -- and feeling eternally stuck in her best friend's shadow. Desperate to make a name for herself and to successfully land a permanent residence at the center table, she receives assistance from her sort of-but-not-really boyfriend Kevin (who still has not made a move on her) to hook her up with a producer that would help her become the next internet sensation. Her totally embarrassing video happens to go viral and soon Kimi learns that fame comes at a price, and it definitely isn't all that it's cracked up to be.

How To Be A Star is a pretty fast read, a book that I read through one sitting, and although it seemed like a light read (one that I would get a few chuckles out of, maybe even roll my eyes at a few corny lines) -- it stays very true to the name and basis of the series: surviving high school. I shouldn't have been surprised considering I had read the first novel centered around our protagonists best friend Emily a few weeks before and thoroughly enjoyed it, but I was when I realized how much depth the story had and the issues it handled in a mere 197 pages.

So let's discuss some pros/cons, shall we?

(view spoiler)

In the first few pages of the novel, we can already tell that Kimi is insecure and just not very happy at all with how her year went. She's not sulking around with her head down in the hallways, but the amount of energy she puts into comparing herself to her best friend and the other popular girls stands out and speaks volumes. Our protagonist is constantly looking out for what would be appealing for the others to look at and see when they notice her, consisting of sewing together cute outfits and changing into them after her mother drops her off at school, and trying to be seen with the right people (also notable in the first novel when she advises Emily not to sit with the nerds at lunch). But as much effort as she puts into making sure that everything she does is perfect, it all falls flat. Watching everyone talk about how cool her superstar athlete best friend is, she explains to Kevin, is not very fun at all when she instantly becomes labelled as 'that friend of Emily's'. Not only does she have to stand by as Emily lands a super cute guy who's totally crazy about her and win all of her swimming competitions, she has to watch as everyone around her heads toward their dreams when Kimi doesn't even know what she's good at yet. Her mother stresses this when she discusses how proud she is of Kimi's brother attending a great school, Emily with her swimming, and her sister with her piano yet puts the pressure on Kimi to actually settle down and stick with something. Kimi has to be one of the most relatable characters in the series because of these issues she deals with, and more: not knowing what to be in the future, popularity, bullying on and offline, a quickly-becoming absentee BFF, and expectations from her parents. Kimi will resonate with all of us teenagers since we'll all be able to relate to

her feeling of wanting to belong and not just be another face in the yearbook.

Facing the issue of bullying and EDs: The message is definitely there. Maria and the other cheerleaders are so cruel towards our girl that they ignore her efforts to fit in and gossip about her so much that upon learning that Kimi had ditched her style for a simple t-shirt and jeans, they ridicule her to the point she cries. Pictures of her less than fashionable days also start leaking out by an anonymous blogger on the internet just as Kimi's video goes viral. Kimi's friends and family express their concerns of her eating habits as Kimi starts dropping lots of weight (Kimi even reflects on this when she notices how skinny she looks, and avoids a few slices of pizza despite her overwhelming hunger).

Emily and Ben's relationship: Because let's face it, they are the cutest pairing ever.

Old friendships discovered: Who knew Kimi and Maria were good friends before Kimi even knew the gang?

Good antagonists: Let's add Maria and Lindsay to the list of upcoming antagonists and girls that are easy to find high school hallways because these types of people can be found anywhere. There was something about Maria that I never liked, but this book just reinforces the fact that girls can be very catty and petty, and this girl will stop at nothing to get what she wants: fame and recognition. Even if it means pretending to be someone's friend to get some spotlight. As for Lindsay, well.. at least she was honest about her dislike of Kimi and she did nothing to convince Kimi otherwise.

A new side to Nicole: She's still boy crazy but she still definitely has a heart as she's shown having guilt about Maria's treatment towards Kimi. And she secretly reads comic books and has a crush on one of the nerds which makes her a thousand times cooler.

For readers who wanted a gay character, you got 'em: Won't spoil who, but I definitely expected it to be one of the guys who was way too invested in his appearance but it wasn't. Just goes to show you that the writers do take things fans say into consideration since the demand was overwhelming.

As for the cons, there weren't a lot except of the confusion with dates and the SHS timeline. It makes references to Amanda's feelings towards Howard and how she has a crush on him, but the game makes it clear that the two have been an exclusive couple for awhile now. At the end of the novel Kimi and Kevin become a couple, ending the book with a double date between Ben/Emily and Kimi/Kevin, but the game only now has Kevin realizing his interest in her.

As for what's next for SHS, it seems clear that if the books do well enough to write a third novel, it'll be about Dominique's comeback and her search for what she feels was taken from her: popularity, record, and Ben Kale. Dominique is out for blood this time and will stop at nothing to take Emily down, which makes me really excited to see this tension and everyone's reactions when she returns to the school. Let's hope she doesn't succeed too much and Ben/Emily pull through. He seems pretty committed and serious about Emily, anyway, so it would be a shame to see all that work he put into getting approval from her dad go to waste over a mean girl who he spent the last book trying to get off his back.

Hopes for the next book and series:

1. Assuming it's all about Dominique, I expect the events to be told from her perspective unless she's going to be made out to be an antagonist -- to which I would say that the book will probably be from someone else's POV, such as Emily's, Ben's, or maybe even Cameron's since he's her half-brother. I wouldn't mind

getting into the heads of any of these characters (again, if we're talking about Emily).

2. Mentions of other characters from the game such as Owen, Zoe, Paige, Hector, Autumn, Wes, Nate, etc.

No perspective from Zoe/Owen/Paige though please. I can't take any more of them.

3. Maria's downfall: Because seriously, she needs to get a reality check that her using people is not okay.

Maybe it can be Nicole who finally stands up to her because hey, even she escaped from the center table to be around a nerd.

4. More mentions of Sara: It's no secret that Emily and Sara are strikingly similar in appearance, and if Cameron's in the next book, it'll be interesting to see more of thoughts about the deceased star. (hide spoiler)]

Sarah says

it was great i guess. Really liked the characters in the book. Whoever is reading this comment or review, you should definitely read this book.

Elaine A. says

This book couldnt be any better... it shows how a not-so-popular high school girl finally gets to be in the spotlight when her video goes viral. And it has a little romance, and shows how some people like to use you, or more specifically, they use you for your popularity, and not for who you really are.

Jennifer Young says

I really enjoyed this new installment in the M.Doty Surviving High School series. I'm a fan of the game, and it was fun to see Kimi's journey throughout this novel. She has a really fun voice, and I hope to see more of her in the game and the novels to come!

A. Fullcup says

This novel tells the story of the rise of Kimi Chen from high school nobody to high school superstar! There was a lot to like about this novel, so I'll list some of my favorite parts without trying to give any spoilers:

Cheerleader slumber party

Kimi's hilariously bad music video

Kimi's date with Cameron

The story at the end about Dominique

and the personality quiz at the end was pretty fun too!

I highly recommend it!

Peter Anargirou says

Standalone, it was okay. It was good as a companion to the game.

Marissa says

I finished reading the first book and loved it. When the second book " how to be a star" came out i went to the store right away and pick up the book. The book started of kinda slow didnt really injot Kimi the charater. But when it started to get into intenceness it was amazing. I love how kevin and kimi date. And yes Ben and Emily are still dating❤. This book was amazing i couldnt put it down. For the theird book i really want the book to fetuer Emiy again. Because me and she have so much in common
