



*'Very funny' Melvin Burgess*

# BE MORE Ned Vizzini CHILL

Swap the d\*\*\* in your hand for a squip in your head

**Be More Chill**

# Praise for Ned Vizzini

"Very funny, well observed and well written... Beautifully executed – definitely one to take notice of, and one of the cleverest plots I've come across in a long time."

*Melvin Burgess*

"Hip, funky, funny and immensely entertaining – Vizzini's debut is a novel of modern teen times that will resonate with all who choose to indulge in it's hilarious excess." *John McLay*

"Comic and intelligent ... he shows a real talent for self-deprecating humour." *Publishers Weekly*

"Ned Vizzini is a young genius. And if he were old, he would be an old genius. It doesn't matter. This kid can write!" *Jonathan Ames*, author of *What's Not to Love* and *The Extra Man*


"*Be More Chill* is a sharp social commentary disguised as a high school sex (or *no* sex, in our hero's case) comedy. I was thoroughly entertained by Vizzini's clever take on the insanity (and inanity) of contemporary teendom." *Megan McCafferty*, author of *Sloppy Firsts* and *Second Helpings*

"His wonderfully sardonic voice ... suggests a wisdom beyond his years." *School Library Journal*

**Ned Vizzini**

# **Be More Chill**

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**To:**

**Naomi (very much the most important: hi, babe),  
Samartha, Bridget, Kate, Carrie, Jessica, Samantha, Effy, Other Kate, That Girl I  
Hung Out with in Prospect Park, That Spanish Girl from Karaoke, Karla, Sarah,  
Claudia, Elyssa (Wilin' Chick), Olga, Lai Sze, Nicole (Bracey), Katia, Vanessa,  
Heavenly and Those Other Girls at New Year's Eve 2001 (including Ursula), That  
Girl from Nice Guy Eddie's, Caroline, Alina Who Ended up with a  
Guy Named Dogshit, Anna, Marnie, Other Caroline, Robyn and Chelsea.**



# PART 1 – PRE-SQUIP





# 1

The room is bright and alive at 8.45 a.m. — I can almost ignore Middle Borough High School's zombie fluorescent lighting. Mr Gretch is up at his desk, a tall bald head with wisps of hair and a beard. He's accompanied by a newspaper and a cactus; in about twenty seconds he's going to take attendance. To my left is Jenna Rolan, the Coolest girl in class.

Jenna is already talking: "She was like, 'I'll only do it if you beat me in pool!' And then of course she *intentionally* lost in pool. What a slut!"

Jenna likes to talk about her friend Elizabeth, who is a "real" slut. In fact, when I think about it, Jenna never talks about her family, or TV, or when work is due, or the ins and outs of procuring concert tickets, like most girls. She just talks about how Elizabeth is a slut.

"You should've seen what she was wearing. It was like a garbage bag with a condom on top—"

"*Bwer-her-her!*" Anne laughs. Anne is the second-Coolest girl in the class, which is math. She sits in front of me so

she's always twisting back in her chair to talk to Jenna, which reinforces the fact that Jenna is Coolest and she is second-Coolest. Girls are very territorial.

"*Ka-yur-ubbbb.*" Mr Gretch clears his throat from the front of the room. "Abbey."

"Here."

"Asu."

"Here."

"Atborough."

"Here."

"Azu, not-Asu." Mr Gretch absent-mindedly cups the top of his cactus. This never seems to hurt him.

"Here."

"Caniglia."

Christine raises her hand. I look over at her. She looks beautiful. "Here." I look down.

"Duvoknovich."

"Here."

"Goranski."

"Here."

"Heere?"

Oh yeah.

Here comes the fun part, the part that has been stressing me since they started taking attendance (in fifth grade). I

can't say "here" in response to my name. It confuses teachers. I raise my hand quietly and say: "Present." Somebody snickers up by the front of the room. Are they snickering at me? Are they? Can never be too sure. I pull out one of my preprinted Humiliation Sheets, write the date up top and put a tally mark next to the **Snick** category. I cover the page tightly so Jenna can't see. Then I retune my ears to listen for copycat snickering.

## 2

The Humiliation Sheets have developed a lot over the years, with a host of different categories, but the current model has **Snickers, Laugh, Snotty Comment, Refusal to Return a Head Nod** (the standard form of greeting at Middle Borough High), **Refusal to Return a Verbal Greeting, Refusal to Touch Hands, Public Denial of Formerly Agreed-upon Opinion, Refusal to Repeat a Joke and Mortification Event** (a catch-all). I use the Humiliation Sheets to keep track of my social status in a concrete, quantitative way. They are my secret, totally; I make sure no one sees them as I fill them up with tally marks every day. I hate tally marks.

Up in front, Mr Gretch writes  $k$  on the board –  $k$  sucks in math; once you see it you might as well ignore everything and save yourself. Mr Gretch can't hear on account of he's... well, *old*, so Jenna keeps talking and I keep listening.

"OK and then Elizabeth was like, 'Where can we go? I don't have a car like you... And the guy says,' – Jenna puts on a low voice – "'Come and sit on this pipe, babe.' And she went! Unbelievable."

Anne eats it up – “*Bwer-her-her*” – craning her neck to suck in every word. It’s far enough into the school year – mid-October – for kids to have stopped talking about summer. (The big story was that Jake Dillinger had sex with this model from Czechoslovakia who was dating his dad, which I believe. Jake can do anything.) Mostly people are talking about the parties of the past weekend or the PSATs, which are coming up. There’s also scattered chatter about the Halloween Dance.

“I hear Brianna has, like, five boys lined up? Because with football players, you don’t know if one of them is going to sprain his ankle and not be able to dance?” Anne uptalks.

Jenna gives back cold silence. “That happened to me in junior high. My then-boyfriend broke his leg and I had to dance with him while he was in crutches and a cast and it was *so horrible*.”

I tune my ears from Jenna/Anne to other pockets of activity in the room. Mark Jackson and this other kid – his name is actually Jackson Marks – discuss video games. Rob works out a math problem, probably something post-calculus, while picking at his mouth, ear and nose as if he has them on shuffle. Barbary explains how everyone has to call him “Dr Barbary” now because he ordered a PhD off the Internet. And Christine, quiet in her invisible pod up

by the front of the room, just looks pretty.

"Ooh, I heard Christine Caniglia has a new stalker," Jenna says.

Whoa!

"Jenna!" Anne whispers like she's protecting something. "He's right *there!*"

Double whoa. I sit quietly, stiff. Calm. Calm. My head is turned so they must not think I'm listening, but I'm always listening. I'm wired. I peek at Jenna. She eyes me as if I'm a mildly interesting object between her and the clock. I turn back.

"Yeah, that's him," she says to Anne. "I heard he wrote her a letter."

*I never wrote any letter!* I never even *said* anything to Christine, not once, except, "Don't press C7, the Nutri-Grain bars get stuck in this machine," that one time out by the Student Union office where the Nutri-Grain bars get stuck in the machine, because I can't talk to Christine. I just look at her and think about her a lot because she's beautiful, you know? I mean she's intelligent and sweet and everything else that a girl is supposed to be to offset her beauty, but even if she were idiotic and mean, she'd still be beautiful and I'd still be contorted.

"He *is* weird," Jenna continues.

This is a bad day for me to start hearing this stuff. In my pocket is a Shakespeare made of chocolate, OK, like one of those Easter bunny chocolates but in the shape of Shakespeare, and I was going to give it to Christine today at our first play rehearsal. I clutch it.

Jenna whispers something I can't quite catch. I slide my elbow across my Humiliation Sheet and put a tally mark under **Mortification Event** because I don't have a specific category for people whispering about me. I should. Just then Mr Gretch does the stupid classic high school move and I can't believe it's being done to me: "And Jeremy, can you tell us what that angle would be?"

My notebook isn't open. It's being used as a Humiliation Sheet shield. My neurons aren't depolarising. (I learned that in bio.)

Mortification Event number two.



# 3

At lunch I seek out my best friend Michael Mell. Michael sits in a different place in the cafeteria every day – sometimes the indoor part with the long formica tables, sometimes the outdoor part with the scarred picnic benches and giant bees – but you can always spot him because he’s a tall white boy with a white-boy Afro and *huge* headphones. They have a cord coming off them that’s spiralled like an old phone cord. The headphones let him plunk down anywhere, with the jocks or Warhammer nerds or at one of the girl tables (although Michael only sits with Asian girls). No one bothers him when he has them on because he’s obviously got important things on his mind.

“What’s up?” I say as I approach. Michael doesn’t listen to a thing in those headphones during lunch. He just likes how they feel on his head.

“*Mmmmgph*,” he says, wolfing down a fish patty sandwich with cheese and chocolate milk. “Sup?”

“Big problems,” I say.