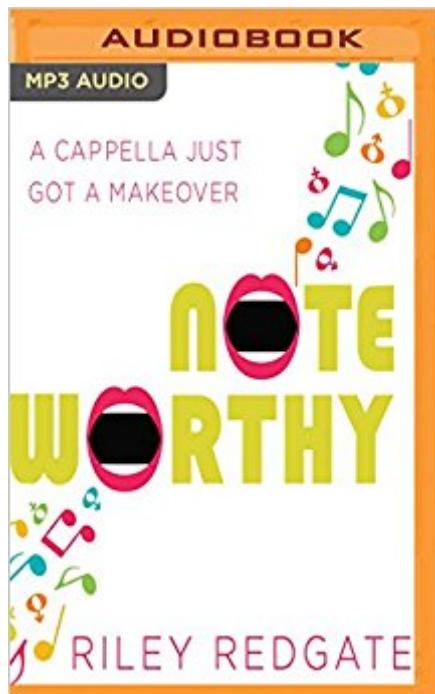


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# Noteworthy



## Synopsis

It's the start of Jordan Sun's junior year at the Kensington-Blaine Boarding School for the Performing Arts. Unfortunately, she's an Alto 2, which - in the musical theatre world - is sort of like being a vulture in the wild: She has a spot in the ecosystem, but nobody's falling over themselves to express their appreciation. So it's no surprise when she gets shut out of the fall musical for the third year straight. But then the school gets a mass email: A spot has opened up in the Sharpshooters, Kensington's elite a cappella octet. Worshiped...revered...all male. Desperate to prove herself, Jordan auditions in her most convincing drag, and it turns out that Jordan Sun, Tenor 1, is exactly what the Sharps are looking for.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

\*\*STARRED REVIEW\*\*"Riley Redgate's (Seven Ways We Lie) second novel superbly probes identity, privilege and community in a humorous plot of high school growing pains. Like her visual arts students at Kensington, Redgate crafts her characters with delicate lines and strong shadows within a phase of life that is anything but gentle. A Noteworthy is a five-star performance, deserving of a standing ovation. Encore!"(Shelf Awareness)\*\*STARRED REVIEW\*\*"Redgate deftly harmonizes a lighthearted plot with an exploration of privilege, identity, and personal agency... A heart song for all readers who have ever felt like strangers in their own skins." (Kirkus)\*\*STARRED REVIEW\*\* "A smart critique of gender rolesâ€¢male and femaleâ€¢in todayâ€¢â€¢s society... delightfully wrapped up in a fun, compelling package of high-school rivalries, confusing romances, and a classic Shakespearean case of mistaken identity."

(Booklist)"Setting and plot delightfully incorporate the arts, with themes of romance and self-awareness woven in... This fun novel pushes against gender norms and will resonate with many teens." (School Library Journal)"It is refreshing to read a story about someone dressing as the opposite sex and not have the main tension be about someone finding out... This is not a story of having to hide who you are, but rather a story of finding who you are." (School Library Connection)"Redgate vividly captures the world of a cappella, and she uses Jordan's soul-searching as well as her family's financial struggles...to bring freshness and substantial depth to a gender-bending/mistaken identity plot that has a long history in literature and theater." (Publishers Weekly)"Like her visual arts students at Kensington, Redgate crafts her characters with delicate lines and strong shadows within a phase of life that is anything but gentle." (Shelf Awareness) --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Riley Redgate is a senior economics major at Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio. Her expected graduation date is May 21, 2016. *Seven Ways We Lie* is her first novel. She grew up in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and hopes to work in a bookstore after college.

I love this book a lot. The fact that the MC is a girl singing tenor is the way straight to my heart. On top of that, I appreciated Jordan's thoughts about gender, and I thought gender was handled pretty well throughout the book. (Having trans characters in addition to the mentions of trans people would have made it even better.) But this is a book that is really about relationships -- platonic, romantic, and familial -- and empathy and trust, and I love its portrayal of all of those things.

Three days after finishing this book and I'm still thinking in Riley Redgate's writing cadence. This book is amazing. She perfectly captures what it feels like to be a performing arts teenager who finally finds a group to perform in while questioning their own identity and sexuality. While that sounds like a small, self-selecting group, this novel feels honest and reads like a thriller. I have a lot of trouble recommending it enough.

What initially drew me in to *Noteworthy* was that it was being called "Pitch Perfect meets *She's the Man*." The fact that it also had a bisexual Chinese American MC? Color me intrigued. Jordan Mingyan Sun is our protagonist, and her narrative voice is sarcastic and refreshing. She says her mouth had a mind of its own, and we could see that from the very beginning. There were a lot of sassy and comical moments that happened directly because of

Jordan's lack of impulse control. I really liked Jordan, because I could understand her deep seated insecurities and fears in a way. Her situation is also very relatable to me, because she wasn't the typical middle class straight white MC I'm used to seeing in YA. We see how different Jordan is from the rest of her classmates in regards to race, sexuality, and economic situations. Jordan herself talks about these disparities in a way that rang true to me. This book is very character driven. We meet The Sharpshooters, this group of 7 guys who all have different backgrounds and personalities. They were all developed exceptionally well, and I can see myself reading companion books or novellas about them because I felt like they all in their own ways stole the spotlight whenever they were on the page. All the character interactions in this book were so cute. I loved how Jordan slowly felt herself opening up to the group because I could really see the evolution from strangers to an almost family dynamic. I also really liked that this was more about Jordan's journey to figuring out who she was and what she wanted. There was very little romance and it doesn't overshadow the plot at all, but when it was there it was really adorable. The diversity here is also really intersectional. Jordan is bisexual and Chinese, but there's also Japanese, queer, Sikh, Indian, learning disabilities, and underrepresented body type representation in the book. I want to make it very clear that while Jordan cross-dresses and poses as a boy to get into the acapella group, she definitely is not genderqueer or non-binary. Jordan throughout the book questions her decision to cross-dress and why she enjoyed her "male" side more than her actual self. I also think the book suffered a bit in terms of pacing. It took me a while to really invest in the story because I felt like I was waiting for something to happen. I wanted to see more of Jordan switching between being Julian and herself. I wanted to see more of how she managed to fool everyone while still staying true to herself. I also wanted the ending to be more developed. The whole book is pretty slow burn and introspective, but the ending felt a bit rushed for my taste. Overall, I really did enjoy the book. There were a lot of cute and adorable moments with the whole cast, as well as honest discussions about poverty, femininity, misogyny, and more. However, had there been better pacing and more nuanced gender discussions, the book would have been much better. A review copy of this book was provided by the publisher via Netgalley.

I was expecting more from *Noteworthy* given the premise and the adorable cover, but it was still a really cute and enjoyable read. Jordan is in her Junior year at Kensington and just lost out on another role in a school musical due to her low voice and her less than feminine appearance. Jordan is discouraged, but she's not giving up, especially when she sees that the

campus all-male a capella group needs a new member with her voice range. Cue the crossdressing! Noteworthy is pretty slow paced, since it takes us through an entire school semester. Jordan goes from a nobody who can't get a role, to someone with friends and a sense of purpose. I loved that the author addressed that Jordan disguising herself for three months isn't going to be easy. She has to flatten her chest, purchase boy clothes on her tight budget, and cut her hair since a wig can shift or fall off to become Julian. Jordan doesn't just throw on a t-shirt and try to sound like a dude. She puts some effort into her disguise and does research. Although, I found her extra efforts to be feminine while she was Jordan strange. She puts on extra makeup, gets a long wig, and starts wearing dresses and heels. If she didn't look this way before, wouldn't it draw more attention to her to do it now? I get that she wants to look even less like Julian, but her reasoning didn't make sense. And she interacts with exactly zero characters as Jordan, so it wasn't like there was anyone to notice the changes. It isn't explained until the very end why she's been alone for two years, so it bugged me for much of the book. I did like the reason though, since it's nothing that I've read before. Noteworthy also talks about sexuality and gender identity a lot. Of course, while dressed as Julian, Jordan gets treated differently than she does as Jordan. She's much more aware of the way she moves in order to blend in. I found it interesting how she says she feels more free and more like herself when she's Julian, but not that she believes she's a boy or even any gender that isn't female. There is a brief discussion of how what Jordan is doing and feeling is different than being transgender, but nothing substantial. Jordan also discovers that she's bisexual, but since this isn't a romance, it isn't focused on too much although there is kissing. I enjoyed Noteworthy, but it was a lot more serious than I thought it was going to be. Not that that's a bad thing. It just seemed like it was going to be this fast, fun, and funny story about a girl infiltrating a male dominated world and blowing them away. It kind of does that, but it's more about Jordan figuring herself out.

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