




Bogus to Bubbly



Nature . . . didn't need an operation
to be beautiful. It just was.

—UGLIES

THE BIG IDEA

Where did you get the idea for that nose?

—FRIZZ

One of the most common questions writers are asked is, “Where do you get your ideas?” But the sad truth is, we don't know. Ideas can come at any time and from any direction: in the shower, waiting for an elevator, or while bouncing across Wikipedia pages.

Even if we don't know for sure how books come into our heads, we still like making up answers for this dreaded question, and eventually these stories stick. So if you've ever seen me speaking in public, you've probably already heard this tale, pretty much word for word.

But just because I always tell it the same way, doesn't make it true. . . .

HOW I GOT THE IDEA FOR UGLIES

Many years ago one of my New York friends got a job in Los Angeles. We were all nervous for him. He was nervous for him, because Los Angelinos can be weird. For one thing, they have this crazy theory that LA is the center of the universe. This, of course, is offensive to us New Yorkers, given that New York City really is the center of the universe.

I mean, all they've got is beaches and movie stars, right? Whereas we have muggers, the subway, and tortured intellectuals. There's really no competition.

After my friend moved to LA, he would write us long, funny e-mails about his culture shock. My favorite described a visit to a Los Angeles dentist. At first it all seemed pretty normal: He sat in a chair, he rinsed and spat, the dentist poked and prodded. But after her inspection of his teeth was over, the dentist sighed and said, "I'm sorry, but it looks like I need to see you in my office."

"Er, okay," said my friend, wondering if he had teeth cancer or something.

He followed her back to a wood-paneled office, plaques covering the walls, and they both sat down. She made a tent with her fingers, leaned across the desk, and looked at him carefully, as if considering

how to break bad news to him. Finally she said, “I need to ask you a serious question. Where do you want your teeth to be in five years?”

My friend stared at her. It wasn’t exactly what he’d been expecting.

“Um, in my mouth?” he ventured.

“Yes, very amusing,” she said. “But seriously, I think we need to talk about a five-year plan for your teeth.”

My friend continued to stare, completely flummoxed. He didn’t know anyone with a five-year plan for their teeth. Was this some sort of LA practical joke?

This confusion lasted for a few minutes, until finally the dentist explained using a simple diagram. Basically, at one end of the scale were my friend’s teeth: normal, slightly coffee-stained New Yorker teeth. And at the other end, in the vanishing distance, were . . . Tom Cruise’s teeth.

You know: Tom Cruise has these superwhite, supereven glowing teeth that shine like a spotlight when he smiles. So the dentist was asking: Over the next five years, how much pain did he want to endure and how much money did my friend want to spend on his journey toward Tom Cruise–like teeth?

My friend answered, “Um, I’ll get back to you on that.”

He left the dentist’s office and walked around—this

was one of the few parts of LA with sidewalks and actual pedestrians—and as he stared at people, my friend kept wondering: Who else has a five-year plan?

Then he noticed a woman who might have had a five-year plan; she was about 25 percent of the way to Tom Cruise. And a man whose teeth were even whiter and straighter—like, 50 percent. And finally he saw a woman whose teeth shone like floodlights—even in the middle of the day—she had gone out the other side of Tom Cruise!

Did she have a ten-year plan?

All of us back in New York thought this e-mail was hilarious. Those crazy Los Angelinos and their teeth! But the story also got me thinking: What would the world be like if everyone had a five-year plan? Not just for their teeth but for their hair and skin and eyes? What if going to the doctor wasn't about your health at all, but about how you wanted to look?

What if cosmetic surgery was so common that you had to get it, or you'd be an outcast?

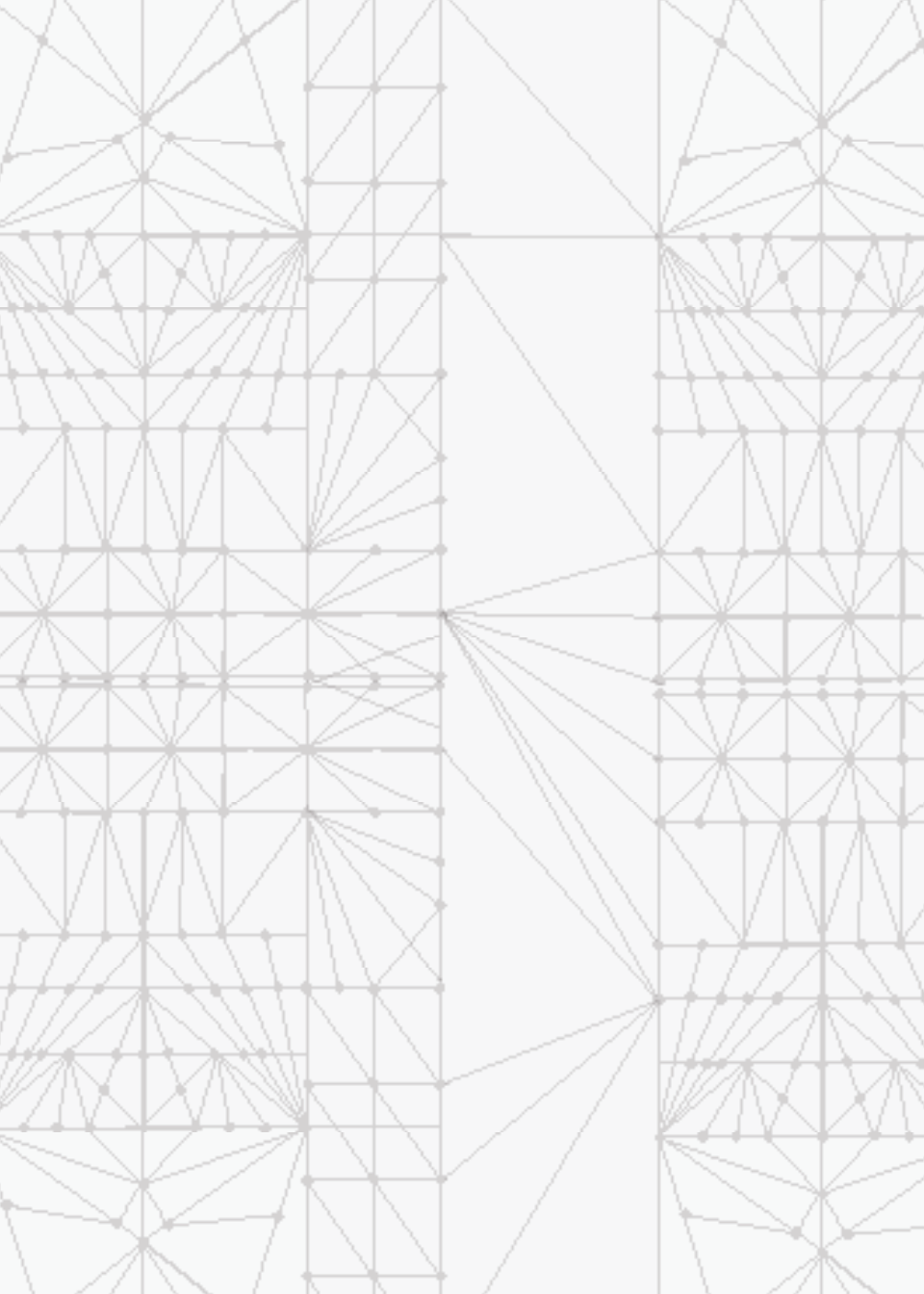
With this notion in my head, I started researching plastic surgery, the science of beauty, and a million other things I needed to know to create a believable future: magnetic levitation, nanotechnology, and, of course, brainwashing (because that's an important part of what's going on here). Slowly, Tally's world

started to fall into place, and all the betrayals, victories, and defeats that she and her friends live through.

But it's still a bit odd to think that it all began with a trip to the dentist.

What follows are my notes on the process: the decisions about the characters, the settings, and the science and technology behind the world of Uglies. I've also included a few documents that you'd be able to read if you could somehow visit that world: a history book, a hoverboard manual, and a few maps.

I hope you enjoy them.





HOVERBOARD MANUAL

Never bored on a hoverboard.

—SHAY

The most common wish I hear from Uglies fans is that someone would get busy inventing a hoverboard. This desire even beats a non-bubblehead version of the operation. Ask yourself this: Would you trade a pretty face for the ability to fly? I certainly would.

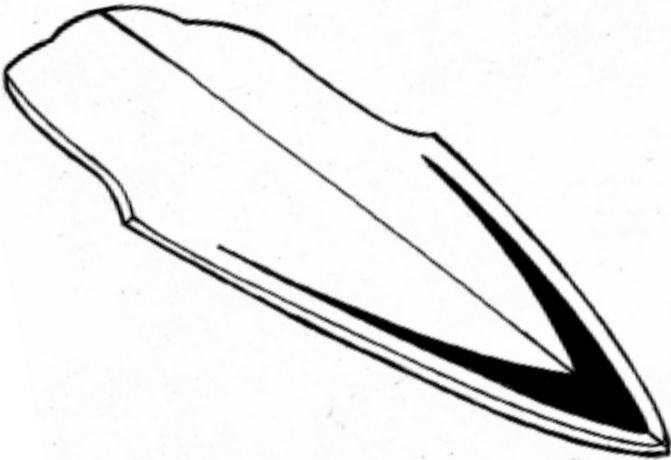
Almost all my books have some kind of flying, climbing, or falling in them. That's partly because I've always had flying dreams, and I have this thing about heights. In college I used to climb buildings for fun, as a way of exploring the campus and hacking the physical world. (But please don't try this at home—or at school.)

Being up in the air is a dramatic way for characters to see their world from a new perspective—literally, I suppose. As Zane says in *Pretties*, “Nothing like heights to keep you bubbly.” Even in our world, where flying is commonplace and amazingly boring, it still is a part of our dreams, and falling is a mainstay of our nightmares.

Of course, in Tally’s world hoverboards weren’t just for fun. This was the machine that freed tricky uglies from the boundaries of their cities, after all, allowing them to travel through the wild to the Rusty Ruins and the Smoke. It was only after exploring the world that Tally and Shay realized how many things needed changing. A few magnetic lifters meant the difference between joining the revolution and being stuck in their dorm rooms.

So what would it be like to requisition your own hoverboard? Luckily, the historians of the Awesome Librarians clique discovered this vintage user’s manual in the memory stick of an old public wallscreen. As you read it, just imagine you’re standing on your first hoverboard, ready to test your tricks against dorm monitors, safety trackers, and the edges of the grid.

**CONGRATULATIONS on your requisition
of a Series 9 Hoverboard!**



You have countless hours of flying ahead of you, but it's important to read these safety and control tips *before* jumping on board. That's why your hoverboard has been shipped with uncharged lifters. Place it near a public energy point, and it will be ready to go in only two hours!

Please read the following carefully. The life you save may be your own.

THE HISTORY OF HOVERING

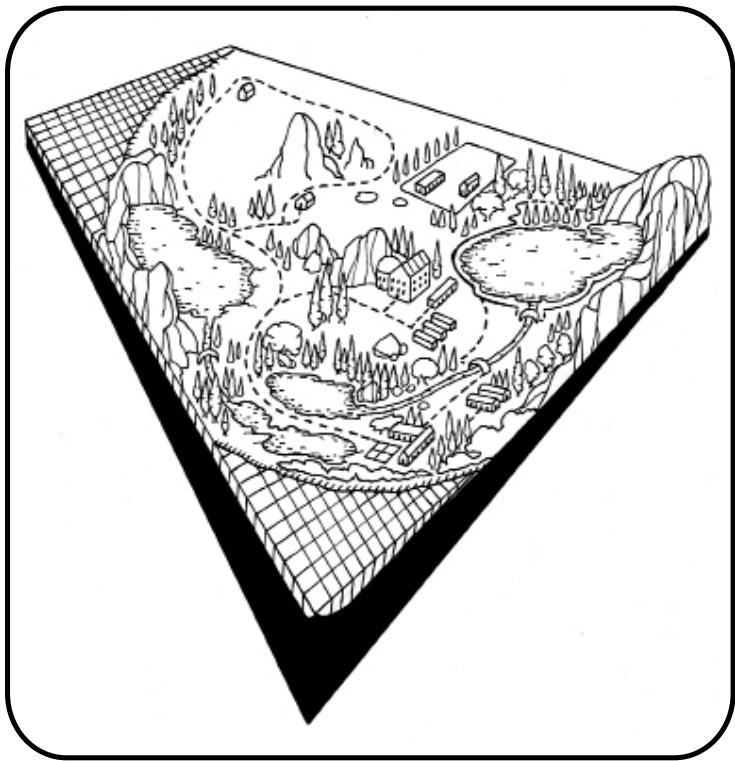
Flying is so easy these days that we sometimes forget what a complex machine a hoverboard is. Simplicity of use is the result of high technology and two centuries of careful testing and design. Ever since the Rusty Crash made it clear that internal combustion was a planet-wrecking idea, scientists realized that an efficient, electricity-based form of travel was something the world couldn't survive without.

These days, magnetic levitation has become the primary means of transportation. This leaves our cities much more space for trees, soccer fields, and pleasure gardens, because we don't have to cover everything with paved roads like the Rusties did. Our "roads" are invisible because they're buried under the ground!

THE GRID

Using the remains of the Rusty Ruins around us, your city government has built a grid, a lattice of ferrous metal buried a few meters below the ground. (Ferrous metals have iron in them, which means they can interact with magnetic forces.) This grid gives your hoverboard something to push against. So the higher you fly, and the farther your board's lifting magnets are from the grid, the weaker they become. How high you can fly depends on your weight and how much charge remains in your board.

WARNING: Never attempt to use your hoverboard outside city limits! Dangers include sudden speed reduction, loss of control, and contact with the ground.



YOUR BOARD

Your Series 9 Hoverboard incorporates three main systems:

1 Electromagnetic lifters powerful enough to levitate the board's weight and yours, and to propel you forward at speeds of up to eighty kilometers per hour. Of all your hoverboard's components, the lifters use most of the energy. Flying at high speeds or high altitudes and carrying extra weight can all greatly reduce the time between charges.

NOTE: Lifters are mostly solid metal and therefore extremely heavy. But, as you will discover when carrying your board, the lifters function in "background mode," reducing the board's weight to only a few kilograms. If your board feels unusually heavy, chances are it needs to be recharged.

2 A guidance-and-control system that makes the board do what you want. The control system reacts to your gestures, shifts in weight, and even sounds, like snapped fingers and verbal commands. Boards also react to the position of your hands (see "Crash Bracelets") and your center of gravity (see "Belly Sensor"). As you ride your board more and more, its control system

will learn your particular way of flying, until it seems to be almost reading your thoughts!

NOTE: To lock your board's control system so that only you can use it, set the identity check to INTERFACE RING or EYESCAN. Series 9 boards can also be placed in "free mode," where anyone can use them.

3 A **safety system** to protect riders from collisions and from themselves. Series 9 boards are always in touch with your city interface, so that the boards know where they are. City regulations may require you to stay away from restricted and congested areas. Some boards are shipped preprogrammed to keep away from the edge of the city grid, where they can fall out of the sky. Depending on the city you live in, your board's safety system may also restrict you to safe speeds.

NOTE: Riders who trick their hoverboards by removing official tracking devices and safety governors risk serious injury and even death!

ACCIDENTS

Even the most experienced hoverboard riders have accidents. As a new rider, you will find yourself falling off

your board more than once in the first few days. But don't worry, just read the following sections carefully, and don't forget to practice, practice, practice!

CRASH BRACELETS

A pair of crash bracelets is your most important piece of hoverboard safety equipment. Each bracelet contains its own magnetic lifter that is capable of arresting a fall of up to a hundred meters. Of course, this doesn't mean you *want* to fall off your hoverboard. Being stopped by your wrists at high speeds can result in injuries, including broken bones, muscle damage, and dislocated shoulders. Please see an autodoc after all hoverboard falls.



NOTE: The lifters in your crash bracelets have their own batteries and must be kept charged. If your crash bracelets are low on energy, your hoverboard's safety system will warn you before you take off.

NOTE: Crash bracelets are designed to work over a city grid. Using your hoverboard over wild sources of metal (such as streambeds) may result in crash bracelets not working as intended. Stay inside city limits!

Crash bracelets have three other important functions:

- 1 If you fall off, your board will stop and drift back to find you, using the bracelets as a tracking beacon.
- 2 Your Series 9 board constantly tracks the position of your bracelets as you ride. This helps its guidance-and-control system know how you are standing on the board, so it can try to anticipate your next move.
- 3 If your board is out of sight, you can call it by twisting the CALL ring on your crash bracelets. It will fly toward you from anywhere in your city at a safe, even speed.

CONTROLLING YOUR BOARD

Hoverboards are designed to make riders feel as though they are gliding across an invisible surface. If you think about it that way, most movements have logical results. For example:



Leaning right or left turns the board in that direction.



Leaning forward increases speed.



Leaning backward, and tipping the front of the board up, slows the board down.

RIDING TIPS

- Always wear grippy shoes when hoverboarding! (Requisition separately.)
- Keep your feet apart for better balance.
- Extend your arms, both for balance and to help your board anticipate your motions.
- Don't be afraid to exaggerate your movements when riding a new hoverboard. Then, as the board learns your specific style, you can gradually make your motions more subtle.

PERSONAL COMMANDS

Boards can also be programmed to react to sounds, words, and gestures. The only limit is your imagination. (See “Programming Techniques” in our advanced manual.) Your board comes preprogrammed with the following simple commands:

Snapping your fingers causes your hoverboard to rise.

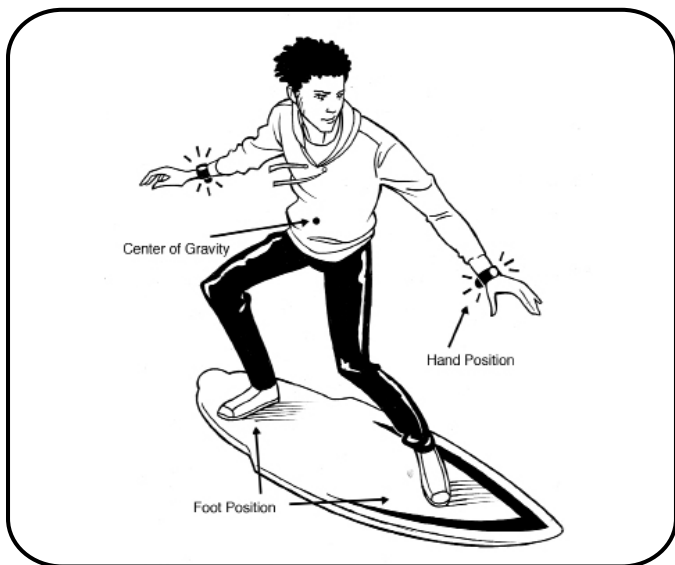
Pointing both thumbs down causes your board to lose altitude.

Crossing your wrists over your chest signals an emergency to the city interface.

The following items are available for requisition separately:

BELLY SENSOR

If you normally wear a belly ring, you may wish to consider clipping on a belly sensor while you ride. Your board's guidance-and-control system will track the exact position of your belly sensor, which tells it where your center of gravity is at any moment. Combined with other data—the shifting of your weight on the board, the position of your crash bracelets, and your verbal commands—your center of gravity helps the board sense how you are standing and where you want to go next.



LONG-RANGE HOVERBOARD

Once you have mastered riding inside city limits, you may want to take a hoverboard on your next camping trip. But boards designed for the city are very dangerous when used off the grid. Consider requisitioning a long-range hoverboard with the following features:

Extra-strength lifters to use natural sources of metal to push against, such as those found in streams and rivers.

Extendable solar panels to recharge without city power points.

Metal-detector lights to continuously inform the rider of the amount of ferrous metal in the terrain.