



SPECIALS

SCOTT WESTERFELD

*THE FINAL CHAPTER
WITH AUTHOR'S COMMENTARY*

Dear Readers:

What you are reading is a very special glimpse inside the mind of Scott Westerfeld.

With the release of EXTRAS, the unexpected fourth volume in the author's UGLIES series, we asked Scott to go revisit the final chapter of the third book, SPECIALS, and give us his thoughts as he looked back on those final pages.

Be warned – this *is* the *last* chapter of SPECIALS, so if you haven't read SPECIALS yet, this isn't the place to start. But if you've read UGLIES, PRETTIES, and SPECIALS and looking for a little inside dirt on why Scott chose to end SPECIALS as he did, look no further.

Enjoy this special revisit of SPECIALS: THE FINAL CHAPTER featuring the author's personal notes.

SPECIALS

SCOTT WESTERFELD

THE FINAL CHAPTER
WITH AUTHOR COMMENTARY



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THE PLAN

“Where were you?” she said sleepily.¹

He stepped from his board, exhausted and unshaven. But David’s eyes were wide. “I’ve been trying to get into the city. Trying to find you.”

Tally frowned. “The borders are open again, aren’t they?”

“Maybe if you know how cities work . . .”

She laughed. David had spent all of his eighteen years out in the wild. He didn’t know how to deal with simple things like security drones.

“I made it in finally,” he continued. “But then I had some trouble finding Special Circumstances headquarters.” He sat down wearily.

“But you saw my flare.”

“Yeah, I did.” He smiled, but he was watching her closely. “The reason I was trying to . . .” He swallowed. “I can pick up the city feeds on my antenna. It said they were going to change you all. Turn you into something less dangerous. Are you still . . . ?”

She gazed at him. “What do you think, David?”

He peered into her eyes for a long moment, then sighed and shook his head. “You just look like Tally to me.”

¹ In the first draft of *Specials*, this scene with David didn't happen at all. Tally went off into the wild to save the planet on her own. But my wise editors wondered if perhaps ending the series that way wasn't too grim. As they put it, it kept Tally isolated and suspended, and provided "neither resolution nor tension." They were right, of course. But I didn't want her to get back with David completely, because Zane had died too recently.

Still, bringing David along did make sense, even if it wasn't about romance. Tally would need David for her new way of life. She may be a Special, but she doesn't know the wild as well as someone who grew up there, and she'll need someone to keep from going crazy.

She looked down, her vision blurring.

“What’s the matter?”

“Nothing, David.” She shook her head. “You just took on five million years of evolution again.”¹

“I *what*? Did I say something wrong?”

“No.” She smiled. “You said something right.”

They ate a meal of city food, Tally swapping the SpagBol² in her storage compartment for a can of David’s PadThai.

She told him how she’d used his injector to change Dr. Cable, and about her month of captivity, and how she’d finally escaped. She explained that the debates David had heard on the newsfeeds meant that the cure was taking hold, the city transforming at last.

The Smokies had won, even here.

“So you’re still special?” he finally asked.

“My body is. But the rest of me, I think that’s all . . .”

She had to swallow before using Zane’s word. “Rewired.”

David smiled. “I knew you’d manage.”

“That’s why you waited here, isn’t it?”

“Of course. Someone had to.” He cleared his throat.

“My mom thinks I’m busy seeing the world, spreading the revolution.”

Tally looked out at the ruined city. “The revolution’s going pretty well on its own, David. It’s unstoppable now.”

“Yeah.” Then he sighed. “But it’s not like I did a very good job of saving you.”

¹ The "million years of evolution" thread starts way back on page 16 of *Uglies*, when Tally sees Peris for the first time since his operation. "There was a certain kind of beauty, a prettiness that everyone could see. . . . A million years of evolution had made it part of the human brain."

So every time David sees past Tally's latest operation, she always thinks him as beating the dictates of evolution.

² SpagBol is Australian slang for "spaghetti bolognese." This running joke about Tally getting stuck with SpagBol is because when my sister-in-law was a little, she once ate only SpagBol for several years.

“I’m not the one who needs saving, David,” Tally said. “Not anymore. Oh, *right!* I forgot to mention, Maddy sent me a message for you.”

His eyebrows went up. “She sent *you* a message for me?”

“Yeah. ‘I love you’¹ . . .” Tally swallowed again. “She said to say that. So maybe she knows where you are, after all.”

“Maybe so.”

“You randoms *can* be awfully predictable,” Tally said, smiling. She’d been watching him closely, her eyes cataloging all his imperfections, the asymmetry of his features, the pores of his skin, his too-big nose. His scar.²

He wasn’t an ugly anymore; to her he was just David. And maybe he had been right. Maybe she didn’t have to do this alone.

David hated cities, after all. He didn’t know how to use an interface or call a hovercar, and his handmade clothes would always look pretty bogus at a bash. And he certainly wasn’t cut out to live in a place where people had snakes for pinkies.

Most important, Tally knew that no matter how her plan turned out, whatever awful things the world forced her to do, David would remember who she really was.³

“I have this idea,” she said.

“About where you’re going next?”

“Yeah.” Tally nodded. “It’s kind of this plan . . . to save the world.”

David paused, chopsticks halfway to his mouth, the

¹ This is the only time in the trilogy that Tally says “I love you” to David, and it’s a message *from his mom*. How tragic is that? Well, except . . . why is she swallowing here? By the way, the only other time anyone says “I love you” in the trilogy is Zane to Tally, right before he jumps out of the balloon during their escape (*Pretties* 228).

² This is the scar that cuts through David’s eyebrow, part of his raffish ugly charm. Scars are important throughout the trilogy: in *Uglies* Tally has one on her palm from when she and Peris made their Best Friends Forever pact; in *Pretties* she gets one on her forehead, which became her first flash tattoo; and in *Specials* the Cutters all have tons of them, of course. (On page 279 of *Uglies*, David promises to explain someday how he got his eyebrow scar. But he never does. Sorry about that.)

³ Or to put it another way, David will follow Tally no matter what she has to do. She’s no dummy.

SpagBol slithering off them and back into the container. His face shifted through emotions, as easy to read as any ugly's: confusion, curiosity, then a hint of understanding. "Can I help?" he asked simply.

She nodded. "Please. You're the right man for the job."¹
And then she explained everything.

That night, she and David hoverboarded to the very edge of the city, slowing to a halt when the repeater network picked up her skintenna. The three messages from Shay, Paris, and Maddy were still there, waiting for her. Tally flexed her fingers nervously.

"Look at that!" David said, pointing.

The skyline of New Pretty Town was aglow, rockets shooting high and bursting into vast, sparkling flowers of red and purple. The fireworks were back.²

Maybe they were celebrating the end of Dr. Cable's rule, or the new transformations sweeping through the city, or the end of the war. Or perhaps this display marked the final days of Special Circumstances, now that the last Special had run off into the wild.

Or maybe they were just acting like bubbleheads again.

She laughed. "You've seen fireworks before, haven't you?"

He shook his head. "Not very many. They're *amazing*."

"Yeah. Cities aren't so bad, David." Tally smiled, hoping that the nightly fireworks displays had returned now that the war was ending. With all the convulsions about to

¹ More importantly, this is a much better ending for David than living in one of the new cities. He starts and ends as a rebel in the wild, born to be on the outside looking in. That's why David is one of only two characters with a old-fashioned name. (The other is Andrew Simpson Smith, who's also an outsider.)

² Throughout the trilogy, fireworks are symbolic of pretty culture. They're silly and useless, but you can't take your eyes off them. So the rule of the Specials is over, and the pretties are in charge again. But they won't be pretties for much longer . . .

unsettle her city, maybe that one tradition should never change. The world needed more fireworks—especially now that there was going to be a shortage of beautiful, useless things.¹

As she prepared herself to speak, a shiver of nerves played through Tally. Whether she was a Special-head or not, this message needed to come out icy and convincing. The world depended on it.

Then suddenly, she was ready.

As they stood there watching New Pretty Town glow, their eyes tracking the slow ascent of the rockets and their sudden blossoming, Tally spoke clearly over the water's roar, letting the chip in her jaw catch her words.

She sent them all—Shay, Maddy, and Peris—the same reply. . . .²

¹ This is a reference to the John Ruskin quote from the very beginning of *Pretties*: "Remember that the most beautiful things in the world are the most useless."

² These three characters represent Tally's unfinished business. Tally and Shay could never stay on the same side, Maddy never really forgave Tally for Az's death, and Peris was always just ahead or just behind her in the scheme of things. So I thought Tally owed them all an explanation for her next step.

MANIFESTO

I don't need to be cured. Just like I don't need to cut myself to feel, or think. From now on, no one rewires my mind but me.

Back in Diego, the doctors said that I could learn to control my behavior, and I have. You all helped, in one way or another.

But you know what? It's not my behavior I'm worried about anymore. It's yours.

That's why you won't be seeing me for a while, maybe a long time. David and I are staying out here in the wild.

You all say you need us. Well, maybe you do, but not to help you. You have enough help, with the millions of bubbly new minds about to be unleashed, with all the cities coming awake at last. Together, you're more than enough to change the world without us.

So from now on, David and I are here to stand in your way.

You see, freedom has a way of destroying things.¹

You have your New Smokes, your new ideas, whole new cities and New Systems. Well . . . we're the new Special Circumstances.

¹ This line gets quoted on reader's MySpace pages and websites more than any other words I've written. You wouldn't think it would be a popular sentiment among teenagers, but there you have it. I suspect that most people interpret it to mean both the good kind of destroying (what Tally did to the pretty system) and the bad kind (what the Rusties did to the earth).

Whenever you push too far into the wild, we'll be here waiting, ready to push back. Remember us every time you decide to dig a new foundation, dam a river, or cut down a tree. Worry about us. However hungry the human race becomes now that the pretties are waking up, the wild still has teeth. Special teeth, ugly teeth. Us.

We'll be out here somewhere—watching. Ready to remind you of the price the Rusties paid for going too far.

I love you all. But it's time to say good-bye, for now.

Be careful with the world, or the next time we meet, it might get ugly.¹

—Tally Youngblood

¹ The last word of *Uglies* is "pretty." The last word of *Pretties* is "special." So of course the last word of *Specials* had to be "ugly," just to close the circle. Congrats to all of you who've written me to say that you noticed this little trick!

What does it mean? Well, maybe that David was right, and Tally is more like her old self than is obvious on the outside. She's still ugly somewhere, deep inside.

So what's the last word of *Extras* going to be? Um, it's "cake," actually.