



# The Hard Count

*Ginger Scott*

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## **The Hard Count** Ginger Scott

Nico Medina's world is eleven miles away from mine. During the day, it's a place where doors are open—where homes are lived in, and neighbors love. But when the sun sets, it becomes a place where young boys are afraid, where eyes watch from idling cars that hide in the shadows and wicked smoke flows from pipes.

West End is the kind of place that people survive. It buries them—one at a time, one way or another. And when Nico was a little boy, his mom always told him to run.

I'm Reagan Prescott—coach's daughter, sister to the prodigal son, daughter in the perfect family.

Life on top.

Lies.

My world is the ugly one. Private school politics and one of the best high school football programs in the country can break even the toughest souls. Our darkness plays out in whispers and rumors, and money and status trump all. I would know—I've watched it kill my family slowly, strangling us for years.

In our twisted world, a boy from West End is the only shining light.

Quarterback.

Hero.

Heart.

Good.

I hated him before I needed him.

I fell for him fast.

I loved him when it was almost too late.

When two ugly worlds collide, even the strongest fall. But my world...it hasn't met the boy from West End.

## **The Hard Count Details**

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Author : Ginger Scott

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## From Reader Review The Hard Count for online ebook

### Mindy Lou's Book Review says

This was an unexpected read. I saw a few friends had read this and really liked it. Even going in thinking I'm pretty sure I'll like it too, I was surprised with the effect it had. This is one of those stories that start out kind of slow and then it builds and builds until the end you when you finish and you sit back and think man that was really good! It's the kind of story that stays on your mind long after you finish reading it.

This is YA story that deals with the struggle with quite a few issues. Our main characters is Reagan, a teenage girl from an all american family. Her dad is the private school's football coach. Her twin brother is the star quarterback and her mom is the stay at home mom who heads all the social parties.

Then you have Nico. He's a scholarship kid who lives in a bad neighborhood. His brother got mixed up with a gang, got his girl pregnant and then said girl takes off and he isn't in the picture either. I won't say where he is since it's not revealed right away. Nico's mom is already a single mom but now she takes care of the granddaughter as well. Nico's family is Mexican. That shouldn't even need to be mentioned but it plays a role in some of the issues being dealt with in the story.

With the little bit of background I gave you, you can probably already see the issues that will come up in the story. That may be predictable but there were unpredictable elements as well. I never thought about the issues the author brings to light that the teenage girl and her all american family dealt with because of her dad being a coach and the snobby women the mom has to deal with.

The story really showed that no matter the race, rich or poor, we all have issues in our life that we deal with. Issues that shape and mold each and every one of us. One of the best things I loved about this story was how much good can come from these issues.

Nico was an exceptional hero. His and Reagan's relationship was incredibly sweet and what we would want our children to experience in their lives. I've never read this author before and this book has me excited to see what else she has written.

I listened to the audiobook and highly recommend it to audio lovers. The narrators were really good and did such a wonderful job putting heart into the reading of this story.

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### Astrid - The Bookish Sweet Tooth says

READ MY REVIEW ON THE BLOG

I DEDICATE THIS REVIEW TO MY FAVORITE HOOCHIE ANA. She never gave up poking me to get this off my currently reading shelf and I deserve all the crap she's giving me now. Thank you, hoochie, love you! ??

One thing that I can rely on when I read a book by Ginger Scott is that the hero will be lovable, strong, special and I have yet to read about a heroine of hers I dislike. Another thing we often get: present day problems addressed in a delicate manner.

In this book we meet Nico Medina, an 18 year old scholarship student who earned his way into a prestigious high school with his intelligence and hard work. The football team's head coach's daughter Reagan Prescott is his opponent in class and more often than not they debate just for the heck of it. When Reagan watches Nico play football she sees his raw, vast talent and her twin brother, starting quarterback of The Tradition, injures his leg and can't play for the season she convinces her dad that Nico could be the person to take the team to the top again. And a win is what they need this season...

With Reagan spending a lot of time around the football field for her movie about the team she gets to know Nico. Their grudging respect for each other turns into a friendship and eventually love. Along the way to their happy ending however lies a lot of adversity.

**You can be a toad in love with a beautiful girl all you want, but in the end, you're still a toad. That's how everyone is going to see you, and you know what? That's how the beautiful girl sees you, too—when other people are looking**

The perfect facade the Prescotts hold up crumbles when forces work against the coach and he may lose his job. Nico's struggles on the team because he's the Latino kid and replacing the popular quarterback, his need to prove his worth as a football player and the fight to overcome prejudice and racism are portrayed as well as Reagan's own conflict about their budding love.

**“Make me earn it,” he says, pausing again to take my top lip between both of his. “I’ll earn it. I’ll never stop trying to earn it...to earn you.”**

One thing that I absolutely love about YA books is that the characters' love is pure and innocent, the few sex scenes are tasteful and oddly erotic in their innocence and definitely don't distract from the story but complement the relationship of the main characters. And that's exactly what Ginger Scott does best. I think she \*gets\* young people. She is a kickass YA/NA author who always brings something new to the table and fills her stories with beautiful words and deep emotions that I feel physically. Nico Medina and Reagan Prescott are special, like all her other characters. They are the ideal people should strive to be.

**Nico is the twist in the tale. He's the element of good. He's what humanity should be—the lesson to be learned. He is hope.**

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**Aestas Book Blog says**

**::: FULL REVIEW NOW POSTED :::**

***“Just don’t ever stop looking at me... Look at me like you expect more. Look at me like it isn’t going to be easy.” He breathes the words against my lips... “Make me earn it... I’ll earn it. I’ll never stop trying to earn it... to earn you.”***

Holy wow, this story had SO. MUCH. HEART!! It was a YA sports romance that drew me in from the first few pages. The author perfectly captured the intense passion of the game in a way that brought tears to my eyes and made me want to cheer out loud, and in the midst of it all was a beautiful forbidden romance between the coach's daughter and the new star quarterback from the wrong side of the tracks, falling in love against the odds, believing in their love enough to withstand criticism, racism, and jealousy, and playing hard enough to win. My heart raced and the story came alive as I read. It was different. It was inspiring. It was beautiful. I highly recommend it!

*Nico Medina’s world is eleven miles away from mine. During the day, it’s a place where doors are open—where homes are lived in, and neighbors love. But when the sun sets, it becomes a place where young boys are afraid, where eyes watch from idling cars that hide in the shadows and wicked smoke flows from pipes.*

*West End is the kind of place that people survive. It buries them—one at a time, one way or another. And when Nico was a little boy, his mom always told him to run.*

*I’m Reagan Prescott—coach’s daughter, sister to the prodigal son, daughter in the perfect family. Life on top. Lies. My world is the ugly one. Private school politics and one of the best high school football programs in the country can break even the toughest souls. Our darkness plays out in whispers and rumors, and money and status trump all. I would know—I’ve watched it kill my family slowly, strangling us for years.*

*In our twisted world, a boy from West End is the only shining light.*

*Quarterback.*

*Hero.*

*Heart.*

*Good.*

*I hated him before I needed him.*

*I fell for him fast.*

*I loved him when it was almost too late.*

*When two ugly worlds collide, even the strongest fall.*

*But my world...it hasn’t met the boy from West End.*

Right from the start of the book, I was blown away by the writing and utterly consumed by the story. It felt like I was *right there* seeing everything unfold before my eyes. This was the first book I'd read by this author and several times within the first few chapters, I literally stopped reading, sat back, and just went "WOW!" .

This story takes place during the senior year of high school. Raegan came from a world of privilege, power, and opportunity. From the outside, her world seemed perfect, but that was only a facade hiding the corruption and ugliness inside. Nico came from the other side of town, the 'wrong side', West End... only eleven miles away but a world of poverty ruled by gangs. What West End had that her world could never comprehend was a sense of family -- loyalty, devotion, caring, love. The closest thing her world had was their football team, where brotherhood and teamwork were at its heart. But even though Nico was a star

student and a better player than anyone they'd ever had on the team, there were people willing to do everything in their power to bring him down. Racism, jealousy, and outright bullying followed his every step but in the face of adversity, their love, talent, and determination prevailed.

*I'm a part of Nico's story. And he's a part of mine. I believe in him. More than I've believed in anything.*

This is a standalone YA sports romance and in this case it is literally both a sports story and a romance, and I was equally absorbed by both sides. It's not a steamy read, but you definitely *feel* the pull between them. I believed in their love and I cheered for their games. I should say that I'm not a sporty person in any way, but I was completely *captivated* by the games in this book. Usually I'm only really "into" the romance side of stories but during all the sport-focused parts of this book, I wanted to cheer out loud. My heart raced. I felt the thrill of it as though it were happening right before my eyes. It was exciting and I couldn't help but get caught up in its intensity and momentum.

This truly was an all-consuming read. From the moment I started reading, I couldn't put it down. It's a story of unexpected heroes, of overcoming the odds, the determination to win, and the power of love. The writing was addictive, the characters felt real, and the story swept me away. I loved every word and highly recommend it!

**Rating: 4.5 stars! Standalone YA sports romance.**

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**Buy THE HARD COUNT (Paperback)**

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**Jan says**

I'm not a person connected to sports. I've never been. I was born lazy.

At school, I used to do everything I could to not participate in sports activities.

I hated P.E. and for that only, this story could have failed me big time.  
Anyhow, I was curious after reading a few reviews.  
I thought that maybe I could skim the boring parts?? And focus on the romance.  
Gah! Did I? I did not!

Not sure how the author pulled this off! I mean, getting a 5 Star from me, because there is a lot of football here. I enjoyed every word, every sentence and every Friday game.  
But I am sure I want to give it 5 Stars.

**Ugly doesn't have a color. It lives among selfishness and hate. And as much as this story is about football... it's also about that.**

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### **Wil Loves Books! says**

**Whose house is this?**

**Our house.**

I'm in love with this book, period. This was such a great read for me. As a sports nerd and a huge football fan, this book was everything I expected it to be and then some. This book reminded me why I love YA so much and why I should read YA more often. The High School experiences, the anticipation, that first touch, the first kiss, the first love, this book had all of that, and I enjoyed every second of it.

***"The difference between our two worlds is impossible not to notice the second my feet step onto the bare concrete floors of Nico's home."***

Cornwall is a prestigious private school with a legendary football program. "Honor. Brotherhood. Tradition.", those are the foundations of it and success is what everyone strives for. If you've ever watched Friday Night Lights (the TV show, which is perfection), it's a very similar concept. A football program that is hugely competitive and where the expectations are extremely high for all involved, coaches, players, even the community.

Reagan Prescott is the coaches' daughter, and the main narrator of this story. She was born into privilege and opportunity. She's smart and beautiful and dreams of going to film school. She also bleeds football, it's in her veins and "The Tradition" (Cornwall's football team) is a huge part of her life and her identity. Reagan also shows us the ugly side of that football tradition, the politics, the backstabbing, the insecurities and instability of a system that solely depends on winning. So, on the surface, her life is perfect but it is all a huge façade.

***"The price of winning is steep, and sometimes it doesn't seem worth it."***

Nico Medina is the hero of this story, and let me tell you he is the HERO in every sense of the word. He makes this book extraordinary. Nico is from the West End, the wrong side of the tracks. A "dangerous" place, a place full of "at risk" youth, a place no one on the other side wants to acknowledge it exists. Nico is academically gifted and extraordinary; he goes to Cornwall on a scholarship and is in line to be

valedictorian. He and Reagan often butt heads because they're basically the same person but she definitely knows Nico is very special. I'm not sure what it is, but the way we see Nico through Reagan's eyes is perfection.

***“Nico is a wild stallion full of promise and gifts, and I’m not sure if he can be tamed. I’m not sure if he should.”***

Nico is also a gifted athlete; he's passionate about football although he does not play any organized sports in school. When the team's quarterback, who happens to be Reagan's brother, gets injured, she convinces Nico to try out for the team in an effort to save her father's job and the football season and that's when the story truly begins.

***“This is what makes football great. The moments when impossible happens; the boys who make impossible happen.”***

The story is a little bit enemies to lovers and also a little bit forbidden since she's the coaches' daughter and they come from different sides of the tracks. Their friendship soon evolves into something beautiful and they realize that those barriers they thought they had and seemed impossible for them to be together were far from it.

***“Look at me like you expect more. Look at me like it isn’t going to be easy.” Nico breathes the words against my lips, pausing when his bottom lip connects with my top, the faintness of the touch so much better than any other real kiss I’ve had. “Make me earn it,” he says, pausing again to take my top lip between both of his. “I’ll earn it. I’ll never stop trying to earn it...to earn you.”***

I really don't want to say anything more about this book, it's one of those you should experience for yourself and you'll see it brings all the feels. I adored Reagan, and I loved Nico with all my heart. I also loved all of the secondary characters, Reagan's family and Nico's family, and all of their friends. This book is simply amazing. It's about, love, family, brotherhood, trust. It's about how we're really not that different. It breaks barriers and as a sports romance, it is at the very top of my list now.

***“We do things in life to make others happy. We make sacrifices because that feeling—the one I once thought was altruism, but have since learned is just love—it makes us feel good. We give, but it’s never selfless. Nico has given so much. He’s lost more than his share, and he’s sacrificed beyond what is right.”***

If you are a sports romance fan and a football fan, you MUST read this book, you won't be disappointed. And if you're not, you still MUST read this book, you won't be disappointed. You will totally love Nico and Reagan and their story. This is my first Ginger Scott book and it will definitely not be my last!

***“Loving you—it makes me feel alive.”***

***\*\*An ARC was generously provided by the author and Wordsmith Publicity in exchange for an honest review\*\****

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## Megan♦\*Steamy Reads Blog\*♦ says

\*\*\*\*\*5 Stars\*\*\*\*\*

***“In our twisted world, a boy from West End is the only shining light.”***

I absolutely loved everything about “The Hard Count.” Ginger Scott is a magician with the written word. I was reminded whilst reading this book why I love YA books so much. It was filled with love, loss, friendship and family. I’ve struggled to find a great book that really speaks to me and has the ability to stay with me forever. This book has it in spades and then some! This is a story of what happens when two, completely different worlds, collide.....BOOM.

***“I’m willing to go the distance.....No matter how far that is.”***

Reagan Prescott appears to have the perfect life. A ‘straight A’ student, her dad is the head coach of her private school football team, her mum is head socialite of the boosters and twin brother Noah, is the starting quarterback. Things aren’t always as they appear; appearances are just facades to hide the truth from the outside world that everything is not so perfect in this ‘perfect family’.

If I were to define what I want from a YA hero, then Nico is just that. He’s smart, sexy, athletic and has just the right amount of confidence (or is that arrogance) and spunkiness. Nico is from West End. West End is on the wrong side of the tracks, or eleven miles on the “wrong side” of the highway. Nico attends the same prestigious school as Reagan due to his intellect. He’s known as a ‘scholarship kid’.

Reagan and Nico’s relationship is somewhat of a star-crossed lovers’ story: the good girl from the privileged family and the bad boy from the rough area of town. Their love was absolutely awe-inspiring and beautiful. This story captured all the purity of what YA books should entail. I loved how Nico and Reagan were so competitive with each other, especially their very articulate verbal sparring.

I can’t say a bad thing about this story. I would recommend this to anyone who loves reading books that epitomise YA romances. Anyone who loves reading beautifully written stories with lovable characters will also find this a great read. If you haven’t already read this story, then I urge you to give it a go. Hands down, this is one of my favourite books for this year.

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## Christy says

**5 stars!!!!**

Honor.  
Brotherhood.  
Tradition.

This is my favorite kind of YA read. Just the right amount of romance, heavy on the feels, self discovery, family and friendship. Add in the fact that it was a sports romance, that just made it all the better! *The Hard Count* is not only a beautiful YA romance, it's also uplifting and inspiring. It had such a wonderful message and makes you want to do better, to be better.

Nico Medina goes to the same school as Reagan Prescott, but he's from the West Side. A very different part of town. He's a scholarship kid and he's there because he's smart. He and Reagan love to argue and have a great banter going on in class. That's about as far as their relationship goes. Until Reagan's brother and the star quarterback gets hurt. Once Reagan sees Nico playing football with his friends, she knows how much of an asset he would be to the team. And seeing as her dad is the coach and his job depends on them winning, she gets Nico to try out. The more she gets to know Nico, the more she realizes he's not at all what she expected. I love seeing their banter turn into friendship. I love even more watching their friendship turn into love.

Nico is a wild stallion full of promise and gifts, and I'm not sure if he can be tamed. I'm not sure if he should.

Reagan and Nico have a bit of forbidden love going on- the privileged girl and the guy from the wrong side of town. There is something that is so special about YA romance. It's so pure, so sweet. Reagan and Nico's love story was beautiful. I loved that they started out almost as enemies and then fell for each other.

Reagan is a heroine that had so much character. She's smart, she knows what she believes in and stands strong even during times that aren't easy. Now to Nico Medina. He is the best kind of hero. I loved everything about Nico. His drive, determination, his morals, ideals of family and loyalty. He was just wonderful.

The first part of this story was a little slow for me, but let me tell you- once it picked up, I didn't want to put it down. I was completely enamored. This story had so much heart and soul. It's a truly beautiful and all consuming read. I didn't want it to end. That last half, so so good!!!

As I said before, the friendship aspect of the story and the romance were both wonderful, but this story was about so much more than love and friendship. It was about overcoming adversity, seeing past stereotypes and overcoming obstacles. Things weren't easy for this couple, but that made it all the better when things finally started to come together for them.

*The Hard Count* is a story I would recommend to YA lovers and romance readers alike. It's my favorite book by this author and a complete stand-alone (YAY!). I would, however, LOVE a spin-off about a few of the characters in this story. Noah and Izzy, Sasha, even Colton! I loved the unique premise and the forbidden love aspect. This is a 5-star favorite you won't want to miss out on!

“Alive,” he says against me, his lips grazing mine with the sweetest words ever. “Loving you-it makes me feel alive.”

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### **Em Lost In Books says**

3.5\*

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### **Jennifer Kyle says**

#### **5 "Honor. Brotherhood. Tradition." STARS**

**What is a Hard Count?** A strategy used by a quarterback in which they will use a deceptive snap count in an effort to draw the defense offsides. Typically, a good hard count will rely on using a longer count to force an overaggressive defense to rush too quickly. A hard count can benefit the offense in two distinct ways. First, a team could be called for offsides and the offense could gain five free yards. Second, a team could receive a free play and have a chance to gain significant yardage risk free.

Ginger Scott delivers a standalone story about a prestigious private school whose academic scholarship recipient from the wrong side of town steps into the starting quarterback’s spot. I place this story in line with such tales as *The Blind Side* and *Rudy*. It’s just as beautiful and inspirational and my favorite story by this author!

Our hero is Nicolas ‘Nico’ Medina. Nico is a gorgeous but infuriating student at Cornwall Prep. He drives the heroine, Reagan Prescott nuts as they spar and argue in the classroom daily. Their opinions have been on the opposite ends of any debate for years. Well that is until Reagan spies Nico and his buddy playing football. She realizes that she has found the answer to the championship and a great underdog star for her documentary.

***“I’m invested in Nico’s success, and part of that is the fact that this documentary on the team is a whole lot more interesting with Nico at quarterback. But I always want this for him. He wants it. Badly. I can tell. I want it more for him...more...***

Nico’s abilities get him the quarterback position that Reagan’s twin brother is too injured to hold. The problem, well problems, is the politics in the school and community. While Nico faces so many obstacles so does Reagan’s father on his decision to play him. The unity of the team is also in jeopardy yet they all have something to learn from this hero.

***"We feel it. You whisper about it, even when you don't think you are. We must be getting favors. We must be here to make sure Cornwall isn't too white. Why the hell couldn't it be because ...we're good. Maybe we're just...good."***

Ginger Scott's grasp on the game of football goes well outside just an understanding of the game. She pulls you into the stands of these scenes while vividly and expertly describing to a reader the sights, sounds, and feelings of the scene.

There is love that blossoms between Nico and Reagan. It's a perfectly written fall on both their parts that is outside the realm of the politics and obstacles and was simply beautiful.

This is a captivating story about high school football, family, ignorance, adversity, strength and love!!

GINGER SCOTT'S HOUSE!

*\*\*ARC provided in exchange for an honest review\*\**

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**Michelle says**

*ARC provided by author in exchange for an honest review*

**“Special. Loyal. Smart. Mysterious. Important. I want more words for him.”**

Before I begin my review, I think I should properly thank Ginger Scott for writing a YA sports romance that is so much more than just the game. Thank you for writing a story that tethers reader's hearts to a story that shines brighter than Friday Night Lights. **Hard Count** was pure perfection. It was the quarterback sneak. It was the 40 yard dash to the end zone. It was the touchdown. This book was the catch that will forever be remembered. And how could this one book encompass what YA sports romance should be? It's simple. Ginger Scott wrote a story that is more than executing romance in her playbook, she made readers FEEL. Feel the prejudice. Feel the hatred. Feel the jealousy. Feel the socioeconomic imbalance. Feel the passion. Feel the love. And most importantly feel the hope.

Nico Medina is smart, handsome, and a talented football star. He should have it all but the only thing that is stopping Nico from recognition is that he was born on the wrong side of the tracks. And so what happens when the kid from the West End falls in love with the football coach's daughter? And what happens when a prestigious school and its alumni pressures the coach to change quarterbacks? Will Nico Medina be able to show people that no one can define and hold you back from fulfilling your dreams?

**“I want to know Nico’s story. I want to hold his hand. I want that kiss from my dream to be real.”**

**“Make me earn it,” he says, pausing again to take my top lip between both of his. “I’ll earn it. I’ll never stop trying to earn it... to earn you.”**

**The Hard Count** by Ginger Scott was a combination of *Friday Night Lights*, *The WestSide Story*, and *Remember The Titans*. In this awe-inspiring YA sports romance, Ginger Scott delivered a story that grips your hearts to see beyond the lights. She made readers see the injustice, the humanity, and most importantly see the big picture. Like any big game, life is about facing those obstacles. It’s about the dedication. The blood and sweat. And most importantly, it’s about the heart. And for Nico Medina he stole our hearts as he never wavered in his love for the girl on the right side of the tracks. So if you are looking for a story that was MORE than your high school sports romance then I highly recommend you read **Hard Count**.

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*Review can also be found on Four Chicks Flipping Pages: <http://fourchicksflippingpages.weebly.com>*...Ginger Scott

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### **Ginger Scott says**

I rarely rate my books in here...but damn it...I believe in this one. I hope you all love it too. It's every little piece of me.

XO

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### **Christie«SHBBblogger» says**

[Yes (hide spoiler)]

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### **Jen says**

I was pleasantly surprised with this book! It's a young adult book with a sports theme. In the beginning I thought I was going to become bored with the football talk and play by play on the field; but that was the farthest from the truth. As I continued to read, I found out this was a story that showed the value of family, loyalty, perseverance and love. This book is an angst read but it's full of heart!

Nico is the boy that lives in the West End, which is the "bad neighbourhood," one where they may be poor but they know the value of family- whether it's family by blood or family by loyalty and friendship. Then there is the girl who catches his eye... she's the coaches daughter and lives in the "richer" side of town. The thing with her life is that even though it may look good on the outside... that is a lie.... there are so many issues that come with being a family that has a father as a coach, a football star brother, and a mother who

runs the committees at school.

This story shows the dark side of sports and many other things as well. Even though there is a heavy tone to the book, there is also a heartwarming romance that evolves through the harshness!

A must read when you are looking for something a little more emotional and in depth! The author did a brilliant job writing an amazing read!

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**Pavlina Read more sleep less blog** ❤️❤️ says

My favorite book is live <333 [https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01HSM221W/...](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01HSM221W/)

**5 BEAUTIFUL STARS**

**"Home.**

**Nico is so much like home; like no home I have ever known."**

This story was perfection!! I loved it so much, I was torn between wanting to finish and wishing it would never end, because it was so beautiful! It wasn't a simple romance, it was so much more!! Lately I've been reading a lot of sport romances and this one was the best! Everything in this story is special, original and unique!

I love Ginger Scott's writing, as always she managed to have me mesmerized by her story. One of the things that I loved about this one apart from the romance, is that behind the love story, we see the characters dealing and struggling with some serious issues that kids can face in a school.

**"I'm a part of Nico's story. And he's a part of mine. I believe in him. More than I've believed in anything, and the enormity of it makes my chest hurt."**

Nico and Reagan's romance is so sweet and pure, I had butterflies each time they interacted! They were so adorable together. I loved all their moments, they were so innocent, yet what they have was beautiful and realistic. Nico was mysterious, smart and so special. I loved him! Also the secondary characters are fantastic and they played an important role to the story!

**"Even there, in black and white, he owns me in a way that makes my palms sweat and my nerve endings fire in anticipation. He's made me want to act, to be better."**

This story is unforgettable! It's one of those that you will want to read again and again!!

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## Beverly says

Ginger Scott is an auto-one-click author for me. I love her stories, but this one might just be my favorite. First this book had so much heart in it, it inspired me and it made think. I loved falling into this world.

*The Hard Count* is a named after a type of football play. I had no clue what it was, even after I read the definition I was a little confused. However, I had my husband explain it to me and I was like okay, I got it but why? So as read this story I still wondered why. Is it just because it's a trick play, where does this title really come from. As I finished the story I think I got it and maybe I am way off, but to me it was everything Nico was.

See Nico is a scholarship student at an elite private school. They have an excellent football program the call *the tradition* instead of team. It sounds crazy, but after listening to the first speech I was pretty caught up in *the tradition* myself. This program makes or breaks people and Reagan's dad's career is on the line. When her brother the star quarterback is injured they are in desperate need of saving.

Reagan recommends her archenemies from class, Nico. Reagan thrives on being the brightest and Nico is there at every turn challenging her. This time Reagan sees Nico as a solution. While he doesn't play for *the tradition* she knows he is a talented football player and can save the season.

So in the beginning this felt like a football story, but as it progressed you see it's so much more. See Nico is from West End, the "other side of the tracks." His family doesn't have the resources Reagan's family does, but they have heart and are a true family. Where I think the title comes from is Nico's ability to see things from all sides. See a hard count requires the quarterback and line to be prepared. It requires reading the situation and going with your gut. Nico was able to see things others couldn't see. He was able to unite a group of people from different worlds. He used his instincts and heart to break tradition.

This story does have a fantastic love story between Nico and Reagan, but it took a backseat to the epic story of building community and uniting people from different walks of life. That doesn't mean I didn't love their love or fall in love while reading their story. I loved them for each other, there was a genuineness to their connection that made me smile so big.

*The Hard Count* will make you think and hopefully make you love. It made me cry from happiness and sadness. It gave me cold chills and had me on the edge of my seat. It was addicting without being over the top. I'll warn you this one might start a little slow, but give it time and you will fall in love too!

***ARC kindly provided in exchange for an honest review.***

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