

Chapter two



When we got to school, our friends Grace and Louise were waiting for us in the playground. We all hugged each other and then we got into a huddle and talked about what we'd done for our holidays. Grace, whose parents are really rich, had been to Lanzarote, and Louise had been to visit her cousins in Galway. I'd spent most of my holidays helping Mum in the garden. Would my friends be impressed if I said 'I

planted six rows of carrots, and ten rows of cabbage and about a hundred rows of gross, disgusting parsnips?’

I don’t *think* so.

So I stayed quiet, and no one noticed.

A few minutes later, Louise nudged the rest of us and hissed.

‘Don’t look now, but guess who’s just walked in the gate.’

I didn’t have to look. There was only one person in the whole school who we all hated. It had to be Melissa, the meanest girl in the world. Grace and Louise used to be friendly with her, but last year they had got sense, and now beautiful, blonde, horrible Melissa had to manage with only four people who thought she was the greatest thing ever.

I turned around and watched as Melissa kind of glided across the yard. She was wearing a totally cool new denim jacket, and she kept tossing her hair like someone in an ad for shampoo.

Already her four best friends were fluttering around her like over-excited butterflies.

Alice laughed.

‘Same old Melissa. I bet she’s really looking forward to seeing me again. What did she say when she heard I was coming back?’

Grace, Louise and I looked at each other and grinned. This was going to be *so* much fun.

‘We didn’t tell her,’ I said.

‘We thought we’d surprise her,’ added Louise.

Alice grinned, and kind of slipped in behind Grace, who’s really tall. I knew this was going to be great. Alice was always the only one in our class who could really stand up to Melissa and her mean ways, and Melissa was going to be *so* sorry to see her again.

Melissa was getting close. She looked at Louise first.

‘Ever hear of a hair-straightener?’ she said.

That was really mean, because Louise *bates* her curly hair. Louise went red, but before she

could say anything, Melissa turned to me.

‘Hi Megan, did you have a nice holiday? Or did you and your super-cool mum with the lovely *fashionable* clothes spend your time saving the planet for the rest of us?’

Melissa’s friends giggled like this was the funniest thing they’d heard in their whole lives.

Usually it makes me really mad when Melissa mocks my mum, but this time I didn’t care. I didn’t reply. Nothing Melissa said could hurt me now.

Just then Alice stepped out from behind Grace.

‘Hi Melissa,’ she said. ‘So nice to see you again. What did you do for your Easter holidays? Pick on people? Kick grannies in the shins? Steal sweets from babies?’

Melissa stopped her hand in the middle of a hair-flick.

‘Alice?’ she whispered, like a character in a film who’s just seen the person who has sworn to kill them.

Alice grinned cheerfully. ‘That’s me – got it in one.’

All the colour had drained from Melissa’s face, making her even paler than usual.

‘What... what... what are you doing here?’

‘Same as you, I expect. I came to get an education,’ said Alice.

‘But... but... ’

Grace, Louise and I started to laugh. Melissa was always so cool and so confident; it was great to see her lost for words.

She tried again.

‘But... you... I ... mean... don’t you live in Dublin?’

Alice grinned again,

‘Well, I did move to Dublin, but I missed you so much I decided to come back.’

Suddenly Melissa relaxed a bit,

‘Oh, I see. You’re just back for a visit.’

Alice thought for a second,

‘I suppose you could say that. It’s just that it’s

going to be a very long visit. I plan to stay here in Limerick for the rest of my life.’

Melissa looked like she was going to throw up all over her fancy new pink sandals. Just then the bell rang, and the rest of us ran into school. Now that Alice was back, school was going to be fun again. I just knew it.