

Chapter One



'This is so totally unfair. This is the worst thing that has ever happened to me.'

I punched the pillow I was holding, but it didn't make me feel any better. *Nothing* could make me feel any better.

I was in my bedroom, with my friends, Victoria, Ella and Ruby. I'd just told them about my mum and dad's great plans for the summer.

I punched the pillow again. 'Well?' I said.

'Maybe it won't be too bad,' said Victoria. 'And you might even enjoy it. You—'

'I am *so* not going to enjoy it,' I said, interrupting her. 'Remember, I'm used to

spending my holidays in a villa in Tuscany. How am I supposed to enjoy a trip to a stupid old cottage, in a stupid old village in the middle of nowhere? What am I supposed to *do* all day long? I won't have any friends. There won't be any shops or a cinema. There's nothing there – a big fat nothing! I might as well just sit inside and wait for summer to be over.'

Victoria ignored me. 'Maybe I can come and visit you for a while.'

'Yeah right. If you can fit it in between all your fun pony camps and holidays to cool places that a normal human being would actually want to visit.'

'Maybe Ella—' she began.

Ella shook her head.

'Sorry, Eva. I'd love to visit you, but I'll be spending most of the summer helping my dad run his summer camp. Maybe Ruby?'

I knew exactly what Ella was thinking. Ruby doesn't really like the same kind of stuff as

Victoria, Ella and I do. She wasn't likely to have big plans for the summer.

We all looked at her.

Ruby went red.

'Actually, I haven't got much free time this summer,' she said. 'I did kind of well in my last gala, so I've got scholarships to a few swimming camps.'

'That's brilliant!' Victoria and I said together as Ella leaned over to hug her.

Ruby wriggled free, embarrassed – she totally hates being the centre of attention.

'Let's get back to talking about Eva's summer,' she said.

'Don't bother,' I said. 'It's too boring. This summer, I'm going to be the biggest loser in the whole country.'

Victoria patted my arm like I was a baby. 'I'll lend you my blue hoodie that you like so much, and I bet if you're really lucky, Ella will lend you one of her totally cool summer tops.'

Ella nodded from where she was perched at the end of my bed.

‘Sure I will, Eva,’ she said. ‘You can borrow anything you want.’

‘And I’ll ask my mum to make you a special bracelet,’ said Ruby.

Ella sighed.

‘I think I’d endure a summer in the country for one of your mum’s amazing bracelets, Ruby,’ she said.

‘Want to swap?’ I said.

Ella shook her head quickly, ‘Er ... maybe not.’

‘Anyway, thanks for your kind offers,’ I said. ‘But you’ll all be wasting your time. What’s the point in wearing cool stuff when there’s no one cool around to see you?’

Once again, Victoria ignored me.

‘The summer isn’t all that long, really,’ she said

I was fed up of punching the pillow. Now I felt like punching my so-called friend.

Couldn't she see that a summer in a cottage in the country was like a life sentence?

Why did she always have to see the bright side?

Didn't she understand that I wanted her to feel sorry for me?

I turned to Ella. She usually has less to say than Victoria has, but mostly she makes a lot of sense.

'What do you think, Ella?' I asked.

Ella thought for a while before speaking.

'Well,' she said slowly. 'There is one *really* good thing.'

'What's that?' I asked.

'I'm just glad it's not me.'



The next day, Ruby had a swimming gala, and Ella and I went to Victoria's place.

'Things have got even worse again,' I said, as soon as we were settled on the huge, squashy

couch in Victoria's bedroom.

'Is that possible?' asked Victoria.

I nodded grimly. 'You see, the whole holiday thing came about because Dad did an attic conversion for Mum's friend Monica. Monica was so pleased with his work that she said we can go and stay in the cottage she bought a few months ago. We don't have to pay or anything. Dad just has to do any odd jobs that need doing while we're there.'

'That was nice of Monica,' said Victoria.

'Was it?' I said.

'And the bad news is?' prompted Ella.

'Monica has to go to hospital soon for a hip operation.'

'Ouch,' said Ella. 'I can see why that makes things bad for her, but how does it change things for you?'

'Monica has an eight-year-old son, and there won't be anyone to mind him during the day, while his dad's at work, so he's coming to the

cottage with us. We get the house and we get the son – it's turned into a package deal!

'Maybe it won't be so bad,' said Victoria. 'You're always saying that you'd like a little brother or sister.'

'I know,' I said. 'But that was before I met Joey. He's a total pain. A summer with him will be a complete nightmare.'

'And how come your mum didn't tell you this yesterday?'

Ella giggled. 'Maybe she thought you couldn't cope with all that good news at once,' she said.

I sighed. 'Who cares anyway? Joey's coming with us, and nothing I say or do is going to change that. Summer is now officially spoiled.'