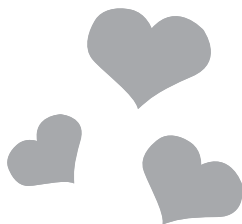


Chapter 1



“I’m soooo depressed,” I moan. “I can’t believe we’re back at school tomorrow. Kill me now.” I grab my best friend Mills’s GHDs and pretend to stab myself in the heart. “O happy dagger ... let me die.” Then I stagger backwards, fall on to her bed and squash her against the star-patterned duvet.

“Ow, Amy! Get off me, you eejit,” she squeals. “And stop with all the Shakespeare. I don’t want to be reminded of English class, thanks very much.”

I laugh and roll sideways. We both lie on our backs, staring up at the ceiling. There’s something stuck to it. A photo. I squint up my eyes, then grin. Ed Whooley’s tanned face is smiling down at us.

“Nice pic,” I say.

Ed is Mills’s cute-as-Christmas boyfriend. But there’s one rather ginormous relationship glitch: he lives in

America. They hooked up over the summer hols while Mills was working as an au pair in his home town of Miami and they've been exchanging smoochy emails ever since.

Ed also happens to be Matt Munroe's little bro – yep, *that* Matt Munroe, the actor who makes R-Patz look ugly. My crazy Aunt Clover had to interview Matt in Miami for the teen mag she works for – *The Goss* – and guess who got to travel to the US of Amazing with her? You got it, li'l ol' *moi*.

It turned out Matt Munroe was only pretending to be American and is actually one-hundred-per-cent-guaranteed Irish beef and Clover scooped the story for *The Goss*. It was quite the trip!

Mills goes pink at the mention of the photo. "You weren't supposed to see that."

I chuckle. "And how is Ed the Head?"

"Fine." Long pause. "I think. I haven't heard from him all week. I've sent eight emails now. I tried ringing his 'cell' but he didn't answer, and I rang his house twice but his dad said he wasn't there. He hasn't rung back yet, and Mum's going to kill me when she sees the phone bill. Maybe he hasn't been getting his messages and there's something wrong with Hotmail. Should I send another email?"

I wince. "Not unless you want him to think you're a serious stalker. Sorry, Mills, it doesn't sound good."

"Maybe he's just really busy?" she suggests hopefully.

Poor Mills. Ed is her first proper boyfriend. I have to tread softly. "Maybe. Methinks you should leave it a few

days, though – see if he gets back to you.”

She sighs deeply. “Relationships are tough.”

“I hear you, *amigo*. Seth’s been acting odd recently too.”

“At least you both live in the same time zone. Plus you’ll get to see him in school tomorrow.”

I groan. “Don’t remind me.”

Mills’s eyes open wide. “I thought it was true *lurrvve*. Have you gone off him?”

“Course not. Seth and I are grand,” I say, then add in a stage Irish accent, “Sure, he’s the joy of me heart, me *acushla*.” I conjure up an image of my boyfriend’s face in my head – warm smile, messy blond surfer hair, sun freckles sprinkled over the bridge of his nose and startling sky-blue eyes. “I was groaning about school. Speaking of which, when’s the school trip to Paris?”

“In two weeks. I can’t wait,” she shrieks, then hugs herself with excitement. But she stops when she sees my fed-up face. “Sorry, Ames. I wish you could come too. It won’t be the same without you. And Seth’s not the only one who’ll miss you like crazy.” She rubs her head on my shoulder and makes sad puppy noises.

I sigh. “If I’d known there was a trip involved I would have chosen ze froggy language with Loopy, instead of Spanish. Plus her classes sound way more fun.”

Mills laughs. “Miss Lupin does try to keep us awake, all right. The best was the Paris Fashion Week role-playing. We all had to pretend to be models, or designers, or fashion journalists and act in character. I was Anna Wintour from *Vogue*. It was hilarious.”

She pauses and her expression shifts. “Until Annabelle and Sophie had a cat-fight over who was going to be Kate Moss. Sophie swung her bag at Annabelle and nearly took one of her front teeth out.”

I laugh. “I remember that. Mrs Hamilton threatened to sue Loopy for endangering her daughter’s perfect smile.”

Annabelle Hamilton is Queen Bee of the D4s – the school’s resident mean girls. They’re named after the postcode of one of the poshest areas in Dublin: Dublin 4. None them actually live there, except for Annabelle herself – her girls-in-waiting, Sophie Piggott and Nina Pickering, live in Foxrock and Cabinteely – but that doesn’t stop them acting like they’re better and heaps cooler than everyone else.

Mills pulls a face. “I’m not looking forward to seeing Annabelle and her cronies again. I bet the D4s all have sparkling new uniforms. And I’ll be stuck in last year’s gear and the same scuffed ballet pumps I’ve been wearing all summer. I’m in for a right D4 slag-a-rama. I know they’re going to call me Little Orphan Annie again. And Annabelle’s bound to have this season’s designer shoes.”

“Bound to,” I say. “But there’s always sabotage. I’ll help you pull the soles off your shoes or something, then you’ll have to get a new pair.”

Mills sighs. “Wouldn’t work. Mum would just get them fixed. You know she’s an eco-fiend and probably the only person on the universe who still darns socks. No, I’ll just have to put up with it.”

"If it's any consolation, I'll be in my old Dubes. We'll be the Sorry Shoe Twins. *Très* depressing."

We both sigh and stare up at Ed again.

"Ames, what am I going to do?" Mills says softly. "About Ed, I mean."

"I'll ask Clover." Clover's seventeen and *uber* worldly. I figure the bad news is better coming from Clover than from me. Clover's great at solving problems. As agony aunt for *The Goss*, she's had buckets of practice. She loves answering all the readers' problem letters. And I get to help her. Lately, they've started printing my name on the page and everything. How cool is that?

Yep, if anyone can help, Clover can.

Mills smiles. "Thanks. But don't tell her it's me, OK? It's so embarrassing."

"Promise." Unfortunately, Clover's so smart she'll probably figure it out in a nanosecond.

I check my watch. "Oops, better motor. Mum threatened me with year-long grounding if I wasn't back by eight. And I'm already late."

"Last night of freedom before we meet our *doooooom*." Mills clutches her neck and pretends to choke herself. "Guess I'll see you at the post box. Usual time."

I wink. "It's a date, honeybun."