



CHAPTER 1

Over It

“Why does Mr. Burns test us every week?” Abby McQuade asked. “It’s not like we need it.”

Abby and Clara Erickson were walking home from school. Clara was Abby’s best friend. The girls’ backpacks were slung over their shoulders. They were heading to the mall for snacks.

“No,” Clara said. “He’s old. Mr. Burns probably took tests every week. You know, back in the day. He thinks we need them too.”

Mr. Burns taught math. Overall, Abby and Clara thought the man was nice. He made math easy to understand. The teacher just

gave a lot of homework. And those weekly tests sucked.

Today was Thursday. Tomorrow was test day. So much for TGIF.

“Well,” Abby said. She pushed her long red hair out of her face. “He doesn’t need to test. We get it. Homework is fine. But tests? Once a month, please.”

“I hate tests,” Clara said. “They shouldn’t have tests in school. Just lessons and homework. If you do the homework, you pass the class.”

“That would be dope.”

Some cars passed by as they walked.

Abby and Clara lived in Largo Bay. It was an old beach town. There were homes right on the beach. Behind those homes were the schools and more houses. Largo Bay Center was the main shopping center. There were some smaller strip malls too.

The girls attended Largo Bay Middle School. They were eighth graders. Clara was a star swimmer. She belonged to a private swim club. Her life was very scheduled. Abby was not athletic. But she loved adventures. Weird things always seemed to happen around her.

“Did Tim ask you to the dance?” Clara asked.

“No,” Abby sighed. “I thought he would. He hasn’t yet. I’m not sure he’ll ask. The dude has no time to think about me. He’s too into skateboarding.”

Tim Cadena was an eighth grader too. When they first met, Abby and Tim didn’t get along. Then Tim started being nice. Abby thought he was funny.

“At least he talks to you,” Clara said. “Will doesn’t even know I exist.”

Will Chu was their one guy friend. He was

really into gadgets and computers. Will also played guitar. He was even in a punk band. Will wanted to become a scientist. He was a genius.

“That’s not true,” Abby said. “He always talks to you.”

“Only when you’re around,” Clara said. “It’s like he’s scared of me. Whenever I call him, he barely says anything. He always finds an excuse to hang up.”

“That means he’s nervous,” Abby said. “Because he likes you.”

“He sure has a funny way of showing it.”

“I loved Fridays in elementary school. Now I don’t like them. Why do you think that is?” Abby asked. “It seemed more fun back then. There was no pressure. No thinking about boys. No parties. No dances. And no homework.”

“All I think about now are tests,” Clara said. “That’s what Friday means to me. And

not just one test. Sometimes I have five! There's a test in every class. It sucks."

"Yeah."

They walked for a little bit.

"Why does the dance have to be this Saturday?" Abby asked. "That's all anybody will talk about tomorrow."

"So true," Clara said. "Who is going solo? Who is going with so and so? Blah, blah, blah."

"Maybe I'll fake being sick. Take Friday off. Wouldn't that be sweet?"

"We should do it."

"Oh, and I forgot. What is up with our parents' camping trip?" Abby asked.

Abby and Clara's parents were close. The girls had no siblings. Sometimes the two families went on vacation together. New York City. Maui. Denver.

"Who knows?" Clara asked. "It's lame. Why can't we go somewhere fun? Like Las Vegas."

"I know," Abby said, laughing. "Who does

not want to celebrate Thanksgiving? But why camping?”

“So true. How are we supposed to cook a turkey? Camping means stews. Yuck.”

“Ew! Can you imagine how gross that’s going to be?”

“And dirty?”

They giggled.

They walked toward Largo Bay Center. There were a lot of shops. The strip mall was always crowded.

“Let’s get a drink.” Abby pointed at the supermarket. It was the largest in the city. “I’m thirsty.”

“I thought you were hungry.”

“I changed my mind,” Abby said. “Let’s go the back way.”

“Sure. A kombucha sounds good.”

There was an an area for deliveries. It was in the back of the mall. From there a

back passage led to the front. The passage ended near the market's entrance. Large dumpsters were in the back too. It smelled like trash.

"This place reeks, Abby," Clara said. She held her nose. "Why did we come this way?"

"I don't know. It just seemed easier. I didn't want to walk across the parking lot."

"Yeah, it is faster," Clara agreed. "Why do boys have to be so lame?"

"Because they're boys."

"It's just ... Why do some girls get asked out? And others don't?"

"Maybe it's us," Abby said. "Other girls are less nervous."

The girls were quiet. Were they nervous around boys?

"I wish that stupid dance was over," Abby said. "And tomorrow? Ugh. I really don't like math tests. Let's skip Friday and Saturday."

As they walked, the wind picked up. A big gust almost knocked them over. Then it stopped blowing.

“That was weird,” Abby said.

“Yeah,” Clara agreed. “The wind pushed us forward. I almost fell.”

They walked through the passage. Soon they were in the front. The girls went into the supermarket.



CHAPTER 2

The Back Way

Abby and Clara stood in line. There were two people ahead of them. The supermarket was always crowded. People were lining up at the registers.

Clara thumbed through a *People* magazine. Abby stared at the *National Enquirer*. The headline read, “*Aliens Crash Ship on Earth.*”

Abby laughed. Clara looked at her. Then she saw what Abby was reading. Clara giggled. “So silly! None of that stuff is real,” she said.

“I know,” Abby said, smiling. “But it is fun to think it’s true.”

Clara shook her head. She went back to her magazine.

Abby looked around the store. There was a big board in the front. It listed the market's daily deals.

Odd. The date was wrong.

"It's October 27," Abby said, confused.

"What?" Clara didn't look up from the magazine.

"The deal board," Abby said. "It says November 10. That's two weeks from now."

Clara looked at the board. "Weird," she said with a shrug.



Abby sat with her parents. They were at the kitchen table. A huge pepperoni pizza was just delivered. It was from Giardini's.

"Has Giardini's ever made a bad pizza?" Abby's dad asked. He was holding a large slice.

"I've never had one," Abby's mom said. She ate her pizza with a knife and fork.