

Chapter One

Molly

“Are they ready yet? Can’t you see I’m literally dying from starvation here?”

The question leaves me sounding more like a whining puppy rather than a hungry kid waiting for breakfast. Everyone knows I don’t handle hunger well.

The intoxicating smell of pancakes and syrup fills the kitchen, making my mouth water in anticipation and my stomach grumble so much it hurts.

“Mum! How long?” I plead, cradling my stomach.

“Yes, alright, they’re coming Molly,” exclaims Mum. “I’m going as fast as—”

An ear-piercing scream escapes my body and cuts her off. My hunger, annoyance and impatience has created its own recipe for breakfast.

The deafening sound of the scalding hot frying pan crashing to the floor snaps me back to reality. Half-cooked pancake batter splatters between us—an unfortunate casualty of sending Mum into a state of instant shock.

She looks at me horrified. I look at the pancakes-to-be spread across the tiles, wondering if they’re still edible.

One thing is for sure. This is not the start to the last day of holidays that either of us had hoped for.

Tomorrow will be my first day of Year 6, my final year of primary school. It also happens to be the start of the 30-day countdown to my birthday. My dad has referred to this milestone as ‘the dawn of the awkward stage’... whatever that’s supposed to mean. I should probably take a moment to pause and fill in some blanks for you.

My name is Molly Jenkins, and I am nearly eleven years old. I’m not overly smart or a sporting superstar, and, when it comes to the social ladder, I like to think that I am somewhere around halfway up.

Not that this bothers me too much as the concept of fitting in has never been high on my priority list.

The most interesting thing about my life is that I am a twin. My brother Michael was born six minutes before me and never lets me forget it. I actually love being a twin, it's something that sets us apart from everyone else, our own little exclusive club. I just wish Michael and I weren't so opposite.

My family is huge, and I'm stuck right in the middle. I live with my dad Nick, my step-mum Katie (who I call 'Mum'), my older stepbrother James and younger sisters Amelia and Maddison. Before you ask, being a twin doesn't give you superpowers. Michael and I can't talk to each other telepathically and, if he stubs his toe, I don't feel it. I've been asked that so many times, but people are always super disappointed when I tell them the truth.

Being a part of such a large family has advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, it's nice to always have people around. You never get lonely when there are four other kids in the house. You can be sure that at least one person will be doing something remotely interesting at any given moment. On the other hand, my alone time has become almost non-existent. I don't even have a bedroom to call my own. I have to share with my stepsister, Amelia. She's six and super annoying, copying everything I say and do. My parents tell me I should take it as a compliment. But it drives me crazy.

Oh, and as you've probably already worked out, living my life in the "green zone" doesn't come easy to me. Having ADHD and ODD (which stands for Oppositional Defiance Disorder), makes sure of that. Basically, it just means that I have trouble concentrating, and I tend to lose my cool a lot quicker than other kids my age. No big deal. As long as everything in my life is running smoothly, and no one makes me cranky, you wouldn't even be able to tell. I'm just an average kid in most ways.

Chapter Two

Molly

Ding!

The sound of the notification catches me off guard. Ordinarily, I wouldn't have paid any attention to the annoying yellow alert message, but the name attached had my finger tapping the banner before it had a chance to disappear from the screen.

Sunshine_Bec_Daisy sent you a new message.

Bec.

Her smiling selfie appears with the caption:

1 more sleep 2 go

Written in a bright neon pink font. The cartoon dog filter she chose for the photo gives the impression that she has a ridiculously large tongue and two floppy ears. I giggle as I screenshot the image to save it on my tablet. It drives Bec crazy when I do that.

Bec and I became friends by accident in Prep, and we've been super close ever since. I remember exactly what happened that day, which is weird because I was only five years old, but I think it's one of those significant moments in your life that you remember forever.

Dad had dropped Michael and me off early to before school care, and I felt as though my heart would break in two. I didn't cope too well with saying goodbye, unlike my brother who had already begun playing in the sandpit before Dad had even left the carpark. There were lots of kids around, but I felt completely alone. I remember sitting underneath a huge tree near the adventure playground, quietly sobbing to myself and holding on to this little toy unicorn that my dad told me would keep me safe until he came back in the afternoon.

I wasn't there long before this older kid, Lincoln, came over and snatched it right out of my hands for no reason at all. He held it in front of my face, then whipped it away every time I tried to grab it. I remember feeling so upset and scared. My very first being bullied moment.

Suddenly, this tall girl with orange curls stuffed under a wide-brimmed hat appeared at the bottom of the slippery dip. She marched up behind Lincoln, grabbed him by his bulky green backpack and spun him on to the ground. Just like that. She snatched my unicorn from between his grubby little fingers, handed it back to me, pulled me up to my feet. Together, we walked away. No words, no explanation, just action. She saved me that day, and has been my best friend ever since.

Don't get me wrong, Rebecca and I have had our fair share of arguments. Ones where we yell, scream and don't speak to each other for a day or two. Then we both get bored with being angry and go back to being friends again. It's totally weird because we look the complete opposite. I'm kind of short with long, brown boring hair and blue eyes, whereas Rebecca, like I said before, is tall with orange curly hair and purple glasses. I've always wanted glasses, but no matter how hard I try to trick the optometrist at my yearly eye check-up, he always says my vision is perfect. So annoying.

Anyway, Rebecca and I haven't seen each other that much over the holidays, so I'm missing her like crazy. She spent most of it visiting her grandparents out west, so I am super excited about seeing her tomorrow. Sometimes I think that she is the only person in the whole world who even tries to understand me.

After replying to her message, I decide I should make us matching friendship bracelets for our first day back tomorrow. I know she'll love it, and what better way to mark the start of a brand-new year than something we can wear forever? Plus, it will almost certainly knock out a few of those annoying hours I have left to kill.

I know that Bec's favourite colour is purple and mine is teal so that's my starting point. Maybe some yellow and white to balance it out a bit? My new bracelet making machine is quite time-consuming, so I jump up and grab my pillow off my bed to sit on. This could take a while.

My mission is interrupted by a knock at the door before Mum pokes her head in.

"What's going on?" Mum asks, glancing around my room, "You're still in your pyjamas?"

"It's fine, chill," I mumble, pulling the machine out of the box.

"It's not *fine*, Molly! You know the rule. Jobs before fun. You can come back to all of this once you're dressed, teeth cleaned and so on." She sighs and walks over, eying my machine as if she might take it away.

I don't even look up. I don't see the big deal.

"Now, please," Mum insists.

She gives me the 'Mum Stare'. You know the one. Eyebrows crowded down to the point that they are nearly touching the top of her nose. Lips pursed together like she has spent the last five minutes sucking on a sour gummy worm. I give her my own rendition of the 'Mum Stare'. She can't go mad at me when I'm just copying her facials.

"Okay, Molly, you win," she relents. "Just remember this moment when you come asking for device time. The answer will be no."

She closes the door loudly behind her.

Whatever. Back to business. I set up my little workshop, making sure everything is in front of me ready to go. Once you start feeding thread into the machine, you can't pause, even for a second. As I switch the machine on, I notice a little red light flashing on the control panel. Urgh... batteries. Seriously? Just breathe, Molly. There must be more batteries around here somewhere. Like a cyclonic force, I sweep through my bedroom, trying to find any trace of four AA batteries. Nothing. I head for the door, kicking the machine on my way through. Why can't things just work? If I don't find a way to make these bracelets, the rest of my day, and probably the rest of the year, will be completely ruined.

I storm out into the hall and nearly collide with Mum.

"Woah... slow down!" she says, taken aback by my forceful exit.

"Are there any AA batteries in the kitchen drawer?" I demand.

"That depends. Are you going to get dressed, and do your chores? When you do, I will be happy to find some batteries for you."

Not what I want to hear.

"Where are the batteries?" I repeat, this time slowing down my words. But it doesn't help.

A familiar sensation begins to radiate throughout my body. My muscles tighten as my breathing and heartrate accelerate. My hands clench themselves into fists, seemingly glued to my hips, tingling in anticipation. I stare into Mum's eyes willing her to take notice of how important it is for her to listen to me and do what I ask, because it is taking all I have to remain in control of the anger that is boiling up inside me.

Mum stares into my eyes for a few seconds, shrugs, and then turns away. Just like that.

BOOM!

It's all too much. The anger I have harbouring inside erupts like a volcano. I feel it pulsate throughout my body, an unstoppable force, making its way throughout my limbs.

I kick the wall in front of me. Hard.

The picture frames hanging above me bounce off the wall every time I make contact. At that moment, I honestly couldn't care less if they fell and smashed on the floor. It wouldn't be my fault. Mum should've helped me.

BANG!

My foot aches but I strike the wall again. Harder. The overwhelming feeling of release is making it impossible to stop.

THUMP!

"Molly, that's enough!" Dad yells as he races up the stairs. "What do you think you're doing?"

"I need batteries!" My hands are once again clenched by my waist and my breathing rapid.

"Molly," Mum scowls, "I simply asked you to go and get dressed, brush your hair, brush your teeth, after which I will be happy to help you find some spare batteries."

BANG!

Another swift kick to the wall.

"Molly," Dad warns. "We can talk about this when you have calmed down."

Calmed down? It's like they don't even know me.