

Chapter 1



“Boys!” Clover taps a pink gel pen against her top teeth, making a hollow rattling noise. “They never change. What idiots!”

She swivels round in her office chair and presses a button on her computer. The printer whirrs into action. She hands me two A4 sheets. “Read this and weep, Amy.”

To: agonyaunt@gossmagazine.com

Tuesday

Dear Clover,

Please help! It’s boy trouble. (What else?) I hooked up with this mega cute guy two weeks ago at a Sinister Teen Frite Nite. The year ahead of me in school. But I have no idea where I stand.

We've been to the cinema a couple of times and he texts me a lot. But I'm confused, one minute he's all over me, the next he's completely ignoring me. What should I do? Play it cool or play along? I'm seeing him tonight, please advise.

Anxious in Artane,
(otherwise know as Wendy, 14)

To: agonyaunt@gossmagazine.com
Wednesday

Dear Clover,

I wrote to you yesterday about a boy. Well, today I found out he's been spreading nasty rumours about me in school. Saying I kiss like a washing machine! I think it's because I told him to go easy on Saturday night. I wanted to watch at least some of the film.

I'm so embarrassed. All the boys in my class are calling me Wendy Whirlpool and the D4 girls are all sniggering at me in the corridors and spinning their fingers round in a circle.

I don't know what to do. It's a nightmare. I haven't been able to eat all day. My friends are telling me to pay no attention, but I can't stop thinking about it. I feel like everyone's staring at me.

I'm going to pull a sickie tomorrow and Friday,

but I'll have to go back to school on Monday.
Please help me, I'm in bits.

Morto,
Wendy

My eyes widen as I read Wendy's emails. I cringe inwardly. I understand exactly how she feels – sick to the stomach with worry. Feeling dozens of pairs of eyes boring into her. Paranoid, unsettled, deeply unhappy.

"What do you think?" Clover says.

"I feel sorry for the poor girl. I'd hate to be in her shoes."

"Any advice for her?"

I shrug. "To ignore everyone I suppose, like her friends say. If it's anything like our school, it'll all blow over in a few weeks. I'd tell her to put her head down and pretend she's invisible."

Clover blows a raspberry. "*Wrong answer!*" She makes the *uh-uh* noise from *Family Fortunes*.

I stare at her. "If you're so clever, what's the right answer then?"

"Duh! Fight back. Don't let the sap get away with it."

That does sound far more interesting. But it's hardly practical. "How? Wendy doesn't sound all that confident." I squirm a little. This is all getting too close for comfort.

Clover tilts her head. "Wendy?"

"The girl in the letter." I stab the printout with my finger.

“Right, Wendy. Let me think.” After a moment, her eyes light up. “Hang on. Maybe *she* doesn’t have to be confident. Maybe someone else can be confident for her.”

Clover smiles at me, her eyes sparkling. She’s up to something. Goose pimples run up and down my spine.

“Oh no, Clover. Don’t look at *me*. I’m so not getting involved. Just answer the letter. Tell her to ignore them.”

But Clover just smiles knowingly. “Amy, I’ve made a decision, we’re not going to be *that* kind of agony aunt.”

“We?” I stare at her.

“Yes, we, Beanie. You’re going to help me.”

“Really? Do I have a say in this?”

“Let me see.” She taps her teeth with the pen again. “Ho-hum.” She pretends to be thinking deeply. “No! And we’re going to get, very, very involved. It’ll be oodles more fun, don’t you think? And I’ll get the agony page and maybe even an article out of it, or my name’s not Clover Wildgust. I can see it now.” She puts her hands in the air. “*Ta-da!* ‘Teenage Boys Dissing You? How to Get Your Own Back by Clover Wildgust.’ No. Clover *M.* Wildgust. I do like middle initials, don’t you? They add a bit of gravitas. Clover *M.* Wildgust. My very first byline. It’ll be the start of a beautiful career.” Her eyes go all starry.

I put my head in my hands. Mum’s right, Clover *is* delusional.

“Right, Beanie,” she continues, “this Wendy business

calls for drastic action. We need a killer plan.”

I’m worried now. When Clover takes drastic action it’s usually just that – drastic. Like when she got bored one day and dyed her hair petrol blue or when she drove through Dublin city in her Mini Cooper with the top down in the middle of February for a dare. She was wearing a bikini at the time and got her picture in two national newspapers. Gramps wasn’t amused.

Clover stares at the noticeboard in front of her desk. I follow her gaze. It’s chocka with all kinds of invitations: to book launches, beauty evenings, fashion shows and parties. My eyes flit past them and rest on the luminous green invitation. You can’t miss it – in gothic writing, it screams:

Dance the Night Away at Sinister Teen Frite Nite

Sinister FM’s Teen Frite Nites are famous. They’re on every Friday in Monkstown Rugby Club and they’re strictly under sixteen and no alcohol. Anyone who’s anyone goes to them. My friends Mills and Sophie are always trying to drag me along. I’ve been a couple of times, but it’s always so packed and I hate dancing in front of people. I get all self-conscious. Then my stomach knots up and I feel sick and want to go home. Besides, it’s always jammers with D4s and Crombies; it’s like their weekly cattle market for new boyfriends and girlfriends.

D4s are girls who live or would like to live in Dublin

4, a posh area of Dublin. They wear Ugg boots, skinny jeans or minis, and are addicted to fake tan and hair straighteners.

Crombies are their male equivalents. The play rugby, wear Abercrombie & Fitch and other designer gear, and say "ledge" (short for "legend") a lot. In Ireland, they are the closest thing we have to Neanderthal man and D4s find them wildly attractive. Figures!

"Grab that green invitation for me," Clover says.

I pass it to her and she turns it over. "Hey, Beanie, would I pass for a fourteen-year-old?"

I look at her carefully. What's she up to?

"Well?" she asks again.

I bite my inner lip, considering. Clover is on the small side, with the kind of straight, white-blond hair you usually find on a Bratz doll. It's so long she can almost sit on it and when it's windy, it sticks to her lip gloss. Clover's hair is real but the colour's most certainly not. Gramps says it'll fall out if she keeps bleaching it, but she just ignores him.

Today she's wearing a mouse grey Juicy tracksuit teamed with a white sequined vest. Her flip-flopped feet are resting on the large wooden desk, her petal-like toenails a warm peachy colour. She looks a little too knowing for a fourteen-year-old, too comfortable in her skin. Plus she refuses to wear Ugg boots, says they give her sweaty feet.

I shrug. "Maybe. On a dark night."

"It'll be dark all right." She smiles and her china-blue eyes twinkle dangerously. "I have a plan. We're not

going to let boys behave like ERs any more. We're going to take revenge. For Wendy." She waves her arms around excitedly. "For teenage girls everywhere. But I'm gonna need you, and your sweaty Yeti boots."