

# Chapter 1

“I can’t be here anymore,” I said to my parents during breakfast on a Saturday morning in October. “I can’t spend anymore of my life doing nothing.”

Neither my mother nor my father looked up from their sections of the newspaper that they had sprawled out across the kitchen table.

“Hello?” I said getting their attention. My mother put hers down.

“What can I do for you my dearest?” she asked sarcastically as she shoved a bit of dry rye toast into her mouth.

“Do you remember how last year we talked about going to Ireland over the summer so I could meet Dad’s family, but never ended up going?” I said, beginning my proposal.

“No,” my mother said, recovering her face with the front page of *The New York Times*.

My father, who was obviously intrigued by my statement peaked his head over the sports section and raised an eyebrow.

“Let her talk,” he said to my mother, and then looked to me to continue.

“Well I was wondering if I could possibly go for a semester.” My mother placed her paper back on the table and let out a large, drastic sigh.

“It’s only six months mom!” I said, pleading my case.

“What is so horrible about living here with us?” she asked sadly, as if I had offended her with my suggestion.



“Nothing!” I assured her. “I just need a change,” I said looking at her with desperate eyes.

“I don’t know Sarah,” she said. “You’re only fifteen.”

“A very mature and independent fifteen, if I do say so myself,” I said sternly, adjusting in my seat to appear taller.

She looked to my father. He shrugged. “I just don’t know if I’m ready to be away from you for that long,” she in a lonesome tone.

Thankfully my father cut in. “I think she’s ready,” he said. “It’s not like she’d be alone.” I smiled at him as my mother kicked his leg under the table. She was on the verge of serious frustration.

“I’ll think about it,” she said. I jumped up from the table and gave each of them a hug and a kiss on the cheek.

“I know I’m ready, you just need to learn to let go, Mom,” I said walking out of the kitchen. They each returned to their reading. I poked my head back around the door.

“Convince her dad!” I mouthed, hoping he could read my lips.

“I’ll take care of it,” he mouthed back. I gave him a big thumbs up and ran to my room happily.



That day in October, I could only have expected another boring old afternoon wasted away by sulking in my room or whining to my parents. And then it happened. On this particular, life changing day, my parents actually agreed to consider my leaving and going to school in Ireland. I taped hits of persuasion around the house; pictures of gorgeous Irish scenery that I had printed off the internet. At dinner I further encouraged them by dramatically explaining my reasoning for wanting to leave.



“There is a world outside of Syracuse and I need to see it. I have never been anywhere and I need to experience new things. I hope you’ll consider and while you’re deciding, please consider my happiness and what is best for me.” I quietly stood up from the table. I left the room feeling good about my heartfelt, emotional speech. I giggled at how ridiculous I had sounded but prayed it would work.

That night as I lay in bed trying to fall asleep my dad knocked on my door and sat down at the edge of my bed. He shared with me, amazing stories about his many adventures as a boy in his hometown of Thurles, County Tipperary, Ireland. He told me what it was like to live there. I could sense in his voice that he missed it while he talked about his family. It seemed as if when he told me a story he was there, re-living the moment.

“Dad,” I said. “How come we’ve never gone over to see your family?”

“It’s just been too expensive for all of us to go. It’s been hard. I want you to see it and I want you to know your grandmother. It’s a whole different way of life. You’d love it.”

My mother overheard him sharing stories and came into my room. She sat down next to him on the bed.

“While you were dropping hits around the house today your father called your uncle Jack,” she began. “Unfortunately for me, he was thrilled with the idea of you going to stay with him.”

She looked sad, yet content. She faked a sniffle as if she was beginning to cry.

“You can go,” she said pouting.

I shot up in my bed. “Really?” I asked in disbelief. I looked to my father; he nodded.



“Thank you so much!” I said excitedly. My mother gave me a kiss on the forehead before her and my father left.

“We’ll figure everything out next weekend,” she said.

I fell asleep that night smiling from ear to ear. I was thrilled.

The next Monday morning before school I stood in front of a closet full of clothes. So many choices and so many colors, yet, nothing to wear. Eventually I decided on a simple pair of jeans, a black t-shirt, and a pair of black flats. I went into the bathroom, ran a little gel through my damp locks, scrunched them up a bit, brushed on a dab of bronzer, applied some eyeliner and brushed my teeth. My mom dropped me off at school on her way to work. I ventured into the school building to meet my three best friends, Sophie, Taylor and Hailey, in the cafeteria, where we sat each morning before first period.

The four of us had been friends since kindergarten. We had slowly morphed into individuals as the years passed, but the trials and tribulations of teenagehood had brought us closer than ever.

Sophie is smart and quiet and never ceases to surprise me. She can completely hold her own and when it comes to being herself she is fearless.

Taylor and Sophie are slight opposites. Taylor wouldn’t be considered too outgoing but is by no means shy. On the other hand she is still searching for herself. Her insecurities sometimes take over her mind as she struggles to accept who she is. She is beautiful.

Hailey and I are similar in the fact that we are completely outspoken. Hailey is very particular about things and she always does them exactly the same way. She is a compelling person, and most people are attracted to the atmosphere she creates.



As for myself, I must admit I'm a bit bossy. It's funny that all four of us are such different people and have different qualities but are best friends. We have separate lives but share a bond that completely connects us.

"Hey guys."

Sophie looked up from her science book and Taylor and Hailey from their cell phones.

"Mornin' sunshine!" Taylor yelled.

"Girls, stop what you're doing. I have some very important news," I said, my voice shaking. "Well," I paused.

"They said yes!"

"Oh my god! That's great!" Sophie said.

Hailey, who obviously didn't listen when I said, "Stop what your doing" looked up from her phone confused.

"What was that now?"

"Wait, I can't believe they agreed to let you go," Taylor said, ignoring Hailey's confusion.

My friends had known for a long time about my displeasure here and had been urging me to ask my parents for weeks.

"Wow. Now that they've said yes it's really sinking it," Sophie said. "You're really going.

"Six months without you," Taylor said.

"I'm so excited!" I said. "I didn't believe them when they said yes."

"Ugh," said Hailey, who had been opposed to the idea the entire time. "I mean, I understand if you need a change, but can't you get bangs or a new favorite color? Don't move to Antarctica!" she exclaimed.



I sighed. “Just be happy for me Hail. You know I love you.”

“What if you come back with all new friends and you don’t even like us anymore?”

“That will never happen,” I assured her.

After that day, the time just flew by. There were just two weeks left before my departure and as it grew closer to the day I knew that I was even more ready than I ever thought I could have been. I was going to live in another country, meet new people, and learn new customs. It is an entirely new culture. Since I found out that I was leaving, I had spoken on the phone with my uncle Jack who I’d be living with in Thurles. He seemed nice. He had such a strong accent, much stronger than my dad’s. I also spoke to the rest of the household, my aunt and two cousins. They were so friendly and acted like they couldn’t wait to meet me.

“Did you remember to bring your books home Sarah?” my mom said just as I walked in the door from school. “Finals are next week, so that means a lot of cramming until then.”

“Yes Mom, I remembered,” I said opening the fridge and pulling out the box of pizza from last night’s dinner. I took out a cold slice and began to devour it.

“Any second thoughts, sweetie?” she said.

I pulled my head out of the fridge in shock to see her sitting there smiling at me slyly.

“Hah. Yea right. I’m getting out of here,” I said, laughing, realizing she was being sarcastic.

I knew she wanted me to go, she was just going to miss me a lot. I would miss her too though. I had never been away from my parents for more than two weeks.

I left the kitchen still eating my pizza, went into the computer room and signed online. As soon as the welcome page



appeared for AOL Instant Messenger, I heard the sound of instant messages popping up onto the screen.

**HotDevil33:** I heard your parents are sending you away to Ireland. Is that true?

**GoodieGumDrop69:** Is it true your pregnant and have to go live with the nuns in Ireland?

**CuseLuvr12:** Good luck with rehab. It will be tough but you can do it.

Wow. I didn't even know those people and they thought they knew my deepest secret. In my high school, people will believe anything. All they need is a little bit of gossip to get them through the day. They feed off spreading rumors to make themselves feel better. News, whether it is true or false, apparently spreads fast. Someone had probably heard me talking about my trip that morning and formed an entirely ridiculous story. I deleted each box off the screen.

When I finished school on Friday I was prepared to have a weekend locked in my room studying. I had finals all next week before I left for Ireland and had only two days before my first exam. I went to the library after school to study. I walked home just as an orange sun was setting into the horizon and a cloudy white moon rose above the city. To my surprise, I arrived home to a dark and silent house. I walked in and dropped my backpack on the floor of the hallway. I flicked on the light switch and "Surprise!" My mom, my dad, Sophie, Taylor and Hailey jumped up from behind the couch.

"Oh my god! You guys scared the crap out of me!" I squealed back at them, my heart beating a mile a minute.

"We wanted to have a small, intimate, going away party!" Taylor said laughing.

The six of us sat down at the dining room table. My mom went into the kitchen and came out carrying a beautifully



decorated, homemade cake that had “We’ll Miss You!” written on top of it.

“I slaved away all day making this cake, so it better be good!” my mom said.

After we had stuffed our faces with cake, my mom went back into the kitchen and re-appeared carrying three presents and an envelope.

“You guys didn’t have to get me anything. Letting me go was the best present I could imagine,” I said smiling.

Sophie, being the practical thinker that she is, bought me a debit card to use to write e-mail.

“It works just like a calling card,” she explained. “You just go to the website on the back of the card and type in your code. If you don’t write me every single memory I’ll hurt you. I want to know every detail,” she said, starting to cry. I gave her a big hug and promised her that I would write all the time.

Taylor bought me a picture frame with a picture of the four of us in it. On the top it said, “Friends Forever”.

“That’s so you won’t forget us!” she said.

“How could I?” I grinned.

Hailey’s present was a raincoat. For a while, we all sat there slightly puzzled when I pulled it out of the box and held it up. Everyone was silent until she finally broke the silence.

“Um, hello? You’re going to the freaking rain capital of the world!”

We all went into a fit of laughter. Leave it to Hailey to lighten up a depressing mood.

Then, my mom handed me an envelope that said, “From Mom and Dad” on the front. I opened it up and inside was my ticket, one hundred euros, and a note. I read it aloud.



*To Sarah,*

*Your father and I wish you the best of times in Ireland. It is such an amazing place and we know you will love it there. We wanted to do this for you because you deserve to see the world and experience a new culture. We will miss you so much but don't miss us too much because it will distract you from all the experiences.*

*Love, Mom and Dad*

I was smiling from ear to ear and crying at the same time.

“Thank you so much. I am happy, sad, excited, and nervous all at the same time,” I said wiping a tear from my smiling face.

“All right, all right, save the tears for the airport,” my mom urged, holding back her own tears.

The girls slept over that night and we stayed up talking for hours. I agreed to write at least once a week, and I assured them, especially Hailey, that I would never forget them. After they fell asleep I lay there awake for some time. I thought about what my new school would be like and if I would make friends there. Thoughts swarmed my mind. I had no idea what to expect. But I was excited. I eventually fell asleep and drifted off to dreamland.

I saw a girl in a gorgeous dress, walking barefoot in a place surrounded by trees that I had never seen before. No one else was in sight. It was a serene place. Suddenly I spotted a boy watching her. He studied her as if she was a work of art, swiftly moving and hiding behind trees to catch her every angle. Their movements were in sync, yet they did not make eye contact. Their bodies were almost imaginary, moving so gracefully. The boy watched the girl intently as if afraid that if he took his eyes off her for one second she might disappear.



His features were just as remarkable as hers: deep blue eyes and short brown hair, and rosy cheeks, as if he had been running in the cold. She stopped moving and stood with her back to him. He slowly moved toward her. She sensed his presence. Their simple actions let me know that they in fact did know each other. There was a forbidden comfort between them. When he reached her he lightly touched her shoulder, barely skimming it with his fingertips. She brushed her cheek against his hand and closed her eyes. They couldn't look at each other. She wouldn't turn around and embrace him. Something was holding her back. They were both in pain and I could sense it. Suddenly they heard footsteps and quickly ran in opposite directions into the darkness.

When I woke up in the morning I was so confused. I didn't have a boyfriend or a "forbidden love" or even a crush. I opened my eyes and saw Sophie, Taylor and Hailey awake. I quickly forgot about the dream when I heard my stomach's loud growl.

"Anyone up for pancakes?" I asked.

"Definitely," the three of them responded at the same time, as they hopped out of their sleeping bags.

