

CHAPTER 1

The misfits



‘This year is going to be different ... better ...’ said Seth. ‘It even smells different. Can you smell it?’

Ryan didn’t say anything. The two friends were walking across the beautiful, green gardens of Harbor School. It was Ryan’s first day. It hadn’t been easy to get a place here and Ryan felt a bit nervous. Would he fit in? But Seth went on talking happily.

‘Before, I always used to sit on my own. I had lunch on my own. I studied on my own. But this year you’re here. When people see me with you, they’ll think I’m cool!’

Just then, a big water polo player walked by and pushed Seth hard. ‘Loser!’ he said.

Seth picked up the books that he’d dropped and smiled at Ryan. ‘See? That wasn’t too bad! Last year was worse than that ...’

Ryan helped Seth get up. He’d promised Sandy and

Kirsten that he would stay out of trouble. It wasn't going to be easy.

Best friends Summer and Marissa had just arrived at school. Marissa waited by the car as Summer put on her make-up.

'I don't want to be here,' Marissa was saying to Summer. 'Everyone's talking about what happened to me.'

'Coop*, they don't even know what happened to you!' Summer said.

'If they don't know, they'll find something else to say about me,' said Marissa. 'And that's worse.'



* Marissa's surname is Cooper. Summer calls her 'Coop'.

'Hey,' said Summer slowly. 'I'll tell you what's worse. It's Seth Cohen.'

Marissa looked up. When she saw Seth and Ryan coming towards them, she felt happier. Ryan always made her feel better.

'Hey, Ryan,' she said. 'What's your first class?'

Ryan pulled out a piece of paper from his pocket and studied it carefully.

'It's Maths ... with Mr Corcetti,' he said finally.

'Good. That's my first class too. Come on, I'll show you where it is.'

'Thanks,' Ryan began to walk with her.

'Hey! Wait for me,' said Seth, but Summer stopped him.

'Don't you get it, Cohen? They want to be alone!' she said.

'Really?' said Seth. 'Well, then I guess I'll walk with you.'

Summer sighed. 'OK. If you have to ...' she said.

Ryan looked quickly at Marissa as he walked along with her. He wanted to hold her hand, but he didn't know how she felt. She had broken up with Luke, but was she ready to be with him? Also, he wasn't sure about the rules here. Did kids hold hands at Harbor School? Perhaps they weren't allowed to. It was so different to his old school in Chino. In Chino, kids were allowed to do almost anything!

'We could go somewhere else,' said Marissa. 'I'd like to get in my car and drive to the beach. Everyone's looking at me, and I don't like it.'

'No, they're not. They're looking at *me*,' said Ryan.

'You didn't try to kill yourself.'

'No, but you didn't spend the summer in Juvie!' said Ryan, and they laughed. OK, so the other kids in Newport all seemed perfect. But Ryan and Marissa's problems were

making them feel close.

‘So ... what do you think? Shall we get in your car and go?’ Ryan asked.

‘Better not,’ sighed Marissa. ‘I’d better not get in more trouble.’

‘No,’ Ryan agreed. ‘I’ve got to be good, too, or they’ll ask me to leave.’

‘We could do something tonight,’ said Marissa. ‘I’ll come to the pool house and say hi.’

‘Great!’ said Ryan. And then he took her hand, just for a second.

Behind them, Seth was busy making plans for spending the day with Summer. Summer didn’t look happy.

‘So I was thinking ...’ he said slowly. ‘We could eat lunch together. Sit under the trees.’

‘And why would I eat lunch with you?’ said Summer. Yes, Seth had been cool in Mexico and he looked quite cute today, but ... what was she thinking? This was Seth Cohen!

‘I thought we were friends now ... after Mexico ...’ said Seth, feeling a little hurt.

‘We’re not in Mexico now!’ Summer replied.

Before Seth could say anything else, someone called out to him, ‘Cohen!’

Seth turned. A small, pretty girl was coming towards them.

‘Anna! What are you doing here?’ Seth put his arms around her.

‘I left Pittsburg!’ Anna said.

‘So you’re coming to Harbor instead? Hey, that’s cool!’ said Seth. He felt really pleased. ‘Summer, do you remember Anna?’

‘How could I forget?’ Summer said.

Summer looked at Anna's clothes. She looked cool and different, with her long earrings and short blonde hair. Summer didn't like the look of Anna. Perhaps it was because Seth seemed to like her so much.

'Let's go,' she said. 'We're going to be late for class.'

Later, in the science class, Summer went over to Seth.

'You're going to work with me, aren't you, Seth?' she said. 'You can do all the boring things – like writing reports.'

'Oh, yes!' he said. 'I'd love to work with you!'

He couldn't believe it! This was the first time Summer had spoken to him before he spoke to her first! It was too good to be true.

But then someone put a hand on his arm. It was Anna.

'Just a minute,' said Anna, looking at Summer. 'Seth promised to work with me.'

'Well ... I don't know ...' Seth began. Anna was looking at him, trying to say something, but he didn't get it.

Then he looked over at Summer. Summer was looking angrily at Anna. Was it possible that Summer was getting jealous? Seth couldn't believe it.

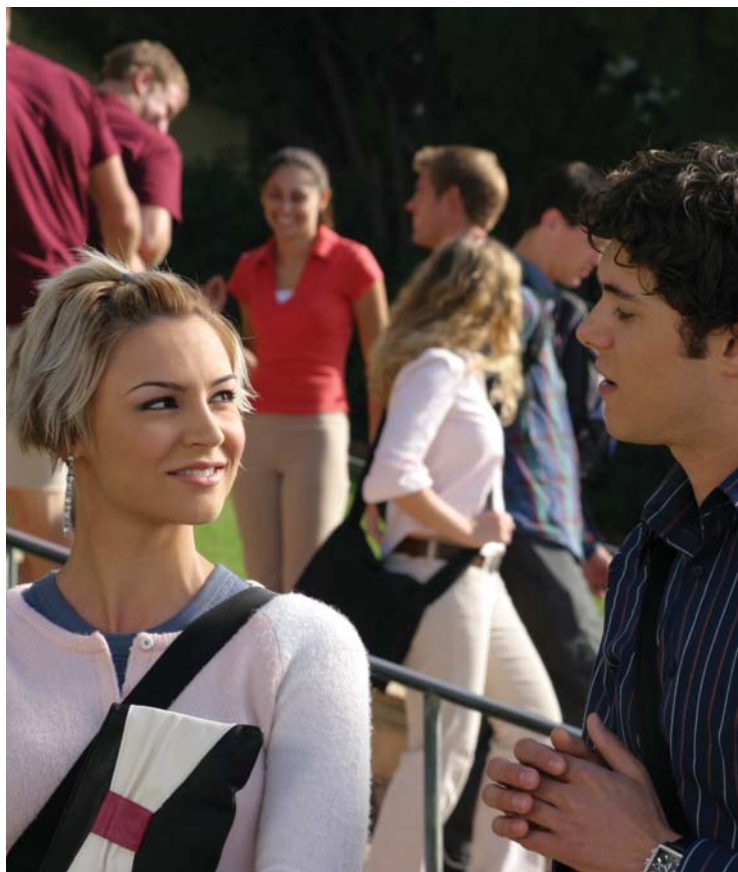
'Sorry, Summer,' he said. 'I'm working with Anna.'

Summer pretended she didn't care. 'Whatever,' she said and went to work with Jordan Cypher. Jordan Cypher was even less popular than Seth Cohen.

'What's happening?' she wondered. 'Do I have feelings for Seth? But that's crazy – he's such a loser!'

After class, Summer waited for Seth. Maybe they could have lunch together after all. But Seth was talking to Anna. He walked out of the class without even seeing her.

'Cohen!' Summer cried, but Seth didn't hear her either.



She felt upset. Seth was more interested in Anna than her. And she felt jealous! 'What's wrong with me?' she wondered.

'You've upset Summer,' Anna said.

'What?' said Seth and immediately turned back.

'Don't go back to her!' Anna cried. 'You know what your problem is? You're too nice to her. Girls don't like guys who are always nice. If you really like Summer, stop trying to please her.'

'Hey, you're probably right. You understand these things. You're a girl ...' said Seth.

'Thanks for noticing!' said Anna.

Seth didn't see the way Anna looked at him.

'I know! You could give me advice – help me win Summer!' he said, kissing the top of her head. 'Thank you, thank you, thank you! This is going to be great!'

'Yeah – really great,' said Anna to herself angrily, and followed Seth outside.