

# Miss Popularity and the Best Friend Disaster

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## CHAPTER 1

# Miss Twelve- Going-on-Fabulous

Cassie Cyan Knight looked at her green Swatch. 6:02! OMG, she had to get inside! Her nightly iChat with her best friend, Erin Donaldson, was about to begin. She'd been sitting on the lawn, relaxing with the newest J.Crew catalog, and had totally lost track of time. (And those periwinkle culottes on page 23 were a very good reason to get distracted. They were adorable!) Cassie jumped up and ran to the front door, her bare feet bouncing off the soft, warm grass, the golden Maine sun bright above.

It was May, at long last. Hooray! It had been six months since the Knight family had moved to Maine from Houston.

Six months since Cassie had been with any of her Texas girls, including Erin.

Six months of snowstorms, wearing boots almost all the time, and freezing cold temps.

Six months of camping and trees and nature.

Six months of being a student at Oak Grove, a private school that was so different from her beloved Sam Houston Middle School, back in big ol' Texas.

But now: The snow had finally lost the fight and warm, breezy days set the scene. Sandals were more than a fashion statement, they were a necessity. There was just one month of school left and, far more important, just eight days until Cassie's thirteenth birthday! She'd dreamed of this moment for years. She'd finally be a full-fledged teenager and one step closer to high school. Of course, it would be a bittersweet birthday without the Texas crew, but Cassie had made her peace with that.

*Life Rule #14: Sometimes,  
what are you gonna do?*

She knew her girls were always with her in spirit. And she also knew that there were some super-exciting birthday plans for her in Maine.

After these six months, Cassie finally felt settled into her new life. She had to admit that she was becoming more and more an Oak Grovian and less a Sam Houston Spur.

Of course, there were lots of end-of-school things going on, too, like finals and papers and getting the yearbook out the door in time to print. Cassie's life felt so busy sometimes, she wondered how she'd ever do everything that adults were expected to do. But it's not worth stressing, she often reminded herself. She wasn't even thirteen yet. There had to be time for fun, too!

Cassie ran past the blueberry bushes and up the wooden front steps of her house, her red tresses flying behind her. This was the first spring in her life without the dreaded Texas humidity, so there was as much spring in her curls as there was in her step. She threw open the front door and bounded up the stairs to her bedroom.

"Cass!" her mother called from the dining room. "You have exactly twenty-seven minutes until supper!"

"Okay, Sheila!" Cassie hollered back. "Sheila" was so much more modern than plain old "Mom." Cassie also called her dad "Paul."

She ran into her bedroom, admiring, as she always did, the meticulously planned chocolate-brown and vanilla-white theme. Cassie missed so much about Texas, including her old house, which was much less creaky and creepy than their house in Maine. But Cassie's bedroom here was stellar. The browns and whites, with just a pop of color here and there. The teal phone. The red leather journal on her nightstand, that she never really wrote in because it was more for decoration than secrets. And the yellow shirt on Bob the Teddy Bear, who no longer lived hidden in the closet. He was now proudly featured on the center of her bed. He'd been through a lot with Cassie. He deserved to be comfortable.

Cassie was still in the process of choosing wall hangings, so her walls were bare, except for a few framed pics. There were the Texas girls, two years ago, all dressed as Powerpuffs at Erin's house one silly sleepover night. Laura Dean, the third in Cassie's Musketeers, won the unofficial Most Dedicated award, painting huge eyes on her face to look as Powerpuff-like as possible. There was a photo of Sheila and Paul back in April, at the Oak

Grove Fash Bash, which had raised a ton of money for tree planting. And, of course, there was a photo of Cassie at her very first—and very interesting—camping trip with Etoile Davey, her bestest Maine friend, and Mary Ellen McGinty, her Maine frenemy. The three girls stood grinning triumphantly after bungee jumping.

Sitting in the edge of that frame was another picture. One that Cassie was hesitant to hang on its own. It was taken right after the relay race on the same camping trip. Etoile was grinning ear to ear with her crush, Seth Gordon. Cassie stood next to them, with Jonah Freeman, Etoile's best guy friend since birth. And Cassie's... crush?! Just thinking it made her woozy with confusion. But maybe. She wasn't sure yet. Lately, her heart went all haywire when he was around. Ever since she'd seen him sing "Don't Stop Believin'" during nano-oke, he just seemed sort of... cute? He was crush material, for sure. He'd always been nice to Cassie, helping with the Fash Bash and pre-al, and being funny and understanding of her fear of all things camping. But he was practically Etoile's brother!

So Cassie hadn't told Etoile about her maybe-crush. She didn't know how Etoile would take the news. Cassie had to be certain of her feelings before she had that difficult conversation.

Cassie ran to her desk, where Erin waited on her glossy iMac screen. iChatting was their daily check-in and Cassie adored it. Time to catch up. Time to gossip a little. Compare homework and ask for help. Cassie loved to hear what was going on back in Houston, although Erin always said nothing was new in Houston. But it was all new to Cassie!

She plunked down at her desk and clicked ACCEPT on the iChat window.

Erin's picture zoomed large and filled Cassie's screen. Even though a long school day had just ended, Erin was still completely fresh looking. Her lip gloss, a pinker tone than usual, sparkled through the monitor. Her blond curls, bigger than ever these days, were piled high on her head. Cassie felt a pang of homesickness. *No one does big hair better than Texas*, she thought. Since the move to Maine, Cassie's curls had gotten tamer. She even straightened sometimes!

"Sisterfriend!" Cassie yelled, laughing. She'd



heard Oprah call someone that once and thought it was hysterical.

“Sisterfriend!” Erin yelled back. Just then, her little labradoodle started barking and spinning in the background.

“Snoodle!” Cassie yelled. The silly dog stopped his tantrum and cocked his head, looking directly into Erin’s computer, at Cassie. “Hi, baby!” Cassie shouted all the way from Maine.

“How was your day?” Erin asked.

Just then another IM window popped up on Cassie’s screen. It was Jonah!

“Cass, do you need to get that?” Erin asked.

Cassie’s face flushed. “Uh, wait one sec.”

She clicked on to Jonah’s IM.

JONAHROCKS: Earth to Cassie Knight. Paging Cassie Knight.

MISSCASS: Hey!

JONAHROCKS: What’s up?

MISSCASS: Nothing much. Just chatting with Erin in Houston.

JONAHROCKS: That’s cool.

Cassie’s heart pounded.

JONAHROCKS: Just wanted to say hi . . . So, hi.

MISSCASS: Hi!

JONAHROCKS: Talk to you later?

MISSCASS: Sure! 😊

Cassie turned back to her camera.

“WHO was that?” Erin asked.

“Oh, no one!” Cassie said, trying to be nonchalant, but almost yelling.

“Uh-uh.”

Cassie couldn’t get anything by Erin.

“Okay, it was Jonah.”

“Etoile’s friend?”

“My friend.”

“OMG! He looks really cute in those pics you sent,” Erin exclaimed, smiling.

Cassie wanted—needed—to change the subject quickly. “Okay, so I was asking about your day. How was it?”

“No, I was asking about *your* day,” Erin pointed out. “But since you’re asking, my day was good. Really good, actually.” She began fidgeting. Erin only fidgeted when she was nervous.

“Wait, what’s up with you?” Cassie asked.

“I have some news . . .” Erin said, leaning in close to the camera.

“What?!” Cassie asked excitedly.

“Well, I know that your birthday is coming up, Miss Twelve-Going-on-Fabulous!”

Cassie laughed. “Yes,” she said with an exaggerated hair flip. “I *am* pretty fab.”

“And, I just thought that you should have a little piece of Texas there to celebrate with you,” Erin went on calmly.

“Okay?” Cassie said.

“So, after much thinking and deliberation with Laura . . .”

Cassie couldn’t imagine what the surprise was going to be. New cowboy boots? Her fave cupcakes from Sugarbabe’s? Something fringe-tastic?

Erin continued, “We decided that . . .”

“Oh my G! What? You’re killing me!” Cassie leaned so close to the camera, she was sure Erin could only see her eyebrows.

Erin’s serious face cracked into a huge ear-to-ear grin. “We’re coming to visit!”

“WHAT?!” Cassie gasped.

Erin’s words spilled out in a rush. “Laura’s dad

has to go to Maine for business, and she asked if he would take us so we could celebrate your b-day, and he said YES!”

“Wait, where in Maine?” Cassie asked. Maine was small compared to Texas, but not *that* small.

“Portland!”

“Portland is, like, ten minutes away!” Cassie couldn’t believe her luck.

“I know!” Erin yelled, Snoodle barking louder now.

“When?” Cassie asked, clicking onto her iCal.

“Um, just one day before your birthday! May twentieth!” Erin said, doing the same.

Just one week away! Cassie jumped out of her chair and spun around. “This is the best news EVER!” she squealed. “Wait, what about school?”

“We have Friday and Monday off for parent/teacher conferences,” Erin explained. She followed Cassie’s lead and jumped up, spinning. The poor, confused dog did the same.

Cassie regained her composure and sat back down. “Okay, I am so excited! You are the bestest best friend in the galaxy!”

“So are you! That’s why we’re coming!”

Cassie thought about the weekend for a moment. “Now, wait a minute, there are *so many*

good things happening. Next Friday, after school, Etoile and I are getting mani-pedis and shopping and eating French fries and ice-cream sundaes for dinner at the mall. That's the start of my birthday celebration."

Erin was quiet for a second and then said, "Oh, so, is it weird if me and Laura are going to be there, too? I didn't really even think about it."

"Weird?! Are you crazy? Of course not. It's all my favorite people in one place! It's perfect!" She smiled at Erin. "And then, we'll do some sight-seeing on Saturday and get ready for my roller-skating party!"

Cassie had already told Erin all about the party. Back in Texas, they had always gone roller-skating together. It felt so 1980s cool, and Cassie loved skating on four wheels. She never did well with Rollerblading. But she felt great on skates. And she hadn't been on hers in far too long. She was planning one of the best parties *ever*. And now, it would only be better with Erin and Laura on the guest list!

"Okay, wait a sec," Erin said. She ran to her closet, pulled the door open, and started to flip through the hangers. "I need you to help me figure

out what I'm going to wear," she called over her shoulder.

"FASHION SHOW!" Cassie yelled.

As Erin ran back and forth from her closet, flashing fashions to the camera, Cassie laughed with sheer joy. She'd been dreaming of her thirteenth birthday since she was nine. And now her special day would include her best friends on the planet, awesome music, and her very pink roller skates.