

## Prologue

Flames engulfed the boat, and my lungs ached as dark, noxious smoke filled the air. I struggled off the dirty makeshift bed and shuffled ~~to~~ across the floor, ~~the~~ cable ties binding my hands and feet making my progress slow.

~~My lungs ached as dark, noxious smoke filled the air. Then a wall of water smashed through the cabin, dulling the flames and the air cleared a little.~~

Seizing my opportunity, I threw myself towards the wooden stairs where the remains of the fire licked their way upward to freedom. I gritted my teeth and reached over to hook the cable tie ~~at~~ binding my wrists on a jagged piece of scorched metal that I could see through the flames. Turning my face away from the searing heat, I tugged down sharply and felt the tie snap. I screamed ~~out~~ as the flames burned my skin, but I didn't have time for pain. I needed to get out, to warn the others. I had to make sure they were okay.

With my hands free, I released my ankles and scrambled up the still burning stairs to the deck. ~~I was on a half-sunk old fishing trawler that was listing at an odd angle in a shallow inlet. The thick smoke had curled its way up from the wreckage and was slowly starting to clear. Through the haze I could see a group of people on the shore line. They stood motionless, looking at the ground. My eyes followed their horrified gazes to the body lying face down on the water's edge.~~

**Comment [ET1]:** Okay to cut as marked? I'm not sure we need all of these details up front – and I think the shorter the prologue is, the tenser it will feel.

**Comment [ET2]:** Possible to use a stronger word here? Maybe "staring"?

Chapter 1  
First Day Blues

*Six Months Earlier...*

My first day at a new school... again. I pulled on my new school uniform and eyed myself critically in the mirror. The moving company arranged for my uniform to be ordered, and it was waiting for me at the house when I got here. A uniform! I couldn't believe it. Back in Boston, only people who went to the fancy, private schools had uniforms. But after some extensive Googling I learned that, in Ireland, everyone wore them. Mine was going to be a royal blue v-neck sweater (the letter from the school had called it a jumper – guess I was going to have to use Irish phrases), a grey skirt and a blue and yellow striped tie. Hideous, of course, but it could be worse; at least I'd blend in.

School here started a week ago, and the later I started, the more I would stand out.

I scowled at myself in the mirror reflection and tugged at the elastic holding up my wavy brown hair. I seriously needed a little makeup, at the very least, some. My face was crying out for a little Mascara and lip gloss, but there was school had a strict no makeup policy in the school, a throw-back to the it's convent roots.

Finally semi-satisfied with my appearance, I went downstairs where I found Downstairs, my dad was in the kitchen playing on his laptop and mumbling about cables.

“Morning, Dad. Did you get that thing working?”

“Hey, Meg,” he said answered, looking confused. “Yeah, it was working fine and

**Comment [ET3]:** Cut okay? I'm not sure why a moving company would arrange for a school uniform (here, we think of the moving company as the movers...) and I think it's stronger anyway to keep the focus on Megan and not on how her uniform got to her house.

then just died on me.”

“It helps to plug the charger into the wall. That’s what actually charges the battery.”

I walked over to the socket, plugged it in, and ~~flicked~~ pressed the power ~~switch~~ button on the computer.

“It’s back!” he cried.

“The wonder of science,” I said over my shoulder as I popped two pieces of bread into the toaster. “So how do you like your new job?” ~~I popped two pieces of bread into the toaster.~~

“It’s great. ~~There’s so much to learn and catch up on.~~ Why don’t you ~~Come come~~ down to the club after school? ~~and~~ I’ll show you around. I have a feeling about this place, Megan. This could be the one.”

I hoped that was true. It would be nice to stay in one school for an entire year, ~~be able to see out a full year in the same school,~~ even if it meant living in Kinsale.

“Sure, Dad,” I ~~said, humoring him,~~ replied. “I’ll stop by after school.” My toast popped and I buttered it quickly. “I should get going.” ~~I said, my mouth full,~~ “I have to figure out where all my classes are.”

**Comment [ET4]:** Cut okay? Not sure why she’s humoring him – it sounds almost too sarcastic for their relationship?

“Good luck,” he said glancing up from his computer with a reassuring smile. “You’ll be fine. ~~The kids around here seem nice.~~ I’m sure you will fit right in.”

The school itself was ~~no~~ t far from my house and on my walk over (all downhill, thankfully) I saw lots of kids making their way in that direction. Nobody really paid any attention to me; in fact, people didn’t even seem to notice I was there. Score one for my ~~probably due to my unexceptional appearance.~~ At five foot five, with pale skin with a

**Comment [ET5]:** Okay? Feels a little more lively with this expression.

sprinkling of freckles, I blended nicely into the sea of faces. I guess I could even pass for Irish, with dark green almond shaped eyes, courtesy of my dad, and my mom's small oval face.

I wondered ~~if my dad would end up being right about me fitting in, how I would fit in with the Irish. I was an expert at dealing with New-new schools and new kids I could deal with, but I had never had to deal with a new country. I had been worried about sticking out didn't want to stand out like a sore thumb, but as different. Luckily the school sweater and tie seemed to be working.~~ *This uniform gig is pretty impressive,* I thought perking up.

Turning the corner, I caught sight of the school gates and my stomach fluttered a little. The school, a long, low building all on one level, had a parking lot ~~to~~ in the front, ~~and was flanked bordered~~ by basketball courts and grassy soccer fields in the back. I took a deep breath and made for the main entrance, when a pair of eyes caught my attention. Just inside the gate, a tall boy, leaning against a lamp post, was staring at me. A chill ran ~~through me down my spine~~ and my hands tingled. I balled them into fists and glanced ~~down at them.~~ *What the hell?* ~~I was so distracted that~~ Not looking where I was going, I took a step forward and walked straight into another girl.

"I'm so sorry," I yelped, as we stumbled and caught each other. I ~~looked quickly~~ glanced back at the lamp post, but the boy was gone.

"No problem," a friendly voice chirped back. "Looking for someone?" ~~she~~ She followed my gaze with a curious expression. ~~asked following my gaze.~~

"Oh no. Well, yes actually. I need to find the principal's office."

"New?" She smiled.

"Am I that obvious?" I asked, laughed ~~laughing~~.

**Comment [ET6]:** Leigh – I would suggest cutting this, actually, since she's just told us above that no one is noticing her, and she attributes that to her looking a little Irish. So this next part feels a little at odds and I'm not sure it's really necessary.

**Comment [ET7]:** Rephrased to avoid repeat of "me"