

Chapter 1

The bell rang, a shrill sound cutting the crisp silence that was heavy in the air of the school hallways. The corridors came to life, with students streaming out of classrooms, their lively chatter filling the atmosphere. It was like every single Friday afternoon at Heighton High School. Students couldn't wait to go home and relax, grateful for the weekend break. No one realized that today was different. For, this was the day, when everything would begin to change. The day, that would set in motion events that would bring a change in the lives of several people living in this small town.

Saige Hudson slammed her locker door shut, and breathed a sigh of relief. She could finally leave the heavy textbooks behind, and enjoy a relaxing weekend. She didn't have any homework...at least, she thought she didn't. Saige was never one for organization. Like the other students in the school, she had been given a planner at the beginning of the year, but she never used hers. Come to think of it, she wasn't even sure where it was, probably at the bottom of a drawer somewhere. Her organizational skills- or the lack thereof – were often the source of trouble for Saige as she rarely remembered to do the small assignments given to her. However, apart from this tiny issue, Saige was a good student.

As she walked towards the door leading out of the school, she was joined by her friend Kala. "So, you didn't get overloaded with homework or anything, did you? Nothing catastrophic happened?"

"No," Saige pushed open the heavy glass door and moved out into the school courtyard, before turning to look at Kala with a confused expression on her face. "Why?"

"Well, my parents said that I could have a sleepover this Saturday, and I was wondering if you wanted to come." She paused for a second, looked in another direction and then smirked. "Well, unless of course you're invited to *their* party."

Saige followed Kala's path of vision and saw a group of students their age standing in a close circle and laughing. She recognized them immediately- anyone in the school would. This was the 'popular' group, the students that everyone knew and secretly, or not-so-secretly, wanted to be part of. These were the kids who were perfect in every way possible. They had perfect physical features – perfect hair that never frizzed, perfect eyes that didn't require vision correction, and perfect teeth that never needed braces. They were talented too, not only getting brilliant grades, but excelling at the extra-curricular activities that their school offered. Ever since Saige had started secondary school, she yearned to be a part of their 'Exclusive clique'. She wanted to be someone who everybody knew and looked up to, someone who everybody compared themselves to, and of course! She wanted to go to the legendary parties thrown by the in-crowd. According to the rumor mill, Missy- the tall, sporty blonde that everyone loved – was having a party at her house on Saturday. As her parents were out of town, it was going to be 'Wild', as Saige had heard someone put it. However, the invitees were strictly in-crowd only, and much to her chagrin, Saige did not meet the requirements.

"I wish I was," Saige said, a tinge of longing in her voice. Kala raised an eyebrow, and Saige quickly said, "But, even if I was, I would totally ditch them and come to yours." Kala didn't look convinced, so Saige changed the subject. "So...who's coming to your place anyway? Who'd you invite?"

"Oh, you know, the usual," Kala waved her hand around in the air. "You, Addison, Chastity and –," she was interrupted by a voice in the background.

"Saige! Saige!"

Kala's face contorted into a disgusted expression. "And I certainly did not invite *her*."

Saige swiveled around to see who Kala was talking about now. She spotted a girl with black hair that was tightly tied back into a ponytail, gray-green eyes that were obstructed by glasses with thick black frames and skin with a dodgy complexion. She was running

towards them and judging by the fact that her face resembled an overly ripe tomato, she had clearly been running for quite a long time. She slowed down as she approached Saige and Kala, her hands falling to her knees as she bent down and gasped for air.

"Saige!" her voice was raspy. "Saige, thank goodness I caught you! We need to talk!"

Saige raised an eyebrow in reply, before turning away and continuing to walk. The girl, however, continued to chase her. "Saige!"

By now, the girl's loud exclamations had attracted the attention of most people in the courtyard, including that of the 'in-crowd'. They had turned around, interested in what was probably going to make exciting gossip for the rest of the day. Saige suddenly felt the unease, that one feels when all eyes are suddenly focused on them. In that moment, she knew that her reaction would determine how people regarded her, and how people thought of her. This was a make-or-break moment. Taking a deep breath, she turned around again to face the breathless and desperate girl.

"What do you want?" she demanded. The ferocity of her voice made the girl shrivel up slightly, afraid of the direct confrontation.

"Um, well, I just wanted to know..." she began, stuttering. "We're paired together for the Biology project- you know, the poster on cell respiration that's due on Monday? And I just wanted to know whether or not you're free this weekend so that maybe we could work on it or something?"

Saige froze. She'd forgotten all about the Biology poster. The idyllic image of her weekend vanished, as she tried to figure out what she should do. She knew that she should talk to the girl, divide the work for the project between them and then organize a time to meet up during the weekend so that they could put it all together. She was about to suggest this when she felt the heat of everybody's eyes on her. She could feel the calculating stare of the popular clique, the clique that she had always wanted to be in. This was a make-or-break moment, she reminded herself, and being nice to this girl wasn't going to help move her up in the social hierarchy of high

school. In fact, it would probably bring her down. Knowing this, she pushed aside her conscience. "I'm busy this weekend," she spoke clearly and loudly, so that everybody could hear what she had to say. "I have a party to go to, and I'm not about to be bogged down by a stupid Biology poster. And I definitely do not want to work with you. If you want to get good marks, you do the poster yourself."

She turned and walked away before the girl could say anything. Kala followed her. "Here I thought you didn't have a mean bone in your body. Not bad, Saige. I totally saw Missy and her crew give you like, an approving nod."

"Really?" Saige was unable to believe that the popular kids had even acknowledged her, let alone actually approved of something that she'd done. She felt proud, pushing away the guilt that was left over from the spiteful things she'd just said to the girl, until there was none left. She felt as if it had all been worth it.

Meanwhile, the girl quietly sat down on a bench, sighing to herself. Students who had watched the scene had moved away, in search of another conflict to entertain themselves. She was forgotten yet again, only to be remembered when boredom struck the students and they came to find her, the new girl. She knew she was an easy target, what with the fact that she had a huge fear of confrontation and was therefore unable to lash back when she was picked on. She was the quiet girl, the one with no friends to defend her. A lonely target was always easy to catch. They laughed at her British accent, still strong having only moved to America from England a few months ago. They laughed at the fact that she always had her nose buried in a book, and at the fact that she actually cared about grades. They laughed at her and she had no defense, slowly shrinking away until she could barely be seen- only two white irises in a sea of darkness.

She opened her shoulder bag that was resting next to her on the bench. It was bright pink, a color that she had chosen because she wanted it to stand out, and it did stand out, but for all the wrong reasons. Here, bright pink was a color that you would see more frequently in the halls of an elementary school. Not a high school.

High school was a monotonous place with the colors all being varying shades of neutral black, gray, white or navy. Bright pink was like an offense. It didn't fit in. And it reminded her that she didn't fit in.

From her bag, she extracted a small, patterned notebook. It had a lock on it, so that in case anyone else happened to chance on it, they wouldn't be able to open it and obtain any more ammunition to use against her. The key was kept on the tiny silver charm bracelet that she always wore. She unlocked the notebook, and opened it up to the first page. Two words were written in pink glitter pen. "Olivia's Journal". She smiled. That was her, Olivia. She often wondered whether or not people knew her name. To many, she was just the 'new girl'. She rarely ever heard anyone refer to her by name unless it was to taunt her, and therefore during the hours she spent in school, she often felt her sense of identity vanish. Thankfully she'd found that all she needed to regain it was to open up her journal, her object of comfort.

She opened to the first blank page she could find, took out a pen from her pocket and began to write. In her neat, cursive script, she detailed the confrontation between her and Saige. She had thought Saige was a nice girl, someone who would perhaps understand her and want to be friends with her. She hadn't expected that Saige would treat her just like everybody else did. She hadn't expected Saige to succumb to the pressure to be like everybody else. But then again, she didn't really know her.

The issue of the Biology project was still outstanding. Olivia wasn't sure what she should do. She didn't want to get low grades, but she wasn't sure whether or not she should just do it by herself at home. Maybe if she did do it, Saige would feel bad and apologize for her earlier actions. Olivia sighed. She seemed to be in a position where she didn't have much of a choice. Especially since she realized that if she didn't do the poster, Saige would probably just get angry and therefore, another confrontation would be inevitable. The last thing she wanted was another skirmish.

Finishing off her entry, she replaced the cap on her pen, closed and

locked her journal, and deposited both items into her bag. She checked her watch and decided that she should probably return home. Getting up from the bench, she began her journey back to her house that was around fifteen minutes away from Heighton High. She set off, expecting to make the journey the same way she did every day- Alone.

Yet, when she was walking through Heighton's main shopping street, she was joined by another girl. Olivia recognized her immediately. Her name was Kellie, and she was in Olivia's English class. Although Olivia didn't like listening to gossip, she had overheard a few students talking about how Kellie's friends had recently turned their backs on her, leaving her all alone. Olivia didn't know why this had happened, but she assumed it might have had something to do with Kellie's body image. She was slightly overweight, and was often teased for it.

"Hey!" Kellie's voice was bright, sunny and enthusiastic. "You're Olivia, right?"

Olivia, shocked that someone was talking to her in a kind manner, let alone referring to her by name, took a minute to reply. "Um, Yeah. I'm Olivia."

Kellie smiled. "I'm Kellie! I'm in your English class!"

"I know."

"You're new, right? From England?"

"Yeah."

"That's so awesome! I've always wanted to go to England. It must be really nice there. But hey, it must be so hard for you, starting out in a new place. If you ever want someone to like, show you around or if you need help or anything, you can come and talk to me! I don't mind at all."

Olivia was a little taken aback at Kellie's sudden niceness. In the two months that she had been at Heighton High, Kellie had never once talked to her. This made Olivia suspicious. What if Kellie wasn't actually being genuinely nice to her? What if Kellie was trying to

befriend her, gain her trust and then ditch her in front of the whole school? What if the whole thing was just a ploy to further humiliate her? After all, what did Olivia really know about Kellie?

"Thanks," she replied quietly. "If I need anything, I'll let you know."

Kellie seemed to sense that something was wrong. "Hey," she said. "Listen, I saw what happened outside school today, between Saige and you? Don't worry about it. Saige's actually a really nice girl. Once she gets to know you, she'll be fine. She probably just wasn't sure what to do with everyone looking at her like that. She doesn't really think things through. And about how mean everybody else has been...well, it's mainly Missy and her group, isn't it? Don't worry about them, they're just jerks. Heighton's a really friendly place once you get to know it."

Olivia became more convinced that Kellie's friendliness was just a trick. Why would she be describing Heighton as a friendly place when she'd just lost all of her friends? "Thanks, I'll keep that in mind."

"Do you want to go and get an ice cream?" Kellie asked, a huge smile on her face. "There's this really great place I know. I'm sure you'll like it."

"Thanks, but I can't right now. I have to get home," she offered no further explanation before she hurried off. Kellie watched her as she went. She understood people well; she knew that Olivia mistrusted her. But she meant no harm- she was genuinely nice. She felt bad for Olivia, and as they were both picked on- Kellie for being overweight, Olivia for being the new girl – she felt as if they were similar, as if she could relate to her. She just wanted to help.

Chapter 2

"I'm home!" Saige called as she closed the heavy wooden door of her villa behind her. It was just past noon on Sunday, and she'd returned from Kala's sleepover, which she had enjoyed thoroughly. They had watched movies and gossiped until almost two in the morning, and the incident that had happened the day before with Olivia never even came up. It was almost as if it had been completely forgotten.

Saige lived in a pleasant, peaceful neighborhood, just outside the center of town. Her house was old- it had been built by her great-grandfather's family, when they had settled in Heighton before the Great Depression had struck, and the house had remained in the family's possession for many years. Saige loved the vintage feel of the house. She had already planned that when she was initiated into the popular clique, she would throw an unforgettable historical themed party in the house. The atmosphere was perfect.

Saige's mother appeared at the top of the stairs. Many people said that Saige took after Mrs. Hudson in the looks department, and that was certainly true. They had the same hazel eyes, the same skin- although Saige's was currently a little more acne-prone – and the same medium-length brown hair. "Hi honey," she beamed. "Why don't you come upstairs? There's something here that you're going to want to see."

"What?" Saige asked curiously as she walked up the spiral stairway that led to the second floor of her house. The curled black banister was unusually slippery and smooth, meaning that Mrs. Hudson had probably spent her morning polishing. As Saige walked up, her mind wandered as to what it was that her parents wanted her to see. Mrs. Hudson led her into the master bedroom, where Saige's father, Mr. Hudson was waiting. He was sitting on his desk chair, facing the door, his laptop opened behind him. Saige squinted to try and make out the large black letters on the glaring white screen. *Heighton High*

School-Progress Report. Uh oh.

Although most schools waited a good three or four months before releasing the first report card, Heighton High was a little different. Two months into the school year, they emailed out 'progress reports' to parents. Progress reports looked and functioned the same way as normal report cards- they were the instruments of torture that made parents aware of the fact that most of the time, their children were not actually working in school, and messing around instead. Saige's parents, like most others, were incredibly strict about schoolwork and grades. Nervousness began to build up inside her. What if she'd gotten horrible marks?

Yet her tension was quickly relieved when her father smiled. "We received your report card just a little while ago. Well done Saige! We're very proud of you."

"Straight A's!" Mrs. Hudson could barely contain her excitement. "Our baby got straight A's!"

"Straight A's?" Saige was incredulous. "Seriously?"

"Well, almost," Mrs. Hudson conceded. "You got a B in Math, but that's okay. You've never been particularly good at math, so a B is actually excellent for you. But anyway, we are so very proud of you sweetheart."

Saige found herself breaking out into a massive grin. "Wow. I can't believe it!" She knew she'd done well in tests and she had put quite a bit of effort into her essays and other assignments- wanting her freshman year to go as well as possible. But she had never expected to get straight A's in her report card. Even if it was just a progress report, it still counted.

Mrs. Hudson gave Saige a huge hug. "We've decided that for doing so well, you have to be rewarded!"

"Rewarded?" Saige perked up. She knew people who got money or gifts from their parents every time they got an A. She wasn't one of them. Being an only child, her parents had decided early on that they didn't want to spoil her. Giving her gifts whenever she got a good

mark constituted as spoiling to them and therefore, they had never established a reward system for Saige. The fact that she would be getting something for doing well in school was new and exciting prospect for Saige.

Mr. Hudson opened the first drawer in his wooden desk. Like the house itself and most of the furniture, the desk was bought back when furniture items were actually carved and created out of real wood and not the fake, cheap stuff sold nowadays that Mrs. Hudson refused to buy. He reached inside the drawer and brought his black, leather wallet out. The wallet was not vintage; it's shiny freshness contrasting deeply with the dusty antiquity of the rest of the room. Flipping the wallet open, he took out an American Express card. He got up, and handed it to Saige.

"Remember how for your birthday you wanted your own credit card? So you could go shopping online?" he asked Saige, who nodded eagerly in reply. "Well, your mother and I had a discussion, and we've decided that you can use our credit card to make online purchases- of course, as long as they're within reason. Going and buying a twenty five thousand dollar limited edition Gucci dress or something would be completely out of the question, but you can buy other things like books, cheaper dresses and games."

Saige laughed. "Don't worry Daddy, I'm not going to do something like that. Thank you so much!" She looked down at the sleek credit card in her hand, running her fingers over the numbers that decorated the back of the card. Holding it gave her a strange sense of power, a sense that was rather hypnotizing. It drew her in.

She broke out of the trance when her father snatched the card from her hand using his index and middle fingers. "We may be allowing you to use the card, but that doesn't mean you can keep it with you. Keeping a credit card IS a lot of responsibility and with your forgetfulness, Saige, you may just lose it. Plus, your mother and I do need to use it."

"Of course," Saige was a little disappointed. She had wanted to show off the credit card to everyone. None of them could use their parents' cards, even Kala, who was spoiled rotten by her parents.

Saige knew that if she could show everyone the card, she would immediately be a promoted to a higher level in the social hierarchy. "I'll ask you when I want to use it."

Mrs. Hudson smiled. "Okay sweetie. Anytime you want it, just come and ask your father or me."

"Of course. Thank you!" Saige walked out of her parents' room, with a smile on her face. Although she couldn't keep the card with her, she was happy that her parents had given her such a nice reward. However, the incident had made her a little bit worried about the Biology project. She didn't want her grades to drop. She walked into her room, sat down at her desk and opened her MacBook Pro. For a minute, she contemplated whether or not to look up Olivia on the Heighton High school directory. Maybe she should call her and organize something.

But what if someone got wind of it? Olivia was trod upon by the popular students, the ones that Saige so desperately wanted to be like. If they found out that Saige was talking to Olivia, she would be trod on as well. She couldn't have that, not now that they had acknowledged her and approved of something that she had done, which ironically was being mean to Olivia. Saige quickly shook the idea out of her head. She wasn't going to get a bad mark on the Biology project anyway. Olivia was too conscious about grades to not do the poster. She'd do it by herself, and because she didn't want to become even more of a reject, she wouldn't tell the teacher that Saige didn't do any work. Although they were in high school, the brand of being a 'tattle-tale' was still something that everybody wanted to avoid. Saige sighed thankfully.

She typed her password into her Mac, and her desktop came up. She clicked on the Safari icon and was immediately transported into the world of Internet. She clicked on the Facebook icon, and logged into her account. In Saige's opinion, Facebook was a wonderful way of accelerating her popularity. She had quite a few members of the popular clique as Facebook friends, and often liked to scroll through their timelines to find out what they were doing, or where they were going. Once, she had seen that they were at an ice-cream parlor near

her house, and had then ventured out, 'coincidentally' bumping into them. She also liked all of their photos and statuses, just so that they were aware that she existed. It would also increase the probability that one of her posts would pop up on their homepages.

Saige posted almost everything on Facebook. She posted about what she was doing, where she was going and whom she was with. She posted pictures and videos. Her personal details, such as her full name, date of birth, and even her phone number were all online. Saige didn't see the harm of putting this information online. Only her friends could see them, right? What she didn't realize was that her Facebook settings were on public. Anyone who went onto her profile could see everything that she had posted.

Scrolling down her homepage, she saw that a number of people had posted about their report cards. Some were angry statuses that yelled at the respective persons' parents for grounding them over an F in English, or a C in Economics. Others were ecstatic ones over receiving a new MacBook or iPhone for doing so well. Most people had pictures along with statuses. Scrolling further down, Saige saw that Missy had received a brand new Retina-display MacBook Pro for getting straight A's. There was a picture of the shiny new laptop that already had several likes, and was acquiring more as time went on. At once, Saige felt the need to post about the privilege that she had been given as a reward.

She went up to the top of the homepage and clicked on the little rectangular space that asked her what was on her mind. The text vanished, and the type cursor materialized. She began to type. "I get to use my parents credit card whenever I want! Thank you SO much Mom & Dad!" Just as she was about to click 'post', she had an idea. There was no reason she couldn't attach a picture as well. But then again, her parents would never let her. But maybe they didn't need to. Neither of her parents had Facebook, so if she somehow managed to get a quick photo of the card, they would never see it.

Footsteps could be heard going down the stairs, and Saige could hear her parents' voices getting fainter and fainter. She got up from her desk and walked towards the door. She tiptoed into her parents'

room. There was no one there. She eased the top drawer of her fathers' desk open and slid her hand in, feeling around until she grasped the wallet. Extracting it, she quickly scampered back to her room, where she flipped the wallet open and took out the card. The plastic felt cold in her hand and she was again filled with the sudden sense of power. This time however, it was more short-lived, as she knew that she was on a clock. She quickly opened PhotoBooth on her laptop and snapped a picture of the card. Then, she placed it back in the wallet and dashed to replace it in her fathers' drawer. When she reached her room again, she uploaded the photo to her status and then posted it. A satisfied grin fell across Saige's face. She couldn't wait for everyone to see it.

Saige could hear her mother calling her from downstairs. She closed her laptop and went downstairs, feeling immensely happy with herself.

Meanwhile, Olivia had returned home. She was sitting alone in her room, feeling horrible about herself. Her sister, Kristine, knocked on the door. Kristine was eighteen- years-old, three years older than Olivia. She had graduated from high school in England and was now attending college just a couple of miles away in a nearby town. Although most graduates would prefer to have their own house and live away from their parents, Kristine had always been incredibly attached to her family. In the summer, when her father was transferred to Heighton, she had been incredibly happy at the prospect of continuing to be close to them, especially Olivia, who she was incredibly fond of.

"Olivia?" she asked, opening the door slightly. "Are you okay? Would you like something to eat?"

"No thanks," Olivia said quietly.

"Hey, what's up?" Kristine came in to Olivia's room and sat down onto the bed. "I'm your sister. You can tell me, no matter what it is and I'll help you out."

"It's nothing really."

"It's not nothing, you seem hurt. Did someone say something?"

"I feel really silly about it. But there's this Biology project that I have to do this weekend and we're supposed to be working in pairs. The girl who I'm to work with- Saige- publicly humiliated me when I asked her when we could work on it. Everyone was watching. She refused to do anything."

"That's so mean! Olivia, listen to me. Don't put her name on it. Just do it yourself and don't give her any credit."

"I thought about that, but I can't do that. I don't want her to hate me. Maybe if I do this, she'll decide that she was wrong about me."

Kristine looked doubtful. She didn't want her little sister to get hurt. But it was what she wanted to do. "Alright then. Dinner will be ready in about half an hour. I'll call you then, okay?"

"Okay."

Later that day, when the inky black shroud of the night had almost completely covered the Earth, someone logged in to Facebook and searched for *Saige Hudson*. A Facebook page came up, and the person recognized the face in the profile picture- and the other pictures that were available on the wall. The person looked at the 'add friend' button before smiling smugly. Who needed to add Saige as a friend when everything was already available to the public?

The person opened a spiral-bound notepad, and uncapped a pen. Scrolling through Saige's timeline and information page, this person wrote down everything that was of interest. From when and where she was born, to who her friends were, to her phone number, to important life events and even the simple things that she liked and disliked, everything was scribbled down. The person read and wrote, learning everything possible about Saige, everything required to impersonate her.

Once this person was confident about knowing Saige well enough to impersonate her, Facebook was closed and the Twitter homepage opened. On the bottom right corner, there was a box entitled 'New to Twitter? Sign up.' The person wrote Saige Hudson in the box asking for a full name. A fake email address was input into the email field, in order to avoid detection. They also added a simple

password, the name of Saige's old puppy that had died several years ago. Upon being redirected to a new page, the person chose the display name of 'saigehudsonxo'. Simple.

After the account had been created and verified, the person got to work. A picture of Saige off her Facebook page was copied, and set as the display picture for the Twitter account. A description using the language that Saige used, and including details about Saige was written at the head of the Twitter page. The background of the page was the vintage lily pattern that Saige had posted on Facebook, saying that she had liked it. The person followed the Twitter pages of all of Saige's favorite singers, movie stars and personalities. To anyone who chanced upon the page, it would look as if it was Saige herself who administered the page. But of course it wasn't.

At this stage the page was harmless, blank. But then, the person investigated further, finding the Twitter handles of several different students in the same school and year as Saige. These handles were then saved on a document on the computer. They would be incredibly useful as events progressed. A single handle was randomly chosen, and a message to this handle was typed out. The person posted the message, feeling incredibly powerful. Saige was going to pay dearly for what she had done.

Chapter 3

Monday morning came as usual, forcing disinclined students to leave their lazy weekends behind and throwing them headlong into another week of the torture and stress that was high school. The only positive thing about going to school was the opportunity to gossip about the events of the weekend. Naturally, the news item that made the headlines was Missy's party. As predicted, it had indeed been wild. Everyone was talking about who was now dating who, or who broke up at the party and how, and how everybody jumped into the pool at the very end of the party and ended up walking home dripping wet or just stayed over at Missy's house. Naturally, Saige gobbled up every titbit she could get.

She was having a chat about what she had heard about the party with Addison, one of Saige's close friends and her mother's best friend's daughter, when she entered sixth period Biology. They were about to take their usual seats at the back of the class when Saige spotted Olivia. A sudden wave of fear passed through her. What if Olivia hadn't done the poster? And what if she told on Saige? Saige had been so sure that Olivia would do the work, but what if she hadn't?

She positioned herself so that she could see Olivia more clearly. She looked down at the desk in front of Olivia, and heaved a sigh of relief when she saw a bright orange poster filled with images and information on it. Saige could even see her name written on the bottom right corner, next to Olivia's. She looked up again and accidentally caught Olivia's gaze. Olivia smiled brightly and pointed to the poster. Saige returned her smile with an expression that was somewhere between a grin and a grimace. Olivia's face fell.

The rest of the class progressed as normal. When it was time to hand in the posters, Olivia silently got out of her chair and placed the large orange sheaf of paper on the teachers' desk. Saige watched

this process carefully; afraid that Olivia might suddenly change her mind and tell the teacher that Saige hadn't done any work. Thankfully, she immediately returned to her seat after handing the poster in.

It was after class that the two girls came face to face again. Saige was passing Olivia's desk on the way to the door, when Olivia called out her name. Saige stopped, and turned around to face her.

"What do you want?" Saige tone far from friendly.

As usual, Olivia began to shrink back like a mouse. "I just, um, well I did our poster this weekend and I put a lot of effort into it and I was just wondering whether or not you liked it. I mean, it is your work too." She laughed nervously. "Well, um, not really, but it has your name on it and you'll be graded for it and..."

"It was fine," Saige interrupted abruptly, for no other reason apart from the fact that she just wanted Olivia to shut up. However, that did not work. Olivia immediately perked up. "Oh, so you liked it? That's great, because I really put quite a lot of effort in it, and I tried to think about what you might've liked to have on it and..."

"When I said it was fine, I meant it was fine," Saige put emphasis on the last word. "I never said that I liked it, I just said that it was fine. Average."

"Oh," Olivia glanced at the floor. "Oh! Alright then."

Saige walked off. It was only once she was halfway to the cafeteria to eat lunch that she realized she'd forgotten to say thank you to Olivia. After all, the girl had done their entire project all by herself, and had still been nice enough to put Saige's name on it. She felt a sudden pang of guilt and was considering turning back when she felt a tap on her shoulder. She swiveled around to see Kala, who smiled at her. They continued walking on to the cafeteria.

"How was Bio?" Kala asked. "Did Olivia actually do the poster?"

"She did."

"Did she give you any credit?"

"Yep. My name was on it. And as far as I know, she hasn't said anything to the teacher."

"That's great! Because I realized, Saige, it was actually quite a risky thing you did there. I mean, imagine if she didn't do it, or if she told on you. You'd be in so much trouble!"

"I know," Saige sighed. They had reached the cafeteria, and headed over to their usual table, over near the food lines. They were the last ones to reach, the normal crowd already gathered around the bench. As Saige slid into her chair, the stream of chatter stopped as everyone turned to look at her. This confused her. "Um, hi guys," she said uneasily, unsure what she had done to cause her to be the center of attention. "How's it going?"

"I didn't know you had a Twitter account," Nichole, the girl sitting opposite her, remarked causally.

"I don't..." Saige narrowed her eyes.

"Well, it appears that you do. And you sent a really mean message to Veronica last night, telling her that she's a worthless, dumb blonde. That was really mean of you Saige!"

"I didn't!" Saige exclaimed. She wasn't sure what everyone was talking about. She certainly did not have a Twitter account, and she would never say anything mean to Veronica, the quiet, sensitive girl that she'd known since kindergarten. Veronica was a bit of a loser, but Saige knew that she was a lovely person. She would never want to do anything to hurt her! "It wasn't me. I don't have a Twitter account. It must be another Saige Hudson."

"Oh no, I'm pretty sure it's you."

"Can you send me the link over Facebook?"

"Fine. I don't see the point of it, since you ought to know the link to your own Twitter page, but I'll do it."

The minute Saige got home from school, she ran up the stairs, closed the door behind her as she went into her room and opened up her laptop. Opening up Facebook, she saw that she had one new message, and clicked on the icon that led her to her inbox. Nichole

had already sent the link- probably in last period when she had had Information Technology and therefore, had had access to a computer.

Saige clicked on it, and was transported to another web page. It was clearly a Twitter page- it bore the signature bluebird in the corner, and the layout was exactly like all the ones that she had seen before. But this page didn't bear the picture of a well-known celebrity, nor did it bear the picture of stranger. She saw her own face, staring back at her from the area allocated for the users' display picture. She saw her own name written across the top, a short description about herself that described where she lived, where she went to school and was written in the same style that she herself wrote in.

She scrolled down the page, taking in everything. The 'following' page showed that whoever had made this page was following all the famous personalities that Saige loved, from Ginnifer Goodwin to Katy Perry. Saige turned her attention to the tweets. The first few were harmless.

First tweet! Yay!

@GinnyGoodwin, I think that you're really good in Once Upon A Time! #fairestforever

And then came the tweet that had caught everybody's attention, 13 words, a jab was delivered that set the ball rolling. It was a reply to an earlier tweet by Veronica, which was a tearful message about having received a C in History. Saige read the message carefully.

@RonnyeVaSelle: well, no surprise there! After all, you're only a worthless, dumb blonde.

Saige looked at it in astonishment. What a mean thing to say! And people thought that she had said it. Granted, the profile looked exactly like she would style her own, if she had a Twitter page. And all of the tweets sounded as if they had been written by her- if she were to write a comment like this, it would be composed in a similar way. Saige couldn't quite accept it as true. She was bewildered by the way someone had managed to crawl into her skin, amazed by the way someone had managed to mimic her so accurately. She had no

idea how someone knew so much about her that they could do such a thing. It scared her.

She knew that she had to tell everyone that it wasn't her Twitter account. She had to tell everyone that it wasn't her who was writing the messages. That was exactly what she resolved to do tomorrow. There was a better chance that everyone would believe her if she told them to their faces. Until then, the only thing that she could do was put it out of her mind, and concentrate on homework instead.

Chapter 4

That night, Olivia was sitting in the living room of her house working on a History essay. She typed furiously, trying to keep her mind on the problems of the Weimar Republic but she couldn't. She was angry with Saige. Olivia had thought that if she did the poster all by herself, it would lead Saige to see her previous mistake and apologize. Maybe they would even become friends, but she was wrong. Instead of apologizing, or even thanking her for putting in so much hard work, Saige had turned up her nose and walked off. Olivia was furious at her for that. She couldn't believe that someone could be so arrogant.

But at the same time, Olivia was angry at herself, for being so meek and quiet. She wished that she could stand up for herself, that she could confront people with confidence. But no matter how hard she tried, she just couldn't. She would always be the tiny mouse who ran away when she came face to face with a cat.

Her train of thought crashed suddenly when she heard a voice behind her say, "what're you doing?" Olivia jumped with fright, almost knocking her laptop over. She turned around to see Kristine, behind her.

"Oh, it's just you," Olivia said. "Don't do that, it scared me."

"Sorry," Kristine put her hands up. She squinted at Olivia's face. There was something that was off. Pulling out a chair, she sat down next to Olivia. "Hey," she said quietly. "What's up?"

Olivia sighed and turned away. "It's nothing."

"No, tell me. Was someone bullying you in school?" Kristine paused for a second, trying to remember previous conversations between the two of them. She remembered the exchange between them on Thursday "Does it have something to do with that Saige girl you were telling me about? The girl who refused to do anything on the poster that you spent the entire weekend on?"

"Kind of."

"Olivia. It's me, okay? You can trust me"

"Okay, look. I handed in the poster, and put her name on it. I asked her if she liked it, and she told me that it was average. She just walked away!" Olivia shook her head with semi-disgust. "I can't believe she wouldn't even say thank you!"

Kristine looked at Olivia's upset face. She couldn't bear to see her sister like this. Kristine had always been incredibly protective and if someone was hurting Olivia, she would see to it that it would stop. But right now, she was at a bit of a loss about what to do. So she placed her hand on Olivia's shoulder, and smiled reassuringly. "Just forget this girl, O. She clearly isn't worth it. Don't waste your time on someone like that."

Olivia smiled. "Thanks Kristine. I do appreciate it."

Kristine opened her mouth to say something else, but was interrupted by the shrill sound of Olivia's phone ringing. "You should answer that," she said. "I'm sure it's one of your friends calling. Believe me, you'll forget all about Saige soon." She left the living room.

Olivia reached for the phone and glanced at the screen. She didn't recognize the number, but answered it anyway. "Hello?"

"Hi, is that Olivia?"

"Yes."

"Hi! It's Kellie! I got your number off the school directory- I hope you don't mind."

"Um, no, that's okay," Olivia was a little unsure as to why Kellie was calling her. The girl had seemed very friendly when they had first spoken, but Olivia thought that she had made it clear that she didn't exactly want to be friends with Kellie. Well, she did want to be friends. It was just that she didn't know whether or not she could trust her yet.

"Well, I was wondering if you were free this weekend. There's an

awesome movie playing down at the cinema, and I'd love it if you could come. It's on Saturday!"

"No thank you," Olivia automatically turned the offer down. "I, um, have a geography essay that I really have to work on."

"Oh, that's unfortunate," Kellie sounded legitimately disappointed, and Olivia went through a moment of doubt, wondering whether or not she should trust Kellie and go to the movie. But she shook the idea out of her head quickly- better safe than sorry.

"Thanks for inviting me though. Maybe another time?"

"Yeah, sure. Bye Olivia."

"Bye," Olivia put the phone down and then turned back to her History essay.

Chapter 5

I will tell everyone that the account isn't mine, Saige thought to herself as she approached the table where her friends were sitting at break time. She could see Nichole glancing at her, and then looking away with disgust. It made her feel uncomfortable. I'll just tell them that it wasn't me. That someone stole my identity. Just like it happens on TV!

"Hey guys," she casually slid into a chair, ignoring the dirty looks that Nichole was giving her. *I didn't do anything.*

"Did you see the Twitter account?" Nichole asked harshly. "Oh wait, of course you did. After all, it is your account."

"Um, actually Nichole, it..." Saige was interrupted by the sound of high heels clicking against the tiled floor of the cafeteria. The clicking got louder and louder until it came to a stop- right next to Saige. She knew who it was before she looked up. There was only one group of girls' who wore heels to school- the popular crowd. She turned her head to look at them, and sure enough, she was right. Standing next to her was Missy and her crew, looking right at Saige. She couldn't quite believe it. Yet she was a little fearful- she didn't know what she had done to attract their attention, and whether or not it was good or bad.

"Saige, right?" Missy's voice was smooth and oozing with confidence. By hearing this girl, it was clear that she wasn't fazed by anyone. She was exactly the kind of person Saige wanted to be, cool, yet uncaring.

"Uh. Yeah," Saige replied, trying to sound as much like Missy as she could, but she couldn't help thinking that she sounded like nothing but a desperate copycat. She silently cursed at herself. "I'm Saige," she added, this time in her normal voice.

"We saw the tweet you sent to Dayna," Missy said, looking back at the girls behind her, who immediately nodded when they saw her gaze fall upon them. Saige quickly thought back to when she'd seen

the Twitter account yesterday. There had been no tweets to Dayna, a girl who used to be part of the popular crowd, before she did something that was apparently horrendous. Since then, she had been socially rejected, not just by the popular kids, but by every single kid in the school. Saige knew who she was, but had never spoken to her.

"Actually, the Twitter account isn't..." she began, but was immediately cut off by Missy, who held up a palm, and stated "I wasn't finished."

Saige grew scared. What were they here for? Were they going to get angry at her for coming into contact with Dayna, who was by all means "outlawed"? *What if they outlaw me too?* However, her fears went away when she saw Missy break out into a smile. "That was pretty brave of you, calling her what you did... and totally cool. Shows that you are on our side."

"Oh!" Saige was surprised. "Oh! Yeah. Right. Of course!"

"And that other tweet that you sent to...what's her name?" Missy clicked her fingers and looked expectantly back at her entourage who quickly supplied her with the information that she was looking for.

"Ronnye."

"Oh of course. Ronnye. Well, that was a stroke of evil genius. Totally cool."

Saige found herself breaking out into a smile. "Thanks."

"No problem," Missy gave Saige a half smile. "I'll see you around," she said, leaving without giving Saige time to reply.

Saige settled back in her seat, feeling incredibly pleased with herself. She could feel the gaze of most of the cafeteria on her, and the open-mouthed gapes of her friends were easily visible from the corner of her eye. The left side of her mouth twisted up into a smug, half-smile. Missy had come up to her, spoken to her, and most of all, had complimented something that she'd done. But wait. Saige suddenly came crashing back to reality. She hadn't done the things Missy thought she had. She hadn't sent those tweets! She

suddenly remembered her plan to tell everyone that she didn't own the Twitter account, but that wouldn't work now. She had practically admitted to Missy that it was her account. She couldn't go back on that. Her friends would hate her!

But secretly, Saige found herself not caring. If her friends ditched her over this Twitter issue, she was fine with that. Because Missy liked what she was doing. And if she kept doing what Missy liked, she might gain a coveted invitation into the popular group. And she wanted to gain that invitation.

Nichole snapped her out of her chain of thought. "So it is your Twitter account?" her voice was scathing and accusing.

Saige turned her head to Nichole, facing her head-on. She flipped her hair very slightly, just like Missy had done, and then met Nichole's stare. She could have sworn that she saw the other girls' gaze flicker slightly, her confidence clearly decreasing. Saige twitched her head to the side slightly and said, "Yes, it is. Gotta Problem?"

"Yes!" Nichole exclaimed. "You can't send tweets that hurt people's feelings like that. That's just cruel."

"Freedom of speech," Saige said in reply. "I can write whatever I want. It says so in the law." She leaned forward, invading Nichole's personal space and causing the other girls' to shrink back like mice. "Deal...with...it." She grabbed her bag from where it was hanging over the back of her chair, stood up, and walked out of the cafeteria. Nichole and the other girls watched her, their mouths agape. Staring at her retreating figure, most of them realized that they didn't even recognize her anymore.

Olivia sat alone at a table near the back of the cafeteria. She had watched the whole situation unfold and didn't know what to think. She had looked up the Twitter account on her iPad and had read the tweets. It had become clear that she had judged Saige wrongly. Saige was not the nice, friendly girl she had thought she was. Instead, she seemed to be cruel and shallow.

Chapter 6

Almost a week had passed since the incident in the cafeteria. The tweets continued to be sent- once, sometimes twice a day – and were always aimed at the weaker individuals in grade ten. Saige had been gaining followers on the account incredibly fast- it seemed as if everyone in the school wanted to follow her. And of course, as her online popularity increased, so did her popularity in school. Everyone knew who she was, and some people even admired her.

Saige herself still had no idea who was actually running the account. She didn't tell anyone this though, not wanting to infringe upon her new found popularity. For the entirety of her school life, she had been treated as if she was average and unpopular. Things had changed now. She didn't see the harm of allowing the Twitter account to keep running- it wasn't really hurting people.

She liked where she was at- nearly everyone she passed would wave at her and everyone wanted to be her friend. She thought that people treated her like this because they generally liked her and her actions. She seemed to have forgotten the nasty nature of the tweets- people weren't trying to be her friend because they liked her. It was because they were terrified of her, and didn't want to be the subject of one of her internet jabs.

As for her old group of friends, certain girls, such as Nichole, had opted to change tables in order to sit away from Saige. They disapproved of what she was doing and did not want to associate with her. However these girls were the minority; the majority of girls were in awe of Saige. In their eyes, she had managed to pull herself out of social obscurity and make a name for herself. They weren't concerned with her methods- they just loved the fact that someone who was so similar to them was suddenly so well known. They wanted to be associated with her, hoping that one day, they would be recognized too.

However, Saige hadn't yet realized that she couldn't be one person

on the internet, and a different person in school. People expected her cyber profile to be the same as her real one. Saige understood this through one particular incident.

She was passing through the corridors with Kala, on her way to fourth-period English class when she accidentally tripped a girl named Aniya. Aniya hit the floor hard, and her papers were scattered all over the corridor. Saige felt guilty and tried to lean down to help pick up her things that were spread out all over the floor. However, she was prevented from doing so by Kala, who seized her arm and hauled her away from the scene.

"What was that about?" Saige asked Kala, somewhat irritated.

"Don't you get it?" Kala was a little surprised, turning to look at the still confused Saige.

"No."

"Okay, look. You're being mean to try and move yourself up in the social hierarchy of high school, right? And you're doing this by making wonderful use of online tools, like Twitter. So everyone knows who you are, and what you're like through this account of yours. They think they know you. You HAVE to act in a similar manner as you do online even IN school. If people see that you're acting differently in school, they'll think that you're a fake."

"So, I have to be mean in school as well?"

"If you want to keep up this popularity, yeah," Kala gave Saige a knowing look before walking into English and taking her seat. Saige entered after her, and sat down slowly, mulling over what Kala had just told her. It was true, she knew. In person, she had to act like her virtual self. She had to become the persona that someone else had created for her, in order to keep her social status. If she was found to be faking things, there was no doubt in her mind that instead of climbing up the social ladder, she'd be pushed down to the very bottom of the rung.

So she had to change herself. She had to start making rude, nasty comments about people during school. Saige knew that she could-

after all, she had made rather malicious comments to Dianna's face before. She just needed to expand her web, picking out other students who could be targets.

The lesson had started, but Saige couldn't be bothered with the themes in *Of Mice and Men*. She had much more important things to do. Pulling out her notebook, she looked around her class. She thought about people in her other classes who were quiet and mostly ignored. She wrote down every single name that popped into her head. These people were her new targets. And, Saige thought, smiling maliciously, there was one person who she knew she'd be able to confront with ease. The one person who couldn't fight back. Simply because she was too scared to do so. Picking up her pen again, Saige drew a circle around the name. Dianna.

Saige didn't want to waste any time in putting her little plan into action. There was a strong possibility that rumors regarding her apparent "fakeness" had already begun to circulate, and she wanted to dispel them as soon as possible. Therefore, she decided to start working from lunchtime- on that very same day. At that point, she didn't feel like targeting her main target- Dianna. Instead, she would start with someone else on her list.

She walked across the field with a new sense of confidence. She could feel people's gazes fixed on her, she could hear their whispers. She smiled to herself as she thought about how just a couple of weeks ago, nobody would bother about her. It was surprising what a few mean tweets sent from someone who was posing as her could do. She sent that person a silent Thank you. She didn't know why they had done it, but it had ended up making her life much better. Or so she thought at the time.

Walking into the cafeteria, she looked around, surveying her surroundings. She spotted Melody, one of the girls on her target list, paying for food at one of the cafeteria lines and zeroed in.

"Hi Melody," Saige cooed as she approached the unsuspecting girl.

Melody looked at Saige strangely. They had never spoken before, and Melody had heard about Saige's recent unfriendly behavior over

the Internet. She had no idea why Saige would be talking to her, and was actually feeling slightly afraid. "Hi Saige," she said quietly.

"What are you eating?" Saige continued to speak in a high-pitched voice, the kind of voice someone might use when speaking to a young child. It was rather intimidating and Melody felt uncomfortable.

"Um, just the spaghetti," Melody looked down at her paper plate. It was oozing with tomato sauce and little spaghetti worms. Saige looked down at it and made a disgusted face.

"Oh, I see. Trying to put on ten more pounds before Christmas break?" Saige looked up and down Melody. "Really, you should be trying to lose some of that puppy fat. We're not in elementary anymore." She walked off, leaving poor Melody standing there, mouth agape. Saige felt a little victorious. She looked around and noticed that several people had been observing the incident. News travels fast- she knew that by the end of the day, everybody would know about what had happened. And she loved that. There was no way that she would be regarded as a fake now. Saige was ready.

Chapter 7

Another week went by, devoid of any significant events. Saige had continued to target the people listed in her notebook, using several different methods. She would directly confront them in a manner similar to what she did to Melody. She would make snide comments whenever one of them spoke in class, or even during the breaks. She would laugh at them, poke fun at them and just generally be unfriendly.

The person who was tortured the most was Olivia. Her fear of confrontation, accent and the fact that she had no friends, therefore no one to stick up for her made her an easy target. Saige made it a habit of delivering at least one rude comment to Olivia's face every day. Kellie often saw these, and tried to comfort Olivia afterward.

This behavior was noticed by everyone else. Some approved of it, going by the theory of survival of the fittest. Others were not so admiring, however they kept silent, not expressing their disapproval for fear that Saige would turn on them as well. Missy, naturally, had noticed Saige's change in conduct and wholeheartedly supported it. She was actually speaking to Saige, often saying hi in corridors, or making small conversation. Saige loved this, and was over the moon.

She was buying a sausage roll for her morning break when she heard someone approaching behind her. She turned around to see who it was, and saw Kala standing there. "Hey," Saige greeted her with a smile as she handed her money over to the cashier before moving out of the queue. "What's up?"

"Listen, I get why you're doing this whole 'evil Saige' thing. I mean, you want to be popular. And who doesn't? But with this latest tweet of yours, you've gone too far. Before this, there were just little insults- no big deal. But you can't go around telling people that they don't deserve to be alive. That's just really mean."

Saige had no idea what Kala was talking about. She'd never seen that

tweet before- and she had checked the Twitter account before she had left home in the morning, so if any of the tweets that people thought had been sent by her came up, she'd know what people were talking about and be able to discuss them as if she had been the one who wrote them. But here she was, caught off guard. She wasn't prepared to tell Kala that it wasn't actually her that had sent the tweet- that would just blow her cover. So she acted as if she was perfectly aware about the subject of Kala's speech. "Um, yeah! Yeah, I thought I might have gone too far with that one. Sorry. It won't happen again."

"It's not really me you should be apologizing to. You should apologize to Nataly," Kala said, before walking off, leaving Saige standing in the middle of the cafeteria.

Saige felt a wave of guilt wash through her. Nataly was a nice girl whom she had known since sixth grade. Saige had gone to her for help in maths several times through the years and Nataly had always been sweet and accommodating- taking time out of her schedule to help Saige with whatever problems she had. Although she was relatively unpopular and quiet, Saige had left her off her target list because of all of the assistance she had given her.

When Saige got home that day, she logged onto her computer. She had received several other comments regarding the tweet that Kala had told her about. Some were approving, while others were disapproving. Missy had said that it was yet another stroke of evil genius and that Saige clearly knew how to "push people to their breaking point", something she deemed a "useful skill in today's tumultuous world". Saige felt that if Missy approved, it was alright, however, she found herself feeling relatively uneasy having not actually seen the tweet with her own eyes. She wanted to know what the person posing as her was saying.

She clicked on Safari, and opened up the Twitter page. The tweet that everyone was talking about was at the top. It was in response to a tweet from Nataly that excitedly proclaimed that she'd gotten into the exclusive Nataly program of a top university in the country.

@NatalyK: Don't think that this makes you special or anything. You're still

as worthless as ever. People like you don't deserve to be alive.

Saige felt her mouth drop open as she read the tweet. She re-read it, absorbing each pernicious word. She agreed wholeheartedly with what Kala had said earlier- this was taking it too far. She suddenly wished that she could take this whole thing back , she wished that she could tell people the truth- that this wasn't her Twitter account and never had been. Opening a new tab, she typed in Facebook's web address. Her homepage came up, and she was so very tempted to type a long post explaining the dilemma she was in to all of her Facebook friends. Explaining that the Twitter account wasn't hers , that someone was posing as her. But it wouldn't work. She'd openly admitted that the account was hers. Nobody would believe her anymore.

She noticed that she had a message. She clicked on her inbox icon, and saw that the unread letter was from Nataly. It was one single sentence. *Don't expect any help from me, ever again.*

Saige looked down at the ground. She was ashamed of herself, for accepting that the account was hers when it wasn't. She should have seen this coming, seen that it would backfire on her. She didn't really want to hurt people. Of course she wanted to be popular, but she didn't want to make other people who had helped her feel as if they were worthless. She typed a reply to Nataly's message.

I'm so sorry.

Nataly was obviously online, because she wrote back almost instantly. *If you're so sorry, delete the tweet.*

Saige was stuck again. She couldn't delete the tweet, simply because the account wasn't hers. She couldn't even guess the password because she had no idea who was running the account. She had let someone else, someone unknown to her, take control over her life. She clicked back to the Twitter account and scrolled through it. It was unbelievable how this person seemed to know everything about her, and was able to imitate her so well. It scared her to death, but there was nothing she could do. When she scrolled back up, she saw that there was a new tweet, in reply to a tweet about the entire

Nataly situation.

@NicholeHartley: You're taking Nataly's side? Fine. It makes my day a whole lot nicer not having to see your disgustingly ugly face.

Saige gasped and buried her head in her hands. Everything was so out of control. It had gone too far, but there was no way to put a stop to it. Saige felt as if she was trapped in a cell that had no doors, or windows. Only walls. And there was no way she could escape that horrible cell.

She thought it was bad then. But it was about to get even worse.

Chapter 8

The tweets were gradually getting more malevolent, and Saige was becoming more and more uneasy about the situation that she was in. However, she still had not told anyone that it was not her who was running the account- scared of what might end up happening to her if people discovered that she had been lying to them all along. Looking back on the entire incident now, Saige wished that she had told someone. It would have helped her in the future.

Thursday evening brought stormy weather. The wind was strong and raging, blowing with such force that the trees had to struggle to stay upright. The rain was heavy, flooding streets and making roads impossible to travel on. The thunder and lightning were menacing, filling everyone with a great amount of fear. Heighton was like a ghost-town that evening- each resident opting to stay in the comfort of their homes rather than venture out into the cold. Saige too, was sitting quietly at her desk, finishing off her History essay. She thought that perhaps the person behind the Twitter account wouldn't post any new tweets today, opting to give her a respite. She was wrong.

Across town, the person impersonating Saige,, stared out of the window at the gray sky and smiled sinisterly. The storm was perfect! It was the kind of weather that managed to create the atmosphere needed to put the imposters' plans into action.

From the very beginning, the imposter had wanted to ruin Saige. That was why the Twitter account had been created- this person being under the impression that by sending out mean tweets to people, Saige would seem undesirable and mean. Although some parts of the plan had worked perfectly, a majority of it had backfired. Saige had gained notoriety and popularity from the account- a result that was neither planned, nor wanted. But now, the imposter was about to put everything back on track and send Saige spiraling down the rabbit hole.

This person had been planning this for quite some time now, observing and figuring out who should be the target. The criteria for identifying the one whom the message would be aimed at, was simple- the target had to be someone who would react in an extreme manner. Therefore, the person had to be someone sensitive, someone who took things to heart. The target had been established.

Sitting down at a computer, the person logged onto the Twitter account and began to type out a message.

Kellie514: I can't believe that you're still around. If I were you, I'd have killed myself b now. If you did, I bet nobody would even remember you.

Kellie Roberts had just turned on her laptop. She hated stormy weather- in fact; ever since she was a little girl she had been terrified of storms. Each time lightning flashed through the sky, illuminating it for a split second, she couldn't help but jump. She had drawn her curtains, and decided to go online to try and distract herself from the gales blowing outside.

As the computer started up, Kellie leaned back in her chair and sighed. She had had a horrible day. Actually, for her, every day was a horrible day. Not many people knew much about Kellie- she tried to interact with others, but they always either ignored her or called her mean names. This had been happening since she joined the middle school of Heighton High in grade six, after moving from Chicago. She'd begged her parents to move her out of the school, and they had wanted to, but the only other institute in Heighton was a private school, which they simply could not afford. So Kellie went through each day, trying to keep her head up high. She didn't want anyone to see that she wasn't happy- especially her parents. They really did so much for her, and she didn't want to seem ungrateful in any way.

Things had perked up for her at the beginning of eighth grade. She had finally made friends. A new girl joined Heighton High at that time, and as with schools in most small towns, found herself alienated and uncomfortable among people who had known each other since kindergarten. Kellie herself had been the last new girl to join and therefore felt sorry for the girl. She felt she could identify

with the new girl. They became friends, and eventually, the new girl was accepted into another group of girls. But she had brought Kellie with her. For once, Kellie felt as if she belonged. They all seemed to like her a lot- they complimented her on the way she was always genuinely nice, and the way she looked out and cared for others. They even called her the "mother hen", the first nice nickname that Kellie had had in a while

However, everything had changed at the beginning of this year- her freshman year. Over the summer Kellie had gone to visit her old friends and family back in Chicago and therefore had been absent from Heighton. While she had been gone, her friends had, had a falling out and the group had dispersed. Upon returning a couple of days before school started, Kellie had found that she was left without a group of friends- all her former friends have being absorbed into other groups. One had even joined Saige's circle. Kellie, however, was stuck all alone

The teasing had resumed as school started. Kellie found herself being targeted again, becoming the subject of many underhanded comments, which were generally about her weight, or her looks. Kellie was slightly overweight, and had a tendency to have sudden breakouts of acne. Both of these were things that she was rather self-conscious of and insecure about. Kellie was also the kind of person who took everything to heart. She was very sensitive, and even the slightest unkind comment could make her feel horrible.

Today, she had been coming out of swimming lessons at around four-thirty, a couple of hours before the storm had hit. Kellie had taken up a sport to try and lose weight. She was useless at any of the other games- team sports had always treated her badly as she was often forced to sit on the side-lines – and had hence taken up swimming. As she closed the gate to the swim area, she was confronted by several girls. She recognized a few of her former friends in the group.

"Um, hi guys," she had said, nervously.

They had ignored her greeting, and started in on the insults almost immediately. They had teased her about trying to lose weight, telling

her quite frankly that it wasn't working. They told her she had no friends. That she was alone, that she had no one to stand up for her. They told her that nobody liked her. Kellie just stood there, trying not to crumple up and cry. The insults kept hitting her, piercing her skin like bullets. The minute that they paused to gather up more ammunition, she ran. And she didn't stop until she got home.

The more she thought about it now, the more she realized that they were actually correct in everything she said. She didn't have friends, and she did seem to repel people slightly. Kellie had tried so hard to befriend Olivia, who she again, identified with because of the teasing. However, Olivia always pushed her away. Kellie didn't understand why- it wasn't as if Olivia had any friends herself. If she was in her shoes, she would welcome the gestures, glad that someone in this unfriendly town was willing to make her feel comfortable and happy.

There must be something wrong with me, Kellie thought to herself, as she opened up her internet browser. *There must be a reason why people don't like me, why people always seem to push me away. It must be my fault. I mean, if someone else tries to be friendly towards another person, they'll welcome it. If I try, they'll just push me away. Am I worthless? Am I beneath people?*

She opened up her Twitter account and typed in her password. As her dashboard opened, she noticed that she had a mention. Excitement flashed through her- Kellie hardly ever got mentions, not having any friends to talk to on Twitter, and few followers who actually cared about her tweets. The mention appeared on her screen, and she read it slowly. As each word registered in her mind, she felt her excitement dwindle and her spirits sink. She blinked, and then read the sentence again.

The minute that she had seen it was from Saige's Twitter handle, her excitement had turned into fear. Although she didn't have friends, she still heard the rumors and stories that circulated around Heighton High. The story that had been making the rounds recently was about Saige, and how she was sending despicable messages to people over Twitter. Although she had been gaining notoriety for it, Kellie resented what she had been doing. How could someone

become popular for sending out messages that hurt other people's feelings? She had read the tweets and had thought about how much she would hate for one of those tweets to be directed towards her. But she knew that the day would come- Saige was targeting those people in their grade who didn't have that many friends, who weren't as popular, and those who had some feature about them that made them easy to tease and target. Kellie knew she was one of them. Saige had already made a couple of mean comments to her in school, and Kellie knew that a tweet would be coming her way.

But in reading this tweet that had been sent to her, it seemed as if Saige had been saving the worst for her. None of the previous tweets had been this...insulting. They had started off as tiny insults that people who were even the slightest bit tougher than Kellie would be able to handle without breaking a sweat. Then they had gradually built up, becoming more hurtful. And now, they had turned into something completely despicable. Kellie couldn't quite believe what she was reading.

But slowly it started to sink in. The words jumped out at her from the computer screen, suddenly appearing in front of her in 3-D. Everything went blurry, and the only thing that was clear was the insult that she had just received. Pain shot through Kellie's body and she felt as if she wanted to scream.

Lightning flashed outside, and she became tenser. It was true- nobody liked her or wanted her around. She was a meaningless figure, someone who should never have existed. Even erasing her existence now would mean nothing to anybody. No one would care. They would light a candle for her, feature her on a Yearbook page, to be polite, but that was it. No one would cry. No one would miss seeing her in the school halls. No one would even notice the difference.

Kellie stumbled down the stairs, her face streaming with tears. Her parents weren't home- they had gone to visit their lawyers and were likely to be stuck in the storm. She staggered into the kitchen, and opened the first drawer of the cabinet. Fumbling around, she found a key chain containing several keys. She crossed the room, almost

slipping on a tile that was wet from a freshly-sprung leak in the ceiling, to the wall where the medicine cabinet was located. She unlocked the cabinet and grabbed a bottle of Tylenol. She slammed it onto the counter. Before she opened it, Kellie took a pen from the holder and a post-it note from the stack that her mother used to write her shopping lists on. She scrawled out a note explaining what had been happening to her, the tweet from Saige, and how that had pushed her off the edge and made her realize that she couldn't- and didn't want to – deal with it anymore. She signed the note with one final sentence: "I'm sorry."

Then she uncapped the bottle and swallowed the pills.

Chapter 9

Kellie wasn't in school the next day. Instead, she was in hospital.

Her parents had reached home around ten minutes after Kellie had taken the pills. They had arrived at the lawyers only to be told that their lawyer was not in, as in his part of town, the storm had hit much earlier and he had been unable to make it to office after his afternoon break, what with the low visibility. The secretary told them that she had been trying to contact them but it appeared that cell phone lines were down. Kellie's parents had immediately started for home, but had been stuck in the storm for an hour. They got there at just the right time.

They came into the kitchen and saw their daughter lying on the ground, pills spilled all over the marble floor. As traumatic as it must have been for both of them, Kellie's father managed to keep a straight head and immediately check her pulse. Her heart was still beating, so they called 911 immediately from their land line which was still working. Thankfully, the hospital was near their house, so the ambulance was able to arrive quickly, even with low visibility outside. Kellie was rushed into the emergency room, and her stomach was flushed. Her parents waited outside, tense and holding on to a string of hope. After an hour, the hardest hour of their lives, the doctor came out of the room where Kellie was being treated to tell them that everything was going to be alright- that their daughter was going to pull through.

They saw Kellie lying on the white hospital bed, with all sorts of wires and tubes hooked up to her. The doctor told them that she would need to stay there for a few more days, so that they could keep a check on her and make sure that all of the toxins were gone from her body, or at least down to amounts which her body would be able to sustain. He told them that although she would be discharged within days, she would need to see a therapist at least weekly for quite some time. He asked them the question that they

knew was coming, but didn't want to think about: "Do you have any idea why your daughter would try to kill herself?" It was then that Kellie's mother remembered the crumpled up piece of paper that she was clutching in her right hand. With trembling fingers she opened it up, and she skimmed through it with tear-filled eyes. The doctor watched her with a sympathetic gaze.

Mrs. Roberts looked up, still shaking. "She was being bullied," she whispered.

Kellie woke up the next morning, around ten o'clock. She didn't know where she was. She looked around, and all she could see was white. There were flowers by her bedside- Carnations, which her mother had run out to buy that morning. She tried to sit up, and managed to do so, but with great pain. She looked down and saw that her leg was in a cast. She was hooked up to machines, wires protruding everywhere. Kellie didn't understand what had happened- she was confused and most of all, she was scared. Suddenly, the sound of the door opening caused her to look up.

Mrs. Roberts and Mr. Roberts entered quietly. They didn't seem to realize that Kellie was awake, and therefore moved almost silently.

"Mom? Dad?" Kellie asked, causing them to jump.

"Oh, Sweetie! You're up!" Mrs. Roberts pressed a blue button on the wall, which was used to call the nurse.

"Where am I? What...what happened?" Kellie frowned, trying to figure out why she was in...the hospital?

Mrs. Roberts sat down on the side of Kellie's bed, being mindful of the various tubes and wires that were keeping tabs on Kellie's vital signs, and giving her liquids to stabilize her. "You're in the hospital, honey. You...you swallowed some pills last night and..." Mrs. Roberts trailed off. She didn't know what to say. What do you say to someone who's just tried to kill themselves, and has been unsuccessful? How do you explain what has happened to them, when you barely understand it yourself?

However, even with that tiny prompt, Kellie felt it all rushing back.

The confrontation after her swimming lessons, the tweet from Saige, the haziness, the pain, the feeling of being worthless...it all flooded through her mind, overwhelming her. She remembered how conscious she was of the pills going down her throat, each one going down, down, down until they reached her stomach. She remembered the agony that had ripped her insides apart. She remembered falling in slow motion through the air until she hit the kitchen floor. And then...blackness.

"I remember," she said quietly. "But how did I get here? I'm not... dead."

"The appointment with the lawyer was canceled. Your father and I came home and found you lying on the ground with pills all around you. We called the ambulance, and they brought you here. They flushed your stomach. Luckily, we got there right in time to save you." Kellie had begun to cry, and Mr. Roberts reached forward and took her hand, entwining their fingers together. "Kellie. What happened to you?"

"Nobody likes me, Dad!" she slowly began to tell her parents the entire story of what had happened. She told them everything, about how she felt as if she was worthless, as if no one cared about her and no one wanted her. She told them about how the tweet she had received made her feel that maybe she shouldn't exist. She told them the exact wording of the tweet, and her mother gasped.

"How dare someone say that to you!" her mother said. "Especially on internet, on a public forum such as Twitter. What's that girls' full name?"

"Saige Hudson," Kellie sniffed.

"Hudson?!" Mrs. Roberts exclaimed. "Nadia Hudson's daughter? The girl who lives in the old house down Cherison Lane?" Kellie nodded. "Those people think that just because they have so much money they can do whatever they want, say whatever they want. I've heard things about that Saige girl. A couple of other mothers down at school were saying that she's been sending some nasty messages around to other girls as well, and saying some mean things. Well,

that girl has bitten off more than she can chew. Her parents won't be able to protect her now. I'm taking this straight to the police. Straight to the police!"

"No, Mom!" Kellie felt as if her mother was over-reacting. Of course what Saige had done was serious, but did it warrant such an extreme reaction. "You don't need to do that. Really! I mean... trying to kill myself was my choice. Not Saige's. And I'm sure the police department have more important things to deal with."

"Nonsense!" Mrs. Roberts exclaimed. "What that girl has been doing has a name- cyber-bullying. And cyber-bullying is a felony! This case is extreme enough for her to be charged with a misdemeanor of cyber harassment. And she will be! I'm not going to the school about this one- they'll sit back and protect themselves. They can't deal with such cases- they certainly didn't do anything back when you were being teased when you joined. Yes, your father and I did go to the principal, and all they said was that 'it's a stage she's going through, it'll end soon'. Well, this has gone too far! I am going STRAIGHT to the police. And they don't have any more important things to deal with. Heighton is a small town- and I haven't heard of any major crimes in the newspapers lately. They will bring justice to you, Kellie. I'll make sure that that Hudson girl is punished for this. All that money can't save her now."

"I agree," Mr. Roberts said, siding with his wife. "Richard and Nadia Hudson might be big-shots here in Heighton, but that doesn't mean that their daughter can do something like this to someone else and get away unscathed. It won't happen. Not while I'm around. I promise you that, Kellie, we'll make sure that these girls are punished so that they can't hurt you...or anybody else, for that matter, again. And after we've done that, we'll move. I don't care about my job, we'll find a new one back in Chicago, where you have friends. I don't matter, Kellie, it's all about you. I want you to be happy."

Kellie looked at her parents, and laughed suddenly. Mrs. Roberts looked at her in shock. "It isn't funny."

"I know," Kellie said. "I'm just thinking about the fact that before

I...you know, took the pills, I thought that nobody cared about me. I'd forgotten that I have two people in my life who care about me more than anyone else in the world." She reached forward as far as she could without causing any of the machines to beep with indignation at being strained, and took her mothers' hand. "Both of you. Dad, you're willing to give up your job and move back to Chicago for me- just so that I can be surrounded by friends and be happy, and Mom, you're ready to storm down to the Heighton police station and demand that the daughter of one of the most powerful people in Heighton be charged with a felony. I was upset because I didn't have anyone who bothered enough about me to stand up for me, but I completely forgot that both of you are willing to go out there and fight for me." She smiled. "Thank you Mom and Dad. I'm so glad that I didn't succeed in killing myself, because I know that I would have killed you too. I didn't think it through and I promise to never make rash decisions like that again."

"We love you too, Sweetie," Mrs. Roberts squeezed her daughter's hand. "I promise, we will fight for you. We'll make sure, these girls will not go unpunished."

Meanwhile, Saige was walking from her math class to English. She had seen the tweet that had been sent out to Kellie last night, and she couldn't believe that she had let everything come this far. That tweet was despicable- something that she would never, ever say to another person. But everyone thought that she had said it, and there was nothing she could do about it.

She was worried too. Kellie wasn't in school today, and Saige feared that it had something to do with the tweet. She didn't want her to do anything extreme- especially since if she did, it would be blamed on Saige. She had wanted to find out what was up with Kellie, but as Kellie had no friends, she had no one who she could ask. At break time, Saige had actually called up Kellie's house, but there had been no answer.

She couldn't help but be scared.

Chapter 10

As in all small towns, news in Heighton traveled fast. Within an hour, it could traverse the entire town, and you could bet that each and every resident would be talking about it...at least until the next juicy tidbit came along. But this Saturday, the story wasn't the usual *Mrs. Smith's dog ate Mrs. Jones's petunias* or *it turns out that there's a family of mice living in the changing rooms at the public pool*. It was much more serious. Word had gotten out about Kellie.

Saige had found out while doing her homework up in her room. She had gotten a call on her phone from Kala.

"Hello?" she said, pressing the green 'talk' button on the mobile's keypad and bringing it up to her ear.

"I hope you're happy!" Kala exclaimed angrily from the other end.

Saige was confused, but figured that it must have something to do with the Twitter account. Maybe the person had sent a message to Kala or something. "What?" she asked.

"Oh, don't tell me you don't know!"

"I actually don't..." Saige said.

"That tweet you sent to Kellie? You should have known better Saige! I mean, Malia's told us how sensitive she is. And your comment was so...so *evil* that OF COURSE she took it to heart and it sent her barreling over the edge. I mean, I would have probably done the same, and I'm not even half as sensitive as her."

"Wait..." Saige wasn't sure what she was hearing. "What did Kellie do?"

"Tried to kill herself. Swallowed a bunch of pills. Because of *you*."

"Ohmygod," Saige suddenly felt dizzy. Nausea built up- she could feel acids tingling in her stomach, rising up through her esophagus until she could feel their fiery burn at the back of her throat. She

couldn't see straight- everything was blurry, and everything was moving. She wanted to throw up. "Is...is she okay?"

"Thankfully, yes. Her parents found her in time. She's still in hospital though. I hope you're happy Saige. I'm so disgusted right now. I don't understand how you could do something like this, how you could even fathom it. You were such a nice person Saige, you always had been. I can't believe you. I don't even want to talk to you anymore. I don't want you to be associated with me. Don't call me." She cut the phone, and Saige was left listening to nothing but the mechanical, metallic buzz of the phone's ringer.

How could something like this happen? How could the tame little Twitter account that she wasn't running, but was in her name, get so out of hand? How could someone try to kill herself because of a tweet? And worst of all, everyone would think Saige had sent that tweet because not only did the account bear her name, but she had told people that it was her account. She buried her face in her hands, and felt her palms become damp with tears. She couldn't believe it. Someone had tried to kill herself over a tweet that she had allegedly sent. Nobody would believe that Saige hadn't sent it. They would think that she was a murderer!

She managed to get up from her chair and walk into her parents' room. They were both sitting at their computers, typing. "Mom... dad.." she said quietly, to get their attention.

"Saige honey, we're a little busy," Mrs. Hudson didn't even turn around to look at her daughter.

"No. Mom, dad...you have to listen to me," she said it this time with more urgency, and her voice caught slightly. This made her parents swivel around to face her, looking at her with bewildered expressions on their faces. Saige guessed that they hadn't heard yet. But she would rather that she told them, than they heard it from some angry, screaming person who deemed their daughter a murderer. She'd be able to tell them the true story, what was really happening, how she wasn't behind the Twitter account at all. They would understand, they should understand.

"I have something to tell you..." she began. However, she couldn't finish telling them what she wanted to. The doorbell rang.

Chapter 11

Saige Hudson had lived in Heighton for her whole life. In the many years she had spent in the town, she had been everywhere. The main shopping street, the central fountains and the historical statue of the first settler in Heighton. She had skipped class by hiding in the bushes at the back of Heighton High, explored the woods in the East of the town and had strolled down Main Street savoring a huge ice-cream sundae from Heighton's renowned ice cream parlor. But never had she sat in the police station.

Mrs. Roberts had acted on her word. She had gone to the police, who had told her that they would bring Saige in for questioning. It turned out that cyber-bullying was indeed taken very seriously in Heighton, and could result in a felony charge.

Saige had opened the door to find a policeman standing outside. He requested to see her parents, and informed them that Saige needed to be taken in for questioning over an alleged case of cyber-bullying that almost resulted in the death of another girl. This was the first time that Saige's parents had heard anything of the sort, and looked rather confused. However, they accompanied their daughter to the police station, sure that nothing would come of the visit as Saige was clearly not guilty of anything. Saige was silent. She knew that she was guilty. She might not be behind the Twitter account, she might not have sent the tweet, but she hadn't done anything to let anyone know that the account wasn't hers. And now she was about to face the consequences.

She was taken to an office by one of the police detectives. Both her and her parents were sitting on uncomfortable chairs facing the desk. The lighting was harsh, and the air conditioning was on full blast, making Saige wish that she'd brought a jacket along.

The door behind them opened, and Saige swiveled around. A tall man, with dark brown hair and weathered skin entered. He wasn't wearing a police uniform, but he had a badge hanging around his

neck at the end of a thin, silver chain. There was a name-tag pinned onto the breast pocket of his leather jacket. Saige squinted to try and read it, but she couldn't. He closed the door, and walked over to the desk. Placing the files he was holding on the desk, he pulled out the chair and sat down. "Mr and Mrs Hudson, Saige, I'm Detective Bates."

"Hello Detective," Mr. Hudson reached out and shook the man's hand. "We were told that you wanted to see Saige regarding a cyber-bullying case?"

"That's correct," Detective Bates replied shortly. He didn't offer any further explanation. Saige guessed that he wanted to see how much her parents knew about the situation before he provided any details. She shifted uncomfortably in her chair.

"Well," Mr. Hudson continued, trying to appear unfazed. "We believe that you're mistaken. Saige is a very kind girl, and would never bully anyone. You must have mixed her up with someone else. We can vouch that she hasn't done anything of the sort."

"Are you sure?" Detective Bates's question caught Mr. Hudson off-guard.

"Am I sure? Yes of course I am sure, Detective! I know my daughter!"

"Modern studies have shown that nowadays, parents think that they know their children, when in reality, they know very little about them. I believe that this is the case with you and Saige, Mr Hudson."

"Look, I'm not here to get psychoanalyzed about my relationship with my daughter," Mr Hudson was clearly quite angry. "Now, I have a lot of work to do, and I'm fully aware that I can just take my family and walk out of here, so unless you have some relevant questions to ask us, that is exactly what I will do. I'm not about to waste my time."

"I apologize. We'll get straight to the point, shall we? Mr and Mrs Hudson, are you familiar with a girl named Kellie Roberts?"

"I don't know a majority of the children in Heighton, except for my

daughter's close friends," Mr Hudson replied. "My wife might though," he turned to Mrs. Hudson, who had a thoughtful expression on her face.

"Kellie Roberts..." she mumbled. "Ah yes! The blonde girl who moved here from Chicago a few years ago. Nora's daughter, right?" Mrs. Hudson faintly remembered welcoming Nora, Kellie's mother, to the neighborhood several years ago, and finding out that she had a daughter of the same age as Saige named Kellie. Mrs. Hudson hadn't spoken to Nora for a long time, and therefore her memory was slightly hazy. However, Detective Bates nodded with approval.

"That's correct. Saige, do you know Kellie?"

Saige nodded. "I do," she said quietly. "She's in my grade at school."

"Do you talk to her?"

"Not really."

"Have you ever spoken to her?"

"I think once, for a project." Saige had actually spoken to her several other times over recent days. She had made a couple of derogatory comments about Kellie's weight to her face, but they had been tiny little things, nothing worth getting upset over.

"Does she have many friends?"

"I don't know. I don't think so. I never really see her with anyone. I think she sits alone," Saige tried to remember seeing Kellie in school, but it was hard, considering that she never really noticed Kellie that much. "She used to hang around with a bunch of girls last year- I don't really remember who exactly- but I think that they had a fight or something because the entire group split up. This year, I've only seen her talking to that new girl, Olivia, once or twice, but they don't seem to be friends."

"Excuse me, Detective," Mr Hudson interrupted. "My daughter has made it clear that she doesn't know this Kellie girl very well. What is the relevance of these questions? What does this girl have to do with my daughter?"

"I take it you are unaware of what happened to Kellie Roberts two nights ago?"

"I do not keep up with the gossip of this town. Dear," Mr. Hudson turned to his wife. "Do you know anything?"

Mrs. Hudson shook her head. "I'm afraid I don't."

"Two nights ago, Kellie Roberts received a particularly malicious message over the social networking site, Twitter. She was so distraught over it that she tried to kill herself. She overdosed on Tylenol."

Mrs. Hudson brought her hand to heart, visibly shocked. "Oh, that's terrible! The poor family. I must send over flowers at once. White lillies, I think. And we must attend the funeral. I'll have to buy a new black suit."

Detective Bates brought his hand up, and Mrs. Hudson stopped speaking. "Kellie did not succeed in killing herself. Her parents found her before it was too late and took her to the hospital, where they pumped her stomach. She is well on her way to making a full recovery, however she will have to consult with a therapist weekly."

"Detective, our deepest sympathies are with this girl and her family," Richard interrupted yet again. "But what does this have to do with *our* daughter? What does it have to do with Saige?"

"Mr. Hudson, you may recall my mentioning that Kellie received a tweet before she attempted to commit suicide. This tweet was sent from your daughter's Twitter handle."

"What?" Mr Hudson turned to face Saige, who looked down. "Saige, is this true?"

"Mr Hudson, Mrs Hudson, were you aware that Saige had a Twitter account?"

"No, we weren't," Mrs. Hudson admitted. "But we believe that our daughter should have freedom on the Internet. We allow her to do what she wants, and since she is over the age of thirteen, she is legally eligible to sign up for accounts on numerous sites without our permission anyway."

"We accessed Saige's page, and read through some of the tweets. It appears that Kellie isn't the only person that she's been targeting; she's targeted various students in her year by sending them mean messages. This has been occurring for around two weeks. Such messages constitute as cyber-bullying, which is taken very seriously here in Heighton." He paused and turned to his computer, where he typed in a couple of commands. He moved the desktop screen around so that it was visible to the Hudson's. "I'd like you to read some of these."

Mr and Mrs Hudson leaned forward and read the tweets. They couldn't believe what they were reading. They didn't feel that the things that were written on the screen were things that their daughter would have said. Detective Bates turned the screen around again, and settled back in his chair. He didn't say anything, allowing them time to process what they had just seen.

"I think Saige should be allowed a chance to explain," Mr Hudson finally said. "Those tweets aren't things that she would send."

Detective Bates looked Saige in the eye. For the first time, Saige understood what it was like to be pushed into a corner, to be intimidated. His gaze was steely and made Saige feel like she was insignificant, like she didn't matter. She couldn't believe that she had made other people feel like that. That wasn't her. She couldn't believe that she had let the person running the Twitter account take over her life like this. "Saige?"

She had to tell the truth now. "It's not my account," she said, quietly. "I didn't write all of those things. I know that they have my name on them, and the account seems like it's mine because it sounds like me, and the description sounds like something I would write about myself but it isn't mine. I don't know how whoever created this account got all the information about me, but they did. And now everyone thinks this account is mine, but it isn't, I swear. I would never say something like that to anyone."

"Alright," Detective Bates had written everything down. "Well, we have no further questions at this point in time. Thank you, Mr and Mrs Hudson. Saige. You are free to go."

"Excuse me Detective, but I have a question," Mr Hudson spoke up again. "If Saige is found guilty of cyber-bullying, which I'm certain she won't be as she has already made it clear to you that she is not the one behind this account, what would be the result?"

"Well, it would go on her permanent record for sure. She could be charged with a misdemeanor of cyber-harassment, which, as she is a minor, would result in her having to serve community service time. However, you will find that her main problem will arise when she has to apply to colleges. They prefer spotless records, and may find that a history of cyber-bullying will have a negative influence. After all, nowadays cyber-bullying is taken very seriously."

Mr. Hudson took a few moments to process this. Saige was standing there, in shock. She couldn't believe that a Twitter account that was originally giving her popularity was amounting to so much trouble. It was literally ruining her life. Suddenly, she didn't care about popularity. She wished she hadn't cared so much two weeks ago, when she could have actually changed something. She could have told people it wasn't her account and, as a result, would have had a solid defense now. But it was far too late now.

She got into the back seat of her parent's car. Before starting the vehicle up, Mr. Hudson turned around to face her. "Saige, I want you to explain everything to us. Now."

Chapter 12

Saige was called back down to the police station on Sunday. Her parents accompanied her again. She was sitting back in the same office, with the same painfully bright lights and blasting air conditioning. This time, however, she'd remembered to bring a jacket.

Detective Bates entered the room, but this time, he was with someone else. It was another man, however, he was clearly a lot younger than Detective Bates. He wasn't in uniform, and wore a badge similar to that of the older detective, and therefore Saige guessed that he was a rookie who had recently been promoted. Detective Bates was probably showing him the ropes.

"Mr and Mrs Hudson, Saige," Detective Bates nodded. "Good to see you again. This is Detective Joshua Carrick," he motioned to the man next to him. "He'll be assisting me on the case."

"So this is a full-fledged case now?" Mr. Hudson asked.

"Please understand that Heighton is a small town," Detective Bates smiled. "Nearly everything here becomes a case, be it a murder – which thankfully has yet to occur and hopefully never will – or who put the neighbors cat up the tree. We're just trying to figure out exactly what has happened here so that Saige doesn't get blamed for something that she didn't do."

"Oh, so you've decided that Saige isn't to be blamed and that she wasn't behind the Twitter account?" Mrs Hudson perked up.

"Not quite," Detective Bates answered. "We're still open to the option that she wasn't responsible, however, a majority of the evidence points to the fact that she was indeed behind the account."

"Evidence? What evidence?"

"We interviewed a couple of students from Heighton High later yesterday, after you had left," Detective Bates held his hand out and

Detective Carrick handed him a file. He flicked it open, and turned to the appropriate page. " Nataly Karges, Nichole Hartley and Missy Armstrong. They all said that you have publicly declared that the account was yours. Nichole did say that you expressed some uncertainty when she first confronted you about the account, however, you confirmed that you were indeed behind it the very next day when she asked you directly. Nataly Karges said that she heard you boasting about the account to Missy Armstrong, who confirmed that this was true. She also said that you seemed rather proud of the messages that you were sending to people. Now this all contradicts what you told us yesterday; that you weren't actually behind the account and that someone else is running it. Why would you tell everyone else that you were running the account if it wasn't true? They also tell me that you were being relatively mean in school as well, recently. They say that you were targeting all of the weaker kids in school."

"Saige," Mrs Hudson said quietly. "I think you'd better tell the detectives here everything."

"That would be nice," Detective Bates supplemented.

"Okay, look," Saige turned back to the detectives. "Two weeks ago, Nichole confronted me at break. Or maybe it was lunch. I don't remember, but it doesn't really matter. She accused me of sending a mean tweet to a girl in our grade. I had no idea what she was talking about. I didn't have a Twitter account and had no intention of getting one. I told her that she must be mistaken, that she must have read the name of the sender wrong. She was sure she hadn't. I asked her to send me the link to the page. She didn't see the need as she thought it was my account, but agreed anyway. So she sent me the link over Facebook. I saw the account, and I read the tweets that had been sent at the time. I didn't like them- they weren't things that I would say. I decided that the next day, I would tell everyone that the account wasn't mine."

"So why didn't you?" Detective Bates asked.

"Please! Let me finish. So I was fully prepared to tell everyone the truth. At break-time, I sat down at my usual table and Nichole asked

me if I'd seen the account. I told her I had, and I was just about to tell her that it wasn't mine and that someone was posing as me, when Missy walked up. Yes, the same Missy that you interviewed. She's also the most popular girl at school. For years I have wanted to be just like her and be in the popular group, but she's barely ever said a word to me. Anyway, she came up, and she complemented me on a mean tweet that she thought I had sent. Said it was genius. And I was so stunned and happy that she was talking to me, I confirmed that the account was mine. I decided that it didn't matter if it wasn't really my account- especially if I was going to become popular from it."

"And did you?"

"I kind of did. People started to talk to me more, smile at me in corridors, wave at me. Everyone knew who I was. I think...maybe it was because they were scared that they would become the subject of one of my jabs on Twitter. But I still liked it. I didn't think of telling anyone that the tweets weren't being sent by me. Later, my friend Kala told me that if I was going to be mean on the internet, I had to be mean in person. That's why I started making mean comments to people even in school. I'd already been fairly rude to Olivia in the past, and she was an easy target, what with being the new girl and being so scared of confrontation, which is why she was the one I was the most mean to. Anyway, the tweets started to get nastier, and I grew uncomfortable, but I didn't see what I could do. And then this happened."

Saige looked up. "I'm sorry I didn't tell anyone. But I didn't send those tweets. It's someone else, who's pretending to be me. What's it called when that happens?"

"Are you insinuating that you're a victim of identity theft?"

"Yes!" Saige exclaimed. "Yes, I am."

Detective Bates nodded. "Okay, then. We'll keep that in mind. Thank you for coming down."

After Saige and her parents had left, Detective Bates turned to Detective Carrick. "Well, Carrick, you're the young one here. What

do you think? Saige's story seem plausible to you?"

"I think she might be telling the truth, sir. After all, popularity means a lot to kids these days. It did even when I was in college a couple years ago. The media glamorizes it. She might have done all of this for popularity. But the question is, if someone did steal her identity, who did, and why?"

"That's always the question, isn't it? Okay, well, we'll have to check into this. It's not like we have anything else to do."

"True."

Chapter 13

Saige did not want to go to school on Monday. In fact, she was dreading it. She knew that everyone would know about Kellie, about there being an ongoing police investigation into her. She'd already been receiving hate phone calls from other students, angry parents, siblings and even a couple of grandparents. It had gotten so bad that she had turned off her cell-phone and her parents had disconnected their land line.

She had tried to convince her parents to let her stay at home, but they insisted that she continued to go to school. It wasn't a punishment- they believed her story completely- but they didn't want her to miss out on any learning. The chances of this incident being imprinted onto Saige's permanent record were high and her parents felt that she needed to work as hard as she could so that in four years, colleges would look past the looming black mark.

So, she went to school. She trudged through the hallways, silently. No one accompanied her- instead, everyone stuck to the sides, whispering. *That's Saige Hudson, the girl who set up that mean Twitter account. Yeah, she's in so much trouble now. Oh that's Saige, the one who sent that message to Kellie? You know the one that made her try to kill herself? Saige Hudson must be ashamed of herself. I saw the police outside her house yesterday. Apparently, she's going to get charged with cyber-harassment. It's going to go on her permanent record. If you ask me, it serves her right. Kellie did nothing to hurt her, so why should she hurt Kellie?*

Saige sat alone at both lunch and break. None of her old friends wanted to be associated with her. As far as they were concerned, the Saige Hudson that they knew had disappeared, to be replaced with someone they didn't recognize. Instead, several of the girls who Saige had been mean to either in person, or over Twitter had been welcomed into their group. They all sat together, laughing, finally understanding what it was like to belong. Even Olivia had been welcomed, and had accepted the invitation. She felt horrible about

what had happened to Kellie. If perhaps she had spoken to Kellie, and become her friend, she wouldn't have acted so rashly. As for Saige, Olivia believed that she had gotten what was coming to her. She deserved to be outcast. Now she knew what it felt like. Olivia openly voiced her opinion on Saige, but kept her opinion on Kellie strictly to herself.

Saige had been targeted through the day. Several people had had things to say to her, and none of them were nice. They called her names, and made her feel horrible. No one felt guilty about this, they all just wanted Saige to feel like the people she had bullied. They had all decided that she would get what was coming to her. Everyone had turned against her.

The person running the account watched all of this from the outside, and felt victorious. The imposter had finally brought Saige down. But something didn't feel quite right. Something felt incomplete. Something more had to be done. The imposter felt that eventually Saige would recover from this, that eventually people would begin to accept her again. Something had to happen that would make sure that Saige didn't ever regain anyone's trust. This person had so much power over Saige's life that with a snap of a finger, things could change. But what action would help the imposter achieve the outcome that would ruin Saige's reputation for good.

Upon returning home the imposter opened the laptop, and scrolled through Saige's Facebook page. What a laugh! Saige still hadn't realized how easy it was to impersonate her. She probably didn't even know that all of her information on Facebook was open to bad for her!. The imposter continued to scroll, looking for something that could be used against Saige. BINGO! There it was staring right up in the face.

It was a post from two weeks ago. It was a web cam picture of a credit card, along with the caption "I get to use my parents' credit card whenever I want! Thank you SO much Mom & Dad!" Saige probably hadn't realized at the time of posting what damage could be done with this photo. After saving the photo on desktop, the

imposter then opened it up in Photoshop.

The picture was fairly clear to start off with. The lighting was right, and the quality was good. Saige clearly had a steady hand, the picture was barely blurred. Still, the person ran the picture through several sharpening filters, to save time and make sure that no mistakes were made. This was a risky job- much riskier than setting up a Twitter account and sending messages to people in Saige's grade.

Upon zooming in the imposter was delighted that each number on the card was visible and easily readable. This was a tiny instrument that could do a lot of damage and make sure that Saige was never trusted again.

Chapter 14

Saige had told her parents about the horrible day she had had on Sunday at school. Her parents had decided that it would be best if she stayed at home for a day, hoping that the whole thing would blow over. However, they made her promise that she would email her teachers asking about the work that she had missed so that she could catch up.

She was walking downstairs at about ten in the morning to fix herself a snack when she saw her mother standing by the door, looking rather puzzled. She was holding a sheet of paper in her hands, and seemed to be reading intently.

"Mom?" Saige asked, approaching her. Mrs. Hudson looked up. "What's happened? Is it something to do with the case?" Saige was scared that there had been some new development that would incriminate her. She didn't want this to go on her permanent record. She'd rather just forget all about it.

"The Case? No, it's nothing to do with the case. It's something else."

"What?" Saige was confused.

"We received our credit card bill, and it's huge. We didn't even order a majority of the things on this list. Like what use would we have for a packet of 350 copic markers? I don't even know what copic markers are!"

"Relax, mom," Saige tried to act reassuring. "I'm sure the credit card company made a mistake. Maybe they got all mixed up and sent you the wrong bill."

"I hope so, because I am certainly not paying for all of these things," Mrs. Hudson exclaimed. "Your father is not going to be happy. He's already stressed out, as it is with this cyber-bullying thing against you. Saige, you didn't do it, right? You didn't bully Kellie, you didn't send out any of those tweets?"

"No! Mom, I swear to you I didn't. I'm telling you the truth when I say that I am not behind else is posing as me and trying to get me in trouble."

"Sweetie...do you know who it could be? Does anyone hate you so much that they would want this to happen to you?"

"I don't think so mom."

"Because if you even have the faintest idea as to who might be behind this, you need to tell me, so we can tell the police. Then the police will start looking into the other person and maybe you'll escape from this entire mess unscathed."

"I know, mom," Saige sighed. "And I promise you, I will tell you the minute I think of someone who might want to do something like this to me. But right now, I swear to you that I don't know anything."

Mrs. Hudson gave her daughter a hug. "Don't worry, sweetie. We'll sort this out."

Later on in the day, Saige decided to get out of the house for a while. She walked down the street, enjoying the fresh air. There was a gentle breeze blowing, and it ruffled through her hair. Saige took a minute to think. She thought about what had been happening over the last few days, about how quickly something that had seemed amazing had gone downhill. *I guess it was too good to be true*, she thought. Suddenly, Saige realized what she hadn't done that she should have. She hadn't been to visit Kellie yet.

Saige entered the hospital holding a bouquet of flowers. She walked across the marble floor, over to the reception table. "Excuse me," she said to the lady behind the table. "I'm here to visit Kellie Roberts."

"Ah, the Roberts girl," the lady said, shuffling through papers. "She's a popular kid, she is. Has had a number of visitors over the last few days. A tragedy what happened to her though. Good thing she survived. Ah, here you are. She's been transferred out of the emergency ward to room 361. That's on the third floor, and

elevators are that way," she pointed to the left.

Saige thanked the lady and walked to the elevators. She was joined by several other people, all heading to different floors. She was thankful that no one was going to see Kellie, because then it would have been likely that they would recognize her as the girl who had caused Kellie to end up in the hospital.

"What are you here for darling?" a nice, older lady asked Saige as she got into the lift. "A nice young girl like you shouldn't be spending time in the hospital."

"Um, I'm here to visit a friend," Saige replied quietly.

"Ah. Well, give my best wishes to your friend."

"Thank you. Give my best wishes to the person you're visiting too."

"I will do that."

The lift bell dinged, signaling that they had reached the third floor. Saige nodded to the lady and made her way out of the doors. She walked down, reading the numbers on each door as she passed them. *356...358...360...361.*

Saige stood outside Kellie's door for a few minutes. She almost got cold feet. Kellie wouldn't want to see her, not after what she had done to her. Maybe coming here was a bad idea. What was she thinking anyway? Did she think that coming here and giving Kellie flowers would make everything alright? She was about to walk away when the door opened, and Dianna came out of the room. She made eye-contact with Saige and glared at her, before walking away.

It was then that Saige remembered why she had come. She had wanted to explain to Kellie what had happened. She wanted to apologize. Although it wouldn't make things right, it would help her sleep a little better at night. This was something that she had to do. Taking a deep breath, Saige knocked on the door before pushing it open and entering.

Mrs. Roberts saw Saige first, and recognized her instantly. When someone does something harmful to a person that you care about, their image is forever emblazoned into your mind, You'll never

forget their face, and whenever you see them, you'll want to punch them. You want them to never forget what they've done, the suffering they've caused. Mrs. Roberts' face was set into a hard line. "You're not welcome here Saige. Please leave."

Kellie looked up upon hearing the name Saige. She saw a girl standing opposite her mother, a girl with long brown hair and hazel eyes- just like Saige's. But the girl didn't look like Saige. She didn't have the same expressions as Saige, and didn't radiate the same aura as Saige. It seemed as if she had changed.

"I'm sorry Mrs. Roberts," Saige began. "I just wanted to stop by and see how Kellie was doing."

"See how she was doing!? Alright, well, she's doing fine. She's doing fine after you almost killed her!"

"Mom," Kellie said quietly. "That's not fair."

"Not fair? Kellie, have you forgotten what she wrote?"

"No, but she wasn't the only one who was bullying me. There were other people too. She may be the one who drove me over the edge, but I don't think she's fully to blame."

"I wanted to apologize too. And explain," Saige continued.

"Explain? Explain what?" Mrs. Roberts clearly wanted to get rid of Saige as soon as she possibly could. In her eyes, Saige had done far more harm than good.

"Please. Listen." Saige began to explain everything. She told Kellie and Mrs. Roberts the same things that she had told her parents, and the police. They listened intently, and Saige tried to judge whether or not they believed her through their facial expressions. However, she'd never been particularly good at reading people, and this time was no exception. She had no idea what they were thinking, or whether or not they believed her. But she still continued to talk. Regardless of whether or not they were convinced by her story, she wanted to know for herself that she had told them the absolute truth.

Upon finishing her story, Saige looked straight at Kellie. "I'm sorry

Kellie. I may not have sent that tweet, but this is my fault. Two weeks ago, I had the power to stop that person. But I made a stupid decision. I cared more about popularity. I should have never let that account continue. And my judgment backfired on me. Now look at me. Everyone hates me- and most importantly, I've had my identity stolen. I've lost control of my life. Something that I didn't do is going to go on my permanent record, and it's going to haunt me for the rest of my life. But worst of all, my decision backfired on you. It hurt you. You almost died because of me. I am so very sorry. I don't expect you to forgive me. But I do hope that one day, maybe you will."

The room was filled with silence. Mrs. Roberts and Kellie were processing what they had just heard. They were deciding whether or not to believe it, whether or not to forgive this girl. But such decisions cannot be made in the space of two minutes. Sometimes, they can take years.

It was Mrs. Roberts who finally spoke. "Saige...thank you for coming. But I think you should leave."

Saige nodded. "Thank you for listening to me." She left the flowers on Kellie's bedside. "These are for you," she said quietly. "I'm very sorry, and I hope you get better. If there's anything I can do, please let me know." With those final words, she left.

Mrs. Roberts turned to Kellie. "Do you believe her?"

Kellie continued looking straight ahead. "I'm not sure. But I think I do."

Chapter 15

The next morning, Saige was awoken by the sound of the doorbell. Her parents had agreed to let her stay home for another day, and she was hoping to sleep in as the exhaustion of the past few weeks had finally caught up with her. However, she was brought to consciousness by an annoying, loud ringing. She pulled her pillow over her ears, but was soon woken up by her mother.

"Saige. We need to talk."

Saige came downstairs, still in her pajamas and her robe. Her mother was sitting on the sofa and she did not look pleased. Next to her were stacks of cardboard boxes, Saige wondered what was going on.

"Mom..."

"Sit down Saige."

Saige sat down on the leather chair, next to the sofa. She kept eying the boxes curiously, wondering what was in them.

"Yesterday, you were there when I received the bill."

"The credit card bill? The odd one, with things on it that you hadn't ordered? Yeah, I was there. I told you the company must have made a mistake, since you didn't actually order any of those things."

"Well, it turns out that we actually did order the things." Mrs. Hudson picked up the bill, from where it was lying next to her, and handed it to Saige. She then began to open the boxes, taking out products that ranged from books and DVD's, to clothes and accessories. Saige was able to find each product that her mother took out from the boxes on the bill.

"I don't get it," Saige said. "We didn't order any of these things. Did the shipping company make a mistake too?"

"No," Mrs. Hudson turned to look at Saige. "The delivery person said that all of these things were ordered by 'Saige Hudson'."

"What?" Saige looked shocked. "But I didn't order these things!"

"Stop lying, Saige!" Mrs. Hudson exclaimed, causing Saige to shrink back. "The proof is there. You abused the trust that your father and I put in you when we allowed you to use our credit card. We said with permission, but you clearly didn't understand that. You must have snuck in and gotten it from our room."

"No! I didn't!"

"Then how are these packages here? Why did the delivery person say you ordered them? Do you have an explanation for that!?" Saige was silent. "You know, I didn't think that you would do something like this and then lie about it. Did you lie about the Twitter account as well? Are you really behind it?"

"What!? Mom, no! I'm not. I've already told you that."

"I don't know if I can trust you anymore."

Saige ran upstairs into her room and slammed the door. She could bet that the person, who had ordered the things in her name, was the same person who had set up the Twitter account. Someone was sabotaging her. They had stolen her identity away from her. She had no control left over her life and it felt horrible. She didn't know what to do anymore. No one trusted her. No one believed her. She was stuck in a position where she really was all alone.

She had read about identity thefts in the newspaper. However, the reporter had always given an objective view of the subject. She hadn't realized how it felt when someone steals your identity. It felt horrible. In this world, the only thing she could ever be sure of was that she was who she was. She could be sure of her decisions. Now, she wasn't making the choices in her own life anymore. She had been completely thrown.

Chapter 16

The police had come to know about the incident with the credit card. Detective Bates racked it up to the idea that Saige was a troublemaker who didn't know where to stop. As it was the credit card of Saige's parents, no criminal charges could be pressed against her. However, Saige had completely lost the trust of her parents. They, who had believed her from the very beginning, now found themselves doubting her story.

Detective Bates and Detective Carrick had spent time interviewing students from Saige's school, in order to get a better idea of what she was like. They had then decided that if the case was to move any further- if they were actually going to find Saige guilty of cyber-bullying- they would need to get some solid evidence against her. Something that explicitly said she had been the one who had sent the tweet. But there had been no evidence- no witnesses... nothing. Detective Carrick thought that perhaps they'd be able to get evidence if they confiscated the Hudson's family's laptops. That way, they could look at browser history and other such things.

Detective Bates managed to get a warrant for the laptops of Nora Hudson, Chad Hudson and Saige Hudson. Mr. and Mrs. Hudson were not too pleased about having their laptops taken away, calling the measure "unnecessary". However, the police wanted to cover everything, and chances that Saige had been using her parents' laptops was very possible.

They took the laptops over to the tech department, and spent the day there- checking each computer's browser history. They got no results out of Mr. and Mrs. Hudson's laptops- they hadn't once tried to access Twitter, and Amazon, which was the website that Saige had ordered the things from, hadn't been accessed in recent times. They then tried Saige's laptop. Twitter had been accessed- but it wasn't the homepage. Saige had gone onto her own Twitter page several times, but according to her history, she had never logged

into the website. As for Amazon, there was no record of her accessing the website in the last three months. They went through her trash too, in case she had deleted the history, but had forgotten to get rid of it completely.

"She probably double-deleted the history," Detective Bates said. "It's what I would do if I was in her situation. Plus the kids these days are awfully tech-savvy. She'd know that she'd have to delete the history from the trash as well, if she wanted to get rid of it completely."

"Yeah," Detective Carrick said, although he seemed to be lost in thought.

A uniformed officer entered the room. "Detective Bates, a student from Heighton High is here to see you as requested. A Kala Wagoner."

Detective Bates got up. "Coming, Carrick?"

"Uh, no sir, I think I'll stay here. Continue working on the computers and see if I can find anything."

"You're on to something, aren't you?"

"I think I may be, sir, but I'm not really quite sure yet."

"Alright, Carrick, suit yourself. We've interviewed so many students that we're probably not going to get any more new information. You're likely to be of more use here than you will be in my office."

"My sentiments exactly, sir."

Detective Bates and the uniformed officer walked out, leaving Carrick alone in the tech room. He kept staring at Saige's browser history. Something was off, but he wasn't quite sure what it was yet. Then it hit him. If Saige had wanted to delete the history of her accessing Twitter on her laptop, she would have probably run a search on the history page of her browser, and deleted each and every mention of Twitter that came up. But why were the frequent visits to the Twitter page itself, still there? Why didn't she delete those as well? She would have wanted to distance herself from the account as much as possible, and therefore wouldn't have left a

single link to any page associated with Twitter on her history.

Detective Carrick was the kind of cop who fully invested in his cases. He had done pretty well in both school and university, but had chosen to become a cop because he wanted to make the world a better place. And part of making the world a better place was making sure that no one got wrongfully convicted. He wanted to be sure that whomever he arrested was guilty. Right now, he was not at all sure that Saige Hudson was guilty.

Suddenly, an idea dawned on him. He took his cell-phone out of his pocket and dialed the number of his friend, Quentin, who was a tech consultant. He had worked with the Heighton Police Department before, and Detective Carrick felt that his expertise was needed in this case.

"Hello?" Quentin said, when he picked up.

"Hi Quentin! I'm calling on business. I assume you're familiar with the Saige Hudson case?"

"The one about the girl who was sending mean tweets to others and made another girl try to kill herself? Yep. News travels fast in this town. Why, what's up?"

"I have reason to believe that Saige is not guilty," Detective Carrick proceeded to explain the issue of the browser history, and the story that Saige had told the police about how someone had stolen her identity. Quentin listened attentively.

"So, what do you need me to do?"

"I was wondering if you could trace the creation of the Twitter account, along with the online purchases that Saige allegedly made. I mean, I'm not even sure if it's possible..."

"It is. I'll be down at the police station at about five and we'll work on this then."

"Got it. Thanks Quentin."

That evening, Quentin arrived at the police station right on time. He was carrying a thin black laptop briefcase, containing his treasured

MacBook Pro. Detective Carrick was waiting to greet him. "Thanks for coming. Your skills are going to be a great help."

"No problem," Quentin said, following Detective Carrick into the tech room. He had been in there several times before, assisting the department whenever they needed any technical help. He was considered to be the foremost technological expert in Heighton.

Sitting down at a table, Quentin unpacked his computer. He opened it up, and logged on. "Okay, so you want to track the creation of a Twitter account? Saige Hudson's account, I'm assuming?"

Detective Carrick nodded. "That's correct. I want to know which computer the account was created from and who's been logging into the account. It's likely that if we find the computer that's logging into the account, the owner will be the person who's really sending out the tweets."

"Okay. What I need to do here is track the IP address. That's like a unique set of numbers that each computer has. Every time someone logs into an account, or even just uses the Internet on that computer, that string of numbers is sent to the server. We can extract the IP address used to log onto Saige's account, and then track it. We can find out which computer that IP address belongs to. It sounds simple, but it's quite difficult in reality, and it's a fairly lengthy process."

"Well, I'm glad we have you then," Detective Carrick smiled. "Let's get to work."

It took Quentin around an hour to pinpoint the IP address. While he was worked, he liked to talk. He asked Carrick a series of questions about the case, as he was rather curious as to why Carrick was investigating further when it seemed rather clear that Saige Hudson's was behind everything. "Anyone can make up a story, Joshua," he said as he typed furiously. "I'll admit, her story was relatively detailed, but she could have just improvised, or even prepared it before-hand."

"Something just doesn't seem right," Detective Carrick replied. "Yes, it seems to be her. If I was someone else, I would probably be

certain that it was Saige because that's how it appears on the surface. But as a detective, I have to look beneath the surface. If Saige gets charged, it'll go on her permanent record, and it will negatively affect her. I want to be completely sure that she's guilty before something like that happens."

"You're something else, Joshua," Quentin shook his head, smiling. "Most people would just say that Saige did it and leave it at that. They'd be too lazy to go any deeper. It helps me sleep better at night knowing that there are still people like you left in this world."

Soon after their conversation, Quentin managed to pinpoint and track the IP address. "The computer, that was used to create the account and has been logging into the account, is located around the Rosebury Drive area."

"But that's at the West end of town," Detective Carrick said, surprised. "Saige Hudson lives at the East end of town."

"Well, it looks like Saige's not your girl. Every single time this Twitter account has been logged into, it's been logged into from the same computer. Hold on, I'm just finding out who it's registered to," Quentin began to type again. "Hmm. It's registered to a Mr. Bennett Greer."

"Greer..." Detective Carrick thought out loud. "I've heard that name before. Yes! That's right! Saige goes to school with a girl named Olivia Greer. Apparently, Saige has never been particularly nice to Olivia- in fact, she's been quite mean."

"That's motive," Quentin nodded.

"Can you track the online purchases in a similar manner to the way you tracked the Twitter account?" Detective Carrick asked. "Find out which computer made the purchases?"

"I can do that. Most online shopping websites track the IP addresses of their customers, in case a situation like this emerges."

Half an hour later, Quentin had managed to get the IP address. It was an exact match to the address of the computer used to create and log into the Twitter account. It appeared that Olivia could very

well be the person who had stolen Saige's identity.

Detective Bates entered the tech room. "Carrick! What are you still doing here? And Quentin? I didn't know you were coming in today!"

"Sir," Carrick began. "We've got something that you're going to want to see. We decided to trace the creation of the Twitter account. The computer used to create and log into the Twitter account is not registered to Saige Hudson. In fact, it is registered to a Mr. Bennett Greer- the father of one of Saige's classmates, Olivia Greer. We also traced the online purchases allegedly made by Saige to the same computer."

"Very interesting, Carrick," Bates looked impressed. "There's clearly someone else involved here. And Olivia does have motive. The girl I interviewed earlier today, Kala, says that Olivia was Saige's main target. She also says that a couple of days before the Twitter account was initiated, Saige had a public falling out with Olivia. They were put together for some project, and Saige refused to do any of the work, making Olivia do it all."

"That's not just motive, that's excellent timing," Carrick commented.

"Exactly. But one question remains: how did Olivia manage to get the credit card number that she would have needed to make the purchases?"

"I've been thinking that too, sir, and I've come up with a theory. I'm not sure whether it's true or not, but it is plausible. Quentin, if you'll excuse me," Carrick went to the computer and typed in the web address for Facebook. He logged into his own account and then ran a search for "Saige Hudson". Narrowing the search down through location, he found her almost immediately. He clicked on her profile.

"Nearly everything here is public," he said. "Anyone can see it." He clicked on her friends list and searched for Olivia. "Olivia's not her friend on Facebook, but that doesn't matter. She could still see all of the information on Saige's wall. That's probably how she found out enough about her to properly impersonate her on Twitter."

"Kids these days," Bates shook his head. "Don't they understand how dangerous the Internet is?"

"Clearly not," Carrick had scrolled down Saige's timeline until he reached his goal. A picture of Saige's parents' credit card, with the numbers engraved clear. "That's how Olivia got the card numbers."

"Good work Carrick," Bates clapped him on the back. "Saige might actually have had her identity stolen. She might have been telling the truth. We'll need to check that computer out. I'll call up the judge's office and get a warrant. We'll go over there tomorrow morning- it's a Saturday, so the girl will be at home. In the meantime, keep this quiet. We don't need her to find out about this and delete her history."

"Yes sir."

Chapter 17

The very next morning, Detective Bates, Detective Carrick and Quentin paid the Greer's a visit. Detective Bates had gone to the judge's office the previous night and had managed to get a warrant, which allowed him to check out all of the computers in the family.

The detectives arrived outside Olivia's house and rang the doorbell. A man opened the door.

"Mr. Bennett Greer?" Detective Bates asked.

"Yes," the man answered.

"You're the father of Olivia Greer?"

"Yes, what is this about?"

Detective Bates held up his badge. "I'm Detective Bates, and this is Detective Carrick. We're from the Heighton Police Department, and we're handling the Saige Hudson case. This is Quentin, he's consulting with us for the technical aspect of this case."

"Yes, we're familiar with the case. Are you here to interview my daughter?"

"Actually, we have reason to believe that your daughter is more involved in this case than she let on. May we please come in?"

"Of course," Mr. Greer moved aside to let the detectives in. He was rather confused. He'd already asked Olivia whether she knew anything about the case and she had said that she didn't really know much.

Mr. Greer led the detectives into the family's living room. There were three people gathered around the TV, a woman who the detectives presumed to be Olivia's mother, along with Olivia and Kristine. "Detectives, this is my wife, Leilani, and this is my older daughter, Kristine. You already know Olivia. Girls, this is Detective Bates, Detective Carrick and their consulting tech expert, Quentin.

"They're here about the Saige Hudson case."

"Detectives," Mrs. Greer stood up and shook their hands. "Can I get you some tea, coffee?"

"That's very kind of you, but no thank you," Detective Bates answered. "Actually, we're here to talk about your daughter- Olivia." Olivia looked up, surprised.

"Oh," Mrs. Greer looked surprised. "Are you here to interview Olivia? I've heard that you've been interviewing students from Heighton High?"

"We're not here to interview her. As I mentioned to your husband at the door, we believe that Olivia may be more involved in this case than she has let on. You see, Saige Hudson told us that it wasn't her behind the Twitter account- that she had had her identity stolen. Now, we didn't believe her at the time, but as police detectives, it is our job to look into everything so that we're sure that we're convicting the right person."

Detective Carrick took over then. "So we traced the IP address of the computer that was used to create the Twitter account and has been used to log into the account. We also traced the IP address of the computer that was used to make multiple online purchases from Saige's Hudson's parents' credit card. The addresses matched- they were from a computer that was registered to you, Mr. Greer."

"I don't understand," Mr. Greer said.

"Mr. Greer, how many computers do you have in your possession?"

"Four. Mine, my wife's, Olivia's and Kristine's."

"Are they all registered in your name?"

"I believe so."

"Mr. Greer, we'd like to see Olivia's computer. We believe that she may have stolen Saige's identity and may be the one behind the Twitter account. We aren't sure, and therefore we have to see her computer and browser history in order to prove her guilt or innocence. "

"Hold on," Mrs. Greer stopped the detectives. "You've got to have some legal document permitting you to take possession of private property."

"We do," Detective Bates held up the warrant. "It allows us to check all of your computers. Mr. Greer, could you please bring us Olivia's computer?"

Mr. Greer got up to get the laptop. Everyone else- including Olivia, remained silent. When he got back, he handed the laptop to Quentin, and didn't say a word. Quentin opened up the laptop. He asked Olivia to input her password, and she did, silently. He then opened her browser history and began to search through it. Surely enough, Twitter appeared frequently throughout the history. Login pages, and dashboards. Quentin opened the Twitter homepage and typed in Saige's username in the login box. He clicked away, and a password appeared, showing that the password for Saige's login had been saved. Also in the history were visits to the amazon pages of the things that Saige had allegedly ordered, as well as several visits to Saige's Facebook page. Quentin looked grimly at Detective Bates and Detective Carrick. This didn't look good for Olivia.

"Olivia, we have just found multiple visits to Twitter in your browser history. You also have the password to the Twitter account that allegedly belongs to Saige Hudson and is in her name saved on your browser. There are also visits to the Amazon pages of the products allegedly ordered by Saige Hudson, and several visits to Saige's Facebook page. I'm afraid you're going to have to come with us down to the police station."

"Olivia?" Mrs. Greer turned to look at her younger daughter, shocked. "Did you do this?"

"No!" Olivia shouted. "No, I swear I didn't. Someone set me up, I didn't do it!"

"I'm sorry Olivia," Detective Bates said. "But the evidence is against you right now. Please come with us. Mr. and Mrs. Greer, as Olivia is a minor, you'll need to accompany us."

"I didn't do anything!" Olivia said again. "It wasn't me."

"Look, Olivia, the browser history is there. You had the password saved on your computer!"

"No, stop," this time, the voice was different. Kristine had stood up and was facing the detectives. "She didn't do it. It was me. I'm the one who's guilty. Olivia had nothing to do with it, I just used her computer. It was all me."

The Greer family was in Detective Bates office. Kristine hadn't said a word as they got into the car, saying that she would only speak once they were at the police station. Detective Bates and Detective Carrick entered the room and sat down, behind the desk. "Alright Kristine. We're listening. Why did you do it?"

Kristine sighed and looked around. "I didn't like the way Saige was treating Olivia. Olivia's new to this town, and I know how hard it is to start a new school. She didn't have any friends and was struggling. She didn't tell me at first, but I could see it. Then, Olivia told me about how Saige had refused to work with her for the science project they had been assigned to work on together. Olivia was so hurt by the way that she spoke to her! I couldn't believe that someone could be so arrogant. So, I took matters into my own hands. I went through Saige's Facebook profile and got tons of information on her. I then created the Twitter account. I just wanted Saige to pay a little bit and feel what it was like to have no friends at all, like Olivia. That was my primary aim. I felt a bit guilty at first. But then, Olivia handed in the project that she had slaved on all weekend giving Saige credit even though that girl hadn't laid a finger on the poster. Saige didn't even appreciate that! I felt justified about what I was doing. But the account backfired, and Saige became more popular! And when she became more popular, she started torturing Olivia even more. I felt horrible because I knew that I was the reason that Saige was being so horrible to my sister. So I decided that if I sent a tweet to someone really sensitive, they'd take it to heart and do something extreme. Then Saige would be blamed, and no one would want to be around her. A friend of mine has a sister who goes to Heighton High and used to be friends with Kellie. I heard her talking about her one day, and figured that Kellie would be the perfect target. I never thought that she'd try to kill herself!

But Saige did indeed get less popular and end up with no friends. And I began to love how much control I had over Saige's life. That was why I used the credit card- I decided I wanted to make sure that no-one trusted Saige, ever again. I never planned to admit that I was responsible for all of these things- and it seemed that no one would ever suspect me anyway, as it seemed so obvious that Saige was at fault. But when you detectives came to our house and thought it was Olivia...I couldn't have Olivia taking the blame for something that I did. I never should have used her laptop in the first place- the only reason I used it is because what I did had to be done quickly. My laptop is slow and useless, while Olivia's is quicker and easier to use. That's the only reason I used it."

"Kristine, you're over eighteen, aren't you?" Detective Bates asked. Kristine nodded, tearfully. "Unfortunately, this is going to have some horrible consequences for you. Not only will you be charged with a misdemeanor of cyber-harrassment, you'll also be charged for identity theft and credit card fraud. You could go to jail for as long as thirty years, but since you've cooperated, I'll put a good word in with the judge."

"I'm so sorry," Kristine said, beginning to cry.

Chapter 18

By Sunday, everyone knew that it was Kristine who was behind the account. People reacted to the news in different ways; some had gone and apologized to Saige for treating her badly, while others accused her of being a fake. Saige graciously accepted the apologies and ignored the name-calling. Through this incident, she had grown up. She no longer cared about popularity. She also now protected her Facebook account. She had gone and apologized to every single person who she had been mean to.

Kellie was up and back on her feet. She attended school and found herself thrust into the spotlight. Many people had approached her to tell her that they were there for her if she ever needed it, and apologized for the way they had treated her in the past. Saige also spoke to Kellie, apologizing again for the trouble that she had caused her. Kellie forgave her, graciously saying that it wasn't really her fault and that if she was in Saige's position, she would have probably done the same thing.

At lunch, Saige was welcomed back at her old table. She invited Kellie to come and sit with them, and she accepted. Saige had come to learn that Kellie was indeed a very nice person. In the years to come, they would become close friends.

Around halfway through lunch, Olivia came up to Saige and Kellie and asked if she could speak to them privately. They agreed, and moved to a quieter and more secluded area.

"I just wanted to say sorry on behalf of my sister," Olivia began, looking at the ground. "And I wanted to apologize from my side too. Kristine would have never done those things if it wasn't for me. I'm sorry that you two had to suffer so much. Saige- you might have said some mean things to me in the past, but that's nothing compared to what happened to you. You almost got charged with something that you didn't do. And Kellie, you could have died because of what Kristine said. I'm sorry for ignoring you every time

you tried to be nice to me too. The truth is, I was insecure."

"I'm sorry too, Olivia," Saige took Olivia's hands in hers. "I'm really sorry for everything I said to you. If I could take it all back, I would."

Olivia smiled. Many years later, these three girls would still be in touch. They were brought together by a negative incident, but had moved on, forming a close friendship. They never had forgotten what had happened, but each of them had grown from it, learning valuable life lessons. They would never make the same mistakes again.