



CHAPTER 1

SUMMER SUN

Molly wasn't sure how long she'd been staring at the same page. The summer sun streaming across her desk made the letters on the white paper dance and swirl. She blinked hard, tried to force herself to concentrate, but the muddle refused to shape into words.

Molly sighed. Her head ached and the neon numbers on the desk clock glared at her: 11.47am. Had she really been sitting here for nearly three hours? She was already way behind on her revision schedule — carefully colour-coded, tightly timed, each hour plotted and allotted to a different

subject. It had felt so safe, so ordered. It had made her feel in control in the chaos that had descended on the family after Mum...

“Dad, I’m going to the launderette.” Molly pushed back her chair quickly, sending a pile of revision notes fluttering across the floor.

The washing machine had been on the blink for a week. Dad had promised to get someone to fix it but he hadn’t. Molly shoved some dirty clothes into a bin bag and made her way downstairs.

“I’ll pick up some food for supper, OK?”

No reply.

She glanced into the lounge where Dad was sitting staring at the TV, still in his pyjamas, unshaven, eyes glassy.

He didn’t seem to have heard.

He didn’t even notice when she let herself out of the front door.