

THE IN-CROWD

CHAPTER 1 A NEW SCHOOL

Cameron McKenzie sat on his bed and looked at his new school clothes. With his red hair, the red jacket looked terrible. It wasn't fair. Today was his first day at an English school. England! His friend Iain was always telling jokes about the English and now he was living there.



He didn't know anything about the move to England a month ago. Then one day his mother said, 'Shona, Cameron, we've got some news.' She smiled. 'You're dad's got a new job! In Manchester.'

His sister Shona said excitedly, 'Manchester? Fantastic – it's got some really cool clubs!'

His mum laughed.

'But I don't want to leave Scotland!' Cameron said.

'Please try to understand, love. It's important for your dad.'

And three weeks later they moved.

...

Cameron really didn't want to start school in Year 10. 'They've all been there for three years, so they've already made friends,' he thought. 'I bet it's horrible ... not like Scotland. *And* the school's probably got a terrible football team.' Cameron loved football. He was very short for his age, but in football that wasn't important. Secretly he planned to play for his favourite team, Celtic, one day. He kicked his school bag. No friends, no football and a stupid English school.

Cameron walked into the kitchen. Shona smiled at him.

'Hey, big brother, don't worry. It'll be OK!'

'I'll be in the car,' he said. Shona was only trying to help. He knew that. But he didn't want to talk to her. 'It's OK for Shona,' he thought. 'She loves meeting new people and doing new things. She'll soon make some English friends.'

Cameron's mum drove them to their new school, Didsbury Manor. 'Enjoy your day,' she said. They got out of the car and walked into school. Cameron was behind a tall good-looking boy and pretty blonde girl when they suddenly stopped. Cameron crashed into the boy.

'Hey, you, be careful!' the boy said angrily.

'But ... but it was an accident,' Cameron started to say. But the boy wasn't listening. He turned to his girlfriend and said something. They both looked at Cameron and laughed.

'Forget it, Cam,' Shona said. 'See you later.'

...

Cameron finally found his classroom. There was a group of about ten students in the centre of the room. The good-looking boy and his girlfriend were in the group. They were all talking and laughing loudly together.

'Hi, Ellen. Wow, you're really brown!'

'Yeah, we went to Ibiza. It was fantastic. We went to a different club every night. The clubs are, like, really cool!'



Anyway, I met this Spanish boy ... It was great fun. What about you?’

‘Jack, how are things? You’ve got a piercing! That’s so cool.’

‘Hey, Justin! How was Florida?’

‘Florida? It was OK, I guess.’

Cameron looked at the group of students.

They all seemed happy

and popular. He wanted to be more like them. ‘I bet they have a lot of fun. I’d love to be friends with them,’ he thought.

Some of the other students were looking at the group too. Others sat in pairs and talked quietly. Suddenly he heard a voice behind him.

‘Hi, there! Good holiday?’

‘I went walking in the mountains with some friends ...’ But the boy wasn’t talking to him – he was talking to one of the girls in the group! The group stopped talking and they all looked at Cameron.

‘Matt! Hello ... Yeah, good. And you? I bet you didn’t go walking in the mountains!’ Ellen said. She smiled at Matt.

Just then a teacher walked in.

‘Right, everyone. Sit down. I’m Mr Grant and I’m your class teacher this year.’ He stopped. ‘Jack Sullivan, is that a piercing? Take it out. This is a classroom, not a fashion magazine. You can’t wear piercings here – you know that.’

The class laughed.

‘Now, we have a new student this year, Cameron McKenzie. Cameron’s just moved here from Scotland ...’

Cameron didn’t hear the rest. Everyone was looking at him and his face was going red. He looked down at the desk while Mr Grant told them about their lessons for the year.

...

‘Right, time for lunch. Don’t forget that homework for Friday,’ the French teacher said. Everyone started to leave the classroom. Cameron looked up. Two boys were looking at him. He remembered their names: Justin and Matt.

‘Er, where do we go for lunch?’ he asked.

‘Are you from Scotland, then?’ Matt said.

‘Aye, from Saint Andrews.’

‘*I from Saint Andrews?*’ Justin said. ‘It’s *I am*, you know. *I am from Saint Andrews*. Does no one teach you to speak correctly in Scotland, then?’

‘No, not *I – aye*. A-Y-E. It means *yes*,’ Cameron said.

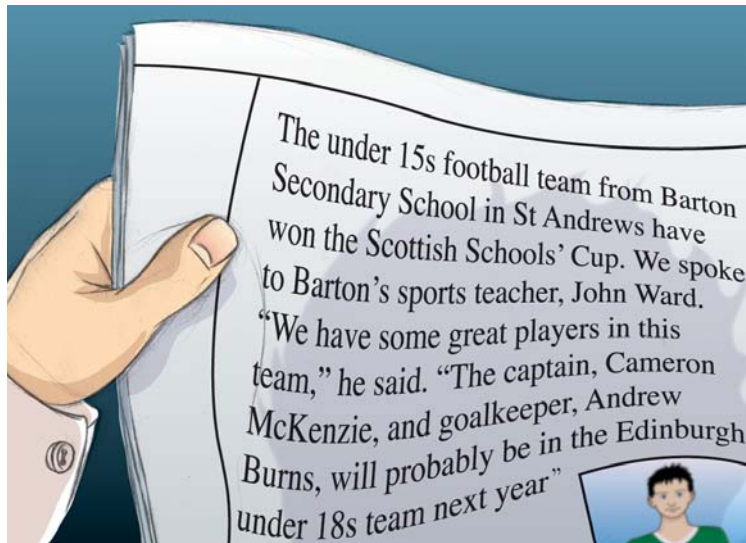
‘Aye, aye,’ Justin and Matt said a few times. They laughed and then walked out.

Cameron put his books in his bag and slowly followed them. They were probably going to lunch. He was right. He got some food and sat down at an empty table. Two girls and a boy sat down at the other end of the table. Justin and Matt were sitting at the next table with a few other students.

Suddenly, Justin said loudly, ‘Cameron’s a girl’s name, you know. Like that one in the films, Cameron Diaz ...’ Matt and Justin both laughed.

‘But she’s much better-looking. And she’s taller!’ They laughed again.

Cameron finished eating. For the rest of the lunch hour he read a sports magazine. There was a story about his old football team.



'That's impossible now,' Cameron thought unhappily.

...

The afternoon classes seemed really long, but finally the last lesson finished.

'See you tomorrow.'

'Yeah, see you later.'

'Phone me tonight, then.'

'Bye.'

Everyone was talking to someone – except Cameron. He put his things in his bag and walked out.

Shona was waiting for him outside. She was in the centre of a group of students and they were all laughing.

'Hey, Cam,' she said, 'the English are good fun!'

Everyone laughed – except Cameron.

'I want to be back in Scotland,' he thought.

CHAPTER 2 NEW FRIENDS

Next morning, Cameron arrived at school early. He was sitting at his desk when a bag hit him in the back. It was Justin's.

'Oh, sorry ... who's that? Oh, it's the little Scottish boy! He's so small, I didn't see him there,' he said.

'But with that red hair, it's difficult *not* to see him!' his friend Matt said. They both laughed.

'Hey, Cameron!' It was the boy from his table at lunch yesterday. He seemed friendly. 'Don't listen to those two. They think they're cool. But people only talk to them because they're friends with Jack and the others.'

'Er, who's Jack?'

'He's the captain of the football team and he's, like, the leader of the in-crowd ...' the boy answered.

'The in-crowd?'

'Yeah, you know, the popular group. They always wear cool clothes and go to the coolest parties. Well, they think they do!'

'Oh, right. And did you say that he's the captain of the football team?' Cameron asked.

'Yeah. That's him.' The boy pointed at someone.

'Oh, no!' thought Cameron. 'I crashed into him yesterday – the leader of the in-crowd ...'

'Anyway, I'm Victor.' He smiled. 'Do you like football, then?'

'Yeah, I was captain of the team at my old school,' said Cameron. 'What about you?'

'Me? No way!' Victor laughed. 'I haven't got time for football. I'm in the drama group and we're doing *Romeo and Juliet*. We started working on it in the last week of the holidays, and we have two or three rehearsals every week.'