

A N N A M A I N W A R I N G

REBEL

WITH
A



CUPCAKE

To eat or not to eat —
is that even a question?



JESOBEL JONES says what she means and eats what she wants. She is who she is, no regrets.

When a wardrobe malfunction leads to a brutal encounter with a mean girl, though, Jess's confidence takes a nosedive. Being fat has never bothered her before. She has her cupcakes and she eats them, too. But then the boy of her dreams invites her to a party, and Jess can't help wondering: is her focus on food keeping her from what's really sweet in life?

Anna Mainwaring's bold and hilarious debut novel points out – and pokes fun at – the intricate ironies and contradictions of being a teen girl. You'll fall hard for the unforgettable Jesobel Jones and her whip-smart take on the world around her.



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Anna Mainwaring



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For Grace and Beth



CHAPTER ONE

**Invisible Rule #1:
Sometimes being a girl sucks. And blows.
All at the same time.**

“We’ve only got an hour,” Hannah whimpers, grabbing the hair straighteners.

“Actually, it’s 57 minutes and 39 seconds.” Izzie peers at her phone. “38. 37. 36.” Her bottom lip quivers and I think she’s going to cry. “I don’t think I can take the stress.”

“I know,” Hannah says. “Let’s all phone in sick. Or pretend we’ve been abducted by aliens.”

“Stop panicking,” I suggest. “I mean, all we’ve got to do is get ready to go to school.”

They both stare at me as if I’ve suddenly grown an extra head.

“Jess. Not now. Don’t start the whole ‘clothes are just clothes’ thing. You may be right but surely even you can see that this is the worst day of the year.” Hannah is now desperate, going through a pile of clothes on the sofa. We’re in the basement of her house, where we always hang out, normally a happy place full of music, food and a very strong Wi-Fi connection.

Not so happy today.

Today is Own Clothes Day, the most nerve-racking day imaginable.

Izzie is in front of the mirror, putting on her fourth coat of mascara. She's going for the wicked-fairy-who's-fallen-on-hard-times look, and amazingly, she seems to pull it off. She looks like someone out of an advert — quirky yet glamorous all at the same time.

“You'd never guess you were a Manchester City fan until three months ago,” I say.

Izzie humphs. She doesn't like to be reminded that she's made the bizarre transition from football fan to white witch. Not quite like Jadis in Narnia — we're short of polar bears and sleds round here — but she does think she can do magic. Worse still, most of our school believes her. But this means that she can go for the emo look and no one will hate her for it.

Next to her, with the dark red hair and pale complexion — that's Hannah. She's more conventionally dressed in a series of cunning layers that bring her in at the right places and out and up at the right places. With her big eyes and ringlets, she looks a bit like a Disney princess. But whereas Disney princesses are never famous for having much going on between their ears, Hannah is on course for eleven A-pluses in her national exams. Clearly not just a pretty face ...

Hannah turns around and stares at her backside.

“Do my slag lines show?” she asks.

I look closely, as only a best friend can at another friend's arse, to see if her panties are visible. “Nope,” I say, “you pass the slag test.”

She smiles contentedly and goes back to work on her eyebrows. I'm saying nothing, but in a few minutes, it'll look like two slugs are sitting on top of her eyes. For an intelligent girl, she clearly doesn't mind drawing on fake eyebrows that make her look — well, to be honest — a bit stupid.

Then there's me. Jesobel — Jess for short. I sort of like my name cos

it sounds pretty. But older people always look shocked when they're introduced to me. Apparently, the original Jezebel was some woman from the Bible who got executed for doing magic, and then her dead body was fed to the dogs. Not really a lifestyle to aspire to.

But maybe it's my name that's marked me out as a bit different. Because while these two are in crisis, I'm just sitting here reading the latest post on my favorite blog, *Fat Girl with Attitude*.

That is until Izzie says, "And what are you wearing today?"

I look at her, bemused. "Er, this?" I wave a hand in the general direction of my body.

"You're Year Eleven! That's what Year Nine will be wearing!" Hannah cries.

I look down at my so-called skinny jeans and Hollister top. She has a point — I have been wearing the same outfit for the last two years. (Don't worry, it has been washed. I don't mean LITERALLY wearing it for two years — that would be gross.)

Izzie grabs my bag. "Let's see what else you've got. Did you bring the leggings?" She rummages through it, tossing one garment aside and then grabbing the next with glee. "Yes!" she cries, and I'm sent to the corner to change clothes. Apparently, layered T-shirts, short skirt and leggings are so much better than what I had on before. With a sigh, I add my prefect badge to my new and improved outfit. I get to stalk the corridors at lunchtime and report any bad behavior.

"That is so much better," Hannah reports back. I stare at myself in the mirror. A girl rather larger than Hannah stares back. But she's smiling, so that's okay. Some might say she's fat, and on a bad day, I'd agree with them. I'm not a whale, mind, just, you know, curvy. And curves are good, aren't they? I've read many blog posts telling me that, but then the photos of curvy women that go alongside them show women that have clearly never eaten ice cream or even thought about a chip. My idea of curves is having boobs that actually wobble when you run upstairs.

I digress. You might be wondering why there's so much fuss over what we're wearing, and you know, I'm kind of with you on this one. But then again ... let's think it over for a minute.

Take an all-girls' school and stick it in a reasonably posh area — South Manchester — stuffed full of football players (and their perm-tanned wives), doctors, dentists, lawyers, TV presenters and artists, who all want their darling daughters to be the BEST. It's like *The Hunger Games* without the bows and arrows — a fight to the death to be the cleverest, thinnest, prettiest, most popular girl in the school.

So, it's bad enough on a normal day when we have to wear regulation uniform — gray skirt, gray blazer, gray socks. (I think they want our souls to be gray.) Own Clothes Day is worse, much worse. Every detail of what we wear will be noted, analyzed and posted online within seconds of us arriving at school, accompanied by mean comments if we've got it wrong. This is why Hannah and Izzie are freaking out. But even though I know all of this, I'm still not that bothered. I mean, there are more important things in the world than clothes, aren't there?

And by things I mean food. Now that I'm dressed, I'm feeling a bit hungry and thinking that food might lighten the mood.

"I know what will make things just tickety-boo," I say. (I know it's an old-fashioned word. I was brought up mostly by my grandmother. This shows from time to time.) I pick up the plastic container that I have carefully carried from my house, a few streets away, and tease open the lid.

Izzie and Hannah simultaneously sigh as if they have both just seen the most beautiful sight in the world. Which they have, if I do say so myself.

I know what you're thinking — we're girls and food is bad because food makes us fat. That's the invisible rule, isn't it? If you're a teenage girl, you should hate your body, hate food and hate yourself.

Well, I don't think like that.

I don't get why food is the enemy. Have you noticed that people are often nicer when they're sitting around eating and talking, rather than not eating and being miserable? Yes, Cat, if you ever get around to reading this, I do mean you.

And also food never lets me down. And there aren't too many things you can say that about.

Cupcakes eaten and clothes sorted, it's on to hair and makeup. Within seconds, the basement is full of the familiar smells of teenage girls: scorched hair, body spray and scented lip gloss.

Finally, Hannah stops looking terrified. "Okay, we're fine for time and we all look great. Result."

We stare at our reflections in the mottled mirror that hangs on the wall of the basement. Three cool but different girls smile back.

"Come on, time to go," Izzie says, and that's that. Let the games begin ...



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ANNA MAINWARING studied English Literature, which led to a career in banking. She left to travel and then to train as a teacher. Anna took part in NaNoWriMo in 2012, and after endless drafts, *Rebel with a Cupcake* was born. When not writing, Anna can be found walking up hills, or in cafés. She lives in Cheshire, England, with her family and a murderous goldfish named Moriarty.

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