

CHAPTER ONE



This is Josie Kate Jenkins. She lives in a two-story, white house, with a long porch on Clover Lane, in the town of Elm Creek. She's seven years old and will start second grade after summer break.

Her best friend, Bailey, lives in the tan house right next door. She and Josie Kate spend a lot of time creating their own adventures in Elm Creek, **which usually end with Josie Kate getting into some kind of trouble.**

Bailey has been visiting her grandparents in the city all week, so she missed the new neighbors moving in across the street. She was excited about the new neighbors, but Josie Kate wasn't.

Elm Creek Elementary was getting a new principal, and

Josie Kate did **NOT** want to be neighbors with the new principal. She couldn't think of anything worse!

Bailey was coming back from her grandparent's house today, and Josie Kate decided to climb her favorite tree in the front yard while she waited for her to come home.

Josie Kate is good at climbing trees. That's also why she loves squirrels so much. They're her favorite animal because they're even better than she is at climbing trees.

Josie Kate reached up and grabbed the first branch. She swung her legs up and climbed on top of the branch. She slowly slipped her bottom off the branch and wrapped her legs around it. She hung upside down. Everything looked funny.



Her friendship bracelet that Bailey made her almost fell off her wrist. She caught it. She and Bailey had made friendship bracelets for each other on the first day of summer break.

They had worn them every day and Josie Kate's had gotten a little too stretchy.

She slipped it back onto her wrist, stretched upward, and pulled herself onto the tree branch.

She climbed a few branches and made it to her favorite spot. It was a branch big

enough for her to lie on without falling out of the tree.

She liked to lie there and watch how the sun would shine through all the branches. It was beautiful.



She closed her eyes and listened to the leaves rustle in the wind. This was one of her favorite places to be. It was peaceful. That is, until **she heard someone scream.**

Her eyes popped open.



She knew that scream. She had heard it before, lots of times. She turned her head and saw Mary Katherine Kirkpatrick running down the sidewalk across the street. She was wearing a dress, as always, and had a giant bow tied in the top of her hair.

"It's attacking me!" she shouted.

She was waving her hands in the air and running wildly, as her sandals slapped the sidewalk. A squirrel scurried away from her on the grass.

Josie Kate rolled her eyes.



Mary Katherine was always dramatic about everything.

Last year, in first grade, Mary Katherine screamed and threw a fit because Billy Baker burped during lunch.



Billy Baker is the most horrible, meanest, and grossest boy in school, but he wasn't even sitting at the same table as Mary Katherine.

She had acted like he had walked over and intentionally burped right in her beauty pageant face.

Yep, Mary Katherine Kirkpatrick entered every beauty pageant within driving distance of Elm Creek.

She had never gotten first place, but she always acted like she was going to be **the next Miss America.**



Everytime she introduced herself to anyone, she would say her whole name “**Mary Katherine Kirkpatrick,**” like she was someone important or something. Even her introductions were dramatic.

She probably freaked out because the squirrel looked at her, thought Josie Kate.

Mary Katherine just **HAD** to be the first kid to go over and meet the new principal of Elm Creek Elementary School. She always wanted everyone to like her best.

She was jealous that Josie

Kate was going to live across the street from the new principal, but Josie Kate didn't care. She didn't **want** to be neighbors with the new principal. She didn't want to meet the new principal- at least until she got sent to her office for doing something wrong. It wouldn't take long, since **Josie Kate had a problem with getting into trouble.**

She watched Mary Katherine run away down the sidewalk. Josie Kate wondered if Mary Katherine was going to start

flying soon, since her hair bow was big enough to be a kite.



Josie Kate giggled and sat up on the tree branch. She looked over and saw the squirrel hiding in the principal's flower garden.

"Poor little guy," Josie Kate mumbled. "She's a scary sight, isn't she?"

Just then, something flew past the squirrel and made a loud **"POP!"** The squirrel ran across the yard, jumped on a tree, and ran out of sight.



Josie Kate quickly turned her head and saw a boy standing on the principal's front yard. He was holding a slingshot and grinning.

"Oh, no you didn't!" she shouted. Josie Kate was in such a hurry to get out of the tree that she jumped and rolled on the ground. It surprised the boy.

He jumped and turned toward Josie Kate. She stood up, turned around, and looked at him.

The boy looked at Josie Kate, smiled big, and started waving at her.



“Hi there!” he shouted. “I’m Wyatt.”

Josie Kate did not smile back as she glared at him.

