

One

I'm going to tell you what happened with my bike. So whatever you're doing, stop doing it. Put down your phone or your tablet or whatever and just *listen*.

I'd spent the last few days dealing with another annoying problem. It had to do with the park up the street from me. *My* park. (It isn't really, but that's how I think of it.) The mayor of our town wanted to build townhouses on it. I wasn't going to stand for that. So I did this thing where I fought it—and I *won!*

And just as I'm finished with that, something else happens. I'm standing at the park with my G-ma. That's what I call my grandma because she's the best *ever*. And we're looking at the park and feeling all good about ourselves. Then Lissa—my best friend, who's *also* the best ever—comes running up to me. She looks real nervous and scared. When I asked her what was wrong, she told me someone had stolen my bike. Right out of my front yard! My parents got me that bike for my last *birthday!* It's pink with a checkerboard seat and a little silver bell! I love that bike more than *anything!* And someone's *STOLE IT!!!*

AAAAAHHHHH!!!!

I have this thing where I get real mad when something goes wrong. It happens all the time. Too much, I guess. But that's who I am. And when I get like that, it feels like a volcano is about to blow inside me. Then I go around yelling and screaming a lot. That's where my nickname comes from—Izzy Jean the Big-Mouth Queen. Someday I'm going to find out who gave that nickname to me. (It was on the chalkboard in school one morning, next to this dumb drawing of me.) And when I do, boy I am going to give it to *her*. Or *him*. Or *them...*

Anyway, Lissa told me about my bike being gone. Then the volcano started rumbling. I breezed past her and my G-ma and headed straight for my house. I didn't have

to look in a mirror to know my face had turned red. My fists were tightened into hard little balls. And I could've spit fire like a dragon.

"Izzy!" Lissa blabbered a few steps behind me. "Now, don't get all, y'know, the way you do..."

But I didn't pay any attention to her. I swear I could've punched a hole in a brick wall at that moment.

When I got home, I marched right inside. I found my mom and dad in the kitchen. They were sitting at the table, eating sandwiches. Huh? What?! My bike had been stolen! How could they be *having lunch?!?*

"How can you be *having lunch?!?*" I squawked. "While someone's out there riding *my* bike around?! What kind of parents—"

My dad put his hands up. "Now, Izzy," my dad said. I knew that sound in his voice all too well. *He's trying to calm me down. That means I'm not going to like what comes next...* "Just take it easy."

"Take it easy?! Someone stole my bike, and I'm supposed to take it *EASY?*"

"We've already called the police, Izzy," my mom told me. "They were here, and they made a report."

A report? I didn't know police had to...

"Do a report!?"

"No, not like a *book* report," my dad said with a little laugh. Then he saw I wasn't laughing back, so he stopped. "They have to do paperwork when there's a crime. It's called a police report. Then they bring that back to the police station."

I stood there staring at him, and he stared back.

Then I held my hands out and shook them. "*AND???*"

“And what, sweetheart?”

“And that’s all they’re going to do? *Write a REPORT???*”

“No, Isabella,” my mom said. She likes to use my full first name sometimes. This is *her* way of telling me to calm down. “That’s just where they start—with the report. Then they spread word to the other police officers. Not just in our town, but in the towns near us, too.”

“And then what?”

“Then all the police keep a watch for your bicycle.”

“That’s *IT?*!”

My dad shrugged. “What else do you expect them to do? A house-to-house search?”

“Uh, *yeah!*”

“This isn’t the old Soviet Union, Izzy,” he said. I had no idea what the “Soviet Union” was, but it probably had to do with history. My dad loves history. And I think he says things like this just to show off how smart he is.

“Well, I’m not going to sit around and just *wait!*” I told them.

“What do you have in mind?” my mom asked.

“You’ll see...”

Two

Lissa and G-ma were waiting for me outside. Lissa looked scared half to death.

“What happened?” she asked.

I breezed past her again, and she me followed again. G-ma trailed behind both of us but said nothing. I think she just wanted to keep an eye on us.

“The police came and did a *report*,” I said.

“The police did a *book* repor—?”

“A report about my bike, Liss,” I told her. “They bring it back to the station. Then they tell other police officers, who’ll look for it. Y’know, when they’re driving around and stuff.”

“Oh...”

As soon as I got to the sidewalk, I turned left.

“Okay, then what are we doing now?” Liss asked.

“I’m going to get it back.”

“Huh? I don’t understand.”

“I know who took it.”

“You do?”

“Yeah—Stupid Face.”

Lissa gasped. “Seriously? How do you know?”

“I just do.”

“Uh, Izzy...that’s probably not a good enough reason to say she took it.”

“It is for me.”

“Stupid Face” is a nickname. (I’m sure you figured that out already.) And this time I was the one who gave it to someone. Her real name is Madison Pace—and I can’t *stand* her.

She's one of those people who thinks they do everything right. She wears the right clothes. She has the right friends. She likes the right music. She says the right things. And if anyone thinks differently, she's treats them like dirt. She's been nasty to me from the first day she moved here. So I started calling her Madison Pace with the Stupid Face. (She doesn't *really* have a stupid face, by the way. I'm not even really sure what 'Stupid Face' *means*. But hey, the nickname rhymed—just like mine...)

I got to the end of my street and made another left turn. Lissa kept trying to talk me out of doing this. We went four blocks and she didn't shut up once.

"She's *always* wanted that bike," I reminded her. "Remember when I first got it? She saw me riding it around and couldn't stop looking at it."

"Yeah, but—"

"Then she was like, 'I want a bike like that, too!'" I did a pretty good impression of Madis—I mean Stupid Face's voice. It would've been funny if I weren't so angry.

"I know, Izzy, but—"

I didn't hear anything she said after that. My mind was made up.

We got to Stupid's house, which was huge. And like everything else about her, it was so *right*. The lawn was cut just right. The bushes were trimmed just right. Everything was perfect. The paint...the windows...the mailbox...all of it.

I pushed the button by the front door. There was a deep *bingggg-bongggg* inside. I already decided I'd be real nice if her mom or dad answered. Yelling at them wouldn't get me anywhere.

But when the door swung back, it wasn't her mom or dad. It was *her*.

Her lips squished into this little shape for a second. Then—unfortunately—she started talking.

“What do *you* want, Big-Mouth?” she asked.

“You know perfectly well, Stupid-Face,” I replied.

Her whole body tightened up when she heard that.

“I really don’t,” she said.

“My *bike*,” I told her. “I want it back, right now!”

She pretended to look shocked. “I don’t have your dumb bike!”

“Yes you do. It was stolen earlier today. And I know it was you because you’ve *always* wanted it!”

“I did *not* steal your bike!”

“*Don’t lie!*” I howled.

We went back and forth this way for a few minutes. We were like two dogs barking at each other in the street or something.

Then she put her hands on her hips and said, “I wasn’t even *here* earlier today!”

I stared at her hard, looking for the lie in her face. She stared back at me, and she didn’t even flinch.

Then someone said softly, “Hi, Madison.” It was Lissa. I’d forgotten she was standing behind me.

“Hey, Liss,” said Stupid Face’s stupid face.

“I really don’t want to get in the middle of this,” Lissa went on. “But can you *prove* you weren’t here earlier?”

Madison turned and called for her mom. Mrs. Pace came to the door a moment later. She was a tall and thin with dark-brown hair. And—I admit it—she also had a very pretty face.

“Yes, Maddie, what do you—oh...hello, Isabella. Hello, Alyssa.”

“Hi,” we both said at the same time.

“Mom,” Stoop went on, “which mall were we at this morning?”

“Piedmont Hills,” she said. “Down Route 32. Why?”

Stupid gave me this nasty look for a second. Then she said, “Alyssa wanted to know.”

Her mom nodded. “It’s Piedmont Hills Mall, dear.”

“Thank you, Mrs. Pace,” Lissa said nervously.

“Any time!”

They both went back inside then. And Stupid gave me that same nasty look as she was closing the door.