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Opening extract from

Amy Green Teen Agony Queen

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amy green

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boy trouble

Sarah Webb

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Amy's Glossary

I live in Ireland, which is a pretty weird place at the best of times. So I've jotted down some notes to help you understand what I'm on about!

Pennys: The Irish version of Primark. Home of way cheap clothes, and fashion saviour of many a teenage girl, moi included.

Brian O'Driscoll and Gordon D'Arcy: aka BOD and Darcy. Very attractive Irish rugby players with legs to die for. Especially in muddy rugby shorts. I have conflicted views on rugby players (see Crombies below).

The Guards: Our police force is called "An Garda Síochána", which translates as "the peace guard". We call them "the guards" or "the Gardaí". This isn't a grisly crime book, so they only come into it once, when Amy gets— Oops, don't want to spoil the story already!

Emos: People, usually teenagers, who are into "emotive hardcore music" eg My Chemical Romance and I Would Set Myself on Fire for You (yes, this really is the name of a band!).

Emos wear a lot of black and are very attached to their Converse boots (black of course) and checked Vans, the more scuffed and beaten up the better. They also

love black eyeliner – girls and boys. I have a bit of a soft spot for Emos.

Crombies: Boys, usually, but not exclusively rugby players, who wear Abercrombie and Fitch or American Eagle and other designer gear. They also wear wear "Dubes", aka Dubarry deck shoes.They say "Ledge" a lot (Legend). Like this, "Charlie's so cool, he's a complete ledge." They are the closest thing we have in Ireland to Neanderthal man. And, of course, D4s find them wildly attractive – figures!

D4s: Girls who live in or aspire to live in Dublin 4, a posh area of Dublin. They wear Ugg boots, skinny jeans or minis, and are addicted to fake tan and hair straighteners. They love shopping and have a passionate love affair with their mobiles. Bullying is second nature to some of them – it's in their designer jeans (sorry, genes). They are, in general, a sad bunch and to be pitied. "Oh My God" (pronounced "Eoi Moi Gawd") is their fav expression or the abbreviated version: "OMG".

Oh My Goddesses: Another name for D4s.

Drummies: The D4 girls who hang around in packs in this huge shopping centre in Dundrum. They clearly have nothing better to do, folks!

Wagon: A girl who is a nasty piece of work ie: "She's a total wagon."

Suicre: Irish for sugar. Pronounced "shoe-kra".

ER: Emotional retard or extremely retarded.

Sap: Kind of like an ER but a slightly nicer way of describing misguided people, especially boys.

Mark Rothko: A dead Russian/American artist who painted huge, side-of-a-bus-sized abstract canvases (which means they have no people or things in them, just colours and shapes). They are AMAZING. Looking at them is like falling into a giant paint pot. He's my very fav artist in the world. Along with Georgia O'Keeffee, who lived in a desert and mainly painted sheep skulls and gi-normous flowers. She's also dead.

Chapter 1

"Boys!" Clover taps her pink gel pen against her top teeth, making a hollow rattling noise. "They never change. What idiots."

She swivels round in her office chair and presses a button on her computer. Her printer whirrs into action. She hands me two A4 sheets.

"Read this and weep, Beanie."

To agonyaunt@gossmagazine.com
Monday
Dear Clover,
Please help! It's boy trouble (what else?). I hooked up with this mega cute guy two weeks ago at a Sinister Teen Frite Nite. The year ahead of me in school. But I have no idea where I stand.

We've been to the cinema a couple of times and he

texts me a lot. But I'm confused, one minute he's all over me, the next he's completely ignoring me. What should I do? Play it cool or play along?

I'm seeing him tonight, please advise.

Anxious in Artane, otherwise know as Wendy, 14.

To agonyaunt@gossmagazine.com

Wednesday

Dear Clover,

I wrote to you yesterday about a boy. Well, today I found out he's been spreading nasty rumours about me in school. Saying I kiss like a washing machine! I think it's because I told him to go easy on Saturday night. I wanted to watch at least some of the film.

I'm so embarassed. All the boys in my class are calling me Wendy Whirlpool and the D4 girls are all sniggering at me in the corridors and spinning their fingers round in a circle. I don't know what to do. It's a nightmare. I haven't been able to eat all day. My friends are telling me to pay no attention, but I can't stop thinking about it. I feel like everyone's staring at me.

I'm going to pull a sickie tomorrow and Friday, but I'll have to go back to school on Monday.

Please help me, I'm in bits.

Morto,

Wendy

My eyes widen as I read Wendy's emails. I cringe inwardly. I understood exactly how Wendy feels – sick to the stomach with worry. Feeling dozens of pairs of eyes

boring into her. Paranoid, unsettled, deeply unhappy.

"What do you think?" Clover says.

I shrug. "I feel sorry for the poor girl. I'd hate to be in her shoes."

"Any advice for her?"

I shrug again. "To ignore everyone I suppose, like her friends say. If it's anything like our school, it'll all blow over in a few weeks. I'd tell her to put her head down and pretend she's invisible."

Clover blows a raspberry. "*Wrong* answer!" She makes the "uh-uh" noise from *Family Fortunes.*

I stare at her. "If you're so clever, what's the right answer then?"

"Duh! Fight back. Don't let the sap get away with it."

That does sounds far more interesting. But it's hardly practical. "How? Wendy doesn't sound all that confident." I squirm a little. This is all getting a little too close for comfort.

Clover tilts her head. "Wendy?"

"The girl in the letter." I stab the printout with my finger.

"Right, Wendy. Let me think." After a moment, her eyes light up. "Hang on. Maybe she doesn't have to be confident. Maybe someone else can be confident for her."

Clover smiles at me, her eyes sparking. She's up to something. Goose pimples run up and down my spine.

"Oh no, Clover. Don't look at *me.* I'm so not getting involved. Just answer the letter. Tell her to ignore them."

But Clover just smiles knowingly. "Amy, I've made a decision, we're not going to be that kind of agony aunt."

"We?" I stare at her.

"Yes, *we*, Beanie. You're going to be my teen advisor."

"Really? Do I have a say in this?"

"Let me see." She taps her teeth with her pen again. "Ho-hum." She pretends to be thinking deeply. "No! And we're going to get, very, very involved. It'll be oodles more fun, don't you think? And I'll get the agony page and maybe even an article out of it, or my name's not Clover Wildgust. I can see it now." She puts her hands in the air. "Ta, da! 'Teenage Boys Dissing You? How to Get Your Own Back by Clover Wildgust.' No. Clover M. Wildgust. I do like middle initials, don't you? They add a bit of gravitas. Clover M. Wildgust. My very first byline. It'll be the start of a beautiful career." Her eyes go all starry.

I put my head in my hands. Mum's right, Clover *is* delusional.

"Right, Beanie," Clover continues. "This Wendy business calls for drastic action. We need a killer plan."

I'm worried now. When Clover takes drastic action it's usually just that – drastic. Like when she got bored one day and dyed her hair petrol blue or when she drove through Dublin city in her Mini Cooper with the top down in the middle of February for a dare. She was wearing a bikini at the time and she got her picture in two national newspapers. Gramps wasn't amused.

Clover stares at the noticeboard in front of her desk for a moment. I follow her eyes. It's chocka with all kinds of invitations, to book launches, beauty evenings, fashion shows and parties. My eyes flit past them and rest on the luminous green invitation. You can't miss it.

Dance the Night Away at
Sinister Teen Frite Nite

it screams in Gothic writing. Sinister FM's Teen Frite Nites are famous. They're on every Friday in Monkstown Rugby Club and they're strictly under sixteen and no alcohol. Anyone who's anyone goes to them. My friends Mills and Sophie are always trying to drag me along. I've been a couple of times but it's always so packed and I hate dancing in front of people. I get all self conscious. Then my stomach knots up and I feel sick and want to go home. Besides, it's always jammers with D4s and Crombies; it's like their weekly cattle market for new boyfriends and girlfriends.

"Grab that green invitation for me," she says.

I pass it to her and she turns it over in her hands. "Hey, Beanie, would I pass for a fourteen-year-old?"

I look at her carefully. What's she up to?

"Well?" she asks again.

I bite my inner lip, considering. Clover is on the small side, with the kind of straight, white-blonde hair you usually find on a Bratz doll. It's so long she can almost

sit on it and when it's windy, it sticks to her lip gloss. Clover's actual hair is real but the colour's most certainly not. Gramps says it'll fall out if she keeps bleaching it, but she just ignores him.

Today she's wearing a mouse grey Juicy tracksuit teamed with a white sequined vest. Her flip-flopped feet are resting on the large wooden desk; her petal-like toenails a warm peachy colour. She looks a little too knowing for a fourteen-year-old, too comfortable in her skin. Plus she refuses to wear Ugg boots, says they give her sweaty feet.

I shrug. "Maybe. On a dark night."

"It'll be dark all right." She smiles and her china blue eyes twinkle dangerously. "I have a plan. We're not going to let boys behave like ERs any more. We're going to take revenge. For Wendy." She waves her arms around excitedly. "For teenage girls everywhere. But I'm gonna need you, and your sweaty Yeti boots."

Chapter 2

Before we go any further, let me explain how I got sucked into the whole agony aunt business in the first place.

Clover recently landed a job on *The Goss* teen magazine during her gap year between school and college. It's kind of like *Mizz* or *CosmoGirl*, but with more articles and less celebrity pics. Not many Irish celebs actually live in Ireland, they mostly hang out in Hollywood, like swoon-boy Colin Farrell and the utterly gorge Cork lad with the big lips, Jonathan Rhys Myers.

The mag's paying her and everything. She wants to be a journalist, so it's great experience. Gramps set it up for her; he knows the editor's Dad. The agony aunt has just gone on maternity leave, so Clover asked could she give it a go. To her surprise they said yes. Clover reckons they were a bit desperate.

I overheard Mum tell Dave, her boyfriend (more about that later), "Clover is so jammy, things always seem to land in her lap." It must seem that way to Mum, but Clover works really hard when she wants to. Which in fairness isn't all that often.

There are more things you should know about Clover:

1. She has always been very spoilt, according to Mum. Mum and Clover are sisters and they have a bit of a love/hate relationship. I guess it's because of the age difference – twenty years!

2. Clover's seventeen going on thirteen (my age), which is probably why we get on so well. Technically she's my aunt, but we're more like sisters.

3. Clover is very popular with boys and always has some poor guy or other on the go. At the moment it's Ryan who's studying Arts at Trinity, an ancient college in Dublin with cobblestones and big metal sculptures worth millions sitting outside on the grass.

4. Clover lives at home with her dad, my Grampa, or "Gramps", as we both call him. I couldn't say Grampa when I was little, only "Cramps" and then "Gramps" and it kind of stuck. She used to call him "Gramps" in a baby voice just to annoy him, but again, it just stuck.

5. Clover's currently on what she has decided will be the first of many gap years from studying or working full-time. She has it sussed!

Clover got a place to study Arts at Trinity College (like Ryan) but she deferred for a year. The Leaving Certificate almost put her off academia for life, she says. She did

surprisingly well in her final exams for someone who's idea of studying is cramming the night before.

Clover also says she intends to live at home for years and years so she can spend all her money on the important things in life, like clothes, shoes and going out. Clover is no fool, according to Mum. But Gramps has just retired and he likes having Clover around the place, he says she livens things up. Clover says she keeps him young; Mum says she's delusional, and that her shenanigans will send him to an early grave.

6. Clover doesn't mince her words. Mum says she's borderline rude; Clover says she's just honest. If you ask me, the truth lies somewhere in between.

7. Oh, and she's mad about elephants.

Right, back to the letters. On Wednesday, Clover rang me in a complete flap.

"I've been reading some of the Dear Clover letters," she said. "You think you lot have problems, try paying for petrol. I haven't bought shoes in weeks. One or two of them are worth answering, but most of them, oo, la, la" – she makes a yawning noise – "boring. Someone asked me the answer to a percentages problem, as if I'd know. Ha!" She snorted.

"Hi, Amy, how are you?" I said sarcastically, after she'd finished ranting on about the dull and pointless letters for a few more minutes. And to be fair to Clover, some of them were total yawnsville. "How's school? Any news? Sorry I haven't rung in an age, can I take you shopping to make up for it?"

She gave a deep sigh. "Don't you start, Beanie. Your mother's bad enough. Listen, I need your help."

"Oh?" This wasn't exactly a new one on me. Usually it meant lending her some of my hard-earned babysitting money. Even though she's the one working, now on the magazine, previously in Tesco (on the till – she used to put on funny accents to amuse herself – American, German and Polish – she's brilliant at accents), Clover's permanently broke. She's a complete shopaholic and spends every cent she earns with the speed of an Olympic sprinter. Luckily that includes spending money on li'l ole me!

"You're a first year, right?" she asked.

"Last time I looked."

'So you know how their petty little minds work."

"Petty? Hey!"

"I should have said insignificant."

"Do you want my help or not?"

"Look, I'll come straight to the point. I've found someone with a proper problem to fix. It's such a sad email; her ex-boyfriend's behaving like a complete pig, surprise, surprise. I feel really sorry for her. But I have no idea what to tell her. Help me, Beanie. Please? It's my first agony aunt page and I really want to impress Saffy." Saffy's her editor. She sounds a bit scary, like a head teacher.

"What's your deadline?" I knew all the jargon from listening to Clover over the last few weeks: the deadline is basically the day you have to have your article or "piece" in to the editor. When you've emailed it, you've

"filed copy". The "by-line" is basically just your name at the top of the piece, by Amy Green in my case.

"Yesterday," she said. Clover always leaves everything till the last minute. Two years ago, she went on holiday with me and Mum to Rome and we came very close to missing the flight because of her. When we arrived to collect her in the taxi, she couldn't find her passport. Mum was not amused. She refused to speak to Clover in the cab, giving her dark looks and glancing at her watch and tut-tutting every few minutes, muttering about being late for your own funeral. I was stuck between them like a slice of ham in a sandwich, and it wasn't pleasant experience.

In the end we had to sprint to the gate. We were the last on the plane by miles and all the other passengers gave us filthy looks as we walked down the aisle with glowing faces, puffing and panting. We'd delayed the flight by twenty minutes and they weren't happy. They'd only held it at all because Clover had flirted outrageously with one of the security guards at the x-ray station. She told him she was a swimsuit model and she had a photo shoot in Rome that very afternoon and could he be an absolute pet and help her or she'd miss the flight. He'd phoned the gate and begged them to keep it open for a few more minutes. Clover deserved an Oscar for her effort. Even Mum was impressed.

Clover gave a huge breathy sigh down the phone. "Saffy's given me until tomorrow morning." She made an "AAAGHHH" noise that sounded like the fast spin of a washing machine.

I was amazed. It wasn't like Clover to get stressed.

"Beanie," she begged, "I really, really need your help. Are you busy? Can you come over? Like now?"

Busy? I was pacing the kitchen, trying to soothe my three-month-old baby sister, Evie, who was strapped across my front in a rainbow tie-dyed baby sling. I was simultaneously watching Alex trying to feed his wooden ABC bricks into the ancient video recorder which Mum rescued from the cupboard under the stairs and resurrected. Alex broke the DVD player a week ago by ripping the DVD tray out; he's more troll than toddler. Mum was on an emergency milk and nappies run, leaving me holding the fort.

"Just keep them alive," Mum had said as she flew out the door.

No, not busy at all!

"I'm babysitting," I said smugly. I prodded Evie in the hope she'd give a little wail to prove I was telling the truth, but she'd finally dropped off to sleep.

"Where's Sylvie? Has she finally done a runner? Wouldn't blame her with you lot." Sylvie's my mum.

"No! Of course not. She's just coming in the door. I'll ring you back." Mum walked towards me, dumped her heavily laden Tesco shopping bag on the tiles and threw her keys onto the kitchen counter with a clatter.

"Sorry, sorry." Her cheeks were flushed pink and I don't think she'd washed her hair for days, let alone brushed it. There was a white milky stain on the shoulder of her sky blue fleece and she looked wrecked. She held out her arms to take Evie off me. While she supported

Evie's weight, I untangled myself from the sling – David Blain eat your heart out.

When I was finally free I said, "Mum, Clover just rang. She said she'll help me with my maths homework if I call over."

"Did she really?" She squinted at me a little suspiciously. It was a first. Clover doesn't believe in homework, she says it's a complete waste of time and energy.

I nodded eagerly. "Yes. It's algebra."

Mum winced. Maths isn't her strong point. Alex threw a brick across the room and it banged at our feet, waking Evie up. She opened her tiny mouth and howled like a banshee.

"Go." Mum put Evie over her shoulder and patted her back. "You'll never get your homework done in this mad house. But back before dinner, OK?"