

Cassandra had never been a member of the popular crowd. Then, right before she was scheduled to start eighth grade, her father got a job transfer and they moved to another city. Cassandra thought that maybe she would finally get into the cool crowd at her new school. On the first day at her new middle school, Cassandra looked around for signs of popular girls. She figured she would be able to tell by their clothing and confidence if they were considered cool or not. At lunch she bravely joined some girls she'd observed in her morning classes - girls she'd judged to be popular. The girls eagerly accepted Cassandra and were incredibly sweet to her all week.

On Monday of the second week, Cassandra noticed that one of the girls in her new crowd was missing at lunchtime. She wondered where her new friend had gone. Much to her surprise, when one of the other girls mentioned Maria's name, the rest of the group all rolled their eyes. The leader of the group made a snide comment about how much she detested Maria, and Cassandra was surprised when everybody else chimed in with mean things to say about her. Cassandra found herself wondering what she had missed. The absent girl had seemed really nice and had gotten along with everyone the week before.

A few days later, when Cassandra joined the group for lunch, Maria had returned, and everyone was chatting as if nothing had ever happened. She could barely believe her eyes. Apparently, she thought, her new friends were less sincere about their friendship than she would have believed possible. Cassandra wondered if she should pull Maria aside and tell her about the mean things that had been said. Before she could act on her thought, Maria gave her a wink and whispered, "We'll talk later."