

**1** SARAH JACKSON WAS day-dreaming when Mrs Blakely, the biology teacher, snapped out a question. ‘So what is the Second Law of Thermodynamics, Sarah?’

Sarah knew the answer. Besides being a science whiz, she had scored higher than any of her classmates in the exams. She had hopes of going to university. But before Sarah could answer Mrs Blakely’s question, James Olson’s hand shot up. James was new at Hawksville High School and he was Sarah’s lab partner. He seemed to know the answer to every question.

Sarah listened to James’ deep, rich voice. ‘The Second Law of Thermodynamics: In any conversion of energy from one form to another, there is always a decrease in the amount of useful energy’.

‘Excellent’, Mrs Blakely cooed in admiration.

The teachers were all very taken with James. He'd just arrived from Jamaica last week and seemed to be an expert in everything. While the boys were shaking their heads and muttering things like 'nerd', most of the girls were busy admiring the handsome boy's velvet brown skin and perfect features. He was tall and slender, with high cheekbones and eyes that glowed like golden-brown gems. Sarah found him very attractive. And she knew she was the envy of every girl in biology because he was her lab partner.

When class ended, Sarah met her best friend, Tina Cordell, in the corridor.

'What are you looking so dreamy about?' Tina asked.

'James Olson', Sarah sighed. 'Isn't he amazing?'

'I suppose so', Tina said, shrugging her shoulders, 'if you like that type'.

Sarah frowned. 'How can you say that?' she asked. 'He's so good looking. And so smart'. As she walked, she pulled a huge orange from her backpack and began peeling it.

'He's smart all right', Tina agreed. 'In maths, James corrected Mr Massey and he was right. But if you ask me—' Tina was suddenly interrupted by Sarah.

'Look, Tina!' Sarah whispered. 'Here he comes!'

'Whoopee', said Tina, rolling her eyes.

'Hi, James', Sarah said, smiling her best. 'Want part of my orange? I'll never be able to eat it all'.

'No thanks', James said, his smile revealing perfect white teeth. 'I carry my own vitamin C'.

'Oh, that's right, you bring your lunch, don't you?' Sarah said. She'd noticed James never ate the tuckshop food.

'Yes, I've never cared much for school food', he answered.

'James, do you know Tina?' Sarah asked. 'She's my best friend'.

'Yes, she's in my maths class. How are you?' James asked Tina politely.

'Reasonable', said Tina.

James frowned for a second as if puzzled by Tina's answer. Then he turned his attention back to Sarah. 'Hey, Sarah, where's a good place to talk?'

Sarah looked at Tina, who rolled her eyes again and sighed. 'Well, we could go out to the courtyard and sit under the trees', Sarah said, glancing at her watch. 'I've got a few minutes 'til I have to get ready for athletics'.

'Great', said James as he headed for the door to the courtyard.

'Be right with you, James', Sarah said. She turned to her friend. 'Hey, Tina. Catch you later, okay?'

'Yeah, sure', Tina said, walking away.

Wonder what's wrong with her, Sarah thought as Tina left. Could she be jealous?

As Sarah exited the building, she noticed what a perfect spring day it was. The sun shone warmly from above, coaxing the flowering blossom trees in the courtyard into bloom and the birds chattered cheerfully as they scoured the floor of the courtyard for scraps.

James was sitting on a bench in a grassy spot under a tree. He looked up and smiled as Sarah approached.

'So, Sarah, tell me about yourself', James said. 'Do you come from a big family?'