



The

Cabbage Craze

ZOE CAME TO SCHOOL on Monday morning wearing cabbage. I don't mean there was a bit of food stuck to her sweater. No, it was more than that. She had several leaves of pale green cabbage sitting on her shoulders.

Zoe is not only the coolest girl in our class, she's also the smartest. She saw me looking at her and smiled. "Those are epaulets," she said.

Epaulets? Epaulets? What are epaulets? Hmm I looked it up. *Epaulet: a decoration sewn on the shoulder of a dress, coat or uniform.*

OK, so they're cabbage epaulets. I get that. But why?

Before I go any further, you need to understand one thing: If I had been wearing cabbage leaves, the other kids would have been teasing me. They would have been saying, "Hey, it's Caitlin Cabbage! Look at Cate Coleslaw! Ha, ha, ha! Caitlin, what are you wearing your lunch to school for?"

But this was Zoe. As soon as Zoe had a bowling party for her birthday, every other kid suddenly wanted to

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have a bowling party. When Zoe got a red backpack, red backpacks instantly became very 'in'. She was a leader—a trendsetter.

Sure enough, the next day, three other girls came to school wearing cabbage leaves. "Hey, Noor," I said to the girl who sits next to me, "You don't have to wear cabbage just because Zoe does."

"I'm not copying Zoe. I already had some cabbage leaves before Zoe ever wore hers," Noor said. "I'm *not* copying," she protested, as I raised my eyebrows. "I'm *totally* into cabbage myself."

The following day, three more girls wore cabbage to class. Would everyone do the same? When would it stop?

I wondered if it was against school rules. After all, our school does have a dress code, even though I don't think there is anything in it about not wearing vegetables.

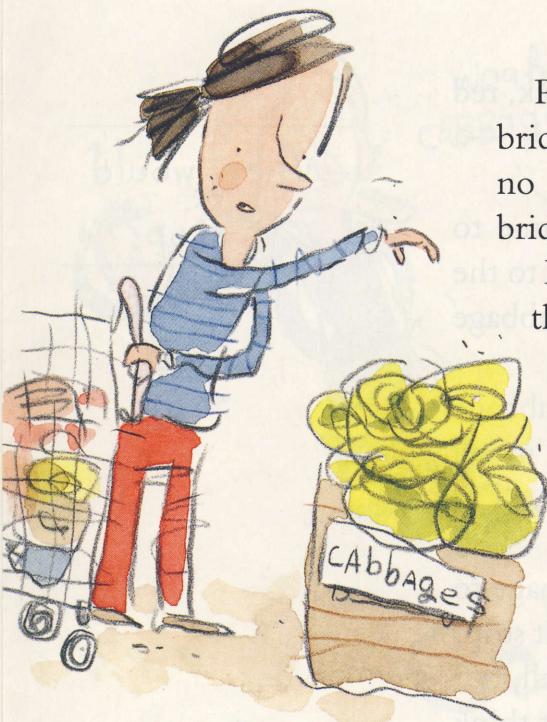
By the end of the week, over half the girls in our class were wearing cabbage leaves. I noticed that the cabbage girls were beginning to sit together. They weren't exactly mean to you if you weren't wearing cabbage. But they didn't try especially hard to be friendly either. The cabbage girls also had their own way of walking. They had to take little steps in order to keep the cabbage leaves balanced on their shoulders.

I started thinking about wearing some cabbage myself. Maybe that sounds crazy, but why not? I wanted to be able to sit with the cabbage girls and not have them stare at my empty shoulders like I was naked or something.

When I was grocery shopping with my mum, I nearly put some cabbage in our cart, but I had second thoughts and stopped myself. It would be too complicated to explain the whole thing to her.

When would it stop?





Plus, I know what she'd say: "If Zoe jumped off a bridge, would you jump off too?" (This really makes no sense at all. Zoe is way too smart to jump off a bridge ... and anyway, she's afraid of heights.)

But it wasn't only because of my mum that I dropped the cabbage idea. If I really wanted to, I'm sure I could have got hold of some cabbage leaves and worn them to class. I didn't do it because I had a weird feeling. I had a weird feeling that the day I came with pale green cabbage leaves carefully balanced on the shoulders of my favourite purple sweater would be the day that cabbage became uncool.

I was right.

The next day Zoe showed up for school without her cabbage. By lunchtime, all the other cabbage wearers had somehow managed to 'lose' their cabbage leaves as well. Cabbage was definitely out.

Zoe hadn't totally given up vegetables, however. The following week she had asparagus braided in her hair. "Hey, Zoe," I said, "Nice asparagus."

"Thank you. I needed some kind of hasp, and this seems to do the trick," she said, running her fingers through the green asparagus shoots.

Hasp? Hmm ... Like I said, Zoe is brilliant. I looked up hasp in the dictionary. *Hasp: a fastener.*

"Zoe, do you want a hairclip?" I asked. "I have an extra one."

"Thanks, Caitlin, that's really nice of you. I'll give it back tomorrow." Zoe removed the asparagus and put the clip in her hair.

"That's OK," I said. "You can keep it."

As Zoe adjusted the hairclip, I'm pretty sure a bunch of girls in my class crossed asparagus off their shopping lists. ■

