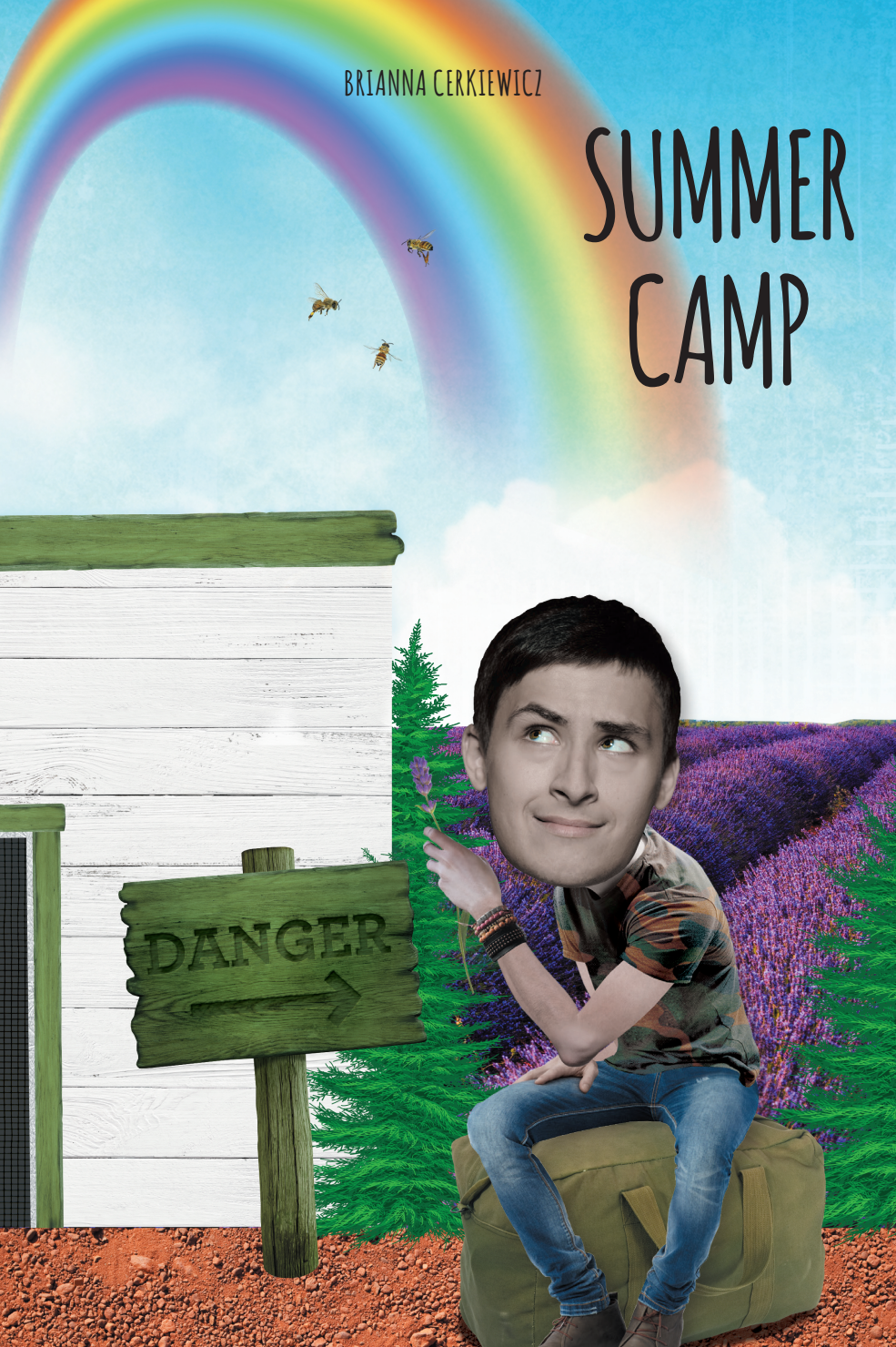


BRIANNA CERKIEWICZ

SUMMER CAMP





BASIL



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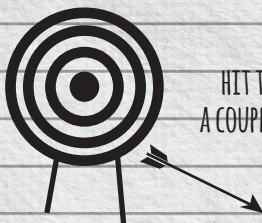
DEREK'S CAMP ACTIVITIES

THE SCAVENGER HUNT WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

1. ROCK SHAPED LIKE THE CAPTAIN'S NOSE
2. WATER BOTTLE
3. PIECE OF STYROFOAM
4. BEE
5. TRACTOR
6. PHOTO OF SOMEONE PROPOSING



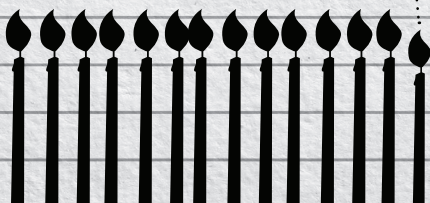
ARCHERY



HIT THE TARGET
A COUPLE OF TIMES.

EXTRA CANDLE FOR LUCK

13 BIRTHDAY CANDLES





LAVENDER



SPEAR BRUSH



CHAPTER 1

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

A plant sits on the kitchen counter. It has silver leaves. Purple flowers. It wasn't there yesterday.

"Happy birthday, Derek," Mom says. She's frying eggs on the stove. She doesn't look up.

"It's not my birthday," I say.

"Early birthday present, then."

"And you thought I'd like ... flowers?" Mom can be a little clueless sometimes. How many kids want flowers? Especially boys who are almost 13 years old.

Now Mom turns around. Looks at me. The eggs sizzle. She cooks everything on high so it's ready faster. Which means a lot of burned food.

“Mom, eggs.”

She points at the plant with the spatula. “It's lavender.”

The eggs pop. Mom turns back to the stove. She flips the eggs.

Ugh! The bottoms are black.

“I'm having toast,” I say. I look at the plant. The flowers are tiny. Delicate. They smell like my grandma's house.

“I've invited the Kingsides over for dinner,” Mom says.

“Okay.” Eric Kingside is my best friend. His mom is Mom's best friend. I don't see what that has to do with anything.

“A birthday dinner,” Mom says.

“You do know my birthday's not for two weeks, right? I mean, you did give birth to me. Or did you?” Then I laugh.

She winks. Puts a plate of burned eggs in front of me.



For dinner Mom's made shepherd's pie. It's my favorite. We always have it on my birthday. What's going on? It's driving me crazy that I don't know.

"So," Mom says. She puts down a water jug. "You might be wondering why we're celebrating Derek's birthday two weeks early."

Eric looks at me. Raises his eyebrows.

I sit up straighter. Finally!

Mrs. Kingside looks smug. She knows something.

"This year," Mom says. "You and Eric won't be here on your birthday. You'll be at summer camp! So that's why we're celebrating now."

"Camp?" I ask. "Really?" I've wanted to go to summer camp for forever. It was always at the wrong time. Or too expensive. Or too far away. Or too ... whatever.

"Really," Mom says. "Camp Rainbow."

““Rainbow?”” I repeat. It sounds girlie. Lame.

“Yup.” Mom answers our other questions as we finish dinner. Yes, it’s a stay-away camp. No, we’re not allowed to bring our phones or iPads. The point of summer camp is to get away from normal life. Is there a lake? Yes. Canoeing? Check. Swimming? Definitely. Leeches? Um ...

“What is the lavender for?” I ask. I’ve just remembered the plant she gave me that morning. It’s still on the counter. I bring it to the table.

“The camp’s at a lavender farm,” Mom says.

I’m still suspicious. Camp Rainbow? A lavender farm? But it’s summer camp.



CHAPTER 2

CAMP RAINBOW

The two weeks leading up to camp pass slowly. Finally the day arrives. We pile into Mom's van. Mrs. Kingside sits in front. Eric and I are in the back. Our bags are with us.

It's a two-hour drive to camp. Mom gets us to play two rounds of 20 Questions. She only picks weird things. It's not fun. We give up. She turns on the radio. I look out the window. We're out of the city now. The highway goes on forever. There are

fields and fields. As far as I can see. But I don't see any lakes.

Eventually Mom turns off the highway. Now we're in a forest. Tall white trees are everywhere. They have round leaves. Don't know what they're called. The only plant I know is lavender. Ha-ha.

"Is that it?" Eric asks. He points through the windshield. I can see some blue between the trees.

"That's the lake. Yes," says Mrs. Kingside. "Camp's on the other side."

We keep driving. Reach a gravel parking lot. We're still in the middle of the forest. Lots of cars are here. Kids are getting out. Grabbing duffle bags from trunks. A sign says *Camp Rainbow*.

"We're here," Mom says.

Duh. I've already opened the door. Jumped out.

We unload our bags. Head toward the sign like everyone else.

There's a girl wearing a neon rainbow shirt. She holds a clipboard. "Hi," she says. "Who have we got here?"

Mom and Mrs. Kingside sign us in.

“Perfect,” the girl says. “Phones? Computers? Any tech stays with your parents. Even iPads.”

Mom holds out her hand. She wants my phone. I don’t want to hand it over. But I do want to go to camp. So I give it to her. Eric hands his over. Zero complaints from him.

“Thanks,” the girl says. “And one more thing. No one is allowed in the lavender fields. Ever. It’s a very dangerous place. You’ll be sent home if we find you there.”

Huh? The fields are dangerous? I guess some gardening tools are sharp. Maybe they don’t want us to break stuff.

“Camp’s that way.” The girl points at a path.

We say goodbye to our moms. Then we go down the path. It’s short. We come out in a field. There’s a big group of kids. Nothing looks organized yet. We throw down our bags. I sit on mine. And wait. Then I look around.

Trees surround us. I can’t see the lake. There

are camp cabins everywhere. Each looks different. Some are unpainted. Some are white. Those have green trim. Most are shades of the rainbow. Lots of purple. There's a big bell in the center. I hope I'll get to ring it. One cabin is for first aid. Some golf carts are parked. They are near a field of lavender.

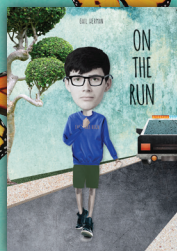
I can see the plant now. There's that smell. A sweet tickle shoots up my nose. Do I like the smell? Hate it? I can't decide.

Fifteen minutes later we get our cabin assignments. Eric and I are in Mugwort Cabin. Our counselor introduces himself. Calls himself the "Supreme Ruler of the Universe." Says he is the "Prince of Pancakes." And the "Captain of Crazyness." Hm. That's weird.

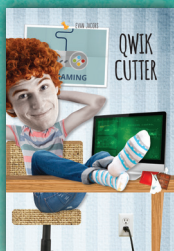
"Just call me 'the Captain' for short," he says.

He's really tall. Like over six feet tall. The man has dreadlocks that fall to his waist. Should I laugh? Am I impressed? I can't decide.

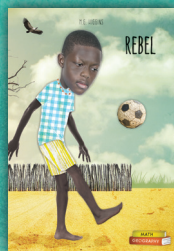
"Let's go, men!" he says. He marches toward a cabin. We follow.



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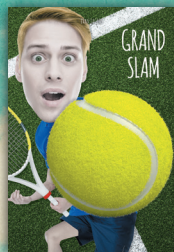
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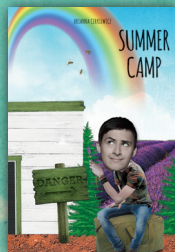
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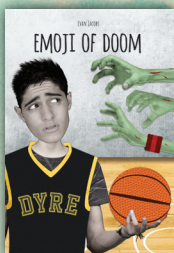
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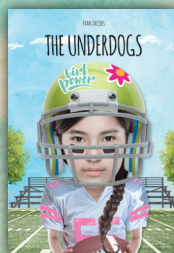
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SUMMER CAMP



BROWN EYES, TOP BUNKS,
ADRENALINE



BURNED EGGS, DREADLOCKS,
PERFUME

FINALLY! DEREK'S MOM SAID HE COULD GO TO SUMMER CAMP. NO PARENTS ALLOWED! BUT CAMP RAINBOW? IT SOUNDED GIRLIE AND LAME. TIME AWAY FROM HOME WAS TOO AWESOME TO TURN DOWN. AND THE CRIME HE UNCOVERED WAS EPIC.



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