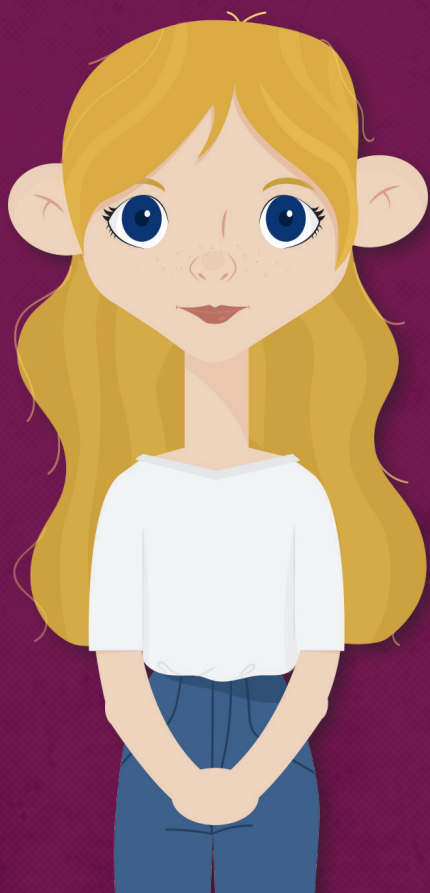
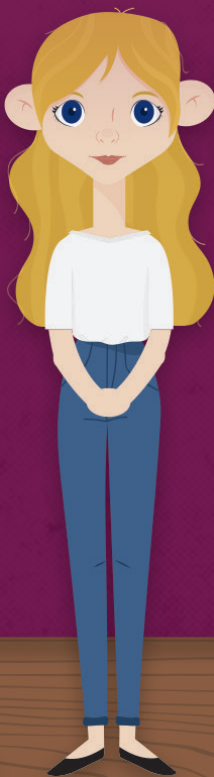
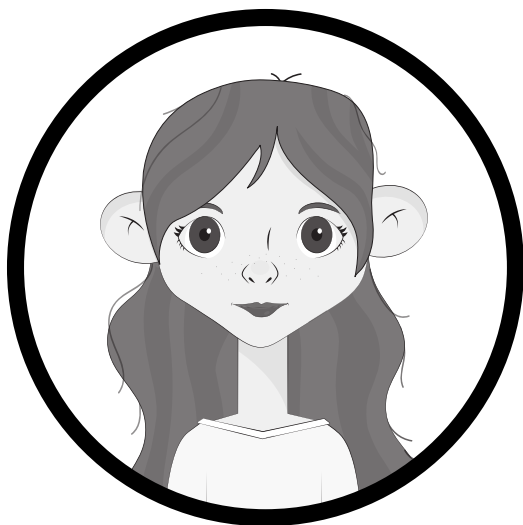
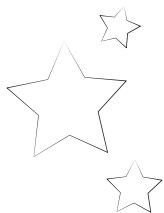


PARTY OF FOUR



Jeff
Gottesfeld





Ava

Age: 12

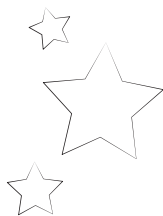
Favorite Food: falafel

Hobby: making slime

Biggest Secret: doesn't like candy

Best Quality: admitting when she's wrong

CHARACTERS



Sammi

Age: 12

Favorite Music: disco

Life Goal: to own a food truck

Most Disliked Chore: babysitting her little brother

Best Quality: insightful

SCHOOL'S OUT

“No more pens. No more ink. No more tests and having to think!”

The song had started at lunch. All the boys were singing. But it was a day too soon. The last day of school was tomorrow. Sixth grade would be over. Ava Smith and her best friend, Sammi Jones, looked at the boys.



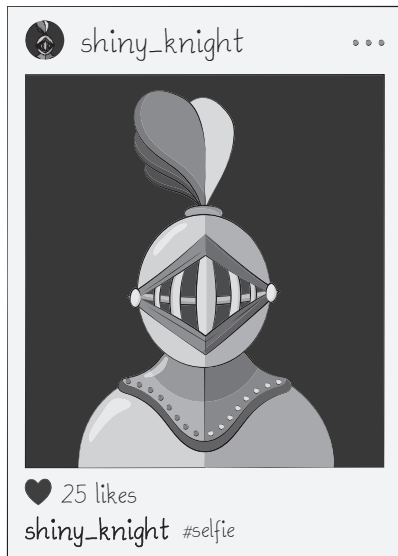
Today
←



Ava sighed. “Look! The boys are singing. It’s so lame.”

“Yeah, it is kind of lame,” Sammi said. “They’re just glad it’s summer. But good grief, keep to the beat.”

“Totally,” Ava said. “First of all, they need a new song. My parents sang that song. That was back in the Dark Ages. No one had cell phones then.”



“We’re 12 now,” she said. “Next year is middle school. The boys need to act mature. I wish just one would act like a grownup. They are being babies.”

“Okay, okay. I already agreed with you. It *is* kind of lame,” Sammi said.

Ava grinned at her friend. “Thank you. I knew you were smart. Who wants the attention anyway?”

The girls had met in the fall. Sammi had moved from New York. She had an East Coast energy. Cool short hair. Black clothes. She loved math. Math! And music. There wasn’t a song she couldn’t sing.

Ava was blond and thin. She never wore black. Art and swimming were her faves. Math was hard!

But Sammi had been placed at her table in math. The girl had helped her. Then it

was Ava's turn. She introduced her new friend to everyone. Now they were besties.

They had a summer plan. The girls would work at Stars Day Camp. It was a volunteer gig. They were too young for real jobs.

Ava would teach swimming. Sammi would teach singing. What was not great about that? Well, Ty and Alex would work there too. Whatever. No one said life was fair.



The bumper about Stars was the staff talent show. The rules were clear. Three or more kids had to be in each act. Ava and Sammi didn't know the other kids. Only

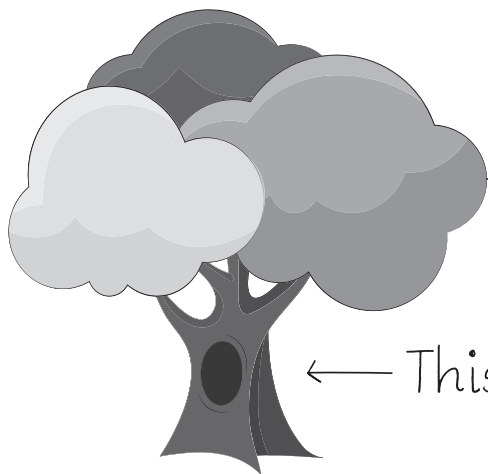


Ty and Alex were familiar. Share the stage with those silly boys? Ava said no. Besides, she had stage fright.

Sammi thought talent shows were overrated. She'd been in them since she was a kid. "Let's just wing it," she'd said to Ava.

Ava didn't have the nerve.

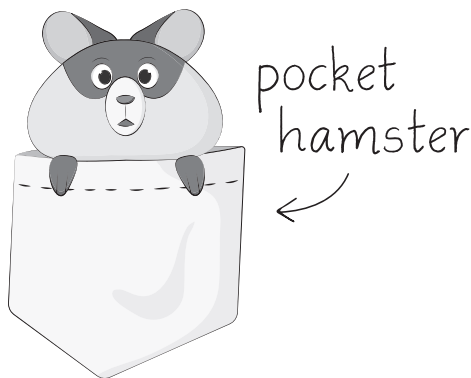
The June sun was hot. The girls moved under a tree. "Ty is cool," Sammi said. "He is smart and creative. I can see it in his eyes."



← This tree

Ava shaded her eyes. She looked over at Ty. He was with Alex. They were still singing that dumb song. Other boys were singing too. Lame.

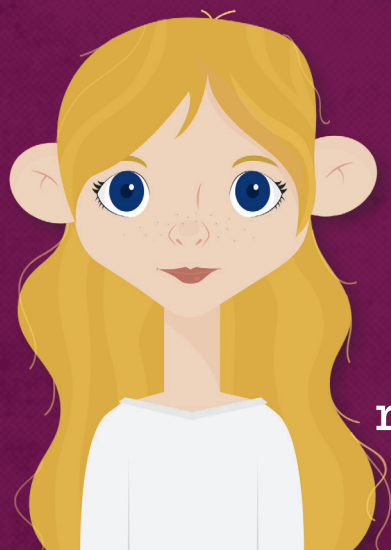
“Please,” Ava said, sniffing. “Remember what he did last winter? Took his hamster to the art show trip. It was in his pocket. Then it got loose. Ick! The poor thing ran everywhere. They kicked us out. We had to go back to school. Did you forget?”



“It was funny,” Sammi said. “It was *really* funny.”

PARTY OF FOUR

School's almost over.
Am I ready for an epic
summer? You bet! There's
just one little thing ...



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