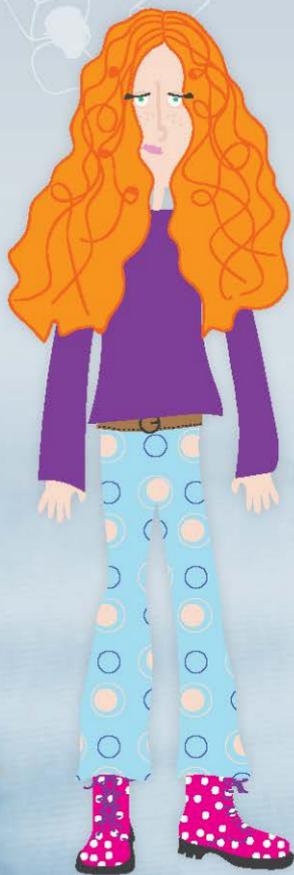
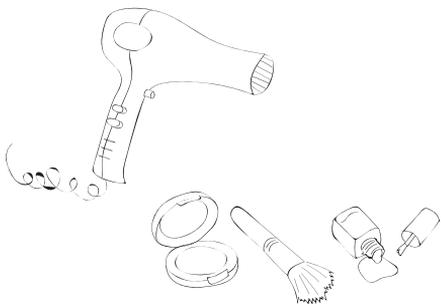


Standing by Emma

Jeff Gattesfeld







MEET THE



Emma

Age: 11

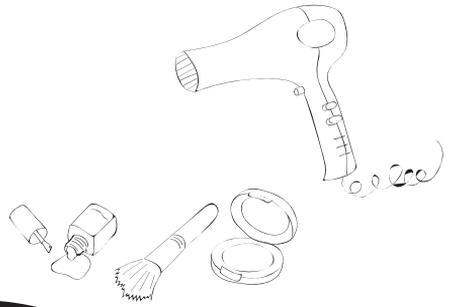
Favorite Old TV Show: *Gilmore Girls*

Best Sport: best second baseman on the school softball team

Future Goal: to be a movie costume designer

Best Quality: intelligence

CHARACTERS



Danya

Age: 12 (wishes she was 16)

Special Skill: can text faster than any kid in school

Secret Wish: spend more time with her mom

Future Goal: to be a movie makeup artist

Best Quality: loyalty

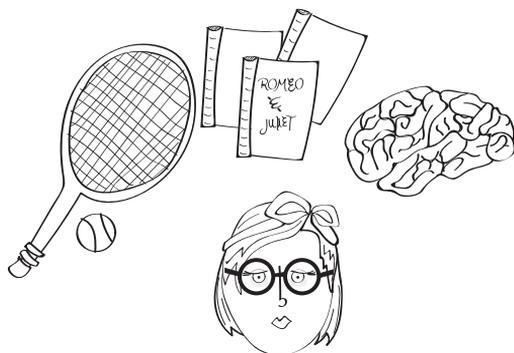
LOVE NOTES

Danya and Emma were best buds. They had been for a long time, even though they were very different.

Danya was tall for her age. She had long red hair. She was extra skinny. She loved her cell phone. Danya only read if she had to. And she was the class clown.



Emma was small. She had short blonde hair. She was extra fit. She loved sports. Emma was a big reader. And she was the class brain.



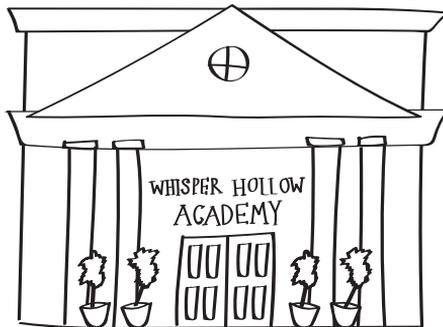
The girls were BFFs—best friends forever. It was like they could read each other’s minds. See into each other’s hearts. Everyone knew it too. All the kids in sixth grade called them “Demma.” They were *that* close.

Danya had other friends, but there was no one like Emma. Danya liked boys. Boys

liked her. She'd had a boyfriend. But she knew crushes didn't last. Emma would always be there for her.

Both girls lived with their moms. Danya's mom worked days. Emma's mom worked nights. They lived too far from school to walk. So Danya's mom took them in the morning. Emma's mom drove them home.

On a Monday in the fall, Emma's mom waited in her car by the school entrance.



Danya and Emma came right out when the

bell rang. They were excited. A boy named Anton had given Emma a note. Right before the bell. Emma had never had a boyfriend. But she liked Anton. He was tall, dark, and funny.



Danya knew how much Emma liked him. She had always told Emma to go and talk to Anton. But Emma never did. Until Emma got the note, Anton had never even talked to her. It was huge that he passed her a note. Scary too. It was so scary that Emma did not want to read it.

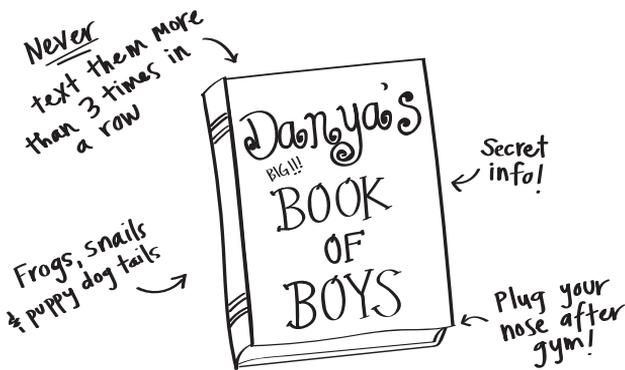


“What if he hates me?” she asked Danya.

“Boys who hate girls don’t write them notes,” Danya told her. She felt like she knew boys well. “Boys ignore girls they don’t like. They act like the girl isn’t even there.”

Emma still looked worried. “What if he’s the first? Maybe he sees me looking at him. Maybe he wants me to stop.”

“And maybe he’s inviting you to the dance.” The winter dance was in three months.



“No way!”



“How do you know unless you read it?”

“I don’t want to get hurt,” Emma told her.

They got into the car.

“Look. Emma. If you won’t read it? Give it to me. I’ll read it,” Danya declared. “Then I’ll tell you what he said. If it’s good, you can read it then.”



“No!” Emma said. “Then you’ll know. And I won’t.”

“That’s crazy!” Danya yelled.

“No shouting!” Emma’s mom told the girls to calm down. Her name was Rosie. That was what Danya called her. Emma called Danya’s mom by her first name too.

Rosie started the car and pulled away from the curb. “What are you guys yelling about?”



“We’re talking ... about a book,” Danya fibbed.

“Yeah, that’s right,” Emma agreed. She was grinning now. “Danya says she’s going to read a book. For fun. Then she’s going to tell me all about it.”

All three of them laughed. Rosie knew how much Danya did not like to read.

“I’ll want a ten-page book report,” Rosie



said. “And I am a very hard grader.”

They laughed again. Rosie turned onto the road. Three lanes each way. Five minutes later, Danya felt something pushed into her hand. She looked. It was the note.

She turned to Emma. “Want me to read it? Really?”

Emma nodded.

Danya opened the note. What she read made her eyes get big.

