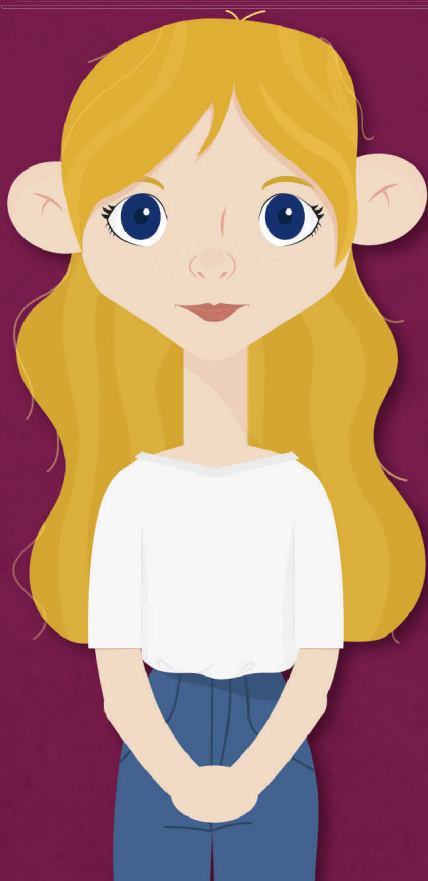
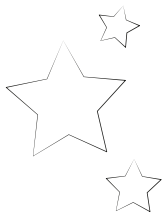


PARTY OF FOUR



Jeff
Gottesfeld



MEET THE



Ava

Age: 12

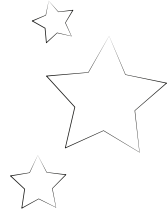
Favorite Song: “Girls Just Want to Have Fun” by Cyndi Lauper

Hobby: reading true stories and writing them

Biggest Dream: to become an Olympic swimmer

Best Quality: admitting when she’s wrong

CHARACTERS



Sammi

Age: 12

Favorite Music: disco

Life Goal: to perform in a Broadway musical

Greatest Challenge: moving from New York to California

Best Quality: insightful

PERFECT FRIENDS

Sixth grade was almost over for Ava. Tomorrow would be the last day. She looked around the school lunchroom. Then she smiled. Everyone was excited about summer break.

But Ava's smile quickly vanished. She frowned at two of her classmates. Ty and Alex had started chanting.

The boys sang the same chant every year. It was always on the last day of school. They started a day early this year.



Today
←



“No more pens, no more ink!” they chanted. “No more tests and having to think!”

Soon other students joined in.

Ava looked at her best friend, Sammi. “Those two are so immature.” She rolled her eyes. “Everyone who sings with them is too.”

Sammi stared at the boys. “It *is* getting kind of old. I know they’re just happy about summer. But they could at least sing on key.” She giggled.

“This is not funny.” Ava flipped her long blonde hair. “First, they need a new song. My parents sang this one. That was forever ago. Second, we’re 12 now. We’ll be teens next year. They need to grow up.”

“Okay, okay.” Sammi held her hands in the air. “I get your point.”



Ava grinned. “Thank you.”

Sammi shook her head. Her short dark hair swung back and forth. “You better get used to Ty and Alex. They’ll be with us at camp.”

“Don’t remind me. I love helping at Stars Day Camp. But those boys may ruin everything.”



Sammi shrugged. “They’re really not so bad. Ty is pretty smart. And Alex is so creative. Have you seen his artwork?”

Ava was shocked. “Ty and Alex are not so bad? Are you kidding? Look at them!”

The two boys had stood up. They were enjoying their chant. Ty was directing the singing. He moved his hands in the air. Alex swayed from side to side.



Sammi glanced at the boys. “I see them, Ava. You know we have to be in the camp’s talent show. Ty and Alex could help us. Each act must have three or more people. I know you’re afraid to wing it.”

“You’re right. I’m terrified of that. You and I need a plan. We need more people too.

But there's no way I'm sharing a stage with those boys." Ava pointed at them. "Maybe we'll make new friends at camp. We could join someone else's act. Then I'll just stay in the background."

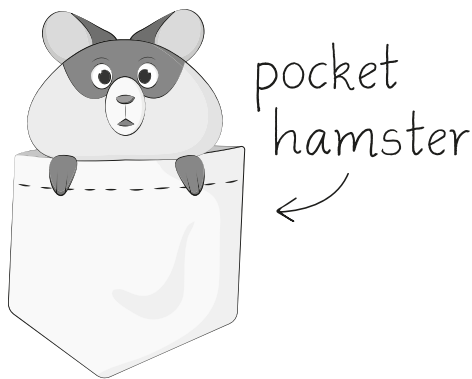
Sammi shrugged. "I don't know why you're scared. Talent shows are overrated. I was in so many when I lived in New York. They're the same here in California. Just have fun."

Ava couldn't take any more of the singing. She motioned for Sammi to follow her outside. "That's easy for you to say. You have all the talent in the world. Singing, dancing, playing instruments. All I do is write. That doesn't work for talent shows."

Sammi put her hand on Ava's shoulder.

“And you’re a great writer too. We’ll figure it out. I just think it would be easier if we had Ty and Alex’s help.”

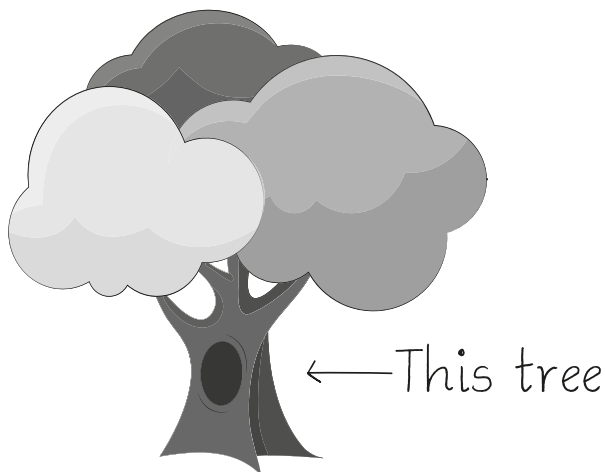
“Please stop, Sammi,” Ava said. “Remember what Ty did last winter? He took his hamster to the art show field trip. Ty had it in his pocket. Then it got loose. Ick! That poor thing ran everywhere. Our class was forced to leave the show. Did you forget?”



Sammi chuckled. “There’s no way I’d forget. That was hilarious.”

Ava smiled. “Yeah, it was pretty funny. But that doesn’t make it okay.”

Sammi leaned against a big tree. “So you don’t think you’ll ever be friends with Ty or Alex?”



“That’s right.” Ava folded her arms.

Sammi tilted her head to one side. “I’m just curious. What would make them the perfect friends for you? And you can’t say for them to be like me. That’s cheating.”



“Hmm. Let me think.” Ava pushed her hair behind her right ear. “They would be *mature*, first of all. I’d want them to be smart and love to read. Musically talented too. At least sing well.”

Just then, Ty and Alex came outside. Some students were still chanting in the lunchroom. The two boys walked over to Ava and Sammi.

“We really need a new song,” Ty said. “That one is so old.”

Alex looked at the girls. “Yeah. Do you two know any good ones?”

Sammi glanced at Ava and smiled.

Ava tried not to act surprised. But she was. She had assumed the boys loved that song. But clearly they didn’t.

She just nodded. “Changing it is a good idea.”

Ty grinned. “How about a classic rock song? Something like ‘School’s Out for Summer’?”

Sammi smiled and shrugged. “Maybe.” She knew Ava loved classic rock.

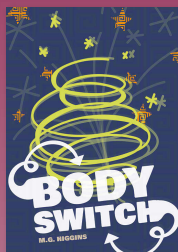
The bell rang. Lunch was over. Students started heading to class.

Sammi walked with Ava. “I told you! Ty and Alex *can* be cool.” She gave Ava a nudge.

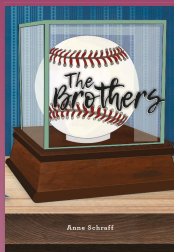
Ava thought for a moment. *Should I get to know them better? Nah. I already know enough. They still need to grow up.*



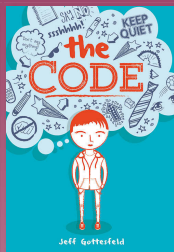
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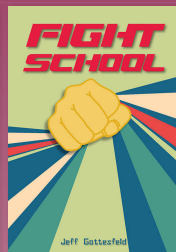
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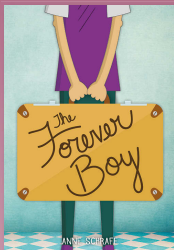
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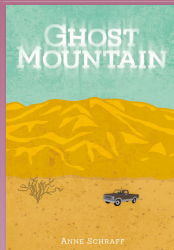
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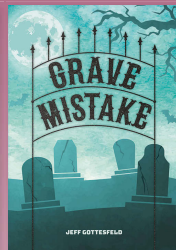
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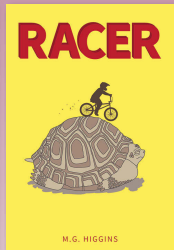
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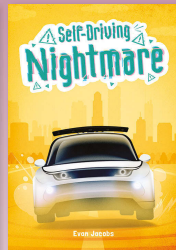
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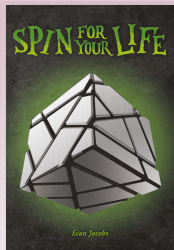
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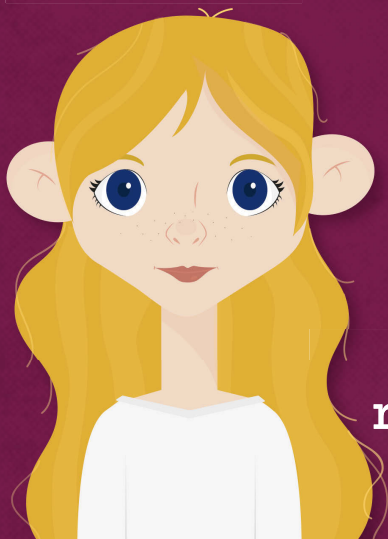
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PARTY OF FOUR

Am I ready to help out at day camp this summer? You bet! There are just a few problems. . .



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