



# Chapter 1

I still say it's not fair."

Lily Robbins looked up from her suitcase at her younger sister, Tessa, who was letting both arms flop to the bed, over and over and over — and, oh yes, over. Lily knew Tessa would have been doing it with her legs if the body brace she was wearing had let her. It was what she did when she was afraid and wouldn't admit it.

"What are you scared of?" Lily said as she tried to cram one more Camp Galilee T-shirt into her already stuffed duffel bag.

"I'm not scared of nothin'," Tessa said, scowling. "I just said it ain't fair."

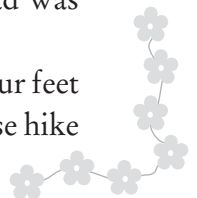
"Isn't fair."

"That's what I said!" The arms did a particularly hard flop. "It's not fair that I gotta stay here while you go to some dumb camp for two weeks."

Lily felt her lips twitch. "If it's dumb, why would you want to go anyway?"

Tessa's scowl deepened until Lily was sure her forehead was going to meet her chin. Nobody could scowl like Tessa.

"Besides," Lily said, "you're just now getting back on your feet since the accident. You'd have to sit and watch everybody else hike




and rock climb and sail — ” She stopped. Tessa’s eyes were going into slits.

“Are you scared of being here without me?” Lily said.

“No, that’s dumb.”

“Are you scared you’ll miss me so much you’ll cry?”

“That’s double dumb!”

 Lily climbed on top of her duffel bag and squished it down while she pulled the zipper closed. The bulging sides puckered, and she could almost hear her clothes groaning. She swiveled to face Tessa, who was still trying to maintain the scowl. Lily could see her big green eyes misting up.

“Are you scared I’m not coming back or something?”

“No!” Tessa said. She slammed her arms down so hard that China, Lily’s big stuffed panda, bounced two inches off the bed. Tessa turned her glare on him, so that all Lily could see was the wavy back of Tessa’s short dark hair. “You’re gonna forget about me while you’re gone,” she said. “That’s what’s gonna happen.”

“No way!” Lily said. She scrambled up and sat next to Tessa on the bed. Otto, Lily’s mutt dog, took that as his cue to join them and crawled out from under the bed and hopped up. Lily stroked his head and Tessa’s at the same time. “I’m only gonna be gone two weeks,” she said. “But even if I was gone the whole summer — or a whole *year* even — I wouldn’t forget you. You’re my sister.”

“Adopted,” Tessa muttered. “And I ain’t even that yet. That dumb judge still has to make it — what’s that word?”

“Official,” Lily said. “But I don’t need him to do that. You’re my sister already, and I’m not gonna forget you, so quit talking like a freak.”

Tessa turned to Lily and scoured her face with her eyes as if she were digging for traces of a lie. “Do you *wish* I was goin’?” she said.

“Well, yeah, du-uh!” Lily said. And she did. Tessa was still pretty rowdy and definitely stubborn, but she was nothing like the way she

was when she'd first come to live with the Robbins family. Lily was having trouble imagining what it was going to be like not having Tessa tagging after her every minute, asking ten thousand questions. Tessa was what Dad called streetwise, but she didn't know a lot of stuff most nine-year-olds knew. Lily had taken it upon herself to teach her.

*If I weren't so jazzed about this camp*, Lily thought, *I'd stay home and help Mom and Dad work with her*. But her parents had urged her to go. They said they needed some one-on-one time with Tessa anyway — and Camp Galilee was the best Christian camp for girls in the whole eastern United States — or so everybody said. Mom and Dad were sure that if anybody would enjoy the special programs they had at Galilee, it was Lily.

Besides, the Girlz were all going — Reni and Suzy and Zooey and even Kresha. Their church had made sure Kresha got a scholarship since her mom didn't have a lot of money.

*I have to spend all the time I can with my Girlz this summer*, Lily thought. *The end of August is gonna be here before I know it, and then I won't see them for a whole year. A whole year!*

"You wanna go real bad," Tessa said. She was still studying Lily's face.

"Yeah, I do," Lily said. She had to be honest with Tessa. The kid had lie radar. "But I also wanna be with you. Too bad I can't be in two places at one time."


Otto gave a growl and wriggled away from Lily, squirming as close to Tessa's side as he could, and sighed himself in. So far, Tessa was the only other person in the Robbins family besides Lily that Otto would even allow to touch him. Ever since she had come home from the hospital, he had to be on the couch or the bed or the chair next to Tessa. The only exception was at night, when, as always, he crawled under Lily's covers like a mole and slept there.

"Look at him," Lily said. "I bet by the time I get back, he'll have forgotten about *me* and only want you."

“Not gonna happen,” Tessa said — although the scowl did fade a little at the prospect. “I’ll make sure he doesn’t forget you.” Her eyes suddenly took on an impish gleam. “And I’ll make sure Shad Shiffer-decker doesn’t forget about you either.”

Lily felt her blue eyes narrowing. “That’s really okay,” she said.

“You know he likes you,” Tessa said.

 Lily grunted and got up to go to the dresser, where she raked a brush through her mane of red curly hair. She could see her usually pale face going blotchy in the mirror.

“You like him too — you know you do,” Tessa said.

“Shut *up!*” Lily said.

In the mirror, she could see Tessa grinning.

There was a knock on the door, and Art, Lily’s seventeen-year-old brother, poked his head in. “Dad wants to know if your bag is ready yet,” he said. “He’s got the air conditioner going in the van, and he’s ready to roll.”

Lily nodded toward her duffel bag and finished the second pigtail she’d just tamed her hair into. She grabbed the khaki hat that matched her shorts and perched it on top of her head. She gazed at her Camp Galilee T-shirt in the mirror. She was a camper from head to toe.

“Good grief — what have you got in here?” Art said. His face went red as he hoisted Lily’s bag up onto his shoulder.

“My stuff,” Lily said.

“You’re going to camp, for Pete’s sake,” Art said, grunting his way to the door. “All you need’s two pairs of shorts and a couple of T-shirts.”

“And underwear and socks.”

“Nobody changes underwear and socks at camp.”

“Gross me out and make me icky!” Lily said. “Just go — oh, wait — I forgot something.”

“How could you have forgotten something? Everything you own has to be in this bag.”

“Stop! I gotta put my journal in there!”

Lily stuck her hand between her mattresses and pulled out her Talking-to-God Journal and its special purple gel pen.

“Put it in your backpack,” Art said as he maneuvered his way out the door. “I’m not picking this thing up again. I’m about to get a hernia as it is.”

“What’s a hernia?” Tessa said.

“Don’t try to come downstairs by yourself, Squirt,” Art said to her over his shoulder. “I’ll come back and get you for the big tear fest.”

“What tear fest?” Lily said, following him down the steps.

“You’re leaving for two weeks,” Art said. “You’re going to cry.”

“I am not. Why would I cry?”

“You cry over commercials for AT&T long distance,” Art said. “Of course you’re gonna cry.”

Lily ignored him and jockeyed impatiently from side to side as Art made his way to the first floor and out the front door. Mom was waiting there, and Lily’s ten-year-old brother, Joe, was on his knees on a chair behind her, batting at her ponytail like a cat.

“Can I have Lily’s share of dessert while she’s gone?” he said.

“Sure,” Mom said, brown eyes dancing. “And you can also have her share of chores.” Her mouth twitched in that way it did instead of outright smiling. Suddenly Lily felt a pang. She wasn’t going to see her mom twitch her lips for two whole weeks. She’d never been away from her for longer than a weekend.

“I’m gonna go up and get the Squirt,” Art said as he charged through the door and headed for the stairs. Although it was barely light out, his T-shirt was sticking to his back with sweat.

“Too late,” Joe said.

Tessa was almost to the bottom of the steps. *One more reason why she can’t go to camp*, Lily thought. *She still doesn’t do what you tell her to do half the time.*

But another shivery pang went through Lily. She was going to miss that too — and Otto — and the horse Big Jake out at the ranch nuzzling her neck with his soft nose. She was even going to miss Joe, the absurd little creep. The wonderful absurd little creep.

“Let’s go, Lilliputian,” Dad said from the doorway. He was wearing a moustache of perspiration, and even his graying red hair was sparkling with sweat. “I wish I were going to Maine to sit by the bay for two weeks.”

*And I wish I wasn’t! Not without all of you guys!*

Lily didn’t know where the thought came from, but as Mom hugged her and told her to have an amazing time and not to try to run the place the first day, Lily felt herself fighting back tears. She struggled to keep it from turning into a tear fest only because she didn’t want Art to be right. Sniffing while Dad pulled out of the driveway and onto the street, she waved until Tessa was merely a dot on the front porch.

But the minute Kresha bounded out of her apartment building — clothes poking out of her duffel bag, sand-colored hair sticking out of a lopsided ponytail, and a grin spreading ear to ear — Lily’s urge to cry disappeared.

“We are going to the camp, Lee-Lee!” Kresha cried. Lily grabbed her hands and jumped up and down with her while Dad shoved Kresha’s bag into the van. *I hope no one makes fun of her Croatian accent at camp*, Lily thought before reassuring herself. *Nah — we’ll always be there to protect her.*

They both climbed happily into the van, and the happiness built as they picked up each of the Girlz and headed north on the New Jersey Turnpike. They passed around a bag of Doritos to each other — since everyone had been too excited to eat breakfast — and switched seats a half dozen times. And, of course, their mouths ran nonstop.

“Okay — how *cool* is this gonna be, guys?” Reni said.

“You’re not scared there won’t be any other African-American girls there?” Zooney said. Her brow furrowed under her carefully curled bangs. Zooney was their worrier.

Reni raised an eyebrow at her. “Not that I was even thinking about it,” she said, “but my mom checked into it, and there’s ten of us.”

“Besides,” Lily said, “it’s not gonna matter because we’re all gonna be in the same cabin.” She darted her eyes from girl to girl. “You guys did request each other on the form, right?”

“You asked us that eight thousand times,” Zooney said.

“And I checked them all when we filled them out,” Suzy said, nodding her shiny bob of dark hair.

“Then it’s a done deal,” Reni said. Suzy, after all, was probably more efficient than the school secretary.

“What we do tonight in our *cabin*?” Kresha said. She’d been practicing saying that word for two weeks.

“Pillow fight,” Reni said.

“Unless it’s against the rules,” Suzy said.

“Let’s not tell scary stories,” Zooney said. “I won’t be able to sleep.”

“I say we play a game,” Lily said.

Reni grinned slyly. “What kind of game, Lil?”

“I don’t know. I’ll think of something.”

“You do always, Lee-Lee,” Kresha said.

Lily nestled back into the seat and smiled to herself. This was going to be the best. She and her Girlz would be together for two weeks with nothing to do but have fun and “discover a relationship with God.” That was what the brochure had said. *I’m gonna be good at that*, Lily thought. *I already have one*. She didn’t cuddle in with China and Otto and her Talking-to-God Journal every night for nothing.

“You know what I love?” Zooney said.

“What?” Lily said.

“We’re not going to have to worry about Chelsea and Ashley and all of them the whole time we’re gone.”



Reni grunted. “I *don't* worry about them.”

But Lily knew what Zooey meant. Chelsea and Ashley and their friends were the popular girls at Cedar Hills Middle School, and they never let the Girlz forget that *they* were never going to be “popular.” Even though the Girlz had stopped buying into that and were finding their own happiness, Lily had to agree that it was going to be good not to have to deal with it.

“What about Shad?” Reni said.

Lily snapped her a look. “What about him?” she said.

“Are you glad to be away from him too?” Reni said, dimples going deep into her cheeks.

Lily felt red blotches forming on her neck, like they always did when she wanted to hide her head in a hole. There was a time when she would have answered that question with a loud, “Gross me out and make me icky!” But Shad wasn't so icky anymore, and that was pretty confusing.

“Lily!” Zooey said. “You *do* like him, don't you?”

Only because Lily saw her father's ears practically coming to a point did she not shove an entire Rice Krispies treat into Zooey's mouth. Instead, she said, “Give it up, Zo. I'm not going there.”

The scenery changed as the day went on and they wound their way through New England. Trees arched over them, creating a welcome trellis, and Dad told them to roll down their windows so they could smell the air. It was cool on their arms and made Lily want to breathe until her whole chest filled up.

That afternoon they could smell salty air and watch seagulls circling as if they'd been waiting to guide them to Camp Galilee near the ocean. The further they drove, the more clearly Lily could imagine the five of them and their counselor setting out on Penobscot Bay in sailboats with bright striped sails.

“I *really* want to go sailing,” she said to the Girlz.

“Doesn't everybody get to sail?” Reni said.

Suzy shook her head. “It says it right in the brochure. Every cabin has a different activity.”

“Ours has to be sailing,” Lily said. “I’ve read three books on it.”

She didn’t add that she hadn’t understood most of it. It still sounded like the most exciting thing she could imagine — and she had imagined some pretty exhilarating things in her time.

“I hope we get a counselor that isn’t mean,” Zooey said.

“Didn’t the brochure say all the counselors were college students?” Lily said.

“Yes,” Suzy said. “Right on page two.”

“Is that what it said?” Dad grinned. “I think I’d better take you home then.”

Dad was a college professor. He was always moaning about university students and their shenanigans. Lily didn’t care whether they had shenanigans or not — whatever that was. It was going to be cool.

Long after lunch, a sign appeared pointing its arrow down a winding road where they could already see Penobscot Bay. The Girlz all cheered and didn’t stop until Dad brought the van to a halt in front of a building that had a big banner on it, which read:

## WELCOME TO CAMP GALILEE REGISTER HERE

“How ya doin’!” said a bubbly, short girl of about nineteen as she opened Lily’s door. “Drop your bags over here, and get your cabin assignments over there!”

“What did she say?” Zooey said. She slipped out of the van already chewing on a fingernail. “Put what where?”

“Stick with me, Zo,” Reni said.

They all said their good-byes to Dad and took off.

“We’ll get all your stuff, Lily,” Suzy said. “Don’t worry.”

Lily wasn’t worried, but as Dad held out his arms to hug her, she felt that pang again. He smelled like Dad — like old books and Irish



Spring — and she wouldn't smell that, or get one of his hugs, or sit in his study and talk with him for two whole weeks. At the moment, it might as well have been two years.

"You're going to come home changed, Lilliputian," Dad said into her hair. "I can feel it. This is a sacred place." He held her out by the shoulders to grin at her. "But don't change too much. I want to be able to recognize you when I come to pick you up."

"You are coming back, right?" Lily said.

Surprise flickered through Dad's eyes. "Of course. Two weeks from this very day."

"That's not so long," Lily said.

"It'll go by all too fast."

Lily nodded. She had a huge lump in her throat that was going to explode into tears if Dad didn't get in the van and go and stop smiling at her that way.

"You okay?" he said.

"I'm fine. You can go."

And then she threw her arms around his neck and said, "I love you, Daddy. Write to me."

"I'll do that," he said.

She broke away and ran toward where the Girlz were standing at a long table loaded with folders and staffed by girls who all looked like they could be in Dad's classes.

*It's gonna be fine — I'm gonna be with my Girlz, she told herself. This is gonna be a dream come true and we're gonna have the best cabin in the whole camp.*

The lump disappeared. The pang faded. She was smiling by the time she got to her little cluster of Girlz.

"What cabin are we in?" she said.

They all turned to her. Zooey was wild-eyed, and the others weren't much calmer.

"What's wrong?" Lily said.

“Me and Suzy are in the same cabin,” Zooey said, eyes swimming.  
“But we’re not with you guys.”

“Kresha and I are together,” Reni said. She bit her lip. “But, Lil, you’re not with any of us. You’re in a whole other cabin.”

“Nuh-uh,” Lily said.

The pang came back. Only this time, it was a full-fledged pain.





Chapter  
2

Lily just stared at the paper Reni handed her. There it was in black and white:

Asher Cabin  
Robbins, Lily

The rest of the names disappeared in a blur of tears, but it didn't matter. None of them belonged to her Girlz.

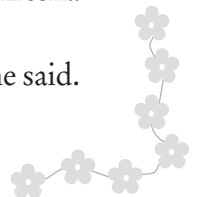
"This has to be a mistake," she said through the lump in her throat. "We all said we wanted to be in the same cabin."

"I asked about that," Reni said. "They said we would have taken up one whole cabin, and they knew we'd hang out together all the time and never meet anybody else."

*I don't want to meet anybody else!* Lily wanted to cry.

But the faces that looked back at her were all as stricken as she knew hers was. Whatever she did, they would do, and then some. Nobody could sob like Zooey. Nobody could retreat into herself like a snail the way Suzy did. Nobody could pitch fits like Kresha or argue like Reni.

Lily sucked in a deep breath. "It's just where we sleep," she said. "We can do everything else together."



“Do you promise?” Zooley said.

“Yes,” Reni said. “We’ll get to hang together — don’t freak or anything.”

“Come, Reni,” Kresha said. “We go.”

“We’re in Zebulun Cabin,” Reni called back over her shoulder as Kresha dragged her away.

“Why can’t they give these cabins names you can pronounce?” Zooley said, still furrowing her forehead over the cabin list. “Naph . . . what?”

“Naphtali,” Suzy said. She looked at Lily with sad eyes. “Are you gonna be all right, Lily?”

“Sure,” Lily said. “We’ll all sit together at dinner.”

That seemed to reassure Suzy, but it didn’t do much for Lily as she dragged her duffel bag and backpack down a sandy path that threaded its way into a stand of trees. Snuggled among them was a white, square clapboard building with a green roof and windows that wrapped all the way around and were covered with screens. Green rolls of canvas hung over each one, lifting and sighing back down in the breeze. It would have started daydreams in Lily’s head if that same head hadn’t been so full of the real world.

But she sucked in some air again and made her way up the little wooden steps. The screen door opened, and a woman of about forty smiled down at her. All Lily could think was, *She’s wearing dentures. I think she’s wearing dentures.*

“You have to be Lily,” the woman said. “You look just like your picture — I would have known you anywhere.”

She put out her hand, and Lily fumbled to get both of her bags onto one arm so she could shake hands. The woman grinned and grabbed the duffel bag.

“Oh, sorry,” Lily said, and felt stupid. She followed the lady into the cabin.

“You certainly came prepared,” the woman said as she set Lily’s bag down with a grunt. She wiped her hands on the back of her denim



shorts and put out her hand. “Now let’s shake. I’m Jackie. I’ll be your counselor.”

“Oh,” Lily said.

So much for all the counselors being college students. This lady was older than Lily’s mom. She had some gray hairs among the rest, which were kind of a faded peanut color, and wrinkles around her brown eyes that crinkled up like spider webs when she smiled. *She couldn’t look less like a college student if she tried*, Lily thought. She was wearing battered hiking shoes and a shirt like Lily’s dad wore when he played golf.

“You’re not the first to arrive,” Jackie was saying. “Meet two of your cabin mates.”

She swept a tanned arm toward two girls Lily hadn’t noticed before. They were unpacking suitcases side by side, and when they looked up at Lily, her heart sank.

They were both beautiful — as beautiful as Ashley and Chelsea. No, even prettier. One had thick, straight, light brown hair streaked with blonde, soft brown eyes, and a tan that made her look as if she’d spent the winter in Hawaii. The other one looked like pictures of fairies Lily had seen in storybooks, with short, blonde, wispy hair and little, twinkly blue eyes. Both of them were dressed as if they had bought out The Gap.

“This is Alexandria,” Jackie said, nodding to the girl with the Rapunzel-long hair, “and this is Genevieve.”

Lily suddenly wished she had a beautiful name — and that she wasn’t wearing a Camp Galilee T-shirt and baggy khaki shorts — and that she was safely tucked into a cabin with her Girlz.

“This is Lily,” Jackie said.

The two girls half-smiled and murmured hellos. Lily gave a weak “hi” and looked at Jackie.

“Where do I put my stuff?” she said.

“Alexandria and Genevieve have claimed the two beds on that end,” she said, pointing. “Any of the other three is fair game.”

Lily scurried to one at the other end, one bed from the wall.

“There are drawers for your things under the bed,” Jackie said. “Whatever you can’t stuff in there can stay in your bag, and we’ll put it in the closet.” Lily looked around in time to see Jackie grin. “And from what I can tell, you’re all going to have a surplus. Holler if you need anything.”

When she turned to go into what must have been her private little nook, Lily was reminded of Mom — her outdoorsy look, her deep voice, her dry sense of humor. The pain in her chest went deeper.

“So where do you live?” Alexandria said.

“Who, me?” Lily said.

Genevieve gave a little giggle. “She already knows where I live. I’m her next-door neighbor.”

*Wonderful*, Lily thought as her heart sank further. *They already know each other. They’re probably best friends. So much for me.*

“I’m from Jersey,” she mumbled.

“Oh,” they both said.

There was a stiff silence. Both girls looked down at their suitcases, and then Genevieve suddenly popped her head up and said, “Have you ever been to this camp before?”

“No,” Lily said. She was afraid to say too much for fear that the eye rolling and hair tossing would begin. That was the way it usually was with pretty, popular, well-dressed girls. Better not to give them too much information to use against her later. Then again, if she didn’t say anything at all they’d probably start calling her a mute or something.

“No,” she said again. “I’ve never been here before.”

“I have!”

That came from the doorway, where a dark-haired, dark-skinned girl was bursting her way in, backpacks askew and cheeks bright red, as if the energy she had inside was sizzling right through her skin.



“I’m D. J.,” she said, tossing all three backpacks onto the nearest bed. “Who are you guys?”

There was a stunned silence, and then Genevieve giggled for no apparent reason.

“She’s Alexandria,” she said, nudging her friend.

“She’s Genevieve,” Alexandria said, nudging back.

D. J. looked at Lily, who had no one to identify her.

“I’m Lily,” she said.

“Cool!” D. J. said. “Isn’t this place just the best?”

She jumped up on the bed on all fours — reminding Lily painfully of Otto — and crawled over to put her face against the screen. She took a deep breath and sat back on her knees, grinning. “It still smells the same.”

“Were you in this cabin last year?” Genevieve said.

“Nuh-uh. I wasn’t in any cabin. My parents were the cooks, so I got to spend the whole summer here — only I wasn’t a camper. It’s not as fun if you aren’t a camper — but now I am, and I am so jazzed.”

*Ya think?* Lily wanted to say. She was sure D. J. was going to start jumping up and down on the mattress any minute. And she was sure it would be adorable if she did. D. J. wasn’t drop-dead gorgeous like the other two, but with her bright, sparkly brown eyes, olive skin, and cute husky voice, she was probably one of the popular kids at her school. She would be here too, Lily was sure of that. The way she was chattering away and lounging against the pillows, she looked as if she were completely at home. Lily was feeling taller and ganglier and more redheaded by the second.

“So do you know what kind of stuff we’re gonna be doing?” Genevieve said.

“Yes — and it’s all awesome,” D. J. said. She sat up cross-legged, her face animated as if she were about to tell a story. Alexandria and Genevieve stopped pulling The Gap out of their suitcases and drew closer. Lily kept unpacking, but she listened.

“We do Bible study — which isn’t boring at all — and then activities — and then lunch — the food here is great — well, at least it was last year because my parents were cooking it — but anyway, then we have a rest period, and then in the afternoon your cabin does its assigned thing — like some cabins do hiking and some do rock climbing — ”

“They do it by cabin?” Lily said.

“Oh, yeah. The cabin does everything together the first week so you’ll bond, and then — ”

“Define ‘everything,’” Lily said.

D. J. cocked her head of short, shiny dark hair at Lily. “Like — everything. We eat together, do Bible study and activities together. You can do anything you want at free time, but most girls hang with their cabin mates.” D. J.’s eyes got even shinier. “Then the second week you get your cabin project. That week you can eat with other cabins and stuff, but you’re so busy working on your project you just sort of end up staying together. You’re supposed to be building a community — I think that’s what they called it. Anyway — you get totally close to the girls in your cabin. It’s awesome!”

She looked at the three of them as if she already felt close to them. Lily felt as far away as if she were still at home.

*I don’t get to eat with the Girlz? she thought. I can’t sit by them at Bible study? I’m gonna be a jerk if I don’t hang with my cabin during free time?*

Her heart took its final dive, right to the pit of her stomach.

“Okay, you guys,” D. J. was saying. “I know our other girl isn’t here yet, but when she gets here, we have to make a pact to be, like, *the* best cabin in the whole camp. Asher is going to *rule!*”

“Uh-huh,” Lily said.

Suddenly two weeks seemed like an eternity.

By the time she and the other girls in the cabin finished unpacking, it was suppertime. Jackie walked with them back up the sandy path to the main walkway, which led up another hill to the dining hall.





D. J. chattered all the way, with Jackie and Genevieve asking the questions. Alexandria remained quiet, like Lily, only she didn't look nearly as awkward about it as Lily felt.

"You know what's really cool about this camp being named Galilee?" D. J. said.

"No," Jackie said. "But I bet we're about to find out."

 "The Galilee in the Bible once belonged to Assyria. I'm Syrian!"

 "Is that why your skin is so dark?" Genevieve said. "I mean, no offense."

 "No — it's cool. I'm proud of my heritage," D. J. said.

Lily saw her chance to contribute to the conversation. "My best friend is African-American," she said, "and she's proud of that too."

But a massive clanging sound drowned out every word. They all put their hands over their ears.

"What's that?" Genevieve shouted.

"Dinner's ready!" D. J. shouted back.

There was a crowd under the sign on the dining hall that read:

## LET US BREAK BREAD TOGETHER

As soon as the bell stopped, the double screen doors opened and the crowd of girls jostled its way in. Lily stood on her tiptoes, straining to see Reni or Zooey or Kresha or Suzy, but the campers all blended together.

It wasn't until Asher cabin was settled at its assigned table that Lily spotted any of them. While the camp director — a woman tall as a statue with bright white hair — prayed over the food, Lily peeked around and was able to locate Suzy at the Naphtali table. When the blessing was over and Lily could really look, she saw Zooey beside her. As the food was passed, they both shook their heads at it and stared miserably down at their plates.

Lily found herself breathing a sigh of relief. Seeing that they were obviously as unhappy as she was made her feel a little closer to them.

She waved in their direction — nearly knocking a huge bowl of salad right out of D. J.’s hands — but neither one of them would look up. Lily let her eyes roam until she found the Zebulun table.

There was Kresha, in the center on one side, talking away, hands flying, and eyes darting all around. The other girls at the table were all leaning toward her, taking in every word — including Reni.

Reni’s eyes were rounded and her dimples were in full view. Lily knew that meant she was glued to what was going on around her. And she was liking it.

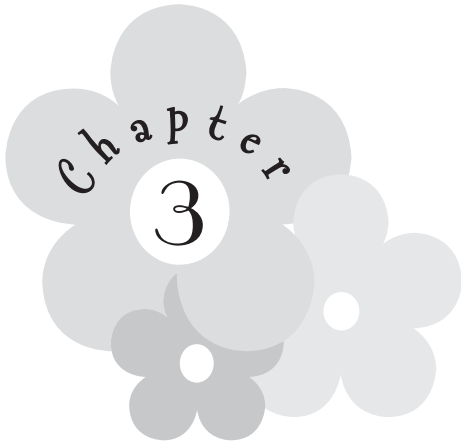
“Reni!” Lily hissed.

It was ridiculous, of course. There was so much high-pitched talking going on in the hall, she would have had to stand up on the bench and yell to get Reni’s attention. And even then, Reni probably couldn’t have been torn away.

“Do you want some spaghetti, Lindy?” D. J. said at her elbow.

“It’s Lily,” Lily said in a wooden voice. “And no, thanks. I don’t feel like eating right now.”





## Chapter 3

After supper—where everything tasted like chewed-up cardboard in Lily’s mouth—the whole camp convened in a large, carpeted room with whitewashed wood walls and an arched window that looked out over the bay. Some girls were oohing and aahing over the view, but Lily just gave it a glance, took in a sailboat and a couple of seagulls, and then searched the room for the Girlz.

“Asher cabin is sitting right over here,” Jackie said near Lily’s ear. She touched her elbow in a way that added, *You’ll be expected to sit with us.*

Feeling as if she had just been scolded, Lily ducked her head and dutifully followed Jackie to the spot where Alexandria and Genevieve were huddled together on the floor. D. J. was standing up next to them, bouncing up to swat at one of the oversized beach balls the counselors were chucking out into the crowd. D. J. missed, and the ball smacked Lily right in the forehead.

It didn’t really hurt, but tears burned in Lily’s eyes as she sank down next to the Alexandria-Genevieve unit.

*I’ve been bombarded with enough stuff today,* she thought. *I don’t need beach balls in the face too.*

