

NOAH WAS HOPING TO GO TO FILM CAMP THIS SUMMER,

but instead, he's being sent to Camp Challah, where his parents want him to make some real friends.

Noah's grandfather has other plans for him, though.

Pops, who claims he used to be a secret agent, says he needs Noah's help on a mission to save the world.

As Noah and his bunkmates uncover mysterious goings-on at Camp Challah, Noah starts to suspect that they're connected to Pops's mission. But what are the chances that Noah can finish filming his magnum opus, earn the friendship of his fellow campers, and save the whole world in just a few weeks?

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NOAH GREEN
**SAVES THE
WORLD**



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CHAPTER 1

An early summer breeze wafts through my window, and I hear the growling motor of the Shady Pines Retirement Home van crawling slowly up our tree-lined street. As it makes a careful turn into our short driveway, I happily shove as much stuff as I can into my lumpy duffel bag.

Super exciting things are about to happen!

For one, in just a few short hours (forty-two to be exact), I'm almost ninety-five percent sure that I'll be going to the David Lynch Film Camp in Los Angeles.

Even though I'm only in seventh grade, this is a big deal for me because I want to be a filmmaker. Not the kind who just tells stories. But the kind who *observes* stories. I want to create my life opus, a very big story, in a style called *cinéma vérité*, a

term I learned in Mr. Burns's after-school film club. Mr. Burns says *cinéma vérité* reveals not only the truth in other people, but the truth in oneself.

This sounds like a good thing for me because people confuse me sometimes. As for revealing the truth in myself, I'm not exactly sure what that means. I'm guessing it's that thing where you say or do something and then afterwards you're like, "That was stupid. Why did I say that? And why are people looking at me like I smell bad or something?"

So by observing others, maybe I can cut down on those types of experiences because, if I'm being honest, that kind of happens to me a lot.

Plus, for Hanukkah, Aunt Bea got me this awesome headpiece camera, which is very cool because I can film people even from far away. The only problem is that I almost got punched once by a kid who thought I was spying on him, which was not my intention. But Mr. Burns says good art should be dangerous, so maybe I'm on the right track.

As for the David Lynch Film Camp, I say I'm only ninety-five percent sure I'm going because, at first, my parents weren't hot on the idea. They were like, "Sorry. Not happening. It's too far away and too expensive."

But I can be really persistent when I want something. So I started talking it up, like, all the time, at every meal, during every car ride, during TV shows. But then I noticed Mom and Dad were kind of avoiding me, so I thought: go subtle. I started leaving brochures around the house in places I knew they'd look, like inside the refrigerator crisper bin, plastered across the car windshield, and taped to the lid of the toilet seat.

Although that might have been a little overkill because at one point Dad was like, "Mention that camp one more time . . ." Then he didn't finish his sentence, which meant he was really mad.

Eventually, he said he and Mom would think it over, which gave me hope. That is until my sister, Lily, reminded me that sometimes that means they've already made up their minds and they're never gonna do it.

But last night, they told me to pack my bags. For a second, I thought they were kicking me out. Lily said I wasn't reading the room right, which, as I said, is kind of my problem. They promised there was a good surprise coming. So now I'm really stoked. Lily's also stoked because she thinks that means she can do what she wants to do this summer too.

The second exciting thing that's going to happen has to do with my Pops. Today is his birthday party. We think he's turning ninety-something, though Pops refuses to say. Yesterday he sent me a mysterious email, saying he has a secret that will change my life forever. I can't imagine what that is, but I bet it's cool!

So, right now, I'm going to find out his big secret. I'm going to make sure I get a hard "yes" from Mom and Dad about film camp. And I'm going to record everything on my camera, which I'm securing firmly around my head as I make my way down to our living room for the party Mom is throwing for Pops.

Pops's friends from Shady Pines are already milling around, filling their paper plates with salad and lasagna. Festive party decorations dot the room, and silver tinsel bristles hang across the fireplace mantel. Mom's large picture board of the history of Pops's life, family, and friends is propped up on the table. Stretched across the archway to the living room is a purple papier-mâché banner that reads: *Happy Whatever Birthday, Pops!*

Lily pops in front of me, looking annoyed. "Noah! Where were you? We need more cups." She leans in close. "Rabbi Blum's had like twelve cups of coffee already, and he keeps leaving them everywhere."

She stomps away.

I spy Rabbi and Mrs. Blum by the buffet. He's probably the most energetic rabbi we've ever had at Temple Beth Israel. He's chatting and bustling around while helping spoon food onto one of the old people's plates.

Lily likes to say that I'm the exact opposite of what she wanted in a brother if she could have picked. Good thing she couldn't! But the fact is that nobody gets to pick. Sisters. Parents. Or even ourselves. Not being able to choose ourselves is probably a good thing, though, because we would most probably never pick who we are and then who would we be?

Pops ambles by me.

"Happy birthday, Pops," I say. "How old are you exactly again?"

"None of your beeswax," he grumbles.

"Hey," I continue, "what's that secret you emailed me about?"

"Can't tell you now, Ned," he says, calling me the name he wanted my mother to give me, after his uncle on his father's side, but she liked Noah better.

"Noah," I say, even though he's not really paying attention and is already on to another subject.

“That nose-y dagnabbit doctor is listening to everything I say,” Pops huffs and shuffles away.

Dr. Marchant, the resident MD at Shady Pines, snoozes loudly in a nearby chair.

Just so I wouldn’t be totally bored, I’ve invited some of my friends from school. I don’t have a lot of friends like Lily does, but my closest friends from film club showed up: Bailey, who has thick glasses, straggly hair, and a T-shirt that reads, *Save the Dolphins*. And Rex, who’s got straggly hair and the beginnings of a very skimpy goatee. His T-shirt says: *Save the Filmmakers*.

“Hey guys!” I wave.

Bailey waves back then stares out the window, and Rex scratches down the back of his shirt with a plastic fork.

They rock!

And speaking of friends, there’s my new friend, Simon. I noticed him yesterday on the school bus, looking a little lost. Principal Lefrak said that he’s an exchange student from London, so I figured I should take him under my wing. He might even be a good candidate for film club. I’m sure he’s feeling very out of place away from home.

“Hey Simon,” I wave, but he’s whispering into his phone.

“Yes, I’d like to leave,” Simon says.

At that moment, Mom carries out Pops’s birthday cake, which is decorated with so many candles she has to blink from the smoke and flames.

“*Happy birthday to you!*” Mom breaks into song.

All his friends join in until the song peters out from general lack of enthusiasm.

“Pops, you want to cut the first piece?” Mom asks.

Pops frowns and stares into the cake. “You know that butter icing gives me the bathroom hoppers. And who’s Mel?”

Mom makes a sharp cut into the cake. “That’s you, Pops.”

“No one ever calls me Mel,” he grumbles. “They call me by my nickname.”

“Now, you know you don’t have a nickname.” Mom smiles tensely.

“Yes I do! Don’t tell me I don’t have a nickname,” he insists. “It’s Liplock Field. I was a secret agent for the CIA, and I always kept my mouth closed! But now almost everyone I know is dead . . .”

He looks over at his friends, waiting, empty plates in their hands.

“Or will be soon.”

“Now Pops.” Mom gently places her hand on his shoulder. “You were a lieutenant in the army, and then you worked in insurance for thirty years. You know you were never a secret agent.”

“That’s because it was a secret!” he snaps.

“Hey Mom,” I say. “So what’s my surprise news? Can you tell me now?” I adjust my headpiece into her face for full cinematic effect.

“A little busy here, Noah,” Mom says with one of her tight-lipped, aggravated expressions, as she makes her way toward the kitchen.

I follow her. “Where’s Dad? Can he tell me about—”

“Ned! I need to talk to you.” Pops steps into my path.

“In a little bit, Pops. I’m trying to get my big news,” I say, tapping my camera headpiece, “and I’m getting footage for my opus.”

“You’ve got pus?!” Pops shouts, holding a fork aloft like a dagger. “Just hold still. One good poke and it’ll all come oozing out. You’ll be as good as new.”

Lily dives in and gently extracts the fork from Pops, just as Dad appears, up in my face.

I brighten. “Hey, Dad, are you gonna tell me my surprise now?”

“Noah, did you rake the wet leaves off the front steps like I asked you?!” he says. “Your Uncle Larry will try and sue us if he slips again.”

“Ned, I think I’ve got the bathroom hoppers,” Pops announces, grabbing my arm and pulling me around the corner into the laundry alcove.

Suddenly he’s all secretive. “I need to talk to you. It’s very important.”

“But I thought you had the bathroom hoppers.”

“Forget about that.” He leans in and wiggles his wiry eyebrows. “The thing is that—”

“Can it wait?” I interrupt, eyeballing the kitchen. “I’m hoping for some promising news . . .”

“I don’t think so,” he says, leaning in closer. He’s so close now that his eyebrow hairs are tickling my forehead, and he’s like, “You have to help me save the world.”