



*Summer and sizzle and secrets—
of veiy!*

Ellie Taylor loves nothing better than a good argument. After all, she's been arguing with Zeydeh, her grandfather, since she could talk. So when she gets accepted to the Christian Society Speech and Performing Arts summer camp, she's sure that if she wins the final tournament it'll be her ticket to a scholarship to the best speech high school in the country.

Unfortunately, the competition at CSSPA is hot—literally. His name is Devon and whether Ellie likes it or not, being near him makes her sizzle. But Ellie's ready to take on the challenge—until she begins to suspect that the private scholarship's benefactor has negative feelings toward Jews. Will hiding her true identity and heritage be worth a shot at her dream? Or will her outspoken nature force her to speak out for herself?

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CHAPTER 1

I love to argue. I'll argue about anything—school uniforms, raising the driving age, or ear hair. I can be for something or against it—doesn't matter. That's why my speech coach says I'm such a natural. Mom and Dad say I was born to argue. My first word was “no” and fourteen years later, it's still my favorite. That's how I knew something was different about Devon Yeats. I took one look at him and all I wanted to say was . . . yes.

I met Devon the first day of the Christian Society Speech and Performing Arts camp. CSSPA is one of the best summer camps for incoming freshmen who want to compete on their high school speech and debate teams. When I got my acceptance letter, I was so psyched. Zeydeh, my grandpa, said I was *meshugah ahf toit*. Roughly translated, that's Yiddish for “crazy as a loon.”

“What Jewish girl goes to a Christian camp?” he ranted.

“*Speech and debate camp*,” I said.

“We’ve been arguing with Christians for two thousand years. You have to go to camp to argue more?”

I was watching him chop onions in the kitchen. Zeydeh has his own house down the street, but most nights he cooks for us. “It has nothing to do with religion,” I said. “The camp is held at Benedict’s High School and it’s open to anyone. The Christian Society is just the sponsor.”

He waved his knife in the air. “That’s what they tell you, Ellie. Next thing you know, you’re genuflecting and craving little wafers.”

“That’s Catholic, Zeydeh.”

“*Hoomf*.”

Hoomf was Zeydeh’s version of a sarcastic grunt. Combined with an eye roll, it was his standard answer when he had no answer. It meant, “I’m right because I say I’m right.” That’s why I hated arguing with Zeydeh. It was like arguing with a crazy person.

Correction. It *was* arguing with a crazy person.

“It’s an honor even to get in,” I told him. “I had to write an essay and get a letter of recommendation just to apply. Besides,” I added, “it’s the only way I can get into Benedict’s.”

His fingers were stiff and bent with arthritis, but he still worked the knife like an expert. “And Benedict’s is such a good school?”

“The best,” I said. “Their speech team travels all over the country. This past year, they went to tourneys in Dallas and Chicago and at Harvard. They sweep State every year, and last year, they qualified sixteen students to Nationals. Sixteen!”



I squished a piece of onion between my fingers. “That’s huge, Zeydeh. Once you make Nationals, you’re like a rock star for life.”

I wasn’t sure yet what I wanted to be—famous litigator, feared lobbyist, president of the world—but I was going to be *something*. And it all started with Benedict’s.

Officially, it was called Benedict’s Conservatory of Arts and Academics. Just the name gave me goose bumps. I’d tried applying, but Benedict’s was a private school and impossible to get into unless you were rich or connected. Which I wasn’t. I’d registered to start my freshman year at Canyon View High in August, but I was praying I could still get into Benedict’s. Camp was my one shot. Every year, one or two of the top finishers at CSSPA were offered a private scholarship. If I could kick butt at camp, I’d bypass the Benedict’s waiting list and get full tuition.

“Even Mom and Dad think the camp is a great idea,” I said.

“*Hoomf*,” he grunted again. “Your parents think Cheez Whiz is a great idea—what do they know?”

“They know everything is not about religion.” If they thought like Zeydeh, my parents wouldn’t even have gotten married, since Mom is Jewish and Dad is Christian. “Forget it,” I said. “I’m not arguing with you.”

“Who’s arguing?”

“Then wish me luck.”

“Don’t I always?” His eyes flashed at me beneath his curly gray eyebrows. He had the same curly gray hair on his head—and poking out from inside his ears.



“This camp will help you reach your dreams?” he asked, his expression suddenly serious.

“If I do well, yeah.”

“Then you should go.” He set down the knife and wiped his hands. “Always you should follow your dreams.”

And Benedict’s was my dream. Canyon View would be okay. But at Benedict’s, I’d be with the best of the best. I’d *be* one of the best.

Zeydeh rubbed the back of one hand over my cheek. His skin was soft and papery. As familiar as my own. “Always remember, my Eleanor Jane. You can do anything. Be anything.”

I wrapped my arms around his waist until I felt the bony knobs of his spine and smelled the starch of his shirt and the vanilla scent that is Zeydeh. I squeezed him and pressed closer until there was no room for anything between us. “I love you, Zeydeh.”

“I love you, too,” he said. “But if men wearing purple robes try to sprinkle water on your forehead, run!”



Even as a kid, I knew Zeydeh was different. For one thing, we didn’t call him Grandpa like a normal grandfather—we called him Zeydeh, the Yiddish word for grandfather. And he didn’t act normal. Grandma and Grandpa Taylor, my dad’s parents, took me and my brother, Benny, for pizza, read us stories about bunnies, and when I asked why the neighbor’s dog had two tails, they told me to hush.



Zeydeh taught us to cuss in Yiddish, he baked cookies for breakfast, and when I asked about the dog, he demanded to see it. Then, he explained the dog had one tail and one penis. You're not supposed to say "penis" to kids, but Zeydeh didn't care. He'll say anything to anyone. He still talks to Bubbe, my grandma, even though she's been dead for eight years. According to him, why should death get in the way of a good conversation?

Zeydeh loves a good conversation. And I inherited his gift of gab. Jews have always been great orators, he says—Maimonides, Einstein, Jerry Seinfeld. I'm following in their footsteps—another Jew to carry on the tradition.

For Zeydeh, being Jewish isn't just a religion. It's life and death. Bubbe lost an uncle, an aunt, and three cousins in the Holocaust. So that's big. It haunts Zeydeh. And I get it, I really do. But sometimes he forgets: This isn't Nazi Germany. This isn't the 1940s. This is boring, hotter-than-jalapeños Phoenix, Arizona. It's the twenty-first century. It's a four-week, six-hours-a-day speech and performing arts summer camp.

And Zeydeh was worried for nothing.

