

WELCOME TO CAMP SHALOM!

Maya can't deny that she's nervous on the first day at camp. She's never been to sleepaway camp before, she doesn't like cold showers or smelly cafeteria food, and worst of all, she's afraid of swimming. So it's a huge relief when Maya meets friendly Dani.

Just as things start to settle down for Maya, someone steals the silver kiddush cup and two candlesticks her cabin needs to lead Shabbat! Maya and her new friends will have to use their brains and work together—with some occasional sneaking around—to figure out who is sabotaging their summer! Meanwhile, she needs to pass the camp swimming test to join the big sleepover on Snake Island or risk being left behind with the little kids.

Maya has a wild summer ahead of her! But with great, new friends by her side—and a dash of honesty—she'll find she can solve any problem.



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SHABBAT SABOTAGE

EMMA CARLSON BERNE



YELLOW
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PROLOGUE

“You’re all set!” Mom barged into Maya’s room, holding a folded sheet of paper. Maya looked up from *Lord of the Flies*. They were just about to sacrifice Piggy. Through her window, Maya could see snow falling thickly, illuminated by the Millers’ garage light. Maybe they’d cancel school tomorrow.

“Set with what?” Maya marked her place in the book with her finger and sat up. She tried to look patient.

“Camp!” Mom read from the paper. “We are so pleased to welcome you to your first summer at Camp Shalom. This all-girls sleepaway camp offers campers a summer packed with unique camp activities and a solid grounding in Jewish culture.”

“I already have a solid grounding in Jewish culture.” Maya took the paper Mom offered. “I’m super grounded.”

The paper read:

WELCOME TO YOUR CAMP SHALOM SUMMER!

Get ready for friendship and fun!

Kayaking

Daily swimming

Campcraft

Giant water slide

Animal care and nature study

Kosher meals

All-camp bonfires

Sports and games in the meadow

Shabbat by the lake

. . . and that's just the beginning!

Maya tried to hand the paper back, but Mom wouldn't take it. They were really going to make her go. "Mom, please, I really don't think Camp Shalom is for me." She'd only said it like five hundred times.

Mom got that look on her face, and Maya knew it was hopeless. Here came a pep talk. "Honey, you need to try. You need to push yourself. Otherwise, you'll just stay in your room the whole summer. You need to engage with the outside world. Taking on your fears is important, and I know you can do it!"

"Mom, you know I hate pep talks. Please don't." Maya thrust the paper at her mother and curled up like a pill bug. She pulled her pillow over her head.

Her mother's voice was resolute. "We didn't send

you last year, but this was our agreement. This year is the year.” She dropped the paper on top of the pillow and went out, closing the door behind her.

Maya pulled up her sweatshirt hood and lay back on the bed, ignoring the crinkle of the paper underneath her. She crossed her hands on her stomach and stared at the ceiling. In five months, she was going to summer camp. She didn’t want to sleep in bunk beds with strangers snoring or eat smelly cafeteria food. She wanted to stay home, in her room, where everything was perfect. Maya closed her eyes. She didn’t have to look to see her books all arranged by author on the shelves, or her lap desk for drawing and her glass animals and her white dresser with the fancy mirror Mom found at a garage sale. Everything hers, everything safe.

Daily swimming.

She tried to shove the words out of her mind. At least she had the rest of the winter and spring. Cabins and cold showers and kayaks seemed so far away from reality right now. Maybe Mom and Dad would forget. Maybe there would be an earthquake and Camp Shalom would fall into a sinkhole. Maya rolled over on her stomach and opened *Lord of the Flies* again. Outside, the snow kept falling.



CHAPTER 1

The camp bus swung around another curve, and Maya's stomach rose. She closed her eyes. She really didn't want to lose her lunch in front of all these kids before camp had even started. The bus was hot and smelled like diesel fuel and plastic and bananas. Maya wiggled in the cracked vinyl seat. She was so sweaty, even her underwear felt damp.

Camp Shalom had not sunk into a sinkhole or imploded or been dismantled plank-by-plank by a disgruntled former camper. She had not gotten her wish, and the plans for camp had gone forward like some kind of machine set in motion, the kind with lots of pulleys and gears. Cabin lists came in the mail, along with piles of forms and a camper handbook the size of a brick. Two giant black duffel bags had appeared on her bedroom floor, and Mom had filled them with pillows, special extra-long sheets, two new bathing suits, a shower

caddy, shower shoes, and free stationery from the public library for writing home. Piles of T-shirts. Piles of shorts. A pack of new socks. A little framed picture of her, Mom, and Dad all sitting in one big chair. Would that even be enough for seven weeks away?

Maya's throat swelled a little, thinking of the picture, stuffed somewhere in one of her giant duffels, which was in turn stuffed somewhere under the bus, along with everyone else's giant duffels. And then, after a lazy curve in the road . . . there was the lake. The lake! The lake! She'd seen it when she she'd driven up with Mom and Dad to visit. They'd wanted to show her Camp Shalom itself, hoping it would change her attitude. It didn't. The lake was so . . . big. And dark. She imagined gnarly fish lurking under its murky surface. And did eels live in lakes? She couldn't remember. Either way, it looked perfect for drowning. Perfect for her own drowning.

Maya didn't know anyone at camp, so no one knew her secret. No one knew what had happened to her the previous summer at the pool.

She'd been at the big, noisy rec center day camp. It wasn't fun. The kids were too wild, and no one listened to the counselors. There were sports, so it was like gym class but all summer. Torture, in other words. She mostly tried to hang around with her friend Becky, who was good at swimming and kickball. Becky was kind of her protector. But at swimming one day, when Becky wasn't

there, she sat on the edge of the pool, by the deep end, cooling her feet in the water. A boy named Miles, who had blond hair and was obsessed with soccer, walked by, and she'd felt his hand thump her back. For one instant, she thought he was giving her some kind of playful punch, and since she'd always had a tiny crush on him, that was great. But then, in the next instant, she realized he was pushing her into the pool.

The water gave her a cold shock all over her body, forcing the air out of her lungs. It closed in around her head. Her feet couldn't find the bottom. She tried to gasp for air, but the water was like a trap around her. She gulped, swallowing mouthfuls of chlorinated water.

She tried to break to the surface and caught a sliver of air. She could see kids running on the edge of the pool in the sun, and others standing and talking. No one noticed her. She tried to yell, but only a cough of water came out. *I'm drowning, she thought. I'm really drowning. This is how it feels to drown. All the drowned people, this is how they felt, only they never got to come back to tell us how it feels. It's really happening.*

But then she felt someone's arm wrap around her ribs. The arm practically jerked her out of the water, and then a rubbery thing was thrust into her arms. "It's okay, I've got you," a girl's voice said. It was the lifeguard. Maya had clung to the float, gasping and squeezing it while the lifeguard towed her to the side of the pool. She could

hardly believe she wasn't dead. Instead, she was sitting on a pool chair, wrapped in a yellow towel, shivering and crying, while a silent crowd of kids stood around and stared. Miles stood at the back, staring too. Maya didn't look at his face. She didn't want to see if he was sorry or not. It was better not to know.

That was it for swimming. She never got back into the pool, and her mom wrote a note excusing her. "But this is your chance to really start facing your fear!" Mom said when they came for visiting day and saw the lake. "You have to push yourself!"

She kind of hated pushing herself. No, she *really* hated pushing herself. But Mom and Dad were very into facing their fears. It was a thing with them. They themselves weren't afraid of anything, and there was no reason Maya should be either. That's what they said, at least.

Except she was. Terribly afraid. And now she was here. There weren't any excuse notes, and the lake wasn't going anywhere.

A clatter across the aisle jerked Maya out of her thoughts. A girl in a drapey gray T-shirt and leggings had dropped a little case of bobby pins. Maya had already noticed her. She'd gotten on the bus at a stop about an hour earlier, and immediately Maya regretted wearing her Glendale Fun Run T-shirt with the orange juice stain. The girl had that kind of thick black hair that hung like a curtain. It draped halfway down her back, with waves

and ripples. Maya had always wanted that kind of hair. Her own thinnish, wavyish light-brownish hair was so . . . wavery. It never did what she wanted. In class, she'd watch the girls with hair like this girl. They take all their hair, just so casually, swirl it up on top of their heads, stick a pencil in it or wrap a hairband around it, and there it would be, just this perfect messy bun, smack on top of their heads, with little pieces hanging down. And she'd try the same thing at home, and her hair just wouldn't do it. Weird bumps would stick out, and she'd get so mad that she wanted to smash the mirror and shave her head.

The girl with the amazing hair muttered something and leaned over to pick up her mess. But at the same time, Maya swooped down to help her. Their heads collided with a sharp crack.

"Ow!" The girl straightened up, rubbing her forehead. "Watch it!" Her voice was loud enough that several other kids looked up.

"Sorry!" Maya said, grabbing her own head. "I was, *um*, just trying to get your pins."

"Well, you smacked my head instead," the girl snapped. "I can get them fine by myself." She eyed Maya for a long moment. Maya crossed her arms over the juice stain. She really should have changed after this morning's spill.

Maya nodded and shrank back into the corner of her seat. She watched the girl gather up her hair into a big, swirly twist, then poke the long bobby pins in one by one. She made it look so easy.

A girl sitting behind Maya reached over the seat and tapped her on the shoulder. “Do you want some gum?” she asked. “Pass it on.” She had a round, cheerful face, and eyebrows so thick they looked like caterpillars. Beside her sat a girl with bouncy dark curls and glasses who was pawing through her backpack, looking worried.

“Thanks.” Maya took the plastic canister of gum. It was cinnamon Ice Cubes. “This is my favorite kind,” she told the eyebrow girl.

“Me too! Did you ever get all the flavors at once? My big sister gave me that for my last birthday.” She grinned at Maya, and Maya smiled back. She seemed nice. Maybe they’d be in the same cabin.

“I’m Annie, by the way,” eyebrow girl said. “Rachel and I are from Louisville.” She indicated the girl next to her.

“I think I left my allergy spray at home.” Rachel looked up from her backpack. “I really need it.” Her forehead was all crinkled with worry.

“Let’s just ask the counselor what to do when we get off the bus,” Annie said, and gave a Maya a little eye-roll look.

Maya smiled back and faced forward. Maybe, if she and Annie were in the same cabin, they could share a bunk.

The bus caravan turned onto a smaller, dirt road. Mechanical gates rolled back, and the bus rumbled through. Maya could see a big lawn spreading out ahead, filled with maybe fifty people. They all looked like counselors or staff. That made sense because all the campers were on the bus. Their bright T-shirts were a rainbow of color against the green grass. Behind them, Maya noticed a low wooden building that must be the office, and then the gravel paths branching off that led to the rest of the camp concealed behind the trees.

The bus ground to a halt, and the driver turned off the engine and opened the doors. A tanned guy with dark hair and a clipboard bounded onto the bus. “Welcome to Camp Shalom!” he shouted. The bus erupted in cheers and clapping. Maya clapped, too, but she wasn’t sure she meant it. “I’m Max, the camp director! Get ready for your official camp entrance!”

Outside the bus windows, Maya could see the mass of rainbow-clad people surging toward the bus. They were lining up on either side of the bus doors and putting their arms up and together, making an arm-tunnel. Everyone on the bus stood up and started talking and gathering their things.