



"An endearing coming-of-age story that will make you laugh, cheer, and warm your soul."

—JENNIFER NIELSEN, NYT bestselling author
of the Ascendance series



Dear Mom and Dad (and Stevie, I guess),



Camp Shalom is the WORST. I would end with that, but they say my letter has to be more than one line. You already know Frankie bailed on me. So now I'm here all alone. There was this one girl who I thought was nice, and who loves musicals as much as I do, but then...oh never mind.

I got so stressed out that now I am covered in HIVES. The girls in my cabin are all making fun of me. But at least the infirmary is nice. It will be the perfect place to hide out all summer. There's a kid here, his name is Harry. He is very... interesting.

Anyway, I hope this letter is long enough. Thanks a LOT for sending me to camp.

Signed, your splotchy daughter,

Bea



CAMP SHALOM
KIDS CAMP



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THE SUN
WILL
COME OUT

JOANNE LEVY

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ONE

Frankie Ferstein and I have ALWAYS been best friends. I would say since we were born, because our mothers are friends and even had us around the same time. I can't say for sure that we were BFFs back in our mothers' wombs but we probably were.

Since we were old enough to hang out, Frankie and I have been inseparable. We've had our birthday parties together, done our homework together, shopped for clothes together—*everything*.

So, of course, it made sense that we were going to summer camp together. I mean, we had always gone to *day* camp together, but this year would be

different. We were going to Camp Shalom, which was a *sleepover* camp. Four weeks of unsupervised fun. Well, unsupervised by our own parents. It wasn't like they were going to throw us all together to run around on our own like wild animals or anything.

But still, four weeks of sleeping in cabins, arts and crafts, and outdoor sports? Yes, please.

One Friday after school, a couple of weeks before school was done for the year, Frankie and I were lying on her bed doing homework. We had about an hour before her mom got home and Frankie had to help with Shabbat dinner.

By *lying on her bed doing homework*, I mean lying on her bed, her scrolling through her iPad, and me looking at YouTube videos of horses on my phone. This late in the year, teachers knew giving us serious homework was just bad form.

“So...Bea?” Frankie asked.

“Yeah?” I didn't look up from the screen.

“We need to talk. I...uh...I wasn’t supposed to tell you this, but we’re best friends, so I have to.”

Her tone got my attention. “Tell me what?”

“It’s about this summer.”

I instantly perked up. “Yeah, it’s going to be awesome! I hope we get to go on canoe trips like your brother did.”

She cocked her head. “You sure spend a lot of time talking to Jeremy. You’re not going to be chasing him all around at camp, are you?”

I felt my face heat up but gave her an exasperated look. “No! It’s *research*, Frankie. So we know what to expect when *we* go to camp. Please.”

She frowned for a second, then shook her head and took a big, deep breath. “So. About that.”

My stomach did a complete flop. Something bad was coming. Even my internal organs knew it. I just stared at Frankie, waiting for her to spill.

She looked down at her iPad and whispered something.

“What?” I asked—loudly, so she would take the hint to speak up.

“I’m not going. I’m going to Circle M camp instead.”

I was stunned into complete and absolute silence.

“We always talked about going to Circle M,” she said quickly. “You know how much I love horses.”

We both love horses, I wanted to say, but couldn’t. My throat had closed up, and my eyes began to fill with tears.

“How could you?” I tried to say, but my voice was gone. All that came out was a squeak.

Either Frankie read my lips or knew what I was saying because we were best friends, and best friends know what their best friends are trying to say even when they are only able to squeak.

“*We wanted* to go to Circle M,” she said.

“Together,” I said as I swiped away tears with the back of my hand. Because best friends do everything

together or not at all. I couldn't even imagine camp without her. I couldn't even imagine a week without her, let alone a month without her. A month alone at a camp where I didn't know anyone.

She looked down at her iPad again. "Well, it's not my fault that your parents can't afford it. I really want to go. You should be happy for me that I can."

I stared at her. I couldn't believe she'd just said that to me.

Before she could say any more horrible things, I ran out of her room and didn't stop running until I got to my house, four blocks away.



I managed to get inside the door before the waterworks really began. I went to drop my backpack on the bench beside the door like I always did, then realized I had left it at Frankie's house.

That made me cry harder.

Mom came out of the kitchen. She'd obviously

heard me, because, I'm not going to lie, I was crying pretty loudly. I probably sounded like a cat that had been kicked. Hard.

“Honey, what’s wrong?”

I sniffed and wiped my arm across my eyes and started to tell her, but all that came out of my mouth was wailing and hiccups, and it probably sounded something like, “Sh...Sh...Frankieaaaaaaaa. Cir... (hic)...cir...Circle...(hic)...emmmmm.”

Mom knelt down and wrapped her arms around me. Somehow she had understood my blubbery warbling. Moms are good at that. “Oh honey, I’m so sorry. Your dad and I were going to tell you about that this weekend.” She huffed out a breath. “Frankie’s parents weren’t supposed to tell her so soon. They’d had her on a waiting list, and a spot just opened up.”

“But...but...” I said into Mom’s hair between hiccups.

She squeezed me tighter. “I’m so sorry, Bea.”

“But...ca...ca...can't...can't I go too? Pleeeeeeease?”

Mom pulled away and sat back on her heels. She looked sad as she shook her head. “I’m sorry, Bea. We just can’t afford it this year. It’s more than double the cost of Camp Shalom.”

There had to be a way. I would do *anything*. “I’ll drop out of Hebrew school,” I offered.

Mom rolled her eyes. “Nice try.”

Busted. Mom knew I hate Hebrew school, but there was no way I’d get out of that. It’s not that I don’t like being Jewish. I just hate sitting in MORE school after regular school and on Sundays. A girl can only handle so much school, no matter how interesting the topics might be.

She sighed. “I know you’re disappointed, but there just isn’t enough money, Bea. You know your dad and I went to Camp Shalom, and we both had great experiences there, meeting other kids from all over the world.”

She put a big smile on her face, but her sales pitch had worked a lot better when Frankie was coming with me.

“What about if I don’t go to any movies and donate my savings?”

“I’m sorry. It wouldn’t be enough.”

And that was it. I was going to be stuck alone at stupid Camp Shalom while Frankie got to ride horses all summer. It was so unfair!

“Maybe you should get a job then,” I blurted out. “Maybe if you had a *real* job, I could go!”

I realized right away that I’d made a huge mistake, but it was too late to take it back.

Mom’s eyes got very narrow as she stood up and crossed her arms. “I do have a real job, Bea. Not only am I your and Stevie’s mom, which, believe me, is a full-time career, but I am also an artist. Not everything worth doing has to be something that earns money.”

I didn’t say a word, only scowled at her.

“Bea,” she continued, “remember when we went to the art gallery? Remember how much you enjoyed seeing all that artwork? What would happen if all those artists had decided not to create because they weren’t being paid enough?”

I shrugged. Maybe I’d appreciate my mother’s art more if she painted horses and not just the blobs and smears that she called abstract.

“Anyway,” Mom went on. “Camp Shalom is a great camp, and it isn’t cheap either. Maybe you should feel lucky that you get to go; some kids are going to day camps or none at all.”

She didn’t get it. I didn’t think she was even trying to understand.

“I don’t care about other kids!” I yelled. “I don’t understand why you have to paint all day when other kids’ moms have jobs where they earn enough money to send their kids to horse camp.” I was speaking of Frankie’s mom, of course. She’s a doctor, not a wannabe artist.

Mom didn't say anything more, but I could tell she was super mad. Her lips were pressed together in a tight line like she was trying to keep her words in.

But I wasn't done. And I wasn't keeping anything in.

"And how am I supposed to go to camp without Frankie? How am I supposed to go anywhere without my best friend?"

Mom opened her mouth. "Bea..."

But then I realized what was really bothering me.

Frankie didn't have any problem going to camp *without me*. My best friend had totally betrayed me.

I began to cry again. "This is going to be the worst summer EVER!"

Mom stepped toward me again, but I dodged her and ran to my bedroom. I needed to be alone to wallow in all my misery.