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# Camp Bugaboo: A Creative thesis

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CAMP BUGABOO

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Graduate School of  
Clemson University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
English

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by  
Brittany Triplett Cuenin  
August 2010

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Accepted by:  
Dr. Michelle Martin, Committee Chair  
Dr. Alma Bennett  
Dr. Rachelle Washington

## ABSTRACT

This creative thesis explores the genre of children's literature through a short novella. There are twenty one chapters consisting of a character arc, conflict, and resolution. The novella reflects the author's command of narrator, plot, characterization, and other important elements of fiction, as well as essential elements of children's literature. This work is submitted to show the author's proficiency in fiction and children's literature.

## DEDICATION

This work couldn't have been complete without my husband, Paul. Thanks to my parents for their constant encouragement.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Doc Martin for providing me with her support and help in writing this thesis. I couldn't have asked for a better chair.

Also, I want to thank Dr. Bennett for being a mentor during my English years at Clemson. I want to thank Dr. Washington for taking time to read and provide a great help to this thesis.

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## INTRODUCTION

I decided to write a children's novel when I realized I could use my love of children's books to create my own children's story. I knew I could use my passion for my favorite books, my memories of unique stories and special characters to create a great story. I also knew I could use my knowledge of literary techniques and literary background to refine my final product. Children's literature is often overlooked by those in academia and adult readers, yet it is loved by children and those who are willing to appreciate the entertaining and exciting world that children's literature can be. While creating this story, I began questioning our cultural relationship with children's books. Why isn't this genre taken more seriously in an academic setting? Why are reviewers so surprised when a "children's book" becomes popular among adults? Why, past a certain age, does it become unacceptable to appreciate stories with child characters and fantastic worlds? Zohar Shavit, in 1986, mentions this common attitude toward children's literature in *The Poetics of Children's Literature*:

From the beginning, children's literature was regarded by other systems as inferior. The general attitude toward children's literature can be best exposed by viewing the means by which society attributed a high status to literary systems and their writers. These means, which have become status symbols, are beyond the reach of children's literature... (34)

In my world, children's books compete equally with literature that has adult characters and mature plots. I wasn't flabbergasted when adults began picking up *Harry Potter* because it is a great literary series. In higher education, the study of children's literature sometimes isn't taken as seriously for its historical significance and literary symbolism, as other genres. Although there are programs that give specific degrees in children's literature, I felt it was essential to contribute my thesis work to creating an original story.

This perceived status of children’s literature combined with my desire to create a work of children’s fiction provided with the motivation and goals for my writing journey. I began my research by starting a “Bookworm” blog to chronicle my reviews of children’s literature ([www.talesofbookworm.com](http://www.talesofbookworm.com)). Using my research, I began brainstorming ideas. I immediately thought about some of my favorite childhood characters and began digging through the children’s books that have stayed on my bookshelf throughout my life: *Otherwise Known as Sheila the Great* by Judy Blume; *Clementine* by Sarah Pennypacker; *From the Mixed Up Files of Basil E. Frankweiler* by E.L. Konigsburg; *The Borrowers* by Mary Norton.

I made notes on the characters, their personalities, and their conflicts. These authors helped me form a foundation for my own creative work. From *Sheila the Great*, I wanted to capture Sheila’s ability to overcome her fears. While boasting about her bravado, Sheila spends one summer learning to adapt to storms and dogs. Overcoming fear would become a theme in my book. From *Clementine*, I hoped to add in the sense of humor that Pennypacker does so well. Clementine’s encounter with using a sharpie to color her hair had me chuckling, and I felt that my book needed that element of humor. I always loved the seriousness of Claudia and James Kincaid in *From the Mixed Up Files of Basil E. Frankweiler*. They are very thoughtful and deliberate in their plans to stowaway at the Metropolitan Museum of Art; Konigsburg’s excellent children’s characters for me to use as inspiration. The adventures of *The Borrowers* has always fascinated me because of their size and their home. The Clock family lives beneath the floorboards of a human family home, and they have several mishaps trying to avoid getting caught by the family. I wanted to use the element of their diminutive size in my book because I felt it would emphasize a child’s role in an adult world, but it would also allow for creative plotting.

Another one of the dusty paperbacks I found most helpful was *Goodnight Mr. Tom* because of its universal themes. Michelle Magorian's 1981 *Goodnight Mr. Tom*, a British boy is sent to the countryside during the Nazi bombing of London. Willie is an abused, sickly boy and becomes fully nourished, spiritually and physically, by a new guardian. As a child, before reading, I didn't know the historical or cultural context of the story, and I probably didn't know that the plot was based on the real evacuations of children. How did I, the late- twentieth- century female reader, identify with a young male character living through a war, sixty years prior, on another continent? That world became real to me because of its authenticity and details. While dealing with an incomprehensible war and an abusive mother, Willie deals with normal childhood conflicts in the country side, like making new friends, finishing his chores, and doing his homework. Willie remains vulnerable, yet he grows throughout the story and became a more mature and complex child. I wanted to capture that growth and change of character in my story. This common humanity and universal experience are what the compelling parts for a reader. My interest, as an adult, was in how Magorian was able to write a character that I, as a child, wanted to know. Her ability to write a book that was fascinating when I was ten, but was also a relevant read to me seventeen years later, was what I wanted to understand and recreate in my own writing.

Some of the children's books I've enjoyed most are great fiction that combines elements of fantasy and reality together to create an intellectual and emotional growing experience. I wanted to be able to do what these authors did by creating a world that was interesting, informative, but above all, fun to read. From my readings, I found that details are essential to creating an authentic work. These details combined with realistic situations allow the author to create fantasy fiction. The balance between fiction and fact is what defines a believable, but exciting work of children's literature. Once there is a realistic world that the story is based

within, and then the author is free to create such fantastical situations such as a mouse riding a motorcycle, children living in a boxcar, and rabbits that can talk. Only when this balance is struck, can the fantasy become the story. With this knowledge, I had hoped to create a world that had that balance.

Children's literature and psychology tell us that children are egotistical, in the sense that their world is only as big as that which they know. Successful literary works play off their sense of the world, and some of the best books are such detailed and crafted worlds that readers have a hard time leaving them. Because many of the books I had read were centered on physically small protagonists, I wanted to create characters that are small in stature. Roberta Seelinger Trites, in her review of *Feeling Like a Kid: Childhood and Children's Literature*, quotes Jerry Griswold on the importance of size in children's literature, "Griswold convincingly argues how these issues inform the canon of children's literature: for example snug homes and hiding places that are 'enclosed,' 'tight,' 'small,' 'simple,' 'well designed,' 'remote,' 'safe,' 'self-sufficient,' 'owned,' and 'hidden' – like Badger's home in *The Wind and the Willows* – provide characters in children's literature with places in which to have 'cozy times'" (395).

I thought that the "smallness" of the characters would emphasize the role of a child in an adult world, feeling vulnerable and defensive. In Trites' review, she reflects on the importance of understanding size. "Perhaps the most important element in Griswold's argument is his insistence on the alterity of childhood. Whether in their need to create safe places, away from the madding world of adults, or in their recurring self-awareness Griswold's analysis indicate that the world is a frightening place for children" (395).

My decision to have my characters as insects would create individuals and situations that would mirror a child's experience in an adult world. I thought that using insects would provide me with a cast that would be interesting and small. I wanted each of them to have unique qualities

and abilities. I knew that entomology, the study of insects, would be a large part of creating the details in my story. Entomological facts would be essential to creating a realistic insect world upon which to base my fantasy. The integration of scientific facts about insects had to be interesting and functional for two reasons: the readers needed to enjoy learning about insects, but they also needed to imagine how these insects could function at camp.

To define the characters, I looked at different types of insects and what their physical characteristics are, so that I could relate them to how I imagined my characters. For the main character, Bea, I looked for an insect that could represent her intelligence, innocence, and love for books. Based on those requirements, I decided she should be a bookworm, the common name of an insect that does exist, known by the species name *Thynasura* ([www.discoverlife.org](http://www.discoverlife.org)). Several types of insects, like the booklouse and the silverfish, will consume paper and book bindings, but I wanted to be able to have fictional freedom with a bookworm. I also thought it would be a creative way to play off of the cultural nickname “bookworm” we give to people who are avid readers. Bea’s role as the bookworm is intended to reflect the importance of reading.

For the main character’s best friend, Carly, I wanted an insect that was friendly, attractive, and unthreatening. I chose a ladybug for Carly because it is one of the more hospitable bugs. The vibrancy of the ladybug’s shell would be a physical reflection of the character’s friendly personality. I knew that the antagonists should be aggressive and feared and travel in groups ([www.utahcountybeekeepers.org](http://www.utahcountybeekeepers.org)). I chose the honeybee as these characters, called the Queen Bees, because they had all of the facets of an antagonist that I was looking for. Their personalities came from how bees function in groups, including defense mechanisms, subordination, and their physical build. I also looked at different genus types and species for inspiration to name items and characters throughout the novel. For example, Bea’s cabin is

named Harmonia. Harmonia is the genus term of a type of lady beetle, and I thought the name fit how I wanted her cabin to function.

The setting of camp was chosen deliberately because it takes characters out of their comfortable environments and forces them into new social situations. Camp offers children an opportunity to grow, and I drew on my own experience as a summer camper for Bea's adventures. I also wanted the camp setting because I felt that camp, for children, offers a microcosm of the world. I wanted Bea to be connected to her family and nervous about leaving them for the summer. I also thought that a camp would be a perfect place to set the characters for many adventures and a great place for the reader to learn about the characters, especially in a group setting that exposes relationships.

The choice of the age group of the characters was made because it allows the book to be read by children who are going through the same growing experiences. Since Bea is ten years old, so she is not quite a teenager but able to grasp the reality of situations. The target audience became fourth and fifth grade readers, although I know many children read above and below their actual skill level may enjoy reading *Camp Bugaboo*.

Age is important not just for the target audience, but also for the opportunity it provides for the characters to grow. As in Roderick McGillis' review of *The Hidden Adult*, points out this dichotomy of childhood innocence can provide for fertile writing material: "For example, Nodelman persuasively argues that children's literature celebrates the innocence and lack of knowledge we attribute to childhood, while at the same time it sets out to give children the knowledge they lack, and therefore end their innocence" (257). The idea of the loss of innocence, or coming of age, allows for a more complex children's literature character, which I hope to achieve with my main character, Bea.

Bea needed to show a level of complexity that would be realistic and with whom children and adults could identify to make her a more authentic character. I also wanted her experience at camp to be more than interacting with enemies and overcoming fears; Bea needed to encounter great new friends and build memories that would help her grow. As Roberta Seelinger Trites wrote, “I recognized with my usual perspicacity what is obvious to most critics of children’s literature: transformations are at the heart of many children’s books. And child readers are often transformed by the transformation of the child characters” (63). To allow for a transformation in Bea, I felt that she should start as a less developed individual and gain strength and independence through her camp experiences and friendships.

Bea needed to show her insecurities at the beginning of the story but gain confidence throughout the story. The confidence growth would be the key to her maturing and integral to forging stronger bonds with her new friends. I wanted to show her ability to gain useful knowledge through books and how that knowledge helped her to succeed and create confidence. In the first camp-out she helps save a fellow camper because she of her reading wilderness survival literature. Her knowledge was essential to helping resolve this conflict.

This creative thesis is a culmination of creative writing and research. I read many online blogs about children’s literature as I came up with my ideas for the story. Many of the blogs, including *Chicken Spaghetti* (<http://chickenspaghetti.typepad.com>), *The Well Read Child* (<http://wellreadchild.blogspot.com>), and *Educating Alice* (<http://medinger.wordpress.com>), are written by parents, teachers, and literature enthusiasts. One of my favorite blogs for reviews was *The Well Read Child*. When reviewing *The Penderwicks on Gardam Street*, the blog author points out the value of having a timeless setting that includes universal situations. In the book, the family of four sisters has lost their mother to illness, and is going through the process of accepting their father’s new courtships. The *Well Read Child* articulates that the strength of the story comes

from its timeless theme. These blogs helped give me a neutral frame of reference for what readers look for in a successful children's novel and what sets them apart for parents and children.

Throughout the writing of the novel, I found myself making changes based on input from family, friends, and advisors. For example, originally the cook was named Rodney the Roach, but readers thought that might have an unsanitary effect, so I decided to make him a beetle, which is more acceptable in the kitchen. Another change was that I decided to change the title from *Camp Bug Juice* to *Camp Bugaboo* to reflect the fear that Bea overcomes while at camp. Since bugaboo has a connotation of fear, I thought it would be appropriate that the camp would be titled something that Bea overcomes. Through this trial and error, I was able to refine my work based on input that made it a much stronger work.

I felt that it was imperative for *Camp Bugaboo* to be read by the real critics: children. My mother read *Camp Bugaboo* to kindergarteners in Virginia, and my sister-in-law read it to first and fifth graders in Georgia. I wanted the teachers to gauge the reactions of the students, especially in terms of characters and plot. My mother has been a kindergarten teacher for twenty years, and she couldn't wait to read the story out loud to her students. My mother is an avid book lover and encouraged my brother and me to read. Our family also had a summer tradition of creating books with wallpaper samples, drawings, and our own stories. I knew that she would be able to read the story to them and assess their reactions, even though it was targeted at an older group. The younger students, ages five and six, reacted well to the plot and description, saying they enjoyed the dialogue between the characters. Similar to the other younger groups of students to which *Camp Bugaboo* was read, the first graders also reacted to the dialogue and the bug descriptions.

My sister in law is also a teacher in a parochial school, and she is an avid children's books reader, so I knew her criticism would be helpful to the story. Since her school is small, she was able to circulate *Camp Bugaboo* to other classrooms. The most articulate critics were the fifth graders from her school, my target age group for the story. I was able to read their reactions because several of them sent me letters and reviews of the story. I was thrilled to have their input. I received their letters when I was working through the first drafts, but I hadn't yet finished the ending. The fifth graders tapped into the transformation of Bea. One commented: "The best thing about [the story is] showing that Bea is a girl who can face her fears." The reaction of the fifth graders gave me the confidence that *Camp Bugaboo* was moving in the right direction. Plus, the responses from the older readers helped me think about what would be the best way to end the story.

I also relied on children's literature journals for criticisms, reviews, and general discussions and theories of children's books. I relied heavily on *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, and *Children's Literature*. I found that Roberta Seelinger Trites' 2001 article from the *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, "What I Did for My Summer Vacation, or Transformations, Existential and Otherwise," helped me think about how children characters evolve. Also from *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, Richard Flynn's 2008 article titled, "Late Twentieth Century Children's Literature Revisited," discussed Judy Blume. His thoughts on Blume's target audience with *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret* helped me to think about to whom I would be directing my story. From *Children's Literature*, I found two pieces that helped me along in my writing process. Roderick McGillis' 2009 article, "What Is Children's Literature?" gave me perspective on the adult/author and child/reader relationships and how I could use that in my writing. I found Elizabeth Rose Gruner's 2009 article from *Children's Literature* "Teach the Children: Education and Knowledge in Recent Children's

Fantasy,” useful. Gruner analyzes the power and structure of education within children’s works of fantasy books, and in my own particular interest, Harry Potter’s Hogwarts classrooms. While my characters weren’t in a school house classroom, they were learning in the classroom of the outdoors. I also used Zohar Shavit’s *Poetics of Children’s Literature* not only as an authority, but as a means to clarify my feelings about writing a children’s book.

I read several books recommended by Doctor Martin while writing. I found two to be not only useful, but essential for helping me figure out what Camp Bugaboo would be. Paul Fleischman’s *Joyful Noise: Poems for Two Voices* skillfully juxtaposes the poetry and scientific information about each insect. *Joyful Noise* showed me how I could use entomology effectively within my story. I also read *Diary of a Worm* by Doreen Corin, the story of a young worm’s day, which inspired the fun details of *Camp Bugaboo*. One of my favorite moments from *Diary of a Worm* is when his spider friend tried to teach him to hang upside down and he learned that worms aren’t meant to hang upside down. I used *Diary of a Worm* to show me how to create the authenticity of a character’s life through realistic details.

In the *Poetics of Children’s Literature*, Shavit asks, “What is a good book for a child? What is the influence of a book on a child? How can it contribute to the child’s development?” Part of my passion for this genre has developed because I believe children’s novels have the opportunity to attract all readers back to the fun of reading.

When I began my journey, I will admit that I suffered from the inferiority complex that Shavit describes when she writes: “Not only does the outside world regard children’s literature as inferior, but also the children’s writers themselves do so, thus reinforcing and perpetuating this self-image” (41). As I wrote, revised, and edited, I began to recognize the power of writing children’s literature. I grew more confident right along with Bea at camp. I found the writing process to be much more strategic and deliberate than I imagined a children’s authors’ process

would be, but this deliberation and persistent revisions of the story helped me to write a much stronger final product than I had originally, and I am extremely proud of the result.

Children who devour books remain lifelong readers and even as adults have conversations about Anne of Green Gables, Narnia, Fudge, and the Boxcar children. This is not coincidental but results from a child's mapping the landscape of his or her own life upon dozens or hundreds of children's books. C.S. Lewis said, "No book is really worth reading at the age of ten which is not equally (and often far more) worth reading at the age of fifty" (Lewis, *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories*). I wrote *Camp Bugaboo* with all of my favorite childhood characters in mind. Reading about them helped me grow, and I still find comfort in revisiting them. My hope is that *Camp Bugaboo* will provide readers, regardless of age, with the same sort of satisfaction.

## CHAPTER ONE

Bea opened one eye and squinted as a ray of sun filtered into her room. She rolled over, crinkling and rustling under her cotton paper sheets of British Poetry. She was attempting to burrow beneath a thick leather cover, when she heard her mother yell up the bookcase, “Get up Bea - Breakfast is ready!”

Beatrice Willow was getting ready for her first trip to camp. The Willows were Bookworms - insects that live in bookcases and libraries. One of the main things that made Bea and her species different from other types of worms is that all bookworms love to read. Descended from their silverfish ancestors of the Thysanura family, the Willows and their Bookworms relatives is a small breed of insect, different from annelid worms. Bookworms are also not terribly popular among book-loving humans since they eat book-binding glue and, in time, make entire libraries of books fall apart. However, her cousins - the earthworms, make a living by digging tunnels and spend their free time burrowing.

Bookworms differ from Earthworms and other worms not only in their favored profession but in their physical build as well. Bookworms have short arms and legs that work well for turning pages and climbing bookshelves. Ironically, all bookworms also have bad eyesight and must wear glasses to read. One of the best things about bookworms is that they can solve lots of tricky problems because they have read so much. And if they don't know the answers, they can look them up.

Bea was about to embark on her first trip to Bugaboo summer camp. Almost all bug children go to camp during the summer. Bug parents love summer camp because their offspring

get to have fun, but they also learn essential outdoor survival techniques that all bugs need to know.

Bea was nervous because she'd never been away from home for so long, but she was excited to meet new friends at camp. As she lay in her bed trying to lie still, she thought to herself, "I hope I make a new best friend at camp!"

"Bea. Up! Now!" Mrs. Willow called from their kitchen, "We need to get ready to load the boat so we can get to the airport on time," as she swirled honey on a pancake made of clover and grass.

"Ok, I'll be down in one second," Bea chirped as she hoisted herself out of her bed. She rolled out of her book, grabbed her glasses, and went to breakfast. Her room was in a small nook of the house in a wooden shelf. The dark wood of the room gave it a warm ambience, while the cream color of her cotton sheets made it light. Bea used a pile of old vintage books as her bedside table. She had a small closet and framed posters of her favorite authors, including Jane Damsselfly, Agatha Ladybug, and Bill Beetle on the wall that her father had found for her. Once Bea was up, she was full of energy. She had been waiting for this day and was excited and nervous.

"I've got your breakfast here," said Mrs. Willow, as she added a fragrant violet to the pancake and set the plate down.

The Willows' home was in an old wooden bookcase, in the library of an eccentric retired British explorer, Sir Willoughby Pender. He collected books and studied entomology. It was a perfect place for a bookworm to live. The Willows' bookcase home was in the back corner of the

library behind Sir Pender's extensive collection of stuffed exotic animals. The part of the bookcase they lived in had partitioned drawers meant for storage of various specimens, but it was never used, so the Willows had made it their home. The Willows dined, slept, and lived in the bottom right drawer. Bea's father, Dave Willow, had built a tunnel in the back corner of their drawer that led to the garden outside. It had taken him months to chip through the wood of the bookcase and the side of the house and onto the patio, but the tunnel made it much easier for the Willows to go outside and tend the garden.

It was a great home, and Bea began to realize this just when she was leaving. Bea looked around at the small kitchen and thought, "I won't have breakfast here for two whole months." She knew their kitchen was a very cozy place, and wherever she would be eating breakfast wouldn't compare. The Willows had a special table made of a wine cork. They had found it after reading a series of novels on wine collecting, following one of Sir Pender's notorious parties. Her father had taken another wine cork and chipped it into three stools for them. This provided a great place to eat their meals and have notoriously long bookworm conversations.

As she sat down to breakfast, Bea asked, "Mom, do you think there will be other bookworms there? Did you remember to pack my Camp Bugaboo sweatshirt? Yum! Look at this breakfast," rattling off questions so fast that Mrs. Willow didn't have a chance to answer.

"Everything is taken care of, and I'm sure you'll meet a variety of insects there that will all be friendly," she replied.

Mrs. Willow handed Bea a fork and said, "Are you ready? Do you have your butterfly bag packed?"

“Yep,” Bea replied. “Did you get stamps for me so that I can mail you letters?”

“‘Yes’, not ‘yep’,” Mrs. Willow corrected her. “And yes, I got a roll of stamps which I put into your trunk with extra envelopes and pens.” Bea’s mother stood with a spatula in her hand, wearing an apron that she had fashioned from Sir Pender’s laundry remnants. Mr. and Mrs. Willow loved to cook in their kitchen and always made it smell delicious with home-cooked meals.

Bea's trunk was full of khaki shorts, extra shirts, and a few notebooks for Bea to write her thoughts in. The trunk, black with silver hardware, had Bea's favorite stickers on it. Her favorite musical group was The June Bug Brothers, and her trunk revealed her dedication to the band. She also had all of her bedding and her favorite teddy bear in her trunk.

Mrs. Willow fixed Bea a snack to go, while her father loaded her trunk onto the waxy magnolia leaf skiff they used to travel for all family trips. All three Willows paddled their skiff down a stream that ran behind the house, until they got to the County Butterfly Airport.

The campers were traveling by a Monarch Winged Air butterfly to Camp Bugaboo, in cabs attached to the body of a butterfly. The cabs were painted the exact color of the butterfly to match the spots of the monarch’s wings. The campers would be on the Queen Alexandra Monarch 323 because that particular family of butterflies had the largest wings. Since the monarchs were making their migration to Mexico, they flew the campers on their way down. The monarchs traveled in groups and used the air current to make the trip short.

Once they arrived at the airport, Bea's mother fussed over unloading her bags and began to look sad as soon as she saw Bea standing next to her trunk. Mr. Willow loaded her trunk onto the butterfly cab and gave her a hug,

"Have fun, Bea! Enjoy it. Meet people and make sure you write us!" Bea's mother brushed away a tear and said, "Make sure you don't swim at night and get chilled; take your vitamins and tell your counselor that you do have an allergy to South American peppers and...."

Bea gave her mom a hug. "Mom! I'll be fine. I'm eleven years old, and don't worry, I'll write you guys! Don't forget to send me clover cookies, updates on what's going on at home, and money for the Canteen!!"

Mr. Willow, a laid-back and calm worm, gave Bea a strong hug and smiled. "Remember what we read about in Sir Pender's journals, Bea. Wilderness survival – You know how to start a fire and stay hidden from large animals in the woods. You will be just fine." Mr. Willow had spent his childhood summers at camp and always told Bea tales of camping. Plus, he loved reading adventure and wilderness stories. Gary Paulsen's *Hatchet* was one of his favorite outdoor survival books. The Willow family gathered closer to the line that led to the monarch loading ramp.

As the group of parents and campers stood in the Monarch hangar, conversations began to halt as a squeaky voice grew louder. Garret, a grasshopper and the head counselor at Camp Bugaboo, began calling everyone to board the cab of the Queen Alexandra.

"Ok, I guess this is it," said Bea, "Love you. Bye, and see you in a few weeks!" Bea turned and gave her parents a big smile. She gripped her duffel bag tightly and walked over to

Garrett. He checked her off the list and said with a friendly smile, “Are you ready for an awesome summer?”

“Uum, yeah! Of course.” Bea replied hesitantly. She looked at Garrett’s stained tee shirt and many friendship bracelets. She decided he looked friendly, which made her excited to get on the butterfly.

“All right then; step into the cab!” Garrett waved her on and started checking off the next camper. Bea nervously climbed up the loading ramp, stepped into the cab and looked for an empty window seat. She found one, took off her jacket, and stuffed her duffel underneath the seat in front of her. The inside of the monarch butterfly cab had rows of seats and large windows on each side. Then, she looked out the window and waved good-bye to her parents. Bea saw her breath steam up the window as she watched Mr. and Mrs. Willow wave until her mother finally turned and shuffled off to the station. She thought about what would happen if they had to pick her up from camp, if it was horrible. Bea decided to get settled and look around the plane for friendly faces.

## CHAPTER TWO

Bea settled into her seat and plugged in her Music Player, MP, which was bright pink and held all of her favorite songs. She investigated the plastic bag her mother gave her and thought, "Yumm, honey cookies." Bea had just pulled out her copy of *American Bug*, a magazine devoted to all things that young female bugs loved, when a curly-haired ladybug shuffled up to her row, laden with tote bags.

"May I sit here?" asked the ladybug with a bright pink headband and matching skirt.

"Sure," said Bea. "Hey, I'm Carly," said the ladybug with a big smile.

"Oh, I LOVE *American Bug*, and you have a pink MP? Awesome!"

"Hi, I'm Bea" said Bea, taking in all the pink Carly was wearing and carrying, which seemed to cover the ladybug antenna to toe.

Carly sat on her pink monogrammed pillow and stowed her matching pink tote bag under the seat in front of her.

Bea commented, "You must love pink."

Carly adjusted her pink polka dot skirt and picked up her *Pink Bugz* magazine. "Of course! I was born in a pink tulip, and my mother said that made me love pink!"

Bea wanted to roll her eyes, and might have, had it been any other ladybug. But for some reason, she felt Carly's genuine friendly vibe. She hoped they would share a cabin.

"Cool," said Bea. "I hope we're in the same cabin."

"Oh, me too! Wouldn't that be SMAG!" cried Carly.

"Umm, SMAG?" replied Bea, curious at Carly's lingo.

"You know, *super magnificent awesome goodness* - short for anything that is great!"

"Oooh," said Bea, relieved. Just as Bea and Carly were settling in their seats and traded magazines, they heard a loud noise at the door of the bus.

"Heellooo! I know we are late, but we are the three Queen Bees, so hold the flight," cried a bumblebee.

Garrett held the door for the bees while admonishing them for being late. All three black and yellow bees were dressed to impress. Each of them had on the designer jeans; BUGGS boots, gigantic black leather purses, and oversized sunglasses. All color coordinated, one was wearing all purple accessories, the other wore pink, and the last one grey. They loudly announced their names to the driver: "Bethenny, Edwina, and Elinor."

"Who are they?" Bea whispered to Carly.

Carly rolled her eyes, and said, "The Queen Bees. The one in the purple is Bethenny, the one in pink is Edwina, and poor Elinor is in grey. Elinor just follows anything they tell her to do because she's a worker bee. They give her some sort of "honorary" status as a Queen, but everyone knows they just treat her like their worker bee.

Carly turned to Bea as the Queen Bees continued to throw a royal tantrum at the front of the cab.

“Anyway, last summer they were all in my cabin, and I thought they were my friends. They told me how much they loved my pink bed comforter, but then kept playing pranks on me and threw my comforter in the lake! Bethenny, especially, loves to make other bugs miserable. I mean at home she’s got like ten worker bees constantly doing everything for her. I don’t mind Elinor, but the other two? The opposite of SMAG. So, I totally don’t like them.”

Bea watched the Queen Bees stroll down the aisle, flicking antennae and making mean remarks. Bea had heard of the Queen Bee hive horror stories from her middle school, and she wasn’t anxious to learn about the camp version of Queen Bees.

The bee with the purple accessories flipped off the hat of one of the younger crickets as she walked by and chuckled. She waved at a mosquito and yelled, “Nice Braces!” while cackling hysterically. Bea could tell that these girls made everyone miserable. Then, the purple accessorized bee stood in front of a rather large beetle.

"Joey, whoaaa, lay off the pizza rolls," the one with purple BUGGS said sarcastically. They stopped in front of Carly and said, "Oh look at these nerds," and laughed. Bethenny looked directly at Carly and Bea and said with a smirk, “Hello there, wanna-be-pink lady bug. I remember you.” Carly just crossed her arms and grimaced.

Bethenny looked over at Bea and gave her a once over. Bethenny put her hand on her hip and turned to Edwina, “Well what kind of worm do we have here? HmMMM?”

Edwina began squeaking obnoxiously and replied, “Like, I don’t even know! She’s not even, like, real!”

Bea blushed and thought about ignoring them. But as Bethenny continued to stand in the aisle, Bea got irritated and blurted out, "I'm a bookworm!" without thinking and blushed.

"Ha! Riiiiighhtt. We all know that book lice are the only book bugs that exist. Look, girls, now we have lice on the bus! And by the way - watch yourself Newbie! Worms don't talk back to the Queen Bees," snapped Bethenny. Elinor, the grey Bee, lagged behind the other two gave Bea and Carly a shy grin as she walked by. Bea wondered why Elinor subjected herself to the Bees.

Bea straightened her posture and gave Carly a look. Carly rolled her eye, "Don't even worry about it, Bea. They are so rude!"

As the three Queen Bees made their way to the back to kick bugs out of "their" seats, Bea looked at Carly and stuck her finger in her mouth, pretending to gag. They watched Elinor put up all three bags, while Bethenny and Edwina relaxed in their seats. Bea rolled her eyes, while Carly laughed and said, "By the end of the summer, I had made up a nickname for them - the Stingers."

"That's funny because Queen Bees don't even have stingers!" Bea responded automatically. Carly laughed. "Yeah, you are right!"

Bea and Carly laughed, and they had a conversation about their hometowns. While Bea listened to Carly, her mind wandered back to those Queen Bees. It really aggravated her that the Stingers thought they ran the camp. "Must be in their honey genetics. In their blood to think they run the hive," Bea thought as she rolled her eyes. Bea hoped that they wouldn't try to ruin her summer, but she also knew that they would be preparing her for middle school next year.

However, the excited mood in the bus made Bea forget about them. Ol'Manny, the butterfly pilot, snapped his flying shades on, looked forward and said, "Buckle your seatbelts and make sure you're in the upright position." All the campers cheered, whistled and clapped. Bea and Carly cheered and looked at each other. Bea thought, "This is going to be one crazy summer!"

As the Monarch Express flew high above the airport, Bea realized how far away from home she would really be. But at least she had already met Carly, and she was sure she would make even more friends. Eventually, Bea was lulled to sleep by her music and the up and down sensation of the wings flapping.

Their flight landed on a great big open field, where all of the counselors, in matching green shirts stood, waving. Bea was deep into a dream in which the Stingers were forcing her to jump into the lake, in her one-piece green bathing suit, when Carly shook her and said, "We're here!" As they filed off the Monarch, the campers were greeted by the Bugaboo counselors. Bea was impressed by how wild and beautiful camp was; she saw moss, pine needles, wild dandelions, and lots of fields. It was completely different from her home where Sir Pender's gardener kept the backyard perfectly manicured. Bea was mesmerized by the wildflowers that towered over her and thought of her Earthworm cousins, who lived outside year round.

All of the counselors had lined up in two long greeting lines and were clapping in sync. Then, they began to sing loudly. "Welcome to, Camp Bugaboo! Welcome to, Camp Bugaboo!" Bea couldn't help grinning because it was so exciting. After all of the campers finished filing off the butterfly, the counselors dispersed to find their charges.

A male grasshopper ran over to give a high five to a few of the male bugs, "Preston, how was your year?"

"Hey, John!" came the response.

"Hi, Good to see you Jane!" cried a short beetle who held a clipboard and whistle.

As squeals of campers greeting each other resounded in the woods, Bea felt a little lonely and homesick. One of the counselors, a ladybug wearing a green camp polo, smiled at Bea. "Beatrice! Welcome, I'm Penny, your counselor, and you're in Cabin Harmonia. Our group is over there!" Penny pointed to a clearing where Bea's trunk sat.

Bea held tightly onto her bag and walked over to the clearing, where she found Carly.

"Yes!" they both exclaimed. Bea was relieved. They both walked down the pine straw path to their cabin, located a short way from the main field. Cabin Harmonia, an old wooden cigar box, had windows with screens to let in air and a big front door that led to a small porch. Carly flung open the rusty screen door and exclaimed, "Oh, good, we're the first ones here. Let's pick out our beds!"

Carly and Bea chose their bunk beds, which were situated in the far right corner of the cabin. Carly wanted the bottom bunk, and Bea got the top. They unpacked their trunks while Penny went to greet the rest of their cabin mates. Bea knew she would feel more comfortable when she had her own space, so she began fixing up her bunk.

Bea climbed up the smooth, worn ladder and surveyed her little oasis. She'd laid out her comfortable paper sheets (blue striped) and her favorite yellow quilt (made of old cotton papers

her mother had sewn together). Running alongside the bunk was a small ledge. Bea placed her flashlight, her MP, leather journal and soft old teddy bear on the ledge. Bea felt a bit more at ease once she saw her things in place, and it felt more like home.

Bea observed Carly's bunk - pink sheets, a pink and green patchwork, three large down pillows, and one light green teddy bear. Carly patted her pillow and turned to Bea, "Should we go look around and check things out?"

"Sure!" said Bea, "You can show me around."

Carly and Bea left their empty cabin, chatting as they walked out the door.

"I'm really excited about this year. Last year, our cabin was constantly fighting because of the Queen Bees. I'm really hoping they aren't in our cabin because I'm ready for a summer without drama," Carly explained.

Bea heartily agreed. "I know! I feel the same way...except for being here last year, of course!" They laughed and walked along the main camp path.

They passed the other girls' cabins and the main field before taking a left to the lake. They ventured down to Optera Lake, which was a tributary of a creek running through the woods. The water was clear and the right size for sailing, canoeing, and swimming for bugs. Carly told Bea the daily swimming routine. When Bea wondered about all the fish in the creek, Carly explained that backswimmer bugs were employed to keep small fish in check. While the backswimmers kept Optera Lake safe, the water boatmen were in charge of camp aquatics.

Carly led Bea past the lake and showed her all of the places they would have their activities, like the arts and crafts hut, which was an old paint can. They walked by the climbing area, a huge rock wall, which looked intimidating to Bea because she knew nothing about climbing anything, except for bookshelves. They decided to go back to the cabin to see if any other campers had shown up.

They saw their counselor Penny on the porch who was talking to another counselor- - something about switching cabins. They walked in to see all three Queen Bees standing beside Carly's bunk, buzzing around, holding both Bea's and Carly's teddy bears while screaming with laughter. Carly yelled at them to give back the bears. Then, Bethenny, the Queen Bee with purple BUGGS and all purple accessories, threw Carly's bear on the floor and announced to her friends: "I don't want to share a cabin with babies."

Bea quickly sucked in her breath and fervently hoped that the Stingers wouldn't be in her cabin.

"Ugh, me either!" chimed in Edwina. Bethenny turned to her fellow honeybees without acknowledging Carly and Bea's presence and said, "I cannot believe we aren't in the same cabin as last year, NIGHTMARE." Come ON - let's go talk to Joe about this situation!" said Bethenny to Edwina. The Queen Bees stormed off in a color-coordinated buzzy huff to change cabins. Elinor, the grey bee, hung back and introduced herself to Bea and Carly. As soon as Bethenny saw her talking to Bea and Carly, Elinor ran off. Bea was just relieved that the Queen Bees didn't want to share a cabin with them because neither did Bea!

Carly and Bea just looked at each other, while Penny walked in, "Oh, I see you girls have met. Great! I'm going to talk to Kelly, but let me know if you need any help setting up." Penny

left to talk to another counselor on the porch. Meanwhile, more of their cabin mates trickled in. One was a gangly grasshopper, and she dropped her purple nylon duffel on the top bunk bed next to Bea and Carly's bunk.

“Hi, I'm Gillian! Call me Gilly though. Where are you guys from? And what time is dinner? I'm STARVING!” Gilly was wearing blue running shorts and had purple sweat bands around her thin green elbows.

Bea smiled because Gilly seemed to glow with an energetic and friendly feeling. “Hi, I'm Bea and this is Carly. We've been here for two hours, and our counselor is Penny. She said dinner would be at 5:30 every day, but it will be later tonight because of the introduction campfire.”

Gilly pulled out a tennis ball and racket from her bag and began bouncing the ball while carrying on a conversation, “Oh, cool. I'm pretty pumped about this summer. I usually go to Tri-State Sports Camp, but this year I convinced my parents to let me come here, so I could rock climb, trail run, and learn how to sail.”

Carly was organizing her tops in her trunk in order of color; pale pink, coral, and fuchsia to peony pink. “What should I wear tonight? It's the first night, which is, like, HUGE!”

Bea and Gilly the grasshopper looked at Carly, and Bea responded, “Umm, what do you mean, Carly? It's just dinner and a campfire, right?”

Shaking out her lime green capris, Carly looked at both of them and said, “Hello! Tonight is the first night we meet all of the other campers. Plus, most days we have to wear camp shirts.”

Gilly shook her head while rummaging through her duffel, looking for something important and ignoring the clothing conversation, “Aha! I knew I still had a peanut butter bar in here! Do you guys want a bite?” Gilly tore open the bar with her mandibles and rested on her bed while Bea and Carly managed the clothing.

Bea replied to Carly, while mentally assessing her own camp wardrobe, “But...I don’t think it matters...Peggy didn’t say anything about clothes – I have nothing COOL to wear!” as she realized she hadn’t even thought about looking cool when packing. Bea thought camp was about, well, camping – not clothes.

Meanwhile, Carly rifled through her trunk. “Gilly, you can at least wear this cute yellow top.” “Bea, I have the perfect summer dress – here!”

Carly handed Bea a cotton knit dress, with fluttery sleeves and a sophisticated blue tile design on it.

“Are you sure, Carly? This is so cute, I love it!” Bea exclaimed.

Carly replied, “Of course– this is why I love camp.”

A loud thump interrupted them. They girls look through the screened in porch to see a colorful caterpillar let go of her big hemp duffel, trying to catch her breath, “Yeah...so, the butterfly. Broke down. He pulled a wing joint. Waaay outside of camp. Whew. We had to walk and fly; the other girls are behind me.”

The three other campers staggered in, looking tired. Two Roly Poly bugs put down their matching matchbox trunks. They introduced themselves as Sue and Sally, identical twins. A strong fire ant came up behind the twins, carrying two duffels on her arms and smiled.

“Hey ya’ll! I’m Jenn!”

Penny the counselor slammed the door and walked in, as one of the Queen Bees walked away laughing, and Bea heard Penny mutter under her breath, “*What a brat,*” and turned to the girls and said, “Ok, Ladies – how are we doing?”

Penny rushed to help the girls who had just arrived with their bags, while the caterpillar introduced herself as Pepper. The cabin soon held a buzz of female bugs talking, chatting, and preparing for the first campfire of the summer.

### CHAPTER THREE

After each girl put away her clothes and got settled, Penny had a cabin meeting. She explained the history of the camp and their cabin five name – *Harmonia*. Penny told the campers that each cabin had been named after an important founder or camper in Bugaboo history. *Harmonia* was the name of the first ladybug to become a counselor, and then a head counselor. The root of the word also means harmony, which Penny hoped would be the theme for their cabin. After she finished the history, Penny went around and had each girl introduce herself.

Carly the ladybug said: “Hi, I’m Carly. I’m from Palm Island, and I love pink. I am a return camper and look forward to summer at Bugaboo all year!”

Bea the bookworm waved at the circle, “Hello, I’m Bea. I’m from Townville, and I love to read. This is my first time at camp, and I’m excited about everything!”

Jenn the fire ant introduced herself in a slow, southern drawl, “Hey, I’m Jenn. I want ya’ll to know that even though I’m a good old red fire ant, I don’t get angry and I can’t wait for camp-outs!”

Sue and Sally, roly poly twins, spoke in sync: “We are roly poly twins from Bugburg. We love to canoe and camp. We like to dance to show tunes for fun.” Bea wondered if they ever did anything apart.

Pepper, the caterpillar, in her mellow voice said: “Hey guys! I’m back for another summer and can’t wait to see what happens. I love to surf and I want to be an artist.”

Penny, the ladybug counselor, looked around with a smile and said, “Wow, what a great group we have! I can tell *Harmonia* is going to be full of memories. My name is Penny, and I was a camper here at Bugaboo for eight years before I became a Counselor-in-training, which I did for three summers. I have been a counselor for two summers, and I love spending my summers here. During the year, I attend Aphid University in upstate New Alate, where I double major in Hive Sociology and Larvae Psychology.”

Penny stood up, “Now that everyone has met, let’s head down to the big field to start the campfire; we don’t want to hold everyone up!”

Penny led the girls down the main path to the big field in between the girls and boys cabins, near the soccer field. All of the insects-- bees, grasshoppers, ants, mosquitoes, beetles, and caterpillars of all varieties--chatted nervously while watching the counselors build an enormous fire. Even Penny appeared excited and gave her counselor friends high fives. Everyone sat on twigs arranged around the fire as benches.

Sally and Joe, two old friendly dragonflies, introduced themselves as the owners of Camp Bugaboo and said that the theme of this summer would be “Courage. Bugaboo campers have courage, and we know you show it every day at camp.” They explained that they wanted all campers to overcome their fears and learn more from each other. Sally stood in front of the fire and spoke: “Bugs need brotherhood, and we all need to remember that despite our differences - we are all insects and campers!” Bea thought it was no coincidence that Sally seemed to be talking to the Queen Bees as she spoke. Apparently, the Queen Bees had raised enough of a fuss to get into the cabin they wanted.

The counselors got up to introduce themselves and their cabins. Second to last, Penny got up to introduce herself to the camp. Since Penny also had lifeguarding duty, she had prepared a rules skit about swimming hour and no running on the dock of the lake, which ended with a counselor getting a bucket of water poured on his head.

Then Penny introduced her cabin, *Harmonia*, and talked about how great the campers were and how their cabin theme was harmony. Cabin H stood up and waved at the rest of the camp, while Penny said, "I'm sure you all will love getting to know the ladies of Cabin H!"

Bea was relieved that she didn't have to introduce herself in front of the entire camp. She was excited to meet more campers but not excited enough to stand and talk in front of the whole camp. At the end of the ceremony, all of the campers and counselors joined Sally and Joe in singing the camp song:

*Camp Bugaboo, Camp Bugaboo*

*Where we spend our sum-mers*

*Under the pines, by Lake Optera,*

*Swimming, Crafting, Camping & Making Friends -*

*New friends, old friends and all of us*

*Insects! Bugs! And Campers Foreve-e-e-e-r-r-r!*

As the smoke from the campfire made Bea's eyes water, she looked around at all of the seasoned campers singing, and she couldn't wait to form the same kinds of friendships and

memories they had. She glanced over at Gilly and Carly, and they all exchanged looks with each other, confident that it would be an AWESOME (or as Carly would say, SMAG) summer.

At dinner, Bea got to meet a few more campers. The dining hall held long tables for each cabin and a serving area, where Head Cook Rodney the Beetle barked orders at the junior beetles in training. Bea was impressed with the food when dinner consisted of mashed sunflower seeds and raspberries. After dinner, they went back to the cabin where Penny let them have down-time before bed. Most of the Cabin H campers were so tired that when they lay down to talk, they quickly closed their eyes and drifted off to sleep.

## CHAPTER FOUR

The first night was hard for Bea because she wasn't used to sleeping in pitch black dark, her parents weren't right next door, and there were lots of unusual sounds. She felt like no one else at camp missed their parents because it sounded like everyone else was deep asleep. Plus, it seemed that Carly had fallen asleep immediately. Bea pulled out her worn paperback, *Antenna McFly & the Flying Wizards*, and snuggled under her quilt with her flashlight.

The next thing Bea knew she was waking up to the sound of a morning bugle and a loud voice saying, "Wake up, campers, today is our FIRST DAY OF CAMP!" Bea rolled over to the worn wooden ledge of her bunk and peeked over to see if Carly was awake. Carly was sighing loudly and hiding her head under her pink and green quilt.

"C'mon Carly, it's time to get up," whispered Bea.

Their counselor, Penny, groggily opened the door of her room and said, "Get rolling, girls. Breakfast and morning announcements are in fifteen minutes."

Bea climbed down the stairs from her ladder and threw on her favorite khaki shorts, a navy blue polo and a Camp Bugaboo sweatshirt. She grabbed her toothpaste and toothbrush and headed to the bathroom.

She ran into Gilly on her way out of the wood paneled sink area. Gilly looked exhausted, "I couldn't sleep at all last night because I thought I kept hearing owls and bats!" Bea was happy to hear she wasn't the only one who had had trouble falling asleep.

Bea and her cabin mates sleepily walked into the dining hall. The hall was an old travel trunk that had been screened in and had a wooden porch with a wide set of wooden stairs leading to the door. Penny led them to their assigned table. Sally, one of the camp owners, stood with a bull horn in front of the campers as they meandered into the dining hall. “GOOD MORNING, CAMPERS!”

“Geez,” Bea thought. “That’s a little enthusiastic for 7:30 in the morning.”

Bea found the breakfast bar. On a long and wide carved pine twig, there were bottle caps full of different toppings: sunflower seeds, raspberries, pine nuts, pine straw, and fresh green grass. Bea piled them all into a thimble and poured honey over the concoction.

Each of the older cabins had two campers assigned to dining duty each day. The campers had to load all of the dirtied thimbles and bottle caps into the dishwashing area that was run by Rodney the Beetle. Bea was thankful it wasn’t her turn on the first day. But Gilly and Carly were chosen, and had to stay to help clean up. Bea was walking back to the cabin behind Pepper and Jill when she ran into two of the Queen Bees.

“Ha! Sweet outfit. I think I wore that in third grade!” said Bethenny, the meanest bee of the Queen Bees, while smirking to Edwina.

Bea tried to ignore them, and kept walking. They continued making fun of her outfit, but then started talking about Ted, the most popular mosquito, according to the Queen Bees. The Queen Bees had their pink Berry phones out, clicking away at their messages.

“Bethenny, OMG, Ted texted you?!?” said Edwina, eyeing Bea as she walked by.

Bea just gritted her teeth and kept going to her cabin, where she went straight to the bathroom, while the rest of the girls had a June Bugs Brothers CD blasting. When she got into the stall, a few tears fell, and Bea felt disappointment along with her tears. She usually wasn't bothered by other bugs. She wiped them on the sleeve of her sweatshirt. Bea felt conflicted because deep down she didn't care what they said about her, but there was a tiny part of her that wanted to please the Queen Bees. She just wanted to enjoy herself and keep her great Cabin H friends. To Bea, the Queen Bees seemed mean all the time.

Carly and Gilly got back to the cabin together while Bea was straightening up her bunk as part of the daily Cabin Clean Up. Gilly and Carly were telling everyone about Rodney Beetle, the head cook. According to Penny, Rodney Beetle had a big heart, but the girls had a hard time seeing it.

Gilly told the girls, "So, he wears this grody stained apron and smokes cigar butts outside. Plus, his whole family lives in the trash receptacle. It was funny watching Carly cleaning!"

"Yeah, it's pretty gross," agreed Carly. "I definitely don't enjoy dining duty. I already got one of my favorite pink shirts dirty. "

The *Harmonia* girls continued to clean up and dance to the June Bug Brothers. Even Pepper, who had a unique taste in music, loved the June Bug Brothers. She asked, "Ok – who is the cutest Junebug; Wally, Willy, or Frank?" Carly unrolled her signed poster, so the girls could all determine their favorite Brother and pick out a place for it on the cabin wall.

Pepper, with her love of all vibrant colors, complimented Carly's comforter. Then Pepper said, "Wait, weren't you the girl last year whose bedding got thrown in the lake?!"

Carly's face tensed, and said, "Yeah, the Queen Bees did it and ruined a really nice blanket my mom had bought me." Pepper laughed, and Bea gave her a dirty look.

"No, Carly – I'm not laughing at you," said Pepper. "I'm just remembering all the crappy things they did to me last year. Bethenny's sister was in my cabin and they loved to harass us!" The girls paused and listened to Pepper.

"Yeah, they tied all of my feet together last year while I was asleep. I couldn't get up and was late for breakfast one morning." Pepper remembered. "And they were constantly taking my tie dyed t-shirts. I'm pretty mellow, but I really couldn't stand them. That's why Cabin Harmonia is going to be awesome this summer!" Carly's face lit up with a smile and they all laughed.

All of the girls cheerfully agreed that Cabin H was SMAG. And they all felt pretty relieved that the Queen Bees weren't in their cabin. While they waited on Penny, the girls listened to music, lounged on their beds and talked. While rummaging through her clothes, Carly asked Bea and Gilly what they were going to wear.

Tossing a soccer ball up and down, Gilly glanced around and said, "Whatever. You know we are going to run around all day, right?" She looked at her own blue shorts and white v-neck tee-shirt.

Carly, in her navy blue shorts, pink ribbon belt and white tank top said, "I just love sharing."

She began pulling out belts, shirts and bracelets from her trunk. Bea was amazed. “Carly, your trunk has everything in it!” Bea noticed that many of the shirts still had tags on them.

Bea remarked, “Your mom must’ve taken you shopping! All my mom did was sew up my old summer stuff!”

Carly blushed and ignored Bea, “Here, try this on!” Bea pulled on a khaki skirt with a navy blue belt. Bea added the striped headband, with her own green polo shirt. Bea thought that was weird but didn’t want to say anything. And as she looked in the mirror, Bea decided that she liked her own style, although she wondered if the Queen Bees would say anything about it to her.

## CHAPTER FIVE

Penny's room was attached to the cabin by a wooden door. That way she had privacy but was there for the campers. Penny walked out of her room. She closed the pine door behind her that was covered in stickers, crafts, and a big chalkboard with notes.

“Girls? Are we ready for our first day?! Ok, let's sit and have a little Cabin H talk before we start the summer! Penny wore a sky blue “Camp Bugaboo” t-shirt with faded red shorts and a white baseball cap with her ladybug antennae sticking out. The girls gathered on the floor around Penny in a circle.

“Ok first. The Cabin Rules.

- We must respect each other and treat everyone equally.
- Tell me if there is anything going on that I need to know or that I can help with.
- We must do clean-up every day. We all have to do it; otherwise it won't get finished.
- Dining duty is twice a week.
- Never be late, and try to be early!

“As long as we do this right, we will have fun. Now to the fun stuff! Today you ladies will be joining Ms. Simone Spider for climbing, then Crafts with Kelly. Simone and Kelly are my best friends here, and I know you all will have a fabulous time! Let's get going so Ms. Simone won't be waiting.”

Bea and Carly walked together, behind the other girls, on the way to the climbing rock. They followed the trail around the lake and half way through the woods, where they veered left. In a clearing, a massive wall of jagged rocks appeared. Bea was nervous about climbing because, as a bookworm, she only had two short arms.

“Hey, I’m Simone,” said an assured voice from above. Everyone looked around. The girls heard a “Welcome to Climbing 101,” and Carly said to Bea, “Where is she?”

All of a sudden, a Daddy Long Legs spider crawled out from behind a rock with her long legs.

“Ladies, not only is climbing fun, but it is important for the survival of any bug. Today, we are going to practice climbing up this rock wall.” Simone was wearing a red bandana, and each of her eight feet had a grippy, black, slipper-like shoe on it. She held out harnesses with a big smile and said, “Don’t be nervous; come on.”

Gilly was the first camper to slip into a harness. She used her long legs to jump from rock to rock. Simone cheered her on. Carly and Bea hung back a bit while the other girls tried to fly, climb, and move their way up the wall. Finally, Carly took a pink harness and used her short ladybug legs to climb half way up. She looked down and said, “Ok, I’m done!” Since Carly didn’t have too hard of a time, Bea thought she could give it a try.

Bea looked at Simone and said, “Well, how do I do this – it’s going to take me forever!” Embarrassed, Bea glanced around, but no one seemed to doubt that she could do it. Bea kept having flashbacks of her fourth period P.E. class in Townville where she fell off the rope climb and everyone laughed at her.

Simone looked at her with a big smile and said, “Well, bookworms have to use their whole body to help their small arms squirm up. It is all in the technique. Do you want to try it? Just think of it as a bookcase! Since I’m a Harvestman and can’t spin webs like my true spider cousins. Like you, I had to learn how to use my long legs to get around”

“Ok, I’ll try,” Bea responded hesitantly. She used her small hand like grips to catch onto the first ledge. Using all of her power, Bea swung the bottom half of her body up onto the ledge. She realized that if she could use her momentum from swinging to get up that rock climbing was not too hard.

“Whew,” she thought and looked up the rest of the ridge, “This is going to take me forever!” As Carly cheered, Bea looked up, overwhelmed by how far she had to go.

Simone yelled to Bea, “You are doing great! Try and get to the next ledge!”

Bea pulled herself up to the next ledge, and felt her arm muscles tighten in soreness and felt sweat drip down her face. She wasn’t sure if her arms could make it. Bea yelled back, “Simone, I want to come down. That’s enough for me today!”

When Simone belayed Bea back down, Bea felt defeated and annoyed. As the rest of Cabin H put their shoes on, and grabbed their water bottles, Carly told Bea, “That was great what you did out there!”

Bea just looked at Carly and rolled her eyes, “Yeah, right! I totally gave up, but it’s super hard without long legs!” Carly just put her arm around Bea. They walked behind the rest of the Cabin and Simone back to camp. Bea was grateful for Carly’s friendship, but she wasn’t exactly looking forward to the next climbing activity.

While they were walking to the dining hall for lunch, the boys from Cabin Papilio came up behind them. Robbie was a Roly Poly who loved video games, and his best friend, Will, was a praying mantis who loved sailing and soccer. They both said hello to Gilly because they knew her from home and sports camps. Like Gilly, Robbie was very energetic and showed off his rolling skills. He rolled into a ball and rolled down the hill, while the other bugs watched and clapped.

Clifford the Wooly Worm, who had been the runner-up to Camper of the Year last year, walked beside Carly and Bea. Bea had briefly met him the first night of camp.

“Hey, what’s up,” said Clifford.

“Not much,” replied Bea, who was not really in the mood to socialize after climbing.

“We just got done rock climbing with Simone,” said Carly, who knew Clifford from last summer.

“Awesome. I think Simone is way cool,” said Clifford. Wanting to avoid talking about rock climbing, Bea changed the subject. “So, what activity did you guys just do?”

Clifford replied, “Soccer with James. It’s pretty cool that he’s teaching us all sorts of trick shots, since he’s a Brazilian Soccer Star and all. Man, you should see him kick with all of his legs!”

Clifford and Bea talked about soccer on the way to lunch. The Main Camp had several different huts, including one for Arts and Crafts. After lunch, Clifford went on to swimming, while Bea joined Carly and the rest of Cabin H at arts and crafts.

Kelly, the arts and crafts director, was a beautiful black and yellow butterfly. All of the Cabin H girls were excited to be there. She pulled out a ball of yarn and said, “We are making Colorful Cocoons today!”

Bea and Carly looked excitedly at each other and grabbed their favorite colors. Bea picked out purple, yellow, and pink, while Carly grabbed two shades of pink and green and said, “SMAG, Bea.”

The arts and crafts hut was decorated with all sorts of beautiful drawings, pottery, and knitted pieces. Pepper was excited about working with crafts since she could make silk strands from her spinneret. She wanted to make them into something cool this summer, and she needed Kelly’s help. Pepper worked with Kelly the butterfly and helped her hand out all of their tools. The girls sat on wooden benches that were bright with a colorful variety of scenes and things painted by years of previous campers.

The cocoons they created were like two baskets tied together. They made great storage containers for jewelry or pens. As they worked, each camper found a personal use for the cocoons. The girls had fun knitting, until Bethenny and Elinor showed up to talk to Kelly about doing designs for the camp newspaper. From what Bea understood, the camp newspaper was the Queen Bees’ personal gossip column.

“Oh look: the Queen Bees!” said Bea, giggling nervously to Carly. Carly looked up and frowned. Kelly walked over to talk to Bethenny, while Pepper rolled her eyes. Elinor attempted to smile at Pepper, and Bea wondered if she enjoyed following Bethenny around all day. Bethenny asked for special markers from the art closet, and Kelly went into the closet to see if she could find them.

As soon as Kelly walked away, Bethenny started mocking everyone: “Oh Carly, knitting is so lame.”

“Penelope, the famous praying mantis, knits on all the sets of her movies,” responded Bea.

Kelly walked back over and admonished Bethenny for her “smart” remarks. With a severe look, Kelly handed over the pens and warned the Queen Bees that they were close to getting into trouble. Then, Kelly resumed her conversation with Pepper, while Bethenny snapped her fingers for Elinor to follow.

“Bye, Ladies! Have a great day!” Gilly yelled sarcastically as they walked away. Jenn looked over and said, “Bless her heart. What a rude little bee!” and they all laughed.

## CHAPTER SIX

The next day, the girls of Cabin H walked back to their cabin before lunch, singing an *ArachnaNebraska* tune, *It's a Bug Party*. "Penny! We met James, the soccer star, this morning at activity!" Bea smiled and joined in on the excited chatter with her cabin mates.

Bea walked with Pepper on the way to lunch, down the gravel path. "I love *ArachnaNebraska*." Bea asked Pepper if she had any brothers or sisters.

"Yes, I have one brother, and I miss my family. My mom and I used to paint all the time. I really miss surfing with my brother, since we lived close to the beach." Bea nodded her head and said, "I miss my family too!" She and Pepper exchanged smiles and headed into the cafeteria. Bea sat next to Carly on a wooden chair. Garrett came in with a box of mail and began to call out names of campers who had packages and letters.

"Bea Willow!" Bea ran up and got a thick envelope, which held a long letter and a copy of her favorite book, *Cynthia the Cicada Spy*.

"Carly Gust?"

Carly ran up to get a small, rectangular box from Garrett. Bea and Gilly looked on excitedly, and cried, "Yes! First package!" Carly put it under her chair and said she would wait, while Jenn got her first package and opened it. She got boots, hiking pants and the *ArachnaNebraska* CD that had come out while they were at camp. All of the girls cheered.

The rest of the table had oohed and aaahed, while Penny remarked on the nice package. When the dining duty campers brought around the pitchers of nectar and crabgrass salad, everyone turned their attention to lunch.

Bea watched as Carly stuffed the box in her pocket and her smile disappeared. Carly barely ate her food and asked Penny if she could go back to the cabin. Penny looked concerned and replied that Carly would have to have a buddy walk back with her.

Bea volunteered, and Penny gave them permission to go. Bea jogged to catch up with Carly, who was already outside. When Bea caught up, Carly was crying, and Bea couldn't figure out why.

“Carly! What’s wrong?” Bea was out of breath and looking at Carly. Carly kept walking in quick strides. She replied, “I don’t want to talk about it!” Bea was hurt and confused. At home, Bea had a couple of other worm school buddies, but she didn’t have a best friend. Bea wasn’t sure how to react to Carly’s obvious emotion, but she wanted to try and be a good friend to her. Bea kept walking with Carly and wondered what could upset Carly who was usually so bubbly. When they reached the cabin doors, Carly turned to Bea and said, “You want to know what’s wrong?” Carly took the jewelry box out of her pocket and shook it. “THIS IS!”

Carly slowly opened up the package, which contained French chocolate truffles, a letter, and a small jewelry box. She opened up the jewelry box. Bea was fascinated, and a little jealous, as Carly pulled out a silver necklace with a C pendant.

Bea picked up the box, and said, “What do you mean? It’s a beautiful gift.” Carly sat on her bunk, eyes red.

“Not the necklace, Bea, the note. My mother won’t be able to make it to Parent’s Weekend again. So, she sent the necklace instead. Why do you think I have a trunk full of brand new clothes? My parents separated a month before camp because my father left our Coleoptera colony last fall. We were hibernating in this tree stump for winter, and he left me, my mom and all 1500 of my mother’s larvae...Anyway, she keeps buying me stupid stuff.”

Bea absorbed the news and tried to figure out how she would react if her parents had decided to split up. It made sense why all of Carly’s clothes were new, and she’d rather loan them out than wear them.

“Well, hey, at least we’re at camp and away from all the craziness at home, right?” Bea asked gently. Carly just shook her head, while the rest of the campers walked loudly into the cabin. Bea could see that Carly was still upset and said, “We can talk about it later tonight.” Carly nodded, and they turned their attention to the rest of the campers. Bea knew that Carly was still upset and that she should try and make her feel better. Everyone was busy getting ready for the afternoon activity and Bea and Carly joined in.

On their way back from the evening activity, Bea and Carly walked behind everyone. Bea suggested that Carly hang out with Bea and her parents on Parent’s Day. It was the first solution Bea had thought of, and it seemed to cheer Carly up.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

After the first two weeks of camp, Bea had gotten into the routine of camp, and she loved it. Every morning they woke up to the bugle and camp song. She would roll over, and wake up Carly. Gilly was usually up already because she was running in the mornings with the Camp Running Club. Bea wondered how Gilly got so much energy. The girls of Cabin H would usually wear their pajama pants to breakfast. They didn't "dress up" because breakfast was early, and the weather was chilly in the mornings. However, the Queen Bees loved to make merciless fun of Cabin H. Bea didn't understand why the Queen Bees got up early just to fiddle with their antennae.

Gilly's impersonations of the Queen Bees were hilarious. She adopted a monotone voice, "Hi, like, Chloe, you like need to match me!" Bea and Carly would giggle and make their imitation voices. While the girls of Cabin H were close, Bea, Carly, and Gilly stuck together during most camp activities.

After breakfast, the campers would attend two morning activities. Bea's favorite activities were arts & crafts and soccer. Then, the campers would have a break before lunch for some down time. After lunch was rest hour. Bea usually read or wrote letters to her parents. Then after rest hour came swimming.

During their first swimming activity, Bea opted out and explained that she didn't want to swim in Optera Lake. Carly tried to convince Bea to swim several times, but Bea enjoyed herself on the grass. Bea was only comfortable swimming in Sir Pender's birdbath where they could see to the bottom through the clear water. The water was just too dark for Bea, and she worried about what lurked below, even though no one else seemed to worry about it.

One particularly sticky day, Bea sat on a colorful towel watching Carly dog paddling around and Gilly jumping off the diving boards. She got sweaty sitting on the shore and decided to dip in at the end of swim just to cool off. Watching Gilly leap into the air with her strong hind femoras and watching Carly shake off her sets of wings gave Bea the motivation to test the waters. Once she did, she had a great time hanging out on the tubes and floating along. After that, Bea spent every minute of swim hour in the water.

Bea enjoyed the snack time when she could get a Cricket-Cola from the canteen that was built out of a water canteen that a human had lost. They played fun card games, like Go Fly! and Metamorphosis Memory with the boys from cabin Papilio. Since Clifford and his Wooly Worm family at home predicted the weather with their colors, the friends would often bet on the weather based on Clifford's fur. After swimming hour, the campers went to the Canteen for snack time. They finished the afternoon with two more activities and dinner. After dinner there was usually an evening event, unless the campers were on an Overnight.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

At the end of the second week, Penny announced at rest hour that Cabin H would find out their first destination at dinner. Gilly cheered while Carly and Bea gave each other high fives. All of the girls excitedly celebrated because they had all been waiting for the first camp-out. The veteran campers told stories of the infamous Goose camp site and the ghosts that haunt it. On the way to lunch, Carly explained the itinerary of camp-outs to Bea.

“First, we go get our packs and snacks. The canteen usually gives snail mix to snack along the way. Then we get the rest of the morning to pack up, and after lunch we head out. OH! And I love camping, but I always volunteer to carry the big tarp because I get first shower then!” Bea took mental notes.

Bea let out a deep breath. “Ok! Let’s go to lunch and figure out what we will pack!”

Garrett announced the cabins and campsites after a lunch of soybean salad sandwiches and peanut chips. “Cabin H and Cabin Papilio - Running River.”

They were handed their assignment, with the boys, to Running River camp site.

“Yesssss!”

“Wooohooo!”

Cheers went up all around Bea. Carly turned to Bea and said, “This is one of the best camp sites. The hike is mostly flat, the river is fun for playing, and there is a fire pit and shelter. Really SMAG!” Carly turned to Bea and said, “Running River is the BEST! YES!” Bea looked

around at all of her friends and began to feel excitement. “This will be a really fun adventure,” she thought.

Garrett went on announcing. “Cabin Apis and Cabin Mantodea.” Bea and Carly began to giggle because Cabin Apis was the Queen Bees’ cabin and they got paired with the youngest boy’s cabin. It happened to every cabin, based on the uneven amount of boys and girls. Everyone turned to the Queen Bees, who rolled their eyes and yelled, “Whatever!”

Gilly and Bea went to pick up their packs, since Carly was on lunch duty. Bea picked up an old brown pack that was musty. Tiller, the Roly Poly in charge of the camp equipment, pulled the straps around her arms and said, “Well, that there is a good fit!” Bea hated the smell of the pack, but she didn’t want to complain or seem like a newbie hiker. Gilly picked up a new, blue pack and put it on. Bea wished that she had put on that pack. They picked one out for Carly and walked back to the cabin.

Carly greeted them at the cabin, “Hey! We have fifteen minutes to pack. Ooh, thanks for picking up my backpack!”

“Ok, Bea, let me show you how I pack. First, they tell you not to bring any toiletries, but I always bring mouth-wash. Then, I pack sweatpants and a fleece because one time I got really cold at night. I always bring two flashlights and my teddy bear.”

Bea and Gilly looked at each other. “How do you carry all of that stuff?” asked Gilly.

She said, “Oh, well, I just make sure a friend carries my water,” and smiled at Gilly. They watched as Carly pulled out a bright pink water bottle and a matching cap.

## CHAPTER NINE

Bea packed all of her camp outfits neatly into the backpack. While watching Carly pack, she sat on her quilt and stared off into space.

“Bea, are you ok?” asked Carly, pulling on her green hiking shorts with a quizzical look on her face.

Bea’s stomach knotted up, and she was embarrassed. “Well, I’m just afraid of sleeping outside. I mean, my parents never allow me to sleep outside because our neighbors have cats. I think I’m nervous...”

“Oh, totally! I was so nervous last year. But seriously, with all of the campers and counselors, we are fine. Plus, one of the mosquitoes always goes with us to make sure that no one follows us.”

Bea thought about the time that her father had been outside fixing a leak at the bottom of their house. He had been attempting to be inconspicuous to avoid attracting extra attention. However, a White-Breasted Nuthatch flew over and landed right near Mr. Willow on the back deck. The bird saw Bea’s father and started at him as if he had spotted lunch. Mr. Willow quickly rolled over to the grass where he could hide and was able to escape the fate of being a Nuthatch’s meal. Bea, her father, and mother were all traumatized by the close call and were extra careful about being outside from that day on.

Bea felt insecure without the comfort of knowing that her parents were on the next shelf up, and was worried about going out into the woods alone. “But,” she thought, “If Carly and Gilly can do it, so can I.”

## CHAPTER TEN

Cabin mates Bea, Gilly, Carly and counselor Penny lined up at the main field in front of the camp flag ready to go. Penny told everyone that they were in for a really fun overnighter at Running River.

When Bea saw everyone's excitement, she smiled and thought maybe camping could be her thing. After the campers gathered their belongings, the two cabins met on the path outside of camp. All twenty campers started out on the path, talking and laughing. The path was an inch wide and avoided all human highways. Three counselors led the campers, and three more walked behind. Bea felt good and felt herself relax since she was walking with Carly and Clifford. They were all talking about this great new band, The Katydids, when the line stopped.

Two of the lead counselors ran to the back of the line. The word spread down the line that there was a huge rock in their way. A human must've left pebbles in the path. Bea felt herself stiffen up, and a knot formed in her stomach. The counselors told everyone they had to climb over the pebble. Going off the trail was very dangerous and they would help everyone get over.

Bea and Carly looked at each other, thinking of their experience at rock climbing. "Greeeattt," Carly sighed.

Gilly came back to their part of the line and said with an excited gleam in her eyes, "What about this for an adventure, girls?!" Bea kind of wanted to-pour her water bottle over Gilly's head for being so excited about something that she was dreading, but was honestly just relieved that Gilly was there.

Counselors Penny and John climbed over the pebble to help everyone down the other side once they made it over. Carly went first. She was top heavy because of her pack, and had to be hoisted up and over. Bea could hear her slide down the other side.

“Bea, why don’t we get you over next?” said Gilly. “I’ll take your pack. Just remember, use momentum to get you over the top and just slide down.”

Bea felt slightly comforted by Gilly, and she stepped into the makeshift step that Clifford had made with his hands. Bea’s adrenaline was pumping so fast that she didn’t even realize that she was being held up by a boy.

“1-2-3 GO!” Gilly and Clifford cried in unison, as they boosted her up to help her clear the rock. Bea saw air for a moment, and thought she might crash. She landed near the peak of the pebble, used her two small arms to pull herself up, and hoisted herself to the top so that she could see down. She saw Carly’s pink shirt waving.

“Slide, Bea!”

Bea swung her legs over the peak, and before she could do anything; she slid down the rock into the arms of the counselors, while Gilly slid down behind her. Twenty minutes later, all of the campers were over, and the pebble didn’t even seem like that big of a deal. Everyone was excited and talking about the “near disaster” of their trip.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

Bea and the rest of Cabin H hiked the rest of the way to the campsite undisturbed. When they reached Running River, Bea felt like she was in a place that no bug had ever been before.

“This is beautiful,” she said. The campsite was a small, flat area of pine straw, behind a fallen tree. A stump covered with moss sat beside a pile of dead leaves and shrub. Beyond the campsite was a small shoreline that bordered a clear and sparkling river. A few of the campers ran to the water’s edge and splashed each other.

The counselors immediately organized the cabins into assigned groups to set up camp. Bea was assigned to the tent group. Carly went with the fire group, and Gilly was assigned to the dinner group. All of the campers had learned in camping class how to set up a tent.

The tents were made of small pieces of tarp that, when set up and connected, created one long shelter for the girls. They set it up against the log using rubber bands as tie downs. Then, they laid down the plastic tarp on the ground for rain protection. They stopped for a snack of walnuts and blackberries, since it would be a few hours until dinnertime.

Carly and Pepper collected scraps of bark for firewood as the fire starters attempted to get a fire going. Deen, the Bug Scout of Cabin Papilio, brought over a fresh bucket of water. “In case of an emergency,” he said. “That is true Boy Scout form,” thought Bea. Then Deen attempted to start the fire by rubbing two sticks together in hopes of creating a spark. Clifford joked that they may not have a hot dinner, since it was taking Deen so long to get a fire started. Finally, Deen figured out how to use a string to spin the stick on top of another piece of wood. They found bark

and shredded it finely so that it picked up the flame and started burning. Soon enough, they had a big bonfire.

Bea was watching the fire when she was asked to help Clifford find a good spot for the boys' tent, since she had helped set up the girls' tent and knew where it should go. As they walked along, they joked about Rodney the Beetle and his crazy cooking. Clifford seemed to pause for a moment.

“So, do you have a boyfriend at home?” Clifford asked, quickly as he picked up some leaves.

“Umm, yeah, no. Well, no. I don't,” Bea blushed and stammered. She wondered why he'd ask her that.

“Do you know if Gilly does?”

“Um, I'm pretty sure she doesn't,” replied Bea.

“Well, yeah, because Will has a crush on her, so I thought I'd ask,” replied Clifford.

Before Bea could finish the conversation, Gilly ran up saying potato peels were cooked and they'd better hurry and get some before they were gone. After all of the campers finished their delicious fire-cooked dinner of roasted chestnuts, potatoes, and beans, also known as “grub.” The counselors let everyone have free time before it got dark when everyone would meet up for s'mores and campfire stories, a Bugaboo overnigher tradition.

Bea and Carly went to their packs to put on their jackets because they were cold. Gilly went to play kickball on the beach by the river with a big group. When they got back to the fire,

they helped Penny assemble the s'mores line of graham crackers, marshmallows and chocolate. Bea loved hanging out with Penny.

Penny made and sold her own line of Bug jewelry, which all of her campers thought was super cool. Carly and Bea were asking Penny about her jewelry when Clifford and Gilly came running back to the camp-fire out of breath, shouting that something was wrong.

Gasping, Gilly exclaimed, "Taylor fell into the river, and I don't think he can hang on much longer before he gets swept away! Hurry!"

Bea, Penny, and Carly dropped the s'mores and ran down to the shore of the River as fast as their legs could carry them. Bea saw his Blue Nets cap floating down the river and spotted him grasping to a branch that hovered right above the swift water.

Bea vividly remembered the Wilderness Survival book that she and her father had read together. She knew that Taylor needed a line thrown to him; if he fell in the river, Taylor could possibly suffer from hypothermia. Plus, everyone knew that a termite couldn't survive long in the river. While Penny tried to radio back to camp, Bea sprang into action. Penny told Bea to order the campers to extend their legs and arms to build a bug chain out to Taylor since they didn't have a rope.

Bea remembered to have someone gather warm belongings: "Carly, get everyone's jackets into a pile so that we can have a place for Taylor to lie down when we get him out of the water. You're in charge of getting him warm and dry once we pull him out!" Carly ran off gathering jackets, fleeces, sweaters and anything she could find.

Penny ran back breathless after she radioed camp. She directed Bea to organize a few campers to help Taylor. Bea called out, “Gilly and Clifford, I need to be on the end of the chain. I can stretch the farthest and I know he can hold onto me. We need to do that, and I want both of you to hold onto me really tight.” Bea took off her sweatshirt and shoes. Penny helped anchor the campers to shore, and she gave them the okay to begin the rescue.

“Ready?” shouted Penny. Bea nodded to Gilly and Clifford.

“Ready,” shouted Gilly and Clifford. While Penny was talking to Taylor to keep him calm, Gilly, Clifford, and Bea waded through the current to the front of the line. Gilly and Clifford latched onto the bug chain, propped Bea up, and held her by her ankles. Penny’s plan was to have them become an insect trapeze.

“On the count of three, Taylor - hold onto my arms and we’ll get you on dry land!” Bea yelled.

When Gilly and Clifford used their momentum towards Taylor, she just focused on stretching her hands towards Taylor, and thinking how much she felt like a circus performer, (which was ironic because she didn’t enjoy being tossed around.) Once Bea felt his grip, Gilly and Clifford pulled them back and caught them. Then all of the campers used all their strength to pull them all back onto shore.

Penny counted each camper as they walked onto shore to make sure everyone was accounted for. The counselors checked Taylor out to make sure he was fine. Carly handed Bea a sweatshirt and blanket, saying, “That was crazy! You were awesome!”

Clifford came over and said, “Wow, you had a really cool head there. That was amazing! I can’t believe Taylor thought he could wade out on a dare.”

Bea blushed and didn’t know what to say, except, “Thanks!”

Later that night, everyone enjoyed the s’mores and the camp-fire activities, but they were exhausted by the day’s adventures. It seemed that Taylor felt much better, since he ate three helpings of s’mores. Bea felt herself getting drowsy beside the fire, enjoying how warm and cozy it was. The conversation around the fire involved recalling the events of the day. Penny congratulated Bea for following counselor/camper protocol in an emergency. “Bea, you did an excellent job of following my directions. You’re an excellent first-year camper.”

“Yeah, Bea – where did you learn all that stuff about rescue?” inquired Taylor from across the campfire circle.

Bea felt comfortable behind the glow of the campfire and, she explained her source, “My dad and I have read *Cricket Smith’s Field Guide to Wilderness Survival*. It’s pretty cool because it has illustrations and cartoons. “

When Bea had decided to sign up for summer camp, Mr. Willow began researching wilderness survival and safety to help Bea prepare for camp and to make Mrs. Willow feel better about Bea going off to the woods for two months. Mr. Willow and Bea sat down once a week and read a chapter from Sir Pender’s library of wilderness survival journals. At the time, Bea thought it was annoying, but as she lay in the tent, safe and sound that night, she appreciated it.

Bea got several handshakes, high fives and congratulations, but she wasn't looking for attention; Bea was just looking forward to bed. She knew her dad would be proud that she had used her wilderness rescue skills.

Carly and Bea snuggled into their sleeping bags, and as soon as Bea's bookworm tail hit the bottom of the sleeping bag, she began to fall asleep. She could hear Carly's voice whispering, "That was awesome, Bea, you'll probably be Camper of the year this summer!" That was the last thing Bea remembered before she woke up with sun shining on the tent and the river gurgling.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

The hike back to camp wasn't nearly as eventful as the hike in or river rescue, but Bea felt the camaraderie of the two cabins was stronger. Everyone talked, laughed, and helped each other down the path. Once they got to their cabin, the girls raced to the showers. Bea sat down on her bed and took a moment to let her first overnight camping experience sink in. She began writing a note to her parents:

*Dear Mom and Dad,*

*You'll never believe what happened on our first camp-out! Remember the chapter on Rivers in Cricket Smith's Field Guide...*

Before she could even finish the first sentence, she felt her head get heavy with sleep. Bea woke up, disoriented, with a blanket over her, still wearing her campout clothes. Penny opened the door and said, "You were out, so I let you sleep through afternoon activities! I'll wait while you take a shower we'll meet everyone at dinner!"

"Thanks. Yeah, I can't believe I slept through the afternoon." Bea reached for her flowered bathrobe and purple shower caddy and shuffled to the showers.

After her shower, Bea began to feel refreshed. She put on her favorite worn jeans and purple t-shirt from her visit to New Bug City. She walked quickly to the Dining Hall and ran into Taylor on her way.

“HEY! Thanks again for pulling me out of the river. I just called my parents to let them know that I’m ok. That was awesome! You’re friends with Carly? I need to thank her too. She’s pretty cool. If you ever need a favor, let me know!” exclaimed Taylor as he jogged off.

Bea just shook her head and wondered if Taylor had a crush on Carly. She skipped on down to the dining hall, ran up the stairs, and swung the screen door open. Bea was hungry for dinner, and she walked to her table waving hello to the Cabin Papilio boys. At the table, all of her cabin-mates started clapping. Bea blushed and slipped into her chair, trying to hide. Penny and the Camp Director, Joe, walked to the front of the room while everyone was eating their grilled mushroom sandwiches.

With Penny standing proudly by his side, Joe blew a whistle to get everyone’s attention.

“We have a few announcements for the evening. First of all, I hope everyone had a great time on their first overnigher of the summer! Cabin Araneae and Cabin Diplura, I hope everyone is feeling better and learned your lesson about making sure you cook food properly. Also, I want to acknowledge a camper who made a great contribution to her friends and peers. Bea Willow helped organize the members of Cabin H and Papilio to save a fellow camper from being swept away in Running River. Let’s all have a Bugaboo Cheer for Bea!”

Bea blushed, as much as a bookworm can blush, and tried to slide lower into her chair.

“So, I am nominating Bea for Camper of the Year!” Joe continued, “Now, as you know, all campers get to vote for Camper of the Year. The COY gets to represent the campers’ voices next summer. Make sure you pay attention to the nominees!”

Carly turned to Bea with a huge smile and cheered, “Yay!” Bea was hoping that the announcements would change soon because she never liked too much attention. Most of the time, she avoided things like this at school, preferring to hang out and read her books.

After dinner, Bea stayed behind to clean up with one of the Queen Bees, Bethenny. Each of the girls stayed on their side of the dining hall to clean up until they had to take out the trash. As they walked out together to throw out the trash, Bea attempted to start a conversation.

“So, Melanie, where are you from?” inquired Bea.

“Uhh, Insectadelphia.” Melanie replied shortly.

“Oh, cool. It must be fun to be from a big city,” Bea responded politely.

Melanie whipped around and faced Bea. “Listen up, you nerdy Bookworm. I don’t know what kind of stunt you pulled, but honestly, if you think you’re going to be the Camper of the Year, you are like, super mistaken. One of the Queen Bees ALWAYS wins Camper of the Year. So watch yourself.”

Bea stared as Melanie slammed her designer sandals down the stairs. Bea felt stunned. She sat down on the stairs wondering what had just happened. Rodney the Beetle walked out and lit a cigar.

“Uhh, just what I need,” thought Bea.

“She’s a real Creepy Crawly, ain’t she?” drawled Rodney.

“Uhh, yeah,” replied Bea. She got up to go, and Rodney tapped her on the shoulder.

“I think this will be the last year the Queen Bees hold Camper of the Year title. Good luck kid.”

Bea smiled in return. “Thanks, Rodney.” Maybe he wasn’t so bad, she thought.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Bea felt encouraged by her conversation with Rodney. Meanwhile, the drama of the first overnighiter was soon forgotten. Bea enjoyed returning to her daily camp routine and began to enjoy the free swim even more because she had started to use the diving board.

Before she knew it, two more weeks had passed, and on one particular morning Bea woke up to the familiar sound of the bugle. Penny shuffled out of her room and said in a tired voice, “Up ladies of Harmonia! Get ready for announcements and breakfast.” All the insects moved in slow motion. Since it was a chilly morning, Carly and Bea grabbed their Bugaboo sweatshirts. Bea remembered how Queen Bee Bethenny had made fun of Cabin H for wearing sweatshirts instead of the latest windbreaker. Because they were running late, Bea and Carly hopped out the door and down the path to the dining hall.

“I couldn’t sleep last night, and then I fell asleep and had the weirdest dream.” Complete with hand motions, Carly explained her elaborate ice skating dream.

Carly and Bea walked briskly down the pine straw path to the Dining Hall. Bea and Carly waved to Clifford while Elinor and Edwina fell in behind them on the path. The Queen Bees began talking loudly over Carly, obviously wanting to be heard.

“Bethenny and Clifford totally belong together. I heard they held hands last night after dinner,” Edwina enunciated loudly. Bea blushed, not knowing why, since Clifford was just her good friend. Carly kept talking about the crazy dream she had had the previous night, but Bea kept her ears open for more of Edwina’s conversation.

“Yeah, totally,” replied Elinor. “She said they are going to the End of Summer Dance together.”

“I know! How cute will they be!” said Edwina. “Plus, Clifford will make sure that all boy campers will vote for Bethenny to be Camper of the Year.”

“Yeah, totally,” said Chloe. “I can’t believe anyone *else* would think *she* could win Camper of the Year title.” Bethenny and Edwina cackled to themselves, while Carly turned around and stopped the girls as they started to walk away.

“Bea is GOING to win Camper of the Year and the Stingers can’t do a thing about it. Too bad everyone LIKES Bea, and no one really likes any of the Queen Bees! SO. JUST. SHUT. IT!”

Carly marched off without giving the bees a chance to respond, while Bea stood with mandibles open, and marveled at the ladybug’s spunk. Bethenny and Edwina took a surprised pause for moment and then began to laugh again.

“What an idiot!” cried Edwina, with a worried look on her face.

“Yeah, good luck, WORM!” yelled Chloe, as they breezed by Bea.

Since no one was around, Bea exhaled a big yell of frustration, “ARGH!” and planted her hands on her hips.

“This is too much,” she thought. Bea decided to get breakfast to go and write in her journal to help her collect her thoughts while everyone was at the dining hall.

*I never asked to be in this race, but now that I am, I want to win it. Who do these Bees think they are? Can I beat them? I really love it here, meeting new friends, helping other campers, and going to activities. Maybe I should try to beat them; I know Carly and Gilly would help me. I wonder if anyone else would. We would need to come up with a campaign slogan and get other campers to vote for me...I think we could do it.*

Writing it all down helped Bea clarify how she felt. After she finished her thoughts, she heard voices coming up the path from breakfast. She closed her leather bound notebook and put it away.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

When the rest of the Cabin H girls got back from breakfast, Bea learned that Bethenny had tripped Pepper at breakfast, causing her to spill her twig and yogurt breakfast everywhere. Pepper had run outside, while Gilly had threatened to throw her breakfast all over Bethenny, and Bethenny threatened to sting Gilly. Jenn had handfuls of yogurt ready to start a food fight. Penny stepped in at that point. Penny sent them all back to the cabin and told them they would be on shower cleaning duty if it happened again.

After their breakfast escapades, the entire cabin was fired up to beat the Queen Bees. Before they had come back, Bea had been in the cabin trying to come up with campaign slogans. She had pulled out a few of the arts and crafts supplies that Penny kept for cabin projects.

Bea told the other campers her plan. They held a cabin meeting and decided to do everything bugly possible to make sure Bea got Camper of the Year! Carly explained to the group that the COY had special privileges and was allowed to sit in the meetings with the counselors to represent the campers. However, they all knew that the Queen Bees used their Camper of the Year status to get fun things for their cabins, instead of for the rest of the camp.

Cabin H decided that they wouldn't tolerate any more of the Queen Bees dominating the Camper of the Year title. Pepper and Jenn were assigned to talk to all the younger campers. They were popular with the younger campers because they spent a lot of time in the arts and crafts room, helping them with their projects.

Carly and Gilly were campaign managers, in charge of organizing and scheduling, and Penny offered to help with supplies. Sue and Sally (the Roly Poly twins) were going to help write speeches and plan meetings. Bea was overwhelmed with excitement!

“Now, girls, we need a great slogan. What should it be?” said Bea.

“You’ll never BEA wrong with a camper like Bea!”

“BEA VS. BEE – who is going to help you across the river?”

“BEA – A bug, a friend, and a camper!”

“We really like the Bea vs. Bee slogan!” said Sally and Sue. Everyone else agreed that was the best slogan to win Camper of the Year.

At the end of their brainstorming session, they made plans to make flyers and pins that night and organize a rally. Bea and Carly went to Joe to see about setting up the rally for Bea. He agreed to let them hold a very short campers’ meeting in the arts and crafts building later that week.

The next day they went to climbing class and met with Simone. As the girls climbed, Gilly filled Simone in on Bea’s campaign. She turned to Bea and said, “I’ll give you camper-of-the-year points, if you climb to the top of this rock wall.”

Bea went wide-eyed and panicked. “Umm. Yeah, I don’t know, Simone. I’m such a slow climber....”

The rest of the girls cheered and Carly said, “Bea, you’ve got to do it. It would be great – for your campaign!”

Bea nervously agreed and put on her harness. She tried to convince herself that it wouldn’t be that bad. As she climbed the first ledges that she had climbed the first time, she felt pretty good. When she got to the halfway point, she stopped and looked down. When she realized how high she was, Bea froze.

She couldn’t move for what seemed like an eternity. Sheer terror had broken out, and her fingers were clamped down like vice grips onto the stone. All of her friends were cheering her on, but she couldn’t move.

Simone knew something was wrong and handed the belay over to Gilly. She scurried up the wall beside Bea. “Go on. You can do it. One foothold at a time, and you will be at the top before you know it. Move this hand up here.”

Bea took a deep breath and followed Simone’s instructions. When Bea neared the top, Simone said, “I have to get back to the bottom to help you down. With her heart pounding, she climbed up and felt the moss at the top of the rock wall. A roar went up from below when she stood up triumphantly on top of the wall. When she came back to the ground, she was greeted by cheers and hi-fives. Simone gave her a hug and told Bea she was working really hard to become camper of the year. Jenn gave Bea a big high five.

As they made their way back to the cabin, Carly made sure the word spread about their meeting. They recruited their friend, Clifford, to help them bring more male campers to the meeting. Bea was feeling more confident and excited about her ability to win camper of the year.

She knew if she could climb to the top of the rock with the help of her friends that she could possibly win.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

The next few days, Bea and her friends worked hard to create an effective campaign. They worked mostly at night and during their rest hour. They used mini sticky notes for posters around camp. They planned their campaign meetings and made *Vote for Bea* buttons. They worked on debate questions, and Bea made sure that she talked to as many campers as she could during swim hour and at the dining hall.

Cabin H became closer and tighter knit because of all the work they were doing together for the campaign. As they talked to other campers, they realized that Camp Bugaboo was tired of the Queen Bees winning and thinking they controlled the camp. Jenn and Pepper kept hearing stories that made them realize the Queen Bees probably helped themselves to counting the votes and controlling the election. Bea was determined to beat the Queen Bees and enjoy her time at camp.

As the days passed, the Bugaboo campers continued their daily activities. Cabin H got to play a soccer match against Cabin Papilio with James as their coach. Bea knew she wasn't the greatest soccer player because of her bookworm short legs, but she loved to play. She felt confident on the field because she could move quickly, and she could pop the ball up and hit it really far with her head.

The soccer field was next to the main big field. The two cabins met up on the field, wearing their soccer clothes. Clifford gave her a high five, and James assigned Bea to play defense. Gilly was a great player and was assigned to the middle field; she could hop and kick at the same time. Carly was in the goalie position because she was low to the ground and had a quick reaction speed and could fly to the top of the net when she needed to.

Everyone had a great time playing while James coached. Penny arrived early to watch the end of the game. By the second half, Gilly had scored three times, and the score was tied. The boys knew they had to cover Gilly, so Pepper passed the ball to Bea since she was open. Bea stood still for a moment, and then she ran quickly toward the goalie, Robbie and used her momentum to scoot the ball forward. Robbie was watching Gilly and didn't notice the ball slowly creep by the line. While Robbie was distracted, Bea kicked the ball with all her might. It went in.

James called the goal: Bea had won the game for them! Cabin H girls were excited and Carly was cheering loudly. The boys shook hands for a good game, and Clifford came over to congratulate Bea. While everyone was talking, Clifford asked Bea, "Are you going to the end of summer dance with anyone?" But before Bea could answer, Will and Robbie came over boisterously singing a Brazilian soccer cheer that James had taught them. Bea's stomach was all in knots, and she watched as Clifford walked away with the boys.

Penny cheered while Carly was giving Bea a high five. Both teams left in good spirits, just in time for a bug butter and cake lunch! Bea felt exhilarated and loved the feeling of winning. She had never joined a sports team at home because she hadn't wanted to endure the tryouts, but her cabin mates made her feel like she was good at it.

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

A few days later, Cabin H was ready for the campaign rally. They met at the arts and crafts building thirty minutes before dinner. All of the girls had made signs, flyers, and pins to pass out. Even Rodney the Beetle offered them Jello to hand out, but Bea wasn't quite sure how popular it would be. Penny's counselor friends came by before dinner. Bea and Carly hoped that many of the younger campers would come. Most of the boys from Cabin Papilio trickled in. They put pins on and proceeded to goof off in the back. A few of Pepper's craft buddies showed up: Henry and David the twin mosquitoes.

While they were waiting for more bugs to arrive, Carly turned to Bea and said, "This is weird. Everyone I talked to said they were going to show up tonight!" Jenn stopped the campers from the younger cabins as they walked to dinner and convinced them to stop in for a moment.

Clifford and Will walked in with a few of the younger carpenter ant campers. However, the total number of campers at Bea's rally was small. But Bea carried on with the rally, introducing herself and explaining why she thought she should be the Camper of the Year. She was disappointed at the low turnout, but made sure she still gave the best speech possible and showed her enthusiasm. At the end of the rally, everyone cheered and grabbed pins and posters to hand out around camp.

Carly, Gilly, and Bea cleaned up the area and left for dinner, disappointed with the lack of campers at the rally, after all their hard work. On their way to the dining hall, they heard loud voices and music coming from the Main Hall. They walked towards the noise, where they saw a line of campers walking out, many of whom had said they were going to attend Bea's meeting.

Gilly walked over to one of the campers and asked, “Hey, what’s going on in the main hall?”

“Oh, the Queen Bees are having music, food, and giving away free t-shirts. Yeah, it’s pretty cool. They said *ArachnaNabraska* is coming for a free concert!” replied the small termite, Billy, as he chewed on taffy.

“Oh, thanks, kid,” replied Gilly, looking at everyone, with an expression of defeat. Bea felt exhausted and thought, “How can we compete with that?”

“Oh, who cares?” said Carly, “They will never be able to bring a huge band here. Plus, they pull this stuff every year!”

Even though Bea knew Carly was right, she was disappointed at their turnout. However, she put on a brave smile and went to dinner with her friends.

That night all of the counselors left dinner early to go to their weekly meeting, and the junior counselors oversaw dinner clean up. While the junior counselors stood on the dining hall porch, Edwina got up on their cabin’s table and whistled to get everyone’s attention.

“I want everyone to vote for Bethenny, a QUEEN BEE, for camper of the year. We all know that the winner receives the COY trophy and can make camp even more fun next year. Also, make your vote for someone who is not a NEW CAMPER!” A few of the younger campers dutifully clapped with their antennae and legs.

While Edwina got down off of her table with a big smirk, Gilly immediately hopped up on their table and yelled, “Camper of the year is for a camper who is outstanding and cares about

fellow campers. No one who is nominated, except BEA WILLOW, cares about Camp Bugaboo. If you want to vote for someone who cares about their antennae and gossip, vote for Bethenny. If you want to vote for Bugaboo, vote for Bea.”

With her arms crossed and her signature smirk on her face, Bethenny said, “Yeah. Bea Willow saved a fellow camper. I have sources who say she forced Taylor to jump into the river and planned the entire escapade! Look out for the real story in next week’s Bug Weekly paper!” Several campers gasped and looked over at Gilly and Bea.

Bea surveyed the room, and thought, “No one will believe Bethenny...will they?” She could see a few campers whispering to each other. “Plus,” Bea thought, “This is my first year and many campers don’t know me. Everyone knows that a new camper doesn’t win.”

“No! Are you kidding? Bea saved a fellow camper’s life, unlike the Queen Bees who never do anything for this camp. VOTE FOR BEA!” cried Gilly.

Gilly began chanting, “Bookworm Bea! Bookworm Bea!” Cabin Papillo and Cabin H joined in on the chanting.

After hearing the ruckus, the junior counselors ran inside and began firmly commanding Gilly and Bethenny to quit their yelling. They instructed the rest of the campers to line up and prepare to go back to their cabins.

“Gosh, I can’t STAND that Melanie,” cried Gilly. Bea shook her head and agreed, “I can’t stand them either. How are we going to beat them?”

“Guys, you can’t forget that so many people we have talked to are excited about a friendly bug being Camper of the Year. Plus, we have to remind people to vote,” said Carly.

After they made their way into the cabin, Bea put on her fuzzy slippers and pulled out her big campaign notebook. They brainstormed for awhile but then started talking about the dance.

“Oh! Gilly, I totally forgot to tell you. I think William is going to ask you to the dance. Clifford was going to ask me about you, but he didn’t have time!” Bea smiled as Gilly rolled her eyes.

“Yeah, William’s cool. I’m just so not girly-girly, but he must know that by now!” said Gilly

Carly responded to Gilly. “I’m going to the dance with Timmy the termite. What about you, Bea?”

“What *about* me...?” Bea said.

“I think you should go with Clifford!” said Carly, while Bea laughed.

“Yeah, right!” replied Bea.

Penny was on her weekly cabin duty, which meant that she had to be on duty in a chair in between all of the female cabins. Penny was a relaxed counselor, but she always made sure the girls went to bed on time. Since she was on duty, the Cabin H girls used that time to stay up and talk. Lit only by a small lightning bug lamp, Carly and Bea continued to talk in hushed whispers after everyone else fell asleep.

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

With only two weeks of camp left, everyone was looking forward to the final overnighter. Cabin Harmonia and the Queen Bees' cabin were set to go on the notoriously long trail, "Dusty Trail." After Joe announced the last overnighter assignments, Bea tried to think of a way to stay back in her bunk. She desperately didn't want to go to "Dusty Trail" with the Queen Bee's cabin. Neither cabin looked happy when Joe announced their assignment. And Bea just knew that the Bees would be up to something.

The morning of the overnighter, Gilly and Bea packed their bags in a hurry. They were running late because Kelly, the butterfly art director, had helped them finish their art projects. Gilly threw in her jar of peanut butter, Bugger Butter, that went everywhere with her. Bea added her notebook, a survival pamphlet, and her compass.

Bea's father had sent her a special package after she had told him about her river rescue. He included a waterproof pamphlet on outdoor survival for worms, and a special wilderness compass. Bea put on her favorite hat with the Camp Bugaboo colors on it. Since they were running late, they only grabbed an acorn at the snack line.

When the two cabins met up to leave, the tension was obvious. As the counselors prepared for departure, Edwina and Bethenny discovered that they had forgotten a few things and kept running back to their cabin.

When both cabins were ready to go, they were behind schedule. The Queen Bees and their cabin mates stuck to the front of the line, while the Cabin H girls stayed together at the back of the line. Penny didn't particularly get along with Cabin Diptera's counselor, Matilda, a moth attending

business school. Penny was the counselor at the end, and Matilda was the counselor in front. The junior counselors, Frances and Lily, walked in the middle. Eventually, everyone settled into their own conversations.

“I’m so excited about the dance!’ said Carly. Bea agreed, although she was hesitant because she didn’t have a date. Gilly replied, “Yeah, I guess I’ll go with William. At least he’s a normal guy!”

All of a sudden Bea heard a loud noise. At the front of the line, Bethenny was screaming and buzzing about her wing: “OH! I think my wing is broken, OW!”

All of the counselors rushed to help her, and Bea took off her pack. Gilly and Carly shared some water out of their canteens. Since it was a hot day, Bea and the girls stood underneath a fern leaf that shaded them from the streaming sunlight. Penny came back from the huddle to let everyone know what was going on while Matilda wrapped her wing with a small piece of cotton. Bea wasn’t sitting near the Queen Bees, but she thought that Bethenny’s wing looked oddly ok.

Penny clapped her hands together: “Ok girls, we are going to continue on and meet Cabin Diptera at the Dusty Trail campsite. We are close enough to the nurse’s hut for their cabin to hike there. We will continue on with junior counselor Lily and set up camp when we arrive. Put your packs on, and let’s get moving!” said Penny.

While Penny organized Cabin H, Lily took a map from Matilda. While Lily was going over the directions with the other junior counselor, Frances, Bea noticed that Edwina walked over to give Lily a long hug while Edwina checked Lily’s pack. Bea thought that was odd, but she

didn't pay attention and put on her own pack. Lily, a Lily beetle, waved at Cabin D and began leading, while Penny took up the rear.

“Bye Cabin Diptera - Good luck!” yelled Penny, as they walked by. Bea noticed a smirk on Edwina's face as they marched by the Queen Bees, but she just assumed that was a look constantly on her face. Lily pointed to the right with her walking stick and said, “To our right ladies! Away we go.”

Cabin H marched along for a few minutes until they couldn't hear the girls behind them. After a half hour of walking, they came upon a clearing that had a few twigs in it. Lily shook her head, and Penny walked over to her. They walked away from the girls and began to look around in confusion.

Gilly took out her Bugger butter and ate some of it. Carly fanned her neck, and Bea watched Lily. Bea had a feeling in the pit of her stomach that something wasn't quite right. Last time they went on an overnight, they had passed many trail signs. Since leaving Cabin Diptera, they hadn't encountered any signs at all.

“Ha! I hope Cabin D doesn't make it to the camp site tonight. Wouldn't that be awesome if we got to camp by ourselves?” said Carly.

All of a sudden, there was a loud THUMP. THUMP. THUMP. All of the girls looked around. They grabbed their packs and Penny hustled them underneath a mushroom. The sound grew louder. Carly looked at Bea with big eyes, and she whispered, “What if it's a pigeon?”

Penny hushed them, and she told the girls to stay quiet. Then, they saw a squirrel, throwing different acorns, shaking them, and throwing them back down. The THUMP of his acorn inspection was loud and terrifying for all of the bugs.

The squirrel came into the clearing nibbling nervously on an acorn. He looked around, fidgeting, and Bea thought he would definitely see them. Then, the squirrel and the campers heard a loud chirp as a blue jay flew by. The squirrel froze, and Bea realized that the squirrel was way too close to the blue jay's nest that she could see in the distance.

Everyone held their breath and crouched down to make themselves very small. The squirrel's nose wiggled from side to side, as if he smelled something, and he ran off as quickly as he had come.

The girls let out a sigh of relief, while Penny and Lily made sure everything was safe. They wanted to make sure the bird and squirrel were gone before they left their cover. Penny stood in front of the campers and said, "Ladies, I believe we might be lost; we are going to try to find our way back to the nurse's hut." Penny looked serious but had a firm smile on her face as she said, "Girls, follow me in sets of two. We will have to walk quickly because we need to get to the hut before dusk."

Everyone knew what dusk meant. It meant that the nocturnal birds and bats would come out, and they had to make sure they were somewhere safe at that time. Bea and Carly nervously scooted beside each other, noticing the cooler air of the late afternoon.

The group of bugs scooted, jumped, and moved as fast as their appendages could take them. After an hour, Penny stopped and ran to the front to talk to Lily. Bea could sense that they might still be lost and stopped Penny to say, “I have a compass!”

Penny borrowed Bea’s compass and found that they were moving north toward what they thought was their campsite. After what seemed like an eternity of left turns, they spotted a rough looking abandoned matchbox hut in the middle of the woods, white with a faded red cross on it. The sun was just about to go down. Lily looked confused, and Penny recognized the matchbox as an older nurse’s hut that wasn’t used anymore.

“Ok, at least we found some shelter. Let’s set up camp inside and make the best of it,” said Penny, who looked worn out. They clambered into the hut, chattering and throwing down their packs.

Lily and Penny sat on the abandoned hut’s porch to determine their location and their plan to get back to camp. Lily looked confused as she inspected the map. Based on her years at Camp Bugaboo, Penny couldn’t understand the trails.

Meanwhile, Penny had the girls lay out their sleeping bags in the hut because they didn’t have time to try and set up tents. As the girls set up their sleeping bags in a big circle, Penny passed around dinner.

As they mentally re-traced their steps, Lily went over how she got the map from Matilda. Lily was confused: “Well, this is strange. I took out my favorite green pen and wrote notes on the map Matilda gave me, but I don’t see them on this map. All I remember is when Matilda was reviewing the instructions about the emergency protocol, I dropped the map on the ground.

Hmm, but then Edwina gave me a big hug and said she would miss me. Which is strange...because I've never talked to her. And then she said she just put the map in my pack for me!"

Bea looked wide eyed as the rest of the cabin put the pieces of the puzzle together and realized that Edwina had purposely put the wrong map in Lily's pack, so that Cabin H would get lost in the woods.

"How stupid. Stupid and dangerous!" cried Penny. She furiously paced back and forth.

Gilly spoke up: "Plus, how are we going to make it back in time for the Camper of the Year vote tomorrow morning - that's why they did what they did!" For the rest of the evening, the girls sat around, exhausted, and unsure of the hike the next day.

When darkness fell, Penny made sure that everyone was in the hut. She pulled out her lightning bug-fueled lamp, as the girls fell asleep.

"We have a long day tomorrow, girls. Get some rest," said Penny, while her and Lily tried to figure out the way back to Bugaboo for the morning.

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Early the next day, a gray misty fog hung over the hut, and all of the campers woke up. Bea rolled over in her sleeping bag, slightly sore and hungry. Penny asked the campers to hurry and get ready because they knew that speed was important to make sure they didn't have to spend another night in the woods. The quicker they got going, the quicker they would be back to Camp Bugaboo.

Once they'd packed their backpacks and cleaned up, the campers put on their packs and lined up to leave. Lily and Penny consulted each other. Bea pulled out her compass and walked over to Penny and said,

“Here, Penny, do you want my compass again?”

“Oh, thank you!” Penny said gratefully as Bea handed her the compass.

Lily and Penny figured out where they thought they were in the woods and how long, realistically, it would take to get back to camp. Since they didn't know what was real or what had been forged, they couldn't use a map. Bea thought they could try the compass direction and navigating the land to get them back to camp successfully. Bea tried to think of a way to get oriented without a map. Then, she realized what they needed to do to find their way in the woods.

“I think what we need to do is have someone fly to the top of the highest tree we can find and have her spot the Camp Bugaboo flagpole. Once we know which direction camp is, we can use the compass to get us there,” said Bea to Penny. Bea hoped that her logic would help them

get back to camp and that they wouldn't lose any more time. Everyone seemed to agree that it was the best solution; Bea felt reassured.

They started to figure who could fly. "Carly, you can fly, right?" asked Penny. Carly nodded her head and replied, "I haven't done it for a long time, but I think I can make it to the top and back." Carly shook her red and black back until both set of wings appeared. Her vibrant outer wings worked in coordination with the smaller wings that emerged. She practiced moving them around and cautiously flew to the top of the biggest tree that they could find. Once she was up top, Carly pointed southeast and shouted at Bea, "I see camp THIS way!"

Bea then marked that direction on the compass, so they could follow it and head towards camp. Bea felt confident that this was the best way to get back. They all knew it wouldn't be an easy hike, especially without any trails to follow.

Penny stood in front of everyone. "Ok girls, listen up. This is no fun, silly matter. We need to be on alert. Gilly? I need you to stay near the front because I'm going to have you jump up high and scout ahead." Penny looked serious as she pulled on her cap. "I want everyone to keep an eye on their buddy, and keep your eyes open for anything!"

Off they went. After a few hours, the campers stopped to refill their canteens. Everyone was tense and silent because they still hadn't run into any familiar trails or anything that made them feel like they were going in the right direction. Carly dropped the cap on her water bottle in the dirt. While she picked it up and dusted it off, she looked up and pulled away some vines from what looked like a piece of wood nailed to a tree.

"Guys! This old trail sign says Oak Tree Trail and that way to Camp!" Carly cried.

Penny gave a genuine smile for the first since they left camp, “I’m glad we found something. Even though this trail hasn’t been used in years, at least we know we are heading in the right direction.” Penny was relieved, as were all of Cabin H campers. Gilly looked at her sports watch and reminded everyone that they should hurry to get back to camp in time for the Camper of the Year election. They divided the remainder of their snacks and drank the rest of the water. Once they were refreshed, they made sure their packs were strapped tight, so they wouldn’t have to stop and could move faster.

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

Clifford told Bea later that once Cabin Diptera got back to camp everyone began to worry. They told the camp directors that Cabin H never met them. Everyone in camp was worried, but the Queen Bees didn't seem concerned. Sally and Joe dispatched a couple of the staghorn beetles, the groundskeepers, as a search party.

As the counselors set up for the election, Clifford knew something was going on with the Queen Bees, and he knew that something wasn't quite right. Clifford had thought he'd overheard Bethenny whispering to Elinor something about there was no way she would win Camper of the Year now. He really wanted Bea to win, so he came up with a plan to stall the election. He recruited his friends to help delay the ballot boxes from being set out. Clifford sent one of the younger campers to climb up into a tree and pretend he couldn't get down. Cabin Papilio also hid all of the pencils and ballots in the craft hut underneath a large pile of yarn.

At the Main pavilion, Bugaboo campers were slowly filtering into the large room. Slowly, the news about the "lost" cabin got out, and the bugs gathered in groups, while Sally and Joe talked seriously with the counselors.

While the beetles were fanning out over the woods to find the Cabin H campers, Bea and her cabin mates, although tired, were hiking as fast as they could to get back to camp. Bea looked around and noticed that everyone was dirty and tired. Yet, they seemed to have gotten a second wind and wanted to get back to camp to help Bea win the Camper of the Year. Gilly kept bringing up great plans to get the Queen Bees lost on their next camp out, which made everyone laugh.

Penny and Lily kept having conversations about “consequences” and “returning to camp.” Bea could only guess what would be in store for the Queen Bees.

According to Penny, the trail crossed a small human highway. When they got to the trail pass, she told Gilly to be a lookout by jumping up and looking over. The campers knew that they had to cross quickly because if a human car came around the corner, they all knew what would happen. The sun had come out and warmed up the day. They could smell the tar of the hot black asphalt as they made their way across the two-lane highway.

Penny had them cross in two groups so that one group could look out for cars while the other crossed. Lily led the first group, while Bea went with the last group. Lily gave the all-clear yell and Penny, Carly, Bea and Gilly began to cross. Right when they paused on the space between two yellow lines, Bea turned around to see Penny stumble and fall.

“Oh no!” cried the girls, “Penny, are you ok?!” as they ran to her aide.

“I may have twisted my ankle,” Penny said in a quick and scared voice. Bea looked at Gilly and Carly. They couldn’t leave her in the middle of the road. They took off her back pack, and Penny wrapped one arm around Bea and the other around Gilly. They knew it would take awhile to cross, so they paused while Carly looked out.

“I think we are all clear,” Carly yelled as she led the group. Halfway across the road, they heard a very loud rumble. Then, they heard Lily yell, “Hurry!”

Just as they heard the loud engine of a car, the staghorn beetles came into sight. Three of them immediately flew over and picked up Penny, Gilly, and Bea. They hovered high in the air, as a car flew underneath them. The beetles flew quickly across the road and landed them on the

ravine with the rest of the cabin. Lily was nearly in tears, and they all thanked the beetles tremendously for getting them out of harm's way. Bea didn't have time to think about what would have happened because she knew Penny was okay and that their time was running out. The beetles put Penny on a stretcher made of toothpicks. Penny lay on the board as two of the beetles picked it up and buzzed her away back to camp.

The rest of the beetles handed out fresh water bottles and snacks. They assured Lily that they had a map and that the trail would get them back to camp. They told Cabin H that the election was still being set up and that they needed to hurry if they were going to make it back before everyone voted. The beetles didn't have radios with them; otherwise, they would have contacted the camp. The hiking crew quickened their pace to get back in time.

## CHAPTER TWENTY

Clifford and his friends had done their best to stall for time. They realized the search effort was serious, but the election committee remained committed to keeping the polls on time. Unfortunately, a few of the Queen bees volunteered to find more pencils, and Clifford was afraid that he hadn't stalled long enough.

Sally and Joe gathered at the front to make the announcement that voting was open, when Gilly ran, breathless and covered in dirt, into the conference area. All of the campers stood up because they had heard a commotion outside. The staghorn beetles had brought Penny to the nurse while the rest of the beetles and Cabin H trickled up to the field outside of the main pavilion.

“WAIT! Wait a minute! Cabin H is here...we are here!” said Gilly, hunched over because she had sprinted into the pavilion. She looked around and pointed at Bethenny, Edwina, and Elinor. “The Queen Bees got us lost in the woods!!”

While Sally went outside to get the whole story, the nurses checked Penny out. While she lay on the stretcher, she explained the events, waving her arms around with the map in her hand. They walked in shaking their heads, and Sally pulled Joe aside. Joe then made an announcement. Everyone rushed to stand around the Cabin H campers as they staggered in, trying to hear the story.

While the campers and counselors were standing around and attempting to get the story, the Queen Bees attempted to slip out the back of the pavilion when Clifford yelled at them.

Shame faced, they walked back in as their counselor rounded them up for what appeared to be a “very serious conversation.”

While the campers and counselors were standing around and attempting to get the story, the Queen Bees attempted to slip out the back of the pavilion when Clifford yelled at them. Shame faced, they walked back in as their counselor rounded them up for what appeared to be a “very serious conversation.” Simone, the climbing counselor, rounded up the three Queen Bees with all of her legs and the entire camp watched as they were taken outside. Penny, Matilda, Sally and Joe all crossed their arms and with stern faces looked at the Queen Bees.

Bea was shocked, surprised and exhausted. She didn’t know what to do. Carly and Gilly gave her high fives as she stood up to go to the front of the Main Hall to accept the trophy. Everyone was yelling, “Speech, Speech!” while the Queens Bees sat in the back sulking, sitting next to their counselor.

Bea walked up to the front, feeling confident and happy. She didn’t like to speak, but she wanted to say one thing.

“I don’t have much to say except Thank You! This was my first summer at Bugaboo, and I love it here. I’ve made friends and had great adventures, so thanks for a great summer! This award is for all campers who love Camp Bugaboo!” Everyone cheered, whistled and buzzed!

A few of the counselors-in-training served dandelion cake and nectar, while the Bugaboo campers gathered around Cabin H. Bea, Carly, and Gilly chose to get to their cabin to take a shower and a long nap before dinner. They were exhausted.

## CHAPTER TWENTY ONE

Since she had won Camper of the Year and had had the adventure of the overnigher, Bea wanted to enjoy her last moments at camp. She made a pact with Carly to have the best next-to-last day of camp ever no matter what happened. Bea was excited that she would come home with great friends, memories, and pen pals.

They woke up to the sound of the bugle. Penny hobbled out of her room on crutches, and said in a loud, cheerful voice, “Today is our last day, girls! Don’t forget to pack your clothes, and we will do a Pen Pal exchange tonight!”

Bea hopped out of bed. She was definitely going to be sad to leave her new best friends, but she was ready to see her parents and her room. Bea, Carly, and Gilly linked arms and walked to breakfast. The dining hall served their favorite meal: mashed chickpeas with mint leaves and honey.

Once breakfast was over, Cabin H made their way over to the arts and crafts pavilion, for their last craft activity with Kelly. Pepper and the girls were excited about the last project. They got to make a summer scrapbook out of magnolia leaves, tied with dental floss. On it, they used scraps of paper, glue, and glitter to record their memories of Camp Bugaboo.

Once they dropped off their scrapbooks at their cabin, they rushed to meet Simone for one last climb. Bea was confident about climbing because she knew that she could make it to the top. As she felt her way to the top, she touched the last rock, feeling proud!

It was a beautiful day, the humidity had gone down, the sun was shining, and all of the campers were enjoying the last day of camp. Before lunch, the Cabin H girls had a quick pick up

game of soccer against the Cabin Papillo boys. Gilly scored five times, and even Carly scored a goal! Out of breath and laughing, they all ran to lunch when then heard the bell.

Later that day, in their downtime before dinner, the girls finished packing their trunks and got prepared for the last campfire. Bea got all of the Cabin H girls' addresses. She got Gilly and Carly's emails, and promised she would send them a package as soon as she got home. Bea felt sad inside, knowing that she wouldn't see Carly and Gilly every day. However, she knew that she would be ready and excited for next summer.

As soon as dusk came, all of the Bugaboo campers meandered down to the campfire. As they slowly walked down the pine straw paths, everyone began to sing the Bugaboo camp song. All the campers were excited because after the campfire, they got to have s'mores. The older cabins looked sad because it would be their last campfire.

Joe and Sally stood up to begin the last campfire. They talked about the summer, the campers, and how it was one of the best summers they'd ever had at Camp Bugaboo. Then, each counselor stood up and said something positive about each of their campers. The oldest cabins had a representative from the boys' cabin and one from the girls' cabin make a speech about their favorite camp memories.

While the campers shared their experiences, Bea couldn't believe she would be home the next day, in her own bed. She linked arms with Carly and Gilly to sing Kumbayah. Bea was already looking forward to next summer, and she knew the last dance would be the perfect ending to a crazy summer.

The entire camp made their way over to the main pavilion where the dance committee had decorated for the event. The girls were wearing fun outfits, and the boys had tucked their shirts in and combed their antennae. The committee had brought in tables with paper tablecloths and streamers in bright colors. They had DJ Jabberwocky, a skinny caterpillar, come in to play music. Once they walked in, he started the music and all of the campers got on the dance floor. Some of the younger campers ran around in circles, while the counselors showed off their latest dance moves.

Bea, Carly, and Gilly danced to the Junebugs and sang all the words. Finally, Bea took a break for the ginger fruit punch, while Gilly dance with her friend William and Taylor asked Carly to dance. While she walked over, Clifford came up beside her and got a cup of punch, too.

“Camper of the Year, great job. You want to dance?” asked Clifford. Bea blushed and replied, “Sure!” Her stomach was in knots, yet she was having a great time. They ended up dancing in a big circle with all of Bea’s friends to *It’s a Bug Party*. Bea wasn’t sure when she’d had this much fun.

After the dance, Clifford made sure that he got Bea’s address because he wanted to write her at home. As the bugs meandered out of the dance, Clifford grabbed Bea’s hand, leaned over, and gave her a kiss on the cheek. Bea smiled as Clifford waved good-bye and walked with his friends, while she found Cabin H. Her first bug kiss!

Bea felt like she was floating on her last walk up to Cabin H with all of her cabin mates. Although they’d planned to stay up late talking, Carly and Gilly fell asleep early. Bea snuggled under her covers, excited about seeing her parents and room. She thought about her first night at camp. Bea remembered being scared of the dark and the noises, but now they helped her sleep.

Bea wondered if her parents would recognize her because she almost felt like a different person coming home. Under her quilt with her special lighting bug reading light, she flipped through her camp scrapbook. No one she knew had adventures like this, and she knew that next summer would be just as great.

## PEN PAL LETTERS

September 18

Carly,

Has your school started yet? I miss camp so much! I didn't want to start school at all. Anyway, I met a new clearwing moth from Texas and we are good friends now! She may come to camp next year. Let's plan our holiday get-together!

Bea

November 3

Gilly,

Congrats on your tennis championship! I was so excited to tell all my school mates that I knew you! I can't wait to see you and Carly next month for our sleepover. My mom will make whatever you want, but I told her you love Bugger butter!

Bea

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