

TELL
ME
EVERY
THING

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CHAPTER 1

I'm starting to worry that Smarty-Pants Camp is going to ruin my best friend, Harold.

Okay, okay. I shouldn't call it "Smarty-Pants Camp." It's a National Scholar of Promise summer program at Stanford that's super hard to get into—the most recent under-eighteen world-chess champion got wait-listed. Harold got in on the first try. I'm super proud of him.

But now, before we've even had a full week of summer break, I'm worried as I watch him stuff a Mathletes duffel bag with every collared shirt he owns.

Harold owns a lot of collared shirts.

I'm trying to tell him about LingoSpatial, a company that's replacing GPS coordinates with words. According to them, Harold's bedroom is located at "Sheep, Monarchy, Bespoke," otherwise known as 12 Waves Lane, in Sudden Cove, California, in the U.S. of A.

This is exactly the kind of thing that riles Harold up. When he gets on a really good rant, his face twists up into an unhinged half smile and his eyes take on a deranged twinkle. It's the best.

I'm perched on the edge of his desk chair, eagerly awaiting a lecture about how ludicrous it is to assume language could be more universal than numbers.

Instead, Harold merely huffs his disdain, shaking his head as he folds, then refolds, a navy-blue polo shirt. I swivel the chair, spouting some of the more insane tidbits about LingoSpatial's plot for world domination. Harold just moves on to a red polo. He's got a closet full of Ralph Lauren to starch, fold, and stack.

Yuck. I officially hate camp. It's taking my best friend away for the summer, and as far as I'm concerned, it's already got him.

His room is cramped. I have to tilt my feet back and forth to make room as he walks from closet to bed, where his large wheeled suitcase is already ridiculously full. Dusk light streams through the window, reflecting a riot of sherbet colors in the room's only mirror, mounted on the newspaper wall. Every time he reads an interesting article, Harold cuts it out (or prints it and then cuts it out) and Mod Podges it to the wall. The bylines go up to my forehead, creating the effect of one giant front page. I like to examine myself in that mirror and pretend I'm news. And today, with sandy blond bangs at peak unruly, lips sourly pursed, and a bathing suit top peeking out from under a loose knit sweater, my reflection could pass as a petulant pop starlet's mug shot.

"This suuuuuuuucks." I throw my head back and spin in the chair the way Harold hates. "What happened to that other camp, the one about starting a revolution?"

“It was Civic Engagement and Leadership Camp,” he says, equally grumpy. “And I got into that one, too. But you can’t say no to National Scholars of Promise, or Stanford.”

“You mean your parents wouldn’t *let you* say no.”

He shrugs. “Same difference.”

“That leadership camp was just over the mountain, in San Jose. You could have made all the protest signs your heart desired!” I whine. “You could have slept in your own bed. Helped me finish the ultimate Jeff Goldblum marathon. Taught me to drive a stick shift.”

“I don’t want to be gone all summer, either, Ivy. But this is a big opportunity.”

I know that. But Harold’s life is one long string of big opportunities—the only thing higher than his grades are his aspirations. He’s never found a club he didn’t want to join, or a cause he wasn’t ready to lead a union strike over. He likes taking a stand, and appreciates a dramatic moment. His passion, drive, and willingness to put himself out there have opened a bunch of doors. Awards committees, scholarship funds, and our local NPR station have all called him a “kid who’s going places.”

They’re right, duh. But he better not go places too fast. We’re only rising sophomores, and I really do need to learn to drive a stick shift.

“I’m gonna beat your high score on the Boardwalk’s Skee-Ball machine.”

That gets him. Harold gives me a look that says, *You wouldn't dare.*

“You wouldn't dare.”

“Try me!” I push off the desk to whirl around even faster.

“Ivy!” he warns. With a sigh, he grabs the back of the chair and holds it still. I give him an icy pout.

“C'mon, man,” I say. “Be present, in this moment, at Sheep, Monarchy, Bespoke!”

“That system is ridiculous and I won't acknowledge it,” Harold says, waving me off. Then he sighs. “This is hard! I'm not packing for hiking or craft hour at the mess. We're gonna be on the Stanford campus, in their actual labs . . .” He runs a hand over his freshly shorn head, the coarse black curls cut down to the scalp. If he's playing with imaginary hair, he must really be stressed.

“Okay, okay.” I stand and join him in an observe-the-closet pose. “Honestly, I don't know why you're so worried. Wouldn't it be *worse* if you had to pack for hiking and crafting and s'mores-ing? Labs be your jam!”

“Yeah but is it, like, a *casual* lab environment? Will there be coats? Will the coats be bleached white, or eggshell? Should I wear sandals with socks, just to fit in?”

I grab Harold by the shoulders and shake. “Don't even joke about that!”

He starts tearing shirts off hangers and tossing them in a heap on his bed. I know Harold's already thinking about the metric

system, and lab reports, and jockeying to stand out among the smartest high school students in the United States.

Meanwhile, I'm noting how the dying sunlight deepens the contrast between Harold's dark brown skin and the ink-covered wall of clippings behind him. I take a mental picture, trying to capture movement in the imagined frame.

That's the difference between Harold and me: He believes in black and white, and thinks objective facts can save the world. Everywhere I look, I see subjective shades—and can't rest till I capture them somehow. Harold's closet is packed with sensible footwear; mine is overflowing with vintage cameras rescued from flea market bins.

But it seems to work with us, somehow. He always asks to see my photographs and paintings, and he's the reason I've embarked on my mission to watch every Jeff Goldblum movie chronologically, and then reverse chronologically. "If you're going to do something compulsively, at least apply a system to it," he said after I made him watch *Thor: Ragnarok* for the dozenth time. We work together, in a yin-and-yang way. Opposites attract, and all that.

But now academic merit is tearing us apart! For the entire summer!

Major bummer.

A flicker of warm white light floods the window. A string of twinkle lights have burst into life outside. They're new.

Harold looks up. "What's that?"

I stand and look outside, faking nonchalance. “What? The lights?” I shrug. “Dunno . . .” Watching him from the corner of my eye, I add: “Maybe you should check it out . . .”

Harold’s eyes widen. I try (and fail) to suppress a smile. He’s too easy.

Lots of people know that Harold is Mensa-level smart and the kind of socially active that means teachers call him “Mr. President”—and they aren’t talking student council. But nobody else knows he’s the biggest sucker for grand gestures this side of a Julia Roberts movie marathon. Nobody but me.

“What is it?” he asks again, a little-kid earnestness in his voice.

I throw my hands up. “Like I’m gonna say it now? Just go in the backyard and find out!”

Packing immediately forgotten, Harold flashes me a blinding smile and runs out of the room. I follow, bounding down the stairs—skipping the squeaky third step—and racing through the kitchen, where Harold’s mom, Angie, is washing and wiping down every dish before putting them in the dishwasher. I barrel out the French doors.

Harold stands at the edge of the deck. Before him, on the broad expanse of beachy crabgrass, sits an igloo made of shoeboxes. A salt-tinged ocean breeze jangles the twinkly lights, darting uneven shadows across the yard. Harold’s dad, Stuart, helped me string the lights from the house to the igloo and drape them all over the very DIY structure. It took days of testing in

my own yard to be sure the structure would stand—with the help of plenty of superglue. Angie and Stuart made sure Harold would be gone all day while I sweated under the late-June sun, stacking box on box on box. But watching the igloo glow under slowly emerging stars, I can say with total certainty: It was worth it.

In California, the temperature plummets the moment the sun sets. Even as I shiver, I feel warmth radiating off Harold's skin. He's been obsessed with exploring the Arctic since he first watched a globe spin. He tracks shifts in Earth's polarity, and has read every book and watched every documentary about all those awful Arctic expeditions where men got lost and ate their dogs and then one another, all in the name of getting to the North Pole. Just to say they did. Harold is *into it*. He might be obsessed with facts, and science, and changing the world, but at heart he's a real romantic.

“Wow,” he says, barely above a whisper.

I nudge his arm. “You can go in,” I say. He looks at me like I am actually Santa Claus. I laugh. “Go!”

Harold leaps off the deck. He has to crawl on hands and knees to shimmy in. I can tell he's scared of bumping the igloo and sending it toppling. I don't bother to explain how much superglue is keeping the thing upright.

I follow after him, anticipation so intense it feels like neon's running through my veins. The igloo is big enough to fit two people, but just barely.

“Okay, lie down,” I tell Harold while I crawl toward the back. He hesitates, looking around at how tiny the space is. “Just do it!”

He curls into the tiniest ball possible, to leave room for me. I grab a little black box that was hidden in the back of the igloo and set it by Harold’s hip. “Close your eyes.” I settle in beside him, flip the switch on the box, and lie back. We’re side by side again, but it feels different when we’re horizontal. I’m more comfortable, and more alert. The muffled air inside the igloo is charged.

“Open.”

The box is a mini projector, and it throws video of the aurora borealis onto the arc of the shoebox igloo’s ceiling. The waves of mystical Arctic light undulate like a disco ball refracting a rainbow. Stuart helped me build the igloo, but I kept this part a secret. This is just for Harold and me.

Harold takes in a breath. His body tenses for a second. Then he lets out a delighted yell that devolves into a laugh full of joy and wonder.

The fake borealis (fauxrealis?) casts the shoeboxes, the UC Santa Cruz fleece covering the ground, and our tightly coiled bodies in a multicolored glow. It’s like we’re inside a lava lamp. The igloo smells like dried glue, cardboard, and new-sneaker plastic. I feel bubbly, a kind of effervescence right under the skin. My body lights up at Harold’s slightest shift.

“Wow. Ivy . . .” He turns his head and I’m scared to turn mine. To meet his eyes. We’re so close—making eye contact right now would be like walking onto hot coals.

I do it anyway.

Harold’s eyes are a slightly lighter brown than his skin. They’re steady amid the waves of hectic light. A feeling comes over me—like when you dive into the ocean. Before cold or wet or the need for air kick in, there’s one fraction of a second when the senses are so overwhelmed that everything is clear and painless.

Harold reaches out and grabs my hand, folding it in his. So warm.

“Thank you,” he says.

The back door slams. I’m so startled that I sit directly up, bumping my head against the igloo ceiling.

“What’s the big deal about this thing?” Stuart’s voice booms. “What’re those lights in there?” Harold sits up, too. We look at each other and start laughing, awkwardly. “Honestly, I don’t understand it. Igloos? Is that what the youths are into these days?”

Harold drops his head into his hands and I almost fall over laughing. Stuart is a coding wizard and a self-made millionaire, but he’s also the fatheriest father ever to be a dad. And it is funny, but this time Stuart did more than interrupt the principal during parent-teacher night. He disturbed . . . something. Whatever was happening between me and Harold a minute

ago . . . I don't know. I've never felt something like that before, and definitely not for my best friend since fourth grade.

What *was* that??

There's no time to give Harold so much as a questioning glance, because he's crawling back out of the igloo to tell his dad about the surprise I planned for him. And in just a few hours, he'll basically be on the real North Pole for the summer, leaving me alone to figure out whether something just changed between us.