

# Nothing Happened

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**HYPERION**

Los Angeles ✧ New York

## CHAPTER 1

# Bee

I FOUGHT THE URGE to crumple the paper, shove it in my mouth, and eat it.

*Flip-flops for the shower*

*Bucket for toiletries*

*Notebooks, pens, etc. will be available at the store*

Why did my college's packing suggestions look so much like a list for summer camp?

Ugh. I wasn't supposed to have to deal with this for months. Packing. Moving. Boston.

"What's that?" My sister, Hana, peeked over my shoulder.

"Nothing!" I stuffed the list back in the envelope.

"If it's not about camp, you can look at it later," my mom said. We were all in the living room on our faded yellow floral sofa, huddled over the coffee table stacked high with mail. Our annual Leonato family spring camp paperworkfest! Every year, my parents picked a weekend in April—shortly after the application deadline—for us to organize our camp's employment for the coming summer. Counselor and activity leader applications; CITs.

I felt Hana's eyes watching me and my envelope with concern.

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I knew my family was really going to miss me when I left—especially after this year, with everything Hana had gone through.

They didn't need to know how my stomach sank every time I thought about college.

Hana opened her mouth to say something, but I quickly cut her off—

“Good idea, I'll look at it later!” I resealed the envelope and hurled the entire packet behind me. It landed with a *smack!* somewhere in the dining room. Hana smiled. Sadness avoided, for now.

“Bee . . .” Mom's severe brow furrowed in my direction.

“What?” I said. “You told me to!”

“You could've broken something.”

My dad carried in another gigantic armful of envelopes and dropped them in a pile on the floor. “That's it: next year, Camp Dogberry is going digital.” Mom shot him a look. He gestured emphatically at the mountain of mail. “Nik, come *on!* Look at this! We're the opposite of eco-friendly. We're eco-mean.”

Mom sighed. She abhorred technology. “I know you're right. As much as I hate to admit it. But, no”—she pointed a finger at my sister—“that does not mean you can use your phone at camp, Hana.”

Hana turned red. We'd both gotten smartphones a few years ago, and ever since she'd been glued to hers.

“The no-cell phones rule is important,” I said. “Don't forget the legend of *The Idiot CIT and the Bear.*”

“I don't think I remember that one.” Dad grinned. “Bee, would you—”

“Maine is known for blueberries and bears,” I began, in my narrator voice, standing up and taking my place in the living room archway. No sense in not being completely dramatic about this. “Camp Dogberry, in Messina, Maine, was practically bursting with

blueberries. As for bears, rumors floated around camp. Largely because of one dangerous incident: *The Idiot CIT and . . . the Bear.*”

“Dun-dun-duuuuuun,” Dad added in.

“One summer, loooong ago, a young, dewy-eyed counselor-in-training was going for his early morning run, with headphones in.” I mimed a slow jog, bobbing my head back and forth. “The headphones were plugged into his cell phone, on which he played *loud music*. This was his fatal mistake.”

“Not quite fatal,” Mom said, undermining my narrative.

“He set off around the coastline, blasting music into his ears instead of enjoying the harmonious sounds of nature. So loud were his tunes, that he didn’t hear rustling in the bushes. Thus, it came as quite a shock when a real live bear cub tumbled onto the path in front of him. Awww! he thought. A baby bear! How cute! I am clearly not in any danger!”

“Have we confirmed with the original source that this was his exact thought process?” Dad asked.

“The CIT stood transfixed by the adorableness of the bear cub. With the music still blasting into his ears, he was unaware of the approaching danger. Suddenly, he felt hot breath on the back of his neck. He froze.” I froze. “He turned.” I turned. “And directly behind him was an enormous black bear. A mama bear’s job is to protect her kids, and she was afraid this clueless human was somehow going to hurt her baby bear. She didn’t know the CIT was harmless. What would the CIT do now? What would you do? Because I guarantee, it’s not this:

“The CIT grabbed two pine branches and waved them back and forth as he backed away, screaming, ‘OLD MACDONALD HAD A FARM. EEEEEYI EEEYI OOOOOH!!!’

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“At this noise, Mama Bear stopped in her tracks, dumbfounded, and quite frankly, artistically offended. She realized that this creature was not dangerous, but totally ridiculous. She let the CIT turn around and run back to camp, where he did about five hundred jumping jacks to release his adrenaline, and then passed out on Monarch field.

“And that, kids,” I finished, “is why we don’t use cell phones at camp.”

My family dutifully gave me a round of applause, to which I bowed deeply.

“Excellent performance as always, Bee,” Dad said. “But I don’t remember this cautionary tale making fun of the CIT quite so mercilessly. For instance, I don’t think idiot is in the title.”

“Okay, so I made some changes.” I rolled my eyes and stepped over the table to drop down next to him again. “Stories evolve.” I ignored the itchy guilt that crept up the backs of my arms. This story was funnier when the idiot CIT and I were still friends.

“Dad’s right.” Mom moved a handful of forms down the line. “We don’t use the word *idiot* at camp. You know that.”

“Obviously, I won’t tell it like that *at camp*,” I assured them.

“You can tell it however you want when you run the place,” Dad smiled. “You can fill it with swears.”

“I *am* running the place!”

“You’re the assistant improv leader,” Mom corrected. New title this year—it sounded so official. I loved it. Plus it meant I got to spend most of the camp day with our long-time improv leader, and one of my best camp friends, Raphael.

“Preeetty sure that means I’m a boss.”

“Okay, boss, have a look at this application and let me know what you think.” Mom passed me an envelope.

I bent back the metal fastener and slid out the packet of papers. The heading *Camp Dogberry Counselor Application* in our official green camp font, with little pine and dogwood trees on either side greeted me. When my eyes landed on the applicant name, I had to fight another urge to crumple up the papers and shove them in my mouth. The staple would pose a problem, but I could spit it out like a cherry pit—

“What the hell?” I finally managed. I looked up right into Mom’s eyes. Same eyes as Hana—big, light brown in the middle, dark brown on the edges. Like tree rings. Mom’s usually reflected that firm, parental love, but now they were straight up laughing at me.

“Seems promising, right?” She tried to keep from smirking. But not that hard. “Ben Rosenthal. He’s applying for sports leader.”

“Ben!?” Hana gasped.

“Do you think he’s right for the job?” Mom asked.

Was this a joke? “Sure, unless we care about the sports program,” I replied, still dazed.

“Wait, seriously, it’s really him?” Hana hopped up and looked over my shoulder. I wanted to block her view, but my arms and hands didn’t move when I told them to. “Ben? Ben’s coming back?!” She squealed in my ear.

“I guess?” I handed her the application.

“Huzzah!” Dad clapped his big bear hands.

“But I thought last year was his *last year*?” Hana said, examining the application critically. I’d done the same thing, but it was definitely his handwriting—it looked like a chicken on a seesaw had filled it out.

“He certainly announced that many times,” I growled. “What a dingus. I should’ve seen this coming.”

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Mom had moved on and was waving the next envelope. “Well, he’s not the only one going back on his vow. Here’s *Donald King* too.”

“Both of them?” I demanded. “Unreal. They kept calling dibs on stuff last summer because it was their *last summer*. They got more breaks and chocolate and beer—” I stopped, quickly. Neither parent reacted, thank goodness.

Hana hopped over to Mom and grabbed the packet. “This is awesome!”

Truthfully, yes, I was excited that Donald was returning to camp. He always brought a special something to Camp Dogberry that no one else did. He was really cool—too cool—so he made everything at camp seem cool for the campers. And for the counselors, too.

“You’re right, it’s awesome,” I said. “But what is *Ben* doing back at camp? Isn’t he a doctor or something?”

“He’s only been in college for a year!” Dad laughed.

“Well, it’s pathetic.” I shook my head. “He made this huge deal about ‘moving on,’ and now he’s just, like, applied? Without saying anything?”

“What else would he say?” Mom asked.

That was a loaded question—one I was not prepared to answer.

“I don’t know!” I sputtered. “He didn’t call either of you, did he?”

Mom and Dad exchanged a glance. “Colleen might’ve mentioned something,” Dad admitted. Colleen. Ben’s mom.

Mom tapped his application. “And Ben might’ve called me a few weeks ago—”

“Seriously?!” I yelled.

“—to ask if applying for sports leader would be appropriate.”

“He’s a nice kid.” Dad nodded.

“He is.” Mom smiled back.

“I’m going to kill you both!” I threw up my hands. What were parents good for? I turned on Hana: “Did you know about this?”

“No!” she said quickly. “I haven’t heard from him since he texted me on my birthday. . . .”

Ouch. I hadn’t heard from Ben on *my* birthday. I looked down and scowled into my hands. Imagined his face on a grape. Squished the grape in my palm.

“But, Bee?” Hana’s soft voice interrupted. “Isn’t it better to have Ben back? Camp wouldn’t be the same without him.”

I looked up. She blinked at me. Hana acts all naive, but she’s sneaky, that one. I shot her a death glare, extra death. Then I threw another application toward her.

“What about *you*, Hana? Would camp be the same without *Claudia*?”

She saw the name on the envelope and immediately dropped it like a hot marshmallow.

“Of course!” she said, voice screeching up an octave. “It’s great they’re *all* coming back!”

My parents looked at us both dubiously. Then Hana attempted her own version of a death glare. Her round eyes twitched. I laughed—it was like a stink eye from a baby seal. My sister was the cutest person alive, and glares didn’t even work on her face.

“Ben, Donald, Claudia, and here’s Margo!” Dad raised up another application. That broke up some tension: we all cheered for Margo. I already knew she was coming back, because we had one of those summer friendships that kept going the rest of the year.

“Excellent!” Dad smiled. “The Dogberry dream team. We’re barely going to have to hire anyone new.”



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“I wouldn’t be that heartbroken if, say, *Bobby* or *John* didn’t come back,” I muttered.

“That’s not a very *teamwork* attitude,” Mom chided.

Dad held up John’s application. Crap. Well, he came with Donald.

“Okay.” I nodded. “But more importantly, if *Ben* had miraculously got a life, would it really be that much of a loss?”

“All right.” Mom sighed, running a hand along her right temple. “Bee, you have a couple months before camp starts, so work on losing that attitude. I can’t take another summer like last year. You and Ben are friends.”

“Not ’till it snows in July,” I retorted. Friends. Friendly, friendly friends. “He’s the biggest pain-in-the-butt friend I’ve ever had,” I added. “And a seriously lazy employee.” I cringed even as I said it. She was right, though—I needed to shut up. The bigger deal I made out of this, the worse the whole situation would be. And besides, it had been almost a year. When was I going to stop associating Ben with that one, awkward night? I’d known him for six years before that. It made no sense, and it made me want to slap myself.

“You know Ben’s got his strengths,” Mom said. “Not everyone’s good at getting up early.”

“He *is* champion of Capture the Flag.” Dad grinned at Mom. “Man. I really can’t wait for camp to start.”

“I’m starting to dread it.” I stood up. “I need a break. I’ll go into town and get us lunch.”

“Pizza, please!” Dad brightened. “And can you stop at Reny’s and grab us a pack of highlighters?”

“And clothespins,” Mom added. We’d just hung up our laundry line.

“You got it!” I hurried toward the front door.

“I’ll come with you!” Hana jumped up.

Argh. I wanted to be alone, but I didn’t want to tell her no. She’d been a little clingy since my college acceptance letters. Look at me, I mentally muttered. Calling my sister clingy. This was Ben’s fault. Before last summer, I never needed time alone to think. I did my best thinking *with* Hana. Now I had secrets.

“Parents—” I turned back to them as I pulled on my boots. “Let’s not be hasty. I’m sure there are other qualified sports candidates.”

“Bee, your promotion to assistant improv leader does not, I’m afraid, give you hiring and firing power.” Mom waved me away. Insulting.

“Sorry, kiddo.” Dad nodded. “Capture the Flag is my favorite part of camp, and Ben *is* Capture the Flag.”

“I repeat: ugh.”

I let the screen door slam on our way out. I usually looked forward to this time of the year. I felt the climbing anticipation—every form we filled out, every permit stamped and hire made, was another step toward starting day. Sun and sweat and laughter.

But this Ben thing pulled me up short; threw me.

Out the door, Hana had a mission. “Want to go look at the waves real quick?”

My sister loved all bodies of water, but particularly our waterfront, the pebbly edges of Messina Harbor. This coming summer would be her first as a full-fledged lifeguard and swim instructor, which meant she got to spend all day teaching campers to swim. And when she wasn’t doing that, she’d be swimming just for herself. I’d known Hana since she was three and I was five, when my parents adopted me and brought me to the US from Ethiopia. They’d originally planned on adopting a baby, but when they got to the adoption

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center, I'd jumped into their laps and demanded a story, and that was the end of that. Luckily, it was a love-at-first-sight kind of deal for Hana and me. Being sisters was clearly our destiny.

I remember watching her in the pool, though, at our YMCA, and feeling slightly five-year-old suspicious. When I showed up, she could already dive and swim across the deep end.

These suspicions had not waned. I'd never been able to confirm Hana wasn't actually a mermaid.

"Sure, let's go."

We set off down the trail. I tried to shake off Ben, but my thoughts kept drifting back to him. Well, things around/adjacent to him. Sparklers and snowflakes. Grass blades and eyelashes.

"Are you okay?" Hana poked my side.

I smiled instantly. "I'm fine!"

"It *is* a little weird Donald and Ben are coming back," she ventured. "When they swore so many times they wouldn't."

"Yeah," I nodded. *Don't take the bait, Bee.* We walked the trail in silence for a few moments, while I fought my dangerously impulsive mouth. Hana checked her phone five times in a minute. She caught me looking at her and blushed.

"Maybe you're right," she admitted. "Maybe I am looking forward to seeing Claudia."

"Oh really?" I teased, relieved by the change of subject.

"Really," she admitted. "But I don't know if I'm over Christopher."

I bit my tongue. Come *on!* At least Claudia was someone new for Hana to obsess over. Not that jerkwad Christopher, who'd yanked her around all year, then dumped her, reducing my beautiful Hana to a phantom who could barely get out of bed.

“Okay,” I said. “But what if this summer, we just did our own thing?”

“What?” I could already hear the defensiveness in her voice.

“I just mean . . .” I fought for the right words. “What if we just swim, and play improv games, do crafts, and hang out with Margo—”

I cut myself off with a sharp breath in. We had reached the part of the path where it divided into three separate trails: One led to the center of camp and our giant log cabin mess hall—Beaver Dam—and the sandy clearing out front with the flagpole. The second led to our swimming waterfront. Docks, buddy board, all that camp swim stuff.

And then, there was the third option: A steep, scraggily path, hidden in the summer by ferns that were just starting to revive now. This little trail led up to Eagle’s Nest, a clearing at the top of a hill hidden by trees, with a perfect view of the stars. AKA Nest, one of our counselor party spots.

Last Fourth of July, after our annual sparkler party, two of the counselors had stayed behind to clean up and had returned to their respective cabins just before morning meeting, causing wild intrigue and rumors to fly throughout camp.

That night.

“Bee,” Hana’s soft voice ventured.

“What?”

“Last summer . . . with you and Ben—”

“Oh my God.” I groaned and stalked toward the water. “I’ve told you a hundred times: *nothing* happened.”