

Chapter One

Ugly as shit.

That's my first thought when I see the welcome sign. It's big and brown with red lettering. The wood is worn, and the paint looks like it's been redone a hundred times. I hate it before I even read the words. And it gets worse when I do.

Welcome to Camp Happy!

The sickly-sweet name makes me want to cringe and roll my eyes. I keep the urge to myself. Not out of politeness. It's just self-preservation. I don't want to annoy the social worker in the driver's seat. I know for a fact she wouldn't appreciate a negative reaction. She's not a fan of rolling eyes. She also doesn't like raised eyebrows. Or sarcasm. Or black eyeliner. Or maybe she hates her job. Hell. There's even a possibility she doesn't like *me*. It's hard to say. She hasn't been mean to me, or even rude. She's just...bossy. Her pink lips are always tight. Even when she told me her name—which is Jane Cowley—she said it like it bothered her.

Do I care about any of that? Not really. Jane Cowley is the same as most grown-ups who are in charge of kids like me. They want to fix us. And we can't be fixed. We don't want to be. Deep down I think they know it, and this makes them tense. But it doesn't matter. Like I said, I don't care. Jane is just a person I have to put up with until this is over.

And I only have to do that for a few more minutes. Or that's what I'm counting on anyway.

Right now she thinks I'm asleep. My eyes are almost closed. My head is pressed to the window, and my breathing is slow. Everything I see is from under my eyelashes. I've been sitting this way for the last half hour. It's kind of uncomfortable, especially on my left wrist. I twisted it two days ago, and it still aches. I want to move it, but I don't dare. Pretending to be asleep helps me avoid conversation. Talking is the one thing Jane does like. And we don't have that in common. I'm happy to keep looking out the window in silence.

The trees pass in a green blur for a bit longer. But not long after I see the sign, I also catch my first glimpse of Camp goddamn Happy. A log cabin with a red roof peeks out from the forest. I notice right away that it matches the welcome sign, and I want to roll my eyes even more.

"Yes," I think again, "definitely ugly as shit."

I don't realize I've said it out loud until Jane jerks a look my way. Her whole body moves, and the seat bounces. Automatically I return her glance. *Damn.* Now she knows I'm awake. I don't turn away fast enough to hide it. Her blue eyes are laser sharp for that second.

"What did you say?" she asks, and her voice is the same as her expression.

Swearing is also on Jane's list of dislikes. High up there.

I do my best to smile.

"Nothing," I say. "Just that it's kind of ugly, isn't it?"

"I think they try for function. Not beauty," she replies.

I nod. Then I move my attention back to the window. I don't need Jane to read my face. She already knows too much about me. Like the fact my mom is in rehab. And about the month I've spent doing community service. Worst of all, she knows

my dad was too busy to come and get me when everything went down. When I think about *that*—about my dad—my heart squeezes inside my ribs.

Why didn't he come?

"It's going to be fine, Adele," Jane says. "Trust me."

The idea of trusting her makes me want to laugh. Mostly because the idea of trusting *anyone* makes me want to laugh. A giggle tries to come out. I fight it back.

"Thank you," I reply in a serious voice.

Jane's fingers tap the steering wheel. Her mouth pinches in that way it does. If I had to guess, I'd say she's trying to decide if I mean it. She stays quiet, and I use the silence to study the rest of the camp. Most of it's visible now that the trees have cleared. I can see it well because we've come to the top of a hill.

Three log cabins are on one side of a wide path, and three more line the other side. At the far end of the path is a much bigger building, and to

the left of it are two smaller ones. All of them are the same gross brown with red roofs. I finally let myself roll my eyes. It's a bit of a cover-up, though. I kind of hope it will draw attention from Jane. If she gets mad at me, it might distract me from the new nerves jumping around in my chest. But she doesn't get mad. She doesn't even get annoyed.

"I know you don't want to do this," she says.

"Oh, really?" I reply before I can stop myself.

"What was your first clue?"

"Adele..."

"Jane."

"There was no alternative," she reminds me.

"You have no family here. The terms of your probation include vetted supervision."

I tune her out. There's nothing she can say that I don't know already.

My mom's drug charge removed her from being able to supervise me. Possibly forever.

My friends' parents don't want a kid with a record living under their roofs.

I haven't seen my dad in ten years, and he wasn't excited to hear that I'm suddenly more than an expense.

Camp Happy is a last resort. It's a place run by the juvie courts. A final stop before people like Jane give up on people like me. No argument will make it any different. Not in a good way. The opposite is a possibility, though. They warned me about it when I was getting my wrist looked at in the hospital. I could be in a group home with a hundred other kids. I might have to go there if my dad doesn't get his shit together. But I don't let myself think about that last part.

Jane says I'm lucky. The judge who sent me here agrees. But I know better. These ugly brown-and-red buildings are a kind of prison. They just don't look like it from the outside.

Chapter Two

The car engine cuts out, and Jane says, “Wait here a second, sweetie.”

I’m too surprised to answer her. In the last day and a half, she hasn’t called me anything but Adele. Or maybe Ms. Reimer, the first few times. But right after she says “sweetie,” she climbs out and slams the car door.

When she walks away, I stare at her. I narrow my eyes. Maybe surprising me was her plan. It sure kept me from asking any questions. I kind of want to jump out and follow her. But I don’t. She might be expecting me to chase her. I’d rather not let her be right.

I don’t stop watching her until she enters one of the small buildings. When I’m sure she’s not coming back, I take a look around. Of course, the cabins haven’t changed in the last two minutes. They’re still brown. They still have gross roofs. And it’s still the place I have to live for the next two weeks.

I don’t want to think about that too much. It makes my heart want to do the squeeze thing again. It makes my throat hurt too. Quickly I search for something else to look at. And I find it. Actually, I find *him*.

A boy.

He's very tall. Neither fat nor skinny. He's looking down at a book. And for a minute, I think he isn't real. Why would a boy like that be standing there? He's too close not to have seen us arrive. I stare at him. If he's real, why doesn't he look up? It's weird.

I don't ask myself why I might see a fake boy reading a fake book. I just keep staring.

His tanned hands stick out from a long-sleeved gray shirt. His fingers flip a page. For some reason, I notice that he has wide knuckles. They make the book look small. I don't know why, but I like that. And liking it makes me blush.

I pull my eyes up from his hands. I want to see his face, even if it's not real. I see his hair instead. It's dark brown, almost black, except for a red stripe in the front. That piece hangs down over his forehead. My eyes stay there for a long time. I want the wind to blow the hair out of my way. It doesn't happen. I give up and move on with my stare.

He's got torn jeans. Dark, dark blue. They're tucked into unlaced combat boots. One purple sock sticks up on his left ankle. A red bandanna hangs from his pocket.

His fingers move again. This time one catches on the page. He sucks in a breath. He jerks his hand away and lifts it up. I see the same thing he does. A fresh line of blood. That's when I decide he's real. A paper cut isn't something I would make up.

His head tilts. I need to look away. If I don't, the very real boy is going to see me staring. But my eyes have their own ideas. They stay where they are, stuck on him. And he does look. Of course. He gazes right at me, and I blush harder. My cheeks are hot. But I still don't stop watching him.

His eyes are a dark color. I'm not sure what shade. Maybe they're brown, maybe green, maybe hazel. They hold me. My skin prickles in a strange way. My stomach does a roll. It's not a bad feeling.