

TURNING THE PAGE



It's going
to be okay.

I think.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 4th

I saw Riley today for the first time since the end of camp.

I was quiet on the ride over, Mom kept asking how excited I was.

And I was, of course. But I was also super anxious.



I know she said she forgave me for everything when I saw her at the dance. But I still feel bad. It all just kind of happened. Breaking the TRUCE and falling for Owen, and kissing him. I didn't plan for any of it. I didn't write a letter to the universe being like:



I hoped things wouldn't be weird between us. I thought about how we haven't spent time together, just us, since before I left. I really didn't want any lingering awkwardness around.

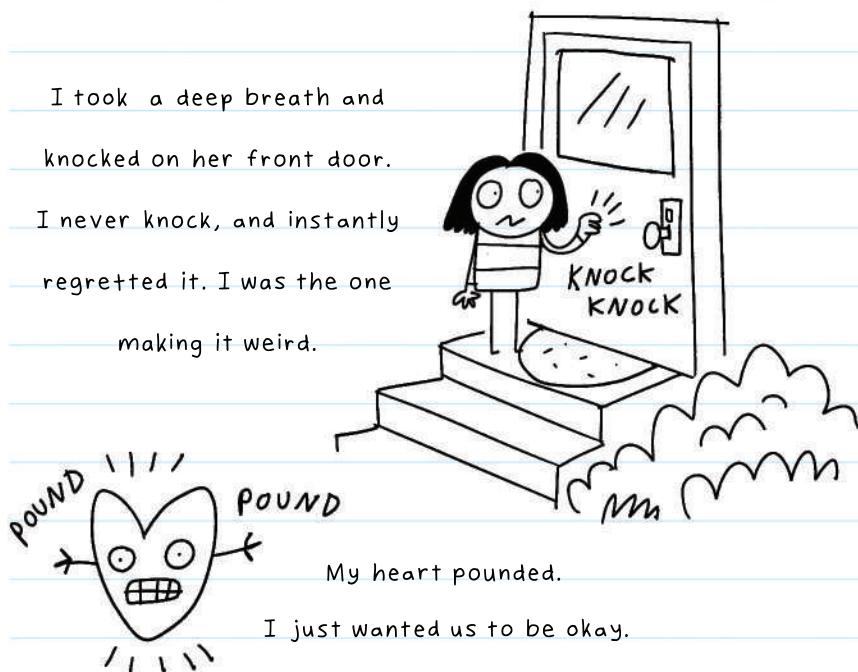


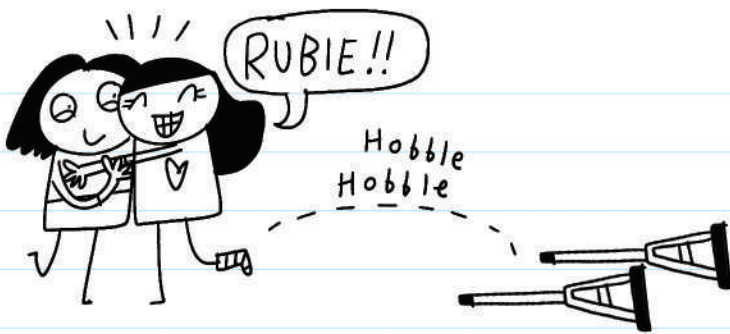
What if we just didn't click anymore? What if our friendship had an expiration date, like a cup of yogurt?



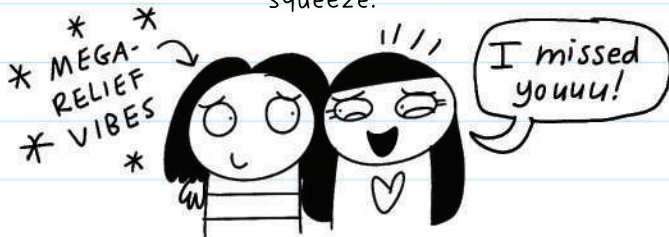
I took a deep breath and knocked on her front door.

I never knock, and instantly regretted it. I was the one making it weird.





But as soon as Riley opened the door my cloud of doubt cleared. She dropped her crutches and hobbled over to me to give me a squeeze.



Then Harry popped out of nowhere and jumped on top of me. Why is he always so sticky?



Riley grabbed a bag of chips and we went upstairs to her room. She had nail polish out with some pop song playing in the background.

Like she had set up something for us to do.

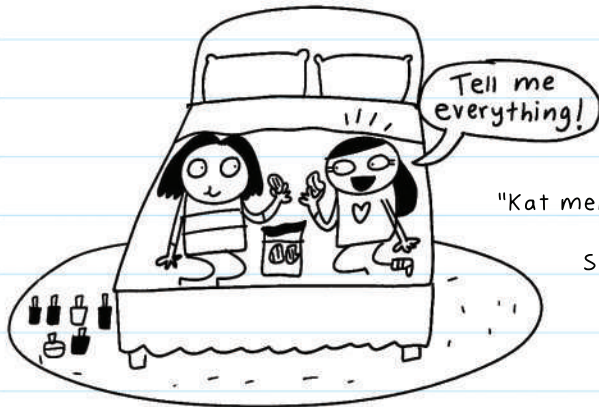
Maybe she was worried about the awkwardness too?



"I'm so happy you're home!" She said. We sat on her bed, taking handfuls of chips. I laid back and kicked my shoes off.

"Me too." Except that felt like a lie.

I really missed being at camp.



"Kat mentioned a Hot Ben!"

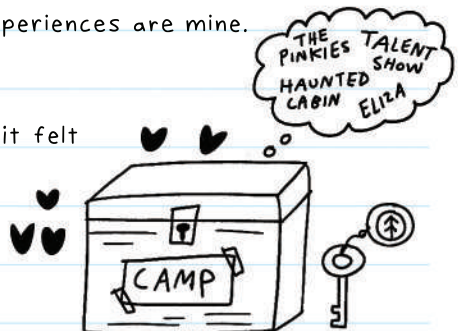
She squealed.

And I definitely did want to tell her all about camp. About how happy I was there. But part of me wanted to keep it to myself.

The memories and experiences are mine.

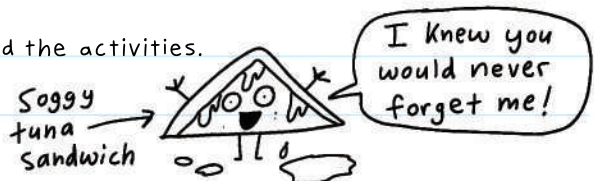
Like a secret treasure box. And it felt

okay to keep it that way.

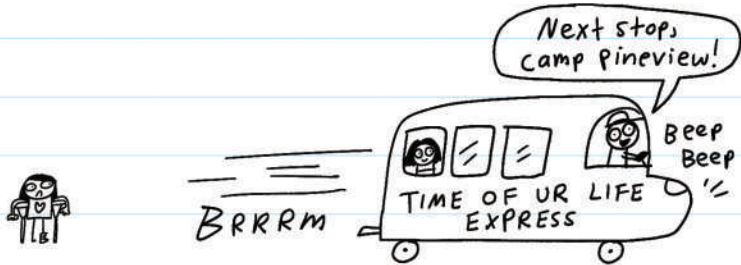


I shared some basic stuff about the cabin,

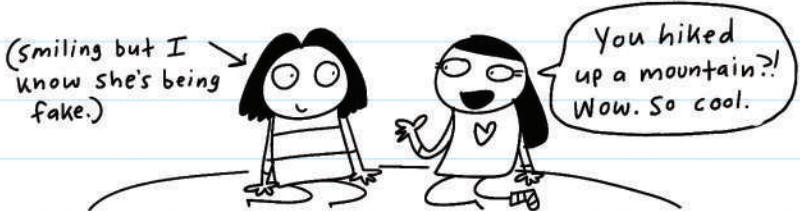
the food, and the activities.



I also didn't want to make her feel like she missed out on the time of her life. Because let's be honest, she totally did.

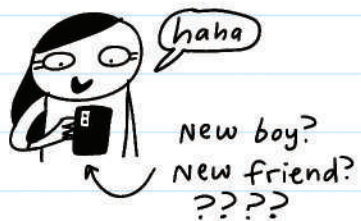


She responded with excitement about what I did share, even though I could tell it felt a little forced.

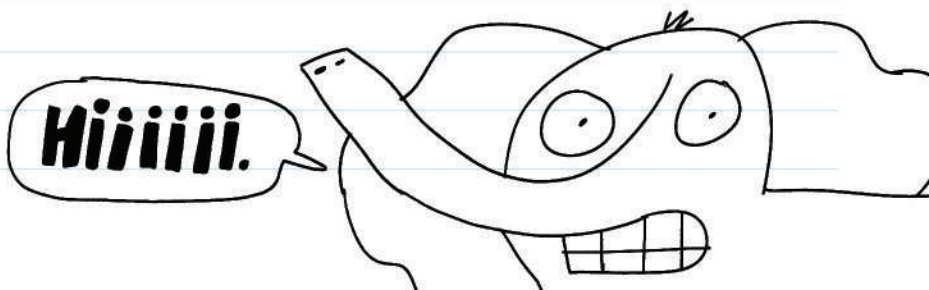


At one point she got a text and laughed as she typed back.

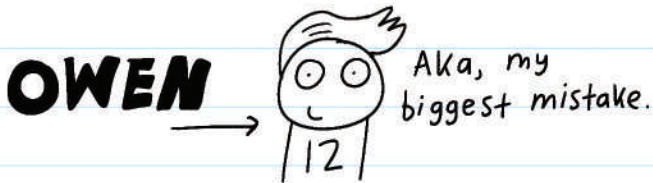
I wondered who she was talking to but didn't say anything.



Instead, I needed to address the elephant in the room.



If things were to really go back to normal between us, we had to talk about you-know-who.



I picked at my nail and said, "hey, I just wanted to tell you again that I'm sorry."



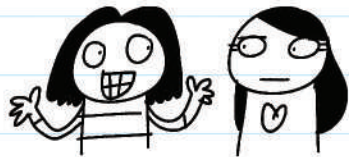
"Rubie it's ok, really. I'm putting it behind us." Riley said.

"I was super upset about the TRUCE, but I think I was just jealous that you got to go to camp and have this whole adventure, *OUR* adventure, while I watched TV all summer."

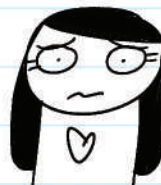
"That doesn't sound so bad." I joked.

She didn't laugh.

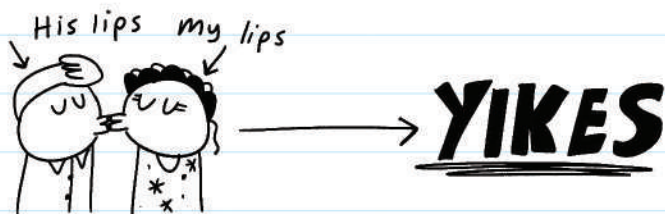
"Sorry." I said.



Riley looked like she was about to cry.



"And when I saw you with Owen, my heart broke into a thousand pieces. You knew how obsessed I was with him. And then... you went and did what you did, you know?"



"I know. I didn't plan to. It's like my biggest regret ever and totally not worth it. He's just a player, and a bad kisser."



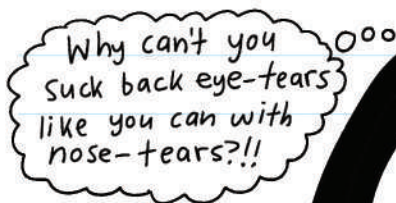
Oops. Maybe shouldn't have said that last part.

But it was true. His lips were stiff and tense.

Kissing a piece of bread would have been more romantic.



I quickly grabbed her hand. "I'm so sorry." I felt tears coming and tried so hard to hold them back. A skill I will never be good at.



I've always been an easy crier, especially when it comes to making mistakes. One time, in second grade, I sharpened my pencil and it got jammed in the sharpener.



I tried to wiggle it out and it broke, leaving half of it stuck inside. When the teacher asked who did it, I raised my hand and sobbed until Mom picked me up from school.

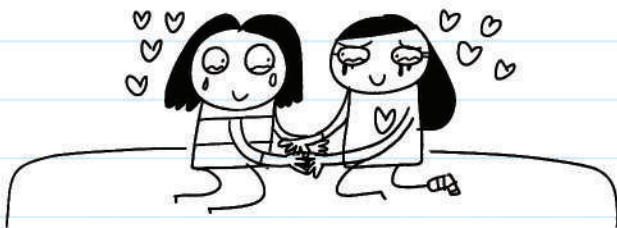


Tears fell down my cheeks and then Riley started tearing up.

"Don't cry or I'll cry."



We went in for a hug at the same time. "You can use my hair as a tissue if you need to" I said. And we both started laughing.



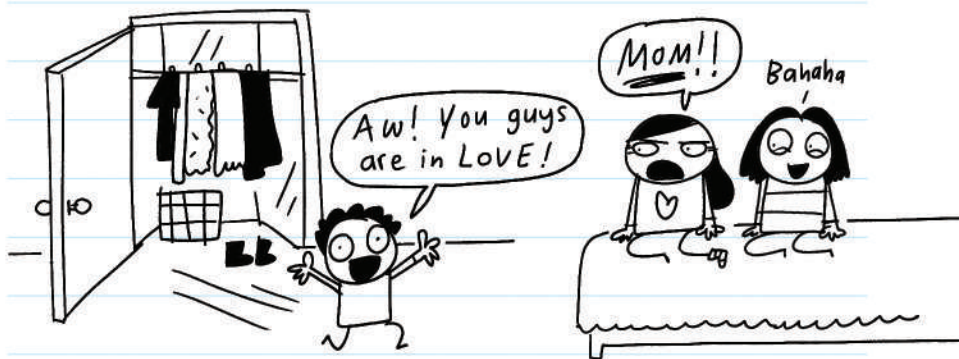
"I forgive you and I love you. I'm so happy you're home." Riley said,
wiping her nose with her sleeve.

"I love you too, Riley. And I'm happy to be home too."

In that moment, that really was true.



Then as if on cue, Harry popped out of the closet.



LATER

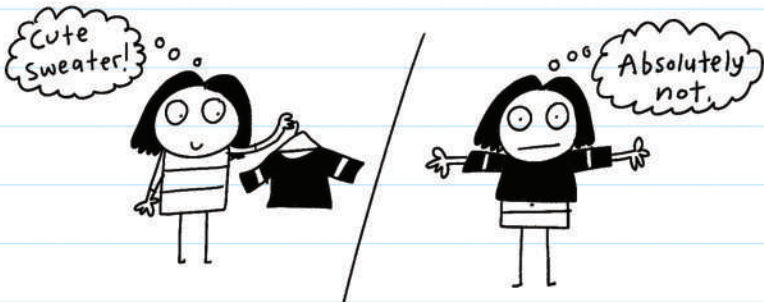
Riley's mom dropped us off at our go-to shopping plaza for the
afternoon. We spent the day in and out of our favorite stores.
Riley had allowance money and I had a couple gift cards from
Christmas that I never used.



We tried on a bunch of clothes. It's annoying how Riley looks good in everything. She could wear a shaggy carpet and still look pretty.



I felt awkward in everything I liked on the hanger.



I have a long torso and short legs.

Shirts are too short and pants are too long. Unless I hike them all the ways up to my armpits, then they fit.



Riley bought a big bag of new clothes because of course, and I walked away with (drumroll) a pickle hairclip.



"Cute" Riley said.

But I felt like I bought it to just buy something.

I don't even really wear hair clips.



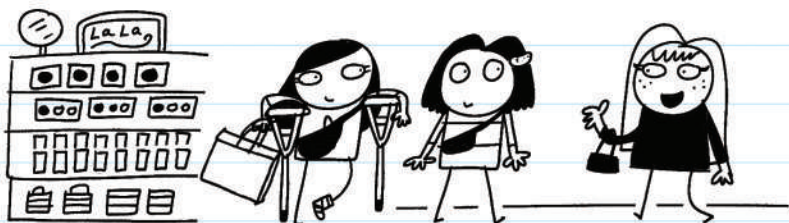
I was happy to be back doing normal things with Riley but I felt a little cranky as the afternoon went on. Internally stewing over how my body looks like a piece of celery.

Riley has curves in all the right places.



And I know "love yourself," blah, blah, blah. But sometimes I wish I would hurry up and be a grown woman already.

But then, on our way out of Blush, the makeup store Riley is obsessed with, some girl said, "OMG, I love your hairclip."



I don't know why compliments from strangers can take you completely out of a funk but it did.

I had positive pickle power the rest of the day.



Riley spent the last of her money on treating us to cherry and watermelon slushes.

We toasted "to us."



It felt like we turned the page together.

