

READERS' THEATER:

Camo Girl

by Kekla Magoon

Setting the Scene

Ella and her best friend Z sit by themselves at lunch every day. Z thinks this is okay, but Ella sometimes feels lonely when it's just the two of them. She wants to make new friends, but a lot of their classmates think Z is weird, and that Ella is weird for being friends with him. When other students tease them for being different, Ella and Z deal with their hurt feelings by pretending that Z is a brave knight and Ella is the bold Lady Eleanor—they invent a world where nothing can touch them and they can't be hurt by mean words. When a new boy, Bailey, comes to school, he makes friends with Ella. Bailey can help Ella make new friends or sit at a different table, but only if she leaves Z behind. What will Ella do?

Characters

Ella Cartwright— A shy twelve-year-old girl who feels like an outcast at her school. She has patches of two different skin colors on her face, which other kids tease her about.

Bailey James— The new boy in school. He is popular and well-liked, but still looking for a group of friends where he really fits in.

Jonathan Hoffman— A popular boy in school and a bully to Ella.

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| Narrator One | } | All narrators represent Ella's point of view. They share her inner thoughts and the things she sees. |
| Narrator Two | | |
| Narrator Three | | |
| Narrator Four | | |

This scene excerpt comes from Chapter 17.

NARRATOR ONE: When we get to the cafeteria, something in me gets a little reckless. I hang back while Z heads for our table. I'm planning a different route.

NARRATOR TWO: I'm going to become the Lady Eleanor, just for a minute. Just long enough to do something brave.

NARRATOR THREE: I walk past the table I usually avoid like the plague. Bailey's just settling in, alongside Jonathan, Brandon, Miles, and Ken.

- NARRATOR FOUR:** My plan, so well-thought-out, is this: I'm going to look Bailey James in the eye, say hi, and keep on walking.
- NARRATOR ONE:** The part that's not so well-thought-out is: why?
- NARRATOR TWO:** I squeeze between two chairs, coming out right beside him. The simple greeting balances on the tip of my tongue.
- NARRATOR THREE:** I stall.
- NARRATOR FOUR:** They all look at me. Bailey, with eyes warm and curious. Jonathan, sneering and cold.
- JONATHAN:** Bug off, Camo-Face.
- BAILEY:** Whoa. What did you just call her?
- NARRATOR ONE:** My face flushes hot. I spin away, but Bailey's hand falls on my wrist. My tray rattles.
- NARRATOR TWO:** Jonathan glances around, puzzled.
- JONATHAN:** What, her? That's Camo-Face.
- NARRATOR THREE:** It's one of those moments when the sky is falling. I try to push it back up in my mind but it's already crashed over me and I can't breathe or think or speak.
- NARRATOR FOUR:** I tug free of Bailey's grip and wade through the atmosphere, away.
- NARRATOR ONE:** Bailey's voice follows me.
- BAILEY:** Un-cool, my man. So uncool.
- NARRATOR TWO:** Then Jonathan's.
- JONATHAN:** Hey, where you going, dude?
- NARRATOR THREE:** I can't help but look back. Bailey's standing up. He starts to lift up his tray.

NARRATOR FOUR: Jonathan glances at his buddies around the table. He grins nervously.

JONATHAN: It's just a joke, man. An old joke.

NARRATOR ONE: I stare at him, appalled. I can't think of anything worthy to say in response, so I just start walking away. The names I call myself in my head are so much worse than Camo-Face.

NARRATOR TWO: Out of nowhere, there's Bailey. Walking beside me with his tray.

BAILEY: Sorry. I had no idea he was that big a jerk.

NARRATOR THREE: Bailey took my side!

NARRATOR FOUR: My heart leaps, with nowhere to go. I don't want to be needy girl, sad girl, loser girl. I am Eleanor. Strong girl. It-all-rolls-off-me girl.

ELLA: Whatever.

BAILEY: No, really.

NARRATOR ONE: He's dogging me around the room as I head for my table.

BAILEY: Guess I picked a bad crowd to start off with.

NARRATOR TWO: I brush one braid over my shoulder, elegantly.

ELLA: It's no big deal. Forget about it.

NARRATOR THREE: Bailey shrugs.

BAILEY: I've been looking for a reason to move tables, anyway. You can come sit with me. Over there.

NARRATOR FOUR: With his head, he points toward the long table where more of the popular kids sit. The boys: Kurt, Rick, Max. And the girls: Cass, Megan, Kelly. Millie's there, too.

NARRATOR ONE: A table I've always wanted to sit at.

NARRATOR TWO: A table of no one who will talk to me.

NARRATOR THREE: Max motions to Bailey, who tips his tray like, *yeah, I'm coming*. He glances at me, expectantly.

ELLA: I have a table where I sit.

NARRATOR FOUR: Z's there already. Alone. Eyes wide behind his glasses. Fork in hand, unmoving.

NARRATOR ONE: Bailey and I look into each other's eyes. My heart throbs. My skin flushes warm. He looks all over my face, and I resist the urge to run, to hide. He doesn't look away.

NARRATOR TWO: This is going to be it. The moment when everything changes. He'll come sit at our table, and we'll no longer be just two, but three.

NARRATOR THREE: He doesn't look away. And then he does.

BAILEY: Okay. Well, I guess I'll catch you later.

NARRATOR FOUR: I haven't even blinked before he's weaving away through the tables.

NARRATOR THREE: I slam my tray down next to Z's. He begins eating silently, leaving me to wallow in my own shattered mess.

NARRATOR ONE: It's not clear to me what's happening. What's clear is, I should have left well enough alone.

END OF SCENE

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1) What decisions does Ella face in this scene? What decisions does Bailey face?
- 2) Whose actions do you like best in the scene? Whose actions do you like the least? What do those actions say about the characters?