

# THE GIRLS IN CABIN THREE

DEBRA H. GOLDSTEIN

*Sunday*

Dear Mom and Dad,

First night of camp. They won't let us into the dining room unless I write you a letter. So, here it is. I think they want a letter instead of a postcard to take up more time. Ms. Mott, the camp director, obviously realizes that after six years of being campers, our cabin knows how to dash off two-word postcards.

It's raining and there isn't much to do. The road to the dining room is muddy, but our cabin doesn't leak this year. They moved us to Cabin Three and told us to tell you to put that on our mail. We have new counselors. Their names are Eve and Mary. Eve looks like she could play football. Mary seems nicer.

Five of us are back from last year and we have one new girl in our cabin. I got a top bunk. Carolyn grabbed the one across from me. Yay! Kimi is under her. Like always, she smiles all the time. Her aunt took her to get the neatest cornrows before camp. Unlike Carolyn's wispy hair, Kimi says my thick mop will be perfect for her to do a simple braid.

You remember Iris and Sue, the Jersey twins you met last year? They picked the bunk across the room. The new girl, Denise, got here last. She wanted me to move to the bottom. No way! She's also not thrilled that we've been coming to camp so long that Sweetie Pie, the camp cat, seems to have remembered us. She adopted our cabin as her home this summer. None of us, except Denise who swears she has pet allergies, wants the cat kicked out by the counselors, so the twins are keeping Sweetie Pie on their side of the room. This is long enough to get into dinner.

Love and Kisses,  
Sharon

*Tuesday*

Mom and Dad,

Still raining. We're spending a lot of time in the cabin or dining room. The counselors say it will be better when it stops raining, and to kick off this week's skits, they got up and sang a stupid song at last night's dinner. All I know is it had a line about some guy named Joe Spivy and poison ivy and another one about Leonard Skinner getting something like potato main poisoning after dinner. After the poison ivy Carolyn and I got into our first year of camp, you better believe that isn't going to happen to us again. I guess we'll have to stop eating the mashed potatoes.

Sharon

*Wednesday*

Dear Mom,

I was going to send you and Dad a Polaroid picture of all of us, but—don't get mad and don't tell Dad—I don't know where the new camera he bought me is. I took some pictures and I thought I put it in my cubby, but I can't find it. We're all going to look for it tonight after we work on our skit. The Jersey twins came up with a great idea for a murder plot and I'm writing it. Gotta run—lunch.

Love,  
S—

PS if I don't find my camera, I'll pay Dad back out of my allowance or set up a lemonade stand.

*Thursday*

Mom and Dad,

More rain. We can't do anything outside so Ms. Mott sent indoor activity kits to every cabin. I guess she decided we're too old to make braided bracelets because our cabin got a card magic set. Mary only has a few tricks up her sleeve, but Eve is really into it. She even smiled. Boring!

Carolyn, Kimi, and I worked on our murder skit instead. I was going to be the dead body (we took catsup packets from the dining room to make a sponge bag for blood), but we decided it would be funnier to kill a counselor than a camper.

Eve said no way. She can be so-o-oh grumpy. Mary agreed to do it. We were going to make her a pool counselor so all she'd have to wear is her bathing suit and gold whistle, but she said her whistle disappeared. Instead, she's wearing shorts, a T-shirt, and a smock. She'll carry paintbrushes like an arts and crafts counselor. The real arts and crafts counselor promised to help us make props today.

I'm going to be the detective—like Sherlock Holmes (if you open this before daddy gets home, thank him for reading me that book)—and Carolyn is going to be my Watson. Kimi, the twins, and Denise are going to be witnesses and the murderer. I'm not sure which one will be the killer or if I'll make the twins identical killers, but since I'm writing the skit, I'll figure it out by Sunday night.

XOXO  
Sharon

*Saturday*

Mom and Dad,

It stopped raining!!!!!! Some kids went hiking, some swimming, but not us.

Mom and Dad, so many things went wrong. First, we were late getting out of the cabin for activities today because instead of making her bed for Ms. Mott's inspection, Denise had a hissy fit that someone took her favorite ring. I saw her wearing it yesterday. It's a lot like the one you gave me when I was ten. You know, a gold band with a pearl on it.

Denise swore she took it off and left it in the cabin when she went to take a shower and it was gone when she got back. Eve, Mary, and Ms. Mott searched the cabin, but no ring (and we didn't find my camera, either).

When Ms. Mott found out about my camera and Mary's whistle, she was upset with Eve and Mary for not having reported our missing things. She grounded all of us "until one of you admits what you did or tells me who took the missing items."

"That's not fair," I said, speaking for everyone as we stared at Denise. "We're not going to fink on each other."

Ms. Mott ignored me, but Mary saved the day. "Maybe instead of making the girls stay in the cabin, Eve and I can take them to the dining room for lunch and then, rather than swimming or hiking, we can practice our skit for tonight." She gave Ms. Mott the funniest sideways glance. "You know, it's the only place at camp that has a stage. We have to rehearse, so if we're in the dining room, no one can write their parents that on the first day without rain they were kept indoors as a punishment for something someone else did."

Before Ms. Mott answered, Denise sat on her unmade bunk, crossed her arms, and pouted. She's such a baby. "I should be allowed to go swimming. It's my ring that's missing. I'm going to tell my father!"

We all glared at her and Ms. Mott looked at Eve, who simply shrugged. "Not another word. All of you will go to the dining room for lunch and stay there practicing your skit. I'll be in my office if one of you wants to talk to me about the missing items."

Even if we knew who took Denise's stupid ring, none of us are going to tell, so we trooped over to the dining room. Denise kept giving Kimi and me the evil eye, probably because we shortsheeted her bed the other night. After lunch, on top of having to stay in the dining room, Ms. Mott made our cabin do KP duty. We had to clear all the trays and sponge them down before we could practice, as well as refill the condiments on every table. Mom, the food after lunch looked even worse than it did before we ate.

We finally got to practice. I gave everyone the props that the arts and crafts counselor helped us make yesterday. Everything was going fine until the part where Carolyn, knife in hand, pushed Mary (I gave Carolyn a bigger part and made the twins my Watsons). Mary was supposed to fall to the ground, stabbed by the aluminum-foil knife Kimi made. Instead, Mary grabbed her side and half jumped and half fell off the stage.

I thought she was giving an award-winning performance. The twins agreed because they applauded, but instead of jumping up and taking a bow, Mary lay on the floor and groaned. That's when I saw that the silver knife sticking up through her bloody fingers was real.

Denise screamed and we all ran toward Mary. Eve reached her first. "Sharon, get Ms. Mott and the rest of you stand in the middle of the room."

When Ms. Mott and I got back to the dining room, Eve was holding Mary's head in her lap. Ms. Mott ran to the phone on the wall and called 911. Then, she called the camp nurse.

The paramedics and our nurse came quickly. When they started to examine Mary, her hands still streaked with red, Ms. Mott sent us back to our cabin.

It was horrible. Everyone was upset. Kimi was crying and repeating the knife she gave Carolyn was make-believe. Carolyn was trying to calm her down by assuring her the knife she thrust at Mary was fake. The twins were real quiet, but I could tell they were shook, too. And Denise was Denise. She pouted.

Ms. Mott came to our cabin a little later. “Mary is going to be okay. It’s what they call a flesh wound. She didn’t even have to go to the hospital, but we’re going to let her stay in the infirmary tonight.”

“But all that blood?” Carolyn said.

“Catsup. Sharon, I understand one of the props you made in arts and crafts was a blood sponge.”

“Yes, but I didn’t get it right. There were sponges in the arts and crafts cabin, but no Saran Wrap. I got a piece from the dining hall while we were doing KP today to make one for tonight.” I pulled the clear plastic wrap I’d taken out of my pocket.

Ms. Mott frowned. “Mary will come back to see you tomorrow when she picks up her possessions to go home.”

One of the twins asked, “Why is Mary going home?”

“Her time at camp is over.” Ms. Mott turned her gaze toward Eve. “Eve, I’d like to talk to you for a moment.”

Ms. Mott took Eve into the portion of the cabin reserved for the counselors. It wasn’t like we couldn’t hear what was being said. You know how flimsy that partition between our bunks and the counselors’ area is. I hushed everyone and we listened.

“Eve, Mary told me she saw the missing items in your duffel bag and confronted you about them. She thinks you used a slight of the hand trick to exchange the fake knife for a real one.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“Let me see your duffel.”

“And if I refuse?”

“We’ll have to get the police out here. But, if I search your bag and we find the missing things, we can simply return the items and I’ll let you go home, too.”

“With everyone thinking I’m a thief?”

“We’ll simply say the incident with Mary was traumatizing.”

I heard a thump, which I guess was Eve pulling her bag down from the shelf and handing it to Ms. Mott. Everything was quiet for a few minutes. When she spoke, Eve didn’t even try to keep her voice down. “I don’t know how those things got in there. I didn’t put them there and I didn’t hurt Mary.”

“We’ll see about that,” Ms. Mott said. “I’ll get someone in here to watch the cabin, but then you’re going to need to come with me.”

I may not like Eve, but I remembered what Daddy and you taught me about standing up for what’s right. I stuck my head around the partition and told Ms. Mott that Eve might not be a perfect counselor (I know Mom, if I can’t say something nice, I shouldn’t say anything at all, but I wanted to tell the whole truth), but she didn’t take anything.

“Sharon, this isn’t about you. Go back with the other girls.”

“No, ma’am.” I rushed to keep talking before she could say anything. “You need to check the garbage the paramedics threw out in the dining room. If you hurry, I’m sure you’ll find the fake knife.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Mary and I were going to tape a catsup-soaked sponge wrapped in Saran Wrap under her smock for tonight’s performance. When Carolyn stabbed her by sliding the fake knife between Mary’s arm and her body, Mary would press the Saran Wrap, it would pop open, and the audience would see blood. While we campers were cleaning the tables and refilling the condiments, Mary probably made a makeshift blood sponge with one of the kitchen sponges, Saran Wrap, and catsup.”

“That seems a little far-fetched.”

“Not really. When Eve and Mary were doing card tricks with us the other day, Mary was good at slipping things up her sleeve. I bet instead of up her sleeve, she put a real knife and a blood sponge under her shirt. When Carolyn stabbed her, Mary distracted us by stumbling and falling. At that moment, she pushed the blood pack, cut herself slightly with the real knife, and palmed the fake knife under her shirt.”

Ms. Mott hesitated. I guess she was thinking through the possibility of what I’d said.

“I know I’m right and that Mary did it because she’s the only one who could have been taking our things. Except for Denise, the rest of us know everything about each other. I don’t know when Mary hid those things in Eve’s duffel bag, but you can prove what I’m saying if you follow up now.”

I was right. Ms. Mott found the aluminum-foil knife scrunched up in the trash with the paramedics’ gloves and the wrapping from the bandage they put on Mary. She confronted Mary with the knife, and she confessed.

We’re getting a new counselor for the rest of the summer and Ms. Mott offered me a counselor-in-training position for next year. I hope she assigns me the girls in Cabin Three.

Must run.... The sun is still out.

Love,  
Sharon

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**Judge Debra H. Goldstein** ([www.DebraHGoldstein.com](http://www.DebraHGoldstein.com)) writes Kensington’s Sarah Blair mystery series (*Four Cuts Too Many*, *Three Treats Too Many*, *Two Bites Too Many*, and *One Taste Too Many*). Her short stories, which have been named Agatha, Anthony, and Derringer finalists, have appeared in numerous periodicals and anthologies including *Alfred Hitchcock’s Mystery Magazine*, *Black Cat Mystery Magazine*, *Mystery Weekly*, *Malice Domestic Murder Most Edible*, *Masthead*, and *Jukes & Tonks*. Debra has served on the national boards of Sisters in Crime and Mystery Writers of America and been president of the Guppy and SEMWA chapters.