

The Lemonade War Series

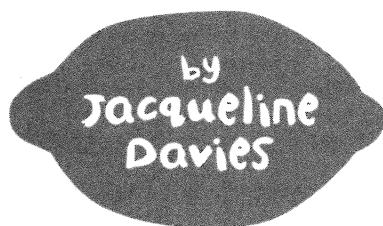
The Lemonade War

A clear glass filled with yellow lemonade, ice cubes, and a slice of lemon. A stream of lemonade is being poured into the glass from above.

Jacqueline
Davies

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The Lemonade War



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—J.D.

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The Lemonade War

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Chapter 1

SLUMP

slump (slŭmp) n. A drop in the activity of a business or the economy.

Evan lay on his back in the dark, throwing the baseball up in a straight line and catching it in his bare hands. *Thwap. Thwap.* The ball made a satisfying sound as it slapped his palm. His legs flopped in a V. His arms stretched up to the ceiling. And the thought that if he missed he'd probably break his nose made the game *just* interesting enough to keep going.

On the floor above he heard footsteps—his mother’s—and then a long, loud scraping-groaning sound. He stopped throwing the ball to listen. His mother was dragging something heavy across the kitchen floor. Probably the broken air conditioner.

A week ago, right at the beginning of the heat wave, the air conditioner in his mother’s attic office had broken. The man from Sears had installed a brand-new one but left the old one sitting right in the middle of the kitchen floor. The Treskis had been walking around it all week.

Scra-a-a-ape. Evan stood up. His mom was strong, but this was a two-person job. Hopefully she wouldn’t ask him why he was hiding in the dark basement. And hopefully Jessie wouldn’t be in the kitchen at all. He’d been avoiding her for two days now, and it was getting harder by the minute. The house just wasn’t that big.

Evan had his hand on the railing when the scraping noise stopped. He heard footsteps fading to silence. She’d given up. *Probably the heat,* he

thought. It was that kind of weather: giving-up kind of weather.

He went back to lying on the floor.

Thwap. Thwap.

Then he heard the basement door open. *Pssshhh*. Evan caught the ball and froze.

"Evan?" Jessie's voice sounded echo-y in the darkness. "Evan? You down there?"

Evan held his breath. He lay completely still. The only thing that moved was the pins-and-needles prickling in his fingers.

He heard the door start to close—*long breath out*—but then it stopped and opened again. Footsteps on the carpeted stairs. A black outline of Jessie standing on the bottom step with daylight squirting all around her. Evan didn't move a muscle.

"Evan? Is that you?" Jessie took one short step into the basement. "Is that . . . ?" She inched her way toward him, then kicked him with her bare foot.

"Hey! Watch it, would ya?" said Evan, swatting her leg. He suddenly felt stupid lying there in the dark.

"I thought you were a sleeping bag," she said. "I couldn't see. What are you doing down here? How come the lights are off?"

"It's too hot with the lights on," he said. He talked in a flat voice, trying to sound like the most boring person on the whole planet. If he kept it up, Jessie might just leave him alone.

"Mom's back in her office," said Jessie, lying down on the couch. "*Working.*" She groaned as she said the word.

Evan didn't say anything. He went back to throwing the ball. Straight up. Straight down. Maybe silence would get Jessie to leave. He was starting to feel words piling up inside him, crowding his lungs, forcing out all the air. It was like having a chestful of bats, beating their wings, fighting to get out.

"She tried to move the air conditioner, but it's too heavy," said Jessie.

Evan tightened up his lips. *Go away*, he thought. *Go away before I say something mean.*

"It's gonna be hot *a-a-a-all* week," Jessie continued. "In the nineties. All the way up 'til Labor Day."

Thwap. Thwap.

"So, whaddya wanna do?" Jessie asked.

Scream, thought Evan. Jessie never got it when you were giving her the Big Freeze. She just went right on acting as if everything were great. It made it really hard to tell her to bug off without telling her to *BUG OFF!* Whenever Evan did that, he felt bad.

"So, whaddya wanna do?" Jessie asked again, nudging him with her foot.

It was a direct question. Evan had to answer it or explain why he wouldn't. And he couldn't get into *that*. It was too . . . too complicated. Too hurtful.

"Huh? So, whaddya wanna do?" she asked for the third time.

"Doin' it," said Evan.

"Nah, come on. For real."

"For real," he said.

"We could ride our bikes to the 7-Eleven," she said.

"No money," he said.

"You just got ten dollars from Grandma for your birthday."

"Spent it," said Evan.

"On what?"

"Stuff," Evan said.

"Well, I've got . . . well . . ." Jessie's voice dribbled down to nothing.

Evan stopped throwing the ball and looked at her. "What?"

Jessie pulled her legs tight to her chest. "Nothin'," she said.

"Right," said Evan. He knew that Jessie had money. Jessie always had money squirreled away in her lock box. But that didn't mean she was going to share it. Evan went back to throwing the baseball. He felt a tiny flame of anger shoot up and lick his face.

Thwap. Thwap.

"We could build a fort in the woods," said Jessie.

"Too hot."

"We could play Stratego."

"Too boring."

"We could build a track and race marbles."

"Too stupid!"

A thin spider web of sweat draped itself over his forehead, spreading into his hair. With every throw, he told himself, *It's not her fault*. But he could feel his anger growing. He started popping his elbow to put a little more juice on the ball. It was flying a good four feet into the air every time. Straight up. Straight down.

Pop. Thwap. Pop. Thwap.

The bats in his chest were going nuts.

"What is the matter with you?" asked Jessie. "You've been so weird the last couple of days."

Aw, man, here they come.

"I just don't wanna play a dumb game like Stratego," he said.

"You *like* Stratego. I only picked that because it's *your* favorite game. I was being *nice*, in case you hadn't noticed."

"Look. There are only six days left of summer, and I'm not going to waste them playing a dumb game." Evan felt his heartbeat speed up. Part of him wanted to stuff a sock in his mouth, and part of him wanted to deck his sister. "It's a stupid game and it's for

babies and I don't want to play a stupid baby game."

Pop. Thwap. Pop. Thwap.

"Why are you being so mean?"

Evan knew he was being mean, and he hated being mean, especially to her. But he couldn't help it. He was so angry and so humiliated and so full of bats, there was nothing else he *could* be. Except alone. And she'd taken even that away from him.

"You're the genius," he said. "You figure it out."

Good. That would shut her up. For once! Evan watched the ball fly in the air.

"Is this because of the letter?" Jessie asked.

Crack.

Evan had taken his eyes off the ball for one second, just for one second, and the ball came crashing down on his nose.

"Crud! Oh, CRUD!" He curled over onto his side, grabbing his nose with both hands. There was a blinding, blooming pain right behind his eyes that was quickly spreading to the outer edges of his skull.

"Do you want some ice?" he heard Jessie ask in a calm voice.

"Whaddya think?" he shouted.

"Yeah?" She stood up.

"No, I don't want any stupid ice." The pain was starting to go away, like a humungous wave that crashes with a lot of noise and spray but then slowly fizzles away into nothing. Evan rolled to a sitting position and took his hands away from his nose. With his thumb and index finger, he started to pinch the bridge. Was it still in a straight line?

Jessie peered at his face in the dim light. "You're not bleeding," she said.

"Yeah, well, it *hurts!*" he said. "A lot!"

"It's not broken," she said.

"You don't know that," he said. "You don't know *everything*, you know. You think you do, but you *don't*."

"It's not even swollen. You're making a big deal out of nothing."

Evan held his nose with one hand and hit his sister's knee with the other. Then he picked up the baseball and struggled to his feet. "Leave me alone.

I came down here to get away from you and you just had to follow. You ruin everything. You ruined my summer and now you're going to ruin school. I hate you." When he got to the bottom of the steps, he threw the baseball down in disgust.

Thud.

Chapter 2

BREAKUP

breakup (brāk'up') n. Dissolution of a unit, an organization, or a group of organizations. The Justice Department sometimes forces the breakup of a large corporation into several smaller companies.

Jessie didn't get it. She just didn't get it.

What was Evan's problem?

He'd been acting like a weirdo for two days now. And it was two days ago that the letter had arrived. But why would he be so upset about that letter?

This is a puzzle, Jessie told herself. And I'm good at puzzles. But it was a puzzle about feelings, and Jessie knew that feelings were her weakest subject.

Jessie sat in the cool darkness of the basement and thought back to Monday, the day the letter had come. Everything had been normal. She and Evan were putting together a lemonade stand in the driveway when the mailman walked up and handed Jessie a bundle of letters. Evan never bothered to look at the mail, but Jessie was always entering contests and expecting to win, so she flipped through the letters right away.

"Boring. Boring. Boring," said Jessie as each letter flashed by. "Hey, something from school. Addressed to Mom." She held up a plain white envelope. "What do you think it is?"

"Dunno," said Evan. He was in the garage, uncovering the small wooden table they usually used for a stand. It was buried under two sno-tubes, two boogie boards, and the garden hose. Jessie watched while Evan gave a mighty pull and lifted the table up over his head. *Wow, he's gotten so big,* thought Jessie, remembering what Mom had said about Evan's growth spurt. Sometimes Jessie felt like Evan was growing twice as fast as she was.

Growing up. Growing away.

"It looks important," said Jessie. *It looks like bad news* is what she thought in her head. Was there a problem? A complaint? A mix-up? All the nervousness she'd been feeling about skipping to fourth grade suddenly burbled up inside her.

"This table's really dirty," said Evan. "Do you think we can just cover it with a lot of cups and the pitcher and no one will notice?"

Jessie looked. The table was streaked with black. "No."

Evan groaned.

"I'll clean it," said Jessie. Evan had only agreed to have a lemonade stand because it was one of *her* favorite things to do. The least she could do for him was clean the gunk off the table. "Maybe," she said, holding up the envelope again, "they're postponing school? Maybe the first day isn't going to be next Tuesday? Ya think?"

That got Evan's attention. "Let's ask Mom to open it," he said.

Up in the humming cool of her office, Mrs.

Treski read the letter through once. "Well," she said. "This is a curve ball." She looked right at Evan. Jessie thought her face looked worried. "Evan, you and Jessie are going to be in the same class this year. You'll both have Mrs. Overton."

Jessie felt relief flood her entire body. The same class! If she could have wished for one thing in the whole world, that's what she would have wished for. She would be with Evan, and Evan would make everything easier. He would introduce her to all those fourth-graders. He would show them all that she was okay. Not some puny second-grader who didn't really belong.

But Evan didn't look happy. He looked angry. "Why?" he asked in an almost-shouting voice.

Mrs. Treski scanned the letter. "Well, the classes were small to start with. And now some of the fourth-graders they thought would be attending aren't because they're moving or switching to private schools. So they need to combine the two small classes into one bigger class."

"That is so unfair," said Evan. "I wanted Mrs.

Scobie. And I don't want—" He looked at Jessie. "That is *so* unfair!"

Jessie was surprised. This was great news. Why didn't Evan see that? They always had fun together at home. Now they could have fun in school, too. "It'll be fun," she said to Evan.

"It will not be fun," said Evan. "School. Isn't. Fun." And then he stomped downstairs and locked himself in his room for the rest of the afternoon. They never finished the lemonade stand.

And here it was, two days later, and Evan was still all locked up, even though he wasn't in his room. He wouldn't talk to her, and he wouldn't play with her.

So Jessie went up to her room and did what she always did when she was upset or angry or sad or confused. She started reading *Charlotte's Web*. She had read the book about a hundred times.

She was at the good part, the happy part. Wilbur had just been named "some pig," and he was getting all kinds of attention from the Zuckermans and the whole town. But Jessie couldn't settle into

that happy feeling, the one that usually came when Charlotte said:

I dare say my trick will work and Wilbur's life can be saved.

Instead, she kept noticing an unhappy feeling tap-tap-tapping on her shoulder. And it wasn't the unhappy feeling that came from knowing that Charlotte was going to die on page 171.

It was Evan. She couldn't stop thinking about what he had said.

Jessie could only remember one other time that Evan had said "I hate you" to her. Grandma had been over and Evan needed help with his math homework. He had that frustrated, screwed-up-mouth look that he sometimes got with math or spelling or writing reports. Mom called it his "he's-a-gonna-blow!" look. But Grandma couldn't help him because it was "all Greek" to her. So Jessie had shown him how to do each problem. Well, she'd just sort of jumped in and done the problems for

him. That was helping, wasn't it? Grandma had called her a girl genius, but Evan had ripped his paper in half and run upstairs, shouting "I hate you!" just before slamming his door. That was last year.

Jessie rested the book on her stomach and stared at the ceiling. People were confusing. She'd rather do a hundred math problems than try to figure out someone else's mixed-up feelings, any day of the week. That's why she and Evan got along so well. He'd just tell her, straight out, "I'm mad at you because you ate the last Rice Krispie's Treat." And then she could say, "Sorry. Hey, I've got some Starburst in my room. You want them?" And that would be that.

Evan was a straight shooter.

Not like the girls at school, the ones who had started that club. She rolled over onto her side to get away from *those* thoughts.

Across the room, against the opposite wall, she noticed the three pieces of foam core her mom had bought for Jessie's Labor Day project. Every year,

the Rotary Club sponsored a competition for kids to see who could come up with the best display related to the holiday. This was the first year Jessie was old enough to participate, and she had begged her mom to buy foam core and gel pens and fluorescent paper and special stickers for her display. She was determined to win the prize money: a hundred dollars! But she hadn't been able to come up with a single idea that seemed good enough. So here it was, just five days before the competition, and the foam core was still completely blank.

Jessie reached for her book. She didn't want to think about the girls at school and she didn't want to think about the competition. She started reading again.

Wilbur and Charlotte were at the fair, and Charlotte was beginning to show her age. Jessie read the words that Wilbur said to his best friend.

I'm awfully sorry to hear that you're feeling poorly, Charlotte. Perhaps if you spin a web and catch a couple of flies you'll feel better.

Well, the second part didn't apply at all, but Jessie imagined herself saying the first line: *I'm awfully sorry to hear that you're feeling poorly, Evan.* It sounded about right. At least it would show him that she cared, and Jessie knew that this was important when someone was feeling upset. She decided to go downstairs and give it a try. She would do just about anything to get Evan back to the way he was before the letter.

Jessie looked in the kitchen and the backyard—no Evan. She was halfway down the steps to the basement when she heard a noise coming from the garage. She opened the door and felt the full heat of the day on her skin. It was like some giant had blown his hot, stinky breath on her.

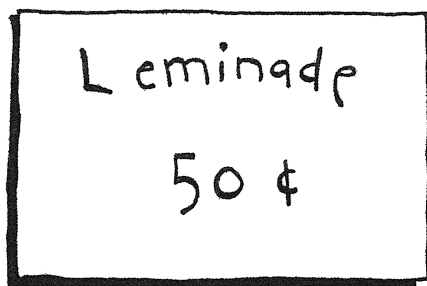
In the garage, she found Evan and Scott Spencer. *Weird*, she thought. *Evan doesn't even like Scott Spencer.* They'd been on-again, off-again friends from kindergarten. But ever since Scott had purposely put Evan's bike helmet under the wheel of the Treskis' minivan so that Mrs. Treski ran over it when she backed out, the friendship had definitely been *off*.

Jessie looked from Evan to Scott and back again. Now she had no idea what to say. *I'm awfully sorry to hear that you're feeling poorly, Evan*, didn't seem to make much sense when Evan was obviously having fun with his friend. She tried to think of something else to say. All she could come up with was "What're you doing?"

The boys were bent over a piece of cardboard. Evan was writing letters with a skinny red felt-tipped pen. The purple cooler was in the middle of the garage and two plastic chairs were stacked on top of it. On the top chair was a brown paper bag.

"Nothing," said Evan, not looking up.

Jessie walked over to the boys and peered over Evan's shoulder.



She said, "You spelled *lemonade* wrong. It's an *o*, not an *i*." But she thought, *Oh, good! A lemonade stand. My favorite thing to do!*

The boys didn't say anything. Jessie saw Evan's mouth tighten up.

"You want me to make the lemonade?" she asked.

"Already made," said Evan.

"I could decorate the sign," she said. "I'm good at drawing butterflies and flowers and things."

Scott snorted. "*Huh!* We don't want *girl* stuff like that on our sign!"

"Do you want to use my lock box to keep the money in? It's got a tray with separate compartments for all the different coins."

"Nope," said Evan, still working on the sign.

"Well," she said, looking around. "I can clean the table for you." The small wooden table, still covered in black streaks, was pushed up against the bikes.

"We're not using it," said Evan.

"But we always use the table for a stand," said Jessie.

Evan pushed his face in her direction. "We don't want it."

Jessie took a couple of steps back. Her insides felt runny, like a fried egg that hasn't cooked enough. She knew she should just go back into the house. But for some reason her legs wouldn't move. She stood still, her bare feet rooted to the cool cement.

Scott whispered something to Evan and the two boys laughed, low and mean. Jessie swayed toward the door, but her feet stayed planted. She couldn't stand it that Evan wanted to be with Scott—who was a real jerk—more than her.

"Hey," she said. "I bet you need change. I've got a ton. You could have all my change. You know, as long as you pay it back at the end of the day."

"Don't need it," said Evan.

"Yeah, you do," insisted Jessie. "You always need change, especially in the beginning. You'll lose sales if you can't make change."

Evan capped the pen with a loud *snap!* and stuck it in his pocket. "Scott's bankrolling us. His mom keeps a change jar, so we've got plenty."

The boys stood up. Evan held the sign for Scott to read, turning his back on Jessie. "Awesome," said Scott.

Jessie knew that the sign was not awesome. The letters were too small and thin to read from a distance. (Evan should have used a fat marker instead of a skinny felt-tipped pen. Everybody knew that!) There weren't any pretty decorations to attract customers. And the word *lemonade* was spelled wrong. Why wouldn't Evan take a *little* help from her? She just wanted to help.

Scott turned to her and said, "Are you really going to be in fourth grade this year?"

Jessie's back stiffened. "Yep," she said.

"Wow. That is so freaky."

"Is not," she said, sticking her chin out.

"Is too," said Scott. "I mean, you're a *second*-grader and now you're gonna be a *fourth*-grader. That's just messed up."

Jessie looked at Evan, but he was busy taping the sign to the cooler.

"Lots of people skip grades," said Jessie. "It's not that big a deal."

"It's completely weird!" said Scott. "I mean, you miss everything from a whole year. You miss the whole unit on Antarctica, and that was the best.

And the field trip to the aquarium. And the thing where we sent letters all over the country. Remember that, Evan? You got that letter from Alaska. That was so cool!”

Evan nodded, but he didn’t look up.

“It’s not that big a deal,” said Jessie again, her voice stretched tight like a rubber band.

“It’s like you miss a year of your life,” Scott said. “It’s like you’re gonna *die* a whole year earlier than the rest of us because you never had third grade.”

Jessie felt cold and hot at the same time. Part of her wanted to yell, “That doesn’t make any sense!” But the other part of her felt so *freakish*—like Scott had just noticed she had three legs.

Evan stood up and tossed the paper bag to Scott. Then he grabbed the plastic chairs with one hand. “Come on. Let’s go.” He reached down to grab one handle of the cooler. Scott grabbed the other, and together they lifted it and began to walk out of the garage.

“Hey, Evan,” said Jessie, calling to their backs. “Can I come, too?”

"No," he said, without turning around.

"Come on. Please? I'll be a big help. I can do lots of things—"

"You're too young," he said sharply. "You're just a baby."

The boys walked out.

You're just a baby.

Jessie couldn't believe Evan had said that. After all the stuff they'd done together. And he was only *fourteen months* older than she was. Hardly even a full year. She was about to yell back something really harsh, something stinging and full of bite, like *Oh, yeah?*, when she heard Scott say to Evan, "Man, I can't believe you have to be in the same class as your little sister. If that happened to me, I'd move to South America."

"Yeah, tell me about it," replied Evan, crossing the street.

The words died on Jessie's lips. She watched Evan walking away, getting smaller and smaller.

He was deserting her.

He *wasn't* going to stand by her at school. He

wasn't going to smooth the way for her. He was going to be on the *other* side, with all of *them*, looking down on her. Telling everyone that she was too young to be part of the crowd. Telling everyone that she didn't belong.

"Fine for you, Evan Treski," she said as she marched into the house, her fists balled up at her sides. "I don't need *you*. I don't need *you* to have fun. I don't need *you* to run a lemonade stand. And I don't need *you* to make friends in the fourth grade."

Halfway up the stairs, she stopped and shouted, "And I am *not* a baby!"

Chapter 3

JOINT VENTURE

joint venture (joint vĕn'chər) n. Two or more people joining forces to sell a certain amount of goods or to work on a single project. When the goods are sold or the project is finished, the joint venture ends.

"Your sister is really—"

"Shut up," said Evan.

"Huh?"

"Just shut up. She's okay. She just . . . she doesn't . . . look, she's okay. So just shut up."

"Y'okay," said Scott, holding up his free hand to show he meant peace.

Evan was getting abused on both sides. The

heavy cooler was banging against his inside leg with every step. And the plastic chairs were scraping against his outside leg. *Bruised and bloodied*, he thought to himself. *All for the fun of hanging out with Scott Spencer.*

Why couldn't Jack have been home? Or Ryan? And why did Adam have to be on the Cape this week? It stunk.

"How far are we walking?" grunted Scott.

"Just to the corner." Evan watched as drops of sweat fell off his face and landed on the hot sidewalk.

"We shoulda stayed in the driveway. It was shaded."

"The corner's better. Trust me," said Evan.

He remembered when Jessie had said the same words to him last summer. They were setting up a lemonade stand together, and Evan had been grumbling about dragging the cooler across the street and down two houses, just like Scott. But Jessie had insisted. "There's sidewalk on this side," she'd said. "So we'll get the foot traffic coming in both directions. And people in cars coming around

the curve will have time to see us and slow down. Besides, there are a bunch of little kids on the side street and their mothers won't want them crossing Damon Road. The corner's better. Trust me."

And she was right. They'd made a ton of money that afternoon.

It took ten seconds to set up the lemonade stand. Evan unfolded the chairs and set one on each side of the cooler. Scott tilted the sign toward the street for maximum effect. Then they both sat down.

"Man, is it hot," said Evan. He took off his baseball cap and wiped the sweat from his face with his shirt. Then he grabbed an ice cube from the cooler, balanced it on his head, and stuck his cap back on.

"Yeah," said Scott. "I'm thirsty." He reached into the paper bag and pulled out a cup. It was one of those large red plastic cups that vendors use at professional baseball games. Then Scott took one of the pitchers from the cooler and filled the cup to the brim with lemonade.

"Hey, not so much," said Evan, pouring himself a cup, too, but only partway. He glugged down half

his drink. *Not bad*, he thought, though he noticed a dead fruit fly floating on the top. His mom had been battling a mad fruit-fly infestation ever since the weather had turned really warm. The kitchen sink area, where they kept their fruit bowl, was dotted with tiny, feathery fruit-fly corpses.

Scott drained his cup and tossed it on the ground. "Aahhh," he said, satisfied. "That was good. I'm gonna have another."

Evan reached for the trashed cup and stowed it under his seat. "Nah, c'mon, Scott. You're gonna drink all our profits if you do that." He stretched his legs out by putting his feet on top of the cooler. "Just chill."

"I'm gonna chill by having another cup," said Scott.

There it was. That mean bite in Scott's voice. Evan's shoulders tensed up.

"Move your feet," said Scott. "It's hot out here."

"Dude, you're—" Evan sat up expectantly and looked down the street. "Hey, here comes our first customer."

A mother pushing a double stroller came into view. At the same time, one of the kindergartners from down the street rode her bike up, noticed the sign, and quickly pedaled back to her house. Within five minutes, there was a small crowd of neighborhood kids and pedestrians buying lemonade from the stand.

Evan let Scott handle all the money while he took care of the pouring and the "sweet talk." That's what his mother called it when a salesperson chatted her up. "Trust me," she had once told Evan and Jessie. "Buying something is only *half* about getting something. The other half is all about human contact." Mrs. Treski knew about these things because she was a public relations consultant. She'd even written a booklet called *Ten Bright Ideas to Light Up Your Sales* for one of her clients. And Evan was like her: He was good at talking with people. Even grownups. It was easy for him. So he kept the conversation flowing, along with the lemonade. People hung around. Most of them bought a second cup before they left.

Evan was so busy, he almost didn't notice Jessie flying out of the garage on her bike and riding down the street toward town. *Good riddance*, he thought—but at the same time he wondered where she was going.

During a lull in business, Evan walked all around the stand, picking up discarded plastic cups. Scott sat in his chair, jingling the coins in his pocket.

"Man, we are gonna be so rich," said Scott. "I bet we made five bucks already. I bet we made ten! How much you think we made?"

Evan shrugged. He looked at the stack of used cups in his hand and counted the rims. Fourteen. They'd sold fourteen cups so far. And each cup of lemonade cost fifty cents. Evan heard Mrs. DeFazio's voice in his ear. Mrs. DeFazio had been his third-grade teacher, and she'd done everything she could to help Evan with his math.

If one cup of lemonade sells for fifty cents and you sell fourteen cups of lemonade, how much money have you made?

Word problems! Evan hated word problems.

And this one was impossible anyway. He was pretty sure the right equation was

$$14 \times 50 =$$

but how was he supposed to solve that? That was double-digit multiplication. There was no way he could do a problem like that. And besides—some of those fourteen people had bought refills but used the same cup. How many? Evan didn't know.

Still, he knew they'd made a pretty good amount of money. That estimate was close enough for him.

"How much do you think we could make if we sold it *all*?" asked Scott.

"I don't know," said Evan. "Maybe twenty bucks?" That sounded high, even to him, but Evan was an optimist.

"Do you really think?"

Both boys looked in the cooler. Three pitchers were empty. They only had half a pitcher left.

"You were pouring the cups too full," said Scott. "You shoulda poured less in each one."

"You're the one who brought the huge plastic cups. You could fit a gallon in one of those!" said Evan. "Besides, I wasn't gonna be chintzy. They're paying a whole half a buck for it. They deserve a full cup. And anyway, we can just go home and make more. My mom has cans of lemonade in the freezer."

"So go home and make more," said Scott.

"Oh, yes, Your Majesty. O High Commander. Your Infiniteness. Why don't *you* go make it?"

"Cuz I'm chillin'," said Scott, leaning back in his chair with a stupid grin on his face.

Evan knew he was just joking, but this was exactly why he didn't like Scott. He was always thinking of himself. Always looking for some way to come out on top. If they were playing knockout, Scott always came up with a new rule that helped him win. If they were doing an assignment together, Scott always figured out how to divide it so he had less work to do. The kid was a weasel. No two ways about it.

But everyone else was out of town. Evan didn't want to spend the day alone. And Jessie—Jessie was on his "poop list," as Mom called it when the dog

did something he wasn't supposed to do. Evan might never play with Jessie again.

Evan crossed the street and went into the house. He was surprised to find that there were no more cans of lemonade in the freezer. Wow. There'd been so many this morning. Luckily there was a can of grape juice in the freezer and a bottle of ginger ale in the fridge. *It'll work*, he thought. *People just want a cold drink. They don't care if it's lemonade.*

He mixed up the grape juice at the sink. The fruit flies were more out of control than ever, thanks to the lemonade the boys had dribbled on the countertop. Evan swatted a couple, but most of them drifted out of his reach and settled on the fruit bowl. He wished his mother believed in chemical warfare. But for Mrs. Treski, it was all-natural or nothing. Usually nothing.

When he went back outside to the lemonade stand, Evan noticed that the last pitcher was turned upside down on the cooler.

"Aw, c'mon, Scott," he said.

"What? It was hot! And you said we could always make more."

"Yeah, well, we didn't have as much in the house as I thought. I've got grape juice and ginger ale."

"I hate ginger ale," Scott said. "I wouldn't give you a penny for it."

It turned out that a lot of people felt the same way. Business was definitely slower. The day got hotter. The sun beat down on them so ferociously that it was easy to imagine the sidewalk cracking open and swallowing them whole.

Fanning himself, Evan asked, "How much money do you really think we could make?"

"I dunno," said Scott, pushing his baseball cap down over his eyes.

"I mean, on a hot day like this," Evan said, silently adding the words *or tomorrow*. "If we sold eight pitchers of lemonade. Whaddya think we'd each make?"

"Eight pitchers? I don't know." Scott shook his head. His baseball-capped face wagged back and forth. "Too hot for math. And it's summer."

Evan pulled the red pen out of his pocket and started to write on the palm of his hand.

$$8 \times ?$$

$$8 \times 50? \quad \div 2?$$

That didn't seem right.

Jessie would know. She'd do that math in a second.

Evan capped the pen and jammed it into his pocket. "But I bet it's a lot," said Evan. "I bet on a hot day like this, we could actually make some real money in the lemonade business."

"Yeah," said Scott. "Then we'd be rich. And I'd get an Xbox. The new one. With the dual controls."

"I'd get an iPod," said Evan. He'd been saving for one for over a year. But every time he had some money put away, well, it just disappeared. Like the ten dollars from Grandma. She'd even written in her card, "Here's a little something to help you get that music thing you want." But the money was gone. He'd treated Paul and Ryan to slices of pizza at Town House. It had been fun.

"That would be so great, to listen to music

whenever I want," said Evan. *I could tune you out*, he added in his own head.

They sat in silence, feeling the heat suck away every bit of their energy. Evan was hatching a plan. The heat wave was supposed to last at least five days. If he and a friend (*not Scott*) set up a lemonade stand every day for five days, he'd definitely have enough to buy an iPod. He imagined himself wearing it as he walked to school. Wearing it on the playground. *Hey, Megan. Yeah, it's my iPod. Sweet, huh?* Wearing it in class when the teacher droned on about fractions and percents. *Nah*. But it would be so cool. At least there would be one thing, *one thing*, that didn't totally stink about going back to school.

After two hours they decided to call it quits. Sales had dropped off—fast—and then stopped altogether.

"Hey, did you notice something?" asked Evan, stacking the chairs.

"What?" said Scott.

"When we started the stand, most of our business came from that direction." He pointed down the street toward the curve in the road. "But after an hour, not one person who walked past us from that

direction bought a cup. Not one. They all said, 'No, thanks,' and kept on walking. Why do you think?"

"Dunno," said Scott.

"Boy, you're a real go-getter," said Evan. "You know that?"

Scott socked him in the chest, but Evan defended and knocked Scott's cap off. While Scott was scrambling for his hat, Evan said, "Just hang here for a minute, okay?" and set off down the street. As soon as he rounded the curve, he knew why business had fallen off so badly.

There was Jessie. And *Megan Moriarty* from his class. They were standing inside a wooden booth, and their sign said it all.



By the looks of it, their business was booming.

Evan watched as Jessie accepted a fistful of dollar bills from a mother surrounded by kids. At that moment, Jessie looked up and saw him. Evan had a weird feeling, like he'd been caught cheating on a test. He wanted to run and hide somewhere. Instead, he froze. What would Jessie do?

Evan couldn't believe it: She sneered at him. She cocked her head to the side and gave him this little I'm-so-much-better-than-you smile. And then—and *then*—she waved the money in her hand at him. She *waved* it! As if to say, "Look how much *we've* made selling lemonade! Bet you can't beat that!"

Evan turned on his heel and walked away. Behind him, he could hear Megan Moriarty laughing at him, clear as a bell.

Chapter 4

Partnership

partnership (pärt'nər-shīp') n. Two or more people pooling their money, skills, and resources to run a business, agreeing to share the profits and losses of that business.

Jessie had been waiting for this moment—the moment when Evan would see their lemonade stand, see the wonderful decorations they had made, see the crowds of people waiting in line, see *Megan Moriarty* standing by her side. He would see it all and be so impressed. He would think to himself, *Wow, Jessie is one cool kid. She sure knows how to run a lemonade stand right!* And then he'd jog over and say, "Hey, can I help out?" And Jessie would say, "Sure!

"We were hoping you'd come over."

And it would be like old times.

Why hadn't it worked out like that?

With one part of her brain, Jessie continued to take money from customers and make change. That was the part of her brain that worked just fine. With the other part of her brain, Jessie went over what had happened with Evan. That was the part of her brain that tended to run in circles.

She and Megan were selling lemonade. Business had been good. Then Mrs. Pawley, a neighborhood mom, walked up. She had had a bunch of kids in her backyard running through the sprinkler, and now they wanted twelve cups of lemonade. Twelve! It was the biggest sale of the day. Megan got cracking pouring the lemonade and Jessie took the six singles that Mrs. Pawley handed her. All the kids from Mrs. Pawley's backyard were chanting, "Lemon-ADE! Lemon-ADE! Lemon-ADE!"

A fly buzzed by Jessie's ear—they'd been having a problem with flies because of the sticky lemonade spills on their stand—and she cocked her head to

one side to shoo it since her hands were busy with the money. And that's when Jessie looked up and saw Evan standing there, staring.

So she smiled.

But he didn't smile back.

So she waved, even though she had all that money in both hands. She waved so he'd know that she was happy to see him.

And then he stalked off, all stiff-legged and bristly. And she never got to say, "Sure! We were hoping you'd come over," like she'd rehearsed in her head.

And just then, Tommy Pawley, who was two years old, pulled down his bathing suit and peed right on the lawn. And Megan laughed so loud, Jessie was sure you could hear it all over the neighborhood.

That's what had happened. That's exactly what had happened. But Jessie knew that something else entirely had happened. And she didn't get it. The way she didn't get a lot of things about people.

All she knew was that the sight of Evan walking

away—walking away from her for the second time that day—made her feel so sad and alone that she just wanted to run home to her room and curl up on her bed with *Charlotte's Web*.

“Hey, Madam Cash Register,” said Megan, nudging her. “You’re falling behind. Ring three for this lady and one for this kid here.”

Jessie turned away from the retreating figure of Evan. “That’s a dollar fifty,” she said to the woman standing in front of her. She took the five-dollar bill the woman was holding out and made change from her lock box, focusing all her energy on the part of her brain that worked just fine.

It’s true that when Evan had first walked out of the garage, Jessie had banged up to her room and tried to think of every way possible that she could make his life a living misery.

She’d thought of telling Mom that Evan was the one who broke the toaster (by playing hockey in the house, which is not allowed). She’d thought of taking back every one of her CDs from his room

(even though she knew that would mean she'd have to give back all of *his* CDs). She'd even thought of putting peanut butter in his shoes. (This was something she'd read in a book, and she loved to imagine that moment of horror when he'd think he'd somehow gotten dog doo *inside* his shoes.)

But when these ideas had finished bouncing around her brain, and when her breathing had returned to normal and her fists weren't clenched at her sides anymore, she knew that what she really wanted was to get the old Evan back. The one who was so much fun to be around. The one who helped her out of every jam.

Like when she ate all the Lorna Doones that Mom had set aside for the Girl Scout meeting. And Evan had ridden his bike to the 7-Eleven and bought a new package before Mom even noticed. Or when she accidentally—well, not accidentally, but how was she supposed to know?—picked the red flowers in Grandma's garden that were a hybrid experiment. Evan had said they'd both done it so that Grandma's disappointment was spread around.

Or the time that Jessie had smashed the ceramic heart that Daddy had given her because she was so mad that he had left them. And then, when she had cried about her broken heart, Evan had glued every single last piece back together again.

She wanted back the Evan who was her best friend.

But Evan didn't want *her*, because he thought she was a baby and she was going to embarrass him in Mrs. Overton's class. So she had to prove to him that she was a big kid. That she could keep up with the crowd. That she could fit in—even with his fourth-grade class.

I'll show him I can sell lemonade, too. Just as good as him and Scott. I won't embarrass him. So Jessie got down to business.

She knew she needed a partner. From past experience, she'd learned that having a lemonade stand alone wasn't considered cool—it was considered pathetic. And her partner would have to be a fourth-grade girl, because that's what this was all about—showing she could fit in with the fourth-

graders. So the question was *who*?

It had to be a girl who lived in the neighborhood, or at least close enough to bike to her house. And it had to be someone that Jessie had talked to at least once. No way could she call up a girl she'd never even talked to. And it had to be someone who seemed nice.

This last part was a problem, because Jessie knew that she often thought people were nice and then they turned out to be not nice. Case in point: those second-grade girls. So Jessie decided it had to be someone who *Evan* thought was nice. Evan knew about these things. He was the one who had explained, with his big arm around her shoulder, "Jessie, those girls are making fun of you. They are *not* nice."

When Jessie thought about all these different requirements, there was only one obvious answer: Megan Moriarty. She lived less than three blocks down the street. Jessie had said hi to her a few times while biking in the neighborhood. And Evan must have thought she was nice because Jessie had found

a piece of paper in his trash can with Megan's name written all over it. Why would he cover a page with her name if he didn't think she was a nice person?

Jessie went to the kitchen and climbed onto a stool so that she could reach the cabinet over the stove. She took down the school phone book and looked through the listings for both of last year's third-grade classes. No Megan Moriarty. *Duh*, Jessie remembered—she'd moved in halfway through the school year. With a sinking heart, Jessie checked the town phone book. No Moriarty family listed on Damon Road.

"Okay," said Jessie, slapping the phone book shut and putting it back in the cabinet over the stove. "Time for Plan B."

Jessie went to the hall closet and got out her backpack, which had been hanging there, empty, since the last day of school. Inside she put three cans of frozen lemonade from the freezer and her lock box full of change. (She put the ten-dollar bill, still paper-clipped to last year's birthday card from her grandmother, in her top desk drawer.) Then she

went to the garage, strapped on her helmet, and rode off on her bike. As she left the driveway, she could see Evan and Scott's lemonade stand on the corner, but she was careful not to make eye contact. She didn't want to talk to Evan until she was ready to (*ta-da!*) impress him. Her heart leaped when she imagined him ditching Scott to be with her.

Megan's house was so close that Jessie got there in less than thirty seconds. And less than thirty seconds wasn't *nearly* long enough for her to plan what she was going to say. So she rode back and forth in front of the house about fifteen times, trying to pick the right words.

"What're you doing?" a voice shouted from the upstairs window.

Jessie slammed on her foot brakes and looked up. Megan was staring down at her. She looked huge. Her voice did not sound nice.

"Riding my bike," said Jessie.

"But why are you riding back and forth?" asked Megan impatiently. "In front of my house?"

"I dunno," said Jessie. "Ya wanna play?"

"Who are you?" asked Megan.

"Jessie," said Jessie, pointing down the street toward her house.

"Evan's little sister?" asked Megan.

Jessie felt like a deflating balloon. "Yeah."

"Oh," said Megan. "I couldn't tell 'cause of the helmet."

Jessie took her helmet off. "So ya wanna?" she asked.

There was a long pause.

"Where's Evan?" asked Megan.

"He's out, somewhere, with a friend," said Jessie.

"Oh," said Megan. Jessie looked down at the ground.

People tell you things, Evan had told her once, with their hands and their faces and the way they stand. It's not just what they say. You gotta pay attention, Jess. You gotta watch for the things they're saying, not with their words.

Jessie looked back up. It was hard to see Megan at all, she was so far up and behind the window screen. Jessie sucked in her breath. "Do you want to do something?"

Another long pause. Jessie started counting in

her head. *One one thousand, two one thousand, three one thousand, four one thousand, five one thousand, six one thousand . . .*

"Sure," said Megan. Then her head disappeared from the window.

A minute later Megan was at the front door. "Hey," she said, opening the screen.

Jessie raised her hand in something that was halfway between a wave and a salute as she walked in. Her sweaty bangs stuck to her forehead where the helmet had mashed them down. She was so nervous about saying something stupid, she didn't say anything at all. Megan leaned against the banister of the stairs and crossed her arms.

"So," said Jessie. She stared at Megan, who was fiddling with the seven or eight band bracelets on her arm. Jessie counted two LiveStrong's, one Red Sox World Champs, one March of Dimes, and one Race for the Cure. "What's that one?" she asked, pointing to a band bracelet with tiger stripes.

Megan stretched it off her wrist and gave it to Jessie. "It's for the Animal Rescue League. My mom gave them some money, so they gave us this and a

bumper sticker. I've got twenty-two band bracelets."

"Cool," said Jessie, handing the bracelet back. Megan flipped it back on. She continued to play with the bracelets on her arm, running them up and down, up and down.

"So, whaddya wanna do?" asked Megan.

"I don't know," said Jessie. "We could—I don't know. Let me think. We could—have a lemonade stand!"

"Enhh," said Megan, sounding bored.

"Aw, it'll be fun. Come on!"

"We don't have any lemonade," said Megan.

"I've got three cans," said Jessie. She slipped the backpack off her back and dumped out the three cans of frozen lemonade. Her lock box came rattling out, too.

"What's that?" asked Megan.

"My lock box," said Jessie. "We can use it to make change." She felt her face getting red. Maybe fourth-graders weren't supposed to have lock boxes?

"How much money have you got?" asked Megan.

"You mean in change, or all together?"

Megan pointed at the lock box. "How much is in there?"

"Four dollars and forty-two cents. Fourteen quarters, five dimes, three nickels, and twenty-seven pennies." Jessie didn't say anything about the ten dollars she'd left at home.

Both of Megan's eyebrows shot up. "Exactly?" she asked.

What do those eyebrows mean? Jessie wondered in a panic. Why was Megan smiling at her? *Jessie, those girls are making fun of you. They are not nice.*

Jessie didn't say anything. She had a sick feeling in her stomach that this was going to turn out badly.

Megan straightened up. "Wow, you're rich," she said. "Wanna go to the 7-Eleven? We could get Slurpees."

"But—" Jessie pointed to the cans of lemonade on the carpeted hallway floor. The frost on them was already starting to sweat off.

"We could do the lemonade stand later," said Megan. "Maybe."

Jessie thought of Scott and Evan, racking up

sales two blocks down. How was she going to prove herself to Evan if she couldn't even get Megan to *have* a stand?

"How about the lemonade stand *first*?" Jessie said. "And then Slurpees with our earnings. I bet we'd even have enough for chips. And gum!"

"You think?" said Megan.

"I *know*," said Jessie. "Look." She held up a can of lemonade. "It says right on the can: 'Yields sixty-four ounces.' So we get eight cups from each can and sell each cup for half a buck, so that's four bucks, and then there're three cans, so that's twelve bucks altogether. Right?" The numbers flashed in Jessie's brain so fast, she didn't even need to think about what she was multiplying and dividing and adding. It just made sense to her.

"Hey, how old are you?" Megan asked, looking at her sideways.

"Eight," said Jessie. "But I'll be nine next month."

Megan shook her head. "That math doesn't sound right. No way we can make twelve dollars from just three little cans."

"Yuh-hunh," said Jessie. "I'll show you. Do you have a piece of paper?"

Jessie started to draw pictures. She knew that other kids couldn't see the numbers the way she did. They needed the pictures to make sense of math.

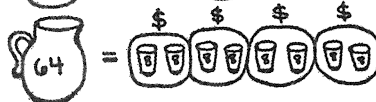
"Look," she said. "Here are three pitchers of lemonade, 'cause we've got three cans of lemonade. And each pitcher's got sixty-four ounces in it.



"Now, when we pour a cup of lemonade, we'll pour eight ounces, 'cause that's how much a cup holds. You don't want to pour less than that, or people will say you're being a cheapskate. So each pitcher is going to give us eight cups. 'Cause eight times eight equals sixty-four, right?"



“Now, we’ll sell each cup for fifty cents. That’s a fair price. That means that every time we sell *two* cups, we make a buck. Right? Because fifty cents plus fifty cents equals a dollar. So look. I’ll circle the cups by twos, and that’s how many dollars we make. Count ‘em.”



Megan counted the circled pairs of cups.
 “. . . ten, eleven, twelve.”

“That’s how much money we’ll make,” said

Jessie. "*If* we sell all the lemonade. And *if* we do the lemonade stand."

"Wow," said Megan. "You're really good at math." She puffed her cheeks out like a bullfrog and thought for a minute. Then she popped both cheeks with her hands and said, "Whatever. Let's do the lemonade thing."

Jessie felt soaked in relief. Maybe this was going to work after all.

An hour later, Jessie and Megan had transformed the little wooden puppet theater in Megan's basement into the hottest new lemonade stand on the block. The stand was decorated with tissue-paper flowers, cut-out butterflies, and glittery hearts. It was a showstopper.

And, boy, did people notice it. Kids in the neighborhood, strangers walking their dogs, moms strolling with carriages—even the two guys fixing the telephone wires. They all came to buy lemonade. And just when Jessie and Megan were on the verge of running out, Mrs. Moriarty went to the store and bought three more cans—free of charge!

So when Mrs. Pawley asked for twelve cups at exactly the moment that Evan rounded the curve and saw her lemonade stand, Jessie felt like she'd just scored a hundred on a test *and* gotten five points for extra credit.

So why did Evan stomp off?

And how come she didn't feel like she'd won anything at all?