

The Mean Girls of Camp Kennedy

Erica Plouffe Lazure

To us, it was a game, and, back then, everything was a game. It didn't matter who it hurt, or why. Regret was weakness. So when my time came, when I stole across the dark toward the cabins, save for the bright sliver of latrine nightlight, I did nothing, screamed nothing. Submitted as they stuck the last Ivory bar into my mouth, forcing the bubble sting, a stubborn froth, foam from my tongue, my natural gag reflex. All summer, we'd prowled the ranks of the bunks, our one secret cruelty—our evil game—we, the Mystery Attack Soap Stars in an otherwise brown-noser A-list crowd. A Miss Teen Knoxville. A second cousin of a Nebraska senator. A fencing pro from Cincinnati. And so what if I mentioned the game to my sister, who told our cousin, who told her mom, who told mine, who called the camp and nearly sent us home? *What would they do, stop us from showering?* we bitched, when the councilors collected a dozen stockpiled travel-sized Ivory bars from our foot lockers, our backpacks, our shelves in the latrine. For three days no one talked to me, and on the third night, when I slipped away from the campfire, alone, back to the cabin, I felt their palms clamp my arms. As their sellout, their tattletale, their last victim, I had no choice—in the way of most lonely teenagers—but to submit.



BARELY CASTING A SHADOW

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