

A REAL FRIEND



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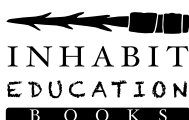
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A REAL FRIEND



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I am so pumped to be a Junior Ranger! This is gonna be amazing. Look at this hoodie.

I know—I can't wait to shoot. When do you think we'll have our first target practice?


Soon, I bet.



All right, kids, let's circle up. I've got some exciting news for our new recruits before we start our drill practice.

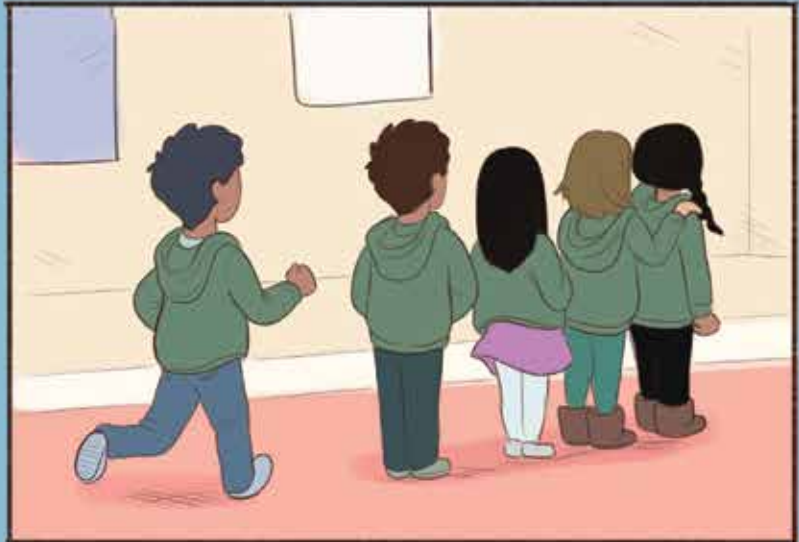






Oh—that's Chaz from Grade 9. He is so cool. I would love to lead drill practice.

Meh...he's okay. I've heard him be pretty mean to some kids before. I don't like that.







Take it easy there, Chaz.

**GET IT
TOGETHER,
NEWBIE!**



He's still learning.
On your feet, son.





See...not a nice guy.

All right, dismiss, cadets. Most of you did a really good job.



Thanks, Chaz! That was fun.



No worries, kid. You did all right. Can't wait to see how you do with a gun this weekend at target practice!

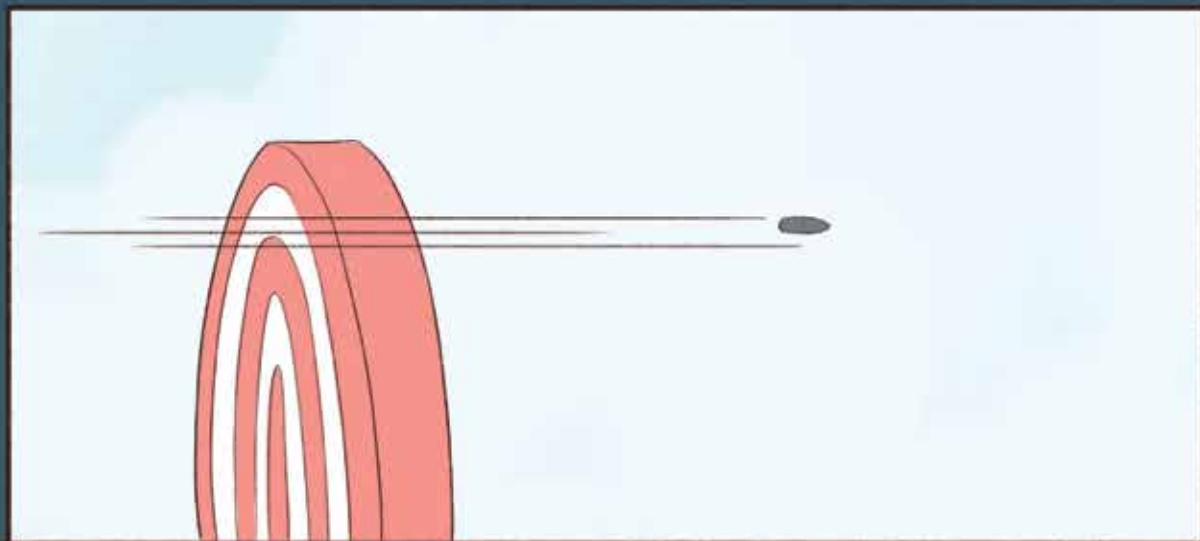


That weekend at target practice just outside of town...









Whoa there, Peter!
Be careful with that.



Sorry, Silas. It's just
so much stronger
than I thought it
would be.



That's all right...
we just don't want
anyone to get hurt.
Let's try again.

Oh, I don't know...



That kid has no business being in
Junior Rangers.

I don't think
that's true. He's
trying to learn.







Girls, eh? They just can't take a joke.



Why did I say that? Anabel is my friend...



Right? You totally get it, Matt. The boys and I were going to go get some slush now that target practice is done. Do you want to come?



Sure!



Oh...should we maybe invite Peter along?

Are you kidding?
No way.

I don't want to be seen with someone who can't even fire a gun without crying like a big baby.






Yuuuum! Blue raspberry is the best flavour.

No way—cherry.




Hahaha, I dunno...agree to disagree, I guess.






You know one thing we don't disagree on? The fact that Peter has no business being in the Junior Rangers.

I think it's time he knows how we feel about it.



Uh...how are you going to do that?



I stole this off my teacher's desk on Friday. Figured we can use it to leave that little twerp a message.







I don't know...you guys already took all the good ones...



Everybody's got to write something...that way we know you won't tell on us.



I'd never tell on you guys.

Look, it's simple...either you write something, or we'll just have to think you're a loser like Peter. You don't want that, do you?



I've got to write something if I want to keep hanging out with these guys. No one will know it was me...



Peter sucks at
shooting and drilling
and being a Junior Ranger







Oh, it was good. I was thirsty after all that target practice.



Text: Sarah's art
Illustration: Sarah
and books of Simon & Schuster

Oh my gosh...this is awful.
Who would write this?



Oh no...I don't know...





Did you know that Peter just lives with his mom? He doesn't have any hunters in the family to teach him how to do this stuff. It's not his fault he can't shoot. I think it's pretty brave he is trying to learn even when he is a bit older.

I didn't know that...that sucks. I can't imagine not having my dad and grandpa around to help me learn how to hunt, fish, and be on the land.



Yeah...well, maybe share that with your buddy Chaz. Then he can stop being such a jerk. I bet that's who wrote all this stuff.





I don't actually believe any of that stuff about Peter. I just really wanted Chaz and his friends to like me. I'm sure it doesn't matter, as long as Peter never finds out. I REALLY hope Anabel never finds out what I did.




A couple of weeks later...

I am going to catch so many fish on our spring trip.

I want to get some ptarmigan. I think my dad is going to let me bring his gun.

Lucky! This trip is going to be so much fun.



It won't be much fun if this loser comes along. He'll probably fall and scare all the fish away.

Good one, Chaz.

I think he's getting a little bit better at target practice.

Come on, man. Are you friends with him now? I thought you were cool.

Oh...no. I was just kidding. We're not friends.

You're gonna have to prove it now.










Oh yeah, thanks, Anabel. I couldn't see where I was going...I must have tripped over my own feet.



I don't think that's what happened.




A boy with dark skin and curly hair, wearing a green hoodie and a blue backpack, looks concerned. A girl with long brown hair, wearing a pink shirt and a blue backpack, looks angry.

That was a pretty bad fall. I hope he's okay.

Don't pretend like you care, Matt. I saw what you did.

A close-up of the boy's face, looking shocked and confused.

Whhaaat?

A close-up of the girl's face, looking angry and accusatory.

I watched what you did there. You tripped him on purpose.

The boy is standing with his head down, looking dejected. The girl is pointing her finger at him, looking angry.

I...I didn't mean to...Chaz...

I don't want to hear it, Matt. If you're just going to do whatever Chaz tells you to, I'm not sure I really want to be friends.



Come on, Matt. You don't need her around if she's going to be so uptight.



But...I want her around. She's my friend...



Later that day...



I just don't understand, Peter. You are really starting to make improvements at target practice and drill. Why would you want to quit now?



It doesn't matter how good I get. They don't want me here.



Who is they?



Oh...all of them.

You've got to give me some names, Peter. That's not how Junior Rangers is supposed to be. Everyone should feel welcome.



If I tell you who it is, it will just get worse. They already make enough fun of me at school.

I really wish you would reconsider.

Thanks. But I really think it's better if I just stop. Please just take my uniform.





Matt, is that you?



Oh yeah...hey, Silas.



Do you know anything about this stuff with Peter? He says all the other Junior Rangers are bullying him.

Oh...no, I don't know anything about that.

He won't give me any names. But normally this kind of thing is being driven by one or two people. They make the rest of the group feel like they have to fall in line or suffer the same kind of bullying.



Yeah...that's too bad.



Well, let me know if you hear anything more about Peter. I'd love for him to feel comfortable enough to come back.



I think these meetings were a real bright part of his day. It makes me pretty angry that some kids ruined that for him.


Yeah...actually...I'll be right back. There's something I have to do before our meeting.









Peter! Hey, Peter!
Wait up.



What do you want, Matt? You guys got what you wanted...I'm not on the Junior Rangers anymore. Can't you just leave me alone?




I wanted to say sorry. And that I really don't think you should quit the program.



What? Then why did you write all those mean things about me?

Why did you trip me in the hall today?




I didn't really want to do those things.


Chaz made me think that if I wasn't mean to you, then he and his friends wouldn't hang out with me anymore.




You really hurt my feelings.



I know, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have done those things. Chaz seemed really cool at first, but he's not such a great friend after all.




I feel really bad. But don't quit the Junior Rangers. You shouldn't miss out on the spring trip just 'cause I messed up.




I just don't know...






I said don't call him a twerp. He's a Junior Ranger, just like the rest of us. We shouldn't be mean to any of the other Junior Rangers.


Oh wooow. I didn't realize you guys were best buds. Guess you won't be hanging out with us anymore, twerp.



I don't even want to hang out with you, Chaz. You're not even my real friend. A real friend wouldn't make me do stuff I didn't want to or make me be mean to other kids.



Sorry, Matt, I guess I just didn't realize you were a loser like Peter.



Chaz! Get up here right now.



Uh...what's up, Silas?

What's up is I've got a problem with the way you've been treating Peter here.

I didn't do anything! He's been telling lies because he's jealous I can shoot better than him.



Peter didn't tell me anything. I just heard it from your mouth. Now inside.

This is NOT the kind of behaviour we expect out of our Junior Rangers.



That was pretty cool what you did back there, standing up to Chaz.



Took me long enough. I never should have been listening to him in the first place.

Probably not. You want to sit together inside?





That'd be pretty cool.

That weekend...



Okay...take your time and brace the rifle against your shoulder.

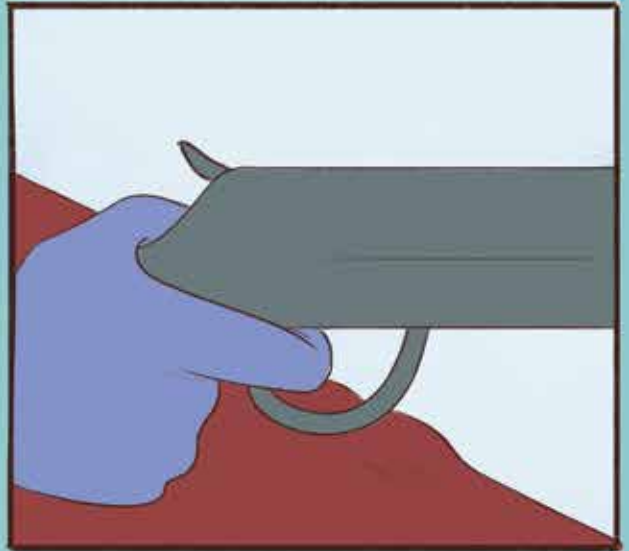


You got this, Peter.





And remember...keep both eyes open!






Thanks, Matt! That was awesome. I'm gonna go show Silas. He'll be so impressed.



That's got to feel better than making fun of him, doesn't it?

Definitely. I can't believe I was such a jerk just to impress Chaz. I'm not going to let anyone pressure me like that again.




An illustration of two children walking on a snowy beach. The child on the left is wearing a dark blue jacket with yellow and white stripes on the sleeve, blue pants, brown boots, a blue hat with white pom-poms, and a light blue scarf. The child on the right is wearing a light green jacket, purple pants, brown boots, a purple scarf, and green earmuffs. They are walking on a path of snow and ice, with large grey rocks in the background. The sky is light blue with white clouds. A speech bubble is positioned above the child on the right.

Good. Besides, I like you better this way.

Matt is excited to join Junior Rangers and go on their spring hunting trip. During drills, an older ranger, Chaz, praises Matt's skills, and he jumps at the chance to hang out with Chaz. But when Chaz and his friends start making fun of a fellow ranger with less hunting experience, Matt feels pressured to join in. Matt doesn't want to bully anyone, but he doesn't want to be called a loser, either. As his new behaviour pushes another friend away, and Matt sees his actions have consequences, he learns what being a real friend actually looks like.



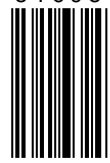

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