

Eleven-year-old **SYDNEY A. FRANKEL** is looking forward to a summer of fun before her new baby sibling arrives. Too bad Sydney's mom has other plans for her –plans that include a summer course at the local community center. Sydney's allowed to pick any class, except the one she really wants. When Sydney and her best friend Maggie decide to switch places so they can both take classes they like, they can't imagine that anything could possibly go wrong . . .

With new and old friends to juggle, a fear of public speaking to conquer, a sibling on the way, and a secret double life to keep on track, Sydney's summer is about to get very complicated.

## ADVANCE PRAISE FOR

### *Sydney A. Frankel's Summer Mix-Up*

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“A book with heart, about finding the bravery to be your true self.”

—Jennifer Cervantes, *New York Times* bestselling  
author of *The Storm Runner* trilogy

“Danielle Joseph has created wonderful characters showcasing humor, sensitivity, and independence, all while highlighting the importance of friendship. Readers who have enjoyed the humor of *Ramona Quimby* will fall in love with *Sydney Frankel*.”

—Christina Diaz Gonzalez, author of  
*The Red Umbrella* and *Moving Target*

“I love this book! It’s a lovely ode to pure kid friendship, plus it’s got crushes and summer hijinks and dancing. *Sydney* and her family are as real and lovable as any you’ll find in children’s literature. Think *Beverly Cleary’s Quimbys* or *Judy Blume’s Hatchers*, but even funnier. *Frankelstein* power!”

—Josh Berk, author of *Camp Murderface*

“A heartwarming, fun, and funny story about a girl struggling to fit in. Readers will fall in love with *Sydney* and root for her as she navigates the summer program her mom forces her to participate in before starting middle school. This book is the perfect blend of humor and heart!”

—Laurie Friedman, author of the *Mallory McDonald* series

“A warm and funny story that shows just how not alone we are, even when it feels otherwise.”

—Chris Tebbetts, author of *Public School Superhero*  
and coauthor of the *Middle School* series

**SYDNEY A.  
FRANKEL'S  
SUMMER MIX-UP**

**DANIELLE JOSEPH**

**KAR-BEN**  
PUBLISHING

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**TO MY FOREVER LOVES—  
DELLE, MARLEY, MAKHI & NAYA.**

**AND TO EVERY READER WHO HAS FELT  
DIFFERENT FROM THE CROWD—WE NEED MORE  
OF YOU IN THIS WORLD!**



## CHAPTER 1

If I could stay home all summer and read, I totally would. Okay, that's a lie. Watching TV with my bestie, Maggie, would be my first choice. But Mom would never allow that. And who am I kidding? She won't let me stay home and read either. She has *other* plans for me: "Exciting plans that will get you on the right road to middle school."

Yes, she really said that.

Funny thing is there's actually only one road that leads to Coral Rock Middle School. I mean, technically, you could go through the backwoods and risk getting a serious case of poison ivy, but I doubt she meant that.

"Sydney, you're going to be a sixth-grader," Mom reminds me on the first Saturday of summer break. "It's time for you to embrace talking in front of groups, since you'll have to do that in class."

I don't move from my favorite spot on the couch. "I'd rather go to the dentist than spend my summer practicing for class presentations," I say.

"That's not what I'm suggesting." Mom dangles the glossy South Miami Community Center's summer program brochure in front of me. "I just want you to have a positive self-image and feel comfortable in your own skin. No pun intended." She smiles.

I look down at my arm. It *would* be nice not to have red splotches all over it every time I have to speak in front of a group of people.

"I want you to get used to putting yourself out there, trying new things with new people . . . expanding your horizons."

Ever since I wimped out of going to the county spelling bee this spring, Mom's wanted me to work on overcoming my public speaking anxiety. It's hard to believe, but both my pediatrician and my school guidance counselor say that it's within my control.

My plan to control it is to stay home all summer. Why focus on *expanding my horizons* when I could be jumping on Maggie's trampoline, chilling on my couch, and getting used to the new phone that Mom and Dad promised to get me before I start

middle school? Maggie's supposed to get hers at the same time—a couple of weeks before the school year starts—which means I'll be able to call and text her whenever I want.

And next year, when my voice gets all shaky in class, I'll tell everyone I have permanent laryngitis. And my cheeks turning red—I'll tell people it's makeup. Magical blush that comes and goes. A new invention. Haven't you seen the infomercial?

"Pick something," Mom says, tossing the brochure into my lap. "Anything. How about tennis?"

"Too sweaty."

"Water polo?"

"I love swimming, but slapping a ball around in the pool? No thanks."

"I've got it!" Mom exclaims as if she's got the winning answer on *Jeopardy*. "Drama. You'll come alive onstage."

"No way, I'd rather die."

"Oh, don't be so dramatic, Sydney!" Mom absentmindedly rubs her round belly.

I sigh and glance through the brochure. And I see it! *Reading Express: The pages come alive as you immerse yourself in stories*. This is perfect! I read almost two hundred books last year. And if I take this class,

I won't have to talk to anyone. I can just hide my face in a book. "You said anything, right?"

"Anything except for reading," Mom says sternly.

Sometimes I wonder if my mother has telepathic powers and is keeping them to herself. "That's not fair!"

"It's a reading *improvement* class, Sydney. You're already a strong and avid reader, so you don't need that. I want you to branch out."

"Mom, I'm not a tree." I stick my arms out and let my hands dangle.

"This is not a joke, Sydney. You can't continue to sell yourself short," Mom says.

"I think it's pretty obvious I'm not short." I plunk my size 10 feet onto the coffee table. It's impossible to forget that I'm a head taller than most of my classmates.

"You know that's not what I meant." She shoos my feet down with a wave of her hand. "It's important that you try something new."

"I'm going to meet tons of people in middle school next year. The summer should be a new-people-free zone." Coral Rock Middle is three times the size of my elementary school, so there will be a lot of new faces.

"Or you can use this time to get comfortable with making new friends. Consider it a test run."

"I get it, but I still don't want to go." The brochure says we'll learn how to voice our opinions. I have to voice mine to Mom. "I'll be right back." I run upstairs to my room to grab the list I started the minute she brought up the idea of me taking a summer class. I have no choice but to use it.

Back in the family room, I perch on the arm of the couch and hold up my list. "Listen, Mom. Taking a summer class is a bad idea for a lot of reasons."

"Like?" She motions for me to sit down properly, so I plunk my butt onto the couch.

"Reason One: The community center is old, meaning it's probably full of cockroaches. I'm allergic to cockroaches. I could get a nasty rash. It wouldn't be pretty."

She laughs. "I'm confident that there are no invasive species in the community center."

"Mom, this is not funny." I look down at the next item on the list. "Reason Two: The classes are very expensive. Just one costs the same as buying 1,076 diapers."

"Wow, I never thought of it that way. That's a lot

of diapers.” And about four months from now, she’s going to need all the diapers she can get.

“Sure is.” I lean in a little closer, ready for the clincher. I once watched a real estate sales video with Zayde that talked about how to *seal the deal*. “Reason Three: I could sit next to someone with a very bad virus, and then I’ll get the virus and give it to you and the baby.” I widen my eyes for dramatic effect. “I’d never be able to forgive myself if that happened.”

She opens her mouth to say something, but I quickly add, “And like Dad always says, ‘Better safe than sorry.’”

She holds out her hand. “Let me have a look at your paper.”

“Um, give me a sec.” I quickly review it for mistakes, because the last thing I need is for Mom, the dedicated high school language arts teacher, to mark it up with a red pen. She’d do it too. She gets so giddy when I have a paper to work on for school.

*Giddy* was a word of the day this past month. Every morning Mom puts a new word on the whiteboard in the kitchen. She never takes a break, not even now that we’ve been on summer break for a week.

Today’s word: *agog*. Say it fast, and it sounds like *oh, gawd!* Mom says the words are chosen at random, but I have my suspicions about this one, because it means intensely excited. I think she’s trying to tell me something.

Okay, phew, all looks good. I hand the paper to her, pop my feet back up onto the coffee table, and wait for the verdict.

Mom looks up. “Sydney, how many times have I told you to get your feet off the table?”

I pull my glasses halfway down my nose. “Do you want a total count or just for today?”

“Just get them off!”

I flip my feet to the side. “Well, what do you think?”

“Very persuasive. But you’re still going to take a class.” Mom rubs my shoulder. “Trust me. When you’re older, you’ll thank me.”

“I doubt that,” I mumble. I need to change the subject. “Can I go to Maggie’s now?” We can’t keep talking about this if I leave the house.

She nods.

I’m two steps from the door when Mom says, “Sydney, if you don’t pick a class by five, I’ll pick one for you.”



“Okay.” I nod.

“Oh, and one more thing—if you don’t complete the class, then no cell phone in August.”

“Whaaat?” A dagger pierces my heart. “That’s so unfair!”

Mom’s arms are folded across her chest. She’s not budging.

I look at my watch. It’s 4:16 p.m. Less than an hour of freedom left.



## CHAPTER 2

It’s now 4:20 p.m. That’s forty minutes until doomsday. Anything can happen in forty minutes. Aliens can land on Earth, pigs can fly, or homework can be banned from the planet, but Mom will never change her mind. Bubbe Rose always says Mom’s as stubborn as a stale matzo ball.

And now I’m down four minutes, because that’s how long it takes me to walk to my best friend’s house. It used to take me four minutes and fifteen seconds, but that was before I grew three inches over this past school year.

Maggie’s house reminds me of a lemon. It’s bright yellow, and her mom loves Pine-Sol cleaner. Mom used to use Pine-Sol too, but after she found out she was pregnant, she switched to all organic products because breathing in chemicals could harm the baby. Kind of funny, since I’ve been breathing Pine-Sol

fumes my whole life, yet no one ever worried about toxins invading *my* body.

I ring the bell and see one of Maggie's big blue eyes filling the small square of stained glass in the middle of the door.

"It's me!" I wave.

"There are a lot of *mes* in the world. Better identify yourself," she says in a deep voice.

"I'm a spy, and I come undercover. Your people sent me."

"I still need a name."

"Victoria Von Fartstein."

The door swings open. "Nice to meet you, Vicky Von Fart." She laughs.

"Man, wouldn't that stink if that was your last name?" I say.

"Yeah, literally." Maggie laughs again. Her curly hair is damp and much tamer than usual. She's lucky because she hardly ever has to brush it—unlike me with my thick, straight hair that knots up in a second.

Since Maggie's last name is Stein, together we are Frankelstein. We've been best friends since kindergarten, but it took us until second grade to put the two names together.

I follow her into the kitchen and sit down at the counter. "Got any soda? My mom's driving me nuts."

"Sure." Maggie opens the fridge. "Has she banned all flavored beverages again?"

"Worse!"

"Oh, no. Well, it can't be worse than *my* news."

We each grab a soda and head for her room. Maggie's dog, Butter, runs after us and licks my ankle. I crouch down to pet him. "Hi, Butter. I missed you too."

He's a feisty Pomeranian. And for a small dog, he's not afraid of anything. He's definitely Maggie's mini-me.

I sit down at Maggie's big pink desk. "My mom's making me take a class at the community center, and if I don't take it, she's never getting me a cell phone."

Maggie's mouth drops. "No phone?"

"She's making me pick a class from *this*." I slap the brochure onto her desk.

"Don't bother. I've seen it." Maggie huffs.

"What? My mom showed it to you?"

"No." Maggie takes a sip of her soda. "*My* mom showed it to me."

Even worse. "Why would my mom get your mom involved?" I ask. "Is she trying to destroy me?"