



### Also by B. Celeste

Underneath the Sycamore Tree

#### Lindon U

Dare You to Hate Me

Beg You to Trust Me

Lose You to Find Me

# PAST THE Broken Bridges Bridges

B. CELESTE

Bloom books

Copyright © 2025 by B. Celeste

Cover and internal design © 2025 by Sourcebooks

Cover design by Eileen Carey

Cover images © Gabi Bucataru/Stocksy, koganami studio/Stocksy, Marta Locklear/Stocksy, Snchzgloria/Shutterstock

Sourcebooks, Bloom Books, and the colophon are registered trademarks of Sourcebooks.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means including information storage and retrieval systems—except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles or reviews—without permission in writing from its publisher, Sourcebooks.

No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner for the purpose of training artificial intelligence technologies or systems.

The characters and events portrayed in this book are fictitious or are used fictitiously. Any similarity to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental and not intended by the author.

All brand names and product names used in this book are trademarks, registered trademarks, or trade names of their respective holders. Sourcebooks is not associated with any product or vendor in this book.

Published by Bloom Books, an imprint of Sourcebooks P.O. Box 4410, Naperville, Illinois 60567-4410 (630) 961-3900 sourcebooks.com

Cataloging-in-Publication data is on file with the Library of Congress.



#### **Contents**

**Content Warning** 

<u>Playlist</u>

Prologue: Sawyer

**Chapter One: Sawyer** 

**Chapter Two: Sawyer** 

**Chapter Three: Banks** 

**Chapter Four: Sawyer** 

**Chapter Five: Sawyer** 

**Chapter Six: Banks** 

<u>Chapter Seven: Sawyer</u>

**Chapter Eight: Banks** 

**Chapter Nine: Sawyer** 

**Chapter Ten: Banks** 

**Chapter Eleven: Banks** 

**Chapter Twelve: Banks** 

**Chapter Thirteen: Sawyer** 

**Chapter Fourteen: Banks** 

**Chapter Fifteen: Sawyer** 

**Chapter Sixteen: Banks** 

**Chapter Seventeen: Sawyer** 

**Chapter Eighteen: Banks** 

<u>Chapter Nineteen: Sawyer</u>

**Chapter Twenty: Banks** 

**Chapter Twenty-One: Sawyer** 

**Chapter Twenty-Two: Banks** 

**Chapter Twenty-Three: Sawyer** 

**Chapter Twenty-Four: Banks** 

**Chapter Twenty-Five: Sawyer** 

**Chapter Twenty-Six: Banks** 

<u>Chapter Twenty-Seven: Sawyer</u>

**Chapter Twenty-Eight: Banks** 

**Chapter Twenty-Nine: Sawyer** 

**Chapter Thirty: Sawyer** 

**Chapter Thirty-One: Banks** 

**Chapter Thirty-Two: Sawyer** 

**Chapter Thirty-Three: Banks** 

<u>Chapter Thirty-Four: Sawyer</u>

**Chapter Thirty-Five: Banks** 

<u>Chapter Thirty-Six: Sawyer</u>

**Chapter Thirty-Seven: Banks** 

**Chapter Thirty-Eight: Sawyer** 

**Chapter Thirty-Nine: Sawyer** 

**Chapter Forty: Sawyer** 

**Chapter Forty-One: Sawyer** 

**Chapter Forty-Two: Banks** 

**Chapter Forty-Three: Banks** 

**Epilogue: Banks** 

## Read on for a peek at the short story Sawyer wrote for her creative writing class...

3,000 Mile Heartbreak: by Sawyer Hawkins

#### **Excerpt from Lose You to Find Me**

Prologue: Raine

<u>Acknowledgments</u>

About the Author

## **Content Warning**

This story contains themes of physical abuse, alcoholism, drug addiction, terminal illness, gun violence, and death. Please read with care.

## **Playlist**

- "What Was I Made For?"—Billie Eilish
- "loml"—Taylor Swift
- "Something in the Orange"—Zach Bryan
- "Always Remember Us This Way"—Lady Gaga
- "What a Time"—Julia Michaels ft Niall Horan
- "Beautiful Things"—Benson Boone
- "Better Off Without Me"—Kyle Hume
- "Drive"—Halsey
- "Without You"—The Chicks
- "Missing You"—Lauren Weintraub

### **Prologue**

#### Sawyer

#### 2005

The slow trickle of running water is how I know I'm close. Just past the two big crape myrtles blooming with pretty pink blossoms and through the magnolia bushes that always scratch my arms is a little wooden walking bridge over the tiniest stream. I tried following it once to see where the water went, but the shrubs that surround the area are too thick to get through.

Mom hates it when I explore because I always wind up coming home with stains and rips on my clothes, but Daddy says there's a reason my name is Sawyer—I was born to explore. And since I'm brave like he is, nothing about the humid air, wild animals, or chance of getting lost scares me. I always find a way home.

Pushing past one of the shrubs that separates me from my favorite place, which is the area of streams and gardens outside the big houses I want to live in someday, I stop short when I spot a little boy leaning against one of the mossy oaks shading the area.

A startled noise escapes me, and I step back onto a twig until it snaps under the weight of my rain boot, causing me to fall backward onto the damp ground. I frown when I lift my hand and see the mud caked onto my palm.

Mom is gonna be mad again.

The shrubs part with a different set of small hands, bringing my eyes up to the boy standing in front of me on the other side. Doesn't he know this is *my* secret place? I found it months ago and never had to share it with anybody. Not even Mom or Daddy when they ask me where it is I go on my bike in the middle of the day.

I squint past the sun to get a better look at his dark-brown hair that's similar to Daddy's and then down to his eyes that remind me of the muddy Mississippi. I don't know many other kids outside my new school, but he looks about the same size as the boys in my class.

He's watching me curiously through a pair of black glasses when he finally asks, "Why are you on the ground?"

I lift my hand to show him the mess. "I fell."

"Why'd you fall?"

I was told not to talk to strangers, which is exactly what I tell him. He smiles at that and reaches down like he's offering to help me up, but I don't take his hand. I push myself off the ground and wipe my hands down the front of my jeans, leaving streaks of mud on the denim.

"This is my bridge," I tell him, crossing my arms over my chest.

He looks behind him and then back at me, pushing those glasses up his nose and smiling. "You built it?"

I blink. How could he think I built that thing when I'm only eight? "No, but it's mine."

His smile grows. "If you didn't build it, isn't it anybody's bridge? Your name isn't on it."

I stand confidently. "Yes, it is."

He watches me. "Are you SH?"

The third time I came here, I snuck one of Mom's butter knives to carve my initials into the side of the wood. But as soon as I did it, I thought I'd get caught, so I packed up my things and biked home as fast as I could pedal before the police came after me.

"What's that stand for?" he asks.

I press my lips together.

He looks down and kicks his sneakers, caked with dirt, on the ground. Quietly, he says, "I'm Paxton if it makes you feel any better. That way we're not strangers."

My parents told me to be really careful whom I trust, but they always talked about adults being the dangerous ones. Daddy sat me down and said to never go into somebody else's vehicle or accept candy from anyone I didn't know. But Paxton is too young to drive, and he hasn't offered me any candy. So he can't be so bad, right?

The girls I go to school with only ever want to play dolls and dress-up, which are boring. Maybe having a boy friend would be better.

"I'm Sawyer."

The name has him looking back up.

"Like *Tom Sawyer*," I add. "It's a book."

"I haven't heard of it."

Shrugging, I look behind him at my happy place. "Can I come in? I have fruit snacks."

When he sees me lift the small backpack, his muddy-brown eyes light up. "What kind?"

That night, I tell my parents about my new friend Paxton, who's nine and goes to a neighboring school. His dad isn't in the Navy like mine, but he teaches about grass or something at the big college in Baton Rouge. Paxton knows a lot about plants because of his dad, just like how I know about boats from mine.

And the next week, he's at the same spot by the mossy oak, waiting for me like he said he'd be. He tells me that his friends at school only like playing video games, and I tell him mine only like playing with makeup and girly things. I sneak two bags of chips and some fruit cups into my bag, and we share them on the little bridge, swinging our legs above the flowing water.

"You never talk about your family besides your dad being a teacher," I say, crushing up little pieces of potato chips and holding out my hand to the birds chirping on the oak branch above us.

Paxton watches me curiously. "They won't come to you."

I stay still, watching as the robins tilt their heads and creep closer to examine the offerings in my palm, squawking in indecision.

Eventually, the bigger one swoops down and lands on the heel of my hand, pecking at the bigger pieces of the salty snack. I smile at him.

"They're robins," I tell the boy staring in disbelief. "See how this one is darker than the other one? That means it's a male."

The robin brings back pieces to the female waiting for his return, their rusty bellies moving as they swallow the chips.

Paxton pushes up his glasses. "How did you do that?"

"They know I won't hurt them," I answer, brushing the crumbs off my hands. "So how come you don't talk about your family much?"

He frowns, staring at the birds watching us and waiting for more food. "I don't know. They fight a lot."

"About what?"

Paxton stays quiet, ripping up blades of grass from the ground and watching the breeze blow them out of his palm. "About everything."

I hug my knees to my chest. "My mom gets angry at my dad all the time. I think it's an adult thing. That's why I don't want to get old. They seem mad a lot."

He lifts his shoulders silently.

"Do you want to try feeding the birds? Robins are docile. I'm sure they'll come up to you too."

Paxton looks over to the last chip before plucking it from my hand. "How do you know so much about birds?"