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BOOK TEN

# INTO THE GAUNTLET

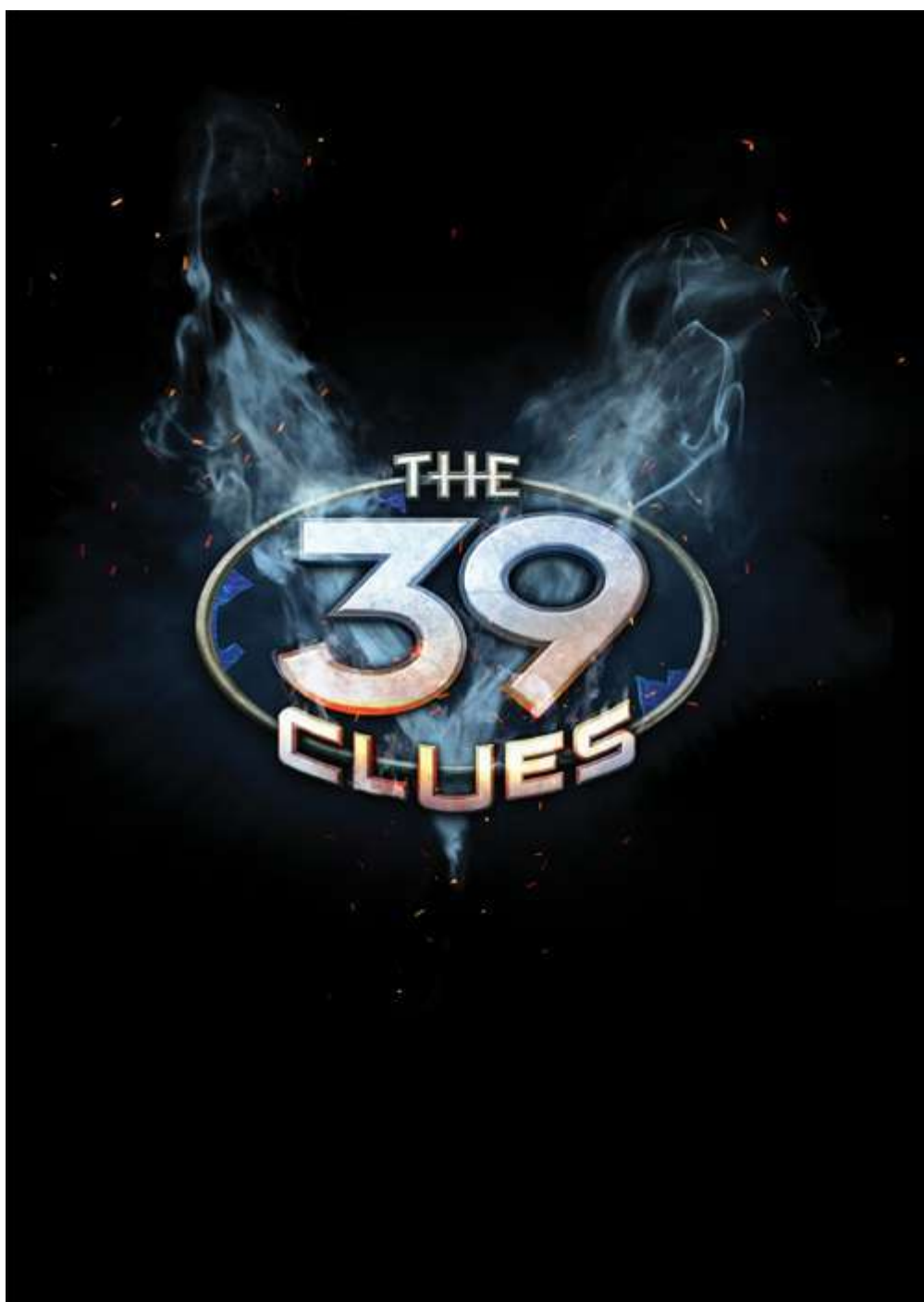


MARGARET PETERSON HADDIX

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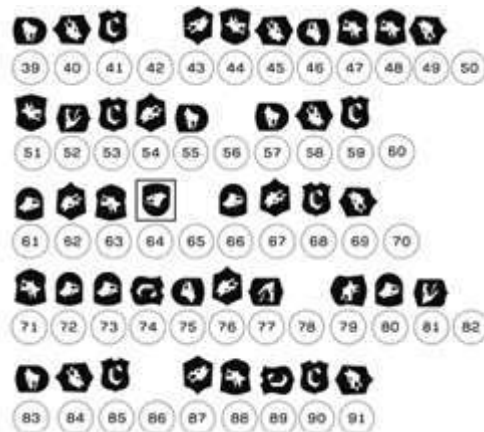


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# INTO THE GAUNTLET



MARGARET PETERSON HADDIX

SCHOLASTIC INC.

NEW YORK TORONTO LONDON AUCKLAND  
SYDNEY MEXICO CITY NEW DELHI HONG KONG

For Todd and Will and all  
the other Clue hunters

— M.P.H.

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## CHAPTER 1

Amy and Dan Cahill forgot to look for bugs in London.

They knew the drill. Arriving at a new hotel, they always had to scour their room for any listening devices or other top secret spy gear their enemies might have planted. They always checked for all possible exit routes and anything that could serve as a weapon, as well. Amy and Dan were only fourteen and eleven. But they'd developed the instincts of CIA pros.

Arriving in London, though, Amy stumbled three steps into the hotel room and collapsed onto the bed. Dan wobbled past her to sprawl on the couch. He sat, then slipped backward, weighed down by his backpack. He looked like he'd been flattened.

*He has, Amy thought. We both have. Now that we know the truth. Now that we know how many lies we've been told all along, how many secrets were being kept from us, how much is expected of us ...*

Only the kids' wild-haired au pair, Nellie Gomez, seemed to have enough energy left to keep standing. She even had enough energy to sway slightly to whatever crazy music she was listening to on her iPod as she tugged their duffel bag and cat carrier into the room. Dimly, Amy thought that she or Dan should have offered to help. But even carrying a duffel bag seemed beyond Amy right now.

Nellie turned to shut the door. Then she, too, seemed to collapse.

*Did she faint?* Amy wondered.

Before Amy had time to do anything, Nellie was standing again. She hadn't fainted. She'd just dipped down to the floor to pick up something Amy and Dan must have walked right over: a plain manila envelope.

Nellie held the envelope in the air like a prize.

"What do you think, kiddos?" she asked. "Wanna bet this is your next lead?"



They'd been warned to expect one — coded, of course, in case any of their enemies intercepted it. Normally, the two siblings would have dashed to grab the envelope, raced to open it, scrambled to break the latest code. At the very least, they would have told Nellie that at their ages — and with the fate of the world depending upon them — they were way too old to be called “kiddos.”

Now Amy just shrugged.

Dan tilted his head back and stared at the ceiling.

“Kiddos?” Nellie said in a puzzled voice. She popped out her iPod earbuds. “Didn’t you hear me?”

Nellie flipped the envelope over.

“Yep, addressed to Amy and Dan Cahill,” she said. “*And* Nellie Gomez. Wow. Now I really feel official. This must have been slipped under the door, waiting for us.” She held out the envelope toward the two siblings. “Who wants to do the honors?”

Neither kid moved.

Nellie shook the envelope at Amy and Dan.

“Come on, guys,” she said. “It’s a *lead*.” She acted like they were as simple as Saladin the cat, always easily distracted with his favorite red snapper. “Don’t you want to see what this says? Somebody’s trying to help us!”

“If *somebody* wanted to help us,” Amy retorted, “they would have just given us all the answers back in Jamaica.”

She knew why they hadn’t, but it was too much to think about right now.

“Or way back at the beginning,” Dan added. “At the funeral.”

Just over a month ago, Amy and Dan had gotten a huge surprise after the death of their beloved grandmother Grace. They’d been among a select group of relatives given an odd offer in Grace’s will: They could have a million dollars apiece or a single Clue.

Amy and Dan had picked the Clue.

Since then, they’d been traipsing around the globe, scrambling to outsmart or outrun or simply avoid some of their least-

charming relatives in the race to the final prize. They'd lost count of how many times someone had tried to kill them.

When Amy wasn't completely terrified, there had also been moments she'd absolutely loved. Learning that she was brave enough to jump off that roof in Vienna. Being the only team to figure out the Clue in Cairo. Flying to the top of Mount Everest.

But only the day before, in Jamaica, Amy and Dan and Nellie had learned what the Clue hunt was really all about. Then the cruelty of it had sunk in on their long flight over the Atlantic. Before yesterday, they'd thought they were no different from the other teams — if you didn't count being younger, poorer, orphaned, and less informed. They'd thought their goal, at least, was the same: Win. Beat everyone else to the final prize.

*But no, Amy thought bitterly. We're younger, poorer, and more ignorant—and it's not enough for us just to beat everyone else to the prize. For us to win, we also have to make everyone else forgive and forget five hundred years of backstabbing, in fighting, double-crossing and ... murder.*

How could anyone forgive or forget that?

"It's impossible," Amy muttered.

"The lead?" Nellie said, a baffled look spreading across her face. "You haven't even heard it yet."

"The whole clue hunt," Dan corrected. "It's useless. We can't win. Not the way we're supposed to. Why'd we even bother coming here?" He gestured toward the window. Since they were on the twelfth floor, all they could see was a patch of gray sky. "I hate London. Doesn't it ever stop raining?"

Amy had a flash of remembering Dan's wild enthusiasm checking into another hotel, weeks ago, back in Egypt. He'd run around the room, delightedly calling out the names of every new object he discovered — "Stationery!" "Umbrella!" "Bible!" Amy felt guilty thinking about what the Clue hunt had done to that enthusiastic kid. It was like he'd turned into a grumpy old man about seventy years early.

"Well ..." Nellie frowned uncertainly. For a moment, Amy thought she would say, *You're right, kiddos. It never stops raining in*

*London, and this clue hunt is insane. I'm only twenty years old, and you aren't even my real family. I'm going home. Now.* Then she shook her head, her black-and-blond-dyed hair flaring out. "Look, kiddos. I promised your grandmother —"

"She's dead," Dan said in the same old-before-his-time voice. "She's dead, Lester's dead, Irina's dead...."

*Mom and Dad are dead,* Amy finished in her head. Back in Jamaica, they'd counted all those deaths as reasons to complete the Clue hunt. Lester had been an innocent bystander, drawn into things only because he'd been willing to help. Irina was a former enemy who'd given her life to save Amy and Dan. And the children's parents had gone to their deaths trying to save a single Clue from falling into the wrong hands.

What did any of those deaths mean if Amy and Dan didn't keep trying?

But how could Amy and Dan keep trying when everything was impossible?

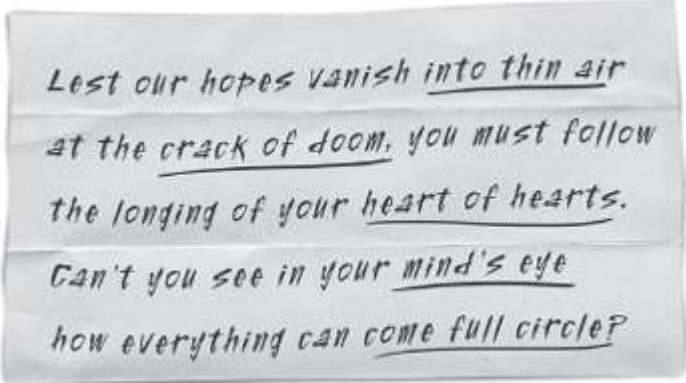
Nellie looked from Amy to Dan as if she could read their minds.

"Let's take this one step at a time, okay?" she said quietly. "Just listen."

She tore open the envelope and began reading aloud:

"*Lest our hopes vanish into thin air at the crack of doom, you must follow the longing of your heart of hearts. Can't you see in your mind's eye how everything can come full circle?*" She looked up. "Does that make any sense to you? Some of the words are underlined — that might mean something."

She held out the note first to Amy, then to Dan:



*Lest our hopes vanish into thin air  
at the crack of doom, you must follow  
the longing of your heart of hearts.  
Can't you see in your mind's eye  
how everything can come full circle?*

Something tickled Amy's mind, but she ignored it.

*Doesn't matter*, she thought. *We can't win.*

"It doesn't mean anything to me," Dan said bitterly.

*Mrrp*, complained Saladin from his cat carrier. He sounded just as cranky as Dan. Nellie bent down to push the lever that set him free.

"At least I can make the cat happy," Nellie mumbled.

But Saladin didn't rub against her leg in thanks. He stiffened and growled low in his throat. And then he sprang straight toward the window.

"Saladin!" Amy shouted.

She glanced quickly to see if the window was open — it was, but there was a screen. Saladin, mid-leap, hissed at it. No, he was hissing at something beyond the screen, perched on the window ledge outside.

It was a monkey.

Amy blinked. And then, in spite of everything, she grinned. The monkey reminded her of one of her favorite books set in London: *The Little Princess*, where a monkey homesick for India climbed across the rooftops to visit a lonely girl who was also homesick for India. And then the monkey led to her finding a new family, even though her parents were dead....

Amy's grin faded.

*Fiction*, she told herself. *Something else that isn't true.*

Anyhow, this monkey wasn't carrying treats. He was baring his teeth at Saladin, slamming his hand against the screen. He must have had something sharp in his hand — just his claws? Or a *knife*? — because the screen split. The monkey sprang over Saladin, dropping to the floor. And then in three quick bounds, he was at Nellie's side. He leaped up and snatched the paper from her hand.

"No! That's *ours*!" Nellie yelled.

She dived for the monkey, trying to snatch the paper back. But the monkey darted away.

"I'll get him!" Dan called.

He jumped up from the couch. He must have forgotten he still had his backpack on because he just fell forward, missing the monkey by a mile. The monkey skittered sideways toward Amy.

“I’ll try!” Amy hollered.

She scrambled up and darted to the right. The monkey darted to the left.

Saladin jumped down from the windowsill, as if he thought he and Amy could corner the monkey together. The monkey easily sprang past them.

He turned around once he reached the windowsill again. He grinned and nodded up and down, making a *kee-kee-kee* sound.

“Is that monkey *laughing* at us?” Nellie demanded, outraged. She rushed toward the windowsill.

The monkey only laughed harder. Then, just as Nellie reached for him, he tossed a coinlike object into the room and plunged out the window.

He was gone.

With their only lead.

## CHAPTER 2

Dan picked up the coin. It was some sort of thick metal, stamped with a fancy script “K” on each side.



A “K.” Of course.

“The Kabras,” Dan said darkly.

The Kabras had become Dan and Amy’s worst enemies in the Clue hunt. They were filthy rich — and pure evil.

“Of course they even have their own trained monkey to do their bidding,” Amy said bleakly.

“They probably have their own private zoo,” Dan muttered.

He rushed to the window, getting there just a few steps ahead of Amy. The monkey was several stories below them now. He had the paper rolled up in his teeth and was climbing down a rope suspended from the roof. While Dan, Amy, and Nellie watched, the monkey reached the ground and scrambled across the sidewalk. Then a pair of hands reached out of a waiting limo and scooped up the monkey. The door shut; the black limo sped away.

“Those were Isabel Kabra’s hands,” Amy said. She pronounced the name carefully, as if every syllable hurt.

*It does,* Dan thought.

He didn’t ask how Amy thought she could recognize Isabel’s hands from twelve stories up. Isabel had murdered Amy and Dan’s parents. She’d tried to murder Amy and Dan themselves back in Indonesia, and threatened them with death in Australia and South Africa. Then there were all those times she’d sent her nasty children, Ian and Natalie, to attack them. Back in Korea, the

Kabra kids had tried to leave Amy and Dan to die in a collapsed cave.

When someone has been so incredibly cruel and awful to you so many times, you develop a sixth sense about them. You know when they're around.

Dan was just as certain as Amy that those had been Isabel's hands.

Dan turned away from his sister because he couldn't stand seeing the agony on her face. He wished he could run after Isabel, beat her up, throw her in jail, take back everything she'd taken from them. But he was an eleven-year-old kid. He didn't have much to work with. The best he could do was to hock up a huge glob of phlegm and spit it out the window. He aimed precisely toward the speeding limo.

"Dan!" Nellie exclaimed.

"What?" Dan said innocently. "She's *evil*. Getting spit on her limo — that's the least she deserves."

Dan could tell Nellie was trying not to laugh. The advantage of having an au pair who was only twenty was that sometimes she thought and acted like a kid herself. But then she put on a stern face.

"I just don't think your aim is that good," Nellie said. "Not at this distance."

"Oh, yeah?" Dan said. He was glad of the distraction. He thrust the "K" coin into Nellie's hand. "Throw that out the window, anywhere you want. I promise, I'll hit it on the first try."

Before Dan had a chance to really prove his spitting ability, he felt a tugging behind him. Now what? Was someone trying to steal his backpack? Right off his back?

Dan whirled around. It was only Amy.

"What are you doing?" he said.

"We need to check the Internet," she said. "Immediately."

Dan's eyes met his sister's. Sometimes he wondered how they could be related. She was shy; he was a chatterbox. She liked books and quiet libraries; he liked noisy video games and any sort



of joke that involved burping or farting. Still, there had been times — especially during this Clue hunt — when Dan felt like he and Amy were practically the same person, thinking the same thought at the exact same time.

Now was one of those times.

“Right,” Dan said. He lowered the backpack so Amy could get the laptop out faster. She handed him the cord. He plugged it into the wall while she plugged the other end into the computer. While they waited for the laptop to fire up, she gave him a pen and a piece of hotel stationery from the desk.

“What are you two doing?” Nellie asked as Dan began writing on the paper.

“We’re figuring out the lead,” Amy said. “I have a hunch, but I want to check it out online.”

“I thought you were giving up,” Nellie said. “I thought you said you couldn’t win.”

Dan looked at Amy and went back to writing. He’d let her explain.

“I still don’t think we can win,” Amy said. “Not the way the Madrigals want.”

Once she would have said that word — *Madrigals* — with the same kind of fear and disgust she reserved for Isabel Kabra. But in Jamaica, Dan and Amy had found out that the Madrigals were really the good guys.

*The way-too-good guys, Dan thought. The ones who think we can end this all holding hands and singing “Kumbaya” around a campfire someplace. They’re nuts!*

“You agreed with everything the Madrigals wanted in Jamaica,” Nellie said. “So did I.”

“Yeah,” Amy said. She sounded distracted. The computer had booted up now, and she was logging on to the Internet. “It just doesn’t seem possible. But if we can’t win the Madrigal way, the least we can do is make sure the Kabras don’t win instead.”

Dan looked up from his paper. “Can you imagine letting Isabel Kabra take over the world?” he asked.

The words hung in the quiet hotel room. This, finally, was something Dan could hold on to. Everything the Madrigals wanted was too big and slippery: peace, love, forgiveness.... Dan hadn't even been able to keep those goals in his mind during a single uneventful plane ride. He would *never* be able to look Isabel Kabra right in the eye and say, "I forgive you." But keeping her from winning the Clue hunt, stopping her from gaining ultimate power, preventing her from being able to cause even more unforgivable deaths ... that would be close enough, wouldn't it?

It would have to be. That was the best that Dan could hope for.

The rain kept falling outside, harder now. The room stayed gray. Nellie was shaking her head, her expression grim.

Then Nellie, irreverent as ever, grinned. She lifted the "K" coin Dan had given her toward her mouth.

"And now we have yet *another* game-changing turnover," she said, as if she were some sort of sports announcer and the "K" coin was her microphone. "For those of you scoring at home, the evil Kabras may think they just surged ahead, but their little monkey business has backfired. They seem to have *completely* reenergized the scrappy Cahill kids, who are just seconds away from figuring out their latest lead, thanks to Dan's photographic memory and Amy's *amazing* research skills."

Dan finished writing the exact replica of the note the monkey had stolen. (Exact, that is, except for Dan's sloppier printing.) He did indeed have a photographic memory, which had already saved them many times during the Clue hunt. He was sure he'd gotten everything right, even the underlining. He handed the paper to Amy and turned to Nellie.

"Nellie," he said, almost scolding her, "this isn't a game."

Nellie watched Dan and Amy bent over the computer together. She had no doubt that in a few moments they'd turn around with some brilliant deduction. And then they'd announce that they needed to depart immediately for some dramatic location.

Personally, Nellie was hoping for Stonehenge. She'd always wanted to see that. But maybe not on this trip — Nellie wouldn't

want to have to explain to some proper British authority why her two charges were rappelling down such a major landmark. That's how these Clue hunt adventures often turned out.

It had been amazing — and a little scary—to watch the transformation in Amy and Dan over the course of the past month. Nellie tried to remember what she herself had been like at eleven or fourteen. Eleven was the summer she'd done nothing but hang out at the local swimming pool, right? And fourteen was the year she'd gotten her nose pierced.

And ... that was the year Dan and Amy's grandmother had entered Nellie's life. Not directly—Nellie didn't meet Grace until later. But opportunities had begun falling into Nellie's lap the year she started high school. For a kung fu “scholarship.” For flying lessons. For more advanced classes than she'd signed up for at school, with demanding new teachers who seemed to care way too much about a certain girl with a pierced nose and multicolored hair sitting at the back of the room.

It had taken Nellie a long time to figure out where all those opportunities came from. But now Nellie saw that Grace had changed her life completely.

*And Grace was one of the good Cahills, Nellie thought. What could someone like Isabel Kabra do to people like me if she's in charge?*

Nellie fingered the “K” coin Dan had handed her. It had seemed just like a coin toss — random luck — that Grace had chosen Nellie to be Amy and Dan's au pair. But in Jamaica, Nellie had found out that her family had been linked to the Cahills for generations. In her own way, Nellie had been as fated to take part in the Clue hunt as Amy and Dan.

And, in Jamaica, Nellie had accepted that fate.

Nellie kept fingering the “K” coin. And then she wasn't thinking about families or fate. She was thinking about the coin, which didn't exactly seem like a coin anymore. It had a thin line that went all the way around the edge. A crack maybe?

Nellie forced her thumbnail into the crack. Under pressure, the “coin” popped open, revealing a miniature electronic network

inside.

Just then Amy whirled around in her chair.

“I’ve got it!” she said. “The answer is —”

Nellie dived toward Amy. She clapped her hand over Amy’s mouth.

“Don’t say it!” Nellie commanded. “We’ve been”— with the hand that wasn’t on Amy’s mouth, she flicked miniature wires out of the faux coin — “bugged!”

In the limo a block away, Isabel Kabra leaned forward, intent on the headset piping an uncultured girl’s words into her ears: “We’ve been —”

Static. Nothing but static. The audio link was gone.

*So they discovered the listening device. So what?* It had been overkill anyhow. Isabel had the Cahill children’s lead, and she had vastly more resources than they did for figuring it out. She had vastly more of everything that mattered than they ever would.

This was just ... annoying.

Isabel almost frowned — *no, don’t do that. Remember? Frown lines? There’s only so much that Botox can do. Those brats aren’t worth getting wrinkles.*

They really weren’t worth noticing, but just in case, she mentally sorted through everything she’d heard, checking for any significance at all in those pathetic children’s pathetic conversation.

*“You agreed with everything the Madrigals wanted in Jamaica” ... “If we can’t win the Madrigal way ...”* This meant they’d joined forces with the Madrigals, the shadowy ne’er-do-wells who had been the bane of Isabel’s family’s existence for centuries. Ah, well. In Isabel’s experience, loyalties were nothing more than opportunities for betrayal.

Isabel mentally fast-forwarded to something the boy had said: *“Can you imagine letting Isabel Kabra take over the world?”*

Isabel let herself smile, even though smiles were nearly as likely to cause wrinkles as frowns.

Yes. She could imagine that. She could imagine it perfectly: the power, the glory, the *rightness* of it. Isabel Kabra was superior to everyone else in the world. When she won the Clue hunt, everybody would finally see that. She would rule, and everyone on the planet would obey.

They would obey — or they would die. Exactly as they deserved.

Amy and Dan Cahill certainly deserved to die.

Isabel's smile widened. She was almost grateful to those brats for managing to stay alive so long. This way, she could think of even crueller ways to kill them.

"Mummy?" Isabel's eleven-year-old daughter, Natalie, half whined from the opposing seat in the limo. "You look a little scary right now."

Isabel realized she was still holding the disgusting monkey.

"Here," Isabel said, thrusting the nasty creature into her daughter's lap. "You and Ian take the paper out of his mouth and figure out what it means. Justify your superior abilities and education for once in your life."

Isabel had trained her children well — the girl cringed away from the monkey, instinctively knowing that monkey hair would look horrible on her haute couture black dress. And fourteen-year-old Ian looked nauseated at the thought of potentially exposing himself to monkey spittle. These instincts would serve Ian and Natalie well someday, if they ever became the heads of the Kabra empire — after long decades of Isabel's astute rule, of course. But right now, Isabel's children were mere underlings, and she couldn't have them failing to obey a direct order.

"Whatever happened to, 'Yes, Mum. Whatever you say, Mum'?" Isabel demanded. "When did you stop obeying instantly?"

Ian mumbled something Isabel couldn't quite catch.

"What's that you say?" Isabel asked. "Speak up!"

“W-we —” Was Ian *stammering*? Ian, whom she’d trained to be smooth and suave, who’d known how to wear a tuxedo properly since he was three? He cleared his throat and managed to get the words out: “We haven’t stopped obeying. We just think first now.”

Isabel slapped the boy.

## CHAPTER 3

Amy lined up listening devices on the desk. After Nellie had destroyed the Kabra bug, the Cahill kids had belatedly searched the entire hotel room, as they should have from the very beginning. They'd found three more bugs: an ingeniously tiny one inside a lamp; an elegant one on a picture frame that Amy had originally thought was part of the artwork; and, under the bed, a rather crude one that looked like it might have been built by a football player with thick fingers.

"Ekat," Amy said, pointing at the ingenious one.

"Janus," Dan said, pointing at the artistic one.

"Tomas," Nellie said, pointing at the crude one and rolling her eyes.

"And the Kabra one was Lucian, so that's everybody," Amy said.

They were naming off branches of the Cahill family—the other branches searching for the Clues. Each branch was descended from one of the four feuding children of Gideon and Olivia Cahill: Katherine, Jane, Thomas, and Luke. Only the Madrigals—Amy and Dan's branch — knew that there'd also been a fifth sibling born after the family fell apart: Madeleine.

*My ancestor*, Amy thought.

It was nice to know where she fit. She'd been longing for that knowledge ever since the Clue hunt began.

*But do I really fit if I don't try to do what the Madrigals want?* she wondered.

Dan shoved the three bugs a little closer together on the desk. He raised his fist above them, ready to smash them all in one blow.

"Three, two, one ..." he counted down dramatically.



At the very last minute before his hand hit the bugs, Amy grabbed his wrist.

“What are you doing?” he asked, trying to jerk away from her. “Are you nuts?”

“I have to talk to you,” Amy said. She gestured toward the bathroom and pulled on his wrist. Dan frowned but followed along. Nellie pointed to herself and raised her eyebrows as if to ask, “Me, too?”

Amy nodded.

In the bathroom, Amy turned on the faucets in the sink and the bathtub full blast. Together, they made a sound like a waterfall. Nellie and Dan had to lean in close to hear what Amy was saying. There was no danger her words would be picked up by any bug.

“If we’re just trying to make sure the Kabras don’t win, should we throw some help to the other teams? Let them know our lead?” she asked. “And ... doesn’t that fit with what the Madrigals want us to do?”

“Are you kidding?” Dan said. “You want to just give away our hard work?”

“What if you share your answers and then, I don’t know, the horrible Holts end up ruling the world?” Nellie asked.

The Holts were the Tomas representatives: Eisenhower and Mary-Todd Holt and their three kids — Hamilton, Reagan, and Madison.

“Hamilton’s not so bad,” Dan said.

“Okay, but *Eisenhower*?” Nellie said.

Eisenhower Holt was a muscle-bound, knuckle-headed buffoon.

*And he was there when Mom and Dad died*, Amy thought. She clenched her fists, as if that could smash the Holts’ clumsily made bug.

“Uncle Alistair can be okay,” Dan offered. “He hasn’t betrayed us ... recently.”

Alistair Oh, an Ekat, had teamed up with them more than anyone else. But he’d also double-crossed them again and again. Then, during a horrifying fire on an Indonesian island, he’d made

sure that they got to safety before him. He'd even seemed willing to sacrifice his life for theirs. Was that enough to redeem him?

*He lied to us in China after that, Amy thought. And he was also there when Mom and Dad died. He didn't start the fire that killed them, but ... he didn't save them, either.*

"How do you know the Ekat bug is Alistair's, not Bae Oh's?" Nellie asked, making a face.

Bae Oh was Alistair's uncle and a completely unpleasant old man. He would have let Amy and Dan die in Egypt if Nellie hadn't rescued them.

Amy's fists clenched tighter. The Ekat bug would have to be destroyed, too.

"So that leaves the Janus," Nellie said. "You want to tip off Jonah Wizard? Want to let him add 'king of the world' to all his other titles?"

Jonah Wizard was already an international hip-hop star, bestselling pop-up book author, and Pez dispenser model. The only thing bigger than his fame was his ego.

Amy waited for Dan to defend Jonah so she could squash his arguments flat. Dan had kind of bonded with Jonah in China. But Dan just got a stunned look on his face.

"Whoa," he said. "Are you sure Jonah's still on the hunt? When was the last time we saw him looking for a clue?"

"He wasn't in Tibet. Or the Bahamas. Or Jamaica," Nellie mused. "Could the great Jonah Wizard actually have given up?"

"There's a bug out there that has 'Janus' written all over it," Amy pointed out.

"Maybe Cora Wizard is doing her own dirty work now," Nellie said.

Cora Wizard. Jonah's mother. Amy could barely remember ever meeting the woman. No, wait. She could.

*That night, Amy thought. I saw her there the night our parents died, too.*

Amy had to grip the counter. She felt the blood drain from her face.

“We can’t let Cora Wizard win,” she whispered.

Nellie and Dan looked at her. Both of them seemed to understand instantly.

“So that’s it. You can’t trust any of the other teams,” Nellie said. “Not really. Not all together.”

“Duh,” Dan said. “We knew that a month ago.”

Amy blinked back something that might have been tears. She hoped Nellie and Dan would just think it was steam from the sink and bathtub faucets running full blast.

“Then how do the Madrigals possibly think we can—” she began.

“Power,” Dan said. “We have to win. And then—then maybe we’ll have enough power to knock everyone else into shape.”

For a moment he looked like a miniature Napoleon, plotting world domination. Then he was Dan again, gleefully darting out of the bathroom.

“We’ll stomp on the bugs,” he called back over his shoulder. “Come on — we’ll each do one. I call first dibs!”

Amy and Nellie looked at each other and shrugged. Then they raced after him. Together, all three of them swept the bugs from the desk and began jumping up and down, crunching the electronic devices beneath their feet.

Two men sat in a darkened room. One had a beaked nose and a dour expression. The other was dressed all in gray and had headphones over his ears. The first man, William McIntyre, kept looking expectantly at the other and asking, “Can you hear them now? Now?”

Finally the man in gray, Fiske Cahill, pushed the headphones back.

“They are figuring out the lead,” he said. “They are proceeding with the hunt. But ... they have destroyed all the bugs.”

Mr. McIntyre was silent for a moment.

“Except ours,” he finally said.

“We had the advantage of having ours built into the wall,” Fiske said. “They are staying in a Madrigal room. One we arranged for them.” He winced.

“You don’t feel right about eavesdropping on them,” Mr. McIntyre said, interpreting the other man’s wince.

“There is much that I don’t feel right about in this clue hunt,” Fiske said. “We are gambling on children. We are gambling with their lives.”

“Doesn’t every generation gamble on the next?” Mr. McIntyre asked.

Fiske made a barking sound that was much too bitter to be a laugh. “Says a man who chose never to have children,” he said. “But ... I made the same choice.” He stared bleakly at the wall. “Something else to regret,” he murmured.

Mr. McIntyre started to lift his hand, as if he might pat Fiske’s shoulder. But William McIntyre wasn’t the type to give comforting pats. He lowered his hand.

“I thought you’d become more optimistic,” Mr. McIntyre said. “You’re wearing gray now instead of all black.”

“It’s dark gray,” Fiske said. “Allowing only a little hope ...” He tapped his fingers on the table. “I wish we could know what they’re thinking. Why they decided to destroy the bugs but continue the hunt. They must have been discussing it somehow.” He pictured scribbled notes being passed back and forth, or a whispered conversation in a closet while the water ran in the bathroom, masking the sounds for the bugs. Knowing Amy and Dan and Nellie, he suspected they’d made it fun. Fiske himself hadn’t had much familiarity with fun.

“They know the fate of the world depends on reuniting the entire Cahill family,” Mr. McIntyre said.

“Is that enough?” Fiske asked. “Should we have given them exact details, spelled out precise consequences — told them *everything*?”

Mr. McIntyre pushed back from the table. “How much of a burden can two children take?” he asked. He sat in gloomy silence for a moment, then added, “You could just *ask* them what

they're thinking. After all, they've told us their clues. We've told them ours. They know we're on their side."

"Yes, but ... don't you see how this clue hunt has taught them to lie?" Fiske asked. "Taught them to be suspicious of everyone?"

Mr. McIntyre frowned.

"They know we're in this together," he said.

"And that's why we're sitting in a safe, dark room, while they're about to head out into danger?" Fiske asked. "Danger that we're going to make worse?"

"And the solution is" — Amy paused dramatically — "William Shakespeare."

Dan blinked.

"Okay, Amy, I know you've read, like, every book ever written. And you know a lot more about words and writers than I do," he said. "But how do you get from 'thin air' and 'crack of doom' and 'heart of hearts' and all that other stuff to *William Shakespeare*?"

"Because he's the one who made up those expressions," Amy said. "Look." She brushed aside the debris of the destroyed bugs and pulled out the chair to sit down at the computer. She touched a key, and the screensaver disappeared, replaced by the site Amy had been looking at before they'd discovered the first bug. "This is a list of all the words and expressions Shakespeare coined. 'Into thin air,' 'crack of doom,' 'heart of hearts,' 'mind's eye,' 'come full circle' — all the underlined phrases are on this list."

Dan watched as Amy scrolled through the words and phrases. There were hundreds of them.

"Sheesh, did the English language even exist before Shakespeare?" Nellie asked. "'Bated breath,' 'gossip,' 'leapfrog,' 'mimic' ..."

"Aw, come on. Nobody ever uses a lot of these," Dan said. "Have you ever in your life said something 'beggars all description'?"

"Some of these sound a little weird now," Amy admitted. "But here's a word you use all the time, Dan."

She let the cursor rest on a single glowing word: *puke*.

“Shakespeare made up the word *puke*?” Dan asked.

“Yep,” Amy said.

“Well, then ... I guess he kind of knew what he was doing,” Dan said.

Dan wasn’t about to admit it to Amy, but he’d always regarded *puke* as pretty much the perfect word. It sounded exactly like what it was.

“And how about ...” Amy was scouring the list for other good words.

Dan wasn’t in the mood for a language lesson. He liked it better when the Clue hunt pointed to swordsmen and kung fu experts.

“Okay, okay, I’ll take your word for it.” He wanted to say, “Whatever,” but he was afraid Shakespeare might have made up that word, too. “Now that we know our next clue has something to do with William Shakespeare, what are we going to do about it?” he asked.

Just then the hotel phone rang.

All three of them jumped, then Nellie reached over and answered it. She listened for a moment, then put her hand over the receiver.

“It’s the hotel’s concierge service,” she said. “They want to know if we’d like them to get tickets for us to any attractions. Or” — she raised her eyebrows significantly — “theatrical productions.”

Amy beamed.

“Oh, no,” Dan moaned. “No!”

“What’s playing at the Globe?” Amy asked eagerly.

“I am not going to a Shakespeare play!” Dan protested.

Nellie ignored him.

“Yes, I’d like three tickets ...” she said into the phone. She finished making the arrangements and hung up, a dreamy look in her eye.

“It’s *Romeo and Juliet*,” she told Amy. “*Romeo and Juliet*, in London, where Shakespeare wrote it, performed at the Globe, just like it was originally done....”

Amy’s expression turned just as awestruck and dreamy as Nellie’s.

“Amazing,” she whispered.

“Torture,” Dan muttered. “Cruel and unusual punishment. Worse than those poisonous snakes and spiders in Australia. Worse than almost being chopped up into lollipops in China. This has got to be the worst thing we’ve had to do yet!”

But nobody was listening.

As far as he knew.



## CHAPTER 4

Ian Kabra tiptoed across the cold marble floor. He was related to just about every notable spy in the last five hundred years. He himself had been trained in subterfuge practically since birth. But this was the one place he'd never suspected he'd have to employ his stealth skills: his own home.

Somewhere high overhead — on the third floor of the Kabra mansion, or possibly the fourth — a beam creaked. Ian froze.

*It's an old house, he told himself. It makes sounds like that all the time. Doesn't it?*

Normally, Ian wouldn't have even paid attention. But normally, he wasn't breaking into the one wing of the house that had always been off-limits to him and Natalie. The wing where all the Kabra family secrets were stored.

Ian's eyes darted about, looking for the first glimmer of telltale light coming toward him. He rehearsed excuses in his head: *Why, no, Mum, Dad, how could you ever think that I would be out of bed tonight doing something wrong? Or sneaky and underhanded? I'm just ... getting a drink of water. Yes, that's it. I was thirsty, and I thought the water would taste better down here than near my bedroom. Haven't you always taught me I deserve the very best of everything? How could you think that I would be here because ... because I don't trust you anymore?*

No light flashed at him. No accusing parent — or suspicious servant — leered out at him. He took a deep, silent breath and began inching forward again. No matter how carefully he stepped, he could hear a soft *tssk-tssk* with every brush of his socked feet across the floor.

*What will happen if they catch me? Is this worth the risk?*

"I just want to know the truth," Ian whispered, so desperate that his lips actually formed the words, his vocal cords actually

pushed out small bursts of sound. He froze again, but nothing happened.

*Truth ...*

Ian had always been taught that truth was a very flexible thing. His mother could smile brightly at another woman and say so charmingly, “Oh, that dress is just perfect for you. Wherever did you get it?” And then behind the woman’s back she’d go on for hours about how such a hideous, shapeless old hag could not possibly have picked an outfit any more repulsive than that one. Or — Ian had heard both of his parents, at different times on the phone, talking to business associates and assuring them, “Why, yes, of course, we have your best interests at heart ...” — and then hanging up, telling a subordinate, “Close down that factory. It’s worthless.” Or, “Sell that stock. Every last share.”

*But that’s just how they treat losers. Outsiders. People who aren’t Lucians like us.*

He remembered how his mother had treated Irina Spasky, who’d been loyal until almost the very end of her life.

*She wasn’t a Kabra. Mum and Dad have a code of conduct—the Kabras are the only ones that matter. It’s just their way. Yes, they can be ruthless with everyone else, but really, they’re doing it for their family. For Natalie and me.*

Was that why his mother had slapped him earlier that day? Why she seemed not to care anymore if Ian or Natalie lived or died, as long as she won the Clue hunt? Why she’d had Natalie on the verge of tears for, oh, weeks, now? Ian had always found his little sister a bit annoying, but lately he’d actually felt sorry for her, watching her try so hard to please their mother, who’d become completely impossible to please.

*What changed? Ian wondered. What happened? Is it really just that we’re ... losing?*

Ian was reaching for a doorknob now. Willing his hands to stay steady, he slipped an old-fashioned skeleton key from the pocket of his silk pajamas and slid it into the lock. His parents had ordered that he be trained to pick locks so he could steal information, if necessary, from business rivals, family enemies,

international spies. He'd never expected to become so confused about who his enemies really were.

*It's time to find out,* Ian told himself coldly.

Just then the lock clicked. One twist of his wrist, and the door sprang open.

With a glance over his shoulder, Ian stepped into the secret wing and pulled the door shut behind him.

Jonah Wizard gave a final wave to the fans crowding around his limo and slid into his seat. His driver shut the car door firmly behind him and pushed dozens of girls out of his way getting back around to the front of the car.

"You're so hot, Jonah!" one of the girls yelled, kissing the window as the car pulled away. She left a smear of lipstick across the glass.

Jonah stared at the lipstick. He'd asked his father to schedule this concert in London at the last minute. He'd sung and danced his heart out for the past three hours. He'd even added a surprise encore at the end. The crowd and the screams and the excitement were his reward, exactly what he needed right now: proof that his fans loved him. Proof that he deserved that love.

So why did he keep thinking that the smear of lipstick looked like blood?

*Because of the clue hunt,* Jonah told himself. *Because if my fans only knew what I almost did ... If they knew what my mother expects me to do ... If I did it ...*

Jonah had been thinking like this since China: in incomplete sentences. He couldn't form a complete thought because that would mean he had to make an impossible decision. An irreversible decision, one Jonah would have to live with for the rest of his life.

"Good show." Jonah's dad, Broderick, spoke from the opposite corner of the limo seat. He was doing calculations on his ever-present BlackBerry. "Ninety thousand people at seventy-five pounds per head, minus overhead, that's a take of ..."

Jonah shoved at the BlackBerry, almost knocking it out of his father's hands.

"Oh, money," Jonah said, his voice cracking. He reminded himself to at least try to sound normal. "Yo, don't you care about anything except the Benjamins?"

"Elizabeths, in this case," Broderick said.

Jonah stared at him blankly.

"Queen Elizabeth?" Broderick said. "On the British pound?"

"Oh," Jonah said. "Yeah. But ..."

And he'd arrived at another incomplete sentence.

*What does Dad think I should do? How much does he know, anyhow?* Jonah wondered. *What does he want for me? Just more money? Or ...*

Jonah couldn't even bear to think the question.

Everything had always come so easily for Jonah. The first time he'd picked up a musical instrument — a child-size guitar — he'd been able to play "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" by ear. (He'd written about that in his pop-up book *Twinkle, Twinkle, Li'l Gangsta.*) Even in the early stages of the Clue hunt, things had just fallen his way. He was a Janus; it was no big deal to sing, tour, record, blog, Tweet, promote, and find Clues on the side. He'd had to do a few crazy stunts — stretch a little — but, hey, things worked out. He already ruled the music world. Winning the Clue hunt and conquering the rest of the world just seemed like the next step.

Until China.

In China, Jonah had come face-to-face with evil.

Evil inside himself.

He'd almost let Dan Cahill be sacrificed for the Clue hunt. He'd been so close to letting Dan die. Horrified, Jonah had quit. He remembered how relieved he'd felt in that moment, telling his mother he was done with hunting Clues, done with threatening his relatives, done with lying and keeping secrets. In that moment, he'd pictured the rest of his life as one long, happy

concert, one great performance after another—fame and fortune without a single complication.

But his mother had told him no. She'd said he couldn't quit. She'd said —

Broderick's BlackBerry beeped, signaling an incoming text. He read it, then held out the BlackBerry for Jonah to see.

"This is what your mother wants you to do tomorrow afternoon," Broderick said.

Jonah braced himself against the back of the seat. He narrowed his eyes to such tight slits he could barely read. He'd stayed away from his mom for the past several days. He'd ignored her messages. He'd let her think whatever she wanted. But was this it? The moment when he'd have to choose?

He'd worked so hard to make his mother proud of him. He was Jonah Wizard, international star. Was tomorrow the day she'd also expect him to become Jonah Wizard, murderer?

"Father-son bonding time!" Eisenhower Holt screamed at the top of his lungs. He gave his son, Hamilton, a punch in the gut that would have felled most grown men. But Hamilton had been on an Olympic-style training regimen since he was two. He merely grinned at his dad.

Eisenhower was looking around at the spectacle before them. Down on the field, men in red-and-white uniforms were chasing a swiftly rolling ball. In the stadium around them, thousands of people rose and cheered, moving almost as one.

"Brits!" Eisenhower yelled. "The best soccer fans in the universe!"

"We call it football around here, bozo," a voice growled behind them.

Eisenhower and Hamilton both turned around. Eisenhower Holt was six foot five, and Hamilton was nearly that tall. But the man behind towered over both of them. He was shirtless, revealing muscles that probably would have looked like rock if they hadn't been covered — like his stony face — in red and white paint.

Eisenhower grinned at the man.

“Sure thing!” Eisenhower agreed. He gave the man a chest bump, his muscular chest hitting the other man’s like giant boulders crashing together. “Go, Manchester United!”

It took a minute — stone moves slowly. But then the man grinned back at him.

*That’s my dad,* Hamilton thought proudly. *He knows how to handle any situation having to do with sports.*

Eisenhower and Hamilton turned around to watch the game again.

“Dad,” Hamilton said after a few minutes. “You don’t mind too much, do you, that, um, we kind of lost our trail? In the clue hunt, I mean?”

“We’ll find it again,” Eisenhower said confidently. “We Holts specialize in come-from-behind victories.”

Hamilton nodded, as he did any time his father imparted Holt family wisdom. Even when he didn’t quite believe it.

That had been happening more and more lately.

“Besides,” Eisenhower said. “Your mother needed time to buy new tracksuits for Reagan and Madison. The way those girls are growing — they might even end up taller than me!” He beamed proudly. “And how could I come to England without going to a soccer — er, football — game with my son?”

“You couldn’t,” Hamilton agreed.

The two of them watched the fancy footwork down on the field in silence for a moment. Before the Clue hunt, Hamilton would have savored one-on-one time like this with his dad. But something was nagging at him tonight.

*With the clue hunt ... Sure, I want to win as much as Dad does. But the way we’ve been trying to win ...*

Ever since South Africa, any time Hamilton closed his eyes, he pictured the same image: a man in a bowler hat—Alistair Oh—sweating. Sweating because Hamilton’s dad was threatening to kill him.

Sometimes when Hamilton saw that, he imagined himself standing up to his father, yelling, “Dad, no! You can’t kill

Alistair!”

Sometimes he imagined Alistair dying.

What had actually happened in South Africa was that Hamilton had intervened secretly, without his father knowing. Hamilton and Dan Cahill, working together, had saved Alistair’s life.

*I had to!* Hamilton thought. *That was my only choice! It doesn’t mean I betrayed my family! Reagan and Mom didn’t want Alistair to die, either!*

But that wasn’t the only time Hamilton had gone rogue. His father didn’t exactly know how often Hamilton had teamed up with Dan and Amy, how much Hamilton had tried to help them rather than his fellow Holts.

*Am I a traitor?* Hamilton wondered. *Or just ... doing the right thing?*

Before the Clue hunt, right and wrong had seemed so simple to Hamilton. Right was doing what his father wanted him to do. Wrong was everything else. Complexity was for football strategy, not ethical decisions.

But what if ... when it came to the Clue hunt ... Hamilton’s dad had been wrong from the very beginning?

Hamilton glanced at his dad again.

“Dad,” he began, “do you ever think —”

“Nope,” Eisenhower said quickly. “I try to do that as little as possible. Gets in the way of muscle development.” He laughed at his own joke.

“Seriously ...” Hamilton tried again.

“Seriously?” Eisenhower lowered his voice. He glanced around, as if to make sure that no one could overhear. “Seriously, I’ll tell you something nobody else knows about me. I’m not very good at thinking. Never have been. But I want better things for you and the girls. That’s why winning this clue hunt is so important.”

Hamilton gulped. Now how could he say what he was going to say?

Eisenhower’s cell phone rang just then, cutting off the conversation.



He lifted the phone to his ear. “Yes, sugarcakes?” he said into it.

Several people nearby turned around, snickering. But Hamilton glared down all of them. There was nothing wrong with his parents using sticky-sweet terms of endearment with each other. Nothing.

The other people quickly looked away.

“Really?” Eisenhower said into the phone. Then he cheered, “Yahoo!” He put his hand over the phone and said to Hamilton, “Didn’t I tell you? The Holts are back in the game! Your mother and the girls found a lead!”

He did a little victory dance, right on the spot.

Evidently, Hamilton’s mother was still talking on the other end.

“Okay, okay, you got a phone call, and ...” Eisenhower said. Then he almost dropped the phone. “We have to go *where*?”

Ian Kabra sat in the midst of dozens of manila folders. He’d hoped that everything would be computerized in the Kabra secret wing. That way, he’d just have to decode a secret password, download everything to a flash drive, and then browse through the info in the privacy of his own room. He’d forgotten how paranoid his parents were about computer hackers. Having to sort through paper files meant he was completely vulnerable to being discovered.

Ian sighed and resolutely picked up the next folder. Massacres authorized, betrayals approved ... thousands and thousands of people sent helplessly to their deaths by generation after generation of Ian’s family.

Ian supposed that most people reading these files would be horrified. He supposed that whenever Mum and Dad planned to show him these files — when he turned eighteen, maybe? — his parents would expect him to be proud. The files around him recorded dazzling tales of power. Raw, throbbing power, wielded brilliantly, century after century.

But Ian felt neither horror nor awe. He simply felt ... unsurprised. He’d always known that his family was both

powerful and ruthless. It truly was the Lucian way. In his turn, Ian would be expected to act just like his ancestors. He'd already demonstrated — on his preschool playground, at those ridiculous Cahill family reunions in New England, in the Clue hunt as his parents' emissary—that he was perfectly capable of living up to his Lucian heritage.

What exactly was he questioning now?

Ian realized that the folder he'd just picked up held a newer label: THE HOPE CAHILL AND ARTHUR TRENT SITUATION.

Ian's heartbeat quickened. He recognized those names. They were Amy and Dan Cahill's parents, people who had died in an accidental fire years ago.

Or maybe not so accidental.

Ian quickly scanned the papers in the file. They were mostly letters. He could see the skill with which his parents had organized the other branches of Cahills — a Janus, Cora Wizard; an Ekat, Alistair Oh; and two Tomas, Eisenhower and Mary-Todd Holt—to confront Hope Cahill and Arthur Trent about Clues they'd gathered, advantages they'd gained. It was brilliant the way Isabel and Vikram Kabra had drawn sworn enemies together for a common goal.

But the confrontation itself had gone badly. Isabel Kabra had struck a match, intending to force Hope and Arthur to play by her rules.

And ... Hope Cahill and Arthur Trent had died rather than give Isabel Kabra the total power she wanted.

Ian felt the papers slip from his grasp.

*My mother caused the deaths of Amy and Dan's parents,* he thought, horror finally catching up with him. Another wave of horror hit him with his next thought: *Do Amy and Dan know?*

Ian thought about the way Amy had smiled up at him back in Korea, the way she'd let him flirt with her, the way she'd blushed and stammered over his suave overtures. She couldn't possibly have known the truth then.

*And afterward?*

Certainly Amy—and Dan—had been a bit cold to him since Korea, but he'd mostly thought that was because he himself had betrayed them, making it look like he was leaving them to die. Not that they were really ever in any danger. (Were they? Would he have cared if they were? Was he any different from his mother?)

*Of course they know that's just how things go on the clue hunt....*

Unbidden, another memory came back to him, one that had been haunting him for weeks. One from the peak of Mount Everest. Ian had been falling, plunging toward certain death. Even though he'd paid an entire pack of Sherpas to get him safely up and down the mountain, Amy was the only one close enough to reach him. But she'd faced a choice: save the test tube of valuable Janus serum they'd all been searching for or save Ian.

Ian had known, in the split second he'd had to think, that the logical, rational, *likely* thing for Amy to do was to choose the serum. It's what Ian would have done in her place. The serum was priceless, possibly even irreplaceable. And Ian was just someone who'd said fake nice things to her and then betrayed her, more than once.

But Amy had saved Ian and let the serum fall.

Ian still couldn't understand why she'd done that. It was so ... un-Lucian. Un-Cahill.

Everyone had been so bundled up then, with every inch of skin covered against the brutal Everest cold. So Ian couldn't see the expression on Amy's face at that moment; he couldn't gauge what she was thinking. But he'd looked into her eyes. And her eyes had been ... knowing.

*She knew then that my mother caused her parents' death. And she still saved me.*

This made everything even more incomprehensible.

Ian picked up the Hope Cahill/Arthur Trent file again. Maybe he'd missed something. Maybe his mother had tried to make up for Amy and Dan's parents dying.

The file held both documents leading up to the fire and a flurry of letters sent afterward. It wasn't hard for Ian to piece everything

together. As soon as the flames grew out of control, the non-Lucians panicked. None of them seemed to have understood that Isabel *wanted* Hope and Arthur to die. Alistair Oh, Cora Wizard, and Mary-Todd Holt had all, eventually, called 911. Eisenhower Holt had grabbed a neighbor's garden hose and aimed it at the blaze.

And Vikram and Isabel Kabra had masterminded a cover-up, trying to hide all evidence of their involvement.

"They felt guilty," Ian whispered to himself. "Otherwise, why would they sound so defensive?"

It was cold comfort, grasping at straws to convince himself his parents weren't really *that* bad.

Ian turned over the second-to-last piece of paper in the file and was surprised to find that the last sheet had nothing to do with the deaths of Hope Cahill and Arthur Trent. Rather, it was a report his mother had written about the death of Irina Spasky.

"She completely betrayed us," his mother wrote. "She disobeyed a direct order from me and went to rescue Alistair Oh and Amy and Dan Cahill when I told her they had to be eliminated...."

*Eliminated.* Just a few weeks ago, his mother had tried, in cold blood, to murder Alistair and Amy and Dan. Not by mistake, not as collateral damage, but intentionally. Ian scanned the entire document. The murder attempt wasn't even a bargaining chip, something threatened in exchange for her actual goal. It was carefully planned — a goal in and of itself.

And Irina had died in the others' place.

"When I saw what Irina was doing, I could have gone back and rescued her," Isabel had written. "But why bother?"

So cold. A woman's life dismissed in three words.

It wasn't that Ian had had any great sentimental attachment to Irina Spasky. She'd threatened to use her poison fingernails a few too many times to be close or cuddly with anyone. But there'd been a moment years ago when Ian was little, when she'd said to him quite wistfully, "Do you suppose you could call me Auntie

Irina? You're the same age now as another little boy I once knew...."

She'd covered her mouth immediately with her hands, as if she hadn't actually meant to say that. And Ian had certainly never called her Auntie. With his parents' encouragement, he had treated her like a servant, slightly beneath his notice. But she had served his family faithfully for years. Even Irina Spasky didn't deserve to be left to her death with the words *Why bother?*

Furrowing his brow, Ian flipped back and forth between the papers describing the three deaths. Something *was* different. The faint hint of remorse that came across in the earlier papers was completely missing in connection to Irina Spasky. It was like his mother wasn't even capable of remorse anymore — not remorse or guilt or doubt or loyalty to anyone but herself.

*Why not?* Ian wondered.

Something rattled across the room, and Ian froze. Quickly, he extinguished the small reading light he'd been using. In the sudden darkness he felt blind. He didn't know if he should leap up and hide or if it was wiser not to move, to stay as silent as possible.

*It's just a noise outside in the Kabra family zoo, Ian told himself. Probably that blasted monkey Mum insisted on using today.*

The rattle sounded again, and Ian could no longer pretend that it wasn't the doorknob to the secret wing. Before he had a chance to move, the door swung open and the beam of a flashlight caught him right in the face.

Someone gasped. It was a gasp Ian recognized.

"Natalie?" Ian said.

"Ian?" his sister whispered. She dropped the flashlight, and the beam of light swung crazily around the room.

Ian scooped up the flashlight and pointed it directly toward the ground, confining the light to a narrow space.

"No — no — don't let it show through the windows," he said frantically.

Now Natalie gulped.

“What are you doing here, Ian?” she asked in a small voice.

Ian thought fast.

“Mum and Dad wanted me to pick up some files for them,” he said. “They trust me in here. Because I’m older than you.”

“You’re lying,” Natalie said, almost offhandedly. “If Mum and Dad knew you were in here, why would you be so worried about the light showing?”

Ian had forgotten that Natalie had gone through all the same logic and analysis training classes that he had. He waited for her to say, “I’m telling,” so he could say, “I’m telling first.” And then he could figure out how to negotiate her silence.

But Natalie said nothing. She just sniffed.

It was funny—just that one sniff made Ian determined that Natalie would never have to find out what he’d just learned about their parents. He never wanted her reading about how Irina Spasky had died.

“Go back to bed,” Ian said. “There’s nothing to look at here.”

“There are secrets here,” Natalie said stubbornly. “Explanations.”

She looked up at her big brother.

“You don’t trust them, either, do you?” she said. “That’s why we’re both here.”

Ian sighed. Sometimes Natalie was too smart for her own good.

“Don’t worry about it,” he said. “Just think about the next Prada bag Mum will buy you.”

“No,” Natalie said. “I have to know—what’s happened to her? Why is she being so mean? Mean all the time, even to us?”

Ian shrugged helplessly. Keeping the beam of the flashlight low, he backed up slightly so Natalie wouldn’t see the mess of files on the floor. He accidentally backed into a desk, knocking himself off-kilter. He reached around and grabbed at the edge of the desk, but his fingers brushed something else. A ... test tube?

Ian spun around and held it in the light.



“That’s not fair,” Natalie said, a familiar whininess back in her voice. But this time it was whininess on Ian’s behalf. “You’re the one who found the serum. They should at least have shared it with you.”

“We’re just servants to them,” Ian said. “Minions. Like” — he swallowed hard — “like Irina.”



## CHAPTER 5

Dan felt cheated.

Nellie and Amy had convinced him that he *had* to come to *Romeo and Juliet* because it would be a good place to look for a Clue.

“It’s about feuding families,” Nellie had said. “Don’t you think that’s related?”

Besides, the two had told him, the play would be exciting.

“Back in Shakespeare’s day, theater wasn’t seen as high class and literary and all that,” Amy had said, practically reading the words right from the computer screen. “It was meant to appeal to common people. On the same level as the other big entertainment in Elizabethan London — bear baiting.”

“What’s bear baiting?” Dan had asked.

Amy had put her hands over Saladin’s ears before answering.

“Oh, it was awful,” she said. “They’d chain up a bear and then let a bunch of other animals — usually dogs—attack. Everybody would watch to see if the bear killed the dogs or the dogs killed the bear.”

“Sounds like *Survivor*,” Nellie said. Her face turned grim. “Or this clue hunt.”

“Well, anyhow,” Amy said quickly. “There are sword fights in *Romeo and Juliet*. Two or three of them. You’ll love those.”

So now Dan had been sitting in the Globe Theatre for what felt like hours, and he was bored out of his mind. Sure, there’d been a sword fight. One. But Dan had missed most of it because he was leaning over to Amy and asking, “Wait—what are they fighting about? Just because the one guy bit his thumb at the other guy? What’s wrong with that?”

“It was a terrible insult in Shakespeare’s time,” Amy had explained.

“Well, then—can I bite my thumb at Isabel Kabra the next time I see her?”

Just then the sword fight had ended. And ever since, the play had mostly been people saying sappy things about love.

Now the girl, Juliet, was standing on a balcony that jutted out above the stage.

“O Romeo, Romeo,” she sighed. “Wherefore art thou Romeo?”

Dan dug his elbow into Amy’s side.

“What’s her problem — is she blind?” Dan asked. “Can’t she see that Romeo dude on the stage right below her?”

“It’s supposed to be nighttime,” Amy whispered. “It’s dark, and he’s hiding.”

“He’s not hiding very well,” Dan said.

“Anyhow, ‘wherefore’ means ‘why,’ not ‘where,’” Amy said.

That was crazy. “Wherefore” sure sounded like it was supposed to mean “where.” Dan’s opinion of Shakespeare was sinking lower and lower.

“But—” Dan began.

“Shh,” Amy hissed. “I want to hear this.”

She settled back, a dreamy look on her face. Beside her, Nellie looked every bit as rapt.

Dan glanced around. It seemed like every single other person in the theater was staring up at Juliet with that same goofy expression that Amy and Nellie had. Even the people standing in the middle of the theater where there wasn’t a roof, where the rain was pouring right down on their heads.

Amy had said that those people were called groundlings, and they didn’t have a roof over their heads because this theater was supposed to be historically accurate, as much like theaters back in Shakespeare’s time as possible.

Dan thought that if he’d been standing in the rain watching a stupid play about love, he wouldn’t have minded a little historical inaccuracy to keep his head dry.

Dan's attention wandered further. He looked toward the top of the theater, three stories up. He and Amy and Nellie had seats off to the side, near the stage, so he had a good view of the ring of thatched roof that protected everyone who wasn't a groundling. Amy had told him it was the only thatched roof in London — and it was allowed only because they'd used special flame-retardant thatch.

The original Globe Theatre had burned to the ground.

*Another fire, Dan thought. Probably set by feuding Cahills even way back in the 1600s.*

Dan's stomach churned. This had been happening to him ever since Jamaica, ever since he'd watched an innocent man die. Dan had gone into shock right afterward, but since then he'd worked very hard to convince Nellie and Amy he was back to normal.

*I am, Dan told himself.*

Except when he thought about Lester too much, or when he remembered how dangerous the Clue hunt was. Then his stomach churned and his vision blurred and his mind blanked and he wasn't sure if he was going to throw up or faint or just start screaming and screaming and screaming....

Dan forced himself to focus very intently on the thatch. Maybe there was a Clue hidden up there and he would see it while Nellie and Amy were watching the play.

A hand appeared in the section of thatch Dan was staring at.

Dan jerked back and blinked hard.

Was he hallucinating? Imagining Lester reaching up out of the quicksand all over again?

Dan made himself look again. He wasn't hallucinating. There was a hand holding on to the thatch. While Dan watched, a dark figure appeared behind the hand: Somebody was holding on and peering over the peak of the roof section directly opposite the stage.

Two more dark-clad heads appeared beside the first.

Dan tugged on Amy's arm. He reminded himself not to act like he'd just thought he was hallucinating a dead man's hand.

“You didn’t tell me there were going to be ninjas!” he said excitedly.

“What are you talking about? There aren’t ninjas in *Romeo and Juliet*!” Amy said.

“Sure there are,” Dan said. “Look!” He pointed toward the back section of roof. “How soon until they rappel down onto the stage?”

Amy looked up at the roof, too.

“Oh, no,” she moaned.

In the brief moment that Dan had looked away, the three ninja figures had begun pulling other clothes over their dark costumes. They were the same kind of clothes the people on the stage were wearing: old-fashioned dresses for two of them, and breeches and a tunic for the third. Then the ninjas began following the peak of the thatch around, toward the roof section that hung over the stage.

“What are they looking for?” Amy muttered, because every few steps they plunged some sort of testing stick down into the thatch.

The ninjas in Elizabethan clothing passed on to a section of roof that Amy and Dan couldn’t see because it was practically right overhead. Amy surprised Dan by diving over the people sitting in front of them.

“Excuse me, excuse me, sorry to get in your way,” she said on her way down, as people gasped and grumbled. Only Amy would apologize in the middle of a dive. At the bottom, Amy did something like a flip and landed on her feet in the groundling section.

“They’re pushing something down the drainpipe!” she hissed back to Dan.

Dan glanced at Nellie — still, amazingly, staring raptly at *Romeo and Juliet* onstage. Then he imitated Amy’s dive and flipped into the groundlings.

“What drainpipe?” he asked Amy.

She pointed.

A tube ran down along the side of the stage from the roof, painted to blend in with all the frilly stage decorations. Dan thought about telling Amy that it wouldn't really work as a drainpipe because it'd been capped at the top. But the pseudo-ninjas had taken the cap off and were putting some sort of chain down the tube.

"That's a plumber's snake," Dan told Amy. "One of those things you use to clear out clogged —"

A rolled-up paper popped out of the bottom of the tube.

Amy dived for it.

"That's ours!" the breeches-clad ninja yelled down at her.

"Too bad!" Dan yelled back. "It's ours now!"

The people around him turned and glared and made shushing noises, but Dan didn't care. He was sure the paper was another lead. That was all he could think about. He didn't even care which team the ninjas were from. They were still three stories up, on the roof. Dan and Amy had all the time in the world to escape.

Then the breeches-clad ninja pulled out a rope. He staked one end of it in the roof and shinnied down it, straight toward Amy and Dan.

Dan glanced around frantically. Back at their seats, Nellie had stopped watching the play and was watching them. She was white-faced and worried looking, gesturing wildly.

"Go! Run!" she screamed, pointing toward the exit. "I'll meet you outside!"

But the groundlings around Amy and Dan surged toward the ninja on the rope, angrily muttering things like, "That's not supposed to happen in the balcony scene!" Dan was caught between a man's large belly on one side and a woman's dripping raincoat on the other. He couldn't even see Nellie anymore.

Amy grabbed his arm and pulled.

"This way!" she screamed.

There was only one way to escape: up.

Onto the stage.

Jonah had a bad seat at the Globe.

Before the play started, he'd distracted himself from thinking about his mother's plans by sending a text to his dad:

Yo Can hardly see stage b/c column  
in way Make sure this never happens  
2 fans at my shows

But his mother must have been intercepting his father's messages because she was the one who texted back:

U R not there to enjoy the play

Jonah's seat was in the section above Amy and Dan's. They couldn't see him, but he would be able to watch their every move when they left their seats. And then he would be able to ...

*Don't think about it*, Jonah told himself.

The play started. The actors sang and laughed; the actors fought. Jonah stopped thinking of them as actors. He could almost believe that what he saw was real. The prince of the city came out and said anyone who started another fight would be put to death.

Jonah started to sweat.

And then he couldn't hear anything else because the prince's words kept echoing in his ears: "If ever you disturb our streets again/Your lives shall pay the forfeit of the peace ... On pain of death, all men depart."

*Your lives shall pay ... Your lives shall pay ... On pain of death, depart ...*

Jonah didn't depart. He sat there, numbly, until he saw Amy and Dan scramble down out of their section and grab something from the floor of the theater.

*Can't I just tell Mom they were too far below me to attack?* he wondered.

His mother didn't like excuses.