

Chapter One

Something bad happened in my town a long time ago.

I don't believe in ghosts, but my best friend, Syd, swears that last September she spotted the one said to haunt Sawyer's Bridge. She was walking home after dark when she saw a figure in a long coat crossing the bridge toward her. When the man

got halfway across, Syd blinked and he was gone. Lots of people have seen him over the years, but no one can agree on why he's on that bridge or what he's waiting for.

The way I see it, if there *is* a ghost, we have something in common. We both haunt the bridge. There's no need to get in each other's way. He can have the night, and I'll take the day.

Now that summer break has started, I'm out here almost every day, searching for treasure. There's a boat-rental place upriver where people launch rafts and kayaks. Thing is, they aren't too careful and tend to drop sunglasses and phones and even wedding rings into the water.

I find them in the silt and do my best to return them to their owners. Phones are easiest, as long as they still turn on. And for anything I can't identify, Syd's dad is always happy to help. He runs the local pawnshop and keeps a lost-and-found box for all the stuff I bring in.

Today, though, there aren't any phones. The almost-noon sun bakes my bare shoulders, but it feels nice after the cold river. The empty cans and fishing lures are laid out on the wooden planks of the bridge. It's the least impressive photo shoot ever. There isn't even a cool lure in the bunch, just plain weights and hooks. But I log everything, even the boring stuff, on my social feed.

There are a bunch of us who look for lost things, but the serious ones are looking for *old* stuff. They take their metal detectors through fields, searching for history. Sometimes they go places where important things happened a hundred or more years ago. I'd like to try that someday, but I like my river. It's familiar. It comes from the mountains and flows out to the sea. For this brief stretch under the bridge, all the possibilities it carries are mine...if I can catch them.

Except there hasn't been anything interesting for a while. I'm starting to feel a little lost myself.

Just as I'm taking the first picture of my finds, I hear something that freezes the water on my skin.

A horrible laugh carries over the rush of the river.

Oh no.

My heart kicks into high gear. I sweep the cans and lures into my mesh bag, along with my phone in its waterproof case, and jump feet first into the river. My swimming goggles flap around my neck. It's only fifteen feet to the water. I dive from the highest board at the pool, no problem. But the pool is deeper.

The water catches me, bouncing me up and down, and it takes me a second to find my place in the current. I kick to the surface and break into the air with barely a gasp. A dozen bike tires rumble over the uneven boards of the bridge. The boys on the bikes are still cackling like hyenas, but they don't notice me. Only one of them glances at the puddle the cans and I left on the wood. He doesn't look further.

They don't see me this time.

I lie back, my toes catching the breeze above the surface, and let the river carry me away. My heart is still pounding at the near miss, and I need a moment to breathe. My mom says I'm "conflict averse." She doesn't say it like it's a bad thing, but it doesn't feel good. I don't like arguments or fights or any kind of confrontation. They make my heart beat fast when I'm standing still, and I can't think straight.

What can I say? I'd rather go with the flow.

I manage to get my goggles back on without too much water inside them. I flip over to scan the riverbed drifting by under me. Among stones and tangling river plants, a half-crumpled can catches the sunlight. When I dive down and pluck it, a cloud of silt puffs up. I'm already moving on as I shove the can into my bag.

Hold on. One of those stones didn't look right.

I twist around and grab a big rock to help me push against the current. I shove my hand into the

cloud of silt and—*there!* I grab something way too smooth and light to be a stone. It's round and flat and fits in my palm.

The air is starting to burn in my lungs, and my mouth wants to fly open. I shove the weird object into my bag and kick for the surface.

The current carries me a little farther as I swim for the riverbank.

A guy fishing on the bank waves. "Nice day to be on the river, eh?"

"Always. Hey, want some weights?" I grab the handful of lead weights tangled in fishing line out of my bag.

"These are in good shape. Thanks." He touches the brim of his hat, which has brightly colored lures stuck into it.

"Have a good one!" With a wave goodbye, I climb the bank, using bushes to haul myself up. The path that follows the river is mostly empty. As I head back toward the bridge, water sloshes from my swim

shorts and shoes. There's a trail of dark gravel behind me. It looks like a river monster decided to go for a walk.

I dig into my mesh bag for the mystery item. Out of the water, it's very cold. I pull it out and am surprised to see a watch. It looks like the pocket watches old-timey people on TV have. My mom's obsessed with those shows.

One side has a design etched into the metal, and the other side is plain. There's a button on the top, but it won't budge. There must be silt stuck in it. No matter how hard I push or pull, I can't get it open.

"Theo!"

My body jerks in surprise, and I drop the watch.

Chapter Two

The watch bounces toward the bushes and the steep incline, but I grab it before it can disappear. Clutching the watch to my chest, I turn to face the person who shouted.

Thankfully, it's not my mom yelling at me for going swimming in the river alone. It's just Syd. Her wild blond hair and freckles stand out in the summer sun. She's wearing a faded-black band

T-shirt and jeans cut off at the knees. Four years ago she decided we were going to be best friends. Who was I to argue with that? I hope she never changes her mind.

"Want some lunch?" She lifts a paper bag, and I see the logo for the local café on the side. My stomach rumbles loudly. I guess swimming and climbing for two hours works up an appetite.

Syd drops onto a bench while I run to get my backpack. I keep it stashed in the bushes under the bridge while I'm in the river. It's got my shirt, water bottle, sunscreen and house key.

As I sit down next to Syd, she hands me a fresh sandwich wrapped in wax paper. I barely manage to say, "Thanks!" before I sink my teeth into it, and mustard and mayo splurt everywhere. The Creekside Café seriously has the best sandwiches in town.

"Find anything good?" Syd asks as she unwraps her own sandwich.

I'm still chewing a massive bite, so I hold out the watch without a word.

Syd's eyebrows shoot up. "That's new. I mean, it's really old, but you know what I mean." She forgets her lunch and takes the watch. She tilts the etched side in the sun and squints. "Is that a ship? This thing needs a polish."

When the button won't budge for her either, she pulls a Swiss Army knife from her pocket. The watch doesn't stand a chance against Syd. She's got the thin blade in the crack and—*click*. The clasp releases and the lid opens a fraction.

"You did it!"

"It's all about how you twist your wrist." Syd grins as she hands the watch back.

The hinge is stiff, and I'm afraid of breaking it, but I've got to see what's inside. I gently pry it open to reveal the watch face. The numbers are all fancy and loopy, and there are words in cursive under the twelve. The hands are stuck at ten forty-six.

"What's that?" Syd says, pointing to the inside of the lid.

Someone's written something right into the metal, but it's hard to read. Some of the shapes don't even look like real letters.

Syd rubs her thumb over it and slowly reads, "*Son...fearless...ports...you?* It's too hard to read like this." She flips it over and frowns. "What does this look like to you?"

Next to her finger are small, precise scratches that look a lot like letters. "What's J.R.?" I ask.

"Not what, who!" Syd's eyes are bright with excitement. "If you find out, you can return it to them."

I scoff. "There's no way whoever lost this is still walking around town. It's been down there for ages." I *wish* I could return it. How epic would that be? Something like this was sure to be missed. I could've put a big wrongness to right. At least I have something other than cans and lead weights