

I started digging carefully like I'd learned from my handbook, *Treasure Hunting 101*. Rule number one: Always protect the scene.

My fingers found something solid. It felt like a bottle. I pulled it out of the sand and held it over my head like a trophy. I had found the first treasure of the day!

"Hey!" Sam called out. "What's that?" He ran into the water and stood next to me.

"Aw," said my little brother, joining us. "It's just a bottle."

"Hang on," I said. Something clinked inside the bottle.

I flipped the bottle over. With a *THUNK*, a blob of wet sand fell out. Stuck inside the bottle was a beautiful pink shell that glimmered. I tried to shake it out.

"Whoa, that's cool," Sam said. "I've never seen a shell like that before."

"Maybe it's from the ocean!" my brother said.

"That's impossible, Bug," I said. My brother is eight years old. His real name is Ben. Mom thinks I call him Bug because he likes creepy crawlers. But really it's because he's so annoying, a real pain in my butt. I always have to babysit him.

"Is not," Bug said. He crossed his arms.

I grunted. The closest ocean is more than a thousand miles away. But Bug had a point. This shell did not look like any of the brown clamshells I'd found at the bottom of the lake.

I shrugged. "Lost treasure?"

We made our way back to the beach. Sam and Bug followed me up to the rocky ledge where we'd left our bags and bikes. Close to Mrs. Wilson's cabin, it was the perfect place to stash our stuff, away from the crowds of people on the beach.

Bug pushed between us. "How did that big shell get in that tiny opening anyway?" he asked.

"Beat it, Bug." I peered into the bottle. I'd seen a ship in a bottle before, down at the Treasure Trove,

Chapter One

I dug deep into the muddy sand. I was looking for treasure at the bottom of the lake. But the more I dug, the darker the water got. Then something soft touched my foot. I froze. What was it? A weed? Or, worse, a hungry fish? I was a treasure hunter, not a diver. I needed to get out of here!

As soon as my head popped out of the water, I gasped for air. I was at the very far end of the

marked swimming area. I thought again about what could be moving around below me. Why had I swum out so far? I knew if Mom were here, she'd tell me to just take a breath, that my active imagination was always working overtime. But she was at work right now. She is a park ranger for Buffalo Pound Provincial Park. That's why we live here.

I love living at the lake. I can ride my bike anywhere I want to go. I have hills to explore. And my best friend, Sam, lives close by, so we can hang out most days. But the lake water hides a ton of scaly creatures that make me nervous. Have you ever seen a fish up close? Their big eyes, spiky fins and sharp teeth make them look like monsters.

"Hurry up, Macy!" Sam called from the shore. He was standing next to my little brother. Real nice. They left me alone out here to be fish food.

I looked around, trying to figure out the fastest way out of the lake. Old Lady Wilson's dock was to

the right. In front of me was the beach. To my left were tall reeds—they were a bit closer, but I hate the feel of moving through them.

Something soft touched my foot again. The creature had found me! This time it grabbed on to my toes!

"Ahh!" I screamed, kicking my feet furiously. It wasn't letting go!

I swam as fast as I could toward the beach. When I reached the shallow water, I tried to stand but slipped on the thing attached to my foot. I fell back into the water and grabbed at my toes. It was just a chunk of lake weed. I laughed, but then remembered that leeches and other creepy crawlers love to hide in lake weed.

I stood up quickly. I looked down at my feet to make sure there was nothing near them. That's when I spotted something sparkly under the water. I had to investigate. Finding things is kind of my thing.