

STORM WARNING



LINDA SUE PARK

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To Ginger Knowlton, who is never clueless.

—L.S.P.



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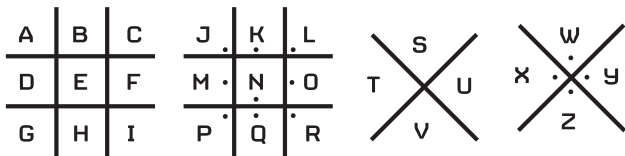
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CHAPTER 1

“Bahamas.”

“Jamaica.”

“Bahamas.”

“Jamaica.”

Dan gritted and clenched every part of his body that could be gritted or clenched. He tried one more time. “BA-HA-MAS. Amy, think about it—”

“*I am* thinking about it!” his sister shot back. “Which is more than you’re doing! Look, if we’re going to go where *she* went, it has to be Jamaica. She wasn’t even a pirate when she lived in the Bahamas!”

They were talking about Anne Bonny, who had disguised herself as a man and become a swashbuckling pirate way back in the 1700s. And who might—or might not—be one of their ancestors. In China, Dan had found a miniature portrait of a woman with Anne Bonny’s name on the back. It was their only lead to the next step in their quest.

Amy and Dan were Cahills. For more than five

hundred years, Cahill family members had been among the most influential people in the world. Scientists like Galileo and Marie Curie; artists and writers like Vincent Van Gogh and Mark Twain; world leaders—Napoleon and George Washington; the list went on and on . . . and it was looking like Anne Bonny might have been a Cahill, too.

In the early 1500s, the Cahill family had separated into branches, each bearing the legacy of a child born to Gideon and Olivia Cahill. Oldest son, Luke: the Lucians. Strategists, politicians, businesspeople. Sister Katherine: the Ekaterina branch, innovators and inventors. Brother Thomas: the Tomas clan of explorers, adventurers, and athletes. And sister Jane: the Janus line, populated by artists and visionaries. Since that time, the factions had been battling one another in a desperate race to find the secret to becoming the most powerful people on the planet.

Amy and Dan had joined that race. Not that they knew what they were doing at first. When their beloved grandmother Grace died, the terms of her will gave them a hint toward the first Clue—and set in motion an adventure they could never have imagined.

Not alone, either. Other teams were chasing down the Clues, too—teams that would do anything to keep Amy and Dan from getting there first. Explosions, cave-ins, attempts to poison them, drown them, bury them alive. In France, Austria, Japan, Korea, Egypt, Australia, South Africa, China . . . Dan and Amy had

survived it all, finding several of the precious Clues along the way.

And they *still* didn't know what they were doing.



They were now in the Beijing airport waiting for Nellie, their au pair, who was at the currency exchange window.

“Jamaica was the last place anyone ever saw or heard of her,” Amy said. She had already researched Anne Bonny online. “So that’s where we should start looking.”

“But—” Dan stopped, trying desperately to think of a way around Amy’s reasoning. She was good at this stuff, at seeing the big picture. He was more a detail guy, and right now he was very interested in one particular detail about the Bahamas.

Amy looked him right in the eye. “I know what you’re thinking, Daniel Arthur Cahill,” she said sternly. “Don’t be ridiculous. We’ve got to beat the other teams to the next clue. We don’t have time to waste at some dumb amusement park.”

Dan yelped. “‘Dumb amusement park’? Is that what you think it is? Don’t you know *anything*? Oceanus is the biggest water park in the world! They’ve got, like, a hundred waterslides! And you can swim with dolphins! And see stingrays and piranhas!”

“Ha!” Amy pointed at him in triumph. “I *knew* you were thinking about Oceanus!”

"Well, it's the last thing *you'd* think about," Dan said bitterly. "The only person in the world who has no idea how to have fun, and she has to be my sister. No wait, I take that back. Your idea of fun is a library open twenty-four–seven."

Amy's eyes widened in hurt. "D-Dan, that's not f-fair," she said, her slight stammer surfacing as it always did when she was upset.

Dan's shoulders slumped. Hurting Amy's feelings always made him feel bad, but honestly, sometimes he couldn't help it. "Look, I know you think it doesn't make sense for us to go to the Bahamas first. But we don't know for sure that the clue is in Jamaica, either."

"True," Amy admitted.

Dan sensed her softening and strained his brain to come up with something that would convince her. "With every clue we've found, it's always been because we discovered a bunch of other stuff along the way, right? In the 'wrong' places. But if we hadn't gone to the wrong places first, we wouldn't have gotten what we needed to find the clue in the *right* place."

His face was a little red now from the effort of trying to explain. "What I mean is, it's turned out that we were *right* to go to the wrong places first. Voilà, the Bahamas!"

Amy burst out laughing. "Do you realize what you're saying? You're admitting that I'm right about Jamaica!"

Dan grinned. "You get to be right, and I get to go to

Oceanus." He punched her on the arm. "That's what's known as win-win."

In their mutual satisfaction, neither of them remembered that the Kabras had a villa in the Bahamas.

The super-rich, super-Lucian family headed by Isabel Kabra, who had already tried to eliminate both Dan and Amy from the hunt.

And who, years before, had murdered their parents.



Nellie rejoined them, bobbing her head in time to whatever was playing on her iPod, as usual. Dan had once suggested that she have the earbuds implanted surgically, since she hardly ever took them out.

"Okay, kids, ticket counter," Nellie said. She nodded approvingly. "Bahamas—now *that's* what I'm talkin' about, dude! Beach chair, here I come!"

On the way to the ticket counter, Nellie stopped in the restroom. When she emerged, she took their passports from them.

They had the routine down pat now: Nellie got in the ticket line and dealt with the agent, while Dan and Amy stood behind her, trying to look as much as possible like two kids traveling with their au pair on a pleasant trip to see nice relatives somewhere. Not like two kids constantly on the run from scheming, murderous, cutthroat relatives, which is what they actually were.

“Three tickets to the Bahamas,” Nellie said to the ticket agent.

While he waited, Dan checked his phone messages. He frowned as he listened. “Hamilton called,” he said to Amy after he closed the phone.

“What did he want?”

Dan shook his head. “The signal was terrible, he kept cutting in and out. But”—he looked around suspiciously—“somehow his dad already knew where we were going.”

Amy gasped. “How is that possible? We didn’t even know where we were going until, like, five minutes ago! And the only other person—” She stopped, her eyes wide.

“While she was in the bathroom!” Dan exclaimed.

Together they turned and stared at Nellie’s back as she stood at the ticket counter.



Amy felt her heart sinking. She squeezed her eyes shut for a moment, remembering other times when Nellie’s actions had seemed suspicious. When she opened them again, she saw that Dan looked exactly how she felt. There was distress on every square inch of his face. Even his nose, if that were possible.

In the last few months, they had spent more time with Nellie than anyone else. *She’s more than an au pair now—she’s like a cousin*, Amy thought. *Maybe even an older sister. How could she possibly—*

“We have to figure out what she’s up to,” Dan said. “We’ll grill her on the plane, where she can’t get away from us. But I gotta tell you the rest of what Hamilton said.”

After one more worried look at Nellie, Amy turned back toward him.

“So Eisenhower finds out we’re going to the Bahamas,” Dan said, “and Hamilton didn’t really understand it all, but he said his dad said something about a cat, and how we got it all wrong, and the Bahamas wasn’t the right place. They’re going to South Carolina instead.”

“Did he know about the portrait? About Anne Bonny?” Amy asked.

“I don’t know. He didn’t say anything about her, just something about a cat.”

“A cat? Was he talking about Saladin?”

“No. The call kept breaking up, and I didn’t really get it all, but definitely not Saladin. Speaking of which—”

He took Saladin out of the pet carrier and stroked the cat for a few moments. Amy could sense that he was still thinking about Nellie and had turned to Saladin for a brief moment of comfort.

Saladin snuggled into Dan’s arms and purred—the only one among the three of them who was perfectly content.

CHAPTER 2

Nellie's jaw dropped.

"You're giving *me* the window seat?" she said, incredulous.

She was momentarily stunned by their generosity but didn't hesitate to snatch up this rare gift. She settled into the seat and rested her head against the window.

After takeoff, Dan reached over and plucked the earbuds out of her ears.

"Dude!" she said. "What are you doing?"

"Right question," Dan said. "What are *you* doing?" He pulled the cord out of the iPod and held the earbuds out of her reach.

Amy took the earbuds from Dan and wound the cord neatly, away from Nellie's swiping hand. "Nellie, cut it out," she said. "We — we really need to talk."

Nellie felt a prickle of unease, which she covered with an exasperated sigh. "What's the problem now? You said Europe, I took you to Europe. You said Japan, so I took you there, and then Egypt and Russia and — and I don't even know where else, I can't keep

track—and now you said the Bahamas, so we’re on our way. What’s to talk about?”

Dan crossed his arms sternly. For a fleeting moment, Nellie almost wanted to pat him on the head; with his face so serious, he looked younger somehow.

“How’s this for starters,” he said. “You somehow magically get us permits to go to Tibet when it takes months for most people. You make one phone call, and all of a sudden we have access to the only helicopter in the world that can get to the top of Everest. The Holts found out that we’re going to the Bahamas when no one else but you knew. And in Russia, we heard a message on your phone, asking for a ‘status report.’”

Nellie had known this moment would come sooner or later; she’d been praying it would be later.

Well, here goes, she thought. Maybe she could distract them. . . . She tossed her head.

“Great. I leave school to look after you guys; I leave *the country* and go wild-goose-chasing all over the world, which has my parents just thrilled, thank you very much; I even save your necks more than once, and this is the thanks I get?”

Amy looked miserable. Nellie felt a surge of pity. Poor kid. Even with an au pair around, Amy had been shouldering burdens that would crush many adults.

“Nellie, it’s not that we don’t trust you,” she said. “Except that Mr. McIntyre told us not to trust *anyone*. And what Dan said—well, can’t you see how it looks kind of fishy to us?”

When the going gets tough, the tough go to the bathroom. Nellie unclasped her seat belt. "If you'll excuse me, I need to use the restroom."

Neither of them budged. "Ah," she said. "So that's why you gave me the window seat. I should have known something was up."

Dan twisted in his seat so he was blocking her way even more.

Nellie bit her lip and stared down at her lap. Thoughts were racing through her head. *That secrecy clause in my contract—fifty thousand dollars extra if I make it through without telling them. Fifty thousand! But I never thought things would get so complicated . . . and it's probably going to get way worse before this is over.*

Without looking up, she could feel their eyes boring into her. They wouldn't be fooled easily.

The truth, then. But not the whole truth. Not who I'm really working for. Just enough to get them off my back for now.

She made up her mind. "Okay," she said. "I shouldn't be doing this, but I can't stand it anymore. I'm going to tell you everything."

She pushed the button to recline her seat its full three-quarters of an inch. "Get comfy, kids," she said. "This is a long story."



Amy felt almost like she was falling. It was as if someone had yanked out the rug she was standing on and

thrown her completely off balance. Even though she was sitting down.

Nellie, whom they had trusted and relied on and confided in all these weeks . . . she wasn't who they thought she was.

She wasn't a random college student hired by Aunt Beatrice to be their au pair. Not even close.

Nellie had just told them that she was being paid by Mr. McIntyre to look after them—and that all along, she had been sending him reports about their activities.

Without realizing it, Amy took hold of Dan's hand. She looked at him and saw that his face was pale, his lips almost colorless. He didn't pull his hand away.

Nellie was just getting started.

"It was Grace who hired me," she said. "When she made out her will, she must have guessed that you would go after the clues. And that the other teams would have grown-ups or money or both. So she planned it out carefully. She wanted you to have someone along who could help you with all the travel stuff and drive and everything. She told me you'd be hunting for clues and that things might get a little tricky. But she sure as heck didn't tell me what I was really getting into!"

Nellie shook her head.

"I had to interview three different times. For *hours*—man, did she grill me. I knew I had a good shot when I told her that I knew how to fly a plane. And when I finally got the job, she told your Aunt Beatrice

that if she fired me, she wouldn't get anything in the will. Your grandmother was one smart lady."

Dan cleared his throat. "No wonder you've lasted so long," he said slowly. "Before you, Aunt Beatrice got rid of au pairs like they were cockroaches or something."

"I swear I've never told any of the other teams a single thing," Nellie said. "I tell McIntyre, and he decides what to do with the information. So like with the Bahamas? Yeah, I told him. But I didn't tell the Holts. *He* must have told them, and he must have had his reasons, but he usually doesn't tell me what they are. Otherwise, my only job is to keep you safe."

Silence.

"Don't you get it?" Nellie asked, sounding a little desperate. "Keeping in touch with McIntyre was part of the job description right from the start. It's what they've been paying me for all along."

Finally, Amy forced out a few words. "All this time?" she whispered. "All this time you've been ratting us out for the money?"

"No," Nellie said fiercely. "I got into it because of the money. But now—"

Amy hardly noticed the unfinished sentence because of the hot tears gathering in her eyes. She couldn't have said exactly what she was feeling. Anger? Sadness? Fear? Confusion?

Answer E, all of the above.

How can we believe her now when she's been lying to us for so long?

She unbuckled her seat belt and stood up abruptly. “Excuse us,” she said in what she hoped was a cold voice. Still holding Nellie’s earbuds, she walked the length of the plane with Dan behind her. When they got to the back, Amy spoke in a ghostly whisper.

“From now on, we don’t let her know *anything* about what we’re doing,” she said.

Dan stared at her in alarm. “We can’t do that, Amy! We need her to—I mean, without her—” He was floundering for the right words. “She still has to drive us and—and everything. What are we gonna do about that?”

The stricken expression on his face told her more than his words. What he was really saying was, *We’re up against schemers and thieves and murderers! We’re just kids—we can’t do this on our own!*

She swallowed her own panic and tried to speak calmly. “We’ll have to play it by ear. Like, we can tell her where to go but still not say what we’re going to do when we get there, see what I mean?”

“Okay,” he said after a long pause. “We’ll figure it out as we go along, right?”

Amy swiped at her eyes with her sleeve. She still felt shaky, but standing there with Dan had strengthened her resolve a little. *At least we’ve got each other. . . .*

“Right,” she said in as normal a voice as she could manage.

Normal. Amy didn’t even know what the word meant anymore.