

Prologue



THE GIRL SEES THE fleeing of the birds, then feels the fast rush of air. For a moment she cannot comprehend the surge of raging muddy water that crests the seawall and spills into the streets below.

The chaos is immediate. The world spins. There are screams, sounds of wood splitting, metal grating and, above everything, the deafening roar of rushing water.

From where the girl stands on the roof of the building, she can see in every direction, and she knows her city will never be the same again. Not after this. She kneels on the roof, watching debris rush past her on a river of water and mud that has consumed everything in its wake. She grasps at the

glass ball on the chain around her neck, feeling it pulse and grow warm in her frigid hand. She is suddenly awake. Aware. Her ears prick and she smells the air.

A woman struggles in the water below, and the girl quickly drops to her belly and extends both of her arms.

“Hurry!” she insists, and the woman takes hold with a fierce grip. But another surge hits, and the woman lets go. A moment later she is gone.

Almost immediately, a small boy appears clutching part of a boat.

“Take my hand!” the girl screams. There is terror in the boy’s eyes, and he paddles furiously toward the girl but it is no use. The force of the water is too strong.

There are more people in the water. The girl tries over and over to pull them to safety, but no one is a match for the wave. One by one, they vanish below the surface.

The girl begins to panic. Surely she can save one! Surely one of them can hang on long enough.

Someone surfaces directly below her and pleads for help, and the girl lunges for the outstretched arms and misses. A flailing hand grasps the necklace she wears and it breaks. The arm disappears, and the girl watches in horror as the glowing glass ball drops from the broken chain at her neck and then vanishes into the dark water. She throws her head back and cries out—a wild sound that is more animal than human.

Chapter One



“MORNING, KID.” My aunt stands bleary-eyed at the kitchen counter. She pours herself a cup of coffee, the first of the morning. “Running a little late, aren’t you?”

“It’s okay,” I say, pouring cereal into my bowl. “I don’t have to be at the government dock until 9:00.”

“Well, you don’t want to dawdle.” Aunt Maddie has the worst case of bed head I have ever seen. Really! On a scale of one to ten, it’s about a fourteen. Instinctively, I smooth out my own hair, but it doesn’t really do any good. I guess the bad hair gene runs strong in our family. Even my father’s hair was ridiculous, before it all fell out, that is. Now he’s just bald.

Aunt Maddie has been around for a few days, having told

Dad, who left last week for a writer's conference in Ontario, that she "needed a break from the city." But she isn't fooling anyone, especially me. I know she's just here because of my recent meltdown—the one I had when Dad brought up the subject of moving to Victoria. Again! I know things are serious with him and Anne, and I'm happy he's found someone, but there's no way I'm leaving Cowichan Bay and going to a new school next year. Dad says our houseboat needs too many expensive repairs, and it isn't worth hanging onto in today's market, but I disagree. Our houseboat is priceless. It's our home!

When I'm finished my cereal, my aunt snatches my bowl away and plunks it down on the counter.

"Are you trying to get rid of me or something?" I bend down to scoop up Chuck, my fat orange cat, from a patch of sun on the floor. He immediately becomes boneless, a trick he loves to perform whenever he is roused too early from one of his epic naps. I drop him on the kitchen counter, and he quickly checks out the milky puddle in my cereal bowl. His bad mood evaporates instantly. Chuck is a sucker for those toasty little O's.

"Hannah!" Aunt Maddie glares at me over her coffee cup. "What would your dad think?"

I don't answer. These days I'm not sure about *anything* my dad thinks.

Aunt Maddie looks at my backpack and frowns. "Are you sure you packed enough socks, Han?" She looks genuinely

worried, as though my sock situation is a fate worse than death.

“Yes,” I say. “I have eighty-seven pairs. Pure wool. Made from rare and highly prized merino sheep.”

She rolls her eyes. “Come on, kid. It’s a legitimate question. Tofino is a damp place, especially in March. I should know. I did field work up there for eight straight months. I grew moss between my toes and mushrooms in my boots!”

Thankfully, there’s a knock on the front door—one I’d recognize anywhere. A second later the door swings open.

“Good morning, Izzy,” I yell as I rinse my now-empty cereal bowl in the sink. Lots of people just walk on in our front door, it’s one of the things I love most about living here. My friend, Izzy Tate, has been doing it for two years, and I never fail to recognize her distinctive knock: two loud raps. Confident and no-nonsense, just like her.

“Oh good,” Izzy says, tromping into our kitchen. She’s wearing gumboots with hand-painted daisies on them and an orange sweater. “You’re still here. I was afraid I wouldn’t get to say goodbye.” Her hair has grown out since last summer, and lately, she’s taken to wearing bright bandanas tied around her head. Today’s is red with white polka dots. Not everyone can pull off that Rosie the Riveter look, but Isabelle Tate sure can.

“I’m glad you stopped by,” I say after popping one of my aunt’s toast crusts into my mouth. “I wanted to remind you again about Chuck and Poos.”

Izzy sighs. “I *know*, Han. Chuck likes Cheerios, and Poos doesn’t like getting his feet wet. You’ve only told me, like, a hundred times.”

As though on cue, Poos appears outside on the deck, his mouth forming a silent “mew” to be let in. The diamond-shaped patch of white fur between his blue eyes looks a little furrowed, a sure sign he’s impatient to come inside.

“Speak of the devil,” Aunt Maddie says, opening the door. “Come on in, cat.” She refills her coffee mug, and waves the pot in the air. “Want some java, Iz?”

“Thanks, but I have to fly.” Izzy watches as Poos winds his little grey body around her ankles. “And Tyler said he’d drop me a coffee at work a bit later. I should actually go. If I don’t get that kayak painted by noon, I can kiss my job goodbye!”

Tyler is Izzy’s boyfriend. Ever since she met him, I don’t see much of her anymore. I’m not whining really—Tyler’s a nice guy—I just miss hanging out with Iz, that’s all. When she’s not at school, she pretty much splits her time between him and the coolest part-time job in the world: painting the boats at Blue Moon Kayaks. Right now she’s doing a stylized image of Tango and Oscar, the semi-orphaned eaglets we cared for last summer. Like all of Izzy’s artwork, it’s going to be awesome.

A horn blasts from the marina, and Aunt Maddie jumps in the air. It’s probably the coffee. Too much and she gets all twitchy.

“That’s the *Tzinquaw*,” my aunt says, clutching at her heart dramatically.

She would be right about that. Riley Waters, one of the original boat dwellers in the Bay, is a sea dog of many habits—one of which is to sound his boat’s horn every day at 9:00 a.m. No one really knows why he does it, but no one has ever called him on it either.

“See? You are now officially late,” Aunt Maddie says.

“And so am I,” Izzy says, making a beeline for the door.

“I’ll text you when I can!” I call after her. “Don’t forget about my kitties!”

She gives me the thumbs-up and closes the door behind her. I’m not really worried; she loves the cats just as much as I do.

Two minutes later, Aunt Maddie and I are rushing up dock #5 toward the shops along the road. I feel weighed down by my loaded backpack, and the hiking boots (my aunt’s old ones) that are tied to the frame slap awkwardly against my hip with every step I take.

“Slow down, Han,” Aunt Maddie says when we reach the road. “I wanted to talk with you for a minute.”

“But you’re the one worrying about my being late,” I say, not slowing down. Access to the government dock is at the other end of the village, and the clock *is* ticking.

She grabs my arm and stops me. “Come on. I just want to talk for a second.”

Great. When relatives say that, it’s never good. I look up and see Nell, who runs the Toad-in-the-Hole Bakery, hanging the bright yellow “Open” sign in the shop’s window.

“It’s about Victoria,” Aunt Maddie says.

I knew it!

She squeezes my arm. “You know, Hannah, moving to Victoria isn’t such a bad thing.”

“I don’t want to talk about it.”

“Well, you’re going to have to sooner or later. I spoke to your dad last night. It looks like he and Annie have found a house.”

I freeze. “What?”

“It’s right near Beacon Hill Park, a little cottage. Honestly, it sounds adorable. There’s a fenced yard and everything. You guys could finally get a dog. I think—”

“They found a house, and I’m the last to know about it?” I feel my ears start to burn.

“He called really late last night, Han. You were fast asleep.”

Nell opens the door of the bakery and gives us an enthusiastic wave. “Hey, ladies! Need a bite for the trip, Han?”

Saved by the Nell!

“Thanks, but no time,” I say, walking away from my aunt. “I have to go.”

“Too bad,” Nell shouts. “I have a bag of warm cinnamon donuts here with your name on it.”

I stop. She did, after all, say “warm” and “cinnamon” in the same sentence.

A moment later, Nell is pushing a brown paper bag into my hands. “You can never have too many donuts.”

Despite my cumbersome pack, I lean in and give her a