

**CAHILLS vs. VESPERS**

**TRUST NO ONE**



**LINDA SUE PARK**

SCHOLASTIC INC.

To Steve Mooser and Lin Oliver,  
with affection and admiration.

— L.S.P.

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# CHAPTER 1

The plane made its final approach into New York City. It was morning on this side of the ocean. Who knew what time it was in Timbuktu now?

Along with his sister, Amy, and two friends, Dan Cahill was a passenger on a private jet. The jet was owned by their distant cousin, hip-hop superstar Jonah Wizard. As Dan gazed out the window, he downed the last of the fresh strawberry and pineapple smoothie made to order by the cabin attendant.

It was a pretty amazing way to travel.

Dan leaned sideways a little to get a clearer glimpse of the skyline. He loved the view of all the iconic structures: the Empire State Building, the Chrysler Building, the Brooklyn Bridge.

And most of all, the Statue of Liberty, standing proud in the harbor. Dan would never have admitted it out loud, but whenever he flew into New York, he always felt like she was welcoming him personally, as she had so many travelers before him.

The cabin attendant, a calm and efficient man

named Victor, came by to take Dan's empty glass. He leaned over Dan's shoulder and pointed out the window toward the southern end of Manhattan.

"That's where the towers used to be," Victor said. "The World Trade Center buildings. You probably were just a baby when they went down."

It was true. Dan had never seen them in real life, only on video. It was easy to recall the footage from that day in September of 2001: the hijacked plane crashing into the first tower, then the second, gouging huge, jagged holes into the buildings. Floods of black smoke and fierce orange flames everywhere.

Even more horrific than the crashes themselves were the unbelievable moments that followed, when both of the massive superstructures collapsed and crumbled into dust, as if they were no sturdier than sand castles. The first time Dan saw the footage, he thought it looked like something out of a Hollywood action movie.

But it had been all too real. Nearly three thousand people had died.

"That part of Manhattan always looks so empty to me now," Victor said.

The southern end of Manhattan was hardly empty. There were hundreds of buildings massed together, short, tall, taller. It reminded Dan of a crowd jammed into one of Jonah's concerts: The tallest buildings were like the people who sit on their friends' shoulders so they can see better.

It was hard to imagine how or where two massive towers could have squeezed into that jumble.

“So sad,” Victor said, “the things people will do to each other.”

Dan sat back against the seat cushion and let out a sharp breath. Victor’s words had hit him like a body blow.

The Vespers.

They had already done terrible things to people Dan cared about. If they got everything they were after . . . Dan couldn’t imagine what they might do next.

He had to stop them. And he knew exactly how to do it.

All he had to do was finish assembling the serum—and then take it.



Amy had her phone out and ready. The moment the plane’s wheels touched the ground, she turned it on. It seemed to take forever before the home screen finally lit up.

And sure enough, there it was: a text message from Vesper One.

The winding trail now leads to Yale,  
and four-oh-eight is oh so great!  
Seventy-four and out the door.  
You have three days—or someone pays.

Observe the tetrameter and perfect rhymes. I could have been a poet, don't you know it?

For weeks now, Amy and Dan had been gofers for the Vespers, a shadowy cabal and nemesis of the Cahill family for centuries. With the help of Dan's best friend, Atticus Rosenbloom, and his brother, Jake, Amy and Dan had traveled the globe stealing artifacts, manuscripts, artwork, even jewels, at the behest of the anonymous Vesper One.

Why? Because the Vespers were holding hostages. Seven people whom the Cahills cared about deeply, including two members of their immediate family—their guardians, Nellie Gomez and Fiske Cahill.

Vesper One had threatened to kill the hostages if Dan and Amy did not perform the specified tasks. This was the latest assignment: Go to Yale and steal — what?

Amy forwarded the text to Evan, who was overseeing the Cahill headquarters in Attleboro, Massachusetts. She added nothing further; Evan would know from the message where they were headed next.

Besides, she had absolutely no idea what to say to him.

"Hi, how's it going?" Utterly banal, given the circumstances.

"We need to talk." Like they could take the time for a cozy heart-to-heart in the midst of this Vesper-induced insanity.

“I have something I need to tell you. I know we’re dating, but yesterday I kissed another boy.”

Amy felt her face get hot. She didn’t know if it was because she was mortified about even the idea of telling Evan . . . or if it was the thought of the kiss itself. She shut her eyes tightly, trying to blank out the memory of Jake’s arms around her, the warmth of his lips . . .

*STOP IT!* Amy scolded herself inside her head. *Don’t get distracted—you have to stay focused! Nellie, Fiske, Phoenix, all the rest—they need you!*

Maybe someday Amy would get to be a normal teenager with nothing to worry about except grades and friends and boys.

Maybe. But first, she had hostages to rescue.



Amy and Dan dashed through the terminal, with Jake and Atticus right on their heels. Amy couldn’t remember the last time she had been able to *walk* through an airport.

She handed her phone to Dan so he could read Vesper One’s text.

“Yale?” he panted. “What about the rest of it?”

“Don’t know,” she gasped back at him. “Guess we’ll find out soon enough.”

“Hey, wait up!” Fifty yards behind, Atticus was struggling with his jacket and backpack. Amy glanced over her shoulder and saw Jake turn around to help his brother by grabbing the pack. She plunged on,

darting and weaving past knots of people.

They all caught up with each other at the taxi stand. The line wasn't long; they were able to get into the third cab. With Evan still on her mind, Amy took the front passenger seat so there wouldn't be any possibility of ending up thigh-to-thigh with Jake.

"Yale University," Amy said to the driver.

"Where is?" the driver asked.

"Connecticut. New Haven."

The driver shook his head. "No. No go that far."

Jake reached for the door handle. "Let's go," he said decisively. "No use wasting time — we'll find someone else to take us."

*Who died and made him boss?* Amy thought. She turned to the driver.

"We need to get to Yale," she said, "and we'll make it worth your while."

The man muttered to himself, then put some info into his GPS.

"Two hour there, two hour come back . . . I do it for six hundred," he said.

"Six hundred dollars?" Atticus yelled.

"Fine," Amy said.

The driver looked surprised; clearly he had picked an amount he thought they would never be able to afford.

"See money first," the driver said skeptically.

Amy took out her wallet, counted off six hundred-

dollar bills, and flapped them at him. “There,” she said. “Now can we *please* get going?”

As if the sight of the cash were a turbo-fuel injection, the driver gunned the engine and pulled out from the curb so fast that the tires squealed.

Amy raised her eyebrows at Jake. “Watch and learn,” she said.

He snorted, then swept his hand from his forehead toward her in an exaggerated mock bow. “As you wish, m’lady,” he said.



Dan had put his backpack into the trunk of the cab but kept his laptop with him. Now he turned it on, clicked through to a search engine, and hesitated with his fingers over the keyboard.

“What should I type in?” he asked. “Yale, of course. And then what—four-oh-eight? Or maybe seventy-four?”

“No way!” Jake exclaimed.

Startled, Amy turned to see his eyes widening.

“Yale and four hundred eight? That has to be—” Jake stopped and shook his head.

Amy could see the shock in his expression.

“Amy, we can’t—it’s not—”

He took a breath. Then he looked at her pleadingly and said, “Please don’t tell me we’re going after the Voynich?”

## CHAPTER 2

Toothpaste. Very important. That nasty feeling when you hadn't brushed in a while even had a name now: "biofilm." Yuck.

*Enough of the idle thoughts. Hurry.*

Some clothes (clean underwear also very important), phone charger, laptop and charger, camera, digital recorder . . . what else might be needed?

A couple of false IDs, just in case. And finally — most important — a piece of electronic equipment specially modified for the task. Can't just toss it in, gotta be gentle with it —

Was someone coming up the stairs? No, but they could be, any minute now. . . .

Get out, quick.

But quietly. Don't let the door slam.



Phoenix had never really been cold before.

He was cold to the very middle of every single one of his cells. His scalp and hair were like a cap knit of ice.

He couldn't see his face, but he knew that his lips were Crayola blue. Even his *toenails* were cold.

Never before had he shivered as long and hard as he was shivering now. And shivering was hard work. After a fitful night dozing against a tree trunk, Phoenix woke with deep aches in all his muscles.

As if being cold wasn't bad enough, now it hurt to shiver.

He was wandering through an endless forest where everything looked the same.

The trauma of the kidnapping, the confrontations with an enemy he couldn't even see, the physical and psychological deprivations of captivity, the escape and near drowning—his ordeal had drained his body and apparently his brain, too.

He just kept stumbling around in a stupor.

He tried to remember the books he had read about kids surviving in the wild. *Hatchet*—that kid had lived for weeks in the wilderness on his own, right?

But he had had—duh, a hatchet.

In frustration, Phoenix kicked at an old rotting stump. It cracked open a little, revealing an active colony of small white grubs.

Grubs. Bears ate grubs.

Humans did, too. He'd seen it on one of those crazy food shows.

Phoenix looked more closely into the crevice. There were dozens of grubs in the dead wood, pale and soft, wriggling and writhing and squirming. . . .

His stomach heaved at the sight of them.

He couldn't do it.

Turning away, he took a step and stumbled on the uneven ground. His reactions dulled by hunger and fatigue and cold, he couldn't catch himself, and fell to his knees. He felt tears coming into his eyes and let them roll down his cheeks unchecked.

At least they were warm.

Phoenix cried for a while. When he finally stopped and his vision cleared, he saw a slim stick in front of him. Almost a twig, really.

And he remembered something from another television program. On one of the nature channels. *Chimpanzees and termites* . . .

The edges of Phoenix's poor frozen brain started to thaw a little.

*I have to get out of here and get help for the others. And I'll never be able to do that if I don't eat something.*

Phoenix picked up the stick. He chewed one end of it until it was frayed, then fanned out the wood fibers. Now it looked like a broomstick for a very tiny witch.

He pushed the stick into the crack in the stump and waited a few moments. Slowly, carefully, he pulled it out.

There were three nice, fat grubs clinging to the frayed wood. *They'll taste like chicken*, he told himself.

Phoenix took a deep breath, closed his eyes, and opened his mouth.



Evan stared at the computer screen. *This can't be right.*

Some time ago, Evan had put out a call to Cahill operatives all over the world, asking for their help in identifying a mole in the network. *No one* was above suspicion. Not Amy, not Dan, not himself.

The results of the search were in, and Evan couldn't believe what he was seeing on the screen.

*Something this big—I have to find a way to verify it. I need to be one hundred and ten percent sure before I tell Amy.*

Evan shook off the shivers that were crawling down his spine, then shoved his ethical reservations firmly aside as he tapped into the suspect's computer.

Where to start? E-mails and documents would be the obvious choice. *Maybe too obvious . . . isn't that where you'd expect someone to start looking?*

Evan moused over the desktop icons.

Music . . . calendar . . . spreadsheets . . . photos . . .

Photos. *One picture is worth a thousand words?*

He clicked on the icon and, after only a few moments, found a password-protected file. It was quick work to figure out the password. *Tsk, tsk—shouldn't use the names of family members. Too easy.*

The file opened. Evan frowned.

There were several copies of a photo of Nellie—the one sent by the Vespers, in which she was thrusting a lizard toward the camera. The copies were identical.

Evan leaned closer to the screen. "What the heck?" he said aloud.

Identical, except for one thing: The lizards were different.

Green lizard. Brown lizard. Spotted, striped, bug-eyed . . . There was no question about it: The photos had been manipulated. The lizard in the original photo had been swapped out for different ones. The last four photos showed the same lizard altered slightly for size and position.

*A tegu lizard, from Argentina. That's what she said.*

Evan sat back and gulped for air, trying to settle the sick feeling that was roiling his stomach.

*South America — where Ian was. She was trying to make us think it was him.*

*She, meaning Sinead.*

*Amy's best friend.*

Who knew everything — *everything* — about the Cahill operation. The damage she could do —

Evan was on his feet and headed for the door. He ran up the stairs and down a hallway, shouldered open a door, and hit the light switch.

Drawers gaping, closet ajar, clothes discarded on the floor — all the signs of a hasty exit.

He was too late.

Sinead was gone.

Evan spun around wildly and crashed into the door frame in his haste to get back to the comm center.

He had to tell Amy that Sinead was the mole. If Sinead got to her first . . . Evan's heart was pounding.

Amy could be in terrible danger.