

CAHILLS vs. VESPER
THE MEDUSA PLOT

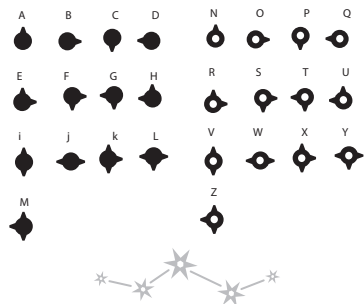


GORDON KORMAN

SCHOLASTIC INC.

NEW YORK TORONTO LONDON AUCKLAND
SYDNEY MEXICO CITY NEW DELHI HONG KONG

For Charles Isaac Korman, who continues
to put up with all this. — G.K.



Copyright © 2011 by Scholastic Inc.

All rights reserved. Published by
Scholastic Inc., *Publishers since 1920.*

SCHOLASTIC, THE 39 CLUES, and associated logos
are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of Scholastic Inc.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a
retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any
means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording,
or otherwise, without written permission of the publisher.

For information regarding permission,
write to Scholastic Inc.,

Attention: Permissions Department,
557 Broadway, New York, NY 10012.



Library of Congress Control Number: 2011922487

ISBN: 978-0-545-29839-1

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 11 12 13 14 15

Book design by SJI Associates, Inc.

Book illustrations by Charice Silverman, Keirsten Geise, and Rainne Wu
“The Head of Medusa” pg. 66 (c) akg-images/Electa/The Image Works

First edition, August 2011

Printed in China

62

Scholastic US: 557 Broadway • New York, NY 10012

Scholastic Canada: 604 King Street West • Toronto, ON M5V 1E1

Scholastic New Zealand Limited: Private Bag 94407 • Greenmount, Manukau 2141

Scholastic UK Ltd.: Euston House • 24 Eversholt Street • London NW1 1DB



PROLOGUE

Napa Valley, California, 5:42 A.M., Pacific Time Zone

Fiske Cahill loved the early morning—the glorious moment when the sun’s rays broke over the mountaintops. He would always be an easterner, but there was no place quite like California.

He eased himself into the mineral bath, feeling the bracing sting of water heated by magma trapped deep within the earth. The ache and stiffness of his sixty-nine-year-old body seemed to melt away, and he knew complete relaxation and contentment. Nothing could spoil the perfection of this moment.

He closed his eyes. That was his first mistake.

There was a tiny splash as the snake hit the water. It was a water moccasin, a baby—the venom is strongest in the very young.

Fiske never saw it. He was aware of a sudden stab, followed by blinding pain and then blackness.

Two men in coveralls lifted him out of the tub and administered a tiny injection of antivenom to his



abdomen. Then they wrapped him up in a vinyl pool cover, carried him to a panel truck, and loaded him inside.

As an afterthought, one of the men fished the snake out of the water and tossed it into some tall grass. If it survived and happened to bite another resort guest, it was no concern of theirs.

Ponce, Puerto Rico, 9:42 A.M., Atlantic Time Zone

Long, powerful strokes propelled Reagan Holt through the sparkling Caribbean. At thirteen, she had already completed seven Ironman triathlons, but now she was training for the world championships. Puerto Rico's lesser-known southern coast was the ideal place for it—great weather, uncrowded roads for running and cycling, and warm, crystal-clear water for swimming. There was even entertainment for these grueling ocean marathons. Through her goggles, she enjoyed the floor show: hundreds of fish species, colorful coral, and . . .

A jolt of surprise threw off her rhythm, and she struggled to maintain her textbook form. At first she thought it was an undersea mirage, but no. Twenty yards away, a few feet below the surface, floated a scuba diver in an antishark cage!

What's going on?

That was when she saw the hammerhead.

It was big—an eighteen footer at least. It moved in a serpentine pattern, its oddly placed eyes sweeping the

reef. When its attention locked on Reagan, she knew instantly. The long body became a guided missile hurtling toward her. Panic was immediate and total. Not even the fastest human could outswim a shark.

The cage. It was her only option. She made for it, expecting at any moment to feel the devastating bite of jagged teeth. The diver read her mind and opened the cage door. She flung herself inside, slamming the gate shut behind her just as the hammer-shaped snout smashed into the titanium bars. The very sea itself seemed to shake. Reagan was thrown back against the frame, but the structure held.

The diver pulled on a signal rope, and a mechanical winch began to lift the cage out of the water. As they broke the surface, she spied the boat. Relief flooded over her. The cost of this training session would not be her life.

Crew members swung them in over the gunwale and set them down on the deck.

It was all Reagan could do to maintain her footing as she stepped onto the wood planking. "Thanks, you guys! That was so close—"

And then she noticed that one of the sailors was pointing a gun at her.

London, UK, 1:42 P.M., Greenwich Mean Time Zone

When anyone advised Natalie Kabra to "find a happy place," that place was always Harrods.



That was the reason for this mental health day away from her boarding school. When the going gets tough, the tough go shopping. And where better than the most famous department store in the world, located in the heart of London's Knightsbridge?

A glance at a bus-stand billboard took the wind out of her sails. It was an advertisement for AidWorksWonders, a nonprofit organization dedicated to global disaster relief. Peering compassionately out was the organization's founder, radiating charity, goodwill, and kindness.



Natalie didn't believe it for a second, and she was in a position to know. That woman, Isabel Kabra, was Natalie's mother—a hard-hearted, cold-blooded conspirator, arsonist, murderer, and terrorist. The only reason she had formed an organization that did good in the world was that it had been her ticket out of jail, to parole and community service. Natalie pitied the poor community Isabel was assigned to serve.

Just the sight of her mother almost made her turn around and go back to school. It had been Mum who

had first introduced her to Harrods. But one couldn't blame Harrods for that, Natalie concluded, stepping in through the brass-plated revolving door.

Muscle memory took her directly to the Girls' department—designer only, of course. Without once consulting a price tag, she collected an armload of outfits and headed for the fitting room. She stepped inside, wondering at the second click that came a moment after she shut the door. She tried the handle. Locked.

And then her world tilted, dropping her against the mirror. The entire cubicle lifted suddenly and began to move forward.

In the Girls' department, the shoppers paid little attention to the large box being carried out of the department by two employees in Harrods uniforms. No one heard the screams that could not penetrate the soundproof enclosure.

Paris, France, 2:42 P.M., Central European Time Zone

To Nellie Gomez, Les Fraises was the best sidewalk café in Paris, and she had tried most of them.

Nellie adored Paris. As much as she missed home, this monthlong class in French cuisine was a dream come true. She loved living in a place where nose rings and punk-rock hair and makeup were considered completely normal. She loved the sights of the city, from the ancient Roman ruins to the ultramodern glass pyramid entrance to the Louvre.



But mostly, she loved the food. Her seminar on sauces had run through lunch, which gave her the perfect excuse to visit Les Fraises in the state she was usually in—hungry.

The chocolate-strawberry croissant looked a little different as the waitress placed the plate on the table next to her espresso. Was that confectioner's sugar on top? Was the chef trying to improve upon perfection? She was anxious to find out.

Nellie raised the pastry to her lips.

Poof!

A cloud of powder burst from the croissant, enveloping her face. It was gone in a few seconds. But by then, Nellie was slumped in her seat, unconscious.

An ambulance pulled up to the café. Two white-coated attendants emerged. They lifted Nellie out from behind the table, loaded her into the back, and drove away.

Tel Aviv, Israel, 3:42 P.M., Israel Standard Time Zone

"This way, children."

Alistair Oh held out his arm and guided Ned and Ted Starling into the elevator of the medical office building. How tragic it was that Alistair, at sixty-six, would be offering his assistance to two teenagers in the very prime of youth and strength. It should have been the other way around.

Alas, such was the legacy of the search for the 39

Clues. The boys had been victims of a cowardly act of sabotage at the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia. Ned now suffered headaches of such intensity that he could not concentrate for more than a few minutes at a time. He was the lucky one. His brother was legally blind.

Alistair sighed. Perhaps Dr. Shallit could help. That was the purpose of their trip to Israel—to see the foremost neurologist in the world. He had achieved miraculous results for patients with similar injuries.

Alistair pressed the button, and the elevator began to ascend. At the eighteenth floor, the car slowed and stopped.

The door did not open.

The next thing he knew, they were dropping, free-falling down the elevator shaft, picking up speed.

“Children—” The word died on his lips. There was nothing reassuring to say about plummeting two hundred feet to a violent death.

He tightened his grip on the boys’ forearms. What an odd place for their lives to end. Yet it was somehow fitting that members of the same family branch should perish together.

In the space of a few vertical feet, the elevator went from terminal velocity to a dead stop. The sudden deceleration flattened all three of them to the floor. Ned bumped his head and cried out in pain and fear.

The door opened. Three large men blocked the entrance to the underground parking garage, their faces obscured by desert head scarves. The leader



reached down to grab Alistair. He underestimated the older man's determination. Alistair's diamond-handled cane came up and fractured the man's wrist.

The attacker cursed and withdrew in pain.

Alistair boosted the boys to their feet. "Run!" he ordered.

Ned took his blind brother's arm, ducked beneath the hands that were reaching for them, and took off down a long row of cars. One of the assailants followed in hot pursuit.

They were almost at the exit when Ted stubbed his foot against a cement parking curbstone. He never hit the floor. Their pursuer grabbed him in a powerful bear hug.

Ned hesitated as the onslaught of another headache shattered everything in his mind except pain.

No. Not now—

With almost superhuman effort, he turned back to his brother. Ted was caught, and Alistair was subdued back at the elevator. Only he was free.

Alistair's voice echoed in the concrete space. "Go! Call William McIntyre!"

With a heavy heart, Ned Starling fled.

Tokyo, Japan, 10:42 P.M., Japan Standard Time Zone

Phoenix Wizard was searching for the hip-hop vibe.

That's what his cousin Jonah had told him to look for. It should have been easy to find in a crowd of

screaming fans, all jumping, stomping, and shouting along with Jonah Wizard, the number one recording artist on the planet.

The teenage rapper was spectacular. From the upper decks of the enormous stadium he must have appeared insect-size on the stage far below. And yet every move, every beat, every “wassup, yo” sent ripples through the audience. Jonah was a hip-hop hypnotist, and all sixty-five thousand people in the arena were obeying his commands—to get wild, get loud, get *down*.

Except one.

Phoenix worshipped his A-list cousin. What twelve-year-old boy wouldn’t idolize a celebrity? And Jonah wasn’t just famous in the music world. He had starred in several movies, including *Gangsta Kronikles*, his first blockbuster; he had his own reality TV show. His face was immortalized on PEZ dispensers and motorized lollipop holders. Paparazzi followed him everywhere.

Yet the music—that was the part that left Phoenix flat. He would have cut his tongue out before saying it aloud, but he thought it was truly awful. Just talking, really. Bragging in time to a simple repeating beat.

Why can’t I see what all these people see?

Jonah began to whip up the crowd to even greater heights. “I love Tokyo—it’s the only place where ‘yo’ is part of the name of the town! *Get up and show me some moves!*”

The response was seismic. Those fans who weren’t already standing rose to their feet in a wave of tens of



thousands of bodies. Phoenix was up with them, hoping that their enthusiasm was contagious.

He felt nothing. What could be more pathetic than a Wizard with no rhythm? All around him, people were gyrating as if their very lives depended on it. He watched, amazed, as bodies were lifted up and rolled across the top of the crowd, passing from hand to hand.

A teen girl floated over him, her expression sheer bliss. *She* had found the hip-hop vibe.

Determined to share the experience, he climbed onto the armrest of his seat, literally hoisting himself onto the “roof” of the audience. He felt a thrill when he started to move, twirling as he skimmed above the concertgoers’ heads. For some reason, there was no fear. The thousands of hands created a seamless surface. It was almost like swimming—riding ocean currents around the stadium. This was awesome! He couldn’t wait to tell Jonah about it after the concert.

And the ride was getting better! He seemed to be picking up speed. But why was he heading away from the stage toward one of the exit tunnels? That wasn’t where the action was!

Then he was down out of the throng, in the darkness of the concrete passage, flanked by two men in mirrored sunglasses.

“What—?”

A foul-smelling wet cloth covered his face. He attempted to struggle, but one whiff of the chloroform brought oblivion.



Although they took place in different time zones throughout the world, the kidnappings were executed at exactly the same moment. The victims had only one thing in common: All seven were members of the Cahill clan, the most powerful family in human history.



CHAPTER 1

A branch had found its way up Dan's sleeve and was tickling his armpit, but it was totally worth it. From the tree, he was looking straight down on the porch swing by the patio doors. There sat his sister, Amy, next to her boyfriend, Evan Tolliver. This was going to be good. They had only been dating for a few months, but Amy had been obsessing over this guy for the past two years. Talk about a match made in heaven—the library nerd and the computer geek. He tapped the button to activate the sound recorder on his cell phone. Posterity had to know the exquisite words of romance that were about to pass between this Juliet and her loving Romeo.

Come on, people, I don't have all day! The school bus will be here in ten minutes!

Determined not to miss a single word—if there was ever going to be one—he inched forward on the branch, perched precariously above the couple.

The first sound that met his ears was certainly not an expression of love.

"Mrrp."

Dan risked a glance over his shoulder. Sitting behind him on the same branch was Saladin, the much-pampered cat Amy and Dan had inherited from their grandmother, Grace Cahill. The Egyptian Mau's green, inscrutable gaze skewered him like twin lasers. In his mouth, Saladin carried an empty tin of Russian caviar, his latest favorite snack.

"Not now, Saladin!" Dan whispered. "Can't you see I'm busy?"

The cat regarded him solemnly and began to stroll out onto the branch.

"Back off!" Dan hissed. "You'll get us both killed!"

Saladin was no lightweight, thanks to his expensive taste for caviar, fresh red snapper, shrimp dumplings, and sushi. The branch was beginning to tremble.

In an attempt to restore balance, Dan shifted his weight. That was all the limb could take. With a crack, it tore away from the tree. Saladin leaped for the trunk and held on with his claws. The branch and Dan dropped as one unit, sprawling at the feet of the couple on the porch swing.

Amy and Evan shot out of the double seat, staring down at Dan amid the wreckage.

"Were you spying on us?" Amy demanded.

Dan picked himself up, brushing at a cut on his arm. "I was trying to coax Saladin out of the tree with some of that caviar he likes," he explained, his face the picture of innocence.



Saladin interjected an outraged “Mrrp!” and the tin fell to the ground.

“And you can stay up there until you’ve learned your lesson!” Dan scolded the cat.

With an exasperated sigh, Amy shinnied up the trunk, wrapped her free hand around Saladin’s big belly, and clambered down again, setting the Egyptian Mau on the lawn. Dan noted the ease with which his sister scaled the tricky maple. She was an athlete now. That was something new. She trained constantly—running, rock climbing, working out like a maniac in their basement gym. It was the same old Amy, yet not quite. Two years before, she had been soft, timid, and unprepared when fate had unexpectedly required extraordinary things of two Boston orphans. So she had been preparing.

Dan felt the threat, too, but his sister had based her entire life on it.

Amy shook her head in disgust. “Just because you’ve elevated dweeb-hood to a fine art doesn’t give you the right to snoop on the rest of us. Don’t you have anything better to do?”

Dan glared back at her, stung. He could never tell her the truth. He *didn’t* have anything better to do.

Amy hadn’t been the only one crisscrossing the globe on a high-stakes treasure hunt two years before. Dan had been with her every step of the way—living by their wits, a split second ahead of disaster, with nothing less than the future of the world on the line.

The 39 Clues. Two years ago, he'd never even heard the term. But, by the end of their grandmother's funeral, he'd learned more than he'd ever wanted to know. He and Amy were part of the most influential family in history. The source of their power was hidden in the Clues.

The Clue hunt had stretched them to the limit of human endurance. It had shredded their very souls. It had very nearly gotten them both killed.

So why did it feel like it had been the only part of Dan's life that meant anything?

When you've been through something like the clue hunt, the eighth grade just doesn't measure up. How could it?

Drag yourself out of bed. Get on the school bus. Do homework. Repeat fifty thousand times.

Not that Dan wanted to return to being chased, blown up, shot at, punched, poisoned, strangled, and used as crocodile bait. It had been awful. Go back to that? Never!

And yet he had never felt so keenly alive as he had during those crazed, perilous weeks. Lately, Dan had become fascinated by stories of soldiers returning home from the horrors of war. They were thrilled to be out of it. Yet they struggled to fit back into their families and routines.

On the surface, Dan had everything he'd ever wanted. They were rich. They lived in a huge mansion with every video game, gadget, and entertainment system in existence. He had a degree of independence and



freedom most thirteen-year-olds only dreamed about.

So what was the problem? Why did he feel like his world was coming out of a tinny twelve-inch black-and-white TV built in 1967?

Maybe I'm just bored. . . .

Either way something was missing.

A series of flashes from the opposite end of the estate caught his attention. He squinted to see Sinead Starling in the window of the guest cottage, angling a hand mirror into the sun.

"Hey, isn't that Morse code?" Evan asked.

"It's probably that Soviet cold-war code she just broke," said Amy. "That's her new favorite."

"Why does she need *any* code?" Dan grumbled. "She lives in our guest house. She can talk to us any time she wants."

He already knew the answer. Tall, strikingly pretty, and brilliant, Sinead never did anything the easy way. She had turned down the genius grant from the MacArthur Foundation to fix up the guest house and join Amy's personal boot camp. They had been bitter rivals during the Clue hunt, yet in no time at all, the two had become as close as sisters.

Sinead was cool, Dan had to admit—for a person with a favorite code.

The flashes ceased and Sinead emerged from the small home. She hopped onto a four-wheel ATV and roared across the rolling property up to Amy, Dan, and Evan. A pair of welder's goggles was pushed

off her forehead into her mane of auburn hair.

"The school bus is running early," she reported. "I was up on the roof, and I saw it coming down the highway."

"Why were you on the roof?" asked Evan.

"I'm retrofitting the furnace for zero carbon emissions, and I had to make a few chimney modifications. You guys should really let me take a crack at that monster in Grace's house. Your energy efficiency is pathetic."

Everyone still called the main residence Grace's house after Amy and Dan's grandmother, even though Grace herself had never lived there. The original mansion had been destroyed by fire right after her funeral. Amy and Dan had rebuilt it from pictures and loving memory. From the outside, it was as close to the original as they could possibly make it—a haven and a place of happiness for two orphans. Inside was another story: infrared cameras, Geiger counters, bulletproof windows. And those were just the security features.

They heard the roar of an engine followed by the screech of an ancient transmission as the bus geared down approaching their gate. Evan took Amy's wrist and began to escort her toward the road.

Can those two do anything without touching? Dan reflected, falling in behind them. The constant hand-holding irritated him. Ditto the arms around shoulders, hanging off each other, and general



closeness. It was like a spotlight on his isolation.

"See you later," Amy told Sinead.

Sinead didn't attend school. The education system had more to learn from her than vice versa.

Her mind was still on furnace modifications. "I could cut your heating bill by two-thirds."

"We're loaded, remember?" Dan retorted.

"Global warming doesn't care what's in your bank account," she called after them. "Think it over."

The bus lurched to a halt and the door folded open. The three hustled down the long drive and boarded.

Dan found an empty row of seats and slumped across it. On both sides of the aisle, pairs of friends jabbered excitedly about sports and TV and books and the day ahead.

Not Dan. For him, this was the most pointless part of a routine that was less than awesome to begin with. Why would two kids with enough money to buy thirty Maseratis take the bus to school?

He would never understand it. If they ever created a school transit exhibit in the Smithsonian, the bus to Attleboro Junior/Senior High would be prominently displayed. It was old; it was hot; it was overcrowded; it smelled. Shock absorbers? What shock absorbers? Every bump and pothole vibrated up and down his spine.

Amy said it was necessary. They had to blend in. Right—like that was going to happen. During the Clue hunt, he and Amy had seen and done things—awful

things no kid should even know about. They had memories that would never fade. It was especially true for Dan. . . .

He checked his cell phone. 8:40 A.M. School hadn't even started yet, and he was already counting the minutes before he could go home. If real life felt lame after all he'd been through, that went double for Attleboro Junior High.

He regarded his sister a few rows ahead. Yep—she and Evan were doing *The Lean*. It reminded Dan of a house of cards. Pull either one away and the other would probably drop like a stone. He wasn't sure why they bugged him so much. By all rights, he should be happy for Amy. Her crush on Evan dated back to freshman year. She was so shy it was a miracle she'd ever mustered the courage to talk to him. But now that they were finally dating, they were in their own little world. They probably didn't even notice the grinding gears, the popping springs, and the earsplitting roar of the engine as the bus struggled to stay ahead of the cement truck directly behind it.

Dan frowned. The mixer was really close—only a few feet off the bus's rear bumper.

What's wrong with that driver? Doesn't he know how dangerous it is to tailgate?

The thought had barely crossed Dan's mind when the truck put on a burst of speed and slammed right into the back of the bus.

It was 8:42 A.M. Eastern Standard Time, exactly the



same instant as the Cahill kidnappings around the world.



The impact knocked Evan out of his seat and dumped Amy on top of him. Shouts and cries from all around indicated that other students had been shaken up as well.

A split second later, the tanker truck in front squealed its tires as it pulled broadside, blocking the road. The bus driver slammed on the brakes. Smoke from burning rubber darkened the windshield.

Amy shut her eyes, expecting a collision and a devastating explosion. But the bus lurched to a halt mere inches from the tanker's silver shell.

"Everybody off!" ordered the driver.

The passengers didn't have to be ordered twice. They ran out quickly.

Evan took Amy's hand. "Come on, let's get out of here!"

Amy looked back and confirmed that Dan was unhurt and in line behind them. Then she followed Evan down the bus's front steps.

She noticed two things immediately: 1) The cement truck driver was wearing a ski mask, revealing only his eyes, and 2) those eyes locked on her the instant she appeared.

It's happening. . . .

She had always known it would, but now that the situation was upon her, it was still a shock.

The man took something out of the pocket of his ski jacket. The rush of adrenaline was something Amy had not felt for two solid years. When the hand came up, holding a pistol, her foot was already flying forward. As she kicked the gun out of his grip, she could feel at least two of his fingers breaking. The weapon hit the ground and slid under the tanker and out of reach.

The students scattered in terror. The attacker reached for Amy with his good hand. Evan tried to step in front of his girlfriend and was yanked roughly out of the way.

But Amy was ready. She had been preparing for this moment since the end of the Clue hunt. This was why she'd gotten in shape and trained in martial arts.

She landed two quick punches, which rocked her assailant but did not knock him down. He came after her again, and this time he had backup. The driver and passenger of the tanker, also in ski masks, joined the fight.

Amy kept them at bay, punching and kicking with windmill speed and force. Still, she knew it was a losing battle. She was exhausting herself, and any one of her opponents had much more physical strength than she did.

What will they do to me? she thought in terror. *To Dan?*

In the Cahill world, the consequences of failure were usually severe.

"Amy—stand back!" came a voice over her shoulder.



Dan. She obeyed without hesitation, an instinct from the Clue hunt — the dozens of times he had saved her life and she had saved his.

Dan stepped forward, brandishing the hose from the tanker truck. He squeezed the trigger and soaked the three masked men from head to toe. Then he looked around at the shocked and silent students.

“Anybody got a match?”

The driver of the school bus pulled out a disposable lighter and tossed it to him.

That was enough for the three men in ski masks. They turned and ran, disappearing into the woods that fringed the road.

There was a deafening silence. Nobody moved a muscle. When the students finally found their voices, the frightened questions came in a cascade:

“Who *were* those guys?”

“Do you think they’ll come back?”

“Amy — where’d you learn to fight like that?”

“I—I—” Amy tried to speak up, but her stammer got in the way, as it always did in times of stress. Cahill matters had rained down on them before — but never in front of dozens of neighbors and schoolmates.

In front of Evan!

And speaking of Evan . . .

“Dan” —her boyfriend’s voice was hushed — “were you really going to do it?”

Dan’s legs seemed to collapse beneath him in slow

motion, and he sat down cross-legged in the middle of the road, the lighter still clenched in his fist. He registered shock, yet the look on his face was determined and stone-cold.

Amy knew him better than anyone in the world, but even she couldn't read his thoughts. Sometimes her brother was the same old Dan, who tried to collect everything from bottle caps to Egyptian mummies. But since the Clue hunt, there were times when he withdrew from her and could not be reached.

The Cahills' eyes locked—an exchange of pure anguish. They did not understand the reason for the attack on their school bus. But one thing was certain—those men had been after her and Dan. It was their Cahill history coming back to haunt them.

It had begun again.

The police sirens brought everyone back from speculation and into reality. Being scared to death was no excuse for revealing Cahill secrets. Brother and sister wordlessly agreed that there was only one thing they could not tell: the truth. Obviously, there was a busload of witnesses and a cement mixer and tanker truck that they couldn't wish away. But the next query—the *why*—was not up for discussion.

Cahill business was for Cahills only.

Not only were they the most powerful family of all time, the Cahills were also one of the most tragic. Both their incredible success and their terrible misfortune stemmed from the same source—the 39 Clues.



The Clues had turned out to be the thirty-nine ingredients of a remarkable serum that delivered enhanced intelligence, cunning, creativity, inventiveness, and physical strength to anyone brave enough to swallow it. On the surface, it offered the promise of a better human race. The reality, however, had been much more sinister.

The miracle formula had touched off a blood-spattered quest to control it. It had been nothing short of war between the five family branches—Lucian, Janus, Ekaterina, Tomas, and Madrigal. No one knew how many lives the Clue hunt had claimed over the centuries, from Gideon Cahill himself in 1507, to Amy and Dan's parents in a horrific case of arson nine years ago. It had to be in the thousands.

Now the Clue hunt was over. Two years before, Amy and Dan had united with young members of all the Cahill family branches to destroy the serum outright. No one should have such power. The mere knowledge that the formula existed had turned the Cahills into ruthless murderers. They had put an end to five centuries of madness.

Yet Amy had always waited for the other shoe to drop. Peace and harmony had never been the Cahill way. She had a feeling that today's attack was the first shot in the next war. And this one would make the Clue hunt seem like a stroll on Boston Common.