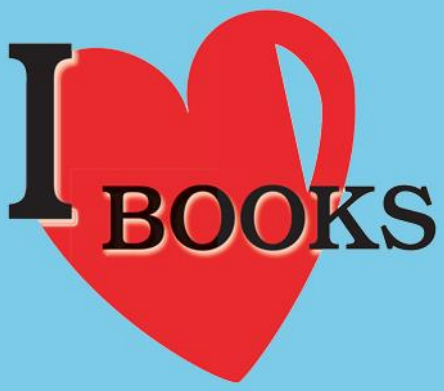

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For Mum and Beth,
the heroines of my story.

Chapter One

Ivy rocked forward as the ambulance turned a corner. Everything inside rattled.

'OK then,' the paramedic said, looking up from his clipboard. He was a bald man with faded tattoos all the way up his forearms. 'What's your full name?'

'Ivy Elizabeth Sparrow,' she fired off, tapping her yellow wellingtons on the floor. It was so stuffy; she needed fresh air. She looked over the paramedic's shoulder and wondered if she could ask him to open one of those blacked-out windows. She could see her frizzy brown curls bobbing in the glass, even more out of control than usual.

The paramedic made a note with his biro and turned towards the rear of the vehicle. 'What about you?'

At the other end of the bench, leaning forward, legs apart, sat a boy in a grey hoodie bearing the band logo of The Ripz. His wiry blond hair had fallen in front of his eyes but Ivy knew he was glaring at her.

'It's Seb,' the boy replied drily. 'I'm her brother.'

The paramedic smiled as he jotted down the name. Ivy tried to push Seb out of her mind. This was all his fault.

She leaned over to the stretcher and took Granma Sylvie's hand. It felt softer than usual. There were Velcro straps across her granma's chest, a brace supporting her neck and a misted oxygen mask covering her nose and mouth. Ivy had never seen her look so fragile before.

'And how old are you both?' the paramedic continued.

'Eleven,' Ivy replied, shuffling ever so slightly closer to Granma Sylvie.

'I'm sixteen,' Seb said in a deep voice.

Ivy frowned and glanced sideways at him. He had only turned fourteen last month.

'OK, good.' The paramedic's face softened. 'Now, I understand that you're both very concerned at the moment – but trust me, the best thing you can do to help your gran is to stay calm. When we get to the hospital, we'll take her into casualty so the doctor can have a good look at her, and then she may need an operation, so she'll be in for a while.'

Ivy grimaced. She knew of only one other occasion when Granma Sylvie had stayed overnight in

hospital – everyone knew about *that* – but it had happened before Ivy's parents were even born. 'Do you know what's wrong?' she asked.

The paramedic frowned. 'I think she may have broken her hip, and possibly her wrist as well, but we won't know till we see an X-ray.'

While he scribbled down some notes, Ivy stroked Granma Sylvie's hand and wondered if she'd suffered broken bones *that* time as well. Probably. She'd had a car crash during a freak snowstorm and had been unconscious for days; when she woke up, she couldn't remember what had happened during the accident, or anything before it. The police only knew her name because she was wearing a necklace with SYLVIE engraved on it. Retrograde amnesia, Ivy's mum called it. Ivy knew the exact date of the crash because the family discussed it so often: 5 January 1969. Twelfth Night.

'Before we get to the hospital,' the paramedic said, 'I need to confirm what happened.' He checked his watch. 'I make it eight thirty a.m., so the fall must have happened at about seven forty-five? And you said that your gran slipped in the kitchen while you were both in the other room . . . ?'

Ivy imagined Granma Sylvie losing her balance and tumbling onto her back, legs in the air like an upturned beetle. If only she'd been there to help.

Seb swallowed. 'She was baking mince pies. We heard her shouting.'

Over our shouting, Ivy remembered. She shot her brother a look of regret. They had been arguing about the stupid new Ripz poster he'd got for Christmas – Ivy had accidentally knocked her orange juice over it; if he hadn't been ranting at her, they might have got to Granma Sylvie sooner.

The paramedic flipped his paper round. 'OK, that'll do. Are you able to get hold of your mum and dad?'

Ivy sighed. *If only.* More than anything, she wished her parents were there now.

'I've texted them but there's been no reply,' Seb said. 'I'll try calling when we get to the hospital. Mum's working, but we might catch her before she starts her shift.'

Ivy had said goodbye to her mum yesterday morning. If she was there now, she would have clapped her hands together and taken charge of this whole mess in an instant. Ivy and Seb had done nothing except ring the ambulance.

'Our dad's in Paris,' Ivy added in a quiet voice. 'He's working too.'

Their dad was a consultant for the famous Victoria & Albert Museum in London, which meant that he was an expert in everything old, and people from around the world were always asking for his advice.

The paramedic raised his eyebrows. ‘So that’s why you’re staying with your gran?’

‘Mum and Dad were with us over Christmas,’ Ivy explained, feeling the need to defend them. ‘They just had to go back to work early.’

It had never really bothered her – them staying in London and leaving her and Seb six hours away in Bletchy Scrubb with their granma – but then this kind of emergency had never happened at the same time before.

The paramedic put down his clipboard and turned to Granma Sylvie, who, despite the neck brace, made an effort to smile. Ivy doubted she could even hear what was being said with that thing on; she hadn’t corrected the paramedic about Seb’s age.

‘OK then, Mrs Sparrow, I’m just going to check how you’re doing.’ He untucked Granma Sylvie’s blanket and rolled it away until her arm was exposed. There was a thin cotton sling around it, secured behind her neck. Delicately he loosened the knot and slid the material out from underneath. Granma Sylvie winced.

As the sling was taken away, Ivy caught her breath. Her granma’s entire arm was purple and bloated like a giant aubergine.

The paramedic took the damaged wrist carefully between his fingers. ‘Hmm, looks like that swelling is getting worse. It must be sore.’ He studied it from

every angle. Ivy caught a flash of gold on her granma's skin. 'I don't see any clasp on your bracelet. I think we might need to cut it off to make you feel more comfortable, Mrs Sparrow. Is that OK?'

Ivy's chest tightened; she imagined Granma Sylvie's was probably doing the same. That solid gold bangle was one of the few items that remained of her granma's life before her amnesia. She had been wearing it at the time of the accident and Ivy couldn't remember her ever taking it off. The bracelet was special to her, everyone knew that.

Granma Sylvie squeezed her eyes closed. Ivy heard a rasping, 'Do it.'

The paramedic found a pair of small silver pliers. Ivy shivered as two soft *snickts* pierced the air and the two halves of the bangle fell away.

'Ivy, my bag . . .' Granma Sylvie lifted her other hand, pointing shakily.

Ivy reached down for the handbag and held it open. Very carefully, the paramedic placed both pieces of the bangle inside.

'Will you look after it for me?' Granma Sylvie asked.

Ivy nodded, forcing a smile, and opened the bag to check that the bracelet was safely in the inside pocket.

'Be careful,' the paramedic warned, 'the ends are sharp.'

Ivy made sure not to touch it as she zipped up the pocket.

'Here,' Seb grunted, picking something up off the floor. 'You just dropped this.' He handed Ivy a black-and-white photo, the size of a postcard. Ivy had seen it many times before because Granma Sylvie always kept it in her handbag. It was the only photo of her from *before*. The police had found it in the glove box of her car after the crash. 'Weird,' Seb said, raising his eyebrows. 'I haven't seen that since I was little.'

We used to look at it all the time, Ivy thought. But she didn't say anything.

'Granma still doesn't know who the other woman is, does she?'

Ivy shook her head. The photo showed a woman standing beside Granma Sylvie. She was slight, with sharp dark eyes and unruly hair poking out from under a round black hat. She wore a thick tartan dress and studded cowboy boots. Granma Sylvie was dressed in washed denim dungarees with what looked like satin ballet shoes on her feet.

'What were they *wearing*?' Seb asked. 'It's like really bad fancy dress.'

Ivy shrugged. 'Who's to say it wasn't the fashion?' She didn't really think it could have been; she just didn't want to agree with her brother.

'Keep that safe,' croaked a voice. Ivy turned.

Granma Sylvie was waving her good arm in their direction.

'Sorry.' Ivy hastily tucked the photo back into the handbag and fastened it up.

Seb slid away from her before she had to push him.