

CAHILLS vs. VESPERS

TRUST NO ONE



LINDA SUE PARK

SCHOLASTIC INC.

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

— L.S.P.

The author gratefully acknowledges
Dr. Kathryn James at the Beinecke Rare Book and
Manuscript Library at Yale University for her
help with the researching of this book.



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Library of Congress Control Number: 2012939109

ISBN 978-0-545-29843-8

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 12 13 14 15 16/0

Book design by SJI Associates, Inc.

Book illustrations by Charice Silverman for Scholastic.

Voynich page p. 16: General Collection Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library,
Yale University; blow dart p. 98: © Marilyn Angel Wynn/Getty Images;
Metal texture for dog tag p. 173: CB Textures.

First edition, December 2012

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



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?”