

G O R D O N K O R -
M A N

BOOK ONE: THE DISCOVERY

D I V E

AN
APPLE
PAPERBACK

SCHOLASTIC INC.
New York Toronto London Auckland Sydney
Mexico City New Delhi Hong Kong Buenos Aires

For Ron Kurtz,
Bubble Blower Extraordinaire

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ISBN 0-439-50722-7

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Printed in the U.S.A.

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08 September 1665

When the explosion rocked the Griffin, young Samuel Higgins knew instantly that the boat was doomed.

Thirteen years old, and dead already, the ship's boy thought to himself as the towering mainmast splintered in a shower of sparks.

The sail, now a billowing sheet of flame, settled down over the treasure that lay stacked about on the deck of the barque. Chests piled high with coins and jewels, silver bars by the hundredweight, ropes of pearls, chains of gold. Samuel watched it disappear beneath the burning canvas. He could feel the deck heaving under his feet as the Griffin began to break apart. A flood of gleaming pieces of eight poured through the gaping holes between the deck planks. It was more money than Samuel had ever seen, worth more, probably, than his entire village in the north of England, and perhaps the surrounding shire as well. It was a fortune that would have turned the head of the king himself.

And yet it could not buy five more minutes of life for the Griffin and her doomed captain and crew.

The voyage back to England would have taken at least three months. The descent to the bottom of the Caribbean took less than three minutes.

There lay the treasure, the spoils of a new world, silent, waiting. . . .

CHAPTER ONE

The catamaran bobbed like a cork, even in the sheltered waters of the harbor on the Ca-ribbean island of Martinique.

Kaz looked dubiously from the flimsy double-hulled boat to the young man who stood balanced on deck, holding out his hand to help the newcomer aboard. "If you want to kill me, why don't you just shoot?"

It got a big laugh. "Come on, Kaczinski. Safest thing afloat."

Swallowing hard, Kaz stepped onto the swaying craft. Putting aside unease was second nature to hockey players, especially in Canada, home of the best of the best. Some of the kids he skated against would go on to NHL careers. They said he'd be one of them— Bobby Kaczinski, the best young defenseman to come out of the Toronto area in the past twenty years.

All that was over now. He stumbled, his knees weak for a moment. It had nothing to do with the motion of the catamaran.

He had come to call it "the dream," al-

though it plagued him as often waking as sleeping. Game six of the Ontario Minor Hockey Association finals. Drew Christiansen — Kaz had not known the boy's name then. Now he would never forget it.

Drew Christiansen, whose life he had ruined.

Drew had taken a pass in front of the Red Wings' net. He was Kaz's man, his responsibility. The check was completely legal, clean as a whistle. Everyone agreed on that — the refs, the league officials, even Drew himself. A freak accident, the doctors called it. A one in a million shot.

Kaz remembered the split-second play down to the slightest detail — the urgency to defend his goalie, the satisfaction of a heavy hit. And then a discordant note: He's not getting up. And then, Why is his neck at that funny angle?

Followed by the nightmare truth: Drew Christiansen would never walk again.

The handshake of greeting came just in time to steady Kaz.

"Tad Cutter, Poseidon Oceanographic Institute," the young man introduced himself. "I'm leading your dive team."

"People call me Kaz." He tried to size up

the institute man. Mostly, he was searching for some hint as to why a world-famous oceanographic group had selected a beginning diver for a summer internship. A month ago, Kaz had never stepped into flippers in his life. It had been a mad scramble to get scuba-certified for this program.

But there were no clues in Cutter's blond, blue-eyed features. He flashed white teeth. "Sit tight and start on your tan, okay? I've got one more to pick up." He leaped onto the dock and jogged off.

Who am I kidding? Kaz thought. Poseidon didn't pick me for my diving. Allagash got me this gig.

Steven P. Allagash was the sports agent Mr. Kaczinski had hired to guide his son's career all the way to the pros. Ex-agent, Kaz reminded himself, since Bobby Kaczinski would not be strapping on skates again.

Allagash had been clearly alarmed at the possibility of such a hot prospect getting away. "Don't make any rash decisions," he had urged. "Forget about hockey for a while. Take some time off this summer. Do something you always wanted to do. I'll set the whole thing up. Just name it."

Kaz had drawn a blank. As long as he could remember, his entire life had been hockey. Camps all summer, games and practices all winter. He had never played any other sport. Why risk an injury that could take him out of hockey? He'd never even had a hobby.

"Come on," Allagash had prodded. "What are your interests?"

The entire back wall of the agent's office was an enormous Plexiglas fish tank. Kaz had always been fascinated by the dozens of brightly colored tropical species that moved through the artificial habitat.

"Fish," Kaz had replied finally. "I like fish."

Fish would do. Diving would do. Anything but hockey.

As he dropped his gear and seated himself on the boat, he realized for the first time that he was not alone. Fast asleep amid a mountain of luggage lay another boy, smaller than Kaz, but probably the same age.

The catamaran bumped up against the tires that lined the dock, and the sleeper shook awake.

He rubbed his eyes behind thick glasses

and yawned. "You don't look like Adriana, so I guess you must be Bobby."

"Call me Kaz." He indicated the many bags and cases that littered the deck around the other boy. "Diving equipment?"

"Camera equipment. Dante Lewis. I'm a photographer."

"An underwater photographer, right?" Kaz prompted.

Dante shrugged. "That's what we're here to find out."

Kaz was amazed. "Are you telling me that you're new at this too?"

Dante stared at him. "Are you?"

"I got certified, like, ten minutes ago!"

Dante was wide-eyed. "I figured they only took me because they needed a photographer. What about you? Any special skills?"

Kaz searched his mind and came up empty. "I used to be a hockey player."

Dante took in the heat shimmer over the endless turquoise Caribbean. "I don't think the rink freezes hard enough down here."

"That's okay," Kaz deadpanned. "I didn't bring my skates." He frowned into the colorful sails in the harbor around them. Poseidon was one of the top ocean research outfits in

the world. Renowned scientists begged to get hired on. Fellowships went to graduate students who were proven geniuses. When they threw open four summer internships for kids under sixteen, they must have gotten thousands of applications. Maybe tens of thousands. They had their pick of the universe.

Why choose us? It didn't make any sense.

They'd been waiting for half an hour when Cutter returned with the third team member. Adriana Ballantyne was a tall, slender thirteen-year-old girl who was dressed more for the deck of a luxury liner than a weathered island-hopping catamaran that smelled of diesel and fish.

Kaz had never seen anyone so color-coordinated. Her deck shoes matched her belt, the temples of her designer sunglasses, and the leather handles of her luggage.

"Diver, right?" he asked as she stepped aboard.

"Right," she confirmed. "I guess." And even less certainly, "Sort of. I did some scuba in the south of France this past Easter."

What was going on here?

The catamaran may not have been the most elegant craft in the seven seas, but it got the job done. They covered the distance from Martinique to Saint-Luc in two hours. As they rounded the curve of the shoreline, Cutter damped down the engine to slow their speed.

"Hey," he called in the comparative quiet that followed. "There's Star. She's on our team too. Look at her go!"

Three pairs of eyes focused on the clear blue water a couple of hundred yards out from an isolated cove. Star Ling was diving in just mask and snorkel, moving with a strength and expertise that was obvious to any observer. She cruised just below the surface with the pointed, unerring trajectory of a torpedo. When she dove, her descent was crisp and quick, easily conquering her body's natural buoyancy. She sounded deep, unhurried by the need for her next breath — a sign of superior lung capacity.

"She's awesome!" breathed Adriana.

As the catamaran angled in toward the harbor half a mile up the coast, Star took to the surface and swam in to the beach. They watched her rise and step out of the water and onto the sand.

At first, Kaz thought she'd stumbled. But then it happened again. And again.

"She's limping!" he exclaimed out loud. "She's a — " He was about to say "cripple" when the image of Drew Christiansen cut into his mind like a jagged fork of lightning. You can't use that word, Kaz thought to himself. You've forfeited the right.

"She's handicapped!" Dante exclaimed in wonder.

Cutter laughed. "Don't let her hear you say that! She's the toughest kid I've ever met."

Three beginners and now this, Kaz reflected.

Who was making the decisions at Poseidon Oceanographic?