

## Chapter One

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Mother and daughter hid in the shadows.

“There’s no one else here.”

Rose kept a grip on her daughter’s arm. Hazel was ten years old, and she was more interested in adventure than in safety. “What do we do?”

“Always take one more look,” Hazel said.

The two of them peered around the corner and toward the back of the shopping centre parking lot. A streetlight shone down on the giant blue Dumpsters. Hazel was right. No one else was around.

Rose looked up at the high-rise apartment buildings in the area. Someone standing on a balcony or watching from a window could look down and see them. She tugged on the front

brim of her daughter's baseball cap, lowered her own, then led the way.

They both wore dark jeans and jackets and carried large cloth bags over their shoulders. In her hand, Rose held an extra bag that could expand, in case the haul was especially good.

By now, they were good at climbing. Rose was up the side of the first Dumpster and had the lid back in a flash, without making any noise.

They spoke in whispers, sorting through one Dumpster together before going on to the next. Hazel often wanted to split up, but Rose was too afraid of what she might find. People threw things in Dumpsters that they hoped would never be seen again.

"I see bread," Hazel said.

"Whole wheat?"

"White, I think."

"Take it for now." They'd throw it away later if they found something healthier. Rose put apples and oranges into her bag, along with a battered box of Fruit Roll-Ups and some kind of cereal.

The next Dumpster gave them a carton with half a dozen eggs — only one was broken — and some cottage cheese that had only just expired.

“Look!” Hazel held up a large Toblerone chocolate bar. It looked to be in perfect shape, except for the torn wrapper. Hazel added it to her bag.

“Shh! Someone’s coming!”

The two of them stopped sorting. They could hear voices coming nearer.

“Hide or run?” Hazel whispered.

Rose could not decide. She and Hazel always found a lot of free food in these Dumpsters, but the neighbourhood was full of people with nothing to do. Bored people could be dangerous.

She hesitated too long. The voices were now right outside their Dumpster.

“Take the first one,” a young man’s voice said. “I’ll look in here.”

And then a face appeared over the side of the Dumpster, the face of a young man with messy hair. He didn’t have a chance to blink before Rose and Hazel let out loud, crazy yells. Hazel threw something at the man’s face. He screamed, clutched at his eyes, and fell to the pavement.

Rose grabbed her daughter. In the next moment they were out of the Dumpster, running madly and disappearing back into the shadows.

“What did you throw?” Rose asked as they ran.

“Orange juice,” Hazel said.

Once they knew they were not being chased, they relaxed enough to laugh, briefly, before continuing with their treasure hunt.