

L I E

T O

M E

*Kaitlin Ward*

POINT

If you purchased this book without a cover, you should be aware that this book is stolen property. It was reported as “unsold and destroyed” to the publisher, and neither the author nor the publisher has received any payment for this “stripped book.”

Copyright © 2019 by Kaitlin Ward

Photos ©: cover girl: Michael Frost; cover water: Jovana Rikalo/Stocksy; interior water: Michael Frost; interior emoticons throughout: Iefym Turkin/iStockphoto.

All rights reserved. Published by Point, an imprint of Scholastic Inc., *Publishers since 1920*. SCHOLASTIC, POINT, and associated logos are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of Scholastic Inc.

The publisher does not have any control over and does not assume any responsibility for author or third-party websites or their content.

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.

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are either the product of the author’s imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, business establishments, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data available

ISBN 978-1-338-53810-6

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 20 21 22 23 24

Printed in the U.S.A. 23

First edition, January 2020

Book design by Maeve Norton

LEFE

TO

ME





GIRL DROWNS IN PASSUMPSIC RIVER.

When I see the headline, I almost drop my phone. It's a link someone posted on Facebook from the local news.

I tap the screen with shaking fingers and read the article in a rush. A twenty-year-old college sophomore, Maria Lugen. Survived by both parents and a younger brother, Steve, who goes to my high school. Maria had been missing for a month. Her death is currently believed to be an accident. No additional information at this time.

I set down the phone carefully on my bed and go stand in front of the mirror hanging on my closed door. I stare at my reflection until my features start to feel distorted and unreal, like a word you've repeated too many times in a row.

Because what happened to that girl—it can't have been an accident. It's too much of a coincidence. I move closer to the mirror, stare at myself from only an inch away. My skin is bruised in places, and there's a cast on my wrist. My head spins

if I stand up too fast. Because I hit my head and fell down an embankment, almost into a river. Unlike Maria, I survived.

But I don't think I was meant to.

"This seems like a terrible idea, Amelia." My best friend Skylar's hands are white-knuckle fists around the steering wheel of her Corolla. "Isn't it too soon? Won't it upset you to go back to the spot where you nearly died?"

"I don't think there's a *too soon* for this type of thing."

"Maybe not, I guess, but remind me again how this is going to help? I still think all this is going to do is upset you, and we should spend our time finding a *new* spot instead."

"I don't *want* a new spot. I want to have not almost *died* at the old spot."

She flinches, and I feel bad. Before returning to school this week, I spent four days recovering at home after three days in the hospital with bruises and breaks and a concussion. That last one is what worried everyone the most, and it's the thing my family and friends all still worry about. The concussion kept me from remembering exactly what happened when I fell, and it's left headaches and occasional vertigo in its wake. Sky wants me to focus on letting myself rest and feel better. She's not wrong, but she doesn't know everything.

No one knows that I suspect I'm in danger from a source other than my own brain. Not even my best friend.

I glance sidelong at Sky. She's supermodel tall, and thin as a spike. Her naturally blond hair is dyed a shade of pink that

edges just close enough to “the natural spectrum” that our school doesn’t make her change it, and it’s cut into a short, layered bob. Her heart-shaped face is littered with freckles, and right now her jaw is clenched tight enough that I can practically feel her teeth grinding.

“I just need to see it, okay?” I say softly as the river comes into view at the bottom of the long winding drive down to the dam. No one else is here. Late September is not a super popular time for beachgoers. “I want to see if I, like, *feel* anything. I know how that sounds, but just bear with me.”

Sky parks her car and cuts the ignition. “You know I will.” She opens the door, then pauses with a small smile. “But the second you start using essential oils I’m ordering an intervention.”

I laugh. “Deal.”

We follow the portage trail that winds behind the dam. It’s a collision of natural and unnatural beauty back here: The stark cliff of cement, and the rushing water at its base. The trees and the rocks around its edges, and the mountains in the background. It’s a place I’ve always loved, and I hate that it’s tainted now. I stop walking, press my shins right up against the guardrail. This side of the rail is a paved path, and the other side is a few feet of grass and then a long, steep slope to the water below. The brush is marred with heavy lines of dirt. Bushes have been hacked away, and tree branches have been broken. Some from my fall, some from my rescue.

This is where Sky found me. The last thing I remember is sitting on this guardrail, waiting for her to arrive. She had

something to tell me, she'd said. Something important. And this was our spot. The place where we'd always come to swap secrets. My mind is pretty much a blank space after that. I remember the feeling of something pushing my shoulder, but I don't remember anyone else being near me. Doctors say I must have lost my balance after standing up on the wrong side of the guardrail. Then I fell, tumbling partway down the rocky hill and by sheer, unfathomable luck, I got hung up in a tree and didn't drop the rest of the way to my death.

My neurologist told me that I probably won't remember anything new and that the reason I don't remember my fall isn't because I've buried a traumatic memory but because my concussion means the memory doesn't even exist. I hate that. The idea that something can happen to you and can be completely ignored by your own brain. I want my neurologist to be wrong, and that's the main reason I'm here.

Peering down into the abyss below me, I get such an intense wave of vertigo that I have to sit down on the path. I pull off my new lime-green glasses and press one palm into my forehead between my eyebrows until the dizziness passes. I'm on the right side of the guardrail, I remind myself. The safe side.

"You okay?" Sky asks. She crouches beside me, rests a hand on my back.

"I'm fine." I swallow nausea, unwilling to admit that maybe she was right and this was a bad idea. It's just a *place*. I shouldn't have to feel this way about it. I replace my glasses and stand up, stretching my arms. My left one is heavy, thanks to the cast



surrounding my broken wrist. It makes stretching a lot less satisfying.

And then I . . . *feel* something. A shadow of a past sensation, like something's tugging at my throat. My hand flits there, to where my favorite necklace normally would be—a rectangle made out of wood scraps on a thin chain that my dad and brother made together and gave me for Christmas a few years ago—but it's missing. Along with my glasses, I lost the necklace when I fell. Suddenly, I can recall a tightness against my throat, and then the sensation of absence. I shut my eyes and try to expand that feeling, remember something else. Something *real*. Nothing else comes, but still, I feel hopeful. Maybe the doctor was wrong, after all. Maybe I *will* remember what happened.

“You sure you're all right?” Sky persists.

I open my eyes. “Yeah. I'm just . . . thinking.”

She perches cautiously on the road side of the guardrail, fingers curled around the metal. It's really not that close to the edge, I notice. Not close enough for me to have stood up, stumbled, and fallen halfway down the slope, in my opinion.

“Thinking about what?” she asks.

“What was the important thing you were going to tell me that day?” It's not the first time I've asked. She doesn't seem to want to tell me anymore, but I'm hoping maybe here, she'll change her mind—it's the *other* reason I wanted to come back, and it's the reason I wanted Sky to come with me. With the water crashing out the back of the dam, sometimes it feels like

the sound swallows up your secrets and keeps them safe. That's why it's always been our meeting place.

"It seemed important at the time," she says. "But now . . ." A shrug. "I don't want to talk about it."

"But—"

"It's not relevant, okay?" Her tone is almost snappish, and it stops me from pressing the matter more.

We've drifted recently, or so it feels to me. Months ago, maybe sometime in July, I noticed that she was busy more often when I texted her to make plans. I pulled back a little, and I hoped that she would notice, but she didn't seem to. She is still here when I need her, so sometimes I think it's all in my head.

But it makes me wonder about her secret. If maybe there's something she wanted to say—something that was making her distant. And if maybe she decided not to because she feels bad for me after what happened.

I hope that's not the case, but I get a pit in my stomach when I think about it.

Usually, I would tell her about what I remembered. She might tell me that remembering my necklace snapping means nothing, because that's Sky: my most pragmatic friend. But she would also listen and she wouldn't make me feel stupid.

Except now she's keeping something from me, and it doesn't put me in much of a sharing mood.

"I don't think I'm going to remember anything," I say. "We should just go."

"You sure?"