

CHAPTER ONE

February 15

Finally, thought Alex. *A perfect day for a snow fort.* Snow covered everything. It blanketed the roof of the old three-storey house. It whitened the tops of the rickety wooden shed and the black garbage cans at the side of the yard. It coated the branches of the skinny pine trees in the back and the towering maple at the front. Most striking of all, it enveloped Mount Ava, the tall, jagged mountain right behind Alex's house. The mountain looked like a giant wrapped in a white fur coat.

It had snowed for three days straight but now the sun sparkled. The air was crisp and cold but there was no wind. The firm, slightly wet snow was just

right for building a fort. And now that Owen had joined them, they might finish the fort before dark.

They were working so hard on the last wall of the fort that at first only Alex heard the rumble. He looked up as the noise grew louder. Closer. It sounded like a speeding train but there were no trains in Glory.

“Did you hear that?” he asked.

“Yeah. I heard something,” said Owen. “They’re probably dynamiting on the road. They do that to stop avalanches from crashing down near the highway.”

“That boom isn’t down the road. It’s close. Really close. It’s like thunder. It’s like . . . Owen! Ben! Look!”

Alex pointed up to Mount Ava.

Waves of snow barrelled down the mountain, breaking branches, crushing trees, pumping out blinding clouds of snow — heading right for them.

“Avalanche!” shouted Alex. “Run!”

But they couldn’t run.

The force of the fast-moving snow knocked them off their feet.