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CHAPTER 1

TOUCH BLUE AND YOUR WISH WILL COME TRUE.

“The ferry’s coming!” High on the cliffs, my five-year-old sister, Libby, jumps foot to foot. “Come on, Tess! Mom says we can run down to meet it!”

Across the bay the ferry looks small as a toy leaving the mainland wharf. I’ve seen that boat heading for our island hundreds of times, but never with my heart pounding so hard.

He’s almost here!

“I hope Aaron likes to play Monopoly and swing at the playground,” Libby calls down to me. “Do you think he will?”

“He’s thirteen. That’s probably too old for swinging.” I know what Libby means, though. I want Aaron to like every thing I do, too: reading, fishing, building

things, riding bikes, and cannonballing off the ferry float into the ocean. Ever since my best friend, Amy Hamilton, and her family moved off the island last winter, I've missed having someone to do those things with. When you live on a small island, you don't get many choices of friends.

The wind quivers a brown strand of hair over my nose. My bangs are in that awful growing-out stage: too short to stay tucked behind my ears and too long to stay out of my eyes. As I wipe that hair away, I notice something sparkle near my feet among the tangles of rockweed. I reach down and pry loose a palm-sized circle of blue sea glass, just the bottom of a bottle. Once it was someone's trash, but now the ocean has tumbled it all smooth and beautiful.

It's extra lucky to find something blue, because there's a saying, *Touch blue and your wish will come true*. So anything blue comes with a wish attached.

Lifting the sea glass up to my eye, I watch the whole world change: the far and near islands, the lobster boats in the bay, the summer cottages ringing the shore, even Mrs. Ellis's tiny American and Maine flags flapping in the wind beside her wharf turn hazy, cobalt blue.

Across the water the fancy mainland houses with their big windows stare blank-eyed back at me. Funny to think we islanders are their "view." I stick out my tongue to give them something new to look at.

Tunneling my toes under the silty clam-flat mud, I imagine Dad standing at the ferryboat's rail, pointing out the islands to the boy beside him. I hope Dad doesn't show Aaron every thing. Aaron's never lived on an island before, and I want to show him things, too. He's probably never seen a seal pop his head up in the water, almost near enough to touch. Or watched a thunderstorm over the ocean, with miles and miles of lightning strikes flashing at once. And I'm extra excited to show Aaron how close it feels to flying when Dad guns the engine of our lobster boat and it skims, fast as a skipping stone, over a flat sea.

"We do our best to make a good match," Natalie, Aaron's caseworker, had promised me when she came out to interview us.

I've never met a foster child before. But I've read books about them. There's Gilly in *The Great Gilly Hopkins*, Bud in *Bud, Not Buddy*, and Anne Shirley in *Anne of Green Gables*. I hope Aaron's the most like Anne: full of stories and eager to meet us. Of course, he won't be *exactly* like Anne, because he's not eleven years old.

Or a girl.

Or Canadian.

"Take it slow, Tess," Mom had said this morning over breakfast. "Remember what Natalie said? We need to give Aaron some space. Don't overwhelm him with questions today."

"I won't ask questions," I promised. "I'll just *tell* him things."

Something hits my shoulder.

Up on the cliffs, Libby's hands are full of fat, Scotch pine cones. She scowls at me and pitches another, but it falls short. "Let's go, Tess! We'll miss the ferry!"

I glance to the boat crossing the bay now. "All right. I'm coming!" Running over the clam flats, my feet slap the muck. Broken mussel shells jab my feet, and my toes clench from the cold water, but I run faster with each smacking step. It might be June, but it'll be weeks before the flats feel warm under my feet.

At the break in the cliffs, I drop the sea glass into my shorts pocket to free my hands for climbing. I know exactly where to place my feet, which rocks wiggle and which ones won't.

"Maybe Aaron'll like green beans!" Libby shouts down to me.

I grin up at her. "Why? So you can give him *yours*?" Stepping up to a flat ledge, I grab a little tree to steady myself. "Or maybe Aaron'll like boats and reading, like me!"

"Or maybe Aaron'll be able to whistle real good." Libby blows, but only a whoosh of air comes.

"You've almost got it."

Libby reaches her hands high overhead. "Or maybe he'll be a hundred feet tall!" Her short blond hair and green plastic barrettes bob as she giggles.

Laughing with her, I clamber up the last ledge and pick up my sneakers from the grass where I'd left them. "If Aaron were that big, he wouldn't fit in our house."

“Or on the ferry!” Libby adds.

I look over my shoulder at the boat — closer now!
Straight on, the ferry looks like a fat birthday cake
from this distance, wide at the bottom, the tall wheelhouse
rising like a candle in the middle.

I slide my feet into my sneakers, without even
brushing the sand away.

“Hey!” Libby yells as I run past her. “Wait for me!”

But I am so full from waiting today that I can’t
swallow one more drop — not even for Libby. Reaching
into my pocket, I touch that lucky-blue sea glass and
try to cram all my wishes about Aaron into one.

Please let this plan work.