



CHAPTER 1

Jake Everdale stared at the clock above Ms. Turner's head. That clock was the coolest thing in his fourth-grade classroom. It didn't just show the hours and minutes. It even counted the seconds and milliseconds, which meant something on it was always moving—just like Jake.

That's not why Jake was watching the clock, though. With one glance, those bright-red numbers told him exactly how much longer until

school got out. And right now, at this very moment, the clock said 2:59:07:11. Just 53.49 seconds to go and school would be over. For the first time all day, Jake let himself feel hopeful. *Maybe Ms. Turner will forget to give back our quizzes*, he thought. *Maybe she didn't have time to grade them.*

2:59:19:52.

“You should all be making progress on your science projects,” Ms. Turner was saying—but Jake wasn’t listening.

2:59:33:16.

“If you have questions, now is the time to ask them,” she continued. “Don’t wait until the last minute.”

2:59:41:52.

Almost there! Jake cheered to himself.

“And one more thing . . .” Ms. Turner said. “I have your quizzes from yesterday.”

NO! Jake wanted to yell. The truth was, Jake didn’t need to get his quiz back to know that he’d failed. And sure enough, there was a bright-red F

at the top of the paper—and a line under it for his parents to sign. Jake crumpled up the quiz and stuffed it into his backpack as fast as he could. But he wasn't fast enough, because he heard a familiar laugh from the next desk.

“Nice work, Everdale . . . or maybe we should call you *Everfail*,” sneered Aiden Allen. Everyone sitting around them started to giggle. Aiden Allen got As in everything. Even his initials were A.A. But in the personality department, Aiden was a solid F.

At 3:00:00:00, Jake was the first one out the door. As Jake walked home from school, his backpack felt heavier with every step he took. With one quiz, his day had gone from good to bad. Another lecture from Mom and Dad . . . another night of no TV after dinner . . . another punishment.

The worst part was that Jake had really tried this time. He studied at his desk for a whole hour. He read his science notes four different times. He

even made flash cards. But during the quiz, everything he knew flew out of his brain like the baseball he homered over the fence last week.

Jake decided there was only one thing left to try: the Wishing Well behind Franklin Elementary School.

Technically, it wasn't a wishing well at all—just a muddy old storm drain. But everybody at school knew it was more than that. If the stories were true, the Wishing Well could grant any wish. But you had to give up something in return—and not just anything. No, it had to be your favorite, most special possession. If you closed your eyes, spun around three times, and threw it into the well—*poof!* Your wish would come true. The catch, though, was that you only got one chance. Jake had been waiting to make a wish since kindergarten. He didn't want to waste it.

But now, Jake had a feeling that it was time.

“Hey, Mom,” Jake yelled as he ran inside, dropping his backpack on the floor. His dog, Flapjack,

was waiting at the door, wagging his tail wildly. Jake paused to give Flapjack a quick pet, then thundered upstairs without bothering to take off his raincoat or his muddy sneakers.

“Hi, honey,” Mom called. “Did you get your quiz back?”

Jake pretended he hadn’t heard her as he searched his room. *My best, most special thing*, he thought. Well, that was easy—it was his collection of signed baseball cards, of course. But there was no way Jake could bear to throw them into the Wishing Well.

Suddenly, Jake spotted a pile of plastic figures Aunt Margaret had sent for his birthday. The Heroes of History set included a bunch of famous people, from scientists to explorers to artists, from across the centuries. Jake might have been more interested if the Heroes came with cool accessories, like remote-controlled vehicles or tiny chemistry sets. But they didn’t. They just stood there.

I guess they're special, Jake thought, staring at the plastic figures. *After all, Aunt Margaret gave them to me.* As the world's top neuroscientist, Aunt Margaret knew more about the human brain than anybody else. When she wasn't at work in her lab, she was traveling all over the globe to give speeches or receive awards for her amazing discoveries. Jake and his family almost never saw her . . . which meant she would never know that he'd gotten rid of her present.

Jake stuffed the Heroes of History into his pockets. Then he raced down the stairs and was about to crash through the back door when—

“Jake! Your quiz?” Mom called from the kitchen.

“In-my-backpack-gotta-go!” Jake yelled in a rush as he flew out the door.

Jake ran down the sidewalk—past the house where his best friend, Emerson Lewis, lived; past the playground; and just past Franklin Elementary School to the grassy field behind it. Usually,

Franklin Field was packed with kids playing, but today, it was closed. Five days of nonstop rain had turned it into a mud pit.

The storm drain—the Wishing Well—was at the far edge of the field, right where the sidewalk stopped. Jake peered through the sturdy metal grate, but it was so dark down there that he couldn't see anything. He could hear the sound of water flowing through it, though.

Jake clapped his hands over his eyes, spun around three times, and took a deep breath.

“Uh, Wishing Well?” Jake began. “I, uh . . .”

Somewhere in the distance, Jake heard a low rumble of thunder. A prickly feeling ran down his neck, making him shiver even though the autumn day was warm.

“I—uh—” he tried again.

More thunder. Louder, this time.

Closer.

“I-wish-for-better-grades-in-school!” Jake said.

Then, with his eyes tightly shut, he threw the Heroes of History into the storm drain. Every last one.

Crack! The thunder was so loud it rattled in Jake's bones.

Jake's eyes flew open. All of a sudden, a flash of lightning tore through the dark clouds and hit the padlock on the gate of Franklin Field, sending sparks flying—and Jake running. But Jake wasn't fast enough to beat the rain. He was completely drenched before he was even halfway home. And that was what made Jake realize something: He had thrown the Heroes of History into the swirling waters of the storm drain—but he had never heard a splash.

The storm, Jake told himself. There was too much thunder to hear anything else.

But inside, he wasn't so sure.