

## EPILOGUE

Rachel had many visitors and a few surprises in her hospital room. There were the people from the news who wanted to do a story about near drowning. Her father shooed them away. She vaguely remembered an early visit from Mr. Moore. She couldn't recollect just what he said but she was pretty sure she told him "A person can't cross the bridges just one time each. But who wants to cross them only once anyway?" Slipping back among her fragmented dreams, she wondered what she was talking about. Bridges. The puzzle Mr. Moore had given her. Yes that was it. But there was something else about bridges--what was it? When she had recovered a little more she had a visit from Keith and Izzy and Cynthia. Rachel wanted to know how the little girl was--the one who had tried to cross the river alone, the one she had caught by the hand before she fell. She was surprised to learn that she had not helped anyone keep from falling in the water. On the contrary, Izzy alone had witnessed Rachel fall into the canal. Izzy had raced across the street without her brother, Keith. Keith was alarmed at Izzy's carelessness and chased after her. Cynthia, who had been walking with them from Dr. Esse's party, towards home ran to catch up. It had taken a few moments to decipher what Izzy meant when she said "Undertoad grabbed Rachel!" Keith was in the water before Cynthia quite understood what was happening. When she did understand, she held onto Izzy and shouted for help. Keith needed all the help he could get. He located Rachel but it was a struggle to keep her head above water. He was glad to feel supportive arms around him and to be told he could let go of Rachel. Someone else had her. A perplexed Keith told Rachel, "It's been quite an experience going from being the school geek to being notorious-and suspended- for carrying a weapon to school, to being acclaimed a hero for helping to save you." Hearing all about this in her hospital room, Rachel was very grateful to and glad for Keith. But it was Izzy's hand she couldn't make herself release and she couldn't stop looking in Izzy's eyes. From Cynthia there was a long embrace and a scolding: "Shame on you, Rachel. You had me scared to death!"

Rachel's parents were there almost constantly from the moment she first regained consciousness. While they thought she was resting, they murmured together and sometimes cried a little and kissed and hugged. But, later at home, there were also some angry words, kept toned down but still noticeable. Mom and Dad started going to see someone, a marital and family counselor Dr. Esse recommended. Dad had been reluctant at first. "It means time and money," Dad complained to Mom.

"And it's a pretty long drive out to the office building in Lob's Wood." Rachel had an odd feeling about it all-but she couldn't put her finger on it. First Mom and then Dad admitted they were getting something out of the counseling.

"Mr. Robin was right about me wanting the kids to do better and go farther than I did in school," Mom said.

"Yeah, and about me feeling bad about not being more involved with the girls when they were younger."

"He's a pretty good therapist, I think. Good sense of humor- kind of impish at times-"

"Yeah, he's a good-"

"-Fellow!?" Rachel exclaimed involuntarily as she entered the room (she was supposed to be concentrating on her homework- not listening to her parents discuss their therapy).

"Well, yeah, I'd say he's a pretty good guy-"

"No I meant --" then Rachel seemed confused.

"What honey?"

"Nothing... I just thought...never mind."

Mom and Dad exchanged a worried glance. Cynthia later confided to Rachel that right after her mishap- Dad brought home stuff to read about brain damage from near drowning.

"My brain's perfectly fine, Cynthia. I can still outsmart you," Rachel retorted, but then softened. "It's just that once in awhile I think I should be able to remember something that happened when I was in the water."

"What? You weren't in all that long."

"Yeah I guess not. But it seemed a long time. I can almost remember--"

As time went by the last tiny remnants of Conscience-Berg faded from Rachel's waking memories. There were some odd things though. Neither she nor her parents could account for her newly found dedication to practicing her oboe or her newly acquired interest in violin concertos or her absent-minded habit of fashioning one-sided pieces of paper out of the perforated strips that Mom or Dad or Cynthia would zip off to open ice cream cartons or boxes of breakfast cereal.