



Chapter 1

“Ben, watch out!” yelled Bekka Cooper, as she watched her normally, not so clumsy, twin brother trip on something sticking up on the beach.

“NO-O-O!” was all Ben could get out as he felt himself falling face first, in slow motion. *What beastly barnacle from a shipwreck washed up on shore and tripped me*, he thought as the sand particles got closer. His arms, flapping like wet noodles, were powerless to stop him. He knew the landing was going to be bad. Ben was convinced he would spend the rest of their vacation at Pictured Rocks with his nose in a cast. And with that, his face landed, sinking two inches down into the biggest, grainiest and hardest sand he had ever seen or felt.

Bending over him, Bekka wasn't sure if she should laugh or call 9-1-1.

“You okay?”

Ben started to move. “This sand is nasty,” he said, jumping up, spitting out a mouthful as he brushed off his clothes. He looked around to see if anyone had seen him make a fool of himself on this, the first day of their camping trip. Without saying another word, he headed down the beach in search of treasure that might have drifted ashore from a shipwreck. His goal was to find something really big and make the headline in the Lansing State Journal newspaper, where their father was a reporter. Their mother said he and Bekka inherited a nose for the news, but right now, his nose hurt.



As the soles of their shoes made fresh impressions in the wet sand, they kept in mind the information the park ranger gave them when they registered their camper: “Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore is a very special place in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. It’s a forty-mile-long shoreline that is treated like a national park. It’s protected by rangers who work to preserve wildlife, natural habitats, and the environment. Just off the shore, are many sunken ships, and sometimes, during storms, pieces wash up on the beach. *Leave them there.* Each ship has its own story, and we want to preserve history and nature. If everyone took something from one of those ships, soon there wouldn’t be anything left for visitors to see. Also, don’t pick wildflowers, plants, or cut down trees for firewood. We sell firewood in bundles here at the center.”

“Wouldn’t it be cool if we found a cannon ball or a piece of gold from one of those sunken ships out there?” Ben asked.



His foot pushed around the object he’d found only to discover it was an old brown bottle. Disappointed it wasn’t anything special, they walked farther down the beach. The wind seemed to blow harder the longer they walked. Bekka’s ponytail blew in the wind, while Ben’s cap threatened to blow off into the lake. Both were amazed at how clear the water was. They’d heard Lake Superior is the largest and the coldest of the five Great Lakes, but Ben wanted to test the temperature for himself.



Taking off his tennis shoe, he stuck his big toe into the water as a wave came up on shore. Two seconds later, he jerked it back out.



“C-c-c-cold,” was all he could say as he quickly put his shoe back on.

“I’m thinking we’ll do more hiking than swimming,” replied Bekka, taking his picture with her new camera.

“Hey, I think I see something weird up there,” Ben shouted, as he ran farther along the shore.

“Aw, it’s just a stick with seaweed wrapped around it,” his sister said, as she caught up to him. She used to be as fast a runner as he was, but lately it seemed he could outrun her whenever they raced. Mom said he was in a growing spurt and now his legs were longer and faster, or so it seemed. Just then, something caught her eye. Turning her head to the right she said, “Look at the seagulls! They’re circling around that tree up there. I wonder why.”



“Let’s go look,” Ben said, as he started to climb a sand dune. He’d never climbed a dune before, so he didn’t realize that, as he took a step upward, he also slipped back down. Grabbing a handful of tall grass, he caught himself and moved upward. Bekka managed to reach the top the same time he did. *Maybe girls are better sand dune climbers than boys*, she thought. Surprising both of them, a wild animal stuck its head out between two bushes. As quickly as it appeared, it scooted out of sight, back into the bushes.

“What was that?” Ben asked.

“I’m not sure, but it had a long tail,” Bekka said. “I tried to get a picture of it, but it was too fast for me. Maybe we should head back to the camper, my stomach’s growling.”

Ben got the feeling Bekka didn’t want to be too far from their parents if a wild animal was nearby. Forgetting the seagulls overhead, they turned back toward Lake Superior. Sliding down the sand dune was a lot easier than going up, and soon they were back at the water’s edge. For as far as they could see, nothing on the beach looked like part of a ship.

“How far out do you think the sunken ships are?” Ben asked.

“I don’t know, but Mom said we’re going on a boat tour tomorrow. We can get a good look at the sunken ships then.”



They walked along the shore looking for something interesting to take a picture of.

“Stand still and I’ll take your picture by that seaweed stick,” Bekka said, as they walked by the stick again.

“Maybe it’s from a two-hundred-year-old tree from that island over there.”



In the distance, a freighter sailed east on its way to Lake Michigan or Lake Huron. It looked to be the size of a toy boat, but it was probably longer than a football field.

Ben wondered what it would have been like being a sailor long ago, crossing the waters of the Great Lakes in a storm. He’d heard of the rough waves, cold weather, and dark nights. He was looking forward to tomorrow’s boat trip. He wanted to see what lay beneath the surface of the lake. *Binoculars*, he must not forget to take his binoculars.

“Ben! Bekka!” a familiar voice called their names.
“There’s someone I want you to meet.”