



spy codes, movie-star bones,
and other things
that get cracked

“Six, seven, eight, nine —!” Elinor is counting the seconds until our handstand contest collapses.

“Jules!” Big Henry slams into the room and *crash!* Elinor and I are down in a heap.



“Big Henry!” I shout from our pileup. “I was going for the record! That was going to be my longest handstand ever.” I turn to Elinor. “Right? I think we were going to get to ten seconds.”

“Definitely,” Elinor says, rubbing her arm. “But now I think I need a hospital. Is it serious?” She holds out her arm for my examination. Elinor is sometimes dramatic

about small injuries, which I like very much because she is never dramatic about one other thing. Besides, when she says things like this, in her lovely Elinor of London accent, it sounds like *she* is the actress and I am the regular person, and I picture my best friend, Elinor, dressed up in a glittery gown and waving to people on a long red carpet, and I am one of those celebrity newscasters asking her about her earrings and her shoes —

“Jules!” Big Henry has come face-to-face with me, interrupting our imaginary moment. I look my little brother in the eyes and he doesn’t blink. This must be serious.

I put my hands on his shoulders. “What is it?” I ask.