

DOUBLECROSS

MISSION ATOMIC



SARWAT CHADDA

SCHOLASTIC INC.

To the fans. May your lives be full of
AWESOMESAUCE!

–S.C.



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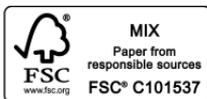
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PROLOGUE

“Dan! Dan! Can you hear me?”

Dan gripped the cell phone, squeezing it so hard that the plastic creaked. “Amy! I’m here!”

He shook it. He could hardly see her: the screen was a blizzard of static, his sister’s face a frightened mask.

Her voice crackled through the speakers. “I—I don’t have much time, Dan. You have to listen. . . .”

“Where are you? Tell me!”

Amy sighed. Her shoulders slumped and she seemed to crumble from inside. He’d never seen her so small, so beaten.

How could she be? She was his sister. They’d been through everything together and had always come out on top.

Always.

“Amy, tell me.”

Her face was stained with bruises.

Dan gritted his teeth. Whoever had done this to Amy would pay a thousand times over.

She put her fingertips against the camera of her own phone, as if she was trying to reach through

the screen to touch him. A weary, weary smile spread over her lips. "I can see you, Dan."

"Where are you? I'm coming to get you. Just wait. It'll be okay. I promise."

"Dan . . ." Amy shook her head.

"I promise!" Dan yelled.

The image disappeared into a cloud of static and the speakers rose to a deafening, mind-tearing buzz, as if a million hornets had been freed.

"Amy!"

She was shouting; he caught the edges of her words, but she sounded so far away, as if her cries were coming out from some fathomless depth. The screen jolted back into focus.

"Dan? Are you there?"

"I'm here! Right here!"



Amy bit her lip, like he'd seen her do a million times before and hadn't thought anything of it; but it was such an Amy thing that now, at this very moment, he realized he was crying.

Her gaze hardened. "I know why Nathaniel wants the clues. I know what he's planning."

"I don't care about the clues, Amy. Just get somewhere safe!"

"They're all that matter." She smiled. "Only you can stop him. It was always down to you."

"No, that's not true. It's both of us, Amy. I can't do it without you."

The image shook. Amy glanced to the side, off screen, and gasped. "He's coming."

"Run, Amy! Run and hide! I'm coming!"

She stopped, her lips not quite forming her words. Amy's gaze lifted. There was a flicker of fear in the way her eyes widened and the small gasp that caught in her throat. "No . . ."

A crack like a gunshot burst through the speakers.

Dan froze. "Amy?" he whispered.

The cell, fallen from Amy's hands, faced up at a ceiling.

Someone lifted it. As it moved, Dan caught a half-second glimpse of Amy lying on the floor.

Alek Spasky appeared. His eyes narrowed with curiosity as he peered into the phone's camera. "Nathaniel? Are you there?"

"What have you done to my sister?" Dan could barely form the words.

“Nathaniel?”

“What have you done to Amy?” Dan yelled.

It can't be. She can't be . . .

He couldn't finish the thought. He couldn't allow it.

“I'm here, Alek,” said Nathaniel, taking the phone from Dan's numb fingers.

“It's done,” replied Alek, quite casually. “The Cahill girl is dead.”