

# ONE

CHAPTER

THE STALE AIR IN THE OVERHEATED BOARDROOM AT YK Industries made my red silk tie feel tight. Way too tight. With trembling fingers, I tried to loosen the noose slowly strangling me. Finally, I yanked hard enough to release the knot, and then just let the tie hang there as I sucked in a breath.

Sitting next to me on one side of the long oak table was my twin brother, Eddy. Like me, he wore a black blazer and white button-down shirt, but his tie was blue. He'd gotten his hair cut about the same length as mine, but gel made his stand straight up, so at least we didn't look as identical as we could have. Mom was on the other side of Eddy, along with our lawyer, John something or other. He was trying to explain to Mom why Phil was still running our family's billion-dollar software company.

Phil. The right-hand man of my father, Rex Yanakakis,

founder of YK, his own Yanakakis family legacy. Together, they kept our family in the Compound.

Roughly two thousand days. Two thousand days of my life spent underground. And why?

Because my father lied.

Lied to all of us. To my mom, to my sisters. To me.

He made us believe there was a nuclear attack and our only hope for survival was to enter the Compound, the lavish underground refuge he had built, so we could survive what no one else on the planet could. We were desperate; we willingly entered that silver door beyond which lay a sanctuary of my father's making. A place of the kind of luxury and excess that we were used to.

A place of safety.

Were we stupid? To enter so blindly?

The memory of that night had dimmed. My ninth birthday. I remember the fire, the screams. I remember my heart pounding so hard I thought I would die. I remember running until I thought my legs would give out. And the terror in the eyes of my mother and my two sisters, terror that mirrored my own.

Mostly I remember my relief as the silver door closed. The screaming was done. And the fire, the apocalypse: They were outside.

As was my brother, Eddy. My twin. My other half.

I was not whole without him. And my own selfishness had been the reason he was not with us. I had set him up, lied to him, so that he hid in the car with our grandma as

she drove away. So, when the time came to enter the Compound, neither of them was there.

I was the reason Eddy was left on the outside. All those years underground, I believed he was dead. And I blamed myself for his death.

The rest of us were safe. Six years we stayed there, believing it was our only choice. The rest of the world was gone.

Or so we thought.

My father's lies were good. Better than good. His lies were brilliant. And his planning was nothing short of genius.

Planning he could only have done with Phil working for him on the outside. While we were stuck on the inside.

But my father didn't count on me figuring out it was all just a game. Figuring out my twin brother was still alive, alive and living in the world that was still there, still oh-so-totally frickin' there. And my father didn't count on me being strong enough to get us all out: my mother; my little sister, Reese; my older sister, Lexie; and . . . the ones born inside.

The Supplements: Four-year-old Lucas. Two-year-old Cara. And Quinn, nearly one year old.

They were the ones who lived behind the yellow door. They were the ones created for an unmentionable, unholy purpose.

The ones who never knew the other world. The ones who only knew the Compound.

My brothers and sisters gave me the strength to stand up

to my father, find the code that opened the door, and get us all out.

I didn't feel guilty for getting out, even if it had led to my father's death.

Because I had to believe he did it to himself. He never should have put us down there. He never should have made us stay for so long. He never should have made us believe the lie.

I hated him for the lie. He deserved to burn with the Compound.

Maybe it made me evil, but I was glad my father was gone.

But Phil?

Phil was right in front of me, strutting through the double doors of the boardroom in his thousand-dollar suit and alligator loafers, hoisting a leather briefcase emblazoned in gold with the initials P.A.W. He set it down in a chair across the large table from us and stared at me, a smug grin on his face.

I looked away and tried to tune in to what our lawyer was saying to my mom.

"Their only option was to assume you were all dead and follow the instructions in the will. I'm sorry to say it that way, but except for Eddy, it appeared you were all . . . gone. So Rex's will instructed that Phil would remain CEO until Eddy turned twenty-five."

"But I'm not dead, obviously. Neither is Eli. We're here," Mom said. She glared across the table at Phil. "And he needs to go."

The lawyer cleared his throat. "Obviously, the judge will have to revisit the will, and Rex's instructions, now, in the event of his death."

Eddy asked, "How does it change things? Is Phil still in charge?" He looked across the room at Phil, but my twin's gaze was soft, his forehead unlined. Apparently, he didn't harbor the animosity I did.

The lawyer rubbed his forehead. "Well. . ."

Mom frowned. "What?"

The lawyer said, "It doesn't change much."

I sat up straighter, causing the leather chair to creak. "How can that be? My mom is still here."

The lawyer shook his head. "Rex didn't name your mother to run the company. He named you boys once you turn twenty-five."

Mom asked, "So who *did* he name to run it until they turn twenty-five?"

The lawyer looked across the room and nodded at Phil. "Mr. Whitaker."

"After what he did?" Mom slammed her hand on the table. "No!"

The door opened and a tall bald man in a gray suit entered the room. He shook hands with our lawyer, then turned to Mom. "Mrs. Yanakakis, I'm Henry Dodge, Mr. Whitaker's lawyer."

He smiled at Eddy and me.

Eddy smiled back. I sure didn't.

Dodge took a seat beside his client and opened a folder. He handed us each a sheath of papers. "This is Rex's will,

which I'm sure your lawyer has shown you, Mrs. Yanakakis. It clearly states that—"

Mom jumped out of her seat and yelled at Phil, "After what you did, you should be in jail! Not running my husband's company."

Phil held up his hands in a gesture of submission. "It's what Rex wanted. I'm simply following his wishes."

Mom sat down and looked at our lawyer. "How do we fix this? How do we get rid of him? Can we contest the will?"

"There are only a few circumstances in which a will can be contested." Our lawyer lifted and lowered a shoulder. "We would have to prove Rex was mentally incapacitated when he made the will, or that he didn't sign the will, or that the will doesn't meet state requirements."

I drummed my fingers on the table. "Let me guess: None of those circumstances apply."

Phil said, "Really, kid?" He shook his head a little, his mouth turned up at the corners. "You think your dad didn't know how to dot his *i*'s and cross his *t*'s?"

Mom ignored Phil and turned to her lawyer. "What if we prove Mr. Whitaker was complicit in keeping us prisoner for six years?"

Her lawyer nodded. "That would certainly—"

Phil interrupted, "You've got no proof of anything."

I stood up and practically leaped across the table. "You were there with the helicopter!"

He smiled and tilted his head a bit. "I was there to rescue you."

"After six years?" I scoffed. "You were a little late."

Eddy pulled on my arm to get me to sit back down. Mom pointed at Phil. "One way or another, I will get you out of here."

Phil leaned back and crossed his arms. "I'm not going anywhere."

Mom shoved away from the table and headed for Phil, who jumped to his feet. I followed Eddy, who quickly grabbed her arm and said, "Mom, we'll figure this out. Just calm down."

Phil turned to his lawyer. "I have to get back to work." He looked my way, a smirk on his face. "I have a company to run."

In an instant, I had my finger in his face. "This isn't over."

"Oh, really?" Phil shook his head. "I think—" Dodge pulled him away and they huddled together, heads down, their backs to me.

My heart was pounding, and I looked down, trying to stop myself from doing something I would regret later: Phil's briefcase was open on the chair right by my leg. A flash drive sat on top of a few folders. Without thinking, I reached in, closed my fingers around it, and slipped it in my pocket. Then I backed away and stood beside Mom and Eddy. "Let's get out of here." And I glared at Phil one more time before we left the room.

Out in the hallway, Mom turned to our lawyer and said, "I want him gone." Her jaw clenched and her eyes grew dark. "One way or another."

I'd never seen that look in her eyes before.



THE LIMO RIDE HOME WAS QUIET. QUIET AND UNEVENTFUL, thanks to our recent move to Mercer Island in the middle of Lake Washington. After spending a few weeks at Gram's in Hawaii, we had flown home to Seattle, arriving one night at a private airfield near YK, and then piling into two big SUVs. As we neared our mansion, the road swarmed with news vans and satellite dishes and reporters. Fortunately, the windows of the vehicles were tinted, but that didn't stop the cameras from flashing. It took forever to get through the gates and onto our driveway.

The second I'd opened the car door, our chocolate lab, Cocoa, jumped out and ran around to the back, probably wanting to see if her doghouse was still there. Inside, our housekeeper Els had been waiting for us. Ever since we'd gotten out of the Compound, she'd been getting the mansion ready for us, and our extra siblings. Reese went right to her old room, leaving Eddy and Lexie and I to help get the little ones ready for bed. I took Lucas to a former guest room that had been repainted in primary colors. A big red fire-engine bed rested on one wall. He squawked, then ran to it and climbed the ladder to the top. He waved. "Look how high I am!"

I grinned. "Can you sleep that high up?"

He nodded and flopped down on the mattress, disappearing from view.

I walked over to the curtained window and peeked out. Although the street itself wasn't in view, the glow from all

the lights was, and cameras still flashed. How long were they going to stay there?

I let the curtain drop and went over to the bed, then climbed up the ladder. Lucas was already asleep.

I tucked him in, then backed down the ladder a step before dropping to the floor.

Downstairs, Mom, Gram, and Els were in the kitchen. Mom was holding a snoozing Finn. I said, "Lucas is asleep."

Els set an apple pie on the counter and held up a knife. "Hungry?"

I smiled. "Sure." I reached out to get the knife.

Els gently slapped my hand away. "I can still get things for you."

"Fine." I made a face at her and climbed up on a stool beside Mom. Els slid a piece of pie over to me. I picked up a fork. "Thanks. May I have some milk?"

Els nodded and went to get a glass, her white orthopedic shoes squeaking as she walked across the tiled marble floor.

Weird. Being served again after so many years of doing things for myself. I took a bite of pie. "Yum. Els, this is great."

She set a glass of milk in front of me and handed me a napkin. "Wipe your face."

Without a word, I obeyed.

Mom handed Finn to Gram, who said, "I'll take this babe up to bed."

I asked Mom, "What are we gonna do about all those news crews?"

She shrugged. "We'll deal with it tomorrow."

Those first two days, being home in our mansion was surreal. Papparazzi and news vans surrounded us. Our home wasn't visible from the street where they camped out, but helicopters could fly overhead. We didn't dare go outside, not even to take Cocoa for a walk. One day I stopped by an upstairs window that looked out over the pool and the basketball court, wishing I could go out there. Beyond the basketball court, something new had been built. I couldn't tell what it was, but I saw a lot of concrete.

Did it really matter? After being cooped up all those years, I was once again denied the coveted freedom of the outdoors.

After three days of virtual house arrest, the YK helicopter came one night and took us to the office. There, we switched to several white windowless vans, which secretly transported all of us to a new house on Mercer Island, bought under a name that would never be traced to us.

While not our mansion, the new house was still huge: seven bedrooms, six-and-a-half baths, on over an acre of lakeshore property, next door to a home that was even bigger, with even more security than ours. Which meant we had a pretty good chance of not sticking out, at least for a while.

My room had a massive bank of windows looking out onto Lake Washington. In front of them was a state-of-the-art treadmill, which I ran on every morning. Running outside would have been better, but we had tried that. Once. Our security force had all been hired for their bulk,

not their stamina, and those guys couldn't keep up with me for more than a mile.

Cocoa followed me to my room, where I inserted the stolen flash drive—initials P.A.W. etched on its side—into my desktop computer. Of course, I also had a new YK tablet; which made my old laptop in the Compound seem laughable, but I found myself still using the desktop most of the time. The list of files on the flash drive popped up, and I hoped one of them had something that would shed light on Phil's connection to my dad and the Compound.

But as I opened the first several files, everything appeared to be legitimate business: schematics of products, meeting notes, schedules. After about an hour, I couldn't stop yawning. I rubbed my eyes, ejected the flash drive, and put it in my desk drawer.

Cocoa had been curled up at my feet, but when she felt me stir, she sat up and put her head in my lap. As I petted her, I realized I would have to figure another way to get Phil out of the company. And out of my life.