

CHAPTER TEN

LUCAS COULDN'T BE GONE. EDDY WAS WRONG. I LOWERED my voice and spoke slowly. "He's in one of the stalls."

Eddy grabbed my arm. "No, he's not. He wasn't in there. I checked everywhere."

Lee was already pulling on my arm. "There's only one exit. I'll go there, you check at the front desk."

Eddy took the handle of the stroller, and I said, "I'm checking the bathroom. He has to be there." I ran there, nearly smashing into a kid coming out. "Crap." Inside, I slammed open each of the stall doors. No Lucas. I whirled around, trying to get a grip. "Lucas!"

I ran back out and headed toward the front entrance of the aquarium. Eddy was at the front desk. He'd gotten rid of the stroller and was holding Cara. "Did they find him?"

Eddy shook his head.

Outside, rain was pouring down, and Lee stood at the

door, looking outside. I joined him. "Lucas has to be in here. He wouldn't go out there. Not when it's pouring."

Eddy came out. "No one there has seen a lost kid." I covered my face with my hands. "It's my fault. I should have waited for him."

Eddy touched my shoulder. "No, I should have just cleaned it all up myself."

Lee didn't say anything, but from the look on his face, it was clear he considered himself at fault. Then he pointed outside, shoved the door open, and stormed through it.

We crowded under the overhang as a soaking wet Lucas came toward us, holding the hand of a boy who looked about my age. He wore a black knit cap pulled down over his ears, a dark green hoodie with frayed cuffs, and faded jeans with holes in the knees. His sneakers were black and beaten up, but his skateboard was nice. Like he only had so much money and the skateboard was way more important than clothes. Rain dripped down his face as he walked my little brother over to us and then dropped his hand.

I scooped up Lucas. "What were you thinking?"

He wiped some rain off his face. "I got lost and went out the door."

The boy pointed to his left. "I found him around the side by an emergency door. He must have gone outside and gotten locked out."

The beeping I'd heard while I was cleaning Cara up must have been the alarm on the door.

"Thank you so much," I told the boy. "We were freaking out."

Lee said, "Stay here. I'll go get the car."

Eddy told the boy, "Yeah, thanks a lot." He glanced at the board under his arm. "That a Plan B?"

The boy nodded, and some rain fell off the end of his nose. "Planned to meet some friends." He looked skyward. "Day turned to crap, though."

"Lucky for us," said Eddy.

Just then, Lee pulled up. Eddy said, "You need a ride or something?"

The boy shook his head, shedding more water. "The bus stop is close."

I breathed a sigh of relief. There had been too many strangers lately. I already had the phone number of one. I didn't want to meet any more, especially not one in our car.

Lee came around and opened up the back door. "Let's get them in."

The running and rain and getting lost seemed to have taken the piss and vinegar out of Lucas, who meekly climbed into his car seat. Cara, who obviously wasn't feeling any better, zonked out completely as soon as I strapped her in. I took my spot in the backseat. Eddy and the boy were still standing outside the car, rain soaking them even more as they talked.

Finally Eddy backed toward the car and held up his hand and the boy turned around and walked away.

Eddy was grinning as he got in the front. Lee sped

out of the parking lot, probably way faster than he should have. But I think we were all happy to put the aquarium behind us.

I wondered how we were going to tell Mom about what happened, because I knew it would be the first thing out of Lucas's mouth.

As we neared home, we had to wait to enter the gate because a FedEx truck pulled away. Joe was holding a box, and just as Lee turned into the circle drive, I caught sight of Reese running out the front door toward the guardhouse.

By the time we got the kids out of the car, she had returned, carrying the package into the house. Reese had gotten so helpful around the house. A few days before I'd seen her with the vacuum. I appreciated how much she had been helping. Maybe it made me feel less guilty whenever I went out and left Mom with all the little kids. I knew she had Gram and Els to help, but I liked knowing Reese was there, too, taking on some responsibility.

Lucas ran ahead of us into the kitchen where Mom was sitting, feeding Quinn lunch.

Lucas proclaimed, "I got lost!"

Mom smiled at him, and then up at me and Eddy. She winked. "I'm sure you did."

"No, I really did! I went out the door with the red light on it and it beeped and then I was outside in the rain and this boy found me."

Mom's smile disappeared and her eyes narrowed. She asked me, "What happened?"

I breathed deeply. "He came out of the bathroom and went out the emergency door."

"Where were you?"

"I was in the bathroom with Lucas." I pointed at Cara. "But then she was with Eddy and threw up, so he called me."

Mom frowned. "And you just left him?"

"For two seconds!" I said. "He was in the stall and I sent Eddy right back for him."

Eddy shook his head. "He had already left."

Mom shook her head. "This is done. This is all *done*. No more outings, no more—"

"Mom!" I interrupted her. "He's fine. We got him."

She crossed her arms and glared at us.

Eddy said, "Yeah, a guy found him and brought him to the front, and we were there."

"A guy? What guy?" asked Mom.

Eddy shrugged. "His name's Tony."

I flashed a glance his way. How did he know that?

Eddy continued. "He's cool. I got his number so we could send a thank-you."

When did he do that? And *why* would he do that?

Mom sighed. She looked at Cara, who was a mess.

"I'd better get her a bath." She picked her up and started to head upstairs. Then she turned back around. "This discussion is not over."

It was safe to say the outing to the aquarium was a complete bust.

I made a turkey and Havarti sandwich with avocado and took it up to my room. I set the plate on my desk and slid the mouse back and forth. My desktop computer popped on and I hit Google. Our close call at the aquarium, the one before we lost Lucas, made me think.

What if Lucas had rambled on about us? Maybe called out our last name?

Would people have put two and two together?

Once again, it made me wonder what people were thinking about us. If they were thinking about us.

I typed in *Yanakakis*. Of course, thousands of entries popped up, most about YK and Dad, all related to the business. I scanned through, looking to see if anything was related to the family, and to more recent events. There were news reports from when we escaped of course, but not much lately.

Social media had changed so much since we'd been away. When I changed the entry to "*Eli Yanakakis*," a post popped up. "Maybe saw Yanakakis twins at Niagara Falls! #YK.sighting."

YK sighting? Was it a club or something?

I clicked on that and saw a bunch of posts. A bunch of posts that all seemed to be about encounters with me and my family.

"Saw them in Times Square!"

"Caught a peek at Disneyworld. Twins and a bunch of kids."

"My uncle in Vail said they've been there for a month." I had to smile. They were all so full of it. No one was even close.

I shook my head, thinking I was dumb to be so stressed about it. Then I realized I had the order switched, and made the older ones go to the bottom. One popped up, by someone named @dpreppin, with an icon of a nuclear cloud.

"Tailed them at Seattle Costco."

I froze. The guy in black. *Was that him?* If so, I wasn't wrong to be paranoid. He *had* been watching us. I clicked on his user name, and a link on his profile took me to a website labeled:

Prepping for Doomsday: Be One of the Survivors

"What the . . ." I clicked and the screen scrolled down, revealing what seemed to be a site about people preparing for the end of the world. There were links to sites about ammunition and gun training and food preservation. I clicked on the Preparation tab. An entire litany about how much food you should stockpile in order to survive popped up.

I realized my hands were trembling.

Were these people disciples of my father or what? Were they watching us? Why? Because we had done what they wanted to do? Survived the end of the world? Granted, our doomsday was faked, but still. We had survived. I supposed someone who wanted to do the same saw us as role models.

I swallowed.

And they probably wouldn't stop until they found out what we knew. What we had been through and what we had done to survive.

I'd seen some of the stories about our years belowground: plenty of speculation, rumor, and conjecture. But some contained shreds of truth, which scared me, because the whole truth was something that I had to be sure they would never find out.

I went back to the original networking site and made up a fake account name. @ITurducken. A homage to the main course at one of Dad's nightmare Christmas parties when I was a kid.

And I posted:

"Whole family in Miami! Mansion on beach. #yksighting."

Immediately, responses popped up.

"Knew I saw them in Sarasota last week!"

"Camping 60 miles away, will check it out."

"That was them at Busch Gardens."

I blew out a sigh of relief. Those people would believe anything. Thank heavens.

But then @dpreppin replied:

"Untrue. In Seattle. Chickens return to roost."

I shoved away from the desk so hard the chair twirled me around, so I was facing outside.

He knew. @dpreppin definitely knew it had been me at Costco.

I stood up and went to the window, looking at our

front gate and the security guard there. What if he'd followed us? What if he knew where we lived?

I went back to my computer. Another reply had posted. The icon was a photo of a little girl, and the name was preppin.

"Definitely at aquarium today."

I glanced back at the icon. The little girl. I'd seen her before. She'd been crying, while the dad in camouflage had tried to get her to stop.

The guy in camo had to be @prep_man

We'd been seen twice. People were looking for us. And now they knew what we looked like.