

# THIRTY-NINE

MY FATHER, THE CREATURE THAT HAD BEEN REX Yanakakis, reached up for me and mewled, "Son."

I stood there, looking down at him, unable to move.

"Kid!" Tony grabbed me. "This place is gonna blow."

I yelled, "He told me it was a drill!"

The expression on Tony's face was serious when he shook his head. He didn't need to say a word.

I said, "But we have to help him!"

Tony pointed at the open door to the room with the cribs. "Like he helps them? Leaving them in there like that?" He shook his head. "They need to be put out of their misery." He pointed at my father. "So does he." Tony grabbed me. "Do you want to live?"

I nodded.

"This place will be a chain reaction. As soon as I hear the first explosion, I'm going," he said. "With or without you."

You've got about nine minutes, kid." And he disappeared through the plastic curtain.

I turned back to my dad, who still lay on the floor, curled up and mewling. I knelt beside him, wanting to throw up, wanting to run away. I set my hand on his arm. It was soft and mushy, and I yanked my hand back. Dad tried to say something, but I couldn't understand what it was. I didn't want to understand. I stood up. "I'm sorry."

Only thirty seconds behind Tony, I ran through the plastic curtain and down the hallway. Outside, the sun hit me. And I realized Eddy and Lexie weren't going to be at the jet.

Maybe, when Dad hadn't shown up at the house, they decided to go to the jet, ignoring my orders?

But if I went to the jet and they weren't there . . . I'd have no time to get them. I couldn't risk it.

If I wanted to save them, there was only one option.

The electronic beeping was everywhere, increasing in speed and volume. As fast as I could, I ran through the plaza toward the house, dodging people who seemed to be unconcerned about the alarm. Apparently, they'd been told, and believed, that it was just a drill.

I hurried through the fence and onto the path and into the house, screaming, "Eddy! Lexie! Where are you?" I ran into the living room and saw no one. I screamed their names a few more times, then made a decision. They had to be at the jet. They hadn't listened to me. I ran down the hallway and out the back. I leaped

down the steps of the marble veranda, hit the path, and went through the door in the wall.

I heard a roar. The jet.

"No!" I yelled. I tried to run on the boardwalk through the jungle, but it was slow going and I was forced to shorten my steps, pounding my way toward the runway. Finally, I reached the trees and caught a glimpse of the runway. I sprinted the rest of the way, triumphantly emerging out of breath where the jet had been the day before.

But the jet was gone.