

# LIAM

## Wednesday, September 6

We hadn't even tasted our pork chops at dinner before Grandpa wielded his fork at Rose.

"The DA wants your account of the paddleboarder accident. Apparently, you neglected to give a statement to the police. They won't close the case until you do."

She froze like a cornered animal, and I almost felt sorry for her. For the most part, she flew under Grandpa's radar, being too insignificant in his world to bother with. She turned a panicky face toward her mom, silently begging for rescue.

Nora patted her daughter's hand. "I'll take Rose to the station tomorrow after school. Will that be soon enough for you?"

Grandpa grunted. "Make sure her version matches Liam's. I want this investigation to end."

"What else would she say?" I asked, searching everyone's expressions. "Do you all think I'm lying?"

Dad and Nora made soothing sounds at me while Grandpa picked at his teeth. Rose shrank further into her chair.

"Truth or lie, it doesn't matter as long as we show a united front." Grandpa sawed off a piece of meat and inspected it, his lip curling with disgust. "I hope your wife learns to cook someday for your sake, Hank."

"Do something, or I will," Nora growled in a low voice to Dad, who was in mid-swallow and started coughing, making him unable or unwilling to stand up for his wife.

I slammed a fist on the table, and the silverware jumped, adding an exclamation point to my anger. "I want to know if you believe me."

Grandpa looked up from his plate with cold eyes. "Stop being so dramatic, Liam."

"This is bullshit." I bolted from the dining room, and Grandpa yelled for me to come back. I was rarely so disrespectful to him, and my feet slowed on the stairs as I considered the consequences. But then, the thought of falling into a drug-induced sleep, void of any nightmares featuring an old man drowning, had me moving again.