

**Maya, Adrian, Kai, and Dylan were semi-normal people, trying to live their lives. However when Dylan's disappearance threatens to expose their secrets, they must find their brother, before it's too late.**

"Do you know where Dylan is?" asked Mom. "He's not picking up his phone."

"Dylan's with a friend, I think that they went to go see a movie. He probably turned his phone off." I looked up at her. "Why?"

"Can you get him to come home?" Mom fiddled with the sleeve on her jacket. "I already called Maya, and Adrian is coming home with your father."

"I'll go and get him," I said standing up.

"No!" Mom shouted, her eyes wild. I jumped. "I mean, just try calling him. He's more likely to pick up if it's you." I scrolled through my phone and clicked on my brother's contact. The phone rang for a while.

*"This is Dylan, you've probably left a voicemail before, so just do that."*

"Hi, this is Kai, can you come home soon? Mom's freaking out. Call back as soon as you can."

"Did you get him?" Mom asked nervously.

I shook my head. "Voicemail."

"Keep calling him until he picks up." There was a knock on the door. Mom raced over to open it.

"Mom, what's going on?" Maya said putting her backpack on one of the hooks at the front of the house. "You sounded really freaked out, over the phone so I came home as fast—"

Mom cut her off. "Where's Dylan?"

"I saw him earlier standing in line for a movie, why?" Mom brushed past her.

"I need to go find him. Your father and Adrian are on their way back home. You need to stay here with your sister." Mom grabbed the keys off of the counter. "I will be right back, love you."

"Wait, Mom!" said Maya, but it was too late. Mom had already slammed the door and was already in her car. "What's her problem?"

"I dunno, she's been like that since I've been home." I twisted my hair. "I think something's really wrong."

"It's probably just Mom being Mom," said Maya. "How was your day?"

"Same old, same old." I kept twisting my hair. "I really hope Dylan's okay."

Maya's smile fell. "Why wouldn't he be okay?"

"I just have a really bad feeling about this," I sighed. "It's probably nothing. I'm overreacting."

My sister shook her head. "Mom's got you riled up. He's probably fine."

"I'll try to call him again." I got off the couch and walked into the kitchen. I called him and got voicemail again. "Dylan, you had better answer your phone or I swear on all things holy, I will tell Mom that it was your idea to put an entire carton of eggs in the microwave, don't you think that I won't."

"Any answer?" asked Maya.

"It's still going to voicemail." I walked back into the living room. "It's really starting to freak me out."

"I'll try calling him." Maya walked into the kitchen. The door opened.

"What's going on?" Dad walked in. "Your mother sounded really freaked out over the phone."

"I don't know, all she said was that I needed to stay here and she called you guys to come back home."

"Where's Dylan? And Maya and Mom?" asked Adrian. Adrian is really protective of anyone he considers his family. He was in the same foster home as Dylan and I before we were adopted. To put it mildly, it wasn't the best place for a kid.

"I'm in the kitchen!" yelled Maya.

"Mom went to go find Dylan." I looked down at my feet. "He's not picking up his phone. I mean, he's at the movies, so that makes sense right?"

Dad looked around. "So, she just called us home for no reason, and is now making the rest of us panic?"

"She could have a good reason," mused Adrian. "She just hasn't told us yet. Any luck with Dylan?"

Maya shook her head. "It's still going to voicemail. "

Adrian paled. "I really hope he's okay. He has to be okay. And when he does get home, I'm gonna kick his ass!"

"Language!" chided Dad.

"Sorry," said Adrian. He ran his hand through his short black hair. "It's just-"

"Adrian, breath." I put my hand on his shoulder. "Go sit down before you pass out."

"Yeah, that would be smart. I'm gonna go lay down." Adrian plopped down on the couch. Dad started pacing.

We waited. And waited. We waited for what felt like hours. Maya called over and over getting voicemail each time. She pulled her long black hair into a ponytail and let it down again.

*"This is Dylan, you've probably left a voicemail before, so just do that."*

"Son of a bitch!" cried Maya. "I've left god knows how many voicemails, and he's still not picking up! I swear if he's just screwing with us-"

I shook my head. "Dylan might be a dumbass, but he's not an asshole. He wouldn't do that."

Dad didn't even bother to scold us for swearing. "Relax, Mom's probably found him and they'll be on their way home." Adrian looked completely zoned out, his almond eyes glazed over. "You okay bud?"

"Huh?" Adrian put his head in his hands. "Yeah, just give me a second."

"Okay." Dad looked at his phone. "Mom's back."

"Is Dylan with her?" asked Maya.

"She didn't say." Mom walked in.

"Did you find Dylan?" said Adrian. Mom shook her head. "Then where the hell is he!"

"I went to the movie theater, and he wasn't there. Do you know who he was with?"

Maya looked up. "Kai, you have their number right?"

"Yeah, I'll text them." I went to the text chain.

*Is Dylan with you?* I waited anxiously for the reply.

*No he went home. Why?*

I let out a string of creative swear words.

"What?" asked Mom.

"Alex said that he came home." I put my phone down. "Do you mind explaining what the hell is going on?"

"It has to deal with your... situation." Mom fidgeted. "You know about that scientist group that came into town?"

"Yeah, their doing that study on marine life on the pier," said Maya. "Why?"

"They didn't come in to town to check on the fishes. A few weeks ago their scanners picked up something weird. Something that looked like a pod of dolphins, but it was too close to shore."

"It was us, wasn't it?" asked Adrian. Mom nodded her head. "Shit. Do they know about us?"

"I honestly doubt it," said Maya. "We've been busy all week, and they just saw shapes, and with today's tech, they couldn't see the human half. They just saw the tails."

"We haven't been back in the water, unless.." I felt sick. "Dylan wanted to swim home. He didn't have a ride back, and the beach isn't all that far from the theater. Oh my god, what if they pulled him out of the water?"

"We can't jump to conclusions," said Dad. "For all we know, he could have just gotten lost, and his phone could have died. If Dylan isn't home by dinner, we'll file a missing person's report and go looking for him. Sound good?"

Mom nodded her head. "Who's up for Italian?" She was met with silence. "Hugo, help me with dinner."

"Kacie. I'll make dinner. You once managed to set a fire trying to boil water."

"Fair."

"Adrian c'mon. " Maya grabbed the sleeve of Adrian's jacket and pulled him up the stairs. I followed them up the stairs and into Maya and I's room. It used to be the attic, so the roof slanted at an odd angle, and Maya's bed was pressed into a back corner and mine was hidden on the other side. The walls were a pale blue, and we had bean bag chairs piled up in the corner.

"Let's watch a movie, okay?" I said trying not to freak him out. "What do you want to watch?"

"You can pick something," he said still really zoned out. Maya picked a Disney movie, and put that on Netflix. I watched the movie, not really paying attention. I really hoped that Dylan was okay, although the sinking feeling in my gut told me otherwise.

"Kids! Dinner!" Maya moved to pause the movie on her laptop. We sat in silence, no one really up to talking.

"I can't eat this is really stressing me out," said Adrian. Maya took his plate.

"I'll eat it, this is really stressing me out." She shoveled more of the pasta into her mouth. "You gonna finish that?"

"No," I said pushing my plate toward her. "You can have it."

"You know what?" Mom stood up. "It's been way too long and none of us have heard from Dylan since this morning. I'm calling the police." She walked into the kitchen to find the phone. She dialed the number for the sheriff's department.

"Hi, I would like to file a missing person's report. My son Dylan, he didn't come home today, and he's not picking up his phone. " She paused listening to the person on the other end of the phone. "Dylan Lumay Garcia. Date of birth? I don't have an exact one, umm.... I think August of 2005. I'm sorry I don't have a date. Might be the seventh? Well he was abandoned on a beach so that's the date you get!"

"Kacie," said Dad.

"I'm sorry, I know you're trying to help, but I'm just stressed." Mom waved Dad away. "He was born here, I think. No nicknames. He was in a foster home before us, so I don't know any other address for him. No employers, he's just a kid. He's about five six, he's a really skinny kid. He's thirteen.

"Black hair, short. Really short. Brown eyes. African American. He, uhh, has a scar on his arm. Kind of jagged like he got bit by a shark. He's a sweet kid, he doesn't drink or do drugs. The last person who saw him was probably my daughter Maya. Or his friend Alex. He likes this one coffee place over on Elm, but I already checked there."

I zoned out at this point. No one could find him, no one knew where he was. Adrian looked like he was a few seconds away from a panic attack. Someone put a hand on my shoulder and I flinched away.

"Sorry." Maya took her hand off my shoulder. "We'll find him."

"I really hope so." I drew back from the table suddenly. "We should check the water. He could have gotten himself stuck in a riptide. He might just be lost."

"Kai, think. If those scientist people took him while he was in the water, what are the chances that they are gonna stop with just one of us. They might just pull you out to."

My rational brain knew that Maya was right, but my rational brain was being overpowered by my monkey brain. As in my brother was in trouble and I need to go and help him. "I can't just wait for him to turn up dead on the beach! I have to find him. Adrian back me up on this!"

"I agree with you Kai, but we can't just go out. The police will be here and we can't just leave." Adrian moved to stand beside me.

"Fine. But after the cops leave, I'm going after him." I stood firm.

"Okay. But me and Maya are coming with you." Adrian moved his plate off of the table. "Safety in numbers." I nodded.

The police would be there soon, so they would probably want to see Dylan's stuff which annoyed me. My brother valued his privacy, and even had a divider in his room to separate his things from Adrian's. They would be going through his stories too. A collection of dozens of unfinished works, and one second draft that he was particularly proud of.

I went up to my own room and sat down on the bed. I put in my earbuds and tried to tune out and ignore what was happening. If you can't fix it, ignore it. It wasn't the healthiest way of dealing with my problems, but it was the closest thing to calm I had felt since he first vanished. I let the music wash over me, and I shut my eyes.

Breathing in and out, I let my mind drift far away. Somewhere other than this stereotypical small town on the east coast full of a bunch of people going nowhere. Where most of your neighbors were only temporary fixtures before they went back to their real lives.

Our house was really close to the beach. Three floors, with chipped purple paint, raised on a platform to avoid damage from flooding. The house permanently smell of seawater, no matter how many times Mom sprayed Febreze. I liked being close to the water.

I mean, I can look out my window and see the ocean and the sand. I felt powerful here. Safe. Where the generally calm weather would only be disturbed by Adrian's stormy moods. I could hear the rain pattering on the roof just above the sound of the music in my ears. I would like to think it was late, but it couldn't have been past eight. At least then I would be able to justify drifting off into dreamland.

CRASH! Thunder rang out pulling me out of my doze. Adrian must really be stressing out. Someone needed to get him to calm down, or no one would get any sleep. But that was Maya's problem and not mine. I hit shuffle on my playlist and braced myself for the incoming storm.