



## Chapter 6

I chuck my towel onto the grass and go to the garage for string to tie up some delphiniums that have started flopping over the coreopsis in the front garden.

The plural of *delphinium* should probably be *delphinia*. According to a website I was on once, that's how 'um' words work in Latin. But even I'm not a big enough dweeb to call a group of them anything but delphiniums. I separate their tall blue stalks from the yellow daisylike coreopsis they're leaning on.

Today's seizure was a bad one. I wonder if we'll still get away to the cottage tomorrow. We better. Bad enough I couldn't go to music camp this summer.

## WHAT HAPPENED TO IVY

Once I have the stalks all gathered together, I need an extra hand to wrap the string around them.

Three seizures in the past month, Mom said. No wonder Dad swore. I heave a deep sigh and glance up at the living room window where Ivy often sits watching me tend the garden, but of course she's napping now.

I lower the stalks gently and tie one end of the string to the railing.

She never had seizures at all before the surgery that went wrong when she was eight and I was twelve. Until then, she didn't need a wheelchair either. Back then, Dad used to do stuff with me. Like, he took me to the museum once and showed me stuff about ancient Greece – neat things they figured out about astronomy. And when we were at the cottage, he took me fishing. I remember once, we were sitting in a rowboat in the middle of the lake with the sun going down and the loons calling. We didn't catch any fish, but he told me the Latin name for the common loon that night. I still remember it: *Gavia immer*.

Again I gather the delphiniums close to the railing.

After today's seizure, there'll be more fooling around with Ivy's meds and more doctor appointments that both my parents will go to. A lot of guys would probably see

that as a chance to raid the liquor cabinet or have a girlfriend over. But my parents can't afford to keep much in the liquor cabinet and I've never had a girlfriend.

The afternoon is hot. Heat bugs buzz above my head as I start tying the other end of the string to the ramp railing.

"David, hi."

I drop the flowers and stand up. "Hannah. I didn't hear you coming." I wipe my sweaty hands on my almost-dry trunks. "But you're here at just the right time to help me with this."

Hannah shoves her hair behind her ears. I never knew ears could be...I don't know...nice. She takes hold of the heavy stalks while I crouch down to tie the string.

"These blue flowers look great with the yellow daisies," she says. "Like sapphires and topazes all mixed together when the sun hits them."

It's neat that she noticed. That she sees it that way. But I hope she doesn't notice what she's doing to me, standing so close.

"It was kind of a happy accident," I tell her. "Nothing was blooming when I moved this coreopsis here. I just knew I needed something to fill a bare patch after a shrub died over the winter."

Still holding the stalks, Hannah says, "I saw you working out here so I came over to ask what time I should be ready tomorrow."

"I don't know. Nine? Ten?"

If we go. With Hannah coming with us, for five whole days, we *have* to go.

"Great." She smiles, and I almost drop the string.

Once the delphiniums are properly upright against the ramp, Hannah heads home and I head to the back yard. My parents are talking quietly on the patio, looking like they'd rather not be interrupted.

Slipping away, I hear Mom say, "No, Stephen, absolutely not. I've said it once and I'll say it again. I will not send our daughter to live in a group home. Her home is here, with us."

Wow. I've had moments of wishing Ivy out of my life. Sure. But to actually send her away? To live with strangers? Not that anyone's asking me what I think, but that's just nuts.