

I Found You

PART ONE

Chapter 4

‘Tell me a little about your husband,’ says the policewoman called Beverly. ‘How old is he?’ Lily pushes down the hem of her top, flattening the fabric against her skin. ‘He’s forty,’ she says. She can see the WPC’s eyebrow arch, just a fraction. ‘And you’re?’ ‘I’m twenty-one,’ she says. It’s no big deal, she wants to shout. Nineteen years. In a life of maybe ninety years. So what? ‘And his full name?’ ‘Carl John Robert Monroe.’ ‘Thank you. And this is the address where he lives?’ She indicates the small living room of the purpose-built flat where she and Carl have lived since they got back from their honeymoon on Bali. ‘Yes,’ she says. ‘Of course!’ She knows as she says it that she has been rude. She is aware that sometimes her manner can be quite harsh for British people’s tastes. The policewoman gives her a look and then scratches words on to a form with a noisy pen. ‘And tell me about yesterday. What time did you last see your husband?’ ‘He left at seven o’ clock. Every morning he leaves at seven o’ clock.’ ‘And he goes to work where?’ ‘He works in London. For a financial services company.’ ‘And have you spoken to his company?’ ‘Yes! It was the first thing I did!’ This woman must think she is an idiot, to call the police before calling his office. ‘And what did they say?’ ‘They said he left work at the normal time. Just as I expected they would say. Carl takes the same train home every day. He can’t leave work late or he would miss it.’ ‘OK. And did you speak to him at all? After he left work?’ ‘No,’ she said. ‘But he sent me a text. Look.’ She switches on her phone and turns it to face the WPC, the text already there, ready to be displayed. You know what’s crazy? This is crazy: I love you more now than I did this morning! I’ll see you in an hour! If I could make the train go faster I would! xxxxx. ‘And look,’ she says, scrolling up through their text exchanges. ‘This from the day before.’ How can it be true that I have a wife like you? How did I get so lucky?! I can’t wait to be holding you in my arms. Fifty-eight minutes to go! ‘See,’ she says. ‘This is a man who wants to come home every night more than he wants to do anything else. Do you see now why I know that something bad has happened?’ The WPC passes the phone back to Lily and sighs. ‘Sounds like he’s got it bad,’ she says, laughing. ‘It’s not a joke,’ says Lily. ‘No.’ Abruptly, the policewoman stops smiling. ‘I didn’t say it was.’ Lily breathes in hard. She must try harder, she reminds herself, harder to be pleasant. ‘Sorry,’ she says. ‘I’m feeling very stressed. Last night was the first time we’ve spent a night apart. I didn’t sleep. Not one minute.’ She waves her hands about, desperately, before bringing them back into her lap. The WPC softens when she sees the tears filming across Lily’s eyes and squeezes her hand gently. ‘So.’ She takes her hand back. ‘You got the text at five last night. Then . . . ?’ ‘Nothing. Nothing. I rang him first just after six, then again and again and again until his phone ran out of charge.’ The WPC pauses for a moment and Lily gets the feeling that it is finally sinking in, that for the first time since Carl didn’t come home last night someone believes that he might actually be missing and not in another woman’s bed. ‘Where does he catch his train from?’ ‘Victoria.’ ‘And always the same one?’ ‘Yes. The five oh six to East Grinstead.’ ‘Which arrives in Oxted at?’ ‘Five forty-four. Then

it is a fifteen-minute walk from the station to here. So he is home at five fifty-nine. Every night. Every night.’ ‘And do you work, Mrs Monroe?’ ‘No. I study.’ ‘Whereabouts?’ ‘Here. It’s a correspondence course. Accounting. It’s what I was studying at home, in the Ukraine. I left college to be here, with Carl. So, now I finish what I started.’ She shrugs. ‘And how long have you been here? In the UK?’ ‘One week. And three days.’ ‘Wow,’ says the WPC. ‘Not long.’ ‘No. Not long.’ ‘Your English is excellent.’ ‘Thank you. My mother is a translator. She made sure I could speak it as well as she does.’ The WPC puts the lid on her pen and looks at Lily thoughtfully. ‘How did you meet?’ she says. ‘You and your husband?’ ‘Through my mother. She was translating at a financial services conference in Kiev. They needed people to look after the delegates – you know, show them about, get them taxis, that kind of thing. I needed the cash. I was put in charge of Carl and some of his colleagues. It was obvious from minute one that I would marry him. From minute one.’ The WPC stares at Lily, seemingly mesmerised. ‘Wow,’ she says. ‘Wow.’ ‘Yes,’ says Lily. ‘It was very wow.’ ‘OK.’ The policewoman slips the pen into her pocket and folds up her notepad. ‘I’ll see what I can do. Not sure we’ve got quite enough yet to open this up as a missing person. But call again if he doesn’t show up tonight.’ Lily’s heart drops, brick-heavy inside her. ‘What?’ ‘I’m sure it’s nothing sinister,’ the WPC says. ‘Honestly. Nine times out of ten it’s just something completely innocuous. I’m sure he’ll be home before bedtime.’ ‘Really?’ she says. ‘I know you don’t believe that. I know you believe me. I know you do.’ The WPC sighs. ‘Your husband, he’s a grown man. He’s not vulnerable. I can’t open a case. But I tell you what, I’ll check his details against our database, see if anyone matching his description has been brought in for any reason.’ Lily clutches her heart. ‘Brought in?’ ‘Yes. You know. Brought into the police station. For questioning. And I’ll cross-reference with local hospitals. See if they’ve treated him.’ ‘Oh God.’ Lily has been picturing this all night long. Carl under the wheels of a bus, stabbed and left for dead in an underpass, floating face down in the dark water of the River Thames. ‘It’s all I can do for now.’ Lily realises that the WPC is doing her a favour and manages a smile. ‘Thank you,’ she says. ‘I really appreciate that.’ ‘I’ll need a photo, though. Do you have a recent one?’ ‘Yes, yes, of course.’ Lily fumbles with her handbag, opens her purse, pulls out the photo-booth snap she has in there: Carl looking serious and handsome. She passes it to the WPC, expecting her to pass some kind of comment on how incredibly good-looking he is. Maybe say something about his resemblance to Ben Affleck. But the policewoman doesn’t; she merely tucks it into her notebook and says, ‘I’ll get it back to you, I promise. In the meantime, speak to his friends and family. His colleagues. Maybe someone there can shed some light.’ After the policewoman leaves, Lily stands for a few minutes and stares out of the window. Below her is a small car park. Carl’s black Audi A5 is there, where he parked it after their trip to the supermarket on Sunday. Just the thought of supermarket shopping with Carl makes her want to curl herself into a tight ball and howl. Then she turns to face their home. The flat that Carl chose for them, a brand-new flat in a brand-new development, the kitchen never used before they used it, the toilet still with a paper band across the lid. A brand-new place to start their brand-new life. With a heavy heart she starts opening drawers and searching through paperwork, trying to find the one small thing she didn’t know about her husband that might unlock the mystery of where he has gone.