

I Found You

PART ONE

Chapter 6

Lily sits in the waiting room at the police station. She is clutching a carrier bag containing a small album of wedding photos and Carl's passport. She found nothing else in her search of his drawers and filing boxes. Nothing at all. No baby photos. No birth certificate. No identifying paperwork of any kind. There was one locked drawer but when she put her hand into it from the drawer above, it seemed to be empty. It was rather strange, she thought. But she assumes that everything must be at his mother's house. Carl is a tidy man and a minimalist. It makes sense that he would not want to clutter up his beautiful new flat with things he has no use for. In her other hand she holds a paper cup of coffee. She shouldn't have bought it; she has thirty-eight pounds in cash in her purse and no access to a bank account. Carl paid for everything, He was setting up a separate bank account for her, was going to put money into it for her every month until she finished her accountancy course. She will have to ask her mother to send her some money. But she knows it will take time for her mother to do that. So. Thirty-eight pounds. She should not have bought the big coffee. But she needs it. She has not slept at all. The big policewoman called Beverly appears with a small smile. 'Good morning, Mrs Monroe. Do you want to come this way? I'll find us a room where we can have a chat.' Lily follows her down a corridor and into a small room that smells of stale cake. 'So,' the WPC says as they both sit down. 'Still no sign of Mr Monroe, I assume?' 'No. Of course. Or I would not be here.' 'It was just a turn of phrase, Mrs Monroe.' 'Yes,' says Lily. 'I understand.' Beverly smiles a strange smile. 'So, you want to make an official missingperson report.' She clicks a pen and turns a page in her notebook. 'Yes. Please.' 'I did run your husband's name through our system yesterday, Mrs Monroe. Nothing came up. He's not in any of the London hospitals; nothing came up at any of the Met stations.' Lily has no idea what a 'met station' is but nods, because she's already sure this woman thinks she is an idiot. 'And what about the police stations?' she says. 'Did you check there?' Beverly gives her an odd look. 'Yes,' she says. 'Like I said. Nothing.' Lily nods again. 'Anyway,' she says, 'I searched the flat. For anything I could find. And, you know, it's a new flat. We only just moved in. I think, probably, he has left all his paperwork with his mother.' 'And have you been in touch with his mother?' 'I have not. I do not know where she lives. Her phone number is on Carl's phone. It is not written down anywhere.' 'Her name?' 'Maria. Or something like that.' 'So, Maria Monroe?' She looks at Lily for confirmation before writing it down. 'And where does she live?' 'I don't know. Somewhere to the west. Beginning with an S.' Beverly grimaces. 'Slough?' she suggests. 'Swindon?' 'I don't know,' says Lily with a shrug. 'Maybe.' 'OK. And what about other family? Brothers? Sisters?' 'He has a sister called Suzanne. Or something. She lives in the same place.' 'Married?' 'I don't know. Yes. I think. I think there is a nephew.' 'So, possibly Suzanne Monroe. Possibly not?' She writes this down. Lily pulls the carrier bag on to her lap and feels for the passport. 'I found this,' she says, placing it in front of Beverly. Beverly flicks through it and says, 'It's current. That's good. At least we can eliminate the possibility that he's gone abroad.' Lily snorts.

‘Of course he has not.’ She sees Beverly roll her eyes very slightly and take in a small breath of impatience. ‘I’ ll need to keep this,’ she says, touching the passport, ‘run it through our system.’ ‘Sure. And then there is this.’ Lily slides the photo album across the table towards Beverly. ‘Some better photos of him. Ones where he is smiling so you can get a better idea of what kind of a man he is. So you can see that he was happy and not about to run away from me.’ She watches Beverly flick through the album. ‘And this was in . . .?’

‘Kiev. Yes. He wanted to marry me in my home country, to be surrounded by my family and my friends. He wanted me to be happy and relaxed. Not stressed out in a strange place. With strange people. He is the best man in the world. My friend, my father, my lover, my husband. Everything.’ She finds she has her fist clutched against her heart and that there are tears in her eyes. ‘I am sorry,’ she says. ‘Don’ t be sorry,’ says Beverly. ‘It’ s understandable for you to feel this way. Now, is there anyone you can call? Any relatives in this country? Anyone who can stay with you for a while? Take care of you?’ ‘No.’ She bunches her hands together in her lap. ‘No. There is no one here.’ ‘Oh,’ says Beverly. ‘That’ s a shame. Well, maybe you could ask someone from home to come over for a while?’

‘Yes. Maybe.’ On the staircase up to her flat later, Lily is subsumed by a horrible blend of excitement and dread. Might he be there, she thinks, on the other side of the door? Sitting in his rumpled shirt and tie with some story of woe? But she knows with every fall of her step that he will not be. She pushes open the door into a vacuum of aloneness. The stillness is appalling. She has never been alone before. Never. She stands for a moment, rocking slightly as though the emptiness has a hold of her, is trying to shake reality into her. She hears a single drop of water hit the bottom of the kitchen sink, the rumble of the fridge, the sound of the front door downstairs being opened and closed. And then she jumps at the sound of the phone. She runs to the phone and grabs it up. ‘Yes.’ ‘Hi, it’ s WPC Traviss. Is that Mrs Monroe?’ ‘Yes. Yes it is.’ ‘I’ m calling because . . . well, this is quite strange, but we’ ve run your husband’ s passport through our system and, well, to put it quite plainly, Mrs Monroe, your husband doesn’ t technically exist.’ ‘I beg your pardon?’

‘His passport is fake, Mrs Monroe. There is no Carl John Robert Monroe.’