

CHAPTER 117

117 Ava: Her New Normal Living in Westwood becomes routine again quickly. Training with Jericho starts again only two days after my return, and the grizzled old shifter doesn't say a word about my long absence. Lucas and I text every night, but I refuse to call him. The sound of his voice is going to make me regret things. And Selene settles into our daily life as though she were never gone. The only downside? Kellan. I have yet to speak to Selene or Lisa about anything important, because the beta is always around. He sleeps on the couch every night, no matter how many protests Lisa and I hurl his way. Even Lucas is on board with it. I thought utilizing his possessiveness would go my way; it didn't. He just said Kellan would be the one wolf he could trust to keep me safe. 15:35 C 1/7 117 Ava: Her New Normal Lisa's worse off than I am; she spends a good chunk of her day glowering at the friendly beta. I watch Kellan as he washes the dishes, his broad shoulders filling out his t-shirt in a way that would be appealing if I wasn't so annoyed by his constant presence. Lisa mutters beside me, "It isn't fair that my apartment's been taken over." I sigh, the sound heavy with frustration. Selene huffs little woof of agreement from her spot on the floor. "You know I can hear you two, right?" Kellan says without turning around, his voice tinged with amusement. Lisa rolls her eyes. "Good. Maybe you'll take the hint and leave." Kellan chuckles, the sound deep and warm. He turns, leaning back against the counter as he dries his hands on a dish towel. "Sorry, no can do. Alpha's orders." I grit my teeth. It's not that I don't appreciate Lucas's concern for my safety. I do. But having Kellan here 24/7 is driving me insane. I can't even have a private conversation with Lisa or Selene without him hovering nearby. 15:35 – 117 Ava: Her New Normal "We don't need a babysitter," I say, crossing my arms. over my chest. Kellan arches a brow. "After everything that's happened, I beg to differ." I bristle at that, my cheeks heating with a mix of anger and embarrassment. I know he's right. I've been kidnapped, attacked, and goddess knows what else in the span of a few short months. But still. "I can take care of myself," I mutter, knowing it sounds petulant even as the words leave my mouth. Kellan's expression softens. "I know you can, Ava. But let us help, okay? It's what pack does." I look away, blinking back the sudden sting of tears. Pack. The word feels foreign on my tongue these days. The Blackwood pack was never really mine, no matter how much I tried to make it fit. And the Westwood pack... Well. I'm not really sure where I stand with them. With him. Lucas and I have been texting, but it's superficial stuff. Jokes and memes, a quick question about our day. 3/7 117 Ava: Her New Normal I'm avoiding anything more meaningful than that, and he knows it. He's letting me. But he's not letting me be as free as I'd like, because despite having won the war of where I live... Kellan's here. "We already have bodyguards outside. Can't you just leave for a few hours? Let us have our space? I can't breathe without one of you watching me, and I'm sick of it." It's true, too. Having guards around at all times is not something I can get used to, and I never want to get used to it. Selene huffs, sliding her baleful gaze in Kellan's direction. Kellan shakes his head, and both Lisa and I groan in unison. The sound is loud and long, dripping with all the frustration that's been building up inside me for days now. It's not just the constant surveillance, though that's certainly part of it. It's everything. The bond with Lucas, the fact that my father and Alpha Renard still haven't been found, the questions I have about my 15 A/T 117 Ava Her New Normal body. All of it. Kellan sighs in resignation, running a hand through his hair until it sticks up in unruly spikes. "Look, I get it. You two need some space. Som

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e time to yourselves." He pauses, his brow furrowing as he seems to wage some internal battle. Finally, he nods, as if coming to a decision. "I can give you tomorrow afternoon. But you have to promise me you won't leave the apartment." Lisa's face brightens instantly, her dark eyes sparkling with excitement. "Really? You mean it?" Kellan nods again, a small smile tugging at the corners of his mouth. "Really. But I mean it about staying put. No exceptions. Especially as Alpha Westwood is gone again." He's back in the Blackwood territory, dealing with things that happened while I was hospitalized. Selene barks her approval, her tail thumping against the floor in a steady rhythm. I can feel her excitement thrumming through our bond, a warm pulse of energy that makes me feel lighter than I have in days. I share a high-five with Lisa, our palms connecting with a satisfying smack. We did it, I tell Selene mentally, my thoughts tinged with triumph. We finally 16:35 5/7 117 Ava: Her New Normal get some time to ourselves. Selene woofs softly in response, her agreement clear. We need to talk, Ava. There's so much I need to tell you. I nod, my heart skipping a beat at the seriousness in her tone. I know. We will. Tomorrow; when Kellan's gone. Lisa's already chattering away, making plans for our afternoon of freedom. "We can watch movies, and order in food, and just relax for once. Oh! And we can finally have that girl talk we've been meaning to have." She waggles her eyebrows at me, her grin turning sly. I feel my cheeks heat, knowing exactly what kind of "girl talk" she has in mind. The kind that involves a certain alpha and the complicated tangle of feelings I have for him. Kellan clears his throat, drawing our attention back to him. "I'm trusting you two," he says, his tone serious. "Don't make me regret it." "We won't," I promise, meaning it with every fiber of my being. "And Kellan? Thank you. Seriously." He nods his expression softening. "You're welcome. 15:35) 6/7. 117 Ava: Her Now Normal Ava. I know this hasn't been easy for you. For either of you." He glances at Lisa, including her in his words. Lisa's smile is genuine, all traces of her earlier annoyance gone. "Thanks, Kellan. We appreciate it. More than you know." Kellan ducks his head, looking almost bashful at the praise. "Yeah, well. Don't get used to it. I'm still your bodyguard, after all." I laugh, the sound bubbling up from somewhere deep inside me. It feels good to laugh, to feel something other than the constant weight of worry and fear. "Wouldn't dream of it," I say, my tone teasing. "We know you're a tough guy, Kellan. No need to remind us." [www.NoVeIw@r\(m\).com](http://www.NoVeIw@r(m).com)