

## CHAPTER 121

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121 Lucas Sell Searching 121 Lucas: Still Searching LUCAS Being away from Ava is torture, but the random photo updates from Kellan help ease the ache in my heart. And the wolf snarling in my head. He's pissed that we're far from her again, logic and reasoning be damned. And if I hear one more word. about that damn dog, Selene—I don't even know what I'll do. I can feel his frustration case as we stare at the photo Kellan texted me; she's exhausted, her cheeks red with exertion and her bangs damp against her head. She hasn't been wearing her glasses. Two days after her discharge, she'd complained about them making her vision blurry. Vanessa and Dr. Beaumont are certain it's a sign that her wolf is awakening, but Ava had taken the news in stride, asking no questions. Her disinterest worries me; to be wolfless is a curse among our people. To know that her wolf might come? <121 Lucas: Still Searching She should be over the moon, praising the Goddess for such a blessing. And yet Ava acts as though it doesn't involve her. Dr. Beaumont says it's probably a trauma response to her life in the Blackwood Pack, but I can't shake the feeling that there's something more to all of this. Ultimately, it doesn't matter. As long as she's safe and happy, I won't ask for much more. It was hard to watch her as she lay in her hospital bed, day after day. Hard to watch as the nurses bathed her with gentle hands. Hard to watch as her cheeks thinned, even with the intravenous nutrition they'd started her on after three days. Losing her would mean losing everything. I can't survive in this world knowing she isn't in it. Simple daily activities like basic hygiene were out; no showers, and meals were only taken because Kellan would bring food and stand watch until I ate it. Lisa wouldn't eat until I did, and I remember thinking that Ava would kill me if her human friend starved to death because I was too sick at the thought of losing her. Otherwise? The entire world could burn, as long as I 13:41 2/8 121 Lucas: Still Searching was by her side. Not really the best mindset for an alpha. Kellan stepped up for me, but I have a lot to deal with now. Which is why I'm back in the Blackwood territory, daydreaming about my fated mate instead of visiting her like I want to. "Alpha?" Shit. Tearing my thoughts away from Ava takes too much effort, but I focus again on the man in front of me. Vester's mild exasperation is clear in the slight frowning of his brow, but he maintains a professional demeanor. "Yes?" "The report..." I cut him off before he can continue. "Summarize it for me." Vester straightens, clearing his throat. "Of course, Alpha. We have some reports that a woman resembling the description of Jessa Grey was seen in the Unregistered Communities to the eastern 13:41 3/8 121 Lucas: Still Searching borders." The Unregistered Communities. Fancy words for vampire lands. As widespread as the shifter packs are, they do not have control over every bit of land. There are registered supernatural communities under Supernatural Committees, all who work with the packs within their vicinity. Vampires, other classes of shifters, and even rogue wolves all live in peace in their corners of the country, some in thriving cities and others in rural towns. And then there are the Unregistered. The rogues of the entire supernatural community, usually under the control of vampires, who see little reason to live in peace with humans. Outside of a massive war, there's no way to erase these communities from the world. There are too many, and vampires are too powerful. Even an alpha requires backup against a single high lord vamp. So why would that shithead Renard work with them, with his ego? 13:41. 121 Lucas: Still Searching We must erase him from our world, my wolf growls. He's bloodth

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irsty enough to challenge the entire pack, seeing little benefit from saving those who watched as Ava was abused. It's hard not to agree with him. I rub my brow with one finger, a heavy sigh escaping my lips. Frustration settles into my gut like a meal of spoiled fish, sending nausea through me at the thought of how much time has been wasted in our search. "How likely is it for one of our scouts to get information from the Unregistered city?" Vester's jaw clenches, his eyes darkening. "We've lost two scouts trying, Alpha." A growl rumbles in my chest, my wolf's fury bleeding into my own. Two lives, gone. Two more families left to mourn, all because of that bastard Renard. "How the f@ck has he managed to hide so well?" I snarl, slamming my fist on the table. The wood cracks under the force, splinters digging into my skin. I barely feel the sting, too consumed by the inferno of rage, molten in my veins. That shit—alpha and his loyal followers have managed EN C 121 Lucas. Still Soarching to evade us at every turn, slipping through our fingers like smoke. It's infuriating, knowing they're out there, plotting and scheming, while we're left grasping at straws. "They've likely found powerful allies among the vampires," Vester says, his tone grim. "The Unregistered cities are a labyrinth of secrets and danger. Even our best scouts stand little chance against their defenses." Shoving away from the table, I pace the room, my mind racing. Sending more scouts is a death sentence. We need a new strategy, a new approach. "What about the other packs?" I ask, turning to face Vester. "Have any of them had any luck?" He shakes his head. "None that they've reported. The Blackwood situation has everyone on edge. No one wants to risk their own people." I can't blame them. The thought of losing more of my own pack members makes my stomach churn. But we can't just sit back and do nothing. "We need to find a way in," I mutter, more to myself than to Vester. "We need someone on the inside, U/B 121 Lucas: Still Searching someone who can gather information without raising suspicion." But who? Who could possibly infiltrate the Unregistered city and come out alive? "Keep searching," I tell Vester, my voice firm. "Reach out to our allies, call in every favor we're owed. We won't rest until we find them." Kill them, my wolf whispers, a murderous shadow in my mind. Vester nods, his expression resolute. "Yes, Alpha. I'll send word to our contacts immediately." I dismiss him with a wave of my hand, my mind already churning with possibilities. There has to be a way, some weakness we can exploit. We just haven't found it yet. But we will. I won't stop until Ava is safe, until the threat of the Blackwood pack is nothing more than a distant memory. I'll tear apart the very foundations of the supernatural world if that's what it takes. I turn back to the reports scattered across my desk, searching for any scrap of information that might lead us to those damned BlaWwW.NoVèLwoRm.Cm

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