

CHAPTER 140

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140 Ava: Lisa's Gone "Ava!" Kellan's familiar voice should bring hope, but all I feel is despair as I stare into the distance, wishing that vampire would reappear. A thousand of them could come and it would be fine. As long as they bring Lisa back. "Ava! Can you hear me?" Kellan's face swims in and out of focus, a hazy blur against the night sky. I squint, trying to bring him into clarity, but it ike trying to grasp smoke. "They have Lisa," I whisper, the words scraping my throat raw. "The vampire... He took her." Kellan's eyes widen, a flicker of anguish passing over his features before he schools them into careful neutrality. But I can see the tension in his jaw, the rigidity of his shoulders. He's barely holding it together. "I know, Ava. We'll get her back." His voice is strained, distracted. Like his mind is a million miles away even 18:12 1/10 140 Ava Lisa's Gone as he's right here with me. Strong arms scoop me up, cradling me against a broad chest. For a moment, I think it's Kellan, but the scent is wrong. Earthy and unfamiliar, not the piney-leather smell I associate with him. I turn my head, blinking sluggishly at the face above me. It takes a moment for recognition to click into place. One of the guards from Lisa's apartment. I can't recall his name, but I remember him standing sentry outside her door, stoic and watchful. He carries me away from the carnage, away from the bodies strewn across the grass like broken dolls. I want to protest, to demand he put me down, but my limbs feel weighted, my tongue thick and useless in my mouth. Behind us, I can hear Kellan pacing, his footsteps heavy and agitated against the ground. He's growling, the sound low and menacing, interspersed with words I can't quite make out. But one stands out, sharp and clear amid the jumbled mess of my thoughts. Mate. He keeps saying it, over and over, like a mantra. Like a 18:12 2/10 140 Ava: Lisa's Gone prayer. I try to focus on him, to call out and ask what he means, but the world is tilting, spinning off its axis. Darkness creeps in at the edges of my vision, a black tide threatening to pull me under. The last thing I see before unconsciousness claims me is Selene running in from the woodline, coming straight for me. Ava! *** The hospital ceiling greets me again when I open my eyes. This... is getting old. Fast. I agree, Selene grumbles, but I can feel her warm weight against me. Someone must have let her in. Of course they did. I wouldn't leave. Led them on a right merry chase around the garden. They call themselves wolves and can't even catch a single dog. Letting out a soft snort, I rub my hands down her fur, turning my head to the presence I can sense by my side. 18:13 3/10 140 Ava: Lisa's Gone Kellan. He's staring out the window and hasn't even noticed that I'm awake, his brow furrowed and gray eyes distant. He's worried about Lisa, Selene says, a whisper in my mind. He's finally realized that they're fated. What? Lisa? Fated? That ma s no sense. It is a rare occurrence, but humans can be mates. He probably didn't realize until he could smell her blood. It's not uncommon. It's a very faint scent in humans until the bonding takes place. How fascinating. Lisa's going to be furious to know... My heart sinks. We will get her back, Selene assures me, her voice strong and determined. "I take it we haven't found her yet?" I ask Kellan, whose head snaps in my direction. "Ava. You're awake. How do you feel?" 18:13 4/10 140 Ava Lisa's Gone "I'm fine." Reaching for the side of my throat, I confirm that the skin is unblemished. "Nothing wrong at all." Except an odd burning in my chest, but I already know what that is. It's a half-bond. We have to get rid of it. I don't know much about vampires—but I know that being bonded with one is bad news. Correct. "You had blood everywhere." Kellan looks me over, like I haven't probably been poked and prodded by numerous nurses and doctors. "I healed," I reply shortly, not willing to talk about what happened. "What about Lisa? Do we have any information on her?" He stiffens at her name and shakes his head. "No. Nothing. You said a vampire took her?" "Yes. Tall. Silver hair. Red eyes. Kind of freaky. Kept calling us kittens." Kellan rubs the bridge of his nose in frustration. "It's impossible to find a single vampire with that description." . 5/10 140 Ava: Lisa's Gone Guilt swirls in my gut. "I'm sorry. I didn't see much else." He waves off my apology. "I'm not trying to make you feel bad, Ava. It's a common problem when vampires are the perpetrators." He's right, Selene says. Their appearances are too similar. "The silver hair es give us a small hint about his age," Kellan continues, "but even that isn't a guarantee anymore. Not with the new trend of silver hair dye." I blink. "Vampires dye their hair?" A grim laugh escapes him. "Not only do they dye their hair, but they also wear contacts. They live among humans, completely undetected." A shiver runs through me at the thought. Vampires walking freely among the unsuspecting populace, wearing whatever disguise suits them best. It's a chilling realization. It's how they've survived so long, Selene muses. Adaptation is necessary for any species to thrive. Adaptation. Right. Lisa's been taken by an adaptive 18:13 6/10 140 Ava: Lisa's Gone predator who sees us as nothing more than kittens to play with. Fantastic. "So how do we find her?" I ask, trying to keep the desperation from my voice. Kellan's jaw clenches. "We have our ways. Every supernatural leaves a trace. It's just a matter of picking up the right il." Not every supernatural, Selene corrects, but I ignore her. "Then what are we waiting for? Let's go find her!" I start to sit up, but Kellan's hand on my shoulder stops me. "Ava, you're in no condition to go anywhere. You need to rest." "I'm fine," I insist, even as the room spins a little. "I can't just sit here while Lisa's out there!" He's right, Ava. You're not fully recovered. Your body needs time. Your wounds are healed, but your blood loss remains. I want to argue, but I can feel the exhaustion pulling at me. The adrenaline that kept me going is fading, leaving me drained. 18:13 7/10 140 Ava: Lisa's Gone Kellan must see it on my face because his expression softens. "I know you want to help, but the best thing you can do right now is rest. Let us handle this." Us. The pack. His pack. Our pack, Selene corrects gently. You have already accepted Lucas in y'r heart, haven't you? I'm surprised to see her standing up for Lucas, and she huffs. I may not be enamored of the wolf, but I'm not blind to what my human desires. You made a decision after that dance, didn't you? I guess I did. It's(w)Ww.N(o)©e©wo©m.c©M

Updates... about time to start thinking like pack and less like a visitor. Her ears flick as she speaks, and I rub her head gently. Got it. Still—even if I think of them as my pack, will they put as much effort into finding Lisa as they would one of their own. They will. She's Kellan's mate. He won't rest until she's 140 Ava: Lisa's Gone That word echoes in my mind, and I look at Kellan with new eyes. The tension in his shoulders. The fire in his gaze. He's a man obsessed. "Okay," I whisper, sinking back into the pillows. "But you have to promise to keep me updated. I need to know what's happening." He nods. "Of cour I'll make sure you're kept in the loop. Even if I don't, Lucas will be here in another hour or two when his plane lands." It's not enough, but it's all I can do for now. Trust in Kellan, in the pack, to bring Lisa home. And trust in yourself, Selene adds. You're stronger than you know, Ava. We'll get through this. You just need to rest a little longer. I cling to her words as Kellan stands to leave. He pauses at the door, looking back at me with an intensity that steals my breath. "We'll find her, Ava. I swear it." When he leaves, I'm alone. Alone with my thoughts and the steady presence of Selene at my side, nausea curling in my belly as I think of the horrors Lisa must be anduring 9/10 140 Ava: Lisa's Gone Rest, she urges. Heal. We'll need all our strength for what's to come. I know she's right, but it's hard to quiet my mind. Hard to stop berating myself for being so f@cking useless, even once that damn power had finally ignited inside of me. Not useless. Never useless. You survived, Ava. You fought. And you'll fight again when the time comes. Comment: 3 View All > Rww©W.n(o)ovélwo©m.c©M

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