

CHAPTER 164

164 Ava: Blood Contract? Come along, kitten. You and your friend, too. I'll give you the freedom he can't. I'll give you the knowledge she won't. Come, Ava Grey, Ward of the Witches. You seek a home, and I have one to give." A scream rips from my throat as I thrash against the sheets, gasping for air. Fear is a heavy weight pressing down on my chest. crushing me, stealing my ability to breathe.. In the darkness behind my eyelids, crimson eyes bore into me, glowing with malice. Moonlight glints off razor-sharp fangs as a sinister voice whispers in my mind. You'll be begging me to fulfill our contract. Don't worry, kitten. I'll come back for you. I jolt upright, heart hammering against my ribs. Sweat plasters my hair to my forehead. The room slowly comes into focus—dark walls, the dresser on the other side of the room, Selene's furry form at the foot of the bed. Her head perks up, ice-blue eyes studying me with concern. Ava? Are you alright? Her voice echoes in my mind, gentle and worried. "I..." My voice comes out raspy and I swallow hard, trying to wet my parched throat. "I had a nightmare Selene c@@ks her head, fluffy ears twitching. About? "It's hard to tell. Trying to grasp the wisps of memory that dance just out of reach is like grasping for smoke. "I feel like I'm forgetting something important. About what happened right before Lisa was taken." Selene goes still, her ears flattening against her skull. When she speaks, her mental voice is hesitant, almost wary. What do you remember, Ava? "The vampire. Fighting. Pain." But why did I hurt, exactly? Why is this suddenly so fuzzy? I frown, sorting through the hazy images in my mind. The Mad Prince. Selene murmurs. "Right." My head clears again. "He bit me. I remember that. It was weird, and..." I shake my head, frustrated. "There's something else. Something I'm not remembering." A flash of Selene's voice screaming in my head returns, and I jerk toward her. "You were yelling at me." Yes, she agrees cautiously. What else? "He said—I would beg him to fulfill our contract soon." Selene's quiet for a long moment. If it helps, I don't think you have a contract with him yet. "What do you mean?" He attempted to force a blood contract. You resisted. It resulted in a half-bond, but that seems to have dissipated, since it was not reciprocated. That might be why your memory's going fuzzy. "What do you mean, blood contract?" Remember the thralls from Sister Miriam's house? Ah, them. Ick. I definitely don't want to be one of those. "I don't feel any different," I offer cautiously. "No desire for blood or anything." Selene's blue eyes are distinctly contemptuous. Contracting and turning are two separate issues, Ava. Oh. "Then what is contracting?" It's a type of soul bonding. For the first time, Selene sounds unsure. It has never succeeded between Lycans and vampires. The attempt has always killed one or both of them. "I'm still alive. So, doesn't that mean it failed?" I don't think it succeeded, she says, still sounding hesitant. But I don't know enough to say. "My memories are still hazy, but he called me something, A ward?" Selene's ears twitch. I don't understand. Closing my eyes, I try my best to summon the words in my nightmare. "He called me by name. Ava Grey... Ward of the Witches. He knew who I was." Her head c@@ks and her tail swishes in agitation. I don't know what that means, but I don't like it. It sounds ominous. "Take a number. I don't, either." A number? A number. For the queue—never mind. Rubbing my eyes,

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I wave her off. "It isn't important. Is there anything else horribly life-altering that you'd like to tell me right now?" Selene is quiet for a moment, presumably while she thinks things through. I can't think of anything at the moment. Though I have been thinking about your magic. My phone buzzes. Grabbing it, I check the time. Two in the morning. Five missed calls, and five text messages. All from Lucas, of course, except for a spam discount advertisement text that just came in. I don't remember giving my number to any stores, but spam is ubiquitous. Ignoring the message, I click onto Lucas' thread and type. [AVA: Sorry. Was exhausted after seeing Mom. Fell asleep. I'll call you in the morning.] I've already failed. I promised to call him at every opportunity and haven't held up my side of things. If this relationship is going to work between us, I really need to put in more effort. Just like he has. Life doesn't always work as planned. True. But I'd resolved to do better. Taking a deep breath and shaking off the guilt, I glance at Selene. "Okay. My magic. You were thinking about it. How so?" A teacher There is one person who might be able to help you though My phone rings Lucas. I swipe it to answer in a hurry. "What are you doing awake?" "Thinking about you. Worrying about you." Selene sighs and rests her head on the bed. If a dog could roll their eyes, I'm pretty sure that's exactly what she just did. "I'm fine. I'm about to go back to bed. But a smile curves my lips anyway. The sound of his voice is comfortable as it washes over me. A part of me I didn't realize felt empty is now full, just by his presence through the line. It's a feeling I never want to go away. How did I push him away so harshly? My entire body, my soul, wants us to be together. I can feel the tug of our fated mate bond, the warmth in my chest where once there was only a dull, aching pain. Imagining living my life without the fulfillment of a mate bond is crazy to me now. It would be awful to know I'd live my life without the warmth he kindles inside of me. The warmth I've finally accepted and even crave. He sighs through the phone. "I'm sorry things didn't work out. I never should have sent you there." "It's fine. I wanted to be here. It was worth trying." My fingers tighten on the phone; I'd forgotten all about my mother once the nightmare hit. "It doesn't bother me that much. I'm lying, of course, "No, really. I'm fine. It's nothing new from her." Another sigh. "I already reserved your flight for the morning. Hurry home." I nod, before remembering that he can't see me. "I will. Thank you." "Get some sleep, love." Selene yawns, snapping her mouth shut with a clack. "I will. You, too." "When I'm done with these papers, I will." He goes quiet for a second. "Did you... have a good visit with Clayton?" "Minhmm. He wishes us the best." "Good." I can hear his deep breath, the relief in his words. "That's great." "Good night, Lucas." "Good night, Ava." A goofy smile spreads across my face as we end the call. A cozy sense of home blossoms in my chest, chasing away the lingering chill of my nightmare. Selene sighs heavily, her fluffy tail thumping against the bed. Get some sleep, Ava. We can talk in the morning. We have that long ride in the metal trap that flies. It's an airplane, Selene. An airplane. That's what I said. ComentarioWWW.novEldorm.com