

CHAPTER 166

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166 Lisa: Fevers and Dreams LISA How long has it been? A few days? Weeks? The sun should keep me oriented, but a fever gets me the first night I'm there. The girl, Marisol, comes by every so often. Always with food. A few times with bowls filled with some noxious liquid that has my nostrils trying to close, avoiding the smell coming from within. She's expressionless as she shoves it down my throat, and I'm too weak to fight her off. It's medicine, I think. I think that because I slowly get better after the third bowl, In between moments of lucidity, I dream. Normal life. Home. Mom and Dad. Working with Ava at Beaniverse. Flirting with that cute guy who accidentally wandered into our professor's Eng Lit class instead of some sort of philosophy class two doors down. Cozy, happy dreams, of a place far from here.. An escape from the reality that chains me. 17:37 At some point the dreams turn from happy comfort to something uneasy and dark. Sunshine warms my face as Ava and I relax at our favorite cafe, sipping lattes and chatting. For a moment, the world feels right again, like I'm back where I belong But then the shadows come They creep in at the edges of my vision, dark tendrils snaking across the ground. I try to warn Ava, but my voice won't work. She keeps talking, oblivious, until the shadows coalesce into a figure behind her. I scream, but no sound comes out. The shadow reaches for Ava, engulfing her, dragging her away as she kicks and struggles. I lunge for her, but my feet are rooted. Darkness swallows her whole. The scene shifts, and we're on a plane, Ava beside me. She's gripping the armrests, making a joke about the turbulence. I reach for her hand to comfort her, but the plane lurches, throwing us forward. Oxygen masks drop from the ceiling as the aircraft plummets. Ava's screaming. I'm screaming. The world outside the windows is a blur of sky and ground, rushing closer and closer until- Impact. Metal screeches and rends. Flames erupt. Pain sears. Ava's hand. slips from mine. The nightmares keep coming, each more horrific than the last. Ava, drowning in a sea of blood. Ava, burning alive. Ava, torn apart 55000 by unseen monsters. And always, I'm helpless to save her, forced to watch as she suffers. I thrash against my chains, but I can't escape. I can't wake up. The horrors play out again and again, an endless loop of agony. Until, finally, mercifully, I do wake up. I'm back in my cell, shivering and drenched in sweat. My throat feels raw, my limbs heavy and weak. Marisol kneels beside me. holding a bowl of that foul-smelling liquid to my lips. "Drink," she commands, tipping the bowl. I gag as the bitter liquid hits my tongue, but I force myself to swallow. Anything to chase away the lingering images of Ava's torment. Marisol watches me with a curious intensity. "How often has the Master fed from you?" she asks, her voice almost eager. I stare at her, surprised by the question. "Just once," I rasp out, wincing at the pain in my throat. Her eyes widen. "Only once?" She shakes her head. "The withdrawal shouldn't be this strong, not for a single feeding." There's something in her tone, an undercurrent of emotion I can't quite place. Envy? Longing? Jealousy flashes across her face as she mutters, "He must favor you greatly, for a single taste to affect you so. I don't know how to respond to that. The idea that this monster might favor me fills me with nothing but a sickening twist of my belly. I stare at the room, the last mast but no words coming out. I know, my mind deals with Mariel's odd behavior. My only hope, but all I want is to curl up and die here. I'm sure she doesn't seem to care about my discomfort. Marisol crouches next to me again her hate prodding at my skin with a client detachment that makes me thudder At first, I'm not sure what she's doing. Her fingers press against my neck, my wrists, my ankles. It's only when she peers down at my shoulder that I realize what she's looking for I don't have any I rasp out, my voice rough from disuse and screaming. "He only bit me once." Marisol's hands still, and she looks at me with a strange intensity. "Only once," she repeats, as if tasting the words. "But the withdrawal... it's so strong. He must have taken a lot." I don't know how to respond to that. The memory of his fangs sinking, the agonizing pain, and the sickening rush of pleasure that followed, makes bile rise in my throat, the medicine threatening to return.

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I swallow hard, trying to push the sensation away. The strange girl settles back on her heels, crossing her arms and resting her check on them as she stares at me. There's something wistful in her expression, a longing that I can't quite comprehend. "When did you know?" she asks softly, her eyes never leaving mine. "When did you realize you were in love with the Master?" 10h Lisa Fevers and Dreams For a moment, I can only gape at her, my mind struggling to process the absurdity of her question. In love? With that monster? The idea is so ludicrous, so utterly insane, that a harsh bark of laughter escapes me before I can stop it. "I don't love him," I spit out, my voice dripping with venom. "I could never love someone like him. He's a monster, a fucking psychopath who gets off on hurting people. How could you even think- But Marisol's expression has already shuttered, her eyes going cold. She stands abruptly, brushing off her knees as if she's been kneeling in dirt. "You don't have to lie to me," she says, her voice flat and emotionless. "I just wanted to be friends. Not like with the others. And then she's turning away, walking towards the strange sliding rock wall with quick steps. I want to call after her, to tell her that she's got it all wrong, that there's nothing romantic or loving about what's happening to me. That she's captive, too. That she's broken and needs to escape. Because what's the point? Marisol is clearly too far gone, too brainwashed by whatever twisted hold this vampire has over her, to see reason. And I don't have the energy to try and be a savior. I'm alone again. Nothing but stone walls and an aching emptiness in my chest. With only nightmares behind my eyelids. 100 Lisa Fevers and Dinama. I curl in on myself, hugging my knees to my chest as if I can somehow hold the broken pieces of myself together through sheer force of will. Tears prick at the corners of my eyes, hot and stinging, but I blink them back furiously. I won't cry. I think of Ava, of her fierce determination and unwavering loyalty. Of how frustrated we were with the guards around us all the time. Of how she went along with my stupid party idea, and is probably beating herself up over it. I am, too. I want to go home. Comentario 17:38

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