

### 3. Gone?

Narrator

"She....she must still be here. She might be in the water." Nolan's voice quivered as he spoke.

"She....she might still make it."

It was obvious that he was heart broken. And though he uttered those words, there wasn't much hope left in it. His eyes wandered around. Squinting in the moonlit water, he hoped to catch a glimpse of Cassy. The one who he loved as his sister, even though they were not really related, he saw her as his little sister.

However, there was nothing except for the ripples that made the water shimmer under the starry sky and the silver light of the full moon. There wasn't even the slightest sign that she was submerged in the cold water.

"Please....." he whispered, slowly feeling his heart sink. His voice was hoarse and his heart was already mourning. Mourning for the loss of his dearest sister.

It was obvious that there was no way that a human could possibly survive that fall. Even if she did land in water, the impact would have been bad enough to kill her. If only she was a wolf.....

"Can you still smell her?" Castor asked.

Swallowing the lump that had suddenly blocked his throat, he sniffed the air. No. Nothing. That could only mean that she most probably was submerged in the river water. Or worse. She could be at the bottom of the river. He painfully stared at the moonlit water, wishing for a miracle. Praying that she would suddenly jump out of the river and laugh at him for falling for her pranks, just like she used back at home.

"Cassy!" He shouted, though he knew that she wouldn't answer him.

"Cassy.... please." He sobbed. "Come back."

His pleas slowly reduced into a mere whisper. Sarah and Olga were already ghting against their own tears. They held on to each other for support, as they tried their best to hold back their own sobs and snies.

Miles too sniffed the air. She was his mate. Even though their bond was broken, he could still sense her. The chances of him sning her out were the highest, even though they were not aware of it. He was certain that her scent hung in the air faintly. However, it only seemed to get weaker and weaker. He walked along the river, thinking that it was where the scent led him, until he too lost it.

It was gone. The alluring scent of roses was no longer in the air. Miles froze on his spot. She was gone for real. A sensation of deep regret suddenly invaded his heart. Not because he rejected her and not because he refused their bond.

But because he feared that if his father ever found out what he had done, he might denounce him as the next alpha in line. And there was no way he could let that happen. Not now. Not when his father was ready to hand over the pack to him.

He scanned through the trees and once again looked carefully at the river. It was useless. He knew that she was no longer there. She was gone. And perhaps it was his fault. His heart raced at that thought. Little beads of sweat formed on his forehead which he quickly wiped away.

No! He told himself.

It was not his fault. It was just because she was unreasonably weak and pathetic. She didn't have to jump off the cliff, just because he rejected her. She was human, how could she feel the excruciating pain of being rejected? She was just being too sensitive. Heaving in a deep breath, he swallowed his insecurities and nodded to himself.

Yes. He reassured himself. It wasn't his fault. It was only her.

Miles slowly turned around to see his friend mourn the loss of his sister. Still holding on to the shoe they had found, he sobbed silently. Castor kept patting his back and giving him his condolences. Sarah and Olga now had their faces streaming with tears.

Miles slowly made his way back to them.

"Now what?" he asked, not knowing what else to say.

There was an awkward silence with no words exchanged between them. The only sound that echoed in the atmosphere was the sound of the little gasps of breath that escaped their lips, as they tried their best not to cry.

"I..." Nolan gulped, and once again stared in the river water, as if he held on to the false hope of nding her alive. That he still wished for a miracle to happen. He looked as though he wished that this was just one of her pranks.

But no. This time she was truly gone. He stepped back without saying a word and shifted in to his dark brown wolf, not caring about ripping his clothes. Right now, he couldn't care less about anything. When he fully shifted, he raised his head at the moon and let out a heartfelt howl. The howl of pain and agony. The howl that conrmed the loss of a loved one.

Olga and Sarah also followed his suite. Soon their howls lled the atmosphere and it reached the ears of Nolan's parents, who were waiting for any news on the cliff. His mother's tear stricken face darkened with fear. Her eyes widened as she felt her heart break in half. Nolan's father too knew what that meant. He too felt his heart sink in to a bottomless pit. He felt as though the earth had stopped revolving.

She was gone.

The group of youngsters soon returned with what they had found. Cassy's shoe. Nolan, in his wolf form, went straight home, not wanting to celebrate nor talk to anyone anymore. Olga and Sarah too went to their homes. That left Miles to give Cassy's shoe to her parents.

He watched how their faces contorted in pain when they saw it. He listened to her cries that echoed throughout the atmosphere, as she clutched on to the last piece of memory Cassy had left for them. It was agonising to see a mother mourn for the loss of her child. It was heart wrenching.

That was not really her own child. Miles thought. But it was obvious they loved her like their own.

"I'll....leave....Mr. and Mrs. Williams. Umm....my father must be aware of what had happened..." Miles spoke in a soft manner, and kept his head lowered.

It was hard for him to look at the mourning couple. Though he never wanted her as his mate, he never thought that this would be the outcome of his actions.

"Yes. Please inform him, young alpha." Mr. Williams nodded in gratitude.

Miles pursed his lips in a thin line.

"We must still try to look for....."

"Her body. I know." Mr. Williams nished.

"I am sorry." Miles murmured and walked away, with Castor right behind him.

"Man. I am not feeling too good. I think I'll just go home." Castor said as they walked side by side.

"Me too man. Me too." Miles sighed and walked away, leaving the grieving couple behind.

After wallowing and crying for sometime, Mr. And Mrs. Williams too left the scenery to go back to their home. Even though they knew that this night, they wouldn't be able to have any amount of sleep.

Meanwhile, in the river, Cassy's body drifted away from where she had fallen. Being submerged in the water had lessened her scent that lingered in the air, until enough time lapsed for it to be gone completely. Slowly, she drifted away and washed on the river bank a good distance away from the water fall near the cliff.

She looked lifeless. She was motionless. Was she dead?

Her scent slowly started to diffuse in the air, and mix with the smell of the dense forest, catching the attention of the lycan king who was strolling in the forest. It was a norm for him to walk alone in the forest every night after a fateful incident eighteen years ago. That was the night he lost his daughter. The fateful night he lost his only pup in the depths of this forest. And every night ever since, he has wandered in the trees. Hoping to nd her, but in vain. However, as time passed, he lost hope and it became a ritual for him to walk in the forest near the river and remember the night he lost his only child.

When the smell hit his nose, he froze. That scent was way too familiar to him. Wild roses. How could he smell it here at this time of the night? That scent only belonged to the royal females. Bewildered, he followed the scent. It took him to the river bank and, to his amazement, he found the lifeless body of a young girl. A girl who was soaked in the river water. The scent denitely belonged to her.

His breathing hitched. Could it be? Gasping and hysterical, he ran over to her and rolled her over to gaze in to her innocent face. She looked weak and pale. But she was certainly alive. He placed his arms underneath her and frantically ran through the trees, wanting to take her to the royal inrmary.

One question kept nudging his mind. Could it be her? Could it be his long lost daughter?