

CHAPTER 118

8 Ava: Alone at Last The good thing about Lisa’s apartment is that it’s soundproof. That means, with Kellan gone, we can talk to our heart’s content. Which is exactly what we do, as I fill Lisa in on what I experienced while I was unconscious. Lisa looks confused. “I know I’m a human, but that doesn’t sound like wolf is emerging. It sounds unrelated to wolves entirely.” your Precisely, Selene says, her tone approving. She likes Lisa. “Selene agrees,” I translate for Lisa. It is an awakening, but not of your wolf. She snorts and gives a quick shake of her head. I’m already awake. I laugh, and Lisa looks at me with a questioning stare. So, of course, I tell her. It’s unfortunate she can’t hear Selene.

118 Ava: Alone at Last “She’s funny,” Lisa remarks, petting Selene’s ears. Despite knowing the dog in front of her is a wolf on the inside, she hasn’t stopped treating Selene as a lovable husky. “So, an awakening of what, exactly?” Your powers, she says, her words terse. The necklace will do no good for you now. The ring, too. You’ve grown too powerful. It’s time to train before you get yourself killed. Oh. That doesn’t sound good. It does not, she confirms grimly. Unfortunately, I don’t know where we can go for tutelage. “Okay, so I have to learn on my own then.” That carries great risk. The grimace that twists my face has Lisa’s eyes bouncing between me and Selene, but she sits patiently, waiting for the summary. “Isn’t it risky for me to just do nothing? I was in a coma for three weeks. Isn’t that bad enough?”

15:30 2/9 118 Ava: Alone at Last Selene groans, her ears flicking. Even so... “How hard can it be?” Hard, she informs me. Do you even know how to access your power? Come to think of it–no. Do you know what it does? Also no. Do you know its limitations? Nope to that, too. Slumping against the couch, I stare at the ceiling. “This is pointless. What am I going to do?” “About what?” Lisa finally asks, nearly bursting with curiosity. After a quick explanation, she squints her eyes at me with a doubtful stare. “What about Sister Miriam?” Selene perks up. Who is Sister Miriam? Is she a vampire? “Vampire?!” I stare at Selene in shock. “Why would you think she’s a vampire?”

3/9 118 Ava Mone at Last Vampires usually name themselves as if they’re part of a church. Brother, Sister, Father, Mother. That’s just bizarre. Rubbing my eyebrow, I think back to Sister Miriam. Of the way my mother reacted to her presence. Of her bizarre behavior and unsettling gaze: “Yeah, she might be a vampire.” She’s definitely something, anyway. Selene cocks her head. It is possible she may know something. But it is also possible she will try to kill you. “She seemed pretty interested in me when we met.” That is good. Vampires like interesting things. They eat boring things. That’s a thought I never wanted to have in my head. “Vampire?” Lisa questions after I fill her in again. “How would a vampire know anything about a shifter like you?” They are very long–lived, and share their knowledge in their community. Despite popular opinion, they are not evil or terrifying. Just finicky.

16:30 19 118 Ava Alone at Last Selene’s definition of finicky seems to be a little off. “You just said she might try to kill me, and that vampires eat boring things.” Yes. In “That doesn’t sound like finicky is a great way to describe them.” She tilts her head again. No, it is proper Okay, then. “Okay, so Sister Miriam might know something–but how the hell am I supposed to see her?” Lisa sighs. “With these overprotective wolves, there’s no way.” The three of us fall into silence, our one idea already dashed. Lisa stares out the window. Selene rests her head in my lap as I rub her ears. No matter how I think it through, I can only think of one solution. “Either I die from my power manifesting without my permission, or I try to figure it out on my own. I don’t have any other option.”

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at Last Selene huffs, her mental grumbling vibrating in my ears. Lisa looks doubtful, but all she says is, “How?” Tugging at Selene’s soft husky ear, I try to think of how I’d accessed it the night of my escape. Nothing comes to mind. I was running. Then, I was running faster. It came to me; I never called it. “Let’s just shelve the topic for now,” I mutter, disappointment heavy and suffocating in my chest. It’s like there’s something squeezing my lungs, constricting my ability to breathe. Selene lets out a soft chuff of agreement. Turning my gaze onto her, I study her dog form intently. “Selene, will I ever be able to shift?” It is possible, she says in that vague way of hers. But we are not bonded in the normal way. “Okay. How would we do it, then?” I do not know. Helpful. “Why am I healing so much faster than I was before? I’ve never had shifter–level healing.”

6/9 118 Ava Alone at Last Your powers strengthen you. It may mimic a shifter’s rate of healing, but yours comes from the world around you, not from your soul. Here we go again, with the cryptic words. Frustrated, I pass them on to Lisa, who tilts her head. “So you’re like a druid or something?” Trust her to find some weird reference. “Druid?” “Or like a shaman? I’m not sure. Those people who are all connected with the world and the animals, or something. Oh, there are also Fae... Maybe it’s elemental magic. Selene, is elemental magic a thing? Fire, water, air, earth? Like all those weird anime shows people watch these days.” Elemental magic. Lisa’s words echo in my head, stirring a whirlwind of memories I’d rather forget. Flashes of my own death assault me, vivid and relentless. The searing agony of being consumed by flames, the crushing pressure of water filling my lungs, the suffocating weight of earth entombing me, and the terrifying sensation of air being ripped from my body. I shudder, my breath catching in my throat. It’s as if

15:36 719 118 Ava Alone at Last 118 Avi I’m reliving each horrifying moment, the pain and fear as real as the first time. Yes, Selene confirms, her voice a soothing balm to my frayed nerves. Magicians have always been drawn to the elements. It’s a fundamental aspect of their craft. “So, I’m a full–fledged magician now?” I ask, my voice trembling slightly. The idea seems absurd, like something out of a fantasy novel. Not quite, Selene replies, her tone pensive. Your connection to the elements is different, more intrinsic. It’s as if they’re a part of you, woven into the very fabric of your being. I frown, trying to wrap my head around this new revelation. “What does that even mean?” It means that you have a profound bond with the world around you, Selene explains patiently. The elements respond to you in a way they don’t to others. It’s a rare and powerful gift. “Great,” I mutter, sarcasm dripping from my words. “Another thing to make me stand out.” Lisa reaches over and squeezes my hand, offering a sympathetic smile as she listens to yet another recan.

8/9 118 Ava: Alone at Last This must be getting old for her (it is for me), and yet she never once complains. “Hey, it’s not all bad. Maybe this is the key to figuring out who you really are.”

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