

GHOSTING

MK DAVIS

CHAPTER ONE: NIGHTMARE

“Time to take your vitals, honey.”

It’s 8:04 am.

Margie enters Sophie’s room with the announcement, carrying an arm cuff and stethoscope. Sophie just stares at the ceiling as Marg rolls up the sleeve of her left arm. *Well at least she’s not Sara*, Sophie thinks to herself. Though, she still intentionally slows her breathing to control her heart rate. Just to give them a little hell. Not that it it’s easy after the last night.

“Stop that, Soph.” Margie knows about her tricks, but is more tolerant than the other aides. She ruffs Sophie’s dark hair before readjusting the arm cuff to start the process over. In the mirror across the room, Sophie notices her natural ginger really starting to grow in. They can’t have any kind of chemical anything in here.

After Margie marks down her stats, she turns back to Sophie. Sit on the edge of her bed. “More nightmares?” She places the back of her delicate hands against Sophie’s sweaty forehead. She could be down-right motherly sometimes.

Sophie nods once. Closes her eyes.

Comment [M1]: I chose a female character based off the genre of YA Urban Fantasy and the particular series I looked at *Wake*. Most of these characters feel as though they are separated from mainstream society mostly by unpopularity or other similar reasons. Here, Sophie is not only emotionally, but also physically separated due to being institutionalized.

“We’ ll have to see about upping your medications, I suppose.” Then she goes and says things like that. Sophie jerks away and deliberately stares out the window across the room. *They aren’ t dreams*, she thinks. She knows it’ s real.

Marge removes her hand - maybe a little hurt - and leaves the room without another word.

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Comment [M2]: This is to show a distrust or even what could be considered anger towards adults. This is a common theme with teen agers. They often feel adults belittle their opinions and treat them much younger than they are.

11:36 a.m. rolls around as Brogan finally sings her name to the visitors’ log and heads to the elevator. Inside, the number three lights up as she presses it on the panel - the psych unit. The silver box stops at the second level and the doors open to reveal a young nurse in pink scrubs with a blonde ponytail and unnecessary smile. *Oh hell*, Brogan suppresses rolling her eyes. The girl babbles far too much about newborns and formula between the two floors. Brogan waves and steps off quickly when the doors open again. *I really hate maternity nurses*.

Comment [M3]: Multiple perspectives on a the same scenario. Will eventually lead to readers having to make decisions about what is real for themselves.

This floor always smells of antiseptic and vanilla. It’ s a weird combination and Brogan has to crinkle her nose to adjust. The bald guy behind the front desk looks up as she approaches the counter. “You sign in downstairs?” He asks with a nod.

Now she intentionally rolls her eyes, maybe with a little exaggeration. “Yeah. ”

“Anything I need to check you for?” He’ s trying to be more professional than friendly.

“I think I got this figured out by now, Joe…” Brogan’s head cocks to the left in exasperation. You’ s think they’ d be done with the formalities after all this time.

“Alright, Bro. Go on then.” He nods down the hall.

Brogan smiles and turns down towards the resident rooms. *Finally.*

She stops at room 312, leans in the doorway. He sister hasn’ t noticed her yet.

“Hey, sis,” she says while throwing he paper bag she’ s been carrying towards the bed.

Sophie turns just in time to see the bag flying before it lands on the white blanket covering her lap. She picks open the corners slowly. “Smells good.” She peers in and her eyes light up. He hand dives in and pulls out a plastic container of blueberries with raspberry syrup. “From Adam?” She asks absently while popping he top, releasing the delicious steam.

“Yep.” Brogan moves to sit on the foot of the bed. “I never could survive on the crap they serve here. So I figured I’ d treat you to some real people food.” She watches her little sister close her eyes and smile around the first bite, “Extra blueberries too.”

Sophie’ s eyes turn to crescents as she savors the fresh breakfast. Brogan stays where she is, watching her baby sister enjoy every bit. Sometimes she forgets how being locked away can suck every bit of happy out of you; make you really appreciate little things you thought you’ d always have. But freedom is a luxury here. A luxury both girls have learned to do without.

Comment [M4]: Kids generally start to understand about sacrifice and how to deal with it as teenagers. Little kids either get things or they don’t. Teens need to start to make those decisions themselves.

Brogan can't help but smile as Sophie demolishes the four stack pancakes and begins to lick the extra syrup off the transparent lid. She looks like a kitten licking a window. Brogan's smile doesn't last long though.

It had only been three days since she had last visited Sophie, but maybe there was something new. Some piece of information that could help their search. "So any, ah... visitors lately, Soph?"

Sophie's eyes flit towards her sister before going back chasing the last bits of soggy crumbs with her index finger. "Don't you mean dreams, Sis?" Her reply is swimming in sarcasm. "After all, he's not real. Remember?"

Brogan walks to the door and leans against the frame. She looks up and down the hall to make sure it's clear of staff before she speaks. "Well I was wondering if Jackson had given you any kind of new info..."

Comment [M5]: Introduction (though not detailed expalination) of "fantasy" element.

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Jackson Miller was the reason Sophie had ended up in this place to begin with. Sophie had met him in a bar a few towns over. She had taken Brogan's ID to get in. She considered it lucky to be able to pass for a sister five years older than herself. Soph was tired of pretending she cared about the boys at her high school just to get buzzed off a few beers. Besides, Brogan wouldn't notice her license missing at least until morning.

Comment [M6]: Everybody loves a rebel in the Heroine character.

She first noticed Jackson playing pool on the other side of the room. Tried not to pay him too much attention. She slid the ID across the bar and ordered a beer when the bartender approached her. The big guy gave the card a quick once over, not even really looking at it. He most likely wouldn't have even asked if she didn't already have it out.

Jackson approached the bar with two empty bottles, waved them at the bartender for another round as he slid in next to Sophie. He glanced over her shoulder as she was pocketing her stolen driver's license.

"Brogan Lark? Cute name." He puts a twenty down when the three beers arrive. "I got her."

"Thanks. So you are...?" Sophie smiled, not expecting the free drink.

"Jackson. You play?" He asked nodding to the table where another guy was re-racking. Sophie shakes her head, even though she's not too bad with pool. "Well come watch. Maybe you'll learn something."

She sat at a table near the game. Oddly, she found Jackson very easy to talk to. Though, if you were to ask her now she wouldn't quite remember what they talked about that first night. Eventually after the other player left, Jackson convinced her to take a few lessons from him. She decided to play along. She enjoyed his company too much to just walk away.

While showing her how to line up a shot into the corner left pocket, he leaned over her, asked "So Brogan, what's your real name dear?" Sophie stiffened, missing the

shot. “Sister’s I’m assuming. Only you’re eyes are really different. Don’t worry.” He added, while taking his next shot.

She relaxed a little, even smiled at him again. “Sophie.”

“Hmm, still a cute name. Suits you better I think.” He handed her the cue stick again. “And you can stop acting like you don’t know how to play, as well.”

After that, Jackson and Sophie were mostly inseparable for months. Until he disappeared.

No one had heard from him for over two months, as though he had skipped town and vanished into the night air. Trying not to show it, Sophie started slipping into the dark. She had lost all contact with the one person she had started to trust. Besides Brogan, of course. Brogan was the one thing that kept her treading water, kept her breathing.

Night was the worst, knowing she’s be alone. That is until two months after Jackson had left. That night Sophie had a visitor.

Comment [M7]: Not sure how well this scene will work. Although Sophie and Jackson are involved romantically, I would like to avoid creating any overly dramatic/lovey scenes.

Comment [M8]: Jackson’s character will be mostly a mystery throughout the novel. Thus, why I tried to not reveal too much about his life or personality in this scene.

Comment [M9]: One: I feel like this could wind up being really cheesy. Two: even though this is really short, I feel as though going into detail about Sophie’s “visions” is somewhat a separate story from the introduction and should begin another chapter.