

Vampire
Dawn

In Cold Blood

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The Story So Far

Hungary, August ...

Juliette, Omar, Finn, Ruby and Alistair find a dead body in the forest ...

... Twenty-four hours later, they tie the murderer, Ava, to a tree, as one by one they fall sick ...

... When they wake, they are vampires, and that murderer looks rather appealing ...

... Mysterious nobleman Ignace, 400 years old and more sophisticated than is good for him, prevents them snacking on her ...

... But that dead body isn't as dead as it looked ...

... They go to Ignace's castle for a crash-course in being a modern vampire.

And so their adventures begin.

This is Ava's story ...

One

Ava hit the ground and rolled, the freezing snow bringing her quickly to her senses. Tyres squealed.

It took her a moment to sit up, brush the snow from her face and look around. The car that had dumped her was gone. No one looked at her. She struggled to her feet, feeling dazed and bruised, and knocked more snow from her coat. It was a fur coat – not hers. She looked down. Her feet were snug in Ugg boots, and they weren't hers

either. Thoughts swam into her head:

Where am I? How did I get here?

One hand clenched something tightly. She opened her fist and looked at a hotel key – a real key with a heavy fob engraved ‘Hotel Star Pristina’.

What’s this? What’s going on?

She could see the hotel the other side of the road. She stumbled, hurt and confused, over the road to the hotel entrance and showed the key to a doorman, who said something she didn’t understand.

At reception, a woman with bleached hair and thick glasses looked up and said something that again Ava didn’t understand.

Ava showed her the key.

‘Ah, we’ve been expecting you,’ the woman said in English. ‘Your room is ready. Your – er, friend – has paid in advance. You’ve been unwell, I hear. Do you have luggage?’

Ava shook her head, and it hurt. Where were her things? All the stuff she had brought to Europe? She had no idea. The woman looked her up and down – disapproving, Ava thought – then led her upstairs to her room.

‘Here.’ The woman opened the door, then stalked off.

The room was large and comfortable – and there were her clothes, neatly folded on the bed, along with some new, warm things that suited the weather.

Where am I? she thought.

Ava pulled the heavy velvet curtains shut against the snow and flopped onto the bed, suddenly tired. Within seconds she was asleep – a long, dreamless sleep that lasted until the next afternoon.

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When Ava woke, she felt groggy and empty. When had she last eaten? She didn't know.

An image flashed into her mind. A tray of food, a room in an old castle. She hadn't wanted the food, even though it was really good food. Was it Ignace's castle in Hungary? She didn't think so.

She wasn't really hungry, just empty. It was a strange feeling, but quite pleasant. She thought eating would make her sick.

She found a street map on the desk – Pristina,

Kosovo.

*That must be where I am, she thought. In Kosovo!
But how? Why?*

She suspected Ignace had something to do with it. That fleeting image – she tried to bring it back – was he anywhere in it? She thought she saw ... someone. Omar – was that possible?

Ava wrapped herself in the fur coat and headed out into the street. She trudged through snow and slush, past people who kept their heads down.

At dusk she came to a bleak park. The snow was grey here, and churned into rucks and ridges. A group of trailers huddled in a clearing between the trees. They were dejected, with peeling paint and cracked wood. No one was around – it was far too cold to be out – but smoke curled from blackened tin flues.

Crude pictures on the trailers showed trapeze artists, clowns, a tiger.

It's a circus, Ava thought. But pitched in Kosovo in the winter – it must be the worst circus in the world!

She would have steered clear a few months ago, afraid of the tough, gypsy types and their fierce dogs. Now she talked herself out of being scared.

'I've been attacked by vampires, dragged to a vampire castle, left alone in Prague, then – then something I don't even remember,' she said aloud to herself. 'What's the point in worrying? If something happens, I'll cope.'

She walked between the dingy trailers. Something strange and compelling pulled her forwards, despite her fear. She followed the feeling, and it caught in her throat. Excitement. *Why? I don't*