

Chapter 135

F.I.G.H.T !

Ava awoke in a cold sweat, head throbbing, and every single muscle she had aching. Nausea rolled through her so furiously that it took her a lot longer than it probably should have to realize that she was actually moving and that the world hadn't just gone all gooey around her.

What the hell happened?

She cautiously cracked her eyes open and was met with darkness. For a moment, she panicked, terrified that the blow to her head had been enough to render her sightless. Then, she saw a shift amongst the shadows directly facing her, and she calmed a bit, realizing that she wasn't blind, just trapped in an enclosed space with who the hell knew who, being transported, who the hell knew where.

Ava shifted and abruptly stilled as yet another wave of nausea threatened to make her sick. And if the strange pressure surrounding her mouth was any indication, she'd been gagged, meaning throwing up was absolutely not an option. Sudden pressure against her side made Ava jump, but the sound of soft sniffing quickly told her that it was just Eliza, cuddling close to her for comfort. Ava so desperately wanted to wrap her arms around the terrified little girl and offer her the security that she needed, but just like Eliza and the others that she had found stashed in the movie theater dumpster, her arms had been bound behind her back.

But not for long.

Ava took a deep breath, doing her best to brace herself for the pain she was in for as she called Mia up to the surface of their bond and shifted. The process was far less painful than it had been during those initial months after her connection with Mia had been re-established, but her bones and muscles still thrummed with pain as she shrunk down into a she-wolf just long enough to slip out her bonds before immediately shifting back.

The first thing she did was quickly locate her clothes in the darkness, haphazardly throwing them back on. The next was to remove the gag from Eliza's face. "Miss Ava!"

Ava quickly clapped a hand over the girl's mouth before she could alert whoever had abducted them that something was amiss. "We have to stay as quiet as possible," Ava whispered and, as soon as the shivering girl

nodded that she understood, Ava took her hand away and went to work untying her hands.

"I'm scared, Miss Ava," Eliza whispered, valiantly trying to stifle her gasping terrified sobs. "I want my mom."

Ava placed her hands on Eliza's shoulders and did her best to convey a sense of assuredness to the girl even though they couldn't see one another in the non-existent light of whatever hold they had been thrown into. "Remember lesson number one, Eliza?" She asked. "This is what you've been training for. Now, what is your most powerful weapon?"

"M-my mind," Eliza stuttered.

"That's right. And what do we do when we find ourselves in a less than ideal situation?"

This time when Eliza spoke, her voice held just a tad less tremor and a bit more confidence, "We make a plan."

"That's exactly what we do," Ava said, feeling pride in her pupil in spite of the circumstances. No, scratch that. Because of them.

Taking a be to calm her own nerves and settle her racing thoughts, Ava took stock of what she knew versus what she didn't. They were trapped,

headed to some unknown destination, and all for some unknown purpose. Ava reached out with her heightened senses and took stock of the others in the hold.

From what she could tell, it was just Eliza, herself, and the two others she'd found in the dumpster. Okay. She could work with this. There were obviously still some incredibly important variables that she'd yet to fill in, but this was a place to start.

And so, Ava put into motion what she'd spent so much time impressing upon her students and led by example. She made a plan.

Ava immediately went on high alert as soon as the van - or what Ava assumed was a van - came to a stop. They had been driving for hours, but she hadn't so much as closed her eyes the entire time. Instead, she'd gone to work trying to ingratiate herself to the other captives as quietly as possible.

She'd been able to learn that their fellow prisoners included Dana, a teenaged shifter who worked an earlier shift at the Arclight and had been snatched as she had been walking home for the day, and Hank, a Wolf who was maybe only a few years older than she was. He had been on his way to see the next big action thriller when he'd been ambushed down the block from the theater.

She could hear the thumping of doors opening and closing, followed by the muffled murmurs of their abductors as they rounded the van until they grew clearly audible as they settled right outside of the bolted doors. "Think we got anything good this haul?"

"At least one shifter and a Were. I think the kid might be a spellcaster, and who the fuck knows about the last one. I only grabbed her because she went poking around and found the others."

"Fuck. The Arclight is too hot. We're going to have to tell Easton to find a new haunt."

"You mean you're going to have to tell Easton. I'm not having my ass chewed out just for following orders."

The doors began to shake as the goons on the other side began to unlock them. Ava grunted quietly enough for the other two supernatural captives to hear and was satisfied when they quietly grunted back.

As near as she could tell, they were ready. They didn't know exactly what they were going to find on the other side of those double doors, but Ava had only heard the same two voices since they'd stopped. And, as far as she was concerned, they didn't need to get far - just to the driver's seat.

The door creaked open, and Ava was the first to move, lunging at the metal flap before it had a chance to swing completely open. Ava darted forward,

gaining enough momentum to jump and kick her legs forward, sending both feet solidly connecting with the door. The door whipped back, connecting with a solid form with a satisfying thwack.

She landed on her ass and slid the rest of the way out of the van, landing on the ground in a crouch, ready to spring forward at a moment's notice. Ava immediately clocked the other human goon standing on the other side of the van, looking positively shocked that a trunk full of superpowered individuals had somehow managed to escape.

"Shit! This one didn't get dosed?!" He shouted as he wheeled backward, scrambling around in his pockets, for what Ava didn't plan on figuring out.

They drugged them? Sure enough, even though they had planned to rush their captives together when Ava spared half a glance, Dana and Hank had barely made it to the van's open doorway where she could finally see them in proper light. Both of the other prisoners looked pale and winded, even after having spent the better part of the evening sitting along for the ride just as she had.

Shit. If they were going to get out of whatever this was, it was going to be up to Ava alone to get it done.

She charged at him and went low, swinging out a leg to take the man out at the ankles. At the last moment, he dodged, managing to stay partially

upright, but Ava brought her leg back up, slamming her shin into the backs of his knees, bringing the ugly oaf tumbling forward.

Ava was on him in an instant, hopping up onto his back and rendering him effectively immobile by wrapping each of her legs through one of his arms and locking her ankles behind his back while clenching his neck and head into a tight headlock. Below her, the goon wheezed in pain as his muscles and joints contorted into uncomfortable angles that he couldn't wriggle out of, held down snugly as they were by her own carefully distributed body weight.

"The key to the van, asshole," She snarled and flexed her muscles, making the human man howl. "Hand it over, and I won't snap every bone in your miserable fucking body."

Just then, there was the sound of a trigger snapping home, and the next thing she knew, it was Ava's muscles rapidly tensing and contracting as a continuous stream of electricity streamed through her body. She fell to the ground as the taser finally retracted, groaning and desperately trying to catch her breath as her body continued to spasm. Her bleary eyes only just managed to catch a pair of loafers step into view. "This tiny girl giving you two trouble, eh?" Came a thin, snide voice.

The man she'd been holding climbed to his feet, fighting back another grunt. "Dorsey didn't drug her, Mr. Easton, sir," he whimpered. "She took us by surprise."

A loafer nudged her none-too-gently in the ribs before turning to walk away.

"Since she likes to fight so much, put her in tonight's first bout. See how she fares in the Arena."