

## Chapter 35

### Approaching Danger

"Wake her up."

Ava was already beginning to rouse when a torrent of cold water came cascading down onto her face. Gasping, she bolted fully upright, only to choke against the ball gag that had been strapped around her head. Ava's lungs burned and tears streamed down her face as she shook her head viciously, desperately trying to suck in oxygen while water still streamed down her nose.

Blinking the water from her eyes, Ava found the sleezy face of the man she'd kicked hovering just out of reach.

"Hello, sweetheart." Each syllable was grotesquely drawn out.

Snarling, Ava lunged forward only to come up short when the metal shackles binding her wrists and ankles pulled taught.

Panicked, Ava looked down the length of her body where she lay in on the fainting couch in the suite's bathroom. Her arms were bound behind her back, and her ankles were lashed together, keeping her supine. Thank the goddess, the creeps hadn't taken her clothes off while she had been unconscious.

The man noticed the direction Ava's had gone and laughed, "Foolish. Your kind are always so young and foolish." He reached out and ran a lock of her hair through his fingers, admiring how the russet strands almost glittered in the light of the bathroom as they slid through each doughy digit.

"So beautiful, too," he continued, lust making his voice raspy. He scanned Ava from head to toe and back up again, and when his dull inky eyes finally came to a stop, they landed on her throat and stayed there. "But my friends and I aren't so vain, like most men. We understand where true beauty lies."

He lifted a hand, summoning something from one of the other men who still lingered outside of Ava's point of view. "So, please rest easy, knowing that our pleasures are hardly so basic in nature. By the time we're through, you'll learn that one need not remove a single item of clothing to achieve nirvana."

He snapped and another wave of water was thrown into Ava's face. Again, she wheezed and choked against the gag in her mouth. This time, water seeped its way into her nostrils causing Ava to panic. Her body began to convulse from the instinctive push to expel the water from her lungs with her ability to cough and spit so thoroughly impeded.

Her eyes were shut tightly against the chaos they'd just thrown her body into, synapses firing off rapidly in a frenetic effort to keep her breathing. Through it all, she heard the repulsive sound of the man above her sigh in bliss.

Then, just when Ava was sure that she was about to vomit, fingers clamped down on her nose, cutting off all access to air, altogether. Ava jerked back into the couch, trying to dislodge his grip. She screamed in outrage from behind the gag. "Calm, child. Hold your breath, and the panic will pass." He said.

"Sublime." A tense voice came from one of the others in the room. Right. Ava had almost forgotten that there was a room full of men watching this happen to her. Aiding in it. Getting off on it.

Goddess, there were no good people. Whether Werewolf or human, everyone was fucking awful.

After a few seconds of deliberately holding her breath, her body seemed to readjust and reset. When the man finally removed his fingers, she could breathe normally again. Her lungs and nostrils still burned, and her throat was sore, but she was breathing.

The man smiled at her as she glared up at him, imagining all of the ways she'd rend him limb from limb, if she could. Unfortunately, they'd apparently thought of that potential outcome. The shackles and binds that rendered her immobile must have been infused with silver in some way, because Ava could barely feel Mia. She knew that the Wolf was enraged and fighting to come to the surface, but the metal barrier kept her at bay."

"Now, see. That wasn't so bad was it?" He reached down and encircled Ava's throat with his clammy palm. He didn't squeeze, but the tenseness in his fingers said that he wanted to. "It was very good for my friends and myself. Watching the terror suffuse your entire, completely overtaking even the mere thought of control. It's...primal."

The man shuddered in excitement, "Am I right, my comrades?" He was met with lust-filled calls of affirmation and encouragement to continue. "You know, the French have a saying, *la petite mort*. The little death. They use it to describe the feeling of orgasm. Poetic though it may seem, it's a bit short-sighted, in my opinion." He began stroking her throat, staring at it almost longingly. "There's a much more apropos biological event that I, and those who share my fascination with the more cerebral side of carnality, feel fit the term."

Slowly, he began to apply pressure to her neck, squeezing tighter and tighter while Ava began to squirm. "It's that moment, right before the light fades behind the eyes and the soul escapes its cage..." His grip was like a vice now, causing the bathroom around Ava to go blurry around the edges of her periphery.

"That is a cause worthy of the name *\*la petite mort\**."

Suddenly, his hand was gone, and Ava instinctively sucked in air through her nose. The influx of oxygen quickly became overwhelming to her, but just before she began to choke again, she went against her own survival instinct and held her breath. The trick worked again and after a few moments, Ava was able to catch her breath without being disturbed by the gag again.

The man grinned a toothy, predatory smile, "Now you're getting it! It's been so long since my friends and I have had such an enthusiastic playmate." "Must be the Wolf in her!" Someone crowed.

"Yes," the man answered. "The girl was right; this one was perfect for our game. It's almost a shame we've never played with one of the Wolf-kind before."

He leaned in and whispered conspiratorially in Ava's ear, "I'm glad you were our first. Now, we've both introduced one another to exciting new experiences!"

Madison paced up and down the seventh-floor hallway, wracking her brain, trying to figure out her next move. Her agreed upon forty percent burned a hole in her pocket, but she was in the clear. Creeping up to suite 701, Madison lightly pressed her ear to the door. Shit. She couldn't hear anything. But that was a good thing, right? "Madison."

She jumped, whirling around at the clear baritone who'd called her. When she saw who it was, her heart sank.

"M-Mr. Miller." She both hated and loved how the towering man turned her into a simpering puddle with just a glance.

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And when he said her name...ugh, their babies would be to die for. Madison didn't want to think about how the whole Wolf-baby thing worked, but if she were a beach on a sunny day, then he was a snowcapped desert. They were kismet, she could feel it. He was *\*exactly\** the type of man she'd hoped to find when she took this godforsaken job.

"Good, I thought that was you." He walked toward her, so she shifted on her feet and smiled, making herself seem as inviting as possible.

"Have you seen Ava?" He asked. Madison's smile froze on her face. "I've looked for her everywhere, but I can't find her."

Madison lowered her gaze, shuttering her telling gaze with her lashes, "I-I'm afraid I wouldn't know, sir. It's so late..."

It was his turn to smile bashfully, "Heh, yeah. I happened to be in the building, and you know how your lot keep late hours." He gestured at her. "I was hoping to run into her. Or check up on her, at the least."

Pure, uncut anger swallowed Madison so quickly the adrenaline spike made her feel faint. She must have swayed on her feet because Dylan paused in his endless ramblings about Ava to finally notice her. "Hey, are you feeling okay?" He asked. "Should I call someone?"

"Y-yes! I mean no, I-I'm fine." Madison grated out past the lump of bile in her throat.

After a moment inspecting her to make sure she wasn't about to have some sort of fit, Dylan nodded and backed away, "Alright, well thanks for the help." He turned and made his way down the hall but stopped and smiled after a few feet. "Have a nice night, Maddie." He waved at her and continued on his way.

Madison breathed hard; fists clenched hard enough to leave marks. She spared room 701 one last look before stalking off down the hall, herself. There were rules in the club for a reason. Ava would be fine. Madison refused to spare another thought on the girl and walked away.