

Chapter 41

Who Gets Her There?

"Are you the one who sent her in there?" Bella's face went ashen at the dangerous undercurrent in Xavier's tone.

The man they'd kept for questioning hadn't been as helpful as Xavier had hoped. The terrified human hadn't bothered to get the name of the girl who'd sent Ava - apparently, she was blonde and liked to play hard-to-get. Which described about a solid third of the club's employees.

With yet another avenue closed to him, Xavier was on a warpath.

"Wh-" It wasn't often that Xavier found the mistress scrambling for words - the impeccably curated air of aloof control he'd spent his life trying to perfect his entire life seemed to come naturally to the businesswoman.

"I had nothing to do with this abhorrent incident, Mr. Michaels. Frankly, I can't believe that anyone would have the nerve to flagrantly disregard the hard rules of this establishment."

"Then where were your safeguards, Sutton? Your job is to keep the people who work for you safe, is it not?"

Xavier poured himself a glass of bourbon and downed it in one. He was still amped up from his disastrous seduction of Ava earlier. He'd thought that he was really beginning to get somewhere with her, a place where they could operate outside of the miles of jagged division that existed between the two of them.

After finding her limp, within an inch of her life, and knowing that he was the one who'd put her in that situation...Xavier knew that he'd fumbled this thing with her hard. He'd placed her in the club as an escort because he knew she'd get the care that she needed from Bella's program. He'd needed her to be safe and secure, and *away* from the machinations of his father and Red Moon while he sorted out the messy past that followed Ava like a blight.

If he ever hoped to rekindle the previous relationship they'd shared, he needed to know once and for all what had happened that night. Xavier had quietly reopened his sister and Sam's murders, but the process was slow going. Ava was supposed to stay in the club, make some easy money, maybe a couple of friends...

Somewhere along the way, his best laid plans had gone to shit. Keeping Ava's identity hidden was getting increasingly complicated. And keeping her safe was even harder.

He'd never anticipated so many of the other Alpha's taking an interest in her. She was certainly never supposed to enter into sexual deals with anyone - Bella was under strict orders that Ava was to be a companion only. That thing that had gone down in 701 never should have happened.

"Between the fanatic waterboarding cults and Noah Thomas, you've been letting a lot slip through the cracks, Bella. It's unacceptable." He continued.

Bella eyed the bourbon bottle in his hand like she wanted nothing more than to shoot the entire thing. She'd have to get in line. "I'm still investigating the incident with Noah Thomas but let me assure you that the two cases are completely unrelated."

"That doesn't make me feel better." He growled.

Bella took a deep breath to resettle herself before continuing, "For all that I can tell, Thomas' dealings with Ava are completely legitimate. I don't know why his intentions weren't relayed to me, but his contract is being finalized as we speak. As for the...group in 701, they'd registered for a non-sexual party, and came up clean when we vetted them. I didn't send Ava to their room, but there was no outward reason that she shouldn't have

been there. I assure you that they will never darken the Green Light's door again."

Xavier poured himself another glass, this time pausing to pour one for Bella, as well. He slid the drink across the table before downing his own. "Don't worry about it. They won't be."

Bella stared at him, silently processing the implications of his statement before emptying the contents of her glass down her throat. "Do I need to keep 701 off-limits for the foreseeable future?"

"Probably," he said, his voice betraying nothing but the facts. "Miller isn't usually one for discretion when he's angry."

Bella swallowed and nodded. "I don't presume to know your mind, but perhaps it's time that we rethink our arrangement," she began. "Assigning Ava to non-sexual clients was a kind idea in theory...but Ava's time here hasn't been easy. On any of us. Is there no other way for her to repay her debt to you."

"You're right," he said. "You don't know my mind. I want results, not excuses, Sutton. While she's here, Ava Davis is your priority, and you can consider her wellbeing as a direct reflection of your continued employment at this club." Xavier took a seat behind his desk and waved her off, "And your first order of business is helping me find whoever sent her to that room."

Bella quickly made her way to her client manager's office on the first floor. It was Jared's job to vet all client requests and bookings. He would have been the one to assign Room 701 to its original host, so he was her best bet to finding out who'd set Ava up.

She sighed, thinking about the girl. Incidents like the one that had occurred last night were one in a million. In all of the years Bella had been running this club, she'd never had an escort die while on the premises. When Xavier had come to her with the details, she'd nearly told him to stop lying.

It was all the more upsetting that it had happened to Ava. The girl had gone through so much already, and Bella couldn't fathom how something so terribly far-fetched had happened to her.

As much as she enjoyed Ava's company, Bella would be glad to never see the girl again if it meant that she was far away from Xavier Michaels manipulations.

She approached Jared's office, only to see a girl rushing from the room with her head bowed. She didn't stop to greet Bella as she ran past, and Bella didn't immediately recognize her, so she wasn't a member of the court.

Bella entered the office without knocking, finding her client manager behind his desk, typing away on his desktop. He didn't notice her until she

delicately cleared her throat. As soon as he saw her, he leapt to his feet, "Ms. Sutton, what a lovely surprise! Looking stunning, as always, darling!"

He sobered when she didn't return his upbeat banter, "I-I, oh God. What happened this time?"

Jared had been here for nearly a decade. In that time, he'd had plenty of time to become well acquainted with the mercurial nature of their business. This wasn't the first time she'd walked into this office to report abuse against one of their employees, and it wouldn't be the last.

Bella swore that it would be the last time it would be for a situation so blatantly appalling.

"I need to know about the guests in Room 701 last night. In detail."

He bristled at her tone, "What did they do? I assure you that I vetted them as thoroughly as anyone else. I know that you've been having me run more bookings past you lately, but rest assured my work is - "

"The guests, Jared." She said slowly, "This is a very serious matter. Our jobs are on the line on this one."

Jared went quiet, silently sinking into his chair.

Bella took a seat of her own, pulled out a cigarette and lit it, "Whoever was in 701 snuck outside paraphernalia into the club. Ended up trussing up one of the girls and forced her into asphyxiation play. Some real Guantanamo-type shit." She took a long drag of her cigarette as Jared gaped at her. The human looked as if he were about to faint, so she offered him her pack and a lighter, which he took gratefully. "What are contracts even for anymore?" He said.

Bella nodded slowly, "Now the boss is pissed. And rightfully so. Between this and Thomas, you have to see how these recent fuckups are making us both look upstairs, Jared."

Jared rubbed his eyes and took another drag, "Thomas was a bad call. He seemed fine, paid upfront - he was obviously one of... your type. I swear, I never would've let him through if I'd known it was going to be such an issue!" Bella leaned in, "I can handle Noah Thomas. Right now, I need to know everything I can about the men who booked Room 701."

Jared swallowed hard and refused to meet her eyes, "There's not much to tell, Bella. They were anonymous."

All at once, Bella saw red.