

Chapter 375

Europe

Pietro groened, trying to force his eyes to open end shuddering when pain greeted his attempts. Something was very wrong. Something so frightening that he knew he needed to stay alive at least long enough to alert the Council and to warn Mac when he arrived, so that one of them could get the information out.

The damage to his body was severe. It was enough to tell him that the likelihood he would be the one escaping was pretty low. They'd done something to him that slowed, if not completely halted, his vampiric healing abilities. Each wound healed slower than the last time. Some of them were still weeping blood as he hung from the steel chains in the ceiling, his feet barely touching the cold stone floor.

He lost his mind back trying to work out how long they'd held him. He knew it was at least one day, possibly even two, since he'd sent Mac the information he'd asked for. It had been shortly after that Pietro had become aware of a feeling of lethargy seeping into his movements. It had been so subtle at first he hadn't really noticed it.

Something about the way Michael and Bruce had been looking at him whilst trying not to look at him had sparked his suspicion that something wasn't right. By that time it had been too late. He'd already drunk the contents of the bottled blood.

It had to have been contaminated with something. Whatever substance they had put in it that was capable of incapacitating a vampire, had already been creeping through his blood, making him sluggish and weak.

It should have been impossible. A vampire's metabolism broke down all foreign substances instantly rendering them harmless. But those two had found something that even vampires couldn't protect themselves from.

The thought of being brought low by the two other males made his blood boil. Even as he conceded they'd been intelligent enough to come up with the unknown substance, he knew deep down they were too stupid to do so on their own. They were followers, monkeys. Someone else was directing their actions, the true organ grinder Pietro had yet to meet.

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He should never have underestimated them. It was a rookie mistake and something a Youngling would do. He'd been around too long to fall for anything so obvious and yet he had. His pride had been his downfall, his belief in his superiority over them. And they had played him hook, line and sinker. They'd counted on him underestimating them and he'd played right into their hands.

He deserved to be in his current predicament but Mac didn't deserve to be pulled into the same trap. His captors wanted something from him which was the only reason he was still alive. He was too weak to defend himself. Killing him would be like taking candy from a baby.

Pietro had never felt so disgusted with himself or ashamed. If he was responsible for anyone else's death he'd be pissed as hell. He'd be dead himself so it was stupid even to worry about it, but all he had left was his rage, be it at himself or at his captors. They had taken everything else from him but he would hold onto that rage with every last fibre of his being.

The key turned in the lock and Pietro stiffened as the steel door slid back to reveal not one of the males but a female this time. Through his one working eye he could just about make out her features in the darkness. She was pretty and looked to be in her mid twenties but he could scent the age on her.

He stiffened when he realised she was close to Ancient, at least five centuries older than he was. In all their history, no European vampire had lived that long. They were wilder, more isolated, preferring to live in secluded covens and warring secretly over territory. How any of them could have reached close to eighteen hundred years old was a shock.

She had to be European because the Council knew of all Elders stateside. The general practice was to present any newly made vampires to the Council once they'd achieved their first year without losing their heads. The population was recorded meticulously. If this woman had been one of them then her identity would be known and Pietro had never seen or scented her before.

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He watched her close the door behind her not the least concerned at being in the room with him on her own. The thought almost made him smile in derision. What would she have to feel concerned about? A naked male hanging limply in chains with one shoulder dislocated?

Just about every one of his ribs were broken, blood seeping from the mess of cuts covering every inch of his flesh. One of his eyes was swollen shut, hell for all he knew maybe he was missing the eye completely. With his hair matted with blood hanging dank and limp against his bruised face, he didn't think he cut a very scary figure.

The woman came closer and he could see her skin with a light caramel colour hinting of some kind of mixed heritage in her family. She was curvy in all the right places and he was male enough to admit she was pleasing on the eye.

Her face was expressionless as she slowly ran her grey eyes over his body, walking around him as she did so, her breathing never once changing its rhythm. If she was pleased or unhappy about the damage to his body she gave no clear indication of it.

Not until she was once more looking up at him, then a small frown furrowed her brow and she asked under her breath. "The boys were a little enthusiastic, I see. They were unsure of how much of the poison to slip into your drink given your age. They may have applied a little too much as your wounds are not healing."

Her voice was light with a musical lilt to it. Under other circumstances Pietro might even have found it pleasing. "If you hire monkeys you have to live with their failings," he managed to grind out through his swollen lips. It hurt to talk but he wasn't going to let her know it.

She smiled and her face transformed into something so beautiful it seemed at odds with the room of horrors they were both standing in. "Ah, I see they may have broken your body but not your spirit." She appeared pleased by his strong will.

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