

## Chapter 24: Pinot Noir

You knew you'd have to see Gabriel sooner or later, Amelia reasoned with herself while they waited for the second course. I just didn't think it would be so soon.

Even though she didn't particularly like Richard, a trip to the wine cellar would give Amelia a brief respite from the building tension at the table. It was becoming increasingly uncomfortable trying to avert Gabriel's glances.

"That's a very nice gesture," Amelia said to Richard. "I'd be happy to pick out a wine for my father."

"I'll join you," Jonathan said quickly. Too quickly, Gabriel noticed. But Richard brushed Jonathan off.

"Nonsense," Richard smiled. "There's no need for a chaperone. We're just going to pick out a bottle of wine. Continue eating your meal. It's not like I'm going to eat her!" Richard laughed loudly at his own joke. No one else laughed along. "You and Gabriel can discuss business," he said to Jonathan. "It's a good opportunity for both of you."

Jonathan looked to Amelia. She could take care of herself, although she appreciated Jonathan's concern. She gave Jonathan a little nod. Richard waddled his way to the back of the VIP room. Amelia followed. With a flourish, he opened the door to the cellar.

“My personal collection,” he winked at her as she entered. He placed his hand on her shoulder from behind and gave it a little squeeze. It made Amelia shudder with disgust.

Perhaps Jonathan should have joined us. But then he removed his hand.

“Go ahead,” he encouraged her. “Find something that suits your fancy.”

The walls were lined with bottles and bottles of wine. Amelia had never seen so much wine in her entire life. She went to one of the walls and touched the tips of the wine bottles. Richard followed behind her, making sure to keep his distance. Richard was far enough away from her that she didn't feel uncomfortable.

“I don't know a lot about wine, but I know enough. You have some amazing wines in your collection,” she told him. It was true.

“Red or white?” Richard asked, as he admired her admiring the wines.

“I prefer red,” she replied.

“Well, we have a nice merlot, as well as a robust malbec. But if you want something very delicate and delicious, I suggest our pinot noir.” Amelia didn't notice him leading her deeper into the cellar. Nor did she notice the way he licked his lips when he said 'delicious'. Her mind was elsewhere.

"You know I prefer red." It was her mother's voice. Her mother has always loved wine, and one of the strongest memories she had of her mom was her holding a glass of red wine and sipping it while she laughed on a Friday night with Magnus. Magnus and her mom would drink wine and then dance together. She can still see them, staring lovingly at each other, as though they were the only two people in the world. But when Amelia was five, her mother had become sick. She'd passed away soon after. Magnus had been heartbroken; he'd loved her so much. He never took a new Luna. Amelia had always been amazed by this, by how much her father had loved her mother. She'd always wanted that for herself. When she was really young, her mother had a best friend, and her best friend had a little boy the same age as Amelia. The two women had joked together about the kids marrying each other one day. "And then you can dance with him forever, just like me and your dad," her mother had laughed. Her friend, however, was not as fortunate as Amelia's mom in the love department. Her husband left her for another woman and moved away. Amelia never saw the young boy again.

"Would you like to try it?" Richard's voice snapped Amelia back from her memory. She quickly looked around.

Where are we? It looked like some sort of hidden room. They were deep in the cellar. She knew that much because she couldn't hear Jonathan or Gabriel anymore. She saw a door but it was closed. Richard must have led her here while

she was day-dreaming about her mom.

"No thank you," Amelia said. Richard was holding out a bottle of wine. "I think we should get back. I think this one would be nice." Amelia reached for a pinot noir with a familiar label. "Strange, but I think this was my mom's favorite wine." She walked towards the door.

Richard stepped in front of her.

"Not so fast," he said, blocking her path. "You know, we're all alone in here." He walked towards her and she backed away until she was backed up right against the wall. He leaned in closer. His fat belly touched hip and she cringed. "You could be my woman. Would you like that?" he asked. He brushed her cheek with the back of his hand.

"I think we best get back," Amelia said firmly.

"I don't think that's best at all," he snickered. "I think I should bend you over right here. Take you from behind. Come on. You want me. I can tell. You followed me here."

Amelia tried to push him off her but he leaned in harder.

"Don't play hard to get, baby. We both want this." He pushed himself to her, shoving her back harder up against the wall.

Amelia took a deep breath. She felt her wolf rising.

He's only a human, she said to herself. There's no way he could beat me. I would destroy him in seconds. She gained control of her wolf.



"It'll be so good," he whispered into her ear.

You know what would be 'so good'? Amelia thought as she moved her head to the side, away from his hot breath. Giving you what you deserve. But I can't hurt him. But what am I supposed to do? How do I get out of this without killing him? His disgusting hands started moving on her body.

Amelia tried to stop him without using excessive force. But such gentle refusal was more of a tease in Richard's eyes, and he became even more aroused.

She tried not to gag. I need to work with Brickroll. I need to maintain a business relationship with them. He pawed aggressively at her pants. If I kill their general manager and smash this cellar to smithereens, I'll never get this project. It won't even take me a month to hand over the management of the company. I'll fail...

A thought occurred to her then. Amaya had set up this meeting. She had called Richard 'a friend'. So surely Amaya knew what type of man Richard was. A complete sleaze. Amaya had led Amelia right into this trap. Well there's her true colors. She's setting me up to fail. I had a feeling, but now I know for sure.

But what mattered now was how to get rid of this disgusting old man. Amelia was just about to give him another good, hard shove, hoping he'd get the message, when they heard a loud bang from outside the room.



"What the?" Richard asked, taking a step back from her.

The bang was followed by the sound of bottles smashing and shattering onto the ground.

And judging by the noise, it was a LOT of bottles.

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