

I awoke to blackness so deep that I wasn't sure if I'd even opened my eyes. I put a hand up to my face and felt for them, reassuring myself that they were, in fact, open. I stared at nothing for several moments before attempting to move, until the darkness began to shift subtly into slightly differentiated shades of black. I sat up slowly, and was surprised by a wave of dizziness. I lifted a hand to my head and felt around gingerly, wondering if I was hurt somehow. My hand brushed over a spot at the base of my skull and I winced as a wave of pain and nausea washed over me. I put a hand out to steady myself as I drew myself up into a sitting position, encountering cold, hard metal bars. I seemed to be in some sort of cell.

The last thing I remembered was being at a nightclub with my friends. I'd probably had one too many tequila shots, but not enough to warrant blacking out. But then, the lump on my head might have something to do with that.

I closed my eyes and listened, thinking I'd heard something. I waited, and the sound grew louder and closer, resolving itself into echoing voices eventually accompanied by the flickering glow of torches. Another wave of nausea washed over me as I realized that I was hanging in a metal box suspended at least thirty feet in the air of an enormous cavern. Below me, three people had appeared, seemingly out of nowhere, so disorienting was the layout of the space. They looked vaguely familiar, but I wasn't quite sure if I actually knew them or not.

"What are we going to do with her?" I recognized that voice. It was my best friend Dru.

"We have to kill her," The voice that answered her belonged to my brother Jake.

"What do you mean you have to kill me?" I yelped down in surprise.

"We have to kill you," He responded, in a tone I'd never heard him use before, completely devoid of emotion

"You most certainly do not. What's going on?"

"You know what's going on, Liz. Don't play dumb," Dru responded.

"Dru? Please tell me what's happening?" Her eyes were glowing in the light of the torch, and I looked pleadingly into them.

"I can't do that, Lizzie. You know the rules."

"The rules? I don't understand. Are we playing some kind of game?"

I recognized the loud, abrasive laughter of my friend Senna. "This is no game, babe. We are going to have to kill you. You know that."

"That's ridiculous. How did I get here?"

"We brought you here."

“From the club?”

“Yes.”

“Where are we?”

“In a cave.”

I rolled my eyes. “Obviously. Are all your answers going to be this cryptic?”

They looked at each other, seeming to consult on the issue before Jake replied. “In short, yes.”

I sighed. “Are you going to at least let me down from here?”

“We’re taking it under advisement,” Dru answered.

I was beginning to get annoyed with their strange behavior, not to mention all the talk of killing me. I wasn’t exactly in a position to get angry, considering I was hanging in a cage from the ceiling of a *cave* with a welt on my head, feeling disoriented and sick. But I couldn’t afford to succumb to the mind-numbing fear that threatened to overtake me. Anger kept me alert.

“You’d better let me out of here, Jake. Dad is *not* going to be pleased when he hears about this.” Even I knew the words sounded stupid as soon as they left my mouth. If my brother was going to kill me, he obviously wasn’t very interested in our parents’ opinion on the matter.

His only response was a mad, maniacal laughter that was chilling to hear reverberating throughout the space.

After at least fifteen minutes more of what felt like completely fruitless argument, I finally succeeded in convincing them to ease me down to ground level. They even let me out of the cage. And it was when I saw them up close that I noticed something was quite seriously wrong. Their skin had a grayish pallor, and their eyes really *were* glowing.