





# A Breath Of Magic

Book 1

Olivier

This is a work of fiction. Any references to real events or places are only used to serve this story. All the names, whether of the characters or the events taking place come from my own imagination. Any resemblance to real people or events is purely coincidental.

WARNING TO THE READER:

This book portrays explicit erotic scenes which may offend young readers

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## Preface

My name is Hugo Chandelin and I'm the youngest of four sons.

Just like in many families throughout the world, my brothers and I are united, *very* united.

The reason for this inextricable bond doesn't solely lie in the fact that we share the same blood. Something even more powerful ties us all together!

Secrets and dissimulation, apprehension and defiance have always ruled our life. No misconduct, no wrong move, no misbehavior allowed if we want to keep our secrets. If they were to be out in the open, we would be hunted down, imprisoned, tortured, dissected in the name of a so-called science which is everything but humane.

Some would call us monsters, freaks of nature... I personally think we've been touched by grace. Each of us, in our own way, has been endowed with a gift that sets up apart from the other humans, which makes us extraordinary.

Not so long ago, our very neat day-to-day life has been brutally turned upside down, throwing us into the unknown and deeply changing the way we used to live, our habits. We are no longer sheltered and invisible. We have more responsibilities than just caring about ourselves.

The only reason why I decided to say all of this is because I think that by doing it, I can protect my family, provide

them with a safe, peaceful future. The very thing we've been stripped from for too many years.

Today, I dare lay myself bare and reveal what we are, who we are. Being known will set us free from solitude. It will give us a chance to really live.

Now more than ever, we need to put a united front and weather the storm. I know that besides cruelty, defiance, indifference and contempt, there are other feelings which are way more powerful, such as forgiveness, understanding, friendship and... love.

I dare not be as presumptuous as to tell you I can change your mind about the supernatural, but I hope I can give you enough keys for you not to blame and condemn us. For you to, eventually, like us.

So, here is, written in plain English, our story...

The Chandelin Brothers series.

# Chapter 1

## Olivier

Cold and darkness were wrapping around me like a heavy and wet blanket sticking to my skin and numbing my body. I couldn't move, and I couldn't gather the courage anyway. I was feeling like my legs and arms were cast in concrete as my eyes were sealed shut and wouldn't, for the life of me, open up. In the middle of all this, I was drifting in a semi-conscious state, unable to wake up completely. A searing pain was going down the entire left side of my body, the side which was lying on... On what, exactly? The floor? I didn't know where I was nor what had just happened to me.

The only thing I was sure of was that I wasn't safe!

I took a breath as deep as my aching lungs would allow me and tried to sort my more-than-confused thoughts out. My stomach was painfully lurching as I thought about everything that could happen to me as I was fighting off this comatose state.

With great difficulty, I managed to half-open my eyes and tried to look around. It was too big of an effort, and I immediately fell back into nothingness.

Terrible angst snuck up on me and wouldn't let go of me as I thought that, after more than thirty years, my secret might have been found out! If that was the case, my family was in danger too!

As the seconds passed, I felt more and more exposed. My secret had been uncovered... My brothers were in danger...

In one last flash of lucidity, I gagged the little voice which, from deep within me, was urging me to send a call for help that could only be deciphered by three people in this world... my brothers.

Whatever had happened to me, they couldn't be brought into this, they shouldn't take any risk. They too had secrets to keep!

I was unable to think about anything else, and I fell once again into unconsciousness, which took me to an ocean of dark and cold water.

“Come on, dude, wake up, open your eyes!”

This low voice sounded calm and soft... it was attracting me back to the surface, to the light, urging me not to dive back into the darkness, into unconsciousness. It was encouraging me to come back, to wake up; it was hypnotic, and I couldn't escape from it.

I was fighting with all my might against this body which was absolutely refusing to listen to me and come back to life. Just moving, even for a few inches, my dry lips was asking great efforts from my body, so I didn't think I had it in me to open my eyes.

“Wake up, Oli!”

You couldn't do more of an explicit command than that, and I had no other choice than to obey it! It wasn't up to me anyway, I was compelled by this voice.

Bringing together as much strength as I could, I then half-opened my eyes, and my foggy stare immediately dove

into a clear and luminous ocean. This wonderful, surreal color...

“Here you go, I got you!” the voice resumed, sounding both satisfied and relieved. “Focus and don’t look at anything but my eyes.”

How could I have done otherwise? I was literally hypnotized. And this blue color just kept on radiating. I felt like I was being warmed up from the inside, soothed.

“Wake up, don’t go back!”

Okay!

“Can you move your head?”

I had to think about it for a few seconds before obliging. I shook my head up and down.

“Good. Now, I’m going to ask you to come back to your senses as soon as I’m done talking to you.”

I took a deep breath and opened my eyes completely. There was still this blue...

“Don’t fall back asleep!” the voice ordered me.

I shook my head yes, completely woken up this time.

My brother Hugo was in front of me!

“What happened? Why are you like this?” he asked me, putting his hand on my forehead. “It’s as if someone had drugged you!”

Deep down, I felt horror surging. If I’d been drugged, that meant I’d been found out. If I was found out, then my brothers would be too!

“Can you tell us why we found you unconscious in a ditch?”

I looked at him for a moment, not understanding what he was talking about before I suddenly started heaving.

I couldn't answer him! I didn't remember a thing!

“What do you mean, ‘we?’” I asked, horrified. “Shit, Hugo, you shouldn't have come! And who's ‘we?’”

I shook my head out of despair. There could only be one ‘we’: Gabriel and Hugo, my two younger brothers. The two headstrong ones.

“Why are the two of you here?”

It was such a high risk to come and rescue me! I knew I should've been grateful to them, but at that moment, I was mad at them for putting themselves in harm's way.

“Get out of here, quick. If ever it's a trap designed to catch you...”

The door flew open on Gabriel.

Bingo!

“If you know, I suppose Ian does too.”

“He wanted to come, but I told him everything was under control.”

“You're nothing but two morons!”

“You're the moron! What would you have wanted us to do? Leave you to rot naked in your ditch until the cops find you and take you to the hospital? I can just picture their faces at the bloodwork! And then what? You would've nicely answered their questions? ‘Yes, Officer, I'm one of the X-

Men and I have superpowers.’ No, we seriously can’t have our faces hung on a precinct wall or in some file!”

I tried to sort out my confused brain.

“You found me naked in a ditch?”

“Nope,” Gabriel said. “You still had your underwear on!”

Somehow, I managed to make a move to straighten myself up and immediately winced from the pain. The whole surface of my skin from my chest to the end of my foot on my left side seemed to have been burned.

“Shit, that hurts like hell!”

“No wonder, we found you lying on a bed of nettles. They were everywhere in the ditch!”

Warily, I rubbed my face and eventually buried my hands in my hair. It was dirty and dusty. I needed a long shower.

“I was certain to have blocked you from my mind!”

“Your brain must have sent warning signals while you were unconscious. I was the only one to pick them up and I immediately called Gabe,” Hugo told me, superbly ignoring my upset stare. “You were a few miles from here. We’ve been here for almost two hours.”

I slowly turned to my other brother and, with a nod, urged him to tell me what he’d found out.

He raised his nose in the air and took a slow, long sniff, a smile still hung onto his lips. My brother was hypersensitive, able to detect and analyze every single smell and, unfortunately for me, he also suffered from high cretinism!

No need for me to look at Hugo to know he had the same exact smile on his face. They were two kids, and when they were together, they were simply out of control.

“Nothing. I haven’t found anything new, except that our big bro is still a clean freak. No way for me to find one single dirty sock or any trace of dust in his house, it’s sparkling clean. You should go see a shrink, no man in his right mind would act as cleaning lady!”

With extraordinary flexibility and agility, he effortlessly dodged the pillow I threw at his face.

He shrugged and became serious again:

“Sorry, I’m not finding anything... I can’t even track the young woman’s essence.”

“What?”

I was in cuckoo land, feeling confused as heck!

“What woman are you talking about for fuck’s sake?”

“The virgin you boned, of course. You reek of sex!”

Fuck! I could count on Gabriel to speak bluntly. According to him, I had sex, except I couldn’t remember anything, not the deed nor my partner... I feared the worst! Crap, a virgin, no less. A virgin?!

“How...”

“The smell of blood and... anyways, if I tell you she was a virgin, you can trust me on that!”

Not knowing what to think anymore, I turned back to Hugo and shot him a desperate look. Now, he was the only one who could help me see things more clearly.

“Hypnotize me again, I want to know what happened, what happened to *me!*”

He threw me an unsure look and then nodded in approval.

“What’s the last thing you remember?” he asked me as he came closer to me.

I thought about it for a while, vigorously rubbing my face in the process, before answering. My brain was just so confused:

“I’m not sure... One of my coworkers at the fire station offered me to have a drink at a bar on our way home. Our shift was over, and as he was not taking no for an answer, I let myself be convinced and I ordered a juice. The waitress put it in front of me and then... nothing. I can’t remember a thing.”

“Did your drink taste weird?”

I shook my head no. It tasted like plain orange juice to me, the kind of juice you pour from a carton and that bartenders charge you a fortune for; it definitely tasted nothing like a fresh, squeezed juice.

From the corner of my eye, I saw Gabriel step closer to the bed, and before I could even ask him what he was planning to do, he leaned over me and put the tip of his tongue on my shoulder.

“Shit, Gabe!”

He stepped back, a look of intense concentration on his face.

He really did just ‘taste’ me!

“It’s not a usual drug. I can’t taste anything chemical in your sweat.”

Great!

“I feel like you’ve been drugged with... plants, yes, that’s it, plants!”

“It’s just getting better and better... And can you tell me if they were at least organic?”

I felt so bad.

“Relax, bro, we’re here to help you.” Hugo reminded me wisely.

I let out a deep sigh and nodded slowly. That was new. Usually, I was the one who had to help my two little brothers. They always ended up getting themselves in trouble and I then had to fix everything. The fact that, for once, the roles were reversed really made me uncomfortable.

“Okay, do it, I’m ready.”

“Okay, look into my eyes.” Hugo demanded, his strange, blue-sky eyes staring at me.

I did as he asked and looked at him. I immediately felt immersed in a blue abyss; nothing mattered around me but these eyes staring at me, these pupils turning emerald green. Within a few seconds, I felt disconcertingly light, it was like my body turned liquid as the room was becoming blurry and my brothers were disappearing; I found myself all alone, facing this immense emerald lake, and I felt good, so good...

“Tell us what happened after you drank that juice.”

Suddenly, searching my mind became much easier, what happened, what I felt came back to me naturally.

“I felt bad right away, I was dizzy, I had difficulties speaking, staying awake... My colleague helped me up a great staircase and opened a bedroom door. He let me collapse on the bed, and right then, almost simultaneously, a woman entered the room too, supported by a young redheaded man who looked beside himself with excitement.

“He was giggling like an idiot and reeked of sweat and alcohol. His clothes were dirty, and, right away, I didn’t like seeing his hands on the woman’s body. It seemed so inappropriate; he was tainting her with his filth! He was looking at me with... desire in his eyes. His poorly shaven cheeks were red, and he wouldn’t stop giggling like an idiot while shamelessly eyeing me out.

“My colleague told him to stop fantasizing; I wasn’t playing for the other team, and even with my brains drugged out, I wouldn’t be interested in a dude... He had *that* right!”

“Tell me about the woman, how was she? What was she wearing?”

Hugo’s voice was leading me on to the right path, keeping me from drifting away. That would have proven very easy as I had no more control over my own body and my mind seemed to want to fly away from me. This shiny green color all around me...

“Sublime!”

“The woman?” Hugo asked me.

“No, your eyes, they’re like liquid emerald.”

Silence fell in the room before Gabriel put an abrupt end to it:

“Fuck, Hugo! You went too strong on him!”

“I don’t have a choice, I need to reach the barrier surrounding his memories. He’s hiding behind them and, because of the drugs, I can’t catch a glimpse of the woman yet. But I can feel her, I know she’s here, somewhere close. Oli, *her* eyes! Think about *her* eyes! How are they?”

“Blue! They’re blue with a green circle surrounding the iris. She has long, curly eyelashes. She doesn’t wear any make-up. She doesn’t need it, she’s so pretty. She has a very soft face, she looks like an angel. An angel with fiery hair.”

I got lost again, but that time around, I was mesmerized by the woman with whom I’d spent the night. She was gorgeous, she really was.

She probably was more than twenty-five but not yet thirty. Her skin was incredibly soft, and strands of blond and fire-like red hair cascaded down to the small of her back.

She had a small, impish nose, sprinkled with freckles and perfectly defined lips.

Her breathing was hectic and you could see in her eyes how terrified she was. As much as she was fighting him off, she couldn’t free herself from the redhead’s embrace, who was still giggling.

She turned her face a bit to the right and her eyes locked into mine. From that moment on, a new light seemed to switch on within herself. Her body collapsed and the man had no choice but to let go of her.

“Come on, let’s give our two lovebirds some intimacy!”

I heard the door being slammed shut as a fire burned in the small of my back.

Trembling, I stepped back to the wall behind me to have something to lean on. I couldn't, under any circumstances, get closer to the woman; I was too scared I would end up jumping on her.

My body temperature wouldn't stop increasing, and drops of sweat flowed down my temples. My fists so clenched my nails sank into my palms, I looked at the woman suffering from the same anguish as I was. How painful that was! My blood was boiling, and an awful tingling was going up my legs.

She too seemed to have difficulties walking or even standing on her own.

When our gazes met, I immediately felt an overwhelming desire for her. Desire like I'd never felt before. In her eyes, I noticed the same glimmer, the same pain.

She took a wobbling step toward me, and I immediately extended my arm for her to stop.

"Please, don't take another step or I won't be able to control myself."

God, I was acting like an animal, and this excruciating pain wouldn't stop. I started to feel oppressed, my vision was getting foggy and the pain even stronger.

"Let... Let me... Help you."

This soft, melodious, singsong, tempting voice.

"Stop... Please. Stop talking, you're hurting me!"

A new fire just ignited in my body; a few seconds would be enough for my underwear to burn down to ashes!

She fell down on her knees, and I had to bite my tongue hard to keep myself from taking a step to her.

Her hair fell on her face, hiding the softness of her features from my eyes.

“You can’t fight it... Just like I can’t.”

“Hush, don’t say another word, please!”

Each of the sounds emanating from her mouth got to me like a small blade exacerbating my desire. I couldn’t stand it anymore, I’d never suffered that much before! I tried to take one more step back, trying to escape her as she was crawling to me on the more than shady-looking carpet.

“I’ll help you.” she told me, a few feet from me.

“Don’t get any closer. You can’t begin to imagine in what state I am at the moment!”

She lifted her eyes full of suppressed tears up to me.

“That’s quite the contrary actually, I know perfectly well what you’re feeling, and there’s only one way for us to feel relieved.”

Just like me, she seemed to have no control over her body.

Facing me, she straightened back up and, as the tears rolled down her pale cheeks, asked me in a beseeching voice:

“Please, relieve me, I can’t stand it anymore, it hurts too much... And it’s only just starting.”

“What do you mean?”

“Until we make love, this hurt, this pain will only intensify until neither of us is able to control themselves. I beg you, please don’t let this happen. I don’t want to suffer.”

A faint burning smell reached my nostrils. My body heat was burning the wallpaper against which I was leaning. I absolutely had to calm down if I didn’t want to burn this hotel and all its occupants to the ground.

With difficulty, I pulled myself off the wall and fell on my knees, a few inches away from the woman. Despite myself, my hand extended to her, and I had just enough control to quickly back away before my incendiary fingers burned the oh-so delicate skin of her cheek.

“Please...”

I closed my eyes and forced my body to cool down to an almost normal level.

Before my eyes opened again, the woman squeezed herself against me, her lips in my neck.

“Please... Be tender...” she begged me.

“Oli! Look at me!”

Hugo’s authoritarian voice immediately brought me back from my memories.

“Shit, I think I’m going to puke!”

“Me too!” Gabriel said, a look of disgust on his face and glaring at Hugo. “This idiot woke you up right when it was getting juicy!”

“Won’t you ever take anything seriously?”

I hadn’t drunk a single drop of alcohol, and yet I felt like I had a huge hangover. How could I have erased a whole

night from my brain? How could I have had intimate relations with a complete stranger? *Unprotected* intimate relations, no less.

“Oh, crap. She was a virgin, that’s why she asked me to do it while I was still in control... She asked me to be tender with her... What if she got pregnant?”

My two brothers stared at me, mouths wide open. Apparently, none of them had thought about this possibility. How would the baby be? Would they be gifted too? How would the woman react? One thing was for sure, she looked as drugged as I was. Under those circumstances, was it rape? Who had planned all this and with what goal? And who was this woman?

“I’ve been used,” I understood, and the thought disgusted me. “I think I’ve been used to get this poor girl pregnant. I don’t see any other reasons. And in this case, it’s totally possible, sure even, that the person who’s planned all this knows about my abilities and might know about yours too.”

This epiphany made me even sicker than all the rest. I’d been used as a breeder!

“Don’t jump to conclusions,” Hugo calmed me down, frowning, a look of intense concentration on his face; No doubt he was having a vision.

“What do you see?” Gabe asked him before I could.

“Shh!” His forefinger up, he demanded silence.

The air in the room seemed to charge up with electricity; no one dared to speak, and Gabriel almost stopped breathing.

“It’s still quite blurry, but I could swear you were a random pick. Well, not really, you must have been picked for your looks. Your gifts have nothing to do with this... Everything seems to be about this woman... She was manipulated too... She’s a victim, just like you.”

“So, it’s as if I raped her!”

Could one feel worse than me right now? I don’t think so...

“No, that was not rape, she was as willing as you were.” Hugo reminded me.

“She was drugged!”

“So were you!” Gabriel replied, raising his voice.

I let out a deep, disheartened sigh. I was completely at a loss!

“Gabe, find her. Earlier you said I ‘reeked of sex’ maybe her smell is still on me?” I asked the only one of my brothers capable of finding someone only by picking up on their aura and tracking their smell.

He shook his head no. For the first time ever, a human could get away from him.

“No can do. For some reason, her aura is completely scrambled. I can’t see anything. The only thing I do have is her smell, but even that seems to be covered or transformed by the thing you both drank. It’s confusing me!”

“If I follow you correctly, you’re saying there’s no way to know who or where she is?”

“I didn’t say that!” he told me with a fierce smile on his face. “Hugo and I will go find the nice firefighter who

offered you a drink right away, and we'll worm it out of him..."

At that, Hugo, standing behind Gabriel, nodded enthusiastically; I feared for the worst: the two of them together? It couldn't be good news.

"Only if you promise not to kill him and remember I want to talk to him too."

Hugo rolled his eyes. Seeing them like this, who would have thought they were twenty-six and seven years old? Kids, that's what they were.

Gabriel took his jacket and flashed to the door. He couldn't wait to get started on the chase!

"If only you knew how bad I feel, Hugo! And not only because of what happened," I sighed. "I feel like something's missing, like I've lost something vital, I feel empty, and I don't understand why."

A deafening silence fell in the room, quickly broken by Hugo's burst of laughter.

His eyes glimmering with mischief, he took his jacket and opened the door to run up to Gabe.

"No wonder you feel this way... You just made love to your soulmate, bro!"

## Chapter 2

Lisa

I was abruptly woken from my wonderful wet dream I was basking in by the nearby church bells ringing eight in the morning.

Cursing my misfortune, I took my pillow and pressed it against my face, wishing to go back into the powerful arms of my imaginary lover. I'd never before in my life had a dream so vivid, so intense! And most of all, it was the first time I could remember every detail of it once awake.

I could picture the way the hotel room was decorated, the clothes he wore, the one-of-a-kind taste and texture of his lips. I could still feel the incredible heat and softness of his hands caressing me tenderly.

His kindness, his gentleness. He'd been soft, considerate, loving... and his face... Dang, if there was one thing I shouldn't have forgotten, it was his features! No luck.

A smile on my lips, I stretched, feeling deliciously languished, repleted and stiff... Stiff?!

Hurriedly pushing my pillow away, I opened my eyes wide, looking to know what was happening to me and my body.

I was at a loss. How could a dream, as delicious as it might be, seem so real? My mouth suddenly dried and with a lump in my throat, I straightened into a sitting position in my bed, all the while wincing from the discomfort. What sports or physical activities could have made my groin so stiff? None! I'd never done any! My tongue went back and forth on my palate and my teeth for a while... Orange and belladonna...

My Gods, belladonna! I'd been drugged!

With shaky hands and my stomach completely in knots from apprehension, I pulled the sheets off my naked body, worried about what my eyes would find out.

Next second, the horror of the situation made my stomach churn... Blood. There was blood on my thighs! A long wail of despair surged up from deep within me and tried to go out from my clenched jaw.

I wasn't a virgin anymore!

By the Gods, I wasn't a virgin anymore!

My foggy brain totally pushed aside the delicious memories of the 'wet dream' and focused on one thing only: I wasn't a virgin anymore!

The horror of the situation putting me on the verge of a nervous breakdown, I turned ninety degrees to my right, intending to grab my cell phone and ask for my best friend Hannah's help.

As a doctor, Hannah would be the most qualified to come to my rescue.

Instead of my phone, my numbed fingers latched on a ripped piece of paper, folded almost in half.

Feeling nauseous, I opened it feverishly and deciphered the few words written on it in a pretty, typically feminine handwriting.

Tears immediately sprang to my eyes as a strong migraine was steadily settling in my head.

I understood the words of this message, the perfectly traced letters were etching in my mind as surely as if it was being branded.

I'd just lost my virginity! So... Hannah, I needed Hannah. I needed her, quick!

My phone in one hand, I tried to get the shaking of the other one under control in order to be able to compose her number.

I had to try a few times before I could hear the dial tone indicating the call was going through.

Please, Hannah, pick up...

Please Gods, do that, for once, Hannah hadn't left her phone home when she took off for work!

She picked up after what seemed an eternity to me.

"Lisa?! Hi, I don't have much time to talk, I'm super late."

This soft and familiar voice... It felt so good hearing her, like a balm on my hurt soul.

"Lisa?"

My lips moved, but no sound managed to go through the lump in my throat. Even the smallest of breaths were struggling to get out. That was why I was hardly breathing at all!

I knew I needed to speak. I needed to ask for her help, I needed...

“Don’t move, Lisa, I’m on my way!”

Had she heard my panting breath, or had she guessed that something was wrong from my not saying anything?

The only thing I knew was that she was on her way here, she was on her way, she was on her way...

She got to my place in record time!

When she opened my bedroom door, I was still sitting on my bed, still in the same position, staring at my phone’s black screen, mentally repeating to myself she was on her way.

I slowly raised my head up to her and saw that she’d gotten what was going on in just a few seconds.

Her first-aid kit in her hand, she ran to me and started to examine me while asking me questions to which I didn’t answer. How could I have? The only thing I remembered was this incredibly erotic dream!

A small, persistent litany kept on playing in my mind, threatening to drive me insane: I’m not a virgin anymore, and this note; I’m not a virgin anymore, and this note...

Hannah eventually put down her instruments and pulled me against her in a tight hug.

I wasn’t alone anymore, she was here!

The tears I'd suppressed until then started to flow from my eyes and down my cheeks, only to reach Hannah's sweater.

I wasn't in control of anything, not my tears, not my sobs, not my arms hugging my friend, desperately hanging on to her.

"Do you feel better?" she asked me after a while.

I felt in a pitiful state...

"Oh, Hannah, if you only knew!"

"I know, Lisa, I know..."

Of course, she knew. She knew everything about me, about my past, about my secrets, the curse which struck every woman in my family.

She knew about the vow I took to never give myself to any man...

Without a word, I broke free from her embrace, surprised to be unaware of when exactly she'd wrapped me in my covers.

I let an arm out, wiped dry the remaining tears from my cheeks with the back of my hand and handed her the crumpled piece of paper.

Frowning, she took it and read a few words, horror showing more and more on her face.

"What the... Fuck no, they know about *that!*"

Hearing Hannah curse like this was so unusual that it made me jump.

Was the situation that bad? Of course, it was!

“It’s going to be okay, sweetie, I’m here. Everything is going to be okay.” Hannah told me, looking back at the small piece of paper.

With the tips of her fingers, she raised my chin up, in order to lock her soft gaze with mine.

She seemed so strong, like a real rock.

“You need to be strong, honey! We have a lot to do, and I’m not leaving your side, okay?”

I had no idea what she was talking about, and frankly, the only thing I wanted for now was to take a nice and long hot shower. Burning hot, even.

“Later. Now I just want to warm up with a shower.” I sobbed, getting away from her to get up.

Keeping her cool, she pushed on my shoulder to get me back on my bed.

“No, Lili, you can’t, not yet. We need to get you examined, honey, get samples, file a complaint and...”

Putting my hand in front of me, I asked her to stop talking. I needed some silence. I needed to think. I wanted some time, just a bit of time to take it all in, just for a few minutes...

Good Gods, a shower. I needed warmth. I needed *his* warmth. His incredible warmth... This stranger...

I was tripping!

Taking a deep breath, I forced myself to calm down and gather a few pieces from my memory. I needed to get them back from this weird dream. Dream?! Yeah, right!

“No examination, Nana, I just want to take a shower.”

Hanna opened her mouth, throwing me an absolutely horrified look.

“You can’t, Lisa. We need to...”

“No, we won’t get any samples of any sort, and you know as well as I do that it’s pointless to file a complaint. *They’re* everywhere. I’ll go take a shower.”

I immediately wriggled out of the covers and wobbled back up. I was dizzy, and my eyes had a hard time staying fixed on something in particular. It probably was the belladonna still in my system.

I felt woozy, unable to take three steps in a row.

On my back, I could feel Hannah’s both firm and soft hand helping me stay somewhat stable.

“I was drugged, Nana, belladonna.”

She didn’t respond to that. What would the point be? She’d certainly realized it earlier when she’d examined my pupils.

“Of course, I was drugged. That’s the least they needed to do to take my virginity.”

A deep sigh was heaved behind me.

“Lili, you know I don’t agree with the fact you want to wash away all the evidence. We need to find the man who did that!”

Her voice sounded beseeching. She probably thought I was in denial or something.

“I wasn’t raped, Hannah, or, at least, not like you picture it.”

“You were drugged, Lisa, you couldn’t have wanted this!” she shouted, circling my waist with her arm.

Dang, this freaking bathroom seemed so far away! No, I wasn’t raped. His hot, oh-so hot, soft, tender, patient hands. His maddening strokes, the taste of his lips. I’d wanted him, desired him. The drugs had only just exacerbated my desire to breed with him.

How could I qualify the steamy time I’d spent in his arms as rape? The more I thought back to this ‘dream,’ the more memories were getting to the surface. Quite a lot of them. I’d asked him to make love to me, to make me his, and after he’d refused, I’d downright begged him!

Hannah let go of me while she turned the water on and found the right temperature.

“He was as drugged as I was and resisted touching me. Oh my Gods, Hannah. I’m the one who jumped on him, literally!”

Surprised, she turned to me and looked at me for a few seconds before shaking her head.

“What do you remember, exactly?” she asked me, while waving for me to hop in the shower.

I steadied myself and stepped over the edge.

The water started trickling down my body, washing away the remains of my innocence.

I pushed the temperature higher, finding it too cold for my taste. A deep sigh of wellbeing got out from my lips when a thick, steamy cloud wrapped itself around me. For the first time in my life, I was taking a burning hot shower, even though I usually took them barely warm. *Him...*

His body against mine. He'd been hot, so hot that, now that he was taken from me, I felt cold. Since I woke up, this impression, this feeling hadn't left me for a second.

The noise of the toilet lid being pushed up got to my ears, and I assumed Hannah had just sat down.

"Tell me everything," she demanded softly. "Tell me the last thing you remember."

I frowned, trying to remember the day, the afternoon, the evening.

"I was on the phone with you, and you told me to enjoy my last night before I turned twenty-eight. You told me that, today, for my birthday, you would break your never-ending diet and that we'd go to the restaurant and see a movie. I hung up and took the trash out."

The memories from the day before were easily coming back to mind. I remembered this feeling of freedom which had seized my heart.

I was going to turn twenty-eight and be untouchable. From midnight on, *they* wouldn't be able to do anything to me. I'd be too powerful!

Dang it!

A yell of rage went up from my throat.

All my life, I'd been on my guard, on the lookout, patiently waiting for my twenty-eighth birthday to take my powers to their apex... I felt like an idiot, I'd been so close!

"Calm down, honey." Hannah told me, feeling that my anger electrified the room.

“Do you realize what a dumb witch I am?” I yelled, prey to bitter tears again. “I let my guard down a few hours before my birthday. I let myself be trapped!”

Despite the trickling water, I heard Hannah heave an enormous sigh.

“Lisa, even though you’re a super skilled witch, you’re still human. Don’t blame yourself for any of that. This whole thing is those fu... idiots’ fault. If we could at least go to the police!”

That time around, I was the one to heave a frustrated sigh.

We obviously could not go to the police. *They* were infiltrated everywhere!

“So, I was taking the trash out, delighted to finally be free from *them* and I wondered at the beauty of the moon for a while. It was so shiny yesterday night that I was in awe. The air outside was nice and a light breeze rustled the last of the leaves hanging from the end of the tree branches. I could feel the beginning of winter all around me, and I felt good, strong.”

So strong that I could feel the power running in my veins. I quickly let my hair loose so that the wind could blow between the strands caressing the small of my back.

Nose up, I’d taken a breath of fresh air and had been surprised to smell a faint scent of agrum.

“I don’t remember anything else. The smell of agrum and belladonna, that’s it. It probably was the ‘breath of sleep.’”

A powerful spell carried by the wind that could make anyone fall asleep.

I focused for a while and clenched my jaw several times while moving my tongue back and forth. Roots of everlasting...

“They must have had me drink a desire philter. That’s black magic...”

The door suddenly opened, and Hannah hung on to the panel on either side.

“What about now, do you feel better?”

I nodded and resumed where I left off.

“I don’t remember the man’s face, but I do remember how he acted. He was very gentle, very attentive. At first, he didn’t want me to get closer to him, he was afraid of how he’d react, he didn’t want to hurt me, he told me so, he begged me to stay away from him. I had to beg him to touch me, to calm down the pain. He resisted Hannah, he really did, he wasn’t a bad man, quite the contrary. He was so considerate with me, so attentive despite the drug. He’s got nothing to do with *them*... the sect. He was a victim too, I know it, Nana.”

This note proved it to me: ‘I saved both you and the man. Keep the baby, it will make you stronger.’

“The note, Hannah! He had to be saved too.” I whispered, looking at her, frowning.

She turned around to grab a towel and handed it to me.

“You can’t trust this note, Lisa, you don’t know who wrote it, it might be a trap... I’ll let you dry off; in the meantime, I’ll search through my kit, I must still have a few morning after pills and...”

“No.”

She stopped dead in her tracks just before the bathroom door and quickly turned to me.

“What do you mean ‘no’?”

“No morning after pill, I don’t need any.”

Had I told her I wanted to transition, I would’ve gotten the same expression from her.

“What do you mean you ‘don’t need any’? Did he put on a condom?”

I suppressed a small laugh. A *condom*? No, if he’d put one, he would’ve needed three or four more; I might not remember everything, but that much I did!

“No, he didn’t put on a condom.”

“So, morning after pill it is!”

‘Keep the baby, it will make you stronger.’ Because, undoubtedly, there *was* a baby! My curse, the one which struck all the women in my family...

I’d just had my first unprotected sexual intercourse and according to the curse, that had to lead to a baby being born.

“Lisa, remember, ‘a woman of the moon of childbearing age, from her first love will bring life on this earth.’ I’m not the one who came up with that!” my friend yelled, her hand on the door handle.

“Woman of the moon, if a good man takes away your virginity, a good child shall be given to you.” I answered her right away.