

Circles within Circles

Chapter Eighteen – Escape

August 2021

Ethan first heard her voice from within his dreams. It was Anneke... calling out? But why, when she was safely in bed beside him?

The hands that seized him had shattered that illusion in a fraction of a second. "Yep, him too," had come a snarling voice, and even as he'd opened his mouth to scream a giant hand clapped a nauseatingly smelly rag over his face. The world had become a chaos of guttural voices and strong hands and flailing struggles... but within what must have been only a few seconds – within which he'd managed only to catch a brief vision of the bedroom, and tattooed muscles, and the limp, half-naked Anneke being laid out and bound with rope – the stinking fog had seemed to rise up and smear his entire brain down into soft, senseless mush.

What a horrific scene that had been! And yet...every time he struggled out of the miasma of drug-induced stupor, it was all he could do to catch fleeting glimpses of his new surroundings before the fog welled up once more and claimed him.

There was some sort of dim glow over him. The parallel pattern of bars. An astonishingly heavy weight upon his limbs, pressing him deep into the sweat-slick surface beneath him. And some unnatural bulk and wetness between his legs, strangely familiar somehow...

In the restless nightmares that intervened, he was falling. Screaming for help. Running from licking flames of death. Sinking into the terrifying depths of an inky ocean. Sometimes there were faces he knew: friends from class, Vijay's lilting voice, the nostalgic figure of his parents... or most frequently of all, Anneke's beautifully smiling face. But in the end, they all went away. In the end, the nightmares pressed closer, and he tumbled helplessly once more from terror to terror: caught like a stray leaf in a black and icy wind.

So it was that when her voice came at last through the blackness, he clung to it with the instinctive ferocity of a drowning man. "Ethan... Ethan, it's me. I'm here. It's okay. It's okay, I promise..."

She promised. And that was enough for him.

When he had finally blinked with gritty eyes up into oddly bright light, she was there. Naked. With a strange collar around her neck. But alive, and apparently well – which was all he needed at the moment. "Whhhmmm- hhhhhmmm," he faltered, only now realizing that his mouth was filled with some strangely springy, rubbery mass. Like a giant rubber ball, his befuddled brain offered. Yes. A big ball. Like the gag Anneke had given him seemingly so long ago. Strange...

"Shh, it's okay now," she murmured, and now he could feel a warm, soothing cloth slipping over his limbs. She was washing him, came the realization – followed shortly by the secondary realization that he was naked. Stark naked. Like her.

"No need to talk right now, babe," she soothed, even as he struggled to move his limbs, disoriented as a Lazarus returning from the grave. "You were crying in your sleep, they told me. It's okay. We'll keep it in for now. Just lie still now and let me finish cleaning you up..."

Given the weight of his seemingly deadened, nerveless limbs, there was little he could do but comply. Yet all the while his brain was desperately whirling into dizzy motion, attempting to make sense of it all. They'd been... kidnapped? Taken hostage? By whom? And why was she free, albeit naked? How long had he been here, anyway – wherever "here" was? And what the hell was going to happen now?

The unspoken questions must have been welling up in his eyes, for even as she continued with her ministrations, her voice came low and urgent. "Ethan, listen. We're here with some- some rough people. People I used to know. People who want some... pretty unusual things." She moved now to wiping his crusted eyes, and he blinked closed under the warm cloth. "They're not going to keep us here forever, okay? They just need me to do something for them. Something special – and then they promise we can go..."

He blinked open once more to find her averting her gaze, moving down to clean and soothe away all the wet, itchy sensations around his groin. "I just need you to trust me, Ethan. You... you're going to have to. You have to."

Have to? What the heck? Why was she sounding so strange? Anneke was raising more questions than she was answering right now, and with every second that passed he found himself longing to tear the stupid gag from this mouth and blurt them out. But cuffed as it seemed his arms were, there was nothing he could do but whimper and mumble his protests from behind the rubbery bulb. She seemed to be doing something down there... wrapping him up in something dry and soft, but disturbingly thick...

"Ethan." And now she was back, bending over him once more with an air of resolve. "Ethan, you know what we've been doing together, right? All our special playtimes... all those kinky things I was doing with you?" She chuckled softly, almost sadly – a sound at which he could only nod and gurgle out his assent. Of course he remembered... "You... you enjoyed that, right? You liked it?" Another nod, more emphatic than the first. Why was she even asking these questions? Of course he'd loved being with her! All those things they'd done were kind of strange, true. But he'd loved how intimate, how sexy, how embarrassing and fulfilling it had been to act like that with her...

"Even the times when... you know. I'd baby you a bit? Diaper and nursing and everything?" A flicker of questioning apprehension entered his eyes now, as the tone in her voice warned him that something serious was up. And yet... of course he had. Not in a million years would he have told anyone but her, but yes: he'd thoroughly and intensely enjoyed it.

And so he mutely nodded.

She sighed softly, and in her grey eyes he could see welling an ocean of regret. "See, there's only one way we're going to get out of here. And so... I just wanted to know you were okay with it..."

As she rose and reached up behind his line of sight, Ethan could not have said what exactly he was feeling. Sentiment, yes. Apprehension. Fear at the odd note in Anneke's voice, and at what that might mean. But all that was to give way in an instant to pure, unadulterated terror.

For now those trembling hands of hers were pulling down a tube... affixing it to the strange gag-like device in his mouth... reaching over and flipping a lever. "Then you'll be okay with going all the way down for good," she murmured, as the tube filled and sagged with a whitish fluid, and Ethan almost choked on the sudden swelling surge of milky liquid in his mouth. "This won't hurt, baby," Anneke continued, still with eyes carefully averted. "Now be a good baby and drink up. It'll make everything so much better... I promise. It'll make all these nasty adult things go away... take you far, far away from here..."

Promise or not, there was nothing left for the struggling Ethan to do but obey: staring wildly up at her pitying face, helplessly gulping down ounce after ounce of the drugged formula. And he could have sworn, before she turned away, that he'd caught a glimpse of a solitary tear running down her cheek.