

Maple floated between the busy crowds at the bar, not certain what exactly he was looking for beyond some reprieve from his friends. The squirrel loved his friends, that wasn't to be mistaken, but having to play the designated driver for yet another night on the town had begun to wear on him. They were off enjoying the thrills of the nightclub; some disappearing into the mesmerising lights of the dancefloor, one of them slipping into the backrooms with the subtlety of a baby elephant, all of them having diverged from the group and gone off to make their own plans, leaving Maple feeling like the odd one out.

He didn't mind usually, the rodent often liked doing his own thing; it was just that none of the things he liked doing often existed in a loud nightclub such as The Lunar Lure. Maple grabbed a seat as far away from the noise of the club as he could in an attempt to take a moment for himself; but before the squirrel could even try to shut his senses off from the assault of his surroundings, he noticed the owner of the club approaching.

A sharply dressed blue wolf with a warm, host-like smile on his face had his eyes on Maple, making no bones about saddling up beside the squirrel on the seat and introducing himself. "Hey there, enjoying yourself?"

Maple wanted to be polite, but wasn't about to lie. "It's... a great place! Just not really my scene, y'know?"

To his surprise, the wolf smiled back. "Yeah it's not the first time I've heard that. I'm guessing it's a bit loud?"

"Among other things...yeah."

"Well that's alright, you just need to find something else to focus on."

With those words the canine's eyes seemed to shrink away, only to be replaced with blossoming rings of blue and purple that bathed maple in a glow much akin to the neon lights of the club, only far more gentle. The colours were warming and alluring like the flickering flame of a hearth, and the squirrel soon found himself caught in the wake of those rings like a sense of gravity had begun to pull on his mind.

Maple's next exhale came slowly, like a gentle exhale of tension. It felt good, but something bothered him about the whole ordeal. This wasn't right; he was meant to be the responsible one for his friends this evening, and he'd only just met this charismatic wolf, as enthralling as his gaze was. The squirrel pulled away from alluring sensation, snatching his thoughts back into his mind before they drifted too far; though he still couldn't find a good enough reason to look away from those steadily pulsing colours.

"Nhh h-hang on..." he stammered. "I don't even know your name yet. Where are my fr-"

"Matts," the wolf interjected. "What's yours?"

“M-Maple,” the rodent said with a soft giggle, his train of thought forcibly switched to different tracks by Matts.

“There, is that better?”

Matts tilted his head and smiled reassuringly once more. It was better, Maple felt a little more at ease, even if only due to the rings of deep blues and purples that were continuing to swim through the wolf’s vision before him. Maybe it wasn’t so bad if he kept looking, it felt nice and he could still hold control of his thoughts; most of them at least. Maple realised he’d been staring at the wolf for a while now; was it weird? It was definitely weird. He was still being hypnotised! He shook his head and forced a response.

“Yeeah, it’s nice... but uh, I don’t think I should... should...” He couldn’t finish the sentence, his mind rebelled against the act of rejecting those eyes.

“What should you do, Maple?” Matts said as he slid a little closer.

“I should go and...find my friends.”

But as the squirrel attempted to move he found his muscles heavy and stiff as if he’d fallen asleep on them; every movement was a chore that beckoned him to sit and stare for a bit longer. Maple struggled to turn his thoughts to his friends, a feline, a mouse, a rabbit... their names escaped his focus for the moment but he could picture them in his mind; at least until the next wave of hypnotic colour that forced him to start from square one.

It was a struggle with his own mind to keep a hold of his thoughts, the rodent only realising now that he had been staring long enough into Matts’ eyes for the effect to be irresistibly strong. He just needed to get to his feet and start moving, momentum would surely carry him the rest of the way. The act sounded like such a chore though; Maple knew he didn’t *want* to leave the wolf and his pretty eyes, just that should because... well because... he couldn’t think of a decent reason.

“Well don’t let me keep you from what you need to do,” Matts smiled while still letting the rings of colour flow through his eyes.

Maple nodded, slightly slack-jawed and finally began to stand from his seat. His eyes never broke from his staring contest with the wolf, even as he was forced to look down to keep his focus on them. This was his chance to breakaway and regain his senses; but as soon as the squirrel made it to his feet, he forgot what he was going to do, not seeming to realise that the act was entirely reliant on the bartender prompting him to do it. He swayed on the spot silently, letting time disappear into the hypnotic echoes of colour in Matts’ eyes.

“What’s the matter?” Matts asked. “Weren’t you going to do something?”

“Uhh... I...” Maple struggled as any remainder of his intentions faded away. He was already doing exactly what he wanted wasn’t he?

Some part of his mind was still calling to make a grab for lucidity, but it was a voice drowned out by a choir of compelling thoughts that lured Maple deeper into those lovely eyes. Something clicked and the squirrel's mind began to focus more intently on the gaze as the resistance faded out, and he began to count the rings rather methodically as if it were a game to help calm his mind. And it worked; with each number he silently counted, Maple grew more comfortable in that miasma of blue and purple.

Matts stood to meet his gaze once more and took a sudden step forwards; the squirrel stepped back on instinct and found himself back up against one of the club's tables that was mercifully clear of glasses. The position was a subliminal reminder to Maple, there was nowhere to escape that hypnotic pull anymore and nowhere he would rather be than staring, standing, swaying.

"There you go, hun. Just relax," Matts spoke in a deeper tone. "Isn't this better?"

The rodent moved to agree but an instinctive thought crossed his mind; wasn't he supposed to be watching out for someone... his friends! "W-wait where are-" he quickly moved to sit up but was stopped by a firm hand on his chest.

"Shhh, it's okay," Matts said. "Your friends are being taken care of by my employees. They're going to enjoy the rest of the night, rest assured."

Maple nodded and slowly relaxed as told; of course it was better, he hadn't felt this at ease all evening. He slumped backward against the table until he was lying flat on his back; not a single protest in his mind on the way down as the wolf's steadily pulsing gaze followed him until they were like the lights above an operating table bearing down on him. The squirrel's own eyes began to pulse with gentle waves of the same colours, mirroring exactly what was seen in Matts' eyes; not a trace of resistance or hesitation left in Maple's head.

"Always helps to receive a bit of personal attention, doesn't it?" Matts asked.

Maple nodded before he processed the question, it was just easier to agree with whatever the bartender said at this point; and easy thoughts were the best ones at the moment. His words weren't so much his own thoughts as they were an echo of Matts' as he drifted into total compliance.

"Yeah...easy..."