

## Chapter 428

"We know there's at least one of them here," Caleb said. "A female called Thereasa. Her description has been circulated to both packs and the Praetorians. What we need to do now is bring the Council up to speed on what's happening over there and develop a plan of action." *worm.com*

"How didn't the Council know what was going on?" Jared asked, sipping at his coffee.

"Do you know what your Were brethren are up to in Europe?" Gard growled impatiently, his eyes wandering to the window as he touched base with Rayne to check she was okay. He relaxed when he felt her send a mental kiss down their bond.

The Hanlon Alpha nodded his head in acknowledgement of the point. The North American Weres had no contact with their European counterparts and no idea how they ran their lives. Still, the way the vampire Council went on, he'd have thought they at least knew what was going on over there with their own kind. It was surprising they had let themselves be caught out like this.

"There's no denying more attention should have been paid to what was happening in Europe," Caleb conceded, glancing at Rafe as he spoke. "Annie and I will brief the Council on the situation and work out how we're going to tackle the problem. Unfortunately, because of this poison issue, sending vampires over may not be the best course of action. This poison is so virulent it doesn't matter the age of the vampire. They have no protection from it unless we find some kind of antidote." *Worm.com*

The Alpha met his gaze with a troubled one. "Demetri gave us Pietro's blood sample from when the poison was in his system. It's going to take some time for our doctors to try and trace the active ingredients to provide an antidote. You don't have research scientists because vampires have always been able to heal themselves. While we have doctors to treat wounds, we have precious few research scientists ourselves. This is new even to us."

"Luke did have a bit of a research background from years ago so he's testing out a sample of the blood too," Jared added. "So far the only thing he can say for certain is that it's a plant based poison. Until he can identify the plant and work out why it inhibits vampire regeneration, finding an antidote is a long way off."

"So a complete blood transfusion is the only way of combating this for the moment," Caleb mused, clearly unhappy with the news.

"We can most probably work on the assumption that there aren't huge quantities of the poison," Rhianna pointed out. "It's deadly to vampires so that leads me to believe that it will be heavily restricted with only a few who have the knowledge to create it."

"Makes sense," Gard concurred with a thoughtful expression on his face. An idea was beginning to cross his mind, one he didn't particularly like but an option the rest of them might find agreeable.

"I'm technically the oldest vampire living and also mated with a Vârcolac. I probably stand the best chance of fighting off any attack. I should be the one to go to Europe to see if I can track down where the poison comes from." He saw his sister start to frown and shake her head, and shot her a brief smile. *worm.com*

"You know it makes sense, Annie. I'm a complete unknown in Europe too. I'd have more of a chance of finding the intelligence we need."

"And what will Rayne have to say about this grandiose offer?" Rhianna's voice was tartness personified, a sure sign she was not happy.

Gard's smile widened and he shook his long auburn locks. "Quite a lot I dare say, and then she'll insist on coming with me. We're going to need someone to keep an eye on Kothari while we're away."

Caleb ran a hand down his mate's back to sooth her distress. Gard's proposal made sense even if he didn't want one of the triumvirate to be so far away. He had a sense of foreboding that something bad was going to happen. Rhianna was skittish too, and that only served to increase his alertness.

But they did need to find out what was going on in Europe and an antidote for the poison. Rafe wasn't objecting to the proposal of two of his pack heading off into a dangerous situation either so the Alpha clearly saw the logic in it.

"First things first, let's get Lily safely back within the fold. I trust we can leave that up to the packs?" Both Jared and Rafe nodded so he continued. "I will call a meeting of the Council. Rafe, can you make sure Andrei and Alexei know, and Nors too. We'll let Demetri and Mara know."

He rose, pulling his mate up beside him, his gaze fixing on Gard. "Europe comes later so no disappearing just now." He looked to Rafe for backup and the Alpha nodded his agreement.

Gard was already moving, pushing away from the desk to stride to the study door. He glanced back over his shoulder. "Agreed. Now, can I go join my mate? I presume this meeting is over?"

At Rafe's nod, he left the room, sprinting from the house and into the surrounding forest. He was so intent on finding Rayne that he didn't notice the shadowed figure lurking in the trees.

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Kothari watched Gard leave, and sank back into the shadows as the meeting broke up and everyone started to leave. He could feel his rage building but it was a slow build. His mother and father were going to be at risk? That was as intolerable as his angel being targeted. What the hell was his father thinking of?

"Eavesdropping?"

The whispered word startled him so much his beast rose instantly, long talons slicing through his fingertips. It was all he could do to remain immobile and not turn around and lash out. His heart missed a beat as he fought to contain the demon. When he was once more in control, he turned slowly to impale Dara with an icy glare. *Worm.com*

Not that she could see his eyes. As always, they were hidden behind their standard camouflage of dark glasses. "Little girls should be careful about sneaking up on people." The words came out terse and full of menace.

Dara stared up at Kothari's furious face and felt the tiniest shiver of fear wash over her. She didn't truly think he would ever hurt her, but they all knew there was something broken in their friend. What that was, they could only speculate about because he wasn't into confessions, but it was there all the same.

She considered backing off and leaving him be, but his 'scary monster' routine was starting to wear on her nerves. She was a Vârcolac and a Romanov. She wasn't about to back down for him.

Dara forced her lips to curve into a smile she wasn't truly feeling. "Oh cut the crap, Kothi." Her voice dripped with derision. "Kallum said we weren't to be alone and that includes you."