

## Chapter 429

He continued to glare at her, his body tense with barely controlled aggression, then he slowly relaxed and a faint smile curved his lips. "So who's with your Siamese twin?" He watched her prickle at the taunt, and his smile grew wider. She was so defensive of Cassia. It was easy to get a rise out of her.

"Cassia is with Elina if you must know, and stop trying to distract me. What were you doing eavesdropping?" She wasn't letting him get away without an explanation.

Kothari watched her, his expression intent. The determination on her face told him she wasn't going to go away. Stifling down a resigned sigh, he headed further into the trees knowing she would follow. When they were far enough away, he ran and jumped onto a large, flat rock perched beside one of the lakes close to the compound.

He stood for a long moment, scenting the air to ensure they were alone. His gaze finally turned to Dara, watching as she skirted the large rock to find a smaller one. *Ww.noelworm.com*

As she sat down, he mirrored her, crossing his legs and adopting a position of meditation. Maybe it would help him.

"So?" Come on, Kothi. I want to know what you were doing." Annoyance was creeping into Dara's tone and she tried hard to tamp it down. It was pointless being irritated with him. He could spend hours sitting silently and waiting everyone else out.

"You're a pain, Dara Romanov," he finally said. He kept his voice devoid of emotion. "You're stupid too. Most people know when it's best not to prod a sleeping tiger."

She rolled her eyes. "You're a panther, Kothi. Though, come to think of it, I can't remember the last time any of us have seen you in animal form. Why's that?" She let his obvious insult wash over her. He was trying to bait her and she wasn't going to fall for it.

Kothari was at a loss to what to do. He wanted to be alone, and yet, his fellow Vârcolac wasn't going to allow that. He was trying his usual techniques to get rid of Dara and it wasn't working. Usually she was easy to rile up to the point she stomped off in a temper. Today she was watching him intently, waiting for him to respond.

He smiled slowly. She was a brave little thing, tenacious when she wanted to be. Maybe she deserved some answers just for being that brave.

"Just because you run around as a wolf almost as much as a human doesn't mean the rest of us have to. I like my privacy."

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She pursed her lips as she contemplated his answer. It was true, she loved being in wolf form, loved the freedom of running through the trees and playing with the other wolves. It would be nice to run with a panther, to experience the subtle difference of another animal. Only Kothi didn't play and Rayne had other things to do.

"You don't play well with others." It was a statement rather than a question. *Ww.noelworm.com*

"I don't play, Dara, ever."

There was such finality to the words, such loneliness in them, which she was sure he hadn't intended to be heard. She cocked her head to the side and scrutinised him with a thoughtful expression. It was as if he'd let an inner barrier down and shown her a little piece of the man hidden within. Her wolf sat up and scrutinised him too.

"I was listening in to the Alpha meeting," he finally said, when she remained silent. "My parents are going to Europe to try and find an antidote to the poison."

Dara sucked in a deep breath at the news. He would be worried about them if they took on that mission. He would be even more alone if they went away for a prolonged period. Something told her that would be very bad for him, and possibly even the pack.

"They're more than capable of taking care of themselves, Kothi. They're the oldest beings to walk the planet, if you disregard the fact Caleb and Annie are reincarnated souls." She was a naturally caring person and couldn't help reaching out to sooth him.

Her soft tone irritated him. She sat there, her golden hair a halo around her head, her expression full of compassion. The beast within wanted to wipe that expression from her face, to see terror in her eyes. It was an effort to push it down.

"If they're not, the world will swim in blood."

He spoke so quietly Dara had to strain to hear the words. A shiver ran down her spine at the certainty in his tone. Kallum would need to know about this. She wasn't sure if even he would be able to contain Kothi if anything happened to his parents, but he was probably their best bet.

She pretended she hadn't heard what he said. "Anything else said at the meeting? Should we have a private conference?"

Kothari knew she'd heard him and ignored what he'd said. Well, maybe not ignored it. She would surely report back to the other Vârcolac. He felt his rage rising again at the thought. Why couldn't they all just leave him alone? Why wouldn't she fuck off and go somewhere else?

The beast was rising swiftly, its gazed fixed intently on the woman before it. He pushed at it, tried to dampen it down, but it fought with him. It watched the pulse at the side of her neck, its mouth watering at how succulent her sweet blood would taste as it ripped her throat out.

Kothari knew he was losing the battle to contain the monster within. "Leave!" he ground out, sweat beginning to bead on his forehead as he wrestled with his inner demon.

Dara tensed at the sound of his voice. There was command in it but also a hint of terror? What could possibly have Kothari terrified? He was one of the most intimidating people she knew. Her wolf howled loudly, tensing at the danger it sensed. The male before them was about to harm them and she didn't know what was the best thing to do.

Kothari was clearly in the grip of some impulse he was struggling to control. If she ran, that could be all that was needed to cause complete loss of control. If she stayed, she was in danger, her wolf growling furiously in his direction, acknowledging an enemy.

She did the only thing she could think of, she shifted.

Kothari hissed as the woman disappeared to be replaced by a beautiful wolf covered in silky brown fur with golden streaks running through it. The monster wanted blood, human blood. Losing its prey infuriated it and a long jagged cut ran down the side of his face as the monster sought its escape.

The pain helped him focus a bit more, gave him a little edge over the monster. Kothari felt a long rent scrape down his spine and welcomed the bittersweet agony as he turned his violence onto himself.

"Run, Dara!"

The wolf stood with hackles up, growling menacingly, its eyes never leaving him. Why wouldn't she run? Didn't she know he was barely in control?

"Run, damn you, run!" Blood blossomed on his T-shirt, deep furrows appearing in his chest beneath the material. The wolf sprang, landing agilely beside him, whimpering as it brushed against his bloody chest causing more pain.

She should have been running away but the vision of blood covering Kothari had her doing the opposite. Deep down she knew running was the wrong thing to do. She had no idea what was happening to her friend, only that it was something so awful it was literally ripping him to pieces. Dara couldn't leave him, she just couldn't.

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