

Chapter 451

NEW TITLE:

STORM OF SHADOWS

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Prologue

Gone!

One word. One thought.

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Shards of glass scything along every nerve ending.

GONE!

The little boy sat up in his bed, tears filling his eyes as he reached out with his telepathic voice. "Mother? Father?" He paused, held his breath, waited for the inevitable response, but silence greeted him, the rustle of the leaves outside his bedroom window the only sound in the physical world.

It was the psychic plane he was focused on though, the place where they always were, the place that reminded him he was never alone. His parents were the only real anchor he had ever known, and he relied on them much more than they could ever have known. Even in the bleakest of moments when he had feared for his very sanity, he could always come to this special place in his mind, where he was safe in their love and support.

Now the chill wind of emptiness graced the mental room he had conjured up in his mind. Always before when he visited, he was wrapped up in the safety and warmth of a little boy's bedroom, his parents reading to him, his mother stroking his head as the rich timbre of his father's voice rumbled of castles and dragons, knights and princesses. Now it was completely dark, no warmth, no love, no light to pull him out of the burgeoning terror that was threatening to overwhelm him.

"Mother! Answer me! Father! Where are you?" His tears spilled over, soaking his cheeks as he waited for a response that he was quickly coming to realise would not be forthcoming. "SPEAK TO ME! ANSWER ME! Please, Mommy! Please, Daddy. I promise I will be good. I promise!

The darkness seemed to grow ever darker. The silence became more oppressive. They didn't answer him. Mommy didn't send her love and cuddles down their familial bond. Daddy didn't tickle his tummy until he was squealing with laughter, trying to get away but not wanting the fun to end. He was alone, all by himself. A little boy who had never grown up because he didn't know how to, and now he was alone. His parents were GONE!

Surfacing from his mental reverie, he threw himself from his bed, staggering as his inner child tried to take in the adult legs beneath him. His body had grown but his inner self never had. Not the precious, good part of himself that had survived the beast within.

His legs buckled and he fell to the ground, throwing his hands out to halt his fall. The tears coursed down his cheeks, his heart hammered with terror, as he reached out with his psychic mind once more.

"Mommy!"

"Daddy!"

"Please...!"

"I am here," a voice whispered through his mind. Cold, detached, familiar.

It wasn't his parents but it was something he knew. Something he could cling to as he realised that his outward projections were rebounding back inside his head, and his words weren't reaching their intended targets.

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"Stop it! Let me reach them! What are you doing? I want my Mommy and Daddy!"

"They are not there, Kothari. You know that so why reach? All you will do is alert the Others to the fact you're aware they're gone. You know what They will do, don't you? They will surround you, overwhelm you, stop Us from doing what we must. Hush now, and listen to me. I have never steered you wrong before."

The voice was compelling, so much so, that he stilled where he was, resting on his hands and knees on the floor, his head bowed as his tears flowed. The voice knew him, had been with him most of his life. It had helped him before when his emotions had become too much to bear. It had protected him, as his parents had. He should listen to it, he should hear what it had to say.

"Who are you?"

At first the voice didn't answer, and he was about to ask the question again but then there was a loud sigh inside his mind.

"You know me, Kothari. You have always known me."wWuv.noV©LŴerM.com

The moment's lessening of his fear quickly ebbed as realisation dawned. Kothari sobbed loudly, lowering himself to the floor and cradling his head in his hands. "No! You hurt my Angel! You burned down the trees and singed the grass with flames of gold. You are the monster inside, the one Mommy and Daddy said I mustn't listen to. Go away! Leave me alone! Mommy! Daddy! Rafe! Kallum! Somebody help me!"wWŴ.noV(o)Iwov**rM**.cOm

Cold laughter filled his mind, amusement and derision all joined into one. "They cannot help you, Kothi. I am in control now. I have placed mental blocks around your mind so strong that if anyone tries to reach you, they will find you peacefully asleep. I am the only one who can help you. I am the only one who can find out what happened to Our parents."

No! There was one other, someone who would come if he called, if he could break through the blocks. "Dara! Hear me! Please help me, Dara! Please!"

"She can't help you. She can't hear you. There is only me, Kothi. Accept it!"

Sobbing profusely, he curled up into a ball, helpless against the strong will that controlled his childlike mind. He pushed, he snarled, he tried to force out the other persona but he was too weak. He had always been too weak. Finally, he gave up, his tired mind too exhausted to try any further.

"Good!" the voice breathed out, satisfaction in that one word. "Sleep now, Kothari, son of Gard and Sarayne. Be at rest and allow me to lead the hunt to find out what has happened to Our parents. You are too soft to do what is necessary. Those who have harmed them need Justice, and for that they require me. For I am Justice, and I am Retribution. I am Death and I am Destruction. The world will swim in the blood of all those who have caused harm to Our parents. Be it directly or indirectly, all who are responsible will know my name is Agony!"