

## Chapter 461

"Yes," she whispered, swallowing back the tears that suddenly threatened to overwhelm her. Having her father's acceptance of her worth meant the world to her. She was aware how difficult it was for him and yet he had allowed himself to be talked around against his better judgement.

"I may be the only person who can save him, Dad. I need to help Kothi, and it has nothing to do with his erroneous belief about us being mates. Being pack is all about being family, but being Vârcolac...I don't know how best to describe how that bond feels to me. The closest I can come is it's like every one of us have the same link that you have with Uncle Andrei. I don't know if that makes a whole load of sense, but it's how I feel."

Her father remained silent for another long moment and then he nodded. "It makes perfect sense, but I'm not going to lie and say that I am happy about this, because I'm not. What I will say is that I respect your decision and believe in you as much as anyone else in this room. If Rafe is in agreement to you going to Europe, then I won't stand in your way any further." The rough edge to his voice was the only hint of the powerful emotions he was suppressing.

At the mention of his name, Rafe snorted, walking around his desk to come to stand before Dara. "Nice to know someone noticed I was still here in the room." There was a hint of amusement in his tone even as his expression was grave. "Contrary to your father's belief, I don't want you going to Europe any more than he does, Dara."

"But, Rafe..."

The Alpha gave her a small smile when her expression turned shocked and she went to say more. ""No hear me out, Dara. I said I don't want you going to Europe, I didn't say that I would stop you from going. Unlike your father, I have to think of the needs of the pack as a whole, and right now three of my most valuable members are missing and we don't know for sure what's happened to them. With the recent attack against us, I need all three back here safe and sound."

Sighing loudly, he placed his hands on her shoulders. "We can't ask the vampires to go because we are nowhere close to preparing enough antidote to the Amort poison. We can't risk our allies to suffer what Pietro did. I can't send wolves because not only will Kothi just shadow himself to hide from them, the European vampires would execute any I sent. Add in the fact that you're the only one who appears to be able to track Kothari, well that means that you would stand the best chance of finding him. There is no other option left open to me but to send you."

Kallum frowned as he listened, weighing up the Alpha's words and finding himself unable to disagree with anything he said. He did have one thought though. "More than one Vârcolac could go. I could accompany Dara, possibly Elina too?"

*αϋℱ(w).πOυεℓwoπm.cOm*

Rafe was already shaking his head before the younger man had finished speaking. "Kothi has hidden himself from all of you with the exception of Dara. While I don't fully understand what is going through his mind right now, my gut instinct is telling me that he would hide from everyone if Dara takes someone else with her. It feels as if he is almost inviting her along...that he is telling her he needs her with him. His need to find Gard and Rayne is paramount and most likely he only trusts himself to do that, and possibly Dara."

"But what about Gard and Rayne's disappearance?" Cedar interjected. "Someone or something managed to get to them and they're the oldest beings to walk this planet. How will Dara or Kothi be safer over there on their own?"

Dara stepped over to her mother, taking her hands in her own and giving her a reassuring smile. "No one is saying this isn't a dangerous assignment, Mom. I promise I won't put myself recklessly in harm's way if possible, but we have to do this. We have one advantage and that's knowing that there is someone out there so powerful he or she could overcome Gard and Rayne. Gard doesn't have the power to shadow himself and you know that Rayne would never leave him by protecting herself when he was vulnerable. It's different for Kothi and I as we both have that power and we will use it to protect ourselves."

"We can also use some of Caleb's contacts over there too, Cedar," Rafe added. "Dara will not be completely alone. We do have allies in Europe she can turn to as she tracks Kothari."

"Are you planning on asking Caleb and Annie's thoughts on this plan?" Andrei asked. His tone made it plain that he didn't see the need.

"Annie has enough to deal with right now," Rafe sighed. "Gard is her brother as much as I am, and she will be taking his disappearance hard. I will let them know what we're doing, and get contact details from Caleb, but this mission is purely pack related for the most part. I am not asking their permission to send Dara over. I will be telling them it's happening."

When no one asked any more questions, the big Alpha gave Dara a tight hug, his pride and concern flowing down his Alpha bond with her. "Keep hold of Kothi's journal. It may help you decipher his way of thinking when you're in Europe. For now, go and get packed. We need to arrange travel documents for you and I'll call Caleb to see if we can use his private jet."

"If you need travel documents for Dara, then how the hell will Kothari get to Europe?" Pietro asked, drawing all eyes to him. It was a valid point. None of the Vârcolac had any formal travel documents.

"He couldn't go to any of our usual people," Alexei mused, his expression turning thoughtful.

"No, he couldn't," Andrei agreed, his expression mirroring his brother's. "Any of our authorised people would flag up the request as is the norm to either Were or vampire council. He would have to deal on the black market and I know just the person who would likely entertain his request."*vwυ.ηOυεℓwoπM.cOm*

"Give me that information," Rafe said as he pulled out his phone to call Caleb. "That might be a good starting point for Dara when she's ready to go."

The meeting now concluded, everyone filed out of the Alphas' house, Dara returning home with her family to begin her preparations to leave. She couldn't deny there was a level of excitement about going on the mission, but she was filled with trepidation too. Everything hinged on her interpretation of Kothi's journal being right. If she was wrong and he didn't believe she was his angel...things might not go as well as she hoped they would.

\*\*\*\*\*

He moved silently down the dark alleyway, avoiding the overflowing garbage from the dumpsters on either side of him. It had taken a while to ferret out who would be the best person to go to, time he didn't have the luxury of wasting. It was daylight now and it wouldn't be long before someone went to check up on him and discovered he was missing. He needed to be far away when that happened, and nothing was going to prevent him from doing just that.

Clad entirely in black, he would have melted into the murky shadows within the alleyway, that was if anyone could actually see him. Instead, he was a passing breeze to the half-asleep homeless souls shivering under the piles of garbage and old newspapers they had tried to keep themselves warm with throughout the night.

*ℱ(w)w.noυεℓ(w)οπm.com*

He didn't see them, not as others would have. They were a vague flicker in his peripheral vision, society's castoffs who were of no threat to him. Intent on his target, he strode confidently onwards, towards the faded red metal door that was his destination. The cruel curl of his bottom lip was his only outward reaction to the locked door. It was no obstacle to him, and he didn't even care that should anyone be looking they would see the door miraculously open by itself.

The door gave against his preternatural strength with barely a squeak, the vampire just inside turning startled eyes as it opened. He would see nothing, and that would surprise him long enough for Agony to slip past the unsuspecting male unhindered.

Shadowing was one of his most favourite parts of being Vârcolac. That unique skill of being able to bend light to hide his physical appearance, as well as to completely mask his scent had brought him much satisfaction over the years. It was how he had slipped the reins of his pack. How he had first discovered the Praetorians protecting them. It afforded him the ability to cloak his existence from those lesser beings surrounding him, with the exception of those Rhianna had permitted to see him.

*vwℱ.ηOυ(e)ℓ(w)Oπ(m).c(α)π*