

Chapter 465

Dara placed her backpack beside the front door and turned towards the living room where she knew her family were waiting for her appearance. To say she was apprehensive about the upcoming trip was an understatement but she ensured her expression was confident as she braced herself to enter the room. She was deceptively calm, particularly after the fraught emotions in their Alpha's study

She put that down to Cassia coming to sit with her for a while when she had started packing. Her sister's presence had been a silent comfort that had soothed the racing of her heart as the enormity of what she had agreed to began to truly seep into her mind. She had to be all kinds of stupid to do this thing, and yet, she couldn't not do it. That simply wasn't an option.

Cassia had asked only one question, her blue eyes intent as she'd examined her sister's face. "Are you certain, Dar?"

"Do I want to be Kothi's only hope? Hell no, Cass, but it appears that is the case." Throwing another t-shirt into her backpack, she had turned to look at her sister. "I can't leave him out there alone, Cassia. I just can't do it. I know this mission is dangerous, and I won't have the backup of the pack like I'm accustomed to. I guess I am just going to have to be everything that you, mom and dad, and our Alphas believe me to be - a strong soldier."

Her sister's expression had changed then, turning thoughtful and a bit distant. Then she had risen from her seat on Dara's bed, engulfing her in a tight hug that contained all her love and the concern she couldn't quite hide. "Remember the vampires over there are quick to attack wolf shifters. It might be wise to avoid shifting as much as possible. Concentrate on your vampiric side and try to convince them you're one of them. If you do come into contact with any wolves over there...tell them you know Fox, that should help gain their trust."

Ww.ñOveLlw.rŘm.c(◊)m

"Fox?" Dara hadn't even attempted to hide her confusion from her sister. Cassia would have sensed it down their link anyway. "Who's Fox?"

wwW.(n)ovel(w)or@.côM

"A European wolf I bumped into a couple of times in the city recently. He tried to protect me from Pietro of all things."

Cassia's rolled eyes had brought a smile to Dara's face. "Why would he think you would need protecting from your mate?" Just the thought of that misunderstanding was funny. She wished she'd been there to see it.

Her sister had shrugged, a smile gracing her lips. "Most likely because of his distrust of vampires which is understandable considering he's from Europe. There was just something about him that struck me as honourable...that he was possibly a Beta in his pack. He was most certainly a soldier. He carried himself as one who was used to having to be on guard all the time. He seemed like a good man to have at your back."

It had been a strange conversation but something Dara filed to the back of her mind to remember just in case she needed it. There were likely few people over in Europe she could count on and having at least one additional ally couldn't be a bad thing.

Now she squared her shoulders and entered the living room, walking across to her mother who immediately rose from the sofa with her arms open wide. It was hard to hide her nervousness, and not to cry as her mother held her tightly. She knew how hard this was for her, how hard it was for all of her family.

"I'll be okay, Mom. You and Dad have trained me well, not to mention the pack and Vârcolac training I've had. I won't place myself in any unnecessary risk."

"I'm sure that's what Gard and Rayne thought too," her father muttered, a frown darkening his handsome face as he took his opportunity to hug his youngest daughter.

"We've been through all this." Dara couldn't hold back the sigh that was threatening to escape. "Now we know there is someone out there that is strong enough to best Gard and Rayne, I will be especially vigilant."

"That's all well and good, Dara, but who the hell is going to protect you from Kothari if he has gone rogue?" he argued, his frown only deepening. @wW.(n)O◊e◊WóŘm.c@M

"Kothi won't hurt me, Dad, no matter what his state of mind is. I am certain of that, so please try not to worry about things that aren't likely to happen." It was important to get that point across to her family because it was something she truly believed. It was the only reason she was willing to go to Europe.

Her parents' resigned expressions were enough to tell her that they were reluctantly agreeing to her mission. Her father handed her a piece of paper with a name and address on it. "This is the vampire Kothari most likely went to see to get ID. Your Uncle Andrei says he's the best on the black market, and he isn't slow at knocking people around if they get too uppity with him. Try to be respectful in your dealings with him. You might find it easier to get what you need with honey rather than with a stick. If you want, I could come with you?"

Dara smiled at her father, resisting the urge to let out another sigh. He couldn't help himself with his overprotectiveness and she really didn't want him to ever change. "I will be fine, Dad. Now, I need to get going because Kothi has God knows how many hours' head start on me. Try not to worry too much, I will check in regularly."

Now that the moment to leave was finally there, she was hesitant to leave the sanctity of her family and pack, but she knew she had no other choice. She had agreed to this assignment and she would do her best to bring Kothari back safe and sound. If they were lucky, they may even return with Gard and Rayne.

With final hugs to her parents and sister, Dara headed out of her home and raised a hand in Rafe and Lacey's direction. Her Alphas were standing outside their home, their gaze intent on her.

"Be safe, Dara, and bring our boy home," Lacey whispered, a tremor in her voice as she hugged her and then stepped back to allow her mate to embrace her.

"In the event that the risk is too great, you are to protect yourself first, Dara Romanov, even if that means returning to us alone. I mean it...don't you dare put your life at risk for Kothari or anyone else, if it becomes clear that he doesn't want to be helped." There was so much Command in Rafe's voice that it would have been impossible to disobey him even if she'd wanted to.

"I understand, Rafe. Let's hope it doesn't come to that." With a final wave to them, she climbed into the waiting Jeep that had her Uncle Aaron, their pack's second in command, behind the wheel.wW@.n◊◊eŁwôr™.C◊M

"I'll drop you off close to the district you need," her uncle told her. His blue eyes stared intently for a long moment and then he nodded his head as if coming to some internal decision she wasn't privy to. "I am proud of you, Dara. You are an Alexander through and through even if your DNA is messed up with those Romanovs." He winked as he spoke, drawing a loud peel of laughter from his niece.

""You're outrageous, Aaron, but thank you for the back handed compliment. I know you adore Dad and Uncle Andrei, despite your grumbling."