

Chapter 470

"At your service," he said with a smile, tipping the brim of his hat. It should have looked ridiculous when he did it, but it seemed to fit his personality well.*ⱱWⱱ.novelWorm.©ℙmm*

Dara couldn't help smiling, despite itching to get on her way. "I bet you drove Gard insane with that charm."

"He appeared oblivious to it," Joshua chuckled, "Now Rayne on the other hand..."

She burst out laughing, rolling her eyes at his shamelessness. "Yes, you drove him insane; I have no doubt about that." It felt good to have a moment of respite, even if it wouldn't last very long. What was to come would probably be full of danger and possibly death...for this one moment it was just nice to forget the darkness that was ahead.

Dara's expression sobered and she shouldered her backpack and motioned Joshua to lead the way out of the terminal.

"I'm sorry to hear our friends are missing," Joshua said quietly, as he led her to a beat up old van. "Can't believe it was only a few days ago I was picking them up here. I liked them a lot." His gaze slid to watch her as she climbed into the van.

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"They are special people," Dara answered, a frown marring her brow. "We want them back just because of that...however there is another very important reason we need them back too. How much did Caleb tell you?"

Starting the engine, Joshua pulled out of the parking lot and heading away from the airport. "Just that they had vanished after they left me and he was sending someone over to look for them. He told me of your arrival and I was to give you any assistance you needed, and I was to try to determine when a Simon Ducat had arrived and provide you with that information."

He shot her another quick look before concentrating back on the traffic head. "Forgive me, I don't mean to be rude, but I am struggling a bit to understand why Caleb would send a Youngling that appears to be around the thirty year old mark to find out how Ancients of Gard and Rayne's years have disappeared. He did add that you would fill me in on anything you felt I needed to know but..."

"Excellent." Dara breathed out the word, a slow smile crossing her face.*W̶W̶Ñov(e)ℒworm.côM̶*

"Sorry?"

"You see me as a thirty year old vampire. That was what I was aiming for so it's a relief to know it's working. Most vamps here won't pay me any attention if they don't view me as any kind of threat."

The quizzical look he sent her way had her smile widening. "Can we find somewhere private to go? Kothi has hours on me as it is, so another ten or fifteen minutes are not really going to make that much of a difference."

He appeared to consider it for a moment and then he turned off the main road and wove through some streets until he reached a modern block of apartments. "One of my coven's safe houses. It should be empty at the moment; we're keeping close to our main hideout these days."

She could understand that. She would likely do the same given the volatile circumstances in Europe. Following Joshua out of the van, Dara headed inside to the small, one bedroomed apartment. It was cold and stark, designed in the minimalistic style, but there was something about it that appealed to her. She could imagine Kothi in a place like this.

"You have empathic abilities, Joshua," she said, as she set down her pack and turned quickly to face him. She caught the surprise he couldn't quite hide.

"I have too," she admitted with a smile. "Circumstances stateside have given us all a need to be aware of any and all special abilities the vampires around us may have. I felt you leaning on me at the airport...I allowed it to test your strength. I think when this is all over, you should come visit with us at the pack. Liam and Reasa can help you hone and expand your considerable skills."

For the first time since they'd met, a flash of unease crossed the elder vampire's face. "Just who are you, Dara?"

"I will answer that, but first I must ask permission to enter your mind. I need to know that you are as trustworthy as Caleb believes you to be."

Joshua backed up a step, distrust joining the unease in his eyes. "The last person who walked inside my mind headed stateside to commit murder. You'll forgive me if I don't particularly want a total stranger messing with my head after that."

Dara didn't want him to be frightened of her, and she didn't want to force her way into his mind either. She was fairly certain that he could be trusted, but there was so much at stake here she had to be one hundred percent sure. "I'm sorry, Joshua, I do understand why you would be reluctant. I do need to do this though, and I would ask that if you trust in Caleb and he has vouched for me, that you please extend that trust for a brief moment to me. I promise you I have no ill intent in mind."

Joshua stared at the strange woman, unsure of what to do. He did trust Caleb with his life, and Dara was clearly special to his friend. It was only a small leap to extend that trust to her, but he was still hesitant to do so. "Tell me who you are first."

She was shaking her head before he finished speaking, regret in her eyes. "I'm sorry, I can't do that, not until I have done what I must do. What I can tell you is that I ask this of you so that lives may be saved, not only stateside, but here in Europe too. The longer I hesitate here, the more blood will seep into the soil on this continent. One moment of trust may mitigate some of that destruction, Joshua."

It was clear she meant every word she said. She truly believed there were lives at stake, and that could mean a clear and present danger to his coven and others where he had alliances. Caleb had asked him to give her every assistance... and this was what she was asking of him. Joshua moved to the sofa in the living room, sitting down slowly. "Okay, do what you have to."

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Dara moved to sit beside him, a reassuring smile on her face. "I promise this won't hurt a bit, and I will talk you through everything that I am doing. Just relax and let down your mental guards. It will make this easier and less dangerous."

When he relaxed a bit more, she reached out and slipped inside his mind with as light a touch as she could manage. She'd only been honing this technique for a very short time, and only on one other person before this. Kallum had agreed to help her and to keep it secret until they were sure of what it was she could actually do. They'd only had three sessions before the shit had hit the fan at the compound and Kothi had gone missing. This was still new to her.

"You will be aware that old skills are returning, things the vampires have long forgotten. One of them is dream walking, being able to travel through a mind and influence events if required."

Joshua sat as still as possible, feeling the slightest of brushes against his mind. "There have been rumours though Caleb didn't answer any direct questions I posed."

"That sounds like Caleb, never willing to share too much, just in case the information falls into the wrong hands." Dara gave him another reassuring smile, as she sought deeper and deeper within the pathways of his mind.

"What I am doing isn't dream walking in the traditional sense. We don't know what it's called to be honest. I just know I was in my early teens when I realised that I had an uncanny knack for knowing when someone was lying to me. I learned from my father that some of the old Vampire Council used to be able to do it, but my uncle somehow managed to block them from knowing when he lied. I didn't pay much attention to this skill at the time but with things moving so rapidly back home, I decided it was best if I honed it as soon as I could."

She paused, breathing in deeply and closing her eyes as she felt along a pathway. "We discovered that not only could I sense if someone was lying to me, but that I could walk within a mind and discover any falsehood, no matter how well it was hidden. There is nowhere anyone can hide from me, and my strength is growing on a daily basis."

Her voice trailed off and she sat back, slowly opening her eyes to meet his. "Who is Dante?"