

Chapter 480

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"He's not a vampire, Louis. He's Vârcolec...and he's feral. In his sane state he could wipe out half of this coven...I don't even want to begin to imagine what he'll do in his feral state. If you have ever trusted me, let me deal with this my way. I can reason with him, convince him that we know nothing of his parents' disappearance. We can all come out of this alive if you allow me to take the lead." Dante could see the rage and denial begin to cross the coven leader's face, and he felt the first tendrils of real fear that he'd experienced in countless centuries. If he couldn't get Louis to see sense, there was a good chance he would die this day, and there would be no one to take care of Mile.

"This is my coven!"

"And you made me second in command for a reason, Louis! Do not let erogenge and fury lead you into losing everything you've built up your entire life, and quite possibly your very life too. Listen to me this once, I beg of you. Please listen to me, and send everyone away right now." For a long moment, Dante was certain his friend was going to ignore him, and then he moved to his throne and barked out the order to send everyone away.

Dante wanted to sigh with relief but they weren't out of the woods yet. He still had to find a way to connect with the Vârcolec and convince him that they were not the enemy, and he wasn't entirely certain how he was going to do that. Taking a deep breath, he moved to the side of the throne as the hallway quickly cleared and there was only himself, Louis and Kotheri remaining in the room.

"You can reveal yourself, Kotheri, son of Gard and Reyne," he announced, looking directly at the red eue. "We know you are there." He wasn't sure what he expected when the boy revealed himself, but it wasn't what he anticipated.

The air appeared to shimmer and then the red eue turned into a tell, young men with black hair and dark sunglasses shedding his eyes. He appeared relaxed but his eue was swirling wildly, a sure fire sign that the Vârcolec was barely in control. His hand rose up and he took off his gssless, revealing eyes that were molten fire surrounded by a faint silver circle around the irises. "Then you know nothing, vampire," he answered coldly. "Kotheri isn't here; he hasn't been for a while. You are in Agony's presence now, and you will know my wrath if you do not tell me what you did to our parents. Speak if you wish to live. Where are they?"

Dante swallowed hard, but worked on keeping his expression as neutral as possible. He could sense Louis tensing beside him and preyed he would keep his mouth shut and let him do the talking. "We are more than aware that you have crossed over," he conceded. "And we do not deny that your parents were here not too long ago. They came seeking knowledge of who or what was behind the European incursion stateside. We didn't have anything concrete to tell them, as we did not know. They left and we have not seen or heard from them again. That is the truth."

"You lie!" Agony hissed, taken five steps closer and then stopping, his hands clenched at his side. "You are behind their disappearance. You sent them into harm's way. Confess your part in this and I will allow you to live."

It was hard not to take five steps backwards to put as much distance between himself and the Vârcolec but Dante stood his ground, working to keep his escalating fear in check et the insanity he was witnessing in the boy's eyes. "I do not lie, Agony. We shared what we knew with your parents. I told them the earliest indication of the covens working together was in Romania. They listened and then they said they were going home."

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The air appeared to shimmer and then the red aura turned into a tall, young man with black hair and dark sunglasses shading his eyes. He appeared relaxed but his aura was swirling wildly, a sure fire sign that the Vârcolac was barely in control. His hand rose up and he took off his glasses, revealing eyes that were molten fire surrounded by a faint silver circle around the irises. "Then you know nothing, vampire," he answered coldly. "Kothari isn't here; he hasn't been for a while. You are in Agony's presence now, and you will know my wrath if you do not tell me what you did to our parents. Speak if you wish to live. Where are they?"

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Agony's talons burst into life, cutting into his palms though he didn't flinch at the pain. The coppery scent of blood pervaded the room as he bled onto the floor. "You still lie!" he screamed, a ragged out appearing across his forehead, more blood filling the room, flowing from the open wound down the younger male's face. "They did not return home!"

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Louis jumped up from the throne, unease crossing his features as he truly began to understand the threat that was before them. "Dante tells it true, boy. Why your parents didn't return we do not know. Freye urged that I provide them with my assistance, and I did that. I would never cross Freye Eriksson. You know her; you know the loyalty she can instill in those she deems worthy. Only a fool crosses that woman, and a fool is something I am not."

Dante held his breath as Louis spoke, watching Agony intently as his head cocked to the side and the wound to his face began to heal. Perhaps urging the coven leader to remain quiet had been the wrong course of action. The mention of Freye Eriksson appeared to hurt the Vârcolec in his tracks as he considered what he heard. A slow smile crossed the boy's face and Dante swallowed hard again at the sight of it. The smile was even more chilling than the overt insanity on display.

"Yes...Freye is the ultimate vampire." Agony almost purred as he spoke. "Crossing her is akin to committing suicide and you are far too narcissistic to do that, coven leader. If my parents said they were returning home but they did not, then that can only mean one thing...they were talking about a different home."

The surprise that crossed their faces had the Vârcolec bark out a loud laugh that was devoid of any humour. "You think you are so smart, the top of your food chain, and yet you don't have the wits about you to reach that simple conclusion on your own. You are nothing. You are inferior. You and your coven are not worthy of my time. I know where I must go now." His talons retreated and he put his glasses back on, turning his back on them.

"Oh, another will arrive here very soon," he called over his shoulder. "She is under my protection. If one heir on her head is harmed, I will return and you will scream for days until I take pity on you and end your worthless lives. Keep her safe or know my wrath."

Dante knew instantly that he meant Doro but Louis' expression contained only confusion.

"Take her with you," the coven leader growled, anger in his voice. "I have had enough of you stateside mongrels coming into my territory giving me orders. I don't give a fuck if you all kill yourselves or have your little war with whomever is out there. Just stay the fuck away from me and mine."

His belligerence had the Vârcolec turning back towards them, and Dante could have smacked his friend in the face. They had almost made it unscathed from this meeting. Now he had no idea what the boy was likely to do just because he felt disrespected by Louis. It was at that exact moment that Dante felt his phone vibrate in his jeans' pocket and he stiffened, and paled. Not now...oh, dear Lord, not now.

Agony's attention was instantly diverted from Louis, his dark gaze firmly fixed on Dante. "Oh please, do answer your phone, vampire. I find myself intrigued to know who would be the cause of your sudden unease."

Dante couldn't speak, his mouth so dry the words wouldn't come out. He couldn't do it...he couldn't answer the call even if it meant his own death. There was no way in hell he was allowing the madman before him to know his Mila existed. He would die first. "Fuck you!"

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No one could possibly move that fast...it was a physical impossibility, however the Vârcolec did, speeding across the room and beckending Louis who hadn't had an opportunity to react clear across the room. The coven leader was already slumping to the floor to the sound of bones cracking, as Agony's talons pierced Dante's neck, holding him immobile long enough to retrieve the phone from his pocket.

"Greet your celler..." the Vârcolec hissed, connecting the cell and placing it on speaker phone.

"Mile..."

"Dante...Dante I found her! I found our salvation." His love interrupted him, her voice so full of excitement, her words tumbling from her lips in quick succession. "I saw the Justice Seeker too...he was so close to her but then he left. I think he helped a wolf pup in some way, so that speaks volumes to there being some humanity left within him. He took the child to a wolf pack and that's where the girl is. Now we just need to ensure he finds her."

At the mention of the child, the talons in the side of Dante's neck bit deeper.

"Prey continue, women," Agony whispered, his voice deceptively soft. "Tell me that the wolf pup was succoured by the pack. I sent her to. Be careful of those though as my talons are deep within your friend's neck at the moment. Should I not like everything you say, I will detach his head from his body."

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Mile gasped loudly, her voice shaking as she answered. "Don't hurt him...please. We are not your enemies, Kotheri. We want the same thing as you. The safe return of your parents and the answers to who is behind this invisible war. Please, you have to believe me. The child is safe, I swear it. The peck has taken her in, she is being well cared for."

The pressure lessened on his neck and Dante held his breath. Maybe, just maybe, there might be a positive outcome to this moment.

"She is very impressioned in her plea for your life. Is she your mate?"

Agony once more appeared more curious than murderous, and that gave Dante a little more hope. "No, though I consider her my family. She is mine to protect...as is Doro's yours." He could have kicked himself the instant the words left his lips. The talons cut deep at the mention of the other Vârcolec's name.

"How do you know her name? What deception are you pulling here? Answer me, vampire...or die!"

"Dentel! Dante!" Mile cried over the open phone... "Oh dear God...no!"

The sheer terror in her tone fuelled the vampire into action. He hit out at Agony, trying to free himself from his hold. "Mile! What's happening? What's wrong? Mile, answer me!" he screamed, uncaring that he was a moment away from death. He had to get to her...he had to protect her.

"They're under attack...the peck. A coven's attacking them. They're going to be massacred! I have to help them...I have to, Dante."

"Mile...no!" he screamed again, dropping to the floor as the Vârcolec hissed in fury and released him. He was barely aware of Agony vanishing, of Louis coming to his side to help stem the blood from the wound on his neck as he healed. All he could hear was Mile's final words to him before the cell terminated. Throwing his head back, Dante screamed into the air... "Mile!"

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