

## Chapter 510

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Pietro nodded, his near death experience and mating with Cassia giving him an even stronger zest for an immortal life. He had always secretly admired Thereasa's will to live even when he had hated her. He hadn't been so sure he would have been that strong had their roles been reversed.

"It turned out that Reasa was Liam's mate, and the only one here that could save his sanity. He was quietly going insane with his high-level empathy. Elina held it at bay as best she could, but he needed someone with the skills of Reasa, someone who could teach him how to protect himself. She not only taught him how to protect himself, but together they managed to rebuild a dozen shattered vampire minds that Liam had inadvertently damaged when Reasa was stripped of her immortality."

Joshua couldn't contain his shock. It had been astounding to learn that the Vampire Queen could strip a vampire's immortality. It was even more astonishing to learn that Liam and Reasa were strong enough to repair destroyed vampire minds. Perhaps there was some hope for Gard and Rayne, and the others in Europe after all. If the Vârcolac were that strong...hell, he had experienced Dara's strength himself in Europe and Liam sounded like he far exceeded her skills, they actually may stand a chance at defeating whoever was out there.

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"Yes, I know," Pietro continued, a smile crossing his face. "I think we were all as shocked as you are at the time. They did it though, and then we were all left with the sticky problem of two Vârcolac mating with two people who hated each other. Well, I hated Thereasa. She was learning the hard way that her actions had drastic consequences."

Pietro sat forward, twirling the glass stem in his hand, the shadow of a frown marring his brow. "I was so full of hate, Joshua. I have never hated anyone more than I did Reasa. I was scarred, damaged, broken by her actions. I knew that my hate hurt Cassia and Liam. I tried so hard to learn forgiveness, but I just wanted to ram my talons in her now human neck, to bathe in her blood as the life leeches from her eyes. I didn't know then what we know now. We had no idea of the power that was out there." His voice trailed off, his gaze riveted to the blood red wine in the glass.

"Your reaction is understandable," Joshua finally said. He could understand Pietro's base urges completely, and the dilemma that placed him in now that he was mated and part of the pack. To be honest, Joshua didn't know if he would have held back the way his friend had.

"Cassia wouldn't let me give into the self-pity," Pietro continued. "She saw the scars and she loved me despite them. I tried to fight the mating pull, but I knew it was impossible. I still hated Reasa, still waited for her to betray the pack, as I knew she would. And she did...I was elated, vindicated. I knew that I had the proof of her deceit. I followed her into the forest expecting the worst. What I discovered was that she was sacrificing herself to save the pack. Michael, the one who had directly poisoned me had blackmailed her out of the pack's safety. He was here to kill her and she was a fragile human. Still, she went to what she believed was her death. My instincts kicked in, I fought the vampires even as I called for Cassia to come. One of them had bullets laced in the Amort poison. He fired at me, and Reasa threw herself into my arms, taking the poisoned bullet meant for me even as she knew she wasn't immortal anymore."

Joshua could envision the scene playing out, surprise etched across his face, surprise and also a touch of admiration for the woman who would sacrifice everything to make things right. "Sweet Jesus," he whispered.

"I know," his friend agreed. "It was a sobering thought to me too. Reasa was dying in my arms. In that moment, the hatred evaporated, and I found myself begging her to stay alive long enough for the pack doctor to save her life. She was dying and I was alive because of her. It was just wrong. Anyway, things became chaotic after that, the vampire queen got involved, and gave Reasa her immortality back. She healed, and we talked. By then there was the first inkling of something bigger being involved in what was happening, but nothing had really been discovered. I had found it in my heart to forgive Reasa, and in doing so the last of my own anguish melted away. I was finally able to fully appreciate this wonderful new life I have with Cassia and the pack."

W@w.nøvèℓWô(r)m.com

"I didn't realise it had become so bad here stateside. I thought everything was still contained in Europe."

Pietro gave a humourless laugh, throwing the last of his wine back before setting down the glass. "Yes, so did we, I guess. We are a tremendously arrogant species, my friend. My arrogance led to my capture and being poisoned. We presumed that once we were back here that the danger wouldn't follow us, but it did. I now believe that I was poisoned deliberately by whoever our enemy is. They wanted to see how we would react, what we would do in that circumstance. Michael's mind was not his own. Reasa spoke the truth when she said that their goal had only been to get information about why I was there. Michael's master had other ideas."

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