

Chapter 517

"See! If the adults couldn't understand your needs then why on Earth do you expect yourself, a tiny a baby to have understood it? It wasn't your fault, Agony. I know it. Your mother knew it, which is why she reassured you. It's time for you to know it too. Forgive yourself for something you couldn't have done anything about. As you've just told me to forgive myself for what happened to Carly."

She was so good, so pure; she was perfection in a fragile human package. He yearned for her words to be true, to give in to her compassion, and forgive himself for the past. His parents were missing though, and they were in extreme danger. Agony was their only hope of surviving their abduction. He couldn't let his parents down again.

"You are a child in a supernatural world, Natalia," he bit out harshly as he whirled to face her, showing just how much of a monster he could be. He snarled furiously, ratcheting up his darkness so she would scream and run away. "You presume to make me weak with your words of love and compassion. Weakness will not save my parents. Weakness will not keep you and everyone else alive. Go back to the clearing with the others. Stay there until I tell you it's time to move out."

His abrupt about face startled her so much; Natalia took two steps backwards, fear shadowing her expressive features. She quickly masked it, a stunning flash of rage crossing her face.

"Do you think being a monster makes you strong, Agony?" She bit back, fury coming off her in waves. "Let me tell you what being strong really is. It's about seeing your father killed and wanting to curl into a ball of misery, but you keep going. It's about seeing all recognition of you disappearing from your mother's eyes until it breaks your heart, but you keep going. It's about traipsing half way around the world with a bunch of strangers who could kill you with one flick of their wrists, but you're needed so you keep going. That is what being strong is all about, not throwing your weight around, and killing everything you see. Being strong is about being mentally strong as well as physically, and seriously, you bloody suck at that!"

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With a furious snort, she brushed past him heading out of the clearing. She turned back for a moment, and he recoiled from the pity in her eyes. "Do you know what's really sad about this whole thing, Agony? Yes, you have a darkness that is feral and bloodthirsty, but you are also Kothari, and love and care about your friends and family. You have a spectacular panther deep within you too. You just can't see that you are not three separate beings inside one body, but one whole being who has three distinctly different qualities. The sad part is until you accept that, until you become as one, you will never see that you will be the most remarkable being on this planet."

Without another word, she whirled around and disappeared into the trees, leaving him seething at the verbal slap down, and yet oddly proud of the way she once again stood up to him. He had been wrong to open up and make himself vulnerable. He could see that now. Yet, a small part of him was glad that she knew the truth of what he was. She was aware of everything and she hadn't run. It took strength to do that and her words echoed in his mind.

Until he'd met Natalia he hadn't considered the merit of emotional strength, but now he was required to do so. It wasn't usual for him to consider others' perspectives, yet a frail human girl was seeping under his skin and forcing him to examine other ways of living. Yes, he could accept that there were different versions of strength in the world; however, she was wrong to think that her version was what would save his parents. He only knew one way to fight evil and that was through blood and death. His way was the only way they would succeed in their mission, and Natalia would just need to come to terms with that.

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Perhaps Kothari was right about the little spitfire who had just left. While she aggravated him on one hand, he found himself more intrigued with her by the minute. Now was not the time to investigate that though. His mother and father were out there somewhere in the mountains and they were his top priority. Running a hand through his hair, he followed Natalia back to the others. He hoped by the time he returned she would have calmed down. Then they could get on with what they were there to do without any further distractions.

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How was it possible to be so infuriated by someone and yet want to hold them close and comfort them at the same time? One part of Natalia ached for Agony and yet the other part wanted to kick him in the shins. The strength of her emotions was surprising. Until she'd seen him cutting himself by the lake, she would have sworn she didn't care what he did. That had changed the moment she'd seen him bleeding.

Something deep inside had broken free. Some part of her had felt pulled towards the volatile Vârcolac. She didn't understand what it was, but something had connected between them in that moment. Now she was just confused and hurt at him opening up and then turning on her. She wished her mother was here so she could speak to her about it. She knew it was forlorn to wish. Her mother wouldn't even know who she was if she were here. Still, she needed someone to talk to and she didn't know who to turn to.

"Is everything okay, Tali?" Dara asked, coming to sit beside her.

The stunning blonde had an understanding smile, and she oozed trust. With a sigh Natalia took her glasses off and rubbed her eyes before putting them back on.

"Why didn't anyone help him, Dara?" She could tell from the other woman's expression that she didn't need to elaborate on who she meant.

"We have all tried over the years," Dara finally answered, a flash of pain clouding her expression. "I guess I was the closest to him, he would let me in a little more than he did everyone else. He always maintained a distance though, no matter what I tried. Just when I would think he was finally opening up he would build his walls again and it was like starting from the very beginning. I kept trying to break down that wall though, as did we all." She gave a small shrug, regret crossing her face that she had never been what he needed.

"He told me things just now, personal things I don't think he's shared with others," Natalia admitted. She didn't go into detail about what was said. That was between them and no one else. She had to talk to someone about her feelings though, and the other woman knew Agony the best.

"He carries so much pain inside, Dara," she whispered, a feeling of helplessness coming over her. "When we were together, I could almost touch it, and something happened...something connected between us. I feel like I have to help him even if he fights me on it. I did try my hardest to get through to him, but he turned on me, becoming hard and unapproachable like he was when my pack was attacked. He went out of his way to scare me and even as he did, I found myself furious with him and yelled at him. Usually I have a much better sense of self preservation."

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