

Chapter 540

Cassia Romanov brushed back the short blonde curl that refused to stay secured behind the bright green butterfly hair clasp at her temple. There was always one thick strand of hair that refused to do as it was told, a constant source of irritation when she was so intent on her work. The rest of her shoulder length curls were forced into a larger butterfly clasp at the nape of her neck, drawing the eye to the curve of her jaw and her slender neck.

She was completely oblivious to the admiring glances she was receiving from two of her pack mates and the one lone vampire in the hastily arranged lab. If she'd been less absorbed in her microscope, she would have noticed the heated looks from the male Weres and equally speculative glance from female vampire.

Tall and sleekly built, Cassia was the image of her mother Cedar, carrying the same inherent grace in her posture, an aura of class oozing from her without any real effort on her part. The lenses of the microscope hid her pale blue eyes, her white lab coat failing to conceal the curves beneath, or the frustration she was experiencing.

It had taken less than two days for the vampires to obtain all the equipment required to set up a state-of-the-art laboratory at the Armand-Hanlon Compound. They had even worked to tunnel deep into the surrounding mountainside and build a sturdy wooden structure to serve as an entranceway into the lab. Another day and the lab was up and running, makeshift walls sectioning off rooms for storage and work areas.

Cassia had been drawn to the area to watch them, fascinated at the speed they had moved and how committed they could be when there was a threat that directly affected them. Of course, the ones who had designed, and built the lab had been individuals trusted by the Ancient Council. The news of the poison was still a secret to most of the vampire race, but clearly, work had to begin on trying to analyse it as quickly as possible so some had had to be informed.

With vampires never before having a need to become proficient in the healing arts, none of them had any of the skills the Weres possessed so it made sense that finding an antidote would fall to the Pack. Or that was Caleb's take on the situation and pretty much what Caleb wanted, Caleb got, with the exception of executing Thereasa.

So, the lab was built into the mountainside in record time and Cassia's natural leaning towards biological analysis was suddenly discovered to be a talent that was sorely needed. She'd spent the best part of the last few days buried in the lab, with the exception of the trip up to the Praetorian compound, working on the blood that had been provided by Demetri. Pietro de la Rios's poisoned blood from Europe. [www.novelworm.com](#)

Her frustration was growing though as she strove to identify the compounds used in the poison. She could find very little, the toxin breaking down too quickly in the blood and some possible contaminants creeping in. She couldn't be sure what was the toxin and what was a contaminant.

Lack of sleep, and failing to find anything useful was making her short tempered, and bending over the microscope for so long was making her shoulders ache. Groaning in frustration, she arched her back and brushed at the stray curl again. ""This is like looking for a needle in a haystack! The sample has degraded too much; I can't be sure what is part of the toxin and what isn't any more."

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Her abrupt movement caught the two Weres admiring her off guard and Cassia scowled. "Don't you have work to be doing?" It was almost comical the way they quickly turned back to their benches and the experiments they were conducting.

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"That was very effective," Freya Eriksson remarked, her green eyes intent on the two males and the rush of colour suffusing their cheeks. Their heads' appeared to dip a little lower and she smiled slightly as she moved across to the other woman. Her curiosity at what was happening in the laboratory had made her a frequent visitor and as she was adept at watching in silence, the Weres tolerated her presence.

She frowned as she looked into the abandoned microscope; not understanding what she was seeing and wishing she could. She had been reading book after book on biology and was starting to get a rudimentary understanding of it but was nowhere as advanced as the Weres. The urge to learn and help in some way was strong. People she loved were at risk from the poison and that wasn't something she could tolerate.

"Is there some other avenue you could investigate?" Her question had Cassia's brow drawing down as she twirled the errand curl, her eyes unfocused as she considered the question. Freya was certain there was no artifice in the girl's action, that she was oblivious to how endearing it made her. She was simply a lovely young lady with a keen intelligence and sassy wit that made most people fall in love with her instantly.

For a moment, Freya felt an ache that her own daughter Elina didn't have that same ease around others but she quickly brushed it away. Elina was Elina, unique in her own way and maybe too much her mother's daughter. She had her father's deep passion though, a strong sense of duty to those she loved. Her daughter would find her own path to happiness one day, she was sure of that.

"Toxins remain longer in the hair," Cassia said, breaking the short silence. "In humans and Weres that is, I'm not sure if the same would be true for vampires. There would be no harm in checking though." A hint of excitement was creeping into the Vârcolac's voice, blue eyes starting to twinkle. "Freya, you may just be a genius!"

"Hardly," the Ancient vampire drawled, though her smile widened as she inclined her head in the other woman's direction. "Perhaps Mallen could request a sample from Pietro when he next attends him." [www.novelworm.com](#)

Cassia was already shrugging out of her lab jacket and heading towards the door. "We don't have time to wait for that. I'll run across now and get the sample myself."

"Cassia, wait! Pietro is not good around others right now. Perhaps you should ask your father or Andrei to speak with him."

The younger woman halted, surprise on her face as she looked back at the Ancient. "I'm a Vârcolac, someone he feels obligated to protect even though we don't need that protection. Why would he see me as a threat?"

Freya didn't want to have the conversation in front of the wolves so she followed Cassia from the lab until they were out of earshot. "It's not that he would see you as a threat. You have to try to understand the vampire psyche and please, don't start shaking your head at me. I know you're half vampire but your wolf tempers a lot of your other half. "