

## Chapter 542

He stepped from the last stair and turned right, heading into the living room and walking over to the French doors out into the surrounding forest. "So, you're one of Alexei's girls." It was a rhetorical question.

She followed him into the room, her gaze slowly roaming over his wide back, her wolf moving restlessly as she took in every inch of the vampire. There was something very appealing about the male, something that called to both her wolf and the woman. She tried to tell herself that she was interested in him as a scientist. He was, after all, the first vampire ever to be scarred, a unique specimen among his kind. However, she knew she was fooling herself the longer her wolf prowled and paid attention to the male. There was something else about Pietro de la Rios...

"Since coming here I've been poked and prodded, and I've had sample blood taken by the pint. I've had medical staff and my friends trying to get inside my head to find out if I'm 'okay'. I've had my flesh cut out time and again to see if the muscle and tissue will grow back undamaged. All I've wanted is to be left alone, to be given the time to fully heal so I can go back to my normal life and now you show up asking for more samples?"

The heat in his tone caused Cassia to sit down in one of the overstuffed red armchairs close to the open fire. There was a level of aggression in the vampire's tone, and she was stronger than him, of which she was sure he would be aware. Being as tall as her parents put her at almost the same height as Pietro and she wanted to give the appearance of being less of a threat to him in case the aggression escalated. Freya was right in that he needed handling more delicately than most.

Pietro spun around to pin her with his mismatched gaze, anger burning within. "Today I've woken up to find the woman responsible for my scars is living two doors down from me. I wonder if there is anyone in this compound who could even begin to comprehend how that makes me feel. I've been informed of the circumstances of her arrival and yet I'm supposed to accept that my torturer is here and let it go. How am I supposed to trust the pack, to trust anyone here when they succour my torturer?"

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Cassia took a deep breath, meeting his gaze and holding it. She had not been prepared for this and was surprised that he'd come right out and said it. The reason for his anger was clear, how to diffuse it was not so clear. Taking a slow breath, she tried to find some way to orientate him, to help him focus on what was really important.

"Do you regret going to Europe, Pietro?" She held up her hand when he opened his mouth to speak. "No, think about the question before you answer it. Think about it very carefully. Do you regret going there to try to determine the threat to me and the other Vârcolac, or is it you regret some of the circumstances that occurred while you were there?"

She watched him frown, the scar on his face twisting with the movement. It still looked pink and tender and she wanted to press her lips against it, wanted to draw her tongue slowly over the mark to see if her touch would help speed up the healing process. It was a completely errant thought and she was stunned as it flitted through her head. It was so unprofessional, especially as she was here to try to help him. Her wolf was making an odd sound, urging her to get up and do just that. She had to fight with the animal to keep her contained.

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Pietro stared at Cassia, frowning as he processed what she'd said. Since he'd been left alone in the house, his earlier tears had turned to anger, a deep bitter rage that Thereasa was being harboured by the pack. He felt betrayed by his friends and wanted to leave but he knew he was still as weak as a Youngling and wouldn't last five minutes among his kind until his body fully healed itself.

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Did he regret going to Europe? He certainly regretted the position he'd ended up in and the pain it had caused, but the actual reason to go? No, he didn't regret that in the least. The twins were the closest thing he had to family. He would die a thousand deaths to protect their children, to protect the woman with pale blue eyes who was watching him so intently.

She was the most beautiful woman he could remember seeing; Cassia Alexander with her hair pulled back giving her a haughty look that was spoilt by one lone curl at the side of her right temple. It seemed to defy all attempts to curb its wilfulness and made his fingers itch to try to tame it.

There was something regal about her, her beauty a mirror image of her mother, her figure curvy in all the right places. He usually preferred his women with more ample breasts but that didn't stop him wanting to feel the weight of Cassia's smaller ones in his hands. Were her nipples a dusky pink or where they a deep brown? He didn't care which, he knew he would love them regardless as he laved his tongue over her tight peaks...ww(w).N©(v)elWôrM.Com

Pietro froze, his expression turning neutral as he realised where his thoughts were going, and that his body was starting to react to Cassia as a woman as opposed to one his best friend's children. It was his job to protect the Vârcolac, not lust after them. That was why he'd gone to Europe in the first place, to protect them! He uttered a curse and turned away from her, staring unseeingly out of the window.

Jamming his hands in his jeans' pockets, he wanted her gone as soon as possible. What had she come for again? Hair, she wanted a hair sample. "My reasons are my own and not something I wish to discuss with a stranger. You wanted hair?" Pietro reached up and ripped out a chunk of his hair, walking as close as he dared and holding it out to her. The scent of blood was heavy on the air and he knew he was bleeding from the torn out roots. He ignored it. It would stop soon, not as soon as it would normally have before the poisoning but it would stop.ww(w).ñóVêlWôr(m).Com

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Cassia reached out for the sample, being careful not to touch the vampire though her wolf was urging her to brush his hand with hers. Something had upset Pietro, she didn't know what but it was clear from his stance that he couldn't bear being close to her. He'd ripped the hair from his head so violently that there was part of his scalp attached to his offering. It was a strong indicator he was barely in control and she didn't want to push him into a more overtly aggressive stance.

Her wolf was howling, clawing at her insides, trying to push forward to get to the damaged male before them. It cried out, one word over and over, a word she couldn't acknowledge, couldn't believe. Slipping the sample carefully into the sterile bag she'd brought with her, she took a few steps back until she was close to the living room door.

"Thank you, Pietro. I apologise for disturbing you but this sample may help us come up with an antidote for the poison so that no one else has to endure what you've had to go through. You should apply some pressure to your wound. I believe Mallen said your blood clots within a few minutes now so it should stop bleeding soon."