

## Chapter 575

Cassia slipped out of the house and automatically turned to the left. She couldn't have helped herself if she'd tried; she had to know what Pietro's reaction was to Reasa being hurt, and she had to test her wolf's response to him again. Her animal's instincts meant everything to her and were what she had come to rely on for her entire life. This current confusion was throwing her off balance. She needed to figure out what the hell was going on.

Clutching Mallen's medical bag in her hand, she headed over to Andrei and Loretta's. She wasn't surprised to sense Pietro close to the front door as she climbed the two steps upwards. The door swung open and he was standing there, mismatched eyes inscrutable as he stepped aside to let her in.

"Is she dead?"*Ww.ńóvë/WOrmm.Cótt*

"Dislocated shoulder and some bumps and bruises. She'll live." Cassia scented the air even though she could tell that they were alone in the house from the quietness surrounding them.

The scar on the side of Pietro's face twisted as he grimaced. He turned and walked into the kitchen, leaving her to follow behind him. "Drink?"

Cassia watched him from under the cover of her long lashes as she sat down at the kitchen table, placing the medical bag on the floor beside her. "Tea, please, black." He was being remarkably hospitable considering he had only met her once, and hadn't appeared to like her very much at the time. Her wolf was watching him, a feeling of intense interest radiating from it, though she couldn't glean what was on the animal's mind. It was a curious sensation and one that confused her even more.

*www.nóvëlwOrmm.Cótt*

"You helped her?" There was a hint of accusation in Pietro's voice as he made two mugs of tea and placed one in front of her, before sitting at the opposite end of the table with his own.

"She was in pain and Mallen was incapacitated. Someone had to."

His expression spoke volumes, clearly showing he disagreed with her. Her wolf settled down a bit, stretching out to lie down with its head on its paws, eyes intent on the male before them.

Cassia sipped at her tea, analysing the wolf's posture, which appeared contradictory. It was relaxed, but alert at the same time. Again, she had the feeling her animal was both sympathetic and angry with the vampire. Maybe that was why she wasn't getting a clearer reading from it after the initial claiming from their first meeting. Was her wolf undecided? Was that even possible?

Setting her mug down on the table, she chose her next words carefully. Not wanting to antagonise him unnecessarily, she worked to keep her tone soft and soothing. "Your reaction to Reasa is perfectly understandable, Pietro. It's natural that you would want retribution for the wrongs she has done to you. Unfortunately, life is never black and white; there are always shades of grey, some darker than others."

His eyes narrowed and one of his fists clenched on top of the table. His other arm tensed around the cup he appeared to be guarding. "Spoken like a true healer." The words came out with more than a hint of derision in them. "I thought you were a scientist, a researcher."

"Recently, my primary duty has been working in the science lab. However, from what Mallen tells me, I'm exhibiting all the signs of being a pack healer as well. Apparently, with wolves it's an instinctual thing, as opposed to knowledge that is learned through academics. He has begun instructing me in the healing arts, though I try to limit the amount of time I spend away from the lab. Finding the antidote to the poison is a top priority."

"Why didn't you just ask your new best friend? As you seem so intent upon helping her, she should have been more than happy to provide you with the ingredients that make up the poison."

Pietro's continued accusatory tone was starting to needle her. Her wolf shared her irritation, baring its teeth though it remained supine for the moment. Cassia had to fight her exasperation and remind herself of just how damaged the vampire was, and by whose hand. "Yes, I relieved her pain but you have to remember it was a pack member who caused it in the first instance. There is no bond of trust between Reasa and the rest of us; maybe there never will be. It's highly unlikely she will ever divulge any information, at least not for a very long time to come."

When he didn't answer, merely watched her with his compelling eyes, Cassia sighed and brushed at the curl at her temple. "You have been brought here to heal so you can return to your normal life. Healing is not just a physical act, but an emotional one too. Retaining this anger isn't doing you any good, Pietro. You need to find some way to come to terms with what's happened and move on."

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Pietro watched the delicate hand brushing at the errant curl and stopped listening to the words coming out of Cassia Romanov's mouth. He couldn't recall seeing anyone move with such innate grace before; the movements were so lacking in artifice, they were mesmerising. He had no idea why he'd allowed her into the house. His initial instinct had been to send her packing when he saw her approaching, but there was something about Cassia that had him doing the complete opposite of what his head told him to do.

*Ww.ńóvëlwOrmm.Cótt*

She was a fascinating woman, this strange blend of Alexei and Cedar. Her grace came from her mother, that was obvious, but there was also that spark of her father in her eyes. She appeared to weigh up her words and project utter calm, when he knew that deep down she was experiencing emotions that were contradictory to her outward expression. Alexei had that knack, as did Andrei. Maybe that was why he was unable to send her away when she called at the house. It was possible that she reminded him of his friends and that led to him feeling more comfortable around her.

When they had first met, she had coolly appraised his scars with barely a hint of emotion creeping across her face. The only time he had glimpsed a slight reaction was when her eyes had traced the scar running down to his collarbone; then her lips had tightened for the briefest of moments. He had tried to get a response out of her, being as rude as he could, but she had let it wash over her and hadn't risen to the bait. That had sparked his interest; an interest he shouldn't be having for a child of one of his best friends. He found himself liking her.

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