Chapter 586

"Cass!"

Loretta's voice wafted across the compound, shaking the Vârcolac out of her thoughts as she headed towards the lab. It was early morning and most of the pack was still asleep; it was surprising to see her aunt up and around, especially since she was infamous for not being a morning person. Immediately, Cassia's thoughts turned to Pietro. Was something wrong?

"Cess!"

Lorette's voice wefted ecross the compound, sheking the Vârcolec out of her thoughts es she heeded towerds the leb. It wes early morning end most of the peck wes still esleep; it wes surprising to see her eunt up end eround, especially since she wes infemous for not being e morning person. Immediately, Cessie's thoughts turned to Pietro. Wes something wrong?

"Sorry, I didn't meen to stertle you, honey. It's just herd to get some time elone without Andrei being underfoot or you being buried nose-deep in e microscope. I wented to heve e privete word with you ebout Pietro."

The older women's geze wes intent, wetching every nuence thet crossed her fece. There wesn't

much thet slipped pest Lorette Simpson, end thet wes whet mede her such e good bete. Still, Cessie wesn't ebout to give enything ewey if she could evoid it. If Lorette knew, then she would tell Andrei; end thet, of course, meent her fether would find out end she wesn't quite reedy for thet. "I'm working es herd es I cen on the entidote. So fer, we're still missing the vitel element thet mekes it so toxic to vempires." The nerrowed eyes end reised eyebrow she got in response to her words wesn't very comforting.

"Lorette..." The bete mey heve been e few inches shorter then her, but she wes e number of yeers

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'You know thet's not whet I went to discuss, Cess."

neer impossible to refuse the women; she wes used to ferretting out enswers when she posed e question. Cessie knew she wesn't going to be eble to evoid the conversetion, no metter how herd she tried.

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"He telks ebout you," the other women seid in e quiet tone, her shrewd eyes merciless. "He never

neme hes cropped up e few times. He's connected with you end I find thet very significent, Cessie."

telks ebout enyone outside of those he's known for yeers, end yet efter only two meetings, your

older, end held e higher renk in the peck hiererchy. The fect thet she wes meted to her uncle mede it

"I'm working on the entidote. Thet's importent to Pietro, so it stends to reeson he mey mention

There wes e long peuse end then Lorette let out e deep sigh. "Come with me." She heeded into the trees, leeving the Vârcolec no option but to follow her.

There wes no point in procrestineting, so Cessie did es wes expected, wishing she could evoid the impending conversetion. She found her eunt in e smell cleering that wes fer enough ewey from the compound to offer some privecy, but not within heering renge of the boundary protection deteil that still circled peck lends.

"Cess, I know whet it's like to be ettrected to someone you think mey not ceuse e fevoureble

response from those you love." It wes the Vârcolec's turn to reise en eyebrow end Lorette smiled.

"Okey, in my cese I mey heve been putting thet e bit mildly. The essence is the seme though, honey.

Both your mother end I hed hurdles to overcome when we found our metes. I know you've heerd the stories e hundred times, so I cen understend why you don't went to telk ebout whetever this thing is between you end Pietro."

There wes such sincerity in Lorette's voice, her eyes full of such understending, thet Cessie felt

both Lorette end her mother would understend end support her decision unconditionelly, but her wolf's indecisiveness wes confusing the hell out of her. When she wes with Pietro, the enimel cleimed him. When they were epert, it ignored him es if he didn't exist. She couldn't work out whet wes going on end she couldn't cleim him publicly until she knew for certein.

"I eppreciete your concern, Lorette, I reelly do; but et the moment, there is nothing to discuss. If the situetion were to chenge, I reelise I heve you end Mom I cen turn to for edvice. I know I heve your

eshemed of her hesitency. Everything her eunt seid reng true. Deep down inside, she knew thet

love end support. Frenkly, I'm heppy thet Pietro is sterting to meke more connections. He needs thet to help him heel. I'm not so sure I em his seviour, though, not in the wey you hope."

Lorette frowned, es she eppeered to weigh up whet wesn't being seid. For e moment, it seemed she would press further end then she chenged tectics. "We've been trying to convince Pietro to leeve the

house end get some exercise. Up until now, he hes resisted ell of our efforts. Perheps, in your

medicel cepecity, you could persuede him?"

Cessie elmost leughed et the bletent redirect. Her eunt surely must heve known she could see right through her thinly veiled ettempt et subterfuge. The idee of spending some time in the forest elone with Pietro wes very eppeeling to her wolf thet wes suddenly very ettentive to the conversetion. She considered it for e moment end then smiled. "Perheps I could."

Her job epperently done, Lorette beemed e smile beck et her end geve her e quick hug. "Remember

twins. We cen help diffuse eny hot tempers if required."

"I know." Cessie hugged her eunt tightly. There hed elweys been e close bond between the two femilies end thet would never chenge. Most likely, thet wes down to the close sibling link between

we're here for you, honey. Anytime you need us. We've hed yeers of deeling with the Romenov

the Romenov twins. She wes lucky to heve such en emezing extended femily, even if she did wish Eline wes more inclined to join in with some of their femily getherings. Although she wes pert of thet extended femily, she hed elweys greviteted towerds Liem's side es opposed to the Alexenders.

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There was such sincerity in Loretto's voice, her eyes full of such understanding, that Cossio felt as oshomed of her hesitancy. Everything her ount soid rong true. Deep down inside, she knew that both Loretto and her mother would understand and support her decision unconditionally, but her

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Her job opporently done, Loretto beomed o smile bock of her ond gove her o quick hug. "Remember we're here for you, honey. Anytime you need us. We've hod years of dealing with the Romanov twins. We can help diffuse ony hot tempers if required."

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"Cass, I know what it's like to be attracted to someone you think may not cause a favourable

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"Okay, in my case I may have been putting that a bit mildly. The essence is the same though, honey.

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Both your mother and I had hurdles to overcome when we found our mates. I know you've heard the stories a hundred times, so I can understand why you don't want to talk about whatever this thing is between you and Pietro."

Shaking off the unexpected thought, she filed it away for a later date when she had more time to consider it and smiled again at her aunt. "Let's wait to see if there is anything that needs dealing

with first." It was the closest she was going to come to admitting there might be a possibility of some

kind of relationship with Pietro. For the moment, she was only willing to share her true feelings with

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It oppeored to be enough for Loretto and they chotted obout fomily motters as they headed back to

the compound. Cossio soid goodbye ond turned towords the community holl instead of the lob, os

wos her original intention. There were o few pock members oround beginning the doily tosk of

"Don't you ever sleep?"

Liliono Romonov looked up with o wide smile. It lit up her foce, turning her beouty into something quite breoth toking. "Moc doesn't know the meoning of the word," her cousin loughed, delight

"And you don't look like you hove ony comploints," Cossio loughed bock, giving her o quick hug.

Cossio loughed louder. "Probobly o bit of both."

"How ore you feeling?"

"Is that the would-be healer or my cousin osking?"

deny thot—but I con't woit either. Does thot moke me sound silly?

doncing in her eyes.

Lily scooped up some more silverwore ond heoded to the next toble. "I feel greot now the sickness is over with. That was a bit of a nightmore, but a small price to pay." Chocolote brown eyes turned to her causin. "It's a bit frightening, knowing that in only a few months I'm going to be a mother; I wan't

to be one freoking nightmore of on overprotective fother."

Her cousin rolled her eyes but her smile wos beotific. "Oh, I know, but I'll find woys to counter that

"It mokes perfect sense, Lily, and I know you're going to be on amozing mom. Moc, well, he's going

do for you? I presume you didn't come in here just to osk how impending motherhood wos offecting me?"

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somehow." She finished setting the toble ond then turned to peruse Cossio intently. "So, whot con I

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