

Chapter 608

Thereasa wanted to groan at her choice of room to teach Liam, but her options had been limited due to her current status. The pack was hardly likely to let her leave or go to a less secure house, so she had to make do with what she had.

She quickly ran her eyes around the interior of the bedroom; it was patently obvious that though it contained a large King-sized bed, it was clearly furnished for one occupant. There was a single, large upholstered chair beside the empty fireplace, and a smaller chair beside the vanity table. Liam's huge size ruled out the smaller chair and brought the larger one into doubt as well. That only left the bed.

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There was nothing else for it, so she squared her shoulders and turned around to look at the Várcolac. "Do not get any ideas. After choosing a position at the head of the bed, she faced him as she crossed her legs and got comfortable. She motioned for him to join her, and the mattress dipped under his weight as he mirrored her position at the foot of the bed. Liam placed the book between them.

"Before we start, will you please stop that?"

Liam blinked slowly, unable to hide the confusion that crossed his face. "Stop what?"

"Looking at me like you're about to eat me up," she snapped, as she added glare for good measure. "You are extraordinarily powerful, and you will need your full concentration for what I am going to teach you. We don't have the luxury of time here, Liam. Who knows how much longer those people up at the Praetorian Compound have? It's been days since the incident."

Her words appeared to sober him, and he nodded in agreement as guilt flashed across his face.

"We don't have time for that either," Reasa remarked, though her tone was slightly less acerbic. "It happened. Deal with it. The important task now is to see if we can fix it. Put all your energy into that and just maybe we have a chance of doing the impossible. "

"It's that easy for you, Reasa? You do something wrong and you just deal with it?"

There was curiosity in Liam's tone as well as a hint of reproof. It was clear they wouldn't be able to begin the tutoring straight away as she'd hoped. The large male before her had too much empathy, too strong a belief in right and wrong. Everything was black and white to him; he had to learn that there were shades of grey too.

Taking a deep breath, Reasa closed her eyes while searching for the words that might help him understand. "Everything moves at a fast pace when you live in the covens. It's a completely different world to the one you live in, Liam. Here, you have the luxury of being protected by those who love you. From what I have seen during the short time I've been here, you are vastly overprotected—to your detriment—and that's why the incident occurred up at the other compound. In the covens, you have to prove your worth daily. You have to be stronger, faster, and have a unique talent that sets you above everyone else. Only then would you attain the protection of your coven leader. It has to be earned."

His eagerness to absorb every word was dampened by the thoughtful frown that settled across his face. Reasa took another deep breath and continued. "If you make a mistake you have to deal with it swiftly. You can't afford to wallow in self-pity and 'if onlys'. If you do that, you're dead. So, yes, Liam, it is that easy for me. It's how I've stayed alive for as long as I have. I learn from my mistakes and I move on." She let her words sink in, and fought to keep a smile from tilting her lips upwards. She could see almost see the wheels turning in his head as he processed what she had said.

He finally nodded, his gaze intent. "You have had to struggle all of your life, Reasa, I can see that. You don't have to struggle any more. The pack will protect you. I will protect you."

It was on the tip of her tongue to snap out that she didn't need his protection, but she did. She was human now, frail and easily hurt as had so recently been demonstrated. Until she was immortal once more, she would need their protection and that was something she was just going to have to accept—for now.

Reasa rolled her shoulders and focused back on the task at hand. "The shields you wove earlier are very good. You learn quickly, so that should speed things along. Did you sample the emotions in the house when we were all together?"

A wide smile split his face and she had to stop herself from sucking in another deep breath. He lit up when he smiled—a different kind of beauty from the savage, feral animal he had been when she was hurt—but beautiful none the less. It concerned her that she was noticing how attractive he was. She had meant what she said; she was not his mate and never would be. Still, she was so enthralled it took her a moment to realise he was talking again.

"The emotions were there but so muted. They didn't overwhelm me at all; in fact, they felt sort of comforting."

"Good, that is the way it should be. I will teach you how to separate the emotions and apply them to each individual, but first you need to understand how a mind works, how to use the deftest of touches. I have years of experience but lack your strength. If someone has a very strong mind, they can keep me out without realising it. For this exercise, you will need to allow me into your mind."

"My mind is always open to you, Reasa. You need never ask to join with me."

His voice was filled with so much honesty and trust that, for a moment, all she could do was stare at him with her mouth open. Then she pulled herself together and gave herself a mental shake. If what he said was true, she could enter his mind and wipe it completely. He would put up no resistance, would allow her to do as she willed. If she really wanted to, she could finish what she started up at the Praetorian Compound, but she found herself oddly loathe to do so.

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She told herself it was because the others would kill her on the spot if she harmed him, that she would never learn to Dream Walk or help the injured vampires. She would lose any chance of ever becoming immortal again. It had nothing to do with the fact that the male before her had defended her not once, but twice. No, it was about what she could gain from the situation, what she could learn to protect herself.

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"You might find it easier if you close your eyes and just relax. I will keep my delving slow so you can follow what I'm doing within your mind. I will continue to talk out aloud as opposed to telepathic communication. It will help keep you grounded in reality. It is very important to remember that, when you delve, you are in the physical world as well as in the mind."

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When he obeyed her without question, she swallowed hard. She let her gaze trace his strong features, and for some reason her heart twisted at the trust he exhibited. He was probably at his most defenceless right now, and yet, he was completely relaxed. Oh, how she wished she could trust as easily as he did.

Reasa reached out with her mind, and slipped into Liam's, passing his outer defences with agile precision as he laid himself bare to her. "You should view the mind as an infinite corridor with doors running down either side. Behind each door is a memory of the past or the present." She breathed softly, smiling as he quickly grasped her meaning, and suddenly the long corridor was before her psychic self. The doors were brightly hued in a perfect rendition of a colour chart, from light to darker shades. He'd even placed numbers on the doors, though they were out of sequence numerically.