

Chapter 613

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In the past moving towards a door had been an instantaneous thing. He thought of where he wanted to be and he was immediately facing that door. Now his heart thumped hard in his chest as he concentrated on his wolf, since he judged that to be that the best starting point. Surprisingly, he didn't appear where his wolf was; they remained standing at the beginning of the corridor. He summoned his animal again, and once more, they didn't move.

"You're blocking yourself," she murmured at his side, her voice calm and soothing. "You know the vampire will be somewhere close to your wolf and you're afraid to face it."

"What if it gets loose again?"

"Then you will deal with it as you have before. You must learn to control it, Liam. You will need it later on the paths we will take."

Reasa sounded so certain and he wanted to ask her how she could be, and then he remembered that she had been a vampire. She had lived with her own monster for over a millennia.

Reaching deeper within himself, Liam summoned his wolf once more and found himself standing beside a deep magenta door. He could feel his wolf as he touched the handle, a slow smile curving his lips as he removed the barrier between them. Within a replica of his forest home, a large russet wolf lay close to a tree, its head on its paws as it stared back at him with glowing amber eyes.(w)wŵ.w.novℓℓŴwørm.(c)øø

"It is quite an impressive animal," Reasa remarked at his side. "I only caught a small glimpse of your wolf up at the compound."

The wolf's gaze turned to her, its head cocking to the side before it rose up and padded forward. It stopped before it crossed the threshold into the corridor, its amber eyes never leaving the former vampire. For a long time it merely watched her, and then it chuffed in Liam's direction and once more resumed its position.

"My wolf likes you," Liam smiled, happy his animal approved of their mate. He hadn't considered that it would be otherwise, but it was still a relief to know they were in tune with each other.

He closed the door when she didn't say anything, and searched for the miniscule human part of himself. He found it close by, as he expected it would be, the door a slightly lighter shade than the last one. "I don't think I need to open this one," he said quietly. "It would most likely be just like looking in a mirror."

When she didn't contradict him he knew that time had run out and he couldn't put off the last step in the process. He had to confront his vampiric side. His heartbeat began to race at just the thought of it, but he searched for the monster anyway, closing his eyes and willing himself to find that last hidden part of himself.

When he slowly opened them, he found himself standing in front of a door of the deepest black, a door with no numeral on its face. It was as if his subconscious mind had deliberately excluded it from the pattern he had conjured up. A trickle of sweat beaded his forehead and he felt a shiver run down his spine.

"Open it. Have faith in yourself."

Reasa's whispered words had him reaching out with a shaking hand, his palm sweaty as he slowly turned the doorknob. There was a loud creaking sound as the door opened inward, into a darkness so absolute it seemed to swallow up all of the light surrounding them.

"All the other doors opened outwards," Liam murmured, trepidation lacing his words. A hand touched his arm lightly, and he was surprised not only by Reasa's gesture, but also the fact he could feel her touch on the psychic plane.

"You feel you have control of everything else except this part of yourself. The door opens inwards because you're afraid of what will come out if it were any different."

There was a certain logic to her statement and he was amazed at the complexity of his own his mind. Always before he had been a slave to hiding from everyone's emotions; it was only now that he felt he was really coming to understand himself.

A noise from within the darkness startled him, and Liam tensed as a portion of the blackness lightened into a muted grey and a mirror image of himself appeared, standing motionless with his eyes closed. This Liam was clad entirely in black, his dark auburn hair loose with a wild, unkempt look to it.

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"He cannot cross the boundary unless you allow him to," Reasa said quietly. "When you change to your wolf form, you do so because you allow it out of the forest room we just viewed. You can contain the vampire within...and study him so you can come to know him. You are strong enough to do this, Liam. Have faith."

The moment she finished speaking, the vampire opened his eyes, dark pools of the deepest black glaring out at them. A loud hiss escaped him, lethal fangs and talons elongated as he strode towards the doorway, with no apparent indication of stopping.

"No!" Liam yelled, holding out his hands as if to ward the vampire off.

"Use your mind, Liam. Use your enhanced shielding capabilities."

It felt as if he was being freed to act, freed to protect Reasa and everyone he loved. Liam slammed up a mental barrier, almost gasping aloud as thick glass appeared from nowhere. The transparent cage effectively barricaded the vampire in, and a strategically placed rectangular opening allowed him to interact with them safely.

"Release me," the monster growled, pushing his fingers through the opening, talons scraping the glass as he pulled hard, trying to remove the barrier.

"No!" Liam cried out again, trying not to slam the door closed to hide the horror within. "I will not allow you to hurt anyone else ever again."

The vampire paused, a cruel smile crossing his face as he flicked his talons over the glass. "You allow others to hurt you, to take that which belongs to us. The female is ours, our mate, and yet you allowed harm to come to her. Release me and no one will ever dare touch her again. You know you are not up to the task. You and the wolf are too weak. Free me and we will have everything our hearts desire."

There was honey in the words, thick and cloying, and yet tempting beyond all measure. His vampire's strength had been proven and his appeal to the side of Liam that wanted so badly to mate with Reasa was a cleverly calculated move. He was tempted...oh so very tempted to remove his defences, to claim the woman at his side. The glass shimmered for a moment and he struggled to maintain it. Then Reasa stepped forward and there was no further struggle; the barrier solidified as he sought to protect her.

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"You are indeed a worthy specimen," she said to the vampire, her green eyes running over the sheer beauty before her. This is what she knew, what she understood. This was what she had seen when she had been hurt and what had drawn her to look at the Vârcolac as a man for the first time.