

Chapter 616

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Cassia shook her head. "Not specifically, but I know he's more than aware anyway. I've noticed Sam and Harlan are always around the compound since Pietro's been here. They're two of Rafe's strongest Betas. Also, Aaron's been close to home too. With all the work required to transfer ownership of the pack's businesses and start up new ones, he should be coordinating that but he's here most of the time. Rafe is keeping his best people close and it can only be for that reason."

Demetri nodded his agreement. The Alpha was smarter than most wolves he knew which was expected of anyone he accepted into his family. Rafe had earned his respect years ago when they had fought with Richard Graves after his attack on the Hanlon pack. While their relationship wasn't the standard kind of family one, he was Rhianna's brother and that meant he was Demetri's family by default and under his protection.

"I'll speak to Mara and Caleb. It might be wise to remove Pietro from the pack and place him somewhere else."

"He's not ready for that," Cassia disagreed, denial rippling through her at the thought of her mate going anywhere away from her. "He's only just venturing out of the house and only in my company. Reasa and Liam will be heading up to the Praetorian compound soon anyway, from what I hear. Let me work with him, Demetri. As long as I stay close everything should be okay."

He looked doubtful but he finally conceded, though he wasn't entirely happy about it. "He can't be allowed to do anything that may hurt the pack; no matter how justified some may feel he is. If he kills Thereasa and Liam goes rogue, hundreds of people could die."

"It won't come to that. I know it won't. I won't let it."

The determination in Cassia's voice matched her expression and it was enough to ease some of his concern. Demetri sipped at his coffee as she ate, wondering if perhaps it would be wise for him to pop in and have a word with Pietro before he headed home.

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"I thought the purpose was for me to recuperate here undisturbed?" There was no mistaking the irritation on Pietro's face as he opened the door.

Demetri merely gave him a level stare before brushing past him into the house. "Cassia reeks of you."

His friend smiled, a genuine, warm smile that reached his miss-matched eyes. "She should," was all the other vampire said turning to head into the empty living room.

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"What are you doing, Pietro? You know Alexei will hand you your ass on a plate when he finds out your having sex with his daughter. Do you have a death wish? Wasn't Europe a step too close for you?" Demetri watched his friend closely, seeing the slight stiffening of his shoulders that indicated his temper was on the rise. He didn't care, he had to find out if Pietro had any concept of what was happening. Perhaps then, he'd be able to have a word with Alexei when the shit hit the fan.

"Remind me again what business my personal life is of yours, Demetri? Should I start commenting on your relationship with Mara and Alexei's with Cedar?" There was more than a hint of coolness in Pietro's voice as he sat down on the sofa and met his friend's stare. Ŵww.No©ⓈⓉ@rM.cOM

"Alexei and I are mated to our partners. What are you implying here? Is Cassia your mate?"

Pietro's expression turned neutral, not a hint of what he was feeling crossing his face. "Don't be ridiculous. We're just enjoying each other. The last time I looked Cassia was a grown woman who is more than capable of making her own decisions. I don't see why this is anyone else's business but our own."

Demetri sat down on the sofa across from him, an eyebrow quirking at his choice of words. "Why ridiculous? Mac found his mate in Lily when he least expected it. Why is the possibility of Cassia being your mate ridiculous?"

"Look at me, Demetri. Look at the scars on my face. You've seen the ones on my body in Europe. What woman would want...this?" Pietro hissed out the words, waving a hand at the visible scars on his face and neck. His eyes blazed with repulsion, his one remaining hazel eye turning almost as black as the damaged one.

If he'd thought his outburst would garner some form of sympathy from his friend he was rudely mistaken. Demetri's expression remained the same, thoughtful but unsympathetic. "Clearly Cassia doesn't mind your imperfections." He pointed out the obvious. His response only appeared to irritate his friend more.

"I'm an anomaly to her. I'm the first vampire to be scarred for life. Of course, she's going to be interested in me. My body may hold the clue to an antidote for this poison. That calls to the scientist in her. As soon as she's found a cure she'll have no further need for me anymore. So I will enjoy the time I have with her for however long I have it, but that is all there is to this thing between us. It is all there can be. I've told her that so she'd aware."

Demetri stared at him, using all of his self-control to stop his mouth from dropping open. It was obvious Pietro was clueless to what was happening. He truly believed what he was saying. Did his friend really know Cassia so little that he believed she was only interested in him for scientific reasons and would leave him when that was no longer the case?

He felt a pang of sympathy but it was for Cassia not Pietro. She was an amazing young woman with a bright future ahead of her. She was happy at finding her mate in Pietro however, she had no idea that her mate didn't want her. Was she strong enough to ride out his friend's demons with him? It could prove one hell of an upward battle to convince Pietro that he was worthy of her.