

Chapter 624

"They disappeared when Jared showed up with Brody and Willow," Cassia informed the Alpha. "Jared said he'd be in contact with you later on to share any intelligence he's uncovered."

Rafe nodded his thanks, turning his attention back to Gard and Rayne. "We can't put off your trip to Europe any longer. How soon can you leave?"

"We'll arrange a flight for later today, if possible," Gard answered, glancing at Rayne to see if she was agreeable. His mate looked a tad hesitant.

"What about Kothi? He shouldn't be left on his own for a prolonged period. Maybe we should take him with us?"

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Rafe was shaking his head in the negative before Rayne had finished speaking. "Under no circumstances do I want any of the Vârcolac over in Europe until we know what's going on. I appreciate your concern, Rayne, but the pack can look after your son until you return."

She clearly didn't like it but she didn't argue with the exception of muttering under her breath, "Technically, I'm a Vârcolac..."

Gard laughed softly, gathering her against his side and dropping a light kiss on her lips. "We know you are, darling, but you're aware of what Rafe meant. Kothari will be fine. He's a grown man."

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"I'll ask Dara to keep a close eye on him," Cassia volunteered. "Of everyone, he has an affinity with her and is more likely to open up to her if he needs a bit of support."

"Good, that's settled then," Rafe said, drawing the debate to an end. "Let Caleb have your travel plans," he added to Gard and Rayne. "He should be able to set you up with some locals that can help."

Cassia had given her report and knew she wasn't required any further. Wishing Gard and Rayne a safe journey, she headed out of the study and made her way over to the lab. That was one task down and one to go before she had to meet Pietro. She fervently hoped she would be able to find the antidote to the poison soon so she could set her mate's mind to rest. She longed to tell him that he would never have to worry about being subjected to the pain and suffering he'd already been through. Her incentive to find the cure had always been strong, but it was doubly so now her mate was involved.

Entering the lab, she was surprised to find Trish there on her own. The younger woman was sitting on a high stool at one of the benches, peering over a printed report. "Where is everyone?"

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Trish looked up, giving a dramatic eye roll. "There was a minor skirmish on one of the pack borders. We were told there were some strange wolves in the area testing our alertness. It didn't erupt into fighting but some of the younger males were patrolling the area and got a little exuberant, from what I understand. Two of them managed to fall into our own pit traps!" For a wolf still so young herself, Trish's exasperated tone made Cassia smile.

"Aaron came over a little while ago and asked Mallen and the others to help out in the medical centre," she added.

Cassia could only imagine the injuries her pack mates would have sustained. Whoever had been supervising them needed a kick up the ass for allowing the youngsters to get out of hand. There wasn't much chance that Mallen or the others would be back soon so that meant she'd have to analyse all the test results herself. "Do they need me over there?"

"No, Mallen said to stay here and check on the experiments though he did want me to come over as soon as you arrived." Trish gave her an apologetic smile as she slipped from the stool and handed Cassia the report she was reading. "It's not looking too encouraging, Cass."

Her words made Cassia's heart sink but she tried to keep a neutral expression. "Maybe some of the others are more encouraging." She gave Trish her most confident smile. "You'd better get over to the medical centre. I'll finish up here and lock up."

As the younger woman left, Cassia's experienced eye ran over the report in her hand and her heart sank lower. Trish was right...the first report didn't tell her anything she hadn't already known. Sighing with frustration, she headed over to the next experiment that was just concluding and tapped out the instruction to print the report.

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There were two more scheduled experiments to finish in the next hour after this one. Perhaps there would be something concrete in one of them if this one didn't bear any fruit either. Snatching up the sheets from the printer, Cassia sat down and began to read the test summation.

Nothing? Really? She skimmed the rest of the report, a feeling of dejection washing over her. How could there be no concise results? They had an active sample of the poison! Could it be because of the time it had taken to get the sample to the lab? Demetri had gotten it to them as swiftly as he could. She didn't think it was that but they couldn't rule it out.

What the hell was the last component of Amort? Thereasa had been high level in her coven and even she didn't know what the plant extract was...or did she? Was the former vampire keeping it from them as a bargaining tool for later? Cassia didn't think so but she had to consider all possibilities. It would be negligent of her not to.

Running a weary hand over her face, the Vârcolac checked her watch and noted she'd already used up an hour of her allotted time she'd given Pietro. At this rate, she was going to be late meeting him. She hoped he would understand and wait for her. Should she hurry over and let him know? The beeping on the next experiment put paid to that thought and she walked back to the printer to grab the report printing out.

Cassia couldn't halt the small exclamation that escaped her as she read the summation. Again, there was nothing of worth in the results. She wouldn't have any positive news to tell Pietro when they met. She would have to admit to him that she'd failed and he was still at risk of being hurt again. Swallowing back tears, she stared at the damning piece of paper in her hand, helplessness overwhelming her.

She had been so sure she'd find the cure this time. She had needed to find it, as she'd never needed anything before in her life. Why couldn't she do it? Why couldn't she protect her mate and the countless others at risk from this abhorrent weapon? If there was just one thing she had been born to do in this life, why couldn't it be this one? Cassia lowered her head to the workbench and tried hard not to weep.
