

Chapter 656

"You have made us so proud, Cassia," Rafe said, a burst of love and pride flowing down his Alpha bond with the blond wolf, bringing happy tears to her eyes.

"It was a group effort," she answered and felt another burst of deep pride, this time from both the Alphas.

Lacey extricated herself from Rafe's arms, gathering the younger woman close. "You are an amazing young woman, Cassia Romanov, and we are so blessed to have you in our pack. You have given up much to help, not only the vampires, but also to protect your pack. It is time you now did something for yourself. Go and claim your mate, honey. Don't take No for an answer either. It's your time now. We can handle everything else."

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"I agree." Rafe smiled down at her, reaching out a hand to ruffle her curls affectionately. "If you need any pointers, I suggest you ask your Aunt Loretta. She had the most difficult time convincing your Uncle Andrei that he was her mate."

Now that she had finally done what she'd set out to do, Cassia could now look to her own future. Getting through to Pietro probably wasn't going to be that easy, but she had the blessing of her Alphas as well as her parents.

"That might be a good idea," she answered with a half-smile tugging at her lips.

Heading back out into the compound, Cassia turned in the direction of her own house first. She wanted to pack a light travelling bag before she had a chat with Loretta. Her aunt had said she could talk to her if she needed to, and this seemed like as good a time as ever. Pietro de la Rios was about to be in for a big shock if he thought he could get rid of her that easily. Cassia wasn't coming back to the pack until she had her vampire in tow.

Her parents were out when she got home and there was no sign of her sister. Cassia threw some clothes into a backpack, as she waited for her call to her mother to connect.

"Hi, sweetheart, is everything okay?"

She smiled at the distracted quality in her mother's voice. Whatever she was doing, it had most of her attention.

"We found an antidote, Mom. We can cure any more vampires who are infected as long as we get to them in time."

"Cassia, that's fantastic! Oh honey, your father and I are so proud of you. I presume Rafe knows?"

There was so much love and pride in her mother's voice that it brought happy tears to her eyes. "Yes, I'm just back from speaking to him and Lacey. I wanted to let you know not to worry when you came home and find me out. I'm going to go see Pietro and I may stay with him for a little while."

There was a long pause before her mother exhaled softly. "I'll let your father know and I will make sure he stays out of your hair until you and Pietro have had time to sort things out. Cass...there won't be a repeat of the last time, will there?"

Although she tried to hide her worry, Cassia could hear it in every word her mother said. She wished she were with her mom so she could give her a reassuring hug. "Mom, I will be fine, really I will. I was just caught off-guard the last time. Now I know how difficult it will be to convince Pietro he's my mate, I'm prepared for him to put up a bit of a fight."

"If you need us, you know where we are, honey. We will always be here for you, no matter what. Now, go get that mate of yours and shake some sense into him. You should stop by your Aunt Loretta's before you head over there. She could give you some helpful tips on how to get through Pietro's thick skull."

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Cassia burst out laughing, shaking her head. "You're the second person to suggest that. I was intending to anyway. Okay, I'd better get going so I'll give you a call later tonight, Mom."

"Take care, honey."

She was still smiling as she threw her backpack over her shoulder and headed downstairs, locking up behind her, and heading over to her aunt's house...

"Are you sure?" Cassia stared at Loretta with a doubtful expression, trying not to smile at the pure devilment shining in her aunt's eyes.

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"Believe me, honey, Pietro was way too helpful back then when I had the same problem with your uncle. Oh, he feigned innocence and stuck to it, but I have no doubt whatsoever that he was completely aware of what he was doing at the time. The phrase poetic justice comes to mind."

"What mischief are you getting up to now, woman?" Andrei entered the kitchen and swooped down for a quick kiss from his mate before turning to his bemused-looking niece.

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"I was just giving Cass some advice on how to get Pietro's attention."

He turned to look back at Loretta before throwing his head back and laughing. "Yes, that would be poetic justice," he echoed his mate's statement that he'd walked in on. "You have my wholehearted approval, niece."

Cassia wasn't so sure she liked how eager her aunt and uncle were for her to publicly humiliate her mate. One part of her could see the humorous side of possibly doing so, but the other part was concerned that Pietro had been through more than enough already. His ego may not be able to withstand any more humiliation.

"I'll bear it in mind," she sighed giving them a quick hug. "I'm going to head over to the Dive just now to try to speak to him."

"Do you want me to go with you?" Andrei asked, his earlier amusement vanishing in an instant, and his expression turning serious.

"No offence, Andrei, but that would be like taking my dad with me. Actually, now I come to think about it, it would probably be worse." Cassia hugged him again to take any perceived insult from her comment. Not that her uncle was the least insulted. Instead, he gave her one of his warm smiles that he reserved for those family members that he treasured.

"You have a point, sweetheart," he conceded.

"You shouldn't look so damned proud of that fact," his mate interjected, though she was laughing as she said it.

"Thanks for the advice," Cassia called over her shoulder as she headed out of the house. Now that she had made up her mind that she was going to beard the lion in his den, she wanted to get over to the Dive before her courage failed her. Her wolf was anxious to be with their mate and so was the woman. Climbing into one of the pack Jeeps, Cassia fired up the engine and headed into town.