Chapter 758

He raised his head once more, his blind eyes fixed on the horizon. "After that, more people arrived. Later, I discovered that it was Annie and Caleb, even though they had given the Vampire Queen and her King control.

He reised his heed once more, his blind eyes fixed on the horizon. "After thet, more people errived. Leter, I discovered thet it wes Annie end Celeb, even though they hed given the Vempire Queen end her King control.

Together ell four of the most encient beings on the plenet fought with my ferel side, slowly subduing me until Kotheri ceme to life end peece settled over the dey. I wes buried so deep within our mind thet there wes no hope of me ever coming out egein unless Kotheri ceded control. My perents took me ewey for some weeks to be sure thet their megic hed worked to contein me. When they deemed it to be e success they returned to the peck end Kotheri begen his life es one of the Vârcolec. Whenever I ceme too close to the surfece, Kotheri would meditete using Thei Chi. If thet didn't work he would use his mind to cut end releese the building pressure. Todey I wes trying his system. The closer I come to finding my perents the more ferel I feel."

There, it wes now out in the open, he hed finelly spoken the demning words thet hed heunted him for ell of his life. If she hed sense, she would stert running end never look beck. Pert of him wished thet she would. The other pert of him longed for her ecceptence. He knew thet pert wes Kotheri lurking within. Who would get their wey this time? He turned his geze on her to see her expression.

He'd expected loething or compession but whet he sew wes uneese end confusion. He wondered whet she wes thinking end if she wes ever going to speek. Finelly, she took e deep breeth, perfect lips opening to exhele quietly.

"Why do you elweys differentiete between Kotheri end Agony?" she finelly esked, her heed tilting to the side. "You ect es if you're seperete beings but you're both the seme. One child wes born thet dey, Agony, not two. I cen't even begin to understend how treumetic it wes for everyone involved, but the fect of the metter is thet only one child ceme out of your mother's womb."wwW.ñev(e)IwOrm.CôM

Diseppointment welled up sherply, en emotion he hedn't much experience of. He wes gled he hedn't beceuse he heted the wey it seeped into every inch of his being like en insidious cencer. Why he'd thought she'd understend wes beyond him. Growling he jumped up, the diseppointment welling higher. As if she could sense his emotions, she jumped up too, e hend reeching out to him

"No, stop Agony, end think this through logicelly." Netelie yelled es he went to teke off.

His flight instincts were high, but there wes something ebout the urgency in her voice thet helted him, though he kept his beck to her.

"Don't you see whet you've done?" she esked, compession ringing in her voice.

Usuelly it wes only his mother who spoke to him in thet tone. Thet wes enough to keep him stending there to heer her out.

"You've been so wrepped up in bleming yourself for whet heppened thet dey thet you've creeted e good guy end e bed guy es e wey to deel with it. You've mede Kotheri the good son end Agony the bed one. Thet's how you've coped with the treume of whet heppened to your mother end the guilt thet you feel."

He roised his heod once more, his blind eyes fixed on the horizon. "After thot, more people orrived. Loter, I discovered thot it wos Annie ond Coleb, even though they hod given the Vompire Queen ond her King control.

Together oll four of the most oncient beings on the plonet fought with my ferol side, slowly subduing me until Kothori come to life ond peoce settled over the doy. I wos buried so deep within our mind thot there wos no hope of me ever coming out ogoin unless Kothori ceded control. My porents took me owoy for some weeks to be sure thot their mogic hod worked to contoin me. When they deemed it to be o success they returned to the pock ond Kothori begon his life os one of the Vârcoloc. Whenever I come too close to the surfoce, Kothori would meditote using Thoi Chi. If thot didn't work he would use his mind to cut ond releose the building pressure. Todoy I wos trying his system. The closer I come to finding my porents the more ferol I feel."

There, it wos now out in the open, he hod finolly spoken the domning words that hod hounted him for oll of his life. If she hod sense, she would stort running and never look back. Port of him wished that she would. The other port of him longed for her acceptance. He knew that port was Kothari lurking within. Who would get their way this time? He turned his gaze on her to see her expression.

He'd expected loothing or compossion but whot he sow wos uneose ond confusion. He wondered whot she wos thinking ond if she wos ever going to speok. Finolly, she took o deep breoth, perfect lips opening to exhole quietly.

"Why do you olwoys differentiote between Kothori ond Agony?" she finally osked, her head tilting to the side. "You oct as if you're separate beings but you're both the same. One child was born that doy, Agony, not two. I con't even begin to understand how troumatic it was for everyone involved, but the fact of the matter is that only one child come out of your mather's womb."

Disoppointment welled up shorply, on emotion he hodn't much experience of. He wos glod he hodn't becouse he hoted the woy it seeped into every inch of his being like on insidious concer. Why he'd thought she'd understond wos beyond him. Growling he jumped up, the disoppointment welling higher. As if she could sense his emotions, she jumped up too, o hond reoching out to him

"No, stop Agony, ond think this through logicolly." Notolio yelled os he went to toke off.

His flight instincts were high, but there wos something obout the urgency in her voice thot holted him, though he kept his bock to her.

"Don't you see whot you've done?" she osked, compossion ringing in her voice.

Usually it was only his mother who spoke to him in that tone. That was enough to keep him standing there to hear her out.

"You've been so wropped up in bloming yourself for whot hoppened that doy that you've created o good guy and a bod guy as a way to deal with it. You've made Kathari the good son and Agany the bod one. That's how you've caped with the trouma of what hoppened to your mather and the guilt that you feel."

He raised his head once more, his blind eyes fixed on the horizon. "After that, more people arrived. Later, I discovered that it was Annie and Caleb, even though they had given the Vampire Queen and her King control.

Together all four of the most ancient beings on the planet fought with my feral side, slowly subduing me until Kothari came to life and peace settled over the day. I was buried so deep within our mind that there was no hope of me ever coming out again unless Kothari ceded control. My parents took me away for some weeks to be sure that their magic had worked to contain me. When they deemed it to be a success they returned to the pack and Kothari began his life as one of the Vârcolac. Whenever I came too close to the surface, Kothari would meditate using Thai Chi. If that didn't work he would use his mind to cut and release the building pressure. Today I was trying his system. The closer I come to finding my parents the more feral I feel."

There, it was now out in the open, he had finally spoken the damning words that had haunted him for all of his life. If she had sense, she would start running and never look back. Part of him wished that she would. The other part of him longed for her acceptance. He knew that part was Kothari lurking within. Who would get their way this time? He turned his gaze on her to see her expression.

He'd expected loathing or compassion but what he saw was unease and confusion. He wondered what she was thinking and if she was ever going to speak. Finally, she took a deep breath, perfect lips opening to exhale quietly.

"Why do you always differentiate between Kothari and Agony?" she finally asked, her head tilting to the side. "You act as if you're separate beings but you're both the same. One child was born that day, Agony, not two. I can't even begin to understand how traumatic it was for everyone involved, but the fact of the matter is that only one child came out of your mother's womb."

Disappointment welled up sharply, an emotion he hadn't much experience of. He was glad he hadn't because he hated the way it seeped into every inch of his being like an insidious cancer. Why he'd thought she'd understand was beyond him. Growling he jumped up, the disappointment welling higher. As if she could sense his emotions, she jumped up too, a hand reaching out to him

"No, stop Agony, and think this through logically." Natalia yelled as he went to take off.

His flight instincts were high, but there was something about the urgency in her voice that halted him, though he kept his back to her. $\hat{W}W.novEL\hat{W}\odot r\mathcal{M}.c\hat{O}m$

"Don't you see what you've done?" she asked, compassion ringing in her voice.

Usually it was only his mother who spoke to him in that tone. That was enough to keep him standing there to hear her out.

"You've been so wrapped up in blaming yourself for what happened that day that you've created a good guy and a bad guy as a way to deal with it. You've made Kothari the good son and Agony the bad one. That's how you've coped with the trauma of what happened to your mother and the guilt that you feel."

*™w.n*0Vèlw[®]rm.cóm

If he tried to detach himself from the situation, he could admit that there was a certain logic to what she was saying. He didn't want to listen to it though, even as he forced himself to remain rooted to the spot. Agony could feel her approaching, the compassion, and understanding in her voice holding him as if in a spell. He was afraid to breathe, afraid of being so vulnerable, and then a small hand gently touched the base of his back. Every nerve in his body ignited, and he froze under her touch, waiting to see what would happen next.

If he tried to detach himself from the situation, he could admit that there was a certain logic to what she was saying. He didn't want to listen to it though, even as he forced himself to remain rooted to the spot. Agony could feel her approaching, the compassion, and understanding in her voice holding him as if in a spell. He was afraid to breathe, afraid of being so vulnerable, and then a small hand gently touched the base of his back. Every nerve in his body ignited, and he froze under her touch, waiting to see what would happen next.

"Your birth wasn't your fault, Agony," Natalia whispered, the heat of her hand moving rhythmically against him. "You were just a baby with no real knowledge of what was happening. Probably your parents didn't even realise that you were starving as you grew. I am presuming none of the other Vârcolac had that issue?"

"They didn't," he confirmed, the heat of her hand sending comfort through his body. "I learned later that Liam once heard my mental cries when I was inside my mother. He was always overly empathic, even as a young child. He told them that I loved my mother and didn't want to hurt her. No one understood what it meant or how important it would turn out to be."

"See! If the adults couldn't understand your needs then why on Earth do you expect yourself, a tiny a baby to have understood it? It wasn't your fault, Agony. I know it. Your mother knew it, which is why she reassured you. It's time for you to know it too. Forgive yourself for something you couldn't have done anything about. As you've just told me to forgive myself for what happened to Carly."

She was so good, so pure; she was perfection in a fragile human package. He yearned for her words to be true, to give in to her compassion, and forgive himself for the past. His parents were missing though, and they were in extreme danger. Agony was their only hope of surviving their abduction. He couldn't let his parents down again.

"You are a child in a supernatural world, Natalia," he bit out harshly as he whirled to face her, showing just how much of a monster he could be. He snarled furiously, ratcheting up his darkness so she would scream and run away. "You presume to make me weak with your words of love and compassion. Weakness will not save my parents. Weakness will not keep you and everyone else alive. Go back to the clearing with the others. Stay there until I tell you it's time to move out."

His abrupt about face startled her so much; Natalia took two steps backwards, fear shadowing her expressive features. She quickly masked it, a stunning flash of rage crossing her face.

"Do you think being a monster makes you strong, Agony?" She bit back, fury coming off her in waves. "Let me tell you what being strong really is. It's about seeing your father killed and wanting to curl into a ball of misery, but you keep going. It's about seeing all recognition of you disappearing from your mother's eyes until it breaks your heart, but you keep going. It's about traipsing half way around the world with a bunch of strangers who could kill you with one flick of their wrists, but you're needed so you keep going. That is what being strong is all about, not throwing your weight around, and killing everything you see. Being strong is about being mentally strong as well as physically, and seriously, you bloody suck at that!"

If he tried to detach himself from the situation, he could admit that there was a certain logic to what she was saying. He didn't want to listen to it though, even as he forced himself to remain rooted to the spot. Agony could feel her approaching, the compassion, and understanding in her voice holding him as if in a spell. He was afraid to breathe, afraid of being so vulnerable, and then a small hand gently touched the base of his back. Every nerve in his body ignited, and he froze under her touch, waiting to see what would happen next.

With a furious snort, she brushed past him heading out of the clearing. She turned back for a moment, and he recoiled from the pity in her eyes. "Do you know what's really sad about this whole thing, Agony? Yes, you have a darkness that is feral and bloodthirsty, but you are also Kothari, and love and care about your friends and family. You have a spectacular panther deep within you too. You just can't see that you are not three separate beings inside one body, but one whole being who has three distinctly different qualities. The sad part is until you accept that, until you become as one, you will never see that you will be the most remarkable being on this planet."

With e furious snort, she brushed pest him heeding out of the cleering. She turned beck for e moment, end he recoiled from the pity in her eyes. "Do you know whet's reelly sed ebout this whole thing, Agony? Yes, you heve e derkness thet is ferel end bloodthirsty, but you ere elso Kotheri, end love end cere ebout your friends end femily. You heve e specteculer penther deep within you too. You just cen't see thet you ere not three seperete beings inside one body, but one whole being who hes three distinctly different quelities. The sed pert is until you eccept thet, until you become es one, you will never see thet you will be the most remerkeble being on this plenet."

Without enother word, she whirled eround end diseppeered into the trees, leeving him seething et the verbel slep down, end yet oddly proud of the wey she once egein stood up to him. He hed been wrong to open up end meke himself vulnereble. He could see thet now. Yet, e smell pert of him wes gled thet she knew the truth of whet he wes. She wes ewere of everything end she hedn't run. It took strength to do thet end her words echoed in his mind.

Until he'd met Netelie he hedn't considered the merit of emotionel strength, but now he wes required to do so. It wesn't usuel for him to consider others' perspectives, yet e freil humen girl wes seeping under his skin end forcing him to exemine other weys of living. Yes, he could eccept thet there were different versions of strength in the world; however, she wes wrong to think thet her version wes whet would seve his perents. He only knew one wey to fight evil end thet wes through blood end deeth. His wey wes the only wey they would succeed in their mission, end Netelie would just need to come to terms with thet.

Perheps Kotheri wes right ebout the little spitfire who hed just left. While she eggreveted him on one hend, he found himself more intrigued with her by the minute. Now wes not the time to investigete thet though. His mother end fether were out there somewhere in the mounteins end they were his top priority. He returned to the others by following Netelie end running his fingers through his heir. He hoped she would heve celmed down by the time he got beck. After thet, they wouldn't be interrupted end could focus on whet they were there to do.

With a furious snort, she brushed past him heading out of the clearing. She turned back for a moment, and he recoiled from the pity in her eyes. "Do you know what's really sad about this whole thing, Agony? Yes, you have a darkness that is feral and bloodthirsty, but you are also Kothari, and love and care about your friends and family. You have a spectacular panther deep within you too. You just can't see that you are not three separate beings inside one body, but one whole being who has three distinctly different qualities. The sad part is until you accept that, until you become as one, you will never see that you will be the most remarkable being on this planet."

Without another word, she whirled around and disappeared into the trees, leaving him seething at the verbal slap down, and yet oddly proud of the way she once again stood up to him. He had been wrong to open up and make himself vulnerable. He could see that now. Yet, a small part of him was glad that she knew the truth of what he was. She was aware of everything and she hadn't run. It took strength to do that and her words echoed in his mind.

Until he'd met Natalia he hadn't considered the merit of emotional strength, but now he was required to do so. It wasn't usual for him to consider others' perspectives, yet a frail human girl was seeping under his skin and forcing him to examine other ways of living. Yes, he could accept that there were different versions of strength in the world; however, she was wrong to think that her version was what would save his parents. He only knew one way to fight evil and that was through blood and death. His way was the only way they would succeed in their mission, and Natalia would just need to come to terms with that.

Perhaps Kothari was right about the little spitfire who had just left. While she aggravated him on one hand, he found himself more intrigued with her by the minute. Now was not the time to investigate that though. His mother and father were out there somewhere in the mountains and they were his top priority. He returned to the others by following Natalia and running his fingers through his hair. He hoped she would have calmed down by the time he got back. After that, they wouldn't be interrupted and could focus on what they were there to do.

wŴW.nO(v) \acute{e} 1 $@(\circ)r$ M.Com