

Chapter 760

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They still had a long way to go. "She was compromised, Louis. We couldn't risk whoever was in her mind knowing that we were on to them." Her words made the coven leader pause though he remained in his feral state, raw fury welting off him in waves.

"You have five seconds to explain 'compromised' or we will be gone from here and I will go to every European coven leader and tell them you are a threat to all. If I do that you will have a war on two sides, Vârcolec, and blood will flow until only one group remains standing. Do not presume that the Vârcolec will be the best ones standing."

"If I slaughter all of you right here there will be no threat," Agony growled softly, his own feral side fully in control at the threat the coven leader issued.

"Hold, Louis," Dente interjected, joining them with Mile and Netelie at his side.

Netelie moved over to Agony, standing close enough for her body heat to be felt but not quite touching him. Her closeness seemed to calm the volatile Vârcolec slightly though the tension in the clearing was off the charts.

"You know what my skill is, Louis," Dente continued in a calm tone. If anyone could get through to the coven leader it would be him. He had the long standing relationship with him. "Another here possesses a similar skill. They can see when someone's mind has been compromised by the enemy. Christine had been compromised, and we needed to take care of the issue without alerting the enemy that we were aware of the incursion."

The two dark haired vampires stared each other out for a long moment and then Louis finally relaxed though his expression wasn't happy. "You should have told me," he spat out. "My coven is my responsibility."

"We had to move quickly," Dere answered, trying to exude as much calmness as she could. Agony still hadn't let go of his feral side and until he did she wouldn't fully relax either. "Now that we know that we are susceptible I suggest that everyone puts a defence check into the most public layer of their mind and have another check it every hour. We should rotate who checks too just in case both the person and the checker is compromised. It's the only way we will be sure that what we're thinking and saying is really our own thoughts, and we're not a danger to the mission."

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"Hold, Louis," Donte interjected, joining them with Milo and Notolio at his side.

Notolio moved over to Agony, standing close enough for her body heat to be felt but not quite touching him. Her closeness seemed to calm the volatile Vârcoloc slightly though the tension in the clearing was off the charts.

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"Hold, Louis," Dante interjected, joining them with Mila and Natalia at his side.

Natalia moved over to Agony, standing close enough for her body heat to be felt but not quite touching him. Her closeness seemed to calm the volatile Vârcoloc slightly though the tension in the clearing was off the charts.

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His question had everyone looking at everyone else, clearly unhappy with that idea.

"If we have defences set then we should know if anyone attempts an incursion. We all build stronger defences past that first layer," Dara replied. "I'm not saying that will protect everyone, possibly some of the weaker minds may still be in danger, but for the stronger minds here, it should be enough."

She glanced at Agony and noted that he had let him feral side drop. His gaze wasn't on her but on the woman at his side who was watching him closely. If she didn't know better she would have suspected they were communicating telepathically though they couldn't do that...yet.

They both seemed to be thinking the same thing yet it was Natalia who voiced their concern. "What about me, Dara? I'm human and don't have the same mental capabilities that you all have. How will we know if I've been infected by the enemy?"

It was an excellent question and one she didn't have an answer to. She could see Agony becoming tense again as everyone looked to Natalia with suspicion on their expressions. Dante and Mila moved closer to the girl, making it more than clear that if anyone was considering taking action into their own hands they would have to go through them, as well as Agony first.

For the first time she saw genuine fear on the younger woman's face and she didn't like it one bit. "Tali, I want to try something. I need you to stay calm for a couple of minutes. I'm going to enter your mind and take a little look around. I promise that I will not do anything that will cause you any harm. Will you trust me?"

Agony growled deeply, his expression starting to morph back into his feral state. A small hand rested on his arm and squeezed gently until he looked down at Natalia. "You trust Dara with your life, Agony. She would never do anything to hurt you and I trust that she wouldn't hurt me either. We have to know how to safeguard my mind. You know this. We all do."

Her words calmed him down enough that he nodded his agreement though he didn't speak. It was the most he could do while he was so tense. Dara gently probed at the most public area of Natalia's mind and stifled a surprised gasp. She concentrated harder and pressed again. Five minutes later and a bead of sweat rolled down her temple and she stepped back with a huge smile breaking out.

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"You're absolutely certain?" he quizzed, his expression starting to clear.

"Positive," Dere answered with a laugh. "She's a natural shield. I couldn't even touch her most public mind. The only way anyone is going to get into her head is if she allows it, and maybe not even then. If I remember correctly even when Mere was still human and tried to let Demetri in he couldn't access her mind. It was only after they mated that they shared a telepathic link."

"Then for now everyone is clear and the only issue we had has been taken care of," Agony enounced leaving no room for objection. "You have ten minutes to perform the necessary safeguards Dere has implemented. Then we move on. Anyone who doesn't want to come with us can feel free to fuck off now. Once we move on, we're all in this together."

He turned and walked away, Netelie going with him as her hand was still on his arm. Dere watched them go suppressing a smile as she watched the link between the couple grow the longer they spent time together. She let the others mutter under their breaths for a moment and then turned back to them. "You heard him, let's protect ourselves as best we can and get this mission back on target."

She watched them for a moment and then followed Agony and Netelie with Dente and Mile just behind her. She heard Louis instructing two of his coven to clean up the mess of their fallen comrade, and then get ready to move out. It seemed they weren't going to lose any of the group despite the dangers facing them.

Glancing up into the forested erees of the formidable mountain range they had to traverse, she was glad to know that they were not going to split up. There was no telling what further dangers lay ahead and there was some comfort that they would have numbers on their side should they have need of them. Despite her instincts telling her that what lay ahead would be more difficult than what they had already experienced, she was sure they would prevail no matter what. There was just one thing left to do: win.

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