

Chapter 386

The self-loathing in Pietro's voice cut Demetri to the quick. He knew what it cost his friend to admit that, how he would view himself as a coward for wanting his torture to end. He understood because he knew he would react the same way if their roles were reversed.

He didn't know what to say to him. He was no Annie; he didn't have the perfect response when someone's soul was so shattered. He tried to think what she would say.

"You did not die, Pietro. You stayed strong until help arrived and you did not ask me for mercy. No sane person would have thought any differently in your situation. Most sane people would have given up and stopped fighting. Only a stubborn, crazy bastard like you would keep going. You like to piss people off." It was possible Annie would have phrased it a bit more eloquently but he figured it was close enough.

"I don't know how much of me is left," Pietro choked out. "I don't know if I will ever be the same man again, Demetri."

"You've eternity to work out just who you are going to be from this moment onwards, my friend. Know your limitations. Don't try and work it all out when you're probably having your first ever shower with what has to be the sexiest male specimen to walk the planet. It's too much sensory overload."

Loud laughter burst through the room. It bordered on hysterical but it was better than the anguished sobs Pietro had been spilling for the last ten minutes. "You fucking suck as a counsellor."

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"That's because you're not my type. Now if it was Mara in my arms she wouldn't have time to be worrying about whether she was broken or not," Demetri laughed.

Pietro laughed again struggling back to his feet, standing a little straighter even though he still felt raw inside. His friend's diversion tactics were helping and he latched onto it. "I'm done with the shower. Just don't think you're climbing into the bath with me."

Keeping up his light tone, Demetri headed out of the cubicle. "Nah, I measured it. Won't fit both of us."

His head tilted to the side. "Joshua's back."

He stayed long enough to be sure Pietro was fine in the bath himself. Snapping open his jeans he grabbed a towel and headed out the room. The blond vampire was in the sitting room. He didn't comment at seeing a soaking wet Demetri appearing in the doorway.

"Your bags are over there." He nodded to the corner of the room.

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Demetri stripped off his sodden jeans and quickly dried himself, digging out clean clothes from his travel bag. He noted Pietro's bags were there too.

"Are the humans okay?" he asked as he pulled on the first jeans and sweater he found and began towelling his hair dry.

"I dropped them off at their rented cottage and left full provisions for them, iron rich foods to replenish their blood loss." Joshua disappeared into the kitchen and came back in a few minutes with a pot of fresh coffee on a tray complete with mugs, cream and sugar.

He placed it on the low coffee table as Demetri finished brushing his hair and tied it back. "I used your credit card and transferred 50K to my personal account," Joshua continued.

Demetri raised an eyebrow in inquiry. He'd given the other man his card so he could purchase food for the humans and anything else they might need in recompense for using them.

Joshua poured himself black coffee and sat down in the nearest armchair. "I keep cash lying around," he explained. "I figured you wouldn't want your financial details tied to the humans in any way. I was reimbursing myself."

"I take it that was 50K sterling?" The dark-haired vampire asked, moving to grab a coffee and taking five minutes to regroup before he had to go deal with Pietro again. ©Ww.nÖvéLwör.m.co(m)

He sank down into the armchair across from Joshua. He didn't have a problem with the money leaving his account. It seemed only fair that the humans gained something from the experience even if they wouldn't remember it. His answer was a brief nod.

Sighing, Demetri sipped at his coffee and then rested his head back against the chair. Silence filled the room but it was a companionable silence and it took him a minute to realise that he was trusting Joshua. Normally it took a long time for him to reach the level of relaxation in a stranger's company that he was currently experiencing. There was just something about the man.

Joshua broke the silence. "How's Pietro?"

Demetri frowned and took another drink. "Fragile mentally. I'm not sure how he's going to react to your presence. He doesn't know you, Joshua. Being vulnerable in front of a stranger may be too much for him. Don't be offended if I ask you to leave. Your assistance today has been invaluable. Thank you."

Joshua had been anticipating the possibility of having to make himself scarce. He wouldn't be offended if that was the case. He'd hate to have a stranger close if he'd just been through what the other vampire had. "I owe Caleb a few favours," he answered with a smile. "This scores one off my list. No thanks are necessary."

Demetri nodded and drained his cup. "I need to check on Pietro." www.VöveLwör(m).cOm

Joshua watched him riffle through the other man's belongings for clean clothes. "The local coven is waiting to clean up here. I know them well and they can be trusted. One of the few things we do share in common with you is the need to ensure our existence remains secret."

He watched Demetri pause for a second as if considering whether or not he was willing to trust someone else to sanitise the cottage before he nodded his agreement and gathered up the clothes.