

Chapter 704

Dara shook her head. She'd been thinking about it ever since she had read the journal. She had tested her wolf, paid minute attention to its reactions over Kothari's disappearance, and the possibility of him being rogue. The animal was unperturbed by the events and it wouldn't have been if he was their mate. "I'm certain of it, though from the evidence in the journal, I think he truly does believe I'm his mate, and that can only work to our advantage."

"Explain." Rafe's brown eyes were piercing as he spoke that one word, his gaze firmly fixed on Dara's face.

Swallowing hard, she took a deep breath to prepare for the automatic outcry she expected from her next words. "If Kothi has gone rogue, or whatever version of rogue we Vârcolac can go, then it stands to reason that he is as dangerous as both Pietro and Dad have already intimated. Sending someone after him will not be without risk. However, I believe that I would stand the best chance of not only finding him, but also bringing him safely home."

"Not a chance in hell!" her father roared, fury blazing from his eyes. "Don't you even consider this, Rafe," he continued, pointing a long talon at the other man. "I mean it. Alpha or not, I will not agree to my daughter chasing after a dangerous man, let alone heading off alone to Europe. We all know that's where Kothari has gone. He's searching for his parents and anyone who gets in his way will be in serious jeopardy."

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"Stand down, Alexei," Rafe countered, his tone calm and even, though his body language was rigid as he stood up slowly. "I appreciate you're concerned for your daughter, but I have to think of the entire pack here. What Dara says has some merit and even though I am reticent about agreeing to anything right now, I can't discount what she has brought to the table."

"If you do this I will leave this pack and never come back," the Ancient vampire spat out, no sign of his fury abating. "Andrei? You don't have anything to say about this lunacy?" His gaze swung to his twin brother, who was oddly silent given the fact this impacted on his family too.

Andrei's expression was neutral, his gaze moving from his brother to Cedar, and then latterly to Dara, who held his eyes with a strength that brought a half smile to his lips. "You are very brave, niece of mine," he sighed, his smile widening at her surprised expression.

His gaze returning to his brother, Andrei shrugged his shoulders and let out a rueful sigh. "Alexei, I have very recently been educated in just what my children are capable of and just how much they do not need my protection. Am I happy that a niece of mine wants to travel to Europe to try to save one of our most vulnerable pack members? Of course I'm not, but do I think she is strong and capable enough to perform such a task? Yes, I am certain that she is because she is her father's daughter, every bit as much as she is her mother's. Dara is a Romanov to the very core, and if you take the tiniest of steps back and truly look at your daughter, you will see just how strong and resourceful she is, my brother."

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The stunned disbelief that crossed Alexei's face would have been comical if the situation wasn't so grave. A loud growl escaped him in response to what he viewed as his brother's betrayal and his gaze turned to his mate, who was looking so torn that some of the rage he was experiencing evaporated as he caught her expression. "Cedar, surely you can't be considering this? She's our daughter!"

"I know, and I want to keep her here with us too, Alexei, but it's not that simple," his mate countered, her voice trembling with the wealth of conflicting emotions coursing through her. "Dara is Vârcolac, and we are only now coming to learn just a fraction of what that means. She is stronger, faster, and has abilities that far surpass all of us here in this room, with the exception of Cassia and Kallum. She is not a helpless child to be protected anymore, my love. We need to see that and believe it because that is the truth."

As her mate took two steps back, Cedar reached out a hand in silent plea for him to hear her out. "Kothari needs us, Alexei, and we are powerless to help him. Gard and Rayne left him in our care and we have somehow failed him through no real fault of our own. Do we sacrifice Kothari so that our daughter remains overprotected here in the pack? When Gard and Rayne come home will you be the one to look them in the eyes and tell them that they have lost their son because we were too afraid to allow our daughter to help him?"

As his expression turned confused, she took a step towards him, holding his eyes with an intentness that refused to allow him to look away. "Would you accept anyone standing before you telling you that you have lost your child because they were not brave enough to give her a chance at being saved?"

Alexei looked away, fury infusing him as the truth of what Cedar said fought to overwhelm him. Would he ever forgive someone in those circumstances? Never! He would hold them accountable for the rest of his existence; blame them forever for the loss of his child. Could he do the same to Gard and Rayne? Could he look them in the eyes and tell them that his child was more important than theirs was and they would just have to accept that? ⓂⓂW.N©VêLW(o)rmm.cOm

Turning to Dara, he stared at his youngest child, seeing a plea deep within her eyes as she met his gaze resolutely. She was so strong and beautiful, and he couldn't be more proud of her than he already was. Where Cassia had veered towards science and healing, Dara has always been more inclined toward physical combat and pack security. She was a soldier through and through, and he had always known that one day she would elevate in the ranks to Beta

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