

Chapter 711

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"Kothi won't hurt me, Dad, no matter what his state of mind is. I am certain of that, so please try not to worry about things that aren't likely to happen." It was important to get that point across to her family because it was something she truly believed. It was the only reason she was willing to go to Europe.

Her parents' resigned expressions were enough to tell her that they were reluctantly agreeing to her mission. Her father handed her a piece of paper with a name and address on it. "This is the vampire Kothari most likely went to see to get ID. Your Uncle Andrei says he's the best on the black market, and he isn't slow at knocking people around if they get too uppity with him. Try to be respectful in your dealings with him. You might find it easier to get what you need with honey rather than with a stick. If you want, I could come with you?"

Dara smiled at her father, resisting the urge to let out another sigh. He couldn't help himself with his overprotectiveness and she really didn't want him to ever change. "I will be fine, Dad. Now, I need to get going because Kothi has God knows how many hours' head start on me. Try not to worry too much, I will check in regularly."

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Now that the moment to leave was finally there, she was hesitant to leave the sanctity of her family and pack, but she knew she had no other choice. She had agreed to this assignment and she would do her best to bring Kothari back safe and sound. If they were lucky, they may even return with Gard and Rayne.

With final hugs to her parents and sister, Dara headed out of her home and raised a hand in Rafe and Lacey's direction. Her Alphas were standing outside their home, their gaze intent on her.

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"Be safe, Dara, and bring our boy home," Lacey whispered, a tremor in her voice as she hugged her and then stepped back to allow her mate to embrace her.

"In the event that the risk is too great, you are to protect yourself first, Dara Romanov, even if that means returning to us alone. I mean it...don't you dare put your life at risk for Kothari or anyone else, if it becomes clear that he doesn't want to be helped." There was so much Command in Rafe's voice that it would have been impossible to disobey him even if she'd wanted to.

"I understand, Rafe. Let's hope it doesn't come to that." With a final wave to them, she climbed into the waiting Jeep that had her Uncle Aaron, their pack's second in command, behind the wheel.

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"I'll drop you off close to the district you need," her uncle told her. His blue eyes stared intently for a long moment and then he nodded his head as if coming to some internal decision she wasn't privy to. "I am proud of you, Dara. You are an Alexander through and through even if your DNA is messed up with those Romanovs." He winked as he spoke, drawing a loud peel of laughter from his niece.

"You're outrageous, Aaron, but thank you for the back handed compliment. I know you adore Dad and Uncle Andrei, despite your grumbling."

He laughed with her, and her nervousness eased a bit and her smile widened. Her uncle had deliberately said what he had to lighten her pensiveness. That was what made him such an excellent number two...he always knew what every pack member needed at any given time. Settling back in her seat...she closed her eyes as the Jeep surged forward, away from the pack, and her mission truly began in earnest.

It seemed like no time had passed before she was getting out of the Jeep, after submitting to a huge bear hug from her uncle. Now she watched the car drive away and realised that she was now truly on her own for the first time in her life.

Squaring her shoulders, Dara checked her surroundings quickly before she shadowed her presence and headed towards the address she'd been given. This part of the city was particularly seedy, and it made sense not to advertise a lone female wandering around. She didn't want to have to kick ass just to get to her destination.

She found it easily enough, scented the area carefully to see if she could pick up any trace of Kothari. She thought she detected a faint scent but couldn't be sure it wasn't just wishful thinking on her part. Making her way down the alleyway, she unknowingly echoed her friend's movements, slipping passed the vampire guard who was staring perplexedly at the steel door that had appeared to open all by itself twice now.

As she entered the door at the very end on the hallway, the dark-haired vampire looked up with a shrewd expression but didn't rise from his seat behind the desk. Dara unshadowed herself as the door closed, keeping a respectful distance from the elder male.

"It's customary to knock when you wish admission," the male growled, displeasure crossing his face as he glared at her.

"I didn't want give you the opportunity to refuse," she countered, moving further into the room and sitting down in a chair across the vampire. "I seek one who is like me."

"I don't know any blondes. My taste runs to brunettes."

She supposed he thought he was being witty but she wasn't very amused by his response. Fighting not to allow her temper to rise, Dara took a deep breath and tried again. "The person I seek is around six foot, with short dark hair and an unnatural predilection for sunglasses and the colour black."

The male sat back, steepling his fingers as he watched her intently. "What makes you think that I would know anything about this individual?"

Dara smiled, mimicking his position. "Because you weren't the least bit surprised when your door opened all by itself and I revealed myself to you. In addition, you had the sense not to instantly attack me. That tells me that the person I am looking for has been here ahead of me, and you, being an Elder of some age, learn quickly. Hence why you didn't attack me. You've already had one lesson today."

The vampire's expression changed, turning guarded as he leaned forward onto his desk. "Let's say...just hypothetically...that such an individual did come to see me. And let's say that the said individual promised to take my head should I divulge his visit, and that I might only do so to one other person and only if said blonde was to say one word only...what would you have to say to that?"

Dara felt elation well up inside and fought to keep her expression as neutral as possible. Kothari had been here, she was certain of that, and he had known that she would come looking for him. He did want her to find him just as she suspected. Only now, she had to try to come up with the password he had left in place for the forger. She had to think carefully because the wrong answer would lead to her having to kick the vampire's ass to get the information she needed and that would take too much time.

What word would Kothi have chosen? What did he believe she would be able to come up with when asked? Dara's thoughts went to the journal nestled in her pack, the journal that was an insight into Kothi's mind and a map to where he was headed. Taking a chance, she met the vampire's unwavering gaze, and took a deep breath before she answered...

"Angel."