

Chapter 292

"You are fully confident with your choice, Demetri?" Rhianna asked. It wasn't that she didn't trust her friend's judgement, it was more a case of she hadn't been aware of Demetri trusting another individual outwith their current group. After Caleb and herself, the Romanov twins were the closest to Demetri, followed after that by Nors. Demetri did not trust easily.

He raised his head and turned to look at her, total confidence in his eyes. "I haven't seen Mackenzie for a few centuries but I know he's still living and roughly where he is right now. He's a hard man, implacable but fiercely loyal to those who warrant it. I did him a service once, one he had yet to repay. He has a habit of taking up causes which he feels are worthy enough. I have no doubt he will answer this call. There is no better person outwith our family that I would give this task to, Annie."

He waited for her permission, slightly surprised that he did so. He adored Rhianna, counted her as his sister. He just wasn't aware until that moment that he'd started to view her as his queen. He had always been ready to defend her, had helped save the Hanlon pack because she asked it of Caleb. Now he knew without a doubt he would do anything she asked of him, that he trusted her with the same deep abiding trust he had for Caleb.

Rhianna watched surprise briefly cross Demetri's face, wondered at what he was thinking in that moment. His faith in this Mackenzie person was absolute even though Caleb didn't appear to know him judging from his surprised expression.

When it came to all things concerning fighting, Demetri was the most lethal of them all because he was the one who could shed his humanity in an instant and do what was necessary. He felt no remorse, never second guessed himself while Caleb suffered for the hard decisions he had to make.

Her mate was leaving everything up to her though she knew he would support whatever decisions she made. He trusted in Demetri wholeheartedly, as did she. With a smile she turned to Mara and winked at her. "Bring your credit card...we may as well spend his money while he's away."

Demetri burst out laughing reaching for Rhianna and ruffling her curls the way Rafe did to annoy her. "How many years ago was that? Are you going to throw that up in my face endlessly? Caleb, your woman is in need of a spanking. You may have been mated longer than I have but you clearly haven't gotten the art of how to be a true dominant mate down yet."

A hard elbow to his ribs had him laughing harder as he released Rhianna and tackled his mate to his side as she tried to elbow him again. "Neither have you, you arrogant ass," Mara laughed wrapping her arms around him.

Caleb rolled his eyes though he was smiling too at the byplay between them. It had lessened the tension in the room, everyone relaxing now they had a plan of action being formulated. "We probably could do with sending someone over to Europe for a while, someone who isn't well known," he mused. "Having a mole in the lion's den wouldn't be a bad thing."*www.nOvelw@rm.côM*

"I would have suggested Stefan but he's a Council member and probably noticeable," Demetri said after a brief pause. "And he would want to take Emily with him which would not only leave the Council two members down but also place her in a potentially dangerous situation."

"Emily is stronger than she appears," Mara countered though she didn't disagree with Demetri's assessment. She was just in the habit of protecting the Youngling who sat on the Council with her and was mentored by Stefan.

"Pietro," Caleb said quietly which brought a groan from Demetri.

"You know he's Andrei's favourite bartender, Caleb. He'll be pissed as hell if you take him away."*Www.NoV@lworm.CoM*

Caleb barked a laugh. "Pietro may tend bar at The Dive but he is anything but a bartender, Demetri. I don't care how jovial and approachable that man appears to be. We all know the folly of falling for that little act when it came to Andrei. I have no doubt there is a lot we don't know about Pietro, maybe even things you aren't sharing either?"

He raised an eyebrow at his friend, knowing that Demetri would be well versed on just who and what Pietro was capable of having spent so much time with the Romanov twins over the centuries. That they placed their trust in the bartender was telling enough.

Demetri grinned unrepentantly at him, his eyes silently answering Caleb's question. "Pietro would be a good choice to send," he conceded. "But you can tell Andrei because I'm not. He's only just started talking to me again for siding with you and messing up his grand entrance onto the Council all those years ago. That man sure knows how to hold a grudge."

Caleb had to smile as he nodded his agreement. He knew Demetri wouldn't have a problem with telling Andrei the news but it would probably come better from him. "I take it we've covered everything now?"

Everyone looked around the room waiting for any other points to be raised. When no one spoke they began to disband, Demetri and Mara slipping away first.

Rafe hugged Rhianna tightly, his love for her a bright beacon in his soul. Always she was there for him no matter what just as he would always be there for her too. His gaze connected with Caleb's over her head and he smiled. "Thank you."

"Thought you'd realised by now that no one messes with our family," Caleb smiled back. "We might be a little pushy and arrogant at times, Rafe, but we protect what is ours. I think it's highly unlikely there will be another attempt on either pack for a very long time. This feels like an opening gambit and they got their asses handed to them on a plate. They will regroup before they try again. By that time we will have the Praetorians in place along with all your own protective measures. No one will get past us."

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"Vampires are a very patient people, Rafe," Gard said, coming to join them with Rayne at his side. He smiled at his sister as she gave him a quick hug before she welcomed Rayne into her family with an even bigger one.

"They will most likely wait until they think we have become complacent before they strike again," Gard continued. "That will give me time to train this generation of young males and possibly even the next. I want to give the hybrid children special training too so they are fully prepared to defend themselves."

"Do what needs to be done, Gard, and schedule myself and all the Betas into the same training regiment you want for the children," Rafe said firmly. "You have authority to do anything that needs to be done to secure protection for the pack. When I am training I am not your Alpha and your word is final."

It was a huge amount of trust and respect to give the Ancient, which Gard was very aware of. His lavender eyes were warm as he smiled and nodded his head. "We will train as brothers," he answered quietly, welcoming his sister's Were brother into his family unconditionally.

Soft tinkling laughter filled the room and Rhianna hugged them both before slipping back into Caleb's arms and grinning up at him. "I love it when my boys play nice," she laughed softly. "And I'm going to be an Aunt again!"

Caleb rolled his eyes, his heart swelling with love as he looked into his Annie's radiant face. Her joy filled his soul as only she could and he couldn't resist bending his head to rub his lips against hers. He would move a mountain if she asked it of him but all she asked was for her family to be safe and protected. He could never deny her that.

To be continued..*Ww@.NOvélw@rM.côM*