

Chapter 304

Demetri nodded silently, watching the others work. Secrecy was paramount and all remains were always burnt to ash to ensure no humans accidentally stumbled across proof of their existence. The likelihood of anyone coming across remains this high in the Romanian mountains was small but it was ingrained in all of them to cover their tracks.

"We are aware of the issues," he finally said. "Alexei had to sort things out in Ecuador a number of years ago. But we've had our own issues to deal with too. We only just managed to stop a civil war not so long ago."

Mac snorted, tossing his blond victim onto the gathered wood as Pietro tossed the other two on top of him. "I love the way you prevent a civil war," he laughed. "Dissolve a Council and set up another to your own liking. Isn't there something a little autocratic about that, my friend?"

Demetri shrugged, and a smile lit up his handsome face. "Times are changing, Mac. You know how resistant to change our people can be. Sometimes the ends justify the means. The last Council was corrupt, ready to start all out war with the Weres. That couldn't be allowed to happen." *www.NoVeIWorm.com*

Mac straightened and looked him in the eye. His expression was carefully neutral. "Why not? Isn't natural selection the way of the world?"

Pietro barked out a loud laugh as he struck a match and lit the pyre. "Andrei Romanov naturally selected a she-wolf for his mate, as did his twin Alexei. Add in the fact that Nors Eriksson did too and that should answer your question, Mackenzie."

He watched the flames dance for a moment then turned to look at the vampire at his side. "Or maybe I should say their wolves selected them," he amended. "The night Loretta caught Andrei canoodling with Marcia was priceless. I haven't laughed so hard in a long time. Loretta calm as you like just upended a whole bucket of iced soda on the pair of them, right in front of everyone. I don't think Andrei knew whether to kiss her or kill her."

"Pietro," Demetri sighed, trying to stifle down his impatience. If he'd heard that story once since they'd been travelling together, he'd heard it a thousand times. While it had been amusing the first couple of times it was wearing old now.

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"You had to be there, Demetri. It was funny as fuck." *www.NoVeIWorm.com*

Mac watched them carefully, his mind whirling as he tried to figure out what Demetri wanted from him. He knew three Ancients had mated with Weres. He could also tell that, despite his laughter, Pietro was tight with the Romanovs and would view anyone out to hurt them as a personal threat. His amusing anecdote was more than humour; it was a subtle warning to him to be careful what he said.

There was more to Pietro than the easy, relaxed persona he displayed. Stupidity not being one of his character traits, Mac tagged him as one to watch in the future.

"There's more," Demetri said, ignoring Pietro and signalling for them to come and sit down. They both moved gracefully towards different fallen trees and sat facing him. *www.NoVeIWorm.com*

"What I tell you now is so secret that if either of you utter a word of it you will die instantly," Demetri said calmly. There was no false bravado in his voice; it was a statement of fact. This secret would end a life in a blink of an eye and they had to be under no illusions about it.

Demetri's matter-of-fact tone piqued Mac's curiosity as well as Pietro's. Both of them knew how to hold their tongue and they weren't concerned with his statement.

"Go ahead," Mac said quietly.

Demetri gauged their expressions for a moment and then let out a deep breath. Caleb had told him he could reveal this if he was certain it was safe enough. He trusted Mac a lot and had known Pietro most of his life.

"The Queen of Vampires had been reincarnated."

Silence greeted his words and then a slow smile crossed Pietro's face. "That's a neat trick, Demetri. I didn't even know there was one, let alone that she'd died."

"The Council destroyed all knowledge of the past countless millennia ago," Demetri answered. "But they were unable to destroy the natural way of things. Over six thousand years ago our people lived in a matriarchal society, ruled by a vampire queen. Her name was Anakatrine and her king was Callain. She also had a Guardian in her brother and together they ruled in peace, a triumvirate of power, not just vampiric but also magical."

Mac quirked an eyebrow in surprise; his thoughts were racing at what was being revealed. "I'd heard rumours that the dark arts were once used by vampires. I'd always considered it nonsense."

"To a certain extent it was," Demetri conceded. "Only the triumvirate had those powers, not the entire nation. And I wouldn't refer to them as the dark arts either. They were only used for good, not evil."

"If these three were all powerful as you say, then how could they be destroyed?" Pietro asked. His mind was whirling too, trying to piece together who the players were in his world so he could work out what was going on.

"Anakatrine formed the first vampire council. She thought our people were ready to govern themselves. Instead they rose up against her when the very first Vampire/Were mating occurred three thousand years ago. She was destroyed along with Callain but their souls have been reborn."