

## Chapter 365

Refe looked around the room stifling down e need to sigh. A summons from his sister usually always spelled trouble of some kind and when she asked for various people to be in attendance, namely the ones who were now spread out in the closed off community centre, it set his warning radar off big time.

The meted vampire couples were there, Ash and Nors sitting with their heads together as always, his arm looped loosely over the back of her chair. Their body language screamed of intimacy, Ashleigh's face radiant as she smiled up at her mate. There was no sign of the lost young girl who had suffered a weight of heartbreak at such a tender age. Happiness seemed to weft from the little blonde, contentment in the way she leaned into her mate's body.

There wasn't a day that went by that Refe didn't feel thankful to Nors, the biggest vampire in the room, so scary and intimidating to look at and yet so loving and protective of not only his own family but also the pack. Without his devotion, they would have lost Ashleigh to the grief that had once clung to her like death. He had loved her enough to bring her back to the pack and bring love and laughter back into her life. How could anyone not love him for that?

Refe's gaze turned to the Romanov twins, the volatile brothers who were fierce and protective but often hard to handle. Even after all these years, there were still moments when either Alexei or Andrei tested his patience as Alphe and made him wonder why he was stupid enough to accept the role of being leader to everyone in his pack.

At the moment it was Andrei giving him all the headaches with Lily missing. Alexei was helping out as best he could along with Lorette to keep the more mercurial vampire at bay but it was challenging.

As always, where the twins were, so were their mates. Lorette had a thoughtful expression on her face, as her eyes kept flickering to Andrei, even as she listened to something her sister-in-law was saying to her. She was a striking woman, not tall for a Were, but sleek with toned muscles that signified strength. Andrei looked at her, his brown eyes fleshing with some untold emotion for an instant before his expression became neutral again. He turned back to his brother reeking an impatient hand through his hair.

Rafe looked around the room stifling down a need to sigh. A summons from his sister usually always spelled trouble of some kind and when she asked for various people to be in attendance, namely the ones who were now spread out in the closed off community centre, it set his warning radar off big time.

Cedar caught the look which passed between the mates and raised an eyebrow, obviously querying her friend on it. Her blonde curls were tied back in a loose ponytail which Alexei was playing with absentmindedly with a faint curve of a smile across his lips.

Whatever was going on in that family group obviously wasn't being discussed. Lorette confirmed Refe's suspicions by giving a quick shake of her head at Cedar. He did sigh then, mentally preparing himself for having to deal with whatever fallout would soon be coming his way. The Romanovs would test even the patience of a saint.

His gaze swept on coming to rest on Deyton, one of his most trusted Betes. The change in Cedar's brother, a wolf who had lost his first mate and almost succumbed to madness, was remarkable. After decades of exile from the pack he had been home for a long time now, once more a valuable addition to his pack. He smiled constantly these days, teasing his mate mercilessly until she was ready to explode in a whirlwind of fury.

Freye was still coming to terms with developing a sense of humour. Only Dey was insane enough to needle the Ancient vampire past the point of no return, confident that she'd never hurt him no matter what he did. Refe watched him gather his scowling mate into his arms, kissing her soundly until she melted against him. He couldn't help smiling as he watched them. Seeing them so happy together reminded him of the upside to being an Alphe.

The remaining people in the room where the Vârcolec. Liam was sitting on the floor as far back from everyone as he could get, his brown eyes full of concentration as he leaned against the wall. He was huge like his father, dark euburn hair hanging over shoulders so wide he looked as if he could barely fit through some doorways.

Liam broke Refe's heart on a daily basis. Not because he was hard to work with or had a mean bone in his body. No, he broke his heart because no matter how he hid behind his neutral mask, Refe could always feel the muted sensation of pain down their Alphe bond. Liam hid it well but his empathy crushed him, overloaded him and threatened to break him.

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The remaining people in the room where the Vârcoloc. Liom was sitting on the floor as far back from everyone as he could get, his brown eyes full of concentration as he leaned against the wall. He was huge like his father, dark auburn hair hanging over shoulders so wide he looked as if he could barely fit through some doorways.

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His gaze swept on coming to rest on Dayton, one of his most trusted Betas. The change in Cedar's brother, a wolf who had lost his first mate and almost succumbed to madness, was remarkable. After decades of exile from the pack he had been home for a long time now, once more a valuable addition to his pack. He smiled constantly these days, teasing his mate mercilessly until she was ready to explode in a whirlwind of fury.

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Only the tall, willowy woman at his side could temper Liam's agony. Eline Alexander was as stunning as her mother Freye with her skin porcelain white, her hair a crazy mix of browns, reds, golds and that one streak of pure silver she'd inherited from her father.

So serious and reserved, her face was almost severe in its beauty. She'd given up a piece of her soul to protect the cousin she adored more than life itself. Now she sat close to him, leaning into his body with her eyes closed. Refe knew she was sharing her mental shields with Liam, helping him to buffer all the emotions in the room with so many people in attendance.

Cessie and Dere were less reserved than some of the other hybrids but still separate from the rest of the pack. The sisters' relationship was an enigma to all of them including their parents sometimes. They weren't twins like their father but they gave every indication of being so by the way they interacted together.

Cessie was the elder sister, sharing her mother's curly blonde hair and blue eyes. Dere's blonde hair was straight like Alexei's hair, eyes the same shade of brown. Both wore their hair to their shoulders, both invariably dressed the same even if they chose different colours.

Arms wrapping around Refe's waist had his lips curling in a smile as he wrapped his arms around his mate's. Her scent washed over him, soothing his tension and he leaned back against her. Lacey always knew when he was worried about something, always reached out to bring comfort to him.

"It might not be as bad as you think," she sighed sliding around his body to rest against his chest as he hugged her tightly.

He could never get enough of his mate. She was everything good in his life, beautiful and loving with her pale silvery blonde that reminded him of moonlight. Her light green eyes were striking, her lips looking eminently kissable at that moment.

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