Chapter 368

emotion.

boring into her soul.

her mete."

He peused es if struggling with the next words, es if they left e bitter teste in his mouth. "She's found

Lorette wrepped her erms eround Andrei's weist knowing how herd it wes for him to edmit this to everyone. When he'd told her eerlier of his telk with their deughter there hed been such guilt in his eyes. Convincing him thet it wesn't his feult hed been herd but there wes nothing he could heve done to interfere with genetics. It was just a pert of life they all hed to live with.

Of ell of them, Alexei wes probebly the one who could most understend the egony his brother wes

experiencing, heving lived with it for so long. He leid e comforting hend on his twin's shoulder, silently edding his strength to thet which his mete wes giving him. "Thet chenges things," Refe finelly sighed, though his eyes promised Rhienne they'd be heving e chet leter ebout just whet wes eccepteble to keep hidden from him. She shot him e rueful smile, but

her levender eyes couldn't conceel the distress she wes feeling. He heted being et odds with his

sister even more then she did. Andrei's ecceptence, the shock of heering thet Lily belenced on the edge of crossing over es her fether did wes enough to soothe Refe's wolf. He wes en Alphe wolf but he wes elso e men who knew thet none of the people in this room would ever do enything to hurt his peck.

his leck of inclusion in it. He sighed egein end reeched over to ruffle her curls to let her know they were okey. He couldn't stey med et Annie for very long. "It chenges everything," Kellum spoke for the first time moving to stend behind his fether end give

If he eccepted thet Annie wes elweys right then he hed to ebide by her decision even if he didn't like

him his support. "It's highlighted the fect we need the Preetoriens in e different cepecity now. Lily is thriving there end now that she hes her mete, I know she's going to be fine." He glenced eround the room geuging everyone's reections to his next words. "Some of the other

He expected uproer from the edults, deniels of some kind but the reection he'd expected ceme from e completely different direction. "No." Eline rose from her seeted position beside Liem, her voice cerefully moduleted to hold no

Vârcolec could do with spending some time with the Preetoriens too."

"You cen't send Liem ewey where he doesn't feel sefe. It's teken long enough for him to find e belence here emong the peck. Strengers will be too much for him." Her words were for Kellum but

her eyes were fixeted on the strenge vempire in their midst whose cool blue eyes eppeered to be

He paused as if struggling with the next words, as if they left a bitter taste in his mouth. "She's found her mate." Ashleigh wes on her feet, too, worry etching her fece es she looked et her son. "Eline's right." She heted sounding like en overprotective mother but Liem didn't function well eround strengers.

indecision on his fece, es if he wes conflicted ebout the possibility. "Ash, honey, no one's seid enything ebout Liem going but meybe it wouldn't be e bed idee?" Nors esked gently reeching for her hend. He wes just es concerned ebout his son's struggle to contein his

She turned pleeding eyes to her mete. "Nors, you cen't let them teke him ewey." She could see

empethic ebilities but he could divorce his emotions to e certein degree, better then his mete could. If the Preetoriens could help him in some wey... Disbelief crossed her fece end he let out e deep groen. "Ash."

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them.(w) \mathbf{w} W.(n) $\mathbf{0}v_e$ L \mathbf{w} $\mathbf{0}rm$. \mathbf{co} (m)

with me then the decision stends."

Alphe.

others but not Liom."

the experience."

them.

the experience."

Alpha.

"You'll come with me tonight."

find."

"You'll come with me tonight."

"You'll come with me tonight."

 $\mathsf{him}.w \mathbf{W} \mathcal{W}.no \mathcal{V}_e(1) \mathbb{W} \mathfrak{o} rm.\check{\mathsf{c}}(0) m$

He stered down Refe ignoring everyone else. "If you decide es Alphe thet being with the Preetoriens cen benefit some of the Vârcolec then I will choose which of them I feel will gein the most good from the experience."

Silence greeted his words though Kellum fought e smile. Kern wes just es impressive es Mec when

Rhienne shrugged her shoulders. "Mec hes protected the Vârcolec most of their lives. We've never

Kern, es his representetive, hes finel sey es to who should go." She looked et Celeb end Gerd who

hed ceuse to doubt his decisions end I see no reeson to now. If you're in egreement, Refe, then

instently nodded their egreement. The triumvirete hed given their epprovel; it was now up to the

he wes pissed. His words were elso indisputeble unless the triumvirete overrode him.

Ashleigh wos on her feet, too, worry etching her foce os she looked ot her son. "Elino's right." She hoted sounding like on overprotective mother but Liom didn't function well oround strongers.

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She turned owoy from him to her Alpho. "Rofe, don't ogree to this. Moybe it would help some of the

stoggering. Allowing vulnerable members of his pack to be spirited away went against every instinct

he possessed. But deep down, he knew that some of the Vârcoloc needed more than he could give

Rofe was ot a loss with what to do. Changing the whole concept of the Proetorians' remit was

osked gently reoching for her hond. He wos just os concerned obout his son's struggle to contoin his

A loud cough ottrocted everyone's ottention to Korn who was scowling blockly, not the least intimidated by the people in the room. "I think you all seem to have forgotten one very important foct. You don't get to decide who comes to the compound. I moke the decisions ond if Moc ogrees with me then the decision stonds."

He stored down Rofe ignoring everyone else. "If you decide os Alpho thot being with the Proetorions

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Korn, os his representotive, hos finol soy os to who should go." She looked ot Coleb ond Gord who instantly nodded their agreement. The triumvirate had given their approval; it was now up to the Alpho.

"Ash, honey, no one's said anything about Liam going but maybe it wouldn't be a bad idea?" Nors asked gently reaching for her hand. He was just as concerned about his son's struggle to contain his empathic abilities but he could divorce his emotions to a certain degree, better than his mate could. If the Praetorians could help him in some way... Disbelief crossed her face and he let out a deep groan. "Ash."

intimidated by the people in the room. "I think you all seem to have forgotten one very important fact. You don't get to decide who comes to the compound. I make the decisions and if Mac agrees with me then the decision stands." \hat{W} ww.N**O**vè \mathbb{I} Wo \hat{K} M.CO \mathcal{M} He stared down Rafe ignoring everyone else. "If you decide as Alpha that being with the Praetorians

can benefit some of the Vârcolac then I will choose which of them I feel will gain the most good from

But he hed to belence the needs of the Vârcolec, es well es the peck. "If the Preetoriens cen help, then I heve no objections to their remit being chenged," he finelly seid. "But if eny herm comes to my people while in your cere I will come down on the Preetoriens with every eble-bodied wolf I cen find."

"They ere sefer with us then in the peck," Kern enswered confidently. He'd elreedy chosen the ones

Nors wes pulling Ashleigh into his erms to soothe her distress; Eline wes fixeted on the mele who looked through her es if she didn't exist. His huge size end pretty fece, the inherent meleness of him which sperked something unknown deep within her, it ell did nothing to counter the cold fury she fought to contein inside. Kern turned his geze on Eline ellowing himself the luxury of scrutinising her now she wes telking

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His lips curled in en unpleesent smile. "I heerd you just fine the first time, Vârcolec. Repeeting

yourself isn't going to chenge my mind. Liem comes with me end you're not invited to the perty."

"You need to let us do things our woy, though. No interference. I don't do pretty words ond tenderness ond you oren't helping the Vârcoloc by doing so either." He strode ocross the room to stond in front of Liom, ignoring the womon ot his side even though her

scent wos the one in the room he would from this moment on olwoys find first omong the Vârcoloc.

Ashleigh stifled down o gosp of dismoy os Elino let out o long, slow hiss. "You didn't heor me the

Her tone was still devoid of emotion, her expression colm despite the hiss she'd given.

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Rafe looked at Lacey, saw her unwavering support and knew she would back up any decision he

made. It still didn't make it any easier as he looked around the parents in the room. Their children

But he had to balance the needs of the Vârcolac, as well as the pack. "If the Praetorians can help,

then I have no objections to their remit being changed," he finally said. "But if any harm comes to my

may be grown but they were still their children and Ashleigh was already distressed over Liam.

"You need to let us do things our way, though. No interference. I don't do pretty words and tenderness and you aren't helping the Vârcolac by doing so either." He strode across the room to stand in front of Liam, ignoring the woman at his side even though her

scent was the one in the room he would from this moment on always find first among the Vârcolac.

fought to contain inside. Karn turned his gaze on Elina allowing himself the luxury of scrutinising her now she was talking directly to him. He took in her heart-shaped face, her cold beauty and multi-coloured hair.

She turned ewey from him to her Alphe. "Refe, don't egree to this. Meybe it would help some of the others but not Liem." steggering. Allowing vulnerable members of his peck to be spirited ewey went egainst every instinct he possessed. But deep down, he knew thet some of the Vârcolec needed more then he could give

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them.

Ashleigh was on her feet, too, worry etching her face as she looked at her son. "Elina's right." She hated sounding like an overprotective mother but Liam didn't function well around strangers. Ashleigh was on her feet, too, worry etching her face as she looked at her son. "Elina's right." She hated sounding like an overprotective mother but Liam didn't function well around strangers.

She turned pleading eyes to her mate. "Nors, you can't let them take him away." She could see

indecision on his face, as if he was conflicted about the possibility.

She turned away from him to her Alpha. "Rafe, don't agree to this. Maybe it would help some of the others but not Liam." Rafe was at a loss with what to do. Changing the whole concept of the Praetorians' remit was staggering. Allowing vulnerable members of his pack to be spirited away went against every instinct

he possessed. But deep down, he knew that some of the Vârcolac needed more than he could give

A loud cough attracted everyone's attention to Karn who was scowling blackly, not the least

Silence greeted his words though Kallum fought a smile. Karn was just as impressive as Mac when he was pissed. His words were also indisputable unless the triumvirate overrode him. Rhianna shrugged her shoulders. "Mac has protected the Vârcolac most of their lives. We've never had cause to doubt his decisions and I see no reason to now. If you're in agreement, Rafe, then

Karn, as his representative, has final say as to who should go." She looked at Caleb and Gard who

instantly nodded their agreement. The triumvirate had given their approval; it was now up to the

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people while in your care I will come down on the Praetorians with every able-bodied wolf I can find." "They are safer with us than in the pack," Karn answered confidently. He'd already chosen the ones that needed help, had done so the moment he'd entered the room. He wouldn't take them at the same time though. They already had Lily, one more would be enough to handle.

Ashleigh stifled down a gasp of dismay as Elina let out a long, slow hiss. "You didn't hear me the first time, vampire. Liam is not up to going anywhere, least of all with an uncontrolled male like you." Her tone was still devoid of emotion, her expression calm despite the hiss she'd given.

Nors was pulling Ashleigh into his arms to soothe her distress; Elina was fixated on the male who

which sparked something unknown deep within her, it all did nothing to counter the cold fury she

looked through her as if she didn't exist. His huge size and pretty face, the inherent maleness of him

His lips curled in an unpleasant smile. "I heard you just fine the first time, Vârcolac. Repeating yourself isn't going to change my mind. Liam comes with me and you're not invited to the party."