

## Chapter 387

"Caleb's plane is waiting at the airport," Joshua continued. "As soon as you're ready to go I'll alert the pilot and he can request clearance to leave. One of my friends is working the airport tonight. She'll slot the flight into the schedule but there may be an hour or so delay, depending on how busy it is."

Demetri halted in the doorway and turned to look at the blond vampire with a speculative expression on his face. Joshua appeared to have thought of everything. He'd told him earlier that anything he'd need would be facilitated. The man was certainly holding true to his word.

"Have you ever considered coming stateside? We could use a good man like you over there."

Joshua laughed loudly shaking his head. "Caleb tried that on me too, Demetri, and I'll say the same thing to you as I did to him. If I'm over there then who do you have to help you out over here? I know enough of what's going on. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to know your Council is about to come down on the covens in all their fury. You'll need someone you can trust here when that day comes."

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Demetri couldn't argue with him, not entirely. Joshua's only error was in believing it was the Council who were going to be taking on the European covens. No, they had something much worse than just vampires coming their way.

He had no doubt that once all the intelligence had been gathered and analysed, it would be the triumvirate who would be calling the shots on just what punishment was meted out for the threat against the Vârcolac. Turning, he went back to the bathroom.

Pietro was drying himself gingerly trying not to rub his skin too hard. Demetri took a moment to catalogue the ugly scars on his back and thighs. He could tell some of them wouldn't heal fully. How many would remain he wasn't sure but he could see at least four deep ones on his back that most likely wouldn't heal.

When his friend turned he kept his critical eye on his front and took the same mental inventory of damage. When Pietro had lost his right eye, a talon had ripped through his flesh causing a deep groove from the outer corner down past his ear and ending at his jaw. It didn't look like it would fully heal.

Added to that, was a line running from his neck, across the joint with his shoulder, coming to an abrupt stop on his collarbone. There was hole healing where the line stopped, clearly indicating the talon had stabbed deep at that point.

A jagged scar cut across Pietro's left nipple, two further scars on either side of it which looked deep and painful. Green eyes swept over the remainder of his body but the rest of the wounds appeared to be fading, albeit slowly. Demetri supposed it could have been a whole lot worse.

"Are you going to have a problem with Joshua being here?" he asked, as he handed Pietro his clothes.

Pietro thought about it for a moment, remembering the other male's calm, steady voice, the feeling of competence and reliability he'd sensed even through his pain. It had been Joshua who'd known what to do to help. It had been Joshua who had offered his blood to replenish him.

He started to dress pulling on briefs and then his jeans. "He helped me. If you say he's okay then I can deal with it."

"Good," Demetri smiled. "We need him to drop us off at the airport. I didn't want to take his car from him. The plane's ready when we are so hurry up. The sooner we're out of here the happier I'll feel."Ŵww.novÈlwórM.com

Sounding so much like the Demetri he knew, it helped Pietro feel almost normal. Maybe being finally dressed in his own clothes; his body clean of the filth which had covered him for days, helped too.

Pietro felt a lump in his throat and swallowed it down. He was going home. A few more hours and he'd be back where he belonged. It'd been so long since he'd stepped foot on home soil. It couldn't happen fast enough for him.

He followed Demetri into the sitting room and took his first proper look at the blond vampire who'd aided them. A faint smile curved the other man's lips as their eyes connected.wŴw.©oveŁŴŎrm.č0m

"You look much better than the last time I saw you," Joshua said. "That eye thing you've got going is pretty interesting. Wonder if it's symptomatic of the poison?"

His matter-of-fact tone, the way he sounded genuinely interested in the cause of the discolouration stopped Pietro from feeling offended by his words. It sparked something in him, a part of himself he was sure he'd lost. They needed as much information about what the poison could do as they could get.

He nodded to Joshua in acknowledgement and turned to Demetri.

"Did you keep a blood sample? We need to get it analysed to try and work out what it is. I ingested it in blood but if there are other methods of transmission we need to know."

"I've already packed it away. Do you want to look around the cottage before we leave? Maybe there's something here which will appear out of place to you which we wouldn't notice?"

Pietro shook his head. "Whatever they gave me was not given here. I'm positive they'd have kept this area totally clean just in case they were discovered."

Demetri shouldered his travel bag and handed Pietro his. "In that case, let's go home. Joshua, can you contact the coven? I want this place completely clean within the hour."

"It's already in hand. One of them is watching from a distance. As soon as we clear the area they'll move in. They know what to do."

Looking around the room one final time, Demetri headed out, trusting Joshua's word. If it was good enough for Caleb then it was good enough for him. Pietro followed silently with Joshua bringing up the rear.

Pietro opted to take the back seat as they climbed into the SUV. "A fedora?"

"My tourist disguise," Demetri laughed. "Stick it in my bag along with the camera."

"Damn, I was hoping you'd forget the hat," Joshua laughed. "I'm partial to them myself."

Demetri turned to look over his shoulder at Pietro. "He's not getting the camera but he can have the hat. I took some photos of the area to show Mara. Once all this shit is over with I'm thinking of bringing her to Scotland for a long holiday."

Pietro packed away the camera and tossed the hat to Demetri so he could get as comfortable on the back seat as possible.

Having someone local driving made a world of difference to how long it would have taken them to get to the airport. Joshua was dropping them off in less than half an hour, leaving the motor running.

"I'm not coming in," he said with a rueful smile. "Too many humans. They all smell so tempting after my little donation earlier. I need to replenish myself and quickly."

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"We can't thank you enough for all you've done to help," Demetri answered. His tone was solemn, gratitude shining in his eyes. "I know you said you're marking off favours you owe Caleb but you owe me nothing. So if you ever have need of me, let Caleb know. I'll do my best to assist should that time ever come."

The blond smiled nodding his head. "That's a pretty huge favour to be owed and I promise I won't use it lightly." His grin widened further as he inclined his head to a silent Pietro and turned back to Demetri. "You know, I've heard all manner of crazy shit about you and after having met you I believe every word of it. I'm so fucking relieved you like me, Demetri Bozic. I'd hate to ever be on your shit list."