

Chapter 445

It was black and white to her mate He had decreed his edict twenty-five years ago after Ashleigh and Loretta had been kidnapped and tortured. The pack was under his protection and no Were was permitted to be harmed by a vampire. The penalty was instant death and in his mind, the European vampire had to die.

His anger at her was palpable. She had told him the vampire would bring no harm, that she was crucial in saving three souls and he'd believed in her, trusted in her judgement. From his perspective, it appeared that she had failed. Liam had been harmed and the poison had been deployed on what should have been safe ground. If he hadn't listened to her, then possibly events could have been different.

It mattered little that Rhianna hadn't known Thereasa would get close to one of the Vârcolac. Someone had been hurt and he judged her because he didn't believe she would have prevented it from happening if she had known. Most of her shunned from thinking that she would have, but another part of her looked at it pragmatically. They had learned much from the attack. Thankfully, the Vârcolac were safe from the poison.

Moreover, she was still convinced that Thereasa would heal three souls. That hadn't changed despite the violence, of that she was sure. Caleb refused to believe that though, and that meant they were at odds. Rhianna was so used to working with her mate, of being in complete harmony with him. The current schism between them was something she hated but would have to endure. Events had to play out the way they were meant to otherwise they would lose two, possibly three souls. Rhianna couldn't let that happen.

Surveying the room slowly, she shivered as she took in the high level of tension. The Vârcolac were all here standing off to one side in a group. The only one missing was Lily but she'd had her own drama today and was safely with her mate. It was better that she wasn't here, not in her condition. Things were about to get very ugly and the poor girl had been through enough stress as it was.*Ww@.nôvEÖwóRm.com*

Her lavender gaze focused on her brother talking quietly with Lacey close to the Vârcolac. It wasn't surprising that Rafe and his mate would adopt a protective stance between the hybrids and the glowering vampires. They were pack and the Alphas protected their own. She expected nothing less from her brother and for a moment, her mind wandered back to another meeting so very long ago. That day Caleb had been determined to protect the Hanlon pack. He had done it for her to safe Rafe's life. Now most of the same players were in attendance, only they hadn't come together for the good of the pack this time.*ww.nOvëL(w)orM.cOM*

Rafe met her gaze with a solemn expression. They had talked earlier and he'd told her he had reluctantly asked Nors and Ashleigh to remain with the pack. They had wanted to come to protect their son but this was way past a simple family matter. He hadn't wanted to ask it of them but there was still the chance another assassin could be around and he didn't want the pack depleted of its best defences. Once Ashleigh had had a chance to speak with Liam and reassure herself he was okay, she'd finally agreed, which had settled Nors down.

Rafe moved towards her, concern in his eyes. They hugged tightly and for once Caleb didn't perform his usual theatrics of extracting her needlessly from her brother's embrace. Rhianna had never thought she'd see the day that she would miss that irritating quirk of his but she did. Rafe quirked an eyebrow, his expression darkening more.

"What the hell is going on here, Annie? I trusted my pack members to you and the Praetorians. I never fought you over anything and now we've come to this? Have we descended to pack against vampire? To family pitted against family?"*www.novelWorM.cOm*

"Have faith in me, Rafe, please. I won't allow any harm to come to the pack, you know that. Trust me." Rhianna whispered the words though she knew everyone in the room could hear them. The sound of a breaking glass resounded in the quiet room but she didn't turn around to look at Caleb. Instead, she gave Rafe another hug and stepped away from him so he could return to his mate's side.

As he walked away, she sighted Gard and Rayne also standing close to the Vârcolac, another sign of what were clearly divided loyalties. Gard was a vampire, part of the pack, and a member of the triumvirate. Technically, he was being pulled in three different directions. Their eyes met and she read clearly what he wanted her to know. Where it came to today, his allegiance was to his son. She couldn't fault him on that.

The vampires all congregated close to Caleb, Demetri and Mara at his side, Karn and the Praetorians flanking him like a personal army. Karn's expression was closed, his inner thoughts hidden, but she knew he was like the others, divided loyalties pulling at him. One female vampire...that was all it had taken to test the loyalties of each and every person in the room. Her presence was worse than the poison used on Pietro. That had brought them together. This woman had the power to tear them apart.

All that stood in her way was Rhianna and her soul felt encased in ice as she regarded everyone silently. How in hell was she supposed to do this alone? She didn't have Caleb's backing, in fact, he was her main opposition. By the time this was over, she didn't even know if she would have him in her life anymore. It broke her heart to look at him, to know that come the end of this day he might walk away and never look back, but events had to play out this way. If that meant she lost her soul mate then she would have to find a way to endure it.

Rhianna Armand hadn't been alive long enough to have the wisdom required to resolve this situation. But there was someone else who had...Anakatrine.

She would have to concede complete control to the vampire queen living within her, effectively doing what Caleb was so afraid would happen and what lay beneath his current mood.

She wasn't completely unaware of what had prompted their opposite stance. He was afraid he was losing her, that she would become Anakatrine and she was about to do just that to ensure everything happened that needed to happen. Everything that made her Annie would be forced into submission. She hadn't willingly given up control of who she was before, and she was afraid of what the consequences of that would be.

Caleb's angry gaze tore at her heart and forced her hand. The only person who could stand up to the might of Caleb was Anakatrine. She had to trust in the other half of her soul, that she would do the right thing.

"Well?" Caleb's tone was cold, unlike anything he had used with her before. It spoke of the level of his disappointment and rage. It had Demetri's head swinging around sharply to regard his friend in surprise. Everyone looked between them, the tension level in the room escalating higher.

"Liam is disinclined to join us," Rhianna answered, refusing to look away from her mate's irate glare. She watched disbelief cross his face before it hardened further and his voice came out like chips of ice.

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"He doesn't have a choice in the matter, Rhianna. Why Karn allowed this madness to continue is beyond me. He knows the law. The vampire should have been executed."