

## Chapter 447

"You must come with me." They were the first words he'd spoken directly to her and he waited with bated breath for her response. She hadn't spoken a word since she'd been led away earlier. He wanted to savour the sweetness of her voice once more. Instead, she glared balefully at him, rising from the narrow cot she was seated on.

She flinched as he took her by the upper arm, his big hand curling lovingly around her delicate flesh. Liam ignored her abhorrence and gave into the urge to run his thumb over her caramel skin. She hissed and tried to pull away, revulsion on her eyes.

"Do not touch me, abomination!" Not the first words he wanted to hear spoken directly to him but he would take what he could get.

"Pardon the intimacy but I have to take you up and I must ensure that you don't try to get away. If you run, I don't think there is anything I can do to stop them hunting you down and executing you on the spot. Please allow me to do what I can to ensure your safety."

He waited for some kind of response but she dropped her gaze, staring directly ahead. Liam took that as a sign of her capitulation and led her from the room and upstairs to the fate that awaited them. He had no idea what was about to happen but he knew whatever did, he would face it with her. Their lives were now irrevocably joined together and nothing in the world would ever change that.

All eyes turned to greet them as they entered the living room. The emotions battered at Liam's mental defences and he stumbled slightly before regaining his balance. The vampire at his side paused, halting his forward movement as she regarded him with narrowed eyes. Something flickered in their depths as understanding crossed her face.

"Mon dieu!" It crossed Reasa's mind that her coven leader would most likely have found it amusing that she exclaimed in his native tongue, however. Louis was thousands of miles away and the situation had suddenly become so much worse than she'd ever imagined possible. The male at her side was a walking time bomb!

Anxious eyes cast around the room, taking in the vampires and Weres as well as the rest of the abominations. She knew they were there to protect the hybrids, she knew they would cheerfully kill her for her actions, but that didn't stop the frisson of fear running down her spine as she looked at hate-filled faces. They were all in danger, every single person in the room. The red-haired hybrid was barely in control, didn't they know that?

It all made sense now, the way he was ill in the practice yard earlier. He hadn't been physically wounded but mentally; overcome with all the emotions flying around at the time. Didn't these people know what they had among them? Her own mental abilities were nothing compared to his. When she lost control, the results were bad, any human close by suffered catastrophic brain damage. Weaker younglings too suffered damage, often losing all trace of who they once were. This male...he was a thousand times more powerful than she was. If he lost control...it would be the end of them all.

"Bring Thereasa to me, Liam."

The petite redhead spoke and her eyes whipped to her, more fear trickling down her spine as she looked into the other woman's gaze. She had never seen eyes of that hue before, never seen eyes that old in one so young. Just who and what was this woman whose very presence soared above all others in the room?

"Annie, please don't hurt her. I know you're in there," Liam pleaded, his head beginning to throb painfully. He raised his other hand in surprise at the sensation, rubbing at his forehead even as his feet moved forward against his will. He was vaguely aware of Elina taking a step towards them, Kallum halting her progress by holding onto her arm. "Annie, please."

Anakatrine's gaze impaled him, demanding instant obedience. "All actions have consequences, Liam. Annie cannot help you now, this is not her time. It is mine and I must do this. An example must be set so others will know the futility of their actions. Caleb's edict is death but you make that impossible. You force my hand and I must go against the one I love most in this world. I must protect all, not just you. Do you understand, Liam?"

Pain exploded in his frontal lobe, searing blinding pain and he heard Elina call out and then she was gone from his mind and his fragile barriers wavered at her loss. He didn't see his cousin collapse against Kallum or hear the commotion behind him, his gaze fully fixated on the vampire queen. "You cannot hurt her. I will not allow it. I can change her, Anakatrine. I can make her understand who we are, what we are."

The desperation in Liam's voice heightened the tension. Karn crossed the room behind them, coming to Kallum's side to gaze into Elina's pale face. He bit out a curse, glaring over his shoulder at the vampire queen. "You charged Mac with protecting the Vârcolac. He, in turn, charged us with taking up that task. Stop this now. You're hurting Elina and Liam!"

Anakatrine could see the damage happening, Elina swooning and Kallum being the only thing holding her up. Sweat was beading Liam's brow, pain blazing from his eyes. One of the Praetorians suddenly clutched at his head, falling to the ground with a wordless cry. Immediately pandemonium broke out, people rushing to the fallen vampire's prone body. She had to end this now before things turned more desperate.

"What the fuck is happening?" Caleb ground out, coming to stand at her side. Her gaze fixed on Liam and she heard the woman beside him cry out.

"He's an empath and he's losing control. He will destroy us all. You have to stop him." Reasa struggled to get free of Liam, tried to run but he refused to let go, tears beginning to streak down his face.

"Speak! Now!" The order issued from the vampire queen demanded an answer. There was nothing Reasa could do to stop the words tumbling from her lips even though she didn't want to tell her anything. It was if she was under some kind of spell.

"He's like me, has empathic abilities. You must know that because she was helping him shield." She gestured to Elina before turning back to Anakatrine and Caleb. "A loss of control for one of us can kill humans in an instant. We cause brain haemorrhages. Vampiric minds are at risk too. Those with weaker minds can have their personalities wiped during a loss of control. That's what's happening to that vampire there. We can also affect Weres."

"Stop it this instant!" Caleb ordered, fury crossing his face as he thought of what this could mean to everyone present. The Weres weren't even safe? No vampire could manipulate Were minds but this woman was telling him they could? If any more of them had weaker minds then they could lose them all.

"I'm not doing it!" Reasa screamed at him, terror on her face. "I'm far too weak to affect just about everyone in this room. He's doing it! He's losing control. With the amount of anger in this room bombarding him, he's overwhelmed, and projecting it back out into the room. It's fuelling itself now, growing stronger and stronger with every moment. He'll kill us all if you don't stop him. He's way more powerful than I will ever be."

Liam cried out, dropping to his knees and pulling Reasa down with him. She fell forward at the sharp movement, her arms automatically coming up to steady herself. Liam twisted around; resting his forehead against hers as another Praetorian screamed and fell to the floor. "Help them," he whispered, his eyes full of unshed tears.

Despite the agony in his head, he had heard her words. He knew she could help him in a way Elina never could. He was killing people and had no way to stop it. The pain of destroying those meant to protect him was mixing with the building fury and he couldn't construct barriers fast enough to stop it. Before too long it would be other minds disintegrating, minds of people that he loved. "Please help them. Do what you must."