

## Chapter 456

There was quiet amusement in Ashleigh's tone and Freya was pleased to see that she was coming to accept Reasa into their family. It would have made things challenging if she had continued to resist her son mating with the woman who had initially come over from Europe to assassinate him. It was good that they would have the best of starts to their life together with the blonde wolf's acceptance.

"The sooner we get this over with the sooner we will be home," Nors pointed out, dropping a quick kiss on his mate's lips before turning to his sister. "Do you want to start at the attack point?"

"That makes sense," Freya answered, waiting until Ashleigh had headed back inside the house and the door closed securely behind her. "You will have to take the lead, Nors. I cannot trust myself not to take Michael's head if I get my hands on him and that will only irritate Rafe as our instructions are to bring him back alive. I can do without another lecture on what it means to be pack."

Her brother smiled, quickly tying his long auburn locks back on a ponytail at his nape. Freya's resigned tone about pack etiquette always made him smile, as well as earned her his pride. His beautiful sister had come such a long way in the last quarter of a century, though she hadn't lost sight of her limitations. Realistically, he should have been the one concerned about possibly losing control as it was his son and his mate who had been hurt by Michael's actions. However, he had spent all his life being the reasonable one, always looking out for Freya, that it was second nature that she would turn to him when she was worried about being able to maintain control.

"Dead vampires tell no tales, Freya, and we need Michael to be singing like a canary. Try to keep that in the forefront of your mind just in case you do come face to face with him, and I am not there to intervene."

She rolled her eyes at him, stretching her arms above her head to loosen some of the tension in her shoulders. "Singing like a canary? Where do you get your vernacular from? Actually, don't answer that, I've heard how most of the pack speak. I swear you grow more like a wolf every day, brother mine."

"Something you might benefit from," he countered as he turned in the direction where the assault had happened only hours before. "Come on, I want to get this over with so I can get back into bed with my mate."

"Lead on, then, and I will dutifully follow," Freya couldn't hide her amusement as he snorted loudly and then took off into the trees. She also couldn't deny the bubble of excitement that was starting to infuse her. It had been a long time since she had not only been on a sanctioned hunt, but also spent any alone time with her brother. It felt as if the years had suddenly rolled back and it was just the Erikssons against the world. She hadn't realised how much she had missed it.

Smiling she took off after Nors, vanishing into the thick treeline surrounding the main pack compound. Her vampiric senses kicked into gear instantly, as she focused on the task at hand. In less than ten seconds, she had caught up with her brother and was fanning out on his left side, immediately falling into old habits of when they had hunted together in the past. Freya took a wide circle towards the attack point just outside their boundary line, meeting up with Nors as he circled in from the right.

"He headed that way," Nors growled, wrinkling his nose at the confusing scents all around them.

"You're sure?" Freya wasn't really questioning her brother. He wasn't usually wrong about things but the area had already been sanitised and the vampire bodies burnt. There was still the lingering scent of death all around them, mixed in with the many packs scents of everyone involved. It wasn't unreasonable to double check they were picking up the correct scent.  $w\mathbb{W}. \pi \delta v \hat{e} \odot \mathcal{W} o r m. c (o) \mathcal{M}$

"Positive...he has a rather unique... odour."

Freya backtracked over Nors' trail until she picked up what he meant. "There's something very wrong with him," she commented, her tone conversational despite the fact she was wrinkling her nose at the smell.

"I guess we'll find out what when we catch up with him," her brother answered. "Let's find where he went to ground..."  $u \mathcal{V} \odot \otimes . \pi \delta v (e) l \mathcal{W} \odot \mathcal{R} m. c \acute{o} (m)$

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Michael sat in the library of the safe house waiting for Candrea to arrive. He had placed a light in the window as she had instructed him when they'd first met, but his patience was wearing thin as he waited. The abduction of Reasa couldn't have gone more horribly wrong...well he supposed it could have, he could have been killed along with the rest of the team he'd taken with him.

One moment he had been in a position of absolute power and the next, wolves and ancient vampires had descended on them on masse and retreat had been the only option. He needed to talk to Candrea. He needed an exit strategy back to Europe. Though he hated to admit it, he needed the other vampire to give him some advice on how he could present this failure to him.

Michael was afraid to report back to their Master just yet. His wrath could be a terrible thing, and the blond vampire was in no doubt that the Master would not be happy to learn that he'd failed to neutralise Thereasa, and had learned nothing of worth from the aborted attack. Perhaps Candrea would have some way of dressing it up so it didn't appear to be such an abject failure. If only the stupid slattern would get his message and show her face at the safe house!

"Michael, your agitation is a palpable thing. Tell me what has transpired."

Cold slivers of dread trickled down his spine as his Master's voice rebounded through his chaotic thoughts. "Master...Master, we were ambushed. The ancient vampires arrived with their wolf pets and slaughtered everyone."

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Heavy disapproval flooded his mind, so thick he could almost reach out and touch it psychically. A split second later, pain exploded inside his mind, sending Michael crashing to the flood clutching his head in agony.

"Be still! Be silent!"

The order was inescapable, and Michael strove to obey even as tears streamed from his eyes. He had disappointed his Master. It was only fitting that he be punished for his failure. He could feel him scything through his thoughts, ripping the knowledge directly from his weak mind. The pain was agonising, Michael's body bowing up in a razor sharp needles appeared to rasp over every inch of his body. He tried to protect himself, to dull the agony, but there was no hiding from the Master.

"Imbecile. Fool. I should never have honoured you with this task. You have nothing to show for your time here, Michael. I was already aware that the pack would be heavily defended from my other sources. Your failure cannot be tolerated; you know that, don't you?"