

## Chapter 457

"Please...Master...please! I live only to serve you. I am sorry! I will do better next time. Please, Master...please let me serve..." Michael let out an agonised scream as a shaft of pure malevolence seared through his already bruised mind. The scream cut off to a muted wail, the last semblance of any rationality cruelly extinguished with a mere thought.

"Candrea...clean up this filth..."ww(w).©©©elworm.cóM

The female vampire was just approaching the safe house, the contact from the Master so unexpected she almost drove off the road into a ditch. As it was, she pulled over in the dark, taking a moment to catch her breath. It took all of her mental skills to hide her instant irritation from the powerful mind still lurking within hers. He never stopped to consider that whomever he was contacting may need to be in full control of their faculties. It was little things like that which chafed at her soul, and was probably one of the reasons she had survived so long in servitude to him.

He burnt out weaker minds at an exponential rate. As soon as she had met Michael, she had known that the blond vampire wouldn't last much longer. He was already too far gone in his subservience, too eager to please the powerful mind that ruled so many. She wasn't the least surprised that she would be cleaning up yet another of his victims. It wouldn't be the first time and she doubted it would be the last.

About to start the car again to carry on her journey, something halted her hand as she went to turn the key. She had always had what she laughingly termed her early warning system. It wasn't a power as such, not like some of the powers others she knew had. It was more of a sixth sense that warned her when she was about to walk into danger. It served her well this time, as less than a minute later her enhanced vision picked up movement at the edge of the forest up ahead, and two figures broke the tree-line.

Nors and Freya Eriksson. Just seeing them together was enough to send a shiver down Candrea's spine. Only a complete fool failed to fear the Ancient siblings, and a fool was something that she wasn't. Holding her breath, she watched the duo cross the empty road up ahead, their destination clear. They were headed towards the safe house. They must have tracked Michael!

How long had it been since she'd been there? Would they be able to pick up her scent from her earlier visit? It had been a few days so most likely any trace scent that may still be there would be well diluted by the many male vampires who had been residing in the house up until the attack. One thing was certain though, she couldn't obey the Master and clean up his mess now. She wouldn't be able to account for her presence there.

Finally turning the key in the ignition when the Erikssons vanished from sight, Candrea quickly turned the car around and headed back the way she had just come. She hoped Michael's mind was completely destroyed as she anticipated it would be, but she wasn't overly concerned if there was still a spark of sanity remaining. She had been well disguised when she had met with the blond vampire. Even if he could give a description of her, it would point in the completely wrong direction. She was safe for now, but she would be on high alert going forward. If the others found out about her...well nothing would save her skin if that truth came out.

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Nors and Freya entered the silent house, turning unerringly towards the sitting room the second they slipped inside. Walking purposefully into the room, they stopped just inside the doorway, a sound of disgust uttering from Freya's lips as her gaze connected with the curled up body lying on the floor.

One glance was all it took to tell them that Michael's mind had been irretrievably shattered. His pale eyes stared vacantly ahead, and flecks of spittle oozed from the side of his mouth. Dried blood encrusted his lips where his fangs had pierced his flesh, the wicked looking teeth still embedded there. Whatever had been left of Michael's sanity was long gone and it took a moment for the two Ancients to process what they were seeing.

"His mind is completely destroyed." Freya pointed out the obvious, a frown marring her exquisite features. "That must have taken extraordinary power. No vampire would willingly allow another to mess inside their heads."wŴw.noVellw©rm.coM

"Except for Liam and Reasa," her brother countered, referring to his son and his mate, and their ability to dream walk. "Does this mean we have another dream walker out there somewhere? Possibly someone from Europe?"

Freya pursed her lips, moving over to the window to stare down at the lit lamp languishing on a table against the wall. "Old abilities are being resurrected. I would not be surprised to learn our enemies have this talent. All the more reason for us to determine if any others have the skillset and to have them trained as soon as possible."WwW.nôv(©)lwO©mm.čoMl

Her frown deepened and then she looked back over her shoulder. "This is a message, this light before the window. Michael was signalling someone that he wanted to meet."

Nors raised an eyebrow, his expression doubtful. "It's a lamp on a table, Freya. I swear you see conspiracies everywhere."

"There is no seating close to this lamp. It provides no direct illumination for anything. Its purpose isn't beneficial as a light source therefore it can only be a beacon of some kind, a message to someone outside that they are being called. Laugh at me if you wish, Nors, but I am sure on this. This lamp is a call for someone to come to the house."

Her brother didn't argue with her, it was foolish to do so when she was so certain. Instead, he nodded his head in agreement and headed back out of the living room. "You check inside the house, I'll do a sweep of the grounds." He didn't wait for her acknowledgement. They had hunted together for over two thousand years and each knew the other's habits.

Nors circled the property and surrounding trees in a tight arc and then three times more in every increasing arcs. He returned to the house when he was certain that the area was completely secure. Freya was just returning up from the basement, her body language alert but relaxed.

"There's no one outside," Nors reported. "I take it the house is secure too?"

"I scented the vampires who attacked the pack but no others. I've checked the house four times and there are no concealed panels to be found. The only person here is the living corpse in the living room."

Her brother frowned, his gaze drifting towards the front door. "Perhaps if we had been a little slower at tracking Michael we might have found out who he was meeting."

Freya shrugged, her movement an elegant tilt of her shoulders. "Or perhaps whoever he was meeting was here already and that is why his mind has been destroyed." She didn't truly believe that. If his co-conspirator had been here they would have cleaned up the mess before leaving. No, it was likely as Nors said, they had arrived before Michael's visitor had.

"You know what this means, don't you?" Calm green eyes met her brother's intent gaze.

"The European vampires have a spy among us," Nors answered, his expression hardening as he uttered the words. Just the thought that one of their own could be responsible for what was happening was enough to send him into a fury like no other. His sister's deceptively calm expression didn't hide her own inner fury from him either.

"When I find whoever it is, they will scream for mercy," Freya promised.

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"I think there will be a long queue for that, sister mine," Nors replied, a cold smile crossing his face. "Come, there is nothing of worth to be learned here now. Let's clean up the mess and report back to Rafe. I want to get home to my mate as I am sure do you."

Without another spoken word, the siblings worked together, lifting Michael's limp body and ignoring his pathetic gurgling as they headed upstairs and into the first available bathroom. Staring down at him for a long moment, Nors nodded his head in his sister's direction and she elongated her talons and knelt down beside the bath.

Smoothing back his hair from his brow, Freya closed Michael's sightless eyes and then sliced her talons across his throat. She pressed hard and deep, scything ruthlessly until his head detached and she let it rest beside his torso. The deed was almost done, well the first part was. Now she had to dismember the body and dispose of it. They also needed to sanitise the house.

Nors left Freya to complete her job, finding as many natural accelerants as he could in the house. There would be sufficient to cover all traces of Michael's origins and most likely burn the entire house down to the ground if the fire department didn't arrive too quickly. It was most important to ensure Michael's remains were obliterated so they would ensure that before the left.

Barely an hour since they'd left the pack, Nors and Freya Eriksson stood hidden within the tree-line watching the house burn in a raging inferno. In the distance they could hear the first sounds of emergency vehicles rushing to the scene, but they were unconcerned by the clamour. The area had been fully sanitised and the human world would be oblivious to what had occurred inside the house. Turning as one, they melted into the darkness, returning home to report to their Alpha.