

Chapter 469

All heads whipped around to the main doors, Mara's shoulders slumping with relief as not only Demetri, but also Caleb strode into the room. Her husband immediately went to the twins' side, a long, hard stare being enough that the brothers sat back down without a further word.

Caleb walked towards the centre of the room, his gaze travelling each face, his expression calm. "As I said, we are not asking the Council to provide any protection for the Armand-Hanlon pack, thought just for the record; it was two vampires that were almost killed in the attack. It was the wolves who protected them."

"That's beside the point. Why are you here, Caleb? You shouldn't be here anyway. The Ancient Council is having far too much involvement in matters that are Council business. We are not your puppets to dance to your tune."

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Claude's tone was quiet but his anger was evident. It was clear that half of the Council shared his view, and even William and Corrine nodded their agreement to that point. They sat there silently, all eyes on the Ancient vampire whose expression remained deceptively calm though deep within he was fighting the urge to rip Claude's head from his shoulders.

"I am here because someone in Europe developed a toxin that could wipe out our entire race," Caleb drawled, his voice so soft that Demetri automatically shifted his weight into a defensive stance and the twins tensed in their chairs.

"I am here because that same someone sent vampires across the ocean to attack us in the heart of one of our strongholds."

Caleb moved then, leaning his arms on the table, cold fire dancing from the depths of his eyes. "I am here because Gard and Rayne have vanished somewhere in Europe, and if someone is strong enough to do that, then it's time we stop this petty bickering and we start working together...ALL of us...before we wake up to find that we're completely fucked!"

He roared the last words out, unleashing all his frustrations into the room, letting the importance of what he'd revealed sink in for a moment.

"Now...does anyone else have any other stupid questions to ask or will this Council now stop thinking about their own petty agendas and start acting to protect our people? Because believe me, if you don't, I will fucking break this Council the same way I broke the last one, and I will keep breaking Councils until you lot get the fucking message!"

Stunned silence greeted his words, a flicker of unease crossing most of the vampires' faces. Demetri moved to escort Mara from the dais, coming to stand beside Caleb. Andrei and Alexei followed, making it perfectly clear they stood with the Ancient.

Stephan rose slowly, his hand moving to rest lightly on Emily's shoulder though he appeared to be unaware of the gesture. "How could this happen to Gard and Rayne? They are the oldest among us."

"Exactly," Caleb answered, his tone a little less strident but his displeasure still very evident.

"Threatening to abolish the Council isn't the way to go though, Caleb," Stephan continued, rebuke in his tone. "That may have worked once before, and it prevented a civil war, but if you try that again...you'll be starting a civil war."

Caleb sighed loudly, frustration riding him so hard it was difficult to articulate words for a moment. "Stephan, you are missing the basic point here ...we are already at war and we have no inkling of who our enemy is. They have attacked us three times now and so far...we're losing! Now, if you lot can just grasp that fact, maybe we stand some chance of finding out who this enemy is and taking them out. If not...I will not hesitate to risk a civil war here if it means that I will have at least half of our people at my side when I take on this enemy."

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"Then why are we all still pissing about here?" William growled rising. "It is the Council's job to protect our people. That means we protect our allies too, as they protect us. We have an antidote to a toxin that would wipe us out in a heartbeat because of our allies. There is an invisible enemy out there that can reach into our midst and neutralise some of our best people. It's time we act. I stand with Caleb!"

"I stand with Caleb..." Corrine rose at William's side.

"You know you have my support," Stephan sighed, "I just wish you were less of an ass about it sometimes."

"We are stronger when we act as one," Emily said quietly.

There were enough votes to give him the Council, but Caleb still looked to the remaining seated members.

"It would seem that the logic presented to us is compelling," Sasha said coldly. "Until this threat is neutralised, you will have my full support to protect our people."

One by one, the remaining Council members nodded their agreement, and slowly Caleb relaxed. "Good, then let's all sit down and I'll provide a detailed account of what we know so far. Then we can see what, if any, ideas we can come up with."

As the room settled, Caleb ran a quick inventory of just how much detail he was willing to give to the Council. Freya and Nors were fairly certain that there was the possibility of a mole in their camp, though that didn't necessarily mean that person was on the Council. Still, each Council member had their trusted support teams, and if someone were smart enough to get that close to the upper hierarchy...well maybe it would be wise to keep a few things close to his chest for now. Dara and Kothi were on their way to Europe. They didn't need any eyes turning in their direction...

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The plane journey had been less of an ordeal than Dara had anticipated, but it had been frustrating waiting for the time to pass to reach her destination. Kothari had too much of a head start on her as it was, his attempts at trying to throw them off his tracks quite inventive. He'd used the pack's credit cards in four major cities, going online each time and purchasing tickets to multiple different European cities under the name Kothari Hanlon.

It was a good tactic, one that would have left them all scratching their heads if not for knowing his forged travel details. Simon Ducat had only shown up at one airport and with one destination...Edinburgh, Scotland. Kothi was following his parents directly, as she had known he would have.

Rafe had called her before she'd boarded her flight to Edinburgh, letting her know that Caleb had contacted his friend Joshua, who would meet her at the airport. She was now scanning the waiting faces, unknowingly echoing Gard and Rayne's actions of only a short time ago. She found him quite quickly, a slight inclination of his head acknowledging that he was the one she sought. Joshua was gorgeous with a slightly roguish look about him, but he exuded a confidence that only came with reaching an advanced age. She hadn't even spoken to him and yet she knew she was going to like him.wWw.NoVel(o)Worm.ċom

"Joshua?"