

Chapter 509

Rafe took an involuntary step forward, but Thereasa intervened first. She quickly scooped the child out of the woman's grasp, handing her expertly to Liam who had moved at the same time. Ava screeched out aloud, lashing out at the vampire, who deftly caught the raised arm, and gripped the woman's neck to keep her immobile.

"Be easy, Ava," Thereasa said, both mentally and out aloud. "You are unwell at the moment, and don't understand what you do. This is no fault of yours. Shifters are genetically programmed this way. However, it doesn't need to be this way. We can work together to help you become well again so that you can take care of the child. You wouldn't wish to accidentally hurt the young one, when you are unwell."

The shock of hearing someone inside her head as well as speaking out loud was sufficient to still Ava's struggles, her eyes going wide. Thereasa used that shock to delve a little deeper into the tortured wolf's mind, ruthlessly shutting out the overwhelming grief that cascaded through the broken mind she encountered.

"We will care for Tali for you. We will feed her, clothe her, ensure that all her needs are met until you can once more take over those duties. You know you are not capable of that right now. You know it is best for Tali. Let us help make you well again, Ava. You have been so brave, so strong fighting this awful pain on your own. Let me help take some of that burden from you, brave wolf. Let us bring you home."

Large tears pooled in Ava's eyes, slowly trickling down her cheeks. "Home." She gulped out the words. "There is no home." An anguished wail erupted from her lips, a cry so full of melancholy that the child in Liam's arms burst into tears.

"He's gone...oh God he's gone." Ava cried out the words, the words containing so much pain her voice sounded raw. "Let me go too, vampire," she begged, her tortured gaze swinging to Rafe. "Alpha, let me go too...please let me go too."

"No!" the little girl screamed out, struggling in Liam's embrace. "I promised her. I promised. You can't leave me. You can't go to the forever sleep. I promised, Mama. I promised."

Thereasa saw the child's words register through the wolf's grief and she ruthlessly pressed on, knowing there was a finite amount of time they had to give her some will to live. "I know it hurts. I know the pain feels insurmountable, Ava. I am in your mind. I can see it, feel it, taste it with every tear you cry. I am astounded that you've stayed with us so long. A less strong wolf would have faded away long ago. However, you're still here, Ava. You're still fighting. You're not alone and you have something precious to live for. Live for Tali, Ava. Live for your child. It won't be easy and the pain won't miraculously vanish, but let me help you find a way to work through the agony. Let me help you find a way to live for your daughter."

w@(w).NoVELtwoRm.com

The she-wolf still wept, but the sobs didn't sound as harsh. "Tali. For Tali..."

"Come with me, Ava. Come to our special room that will help you heal. I promise I will not leave you. Come, brave wolf."

An audible sigh of relief sounded from the compound as Ava allowed Thereasa to lead her towards the medical building that contained the pack's safe rooms, Aaron in close attendance.*wWw.fóVéllwor(m).com*

Liam cuddled the little girl close, quietening her terrified outburst. "It's okay now, little one. We will take care of Ava. She will be fine. You have been very brave. Now it is time to let us take over the burden you have had to bear."

"I promised, Tali," she hiccupped. "I promised that I wouldn't let her Mama go to sleep forever like Mama and Papa did."

wWw.n@eℓw(o)Rm.com

Rafe stroked the child's back, aware that she had recently lost her parents to a vampire attack, and was almost as vulnerable as Ava was. Dara had said the child's name was Pippa. It was important to establish her identity to her so that she didn't get caught up in Ava's grief and begin to believe that she was her daughter. "We will look after Ava, Pippa," he said with quiet authority. "We will look after you too."

Liam felt a little hand tangle in his auburn hair, and met his Alpha's gaze. "Pippa can stay with me until Ava is feeling better." His gaze told Rafe that he would work inside the child's mind, helping her to come to terms with her own grief as Thereasa worked with Ava, a bond of trust having been formed there already so it was best that he left the she-wolf to his mate. Rafe nodded his head in silent agreement, and the Vârcolac headed to his home with the little girl.

To say Rafe was relieved was an understatement. He had been doubtful about them being able to help Ava when Dara first mooted the idea, but they had to take a chance, as it was the only option open to them at the time. Perhaps everything would work out satisfactorily, only time would really tell.

Joshua followed Pietro to a modest sized home deeper into pack lands. He thought back to their time in Europe, of how convinced he was that the other vampire would die from the terrible poisoning he'd suffered at Thereasa's hands. It was gratifying to see the other male so obviously healthy and happy, despite the scars than ran down one half of his face. What he couldn't understand was why Pietro hadn't killed Thereasa but instead, appeared to be friends with her.

"It's a long story," Pietro chuckled, as if he was reading Joshua's thoughts. "What do you think of the house? We just finished it last week. We split our time between the pack and the club. I wanted something that I had built myself. Rafe appeared to understand that and was happy to donate this patch of pack lands to us."

It was a great looking place. Not large but with room for expansion should children appear on the horizon. Joshua knew enough to know that now Pietro had mated to a Vârcolac he had the potential to become a father. The concept of children was entirely alien to him personally, but the Romanovs and Erikssons appeared to have thrived as parents so there had to be something of worth in it.

"Looks nice," he commented, casting his vampire gaze around the area and stopping when he saw a chimney stack. "You're not too isolated from other pack members either." Security was always something in the forefront of Joshua's mind.

Pietro followed his gaze, a wry smile crossing his face. "That's Liam and Reasa's place. It seems I have my own personal bodyguard in that vampire, or perhaps it's a Vârcolac mated thing where they move out, and need to be close to each other. I could be wrong about the latter though. Liyi seems perfectly happy up at the Praetorian Compound."

Joshua's deep blue eyes met his friend's, curiosity shining deep within. "I guess I need to hear this long story." He followed Pietro into the house, pausing to admire the fresh white hallway before joining him in the cosy living room that had a refreshingly light and airy contemporary feel. He moved to one of the pale cream leather sofas, accepting the glass of red wine Pietro handed to him.

w@.nOVELwo@m.có(m)

"Well, as you can see I recovered from my near death experience," the other male said, sitting across from him and sipping at his own glass of wine. "I was surprised to return here and discover that my mate was one of Alexei's daughters. I was equally as surprised to learn other facts that I believe Caleb has told you already." He raised an enquiring eyebrow, not willing to go on until he had confirmation.

"Yes, I know about the attack on the Vârcolac and the punishment meted out. That was the last that I heard on that subject though. I had expected Thereasa to have taken her own life once she realised she was human. I can't begin to imagine the trauma to a vampire's soul to go from being everything to being nothing."