

## Chapter 512

Rhianna Armand stepped into her brother's home deep in the heart of the forest, a sense of coming home settling over her. It didn't matter how much her life had changed over the last three decades, she always felt a sense of home when she was close to Rafe. For a long time it had just been the two of them, their familial bond becoming closer than most siblings after the death of their parents when she was only three and Rafe had just turned eighteen. Life had been so much less complicated then, two human siblings oblivious to the supernatural world that existed all around them. Even when her best friend Millie joined their tight family group, it had all still been so simple. Until the day Rafe had died at the hands of a wild animal and everything had changed.

At the time she had thought life wasn't worth living, and then she'd met Caleb, learned of the world of vampires and werewolves, and that her beloved brother wasn't really dead but was in fact now a wolf shifter. A poignant smile crossed Rhianna's face as she made her way towards Rafe's study to the right side of the ground floor. Now she was a vampire, Millie was mated to another wolf shifter Alpha, and they were embroiled in the supernatural world as if they'd known about it forever. Life was definitely more complicated now, but she wouldn't change it for the world. Even if it meant sometimes she had to butt heads with her brother as she anticipated she might have to this morning.

Rafe was sitting behind his desk as she knocked the study door and pushed it open before he could grant permission to enter. He knew why she was coming over, she'd phoned beforehand. He smiled as he looked up, ushering her forward into a room that was already full of people. Freya Eriksson and her mate Dayton Alexander were sitting on the large brown leather sofa positioned in front of the study window. Nors Eriksson was leaning against the wall beside them, and Joshua was perched on the arm of a chair at the cold fireplace.

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"You don't need to look so surprised, Annie. I know I may be overprotective of my pack at times but even I can see the wisdom of sending others over to Europe to protect Dara and Kothi and hopefully assist in finding Gard and Rayne," her brother said, rising from his desk to stride forward and give her a huge bear hug.

"I am so used to having to argue for everything I want," she laughed softly. "It's disconcerting to find an alpha male so reasonable for once." Seriously, it was challenging dealing with all the alpha males in her life. It was a relief to know this time was going to be easy.

Rhianna greeted the others in the room and then found a spot on the sofa beside Freya and Dayton. "You know what we're proposing to achieve in Europe?"

"Find the enemy," Freya replied, brushing her multi-coloured streaked hair back over her shoulder as she sat close to her mate. Her eyes flashed in anticipation and she looked more feral than usual. That was understandable. Since mating with Dayton, the pack had become her life, a place for her to belong to, after so many centuries of being alone with only her brother Nors to anchor her to sanity. She took her responsibilities seriously though, and Dara was her niece courtesy of her mating with Dayton. No one would get the chance to hurt her family and live to tell the tale. Dayton's deep blue eyes held the same resolve.

"We're to watch the watchers and make sure no one harms Dara and Kothi," Nors added, long auburn locks secured at the nape of his neck with a strip of brown leather. "The only clarification I want is do we kill anyone we find tracking them or do you want them interrogated." He leveled his gaze at his sister, silent communication travelling between them. Sometimes Freya needed things spelled out in black and white, so there could be no claims of ambiguity in a situation.

"If it's safe to try to extract information then gathering intelligence would be preferable," Rhianna replied after a moment's thought, though her brow puckered in a small frown. "Let's just not forget what happened to Pietro over there. We don't want to be too overconfident."

"So I can kill them," Freya asked, her expression fierce. She'd spent so many years in the pack living by the pack rules which meant reigning in her more baser instincts. The restrictions chafed at times because of her volatile vampiric nature, however she understood the need for those rules.

"You are free to do anything that protects yourself and our family and allies over there," Rafe answered. "Intelligence gathering is fine if you're able to get the chance but coming home safe is the most important thing." He glanced at Rhianna as if challenging her to disagree with him.

She merely smiled and nodded her head. "That goes without saying."

That appeared to mollify the vampire and she sat back with a contented expression crossing her stunning face. She looked so smug that her mate shook his head with a wry smile. "You're so bloodthirsty, love of mine," he grinned.

Freya shot him a level look, not the least insulted by his comment. "Of course, mate. Is that not why you love me?"

There was no real need to reply to that comment so Dayton merely laughed and draped his arm across the back of the sofa with a deep chuckle, his love and pride for his mate clearly evident in his body language.

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"I think we need to set a clear hierarchy of who is in charge on this mission," Nors commented. "There are far too many alpha personalities on the team. We can't have things going to shit because everyone thinks they're the biggest badass there."*www.(n)oVëlWÖRM.©®m*

It was a valid point. Dayton was used to being a pack beta but Freya, Nors and Demetri were all on the Ancient Council. Joshua's dominance level was also an unknown, being that European vampires were so closemouthed about their hierarchy. Rafe had three additional members of his pack going over to Europe and therefore could make the decision, however he turned to Rhianna for her thoughts.

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