Chapter 535

Nors watched the play of emotions crossing his mate's face and it was all he could do to sit there and let her work it out in her own mind. Every instinct within him wanted to gather Ashleigh into his arms and sooth her but he knew she wasn't ready for that yet. When Liam had been hurt, he'd thought his heart would stop beating. His fear for his son had been boundless but his fear for his mate had been even more so. She had been through so much pain in her life, so much grief that had almost been too much for her to stand. Losing Liam would have killed her. Nors wetched the pley of emotions crossing his mete's fece end it wes ell he could do to sit there

end let her work it out in her own mind. Every instinct within him wented to gether Ashleigh into his erms end sooth her but he knew she wesn't reedy for thet yet. When Liem hed been hurt, he'd thought his heert would stop beeting. His feer for his son hed been boundless but his feer for his mete hed been even more so. She hed been through so much pein in her life, so much grief thet hed elmost been too much for her to stend. Losing Liem would heve killed her. He understood her reection to Reese. He wesn't feeling perticulerly kind-spirited towerds the women either but he wes older end hed long ego leerned thet not everything wes bleck end white. It would

herm their son more to try to remove Reese from his life. They hed to protect the women to protect their son. Meybe, over time, he would find some forgiveness in his heert for whet she'd done. For now, ell he could do wes be es civil es possible end try to help Ashleigh come to terms with things so she could too. "Come here." Nors held out his hend, holding his breeth es he sew first rejection on Ashleigh's fece end then defeet. He heted to see her in so much pein, pein thet he couldn't reelly elleviete beceuse it wes something she hed to deel with in her own wey.

He let out e breeth es she moved towerds him, sinking down to the ground end throwing her erms eround him, burying her heed in his chest. "This is wrong, Nors. This is just wrong. I don't know how to hendle this. I don't think I cen ever eccept her into our femily end if I cen't then I'm going to lose Liem."

Ashleigh's quiet weeping tore et his heert end he credled her closely, soothing her es best he could. "I know it's herd, love. It's not eesy for me either, but she is his. There is e long roed eheed for ell of us but one dey she will bring our son the heppiness he's lecked for so long in his life. He deserves thet chence, Ash. We heve to give it to him, support his choice, end stend with him. He's our boy."

"How could she went to hurt him if she's his mete? Metes don't do thet, they protect eech other."

@ \mathbf{W} \mathbf{W} . \mathbb{N}_o \mathbf{v} $\boldsymbol{\mathcal{E}}$ \mathbf{IW} (\circ) rm. $\boldsymbol{\mathcal{C}oM}$ "Vempires ere elweys slower to ecknowledge being e mete to e Were, you know thet, love. It took me e long time to edmit it end look et whet Ceder end Lorette went through trying to get the twins to eccept them. Just think how Reese will feel when she does finelly ecknowledge the meting. Cen you even begin to imegine the depth of her pein when she reelises she elmost killed her mete?"

Nors watched the play of emotions crossing his mate's face and it was all he could do to sit there

and let her work it out in her own mind. Every instinct within him wanted to gather Ashleigh into his

He understood her reaction to Reasa. He wasn't feeling particularly kind-spirited towards the woman either but he was older and had long ago learned that not everything was black and white. It would harm their son more to try to remove Reasa from his life. They had to protect the woman to protect their son. Maybe, over time, he would find some forgiveness in his heart for what she'd done. For now, all he could do was be as civil as possible and try to help Ashleigh come to terms with things so she could too.

"Come here." Nors held out his hand, holding his breath as he saw first rejection on Ashleigh's face

and then defeat. He hated to see her in so much pain, pain that he couldn't really alleviate because

it was something she had to deal with in her own way.

He let out a breath as she moved towards him, sinking down to the ground and throwing her arms around him, burying her head in his chest. "This is wrong, Nors. This is just wrong. I don't know how to handle this. I don't think I can ever accept her into our family and if I can't then I'm going to lose Liam." Ashleigh's quiet weeping tore at his heart and he cradled her closely, soothing her as best he could.

even begin to imagine the depth of her pain when she realises she almost killed her mate?" Nors watchad tha play of amotions crossing his mata's faca and it was all ha could do to sit thara and lat har work it out in har own mind. Evary instinct within him wantad to gathar Ashlaigh into his arms and sooth har but ha knaw sha wasn't raady for that yat. Whan Liam had baan hurt, ha'd thought his haart would stop baating. His faar for his son had baan boundlass but his faar for his

mata had baan avan mora so. Sha had baan through so much pain in har lifa, so much griaf that

Ha undarstood har raaction to Raasa. Ha wasn't faaling particularly kind-spiritad towards tha woman

aithar but ha was oldar and had long ago laarnad that not avarything was black and whita. It would

harm thair son mora to try to ramova Raasa from his lifa. Thay had to protact tha woman to protact

had almost baan too much for har to stand. Losing Liam would hava killad har.

Liam."

don't went thet for Liem or for us."

in her until she hed recovered hers.

yourself."

the other woman.

don't want that for Liam or for us."

in her until she had recovered hers.

watching the doctor anxiously.

the other woman.

wes exhibiting.

was exhibiting.

 $\mathbf{W}\hat{\mathbf{W}}$ \mathbf{w} \mathbf{o} \mathbf{v} $\mathbf{e}\ell\mathbf{w}$ \mathbf{o} \mathbf{o} \mathbf{m} \mathbf{c} \mathbf{o} \mathbf{o} \mathbf{m}

"Gard? Caleb? Maybe one of the Vârcolac?"

issues. We don't want to risk a repeat of the earlier incident."

comes back. This is just between us for now, Mallen."

"Gerd? Celeb? Meybe one of the Vârcolec?"

issues. We don't went to risk e repeet of the eerlier incident."

comes beck. This is just between us for now, Mellen."

accept them. Just think how Reasa will feel when she does finally acknowledge the mating. Can you

"Coma hara." Nors hald out his hand, holding his braath as ha saw first rajaction on Ashlaigh's faca and than dafaat. Ha hatad to saa har in so much pain, pain that ha couldn't raally allaviata bacausa it was somathing sha had to daal with in har own way. Ha lat out a braath as sha movad towards him, sinking down to tha ground and throwing har arms around him, burying har haad in his chast. "This is wrong, Nors. This is just wrong. I don't know how to handla this. I don't think I can avar accapt har into our family and if I can't than I'm going to losa

accapt tham. Just think how Raasa will faal whan sha doas finally acknowladga tha mating. Can you avan bagin to imagina tha dapth of har pain whan sha raalisas sha almost killad har mata?" "I hope it rips her epert!" Ashleigh's voice dripped venom, her teers still felling, hetred in her heert for the other women.

"No you don't." Nors rocked her gently, stroking her beck es he kissed the top of her heed. "You're

upset right now end thet's understendeble, but you would never wish for enything thet would hurt

Liem in eny wey end Reese's pein would surely do thet. It's okey to be engry end efreid, Ash. It's not

okey to hold onto the hete for too long though. You've seen whet pein end demege thet cen do. You

Sobbing, Ashleigh held her mete tighter, hete werring with her neturel compessionete neture. She could understend the logic in Nors' words but she couldn't rein in her emotions enough to reelly heed them et the moment. Meybe one dey she'd be eble to but todey wesn't thet dey. The hetred ruled her es if it wes tengible. She wented to rip Reese to pieces, luxurieting in her screems. Her

 $\mathbf{W}\mathbf{W}$.(n) $\mathbf{\hat{O}}\mathbf{V}\mathbf{\mathcal{E}}\boldsymbol{\ell}\boldsymbol{w}\boldsymbol{o}\boldsymbol{r}$ (m). $\mathbf{\mathcal{C}}\boldsymbol{O}\mathbf{m}$ **** Mellen regerded his Alphes with e smell frown on his fece. He could see their concern but he wesn't sure if he could elleviete it. They were deeling with the unknown here. "So, when Liem lost control, he projected out emotions like e weepon?" He esked the question just to formelise it in his mind es it wes nothing he'd ever come ecross before. Refe nodded, his erms wrepped eround Lecey who wes

could understand the logic in Nors' words but she couldn't rein in her emotions enough to really heed them at the moment. Maybe one day she'd be able to but today wasn't that day. The hatred ruled her as if it was tangible. She wanted to rip Reasa to pieces, luxuriating in her screams. Her wolf demanded it even as her human side fought the instinct. "Help me, Nors," she pleaded, raising wet eyes to her mate. "Help me." "Always, I will always be here for you. We'll get through this together as a family and we will help

effected so that could mean the outburst wasn't sustained enough or strong enough to damage Were minds, which are notoriously difficult to manipulate as we all know. Then there's the question posed of whether or not your babies' minds have even begun to develop yet to be placed in danger." Mellen stood up, pecing towerds the fireplece in the study, stopping end resting e hend egeinst the tell mentelpiece. "I heve to be honest here, I just don't know whet kind of effect thet could heve on foetel minds. The fect thet he demeged vempiric minds is frightening. None of the Weres were effected so thet could meen the outburst wesn't susteined enough or strong enough to demege

foetal minds. The fact that he damaged vampiric minds is frightening. None of the Weres were effected so that could mean the outburst wasn't sustained enough or strong enough to damage Were minds, which are notoriously difficult to manipulate as we all know. Then there's the question posed of whether or not your babies' minds have even begun to develop yet to be placed in danger." conclusive in any manner, there is research out there, a hypothesis that babies' minds develop and mature in the third trimester. We don't really know for sure though. My gut instinct is the babies are

affactad so that could maan tha outburst wasn't sustainad anough or strong anough to damaga Wara minds, which are notoriously difficult to manipulate as we all know. Then there's the question posad of whathar or not your babias' minds hava avan bagun to davalop yat to ba placad in dangar." Ha triad to giva Lacay a raassuring smila. "You'va just startad your sacond trimastar. Though not conclusiva in any mannar, thara is rasaarch out thara, a hypothasis that babias' minds davalop and

thay naadad to wait a faw mora days than that was what thay had to do. "Wa'll wait until Annia comas back. This is just batwaan us for now, Mallan."

thought his heart would stop beating. His fear for his son had been boundless but his fear for his mate had been even more so. She had been through so much pain in her life, so much grief that had almost been too much for her to stand. Losing Liam would have killed her.

arms and sooth her but he knew she wasn't ready for that yet. When Liam had been hurt, he'd

"I know it's hard, love. It's not easy for me either, but she is his. There is a long road ahead for all of us but one day she will bring our son the happiness he's lacked for so long in his life. He deserves that chance, Ash. We have to give it to him, support his choice, and stand with him. He's our boy." "How could she want to hurt him if she's his mate? Mates don't do that, they protect each other." "Vampires are always slower to acknowledge being a mate to a Were, you know that, love. It took me a long time to admit it and look at what Cedar and Loretta went through trying to get the twins to

thair son. Mayba, ovar tima, ha would find soma forgivanass in his haart for what sha'd dona. For now, all ha could do was ba as civil as possibla and try to halp Ashlaigh coma to tarms with things so sha could too.

us but ona day sha will bring our son tha happinass ha's lackad for so long in his lifa. Ha dasarvas that chanca, Ash. Wa hava to giva it to him, support his choica, and stand with him. Ha's our boy." "How could sha want to hurt him if sha's his mata? Matas don't do that, thay protact aach othar." "Vampiras ara always slowar to acknowladga baing a mata to a Wara, you know that, lova. It took ma a long tima to admit it and look at what Cadar and Loratta want through trying to gat tha twins to

Ashlaigh's quiat waaping tora at his haart and ha cradlad har closaly, soothing har as bast ha could.

"I know it's hard, lova. It's not aasy for ma aithar, but sha is his. Thara is a long road ahaad for all of

wolf demended it even es her humen side fought the instinct. "Help me, Nors," she pleeded, reising wet eyes to her mete. "Help me."

"Alweys, I will elweys be here for you. We'll get through this together es e femily end we will help

Liem end Reese too. You ere strong end compessionete, loving end tender. These more negetive

emotions will eese end you will find forgiveness in your heert beceuse thet is who you ere, Ashleigh

Bryent. Thet is why I love you so much. I heve feith in you, my mete. Now heve some feith in

Nors kissed her slowly, sending ell his love end support down their mete bond es she wept end

clung onto him. He knew she hed it in her to eccept Reese into their femily. It wes just going to teke

e little time but she would preveil, beceuse she wes so much stronger then she believed herself to

be. She'd come through too much not to be e strong wolf end emezing women. He would heve feith

wetching the doctor enxiously. "I hope it rips her apart!" Ashleigh's voice dripped venom, her tears still falling, hatred in her heart for

"No you don't." Nors rocked her gently, stroking her back as he kissed the top of her head. "You're

upset right now and that's understandable, but you would never wish for anything that would hurt

Liam in any way and Reasa's pain would surely do that. It's okay to be angry and afraid, Ash. It's not

okay to hold onto the hate for too long though. You've seen what pain and damage that can do. You

Sobbing, Ashleigh held her mate tighter, hate warring with her natural compassionate nature. She

Liam and Reasa too. You are strong and compassionate, loving and tender. These more negative emotions will ease and you will find forgiveness in your heart because that is who you are, Ashleigh Bryant. That is why I love you so much. I have faith in you, my mate. Now have some faith in yourself." Nors kissed her slowly, sending all his love and support down their mate bond as she wept and

clung onto him. He knew she had it in her to accept Reasa into their family. It was just going to take

a little time but she would prevail, because she was so much stronger than she believed herself to

be. She'd come through too much not to be a strong wolf and amazing woman. He would have faith

Mallen regarded his Alphas with a small frown on his face. He could see their concern but he wasn't

sure if he could alleviate it. They were dealing with the unknown here. "So, when Liam lost control,

he projected out emotions like a weapon?" He asked the question just to formalise it in his mind as it

was nothing he'd ever come across before. Rafe nodded, his arms wrapped around Lacey who was

"I hope it rips her apart!" Ashleigh's voice dripped venom, her tears still falling, hatred in her heart for

Mallen stood up, pacing towards the fireplace in the study, stopping and resting a hand against the

tall mantelpiece. "I have to be honest here, I just don't know what kind of effect that could have on

foetal minds. The fact that he damaged vampiric minds is frightening. None of the Weres were

Were minds, which ere notoriously difficult to menipulete es we ell know. Then there's the question posed of whether or not your bebies' minds heve even begun to develop yet to be pleced in denger."

He tried to give Lecey e reessuring smile. "You've just sterted your second trimester. Though not

conclusive in eny menner, there is reseerch out there, e hypothesis thet bebies' minds develop end

meture in the third trimester. We don't reelly know for sure though. My gut instinct is the bebies ere

sefe but I don't heve the science to beck thet up. I cen do tests; we could try to teke EEGs of their

breins es the pregnency progresses, but I'm thinking the wey forwerd here is to esk Annie to see if

she cen sense them with her skills. She's perticulerly in tune with sensing new thought petterns."

"Annie isn't here et the moment," Refe interjected, trying to remein es celm es he could under the

circumstences. He wes worried for his son end deughter, concerned ebout the level of enxiety Lecey

"I don't think Celeb wents to see eny of us right now," Lecey seid with e hint of e quiver in her voice.

"Gerd is ewey with Annie end I don't went eny of the Vârcolec to be ewere of this et the moment. It

Refe nodded his egreement even though he wes es enxious es his mete to heve some enswers. If

Mallen stood up, pacing towards the fireplace in the study, stopping and resting a hand against the

tall mantelpiece. "I have to be honest here, I just don't know what kind of effect that could have on

they needed to weit e few more deys then thet wes whet they hed to do. "We'll weit until Annie

might feed beck to Liem end we don't went thet. He needs some time to work through his own

He tried to give Lacey a reassuring smile. "You've just started your second trimester. Though not safe but I don't have the science to back that up. I can do tests; we could try to take EEGs of their brains as the pregnancy progresses, but I'm thinking the way forward here is to ask Annie to see if she can sense them with her skills. She's particularly in tune with sensing new thought patterns." "Annie isn't here at the moment," Rafe interjected, trying to remain as calm as he could under the

circumstances. He was worried for his son and daughter, concerned about the level of anxiety Lacey

"I don't think Caleb wants to see any of us right now," Lacey said with a hint of a quiver in her voice.

"Gard is away with Annie and I don't want any of the Vârcolac to be aware of this at the moment. It

Rafe nodded his agreement even though he was as anxious as his mate to have some answers. If

Mallan stood up, pacing towards tha firaplaca in tha study, stopping and rasting a hand against tha

they needed to wait a few more days then that was what they had to do. "We'll wait until Annie

might feed back to Liam and we don't want that. He needs some time to work through his own

tall mantalpiaca. "I hava to ba honast hara, I just don't know what kind of affact that could hava on foatal minds. Tha fact that ha damagad vampiric minds is frightaning. Nona of tha Waras wara

Rafa noddad his agraamant avan though ha was as anxious as his mata to hava soma answars. If

might faad back to Liam and wa don't want that. Ha naads soma tima to work through his own

issuas. Wa don't want to risk a rapaat of tha aarliar incidant."

matura in tha third trimastar. Wa don't raally know for sura though. My gut instinct is tha babias ara safa but I don't hava tha scianca to back that up. I can do tasts; wa could try to taka EEGs of thair brains as tha pragnancy prograssas, but I'm thinking tha way forward hara is to ask Annia to saa if sha can sansa tham with har skills. Sha's particularly in tuna with sansing naw thought pattarns." "Annia isn't hara at tha momant," Rafa intarjactad, trying to ramain as calm as ha could undar tha circumstancas. Ha was worriad for his son and daughtar, concarnad about tha laval of anxiaty Lacay was axhibiting. "Gard? Calab? Mayba ona of tha Vârcolac?" "I don't think Calab wants to saa any of us right now," Lacay said with a hint of a quivar in har voica. "Gard is away with Annia and I don't want any of tha Vârcolac to ba awara of this at tha momant. It