

## Chapter 561

Lacey didn't know if Caleb was as adept at delving as Annie was or if Rafe would throw a fit, but worrying was driving her insane. She had to know. Pulling Caleb into the study, she didn't knock, and Rafe and Aaron's heads shot up in surprise at their abrupt entrance.

There was a long moment of silence as tension began to fill the room and then Aaron rose from his seat in front of the Alpha's desk, smiling at the Ancient. "I guess this is my cue to get lost for a while," he grinned. "I'll head over to the lab to see if there's been any progress overnight and give you an update before Caleb leaves." He nodded to his alpha and headed out.

"If you've come to cause trouble, Caleb, you can just turn around and fuck off," Rafe growled, his expression hard. He wasn't pleased to see the vampire and even less pleased that his mate was still holding the other male's hand and his second-in-command was giving deference to the Ancient vampire.

"Rafe," Lacey sighed, crossing the room to stand beside his chair, where he was purposely lounging. His silent message was making it very clear, in pack terms, he was the alpha here and their friend was beneath him. She was relieved to see Caleb wasn't rising to the bait or looking amused. If there had been even a hint of laughter from the vampire, her mate would probably do something regrettable.

"You wanted to know if I'd heard from Annie," Caleb responded in a neutral tone, moving to sit in the chair Aaron had vacated. "We spoke earlier and she's fine. Gard is taking good care of her and she hopes to be home soon."

Some of the tension eased from the Alpha, and Lacey's soothing hand on his back helped to release some more. Rafe wrapped an arm around her back, pulling her closer. "Glad to hear it. Is that all?" He could feel Lacey stiffen and he had to fight down a sigh. He didn't want to do anything to upset her, but he was pissed at their friend and didn't know how far they could trust him anymore. His recent behaviour was a major cause for concern.

The Ancient sighed at his aggressive tone, irritation flashing in his eyes for a moment before he slowly relaxed. He leaned forward, bracing his arms on the edge of the desk, his tone neutral. "I've already done this shit with Demetri this morning, Rafe, so I'm in no mood to go through it again. What's done is done, and can't be changed. What we need to be concentrating on now is working to find a way to fix things. You want to be pissed at me, join the queue. You want to know what's going on and if your pack is safe, then let's talk about it with less of the attitude. Choice is yours, my friend."[www.noVéOW©π©.com](#)

He leaned back again and glanced at Lacey before looking back at the Alpha. "Besides, Lacey said she had something personal she wanted to discuss."

Rafe stiffened further, shooting a quick glance at his mate as he considered Caleb's words. The vampire sitting in front of him was the one he'd come to know well, not the stranger they saw at the Praetorian Compound. Even as he was slapping him down in his usual arrogant manner, he was according him the respect of an equal, talking with him as he would one of his own whose opinion he valued. There was a subtle art to instilling respect and a slap down at the same time, and Caleb was good at it.

The most important thing was Annie was safe and coming home soon. If his sister was talking with her mate, that was a good sign. He was aware of what was happening up at the Praetorian Compound; Mallen's team had been keeping him updated. Caleb's intention for handling the situation was something he did need to know, as ultimately, no matter what Mac was doing, the Ancient would have the final say in it. Rafe could be pissed at his friend all he wanted to, but he needed to remember he was an Alpha first to ensure his pack was protected to the best of his ability. There were too many outside influences that could cause them harm, and to do his job he needed to work with the vampires.

"Lace?" Rafe needed to know what was going through his mate's mind, what she wanted to discuss with Caleb. The pressure on his back increased as her soft hands rubbed over his muscles, but he could feel the slightest quiver in her touch.

"Maybe Caleb could help? Annie isn't going to be back for a few days more and I was wondering if there was a possibility..."

She didn't need to continue; he knew where her thoughts were going and he could feel her concern through their bond. It was hard on Lacey to wait, not knowing if their babies were safe. It was hard on him too, but he had to be strong for his mate, had to give her the reassurance that everything was going to be just fine.

Holding onto his anger wasn't going to achieve anything and he'd hurt Lacey if he did. There really wasn't any other decision for him to make so he lowered his aggressiveness, meeting Caleb's gaze with a half-smile on his lips. "You have a knack for rolling in and acting like a pack belongs to you, Caleb. I remember how it used to piss Jared off. I can understand how he felt now."

"You know fine well I'm not interested in having a pissing contest with you, Rafe. This is your pack and you run it your way," the Ancient sighed. "You know I'd do anything in my power to protect it too. You're my family and I protect my own. "

"Didn't sound that way up at the Praetorian Compound," the Were retorted.

"That was my issue and one I'm handling. Leave it at that and tell me what's gotten you and Lacey so worried? I can see it in your eyes. Is it the woman? Is her presence too much of a challenge? I can find somewhere else for her if it is."

Rafe shook his head, giving Lacey another tight squeeze. "No, the Reasa situation is being dealt with as best as we can. It's problematic, but we're trying another option to help Liam maintain enough control of his... power. I'll let you know if it becomes too difficult to handle. Work is still being done on finding an antidote to the poison, as you heard, and we've managed to set up a high-end laboratory with the help of carefully selected vampires, trusted by the twins and Freya and Nors. So, we're managing as well as possible, given the circumstances; that includes helping to keep the injured vampires comfortable up at the Praetorian Compound."[www.n\(©\)v&LWôrm.cOm](#)

Caleb nodded, relaxing further as Rafe's tone evened out and became a bit friendlier. "I've just been up to see Mac and get an update." He was still waiting to hear what the personal issue was and Lacey's body language was showing more signs of distress the longer they avoided it.

"I'm pregnant," she suddenly blurted out. ©wW.noV©IlWor©.Com

For a moment, Caleb couldn't understand what the problem was, his lips widening in a large smile. "Congratulations. Does Annie know?"

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