

## Chapter 565

Freya smiled as she walked back to the front of the house. The woman brought out a side of herself she'd missed for the last quarter of a century. She took comfort in knowing that it still existed beneath the more mellow part of her personality. She wasn't unhappy with the way her life had changed; how could she be when it had brought her Dayton and Elina? Sometimes though, she did wonder if being in the pack made her soft. That a day would come when she was needed, and she would hesitate and someone she loved would pay for that hesitation. It was good to know that she remained fundamentally the same strong vampire she had always been.

She was surprised by her lack of animosity towards Reasa. Sure, the human was no longer a threat towards her loved ones; but that wasn't what had her at ease, even though she had just rattled off a long list of reasons why Reasa was safe in her home. The predominant reason she lacked animosity towards the girl was the fact that she understood her.*www.novelworld.com*

It wasn't so long ago that she had been like Reasa. Her motivations may have been different, but the drive had been the same. If Freya had believed in anything so whole-heartedly, she would have moved heaven and earth to achieve her goal, much like Reasa had, despite the basic error of her thinking. She could relate to that drive as she could relate to the rank Reasa had attained within the covens in Europe. It spoke of her strength and power as a vampire. Louis had never been known to be a fool or a misogynist. Reasa had lucked out joining his coven.

That was an interesting turn of events, unearthing Louis' involvement. It was gratifying knowing that he still lived, too. His coven had been one of the younger ones when she had visited Europe. It was for that reason she had aligned herself with him; it was easier to be accepted, as he needed every powerful ally he could find. She would need to talk with Gard before he headed over there. She could probably give him a few pointers on how to deal with the Frenchman.

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Pulling ingredients out of the refrigerator, Freya mused over what it all meant. Louis had never been one to set himself up on the losing side. Why was he getting involved in matters that weren't his concern? Had he set Reasa on her task? That didn't fit the Louis she remembered. He'd had much more intelligence than that back then.

Reasa entering the great room interrupted her line of thought. The human hesitated for a second before she headed over to the kitchen area. She'd washed her face and changed her clothes. There was a sense of determination radiating from her, as if their conversation had worked to give her a bit of backbone. Freya approved.

Tossing a recipe book onto the workstation, she inclined her head. "You need to learn to cook as you now require food. I'm not going to wait on you and neither are any of my family, just because they eat too. Ingredients and instructions, you may begin. I will assist if you have any problems."

It was gratifying to see the former vampire didn't argue with her, merely started to leaf through the book with an air of concentration on her face. There was hope for Reasa and that in turn meant there was hope for Liam. They just needed to work on her errant thinking and convince Ashleigh to accept her into their family. That thought was enough to make her groan, but she held it in. Nors and Liam could work on Ashleigh; she would do her best to work on Reasa.

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Liam watched his aunt and mate from his perch up in the tree. From what he could see, things appeared to be going well; however, he reached out with his mind to connect with his aunt, just to test the level of her emotions. Reading her had always been easy for him, even when he was a small child. For someone who thought she locked down her emotions tightly, she overwhelmed his senses much more easily than most people could when her iron control slipped.

He would never tell her that though and thankfully, those times were rare. His aunt had always been one of his most favourite people; his devotion to her transferring instinctually to Elina when she was born and forming a strong bond between the cousins. He loved them both fiercely, adoring their beauty and their dedication. Most of all he loved the way they could calm their minds, until only a hairsbreadth of emotion escaped and he felt safe beside them.

His aunt's emotions radiated contentment. She was her usual cool self, and he could perceive no hint of threat directed at Reasa. That soothed Liam immensely and he relaxed against the branch watching the glorious caramel-skinned woman peering into what appeared to be a cookbook. He was stunned to realise his aunt was teaching his mate to fend for herself. That simple task helped to soothe his soul. She would keep her word to him. His mate would be safe.

"Of all of us, you were the one I least expected to cause the most trouble."

Liam didn't react to the mockery in Kothari's tone, nor did he display any surprise as his fellow Vârcolac appeared at his side in the tree. He had known his dark haired companion was close but resisted the urge to tell him so. Kothi liked to sneak up on people. If he knew that the empath could sense him anywhere in the compound it would irritate him and he was volatile enough as it was.

"No, you want that title, Kothi," he remarked dryly, fondness in his tone as he turned to look at his friend. Liam was feeling more composed than he had in a long time and it was reflected in his body language. His mother had been right. Moving Reasa for the moment had been the best course of action. It would give him time to regroup and find some inner peace.

Liam's gaze reflected back at him from Kothi's mirrored shades. "How's Pietro holding up?" He'd heard his parents talking earlier about the vampire being aware Reasa was at the compound.

"I'd keep your mate away from him. He has a rage simmering inside that could blow at any given moment. He may not be able to stop himself from trying to eliminate the source of his torment."

One part of Liam understood the vampire's need to strike out; the other wanted to beat the crap out of Pietro for even thinking it. The negative emotions he was experiencing lately were so alien that Liam was unsure if he'd be able to balance them out in his mind. He had to find a way to come to terms with them; otherwise, he didn't know what would happen.

"He mustn't try to hurt her, Kothari." His friend's lips quirked in a half smile at the determined note in his voice.*www.novelworld.com*

Looking down on the two women in the house, Kothari's lips once more assumed their standard flat line. "That message has been reiterated to him; nothing will happen to your mate."

The conviction in Kothari's tone brought a frown to Liam's face and he shifted his position to watch his friend with an intent expression. "Pietro has reason for his animosity. While I can't allow him to hurt Reasa, his feelings are justified, Kothi. He has suffered much at the hands of my mate and her cohorts."*www.novelworld.com*

Kothi's mirrored gaze met his own as the other Vârcolac inclined his head. "I wouldn't hurt him, Liam. I would stop him though, because his actions would ultimately cause him as much pain as they did you. Pietro has the soul of a Praetorian. In his heart, he must protect the Vârcolac. It would kill him to do anything that would harm you."

What he said made sense and Liam frowned as he pondered the implications of his mate being in the pack. Kothari's mention of the Praetorians also brought up something he knew he shouldn't be avoiding. No one had talked about what had happened when Reasa was stripped of her immortality. Truth be told, he had been more focused on his mate and his own issues than what was going on within the pack and their protectors.