

Chapter 571

"Then I am just as culpable here too," Dayton interjected, his tone pragmatic. He raised a hand to halt Freya's automatic denial. "No, if you're intent on applying blame, Freya, then let's look at the big picture. How did Reasa get access to the phone? What diverted your attention enough that she could take it in the first instance?"

Her angry gaze bore into his, her expression turning hard. "Don't try to manipulate me, Dayton. The error occurred because I didn't stop to consider that she would even try to get access to a phone. It has nothing to do with you arriving home and distracting me. You didn't leave your phone out and you didn't overreact to the situation."

"When you guys have finished beating yourselves up over who is responsible, do you think one of you could give me a hand here?" Mallen asked dryly, interrupting the volatile situation. "I need someone to brace Reasa so I can pop her shoulder back in." Three heads turned to survey him, but it was the vampire who moved first.

"I am the strongest." Freya swept past her mate and Alpha, moving into position as Mallen relayed his needs. She supported the other woman against her body, listening intently to the doctor's instructions.

As they worked together, Rafe turned to Dayton. "Do we know where Liam is?"

His Beta let out a sigh, his gaze never leaving his mate's rigid face. "He went for a walk with Elina earlier. I think they took off into the forest. With any luck, he'll be out of hearing distance and none the wiser." A loud popping sound filled the room as he finished speaking, followed a split second later by a harsh scream. Reasa's body went rigid with pain, her eyes rolling back in her head, the colour draining from her face.

Liam increased his pace to enable him to catch up with his cousin. His wolf was unsettled, urging him to return to the compound quickly. There was no real reason for it, so he was perplexed by his animal's behaviour. It appeared he would be struggling with his wolf the entire time it would take him to claim his mate. He wasn't used to that, having always been in harmony with his wolf from a very early age.

"What?" Elina's voice broke the silence as they entered the compound, her eyes alert as they ran over his face.

"Something doesn't feel right."

A loud scream rent the air and Liam stiffened in shock for a moment, every muscle in his body going rigid. Then a loud snarl erupted from his chest and he took off at supernatural speed towards his aunt's house.*wŴw.n0v(ε)lwóRm.com*

"Liam!" Elina flew after him, catching the front door as it tried to whip shut in her face. "Kallum, help!"

Liam was barely aware of his cousin at his back, though he heard her call to Kallum. His wolf was howling in fury, his mate's screams echoing in his mind as he raced down the hallway and into the room where Reasa was. Images assaulted him in a microsecond, Reasa lying on the ground with Mallen and Freya beside her. Rafe was in the room as was Dayton, but all he could see was his mate, her body twisted in agony.

"Liam, calm down." Rafe's tone was full of Command, pressing at his wolf to obey him as Alpha.

It worked for a moment, the beast calming a bit, but then his vampiric side rose up to counter it. If he hadn't been so focused on getting to his mate, the savageness of his feral side would have brought him to his knees. As it was, all he could think about was getting to Reasa, to keep her safe from those hurting her.

Liam knocked aside Mallen with one hard swipe of his arm. Glowing amber eyes turned to his aunt, molten lava running through his veins. "What did you do?" The rage within was at crisis point, his mind chaotic as his emotions peaked. A wave of solid air exploded from him, radiating out like a shockwave, knocking everyone from their feet.

"What...did...you...DO?!"

Freya rose slowly, her gaze never leaving her nephew, her body poised for attack. She could see no sign of the boy she loved, but she recognised the monster that lurked in his eyes. She had seen it many times before when looking at her own reflection. It was something she'd never dreamed she would have witnessed from the gentle soul of her nephew.

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Raising her hand, she motioned for everyone else to stay back. They couldn't have reached them anyway. Whatever Liam had done had placed a barrier between the three of them, and the rest of the room. While her eyes were riveted to Liam's face, the logical side of her mind catalogued the effect and recognized its similarity to what Annie had done at the Praetorian Compound.

"She stole my phone and made a call to someone outside the compound. I had to stop her, Liam."

"You hurt her." The hard edge in Liam's voice was chilling.

"It was an accident, nephew. I didn't consider her fragility when I intercepted her call. I erred and I am sorry for her injury, but it is not life threatening. She will heal." Freya kept her tone cool and rational, knowing it was the vampire who was listening as opposed to the wolf. To calm her nephew down she had to appeal to his logical side.

"You hurt her." Another blast of rage knocked her back down to her knees as the same cold tone resonated from his lips.

Mallen cried out, his hands coming to his head as he curled up in agony. "Liam, stop!"

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The room erupted in a sea of sound with all of the Vârcolac crying out in one mental voice, trying to break through Liam's barriers as they ran towards the house. Elina was already in the room, casting out her mental shields in Mallen's direction, attempting to connect with his mind in a way she'd never tried with a non-hybrid before. She managed to slide a block in place, countering the worst excess of Liam's emotional backlash, but she knew it wouldn't hold for long. He was too strong, too out of control.

Elina sank to her knees outside the barrier. As she watched her cousin turn his full attention on her mother, she realized there was only one person who could derail his need for destruction.

"Thereasa, stop him! You're the only one who can reach him right now. Talk to him!"

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Her words brought no reaction from the other woman who remained curled up in a ball, her eyes staring vacantly ahead. "REASA! Hear me now! If he does this, he will implode and destroy everything. If we can't contain him, everyone will die, men, woman...our children! You have to stop him, Reasa. You have to let him know you're okay."