

Chapter 582

Mara nodded her assent as Claude leaned forward and directed his gaze towards Demetri. "What of the assassin?"

"Neutralised," the Ancient responded brusquely, making it plain he had nothing further to say on the topic. "The Weres are working on trying to determine an antidote to the poison, but so far we are unsure of all the components used in it."

"We're really leaving it up to the wolves to find an antidote?" Lenore queried, with an incredulous note in her voice. "What's to say they will do their utmost to succeed? They are not of our kind."

"How many scientists do we have?" Alexei countered. "Perhaps we should give samples to the human scientists and let them work on it?"

"Don't be absurd, Alexei, you know that isn't what I meant." Venom dripped from Lenore's voice as she glared at the Ancient at the end of the table. "If the hybrids are immune, then what incentive is there for them to find the cure? Their loved ones are safe."

"You forget that Annie is Rafe's sister and Caleb his brother," Mara sighed, feeling exhausted. Keeping her wits sharp around the other Council members took a lot of energy. The current session had just about wiped out her reserves with the constant bickering.

Demetri crossed behind the dais to place his hands on her shoulders, rubbing her shoulder blades to ease a little of the tension. He didn't give a fuck what the other Council members thought of his actions; his Mara needed some of his strength and her needs were his priority. "The wolves hold many pureblood vampires as their friends and family and that is why they are working around the clock to try to find the antidote," he growled.

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"Yes, if only we all shared that same loyalty," Mara muttered under her breath, aware that everyone could hear her.

"Okay, I think we have discussed the other points enough," Stephan sighed, rising to his feet. "To sum it up: Rayne and Gard will be asked to travel to Europe and report back their findings; the wolves will continue working on an antidote to the poison and update us when they are successful. I guess the main question left is do we tell our people of this present danger?"

No one answered; each vampire looked from one to another, trying to gauge his or her thoughts on Stephan's summation.

"A vote sounds good." Demetri finally broke the silence. "I vote no. Most of them won't believe it and probably hare off to Europe and get themselves killed. Even if they don't, the more people who know, the higher the likelihood it would end up alerting whomever is responsible with what we have learned thus far. That, in itself, could end up escalating whatever timetable they have established. From the intelligence we have gathered, it would seem only one assassin has managed to cross over and attempt to infiltrate our territory. No point in making them react prematurely. We have more time this way."

Stephan laughed and it was the first humorous sound of the evening. It appeared to startle a couple of the other Council members. "Your logic is sound, Demetri, but your vote is moot. You're not a member of the Council."

He turned to survey the others, and took note that they had digested the Ancient's words. "Do we need a formal vote? What Demetri says makes sense. If there is anyone who wishes to alert our people now, please speak." He didn't expect any dissent to the Ancient's logic and received none.

"I declare this meeting adjourned then. Mara, how soon will we know if Rayne and Gard are in agreement to our request?"*ur(w)w.nôvéł©or©.com*

"I'll email everyone later tonight. The sooner we get someone over there the better. We intend to stop off to update the pack on our way home."

The Council members began to file out of the chambers slowly. Stephan held back to ask after Alexei and Andrei's families. There was nothing unusual about his action, as he had been their friend for centuries.

When the others had finally gone, Demetri scowled at him. "Did you have to give me such a hard time?"

Stephan's smile was innocent. "Of course, it would have appeared remiss of me not to."

"Not to mention the enjoyment you took out of making him squirm!" Andrei laughed, this time his smile actually reaching his eyes.

"There is that," his friend laughed back, his eyes twinkling. Stephan's expression deepened as he motioned Emily to his side. "You performed excellently, Emily. Your timing was impeccable. Thank you."

The Youngling blushed and bowed her head to hide her pleased smile. "Thank you, Stephan."*wurŴ.n(o)véŁwórm.coM*

"Do you think they bought it?" Mara asked. She had taken on more of a major role in the evening's events, and that made it difficult for her to take stock of the other Council members' positions.

"They bought it," Alexei answered. "I spent most of the meeting watching their reactions. They truly think it was their decision to send Gard and Rayne to Europe. I would bet a small fortune that not one of them realised they were being herded in that direction, especially not after Andrei's little display."

His twin snorted. "I didn't do anything. If I could have pounded on Cristoph's face a little, then maybe you could have said I did something."

"The objective was to get them around to our way of thinking not alienate them, Andrei," Demetri admonished, his tone dry. "And anyway, just a little of that creepy smile of yours is enough to make most people run a mile. You don't need to bash skulls to get your point across."

"The next idiot who thinks he or she can send my children into a warzone is going to get their skulls caved in and I don't care who they are," his friend muttered, clearly unhappy with that part of the meeting.

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