

## Chapter 595

Liam needed Ashleigh as well as Reasa, more now than he'd ever needed her before. Was it such a leap of faith to step back and consider that maybe Reasa had to use her empathy adversely just to survive over in Europe? What did she really know about Thereasa's life and what she had endured till now? She'd made no attempt to find out what motivated the former vampire. Annie was right, it was time to take a step back and look at the bigger picture.

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Turning slowly, she stared at the petite redhead sitting on the sofa watching her in silence. Annie had risked everything for what was right. She was the bravest person Ashleigh had ever met, and that had nothing to do with the soul of the vampire Queen that lived within her. It was time for Ashleigh to be just as brave, and just as determined to do the right thing.

A soft smile crossed her face and she nodded her head. "What can I do to help, Annie?"

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Rhienne and Ashleigh headed over to the peck compound once Rowen showed up at the bookstore. Aeron and Jen's daughter liked helping out on a part-time basis while she was finishing off another degree at the university. The latest venture was in teaching; the first one had been in computer science. Though she enjoyed all things computer related, she'd realised that wasn't the type of career she wanted. She appeared much happier since she switched paths, and enjoyed helping out with the children's story time session at the bookstore.

As Rhienne pulled up outside her brother's house, she wasn't surprised to see him waiting in the doorway. It was as if he had known she was on her way over, and it made her lips quirk in a small smile to see him standing there.

He strode to the car and had the door open even before she'd managed to take off her seatbelt. "Are you okay?"

"Refs, I told you last night I was fine." She laughed as she was scooped up in a big bear hug, and returned his embrace with as much fervour. It never seemed to matter to him that she was a vampire and technically stronger than he was. She would always be his baby sister to protect. "You worry too much."

"That's my job," he answered with a lop-sided grin, turning to greet Ashleigh as she joined them. "I thought you were working at the bookstore today."

"I was, but Annie had some important things to discuss that affect Liam. Rowen is taking care of the shop for the time being."

Refs turned a quizzical gaze on his sister who gave him one of her enigmatic smiles. "All in good time," she grinned. "Celeb's on his way over, so I went to wait for him. However, you can tell me how you managed to get your mate pregnant again without me knowing about it." There was laughter in her voice which prompted a wide grin to spread over her brother's face.

"I really need to tell you the facts of life? Thought you and Celeb had that one nailed down already, but if you need some pointers..."

"He's been insufferable since we found out the babies are okay," Lecey laughed, as she proceeded out of the house to give her sister-in-law a big hug. There was more than a hint of amusement in her voice as she looked at her smug mate. "He's been strutting around like a proud peacock."

Her teasing had the Alphe grinning as he gathered her to his side and dropped a kiss on the top of her head. "Don't let her fool you, Annie. She's been lepping up all the attention the peck's been giving her, too."

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The happiness exuding from the couple was warm and soothing. Rhienne's answering smile was full of love as she gave each of them another quick hug. This was her family; when they were happy, she was happy. Things could have gone so much differently, and she was relieved that everything was okay.

"I need to head over to lessons, so I'll catch up with you later." Lecey disentangled herself from them and disappeared into the community hall, leaving the others to head into the Alphe's study.

"Nors is over at the new warehouse preparing it for Monday's opening," Refs said as he ordered coffee and breakfast to be brought to his study and set down in the armchair beside the fireplace. "Do we need him here?"

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"Ashleigh can fill him in later or if we need him, we can give him a call to come home."

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Rhionno was interrupted briefly when Lily knocked on the door and entered the study. She was carrying a loden tray and the Alphe immediately rose to take it from her. "You shouldn't be carrying this in your condition." There was disapproval in his tone, but also a trace of pride. He knew his errant pack member wasn't required to do breakfast duties, but she was there every morning, usually before the other pack members were awake.

"I'm pregnant, Rofs, not sick." The Vârcoloc laughed, though her pleased smile let everyone know that his concern for her well-being was appreciated.

"You're wasting your breath there," Annie chuckled as she rose to give the younger woman a hug. Her eyes travelled over her face with intent before she smiled again, clearly pleased with what she saw. "Impending motherhood suits you."

"We'll revisit that in another month or so when I suddenly balloon out to the size of a house," Lily quipped as she turned and left the room, passing Coleb on his way in.

"Are you trying to irritate me?" the vampire grumbled as he headed straight for his mate and dropped her up in his arms. "You're not even home for twenty-four hours and I woke up to find myself alone in our bed."

Rhionno laughed at his peeved tone and cuddled closer to ease his separation anxiety. It was going to take her a while to alleviate her mate's distress when she wasn't at his side. She would have to put up with it until he was once again convinced he wasn't about to lose her. "You needed the rest and I couldn't sleep because of what we've discovered. I was only at the bookstore, Coleb. Not that for now."

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