

Chapter 701

Michael sat in the library of the safe house waiting for Candrea to arrive. He had placed a light in the window as she had instructed him when they'd first met, but his patience was wearing thin as he waited. The abduction of Reasa couldn't have gone more horribly wrong...well he supposed it could have, he could have been killed along with the rest of the team he'd taken with him.

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One moment he had been in a position of absolute power and the next, wolves and ancient vampires had descended on them on masse and retreat had been the only option. He needed to talk to Candrea. He needed an exit strategy back to Europe. Though he hated to admit it, he needed the other vampire to give him some advice on how he could present this failure to him.

Michael was afraid to report back to their Master just yet. His wrath could be a terrible thing, and the blond vampire was in no doubt that the Master would not be happy to learn that he'd failed to neutralise Thereasa, and had learned nothing of worth from the aborted attack. Perhaps Candrea would have some way of dressing it up so it didn't appear to be such an abject failure. If only the stupid slattern would get his message and show her face at the safe house!

"Michael, your agitation is a palpable thing. Tell me what has transpired."

Cold slivers of dread trickled down his spine as his Master's voice rebounded through his chaotic thoughts. "Master...Master, we were ambushed. The ancient vampires arrived with their wolf pets and slaughtered everyone."

Heavy disapproval flooded his mind, so thick he could almost reach out and touch it psychically. A split second later, pain exploded inside his mind, sending Michael crashing to the floor clutching his head in agony.

"Be still! Be silent!"(w)www.nOVéleW@r@.com

The order was inescapable, and Michael strove to obey even as tears streamed from his eyes. He had disappointed his Master. It was only fitting that he be punished for his failure. He could feel him scything through his thoughts, ripping the knowledge directly from his weak mind. The pain was agonising, Michael's body bowing up in a razor sharp needles appeared to rasp over every inch of his body. He tried to protect himself, to dull the agony, but there was no hiding from the Master.

"Imbecile. Fool. I should never have honoured you with this task. You have nothing to show for your time here, Michael. I was already aware that the pack would be heavily defended from my other sources. Your failure cannot be tolerated; you know that, don't you?"(w)www.noVeleW@r@.com

"Please...Master...please! I live only to serve you. I am sorry! I will do better next time. Please, Master...please let me serve..." Michael let out an agonised scream as a shaft of pure malevolence seared through his already bruised mind. The scream cut off to a muted wail, the last semblance of any rationality cruelly extinguished with a mere thought. www.m@r@W@r@.com

"Candrea...clean up this filth..."

The female vampire was just approaching the safe house, the contact from the Master so unexpected she almost drove off the road into a ditch. As it was, she pulled over in the dark, taking a moment to catch her breath. It took all of her mental skills to hide her instant irritation from the powerful mind still lurking within hers. He never stopped to consider that whomever he was contacting may need to be in full control of their faculties. It was little things like that which chafed at her soul, and was probably one of the reasons she had survived so long in servitude to him.

He burnt out weaker minds at an exponential rate. As soon as she had met Michael, she had known that the blond vampire wouldn't last much longer. He was already too far gone in his subservience, too eager to please the powerful mind that ruled so many. She wasn't the least surprised that she would be cleaning up yet another of his victims. It wouldn't be the first time and she doubted it would be the last.

About to start the car again to carry on her journey, something halted her hand as she went to turn the key. She had always had what she laughingly termed her early warning system. It wasn't a power as such, not like some of the powers others she knew had. It was more of a sixth sense that warned her when she was about to walk into danger. It served her well this time, as less than a minute later her enhanced vision picked up movement at the edge of the forest up ahead, and two figures broke the tree-line.

Nors and Freya Eriksson. Just seeing them together was enough to send a shiver down Candrea's spine. Only a complete fool failed to fear the Ancient siblings, and a fool was something that she wasn't. Holding her breath, she watched the duo cross the empty road up ahead, their destination clear. They were headed towards the safe house. They must have tracked Michael!

How long had it been since she'd been there? Would they be able to pick up her scent from her earlier visit? It had been a few days so most likely any trace scent that may still be there would be well diluted by the many male vampires who had been residing in the house up until the attack. One thing was certain though, she couldn't obey the Master and clean up his mess now. She wouldn't be able to account for her presence there.

Finally turning the key in the ignition when the Erikssons vanished from sight, Candrea quickly turned the car around and headed back the way she had just come. She hoped Michael's mind was completely destroyed as she anticipated it would be, but she wasn't overly concerned if there was still a spark of sanity remaining. She had been well disguised when she had met with the blond vampire. Even if he could give a description of her, it would point in the completely wrong direction. She was safe for now, but she would be on high alert going forward. If the others found out about her...well nothing would save her skin if that truth came out.

Nors and Freya entered the silent house, turning unerringly towards the sitting room the second they slipped inside. Walking purposefully into the room, they stopped just inside the doorway, a sound of disgust uttering from Freya's lips as her gaze connected with the curled up body lying on the floor.

One glance was all it took to tell them that Michael's mind had been irretrievably shattered. His pale eyes stared vacantly ahead, and flecks of spittle oozed from the side of his mouth. Dried blood encrusted his lips where his fangs had pierced his flesh, the wicked looking teeth still embedded there. Whatever had been left of Michael's sanity was long gone and it took a moment for the two Ancients to process what they were seeing.

"His mind is completely destroyed." Freya pointed out the obvious, a frown marring her exquisite features. "That must have taken extraordinary power. No vampire would willingly allow another to mess inside their heads."

"Except for Liam and Reasa," her brother countered, referring to his son and his mate, and their ability to dream walk. "Does this mean we have another dream walker out there somewhere? Possibly someone from Europe?"

Freya pursed her lips, moving over to the window to stare down at the lit lamp languishing on a table against the wall. "Old abilities are being resurrected. I would not be surprised to learn our enemies have this talent. All the more reason for us to determine if any others have the skillset and to have them trained as soon as possible."

Her frown deepened and then she looked back over her shoulder. "This is a message, this light before the window. Michael was signalling someone that he wanted to meet."

Nors raised an eyebrow, his expression doubtful. "It's a lamp on a table, Freya. I swear you see conspiracies everywhere."