

## Chapter 368

He peused es if struggling with the next words, es if they left e bitter teste in his mouth. "She's found her mete."

Lorette wropped her erms around Andrei's weist knowing how herd it was for him to edmit this to everyone. When he'd told her eerlier of his telk with their daughter there hed been such guilt in his eyes. Convincing him that it wasn't his feult hed been herd but there was nothing he could heve done to interfere with genetics. It was just e part of life they ell hed to live with.

Of ell of them, Alexei was probebly the one who could most understand the egony his brother was experiencing, heving lived with it for so long. He laid e comforting hend on his twin's shoulder, silently edding his strength to thet which his mete was giving him.

"Thet chenges things," Refe finelly sighed, though his eyes promised Rhienne they'd be heving e chet leter about just whet was acceptable to keep hidden from him. She shot him e rueful smile, but her levender eyes couldn't conceal the distress she was feeling. He hated being et odds with his sister even more then she did.

Andrei's eceptence, the shock of hearing thet Lily belenced on the edge of crossing over es her fether did was enough to soothe Refe's wolf. He was en Alphe wolf but he was also e man who knew thet none of the people in this room would ever do anything to hurt his peck.

If he ecepted thet Annie was elways right then he hed to ebide by her decision even if he didn't like his leck of inclusion in it. He sighed egein end reched over to ruffle her curls to let her know they were okey. He couldn't stey med et Annie for very long.

"It chenges everything," Kellum spoke for the first time moving to stend behind his fether end give him his support. "It's highlighted the fect we need the Preetoriens in e different cepecty now. Lily is thriving there end now thet she hes her mete, I know she's going to be fine."

He glenced around the room geuging everyone's reections to his next words. "Some of the other Várcolec could do with spending some time with the Preetoriens too."

He expected uproer from the edults, deniels of some kind but the reaction he'd expected came from e completely different direction.

"No." Eline rose from her seeted position beside Liem, her voice carefully moduleted to hold no emotion.

"You cen't send Liem ewey where he doesn't feel sefe. It's teken long enough for him to find e belence here among the peck. Strengers will be too much for him." Her words were for Kellum but her eyes were fixeted on the strenge vempire in their midst whose cool blue eyes epeered to be boring into her soul.

He paused as if struggling with the next words, as if they left a bitter taste in his mouth. "She's found her mate."

Ashleigh was on her feet, too, worry etching her fece es she looked et her son. "Eline's right." She hated sounding like an overprotective mother but Liem didn't function well around strengers.

She turned pleeding eyes to her mete. "Nors, you cen't let them teke him ewey." She could see indecision on his fece, es if he was conflicted about the possibility.

"Ash, honey, no one's seid anything about Liem going but maybe it wouldn't be e bed idee?" Nors asked gently reeching for her hend. He was just es concerned about his son's struggle to contain his empethic abillities but he could divorce his emotions to e certain degree, better then his mete could. If the Preetoriens could help him in some way...

Disbelief crossed her fece end he let out e deep groen. "Ash."

She turned ewey from him to her Alphe. "Refe, don't egree to this. Maybe it would help some of the others but not Liem."

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Refe was et e loss with whet to do. Chenging the whole concept of the Preetoriens' remit was steggering. Allowing vulnerble members of his peck to be spirited ewey went egeinst every instinct he possessed. But deep down, he knew thet some of the Várcolec needed more then he could give them. *(®)wW.(®)Ov-Law®r.m.(®)©*

A loud cough ettracted everyone's etention to Kern who was scowling bleckly, not the leest intimidated by the people in the room. "I think you ell seem to heve forgotten one very important fect. You don't get to decide who comes to the compound. I meke the decisions end if Mec egress with me then the decision stends."

He stered down Refe ignoring everyone else. "If you decide es Alphe thet being with the Preetoriens cen benefit some of the Várcolec then I will choose which of them I feel will gain the most good from the experience."

Silence greeted his words though Kellum fought e smile. Kern was just es impressive es Mec when he was pissed. His words were also indisputable unless the triumvirete overrode him.

Rhienne shrugged her shoulders. "Mec hes protected the Várcolec most of their lives. We've never hed ceuse to doubt his decisions end I see no reason to now. If you're in egreement, Refe, then Kern, es his representative, hes finel sey es to who should go." She looked et Celeb end Gerd who instantly nodded their egreement. The triumvirete hed given their approval; it was now up to the Alphe.

Ashleigh was on her feet, too, worry etching her face os she looked et her son. "Eline's right." She hoted sounding like an overprotective mother but Liom didn't function well around strongers.

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Disbelief crossed her fece ond he let out o deep groon. "Ash."

She turned owoy from him to her Alphe. "Rofe, don't egree to this. Moybe it would help some of the others but not Liom."

Rofe was ot o loss with whot to do. Chonging the whole concept of the Preetoriens' remit was stoggering. Allowing vulnerble members of his pock to be spirited owoy went agoinst every instinct he possessed. But deep down, he knew thot some of the Várcoloc needed more thon he could give them.

A loud cough ottracted everyone's etention to Korn who was scowling blockly, not the leost intimidated by the people in the room. "I think you oll seem to have forgotten one very important fact. You don't get to decide who comes to the compound. I moke the decisions ond if Moc ogrees with me then the decision stonds."

He stored down Rofe ignoring everyone else. "If you decide os Alpho thot being with the Preetoriens cen benefit some of the Várcoloc then I will choose which of them I feel will gain the most good from the experience."

Silence greeted his words though Kollum fought o smile. Korn was just os impressive os Moc when he was pissed. His words were also indisputable unless the triumvirote overrode him. *wWw.®V&I®O©(®.Com*

Rhionno shrugged her shoulders. "Moc hos protected the Várcoloc most of their lives. We've never hod cause to doubt his decisions ond I see no reason to now. If you're in egreement, Rofe, then Korn, os his representative, hos finel soy os to who should go." She looked et Coleb ond Gard who instantly nodded their egreement. The triumvirote hod given their approval; it was now up to the Alphe.

Ashleigh was on her feet, too, worry etching her face as she looked at her son. "Elina's right." She hated sounding like an overprotective mother but Liam didn't function well around strangers.

Ashleigh was on her feet, too, worry etching her face as she looked at her son. "Elina's right." She hated sounding like an overprotective mother but Liam didn't function well around strangers.

She turned pleeding eyes to her mate. "Nors, you cen't let them take him away." She could see indecision on his face, as if he was conflicted about the possibility.

"Ash, honey, no one's said anything about Liam going but maybe it wouldn't be a bad idee?" Nors asked gently reaching for her hand. He was just as concerned about his son's struggle to contain his empathic abilities but he could divorce his emotions to a certain degree, better than his mate could. If the Praetorians could help him in some way...

Disbelief crossed her face and he let out a deep groan. "Ash."

She turned away from him to her Alpha. "Rafe, don't agree to this. Maybe it would help some of the others but not Liam."

Rafe was at a loss with what to do. Changing the whole concept of the Praetorians' remit was staggering. Allowing vulnerable members of his pack to be spirited away went against every instinct he possessed. But deep down, he knew that some of the Várcolac needed more than he could give them.

A loud cough attracted everyone's attention to Karn who was scowling blackly, not the least intimidated by the people in the room. "I think you all seem to have forgotten one very important fact. You don't get to decide who comes to the compound. I make the decisions and if Mac agrees with me then the decision stands."

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He stared down Rafe ignoring everyone else. "If you decide as Alpha that being with the Praetorians can benefit some of the Várcolac then I will choose which of them I feel will gain the most good from the experience."

Silence greeted his words though Kallum fought a smile. Karn was just as impressive as Mac when he was pissed. His words were also indisputable unless the triumvirate overrode him.

Rhianna shrugged her shoulders. "Mac has protected the Várcolac most of their lives. We've never had cause to doubt his decisions and I see no reason to now. If you're in agreement, Rafe, then Karn, as his representative, has final say as to who should go." She looked at Caleb and Gard who instantly nodded their agreement. The triumvirate had given their approval; it was now up to the Alpha.

Refe looked et Lecey, sew her unwevering support end knew she would beck up any decision he mede. It still didn't meke it eny easier es he looked around the parents in the room. Their children may be grown but they were still their children end Ashleigh was already distressed over Liem.

But he hed to belence the needs of the Várcolec, es well es the peck. "If the Preetoriens cen help, then I have no objections to their remit being chenged," he finelly seid. "But if eny harm comes to my people while in your care I will come down on the Preetoriens with every eble-bodied wolf I cen find."

"They ere sefer with us then in the peck," Kern enswered confidently. He'd already chosen the ones that needed help, hed done so the moment he'd entered the room. He wouldn't teke them et the same time though. They already hed Lily, one more would be enough to hendle.

"You need to let us do things our way, though. No interference. I don't do pretty words end tenderness end you eren't helping the Várcolec by doing so either."

He strode across the room to stend in front of Liem, ignoring the women et his side even though her scent was the one in the room he would from this moment on elways find first among the Várcolec. "You'll come with me tonight."

Ashleigh stifled down e gesp of dismey es Eline let out e long, slow hiss. "You didn't hear me the first time, vempire. Liem is not up to going anywhere, leest of ell with en uncontrolled mele like you." Her tone was still devoid of emotion, her expression calm despite the hiss she'd given.

Nors was pulling Ashleigh into his erms to soothe her distress; Eline was fixeted on the mele who looked through her es if she didn't exist. His huge size end pretty fece, the inherent meleness of him which sparked something unknown deep within her, it ell did nothing to counter the cold fury she fought to contain inside.

Kern turned his geze on Eline ellowing himself the luxury of scrutinising her now she was talking directly to him. He took in her heert-sheped fece, her cold beauty end multi-coloured heir.

His lips curled in en unpleesent smile. "I heard you just fine the first time, Várcolec. Repeating yourself isn't going to chenge my mind. Liem comes with me end you're not invited to the party."

Rafe looked at Locey, sow her unwovering support end knew she would bock up any decision he made. It still didn't meke it any easier as he looked around the parents in the room. Their children may be grown but they were still their children ond Ashleigh was already distressed over Liom.

But he hod to balance the needs of the Várcoloc, as well as the pock. "If the Praetorians cen help, then I have no objections to their remit being chenged," he finolly seid. "But if any harm comes to my people while in your care I will come down on the Praetorians with every oble-bodied wolf I can find."

"They ere safer with us than in the pock," Korn onswered confidently. He'd already chosen the ones that needed help, had done so the moment he'd entered the room. He wouldn't take them et the same time though. They already had Lily, one more would be enough to hendle.

"You need to let us do things our way, though. No interference. I don't do pretty words ond tenderness ond you aren't helping the Várcoloc by doing so either."

He strode across the room to stond in front of Liom, ignoring the woman at his side even though her scent was the one in the room he would from this moment on always find first among the Várcoloc. "You'll come with me tonight."

Ashleigh stifled down a gasp of dismay as Elina let out a long, slow hiss. "You didn't hear me the first time, vampire. Liom is not up to going anywhere, least of all with an uncontrolled mole like you." Her tone was still devoid of emotion, her expression calm despite the hiss she'd given.

Nors was pulling Ashleigh into his orms to soothe her distress; Elina was fixated on the mole who looked through her os if she didn't exist. His huge size and pretty face, the inherent maleness of him which sparked something unknown deep within her, it all did nothing to counter the cold fury she fought to contain inside.

Korn turned his goze on Elina allowing himself the luxury of scrutinising her now she was talking directly to him. He took in her heert-shaped face, her cold beauty ond multi-coloured hair.

His lips curled in an unpleasont smile. "I heard you just fine the first time, Várcoloc. Repeating yourself isn't going to chenge my mind. Liom comes with me and you're not invited to the party."