

## His Beta 24

### Chapter 24

Lanie

I picked my way back “home”, trying to reconcile everything that had just happened.

1...couldn't.

None of what Braden had told me made any sense. How could I not know of the existence of

vampires?

Er, masas dima or whatever he had said.

Sure, I had no proof of anything he told me, but he definitely hadn't smelled like anything I'd

encountered before, and that in and of itself was proof of...something.

But if vampires existed, what about...

Oh, s hit. What else was out there that I didn't know about?

And why didn't I know about it? Did my parents know about vampires and whatever other witches and

fairies and trolls and-

I was getting ahead of myself. Way ahead of myself.

I couldn't wrap my brain around vampires, let alone anything else right now.

Calm down, Lily demanded. You're starting to hyperventilate.

I stopped walking and sank to my knees, the damp earth and scratchy leaves on my bare skin

centering

me a bit.

shirt.

You need to let me shift back. We need to try to get his scent off you.

Lily's words didn't register with me until I looked down to see that I was still wearing Braden's flannel

Fuck. She was right. It was better for me to stroll back in naked than to show up wearing a strange

shirt

with an even stranger scent. The last thing I needed was even more attention than I was already going

to be faced with after this morning's absolute disaster.

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I snorted. Well, at least discovering that vampires existed had managed to overshadow my humiliation

momentarily.

Get it together. Someone is going to see us. Let me take over. Now.

With a shake of my shoulders and a crack of my neck to steel myself, I took the flannel off and shoved

it

under some leaves and behind a rock. Lily took over and the shift was even quicker than usual. She

must

have been anxious as hell to shake the masas dima scent off.

Meanwhile, once we shifted and Lily proceeded to roll around in the leaves and dirt, part of me wilted

inside at the loss of that spicy, musky aroma I hadn't realized had seeped into my nose.

We're safe now, she said.

The words "It's time to get back now" remained unspoken, and I was a bit grateful for her rare

consideration instead of being the battle ax she usually was.

It's now or never. I urged her forward with my thoughts and we started trotting out from the tree line,

across the vast lawn of Xander's house, and toward the front door. May as well make an entrance

instead of trying to slink through the back.

As if I could slink through the back.

There was no way they didn't have people watching for me.

"Lanie!"

Mindy burst from the front door and ran toward me. I desperately wanted to hug her, but the last thing I

needed was to turn into a blubbery mess. No way in hell was I going to let Xander or Zane or Alice or

any of

their entourage see me cry.

Mindy and I reached each other, and she dropped to her knees beside me, for once ignoring the fact

that

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her pants might get dirty and mar the perfect-looking image she always portrayed. When her arms

wrapped

around Lily's neck, Lily rested our chin on her shoulder and nuzzled into Mindy's neck and chuffed

lightly.

At least she didn't whine and let Mindy know just how upset I was. I didn't think I could take even Mindy

knowing how hurt I was. But based on her actions right now, she didn't have to be told.

"It'll be okay," she murmured and stroked Lily's neck. "I promise. Whatever happens, we'll figure it out."

Lily didn't warn me she was ceding control, and the next second, I was sitting on the ground and Mindy was stroking my hair.

Thank god wolves didn't give a s h it about nudity for the most part.

"And now I get to face everyone," I said quietly, not sure what else to say.

"F uck them."

I pulled away from her hug and looked at her face, searching her eyes for anything I could suss out.

"What's being said?"

She bit her lower lip-a sure sign that things weren't great. "Not a whole lot.")

I raised an eyebrow and said nothing.

"I mean... just what you would expect."

I lost it. Literally lost it.

My shoulders shook with laughter as I cackled, my whole body practically vibrating as the laughter

overtook me. I wrapped my arms around myself and rocked back and forth, tears streaming down my cheeks.

Lanie stared at me, wide-eyed.

I managed to catch my breath long enough to say, "Lanie, come on."

She looked at me quizzically.

"They're saying just what I would expect?" I hiccuped from gasping in too much air while I'd laughed. "I

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have no idea what to expect. This has never happened before. This whole thing is f ucking insane."

She didn't say anything, and I refrained from rolling my eyes at her. I loved her, but da mn, she could

be a little dense at times. And I'm sure everything in her world was clouded by the fact that she was

now mated. To two hot men who actually wanted her and we probably doting on her every second they

weren't dealing with, well, everything surrounding me.

"Come on. Let's get this over with." I stood up.

"You sure? We could go for a walk, sit here for a bit longer..." Mindy cast a furtive glance back at the

front door, where a few guards were now standing and watching us.

At least they had the decency to let us have our moment. My guess was that it had more to do with Mindy and who she was mated to and less about any sort of compassion for me. The last thing these guys wanted to do was piss off Mindy's mates-their bosses.

And then Monroe and Maxim were stalking our way, and their faces didn't radiate sunshine. At all.

I looked over at Mindy, and tilted my head in a silent "Everything okay?"

She gave me the slightest shake of her head, and in that moment, I knew just how much she had risked by rushing out to meet me.

There was no way that her mates, Xander and Zane's High Guards, would be happy with their mate being

seen as overly sympathetic to an outcast. Well, at least, that's probably how I was going to be considered

now after being so thoroughly rejected this morning.

I gave her a slight nod and stood, straightening my back and squaring my shoulders as I met their gazes

head-on.

“Let’s get whatever happens next over with.”