

Chapter 316

He scowled then, a hint of anger crossing his face before he smoothed out his expression. "A fair point," he finally conceded. "I asked you here because we need to get something straight before things go any further."

Lily was immediately alert, taking a chance and moving across the room to stand in front of him. She invaded his space but stopped short of touching him. She saw his nostrils flare and heard him suck in a deep breath. She smiled. He was not immune to her charms and in the relative privacy of the study he was allowing his reactions to be noticeable.

"Things?" she repeated softly, feeling a tad braver after his reaction. "Define things, Mac?"

She was tempting the devil, prodding a sleeping tiger. Those lines may be tired old clichés, but pushing him set her heart racing. Heat ran through her body as she stood so close to her mate, his scent invading her senses. Her body practically hummed for him and her tongue snaked out to wet her lips in anticipation.

"Andrea." It was a growled warning. Mac could feel her body heat, scent her growing arousal, and his own body was reacting predictably. He hadn't summoned her for this. Yes, he wanted her to know exactly where they stood but he hadn't counted on her acting so aggressively, testing the very limits of his self-control.

He stepped around her and walked behind his desk, forcing his muscles to obey his brain. "There is one more test to pass before you are fully accepted into the Praetorians," he bit out, swallowing hard before he turned around to face her.

"If you pass that test you will be sworn into this life and you will never be free of it. I know you're attracted to me. I won't insult you by denying I feel the same attraction. But I don't fuck members of my team, Ruminsky. There will be no sex between us. Accept that and you'll move on to the last test. Refuse to accept it and you can pack your bags and fuck off right this instant."

Okay, that was so not what she wanted to hear, and she had to take a moment to think it over. Her mate admitted to wanting her, and that was certainly something to be happy about. To keep his attention, she had to join the Praetorians. But if she joined them, he'd keep her firmly away from him. How was she going to get around that?

"Why not?" she finally asked, and he frowned at her.

"Why not what?"

"Why don't you fuck the females on your team? It can't be that they're not strong enough to cope with your sexual demands. Is it because they're too butch? The couple of the females I've seen have been quite manly in appearance."

Mac's mouth actually dropped open at her question. Was she for real? She was seriously questioning his reasoning for not having sex with his female team members? "I don't have to justify my reasoning to you," he bit out. "The no sex rule stands. Agree to it or get out, those are your options."

Lily licked her dry lips and tried not to let his thunderous expression intimidate her. She glanced down at her body, doubt suddenly creeping in. He'd admitted he was attracted to her but maybe attraction wasn't enough.

Was there something wrong with her body? Was she possibly not his ideal woman? Mates were supposed to want each other, they were supposed to be ravenous for the taste and touch of each other's bodies.

She looked back at him unable to hide her uncertainty. "Am I too butch?" Her voice sounded small even to her own ears. "I've tried to maintain my femininity despite my speed and strength. I thought I'd managed it quite well but I may have gotten it wrong." Her lower lip trembled as she let her words trail off. This was so embarrassing. How could she have gotten it so wrong?

Mac was dumbfounded as he stared at her. The tough, sensual woman who had all but undressed him with her eyes had suddenly vanished and in her place was a shy, uncertain girl whose eyes were suddenly moist and whose bottom lip trembled as if she was on the brink of tears.

What was equally astounding was his reaction to this new Andrea. He was overcome with the urge to pull her into his arms. Not because he wanted to taste every inch of her sun-kissed skin which he did, but because he wanted to soothe the uncertainty from her expression, to convince her she was an extremely beautiful, desirable young woman.

His reaction stunned him as did her sudden transformation. "I do not have sex with my team because we need to work as a unit, Andrea," he answered gruffly.

"Our mission is paramount. There can be no distractions from that mission. Becoming involved with someone on the team could lead to one of my charges being endangered. If I was forced to choose between her and one of my charges, I could hesitate just long enough for someone to be killed. That is unacceptable."

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Lily blinked slowly, almost sighing with relief that no tears fell. Mac's expression almost looked apologetic and her little moment of insecurity evaporated instantly. His speech was impressive, his commitment to his duty commendable.

She smiled. "Is that all? That won't be a problem then."

Mac was oddly disappointed by her instant agreement. The devil inside him wanted her to argue more, to push at his iron self-control just enough that he could blame her when it broke and he crushed her soft lips against his.©W̶w̶.NoVêlw̶oR̶m̶.©oM̶

"I'm glad we've cleared this up." He kept his tone formal, hiding his disappointment.

Lily's smile widened and she moved to sit on the edge of his desk. "I am too, Mac. Now that you've seen my skills in action, you can see how silly it is to be concerned about me while we're on the job. I'm more than capable of taking care of myself. Your charges would never be compromised just because we were sleeping together."

Every muscle in his body went taut with strain as she swung her legs around and draped them on either side of his body. She leaned back on her arms and tilted her head back, her long glossy ponytail brushing the desk behind her. Her pose pushed her breasts up, the heat from between her thighs tantalisingly close to his legs. She was like a voluptuous goddess offering her body to use at his will.

"I've just told you..." Her eyes connected with his, dark chocolate pools with flecks of gold flashing through them. He couldn't continue with his rejection. He literally couldn't breathe. Against his will, his hand rose and circled her slender neck. He was bending his head to her parted lips before he could stop himself.

Need gripped him, hot and hard, so powerful it was a wrench to his gut. His nostrils flared as her scent engulfed him and rational thought fled from his mind. He had to taste her, had to slake his hunger for her even if it was just a kiss. Surely there was no harm in one kiss?

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Lily sighed softly, her heart careening wildly in her chest as Mac's dark head bent down to her. He was going to kiss her! Finally, she would receive her first real kiss and from her mate too. The hunger on his face took her breath away. She knew his kiss would be the most intoxicating thing to happen to her. She closed her eyes, a soft moan escaping as she felt his breath against her lips.

"Oh dear, am I interrupting?" A very feminine voice broke through the spell wrapped around them.

Mac immediately released Andrea, straightening up and working to conceal his shock and disappointment at the interruption. He'd been so lost in the woman sitting on his desk he hadn't even been aware of the additional presence in the room.

Lily's entire body went rigid in denial, panic crossing her face as the scent of lavender and jasmine hit her, confirming the identity of the woman who had entered the room.w̶W̶w̶.nOvêlw̶oR̶m̶.c.oM̶

No way! It couldn't be! She'd masked every bond she had with everyone. There was no way anyone could have tracked her. Her head turned slowly and she looked over her shoulder, directly into a pair of amused lavender eyes.

"Oh fuck!" she groaned inside her head as she met Annie's gaze.

"I don't think you've quite reached that stage, Lily darling," her Alpha's sister answered her privately, laughter echoing down her mental touch as well as love and reassurance. "You've created quite a stir, little one. We'll talk privately later. For now let me see what Mac has to say for himself."

To be continued...