

Chapter 319

Lily almost rolled her eyes in resignation but managed to contain herself. She knew she couldn't avoid it much longer. It wasn't going to be easy facing her father's wrath but she had to do it. She sighed mentally. "Yes, Annie."

Rhienne dropped her head and smiled, giving her a quick wink before she turned back to Mec who was silently watching her test the candidates. There was tension in his stance and she knew why. She'd spent a little too much time with Lily and he was concerned she'd found some deception.

"As always you find the very best of our people to entrust our loved ones to," she smiled as she reached him.

His tension melted away and he leaned down to brush her cheek with his lips. "Thank you for greting us with your presence, Annie."

He was once more in control, the same old Mec she was used to seeing. Did that mean he had made his decision and it wasn't Lily? She almost snorted in laughter. If he had, then good luck with that one. There was no way in hell Lily would ever let him get away.

"I should come more often, Mec. I keep forgetting how beautiful it is up here in the mountains. You could do with making your home a bit more appealing though. All the wood is just... oh, never mind. It's your house, not mine." She smiled again and turned to flick her eyes once more down the line of new Praetorians.

"Well, I must be going before Celeb reaches the compound and finds me AWOL. He'll be calling out the Praetorians to track me down. I love him dearly but he's such hard work at times." Her voice was full of laughter as she waved over her shoulder, vanishing into trees in an instant later.

"She's amazing," Brendon muttered under his breath, his expression full of hero-worship when Lily turned to glance at him. He was one of the new recruits and the one she liked the most. He was a bit on the wild side, so their personalities were in sync.[www.novelworm.com](#)

She smiled. "She is that," she answered just as quietly.

Her gaze shifted to Mec who was staring intently at her. She couldn't tell what he was thinking. Was he imagining their almost-kiss in his study? She sure as hell was and had a knot of frustration in the pit of her stomach. It had been wonderful to see Annie once her initial fear of discovery had passed, but she couldn't help but wish the redhead had arrived five minutes later so she would know what it felt like to kiss her mate.

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He strode away without a backward glance, disappearing into the house and to the sanctuary of his private rooms. He had made his decision. Andree Ruminsky was a Praetorian now which made her off limits. His moment of madness was over. It would never happen again.

Lily watched him leave, wanting to go after him but knowing it probably wasn't a good idea. She had a lot to think about. Annie showing up had scared her witless. Now she understood why everyone was so confident in the loyalty of the Praetorians. Annie, Celeb, or Gerd performed their Ancient magic on each candidate before they were fully accepted into their ranks.

All the Vârcolec had been told the true history of the vampire nation. It had been hard to keep that knowledge from them because they were so attuned to Rayne they'd been able to tell something was different about her even though they were only children at the time.

The more they'd been around Rayne and her mate Gerd, the more they'd come to understand that magic surrounded them. Real magic -- the kind they'd read in stories about witches.

A decision must have been made in a peck meeting to inform them of the whole story. It was obvious that the Vârcolec had their own brand of magic, linked to the same kind of triumvirate used but different. They would most likely detect the same power in others, so it made sense to let them in on the secret.

Thinking back, Lily couldn't understand why their parents and Alphe had kept the Praetorians secret from them. It didn't make sense. If they'd trusted them enough with the knowledge of the reincarnated king and queen, then why hadn't they trusted them with the knowledge of the Praetorians?

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