

Chapter 327

On the rare occasions when even the emotions of the mini-pack were too much for Liam to bear, Elina was the only person he could stand to be around apart from his parents. They would vanish into the forest together, sometimes for hours. When they came back, Liam was always so much more balanced.

Kothari was the outsider. He was one of them and yet he wasn't. Maybe it was because he was born of a Vârcolac and a member of the triumvirate, and that had set him slightly apart. There was an aloofness to Kothi that the rest of them couldn't fully breach. He mingled with them, was included in the wayward scrapes they'd gotten up to, yet he was always just that little bit apart. It didn't make them love him any less, they just respected his boundaries.

No one knew why conception was so unpredictable with the Vampire/Were mated couples. Various ideas had been tossed around and some tests done on blood samples, but there was still no rhyme or reason behind it. The truth was the matings were just too new that it could be centuries before any pattern started to develop to explain it all.

Lily closed her eyes and rested her head back against the seat. She wondered what side of the coin she and Mac would fall on. Would they have a child straight away or would she have to wait to know the joy of being a mother? It didn't cross her mind to consider that Mac may reject her.

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He belonged to her and there was no escaping that fact. It might not be an easy thing getting him to accept her as his mate but he would eventually, as long as Karn wasn't taking her back to the pack. He'd said he wasn't and he'd never lied to her before. But then, he'd always believed she'd never lied to him too. Maybe Karn was paying her back; maybe he was lying to her to keep her docile while he delivered her up to her father.

She didn't even want to go down that road. If Karn was being a sneaky bastard she would not be pleased about it. Talking with Kal, feeling the strength of their mini-pack around her had hardened Lily's resolve. She was not going home. She didn't care what she had to do to stop that happening. Karn was in for a very nasty surprise if he thought differently.

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Karn was acutely aware of the woman at his side even though he wasn't looking at her. He'd learned early in life that it was wiser if he keep his mouth shut when his temper had been incited. He hadn't curbed himself earlier and had lashed out in frustration. He regretted doing it, even if he hadn't changed his opinion on the matter.

He was livid with Mackenzie. He was angry with Lily too but it was a pale imitation of the fury he felt at his friend's present course of action. He was between a rock and a hard place and he didn't know which way to jump. He was not used to dealing with uncertainty and his irritation was at an all time high as a consequence.

He'd almost passed out in shock the night before when he'd scented the true scent of a Vârcolac within the house the Praetorians used as their base. He'd just dumped Brandon on his bed and was heading out of the room when the sweet fragrance of lilacs had filled his nostrils. How none of the others had noticed was beyond him. They all knew the children's true scents.

He supposed he knew this particular scent better than most. Mac never did guard duty and it wasn't often one of the children left the pack's compound. On the rare occasions Andrei allowed his daughter to be away from the pack, he'd always demanded that the very best Praetorians be assigned to Liliana. Karn had always led the group which guarded her from a distance.

It had almost been his personal mission to guard her and he'd been doing it for a quarter of a century. The shock of finding his charge within their very midst, of discovering that the woman he thought of as Andrea Ruminskey was in fact Liliana Romanov had knocked him sideways.

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He was supposed to protect her and he hadn't even known she wasn't safe at the compound! And if that wasn't bad enough, he'd been training her for weeks now. He'd tossed her on her ass on numerous occasions during that training. He'd blooded her; hell, Mac had practically ripped her fucking arm off yesterday. He was supposed to be ensuring no harm came to her and he'd been knocking seven shades of hell out of her for weeks.

It was just unconscionable. It didn't matter that he hadn't known it was her. He should have known something wasn't right about Ruminskey. He didn't form bonds with others. The only person he gave a shit about on a personal level was Mac. When he'd started looking at Ruminskey as something other than just another soldier he should have known something was wrong.

He had to have recognised Lily on some subconscious level somehow. He may not have seen her in the flesh before but something about her aura or masked scent must have registered deep within him. Maybe she'd used a scent which bordered on something he'd smelled before. He had to have known it was her on some level and that was why he'd struck up a different relationship with Ruminskey during the training.

He'd scheduled extra training sessions for her. She'd already surpassed the others in her group. He'd been surprised by her skill level, but he could understand why now that he knew who she was. The Guardian was a formidable trainer. Karn had tweaked her skills even further, teaching her how to fight a little dirtier when required. *Www.novelworm.com*

He'd been proud of her and had grown to respect her abilities. He'd been keeping an eye on Brandon around her too. They were thick as thieves when they were together, the pair of them trouble waiting to happen. He'd known the other male was interested in more than friendship and he'd found himself making sure things didn't cross the line between them.

The more he thought about it, the more he realized that his watchfulness with Brandon was yet another red warning flag which he'd blithely ignored. If he'd paid more attention to his reactions to Andrea Ruminskey, he could have nipped this in the bud and they wouldn't be in the shit they currently were.

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Mac had claimed her the night before. He hadn't repeated that claim this morning when Karn had seen him, but that didn't matter. Mac had declared Andrei Romanov's daughter as his. Karn's protective instincts had immediately kicked in but he found his loyalties torn.

He would gladly lay down his life for Mac. His friend was the only vampire he could say that about. Andrei would kill Mac to keep him away from his daughter, which meant Karn would have to stand against the Ancient to protect his friend.

But his primary job was to protect Lily at all costs. He couldn't help kill her father because that would destroy her. That act would bring the wrath of the Ancients down on their heads, not to mention the triumvirate and the Armand-Hanlon pack. The Praetorians would no longer be the protectors but would become the enemy.