

## Chapter 329

"I used photos of someone who looked a lot like me, enough that she satisfied Andrea's description. Because of the supposed reclusive nature of the coven Andrea belonged to, it was easy to pretend there were very few photos and they were slightly blurry. I took them myself, had a human girl pose for me. She wanted to be a model and needed a portfolio done. I fudged a few shots for myself."

"So Pietro gave Andrea the green light and you somehow managed to switch the photos under my very nose when you came for training." Karn couldn't make up his mind whether to be outraged or impressed with her ingenuity. She had fooled them all.

"Don't be cross, Karn. It's not your fault. I'm able to shadow myself and you're not an Ancient so you wouldn't be able to detect me. It could have all blown up in my face if the timing had been wrong but luck held out. I was able to switch the photos before you met Andrea in the flesh."

He felt another chill run down his spine at her words. He pulled into the underground parking garage of the apartment complex and found a spot close to the elevator. He switched off the engine and turned to look at Lily.

"You are truly terrifying the shit out of me," he admitted, concern in his voice. "The thought of you being out alone would have turned my hair grey if I was human. You have to promise me you will not shadow yourself while you're with us. We can't protect you if we can't track you, Liliana."

Lily frowned at him and bit her bottom lip. She could understand why he wanted that promise but she wasn't sure she could give it to him. She didn't want him to be angry with her again. He'd spoken more to her this morning that he had the entire time she'd known him. She liked this more communicative side to Karn.

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"I can only promise that I won't shadow myself unless I'm required to protect myself in some way. It's our primary defence, Karn, the first thing we were taught as children."

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He didn't like it but he had to concede she had a point. He finally nodded his agreement. "Don't make me regret this concession," he ground out before getting out of the car and waiting for her to alight. His keen gaze swept the area for any signs of people around them. They were alone.

"Where are we?" Lily asked as she too scented the area as was habit. It was another thing drilled into all of them, to always be aware of their surroundings. *ww(w).NoVel(w)RM.C@ (m)*

Karn locked the Jeep using the remote and kept her in front of him as he ushered her to the elevator. "Mac's apartment. He swung by last night and stocked up with some human food for you." His gaze turned pensive for a moment as they entered the elevator and he hit the button for the penthouse floor.

"How long has it been since you've eaten anyway? I've seen you drink some of the others under the table but last night you revealed your identity and you can't have consumed more than half of what you normally could handle."

Lily was stunned by the news that Mac had been out buying human food. Not only that, he had a penthouse apartment and had obviously instructed Karn to bring her here so she could eat. Those didn't sound like the actions of a male who was about to send her packing. Karn had said he didn't agree with Mac's decision, and he probably still didn't but he was obeying his instructions.

Mac was taking care of her. She tried not to get too excited by the thought but it was hard. He was acting like a mate, his need to provide for his woman dictating his actions. Maybe it wouldn't be so hard to convince him they were meant to be together.

"You didn't answer my question." Karn broke into her reverie as the elevator doors opened and they stepped out onto the penthouse floor. He had the door open and ushered her inside before she could blink.

"About a week," she answered, her gaze taking in the enormous great room before her. It screamed of luxury, with thick carpeting, the colour scheme lush with creams and browns accented by splashes of black and red. The sofas and chairs were brown, the cushions adding the accenting colours. The walls were cream with a real open fireplace against one wall.

To the left was a fully-equipped kitchen with shiny white cupboards and countertops made of gleaming black marble. It was modern and probably hadn't been used in a very long time, not since Mac had owned the place at least.

After the spartan finishing of her current accommodations it was sheer heaven to stand in the midst of such luxury. Lily shrugged off her jacket and let it drop onto the back of one of the sofas. She was tugging at her boots an instant later, baring her feet so she could sink into the sheer indulgence of the thick cream carpet beneath her.

Karn watched her carefully, seeing her face light up as she surveyed the room. Her delight was evident and he found himself smiling as she sighed softly when her bare feet caressed the floor covering. She was simply breathtaking and for a moment he completely forgot that he shouldn't be finding so much enjoyment out of seeing her pleasure.

He watched Liliana Romanov and realised he was seeing the real woman for the first time. She wasn't pretending to be Andrea; she wasn't hiding behind her natural defensive walls. Before him was Lily and she was pretty spectacular.

If he'd had the usual morals his kind were prone to, he might even have been tempted to make a play for her himself. Thankfully, stupidity wasn't something he suffered from too often. Was this what Mac had seen the night before? Had Lily shown her real self to him? If she had, it was no wonder his friend had succumbed to her. He was slowly beginning to understand his friend's dilemma.

"Does Mac live here?" Lily asked turning to look at him. Her face was full of curiosity, pleasure dancing in the depths of her brown eyes. He decided it probably wouldn't be best to tell her what Mac used the penthouse for.

"Not full time," he finally answered. "It's more of a retreat, a place we can use if we need to be closer to town. Mac stays at the compound most of the time."

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He crossed the room and headed into the kitchen. "There should be something here you'll like to eat. Vampires are not too clued up on human food and can't cook, but I assume you're capable of doing that?"

If he'd given anything away about the penthouse and Mac, it wasn't apparent because her smile stayed in place as she walked over to pull open the door to the fridge. "He remembered," she sighed softly, her smile widening. Her face literally shone with pleasure.

"Remembered what?" Karn was confused by her sudden happiness, the almost loving note in her voice.

"That I preferred steak to blood," she answered while pulling out a plate with the largest piece of raw meat he'd ever seen on it.

He watched her move around the kitchen effortlessly, placing a frying pan on the stove before turning to chop and dice salad greens and tomatoes as the pan smoked over the hot gas flame.