

Chapter 338

She took off into the trees, matching Brandon's long stride effortlessly. She could feel him glancing at her from time to time and knew he was wondering what was going on. She liked him a lot but he was could be very nosey at times. She'd need to remember that. If anyone had a chance of working out her true identity other than Mac or Karn, it would be the vampire at her

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It didn't take them long to catch up with the others. Karn kept them running for another two hours. By the time they made it back to house, Lily was much calmer and actually thankful for the gruelling pace the Praetorian had put them through.

She still didn't know how she was going to beard Mac though. It was obvious he was determined to keep her away, but she was a Romanov to her very core. She had no intention of letting her mate slip through her fingers just because he'd acted like an ass. Hell, if her mother had done that she'd never have been born.

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She headed up to her room to shower, grimacing at the stark interiors as soon as she entered. She sensed a presence behind her and turned to see Karn at the door. She left it open and allowed him to follow her inside.

"Everything okay?" he asked quietly, his pale blue eyes intent.

She knew what he was asking. "He was a pig like you said he'd be, but he didn't touch me. He made a great attempt at some nifty mental abuse but I'm a lot stronger than I look, Karn. You don't need to worry about me."

He quirked an eyebrow and she gave him a repentant smile. "He did teach me to control my wolf so there will be no repeat of today's earlier problem. You do know I never meant to hurt you."

Karn was silent for a moment before he nodded. "You do know that I wouldn't have stopped you, Lily," he countered. "I've sworn my life to protect you. I could no more hurt you than any of the other Praetorians could, even if it meant protecting ourselves."

Lily looked down at the carpet sucking in a deep breath. "I know," she finally whispered. "That's what makes it so much worse, Karn. Anyone else would have tried to defend themselves. No one here would and I could cause a lot of damage."

She looked back at him, her face full of misery. "I know you think it's madness for me to be here. You don't agree with Mac's decision. Hell, I don't think he even agrees with it either. But I need to be here so badly. I need to be sure I'll never be a danger to anyone like that again. I can't do that in the safety of the pack because no one there would ever push my boundaries to the limits. I need you to help me, Karn."

He couldn't deny that she did need them. He'd come close to death at her hands even if it had been accidental. His lips quirked in a smile and he let out a long breath.

"And I can't deny you that help," he admitted ruefully. "We Praetorians can twist the word protection into just about any connotation we want to. I'll help you all I can, Lily. I'll protect you from anything, even if that means protecting you from yourself. Just stay out of Mac's way. Don't push him to his limits because you may very well break him and he's my friend."

She chewed on her bottom lip as she met his intent gaze. "I can promise you that I'll work with you to learn all I need to but I can't promise you anything when it comes to Mac. He's my mate, Karn. He's fighting the mating pull and that's unacceptable. I'm going to push him and I'll keep pushing him until he can't hide from the truth. He belongs to me. It's a simple as that."

"I hope you know what you're inviting," he sighed wearily, shaking his head as he turned away. "You have the power to split the Praetorians apart and get most of us killed. Keep that firmly in mind, Liliana Romanov. You hold our lives in your very hands." He walked out of the room without a backward glance, leaving her staring at the closed door.

His words were sobering. She was beginning to realise just how much her actions were endangering the men and women who were becoming her friends. Karn was so sure Mac wouldn't break and give in. Lily disagreed with him. Only time would tell which of them would be proven right.

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She headed for the shower and stayed under the spray until she felt as relaxed as she was ever going to feel. As she towelled herself dry, a smile began to spread across her face as an idea began to form. Mac was so sure she wouldn't be hanging around for very long. She was about to disabuse him of that notion.

Lily didn't bother getting dressed, returning to her bedroom naked. She made sure the door was locked and the curtains closed then she sat down crossed legged on the bed and slowed her breathing with a couple of deep relaxation exercises.

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Once she was calm, she dipped deep inside herself and found the hidden well of power that she could barely tap at the moment. She imagined a deep green sari made of gossamer silk and sighed as she felt the soft fabric wrap around her body. With a smile, she took the yards of material off and imagined another one in the same colour.

She sat for over an hour, conjuring up endless swathes of silk in deep greens, dark blues, soft lilacs and pale reds. By the time she was finished, the bed was covered in fabric. Pleased with her efforts, she pulled on a pair of cargo pants and a tank top before heading down the hall to Brandon's room.

"Hey Bran, do you know where I can find a staple gun?"

Her friend looked up from the book he was reading, surprise on his face. "Why do you need a staple gun?"

"You know how Rhianna remarked yesterday that Mac's house was full of wood? Well, I got approval to have some fabric delivered to brighten up my room, but I don't have any tools to hang them up." She made her tone sound as innocent as possible, hiding her smile as she saw Brandon swallow the lie easily.

"Didn't know you were such a girl," he laughed, sliding off the bed. "There's a tool cupboard next to the kitchen. I'm sure I saw a staple gun in there. Do you want a hand hanging your drapes?"

Lily shot him her most winning smile. "You grab the tools and I'll steal a bottle of wine and a couple of glasses. Just don't break anything in my face this time."

Brandon laughed and started downstairs as she hung back and looked defiantly at the silent attic floor above.

"So you think I'm going home soon, Mac? Think again, my mate."

To be continued...