

## Chapter 345

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She could see him trying to rein in his fury at Kallum's presence. He could tell that Mac had no idea one of the Vârcolac was sitting right there, but it didn't alleviate his building rage.

He strode into the room, his footsteps taking him right up to her. The hands that reached for her upper arms were gentle despite the raging emotions surging down their bond. His head bent slowly, his eyes intense as he rubbed his lips gently against hers.

"I don't quite know why Mac wants to strangle you, Rhianna, but I can understand the sentiment. There had better be a very good reason for this because I am sorely struggling to rein my temper in."

His use of her given name was always a bad sign. He only used it when he was seriously pissed at her. She smiled gently and stepped into his embrace, knowing he wouldn't be able to stop himself from wrapping his arms around her.

"We have a bit of a problem with the Praetorians or I suppose I should say the Vârcolac," she admitted feeling the tension in his big body. "Lily knows about them as does Kallum now. There's no point in trying to maintain secrecy any longer which is why I wanted you to come home. We need to work out what we're going to do about it."

Caleb's body stiffened further and his arms tightened so much she almost gasped at the pressure he was applying. He appeared to notice and relaxed his hold, glancing down at her in apology.

"There's no way we can do damage control?" He had to ask even though he knew whatever was going on was probably beyond that. He kissed Rhianna's forehead, running a hand slowly down her back. Despite her brave little smile and the defiant tilt of her chin he knew she was worried about his reaction to the news.

He sighed wearily as he read the answer in her lavender eyes and then his lips quirked in a reluctant smile. Yelling at his woman was pointless. She would only yell back or smile at him until he'd vented his displeasure and succumbed to her charms. If there was no way to contain the situation then he'd be better off finding out just exactly what the situation was.

He tilted his head slightly to catch Kallum's eye. "You might as well reveal your presence. There's no arguing with my woman when she makes her mind up about something and she appears hell-bent on this course of action."www.novelsLWórk(m),(c)(o)m

Mac immediately stiffened, turning to gaze at the empty chair. His eyes narrowed and he bit back a curse as a large, brown-haired man suddenly appeared. Brown eyes met his, wary but also full of curiosity. He'd seen those eyes before, only they belonged to someone else.

The spicy scent of sandalwood with the barest hint of lilac on the edges had him stiffening further as he realised who the mystery guest was. His eyes darted to Rhianna and he growled low in his throat.

"You have got to be fucking kidding me," he ground out through clenched teeth. "There are no Praetorians out there, Annie, which means he's as bloody reckless as his sister. How the fuck are we supposed to protect the Vârcolac if they all start shadowing themselves and running around on their own?"

Kallum rose slowly to scrutinise the man his sister had chosen as her mate. It was more than evident the vampire was deadly, a large, well-honed fighting machine. It was also evident he had a temper to match their father's, which would most likely make for some pretty explosive moments with Lily.

Obviously the Praetorians were an elite group, as Annie had mentioned, tasked with protecting the hybrid children as they grew up. It didn't take a genius to work out that there had to be some reason that protection had been required, something none of them knew about. The scent masking, no-shadowing rules when leaving the pack sort of made sense now.

He wanted to learn a bit more about his sister's mate, to make sure he was good enough for her, but something told him that it wouldn't matter to Lily whether or not he liked the man. She would prefer it if he did but she wouldn't allow it to affect her decision about mating with him. He shuddered at the thought of her bringing Mac home to meet their father.

He kept his gaze locked with eyes so black they were bottomless pits. He had a sense that Mac was waiting for something to happen, for him to do something. When he didn't drop his gaze, the vampire's mouth twitched ever so slightly, almost reluctantly.

"Might have known he'd be as bad as she is," he muttered irritably.

"Actually, Lila's a lot worse than I am," Kallum corrected. "I take it she's inveigled herself into your little band of protectors and that's what's causing all the consternation? God, that is just so like Lily. How did she manage to do it? Surely there are checks in place or something when recruiting?"

Mac's eyes tracked back to Annie and he gave her a pointed look. Caleb's eyes also dropped to his mate and he growled loudly.

"Tell me you know nothing about this," he bit out.www.novelsLWórk(m),(c)(o)m

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Rhianna grinned sheepishly up at him. "I knew nothing about it until a couple of days ago when Mac called me to check the new recruits. Lily assured me she was okay and she appeared happy where she was. She didn't want to return to the pack and I saw no harm in leaving her with the Praetorians. They are her protectors after all."

"Rhianna, you know the pack have been going insane trying to find her," Caleb bit out, his voice starting to rise as his temper flared again. "You know Andrei has been at the killing edge for weeks now. How could you keep this quiet? We talked about this. We agreed that the sooner we found Lily and got her safely home the better."

"No, you decreed that Lily should be brought back to the pack and locked up for her own good," she countered quietly. "I just didn't argue with you about it. It was more than evident as you, Andrei, and Alexei all sat around plotting the poor woman's incarceration that there would be no reasoning with any of you. I didn't agree with you, Caleb. I just didn't disagree with you."

Caleb stared down at her for a long moment, then his arms dropped away and he stalked over to the other end of the room. He turned, his eyes almost black with anger when he pinned her with his gaze once more. "Don't you bloody argue semantics with me, woman. The very fact you didn't disagree implied that we had your agreement and you know it."

Rhianna took a deep breath to quell her own burgeoning temper and met his gaze unflinchingly. "You only hear what you want to hear sometimes, Caleb. I've learnt when it's pointless arguing with you. You knew very well that I disagreed with your decision, which was why you never actually asked me outright. You avoided it because you didn't want to get into an argument over it. But all this is rather a moot point anyway. Lily joined the Praetorians and I didn't give her up to Mac when I approved the recruits."

Her tone quite clearly dared him to deny her accusation. It also left the room in no doubt that she was quite finished with the topic and wouldn't be drawn into any more arguments about it. Caleb glared at her furiously, opened his mouth to speak, and then growled as he clamped his lips closed.

He wanted to call her a liar, wanted to be the one in the right, but as he cast his mind back a few weeks he could see that she hadn't once agreed with him and the twins. She'd been present in the room and he'd felt her disapproval down their mate bond. And that was why he hadn't asked her if they were doing the right thing. He hadn't wanted her to tell him no.

"You should have opened your mouth at the time," he finally muttered, his unhappiness still very evident.

Rhianna sighed deeply. "Andrei wasn't willing to hear it and quite frankly keeping him in check was more important at that point. I should have said something afterwards but you were all so certain you were in the right that it seemed pointless trying to get you all to see reason."