

## Chapter 346

She crossed the room to her mate, stopping just before him. Her eyes raked over his face, watching him struggle to calm his annoyance at her. She hated arguing with Caleb and was thankful they didn't do it very often. But she wasn't about to apologise for the decision she'd made, not in this instance. Lily had needed freedom and she didn't regret allowing her that freedom.

*Www.nOvelwo(r)m.cOm*

"Caleb, you're almost as blinkered as Andrei on this point," she finally sighed softly. "Maybe it's a male thing, but for some strange reason none of you seem to have realised that the Vârcolac are no longer children. They're fully grown adults who are quite capable of making their own decisions and going out into the world to find their mates.

"We have no right to restrict their movements, to damage their spirits by denying them that. Yes, we can love them and want to protect them but we have to allow them to live their lives. We can't cage them or confine them to pack lands because we're frightened something may happen to them. That's just wrong and you know it."

"In more ways than one," Mac reluctantly agreed. Everyone turned to look at him and he sighed in resignation. "Annie does have a point, Caleb. Lily can fight like a professional -- hell, she blooded me when we were sparring. She's smart, fast, and utterly lethal when she's in fight mode. But when it comes to interacting with others she struggles with her emotions.

"She's fine when everything is going well and she's feeling confident but the moment things don't go to plan she reacts in one of two ways. She either loses all confidence in herself or she reacts so negatively she turns violent."

Kallum growled softly, his body tensing. "Lily isn't violent," he argued, anger creeping into his voice. "Yes, she's a bit on the wild side but she'd never deliberately hurt someone, not in anger."

Mac turned to spear him with a cold stare. "Tell that to Karn. She lost control of her wolf yesterday because she was upset about something and she ripped out part of his throat. He's lucky she regained enough control otherwise he'd be dead now. He's been her main protector all her life. He wouldn't lift a hand to defend himself against her."*©www.nOVELwOrm.com*

Rhianna let out a startled gasp and Caleb's arms automatically gathered her close, comforting his mate even as shock rippled through him.

Kallum continued to glare at Mac for a moment longer before his eyes softened and concern etched across his face. "That's why she contacted Dad and told him she was a monster," he breathed quietly. His heart ached for his sister. He knew her so well, could guess at the awful guilt she would have felt over her actions.

The room was silent as Mac's words hung heavy in the air. Caleb held Rhianna close, running soothing fingers through her riot of red curls as her distress flooded over him.

"You're right, Annie," he finally conceded. "We all should have seen this coming. There's been way too much testosterone in play. We've all let the children down."

"Not deliberately," Rhianna answered with a sad smile. "We've been working blind for the most part. Rayne came to us as an Ancient. Any issues she may have had to overcome as she grew up she handled on her own. None of us really knew what to expect. And it's not as if major harm has been done either. We just need a new plan of action going forward."*Ww(ω).NóVELwOrm.com*

Mac had more information to impart and the news wasn't going to be very welcome. "The timing sucks," he announced bluntly. He glanced at Kallum then looked pointedly at the others.

"Whatever it is, Kallum can hear it," Caleb said, motioning for everyone to take a seat.

Mac chose the sofa closest to him and Caleb manoeuvred Annie over to the sofa across Mac. Mac's eyebrows rose when Kallum chose to sit beside him but he continued with his news without saying anything about it.

"Pietro called and said there was activity over in Europe. He's fairly certain he's about to get access to whatever is going on over there. I fly out to Scotland this afternoon. I want a firsthand feel for the situation."

Caleb's lips tightened and he looked at Kallum. "There was an attack on the compound a quarter of a century ago," he explained. "Freya and Dayton were surprised by vampires. They didn't get anywhere near the pack but an investigation into the attack led us to believe that someone was trying to harm the Vârcolac. Pack security was enhanced and we set up the Praetorians to protect you.

"The attack came from our European brethren and Pietro has been there ever since trying to infiltrate the group so we can take it out. Until now there haven't been any further incursions."

Kallum quickly digested the information. Everything about their sheltered lives and growing up in the pack suddenly made sense. "So whoever is after us probably thinks we've grown complacent and now would be a good time to have a second attempt at harming us."

He felt a bubble of fury begin to well up inside him and he fought to push it down. There was no point getting angry about the problem. He needed a clear head to protect his people. Sensing Mac's eyes on him he turned his head to meet the vampire's gaze. He was slightly surprised to see approval in the other man's eyes.

Mac was impressed by how quickly Kallum had interpreted the situation. He didn't ask any unnecessary questions, just got straight to heart of the matter. He examined the Vârcolac carefully, trying to get a feel for just who Kallum Romanov was as a man.

He was important to Lily and he knew she would be unhappy if he didn't find some common ground with her brother. He also had the impression that Kallum was equally trying to size him up too. Had Lily told her brother that she thought he was her mate? So far that little gem hadn't come up in the conversation and Mac would prefer if it didn't.

He turned back to Caleb and Annie. "So where does this leave us?" He blinked slowly when Kallum answered him.*www.nOVEL(ω)Orm.Com*