

Chapter 352

Lily bit into a burger and let her gaze travel up to her brother's face. It was clear there was male posturing going on and she was curious to see Kal's reaction to her mentor. She didn't realise she was actually holding her breath until she saw his lazy smile cross his face.

"You're the boss in all things, Karn, with the exception of Lily's safety, if I deem a different course of action. I'm more than happy with that arrangement if you are."

"Agreed," Karn answered immediately though his gaze didn't lose its penetrating stare. "The same applies for you or any other Vârcolac who may come to this compound. You do exactly what I say when I say it unless it will cause extreme danger to either yourself or one of the others. It's still our job to protect you and you'll let us do that. If you can't agree to it then you can fuck off back to the pack and take Lily with you."

Kallum felt respect for the vampire blossom deep within. This male was every bit as intelligent and lethal as Mac. He was also one dominant son of a bitch and wasn't about to let anyone as young as he was start trying to usurp his position.

He could understand that and also understand the cost to the vampire of having to concede that there may be a point when he would have to accede to a younger man he felt was still a Youngling in vampire terms.

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Kallum conceded all the time to the dominant males in his pack even though he knew deep down he was stronger than all of them. He understood that sometimes the needs of those under his protection were more important than his own need to dominate. He had that in common with Karn and it was a good base for what he hoped would become a good friendship. He could see Lily thought highly of the vampire. *wŴ(w).nvℳŴorM.cⓈM*

"That sounds fair to me," he finally agreed reaching to grab a burger before Liily ate them all. He'd brought plenty, sensing Lily's hunger in their brief contact earlier. "Now we've finished with the pissing contest, do you mind if we have lunch while you brief everyone else?"

For a moment Karn just blinked slowly at him then he threw back his head and laughed. A quick hand movement and his people were heading towards the big house, Lily and Kallum securely circled as they followed them.

Brandon waited until Lily came level with him and pierced her with a hard look. A frown marred his usually smiling face, disapproval wafting off him in waves. "You could have bloody told me," he snapped irritably. He was in shock at discovering the woman who was most probably his best friend in the whole world wasn't who he thought her to be.

"What would you have done if I had, Bran?" she asked softly, a sad expression crossing her face as she was once more the subject of displeasure from someone she classed as a friend.

He pondered the question searching deep within to come up with an honest answer. His frown melted away and his lips quirked. "I would have ratted you out in an instant to Karn like a good little Praetorian," he admitted looking slightly sheepish at the thought.

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Lily shot him a tentative smile. "I would have forgiven you if you had," she sighed softly. "I would have been mad as hell at you, but I would have understood why you'd felt compelled to do so."

Brandon nodded his gaze turning slightly apprehensive. "Just how much of Andrea Rumskey was the real Liliana Romanov?" He held his breath as he waited for the answer.

Lily knew what he was really asking and it hurt that her actions had caused him distress even unknowingly. "Everything apart from the name and the blood drinking," she reassured him nudging him slightly with her shoulder. "You're Lily's best friend just as much as you were Andrea's."

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He was silent for a long moment and then he grinned widely at her, his eyes dancing with merriment and a hint of pride. "My best friend's a Vârcolac," he said smugly. "How many other people can claim that?"

Lily burst out laughing. "You're such a status whore, Bran. You're so bloody easy; it's a wonder no woman has managed to seduce you into mating them yet."

His laughter joined hers and he nudged her back, only he did it hard enough to bump her into her brother who automatically corrected her momentary imbalance. "Many have tried and all have failed," he laughed. "It'll be a cold day in hell before any woman clips my wings."

Kallum listened to the easy camaraderie between Lily and Brandon, keeping silent as they worked out just what the revelation of her true identity meant for their friendship. He was perturbed to realise just how stilted Lily's growth had been within the pack confines.

The woman he was witnessing was so much freer in spirit and obviously well thought of among her peers. Her relationship with the others was easy, full of mutual respect and loaded with trust when it came to Karn and Brandon. The two males obviously cared greatly for his sister and she returned their feelings with abandon.

It was like seeing Lily come alive watching her interact with the Praetorians. He could only guess at how Kothari and Liam would thrive in this environment, possibly Elina too.

He was more certain than ever that they all needed to spend time with the Praetorians. It was just getting Karn to agree with it that could pose a bit of a problem. He would need to spend some time with the vampire to find the right way to get his point across.

Lily turned to him then, an unspoken question in her eyes.

"Can we talk privately somewhere?" he asked with a smile on his face. He couldn't help reaching out to pull her against his side, relieved to have her under his protection once more.

"My room," she responded looping an arm around his waist. "You can tell me everything, where you met Mac, what you thought of him. Is Dad still furious with me? Is Mom okay?"

Kal kissed the top of her head, following her into the house and past the eyes of the Praetorians who watched them silently. Sometimes his sister sounded so much younger than her years. She wouldn't settle until he alleviated her fears. He had no idea if Karn expected them to stay or not but he didn't care. Soothing Lily was more important at the moment.

He laughed loudly as his sister ushered him into the room and closed the door. The riot of colour on the walls was so typically Lily he wasn't sure why he found it a bit startling to see the fabric there. He supposed it had something to do with the fact they were in the heart of an elite soldier's training ground.

Lily grabbed a can of soda out of the bag she was still clutching in her hand and hopped onto the bed with a grin on her face. "Mac thinks he's sending me home," she explained after taking a drink and searching for more food. "I'm letting him know I'm making myself at home."