

## Chapter 355

Mac felt a surge of emotion wash through him as Karn hung up on him. He stood in the middle of the airport trying to work out what the emotion was. He was astonished to realise it was a combination of fear and need. He was afraid for Lily and he had a pressing need to return to her. It was so sharp it felt as if his gut was twisting inside.

He swore under his breath, cursing the rise of emotions he couldn't afford to deal with, cursing the stunning brunette who was wreaking havoc on his life in a way no other could. Damn Liliana Romanov to hell! She had no right to do this to him. But even as he cursed her, his feet were moving of their own volition heading out of the busy airport.

He called Rhianna when he got outside and started heading to the long stay car park where he'd left the Jeep. "I can't get to Europe," he said with little preamble. "Pietro should have backup though just in case. Can you send someone?"

Rhianna didn't bother asking what was wrong. She knew it had to be something relating to Lily to have Mac turning back from his course of action. "No one as inconspicuous as you," she answered her tone thoughtful. "I'll ask Demetri to go. It's not ideal, but if your gut instincts are right, then Pietro needs someone at your level if not higher to watch his back." *www.novEIL@ðRM.čmM*

Mac felt some of the weight of responsibility seep from him. Demetri was an excellent choice if he couldn't go himself. Sure he wasn't invisible, some of the older vampires may recognise him, but he was deadly in a fight if it came down to it.

"Thanks Annie. I need to find out what new trouble Lily's unleashed at the compound. Apparently Karn's not sure that even Kallum's presence there is enough to temper her. For some reason he thinks I'm the only one up for the job."

She had to laugh at the disgruntled tone in Mac's voice even as she heard the sound of a car door slamming and keys jingling as he tried to fit them into the lock to start the engine. He may not be happy to be returning to the compound but he appeared to be in a rush to get there.

"You're her mate, Mac. You may not want to admit it, you may be mad as hell about it, but it's inevitable, my friend. You should stop fighting it."

An audible silence stretched and then his breath blew out in a loud sigh. "Has anyone ever told you you're as annoying as hell sometimes, Annie?"

She laughed harder. "I've heard that a time or two. Just as I've heard a time or two that I'm always right. You should think on that, Mac. Now go sort out your problems and let me call Demetri. Caleb and I have set up a meeting with Rafe for later on tonight. We'll keep you informed of the outcome." *Www.nOVèlwOr@.cm*

Mac didn't say goodbye, he simply hung up and started the engine. He pushed Rhianna's words from his mind, refusing to listen to them. The redhead's confidence should have soothed his concerns but it didn't. He knew Andrei Romanov. If he lost control the way Lily was losing control, then there would be no stopping him.

He didn't know if Loretta had the power to control Andrei when he hit the killing edge, so the only option was to make sure the vampire didn't get to that point. If that meant denying Lily, then he would, no matter the personal consequences of his actions.

There were far too many lives at stake, not just the Praetorians but also the Vârcolac. This could rip them all apart and leave them vulnerable right at the time when they needed protection the most. *WwW.Nðæe(!)@óR-M.C@M*

*Www.n(c)Væ(w)orM.(c)ðm*

Mac uttered another loud curse and headed towards the Praetorian compound. When he got his hands on Lily he was going to shake the living daylights out of her. She would obey him or so help him God, he...he....well he didn't quite know what he'd do but he'd think something dire up if he had to.

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Lily had barricaded herself in her room refusing to speak to anyone. Kallum had tried to talk to her but she'd been unable to meet his gaze, ashamed at her loss of control. He sent her love down their bond and it had hurt to feel it, so she'd masked the bond tightly until nothing and no one could get in.

Her brother had finally hugged her silently, kissing the top of her head and leaving with Karn when he'd realised she needed space. She knew he was keeping a light touch with her mind just in case she let him in. It made her feel worse because she was aware he was hurting because she was shutting him out.

And Karn had summoned Mac home. She shivered at the thought of seeing him again. He'd be angry with her, disappointed with her weakness. He had important work to do and he'd had to give that up to come back and babysit her like a child.

How would he ever accept her as his mate when he had to take care of her like a two year old all the time? Why couldn't she be mature enough to be the woman he needed? She'd spent over a decade shaping herself into the kind of woman Mac could be proud of and it had all been for nothing. She was weak and pathetic and he could never love a submissive woman.

Lily let the tears fall as she buried her head in the pillow to muffle the sound. She was so confused she didn't know which way to turn, what to do to make things right. She reached out mentally; searched for that one rock she knew would always be there no matter what she did wrong or how angry he was with her.

"Daddy?"

Instantly she was assaulted with conflicting emotions, relief, anger, concern and layering them all was a deep rooted pain that threatened to take her breath away. Her tears flowed harder and she bit her bottom lip to muffle her sobs.

The emotions suddenly vanished, cut off in an instant to be replaced with a strong sense of love and acceptance. "Shhhh, baby, don't cry. There's nothing so bad we can't fix it. You know that."

"I keep doing everything wrong," she wailed. "I try to be good and I fail all the time. I'm frightened, Dad. I'm so fucking scared of what I'll do, who I'll hurt. I keep losing control and I've already hurt one friend."

Andrei took a deep breath, his heart clenching painfully at the plea for understanding in his daughter's voice, at the sheer terror trembling through his bond with her that he could suddenly sense. He knew that feeling well, that moment when the sane part of him realised the madness was about to take hold and sweep away the last piece of goodness within his soul.

Of all the things he could have given to Lily, this was the one he'd prayed neither of his children would ever inherit.

"Language, Liliana," he answered gruffly fighting to keep his growing fear from his tone. "I know you're upset but I'm still your father and don't want to hear foulness from my little girl's mouth."

Surprisingly, his stern words actually helped to calm her down a little. It was such a normal parent thing to hear that she sighed softly and rubbed at her cheeks to try and dry the endless tears.

"I think I was into my third decade as a vampire when I first noticed the faint whiff of what I've always termed my insanity," Andrei continued in an even tone. "It terrified me how hard it was to maintain control of the feral part of my nature. I was lucky I had a close bond with your Uncle Alexei. He was able to help me when I danced too close to the killing edge. Later, I learned to control it myself but I was always aware it was there, always knew that one small lapse on my part and a monster would be born."

He let his words sink in, feeling her startled emotions as he opened up to her and let her know that she wasn't alone, that he truly did understand what she was currently going through.

"I managed to control it for centuries with just a few slip-ups along the way. And then I met your mother. Lord, that woman was enough to shatter any man's self control no matter how hard I fought against her. You know what happened, Lily. We never hid from you the choice your mother had to make back then. We glossed over my part in the whole affair though."