

Chapter 357

When had her brother become so strong? How much of himself did he hide from everyone the way she had hidden her own weakness all these years? For the first time she thought she could truly understand the pack's obsessive need to protect them. They were an unknown entity; with powers so strong they could be dangerous. Watching Kallum cemented the decision she'd come to.

Mac's gaze shifted an instant later and his head snapped up to her. God he was so beautiful, so intoxicating, she felt as if she'd melt from the heat in his eyes even at a distance. Her heart twisted painfully in her chest though she kept her expression carefully neutral. Seeing Mac made it so much more painful to do what she had to do but she wouldn't be swayed from her decision.

Lily hitched her pack over her shoulder and walked serenely downstairs conscious that every eye was on her quiet descent. The Praetorians had been watching Mac and Kallum argue, now they watched her, the cause of the argument. *WWW.NoVeLworm.com*

Karn's expression was unreadable but then she didn't expect any less from him. He would never openly show what he could keep hidden. Brandon raised an eyebrow at her and she couldn't stop her lips quirking. There were just some things her friend would never get the hang of; denying his friendship with her was one of them.

She swept past them all and came to stop at Kallum's side. She thought she detected a slight tic in Mac's jaw but she could have imagined it. He was the master at shielding his emotions, so much so she would have doubted he had any if he hadn't let slip his mask the night before. *www.NoVeL(w)O(r)m.com*

"I'm ready to go home now, Kal," Lily announced in an even tone, her gaze never leaving Mac's. She felt confusion run through their bond as she opened herself back up to her brother.

"You've just turned the pack upside down for your right to be here, Lila. Now you want to go home? Did I miss something?" Kallum couldn't keep the anger from his voice even though he wasn't angry with his sister as such. He'd just spent the last five minutes arguing with Mac to allow her to stay at the compound! Now she was doing a one hundred eighty degree turn on him?

"I've talked to Dad and it's apparent that I need to go home." Her gaze shifted to her brother, her body language irresolute. "We're endangering the pack by being here, splitting both the Praetorians and our families. Mac needs to be in Europe to track down the threat against us and he can't do that if he has to keep babysitting me. I'm safe at home so it makes sense to be there until all this has been cleared up."

She was agreeing to go home for the moment but she wasn't giving up on claiming her mate. She needed Mac on more than one level; her talk with her father had made that abundantly clear. It had suddenly struck her that Mac couldn't be who he was meant to be when she was around. She was hurting him by dividing his focus and that was something she couldn't live with.

She wouldn't be a burden to her mate. She had waited twelve years she could wait a few more if that's what it took for Mac to be able to come to her with a clear conscience and no regrets.

An irritated snort filled the air and she had to smile as she turned back to look at Brandon. "You need to work on your impassiveness, Bran. You're pretty hopeless at it. Don't worry I'm not vanishing completely. You can come visit me at the compound, if Mac has no objections to it."

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She turned back to look at her mate. His eyes bored into her soul and for a moment it was almost as if they were the only two people standing there. She couldn't tell what he was thinking or feeling.

It was an effort to tear her eyes from his to smile up at Karn. She would miss him almost as much as she would miss Mac. "No sigh of relief, Karn? I'm just about to make your life so much simpler." Her tone was teasing even as she felt as if her heart was about to break under the strain of keeping up her calm façade.

He grunted and looked away not bothering to answer. He was watching Mac carefully instead, waiting to see what he would do now that Lily had decided to leave.

Mac stared at Lily, his body so tense he felt as if the slightest breeze would break him in two. Her face was pale, the telltale signs of weeping in the slight redness around her eyes. She was stunning, her hair loose for once, still damp from her shower.

The smile she gave Brandon and Karn didn't meet her eyes, the serenity in her face a cold mask she wasn't quite adept enough to carry off to perfection. When she spoke there was just the slightest hint of a quiver as if she was holding onto her self-control by the faintest of margins. She looked so fucking fragile it was enough to break his heart.

His earlier rage had dissipated only to be replaced by a new anger. Lily was leaving him. The decision was clear in her eyes, her pack on her shoulder the physical announcement of her intent. He should have been glad about it. He'd be able to go to Europe and track down the threat to her. He'd be able to do his job as he'd promised he would all those years ago. But he didn't feel glad. He felt a cold, chilling anger which threatened to turn the blood in his veins to ice.

She was fucking leaving him!

He reached out gripping her upper arm firmly and marching across the entranceway towards his study. He ignored her startled gasp and held up a hand in warning when Kallum moved to intercede.

"Mind your own fucking business," he ground out, piercing him with a hard glare. "You know I won't hurt her."

A silent moment passed between the two men and then Kallum backed off. He wasn't looking at the head of the Praetorians but instead the furious gaze of a mate who was being driven to distraction. One thing he knew well was never to come between mates. Mac wouldn't hurt Lily so he let them go to work out their issues.

"Mac!" Lily couldn't believe he'd just frogmarched her into the study in front of everyone. The door slammed shut behind them with a loud bang and she would have jumped if the scent of fresh paint hadn't distracted her. It was so strong it made her nose wrinkle in distaste.

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There was a new desk too, slightly smaller than the last one but in a soft cedar wood rather than the dark mahogany of its predecessor. The walls were devoid of wood panelling; now smooth plasterwork with a soft cream finish. It was so completely changed she was momentarily stunned into silence.