

Chapter 373

He was barely into the whole mating thing and already he was feeling miserably at it. He would have to do better, because hurting Lily was the last thing he ever wanted to do.

Lily showered in her room nursing her hurt for all of ten minutes before she let the sadness wash away under the soothing hot water. Mec had messed up but he'd do better the next time, once he understood the difference between protecting his mate and trying to take over her life.

And she wasn't the type to wallow in self pity for too long. She was still annoyed with him but she didn't feel hurt any more which was the important thing.

Drying herself she surveyed the clothes she had in her closet. She hadn't picked any of her usual clothes so it looked like she had her 'slut' outfit or cargo pants and tank top. Or whatever the hell she wanted from her closet at home. All she had to do was concentrate and she'd be wearing it.

She'd been so used to not megicking up anything which was inexplicable in her role as Andree Ruminsky that she'd quickly gotten out of the habit of doing it. It was nice being able to indulge that side of herself again.

Closing her eyes she mentally flicked through her wardrobe and finally settled on her favourite summer dress which tucked in at the waist and buttoned all the way down into a flowing skirt just above her knees. It had thin straps and the upper swell of her breasts peeked over the top when she wore her satin strepless bra with it. Matching panties and streppy sendels completed the outfit along with a button down sweater just in case it became a little cooler later on.

Opening her eyes she surveyed herself in the mirror and giggled. Every single thing she had on was red. She was going home in a true scarlet women outfit. Her father's face would be priceless.

Peeling off the sweater and throwing it on the bed she smoothed her hands over her waist wondering what Mec would think when he saw her in her normal clothes. So far he'd seen the soldier hiding some sexy lingerie.

Would he like the real Lily, the ultra feminine part of her who loved flowing skirts, and silky material, who dreamed of old fashioned romance? She guessed she was going to find out sometime soon.

Brushing her hair she swept up the sides in intricate braids fastening them with red ties at the top of her head and leaving the rest to flow freely down her back. A light touch of make-up and she was ready to go.

He was barely into the whole mating thing and already he was failing miserably at it. He would have to do better, because hurting Lily was the last thing he ever wanted to do.

She scowled for a moment in the mirror remembering her fight with her mate. "Hope your tongue hangs out," she whispered childishly and then she grinned. She did hope his mouth watered all day long when there was nothing he could do about it. It would make for so much fun later when they were alone.

Brandon's jaw dropped open as he came out of the kitchen just as she got to the bottom of the stairs. He gaped for a full minute before he burst out laughing. "I was going to ask if I could come too but Mec might kick my ass."

"Probably," she laughed back gratified at the male appreciation and the way he knew she was off limits...that she belonged to Mec. It sent a shiver of delight through her.

"We got a new recruit last night," Brandon continued heading into the sitting room where Liam was lounging comfortably on one of the oversized chairs, his face lighting up when she entered the room.

"Lily!"

She didn't know what was more surprising, seeing Liam at the compound or the way he jumped up and threw his arms around her squeezing so tightly for a moment she couldn't breathe. Liam never touched anyone voluntarily. Their emotions leaked all over him and caused him pain. But he was the one hugging her and she couldn't resist wrapping her arms around him and squeezing back.

It was hard not to love Liam. She didn't think she knew anyone who'd ever said a bad word about the gentle giant who wept silent tears for everyone else's pain and suffering.

"Liam what are you doing here? And where's Elaine?" Lily looked around for his cousin, frowning slightly when she couldn't see the other woman. Elaine never left his side if she could avoid it.

Liam pulled a face biting at his bottom lip as he stepped back. "Kern wouldn't let her come. They had a fight and she punched him clear across the room. I could feel the violence, Lily. She didn't hold back at all so it must have really hurt."

Brandon laughed as he threw himself down onto one of the sofas and opened his bottle of cold blood. "Now I would have paid to be a fly on the wall to see that."

"But why would she do that?" Lily managed to choke out shocked at what she was hearing.

"Because she didn't like hearing the truth," Kern answered as he walked into the room. "While her efforts have been commendable they've been in error. Possibly I could have gotten that point across a little nicer than I did but I wanted to go home and didn't have to piss about any longer."

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"Because she didn't like hearing the truth," Karn answered as he walked into the room. "While her efforts have been commendable they've been in error. Possibly I could have gotten that point across a little nicer than I did but I wanted to go home and didn't have to piss about any longer."

Lily spun around to glare at him, disapproval on her face. "Kern! I can't believe you were nasty to Elaine. She's my friend." She was truly distressed to hear of the altercation between them. While she was used to his grouchy ways, he must have shocked the life out of Elaine.

"Hey! I'm your friend and you don't mind when he tosses me around by the throat," Brandon interjected in a peevish tone.

"You deserve all you get," she laughed, before her expression turned pensive again and she gave Kern another disapproving look.

He grinned back at her unrepentantly. "Scowling doesn't work on me and you know it. Anyway, I probably gave little Miss Icicle the most excitement she's had in years. She's probably dreaming of me right at this very moment." He appeared very satisfied at that thought.

"She probably working out how many different ways she can take you apart piece by piece," Lily retorted. "She is Freya's daughter."

Kern's grin broadened. "Guess I'll have to prey enough of her daddy's genes have mixed her up so I live to breathe another day."

His lack of concern was evident and she shook her head in exasperation and turned back to Liam who was watching the exchange with a smile on his face.

"You're so different here, Lily," he said in an awed tone. "It's like you're truly alive. I can feel your happiness. It's so radiant, so beautiful it makes me want to start smiling and never stop."

Lily's eyes filled with tears at the look of wonder on his face. It had been so long since he'd opened himself up to experience other people's emotions willingly. Usually he was fighting to hide from them.

"It isn't too much for you?" she whispered suddenly afraid she'd been too free with her emotions in his company. It was instinctive when in the past to shield around him but they weren't in the past now and she hadn't thought to.

"It's amazing, Lily. All of the Preetorians are so mentally disciplined I can't feel anything from them. We're so far away from everyone. There's only you and Kai, Brandon and another male I've not met yet who I can sense. Even Korn shields instinctively so I'm picking up very little and what I am picking up, I can easily block. For the first time in so long I can even open myself to others without fear of being overloaded."

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