

Chapter 392

Mac filed the information away for future consideration. Kothari plainly had extreme anti-social tendencies which could spell an issue waiting to happen. He'd get Karn's initial thoughts on the man when they got home later. He was curious as to why his second-in-command hadn't selected him to come back to the compound the night before.

For the moment they were pulling up into the centre of the suspiciously empty compound and Lily was tense at his side, her eyes flickering around the empty square nervously

"Crap! Rafe must have warned everyone to stay away," she muttered under her breath, tapping a finger nail against the dashboard as she leaned forward. The lack of people milling around was not a good sign. She'd been hoping for lots of pack mates being their usual nosey selves to run interference. "Park here, Mac."

He brought the Jeep to a halt outside a two storey house with a large tree to one side of it.

"This is where I grew up," Lily sighed, a faint smile gracing her lips as she thought of all the fun times she'd had sneaking out and climbing down that very tree beside her bedroom window. She turned to see Mac's reaction and her smile grew softer as she watched him quickly tie his hair back at the nape of his neck.

His dark gaze connected with hers as he turned sideways to look at her. His expression was serious as he picked up her hand and kissed the back gently. "No matter what happens, Liliانا, I promise I will do my best not to hurt your father. But this you must know and accept before we do this. You will be coming home with me. No one had better try and stop that happening because I will not tolerate it under any circumstances."

She shivered at the promise in his eyes, knew he was telling her he would fight to the death to keep her, be it her father's or his. It sent fear flooding through her which she couldn't hide.

"Let me deal with him, Mac," she whispered. "Don't do anything which can't be fixed. I will be coming home with you, no one will prevent that. Just trust that I know the best way to deal with this."

Mac had to fight down his instinctive need to be the strong one, the one to protect what was his. If it came down to a fight between him and Andrei, despite Liam's reassuring words, it would be messy and bloody and would most likely end in someone's death. He knew it would kill Lily to lose either of them so he battled his natural instincts and nodded his head in acquiescence.

"I'll do the best I can, sugar," he sighed, leaning forward to brush her lips gently. "Let's hope Liam's right and Andrei feels the same way as I do, that your happiness is the most important thing here." With that he pulled back and opened the door.

Lily followed him anxiously smoothing down her dress and wishing she'd picked something old, something Victorian and reserved that wouldn't incite her father's anger. She pushed the thought away as being unjustified. Her father understood. They'd talked about things and he'd been hurt that she'd thought he would do anything to her mate. She had to keep that firmly in mind.

The front door to the house suddenly opened and Mac's gaze swivelled from Lily to the gorgeous brunette who appeared from the house. He'd never seen Loretta Simpson before but he could see where Lily got a lot of her looks from. While not as classically beautiful as some women, Loretta's allure was just as impressive.

Her thick brown hair was perched haphazardly on top of her head with strands framing her face. Her brown eyes were shining with moisture as she regarded her errant daughter standing sheepishly in front of her.

"Hi Mom," Lily said, biting at her bottom lip as she tried to work out how much trouble she was in. She felt as if time had rolled back and she was once more about to get a telling off as she had that day she'd persuaded Kallum to try shifting into wolf form and they'd met Dayton in the forest.

"Oh, come here and stop trying to look so repentant when we all know you're not," Loretta laughed, rolling her eyes as she gathered her child into a tight embrace, swallowing back the tears of relief which were threatening to fall. She held her in a death grip, relief and love surging down their bond now she could see Lily was well and unhurt.

"You scared the living daylights out of us, Lily," she whispered. "Don't you ever suppress our bond again. I thought your father was going to explode when he couldn't contact you. He was all for calling out the Praetorians thinking someone had kidnapped you and drugged you so you couldn't call for help."

The chastisement brought tears to Lily's eyes even as she hugged her mother back just as fiercely. Despite her words, Loretta was pouring so much love and forgiveness to her it was making her feel even guiltier for her actions. She hadn't wanted to hurt her family; it had just turned out to be unavoidable. "I'm sorry, Mom. I should have stayed in contact, I know that now. I just wasn't thinking clearly at the time."

Loretta framed her face gently and gave her daughter a reassuring smile as she wiped at her wet cheeks. "Yes, you always did have a habit of acting first and thinking later," she remarked, her smile turning rueful. "You're so much like you father. How I've managed to stay sane with two of you to contend with I don't know. Thank God Kallum was less of a handful."

She hugged Lily tightly again and then stepped back to regard the vampire standing silently beside them. Her gaze was critical as she measured his suitability to call himself her child's mate. She'd have to be dead not to notice how attractive he was and she could see he was strong and a good age for one of his kind. Mackenzie exuded power much like Andrei.

She turned back to Lily and gave an exaggerated wink. It had the desired effect, causing her daughter to burst out laughing. "Yes, I think he'll do nicely, Lily, though you can fill me in on all the details later."

She directed her gaze back to Mac and held out her hand. "I'm Loretta, Mackenzie. Welcome to the family."

He took her offered hand and raised it to his lips rather than shaking it as she'd expected. "I can see where Lily's gets her looks from, Loretta," he answered smoothly, immediately liking his mate's mother for the way she instantly soothed his Lily. She didn't feel as stressed as she had a moment before.