

Chapter 403

"Caleb's asked for a meeting tomorrow here at the compound. There's more but now isn't the time to go into it. We can form an action plan once everyone can be updated on the situation. Demetri is on his way with Pietro and I wanted to prioritise getting him set up somewhere he'd feel safe first and let Mac know of the impending danger so he can alert the Praetorians."

Mac nodded. "Do you want the Vârcolac home?"

Rafe hesitated, watching Lily press against Mac's side. With the threat against the vampires it made more sense for the Vârcolac to be surrounded by Weres who weren't endangered by the poison. But Caleb had said there was no sign of a move state side yet so they had some time and he didn't want to separate Lily from her mate. Mac would have to do his job as a Praetorian and wouldn't be able to come to the pack with her.

"No, they're safe for now, Mac. I may patrol some Weres up close to your compound as additional backup, so let your people know. Caleb gave me the location when he called. They can do outer sweeps so you can keep closer to the compound and everyone is at less risk."

"Makes sense," Mac answered, not the least put out their location was now known to the pack. The time for secrecy was past and he'd use anything and everything available to keep Lily safe.

He stood up, pulling Lily up with him and securing her under the shelter of his arm. "It will probably be best to have less people around Pietro when he arrives. I want to get back up to our compound as soon as possible as well to alert my people."

The others stood and Loretta hugged Lily tightly whispering in her ear before nodding to Mac. "I'm going to organise a room for Pietro. Should I call Mallen over?" she asked Rafe.

"He's watching for their arrival and will come over when they do," Rafe answered.

"Give me five minutes to grab some things from my room, Mac," Lily said, her expression grave as she kissed him quickly and followed her mother from the room.

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"AJ and Ben, possibly Thorne too," Rafe answered after a brief pause. "They can do with the experience. I'll send up Harley and Sam as well and sound out Lacey on whether or not she wants to tag along. I need Aaron here and it's too risky to send anyone up with vamp DNA. We'll work out where best to place everyone else after the meeting tomorrow. For now, I want our strongest fighters close to the pack."

Andrei nodded his agreement as Rafe quickly worked through the logistics. Both Aaron Junior and Ben displayed an Alpha tendency which wasn't surprising considering who their father was. Thorne was also showing signs of being a strong Beta along with his brother DJ.

They were still young compared to most Weres but with the more experienced members of the pack going along too it would be a good proving ground for them if the danger level was reasonably low.

Mac listened to the conversation though his main concentration was on the direction his mate had disappeared in. He waited impatiently for her to return, anxious to be on his way to alert his people. His respect for Rafe Hanlon was building as he listened to the Alpha discuss options with Andrei. He was a man he could quite easily come to be friends with. He exuded a calm, authoritative confidence which Mac liked a lot.

Finally, the sound of Lily returning caused a little of his anxiety to recede. He took her pack from her as she paused at the kitchen doorway. The fact she allowed him to without commenting showed how distracted she was.

Lily had packed as much as she could in the short time frame she had. The trip home hadn't turned out as she'd expected and her thoughts were in turmoil at everything that had occurred. On top of that, she could sense something wrong with Mac. Oh, he made all the right gestures, acted like the usual dominant male most mates were but there was a slight reserve about him.

She had tried to place when she'd first noticed it but she couldn't put her finger on the exact moment. Was it before or after he came out of the study with her father? It nagged at the back of her mind even as she tried to concentrate on the impending threat.

"Do what Mac tells you," Andrei said, coming to gather his daughter into his arms and hold her close. "I'll talk to Kallum but make sure he and Liam do the same. No heroics from any of you. If Mac says move, then you shadow instantly and get the hell out of danger."

"Dad, we'll be fine," Lily sighed, even as she held onto him tightly. She could feel some of his fear leaking down their bond. "Rafe said the danger isn't imminent. Stop being such a worrier."

"There's no harm in pointing out the obvious," Rafe answered, stealing a quick hug when Andrei released her. "You're all vulnerable to this poison with your vamp DNA and we don't know for sure what the method of delivery is. Caleb may have been reasonably certain we have time on our side but that doesn't mean we shouldn't be prepared for all eventualities."

"Yes, Rafe," Lily smiled. She'd be better off asking them to stop breathing than to ask them to stop being overprotective.

Mac gathered her against his side and shouldered her pack. "Let us know if you hear anything before the meeting. We'll be back in the morning, early." He nodded to the others and escorted Lily out of the house and towards their Jeep.

Once he'd stowed her belongings in the back seat, he pulled her close and caught her lips with his. His own fear was in his kiss, searing her like a hot flame as he dived into her sweetness.

Sha had triad to placa whan sha'd first noticad it but sha couldn't put har fingar on the axact momant. Was it bafora or aftar ha cama out of tha study with har fathar? It naggad at tha back of har mind avan as sha triad to concantrata on tha impanding thraat.

"Do what Mac tells you," Andrai said, coming to gathar his daughtar into his arms and hold har closa. "I'll talk to Kallum but maka sura ha and Liam do tha sama. No haroics from any of you. If Mac says mova, than you shadow instantly and gat tha hall out of dangar."

"Dad, wa'll ba fina," Lily sighad, avan as sha hald onto him tightly. Sha could faal soma of his faar laaking down thair bond. "Rafa said tha dangar isn't imminant. Stop baing such a worriar."

"Thara's no harm in pointing out tha obvious," Rafa answarad, staaling a quick hug whan Andrai ralaasad har. "You'ra all vulnarabla to this poison with your vamp DNA and wa don't know for sura what tha method of dalivary is. Calab may hava baan raasonably cartain wa hava tima on our sida but that doasn't maan wa shouldn't ba preparad for all avantualitias."

"Yas, Rafa," Lily smilad. Sha'd ba battar off asking tham to stop braathing than to ask tham to stop baing ovarprotactiva.

Mac gatharad har against his sida and shouldarad har pack. "Lat us know if you haar anything bafora tha maating. Wa'll ba back in tha morning, aarly." Ha noddad to tha othars and ascortad Lily out of tha housa and towards thair Jaap.

Onca ha'd stowad har balongings in tha back saat, ha pullad har closa and caught har lips with his. His own faar was in his kiss, saaring har lika a hot flama as ha divad into har swaatnass.

swaatnass.