

Chapter 404

Lily moaned and pressed close to Mac, threading her hands in his hair as he took her mouth ruthlessly, branding her his in every way possible. His body was hard and unyielding, his grip tight around her body as he fit her curves to his.

Her head swam and desire rose instantly, her breasts swelling with need, wet heat blooming between her thighs. She battled her tongue against his, rubbing against his instant erection and causing him to groan into her mouth.

Reluctantly, he dragged his mouth away from hers and stared down into her flushed face. She looked stunning in her seductive red dress and he wished he had time to strip it slowly from her body so he could lick every inch of her soft skin and drive her wild with pleasure.

Only the consequence of doing so was unthinkable. They were mated now. If they made love there was a high probability they could create a child. As if everything else wasn't bad enough, he still had that to contend with.

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"Mac, what's wrong?" Lily breathed quietly, a frown marring her exquisite features.

"We'll talk later," he sighed, resting his forehead against hers. "We need to get back to the compound. I need to alert everyone to the situation and start doing my job of protecting you."

"You're at risk too, Mac. All the Praetorians are."

He released her and walked around the Jeep to open the door. As she stepped inside he ran a hand through his hair. "Yes, I know. That's only going to make our job harder but it's not going to stop us from doing what we have to."

He closed the door and slid into the driver's side. Starting the engine he gave her a brief glance before he put the car in gear and headed towards home.

Kothari stepped out of the trees as they passed and released his shadowing abilities when they were out of sight. He leaned against the side of the house for a long moment digesting all he'd heard. He could feel his rage building, the surging darkness within him fighting to take hold.

It would only be a matter of time before it erupted. It was too deeply rooted. He moved back into the trees taking off at a run to get as far away from the compound as he could. He shadowed as he ran, the rage building fast and furious at the threat to his pack, to his family, to her.

A soft glow began behind his dark glasses, quickly turning into a harsh glare as they melted away from his face and dropped in a molten mess to the forest floor. Fangs elongated and talons erupted from his fingers, a long red gouge streaking down his face as he fought to contain the coming storm.

With an inhuman shriek he cast his fury outwards as blood began to pour down his face. Ahead of him a swathe of trees turned to ash in an instant, the ones behind them snapping and splintering where they stood.

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Kothari closed his eyes and took a deep breath as his wound healed leaving a trail of stickiness in its wake. He wiped at his face as he opened his eyes once more to survey the damage. Silver orbs rimmed by a deep crimson red took in the devastation and he breathed out a sigh of relief that he'd made it far enough away from the pack.

It had been close this time but the release would take the pressure off for a while. He'd be able to control himself over the following week as long as he kept up his mediation and Tai Chi exercises. He wouldn't endanger his angel or anyone she loved. The pack was safe from him for a while.

Reaching within his inner core, he conjured up a new pair of dark glasses, hiding his eyes from the world as he turned in the opposite direction heading towards his special place where he could be alone and clean up before he had to return to the pack.

So the European vampires thought they would come here and hurt what was his? He would kill them all if they tried. Not one would leave pack lands alive.

What chilled Kothari's heart wasn't that he was prepared to kill to protect his people but that he knew he would take pleasure in it. Just the thought of it had his lips curling in a smile he didn't want to be smiling but couldn't contain.

The monster within was pleased with the turn of events.

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Mac was silent the entire way home which Lily couldn't help being concerned about. The few times she'd attempted to engage him in conversation, he'd merely given her a small smile and answered in monosyllables. She knew he had a lot on his mind but something told her there was more to his silence than just the news they'd received about the poison.

She was fighting not to become angry at being shut out. It was hard though because things should have been different now they were mated. Mac should be treating her as his partner not like any other Vârcolac. His distraction was really starting to irritate her but they were at the Praetorian compound now and the opportunity to talk with him about it was slipping away.

Before she knew it, Mac urged her forward into the house, his sharp gaze scanning the area continually until they were safely inside. Karn was just coming out of the kitchen and stiffened immediately when he saw his friend's expression.

"What?"

"Get everyone together in the sitting room. I'm just going to get Lily settled," Mac replied. "Where's Kal and Liam?"

Karn's gaze turned to the stairs. "They're in Liam's room."

Mac nodded as he wrapped his arm around Lily's waist and headed in that direction. "Station some guards outside his bedroom window. They can be updated on the news after the meeting." He all but pulled Lily upstairs with him as he spoke.

"Mac..." She tried to pull away but he kept his grip firm as they made it onto the first landing. Lily tugged at his arm and he released her, his expression inscrutable.

"What's wrong with you? You've been acting weird and don't tell me it's because of what we've just learned. Something was wrong before Rafe arrived. What happened in the study? Did my father say something to you?"

Mac stared down at her, easily reading Lily's building irritation. He knew he wasn't being fair on his mate. They had so much to talk about but first he had to get his people briefed. He was also aware that he was being a coward. He was almost happy he had something else to concentrate on rather than talk to Lily about their personal issues.

"You know what we're facing, Lily. I've got a job to do and don't have time for this right now. We can talk later once I've briefed everyone." His tone was sharper than he intended and he wanted to claw the words back the moment they left his mouth. The flash of hurt in Lily's eyes was quickly replaced by anger.

"You've barely said a word to me since we left the pack and now you're blowing me off? You're using this poison business as an excuse to hide something and I want to know what it is. I'm your mate. There should be no secrets between us."

Lily could hear a shrill note starting to creep into her voice and she battled hard to calm down. The stress of going home, the news that Rafe wasn't Mac's Alpha and the added stress of a bunch of wackos out there somewhere running around with a poison that could take out most of her family and friends, not to mention her mate, was too much to handle. Mac keeping additional secrets on top of that was the final straw.

Mac's resolute expression fuelled her growing anger as he thrust her pack into her arms.

"I said we'd discuss this later and that's an end to it, Liliana. Take your things up to our room. You can let Kal and Liam know what's going on though Andrei's probably already been in contact with Kal. If you want to come down to the sitting room fine, if not the three of you stay in Liam's room. I don't want you split up while we're preoccupied. I'll come get you when I'm finished."

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