

Chapter 406

It had taken longer for Mac to organise his people than he'd anticipated. The day had waned into early evening and finally full dark as he increased the duty roster and recalled all Praetorians from leave.

He sent Karn out to liaise with the wolves, his number two reporting back that the Alpha's mate had indeed come along to help supervise the younger males and protect her pack members residing at the Praetorian Compound.

Mac had taken the time to meet with Lacey Hanlon as she was second only to the Alpha of the Armand-Hanlon pack and rated the respect of being greeted by the head of the Praetorians. She was an impressive woman, physically beautiful but also with an inner-beauty that shone out from behind the eyes of her outraged wolf.

He'd have had to be dead not to admire her and think that Rafe Hanlon was a very lucky man to have such an exquisite mate. Which inevitably turned his thoughts to his own mate and the fact she was pissed at him and he hadn't seen hide or hair of her since he'd left her without a backward glance.

Sighing, Mac ran his hand through his hair and took the stairs two at a time heading up to their room. He couldn't avoid Lily forever and didn't want to. After the events of the day, he wanted nothing more than to breathe in her sweet scent, to hold her close and try and find a moment's respite from everything.

He knew she wasn't in their room the instant he entered. Always before, he'd found a joy in entering his inner sanctuary after a hard day. Tonight it was just another series of rooms in the house, the feeling of coming home he usually experienced not in evidence. How could it be when his Lily wasn't there? Home was now very firmly wherever she was, no matter what their differences were.

Mac slipped back downstairs scenting the air as he did. Lily was still with Kallum and Liam so he headed there, opening the door quietly. He froze in the doorway taking in the sight in the darkened room.

His mate was piled in a mass of arms and legs fast asleep in the middle of the bed. She'd changed into the cutest pair of pyjamas he'd ever seen, the top deep red, the cropped-legged pants white but covered in hundreds of red butterflies.

Her brother was curled around her back, his arm loosely around her waist as he slept. Lily's head was resting on Liam's lower thighs, her hair tangled about her, Liam's hand resting in the silky mass.

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A low growl reverberated around the room filled with so much menace that it cut through Mac's fury and he blinked in surprise.

"Don't go there, Mackenzie," Kallum breathed quietly. "We are pack. We are Vârcolac. Don't ever forget that and don't ever think that you can take Lily from us." He silently extracted himself from his sister and sat up, turning molten amber eyes on the vampire in the doorway.

Mac remained still as he confronted Kallum's wolf in full protective mode. He had enough sense not to make any sudden moves until the animal backed down from its aggressive stance. Unlike with Lily, her brother's wolf was a true Alpha and any aggression on his part would spark a confrontation which would hurt his mate so he allowed the wolf its dominance.

Kallum suddenly relaxed and shot a rueful smile at Mac. "Sorry about that. I don't like being woken by aggression." He turned to look at his sleeping sister for a moment and then his gaze met Mac's again.

"She was upset earlier. We heal our distress with a wolf's touch. We go pack, our animal instincts taking over. This is normal for us."

Mac relaxed too, a thoughtful expression crossing his face. He'd had no idea how much the wolf half of the Vârcolac played in their psyche. He realised he was guilty of thinking of them as more vampire than wolf because they didn't appear to let their animals free as often as normal Weres.

He could see he was going to have to rethink some of his previous misconceptions when it came to his mate. Walking into the room, he approached the bed cautiously, earning a soft chuckle from Liam as he sleepily opened his eyes.

"Kal's bark is worse than his bite," he yawned, before closing his eyes again and stroking Lily's head lightly. "My legs are going to be cold when you take her," he added with a sigh, before going back to sleep.

Mac smiled as he bent down and scooped his sleeping mate into his arms. Lily didn't wake but she did instinctively curl into his chest, an arm wrapping around his neck. Her closeness instantly soothed him, her scent surrounding him and invading every part of him. God, how he'd missed her.

"Whatever it is you can't talk to Lila about, perhaps you can talk to me?" Kallum said, as he settled back on the bed, lying on his side as he watched his sister being cradled tenderly by the vampire.

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Mac regarded him intently for a long moment before brushing his lips against Lily's forehead. "Thank you for the offer, Kal. I will bear it in mind." He headed to the door with his precious bundle. He turned before he left the room.

"Security is heightened around the compound and some of your pack are in the area too. Stay within the compound limits though. If they want to visit, fine, but none of you are to go looking for them."

He waited for Kallum's nod of agreement before he left and closed the door behind him. He stared down into Lily's sleeping face as Karn walked upstairs to come and stand beside them.

"Was it only the other day I said this was fucked up?" the other vampire asked with an ironic laugh. "Didn't know I had psychic abilities."

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Mac's lips twitched in a half smile as he met his friend's gaze. "Sometimes fucked up is so worth the effort my friend. Wait until you meet the woman who brings you to your knees."

A pair of cold green eyes flashed in Karn's mind and he unconsciously ran a hand over his recently healed ribs. "Never going to happen, Mac. I'm going to run like fuck the instant I see her." He laughed and headed off towards his room.

Mac watched him go, a shadow of a frown on his face before he looked back down at Lily once more. "There was just a hint of a sparkle in his eyes there," he whispered, kissing her temple. "I think our Karn is in as much trouble as I am, sugar."

Lily snuggled against him at the sound of his voice and he smiled. Even pissed at him she still wanted to be close to him. She couldn't argue with her subconscious mind though he was sure she was stubborn enough to try.

Mac swept his mate upstairs to their bed. He was tired and tomorrow would bring about more headaches to deal with. For tonight he wanted to luxuriate in the feel of his woman in his arms. Tomorrow he'd deal with her wrath and find some way to answer the questions she had without breaking her heart.

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