

Chapter 441

Lily snuggled closer, protected by her mate's strong arms, smiling sleepily as her eyes closed against her will. She listened to the gentle rise and fall of her mate's chest, feeling safe within his arms, knowing it would take him a while to get over the fright she'd given him, but comforted that she was where she belonged.[www.n\(ø\)vèLworm.Cøm](#)

"How long do you think we have before Andrei checks in?" Mac asked sleepily, rubbing his lips against her shoulder.

"Kallum bought us some time," she smiled, "They know I'm okay. I dare say Dad will have a thing or two to say the next time we visit." She yawned and then tilted her head back to look at him. "Mac, how did you find me? I was shadowed. Did my vomiting give me away?"

Pale grey eyes connected with hers and he frowned. "I didn't track you that way and you'd closed off our mate bond so I couldn't track you that way either." He raised himself up slightly to stare down at her. "Come to think of it, when you vanished, I managed to keep up with Kal and Liam which shouldn't have been possible."

Lily's eyes widened, surprise crossing her face. "You saw through my shadowing?"

Mac smiled slowly, reaching deep within and sensing the changes slotting into place, changes that had come about from his mating with a Vârcolac. The wolf gene was muted and probably always would be, but it appeared he'd taken on the more enhanced characteristics that went with the vampire gene. "It would appear I can, sugar," he drawled, leaning down to kiss her forehead. "So, that's put paid to any future plans of running because I will always find you."

He chuckled at her mock-outraged expression and settled back down beside her, snuggling her in tightly. This was where he belonged, where he would always belong, with his beautiful Liliana Rose. "Sleep now, sugar."

"Mac, when I wake this time, you will still be in bed beside me?" There was a hint of vulnerability in the question, alluding to the fact that so far, she had always woken alone since they had mated. It was a mistake he wasn't going to repeat.

"Always, Lily. You won't ever wake alone again. Now go to sleep before I decide to sing you to sleep. Believe me, that is something you most definitely do not want to happen."

Sighing happily, Lily allowed sleep to claim her, safe in the knowledge that no matter what happened, she and Mac would always be able to work out any issues and overcome them, because that was what mates did.

"Lily."

She woke with a start, dread filling her heart at the sound of the male voice inside her head. Turning slightly, she glanced at Mac to see him fast asleep, the mental intrusion failing to disturb him.[\(w\)ww.ñøvèltwoⓄ.M.čøⓈ](#)

"Lily."

She couldn't ignore the command in the tone no matter how much she wanted to. Her wolf would always answer to that command, at least, until another came along to usurp that relationship. Schooling her emotions as best she could, she slipped silently from the bed and found a robe belonging to Freya. Slipping it on, she padded barefoot outside to the man waiting for her.

Rafe's expression was so neutral it was hard to tell what he was thinking. Her Alpha stood on the first step of the porch, brown eyes quickly running over her face. "You're okay?" Even his voice was neutral.

"I'm okay, Rafe. Kothi was in the right place at the right time. The baby's fine too." It was hard to look into his penetrating gaze and her head lowered automatically in the submissive position her wolf adopted. Her Alpha had warned her of the penalty of blocking his link and she had gone ahead and done it anyway. It was time to accept his judgement even though it would break her heart to leave the pack. She knew it was only a matter of time before that happened anyway, but she wanted to remain part of the Armand-Hanlon pack as long as possible.

Rafe sighed, staring at Lily's bent head. She had placed him in an unconscionable position and they both knew it. It hurt to look at her so he turned away, sitting down on the top step and staring out at the panoramic view of the mountains and forest. "What am I supposed to do with you, Liliana?" It was a rhetorical question and they both knew it.

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He sighed again, running a weary hand through his shaggy hair. "Come, sit with me." Rafe waited for her to take a seat beside him, trying to work out what to say. Annie had told him he would know what to do for the best when it came to his errant pack member. He wasn't so sure he was that wise. Lily had deliberately undermined his authority as Alpha, knowing what the consequences for that would be. How was he supposed to resolve this?

"Have you no respect for me, Lily?" The words came out sounding pained, touching on the root cause of Rafe's dilemma when it came to her.

Her head whipped around, shock blazing from her eyes. "Good God, Rafe! No, you can't believe that! Of course, I respect you. You're my Alpha. You have always loved and protected me, always been someone I could count on. I have so much respect for you, Rafe, please don't ever think that I don't."

"Then explain this to me, Lily. Help me understand why I fail so badly as your Alpha, because quite frankly I'm at a loss here. Why can't you put the needs of the pack before your own? What is it about my leadership that you find so onerous?"

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