

Chapter 612

"I'm shielded too tightly for you to feel anything," she said quietly, turning her intent gaze on his.

"Whatever help Mother was at the beginning quickly wore off, Liam. Everyone was certain we were losing you. I snuck down one night to see you because I couldn't bear to be apart from you any longer." Her voice faltered and for a moment he thought she wouldn't continue, then she took a deep breath and let it out slowly. "You were hurting yourself. You were in wolf form and you were biting at your own paws...you were trying to chew them off."

Her voice had dropped to a whisper, and for a glimmer of a moment, he felt a strong surge of pain and then it vanished as quickly as it had come.

"I couldn't let you do that. I couldn't let you hurt yourself. I opened the door and came in, even though I'd been warned to stay outside and call an adult if you needed help. I did the only thing I could think of: I just threw my arms around you. I could feel you in my head, screaming relentlessly. It hurt my head, so I tried to push you out and something snapped into place. The adults think it may have been something to do with the fact that we connected before I was born. The shield I used protected me, but it also strengthened your own shield. When we are connected like this, I can help keep the overload at bay."

Shock rippled through him, his astonishment so profound that for a moment he couldn't quite grasp what she was telling him. Now that she'd mentioned the connection, he could feel her nestled quietly inside his head. Her presence wasn't intrusive in any way; she wasn't reading his thoughts or anything. She was just there, right where he imagined his mental barriers to be.

What he did notice was the utter calm she projected. He felt something similar around his aunt when she contained her emotions, but nothing nearly as strong as what he felt around his cousin. As his astonishment subsided, it was replaced by a dawning realisation....

"Elle, if you're protecting me all of the time, then what about you?"

Big eyes met his and for another moment, the barriers she held wavered; he felt a shaft of pure love radiating outwards before it was cruelly extinguished in the next heartbeat.

"Aside from my parents, there is no one I love more than you, Liam. You are my family, my cousin, the brother I've never had. You have always protected me, always welcomed me into your life. You've never once chased me away because I'm younger than you or a girl, even now when you've started thinking about girls and what you can get up to with them. Now, I can finally do something for you, to repay everything you've ever done for me."*ww(w).nóv(ø)/werrm.Côm*

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"No! Elle! Not this!" Despite trying to hold them back, his eyes filled with tears as the full impact of what his beautiful cousin was willing to do crashed over him in a wave of despair. "You can't sacrifice yourself for me, Elina. You just can't."

"It is only a sacrifice if I achieve nothing from it," she smiled, but there was no warmth in the tilting of her lips. "I can't lose you, Liam, I just couldn't stand it if you were no longer in my life. This way I get to keep you and you get a chance at living a normal life."

Liam was shaking his head, oblivious to his tears, and determined that she wouldn't do this thing.

"Your parents will never allow it. Rafe won't allow it. When they find out what you're doing..."

"They already know, Liam. There have been endless meetings about the subject. They've covered every possible angle and this is the only one that works. Mother said I am old enough to make my own decisions and Father has reluctantly agreed to it. I think they have realised my shields are too strong for them anyway, and they know there is nothing they can do to prevent it."

"Elle...Elle, your beautiful smile...your laughter I love so much. You can't give that up for me, not for anyone." There was desperation in his voice as he gripped her hands hard, trying to get her to see sense.

"Then work on your shields, Liam. Work as hard as you can and one day you will hear my laughter again. For this moment though, keeping you sane is the most important thing and my mind will not be swayed from this course of action."

He could see the truth in her eyes and knew there was nothing he could say that would dissuade her. Gathering his beautiful cousin in a bear-like hug, Liam wept...for both of them...

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"I should have argued more," Liam sobbed, as he bowed his head to hide his shame. "I should have refused her, but the peace she brought to my soul was a balm I never thought I would ever experience. She gave up too much for me. I wasn't worth that kind of sacrifice, not when I have gone on to do such terrible things."

"A person's worth is not how they perceive themselves but how others do. Elina clearly loves you, as do your parents and your pack." There was a healthy dose of respect in Reasa quiet words, as well as a slight catch.

Liam turned his tear-stained face to look at her, but she was staring straight ahead, her eyes dry.

"I don't want to do this anymore," he ground out, leaving the psychic plane and opening his eyes. He was shocked to see his hands resting on top of the book, Reasa's smaller hands wrapped around his.

She removed them, meeting his gaze with a neutral expression. "We need to continue what we've started. We need to heal the fragments of your soul before we can move on."

"I can't!" The words came out harshly, anguish on his face as he shook his head to reinforce them.

"You must. Too many people's lives depend on you, Liam. I will be with you."

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Liam met Reasa's gaze again, searching her face avidly. There was something in her voice, something softer than anything she had given him before. Had travelling through his memories helped to begin their bonding? He couldn't see the same hostility in her expression. She wasn't showing any love for him, but then he hadn't expected that so soon. There appeared to be a softening towards him though and that gave him some hope.

She was offering to be at his side when he confronted the vampire Twice before, his vampiric side had surfaced, and both times she had been the only one that part of his psyche would listen to. There was no fear or concern on her exquisite face. She believed that no harm would come from doing this. It was up to him, and whether or not he had the same faith in himself that his mate was displaying.

Taking a deep breath, Liam closed his eyes, and joined her once more in his mind. "Okay, let's do this."

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