

## Chapter 636

Liam considered it for a moment and then shook his head. "That kind of shield would be mostly ineffective and not a good use of your talents." He glanced at Reasa and then back to his cousin. "Reasa's control is exceptional. I'm not concerned about any issues there. I think it would be best if you buffered my defences instead. You're used to my mind so it will be second nature to you."

"And you will feel more confident in yourself knowing I am doing so," Elina said telepathically for his ears only.

"Yes I would, Elle. I am so much stronger with the new shielding techniques I've learned but this... this will just make me feel a bit better."

Karn's return into the room with a second plush armchair halted their conversation and Elina once more returned to her spot at the window. As Karn set it down beside its matching companion, she let her gaze run over the vampire that had managed to break through the cold defences she'd honed to perfection. She was still perturbed that she'd lashed out at him with such violence. Her loss of control had been unforgivable, no matter what the circumstances had been. It was unfortunate he would be present during this exercise, when she needed all of her control, but she would find a way to ignore him.

As if realising he was under scrutiny, Karn turned his head to look at her, his lips curling in another insufferable smile as his pale blue eyes twinkled and seem to convey that he knew just what she was thinking. Looking away, Elina turned inward, feeling the link that connected her to her cousin and concentrating solely on that as she slipped into Liam's mind and wove a delicate net of spidery tendrils around his impressive defences. Her web looked flimsy but it was as strong as she could make it. If Liam's control broke, well there would be at least a small fraction of time for the others to run before total catastrophe occurred.*www.novelworld.com*

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Turning back to her cousin, she watched him and Reasa sit down beside Brandon's bed, the ancient tome open in Liam's lap as he quickly ran his gaze over a couple of pages. She stiffened when Karn moved to her side, resting his back against the wall beside her.

"Can I shadow you?"

Every single part of her being screamed NO but she ignored her instincts to push him away and relaxed as best she could. "I am only an additional shield for Liam. You will not learn anything from that."

"Guess, I will be the judge of that?" he countered swiftly, and she knew he would cause a scene if she continued to thwart him and that was counter-productive to why they were all here.

"Fine." Elina allowed entry into her mind, trying not to lash out instinctively when she felt the pure male dominance of the vampire by her side slip easily inside and nestle close to her own defences. She ignored him as best she could, relaxing further when he didn't push at her inner defences but instead examined her link with Liam and followed that path to her cousin's mind.

"Impressive." There was such respect and awe in Karn's tone that the last of Elina's misgivings eased and she concentrated on what was happening before them as opposed to fixating on the male at her side. She was relying on Karn not to violate the trust she was giving him. She only hoped that she wasn't wrong to do so.

Liam glanced at the woman at his side, meeting her apprehensive gaze. "Do you need more time?"

Reasa shook her head, rolling her shoulders to relax some of the tension suffusing her body. "No, we should begin."

At her acceptance, the large Vârcolac closed the book and set it down on the floor. "Mac, it might be best to clear the house of anyone who doesn't need to be here."

"That's already been done, Liam. Everyone who is here needs to be here," the Praetorian leader answered calmly, signalling the Weres and vampires who were tending to the others. "We can't afford to leave the others uncared for while this is happening. Everyone present has volunteered to be here."*www.NovelWorld.com*

Again, it was as if he was being absolved of any responsibility in advance, and Liam felt another moment's doubt that he could, not only, bring the vampires back, but deserved any forgiveness.

"We should begin, Liam."

Reasa's practical tone helped to balance him and he nodded his head slowly, turning to look at Brandon lying so peacefully in the bed. "Time to come back to us, Brandon," he muttered under his breath, feeling Reasa slipped effortlessly into his mind beside Elina.

Dear God it was hopeless!

That was the first thought that came to Liam's mind as he slipped into Brandon's and viewed the carnage that was there. Unlike everything he'd previously experienced, there was no long passageway with doors leading from it, straight or curving haphazardly as Reasa had described. He stood at the beginning of what appeared to be a maze, a ten-foot barrier of steel mesh in front of him.

"Reasa?" He couldn't keep the hopelessness from his voice and knew she picked up on it instantly.

"I've never seen anything like it before," she whispered, her tone horrified as she stood beside him. "Liam, this mind is gone. There is nothing we can do."

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They were speaking aloud as they had done before, and he knew the others would be listening to every word they said. Despite concentrating solely on Brandon's mind, he could detect Mac's sharp, indrawn breath at Reasa's announcement. Liam refused to be defeated, refused to give up hope when they hadn't even tried yet.

"I don't accept that, Reasa. I can't accept that. We have to be able to do something."

"What? I have no experience of this. I don't know where to begin and that book didn't give us any answers for something as damaged as this. What can we do?"

Squaring his shoulders, Liam reached down and took her hand, to lend her strength and also to find some himself. "We can try, Reasa. We can try." Taking a step forward he pulled her through the opening in the steel mesh and deeper into the fractured mind before them.

The conversation between Liam and Reasa made Mac's heart sink. He had no idea what they were seeing inside Brandon's mind but it sounded hopeless. He looked away from the bed, towards the window where Elina and Karn stood.

"Are you seeing what they're seeing?"