

Chapter 646

Lily nodded giving his hand a reassuring squeeze. "That was days ago, Brandon. Liam was inside your head, and the heads of the others in this room. He didn't know what he was doing but in his distress over what was happening to Thereasa he projected his emotions outwards and some of the Praetorians were injured in the backlash. You were one of them. You've been trapped within your mind ever since."

He gaped at her, trying to understand what she was saying. "You mean he damaged our minds somehow?"

Lily nodded. "It wasn't intentional, Brandon, and he is so overcome with guilt by what happened. He's learned to shield his empathy better and he and Reasa are the reason you're awake right now. They spent all day yesterday in your mind, searching for your shattered psyche so they could help bring you back."

Brandon's thoughts were in turmoil at the news. His mind had been shattered and days had passed? He was staggered by what he was hearing but the more he thought about it, the easier it was to put two and two together. The dream of Lily talking at him was clearly when she was reading to him. The hide and seek game with Liam and Reasa was them luring him back to reality. That had to make Liam one of the most dangerous people he had ever come across, and now he appeared to be working in conjunction with the would-be assassin.

"Please don't hate him, Brandon. Liam worked himself to the point of exhaustion last night trying to fix his mistake."

Blinking slowly, he regarded his friend, only half listening to what she was saying as he processed what had happened. It took a moment for her words to seep through but when they did, he shook his head in denial. "Of course I don't hate Liam. He is Vârcolac, as are you, Lily."

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He squeezed her hand, wanting to relieve the distress he saw on her face. "I signed up to lay down my life for the Vârcolac no matter what the circumstances. I could never hate any of you and most certainly not Liam. It's my job to protect him."

"And we are so lucky to have you," Lily smiled, leaning over to give her friend a warm hug. She had been afraid that the Praetorians would fear Liam after what had happened. It was a relief to know that Brandon, at least, didn't harbour any ill will because of what happened.

"Okay, that's enough of the hugging," Mac growled with a glint of humour in his eyes as he entered the room. "Just because you've been in a coma for days doesn't mean you can take liberties with my mate, Brandon."

It was obvious he was only teasing so Brandon did a little of his own, ensuring his grip tightened around his friend so she couldn't pull away. "Lily gives great hugs," he winked, drawing a bark of laughter from Karn who appeared at Mac's side.

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"Do you want to go back into another coma, boy? Keep that up and you may well just do that."

"How are you feeling, Brandon?" Mac asked, extracting his mate from the other male's arms and sitting down in her chair. He pulled her onto his lap, grinning widely at her exuberant expression. He shared her relief, not just because he liked the younger male, but also because it made his Lily happy to have her friend back.

"A little sluggish and disorientated," Brandon answered, turning serious as he reported to his leader. "I have a strong thirst for food still even though I've had a full bottle already. Might be wise to have a large stock for when the others wake up as they're going to be famished."

The Praetorian leader nodded trying not to be overly hopeful. Just because Liam and Reasa were able to bring Brandon back, it didn't mean they would automatically be able to save the others. It was possible that Brandon's connection with Lily and Liam was a deciding factor in the younger male wanting to return.

The sound of the door opening once more had everyone turning to the newcomers. Reasa appeared first, followed closely by Liam. The Vârcolac's eyes widened as he saw Brandon sitting up in bed. "It worked," he whispered, relief glowing in his eyes.

"Intriguing," the human woman said, curiosity on her face. "I did not think we would be able to do it. It would appear I am wrong once again." She hung back as Liam crossed over to his friend.

"I am so sorry, Brandon. I never meant to cause you or anyone else any harm." Liam's relief had changed to guilt, his expression sombre as he regarded his friend. He couldn't put into words how happy he was to see Brandon sitting up and talking to everyone. He hoped that his successive actions had gone some way to mitigating the damage he'd caused.

"You're forgiven," the vampire grinned, running a hand through his long dark hair. "I needed the rest anyway. You do know what a slave driver Karn is." He deliberately kept his tone light and teasing to ease some of Liam's guilt. Shit happened and sometimes people got hurt along the way. It wasn't in Brandon's nature to hold a grudge...not unless someone tried to hurt someone he cared about.

"It was an accident, Liam. Nothing for you to beat yourself up about. I'm fine, and I'm sure the others will be too once you've had a chance to annoy the hell out of them by playing hide and go seek in their minds."

Liam's smiled, a slow smile full of gratitude to his friend. His curiosity was piqued too by his words. "You were aware of us in your mind?"

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"Sort of," Brandon answered with an answering smile. "It was like a hazy dream. You and Reasa were calling to me but every time I thought I'd found one of you, I would have to start all over again going in a different direction. I can remember feeling exhausted by the time you stopped calling me. I was glad you both went away so I could sit down a rest."

The doctor arrived back at the bed. "Okay, now you've all satisfied yourselves that he's fine, Brandon needs some more food and then some rest."

"I'll get you something more to eat," Lily said wriggling out of Mac's tight embrace.

Her mate rose too. "I'll ensure we have an adequate stock of chilled blood." He gathered his mate close and shepherded her out of the room.

"Are you up to trying with the next patient or do you need more rest?" Karn asked.

Liam glanced at Reasa who nodded her head. "I'm fine to try again."

"Good. I'll round up Elina while you get yourselves comfortable. Just move the chairs beside Brandon's bed to the next one." Karn left the room leaving Liam and Reasa to get themselves set up for the next dream walking.

"Reasa...?" Liam wanted to see beneath the cool mask that was back in place. He wanted to know that his mate was okay after her emotional outpouring earlier. He knew this wasn't really the time and place, but he needed some kind of reassurance.

"Let's just concentrate on what we came here to do, Liam. That's our highest priority and we need all our energy for that."

Conceding defeat for now, Liam sat down beside the next bed, relaxing his body and trying to clear his mind of all external stimuli. It was hard with his mate so close, but it was necessary to bring back the remaining Praetorians.

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