

Chapter 661

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His expression drifted off as he spoke, as if he were lost within a memory that was replaying itself. "Mac crossed my path on one of my trips down to the villages. I was almost insane with hunger at the time, so much so, that when I scented him in the area I was ready to fight to the death to protect my hunting ground. He knocked me on my ass so hard I swear I was seeing stars. Then I realised that I really was as I lay on my back looking into the night sky with Mac's talons around my neck."

"What happened then?" Reasa couldn't stop herself from asking when he stopped talking and didn't appear as if he would continue.

"He could have killed me. I was too weak from hunger to defend myself but instead I heard him talking softly to someone else and then I could taste the sweet hot blood of a human dripping into my open mouth. I tried to fight him to get to the blood but he was too strong for me. In the end I just had to lay there and accept the small hand-outs he gave to me. By the time I was sated enough, he let me up and I was astounded to see four villagers sitting beside the trees, all still alive."

The expression in Karn's eyes sent a chill down Reasa's spine when he looked at her. There was so much self-loathing on his face it was painful to witness. "You see, until that very moment I had always killed to satisfy my hunger. I didn't know there was any other way. In one night Mac taught me how to feed without the need for unnecessary loss of life. He taught me to feed often and in small amounts to ensure I would never lose control and reach that feral state again."

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"He saved you," she whispered and he nodded his head. "This is why you follow him now, because he believed in you and gave you a future."

"Yes he did and I will follow wherever he chooses to lead me. However, that isn't the point to this story, Reasa. The point is we have all done unspeakable things in the past that we are ashamed to admit to. It's what we donow that matters though. We can be enslaved by our pasts or we can learn from our mistakes and work to make not only ourselves, but those around us into better people. I don't care what the old Thereasa did. I can only look to the woman I know now and am impressed by her strength of will and unfailing dedication to helping those lost souls upstairs."

Reasa looked down at her bowl, the now soggy cereal appearing to swim before her eyes. A lone tear splashed into the milk, followed by a second and then another. Karn liked her. He was the first person that wasn't protecting her for Liam's sake or grateful for being brought out of a coma. He actually saw her as a person and found something to like about her.

Scrubbing at her face and fighting down the strong emotions that threatened to overwhelm her, she stood up keeping her gaze averted from the blond vampire. "Thank you."

"You have a hard road to walk, Thereasa. Yes, there will be those who may only ever see the old Reasa, but there are countless others who will see the new one. You don't have to walk that road alone. You have friends who are willing to give you a chance and share your burden with you. All you have to do is let them in."

Karn placed a hand underneath her chin to tilt her head up to meet her eyes. "I am one of those friends. If anyone gives you a hard time here, you let me know and I will have words with them. And if you ever need to talk...about anything...you can come to me, okay?"

"Okay," she whispered, giving him a watery smile. She couldn't believe it but she actually had a friend. For the first time in a long time there was something good in her life and she was afraid she would do something to ruin it as she had everything else. Something told her Karn didn't offer his friendship lightly. She prayed that she didn't do anything to let him down.

"Good, now off to bed with you, girlie, before Liam comes looking for you and decides to kick my ass for having you up at stupid o'clock in the morning."

With a gentle prod he sent her heading back upstairs and she went feeling dazed by what had just happened.

"Reasa?"

Liam's sleepy voice muttered in the darkness as she closed the bedroom door behind her. She stumbled in the dark making her way towards the bed and let out a small gasp when strong arms circled her body and she was lifted onto the bed.

"Where were you?" There was nothing but curiosity in his voice and for the first time she stopped to really listen to what Liam wasn't saying in so many words. There was no concern that she had run off. There was no accusation that she might have been doing something underhand. He completely trusted in her and that fact was only now starting to sink in.

"I was hungry. Karn sat with me while I ate some cereal. He was keeping me company."

"You should have woken me. I would have made you something to eat." Again there was no judgement in his tone, only a desire to look after her.

"Freya is right. I do need to learn how to cook. Perhaps this is something we can do when we have finished with our task here? That's if you can cook."

Liam went so still that for a moment she wondered if she had done something wrong, then he lay down, pulling her into his embrace as he had done every night since they had been at the Praetorian Compound. "I would like that very much, Reasa," he said quietly, his voice thick with emotion.

It was so easy to relax into his embrace, to feel his breath against her neck as she closed her eyes to go back to sleep. She had become accustomed to his gentle touch, to the feel of his strength surrounding her. He didn't press for anything else. He was content to have her close. She had to concede that she had never felt more protected than she did by his side. "I would too, Liam," she answered with a sleepy yawn, snuggling down and allowing sleep to claim her.

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"They need a break, Mac. They've been at this constantly for days now. They need to work their physical muscles as well as their mental ones. I found Reasa exhausted in the kitchen last night so hungry it was a wonder her stomach rumbling didn't wake up the entire house. She was too tired to prepare herself anything but her body was demanding it. This isn't a request...I'm telling you they need a day off."

Mackenzie stared hard at Karn as he mulled over his words. The dream walkers had been spending days at a time inside the wounded vampires mind, slowly bringing them back to the here and now. So far, four of them were awake, Brandon included. It was hard not to push for the final two to come back. There was a sense of urgency, like they were running out of time. The longer the vampires were in their coma-like state the harder it appeared to be to bring them back.

"We could lose the last two, Karn. You know that."

"We could lose Liam and Reasa, Mac. Those men lying up there pledged their lives to keeping the Várcolac safe. If they had a choice in the matter they would tell you to put Liam first, andyou know that."wʍʍ.ɪɔvɛɫwɔɹm.cɔm

When Karn was so vociferous about something he wasn't about to back down on it. He clearly was concerned for Liam and Reasa's health. Mac sighed and rubbedbed a hand over his face, finally nodding his agreement. "Fine...but you tell Liam. You know he's not going to like it."