

Chapter 737

"Mackenzie!" Lily groaned, pushing at his chest and conceding defeat quickly when he wouldn't let go. "You can't keep me locked up here at the compound. It's like being in a prison." It wasn't really, how could being in her mate's loving embrace ever be like a prison? However, her frustration was riding her hard, and she was desperate for a little freedom.

Karn snorted loudly and rolled his eyes again. "Your idea of a prison and everyone else's is vastly different, Liliana."

"I can deal with my mate without your assistance," Mac interjected, feeling the tenseness of Lily's body in his arms. She was coiled so tightly he was starting to feel concerned. Her agitation couldn't be good for her or the baby. "Honey, we've had this conversation before. You agreed to stay here at the compound."

"Not all of the time, Mac," she muttered against his chest. "I want to be able to go visit the pack and see my friends. I need a little freedom." She looked up at him, seeing the stubborn set of his mouth warring with the concern in his slate grey eyes. It was still a little disconcerting to see their changed colour, having been so used to seeing them black.

"Being cooped up isn't good for anyone," Kallum added, keeping his tone quiet and confident, working to remind the other two men that he was someone whose judgement they trusted. "It's not just Lily that's becoming edgy, Brandon is too. I think it would be a good idea to take them into the city for a while, let them get out for a little while. I am happy to go with them."
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"Absolutely not!" Mac and Karn growled at the same time, their expressions turning set.

Lily was surprised at Kallum's words too, but she didn't dare look at her brother. If he'd included her in the city visit then he had to have a good reason for it.

There was a long pause and then Kallum sighed deeply, resignation in his exhalation of breath. "Fine, maybe it wouldn't be wise to take Lily into the city but there shouldn't be any reason Brandon can't go. Elina wants to go visit her family at the Hanlon pack. Surely there can be no objections to Lily going with her? Hell, one of you can go with them too, if you're so concerned. "

Silence reigned when he stopped speaking and Karn pursed his lips as he looked at Mackenzie. "Brandon is edgy," he conceded. "He's almost back to peak fitness too. I can see no harm in letting him go with Kallum, and I could escort Lily and Elina to the Hanlon pack."

Lily held her breath, her eyes beseeching Mac to say yes. She had faith in her mate's empathy. She knew he could feel how badly she needed this time away through their mate bond.

Mac hated saying no to Lily, even when he knew it was for her own good. He also knew he had to stop coddling her, that she was stronger than he was, and she would end up resenting him if he continued to restrict her movements. He was just so afraid of losing her. She was the very air he breathed, the most precious thing in his world...and she was carrying their child, that beautiful miracle he had never dreamed he would ever be able to have again. It was difficult to balance his need for her protection with her need for independence, but he had to do it.

Sighing, he admitted defeat, tilting her chin up so he could kiss her tenderly. "No city, but you can go to the Hanlon pack with Elina. You stay with Karn the entire time you're there though. You have to promise me that."

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Lily pouted, trying not to show the elation rippling through her. If she agreed too easily, her mate would become suspicious. "I could kick Karn's ass even pregnant," she quipped, drawing another snort from the man behind her, which she ignored. "Karn doesn't need to come with us."

"He goes or you stay, Liliana Romanov. That's about as much leeway as I am able to concede right now." Mac's tone brooked no argument, leaving everyone in the room fully aware that he meant it.

"Okay, I will stay with Karn. Thank you, Mac." Lily hugged her mate tightly, hiding her huge grin in the crook of his neck. Sure, he would be able to sense her happiness at his concession, but that would only be expected. Stepping back, she gave him a smile and then turned to her brother. "Let's go tell Brandon before he implodes from frustration."

Mackenzie and Karn watched them leave, fighting to hide their smiles. "Do you think they know they've just been played?" Mac asked, feeling a little mean at their deception.

"They'll work it out," his friend answered, laughter lacing his tone. "Once they've finished congratulating themselves at having played us."

He'd warned Mac only the day before that Lily's frustrations were escalating to the point that there was a chance she might do something reckless. She needed to be active and contributing; the only problem had been figuring out what Mac was comfortable agreeing to that would also give Lily the purpose that she needed.
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They'd heard about the European wolves, and it seemed reasonable to have the Vârcolac look into the rumours currently surfacing. Mac knew handing his mate something she hadn't worked for wouldn't soothe her frustrations much, so he'd done what any good mate would, he'd make her work for it. Now Lily had some purpose and Brandon would also be able to finish his recovery. It was the best outcome they could manipulate, though Mac was still a little dubious at letting his mate out of his sight.

"You made the right call, Mac. That little ball of trouble was practically beaming with smug satisfaction as she sashayed out of here. You know I'll keep an eye on her. She can't get into too much trouble at the Hanlon pack."
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"She'd better not," his friend growled. "Just make sure you're attention isn't diverted elsewhere, Karn. If Lily gets up to anything that I deem reckless, it will be your hide I'm taking it out of."

Karn burst out laughing, walking away with a nonchalant shrug. "I have no idea what you could possibly be eluding to, Mac. You know I take my responsibilities very seriously." He closed the study door behind him, a wide smile gracing his lips. It was always very entertaining when Elina Alexander was around. He was certainly looking forward to spending more time with the introverted Vârcolac.