

Chapter 9: Lily

The morning after we met with Alpha Wyatt, Leana and I grabbed an early breakfast before walking to the outskirts of the city. From there, we shifted and began running. The fastest way to Araphyra from here was through King Urien's lands. While both Leana and I were feeling unsettled about crossing the vampire's land, but our parents have known King Urien for years. He was the first of the vampires and other supernaturals to swear his allegiance to the Guardians, specifically to Aunt Angel.

It takes us several hours again to get to the outskirts of King Urien's lands. We stop and eat, discussing our plan.

"I think we should cross. I'd rather not stay the night, do you agree?" Leana says to me.

"Absolutely. I think I'd feel more comfortable sleeping outside than in a vampire's lair."

"Who do you think will be guarding their borders?" Leana asks, as we finish our lunch, putting our garbage away to toss out later.

I look up at the sky. It's a bright, sunny day. While vampires don't burn up in the sun as humans think they do, they are light sensitive, causing pain if it's too sunny outside, like today. It's why vampires are mostly seen at night and on rainy days. It's similar to what humans say it feels like when their eyes are dilated and they go out in the sun. It impacts their ability to see and it's painful.

"Humans, maybe? I'll be surprised and worried if it's werewolves. I haven't heard of any packs guarding vampire lands, have you?" I ask her.

"No, I haven't. If it is wolves, what do you want to do?" She's asking if I



want to fight or run.

"There's two of us. If King Urien has changed his ways and has decided to go against the Guardians, maybe he needs to be reminded of what and who we are." I say.

"Agreed." Leana says as we stand, making our way to the King's borders.

We wait for about 10 minutes before we smell them. It takes them another 10 minutes before they finally stumble across us.

"Halt! Who goes there? These are private lands." Leana and I look at each other, rolling our eyes. Definitely human.

The group walks up to us with their guns pulled and aimed at us.

"This is private land. You pretty ladies need to move along." The leader says.

"We're here to speak to King Urien." Leana tells them.

I watch as the leader turns and looks at the group around him. "You ain't one of them." Another man says.

"No, we aren't. But that doesn't mean that we don't know who and what they are." I say.

"I'll have to call." The leader says.

"Please let King Urien know that we are simply looking to cross his lands. We do not wish to take him away from his important business."

"King Urien is...."

"Shut up, Cole." The leader says before the other one, Cole, could finish



his sentence.

I watch as the leader pulls out a phone and dials a number. I hear a snarl when the phone is picked up and the leader noticeably pales.

"Sir, there are two women here asking to pass through your lands."

"Their names?" I hear the vampire on the phone ask.

He looks up at us about to ask, when Leana answers.

"Guardian Leana Holstin and Guardian Lily Forte request King Urien's permission to cross his territory." She says, knowing the vampire will hear.

We hear a hiss on the other end before the vampire tells us to wait.

The leader looks at us. "He says..."

"We heard him." I interrupt him.

"So, what are ya, anyway?" The man asks. We ignore him and a couple minutes later we hear the sound of a fast moving vampire, headed our way.

Leana and I both turn to look in the direction he's coming. When he arrives, he is cloaked with dark glasses on. The humans step back, bowing to him. I can't decide if they are paid well, or if they are hoping that the vampires will change them. Either way, they aren't the best protection. It makes me wonder what other security measures are in place.

I glance around and only now notice the security cameras posted around us. They've been watching us since we got here, but still they waited for the human to contact them before acknowledging our presence.



"This way, Guardians." The vampire says, without any introduction or preamble.

"We do not wish to interrupt King Urien. We are merely looking to pass through his borders.

The vampire turns and smiles at us. The smile is anything but pleasant. "Trust me, you won't be bothering King Urien."

He begins moving quickly, not giving Leana and I a chance to argue further. We begin running to keep up. It's only about 15 minutes before the vampire's castle comes into view. Even in the light of day, I can see that it's exactly what you'd expect from a vampire's castle.

It looks ancient, built from stones with moss and vines growing over the walls. Even from here, it looks dark, like the sun refuses to shine on it. It's grey and black coloring amplified by the spires pointing into the sky from all across the top of the castle roof, giving it the look of grief and doom. The stark difference in this castle versus the one in Araphyra makes my heart thump. This castle looks as uninviting as it possibly can, where the castle in Araphyra is as warm and beautiful as you'd expect from the elves.

When we get to the front door of the castle, it opens without the vampire's assistance. Once again, I look up and see cameras everywhere. I notice that Leana is looking around and has seen them too. When we enter the castle, the doors close behind us with a resounding bang of finality. Leana and I look at each other. Something is very wrong.

Our vampire escort pulls his hood from his head and the glasses from his eyes. He continues to walk down a long hallway. If I weren't a werewolf, the cold seeping from the walls would be almost unbearable. This is the first time I've ever been inside a vampire's castle and it makes me wonder how my Aunt Angel survived for so many years as a captive. It



must have been horrible.

We arrive at what can only be described as a throne room. The room is full of vampires, milling around doing whatever they do during the day. Some of them are feeding on willing humans, others look busy catering to the whims of others. I'm guessing the ranked members of the vampire clan are the ones being catered to and their version of omegas are the ones providing them with whatever they ask for. My nose twitches. The smell of vampires is strong and burns my nose. It's like being outside when the temperatures drop below zero degrees, and the air is so cold it burns your nose, mouth and lungs.

My attention turns to the throne but instead of King Urien, I find a different vampire. He looks vaguely familiar but it's hard to tell for sure, since he's feeding on a naked female who is straddling his lap.

"Your highness." Our escort says, bowing to the man. His eyes open and they are glowing red. He pulls his teeth out of the woman's neck, smacking her ass hard enough to leave a mark. "Get up." He says to her.

She gets up on wobbly feet, turning to step off the dais. Her eyes are glazed over, and she passes by us without looking in our eyes.

"Elder Lance." Leana's voice rings out, causing the room to go silent. I turn back to the man on the throne and see that indeed, this is Elder Lance, King Urien's son, who sits on the council.

He wipes the corner of his mouth with his thumb before licking the blood off. Then he turns his attention to us.

"Guardians. To what do we owe the pleasure?" He gestures to the room of vampires who have all turned their attention to us.

Hera pushes forward, feeling threatened.



"We seek an audience with King Urien." I can hear Kella's deeper voice and know that she has pushed forward too. Something is definitely off with this clan.

He stands, walking slowly toward us. "Well, that will be problematic." He says, keeping his eyes on us.

"Is he not in attendance?" Leana presses.

Lance begins laughing. When he does, the other vampires begin laughing as well, as if his laughter gives them permission or perhaps requires them to laugh as well.

"No, my father is not in attendance."

"Do you know when he will return, Elder Lance." Leana asks again, undeterred by his strange behavior.

"My father is dead. And you will address me as King Lance when you're in my castle."



Cooper author

King Lance doesn't seem like a nice guy at all! What do you think?

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