

His Beta 319

Chapter 319

Braden

"I can't say that I'm shocked. A bit dismayed, of course, that my granddaughter is facing the fallout of my actions.

We knew that killing Orion would break the Treaty. I should have known the High Council would find a way to wrangle the situation for their own twisted needs.

Malachi offered me a glass of warm crimson liquid.

When I reached to take it, he snagged my wrist and pulled me closer in a half-embrace. "You've been gone too long. I wanted you back here ages ago."

I let myself breathe him in, that cool vampire scent so concentrated in him. Like crisp autumn leaves and cinnamon. Out there in the world, even when I came across another vampire, the smell was diluted, and Malachi... Well, as an Ancient he was always just so much more. It had been too long.

We parted, and he made a show of looking me up and down until I laughed and shook my head,

"It hasn't been that long, Malachi. I'm sure I still look the same. You certainly do." I lifted my glass

toward him and took a long, slow sip. "Delicious."

"That beverage? Or me?" He grinned and winked, but the glee on his face faded nearly at once.

"You've been sending a bounty of information back to us. We're indebted to you."

"I came back as soon as the news broke about the Treaty. They've put a price on Lanie's head,

Malachi.

Hers and the others. They're not going to be safe in Stillwood."

I grimaced at the thought. I'd been hanging around with unsavories for too long, spying to et

information to send back to Brightsky. Now that I'd returned, all I wanted was to drink a gallon of Malac

and shower off the stink of humans and wolves.

"They're not in Stillwood. Charlotte and Lanie made a connection, and Charlotte brought

Malachi drained his glass and lifted the bottle, one eyebrow arched.

I followed suit and held out my glass for a refill. All of them?"

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"Yes. And their three pups, along with Xander's mother. They arrived only a couple of days ago "

"You should have sent word to me," I said.

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Malachi shrugged, and I found it impossible to stay mad at him. Maybe that was his Ancient charm, or more likely, the handsome face. He'd appeared to be in his late forties for as long as I'd known him, and I suspected he'd continue looking that age for well, until he didn't want to, anymore.

"You're here now. You know now," he said. "But what is that going to mean for you?"

"Why? Because i had to drink their Luna's blood so I wouldn't die?" I laughed. "They're in Brightsky.

They can hate me if they want to, but they're in our territory. Anyway, they should thank me. taken her

If I had

have their Lanie back.

Malachi

lost you

put his glass down and moved to me like quicksilver to touch my face. "I can't believe I almost

"Well," I said gently, "you didn't. And I'm back here now."

I'd been taking my orders from Malachi for years without dreaming that we'd become more to each

other. Sometimes, I still couldn't believe it, not even with his mouth and hands on me. Part of me was always waiting for him to change his mind and return us to where we'd been before the first time we kissed.

His gaze traced my face before settling on my eyes.

His lip quirked up on one side. "You put your things in your rooms before you came here. I thought you were going to consider moving into my quarters."

"I did think about it. But I wasn't sure you'd still want me to," I told him honestly.

"And you're not sure you want to give up your independence from me. I understand. Malachi's expression shadowed, but he nodded and stepped back. "You're afraid others will think you've gained special privilege by being with me."

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"Haven't I?" I set my glass on the table and moved forward to put my arms around his waist. "I mean, what's the point, if I don't get special treatment from the most Ancient of the masas dimas?"

His hands slipped to my waist to anchor me against him. "If the world was not in flames right now, I would take you right here and remind you of how special that treatment can be."

I laughed hoarsely. "Hmm. I look forward to the reminder."

His lips brushed mine before he stepped back and said crisply, "Charlotte has informed Lanie and her mates that they are in exile and being blamed for Orion's murder. She's called them to the meeting room. We should go there now, ourselves. There's much ground to cover."