

FREE STORY

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Lilia's Lair

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by Kallysten

(This is a glimpse of what the future holds for Vincent and Lilia, the characters from [CheckMate](#).)

When they arrived at the ancient mansion, another Special Enforcer was just leaving the scene. The woman gave Vincent a light nod, but her gaze remained on Lilia as she walked by them, as intent and intimidating as a hawk observing its prey. Lilia ignored it superbly.

Three years had passed since their mating, and it had become common knowledge amongst the city's Special Enforcers that Vincent worked with a vampire. None of them knew why, though, and he wasn't planning on explaining himself in any way. Not that they would dare ask the question to his face.

"Let's check it out," Lilia said. "She may have overlooked something."

Vincent refrained from saying it was doubtful; he knew the other Enforcer, or at least he knew of her, and her reputation claimed that she was one of the best. It was useless to argue with Lilia when she was in a hunting mood however, and that was definitely the case here. She had been all but bouncing from repressed energy all day long, and even a few distractions of the naked kind had not helped.

He followed her inside the building. If nothing else, the simple fact that she could walk in without a problem was a testament to the mansion not having human owners anymore. Remained to see if there were any vampire guests left.

At first, he could see how focused she was, body poised, head cocked, listening intently and throwing a dirty glare back at him when a bit of dust tickled his nose and he sneezed. This was the huntress he had once hunted, ready to attack or defend herself as needed. She was as beautiful as ever – and clearing his mind of the onslaught of erotic images surging up became an urgent priority. He had become inattentive too many times in the past because of stray thoughts, and Lilia wouldn't forgive him getting hurt again this way.

As they walked through the large rooms, her stance altered, became lighter even as she started looking around her in an entirely different manner. He wasn't sure what had caused the change, but he could see she wasn't hunting anymore. Instead, she looked as though she were trying to memorize every detail of the faded paint on the walls or of the dilapidated furniture.

"You know what your apartment lacks?" she asked out of the blue, coming to a halt in the center of what had once been a living room.

"A bathtub?"

It had been a frequent complaint from her in the past few months, although what she expected Vincent to do about it, he wasn't quite sure. Almost two years at the Academy had not given him any useful plumbing skill.

"Yes, of course. But not only that." She took a few steps toward a wall, then pivoted to face him again, raising her arms on each side of her in a grand gesture. "A fireplace like this one."

Behind her, said fireplace occupied almost half the length of the wall, its marble covered in soot and dust. To say that it was imposing would have been like saying there were a few stars in the sky.

"Lilia, love, do I need to remind you that you are highly flammable?"

"And you're not?"

Vincent let out a spark of laughter at her deadpan tone and cocked eyebrow. "Touché. But you'll admit fire is a tad more dangerous to you than it is to me."

"Only if I actually touch it. And I'm not that stupid." Her gaze sharpened, her lips tightening into a thin line. "Just like I'm not stupid enough to try and attack a Special Enforcer from behind after my whole clan has been reduced to dust."

For a brief moment, Vincent could only wonder what she meant by that – and why she was pointing her slim crossbow toward him. He understood the second before she let loose, and ducked to the side. By the time he turned to the spot she had been aiming at, the dust was already settling down.

"I always liked fireplaces," she continued as though nothing had happened. "Almost as much as I enjoy long soaking baths. I bet this place has a bathtub just as decadent at the fireplace."

With that, she sauntered out of the room and toward the staircase, pressing her lips to Vincent's cheek when she passed by him. He shook his head and smiled as he watched her go, then pulled out his cell phone from the inside of his jacket. He composed the number from memory; he had dialed it just about every day for the past ten years. The liaison between Special Enforcers and the police was a vampire himself, and he worked a late shift at the police station.

"Mac? It's Vincent. I'm at that mansion you asked me to check out. Already cleaned up, although I didn't have much to do with it. Could you do me a favor and check the property documents, see who I'd need to talk to if I wanted to buy it?"

Mac laughed and rightly guessed what had prompted the call. He knew about Lilia as well, but he wasn't shy in teasing Vincent about her, or in asking at the most unexpected moment what had brought her and Vincent together. He certainly hoped to take him by surprise, one day. Vincent had noticed however that in the two occasions he had met Lilia, Mac had been much more serious—and he definitely hadn't asked her what she was doing with Vincent. Hanging up, Vincent climbed the staircase. He easily found Lilia in one of the bedrooms. She had pulled aside the windows' drapes, and moonlight flooded the room, revealing cream tones and light wood tones that might have belonged to a young girl.

For a second as Lilia turned toward him and her long jacket flared around her, Vincent could imagine her, a lady of the high society, wearing elegant clothes and living in a home much grander than this one—much grander than his townhouse. Her unguarded look, for that one instant, was one she rarely showed the world, a look of vulnerability that a young woman named H el ene might have worn more easily than Lilia did.

Even more than a few moments before, Vincent hoped that Mac would find the information about the mansion. It would be a fine place for Lilia and him to call home.

the end

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