

The Therian

By Anna Gustic



The Therian: Chapter One

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"Above all watch with glittering eyes the whole world around you."

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Lily jerked awake, barely registering the chorus of the song playing on the radio, and the white noise sounds cars made while on the move. She was dreaming about running through the forest. Something was chasing her, and she was all alone. She shook it off and looked around to familiarize herself with the here and now.

Next to her in the driver's seat was her Dad. His familiar bearded profile brought her no comfort.

Then again it never had.

"What is it, Lil?" She winced at his icy tone which practically screamed dislike. She supposed she should be used to it, but it never failed to get to her.

"Nothing Dad. It was just a strange dream." He grunted in response and stopped paying attention to anything she had to say. She sighed dejectedly and gazed out her window. Coming out here to the middle of nowhere Russia was the last thing Lily wanted. The only thing that even slightly reminded her of home, was the height of the towering trees. If she tried, she could imagine they were the skyscrapers she was so familiar with.

Why couldn't he have picked somewhere else, anywhere else to move? If she could, she would have stayed in New York City. Unfortunately having just graduated High School, it was tough to find a job that would pay her enough to buy a decent place. So, until she could afford to move, she had to stay with dear old Dad. She wondered if he even noticed she'd graduated from school. He certainly never came to the ceremony.

She watched the trees and forest go by in a green and brown blur. It was hypnotizing, so when the car suddenly screeched to a halt over the whining protest of the brake pads she couldn't help but let out a yelp of surprise.

"Christ! What happened?" She gasped.

"A wolf. Almost hit him." Her Dad grunted in mild shock.

"Is he okay?" She murmured. He glared over at her like she asked him whether or not the trees were purple with magenta polka dots.

"Why do you care?"

"Because I don't hate all non-human life? Animals are people too." She meant it as a joke, but he took it seriously and scowled at her.

"What are the chances?" He seemed to be talking to himself, but she chimed in.

"Well, Dad, you did move us out to the middle of the Russian wilderness. The wildlife is bound to be a little more wild here." He shrugged her off and began driving again, slower than before.

After what felt like a century later, they parked in front of a surprisingly sizeable cabin. It was slightly

run down, but it was nothing a little T.L.C couldn't fix. She decided right then and there that she liked it. Who would have thought, a city girl like her finding a cabin likable? Lily stood straight and stretched her muscles; leaning down and pulling at her jeans. After the exceptionally long car ride from the airport, her jeans felt like they were fused to her skin.

Her father came huffing around the back of the car, carrying a few boxes from the beat up Chevrolet to the inside of the cabin. She took in the fresh air and looked around her new home, noting the dusty dirt road leading from the cabin down to the main road and the fact that they were surrounded by forest. She couldn't shake the feeling of being watched, but they couldn't possibly have any neighbors right?

Lily's eyes wandered the treeline until she saw the cause for her suspicion. It looked like Russia knew how to make men right. She was innocent of men, but she'd grown up in Manhattan. She did know a thing or two. She smiled shyly at them. Both of the strangers were built like gladiators. With the same blond hair, blue eyes, and bone structure she figured they must be related. Her father noticed them and stepped forward, expression querulous.

"Who are you?"

"We came to see if this cabin was still up for sale. Have you purchased it?" Neither man even looked at her. Didn't that just figure? She rolled her eyes and turned to get some boxes when she noticed something in the treeline. A man stood there. He was shorter than the two blond men. His hair was short and dark, yet his face seemed to be obscured by shadows. He had a muscular build and aura of intimidation so potent she could feel it from where she stood.

He seemed completely at ease, muscular arms crossed over his chest, one knee slightly bent. He wore jeans and some workout shirt. It was unzipped, and she could make out his abs. All she could see of his face was the barest glimpse of full lips and an angular chin. Pulled by something she couldn't even begin to describe, she moved forward; he steps jerky as if she were a marionette pulled on a string.

His head angled down, and he moved back into the tree line, disappearing like some ghost. During this strange little episode, one of the strangers seemed to notice it and was staring at her with an odd expression on his face. She glanced from him to the trees, and then at her father who seemed oblivious. The one who was watching her stepped forward.

"Greetings. My name is Klaus." Lily smiled shyly up at him.

"My name is Lilliana, but just call me Lily for short." He regarded her for a moment and then glanced

meaningfully at her father.

"If you need anything, Lily, call this number." He held out a card with a number written on it in an untidy scrawl. What was the reason behind this? Who just appears out of the woods and hands you a random business card? Was he some creep?

"Thank you, but I don't even know you." He smiled at her, teeth flashing white in the sunlight.

"No. But you never know when you'll need a friendly face out here." She furrowed her brow at him. Was he trying to scare her? Was that a threat? Studying his features, a shiver ran down her spine. No. That wasn't a threat. He'd only been speaking the truth, and that made her wonder just what exactly there was to fear in these woods. "Besides, this is a hard country and I think your Father will not handle it well." She smirked at him. Most people disliked her Father.

"He doesn't take much of anything well," Klaus smirked at her and rejoined his friend in the conversation with her Father. Lily looked back at the tree line, hoping to catch a glimpse of the mysterious man who was watching them. He wasn't there. She scanned the trees until the conversation between Klaus, his look alike, and her Father ended, and the strangers went the way they came. Still nothing.

After an awkward silence, both Lily and her Father went back to unpacking everything. As Lily unloaded box after box, she couldn't shake the feeling that they didn't come to see if the house was still up for sale. The card in her back pocket seemed a constant reminder that there was something fishy happening.

Lily shook it off and continued with getting things moved in and set up. Finally, once everything downstairs and in her Father's room was done, she went to her room. It was the only one at the top of the stairs.

The room was bigger than she could have hoped for and she counted herself lucky that there was an attached bathroom. She figured it was probably the master bedroom, but her Father hated sleeping above ground level, so she lucked out. She shook her head. It was time to get to work setting up her space.

Several hours went by, and she was nearly done. All that was left to do was put her clothes away. It was as she stood up straight from putting some jeans in a drawer that she was suddenly pulled flush against a tall, masculine frame. Arms so muscular they were bigger than her thighs wrapped just under her chest. Long lethal, claw-like fingernails sent shivers down her spine as one of his enormous hands covered her mouth, and the other came to rest just right over the top of her jeans.

She made a little squeal of fright and started kicking and punching to fight off her attacker, but she may as well have been trying to fell an oak with a pocket-knife. Since she was at an obvious disadvantage, she decided to fight dirty. She lifted her foot and slammed it down on his as hard as she could. His grip didn't loosen as she hoped it would, but he did grunt in surprised pain. 'Good, I hope that hurt jackass.' She thought, still struggling in his grasp. But all of her resistance stilled when his dark baritone voice rumbled through her like a beat of a drum.

"I am not here to harm you." Since his hand was covering her mouth, all she could do was make a frustrated sound. She could have sworn she sensed him smile. "Submit" His voice came out rough and ended on a growl that rumbled through her. Lily's entire body went limp and comfortable, completely against her will. It was like her muscles forgot how to obey her brain. "You are safe little one. This will only take a moment."

He pulled her even tighter into himself and suddenly the hand resting on her stomach seemed to heat up all on its own. He tensed behind her and then, just as quickly as he'd appeared; he was gone. She whirled around, looking wildly about her bedroom for the intruder but no one was there. What did he want? Why did her skin still tingle where he'd touched it? What was that strange heat? She shook her head to clear it and pulled that weird little card from her back pocket, staring at the numbers. Maybe Klaus knew.

Abel

Abel wiped the sweat from his brow as he surveyed the work he was doing on erecting a fence around the backyard. It would keep most wildlife out except for the kind he'd come to hunt down.

He glanced up at the window of the room his daughter now called her own. She'd grown into quite the beauty, but he despised her. Not only did she remind him of her mother, but she was an abomination. How could a child of his be born Therian? If it weren't for the fact that she was his flesh and blood, he might have strangled her in her crib.

He wondered how long it would take for them to notice her and come sniffing around. If they came, he was more than ready for them. If they didn't come, he would use her as bait. At least then she would be useful for something. All he had to do was cut her a little and the scent of her blood and fear would bring them running.

He grinned maniacally as he turned back to the fence.

