

Chapter 397

Mac simply tightened his hold on Lily and met Andrei's gaze. His expression was neutral but his eyes were anything but. He responded to the male challenge instinctively though he did work to keep his aggression levels down. "That's what mates do, Andrei. I would've thought you'd managed to work that out after being mated to Loretta all these years."

Silence descended over the kitchen as both Lily and Loretta tensed waiting to see what Andrei's reaction would be. Mac kept his tight grip on his mate as she wiggled on his lap attempting to stand up to try and make the situation less volatile by not rubbing her father's nose in their relationship.*WŁw@.nσve!wóŕ(m).CøM*

He was having none of that. She was his mate and it was natural to express their love physically. He wasn't about to deny that and he wouldn't allow her to either, not even to appease Andrei. No one would dictate when he could and couldn't touch his mate.

And it probably wasn't prudent for her to rise at the moment. Her wiggling was inciting a reaction which was very natural. They might be pushing their luck a bit if Andrei had to see the evidence of his sleeping with his daughter.

"Mac, let me up."

"Not a chance in hell, sugar,"he growled. "Your father has to accept that I can't keep my hands off you and you have to know that I won't tolerate you denying us in any shape or form. This is a male thing. You asked me to let you do things your way. Now it's your turn to let me do things mine. Trust me, Lily."

She couldn't really argue with him. He had given her the space to talk to her father first and she was reasonably confident the situation wouldn't come to blows. Lily stopped wriggling to escape and settled against Mac's chest, her gaze intent on her father's face.

Andrei would've been a liar if he denied that he was tempted to rip Mac's arms from his shoulders. They were so securely wrapped around his daughter's body, one hand resting possessively on her hip. He'd have had to be a saint not to have some negative reaction to it but the resolute expression in Mac's eyes earned the respect of his more feral side.

He'd always liked Mac, had always been impressed with his integrity and the way he handled himself. He liked the fact he wouldn't back down in his presence. If he was willing to stand up to him to secure his right to be Lily's mate then he would defend her to his dying breath. There was nothing he wanted more for his daughter, someone as committed to protecting her as he was.

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"Oh, I think I've got the hang of that just nicely," he smiled, crossing over to Loretta and gathering her into his arms so he could ground himself in her scent and ease down his aggression levels a bit more. He turned back to Mac.

"It's been a while, Mackenzie. I wasn't expecting our next meeting would turn out to be with my daughter wrapped all over you. Father's prerogative to be a little pissed off about it even if I'm willing to accept that my little girl is all grown up now."

"Fair enough," Mac agreed, with a brief smile. "Just as long as you do accept that Lily's mine and I'm not going to let anyone come between us."

Lily watched the byplay wondering idly if this was akin to a father handing off his daughter in a marriage ceremony. Weres and vampires didn't adopt the human bonding ceremony, their mating bonds being that much deeper and fixed.

Surprisingly the one couple who were actually married was the last couple most people would have thought of. She adored the story of how Demetri had proposed to Mara when she was still human and not ready to join his world as a vampire. It was so romantic that one of the most intractable vampires ever appeared to be the one who had bent the most to secure his mate.

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Andrei shrugged as if it was a given and dropped a kiss on Loretta's mouth. "I suppose we could continue having a pissing contest or we could let our girls eat breakfast. I know which one I'd prefer to do and I'm sure I don't need to recite the whole "You hurt my daughter and you're dead" routine."

Mac laughed even as Loretta slapped Andrei's chest in admonishment and Lily groaned in despair. "Duly noted and understood," he answered, slipping his mate from his lap into the chair beside him so she could eat. His kissed her temple and played with a lock of her hair as Loretta and Andrei joined them at the table.

Lily started eating, sparing a glance at her mother as her father and Mac started catching up as if they hadn't just been about to go at each other to prove who was the biggest, badass vampire a handful of seconds ago. She couldn't believe she'd been so worried about this meeting and they were chatting away so amicably. Mac was filling her father in on the formation of Praetorians and he appeared genuinely interested in the subject.

"Don't even try to understand men, honey," Loretta said, as she chewed on a bacon sandwich. "They're a completely different species and that's nothing to do with the whole Vamp/Were thing. I like your Mac by the way."

Lily's mental laugh was full of happiness. "I'll take your advice on the whole male thing. Mom. And I'm glad you like Mac and Dad seems to as well. I just feel so happy right now. Everything's just perfect."

"Perfection is pretty boring, Lily. Being mated is no easy feat especially when your mate is a dominant, overbearing vampire who thinks you need their help to just breathe properly. It's not always going to be heart and flowers, not if I'm reading Mac correctly."

Her mother's caution was spot on and so like her that Lily smiled as she forked some eggs into her mouth. "I know that. Do you know he didn't tell me about the meeting last night until this morning? I was furious with him about it. Come to think of it, I think we've argued more times that we've kissed at this point."

She blushed slightly remembering the night before and heard her mother's laughter in her head. "Okay, maybe that was a slight exaggeration. There was a lot of kissing being done last night."

"Tell me more," Loretta teased. "Is he as good as he looks?"

"Mother!" Lily's exclamation was half scandalised, half amused. Her mother was incorrigible at times and sometimes she forgot just how much of wolf lived inside her.

"What? I was only asking," Loretta said innocently. "I was just wondering if there was a chance you might be making us grandparents in the near future. I'm trying to envision your father's face if I manage to fall pregnant at the same time as you. It would be priceless to tell him he's about to become a father again and a grandfather."

Lily choked on her breakfast, Mac immediately patting her on the back as she tried to laugh out loud and swallow the food in her mouth. Both he and Andrei shot the two women perplexed looks wondering what was the cause of such hilarity.

Lily managed to catch her breath and take a sip of coffee. "Mom, you're terrible!" She turned to her father laughter dancing in her eyes. "You do know she's talking about having another baby. Dad. Another girl to drive you insane now I'm out of your hair."

Andrei stared at his mate shaking his head in disbelief. "No, I had no idea such devious thoughts were going through your mother's mind."

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