## Chapter 399

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Andrei knew that neither his mate nor daughter were aware of Mac's tension. They had no idea of his past and he was masking his emotions quite well. Hell, if Andrei hadn't been aware of Mac's past he would have been fooled too.

But he was aware and he knew the other male was about to break his daughter's heart. He couldn't allow that to happen.

"Mackenzie, if you've got a moment would you join me in my study?"

"Dad..." Lily frowned at her father, immediately concerned that he was going to so something rash despite his promise.

Andrei gave her a brief smile. "I just want to catch up on how Pietro's getting on. I promise to be on my best behaviour." Her relieved smile was worth the small lie he told. He did intend to ask about his friend but that wasn't the reason he was inviting Mac for a private talk and the other vampire knew it.

He left the kitchen and headed to his study, letting Mac know in no uncertain terms that refusal wasn't an option.

Mac knew there was no avoiding the conversation with Andrei. Part of him even understood because he would do the same thing if someone was about to hurt someone he loved. But he didn't want to talk about it. He was under no illusions that he would have to discuss it with Lily at some point but he wanted to choose the time for that discussion.

He reluctantly followed Andrei into his study staring at his friend's rigid back as he closed the door. "I know what you're going to say. Just leave it, Andrei. I don't want to discuss it."

Cold brown eyes turned to meet molten black ones. "You're about to break my daughter's heart and

you don't want to discuss it?" The words hissed out of Andrei's mouth, his expression hardening into a terrifying mask.

Anyone else would have quailed at his expression, but Mac held his ground. "This is between me

and Lily. It doesn't concern you."

cold and low. "Only a walking dead man would have the nerve to tell me that my child doesn't concern me. Are you seriously that stupid, Mackenzie? Do you seriously think I'm just going to stand back and watch you destroy my daughter?"

"That's a tad bit melodramatic even for you," Mac answered just as coldly, his eyes a bottomless pit

of darkness as he refused to be intimidated by the other man. Losing his temper with the volatile

A low growl erupted from Andrei and his eyes began to bleed to black. When he spoke his voice was

vampire wasn't the way to go. Andrei was waiting for an aggressive reaction so he could feel justified in committing the violence he so obviously wanted to. $\boldsymbol{w} \otimes \boldsymbol{n} \boldsymbol{O} \otimes \boldsymbol{M} \cdot \boldsymbol{M} \cdot$ 

justified in committing the violence he so obviously wanted to.

"What goes on between mates is no one else's business but their own. Or should I start interfering in your relationship with Loretta now that I'm classed as part of the family?"

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The unexpected question appeared to divert Andrei for a moment and his next growl was more feral at the prospect of anyone interfering between him and Loretta. He wouldn't tolerate such a thing and neither would she. Unless the pack was endangered somehow, mates' relationships were sacrosanct. Everyone knew that.

He hissed again and glared at Mac, who calmly met his gaze with a raised eyebrow.

With an irritated snort Andrei turned away and stalked over to the window, staring out into the trees surrounding the house. Deep down he knew his friend was correct, that he had no right to become involved in Lily's relationship now she was mated. But how could he just stand back and do nothing when she was going to be hurt? She was his little girl and always would be, no matter how grown up she was.

Were, it's in her blood. You can't take that away from her, Mackenzie. She'll stay with you because you're her mate and she loves you but she will never be truly happy being childless. Her happiness should be all the matters to you."

"Lily would be a wonderful mother," he finally said, loosening the grip of his feral side. "She's part

now he sensed the danger had passed. He kept his mate bond muted but his voice betrayed his inner turmoil.w $\mathbf{W}$  $\mathbf{M}$  $\mathbf{M}$  $\mathbf{N}$  $\mathbf{N$ 

"Do you think I don't know that?" Mac ground out releasing the tight control he had on his emotions

He ran a hand through his hair and walked over to the chair in front of Andrei's desk. He sat down and lowered his head into his hands, rubbing them wearily over his face. "I can't do it again, Andrei."

on Mac's face helped release some more of his aggression.

When he'd first met Mac, he'd still been in the grip of relentless grief even though centuries had

The words came out on a choked sound causing Andrei to turn to look at his friend. The expression

formed a bond between them at the time. Andrei could relate to the wildness living in the bleak darkness of Mac's eyes.

Over time, the grief had waned and his friend had found some inner balance but he found himself looking at that same expression he had seen a thousand years ago when they'd first met. He was

passed since the death of his family. His ferociousness had been one of the things which had

stunned to realise that the pain of losing his wife and child had never really left Mackenzie; he'd just managed to hide it better.

"I can't have another child," Mac continued shaking his head in denial at just the thought of it. "Try and imagine it, Andrei. God forbid, but try and imagine losing Lily or Kallum, how it would make you

would feel. There is no pain in the world worse than losing your child. You can endure anything else

after it because nothing can compare."

He broke off and looked away, swallowing hard. The memories had never faded, never once left him since the day he'd found his family dead. They were worse now because his vampiric memory was so much more accurate that his human one.

He could smell the scent of the blood, the acrid smell of death in the room. Hell, his imagination could even replay the agonised screams of Maria as she watched her daughter being murdered before her very eyes. www.novelworm.com

"Imagine it, Andrei and then you tell me if you would be willing to father another child into the world,

Each moment played out in his mind in glorious technocolour. He could see everything so clearly.

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to spend every waking moment terrified that you'd lose that child as you lost Lily or Kallum."

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Ovar tima, tha griaf had wanad and his friand had found soma innar balanca but ha found himsalf looking at that sama axprassion ha had saan a thousand yaars ago whan thay'd first mat. Ha was stunnad to raalisa that tha pain of losing his wifa and child had navar raally laft Mackanzia; ha'd just managad to hida it battar.

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"Imagina it, Andrai and than you tall ma if you would ba willing to fathar anothar child into tha world, to spand avary waking momant tarrifiad that you'd losa that child as you lost Lily or Kallum."

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