

Chapter 408

As Demetri closed the door behind him, Mara hurried down stairs and smiled at Pietro before engulfing him in a tight embrace. "If you need anything call me, doesn't matter if I'm in a Council meeting. I'll leave instructions you're to be put through to me no matter what."

Pietro felt moisture start to gather in his eyes again and took a deep breath to centre himself as he returned her hug. Mara Bozic was a good woman. She was not only Demetri's wife but also a member of the vampire Council. She brought him comfort on many different levels and he was grateful for it.

"Thank you, Mara, for your hospitality and your support. It means a lot."

Soft lips brushed his cheek as she pulled back and he heard an irritated snort from Demetri, followed by a resigned sigh.

"Wife, we've discussed this kissing business before."

Mara laughed softly as she gave Pietro one final squeeze and let go. She turned to her husband and raised an eyebrow. "And when you stop driving Caleb nuts by hugging and kissing Annie at every opportunity then, just maybe, I will listen to what you have to say on the subject, husband," she countered, amusement lacing her tone.

Demetri laughed and gathered her into his arms, kissing her soundly to erase Pietro's scent. He had settled him slightly.

But he liked to tease Mara when he could and she would expect him to grumble at her display of affection with another male. It was normal and Pietro would expect it of him too, so normal he gave them. With a reluctant sigh, he pulled back and looked at his friend.

Pietro squared his shoulders and turned and headed down to the ground floor with Mara and Demetri behind him. He waited patiently while Demetri kissed Mara once last time and then the two men headed outside.

"This sucks, Demetri."

"I know but it's necessary." Demetri unlocked his car remotely and Pietro scowled as he got in.

"No comment?" Demetri sighed as he started the engine.*www.novelworm.com*

"Is there any point? I'm as weak as a newborn baby right now and you and Caleb have made it plain this is happening. Arguing about it isn't going to get me anywhere." Pietro couldn't contain the anger in his voice.

Demetri sighed again and rolled his eyes before he shifted into gear. "I meant about my new car. Cost me a fortune and you didn't even comment on it."

The change of topic threw Pietro for a moment and then he looked around him. His eyes widened and he let out a low whistle. "A McLaren F1? You have way too much money, Demetri."

His friend beamed with pride, lovingly stroking the steering wheel as he gunned the engine and took off. "No point in having money if you don't get to treat yourself every now and then," he laughed.

Pietro shook his head and rested back, closing his eyes and trying to psyche himself up for reaching the pack compound. He hoped there wouldn't be a lot of people around, that Rafe would realise he needed space and would keep the wolves away from him.

He could cope with the Andrei and Loretta where he'd been informed he was staying. He could even bear Alexei and Cedar around him but everyone else...he just wanted them to stay away and leave him in peace.

He kept his eyes closed the entire journey, grunting one syllable answers to Demetri until his friend finally fell silent and gave him some space. His trepidation grew as they pulled into the compound and stopped in front of Andrei's house. A quick scan of the area showed it was deserted and he sighed with relief. Rafe was obviously smart enough to tell everyone to stay indoors when he arrived.

Andrei appeared at the side of the car, opening the door and peering inside with a neutral expression. "Don't think this means you're getting out of your bar duties. We'll reassess how you're doing in a few weeks' time and if I feel you're up to it, then it's back to work for you."

Pietro's lips twitched in a small smile. He was relieved to feel a bit more settled being in a familiar situation. He hadn't seen his friend for 25 years but Andrei was always going to be Andrei. If you were in his inner circle you could always count on him to never change.

"Now seems like a good time to instigate labour laws for vampires," he grumbled as he climbed out of the car.

"Don't you listen to him, Pietro," Loretta said in a prim tone, coming to stand beside her mate. She gave him a warm smile. "Is it okay to hug?"

He stared at the pretty brunette, remembering the first time he'd seen her walking into The Dive with her head held high; a Were in the heart of a vampire den. He'd been both disgusted and also impressed with the feisty she-wolf who had sat down and all but demanded to see Andrei.*www.novelworm.com*

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She'd met his eyes then with no fear and now she held his gaze once more. There was no sign of any loathing or disgust on her face. Instead there was warmth in her deep brown eyes, concern etching her features. Again, he was amazed at the strength of the females his friends had chosen for their mates. Loretta would always be special to him because of who she was as well as because she was Andrei's mate.

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"For you, always, Loretta," he finally answered, moving forward to embrace her tightly and accept her welcome into her home.

"Make it quick," Andrei growled, grabbing Pietro's travel bag and motioning Demetri inside. As soon as they were alone, he gave the other man a questioning look.

"It's hard to tell," Demetri said quietly, nodding his head towards Andrei's study. It was safe to leave Pietro with Loretta. He'd scented Nors and Alexei close by as well as some of the pack betas. They'd kept out of the way of their arrival but the pack boundaries were effectively being patrolled to ensure no harm came to anyone, including Pietro.