

Chapter 417

It was as if he was possessed, denial blazing in his heart. He grabbed his wife by the shoulders and shook her, ignoring her missing throat. "Get up, Maria! Sophia needs you! I need you!"

Her head flopped sickeningly and the last of her warm blood pumped out of the tear in her neck. Mackenzie felt his soul die as he hugged Maria's lifeless body to his and began to sob his anguish into the room.

"Not my Maria," he wept. "Not my love. Dear God, please don't do this to me."

Mackenzie had no idea how long he wept as Maria's body went cold in his arms. It didn't even register in his mind that she had still been warm when he'd arrived, that whatever had happened to take her from him had occurred probably only a handful of minutes before he got back to the holding.

There wasn't much rational thought in his mind until he remembered his daughter and stilled in his rocking of his wife.

"Sophia." The word whispered out of his lips. He hadn't thought anything could be worse than finding Maria dead but the fear in his heart for his daughter surpassed even that. Maybe she had escaped whoever had done this to Maria. *WWVellworm.com*

Again, he knew he was in denial. Maria had been injured in the living room and had run to Sophia's bedroom. A mother always runs to protect her child when danger is around and Maria adored Sophia as much as he did.

Mackenzie's mind snapped back to the initial scene when he entered the room, Maria lying on her back with her hand stretched out...

"No! No, no, no, no, no, no!" He heard himself chanting even as his gaze returned to the bundle of rags half under the bed and saw a tiny white foot poking out.

Mackenzie's heart stopped beating; horror invading his soul as he gently lowered Maria to the floor and haltingly moved towards the bundle. With gentle hands he reached for the tiny body covered in her blood-stained nightgown, and picked up the lifeless form of his daughter.

Someone was scraping cut glass through his body. They were doing it repeatedly as a fire of agony tore through him.

"Wake up, Sophia," Mackenzie sobbed, cradling his daughter in his arms and pressing his large hand against her ravished throat. "Please wake up for Papa, angel. Please."

But he knew Sophia would never wake again. The deathly pallor of her skin and the coldness of her little body told him she had been dead longer than Maria, that his wife most likely had had to watch their daughter die before she was killed.

Mackenzie sat sobbing in a pool of blood beside his wife, cradling his daughter and holding Maria's limp hand against their child's body. They were a family and they did everything together. The only time they were apart was when he was out in the fields. If he'd been home today when whatever monster it was that had come calling had arrived, he'd have been lying beside his family, as dead as they were.

The tears wouldn't stop; the cut glass grating through his body wouldn't stop. His life was Maria and Sophia. They were his heart and soul and now they were gone, their end something so hideous and terrifying. He couldn't bear the thought of how they must have suffered. He couldn't bear the thought of living a life where they no longer existed.

Mackenzie still felt tears streaking down his face as he gently settled Sophia in her mother's arms and took his knife from his belt. He wasn't crying for himself but for the two beautiful angels who no longer graced the world.

"I'm coming, Maria," he whispered as he lay down, their daughter safely between their bodies. "Papa's coming, Sophia."

Mackenzie rasped the knife across his throat, closing his eyes as he felt his blood begin to flow...

Lily was sobbing, her arms tightly around Mac, holding him as he wept out the death of his family. The anguish in his eyes, the heartbreak in his voice, was more than she could stand and she had to try to comfort him somehow. *WW.nðvℓwO(r)m.(c)oM*

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"I'm sorry," she whispered repeatedly, rocking him in her arms and holding him tightly, afraid he would splinter from the memory.

Mac held her tightly, struggling out of the past, grounding himself in the scent of his mate and her whispered words. He'd meant to keep control, he'd meant to make sure that Lily wasn't upset by this revelation and instead, she was the one holding him, soothing him and taking his pain on as her own.

He was continually underestimating her, believing her to be young because of her years. But his Lily was so much stronger than he imagined and he let her ease the ache in his heart because it was overwhelming him and threatening to take him under.

"How did you survive, Mac?" Lily asked when his tears subsided and she felt him gain some control. Her heart was breaking for him but she knew he needed to complete this story if there was any chance of him healing from it. No wonder he'd been alone for so long after something so awful.

"Demetri," he answered after taking a deep breath. "I woke to find I was a vampire. At first, I thought it was Demetri who'd killed my family but he explained it was a vampire who had crossed over that he'd been hunting. I was angry that he'd saved me and turned me into the same kind of monster that had killed my family. I think he felt some guilt that he hadn't been in time to stop the massacre from happening."

Lily sat back and wiped at his wet cheeks, brushing a soft kiss over his lips. "Doesn't sound like the Demetri who must have been around in those days," she mused. "He's only calmed down since he met Mara from what I know."

A weak smile crossed Mac's face. "Yeah, he was a lot less civilised back then but maybe deep inside there has always been a stroke of goodness in his soul. Demetri helped me bury my family and say goodbye to the world I once knew. Then I joined him on the hunt for their murderer. I was too young and new to the life to take down the vampire myself but Demetri let me have the killing blow once he'd incapacitated the vampire."

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