

## Chapter 418

Mac rose from the bed and paced back to the window, staring out for a long time before turning around. "You're probably wondering why I'm telling you this now."

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Lily met his bleak gaze, tracing every line of anguish still visible on his face. Deep inside, her heart broke a little more. She didn't need Mac to say the words. That he carried the death of his daughter so close even after all this time was a telling factor. The pain cut him so deep he'd probably never truly recover from it. His change in demeanour when having babies was mentioned the day before now made sense.

Her wolf howled its anguish and tears gathered in Lily's eyes. "You don't want children."

Mac stared into Lily's anguished face, hating himself for putting that expression on it. "I can't, Lily, please try to understand that," he pleaded. "I can't father another child. I can't ever risk losing a child as I lost Sophia. I'd never survive it a second time."

Lily blinked and the tears slid down her cheeks. She would never know what it was to be a mother. She hadn't really thought about it in detail until recently and even then, it wasn't something she'd wanted to happen right away. She'd wanted to spend time with Mac first, enjoying their life as mates before they became parents.

Now Mac was telling her that they would never be that and a little piece of her died inside. The tears flowed faster as she tried to reconcile herself to this added blow. Her wolf snarled her fury, clawing inside her to get out and hurt something or someone.

'Stop it!' she growled at her wolf, forcing the beast down with a strength she didn't know she had. "He aches at the loss of his daughter. Our mate bleeds inside. Would you bleed him more my wolf?" www.NovelWorld.com

The stern words had an instant effect on the beast. She stopped prowling and cocked her head to the side. Lily's eyes shifted to an amber colour as the wolf observed their mate's expression and tested his emotions within the bond. She howled mournfully and tried to surge forward to soothe their mate but was held back by her human side.

'Shhh. We will heal him together but he needs the love of the woman right now, not the protection of the wolf.'

Mac watched Lily's eyes change and braced for the wolf's assault. He knew he was in for a power of hurt when the beast attacked and he welcomed it for the pain he was subjecting his mate to. He couldn't fail to see a little of the spark die from Lily's eyes as she realised he wouldn't be dissuaded from this course of action.

It was criminal to keep Lily mated to him and to cause her this pain. If there was any way he could undo the mating he would, so she'd be spared the pain he was putting her through. But he couldn't. They were mated for life now, a life Lily had dreamed of having children in but now knew would never have. Mac cursed himself and prepared for the physical pain that would in no way compensate for the emotional anguish Lily was experiencing.

He tensed as Lily rose from the bed and walked slowly over to stand before him. When he looked in her eyes he saw no sign of the wolf, only the love and compassion of the woman that was his mate.

"It's okay, Mackenzie," Lily breathed quietly, wrapping her arms around him tightly and burying her head against his chest. "I understand. If I have a choice between eternity with you and the chance of being a mother I would chose you in a heartbeat. I love you, Mac. You are as necessary to me as the air I breathe."

She leaned up on tiptoes and kissed him. "Anyway, Annie and Mara manage fine without children. They're more than happy with their mates. It's not the end of the world."

Andrei's words came back to him and he hugged Lily tightly, cursing himself repeatedly for hurting her. He could hear the quiver in her voice, knew she was being brave and strong for him and it only made him hate himself a little bit more. Andrei was right; Lily would stick with him no matter what, whether or not he deserved her.

"I love you, Liliana Rose Romanov," he whispered through more tears. "I don't deserve you but somehow I will make this up to you if it takes me the rest of my existence."

"Just love me, Mac," she whispered back through her own tears. "Never stop loving me and I'll have all I've ever wanted."

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Lily somersaulted in the air, spinning so fast she was a blur to even the sharp vampire eyes watching. She sailed over Kallum's head with a fluid grace that wasn't natural, but then, she was Vârcolac and she wasn't holding back. www.NovelWorld.com

Since talking with Mac, she'd buttoned down her emotions tightly, muting all her bonds to contain the inner turmoil she was feeling. Everyone had given her the space she so obviously craved and hadn't intruded, but as the day had worn on, Kallum's concern had grown to the point he'd issued his challenge of a training session.

Whatever was eating his sister inside was causing her to shut down and internalising was the worst thing she could do. Mac had studiously avoided him and always seemed to have something urgent to do when he sought him out. The proposed meeting at the compound had been set back a day while the triumvirate gathered information, so they were locked in at the Praetorian compound, the tension level high.

Kal grunted as Lily caught the back of his knee with her staff as he streaked out of her way. Her eyes were amber showing her wolf's aggression and letting him know that she wasn't holding back. The fact that this was the third time she'd managed to hit him was evidence enough. His sister didn't want any quarter so he gave her what she wanted.

His wolf surged forward, his eyes glowing the same amber as he released some of his carefully held control. As Lily watched him intently, he executed the fastest of back flips catching her off-guard. She streaked forward to avoid his reach but his staff came down hard on her back causing her to overbalance and fall to the ground.

She rolled and was back on her feet in an instant, ignoring the pain in her back and the wetness from the open wound he'd inflicted. Her wolf growled its fury at being bested and she feinted to the right, quickly changing her direction as Kal anticipated her move.

In two strides, she was at the large box housing the practice weapons. Throwing the staff to the ground, she came back at her brother wielding two Katanas, the deadly weapons slicing through the air and missing him by inches.

Kal had to throw himself backwards to escape Lily's blades. The utter fury he saw in her eyes told him that he'd most likely have to loose his wolf further to contain her. The depth of Lily's pain must be crushing to send her so feral and his concern grew even as he quickly swapped weapons and began to dance around the practice area meeting each blow Lily rained down on him.

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