

## Chapter 333

The venom in her voice startled him and he blinked at her in surprise. The start of their relationship had been rocky but over the years they'd learned to work together in a peaceful harmony that had always soothed the feral beast that lived deep within him. His mate was usually more supportive, but now she was looking at him not only with anger but also disappointment.

He instinctively reached out through their bond, wanting to wrap himself deep within it but he couldn't get close to her. She'd done something to mask their mate bond, had withdrawn from him completely until all he could feel on the other end was a sense of emptiness. For a moment he could only stare at her open-mouthed. Had she severed their bond? Was that even possible?

"Rose..."

She stepped back from him, shaking her head as she held up a hand to keep him back as he went to follow her. "No, Andrei. My child is out there hurting. She won't even contact me to let me know she's okay because she's afraid I'll try and convince her to come home.

I've done my best to be a good mate to you. I've spent the last thirty years catering to you, running interference between you and our children so they could be happy. And what do I have to show for it? Our son spends more time out of his home than he does in it and our daughter has run away.

I'm losing my children because I've failed to protect them. Oh, I might have protected them from physical injury and attack, but I've failed to protect them from emotional harm."

Tears filled her eyes as she looked at him, pain welling up deep inside at the disbelief on his face in response to her rejection. She loved Andrei so much; he was the other half of her soul, but right at that moment she didn't like him and that was hurting her almost as much as it was hurting him. Her wolf howled miserably inside her.

"Never in my wildest dreams did I ever think that I should have been protecting them from you, Andrei," she whispered hoarsely as the tears started to fall. "I never knew that by loving you I was failing them."

Andrei carefully blanked his expression and fought his need to pull his mate into his arms and comfort her. He knew she wouldn't accept any overtures from him, not while she was this upset. Her words were lancing through him, slicing him like knives. He wanted to deny them, wanted to protest his innocence but he couldn't make the words come.

Loretta didn't want to hear denials anyway. Her expression said it all, her body language screaming at him to stay away. There was a gulf a mile wide between them and he didn't know how to bridge it. "What exactly are you saying here?" he finally asked.

It was a fight to keep his tone neutral, to hide the sudden fear inside him that had nothing to do with his errant daughter and everything to do with the woman standing before him. **WwW..Nove(l)WorM.COm**

"I'm saying you have to find a way to fix this, Andrei. I love you but you're hurting our children and I can't stand by any longer and let it continue." She held up her hand again when fury crossed his face and his mouth opened.

"I know you don't mean to hurt them. I know you think you're protecting them but you're destroying their spirit, Andrei. Maybe not so much Kal because he's Alpha enough to withstand it, but Lily is so much like you it scares the life out of me sometimes. She needs more than a domineering male ordering her around. You can't force her to do what you want her to but you can 'lead' her in the right direction."

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Andrei stared at her for a long silent moment, battling down his anger. The last few weeks had wreaked havoc on his emotions. Worry for his daughter and the constant effort to suppress the urge to kill something or someone had taken its toll. Only Loretta and Alexei had been able to temper the wildness in him, and he took a deep breath to examine just what that wildness actually was.

Guilt. It washed through him like a tidal wave. It was hot and ugly and crippling. His rage was based on his feelings of guilt, of knowing that he was responsible for Lily running away.

He took a step back from Loretta and turned away from the accusation in her eyes. He didn't want to see that expression on her face, didn't want to admit that he'd let her down so badly he'd put her in the position of having to choose between him and their children.

She was his life, the very reason he woke each morning. He didn't know how he was going to cope if he'd destroyed their bond. He didn't know if he could cling to his sanity, if the children would be enough to hold him to reality if Loretta left him.

Loretta's scent wafted over him just before her arms slid around his waist from behind. He felt a rush of love flow down their mate bond. He stiffened in surprise before relief washed through him as he realised their bond was still there, that she hadn't severed it somehow.

"I just wanted to keep them safe," he ground out hoarsely, turning in her arms to drag her hard against his chest. His body shuddered as tears threatened, his heart racing wildly in his chest. "I'm so sorry, Rose. I would rather die than hurt you or our babies."

"I know, love," Loretta whispered, clinging to him tightly, rocked by the sheer intensity of his emotions flowing through her.

She'd wanted to stay angry with him, wanted him to understand the consequences of his actions, but Andrei's emotions were always erratic at best. He felt everything so intensely that it was sometimes just too dangerous to allow him to experience his emotions without tempering their effect.

When he'd turned away from her she'd unmasked their bond so she could be prepared for his next move. The complete self-loathing she'd experienced was more than she could stand. He was her mate. She couldn't stay angry with him when he hurt so badly.

"Are you going to leave me?"

She'd never heard him sound so uncertain before. He did nothing to conceal the thick fear in his voice, his arms crushing her tightly to his chest. **Www.n(ov)elWorM.CoM**

"Only on the day I finally stop breathing," she sighed trying to inject a little humour into her tone. "I may be pissed at you, Andrei, but you should know by now that I keep what belongs to me." **Www.novelWorM.CoM**