

Chapter 179

Dayton watched her, his eyes narrowing slightly. Her last words had struck a chord. He hadn't been frightened when the vampire had grabbed him for that exact reason. If she had bitten him then he would be dead in an instant and he wouldn't have to keep waking up every morning. Vampire venom was fatal to a Were, unless the couple involved were mated.

Ashleigh frowned as she glanced between them both and then turned back to Dayton. For a moment she had seen disappointment flicker across his face and she knew that some part of him had hoped that Freya would bite him. Her entire being rebelled at the thought of someone wishing to die so much and yet she could understand it too.

"I once felt as you do," she said softly, memories running through her mind of the time when she had wanted to lie down and die, her own grief so overpowering that nothing could touch it. And then Nors had been there refusing to let her give in, pulling her reluctantly back to the land of the living with his endless patience and unwavering dedication.

Dayton's gaze left the vampire to turn back to Ashleigh. The compassion was still in her eyes as well as a slightly haunted expression which slowly cleared.

"Life is worth living, Dayton. The pain does recede and happiness is out there if you're brave enough to reach out and accept it." Her voice remained soft, a small smile of comfort crossing her lips.

"Maybe it's not time for you just yet but when it is, my door will always be open to you. I'm sorry we disturbed you. I just wanted you to know that. David would have wanted me to be here for you."

For a brief moment his expression softened, a world of agony appearing in his eyes and then it was gone as instantly as it had appeared and the hard mask was back.

"Happy ever afters are for fairy stories," he answered bluntly. "Take your pet vampire and leave, Ashleigh. I don't want you here in my Gallery. Tell that to all of them, just in case they decide to emulate you. If they come here I will move on again. I will close down my email account and my cell too. Tell Aaron that."

A frown full of unhappiness crossed Ashleigh's face. She had hoped coming to see him would be the start of Dayton slowly coming back to them, that she could somehow reach him where no one else had been able to. She had erred in her judgement. She had only pushed him further away. He was threatening to remove even the loose contact his family still had with him.

"They won't come, Dayton. Cedar told me not to, that this was a bad move. But I had to try. Please don't punish your family for my mistake. They don't deserve it."

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He didn't answer her, his expression inscrutable. She could only hope that her words had gotten through. She took Freya's arm and tugged slightly, urging the vampire to leave with her. She could see anger on the other woman's face and was anxious to get her out of the gallery before she erupted again.

Freya resisted her for an instant, a smile on her lips which held no warmth as her gaze bore into the man in front of her. "Pet vampire?" She suddenly laughed, a rich tinkling sound that was so at odds with the cold, hardness of her demeanour.

"You shouldn't have said that, little doggie. It isn't wise to give me ideas. I've never owned a pet before. Maybe I might have to see if I can train one up to come to heel when I call?" It was obvious just who she fancied as having for a pet.

"Freya, will you stop." Irritation laced Ashleigh's voice, a hint of fear trembling just beneath it. If she had known bringing her would have caused such a headache she would have argued with Nors about leaving her behind. She didn't want Dayton on Freya's radar, which he obviously now was.

Dayton was smart enough not to answer the vampire. He knew anything he said would only be construed as a challenge and she would act on it. Instead he kept his expression impassive, let her have the last word.

She was a megalomaniac like most vampires. She needed to have the power so he let her have it. To do anything else would be an open invitation and he most definitely didn't want her to come back. The skin on his throat still burned with the heat of her hand wrapped around it. He didn't want her laying hands on him ever again.

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The vampire slowly relaxed, her expression softening as she turned to look at the little blonde. "You take all the fun out of life, Ashleigh," she sighed with resignation in her voice, but there was a hint of warmth in her tone and in her eyes. She spared one last glance at the wolf and then she followed her sister-in-law out of the gallery.

Dayton watched them leave, surprised when he felt his lips tug in a slight smile. It was plain to see that Ashleigh was having words with the tall vampire as they climbed back into the car. The other woman actually had a resigned expression on her face, as if this was a normal occurrence. Knowing how deadly Freya Eriksson was, it was almost amusing to see her submit to the verbal telling off she was getting.loveofwolves.com

Then they drove away and his hand automatically went to his throat, to the place where the vampire had touched him. He could still feel the imprint of her grip, could still feel the heat as if it was branded into his skin. It had been so long since a woman had laid hands on him that he'd forgotten what it felt like.

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There was only one person living he allowed to touch him in human form and he hadn't seen her in over two years. She had earned the right to touch him, she understood his boundaries. No one else had that right but the vampire had done so. He would have killed her if he could have but he knew it was an impossible task. She was Ancient. She could snap him in two without any real force required.

His thoughts were in turmoil as he tried to process everything that had happened. Would Ashleigh stay away? Would her visit spell the start of something he didn't want? There was a chance this meeting would be reported back to Rafe Hanlon, that his new Alpha would decide it was time to visit his errant pack member. Was it time to start packing again?

A flicker of blackness interrupted his musing and his keen gaze sharpened, looking out the window to the street. The flicker happened again on his peripheral vision and his head swung to the left. The side of his mouth quirked slightly as he connected with the blackness. Talk of the Devil and she was sure to appear.

Rayne had lingered outside the Gallery, close enough to hear what was being said but staying out of sight. Masking her scent was child's play, she did it instinctively. Shadowing herself required a bit more skill but nothing too excessive. She did that instinctively too as she eavesdropped on what was occurring inside.

She'd considered intervening when the vampire had flown at Dayton but her enhanced senses had told her there was no real intent to harm him. And she didn't want to give her presence away to the other two women. Being invisible was second nature to her, she had been doing it for so long now she couldn't remember when she had first started.