

## Chapter 182

The sound of the little girl's voice inside its head shook the wolf to its very core. No one had spoken to it mentally in over fifty years. The child shouldn't have been able to. The only good thing about this strangeness was it captured its human's attention and the man responded.

Dayton Alexander coiled within the animal, pressing his essence forward until he balanced precariously with his wolf. He looked down at the children before him, retaining his wolf form but conscious that the child had addressed him mentally.

It should have been impossible. Only his mate could talk with him in that manner, or a member of his pack in animal form. The scents of the children washed over him and he stiffened slightly. He knew them for what they were. For a brief instant he wondered if the girl was Cedar's and then he scented Loretta on her.

"What pack do you belong to?" He couldn't stop himself asking, though he already knew the answer.

"The Armand-Hanlon Pack," Lily answered gravely, trying not to smile at the sound of the wolf in her head. He had a very nice voice, deep and silky sounding.*WwW.nOvE(l)W(o)rm.com*

Dayton closed his eyes, trying to block out the information she had given him. He had wandered too close to his Pack without realising it. He hadn't been thinking very straight since Ashleigh had turned up at his Gallery. He knew to stay as far away from this area as possible.

Yet, his Beta instincts were kicking in. The children were alone in the forest. It was dangerous for them. Long dead emotions were starting to rear up, a need to protect the vulnerable members of his pack screaming at him. He didn't know what to do. Most of him wanted to turn and run but the other part refused to let him move. The issue was taken out of his hands an instant later.

A loud hiss suddenly rent the air and Dayton tensed automatically, scenting vampires just as two of them dropped out of the trees. One had long flowing blond hair, the other wild light brown locks running down his back. In a instant the children were gone from in front of him, secured in the arms of the two vampires.

"Daddy, no!" Lily shouted, afraid for her new friend when she saw the expression on her father's face. He was furious but it wasn't at her and Kallum. He was angry with the wolf and he sometimes forgot to be human when he got that angry.

Andrei Romanov quivered as he tried to abstain from attacking the wolf. The need to rip the animal to pieces was unbearable but he was aware his babies would see any violence he committed and that held him back as nothing else could.

"Alexei, take the children back to the compound." He passed Lily into his brother's waiting arms, his cold eyes never once leaving the wolf.

"Daddy!" Lily shrieked desperately trying to wriggle free from her uncle. "Don't hurt him, Daddy! Please!"

"What the hell is going on?" an irate female voice demanded loudly. Loretta Simpson strode purposefully into the clearing, clad in hastily thrown on sweatpants and tank top. Her long brown hair was tangled, a deep scowl marring her pretty face.

She was angry and perplexed, seeing her mate, his brother and her children all in the clearing. One moment Loretta had been tucked up in bed with Andrei and the next he was snarling viciously and streaking from their bed, fear and a killing rage running through their mate bond. She'd followed as fast as she could, sleep still clouding her brain slightly.

"What are the kids doing out of bed?" Bewildered she stared at her children before turning to see what had Andrei so close to killing. Her entire body went rigid with shock, her eyes filling with unshed tears in an instant.

"Andrei, back away, baby," she said in a low tone, sending instant reassurance through their bond. "The children are fine, they're safe."

"He touched them," the growl erupting from Andrei's throat was feral, fury laced with hatred.

Loretta eased herself around her mate's body capturing his gaze even as he hissed at her furiously for getting between him and the dangerous wolf in their territory.

"He's a friend, Andrei. A very old friend. He would never do anything to hurt any child let alone a child of mine."*WW©.NôVeiWOrm.Com*

That got his attention and he relaxed slightly, surprise warring with the fury deep within him. His heart had almost stopped when he'd sensed Kallum's mental shout of fear. Finding his children gone had lodged fear so deep within him for a second he had actually frozen on the spot before he had called mentally for his brother.

Tracking Lily and Kallum to the clearing and finding them with the wolf had been the last straw to his fragile sanity. He would have killed the wolf on the spot if the children hadn't been present. Now it was sounding as if it was fortuitous that he hadn't.

Sensing her mate was now calm enough, Loretta turned to face the wolf who was staring at her with deep blue eyes that were so familiar even though she hadn't seem them in such a long time. She couldn't believe he was here, so close to the compound. She couldn't believe neither Aaron or Cedar were there to see him. With him rebuffing Ashleigh's visit so strongly, finding him close to home was staggering.

"Don't go," she said softly, seeing the instant the wolf made the decision to leave. "Please, Dayton."*WW©.OveLwôrm.Com*

Alexei stiffened slightly, his eyes intent as the wolf hesitated at Loretta's words. He knew that name well. Cedar has spoken of her lost brother on many occasions, a deep sadness invading her soul when she talked of him. When she learned he had been so close and she had missed seeing him, she would be devastated and that sparked a vicious anger inside the vampire.

Dayton shifted, staying crouched low to the ground, aware his nakedness may cause the vampires to react aggressively but trusting that Loretta would be able to contain them. She had handled the most dangerous one already quite adroitly. He had known her all her life and knew what her capabilities were.

"Loretta." It sounded strange to say her name after such a long time. Despite recently meeting Ashleigh, Loretta was the first old pack member he had spoken to in five decades. "It was not my intention to harm the little ones. I was in the area and scented them. I was curious as to why children would be out alone."