

Chapter 184

Rayne's laughter increased in volume, her stunning eyes sparkling as she regarded him with amusement. "Is that your way of telling me you like my personality?"

Dayton snorted loudly and rolled his eyes. "Fuck off, Rayne."

There was no heat in his words but she stood anyway knowing he needed space. "As you command," she said softly. She took a moment to run her fingers lightly along his jaw. He stiffened slightly but held still for her touch. Her heart twisted in her chest as she met his shuttered gaze.

Dayton Alexander may shun all personal contact and yet he craved it deep within his soul. He could hide it from the rest of the world but she could see deep inside him. Which was why she pushed him with her little touches.

For decades the barriers he had erected had been all that had kept him sane. But times were changing. The man that he had once been was aching to break free. It was evident in how easy it was for others to break his rigid control. First the two women in his Gallery and now the adorable little children in the forest. It would be a hard, painful time for him but she had hope that he was strong enough to ride the emotional storm which was about to hit him like an avalanche.

"Dinner tonight?" She stepped back and turned to scale a low tree branch, perching nonchalantly on it, her feet swinging in the air.*www.NoVelluOrn.com*

Dayton tied back his hair quickly with a leather thong before he nodded once. "You're buying," he answered. He regarded her for a long moment and then frowned slightly. "What are you up to, Rayne?"

Silvery laughter greeted him and she swung herself effortlessly onto the next branch above her. "I think I might hang around a while and see this Pack in action. So many lost, damaged souls in one place. It's fascinating, Day. Almost all of them have suffered personal loss or heartache and yet they come together as a group and they are so much stronger for it."

His frown deepened until he was scowling quite darkly at her. He wasn't stupid, he could see what she was trying to do. "I'm not interested." His words were curt, his expression turning hard.

"Then go paint something," was her answer as she climbed higher. "Just because you're not interested doesn't mean I can't be." She disappeared completely then, using her shadowing abilities to vanish from his senses.*Ww(w).fove1WoR@.com*

Irritated he glared at the spot he had last seen her, knowing she could be anywhere by now. Then he turned and walked the last distance to where he had left his Jeep.

He was irritated because he knew Rayne was playing with him. Cats liked to play, liked to taunt and tease. If she thought he was going to fall for it she was wrong. He might be a little off balance because of the last few days but his need to be alone was still the most dominant part of him. He didn't need the Pack and more importantly he didn't want it either.

Loretta was still kind of stunned at seeing Dayton so she was mostly silent as Andrei sat their children down at the kitchen table and began to have a serious word with them.

Her gaze ran over them and she had to stifle down the smile that threatened to cross her face. Her babies were the most precious things in her world. They were so unlike personality wise but their shared gene pool was obvious.

Lily's hair was long and slightly darker than her brother's, more closer to her own rich brown colour. Kallum was a miniature little version of his father, his brown hair light like Andrei's, though he was more sensitive personality wise. It was her daughter who had her father's rebellious wildness and she was usually the one who instigated any of the trouble the Pack children got into.

"Liliana Rose, I am very disappointed in you," Andrei said sternly, a deep frown marring his face as he pinned his daughter with a steely gaze. He was fighting a smile too as he watched her little chin tilt exactly the same way her mother's did when she didn't like something she was hearing.

His fear had mostly dissipated now he had his children safely home where they belonged and he ached to give them both a big relieved hug but knew they had to understand first that actions had consequences.

"Why is it all my fault?" his daughter asked stubbornly, her lips pouting in the way that she knew tugged at her father's heart and usually made him forgive her a lot quicker than normal.*ww(w).foVéOwOrn.c@m*

"Because you're the oldest and you know fine well that Kallum will do anything you ask of him," was his blunt response as he struggled not to cave into the little witch before him. She was way too precocious for her age. He knew he was mostly to blame for it because he gave into her so easily.

Her little face crumpled under the weight of his displeasure and she looked down at her clasped hands. It took everything in his power not to drop to his knees before her and pull her into his arms.*Www.©ov&Wo@m.com*

"What if that wolf hadn't been an old friend of your mother's?" he asked quietly, his voice a little more gentle though still stern. "You could have been hurt, Lily. Kallum could have been hurt. You wouldn't want to be responsible for that, would you?"

Big brown eyes filled with tears and her lower lip trembled as she looked at him and then her little brother. "I'm sorry, Daddy. I didn't think."

Loretta could feel the heartbreak rushing through their mate bond and stepped forward, placing her hand unobtrusively on Andrei's back and rubbing gently. She knew how much he hated seeing either of their children cry. It was worse with Lily though because in the back of both of their minds was always the memory of how they had almost lost her before she was even born.

For the space of a few hours they had both believed their child had died when Loretta had been forced to shift into wolf form during early pregnancy, something which usually aborted the child. That memory led to them being a little less strict than they should be when dealing with their little wild child, something they both admitted to.

"You need to start thinking from now on," she said quietly, taking over as her mate struggled with his emotions behind a mask of neutrality. "You're old enough to know better, both of you. I suggest you go up to your rooms and think on your actions for at least an hour. Then we can discuss it again."

Head bowed, Lily slipped down from her chair not meeting her parents' eyes. She could feel their disapproval and it hurt a lot. Kallum had sat silently the entire time, his eyes wide with misery, shooting sad glances at his father.

"I'm sorry, Kal," Lily whispered, throwing her arms around him and hugging him tightly. "It's not your fault, it's mine. I'll make it up to you."

The adults stood tensely watching as she helped her brother down from the chair and led him out the kitchen and upstairs as ordered.

Andrei twisted the instant they were away and wrapped his arms around his mate, burying his head in the side of her neck and shuddering deeply. "Sweet Jesus, Loretta, those two are killing me slowly." It was an anguished whisper, his voice low so the retreating duo wouldn't hear him.

She knew the feeling but still managed a little laugh as she stroked his hair gently. "That's what children do, baby," she sighed softly. "They rip your heart out and hand it back to you with sweet little smiles over and over again." Her tone was full of love, her touch soothing him until he regained some semblance of self control.

He finally raised his head and gave her a tortured look. "How are you supposed to teach them anything when they look at you with those big brown eyes filled with tears? I take on the entire vampire nation every day and yet one hint of hurt in my children's eyes and I'm brought to my knees."

Love shone through their bond, Loretta's beautiful face radiant as she touched his cheek gently. "They're your babies, Andrei. They'll always have that power over you. The trick is not to let them see it and you're managing that beautifully."

He leaned down and kissed her gently, his arms tightening as his soft touch turned more demanding. Her heady cinnamon scent washed over him and desire quickly sprang to life as it always did when she was in his arms.

His kiss turned deeper, his body hardening against her soft curves as he plundered her mouth almost desperately. She was breathing heavily as she pulled back, her eyes flashing brightly, her lips looking deliciously ravished.

"We have to talk about what Dayton told us," she said breathlessly, fighting the urge to surrender in his arms and spend part of the next hour loving her beautiful vampire the way she wanted to.