

## Chapter 198

Dayton and Rayne made their way out of the library, leaving the Alpha alone to contact whoever he needed to speak to. Rafe had given them free passage within the compound and had offered them the use of the guest rooms on the first floor of the main house.

Dayton didn't particularly want to stay, but until the issue with Freya was sorted out he knew she would keep coming back to the gallery. Rayne, surprisingly, had seemed overjoyed at Rafe's offer. This set him musing quietly to himself: his friend appeared to be anxious to spend time in the compound and he doubted it had anything to do with Freya. Trivial matters such as death threats just didn't faze her.

Before he could ask her what was going on, the sound of children's laughter caught his attention and he turned to look up the main stairwell. Three little ones came haring down from the second floor, squealing with laughter as they ran.

In the lead was a small boy of around five, his hair a shock of deep chocolate brown, his light blue eyes glowing with glee as he ran. Behind him another boy and a girl chased after him. They were both blond, around the same age; the girl's eyes were a deep green and her sibling's a light blue like his brother's. It was obvious that they were from the same litter.

"DJ! Thorne! Rowan! Get back here right now!" an exasperated feminine voice called from upstairs. The woman's tone sounded stern but there was a trace of laughter lurking in it as the three little rascals made their bid for freedom.

Dayton couldn't help the smile that crossed his lips and the cold fury within him began to melt in the face of the children's antics. His Beta instincts kicked in automatically and he collected the first child into his arms as he reached the bottom of the stairs.

His sudden appearance surprised the children so much that they all froze in place, the cub in his arms staring wide eyed at him. "You really should listen to your mother, little one," said Dayton in a firm tone, but with a hint of gentleness to it as he didn't want to frighten the boy.

The child's reaction stunned him: his face suddenly split into a huge grin and he threw his arms around Dayton's neck and held on tightly. Dayton couldn't help stiffening slightly at the open display of affection before he willed his body to relax and accept the child's embrace.

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More of his fury melted away as he gently held the child against his chest, inhaling in the manner of his wolf to ingrain the boy's scent deep within himself.

"You three are in so much trouble..." As she appeared at the head of the last set of stairs, Jennifer Swift stopped in shock, staring wide eyed at the scene before her.

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She instantly recognised the man standing in the main hallway: Dayton Alexander. There were photographs of all the Alexanders in her home; including the lost brother Aaron missed so much.

Behind him stood a Werecat whom she quickly judged to be no threat; otherwise she wouldn't have been allowed to enter the house. Jen's gaze was drawn instead to Dayton, and to the way he was holding her son so carefully.

Did Aaron know his brother was here? It was a silly thought and she knew it; of course he would know, though where he was she had no idea. How should she react to Dayton's presence? She knew his story, understood why he had closed himself off from the pack. And yet here he was, holding DJ with such care, and there was more than a hint of warmth in his eyes as he looked at her son.

"Let the children bring him home to us, honey," she heard Aaron's soft words in her head. He must have sensed her confusion and realised why.

"I need to stay with Cedar at the moment. Alexei is close to losing it and she needs my help to get through to him. Don't push Day: he'll react better to the children than to us. Let them charm him as they do everyone else and take it from there. You can do this, Jen."

His words held such confidence, such faith in her that she felt her worries melt away. So she blew him a mental kiss, sent him a shaft of love through their mate bond, and waited to see what would happen next.

Dayton watched the beautiful woman carefully, trying to judge if she was about to freak out at him for touching one of her children. Although pack mothers were notoriously protective of their young she didn't appear to be about to go for his throat, so he relaxed and allowed himself a moment to study her.

She had long black hair, a shade lighter than Rayne's, and lovely green eyes. She was beautiful, if somewhat on the small side for his taste, standing only about five foot four. Regardless, she was a very attractive woman and her mate was clearly a very lucky man.Www.no(v)éL©OrM.čô©

Dayton was rather startled to find that he'd just appraised her as a woman. He had spent so long never really seeing women that it was disconcerting to suddenly start viewing a member of the opposite sex in that manner.

"Have you come home now, Uncle Dayton?" the cub in his arms suddenly asked, raising his head to look into his eyes and Dayton struggled to keep the shock from his expression as he stared back at him.

The instant the boy spoke he knew whose children they were. Another cursory glance at the other two and he saw Aaron stamped all over their features. He was looking at his niece and nephews; something twisted deep within him--a fierce, overwhelming need to protect these little angels.

"I'm certainly here for a visit, at least," he finally answered, not wanting to promise anything he couldn't deliver. He could only assume that the children recognised him from photographs in the family album. His answer didn't appear to upset the boy in his arms, who just grinned even wider than before.

"I'm DJ," he laughed. "That means Dayton Junior but everyone just calls me DJ because it's shorter." He wiggled to be put down and then ran up the few steps to his siblings. "This is Thorne and this is Rowan," he announced solemnly, showing his uncle that he was the oldest of the triplets, and therefore the leader, as he tapped first his brother and then his sister on the shoulder.

It was all Dayton could do not to laugh at his performance. It was so cute, so pompously arrogant, for one so young. He knew at once that DJ would grow up to be a strong Beta. He was already exhibiting the signs of leadership.

Dayton Junior. He felt his heart twist again, guilt rushing through him in a strong wave. Aaron had named his oldest son after him. His brother had mentioned he had three children but had never given any real information about them, just that he had two boys and a girl.

He'd known why Aaron had held back. His brother had hoped curiosity would be the key to making Dayton respond to one of his emails. It hadn't, so now he felt that he was discovering them for the very first time.

"Pleased to meet you," he said quietly, swallowing against a lump in his throat as three angelic faces smiled up at him.

He could see Aaron in every face as well as the stunning woman standing watching the proceedings. He turned his gaze from the children and looked back at her. "You must be Jennifer."

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