

Chapter 199

She smiled warmly at him, walking down the stairs. "Jen," she corrected, her tone echoing the warmth of her smile. "I'm so happy to finally meet you, Dayton. Sorry these little rascals waylaid you. I was in the middle of making their breakfast when they decided that playing outside was more important than eating." She shot a reproving look at her children but they just grinned impishly at her.

"It's fine," he answered a small smile curving his lips. "This is Rayne," he added, nodding at his friend.

Jen greeted her with an equally warm smile. "Would you like to join us for breakfast? Maybe these three will behave if we have company." Her tone suggested she was doubtful of that happening.

Dayton hesitated slightly, unsure if he could cope with any more sensory overload.

Rayne took the decision out of his hands. "We'd be delighted to, Jen."*Ww.nOvE()Wor-m.©ôm*

Dayton shot her an irritated glare but she just smiled at him and turned to the children, who were watching her suspiciously.

"You're not a wolf," Thorne said solemnly, a frown marring his expression.

"You're not a cat," she responded lightly, giving him a wink. His eyes widened for a moment before curiosity got the better of him and he was suddenly smiling.

"Can you shift? Can we see the cat?" Just like that the three children were accepting her into their pack, imploring her to shift so they could see her cat form.

"Maybe later, if Rayne can be bothered indulging you lot," Jen interrupted, shooin them upstairs. "Breakfast! Now!" Laughing, she followed her children back upstairs, Dayton and Rayne a few steps behind her.

Aaron arrived just as they were finishing eating. He bent down to give Jen a long, lingering kiss which turned a little heated until she pushed at his chest and laughed softly. "You're worse than the kids."

"Guilty as charged," he grinned unrepentantly as he dropped three quick kisses on the tops of three expectant heads. His blue gaze turned to his visitors and he nodded at Rayne. "I'm Aaron."

"Rayne," she smiled back. "You have a lovely family, Aaron."

He beamed proudly, his gorgeous face radiant. "Don't I know it." He turned his gaze to his brother and his smile faded slightly as their eyes met. He searched Dayton's face intently for a long moment, and then relaxed.

"Good to see you, Day. I'd maybe leave it a while before you try and catch up with Cedar. We mostly got Alexei settled down but he's still a bit irate. Vampires!" He rolled his eyes in mock sufferance.

Dayton blinked at his youngest brother slowly, amazed at the way Aaron just accepted him sitting at his dinner table with his family, no hint of reproach on his face at all. He had just vanished from his family's life for over five decades. Were none of them going to call him on it?

He knew his family understood, Aaron more than most because he had been instrumental in preventing him from turning Rogue when Faith had died. Even so, he had expected some anger, some hurled accusations, and their absence was setting him on edge.

Aaron could see the confusion in Dayton's eyes and grabbed himself a cup of coffee. "Day and I are going to have a chat," he told Jen. "You okay entertaining Rayne for a bit?"

"I think Rayne's old enough to entertain herself, Aaron, though I wouldn't mind the company," his mate snorted with a laugh.

Dayton spared a quick glance at his friend, who was talking with the children. She looked up and, with a smile, shooed him away. Grabbing his own cup of coffee he followed his brother out of the kitchen/dining room and down the hall to a second, smaller library.

"You have the whole second floor?" he asked curiously as he sat down on the brown leather sofa closest to the window. His brother sat down beside him and gazed outside briefly before settling his gaze back on him.

"Jen and Lacey were best friends, practically sisters, before they became wolves," he explained. "They'd been through tough times together and with Jen expecting triplets, Lacey wanted her close when the Alpha's home was built."

"Explains why it's three storeys," Dayton remarked.

Aaron laughed softly. "Yeah, now that Lacey is due to give birth, the extra space is needed. I'm trying to talk Jen into having some more but she just utters three names and that kind of puts a dampener on the idea." His tone was full of amusement, his deep love for his family shining through.*www.no-vE!WorM.cO(m)*

"You did good, Aaron." It was hard to compliment his brother on his choice of mate, and his beautiful children, not to mention his high rank within the pack. If Faith had lived then he would have had a family like this, known the joy of being a father. Instead he'd only known heartache.

"Only had one black spot in my life, but that looks like it might be fading now," his brother replied quietly, keeping his gaze firmly fixed on the man before him.

Dayton shifted uncomfortably, looking away at the undisguised question in Aaron's eyes. "I don't know how long I'll be here, Aaron. It's...difficult."

Aaron sighed deeply, looking down at the coffee cup in his hands. "It doesn't have to be, Day. You know deep down that Faith would never have wanted this life for you. She would have been heartbroken that you gave up on life."

"Don't!" It was a tortured sound. Dayton rose and moved away from his brother as if putting some distance between them could make his words less powerful.

This was why he had stayed away; this was why he had distanced himself from his family in every way possible. He'd known that they would want him to see sense, to convince him of what Faith would have wanted. They didn't understand because they couldn't. They hadn't lost their mates.

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