

## Chapter 202

Alexei rested his forehead against hers and sighed deeply. "Maybe I need to spend some extra time with Aaron, do more training or something," he admitted quietly. "I shouldn't have lost it like that. I shouldn't have put you in that position in the first place."

"You're doing fine, love," she reassured him, a small smile tugging at her lips as she freed her hands from his hair to wipe at her cheeks, a task which he took over with his lips, kissing away the last of her emotional outburst.

"Not good enough if I made you cry," he growled softly, his displeasure evident in his voice.

"I'm sure it won't be the last time," she laughed giving him another kiss to ease his guilt. "Couples fight all the time, love. It's normal. They also kiss and make up afterwards." She gave him her best sultry smile, a shriek of laughter escaping her as he walked her backwards the two steps it took to have her pinned beneath him on the sofa.

"We did the kissing bit," he mused quietly, desire dancing across his gorgeous face as he leaned down and gave her a hard searing kiss that had her body responding instantly to his. "How long are the kids away for?" he murmured against the side of her neck as he nipped lightly at her fragile skin.

"We could maybe work on the making up part right now?"

Cedar laughed at his hopeful tone as he pressed his raging erection between her legs, rubbing against her intimately as she felt the first brush of his fangs against her throat. A low moan escaped her as his mouth travelled up to her racing pulse and he sank his fangs deep into her skin.

Her moan turned into a cry of pleasure as his venom rushed through her body, igniting fire wherever it touched. He suckled hard against her, drinking down her sweet blood and groaning in ecstasy as he did.

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Alexei hadn't fed for over a week. He tried to limit the occasions on which his woman nourished him with her precious life's fluid. If he did it too often it tired her out. And with two young children and a job as a pack Beta, being tired wasn't an option for his Cedar. He drank deeply, his head spinning as her sweetness infused him with strength—and a deep need to be buried inside her body.

He released her neck, licking her wound closed as he searched once more for her mouth to indulge another of his favourite tastes. A knock on the door had him growling in irritation. "Ignore it! Whoever it is will go away."

"Alexei!" Cedar giggled, trying to squirm out from under him. But he held her pinned easily, refusing to let her get up.

The knock sounded again and Alexei cursed loudly as he rose from the sofa to go to the front door. He wrenched it open with the intent of scaring the shit out of whoever had just interrupted his precious time with his mate, but stopped short when he saw who their visitor was.

His keen gaze took in the slight redness that still ringed Dayton Alexander's eyes and he knew instantly that Aaron's meeting with his brother had been emotionally harrowing. He stared mutely at the man whose head he had been determined to rip from his shoulders just a few minutes ago, and felt a ripple of compassion course through him. Now he understood how difficult coming to the compound had been for the wolf who had lost his mate so long ago.

[illegible]

"Hello, Cedar," Dayton said quietly, his deep blue eyes intent on her face searching for any sign of how she might be feeling at him coming to her home.

She moved instinctively, throwing herself into his arms and clinging on for dear life. "Oh, Dayton," she whispered, tears once more making her voice husky.

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For a moment he just stood there, stiff and unsure of what to do; then his arms came around his sister and he was suddenly crushing her so tightly, drinking in her sweet scent, allowing himself the soothing touch that was part of being a wolf.

"I suppose you'd better come in," Alexei sighed, with a slightly dry note to his voice. "That's if my mate will release you long enough to let you move."

Cedar groaned and stepped back, pulling Dayton by his hands into her home, laughing and crying at the same time before she was hugging her brother again so tightly.

"I'm Alexei," her mate said rolling his eyes in mock exasperation. "I'll put the coffee on."

Dayton was amazed the vampire wasn't trying to kill him. From everything he'd heard about Alexei Romanov, this was one badass vampire with a very overprotective streak when it came to his family. Aaron had warned him to be prepared for a negative reaction. Cedar's powers of persuasion must have been top notch to restrain her mate.

"Cedar, can you let go now? I promise you I'm not going anywhere for the moment. Rafe has offered me a bed at his place for a little while and I'm going to take him up on the offer."

She stepped back, wiping at her cheeks as she did so. "You promise? I mean, it's okay if you need to go, Day. I understand if you do. It would just be nice if you could stay a little while, meet my children and..."

The smile he gave her was so warm her voice faltered and she couldn't speak. He almost looked like the old Dayton, the man he had been so very long ago before his heart was shattered.

"You deserve a better brother than I've ever been to you, Cedar," he said quietly. "One who doesn't break your heart. And yet you love him unconditionally despite that."

"I don't want a better brother," she whispered more tears gathering in her eyes. "I just want you, Day No one else."

Her heartfelt declaration didn't rip his heart to pieces as he'd expected. Instead he felt a rush of warmth; his pain eased a little, and then he was wrapping his arms around his sister once more. He swallowed hard, tried to speak and then had to swallow again.

"I'm so sorry," he managed to get out. "I didn't mean to hurt you, to hurt the family."

"We know that, silly." Her reply was instant, her hold on him tightening as he shuddered and fought for control. "We've always known that, Day. Just as we'll always be here for you when you're ready."

Something mended deep inside him. It was just a little something, but it was a start. Swallowing back fresh tears, Dayton luxuriated in his generous sister's love and forgiveness.

He took a deep breath and spoke words he'd thought he would never hear himself utter again but was unable to hold back: "I love you," he whispered softly.

"I love you too, Day, so very much. Welcome home, brother."

To be continued...