

## Chapter 249

It wasn't a brief kiss by any means. It was hot, passionate and stole the breath out of her body so she had to cling onto him limply to stop her knees from buckling.

"Remember what Nors said," he whispered against her lips. "Let Ashleigh down gently. She cares about you and only wants to help you. Don't throw it in her face."

She swallowed hard, staring into his dark blue eyes, fascinated by the light she saw dancing within their depths. Her confusion increased but her irritation soothed greatly as he held her close. She wanted to promise him the world in that moment, anything so she could see his eyes dancing with such merriment.

It was hard to pull herself out of his arms, hard to nod her head in acquiescence to the Alpha, but she did it for Dayton, because it would make him happy. "I will contain myself," she answered grudgingly turning and walking out of the room as quickly as she could.

"You've given yourself a tough task," Rafe commented as the door closed and Dayton took the seat Freya had vacated. "And me the worst headache ever. She's a lot of hard work."

Dayton met his Alpha's gaze squarely. He knew the other man was aware that he was claiming Freya as his mate. Despite his words he didn't appear to be as worried as he made out. "She's worth it," he answered firmly. "You were hard on her." It was an accusation even though it was said calmly.

"She needs softness from her mate, discipline from her Alpha. I won't apologise for it. She understands strength, values it. She'll give me no respect until she comes to see me as deserving of it."

He had a valid point. Dayton was forced to concede that, even if he disliked the way Rafe spoke to her. When he mated with Freya the Alpha bond would snap in place instantly. She would truly become pack and if she didn't respect Rafe then it would cause problems.

"Was this what you wished to speak to me about?" He didn't know Rafe well as a person, though he was aware he was a good Alpha from all Aaron and Cedar had told him. He was sure he had questions that he wanted to ask him about finding a second mate. It happened so rarely that it was classed as something special when it did.

Rafe laughed loudly. "No, though it has piqued my curiosity," he admitted. "Second matings are something to be celebrated though your choice could have been a little less volatile."

He held up his hand when Dayton opened his mouth the protest. "Don't get me wrong. I have no ill feelings towards Freya. She has my eternal gratitude for doing the impossible, bringing you home to us. She will make pack life lively but she is fiercely protective of those she loves. We are strengthened by her addition and that is always a good thing."

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"Then what did you want to talk to me about?" Dayton was confused. He couldn't think what his Alpha would need him for when there was so many other strong members of the pack to do his bidding.

Rafe frowned deeply and ran a hand through his hair. "Certain revelations have come to light since you've been gone. I can't speak of them directly but I can say they are staggering. You know about the children. I'm assuming Rayne told you everything as you're so close. I need to know where she is. We need her guidance in how best to deal with the abilities the children are displaying. Do you know where she is?"

It was Dayton's turn to frown at the mention of his friend. He'd come back to the compound expecting her to be there. If Rafe was looking for her too then he had no idea where she would be. She never revealed where she stayed when she was in town.www.©OVē(i)W(ø)ŘM. (c)o™

"I don't know," he admitted, concern creeping into his voice. "I spoke to her earlier and could tell something was wrong. It's why we came back, so I could talk to her. I thought she would be here."

"No one's seen her. She vanished the day Caleb and Annie came home. I believe Gard knows something though what it is I have no idea. He won't speak to anyone about it, not even Annie."

"Gard?" Dayton had never heard the name before. He knew who Caleb and Annie were, everyone did. This other man was a surprise though.

"He's a friend of my sister's," Rafe answered carefully. "An Ancient vampire; with some skills that appear to be similar to the children. I don't know much about him except he's been watching over the pack for a few years. I believe he's had some contact with Rayne since she's been here. I suspect possibly a romantic entanglement though I have no confirmation of that."

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Rayne...bedding a vampire? The thought was so absurd that Dayton almost burst out laughing. And then he thought of himself. If anyone had told him a month ago he would be claiming a vampire as his mate he would have died laughing.

Lord, had Rayne found her own mate in this Gard? Was that why she felt the need to run? She didn't liked being caged in anyway. He could understand her flight instincts kicking in to some degree but she was smart enough to know she couldn't run from the mate bond. There had to be some other reason she was running.

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"She was talking about moving on, Rafe. She may already have done so. Rayne is searching for something. I don't think she even knows what it is but it's a compulsion within her. For a moment I thought she had found it here but something's spooked her. When she shadows herself no one can find her. I don't even know how to begin tracking her down if she doesn't want to be found."

Rafe sighed deeply and leaned forward on the desk. "I know one man who can," he said quietly. "If she remains in human form. Gard at least told us that much. Apparently if she shifts to her panther and then shadows herself she drops off even his radar. Caleb can see through her abilities too but he won't leave Annie's side at the moment. I guess our only option is to ask Gard to try and track her."

"But if he's the one she's running from she'll revert to panther and slip away," Dayton argued. "Let me try to find her. She trusts me, cares about me, maybe enough that she won't leave without coming to see me one last time."

The Alpha considered for a moment and then nodded. "It's not just the pack that needs her, Dayton. She needs us too. Try and convince her of that."

He nodded and stood up, anxious to find Freya before he went looking for Rayne.

"Oh, and Dayton, let me know when you're ready to officially accept the position of Beta within the pack."

Rafe's parting words had his head turning back, a slight feeling of unease flowing over him. His Alpha appeared certain that he would be staying. He acknowledged that finding his mate in Freya was a step closer to coming home for good. He just didn't know if she could survive being part of a pack.

Any decisions he made would have to hinge on what was best for his mate. He nodded his agreement anyway. Just knowing his new Alpha was according him the honour of such a high rank despite barely knowing him pleased his wolf greatly. He headed out the library, looking for his mate.

To be continued...