

## Chapter 280

Demetri admired Gard's new mate for a second, acknowledging how stunning she was, trying to scent her hybrid nature which she was masking well. She looked a right handful, just what his old friend needed. His thoughts quickly conjured up a pair of deep brown eyes, long thick brown hair, and he smiled softly. Yeah, Rayne was stunning to look at but no one could compare to his Mara.

"I'll report back to Caleb and Annie," he finally said. "You've got this in hand so there's no need for us to be here right now. Let us know if you want a full Were/Council meeting or if we're keeping it in the family." He turned away and headed back into the trees.

"So that was Demetri Bozic?" Rayne asked in a bemused tone. She was quite taken aback by the vampire, more so than she'd been with any other she'd met before. His reputation preceded him and his general aura didn't disappoint. He was stunningly gorgeous, powerful and decidedly lethal. Just being around him sent a shiver up her spine even if she could appreciate the pretty package he came in. She seriously hoped never to get on his bad side.

Gard frowned slightly and wrapped a hand around the nape of her neck to draw her gaze back to his. "I like Demetri," he said softly. "Do I have to kick the shit out of him?" The possessiveness in his voice brought a bubble of laughter from his mate.

"Oh he's pretty," she laughed softly. "But he couldn't hold a candle to you, Gard. And you know it." She stroked his chest lightly as he bent his head and captured her mouth in a possessive, branding kiss.*wWw.nO©eLlW(◊)rm.COm*

Rafe rolled his eyes and looked away but a smile tugged his lips. It was plain to see how deeply in love they were. His pack was all the more stronger having them as part of it. A deep tug inside him had a groan ripping from his throat.

"What?" Rayne asked.

"Let's get these bodies burnt," Rafe sighed shaking his head as he examined the Alpha bond that had just stretched between him and Freya Eriksson. He'd known it was coming but still he'd hoped for a little more time to figure out how to deal with the vampire when she joined his pack. There wasn't anything he could do about it at the moment so he put it out of his mind as they set about their task.

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The first thing Rayne did when she got back to the compound was to detach herself from Gard's arms and throw herself into Dayton's. They had walked into the library, finding it empty apart from the other couple. She was aware of the flare of jealousy that ripped not only from her own mate but also Freya. She ignored them.*wW(◊).movèLwOr™.com*

"You're hurt," she breathed softly, tracing the light coloured bruises on his bare forearms.

"I'm fine," Dayton smiled giving her a tight hug, relieved that she was home safe and well, that she hadn't run from the pack. He could sense Gard's annoyance, knew instantly she'd mated with her vampire. He was happy for his friend. "You've mated." He couldn't keep the joy out of his voice.

Rayne laughed in delight and also a touch of awe. She couldn't help stroking his jaw tenderly as she was so used to doing. "So have you, my friend. And your mate is being remarkably restrained."

She eased out of Dayton's arms to smile at Freya. It was plain to see she was struggling with her mate's intimacy with another woman but she was working hard at dealing with it. "Thank you, Freya," she said quietly.*wwww.nó©é⓪W(◊)Rm.co©*

The words brought a surprised expression to Freya's face. Of all the things she'd expected to come out of the wildcat's mouth, heartfelt thanks wasn't one of them. "For what?"

"For loving him enough to bend for him; for giving him back a reason to live. You will forever have my eternal gratitude. Anything you need, all you have to do is ask." Rayne swallowed hard to choke back the rush of emotion she felt for the other woman. One day she hoped that her best friend's mate would be able to accept her completely, that they could be friends too.

Freya eyed Rayne carefully for a long time, shocked at her words and the sincerity behind them. She felt some of the antipathy within her die down. The cat was mated now to the Ancient. She had chosen her male and it wasn't Dayton. More of her reserve crumbled as she met the other woman's gaze.

"He is lucky to have you for a friend," she finally said reaching out to slide her arm around Dayton's waist as he automatically gathered her close to his side. "I should thank you for keeping him alive long enough for me to find him."

Dayton kissed the top of her head, joy surging through him at the first tentative steps towards friendship he was witnessing. He met Gard's slightly hostile gaze and damped down a sigh. Would it be any easier for him and the Ancient? Mates were terribly possessive, not just the females. Newly mated males could be a nightmare to contend with.

Gard wasn't pleased with the way his mate casually touched the wolf. Hell, she'd even looked at Demetri with appreciation in her eyes. But then he remembered those stunning eyes looking at him. There was no escaping the love deep within them or the way her body automatically curled into his at every opportunity. His cat belonged to him body and soul and he knew it.

"Keep the touching down to a minimum, at least for the next decade or so," he growled softly. He watched Dayton relax, a smile crossing his face as he nodded his agreement.

"Possessive much?" Rayne laughed lightly wrapping her arms around her vampire and pulling him down for a kiss. It was long and slow, full of her love and her pleasure that he was willing to play nice with her friend.

Gard knew in that instant that he'd give her anything she wanted, just so she would kiss him as she was now doing. Her body practically hummed with approval, their mate bond full of a glowing happiness that made his heart skip a beat. His cat was happy with him and that meant everything to him.

Rafe entering the library broke them apart. Behind him came the other vampires and their mates. Aaron brought up the rear, closing the door firmly behind him and leaning against it.

As everyone settled, the Alpha's second in command made his report. "The area is secure within a twenty mile radius. Soldiers are patrolling in groups of threes and there's no hint of any vampires. Jared's sent over Brody and Connor and some of his soldiers for additional backup. I asked Connor to take command of both packs while we're tied up here."

Rafe nodded, pleased with Aaron's decision. Connor was Jared's number two now that he and Aaron had their own pack. He was a good choice and well respected by everyone. "We can't be endlessly patrolling, not with this number of people. It leaves the pack too vulnerable if anyone slips through." He hadn't rescinded the evacuation protocol yet. Not until he felt totally at ease bringing Lacey and all the children back up from the tunnels.

"How technically oriented are vampires?" Rayne asked, an idea coming to mind, something she had seen on her many travels.

"We're not dummies but we don't rely on it," Alexei answered. "We don't need to, not with our enhanced sight and hearing."

"So, if you were out for a recon mission in a forest you wouldn't be looking for little gadgets tracking your movements?" Rayne continued, watching understanding slowly start to dawn on everyone's face.