

Chapter 281

"Nice," Andrei grinned and it was a genuine smile as he eyed up the wildcat with a speculative expression. Anyone who was going to put themselves out there to protect his babies was an acceptable addition to the pack. "We couldn't rely entirely on technological surveillance but it would cut down the need to have so many wolves away from the compound."

Rafe felt some of his tension ease. "We'd need something that blended into the scenery. Who have we got that has the skills to work on this?"

"Harley," Aaron answered immediately, referring to one of their Betas who was almost permanently stationed close to the Alpha's house. "If it's got any form of metal in it, he knows how to take it apart and put it together again. He also teaches the young males too. It would be good experience for them to be involved in anything that's going down to protect the pack."

Dayton stared at his brother, watching the man who even though he was the youngest of the Alexander clan, was the most dominant, pack focused member. The needs of the pack came first and foremost in Aaron's mind and he was automatically latching onto how the young males could be trained whilst serving the current danger to all of them. His respect for his brother soared.*www.00x0w0r00.00m*

It was clear that Rafe's respect for his second in command was just as high. "Get onto it when the meeting's over, Aaron. Do whatever you have to. I'll leave it in your capable hands. For the next few months that's your main objective."

Rafe's gaze turned to the others and he appeared deep in thought. Although the vampires were a great addition to the pack, they didn't hold pack rank as such. Most of that was down to the fact the twins were Council members and their time was needed there as well as being liaisons with the pack and the vampires. Nors was an Ancient and therefore his time was spent doing whatever Ancients did.

A memory came to mind and he didn't know whether to laugh or cry. He'd been hell bent on self destruction years ago, to the point that Jared had jumped all over him. He'd been furious at the time but now he saw the wisdom in his old Alpha's decision.

"The pack is going to be down a few Betas for a while," he announced after a long pause. He met Dayton's gaze and saw a small frown start to form on the other man's face. "Sorry, Dayton but we need you. I can't wait for you to make the decision on your own."

"Rafe..."

"What does he mean?" Freya asked, feeling how tense her mate was and instantly bristling.

"I need Dayton to step up to the plate and be who he's supposed to be," Rafe answered before Dayton could. "He's a Beta, was one when he was part of the Hanlon pack. I need him to be one again."

Freya kept her eyes on her wolf, seeing the torn expression on his face. Part of him wanted to agree but the larger part of him was holding back and she knew why. It was because of their earlier conversation, about her accepting the pack. He didn't want to commit because he was concerned about her.*www.N0(v)eW0r00.00m*

God, how she loved him; he had meant it when he said he would willingly give up everything for her. Sighing softly she pressed her hand lightly against his chest to soothe the tension within him. "Will you protect my family for me?" she asked quietly. "Will you take care of Ashleigh and Liam as if they were your own?"*00w.N0(v)eJw0rmm.00m*

His stunned expression almost made her laugh. Hell, it would have if it wasn't suddenly so crucial to her that he agree to protect what was hers. The attack on them had been a levelling experience. Once she'd gotten over the whole threat to Dayton she had to consider what could have happened to Ashleigh and Liam if the vampires had gotten through. Having them hurt was just unacceptable to her.

"You know I'd die for them," Dayton said quietly, cupping her face gently. "They are yours so that makes them mine, even if Ash wasn't David's sister. But you know what this means if I agree to it, Freya. There will be no turning back. We will be irrefutably part of the pack."

"I know," she sighed deeply. "I'm prepared for what that means. This is who you are, Dayton, who you are meant to be. I will adapt."

"Glad to hear that, Freya," Rafe interrupted, mentally preparing himself for the coming backlash. "Because you have a lot of work ahead of you. For the next three months you will be training under Dayton in what it takes to be a pack Beta. At the end of that time we'll evaluate the situation and see where we're at with a mind to making it a permanent rank."

Complete silence filled the room. Even Aaron stared at Rafe as if he'd just lost his mind.

"Rafe, I don't think that's a good idea," Nors said breaking the heavy silence. His sister's body had gone rigid with shock and even Dayton's soothing hands stroking down her back wasn't alleviating any of the tension deep within her.

Rafe barked out a laugh. "Neither do I but that's my final decision on the matter. Freya, I want you to stay behind after this meeting has concluded. We'll discuss it further then but for now I'd appreciate you holding your peace on the matter."

He turned away from her, instantly dismissing her reaction as if it was unimportant. He was hoping she was too stunned by his announcement to answer him back and it appeared she was when she remained silent but tense.

"Okay, the final thing is Demetri swung by earlier. Word is this attack wasn't centrally planned so it looks like it was some kind of independent action. That doesn't mean we shouldn't be keeping an ear to the ground over at the Council. I can rely on you two to keep me updated?" His gaze was now on Andrei and Alexei.

Andrei rolled his eyes at even having to be asked but it was Alexei who answered him. "That goes without saying, Rafe. We'll start a quiet investigation, see what we can come up with but I agree with Demetri. No one could have kept this so quiet if it came from deep within us."

"The vampires who attacked were not local," Freya suddenly chipped in, surprising everyone. Her expression was carefully neutral as were her words. "They were young too. Only one of them had reached Elder status but even he was weak so he couldn't have been that old. My best guess is this is from the European side. They're more isolated and therefore less likely to be in fear of us Ancients."

"That makes more sense," Rafe acknowledged thoughtfully, acting as if the vampire's voluntary inclusion into the discussion was the norm. He was actually pretty stunned by it but kept his feelings to himself.

"What about us?" Gard asked. He knew he had skills that could be utilised by the pack. Now he didn't have to hide and was a part of them because of Rayne, he needed to be included.

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"Rayne, you are now our official hybrid expert," Rafe answered slowly, his keen gaze running across the room to take in the reaction of the others. As he'd expected, no one objected. "We need you to guide the children and to help us understand what they're capable of and how best to nurture their abilities without letting them get out of hand."

Rayne smiled widely and nodded. This was something she could do, something she wanted to do. She could give the children what she'd never had, someone to help them find their way in the world. She was practically humming with anticipation.

"Gard, I want you to help Dayton. He's going to have a lot on his plate what with training Freya as well as picking up Beta duties. With Aaron on surveillance detail we'll need someone to pick up the training of the young ones. We've always been good at protecting ourselves but now we need to be better. Your protective abilities are what we need. I want the current and next generation of wolves to be so honed in their skills that even a vampire will quake in his or her boots when they hear the Armand-Hanlon pack name."