

Chapter 282

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Gard grinned. He couldn't help the wide smile that crossed his face. His respect for his sister's Were brother was beginning to grow. Rafe Hanlon was a very intelligent man. He was skilfully utilising the new additions to his pack, seeing their unique abilities and applying them to where they were best suited.

"I'm not an easy teacher," he had to inform him. "I'll work them hard and they're going to come complaining to you about my techniques."

"And I'll send them right back to you with a flea in their ear," Rafe answered firmly. "This pack will be the strongest it can be. Mould them, bend them, just don't break them, Gard."

"Agreed."

"Okay, meeting over," Rafe sighed fighting the urge to run a weary hand through his hair at the thought of what was to come. "Lift the evacuation protocol. Let's get our families back where they belong."

Dayton hung back with Freya as everyone started to file out. Nors stopped beside his sister meeting her gaze intently.

"Go. I'm fine," she said quietly, giving Ashleigh a quick smile. "I will come see you afterwards." Silently the other couple left with everyone else.*w.wW.n0(1)ê0W.rM.C0m*

"Dayton, I meant what I said," Rafe announced. "I want to speak to Freya alone. I won't keep her long."

Freya stroked her mate's chest lightly. "I will be on my best behaviour," she promised.

Dayton kissed her gently, worried about leaving the two of them alone but knowing he had to. He trusted his vampire. If she said she would behave then she would. He just didn't want to be apart from her. Sighing softly he stroked her hair tenderly. "I'll be in the community centre."

He saw surprise in her eyes for a moment and then pleasure. The fact that he trusted her enough to leave her and go get on with his own work was the right thing to do. It gave her that added incentive to reach inside herself and do what was right.*Www.N0VeLW0r.M.c0mm*

Freya swallowed as he left and prayed that she could do this for him. The Alpha's words earlier had filled her with a mix of rage and confusion. She didn't want to do what he had planned for her. He was effectively forcing her to integrate with the pack and they both knew it.

She turned to find Rafe watching her quietly. When he didn't speak she moved a chair to across from his desk and sat down in it. This was what he had demanded of her the last time she'd been in this room with him so she figured it would be what he expected this time.

"Years ago I tried to take my own life," Rafe said quietly, startling her completely. "I didn't want to be a Were, I couldn't face being what I was. I didn't fit into pack life no matter how hard my friends tried to help me. Sound familiar?"

She stared impassively at him for a moment, taking in the words, hearing the truth behind them. There was pain in his voice as he admitted to his past, as well as self-loathing. Strangely she could relate to him. His story was familiar in so many ways.

"And yet you are now mated with young," she answered. "You have your pack and you obviously love life and regret your past actions. What changed?" Curiosity laced her tone.

Rafe smiled. "Jared Hanlon is what changed. He sat me down in a library very similar to this one and the bastard promoted me to a Beta in his pack. I was so furious I almost shifted to wolf form and attacked him. I thought he was being cruel when in fact he was helping to save my life."

He waited for his words to sink in. "I know you don't like me right now, Freya. But that doesn't matter to me because surprisingly I find myself liking you. I look at you and I see myself in your eyes. You're at the same crossroads I was at and yet you have something I didn't at the time. You have your mate to help you."

He leaned forward and placed his arms on the desk. "I'm not doing this to be cruel, Freya. You're pack, you're mine to protect even if you don't think you need it. Each and every one of us is here for you, not just Dayton and Ash and Nors. You belong to us. You belong here. All you have to do is let us in. We don't care about the past, all we care about is the future and that you'll be part of it."

Pain welled up inside her, a harsh crippling pain brought on by the easy acceptance of the wolf before her. He meant it! Every single word. She could feel it flowing through the Alpha bond that was now inside her. She could feel it in the wolf gene that was waking up inside her body, trusting in the man who was their Alpha.

She'd never belonged anywhere, not before she'd met her wolf and accepted him into her heart. Now another wolf was reaching out to her, asking her to trust in him. The pain ebbed slowly, hope warring with her distrust of all things Were. This strong male had revealed his vulnerability to her. It echoed hers and gave her added hope that she was on the right road to the full recovery he had found.

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Respect flared deep within her for the Alpha wolf called Rafe Hanlon who was opening himself and his pack to her unconditionally. She swallowed back the lump of emotion that was threatening to overwhelm her.

"You know I'm going to keep fucking up," she finally said when she could speak in her normal tone. "You think Andrei is a nightmare? He's got nothing on me. I will never be a tame vampire."

Rafe's laugh barked out loudly. "Oh I know that," he agreed when he stopped laughing. "And I also know that my pack couldn't ask for anyone better to protect them."

Freya was silent for another long moment and then she gave him a tentative smile. "I will do the Beta training...Alpha."

He smiled widely. "Oh, I had no doubt about that," he answered drolly. "The only question was if you were going to do it willingly or not."

His certainty made her bristle instinctively and then she burst out laughing and rose from the chair. "You are a formidable foe, Rafe Hanlon. There is a core of steel a mile wide within you that most people miss because of your easy going nature. None of us mated vampires ever stood a chance against you, did we?"

Rafe's expression turned to one of mock innocence before he laughed again. "I protect what's mine, Freya, and you are all mine. Now how about you go get started on your training so I can go greet my mate and sons as they come out of lockdown?"

Shaking her head, Freya headed to the door. She stopped as she reached it turning to look back at the Alpha who was watching her with a very pleased expression on his face. "Just for the record...I don't dislike you, Rafe Hanlon." She opened the door and disappeared from sight, but not before she heard his final quiet words...

"Welcome home, Freya Eriksson."

To be continued...