

Chapter 297

Connor instantly looked repentant, picking up on his brother's concern and taking a step back. He smiled gently. "No offence meant, Freya. I'm just trying to say thank you for bring Day home to us. I didn't get hit much with the sensitivity stick when I was born and didn't mean to make you feel uncomfortable."

His words were so sincere, his expression so downcast, that she couldn't help relaxing against Dayton's side as she finally worked out that the big gruff male in front of her was trying to welcome her into his family in the same way he related to his brother. She was quite astounded that he felt she was so much a part of the Alexanders that he was willing to treat her on an equal footing as her mate. Maybe meeting the rest of them wouldn't be so bad after all, if they were all so ready to accept her as Connor was.

"None taken," she finally said, straightening up. "I am still adapting to your pack ways but it's getting easier. Did I hurt your hand badly?" She noticed he was still holding it rather gingerly at his side.*w(w)w.N@vefwOrM.©om*

"Broke my knuckles." He grinned at her horrified expression. "It's all cool, they're healing just fine. Will be good as new in another couple of minutes. You pack a mean punch."

Freya's eyes swung to Dayton's to see what his reaction was to her breaking his brother's hand. He was grinning widely, pride shining in his eyes which totally confused the hell out of her. She had the distinct impression she would always be walking a tightrope of confusion around the Alexander family. Before she could apologise to Connor his phone went off and he groaned deeply.

"That will be Ma again or Willow. I swear they've been calling or texting every ten minutes for the last couple of hours." He put on a high pitch voice. "Have you left yet?" he mimicked before he answered the call.

"Willow, we're just leaving now," he grumbled. "I was just saying hi to Freya and then we're heading out. We'll be there in an hour or so."

He paused and listened to his youngest sister for a moment and then grinned at Dayton. "Nah, he hasn't dyed his silver. Looks older than me now but hell, he's always wanted to be the eldest and he'll do anything to achieve it. Now get off the phone so we can make tracks. And tell Ma not to call or text again. I'll be driving."

He hung up muttering "Women!" under his breath. "You ready to hit the road, Day?" His question was asked lightly but there was concern in his gaze as he looked at his brother. He knew Dayton was worried about facing the rest of the family. He'd done his best to ease him, had even let his vampire break his knuckles as a way to metaphorically 'break the ice'. He wondered if he'd done enough.

"No time like the present," Dayton said firmly, feeling a lot more relaxed because of his brother's easy acceptance of not only him but Freya. Connor was letting him know he had his back, just as Cedar and Aaron's presence to see him off was their way of showing him they were there to support him.

He tugged Freya towards the cars, releasing her long enough accept Cedar's hug. He wrapped his arms around her tightly, grateful for her love and support.

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"The family's just excited to have Dayton home," Cedar said to Freya as she stepped out of her brother's arms. She didn't attempt to hug but her eyes were warm as she smiled at the vampire. "We're a bit on the tactile side but don't be afraid to ask for some space if it makes you uncomfortable. No one will be offended."

"Ma might completely ignore that request," Aaron laughed as he slapped Dayton hard on the shoulder before grinning at Freya. "Try and cut her some slack though. She's been missing her baby for a long time and a second mating is a truly amazing occurrence. She'll most likely want to hug a lot."

Freya could feel panic start to build up inside her at the prospect of strangers touching her as if they had the right to do so. She just wasn't accustomed to the amount of tactile contact she envisioned happening. She looked to Dayton for help and saw his brows drawn down in concern.

She also saw longing in his gaze, as if he was suddenly desperate to be back in the warmth of his family after being so long apart from them. She could feel his emotions roiling from one end of the spectrum to the other as he tried to work out which one would take dominance.

He needed his family to finish his healing. This was his last hurdle and he needed her to be strong for him, to help him through it. She was his mate and now part of this large family who liked to smile and hug a lot.

So far she had been accepted by three of his siblings and from the way they spoke, the remainder of the Alexander clan were waiting to accept her too. If that meant she had to suffer tactile contact then she could cope with it, to help her wolf find true peace.

She gave Aaron a small smile, barely a lifting of the corner of her mouth. Despite his laughter she could see some concern in his eyes about how she would react to his other family members. She admired him for his caution. She had come to respect this brother of Dayton's having watched him for many years around the compound as he'd worked to build the pack into what it now was. He was a male of integrity, even she could see that.

"I will be gentle with your mother," she promised lightly. "She sounds a lot like Ashleigh. She's very tactile too." Her tone was long-suffering but there was a faint trace of amusement in it.

Aaron smiled back at her, his concern melting and something like pride glowing in his eyes. "We'll make a wolf out of you yet, Freya."

"I'd rather die first," she drawled softly before turning away to hide her amusement as he burst out laughing. Yes, she could do this for Dayton. The Alexanders weren't too bad...for wolves.

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Connor bid farewell to his bother and sister and jumped into the first Jeep just as his phone rang again. Freya heard his muttered curse as she climbed into the passenger seat of the second one.

"Ma, I told Willow to tell you not to call again! We're on our way..."

She closed the door and turned to Dayton as he climbed in and started the engine. "Your family are overpowering, wolf. I expect you to make this up to me, big time!"

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