

## Chapter 238

Rayne rolled away to lie on her back, staring up at the cave ceiling. It looked so cold and grey, a direct contrast to the warmth surrounding her wrapped up in the thick blankets in Gard's bed with the heat from his body at her side. He'd asked her a question and something was holding her back from answering it. She didn't know what it was, but it had to be instinctual because her cat wasn't even trying to force her to reveal he was her mate.

This was strange, considering it had been almost desperate for her to do so earlier. Now her cat suddenly wasn't so eager?*www.Nóvelworm.cOm*

Gard was lying so still at her side and she could feel his eyes on her even though he was silent. He was expecting a response, waiting patiently. She finally turned to meet his gaze, her expression carefully neutral.

"Can you do the bath thing again? I need to get back to the compound and it would help if I didn't have your scent all over me, might give it away that you're out here."

Her response surprised him, taking away the warm glow he'd been experiencing from their lovemaking. They'd just had the most amazing sex of his very long life and she was suddenly retreating from him, hiding behind a calm mask that let none of her inner emotions show? All he had done was ask a question.

"Or maybe you just want to wash me from your body?" There was a hint of steel in his voice, something he hadn't displayed since the first time they had met. Her throwaway response cut him deeply and he reacted instinctively with his own.

Rayne turned to look at him, raising an eyebrow inquiringly at his terseness. She took a deep breath and let it out slowly. "If I'd wanted to do that I would have said so," she answered quietly. "I assumed you wouldn't want the pack being aware of your presence in the forest."

"I don't," he agreed in a calmer tone, "but you don't have to be in a particular hurry to leave either. Or avoid my question." He felt hurt that she was ready to climb out of his bed as if what they'd just shared meant nothing to her. She had claimed him while they made love, just as he had claimed her.

Everything about her fascinated him, called to him and told him she belonged to him completely. Her declaration had led him to believe that she felt the same way. When a Were claimed someone with the word 'mine' it meant they were claiming their mate. He knew she was his, had probably known from the very first day when she'd fallen from the tree and his heart had almost stopped. He just hadn't been willing to admit it to himself.

Rayne rolled away from him, turning her back as her cat mewled quietly inside her. She could feel Gard's tension rise, knew he was unhappy with her reaction to him but something inside her urged caution. She knew he was her mate. She wanted to claim him and from the looks of things he appeared more interested in pursuing some kind of relationship with her other than a quick fumble between the sheets. But she just couldn't say the words, no matter how much she wanted to. So she closed herself down completely.

"People say all manner of things in the heat of sex, Gard. Most of the time, they mean nothing. As for leaving, I've got things to do. I have a friend I need to track down. We had a disagreement earlier and he left feeling very unhappy with me. I need to fix it."

She was suddenly flipped onto her back, Gard looming over her with a hard expression on his face. "He? Who is he, Rayne and why is he suddenly more important than spending time with me?" His voice was laced with jealousy, his fingers digging hard into her shoulders.

She felt her temper spark and pushed at his chest. "He is none of your damned business," she growled out. She knew he was thrown by her behaviour but being high handed wasn't something she was willing to tolerate. Her friendship with Dayton was important to her. She didn't have time to put up with petty jealousy. She opened her mouth and said the first thing that came out in a fit of temper.

"Just because we fucked doesn't give you proprietary rights over me, vampire. Yes, it was great, I enjoyed it immensely but it was sex and nothing more!"

If she could have taken the words back she would have. The flash of uncensored pain that crossed his face was like a knife to her heart. She hadn't meant it, her cat was roaring furiously at her. But she had said it and the effect it had on Gard was instantaneous. The pain vanished and dark fury crossed his face. His expression turned rock hard, his fingers biting deeper into her skin.

Gard stared down at her and felt a pain he'd never experienced before. Her words rocked him to his very core, breaking something inside him. Anger reared its ugly head and also a deep sense of unease. Rayne hid so much of herself from him. He was conscious of the fact he didn't really know anything about her except she could do things no Were should be able to. And she made him ache in a way no other woman could.

She had all but flown out of the Alpha's house the moment Caleb and Annie had shown up, panicked to run as far away as she could. He should have noticed the timing of it but he'd been more concerned about her. Now that he thought back on it he suddenly found he had more questions he wanted answered. Important ones.

It wasn't like him to be led around by his cock. It wasn't like the pack to just let anyone into their safe haven, let alone so close to the children. The first time he had seen her she had been trying to get into Lily's room. Did she have other abilities he didn't know about? Could she sway other people's thoughts?

The longer he considered everything, the deeper his unease grew. His anger was starting to escalate as his protective instincts towards the pack kicked in. He had considered keeping her, taking her as his mate and binding her so tightly to him she would never be able to leave. Where had that thought come from? Was it his or was it Rayne's?*www.n0(v)elw0r@c0mm*

"Just who and what are you, Rayne, because you sure as hell are not an ordinary Were. What were you running from earlier?" His voice was hard; completely brittle as he fought against the pain he was feeling.

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Rayne lay still beneath him, sifting through his emotions unashamedly as his expression hardened even more and her playful lover transformed into the cold, deadly vampire he truly was. The pain that was suddenly flooding her body had nothing to do with his hold on her.

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