

## Chapter 273

Deep green eyes met hers before quickly running over her body. "I take it your wolf is in better shape than you are?" Nors asked drolly though his tone did contain a measure of relief.

"Nothing a hot bath won't cure," she smiled slowly waving a hand over her bloody apparel. The damage to the vampire at their feet was extensive and yet not a speck of blood touched her brother's expensive suit. She, on the other hand, looked like she'd just bathed in blood.

Nors' attention focused on the trees behind her for a moment and then he turned back. "There were more of them but they've left the area. We need to report back to Rafe and organise sweeps of the area."

Freya's alert gaze swept through the trees, looking for any sign that they'd missed one. "You're sure they're gone? I won't risk my wolf, Nors."

The smile that crossed her brother's face was both pleased and also teasing. "Welcome to my world, sister." There was a wealth of emotion in his voice, a sparkle in his eyes as he surveyed her carefully.

She met his gaze her expression softening into something he'd never seen before. "It's such a beautiful world," she whispered, awe in her voice.

His smile widened and he reached out and cupped her cheek gently, ignoring the drying blood. "I'm so happy you can see that now, Freya. That's all I've ever wanted for you."

She watched him silently for a moment, hearing the words he didn't speak in the undercurrent of pain in his tone. Freya turned her head slightly, kissed the palm of his hand. "Dayton told me the past can't be changed but the future is ours to shape how we want it to be. He's very smart, for a wolf."

Nors breathed in deeply. His sister had grown, moved on and now had someone to call hers. Her quiet words gave him absolution. Her happiness gave him the forgiveness he'd so longed for. They didn't need to say the actual words; they both knew what they were really talking about.

"Yes, he is a very smart wolf," he breathed softly. "A good mate for you."

Talking of Dayton had her eyes going back to where she'd left him. The scent of wolves was strong on the air signalling the pack had arrived. "We'd better get back. Your Alpha will have lots of questions." She turned to move away but he held her back a moment.

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"You do know Rafe will be your Alpha too when you mate fully with Dayton?"

She froze, her eyes narrowing at the news. She hadn't thought of it. She knew she would be tied to Dayton which meant she would be tied to the pack but she hadn't considered how that would come about.

She could see the huge Alpha now entering the clearing. He had shifted to human form, walking around in his bare skin as if he was fully clothed. This man would have power over her. He was already ordering her about as if he had a right to. His actions so far had infuriated her beyond bearing.

Dayton dropped from the tree to land beside his Alpha and she growled softly at him doing so without getting the all clear from her. She watched them speak together as she'd watched them previously in the library. It was clear that her mate respected the big man, trusted him.

She let out a long slow breath. She would be expected to toe the line, accept orders from Rafe Hanlon. She didn't know if she could do so. Bending was not in her nature though she had managed to contain herself under Rafe's disapproval in the library but only because Dayton had been there.

Her choice was simple, to accept her mate's world or to be alone again. It should have been an easy decision but it wasn't. She wanted Dayton in her life forever but she didn't know if she could accept the limitations being placed on her to have him.

It struck her that this wasn't something she would have to agonise over alone. She could talk to her wolf about her concerns. Together they could work out a way to be together that they both could live with. A decision didn't have to be made right this very instant.

"Come. We need to let the pack know what has transpired." She began walking across the clearing, towards the wolf that was turning in her direction, his deep blue eyes shining as she approached.

Rafe frowned as he saw the state Freya was in. It was obvious she'd healed from whatever wounds she'd taken but the blood covering her was a testament to what she'd suffered to keep Dayton safe. Her eyes were fixed to her mate and Dayton was striding to meet her the last distance, pulling her tightly into his arms.

Nors reached his side as he watched the couple embrace. He turned to look at him. "I don't suppose you left anyone alive?" He knew it was a futile hope that they had. Freya's bloodlust would have been sparked because her mate was threatened, Nors' because his sister had been.

"Sorry, Rafe. Freya had already taken out two of them and the third was training a sniper rifle at her head. I couldn't let her be hurt any more. She's been through enough." For all he apologised Nors' words were cold and hard.

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The Alpha let out a frustrated growl and turned back to look at Freya and Dayton. "So we have no idea what the fuck the vampires were doing here in the first place and if they intend to come back and hurt the pack?"

Freya was so relieved that Dayton was holding her, that he was healed from the damage she'd inflicted to protect him, she was only vaguely aware of Rafe and Nors' conversation until the Alpha let out his growl. She stiffened in her mate's arms. "I fucked up," she whispered for his ears only. "I didn't think of the pack, that it was vital to get some intelligence from the vampires."

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His lips brushed her temple, his hand stroking her hair lightly. "There's no denying it would have been helpful to know why they attacked, honey, but sometimes a situation moves so fast it's not always possible to think of the bigger picture. And you're still new to having to think about the pack as part of your family."

She understood his reasoning but she still knew she'd fucked up. She'd let her feral nature dominate her, her need to kill the vampires more important than anything else. It was a clear sign that she wasn't cut out for pack life and her eyes met Rafe's as she slipped from Dayton's embrace and turned to face the Alpha.

"I was angry they endangered Dayton's life and I'm used to dealing with incidents swiftly. I won't apologise for protecting him. If that makes you angry, wolf, then so be it." Her tone was irresolute as she waited for the big man to berate her actions. She wouldn't back down even as she heard Dayton's sharply indrawn breath at her tone.

Rafe regarded her intently for a long moment. It took him a long time to speak because he wasn't quite sure how to deal with her. He was pissed they didn't have anyone alive to question and yet he understood the rage that came over someone whose mate was endangered. He'd been there himself.

He had to find some way to integrate Freya into his pack or he was going to lose Dayton. He was under no illusions the other man would leave the pack again if it was the only way to keep his mate. But he still needed her to know that she couldn't just act on her own without thinking.