

Chapter 549

Turning his attention back to Nors and Ashleigh, he searched for signs of how they were holding up. Nors appeared to be doing okay, though Ashleigh was showing signs of strain. He sent a pulse of love down their bond, bathing her with his pride. "I know this isn't easy for you, that it's putting a huge strain on your family. I would lighten the burden if I could, but I can't do anything about Liam claiming her as his mate. I will do what I can, though, to make it as easy as possible. You know you can always come to me if you need to. We will get through this together. It's what the pack does." [Www.novelworm.com](#)

"I know, Rafe." Ashleigh smiled a sad smile that was supposed to be reassuring but she couldn't quite pull it off. Since her meeting with Thereasa, her wolf had been so quiet that she was concerned about the strange behaviour. Being dual-natured, she was used to having her wolf interact with whatever was going on in her life. This silent watching was something completely new that she hadn't experienced before. It was unsettling. She was afraid her wolf was waiting to harm her son's mate and she wouldn't be able to control it even if she wanted to.

A knock on the door diverted her musings and Freya and Dayton entered at Rafe's command. The vampire frowned when she sighted her brother and his mate already in the room, though her mate was all smiles.

"So, what are we cooking up today?" Dayton Alexander raised an enquiring eyebrow as he pulled up a chair beside the sofa Nors and Ashleigh were already seated on. He waited for Freya to sit down before perching on the arm of the chair, his arm casually across the back so he could play with a multi-coloured lock of his mate's hair. Essentially he looked relaxed but everyone knew he was unconsciously soothing Freya, as was his habit.

Rafe automatically took command. There wasn't any point in beating around the bush when it came to his most difficult pack member. He fixed his gaze firmly on Freya as he spoke. "Thereasa's rejection of Liam is causing him harm. She is struggling to come to terms with being human because she's too fixated on him being a hybrid and her potential mate. It's apparent she needs to be housed somewhere else for the time being. You two are the logical choice to take her in."

Freya hissed, leaning forward in her chair, her eyes narrowing as she stared at the Alpha. "Is this an attempt at humour?" Her words were emotionless, her expression anything but.

"No, this is a genuine request for you to protect your nephew's mate for a time, until they can work out their differences and find a way to come together."

"No!"

"Freya." Dayton rubbed a hand down his mate's back, his voice low and soothing. He could feel her fury through their mate bond and instantly worked to counteract it before she exploded. She was very close to Liam and the fact she had managed not to get involved with Thereasa so far had been to her credit. Now she was being asked to shelter the woman and that might be too much to ask from her. He held her gaze as she turned to stare at him, disbelief in her eyes.

Dayton agreed with Rafe? He wanted to allow Liam's would-be assassin in their home, a woman who hated all Vârcolac and that included their own daughter? Surely she had to be reading him wrong, but as she searched his face, she couldn't see any sign of revulsion at the prospect of accepting the woman into their home. "You are not considering this." It came out sounding more like an order than a question.

"Yes, what Thereasa did was wrong, but she's been punished for it and has been given sanctuary within the pack. I know you're angry on Liam's behalf and frightened for Elina." Dayton framed her face in his hands sending all his love down their bond. "She is no danger to those we love, Freya. She is broken and fragile, and she is Liam's heart despite what she has done in the past. You have seen first-hand what losing a mate can do if the wolf doesn't go rogue. Before you, I survived, but didn't live. Would you wish that for Liam, my love?"

Furious tears welled up in her eyes as she glared at him, trying to ignore his words. "You know I don't, but this is too much, Dayton. For Liam, for my Alpha, I have left her untouched until now because I would hurt them by giving in to what I want to do to that woman. This is a step too far though. You can't ask this of me."

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Rafe frowned as he listened, wondering where else they could turn. He had expected Freya's opposition but her vehemence surprised him. Her hatred for Thereasa ran almost as deeply as Ashleigh's did. If they couldn't place their unwelcomed guest with Freya and Dayton, then he wasn't sure what to do with her. He didn't want her with one of the less senior pack members.

"Freya, I know how hard this is," Ashleigh said quietly, breaking the silence that had descended in the room. She did not hide her inner conflict from her expression as the vampire turned to look at her. Instead, she held Freya's gaze, knowing that this was most probably the one moment they were most in tune with each other since they'd met.

"I don't want that woman in Liam's life any more than you do," she continued, "but what I want isn't the point here. Thereasa is Liam's mate. I may not like it, but it's a fact that can't be changed. If circumstances had been different, and Liam not affected so badly by her rejection, then I would allow her to remain in my home and find some way to come to terms with it. But that's not possible, so I must find another safe haven for her until he can make his claim. Dayton is right, Freya, she is Liam's heart. I know this isn't fair; however, I must ask you to protect my son's heart when I cannot. Please, Freya." [Www.novelworm.com](#)

The burning fury inside Freya flashed brightly for a moment, and then it slowly began to diminish as she stared into Ashleigh's gaze. Over the years, she had come to love the wolf as much as her brother, welcoming her into her heart with Liam as a central part of her family. She had come to admire and respect the quiet strength of her sister-in-law, and at times had wished she had her fortitude. There was so much courage in the softly spoken words Ashleigh had just issued that Freya felt pride coming to replace the fury she'd been feeling a moment before.

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"Very well, the woman can live with us and I will not harm her," she finally agreed, reaching across to squeeze Ashleigh's hand gently. "You are a remarkable woman, Ashleigh. You make me proud to have you a part of my family. I know you would protect Elina with your last breath and I will do the same for Liam. I will protect his mate and place his needs before my own. "

The tension level in the room dropped and Rafe contained his sigh of relief. His thoughts turned to his sister and he wondered where she was, and if she had any inkling of what she'd been asking of the pack when she'd tasked him with keeping Reasa safe. So far, it had only been upheaval and heavy hearts. He had a feeling there was a lot more of that to come before events played out as they were destined.

To be continued...