

## Chapter 450

Outside the circle, understanding came to Gard. He had seen this once before, so many millennia ago when Anakatrine was just a babe and his mother had reigned as Queen of the Vampires. It was something so outdated it was long forgotten by all, apart from his sister it appeared. Ice ran down his spine as he watched on helplessly. "Don't do this, Anakatrine," he whispered. "Dear God, don't do this."

"I take from you that which was given." Talons shot sparks of fire into Reasa's body and she spasmed in pain, screaming into the air as her back arched and Anakatrine chanted in the circle. "I take from you that which you have dishonoured." More fire raced through Reasa's body and she screamed again, writhing in agony on the floor.*www.©ΔVεℓW0℞m.čoM*

"As the first vampire was born with the blood of his Queen, did she bequeath to him his strength, his vitality, his speed and his everlasting life. Her blood flowed in his veins; her blood made him what he was. As she once gave, now do I take back that which was always mine to give and will forever be mine to retrieve. I take back my blood, my honour, and my protection unto the day you should be worthy to once more know my benevolence."

The circle exploded with light, obscuring all sight for a handful of seconds. Reasa's screams where animalistic, Liam screaming with her, his head thrown back in in a rigour of chorded muscles.

Gard began to weep silently, weeping for the vampire within, weeping for Annie who would have to endure the most because of the actions of her other half. He wept for everyone and the fallout that would come from Anakatrine's justice.

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The light evaporated, and the electrical barrier vanishing along with the build-up of magic. In the centre of the room, Reasa curled in a foetal position, raw cries of misery rasping out of her throat as she rocked on the floor at the vampire queen's feet.

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Liam pushed Elina away, crawling to her, pulling her unresisting body into his arms and rocking her gently with tears streaming down his face. Accusing eyes met Anakatrine's, confusion warring with anger. "What did you do? What did you do to her?"

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"Yes, what did you do, Anakatrine?" Caleb's cold words cracked around the room, flat eyes staring at the woman who was his mate and yet someone he didn't appear to know at all. Everyone was looking at her, trying to ignore the plaintive cries of the woman in Liam's arms, staring at the stranger in their midst who wore the face of their Annie.

"You wanted justice, Callain. I gave you justice. Not the kind you wanted but a cruel justice nevertheless. I warned you that Annie would be harmed by the deeds done this day. I strongly suggest you remember that when you come to enact the decision I see in your eyes right now."

Caleb ignored her words, glaring at the woman he had loved for such a long time. His stomach turned as he looked in her eyes, searching for the girl he'd fallen in love with, not once, but twice, and not finding her. "What did you do, Anakatrine," he repeated in a flat tone, everyone shifting uncomfortably around them.

"I killed her, Caleb."

At his puzzled frown, Gard cleared his throat, moving away from Rayne's soothing touch to stand with them, completing the triumvirate that had once ruled the vampire nation in peace and harmony. "She stripped her of her immortality, Caleb. Thereasa is no longer a vampire. Anakatrine has made her human again."

Shocked rippled through the room, loud startled gasps of disbelief. The room exploded in sound as everyone started talking at the same time, denying it was possible, horror in the words they spoke. Liam scented the weeping woman in his arms, and stiffened as the truth of Gard's words was proven. Thereasa had no vampiric scent.

She was fully human now and so fragile the slightest thing could kill her. He held her more gently, weeping with her as he continued to rock back and forth. He would have to protect her from everything and everyone now or he would lose his precious mate. For the first time in his life, Liam turned hate-filled eyes on the back of the woman who he had trusted to do the right thing.

The expression on Caleb's face brought him some comfort. The Ancient was looking at his mate as if she had just grown horn and turned into the devil incarnate. Anakatrine would answer for her deeds this day, whether it was by his hand or Caleb's, she would answer.

Disgust rose in Caleb, so strong it was almost overwhelming. It took all his self-control not to reach for Anakatrine's neck and start squeezing. How could she have done this? When had she become this powerful? What did this mean for their people as a whole when it became common knowledge that there was a vampire queen running around who could strip away people's immortality? How could he be with her, this woman he didn't even know anymore?

"You bitch."

She blinked at him, confusion crossing her exquisite face as he spat out the words, his heart encased in ice.

"Caleb?" Annie whispered.

The End.

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