

Chapter 531

She nodded her agreement though she wasn't thrilled they would be going. It was necessary though, so they knew what they were dealing with. Testing her link with Caleb, she found it still closed. "Do you think Caleb is right, that I've changed so much that Anakatrine will take over for good?"

Gard stopped walking, frowning at the question. He chose his words carefully. Despite being livid with Caleb, he respected him as his King, and loved him as his Sire. "I can never be sorry to see Anakatrine. For so long she was the only thing in my life, mine to protect and love like the very air I breathed. I knew her better than Callain ever did, and I know that while there may be times she's required, she knows this is your life, Annie.

He reached for her hand and gave it a gentle squeeze. "She only wants to help you when things become too difficult for your compassionate nature. The problem isn't with Anakatrine, it's with Caleb and Callain. You were right when you accused him of lacking balance. Caleb is such a strong personality he's afraid Callain will become the dominant part and he's projecting that onto you. When he learns to listen to his past self and see that Callain doesn't want to take over, he will find balance and be able to understand the same applies with you."

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"How long do you think that will take?" Rhianna's words broke off in a wave of misery.

Gard gathered her to his side, keeping his eyes firmly ahead. "Soon, Annie. I have never seen any two people more suited to be with one other. You've crossed millennia to attain that end. Caleb just needs a little more time."**www.nOveLWOr(m).com**

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Caleb stared at the door as Rhianna and Gard vanished from sight. The rage within burned brightly and he couldn't find a way to dampen it down enough to be concerned that his mate was drifting further and further away. He knew the concern was there, it had surfaced enough that he'd pushed at Gard to keep Rhianna safe, however, the emotion was lacking. Any emotion other than fury was lacking.

Around him, he could hear the pack moving quietly, starting to come out of the shock of what they'd witnessed. Thereasa was silent, Liam's low voice whispering to the human. His antipathy towards the woman was still strong but how could he execute her now? She wasn't a vampire anymore and killing humans was frowned upon. If he continued to try to push for justice, Gard's words would come true, and there would be civil war and she would have won.

Rafe moved to Liam. "Take her to my Jeep. We'll be there shortly." His gaze turned to Caleb, waiting to see what his reaction would be. He'd promised Annie he would keep the woman safe. He meant to keep that promise.

Their eyes connected and a long moment passed before the vampire gave a slight nod. The Alpha managed to contain his sigh of relief. It would appear they were not about to go to war with the vampires today. He deemed it prudent to get his people back to the pack as soon as possible. "We're going home."**www.nOveLWOrM.Com**

The Vârocolac appeared to move as one, all coming to flank Liam as he rose gracefully for one of his huge size, Thereasa cradled tenderly in his arms. The woman was limp though conscious, her eyes glazed as if in another place. She put up no struggle being in Liam's arms, lying against his wide chest as if resting against an immovable object.

"If you hear from Annie...?" Rafe let his words trail off.

"I'll let you know." Caleb turned away from him, ignoring the Weres as they left the house. His thoughts were now firmly centred on how to minimise the damage of what had happened. He knew the Weres would remain silent but there were many vampires present today. Demetri and Mara could be trusted, but there were younger Praetorians affected by Liam's loss of control.

Demetri watched his friend with narrowed eyes. He was concerned for Caleb, concerned what this rift with Rhianna would mean for him, not only personally, but also for the rest of their people. If Caleb didn't get a resolution soon, who knew what would happen. "Mara, can you give us a moment?"

It was clear his mate wasn't happy about the prospect but she nodded and brushed her lips against his briefly. "Don't be doing anything stupid now. I like that head firmly where it is."

Her response was enough to bring a smile to his face, and he deepened their kiss, his body naturally reacting to her pull. "Would I be stupid?" he laughed, giving Mara a reassuring hug before releasing her reluctantly. "I won't be long."

Demetri waited until she had left before his glacial gaze rounded on his friend.

Caleb could see the fury in Demetri's eyes, but wasn't willing to hear what he had to say. Holding up a hand, he halted his friend's words before they could leave his mouth. "Don't think about going there."

The expression of disbelief that crossed the other man's face was almost comical. "You really think that's going to work on me after all these years, Caleb? It might work on others but never me; we've come too far for that. What the fuck is going on here? What's all this crap with Annie? How could you just let her go off with Gard like that? If the Council finds out what happened here today, you know her life will be in danger. "

"Of course, I know that!" Caleb hissed, his eyes glowing amber in his fury. "I have to get this fucking nightmare nailed down tight before they find out about it. Protecting Annie at the same time will only distract me and I can't have that right now. She'll be safer with Gard for the moment."

"And then what?" Demetri persisted, his own fear for Annie making him feel helpless, which in turn, pissed him off. "The way you're treating her is wrong, Caleb. Of all of us, you and Annie are the heart of all that is right with the changes happening to our people. If you break...not just you, but Anakatrine and Callain too, where does that leave the rest of us? Everything that has happened the last quarter of a century, you pushed us into it kicking and screaming for our own good. Are you going to throw all that away?"