

Chapter 553

Caleb screamed, flying from the bed with talons slashing out, his fangs elongated, his eyes pools of darkness. His body drenched in sweat, his eyes wild, he roared and slashed out, shredding the bed with his talons, flowing around the room, searching for any sign of threat. He quartered the bedroom, leaving no dark crevice unchecked until he was certain there was no danger in his vicinity. Only once he was fully convinced he wasn't under attack did the impact of his nightmares begin to sink in.

Caleb groaned, falling to his knees and shielding his eyes as a shiver wracked his body. It had been as if he'd been there, not Callain but him, Caleb! History had replayed itself in graphic detail, and watching it had been a torture he'd never believed imaginable. He'd been helpless to intervene, helpless to stop the carnage he'd witnessed. Callain's emotions had flown through him...the fury, the sheer depth of the vampire king's rage was more powerful than anything he'd ever personally experienced. Anakatrine! It had been Callain's only thought; trying to protect her even though he knew it was futile. *uw(w)W.W.nσ(v)@PWo⊙m.cōm*

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Caleb felt the same the same urgent need to save her but he couldn't influence what had happened no matter how much he'd wanted to. It wasn't even that the visions had shown too many vampires attacking. What he had witnessed was the past; it had already happened and couldn't be undone.

He'd never dreamed about it before; not once since Gard had turned the key in his mind that had awakened Callain. Probably because he had locked down that side of himself so tightly, the other man had never had the opportunity to influence any part of his life. Until now.

He rose to his feet, his feral side calmer, his amber eyes taking in the destruction of the bedroom. He was under no illusion that Callain had managed to take dominance as he'd slept. Caleb's normally tight control had slipped as a result of everything that had happened recently. The events at the Praetorian compound, his exhaustion, and Annie being gone had granted the vampire King the perfect opportunity to act. He was too drained to even consider being mad about it, the images in his mind refusing to leave.

Running a shaky hand through his damp hair, Caleb picked his way through the broken furniture as he headed into the bathroom. He stopped at the sink, staring at his reflection in the mirror. The face staring back at him looked worn and tired, two thousand years of living stamped all over it. He'd never seen the extent of all he was, of everything he'd ever done, reflect in his expression before. It was unsettling to see it now.

Caleb sighed, running some cold water into the sink and splashing it on his face. He couldn't give up now, not when there was so much at stake. Seeing Anakatrine dying had shaken him to the core and rekindled his need to protect Annie. He couldn't fail as Callain had. The consequences of that were unbearable.

Raising his head, he gazed into the mirror again and froze on the spot. Callain looked back at him, his face different but the colouring the same. He gaped at the stranger looking back at him, before blinking to shake away the image. When he glanced back, it was his own reflection he saw and he swallowed hard, relief coursing through him. First the nightmares, and now this. It was clear that his former self was determined to be heard.

Fuck it; maybe it was time to start listening to what the vampire King had to say. After all, he was screwing things up royally doing them his way. Maybe Callain had something to contribute that could prove useful? Closing his eyes he took a deep breath and then turned his mind inward, searching for the metaphorical door he'd locked Callain's persona behind for so long.

"You're determined to get my attention, so speak, Callain. Did you enjoy putting me through a blow by blow account of your failure?"

There was a long pause and for a moment Caleb wondered if he had just lost his mind, talking to himself. Then he felt another presence begin to emerge and he gripped onto the sink hard as he waited for a response.

"Enjoy is hardly the word I would have applied, Caleb, but you needed to see what you risk losing if you continue on your current path. You needed to understand what Anakatrine gave her life to protect. I only wonder if you actually saw what you needed to see, or if you are too wrapped up in your own arrogance that you missed the point completely."

The vampire King's tone was thick with condemnation, immediately irritating Caleb, but he dampened it down. It was pointless getting mad at him; he'd only be fighting with himself. It crossed his mind that he'd expected the other man's speech to be markedly different to his, but maybe having spent a quarter of a century in Caleb's head had made it more modern. "So, what lesson did you think I needed to learn? Enlighten me, vampire King."

"If you need to ask then it's clear I've failed."

This wasn't going well and was clearly going to be counterproductive until Caleb started trying to work with Callain as opposed to challenging him for dominance. The aura within was very powerful, so powerful that he wondered at the ease he'd managed to subdue it for so long. Had Callain let him retain control? If he had, then why?

Caleb sighed deeply, pinching the bridge of his nose as he tried to think rationally as opposed to emotionally. The vampire King wanted him to see something in the nightmares, so maybe he should look at them again in a more objective manner? The dreams had come in three segments. In the first one, Anakatrine was packing up ancient tomes and instructing Gard to take them somewhere for safekeeping. The second dream centred on Gard being forced to leave with Rayne with orders to protect her. The third and final image was, perhaps, the most disturbing of all; the end of the monarchy ruling the vampire nation and the vivid death of the King and Queen.

His mind whirled as he replayed sections of each dream, searching for what he may have missed the first time. "The books," he finally said, staring at his reflection. "With everything happening why did Anakatrine feel the need to save books, unless there was something of great importance within?" *⊙WW.⊙@V@PW.Rm.ċOm*

"Exactly!" Callain answered. Caleb could have sworn there was a hint of pride in that one word. "Why indeed? What do they contain and where are they now? Does Gard still have them? Can Annie use them now in this time?"

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The thought rocked Caleb and the sink broke under his hands as he unconsciously applied pressure.

"You're going to have to fix this place up before she comes home."

Cursing, Caleb stepped back, his face thunderous. "Thanks for pointing out the obvious." Turning on the shower, he threw himself under the scalding spray and ignored Callain as he worked through more of the dream. As he towelled off and retrieved jeans and a T-shirt from the wrecked closet in the bedroom, he pursed his lips as something else occurred to him.

"Anakatrine wasn't just saving the child. She was saving Gard too. He would never have left her if he'd known the danger was imminent."