

Chapter 555

There was bitterness and pain in Callain's final words that shocked Caleb and he ran his hands through his hair as he digested the vampire King's words. Callain was right. Caleb had spoken to Anakatrine as well as Annie, but he'd never allowed his alter ego to come out in all that time. Anakatrine and Callain were present in this timeline but kept completely apart!

Caleb groaned, holding his head in his hands. He would go mad if someone kept him apart from his mate, if he couldn't speak to his Annie, touch her and hold her for a quarter of a century. He had done this to Callain and Anakatrine, and just the thought of what that must have been like for them made him groan again. It didn't help that he hadn't been aware of what he was doing. The fact that he'd done so was enough to fill him with self-loathing. What the fuck was he doing?

It was all too much; he needed some space and time to think everything through. He'd reached the limit of what he could endure while talking to the vampire King. "Callain, I need to be me for a while. I need to think."*www.n@vêlWorm.Com*

"I understand, Caleb, but understand this too: I need to talk to my Ana. You've had her for twenty-five years. I need her too. Don't make me wait too long."

There was a plea in his words in addition to an implied threat. It made Caleb bristle; it also made him wonder just whether or not Callain was capable of more than he'd originally thought.

"You think you have me contained behind that door in your mind? I stay there because I know Ana would be upset with me if I caused you harm. Believe me, Caleb, I could take control of you any time I wanted, as could Ana with your Annie. Keep me apart from my mate much longer and I may risk her wrath by proving it to you."

There was a hot burst of power deep within, as Callain's power blazed brightly, backing up the words he'd just spoken. "Know this, Caleb. I have tolerated your disrespect of my mate because of your ignorance of events. I suggest you tread carefully going forward. Anakatrine has sacrificed much and deserves to be respected. She is your Queen."

His parting words disturbed Caleb even as his guilt escalated. Could he really blame his alter ego for protecting his mate? It was what he would do if someone disrespected Annie. How was he going to work this mess out? He didn't know where to begin, how to start coming to terms with what he'd learned. For the first time in his life, he felt truly alone and reached out to the one person who would always be there for him...

"Annie?"

He felt a surge of warmth, and the tentativeness of her touch with so much distance between them. He was surprised at how instantly she responded, even though he knew he shouldn't have been.

"What's wrong, Caleb?"

He swallowed hard, hearing her love, feeling it flowing down their mate bond as he opened up fully to her. He'd pushed her away and yet she was there in a heartbeat with no condemnation in her voice, just love and concern. "I've had bad dreams. They shook me up a bit. Are you safe, Annie? Is Gard protecting you?"

"He's being his usual insufferable self," she laughed, her love for her brother evident in her tone. "I'm fine, Caleb. There is nothing to worry about."

"Are you ready to come home?" A soft sigh whispered through his mind, full of such longing that he wanted to reach out and hold her tightly.

"Soon, love, but I have something I must do first. Are you ready for me to come home?"

His instinctive answer was yes, but he held his tongue. God, he wanted her home so badly that he wanted to demand she return straight away, but he knew he needed time to work out how to ensure her protection once she was home. He had many plans to make and he needed to wrap his head around everything he'd learned.*WwW.NoVeltoRm.C(o)M*

"Let me make sure it's safe for you first. I have a lot of thinking to do and while I want you here with me so badly, I know we both need this time to do what must be done. I do miss you, Annie, so very much. I feel as if half of my soul is missing."

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"As do I, Caleb. I know we need to talk, to find some way to work through this issue we have, but I have faith in us. A few more days apart won't kill us."

"Speak for yourself," he grumbled but there was humour in his tone, his chaotic thoughts calming as she bathed him in her love. "I love you, Annie. I know I'm being an ass and don't deserve you but never doubt that you're the only reason I wake each day, that you're the reason my heart beats. When I get my act together I intend to prove that to you, every day for the rest of our existence."

"I love you too, Caleb, so much that it hurts to be away from you. I'm just glad you're at the point where you want to speak to me again. Please don't close our bond, Caleb. Even if you're mad at me or Anakatrine, never cut me from you in that way. It hurts too much."

The muffled sob at the end of her words was enough to break his heart. He hated himself for putting her through this anguish. "I won't, love, I promise. I'll be here anytime you need me. I'll never leave you like that again."

He sent his love down their bond, mentally holding her close to soothe some of the hurt he'd caused. "I'm sorry, Annie, so very sorry."

"I know," she whispered back. "It'll be okay, Caleb. We'll be okay. I have to go now. You know where I'll be when you're ready."

He felt her leave and wanted to call her back, but knew that she was right to go. He still had to address his feelings for Anakatrine and he had so much new information to digest before he could settle that in his mind. Just knowing that Annie would come if he needed her was enough. Just knowing she still loved him and didn't hate him for the way he'd treated her would keep him going until he could hold her in his arms again.

The time for procrastination was over. It was time he got around to doing what he had to do so his Annie could come home to him. Caleb rose from the sofa and headed out of the house. It was still dark, dawn over an hour away, but he didn't care about that. He needed to speak to Demetri; he needed to start repairing the damage he'd done.

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Rhianna rose from the drenched bed, pushing back her tangled damp curls. The dreams had been excruciating, no doubt brought on by Anakatrine and most likely what Caleb had just experienced. Though shattered by reliving the past, Caleb's touch, his reaching out to her had given her hope.