

Chapter 556

He still loved her; he was still intent on protecting her. He wanted her to come home. The tears from her nightmares dried on her face; fresh tears falling as she hugged herself tightly. Caleb loved her. They would be together again soon and they'd find some way to work through their problems.

Rhianna headed into the en-suite bathroom to run a shower. They were staying in a small apartment Gard owned in the city; one of many properties it appeared her brother owned. As she showered, she replayed the dreams in her mind, frowning as the hot water flowed over her body. It appeared there was something Gard hadn't told her, something Anakatrine had kept quiet about too. She would be having words with him about that.

She was dressed and knocking on his door in less than fifteen minutes, her damp hair pulled up in a high ponytail. When the door pulled back, she stifled a gasp at his haggard expression. It would appear none of them had escaped the nightmares. "You neglected to tell me something, Gard."

He snorted, rolling his eyes as he stepped back to let her into the room. "I guess Anakatrine didn't want you to know until now."

Rhianna turned around from looking at the rumpled bed, arching an eyebrow. "Do you still have them?"

Gard looked at her expression and sighed. "Of course I do. It was one of the last things she ever asked me to do for her. Let me take a quick shower and I'll take you to them."

"They're here?" She couldn't keep the surprise out of her voice. For some reason, she hadn't expected that.

Gard smiled, glancing over his shoulder as he headed towards the bathroom. "Well, you didn't think I was going to bury them somewhere inaccessible for three millennia? I've always kept them close to where I've put down my roots. When I felt Anakatrine's presence awaken, I retrieved them as soon as it became apparent that you would be staying here. Meeting Rayne ensured I would always remain here too."

He closed the bathroom door and Rhianna headed back to her room. Excitement was starting to well up inside her. Gard had the ancient tomes of the vampire Queen and soon she would be able to read them. Maybe there was something within them that could help with the European problem? Maybe there was something within them that could bring her closer to Caleb? There had to be a reason Anakatrine had saved them and she was determined to find out what that reason was.

Demetri growled, coming instantly awake as the sound of the front door opening roused him from his sleep. Mara stirred at his side, sitting up abruptly as she too heard the intruder downstairs. She turned to look at her husband, but he was already flowing from the bed in one sinuous movement, morphing into his feral state before his feet touched the floor. He was halfway towards the bedroom door before the scent of their nocturnal visitor reached him, and he halted his movement, muttering a loud curse.

"Caleb?" Mara's head swivelled to her bedside table to glance at the alarm clock. "It's not even five a.m."

Demetri cursed again as he hunted in the dresser for some boxer shorts. He was irritated at his friend for showing up so early but beneath his irritation was an underlying trace of concern. Caleb must have had a good reason for turning up at this hour. Something had to be wrong. He was vaguely aware of Mara climbing out of bed as he headed out of the room to greet their visitor.

"Do you know what time it is?" Demetri growled out the words, raking talons through his rumpled hair as he glared at his best friend standing in his open doorway. He pushed down his vampiric side, scowling darkly as Mara appeared beside him, a hastily thrown on dressing gown wrapped around her.

She was still blinking sleepily, snuggling against Demetri's bare chest now that she knew there was no imminent danger. "Do you need me, Caleb?" It seemed prudent to ask; she was part of the vampire council, even though she was still a Youngling. The Ancient vampire staring up at them had appointed her to that position and he may have come on council business.

"Yes, I do, Mara. Sorry for the early hour, but I have to get up to the Praetorian Compound and then over to the Armand-Hanlon pack. If you wouldn't mind..."

"Come on, lover, let's get dressed." Mara tugged at her scowling husband, smiling up at his expression. Even petulant, Demetri was gorgeous. If it weren't for Caleb's unexpected presence, she would be so tempted to drag all six feet plus of muscled flesh and hard body that she craved right back to bed. Her man had "built for sin" written all over him and boy did he know how to be sinful; beneath the sheets, and over a table, and in the shower, and...

Mara stifled a groan and headed back to the bedroom, fighting down her sexual urges. Being a vampire had its disadvantages at times, like an inappropriately heightened libido when least required. If she couldn't keep herself under control, Caleb would have to wait a lot longer than his expression indicated he was willing to. $(w)Wu.\odot O(v)\odot(l)W_e\mathbb{R}m.c_e(m)$

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"What could he possibly want at this time of the morning?" Demetri grumbled, pulling on a pair of black jeans and T-shirt as Mara dropped her dressing gown.

"I guess we'll find out shortly," she sighed, heading to the closet to pull out some clothes. She had taken less than two steps before she shrieked as her husband picked her up and pinned her against the door, sucking her breast into his mouth. The touch of his warm mouth and tongue elicited a deep moan, even as she pushed him away. "Demetri! Caleb's here."

"Hungry," he growled, sinking his fangs into her soft flesh and suckling hard, her hot blood filling his mouth and making his head swim.

Mara stifled down another moan, threading her hands in his hair to pull him away. However, his strong suckling was igniting her previous erotic thoughts and she couldn't resist holding his head against her breast for a moment, liquid heat flowing to her core as he pulled roughly. It felt wonderful, but a part of her still focused on why Caleb was there, so with some reluctance she tugged at Demetri's hair to get his attention.

"Demetri, stop it. You're not hungry, and even if you were, you wouldn't get any real sustenance from my blood. You're just being difficult. Behave yourself!" He couldn't really argue with her; they'd fed from their private stock of human blood only last week.

Although it was highly erotic to feed from each other, they required human blood to be fully nourished; Mara more so than Demetri, as he was an Ancient and could go months without requiring food. He didn't though, preferring to join her with her more frequent feedings.

He was ignoring her words and she tugged at his hair again until he released her breast with a deep growl. Demetri watched her for a moment, licking his lips and then kissed her, long and slow, sliding his tongue deep into her mouth. His kiss branded her his, in every way imaginable, and held a hint of promise as well as danger. When he finally raised his head, Mara was struggling for breath and the heat in his gaze had her heart beating a wild tattoo.

"Fine, beautiful, we'll do things your way for now, but as soon as Caleb's gone, we'll discuss this further."

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Big brown eyes met his, which were only a heartbeat away from being feral, and Mara's heart skipped at the promise she read in his expression. She was going to pay for being the sensible one...again, and she couldn't wait.

Mara laughed, anticipation heating her blood and threatening to undo all the progress she'd just achieved, which was focusing her husband on the situation at hand. "Bring it on, Demetri, I'm not afraid of you. Now let me down. I need to get dressed, or would you prefer if I went to this meeting with Caleb naked?"

Her jibe had the desired effect and he released her with a loud curse. "Try it and see how far you'd get, woman!"

She was still laughing as she hastily dressed in jeans and a T-shirt, feeling his eyes on her back the entire time. Her man had woken up in one of his dangerous moods, the kind of mood that scared the shit out of just about everyone who knew him. It didn't faze her though; she'd just have to work on keeping him tempered until it passed. It would make the day interesting to say the least.

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