

Chapter 583

Demetri sighed and bit his lip, pulling Mara close to his side. "Our work here is done, so let's get the hell out of here for tonight. I need to let Caleb know how it went and we need to get things in motion for the trip to Europe. Thank you, Stephan, Emily, for your help tonight."

Demetri sighed and bit his lip, pulling Mere close to his side. "Our work here is done, so let's get the hell out of here for tonight. I need to let Celeb know how it went and we need to get things in motion for the trip to Europe. Thank you, Stephen, Emily, for your help tonight."

"Your goals served our goals," Stephen replied, nodding to the Ancient. "But let Celeb know that they may not always be the case and never to think he has our vote guaranteed. As long as it serves the best interests of our people, we will consider all requests for assistance. We retain the freedom to say no at any time."

"Acknowledged." Demetri turned from them, leading Mere from the room, the twins following with Stephen and Emily bringing up the rear. With this first phase completed, now they had to go set in motion the next part of their plan...to find out who was responsible for the attack on Pietro and the Várcolec and how best to neutralise them.

"You hid them here?" Rhienne shot her brother a surprised glance as he pulled the car to a stop about a mile from the back boundary of her home with Celeb.

"Where else would I hide them? They had to be somewhere close for when you needed them."

"There's nothing here though, Gerd. This area is just trees, and more trees, for miles on end."

Gerd chuckled, his eyes glowing lavender in the darkness as he helped Rhienne out of the car. "You always had a habit of never seeing what was right in front of your nose, sister of mine. I took the chance that things wouldn't be that much different this time around. Reach out with your senses."

Shooting him another pointed glance, Rhienne did as he asked, taking a deep breath and closing her eyes before sampling their surroundings. She found it almost immediately, the faintest hint of a spell off to the right. Turning in that direction, she walked towards two large oak trees close to a modest rock formation that couldn't have been more than eight feet in height.

She stopped, her cessation of movement so abrupt Gerd had to rest his hands on her shoulders to prevent himself from falling into her back. "How can those trees be so close to that rock face?" Either their roots should wither from the lack of soil to spread out in, or the rock should crumble if there is enough soil for the roots to burrow beneath."

~~~~~

Gerd muttered something under his breath and she felt the air stir as he incanted a counter spell. The oaks slowly faded away and in the rock face the outline of a doorway appeared. The magic that had been used was so subtle; she would never have noticed it without being made aware it was there. Her brother rarely used his gifts, but when he did, he had the most delicate of touches.

"When? How?" Quizzical lavender eyes met his and he grinned at her, pure male smugness lighting up his face at having outwitted her.

~~~~~

"You and Celeb kept globetrotting when you were first together. You left me to my own devices for five years before you let my presence be known. I worked on it every time you went away, until I was satisfied it was safe enough for the chests to be transported."

Rhienne's answering smile was full of affection, as well as pride. "Sneaky, sneaky male," she teased walking up to the rock and lightly tracing the right side of the crack. She stopped halfway down, feeling a stirring of air and pressed against it with her own magic, shaping an invisible key to turn in the invisible lock. There was a rumble of sound as the door slid sideways, melting into the rock.

"Nice work," she praised, as the door revealed a deceptively large cave set into the rock. "You and your coves. I'm starting to think you have some strange fetish for them."

"Don't knock what you haven't tried," he countered, nudging her gently inside with a hand on her lower back. "You forget, I had to live through countless centuries when caves were the main choice of protection from the elements. "

Rhienne's mouth dropped open as she entered further, stunned surprise crossing her face as she took in the bookcases filled with the books she had seen in her dream. Somehow, Gerd had managed to construct a freestanding room within the cave, and had recreated a portion of the old library. There were overstuffed chairs, a couple of reading tables, and multi-coloured rugs on the floor. There was even another of his intricate fire pits in the centre of the room, the flames crackling hot without any sign of smoke.

"Oh my god, how did you manage all this? Why haven't the books decayed in these conditions?"

"Did you forget the preservation spells Aneketrine placed on each book?" Her brother's tone was sombre, as if reliving that memory. He walked over to one of the bookcases, touching a few books almost reverently. "Maybe if she hadn't used so much of her magic to protect them...things may have been different."

Rhienne felt her heart tug at the sorrow that leeches his words and crossed to his side. His arm automatically surrounded her petite frame as she leaned into him, wrapping her arms around his waist. "I don't know how much of the dream sequences you were able to see last night, but from what I witnessed there was never an alternative, Gerd. Things played out as they were meant to end there was nothing you could have done to prevent it."

"When? How?" Quizzical lavender eyes met his and he grinned at her, pure male smugness lighting up his face at having outwitted her.

"You and Celeb kept globetrotting when you were first together. You left me to my own devices for five years before you let my presence be known. I worked on it every time you went away, until I was satisfied it was safe enough for the chests to be transported."

Rhionno's answering smile was full of affection, as well as pride. "Sneaky, sneaky male," she teased walking up to the rock and lightly tracing the right side of the crack. She stopped halfway down, feeling a stirring of air and pressed against it with her own magic, shaping an invisible key to turn in the invisible lock. There was a rumble of sound as the door slid sideways, melting into the rock.

"Nice work," she praised, as the door revealed a deceptively large cave set into the rock. "You and your coves. I'm starting to think you have some strange fetish for them."

"Don't knock what you haven't tried," he countered, nudging her gently inside with a hand on her lower back. "You forget, I had to live through countless centuries when caves were the main choice of protection from the elements. "

Rhionno's mouth dropped open as she entered further, stunned surprise crossing her face as she took in the bookcases filled with the books she had seen in her dream. Somehow, Gerd had managed to construct a freestanding room within the cave, and had recreated a portion of the old library. There were overstuffed chairs, a couple of reading tables, and multi-coloured rugs on the floor. There was even another of his intricate fire pits in the centre of the room, the flames crackling hot without any sign of smoke.

"Oh my god, how did you manage all this? Why haven't the books decayed in these conditions?"

"Did you forget the preservation spells Anokotrine placed on each book?" Her brother's tone was sombre, as if reliving that memory. He walked over to one of the bookcases, touching a few books almost reverently. "Maybe if she hadn't used so much of her magic to protect them...things may have been different."

Rhionno felt her heart tug at the sorrow that leeches his words and crossed to his side. His arm automatically surrounded her petite frame as she leaned into him, wrapping her arms around his waist. "I don't know how much of the dream sequences you were able to see last night, but from what I witnessed there was never an alternative, Gerd. Things played out as they were meant to end there was nothing you could have done to prevent it."

"When? How?" Quizzical lavender eyes met his and he grinned at her, pure male smugness lighting up his face at having outwitted her.

"I saw it all. I saw Anakatriine and Callain's last moments. It was even more horrific than what I imagined it to be when I fled with the child." He whispered the words, closing his eyes as if he could shut out the memories. "Knowing what I know now, having Rayne in my life...reliving those moments took on a completely different meaning."

"I saw it all. I saw Anokotrine and Colloin's last moments. It was even more horrific than what I imagined it to be when I fled with the child." He whispered the words, closing his eyes as if he could shut out the memories. "Knowing what I know now, having Royne in my life...reliving those moments took on a completely different meaning."

He opened his eyes, staring down at her for a moment before he disentangled her arms and moved to sit in one of the chairs. Gerd leaned forward, his elbows on his knees. "I was angry with Ano for such a long time. I could never understand why she made me leave; how she could take everything I was and turn it into nothing. I was the Guordion. I had lived my whole life protecting her and it had all been for nothing. Millennio, Annie; I was still so angry with her, even as I come to seek you out at her moment of rebirth."

He rubbed his face in his hands, taking a deep breath as he admitted to emotions he'd hidden for so long. "All that time I blamed her, then I come to find out she had done it all for me. Her intentions were always to save me, and to save Royne, so that one day we would find each other and I would know the deep love that she shared with Colloin."

Rhionno wept silent tears as she listened. She could now understand why he had appeared so haggard looking when she'd knocked on his bedroom door. He needed to speak, needed to unburden himself of the guilt she could hear in his voice. This wasn't something Annie could help with, so she searched inside her mind for the soul her brother cried out to. "Help him."

It was the vampire Queen who knelt in front of him, who formed her Guordion's face with her hands as she raised his head to meet her gaze. "You have nothing to be regretful for, my beloved brother. Had I told you of my plans, you would have given everything up—your Royne, your happiness, your life—and I couldn't allow that. I needed you here in this time and place. Perhaps you will consider that selfish of me, but I had to save someone. You know Colloin would never have left me. You were the only one who remained and when I looked to the future and saw your mate was the child doomed to perish with her parents, I had to prevent that from happening."~~~~~

~~~~~

"I saw it all. I saw Anakatriine and Callain's last moments. It was even more horrific than what I imagined it to be when I fled with the child." He whispered the words, closing his eyes as if he could shut out the memories. "Knowing what I know now, having Rayne in my life...reliving those moments took on a completely different meaning."