

Chapter 604

His quip earned him another glare and he grinned. "You do know you look scrumptious when you're annoyed and that gives me an overwhelming urge to eat you all up?"

"Caleb!"

Laughing, he swooped down for a lingering kiss. "Okay, I'll behave."

Waking up to find Rhianna gone had left him believing everything had been a dream. For a moment, he had panicked until he'd reached down their mate bond and discovered his woman was nearby, but clearly busy with something that was taking up all of her concentration. It had taken him a while to let the last of his pique wash away, but his tension was finally beginning to ease.

Dayton strolled out of the bedroom area, a towel wrapped around his waist and another briskly rubbing at his hair.

"We have guests, Dayton. Put some clothes on." Freya's neutral tone belied the expression on her face.

"Last I looked this was my home," he retorted as he shot her a grin, his tone unrepentant. "If people want to come calling at silly o'clock in the morning, then they can take me as I am."

The two women shared a look, one that was universal to all women with unruly males in their lives.

Rhianna laughed and rolled her eyes, unperturbed by the barely clad male, though Caleb's arm tightening around her shoulders told her he wasn't happy with the scenario. She leaned into him and sent a shaft of love down their mate bond, sprinkling in a healthy dose of lust to reassure him that he was all the man she would ever need.[www.\(n\)Ove1\(w\)Orm.C0m](#)

"We're sorry for the early hour, but we need to speak to Reasa and Liam. I believe Rafe is sending Liam over; for now, could I have a private moment with Reasa?"

"I will take you to her," Freya replied, sending another disapproving glance at her mate before she preceded Rhianna into the back of the house.

"I'd better get dressed or there will be hell to pay," Dayton laughed in Caleb's direction, his laughter turning louder at the expression on the vampire's face.

"Indeed," Caleb answered, his tone neutral, but his expression indicating the other male would be wise to do just that. He knew he had nothing to worry about from the wolf, but it was hard to dampen down his possessiveness sometimes. Making an effort, he gave Dayton a smile and headed towards the kitchen. "Can I help myself to coffee?"

"Knock yourself out." The wolf grinned as he too vanished, leaving the vampire alone.

Freya knocked on the bedroom door and wasn't surprised to see the former vampire sitting in the armchair before the fire, already dressed. She'd heard her stirring earlier and had kept her enhanced hearing attuned to her movements, but hadn't intruded.

She now clicked her tongue in vexation. "You should have called me to assist you when you showered. Mallen instructed you to keep your arm in the sling at all times." Her tone held reproof as well as chagrin. If she had checked earlier, Reasa wouldn't have had to struggle through the pain of showering and then dressing herself.

"I am not an invalid," Reasa answered, keeping her gaze averted. "The medication supplied has dulled the pain. I am managing just fine on my own."

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"Very well; if you wish to make life more difficult for yourself, then so be it. You have a visitor."

The former vampire turned her head, and her eyes flashed with hatred when she saw who her visitor was. "I do not wish to speak to her." Her words were directed at Freya, though her eyes never left the petite redhead once she'd entered the room.

"That's unfortunate but unavoidable," Freya replied, her words calm although her tone brooked no argument. "I will be outside if you require my assistance, Annie."

Rhianna smiled and waited for the door to close before she walked over to the bed and perched on the bottom. "I was sorry to hear about your accident, Reasa. May I call you Reasa, or would you prefer a more formal address?"

"You appear to do as you please, so why bother asking me?" the other woman growled, her eyes never leaving the vampire. "I have nothing to say to you and yet you remain here in my room. There is nothing I can do to forcibly eject you, you made sure of that."

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Rhianna sighed, though her expression was compassionate. She had known this meeting would not be easy, but hadn't anticipated just how difficult it would be. Anakatrine had stripped Reasa of her immortality and it was now left up to her to find some way to connect with the human woman.

"I know you're angry at your fate, Reasa. It's perfectly understandable that you feel that way. Everything you were has been taken from you and all you see in front of you is that you are being held captive here, too weak to take control of your destiny. You feel a great injustice has been done to you, and yet you choose to remain here with Freya after she injured you. Why is that?"

The former vampire remained silent, refusing to be drawn by her question and it took everything within Rhianna not to sigh out aloud once more. She had deliberately phrased her words to try to encourage dialogue, but it was clear it wasn't going to be that easy.

"Okay. I believe you stay because you can relate to Freya. She is a strong vampire, something you used to be, and therefore can understand. While you stay, it may give you some comfort; however, it also causes you much pain, for she is a living reminder of everything that you have lost."

"I didn't lose anything!" Reasa cried out, rising from the chair to glare at the redhead. "You took it from me! You ripped out everything I was and left this pale shadow in its place. Why didn't you just kill me? Why didn't you let the other one kill me, as he wanted to? Does it make you happy to see my suffering? Is this the punishment for shooting Liam?"

Reasa's breaths rasped loudly in the room, her chest heaving with the force of emotion behind her words. Rhianna fought down the overwhelming pity that rose up within her, remaining silent to allow the girl to have her moment. Reasa needed this closure; she deserved the right to confront the woman she viewed as her tormentor. She had to vent, to release the venom within her so she could start to move forward.

"Nothing to say, vampire?"

The words were spat out, but Rhianna remained quiet in the face of the other woman's fury. Reasa seemed oblivious to the tears that coursed down her face, despite her harsh words. Her pretty features were etched with agony, and announced to the entire world that she was dying inside. She was human now, and could no longer control what others witnessed. It would take some time for her to learn how to overcome her vampiric pride.

"Why don't you take a seat, Thereasa?" Rhianna finally said, keeping her tone light and soothing. "I know this is hard for you. I realise you hold me accountable for your misfortunes. I also know once you come to terms with this grieving process you are going through, you will understand that your actions required the direst of consequences. What would you have done had someone come into your coven and attempted to harm those you hold dear?"

Reasa sucked in a deep breath and scrubbed a hand across her face. She wanted to continue screaming at the redhead; but suddenly, the urge to crawl back into bed nearly overwhelmed her. She couldn't do that, so she sat back down in the chair and stared into the empty fireplace.

"What would your punishment be in those circumstances, Reasa?" Rhianna left the question hanging in the air, and resisted the urge to keep talking. Sometimes things had to move at the other's pace, and this was one of those times.[www.W.0ve\(1\)©0rm.Cem](#)

"Death," the human woman finally answered, her voice sounding hollow. "I would kill anyone who tried to harm my coven. There would be no mercy."

"That is why you are struggling so hard with this," Rhianna said quietly. "Not because you are no longer a vampire, though, that is contributing to your emotional turmoil. You are struggling with this because mercy has been shown to you, Thereasa. You expected to die for your actions and yet you still live."

"Why?" The word strangled out, anguish and a plea in her voice. Reasa turned haunted eyes on the vampire, confusion warring with her rage. "Why?" She asked again, only this time there was an underlying strength in her tone.