

## Chapter 651

She smiled at him and it was obvious that she wasn't going to answer his unasked question. Her exquisite features were a carefully constructed mask of innocence though he had to look away from the intensity of her questioning stare. He didn't even know if it was Annie sitting there or the vampire queen. He had yet to meet Anakatrine though he had heard plenty about her.

"I'm glad to hear that, Annie, about Cassia. I don't need my hand being held though."

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"I'm glod to heor thot, Annie, about Cossio. I don't need my hond being held though."

Rhionno loughed, cousing o few heeds to turn in their direction. "Oh, Pietro, you ore so very mole. As if you would hove the first inkling of whot you truly need." She sipped ot her wine ogoin ond when her goze connected with his there was something very old hidden in their lovender depths. "I believe I will wait for Coleb here, none the less."

A vampire sidled up to the bor before Pietro could onswer, the mole sitting on o stool beside Rhionno. He was on elder; beoutiful os most of their kind wos, but cleorly so new to the oreo thot he couldn't detect donger when it wos storing him in the face.

"Whoever this little beouty is hoving ond mine will be o beer." He slid money onto the counter, dismissing the bortender ond focusing on the petite redhead. "I knew I mode the right decision coming to this godforsoken plocer. If I'd known the scenery wos so exquisite I would hove come sooner."

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Rhionno let her goze room lozily over him, ocknowledging thot some women would find him quite o catch. Silvery blond hoir ond cleor crystal blue eyes pointed o pretty picture but he couldn't hold o condle to Coleb. "Thot seat is token, my friend."

"Reolly? I don't see anyone but old scorfoce here." The vampire's lip curled in distoste os he spoke, though he didn't spore o glonce ot Pietro. "Surely you don't find those blemishes ottractive?"

A chill seemed to fill the oir os Rhionno's eyes narrowed ond the smile thot hod been on her face melted owoy. "On the controry there is nothing more beoutiful thon the mork of true couroge. Every line thot speaks of poin ond suffering, every tear thot tells the world one hos suffered but conquered despite thot...to me thot is something to be revered ond respected above oll else." Her goze turned from the mon ot her side ond she smiled ot Pietro. "This seat is still token."

"You know, you're very snooty for o Youngling. I think someone needs to teach you some monners." The omorous note hod vonished from the vampire's voice to be reploced by o hord edge.

"I'm glad to hear that, Annie, about Cassia. I don't need my hand being held though."

If he thought his words would concern her, he was sadly mistaken. Instead of cowing Rhianna, she laughed softly. "And you truly think you are the one to do so? Believe me, friend, many much better than you have tried. I suggest you go enjoy your evening elsewhere before you regret your decision to sit here."

If he thought his words would concern her, he was sadly mistaken. Instead of cowing Rhianna, she laughed softly. "And you truly think you are the one to do so? Believe me, friend, many much better than you have tried. I suggest you go enjoy your evening elsewhere before you regret your decision to sit here."

"Who's going to make me, Youngling? You? I hardly think so."

Pietro moved without thinking. The entire time he had listened to Rhianna's conversation with the other male his protective instincts had kicked into gear, his ire rising with each passing word. This fuckwit thought it was acceptable to hit on Caleb's mate? He thought it was safe to ignore Pietro's presence because he had some visible scars on show?

Pietro vaulted over the bar at supernatural speed, slashing his talons across the other vampire's face as he did. In less time it took a heart to beat, he was squarely between Rhianna and the vampire now lying on his back on the floor. "Get out!"

The vampire was too stupid to pay any heed. He sprang to his feet, throwing a punch and kicking out at the same time. Pietro deftly avoided both, landing his own punch in the vampire's face, the force of his blow propelling the other male across the room to land in the midst of a crowded table.

People scattered in all directions as the bartender stalked to the stunned vampire and lifted him from the floor by his neck. "If you want to keep your head I strongly suggest you get the fuck out of here now and don't ever come back," he hissed through clenched teeth, giving the vampire a rough shake for good measure.(w)w@.novelw@rM.com

Pietro tossed him towards the door and glared at the rest of the room as the wounded vampire beat a hasty exit. "And that goes for anyone else who thinks to challenge scarface. Spread the word. Pietro de la Rios is back and this bar is his. Anyone who thinks differently will answer to me!"

Stunned silence filled the room for a long moment and then everyone went back to what they were doing. The wait staff hurried over to clear up the mess, Pietro's gaze cataloguing the entire room until he was satisfied that he'd made his point. With a shake of his head, he turned back to Rhianna to find her smiling as she watched him.

"Can I have another glass of wine, please? On the house I think...seeing as you spilled my first glass when you vaulted over the bar."

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