

## Chapter 679

Rayne let out a slow release of breath as the train rocked to a halt in Braşov station. For too many centuries she had avoided returning to where her life had first begun. Now she was a step closer to her beginnings, and she couldn't deny the feeling of homecoming that assaulted her.

She hadn't expected to have this reaction to being back in Romania and she wondered if Gard felt the same. Turning to look at him, she saw his gaze peering out to the station interior as they waited for the other travellers to alight. "When were you last here?"

He turned to smile at her, a soft glow in his eyes. "Not that very long ago," he admitted. This is where I tracked down Caleb and released Callain back into this world. He had left Annie briefly in Bucharest while he was meeting with Joshua here about his first stirrings of unease over Europe. I didn't know who Caleb was with at the time but I know now since our trip to Scotland. They were playing at being tourists. It was quite fun to watch them thinking they were being so clever when all the while I was following them."

"Caleb was aware something wasn't right that far back?" She was surprised to learn that.

Her mate shrugged. "I don't think it was anything definite at that point, just a faint tendril of speculation on his part from something a friend of Joshua's had imparted. Nothing tangible came of their meeting, and Caleb returned to Annie none the wiser that he had met me. I have a little skill in dream walking myself though it exhausts me so much I prefer not to do it. It took me three days to recover from our meeting and awakening Callain. I had to hide my identity from Caleb's mind until the time was right."

Rayne arched an eyebrow at him, mock-resignation crossing her face. "And I am only just learning this now? I think I may have to teach you the true definition of what being mates is supposed to mean." She was teasing him, enjoying seeing a flash of concern twinkle in his eyes before he realised that was her intention and he wagged a finger at her.

Her thoughts were already wandering though, and a speculative gleam entered her green eyes. "Do you think Joshua was alerted by Dante?"

Her question earned her a light chuckle. "You noticed that too then? Dante didn't appear the least surprised to see us show up at Louis' place. Given we managed to slip passed all the other vampires looking out for someone arriving in Europe, that could only have meant that he had been given a head's up by Joshua."

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"And here was I thinking you were just a pretty face," Rayne laughed, winking at his mock-outrage. "Yes, I would say Dante and Joshua are known to each other, though I don't think Louis is in on that secret." *uwWw.(n)ovelWôRm.cOm*

The passengers had all left the train, so they rose and exited onto the outdoor platform. Rayne admired the curving rooftop, the organic shape appealing to her ascetically. Inhaling deeply, she closed her eyes and let out a long slow breath. "You can smell it in the air," she sighed, a beatific smile gracing her lips. "The sweet scent of home."

"We're not quite there yet," he countered, reaching for her hand to pull her into the main building. "We still have a fair few miles to go yet, but I know what you mean. The air smells so much sweeter here. I suppose it always will."

Rayne smiled at the excitement in his tone, turning back to the earlier conversation as they headed out of the station. "Do you think Caleb knows Dante? Joshua is someone he trusts so there could be precedence that he may."

Gard pondered the question for a moment and then shook his head. "He would have mentioned him at some point. I think Dante is acting for reasons that only he truly understands. They just happen to coincide with our goals at the moment."

"I liked him, and Joshua." Rayne grinned at the narrowed glance her mate shot her way.

"Yes...I noticed. Perhaps you are the one who needs some further instruction on what a true mate should be."

"Why, Kothari senior...I do believe you are jealous." She burst out laughing at the dark glare he gave her, her amusement cutting off as he dragged her into a nearby alleyway and pinned her against the wall.

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"Keep it up woman and I swear I'll take you right here and now and to hell if anyone might walk past. Oh, and call me that again, and I will not only take my sweet time about it, I'll make you beg for everyone to hear." He sealed his threat with a hot, wet kiss that stole her breath away.

"Hmmm, yes dear," she whispered into his mouth, giggling as he palmed her breast and gave it a gentle squeeze.

He kissed her again and then they pulled apart, sharing a glance that told the whole world just how they felt about each other. Gard looped an arm over her shoulder and they headed back onto the street.

"Do you think he's okay?" Rayne asked after they'd walked a mile or so. Her gaze was flittering from face to face and then the surrounding buildings, but her mate knew exactly who she was referring to.

"He has to fly the nest at some point, Sarayne. Now is as good a time as any." Though he tried to sound convincing, he knew she could hear underlying concern in his voice.

"I keep wondering what we did wrong," she admitted, her voice low. "Did we try hard enough? Was there something we could have done differently?"

Stopping, Gard ignored an angry mutter from a passer-by who almost barrelled into him. He gathered his mate close, kissing the top of her head, as he ran a soothing hand down her back. "We have loved our son with everything that we are, Rayne. We have protected him as best we could and been there whenever he has needed us. There isn't anything else we could have done differently than to love him as we have. He will find his way, my heart. His journey may just be a bit rockier than most others."

He had told her the same thing countless times and she could only hope that it was the truth. It was so hard not to wonder, not to worry about the beautiful son she had brought into this world though. She ached for him to be happy, for him to one day find that other half of his soul and never be alone again.

"Come on, the sooner we get this mission over with the sooner we will be back home with Kothari."

Gard released her but retained hold of her hand, pulling her along the busy streets towards their goal.

After a while, Rayne came out of whatever thoughts had been dominating her mind, a perplexed look crossing her face. Ahead of them were scores of people all dressed in black gothic attire, all heading in the same direction. "Is there a convention or something on in the city?"

Gard laughed, genuine amusement shining in his eyes. "Ahh those are the vampire groupies," he chuckled. He pointed to a building up high, thick trees and bushes at its base, its red brick rooftops and steepled tower glistening in the sunlight. "They're headed to Bran Castle to see where Vlad the Impaler was purported to live."

His amusement rubbed off on her, shaking away her gloomy thoughts. "Seriously? They genuinely believe that Dracula lived there out in the open among humans?" No self-respecting vampire would ever have allowed humans to know of their existence, even in centuries gone past. Although, she supposed maybe back then there hadn't been a whole lot of options available to Gard's people.

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