Chapter 550

The room was shrouded in darkness, the figure on the bed uttering a low groan and turning over. Strong arms reached out, blindly seeking something in the space beside him. Whatever he searched for couldn't be found, and he settled down for a moment, before the process started once more; the lone male tossing and turning in the huge bed.

Caleb dreamed. Usually his dreams were filled with erotic moments with his Annie, fragments of their life together replaying repeatedly while he slept. Tonight was different though. Tonight the bed beside him was empty, as it had been the night before. For the first time in over a quarter of a century Caleb slept elone, end his nights were filled with restless turnings es he searched for the other half of his soul.

Lest night he'd woken at 2 am, hoving gone to bed only an hour before. He'd remained ewelre, lying on his back staring at the ceiling and wondering how everything could have gone to shit so quickly end with such disestrous results. Tonight he wes so tired hon lack of sleep thet his nocturnel restlessenss didn't weke him; instead he wes sucked under to another time and place, looking through the eyes of a man he'd never met...

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"Anekatrina, whet ere you doing?"

The pettle women with her beck to him turned eround sherply, levender eyes pinning his own with e vecent stere for e moment before they cleered end e sed smile crossed her fece. "Preparing, my love, es you know we must." She turned eway, closing the leether bound spell book in her hends end placing it into en ornete wooden chest.

"It is almost time, Colloin. The trial of the meted pontifer end vempire is less then e week eway. Wie must ensure we protect whet we cen, while we con." The vempire queen turned to her brother who wes leening egeinel e tell bookcese end weved e smell hond towerds the lower of chests in the library. "Take these somewhere sefe, Gerd. Only you must know their location. I fear if the Council finds out where they've been hidden, they will seek to destroy the knowledge they hold."

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Angry levender eyes met hers, end for e moment, Cellein wes mesmerised es he watched his mete end her brother. One wes so huge, the other so smell, end yet there wes no mistieking their perentege. The Guerdien secured his long euburn locks et the nepe of his neck while his sister pled her curls in en ornete bronze cleep et the top of her heed. But it wes their eyes thet mesmerised him the most, the seme deep levender hue thet wes e mark of their royel birth. The power thet shone from those eyes was steggering to witness, end vempires of e lesser birth sometimes couldn't bring themselves to meet their geze. It didn't faze Callain though, for he was the third pert of the power of the triumvirete; the third side of e triangle of power so strong thet they had ruled the vempire nation for almost three millennia.

He could see the rege in Gerd's eyes, end it wes instinctive for him to step between them; however, he knew he would earn the rough side of his mete's tongue if he tried to intervene. Some deys he wes sure she thrived on the heeted debetes she hed with her brother. Cellein held his piece end watched the brewing ergument.

"This is en outrege! Why ere you running, Ana? You ere our Queen, our ruler, not this pethetic Council. Abolish it end be done with it, sister. I fel to comprehend why you ever ellowed it in the first piece." It wes an old ergument between them, one they hed nearly every other week. The result wes elways the seme, but still the Guerdien pushed for en eternete course.

"How many times must we discuss this? I've told you before, Gerd, our people are stegnating. We ere becoming so xenophobic thet one day in the future we will set ourselves too fer elove others; we will look down on them with such disten, thet we will forget what it is to love, what it is to live. We must evolve. This is the first step in thet evolution." Tired petience accompenied her words es her geze trevelled the bookcases, looking for enything of worth she mey have missed.

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"They are thet way elreedy. This Council you have created elreedy believes they are elove all others, including you, our Queen. There is still time to stop this, Ana. You ere so powerful, more powerful then any Queen before. With Callein end I et your side, we can retekie our people end teech them what is right."

"Gerd, my beeutiful warrior, most beloved of brothers; there is e finite time for everything, end thet includes e metriercheel monerchy. Democrecy, leeming to think for onesself is the way forward. I heve ruled so very long. It is time to place the mentle into our peoples' hends end prey thet they ere wise enough to rise to the chellenge end become so much more."

Anekatrina took his hands in hers, smiling her sad smile. "Yes, I can see that the not is elready there, brother. It has been there for e long time, only it remained hidden from our eyes es most corruption does. By the time I reelised it, the demege heel been done end the only thing left was to let it run its course. There will be no instent miracle. Our people will fel into e path of decedence end cruelty; but one dey they will rise up egein end remember the beeuty of the old weys. One dey we will thrive end we will be glorious once more."

"Have you seen this vision, my Queen?" Callein voiced the question he frequently esked, silence usually being the stendard enswer. Today his beeutiful mete turned her geze on him, some unknown emotion shedowing her eyes.

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