

# Runs in the Blood



## Antiquing

*Sometime in the recent past*

He had forgotten how enjoyable it was to get out and do some of the antique scouting for himself.

It was early evening in Philadelphia, and Anton was taking a working vacation. Which was actually more vacation than working as he explored old haunts on the east coast. But tonight he was actually working, if somewhat lightheartedly, wandering through smaller antique shop. He was both checking out the competition, and looking for undervalued pieces he could possibly turn a profit on.

They marched in to the store behind a plump fifty-something women, wearing cat's-eye glasses and carrying a clipboard. Turning back to her students, a class of bored high-school freshmen, she tapped her clipboard to get their attention.

"Listen up! You all have your worksheets to fill out, so I don't want to see anyone goofing around. You break something, you bought it. Now there's a large storage area at the back of the store as well as the display floor, so I want to see some creativity in your selections. Let's get started."

As the rest of her interior design class dispersed to find examples for their project, Amanda Pruitt looked around uncomfortably for a new place to hide. She couldn't stand the cliques in the class and had been looking forward only to the chance to get away from school for a while. The field trip was a perfect opportunity.

Realizing that Mrs. Banner had said something about a storage area, she wandered quietly towards the back of the store, her hair hanging forward to obscure most of her face.

He was heading towards the front of the store to ask the clerk a question about what appeared to be a 19th century writing desk. Anton paying more attention to an oak carved mirror as he passed instead of where he was going. So he was surprised as he bumped into someone heading towards the back. "Sorry," he said.

Amanda looked up to say she was sorry as well...and then kept looking up, finally meeting his gaze. He was incredibly tall, much more so than anyone she'd ever met. Eyes widening, she stared at his handsome face (also much more so than anyone she'd met) and blinked. Heart pounding, she opened her mouth to reply but barely a whisper came out. "Sorry...sir."

He looked down to see a young woman which he had just bumped into. "It's okay," he said sidestepping, to move around her. "I should have been watching where I was going." There was something usual about her that Anton couldn't place, something different from the other teens who were now milling about the shop. "Again, I'm sorry," he said and then turned to closer examine the mirror that had caught his attention. Although it didn't now have one hundred percent of it.

Staring blatantly, Amanda swallowed and tried to calm her flustered nerves. She really should've been concentrating on her project. [Project--what project?] Holding her notebook tight to her chest, she tried to focus on the path before her as she headed back to the storage room. But it was hard to keep from turning around.

He was aware of her eyes on him. Anton's eyes slid over her, with a bit of regret. [Just a little on the young side,] he thought. She was pretty, and had the potential to become a great beauty. There was a strong tug of attraction to her, and in some other ages there would have been no questions about someone his age becoming entangled with a person her age. Unfortunately, in this day and age, he was limited to observing only.

Suddenly in the dusty and stale atmosphere of the storage room, Amanda looked around at the rows of

antiques and wished they had a few paintings she could look at. But the furniture and accessories would do for now, and she made a point of avoiding her classmates. She made sketches of the pieces she really liked, and wrote down the prices of those she thought could fit in to her projected floor plan. But all the while, she kept watching the door, hoping the handsome man would eventually reappear.

Finishing his examination of the mirror, he drifted back towards the storage room that he saw the young woman disappear through. There were a few pieces in there he wanted to see, he told himself. Not that he was interested in the person in there, he told himself.

When she saw him coming, she ducked behind a row of storage racks, where she could watch him without too easily being noticed. It wasn't the first time she'd had an instant crush on an older man. It was much easier to watch them from afar and dream of what it would be like to be with them. They weren't as immature as the boys at school...and without knowing them personally, it wasn't hard to pretend that they were nice to her. That she might marry someone like them some day. [A pipe dream,] she told herself. But it didn't stop her from imagining.

He glanced over the room, not spotting her. Disappointed, he walked in, looking at the smaller statues and vases on the shelves. Anton had been interested in larger furniture pieces, he wasn't going to object to purchasing one or two smaller items as well.

Carefully pushing a sold tag out of the way, Amanda bit her lip and tried to hold her breath. Her backpack was feeling incredibly heavy, but she didn't want to chance removing it. She didn't want to make a sound at all. Curling her toes in her shoes, she stared at his ripe lips. [I bet he's a really good kisser.]

Anton walked past the shelves, pausing to examine a porcelain statue of the the Virgin Mary on a lower shelf. Wanting a better look, he bent over, hands resting on his thighs as he looked closely at it.

He bent down, bringing his face almost level with hers and she jumped as he nearly looked right at her. Backpedaling quickly, she felt her backpack hit the shelves behind her and hurried to scurry away. But when she stepped forward, the shelf bounced back and one of the previously sold antiques fell off its perch and crashed to the floor.

"Oh my God!" Face burning, she stared at the shattered pieces in dismay. And then at the thousand-dollar price tag. Suddenly she felt like she might be sick.

Anton had also jumped back, startled at seeing a face there. His stomach dropped when he heard her words, and he was around the shelf, thinking that she had cut herself. "Are you okay?" he said, only barely registering the shattered vase on the floor.

She jumped again, gasping when he suddenly appeared. The color was draining from her face as she knelt down in front of the broken shards. Her gaze skittered about, waiting for someone else to notice or for her prissy teacher to come charging upon the scene. Looking back up at the stranger, she said, "I broke it. My parents are gonna kill me."

She jumped again, gasping when he suddenly appeared. The color was draining from her face as she knelt down in front of the broken shards. Her gaze skittered about, waiting for someone else to notice or for her prissy teacher to come charging upon the scene. Looking back up at the stranger, she said, "I broke it. My parents are gonna kill me."

Before Anton could tell her that it would be okay, Mrs. Emily Bokenkamp poked her nose into the room, having heard a commotion. Her eyes grew wide with horror as she saw the shattered pieces. "That... was a... Wedgewood jasper vase." Skipping over the strange adult, her gaze locked on the young girl. "What happened here?" she asked in an all too calm voice.

Turning bright red and a little teary-eyed, Amanda hung her head. "It fell. It was an accident."

"An accident," the owner of the store repeated. Her voice became acidic. "An accident that will have to be paid for."

"Of course," Anton said. He had taken one look at how she was dressed, combined with her young age and guessed that she wouldn't have that kind of money. "My apologies for being so clumsy, Mrs. Bokenkamp. Add it to my invoice, of course."

Amanda blinked. [His invoice?] She opened her mouth to object but was silenced with a look from his direction. Watching the store owner nod and walk away, she let out a deep breath and swallowed heavily. "I can't...believe you did that."

Anton shrugged in an offhanded way. "I've bought enough over the years from Mrs. Bokenkamp, so she will cut me a deal," he said as he knelt to carefully gather up the shattered pieces. He looked at her and raised an eyebrow. "Unless you would like to pay for it?" he said in a lightly teasing voice.

"I--" She waved her hands about, flustered. "I can pay you back." [Eventually,] she thought. "It may take a while..."

Anton shook his head as he picked up the last of the pieces and stood up. "Save it for your college fund. This," he said, "I can write off as a business expense." He looked at her still slightly panicked expression. "Are you okay?"

She was shaking as she pushed herself to her feet. "I thought that I would have to tell my parents what happened." She felt like hugging him. Finally a fantasy that matched up to reality. "Thank you. So much."

Anton smiled down at her. "You're welcome. It was my fault for startling you." [And if only you were a few years older, just for appearances sake.] At his age, five years wasn't that much of a difference to him. But he couldn't afford to draw too much attention to himself.

She almost said that she had been the one staring at him, but decided to keep her mouth shut. "Are you sure I can't pay you back? I feel bad about you having to spend so much money on my clumsy self."

"It's okay," Anton said. "Just be more careful around fragile things in the future. I may not be around to buy them for you then." He was so tempted to ask her for a kiss on the cheek as repayment, but he didn't want to pressure the poor girl, or make her think he would blackmail her for certain favors.

She smiled shyly, a slight blush coloring her cheeks. He was so very handsome and had dreamy eyes. Amanda couldn't help staring. "You've got five minutes left," Mrs. Banner called out to her class, making Amanda jump. "Finish up your work and meet by the door for roll call." Glancing back in the direction of her teacher's voice, she said, "I've got to go. I haven't gotten all of my assignment done." Smiling at him again, she impulsively leaned in and kissed his cheek before hurrying for the front of the store, her long hair flying behind her. "Thank you!"

"You're welcome," he called after her. He could feel his skin tingling from the kiss as he watched her head back to the front of the store. "My dear," he said to himself, although not quite sure why.



### *Sometime in the near future*

The tall blond waved Bryn down, hurrying the last few steps to meet her. "I was just going to take this in to the boss, but I'll give it to you instead. I think you left it when you moved. I found it in the back of the bedroom closet on a high shelf."

She showed Bryn the contents of the box, which looked like a wide vase wrapped in newspaper, along with a smaller, similarly wrapped bundle. Frowning, Bryn took the heavy box. "It's nothing I recognize off hand, but I'll take a look at it. Thank you."

"You're welcome." Turning on her heel, Vandala headed back to the elevator.

Then Bryn opened the door to Anton's office. "Looks like we have a mystery package."

"Really?" Anton walked over to take the box from Bryn. He peeked into the open lid, frowning when he didn't recognize the contents. "Where did you find this?"

"Vandala just gave it to me. She said we left it in the apartment when we moved."

"Hmm... still don't remember it." He placed the box down on the desk and pulled out the smaller of the bundles and started to unwrap it.

Chewing a piece of cinnamon gum, Bryn pushed herself on to his desk and sat watching him. She couldn't remember what, if anything, they would've left at the apartment. Except possibly an appliance or two that they were replacing. Certainly not a vase. But as he unwrapped the smaller bundle, it was something she'd ever seen in his apartment at all. It was, however, familiar.

"How did you get that?" she asked, her voice filled with wonder.

Anton looked at her, wondering why she seemed so surprised. "I bought it about fifteen years ago," he said, turing one of the shattered pieces in his hand, assessing it. "I was in this antique store in Philadelphia, and this young girl broke it. It was an accident, but the store owner was very hard nosed about her 'you break it, you bought it' policy. I figured she couldn't afford it, so I said that I broke it..." He looked her, a light of comprehension showing in his eyes. "It was you?"

She stared silently at the broken pieces, her mouth open as if she couldn't find the strength to close it. Even broken, the detail of the white relief work and the lack of luster in the black finish told it what it was. Wedgwood Jasper. The very same kind of porcelain she'd broken over a decade ago. Blinking, she turned her stunned gaze to him and stupidly nodded.

Anton put the piece down and reached over to pull her closer. "I didn't even recognize you. But you had your hair over your face, so I never got a good look." His hand slipped around her back, holding her tight as he leaned against the desk.

Tucking herself tight against him, she wrapped her arms around him as well and squeezed tightly. Her heart was pounding so loudly she was sure he could hear it. Uncertain what to say, she could only hold him and manage to keep breathing.

He held her tightly, gently stroking her hair. "You looked so frightened, and you told me that your parents were going to kill you. I felt your kiss on my cheek for a long time afterwards. I always wondered what became of you. If you married or had children." He smiled softly. "Guess I know the answer now."

She couldn't help smiling. He'd said almost the same words to her after they were reunited in Baltimore. "We just keep running in to each other. I wonder how many more times we would have met if we hadn't gotten it in to our heads sooner." Pulling back a bit to meet his gaze, she said, "I was convinced you saved my life that day. There was no way my parents would forgive me for breaking something so expensive."

"Good, because if your parents had killed you, I wouldn't have met you in Santa Cruz." He gently stroked a lock of hair back from her face. "One question, my dear. What were you doing hiding in that back room?"

She grinned, blushing slightly. "Waiting for my prince to come."

Anton pressed his lips to her forehead. "And I did. Sorry it took me another ten years to realize it."

"It's okay," she said, softly. "How much longer do you have to stay here? It might be nice to go home and find a place for the one that isn't broken."

Anton nodded, pressing his lips to her forehead again. "We can go right now, my dear." Reluctantly releasing her, he rewrapped the shattered pieces.

"We could put the broken pieces inside the other one when we display it. Would make an interesting conversation piece." She smiled. "You know, every time I went to Philadelphia after that day, I looked for you. I thought maybe you lived there. I kept hoping I would see you again."

Anton smiled. "I like the idea about displaying the broken pieces my dear," he said as he hefted the box. "I thought I would never see you again, since I didn't live there. But I always wondered what happened to that shy little girl that kissed me."

She blushed again. "Well, I wasn't that little. I weighed more then than I do now. And as for shy...I think that went out the window when I kissed you." Walking backwards toward the door, she studied his face. "You had longer hair then."

Anton walked to the door and juggled the open for Bryn. "And you wore your hair forward. I like it styled better when it comes away from your face. So I can see your beautiful eyes." He walked down to the elevator and waited for it to open.

Putting her arm around his waist, she squeezed him to her. "I like it better when you've got your hands in it. Or when you're burying your face in it. Even sometimes when I have to poke you because you're laying on it. Because I like it much more when you're around me than when you're not."

Anton smiled as he stepped into the elevator. The moment that the door was shut he put down the box on the floor and pulled Bryn against him. "Like this, my dear?" he asked as he threaded his fingers through her hair.

She let out a delicate shiver, leaning in to his touch. "Mmm. Perfect." Snuggling in to his arms, she wrapped her arms around his waist and pushed her hands under the back of his slacks. Bryn rubbed her nose against his chest, breathing in the masculine scent of him. "I remember wishing I could do this to you at the time, too."

"And what else would you have done? Because I wanted to do this." He leaned down and kissed her mouth, letting his tongue caress her lips. His fingers wrapped around her skull and held her close.

Sighing against his mouth, she sucked gently at his tongue and pushed herself to her toes to better meet his kiss. His warm body made her want to wrap herself up in his arms like a blanket. "I wanted...to ask you to take me home with you."

He pulled her lower lip between his, nibbling softly. "Well, even though it's fifteen years later, will you come home with me?"

"Well, since I don't have to get my parents' permission first, absolutely. And lucky for you, I'm completely legal now."

"Mmm...two very good points." He was just about to deepen the kiss when the elevator doors opened, revealing the first floor working areas. "Come on, then, my dear," he said putting an arm around her waist.

He didn't have to tell her twice. Hurrying along side him towards the car, she couldn't help giggling when they both practically ran across the parking lot. She waited very impatiently for him to open the door before climbing in. Once he was seated as well, and the vases were safely stored, she leaned across the center console and attacked his mouth again.

Anton's hand came up to cup her cheek. And he returned her kiss with a fiery passion. His other hand slid up and down her side. "Don't know if I can make it home, my dear," he moaned.

She let out a soft whimper, forcing herself to sit down and buckle her seatbelt. "You'll have to drive very fast."

And he had been hoping that she would say yes to a back seat quickie. Instead Anton buckled up and put the car into drive. Hoping that there were no cops between the warehouse and their home, he started speeding down the freeway, wishing he were driving the Jaguar instead of the PT Cruiser.

She was squirming in her seat, trying to keep her gaze focused out the side window. It didn't help that she could see his reflection in the glass. Pushing her foot down on the floor boards, as if she could somehow make the car go faster, Bryn bit her lip and tried not to shout out, "Pull over now!"

His body throbbed at the tone of her voice. Finding a relatively secluded spot on the freeway, he pulled over and killed the lights to the car. And he didn't even bother with the back seat. In one smooth motion he climbed over the console and lowered her seat into a reclining position.

"Did I say that out loud?" she asked, reaching over push her seat back as far as it would go. A little overwhelmed by the size of him, she hastily reached up and pulled him closer so he wasn't looming over her. "We're gonna get arrested for this."

Anton kissed her briefly before arching an eyebrow. "You want me to get off you and drive us home?"

She shook her head. "No, but maybe you should be on the bottom." Not giving him much of a choice, she pushed him to the side and quickly moved opposite him, pushing him down in the chair, before climbing on to his lap. She pressed her hands to his shoulders and leaned in to his body, kissing him eagerly.

His arms wrapped around her waist, pulling her firmly against him. Anton kissed her eagerly, fingers of one hand threading through her hair. The other hand went to her ass and squeezed one cheek teasingly.

Pulling back a bit, she stared at him, drinking in the sight of him, seeing him in a new light. A little shiver went through her as she stroked his cheek. "I love you so much. And I know that didn't change from yesterday to today, but it suddenly feels even bigger."

Anton continued to stroke her hair. "I love you so much, my dear. I think I knew it from the moment I met you in that antique store that I loved you. If you had only been a few years older, I would have swept you off your feet then and there."

"I wish you would have then. Would've saved so much time and frustration." Speaking of frustration, she let out a groan as she pushed away from him and resettled in the driver's seat instead. "I don't want to do this here. Not in the car." She quickly buckled herself in, moved his seat forward, and restarted the car. "I want to be comfortable and in our own home."

Anton let out a moan of his own. "Sounds good to me," he said as he readjusted the seat and put on his seat belt. "If I had asked you then, Bryn, would you have come with me?" he asked, curious.

"I think I might have. I probably would've taken a moment to find out if you were some sort of a pervert, first." She glanced at him, smirking. "And once I was sure, then I would've gone with you."

Anton grinned at her. "You're right. It would have saved us a lot of time." He glanced out the window, noting that the scenery was flying by. "I hope the kids don't mind spending the day with the grandparents. So I can show you exactly what kind of pervert I am."

Her foot pressed a little harder on the gas. "Mmm, me too." She could feel her stomach growling. "And hopefully we'll have time for snacks, too. Since we forgot to leave time for dinner."

"I'm certain there will be a whole lot of eating going on," Anton said. He looked out the windshield as Bryn pulled onto the exit. "You might want to slow down so we don't run into the gate, my dear," he commented as he hit the open button.

She almost didn't hear him in her reaction to his eating comment. Shuddering visibly, she stomped on the brake, throwing them both forward against their seatbelts. Giving him a sheepish look, she slowly pulled forward as the gate opened and drove towards the house.

Anton chuckled as he pushed himself upright in the seat again. Once they were in sight of the house, he hit the button that opened the garage door. In his eagerness, he fumbled at the seat belt, ready to leap from the car the moment it was stopped.

Stopping the car and hastily putting on the parking brake, she almost forgot to turn off the car as she swung the door open. Turning off the engine and unbuckling herself in two swift motions, she quickly climbed to her feet, slammed the door, and raced him towards the garage entrance of the house. "Upstairs or downstairs?"

He caught her at the door, figuratively and literally. Scooping her off of her feet, he panted out 'upstairs' as he kicked the door open. Carrying her through the house, he then charged up the stairs. and down the hall to their bedroom.

She didn't even think about protesting that she was being jostled like a rag doll. Instead, she clung to him tightly and just barely moved her legs out of the way before he hurried through the door. Laughing as he propelled himself and her on to the bed, she let out a grunt as he partially landed on top of her and quickly dragged him even closer.

Anton moaned as he climbed on top of her. He pulled his lips up the length of her neck before sucking on her earlobe. His hand started to work her blouse up so he could stroke her bare stomach.

Squirming a bit, she arched her neck back and kicked her shoes to the floor. She couldn't stop staring at him, wondering why she hadn't recognized him sooner. True, it had been a long time ago, but it seemed this she should've remembered something. Pushing her fingers through his hair, she pressed her lips to his temple.

Anton gently nuzzled her neck and turned to lightly kiss her lips. His arms wrapped around her waist tighter as he rolled over so that she was settled on top of him. He gently stroked his fingers over her face. "I should

have known my dear. I think in my heart I've always known, but I should have realized it earlier."

Bryn snuggled close to him, nibbling at his neck until he squirmed. "We both should've. But it doesn't matter, now that we know. Now we can just make up for lost time." Kissing her way to his face and then smooching him repeatedly, she started unbuttoning his shirt.

Anton moaned as her teeth teased his neck. "I thought we were still making up for the year we spent apart." His hand worked up her stomach to cup her breast over her bra. "And then there's the time between lives that we need to make up for too."

"Sounds like we're going to be very busy for quite a while." Sitting up a bit, she gazed down at him. "I had no idea. I thought, back then, that you'd probably be a good kisser, but who knew you'd be so good at everything else, too?" Grinning at him, she dove down and began kissing his chest, lightly nipping his skin as well.

Anton grinned as his hand squeezed her breast. "Careful dear, or I might get a swollen head. Oh, and I may become vain too." He licked along her neck and then blew, cold air tickling her soft skin.

Grinning, she couldn't help wiggling her pelvis against said swollen head. "So I see." Nuzzling his jaw, she softly murmured, "It's a good thing for me that I like you this way."

Anton grinned as he turned his head to kiss her lips. "So I see." His hand slowly stroked down her hip, slipping behind to cup her ass and pull her even closer.

Pressing her hands on his chest, she propped her head up and looked at him. "I can't stop staring at you now. Not that I could before," she admitted, with a wry smile. "It's just...it's as if you're suddenly a different person. I know that sounds dumb, because you aren't, but it feels like some whole new side of you had opened up to me."

Anton gently stroked her hair. "Am I really that different, my dear? Or is it that you didn't expect me to be as protective of Amanda as I am of Sabryn? That she wasn't deserving of the same love?"

She hadn't been thinking that...but that didn't keep her from hanging her head when he mentioned it. "I don't know. Maybe."

Cupping her cheek, Anton lifted her head so she was looking at his eyes again. "Well, let me tell you this. Amanda deserves every bit of my love just as much as you do. And if I had known then who you were, I would have taken you away from everything then and there."

Her eyes watering, she sucked in a sharp breath just before pressing her lips to his, hugging him tightly. Trying to hold back tears, she held on to him and started to roll, pulling him on top of her instead, needing to feel the shelter of his body. "I know...you would've."

Settling against her again, Anton tightened his arms around her. "Shhh... I'm sorry. I didn't mean to make you cry." He pressed soft kisses to her lips, and gently rocked from side to side, trying to soothe her. "I think I fell in love with you then, my dear. So when I saw you at the boardwalk, I was more than ready."

Clinging to him tightly, she sniffled a bit but managed to push away the rest of her tears. Pressing her face to his neck, she wrapped her legs around his. "I need you, Anton. I love you so much."

"I love you too, my dear," he said as he nudged her legs apart. "And you have me. You always have, and you always will." With a smooth and gentle motion, he pushed himself inside of her. He didn't make any motions beyond that, just savoring the feel of her.

Groaning softly, she tightened her hands on him and felt her breath wash back over her face from the proximity of his neck. Closing her eyes, she rubbed her cheek against his and gently kissed his mouth. Bryn pulled gently at his lips, regaining some of the passion from before. "I don't ever want to let you go."

Anton returned her kiss at first tenderly, and then with more excitement. Slowly his hips started to move. Little rocking motions at first, but they quickly gained force and speed. As did his kisses, tongue slipping in to probe her mouth.

Moving with him, Bryn lifted one of her legs higher until her ankle was resting on his ass. She moaned at the resulting angle, squeezing him tightly inside her. With her hands roaming over his back and her eyes focused

on his, she tried to imagine how it would've been if he had taken her away all those years ago. It was hard to imagine it could get much better between them.

Anton gently caressed her sides before resting on her shoulders, holding her in place. He was breathing heavily as his strokes became more forceful. His kisses carried more passion as well as he nipped at her lower lip.

"Oooh..." Sliding her hands down to his ass, she squeezed tightly, enjoying the firm contractions of his muscles. She pulled him even closer with each thrust, her breath gusting out of her lungs. Toes curling, she returned his biting, sucking kisses, her fangs sharpening against his tender flesh.

"Oooh..." Sliding her hands down to his ass, she squeezed tightly, enjoying the firm contractions of his muscles. She pulled him even closer with each thrust, her breath gusting out of her lungs. Toes curling, she returned his biting, sucking kisses, her fangs sharpening against his tender flesh.

Anton groaned as he felt her teeth scratch him. The feel of her fangs always pushed him to new heights of pleasure, and this time was no different. Finally giving in to his desire, he let his fangs sharpen and sank them into her neck as his orgasm started.

Squealing loudly, Bryn followed in to ecstasy along with him, digging her fingernails in to his ass. Every suck of his mouth brought about stronger shudders in her until she thought she might explode. Not waiting for his turn to end, she sank her fangs in to his flesh as well, completing the circle.

Anton let go of her neck and threw his head back with a roar. He could feel her drinking his orgasm as she drank his blood. He sagged against her with a low moan, not caring if she drained him completely.

Clutching him tightly, she drank until she couldn't breathe, then let go of him as she came up for air. Smoothing her hands over his back, she kissed his neck repeatedly and let out a contentedly sigh. "You have to stay here all day. I'm not letting you move."

"Good, cause I don't want to move." Anton snuggled on top of her, holding her tightly. "I love you so much, my dear. And I think this just confirms again that we were always meant to be together."

She nodded, smiling. "Yeah, it does. And there hasn't been a doubt in my mind for a very, very long time."

End Antiquing

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