

# Her Brother, Her Mate

## 1 Introduction

“What are you doing?” Mom hisses at me. “I told you to eat before or after us at meal times. What are you doing trying to sit with us right now?” I looked around the room. People all around are looking uncomfortable watching our exchange. I’m not even sitting at the alpha table. I snuck in and grabbed an apple. I was planning to leave for school right after, but Tommy Childes, our Gamma, stopped me to ask if I could run a children’s training program after school since his wife was feeling unwell. “Luna Mary, I was just asking Carli to sub for Elena today,” Gamma Tommy said to my mother. He is used to seeing the cold treatment from my mother towards me. Ever since I could remember, mom has been indifferent towards me. It wasn’t until 4 years ago, when my brother, Parker, turned 18, that she was downright hostile whenever I was near. I want to roll my eyes but restrain myself knowing dad is here too. My dad, Alpha Jared Snider, is watching my mom curiously from the head table while talking to his Beta, Anthony Reynolds, and his mate, Jessica. He couldn’t care less that mom was being a t\*\*t towards me. He’s probably just worried I might offend her in some way. He treats me as indifferently as mom used to. I could die tomorrow and he would be as remorseful as a stranger at my death. Probably wouldn’t even find time to attend my funeral. “I’m going to school,” I grunt, not wanting to be in my mother’s presence for much longer. “I’ll be at the gymnasium by 4, Uncle Tommy,” I address our gamma the way he has always encouraged me to. It’s funny that the gamma of our pack is more like family to me than my own family is. Mom’s eyes tighten when I call him ‘uncle’, but she doesn’t say anything more. She turns and walks off with a huff towards dad. “I’ll see you this afternoon, sweetie,” Gamma Tommy rubs my back comfortingly, “Have a good day at school. Learn something.” I smiled reassuringly at him, then headed out. Despite my parents’ emotional negligence, they still do a good job taking care of me financially. Probably just to keep up with appearances. I tossed my backpack in the backseat of my Range Rover, then set off for school. As the alpha’s daughter, and one of the top warriors, school life is much easier than home life. My focus has always been on my warrior training, but I do well in class and am friendly with everyone. My best friend Simone and her twin brother Casey found me at my locker. “Ey biotch. What has you lookin’ like you just sucked on a lemon? Mom again?” Simone asks me. She is glamorously beautiful, dressed immaculately in a fitted dress and stiletto heels. She looks more ready to hit

the catwalk than for high school Chemistry. Casey is a warrior like me. He is in a sweatsuit and Air Max trainers. His dark brown hair is messy like he just got out of bed, which works for him. He's handsome in that 'I don't have to try' kind of way. My auburn hair is in a pony tail straight down my back. I'm in sweats just like Casey, but opted for a fitted racerback tank and jacket instead of a sweatshirt. Simone probably looks out of place next to me and her brother, but she seems to like the contrast. It makes her stand out more. I shrug at her question, digging through the books in my locker until I find my notes for first period crumpled in the back. "You going to the lecture tonight?" Casey leans against my locker's door and asks. Gamma Tommy has his brother coming in from Blue Cliff Pack up in Canada to give us a lecture on vampire slaying. We've had a growing issue with rogue vampires not part of the local coven coming after innocent humans, and even our weaker she-wolves and children. Rogue vampires can't come out during the daytime, so we rarely have issues with them here in Florida. Miami has a large coven, but they claim they have nothing to do with the attacks. They don't seem to be lying, but they also don't seem concerned about the issue. "I'm covering for Elena at the children's class, but I'm going after. I want to meet Gamma Nathan since I'll be transferring to Blue Cliff after graduation," I tell Casey. His and his sister's faces contort into disapproval at the reminder of my plans for after graduation. I didn't originally want to move. I love Crystal Moon Pack. I love our powered sand beaches, the rich vegetation, and I love serving as one of the top warriors. The decision of my move was forced upon me by my mother. She sent the transfer request months ago and only told me after it was approved by both my father and the alpha of Blue Cliff. She said she didn't want me to still be here when my brother got back from university in Mississippi. Parker, my brother, is going to be the next alpha. He was always the only one in my family that treated me like an actual human. He remembered every birthday, gave me a gift on every holiday, and celebrated every one of my achievements, even when our parents forgot. He was the reason I wanted to be a warrior. He would train with me every day in middle school, telling me I could be his gamma if I became good enough. It wasn't until his 18th birthday that he started treating me like an inconvenience. He suddenly became hostile towards me, sneering and avoiding me until the day he left for college. He originally was going to a university close to home, but decided to go to one out of state and I have barely seen him since. I've given up trying to talk to him. The whole first year he was gone, I would call him often, and send him several texts a day asking what I did wrong. It wasn't until he answered one time, clearly getting busy with some chick as he roared at me through the line to leave him alone that I gave up. "Need help with the class?" Casey asked me, tossing his arm around my shoulders as we walked

to class. Simone peered at us, smirking, but didn't make any comment. I know Casey likes me, but with me leaving and him in the running for gamma, it would never work out. I love him like a brother, so I don't want to make things weird before I move. I'm not a kid person, though, and Casey is great with them, so I decided to take his offer. The kids will be happier having him there too. School drones on like it always does. After lunch, all my classes are physical education classes, my favorite classes at school. I'm wrestling with my women's P.E. coach, the only she-wolf in the school that is up to par with me as far as fighting goes. Coach Cunningham, or Fankie as she likes me to call her, is attempting to roll with me off the mat, gaining 2 points before I lock her head in my legs and cut off her airway. The whistle blows, forcing me to release her. We both take our stances on opposite ends of the mat, measuring one another and looking for the best openings. She comes at me, hands raised, hips heavy, slick and ready to go for the whizzer. I dropped and took the backdoor, pulling her to the ground and taking the top position. I lock my arms and legs around hers like a vise, rolling until I hear the whistle, indicating I won, once again. "Damn, Carli. You're going to have to start practicing with the boys. I haven't been able to get you the entire season," Coach Frankie gripes, wiping the sweat from her brow. I pick up the pack of alcohol wipes, wiping my entire body to avoid getting ringworm from the dirty mats. "I tried that last semester. Coach Brock won't let me anymore because I made his son cry." Coach Frankie snickers, "What a pussy." I laugh, picturing the look on Coach Brock's face when his son went unconscious in my hold, not willing to tap out. After school, Casey rides with me to the gymnasium next to the warrior building, letting his sister figure out how to drive home in the Jeep they share with her killer heels. It's a manual, and I'm laughing with him picturing her trying to balance the clutch in the stilettos. "I've been thinking," Casey says, "I'm pretty tired of Florida's humidity. How's the humidity in Canada?" I shrugged, "I've only been there once with my brother and Uncle Tommy in grade school. I don't remember anything about the humidity, but it was really cold. That was my first time seeing snow." "I'd like to live somewhere where there's snow." I looked away from the road to give Casey a curious, apprehensive glance. "Case, you're up for gamma. If you try to transfer, they will take your name out of the running. And what about your parents?" He leans his head back, putting his hood over his eyes like he's ready for a nap and shrugs. "I don't really want to be gamma if you're not here. Even if you were to stay, you wouldn't stay in the packhouse. What's the point?" "Case," I said his nickname like a plea, begging him to see reason. "Carli, it's bullshit that your mom is chasing you out of your pack. You love it here. I know she has always been a s\*\*t mom, but forcing her daughter to move is beyond cruel. I don't want to pledge loyalty to an Alpha who let his

mother drive his sister away. Even if I stay here, I'm taking my name out of the running after I graduate. I want to be somewhere where every member of the pack is treated with respect. If they don't respect you, their own daughter and sister, why the hell should I believe they'll respect me or any other member here." Despite the way my family treats me, they are decent leaders. Our pack runs smoothly, and dad is usually fair and just with his leadership. Mom isn't a fighter, but she excels at party planning and making everyone feel welcome. Everyone but me. I understand where Casey is coming from, but I don't think he has to worry. Parker will lead the pack in the same way our father has, and things will very much be the same as they are now. We dropped the discussion, mostly because I didn't know what kind of response to give Casey. I would love to have him come with me. Not for the reasons he wants to come with me though. It would just be nice to have a good friend from home with me, so I feel more comfortable in the new environment. Neither one of us are 18 yet, meaning neither one of us knows who our mates are yet. If we decide to move together, then start dating, our friendship will be forever ruined when one of us does find our fated mate. I'm not willing to lose Casey's or Simone's friendship. They're more my family than my actual family. I depend on them more than they know. The kids in the children's training camp are wild. This class is for elementary aged kids that show signs of being future warriors. They treat Casey like a human jungle gym, teaming up to try and tackle him to the ground. I take each kid off one by one and assess their developing skills, giving them assignments for what to work on in their spare time while Casey wrangles the group into doing exercises and drills. Once it's done, and the last of the kids are picked up by their parents, we both shower, then run over to the warrior building to the biggest conference room, just in time for Gamma Tommy and his brother, Gamma Nathan, to begin the lecture. Gamma Nathan looks more rugged than his younger brother. His flannel shirt and beanie stood out in the room full of warriors with beach attire and golden tans. I sit by Casey and listen intently as Gamma Nathan goes through a slide show on techniques to subdue a rogue vampire. Rogue vampires are more animalistic, relying heavily on their primitive instincts, making them hard to hunt. Gamma Nathan has pictures of rogue vampires and the images are startling. I've seen many normal vampires. Besides their red eyes, they look just like regular humans. They have a distinct smell, like rosewater and ivy. I hooked up with a vampire in the past. He was a great lay; extremely sexy and attentive. These rogue vampires look creepy, much more like what humans depict vampires to be like in their movies. After the powerpoint, Gamma Nathan starts taking questions. I raise my hand and wait until he nods his head in my direction. "How often do you have to deal with rogue vampires in Blue Cliff, Gamma Nathan?" He smiles warmly at me, probably recognizing me from the time I

visited when I was little. “We have 5 to 6 a year. Vampires turn rogue after feeding on their own kind. In some parts of the Canadian wilderness, feeding on their own kind is the only way for them to survive. With the shorter days and colder environment, it’s an ideal breeding ground for vampires who wish to live a more secluded life. Seclusion isn’t always a good thing, and they often have to turn on each other when they are hungry enough and they can’t find food.” “Do you have special training your warriors have to go through in order to effectively take them out?” Casey asks. “All our warriors, from the time they are pups, undergo training on how to kill rogue vampires. It’s something that is normalized in the north. When I met my mate and moved up to her pack from here 25 years ago, I had to learn things middle schoolers there already knew. After a couple of months, I was just as effective at dealing with them than any natural born member of Blue Cliff.” Gamma Nathan took several other questions before ending the meeting and releasing everyone to go home. After almost everyone else cleared the room, Uncle Tommy came up to me with his brother to introduce us. “I’m sure you remember, but this is Carli, Alpha Jered’s only daughter,” he gave his older brother a look, which I interpreted as he was using the term daughter loosely. “This is Casey Lewis. He is in the running to take over for me.” “It’s nice to see you again,” Gamma Nathan held his hand out to me, giving me a warm smile. I returned his firm handshake, grinning at my soon-to-be gamma. He shook Casey’s hand before turning back to me. “I’m excited to have you in a couple of weeks. My daughter and I will be staying here until your graduation to escort you back to Blue Cliff. She is flying down this weekend. Maybe you can show her around?” “I would love to. Casey and Simone have their birthday party on the beach this weekend. She is more than welcome to come with me. Right, Casey?” I turned to stare up at my friend. “Of course,” he smiles down at me. Tommy chuckles at the way Casey is looking at me, but I choose to ignore it. “Since we’ve missed dinner at the packhouse, do you two want to join us? We’re meeting Elena at Zaxby’s,” Uncle Tommy asks us. \*\*\*This book is a coming of age about a young woman that is coming into adulthood after being abused emotionally by the people meant to love her for her entire life. There will be a lot of growth, and there will be a lot of pain and frustration getting there. By the end of the book, I know you will love her and the family she has built as much as I, and thousands of other readers do.