

Chapter 3

"Hi!" Vanessa greeted when she saw Mason, a pack member and her friend who she was sure wanted to be more than just friends.

"Hi! You and your friend look so beautiful!" Mason replied with a friendly wink.

"You don't look so bad yourself." Seeing Mason all dressed up, Vanessa couldn't resist flirting a little.

"Who is she?" Mason asked, nodding toward Ciara.

"Oh, her? She's Ciara."

"Ciara...as in the blind human in the attic? She is really beautiful."

"Yeah, well, it's beauty wasted on a blind, good-for-nothing girl. Who'd want her?" Vanessa said, with a fake chuckle to hide her annoyance at Mason admiring anyone other than herself.

Then she led Ciara away from him to a corner from which she could watch her pack mates dancing and grabbed two soda cans from a passing waiter. Feeling slightly annoyed, she helped Ciara pop the soda can open, put in a straw, and wrapped Ciara's hand around the soda can.

Then she sat with Ciara and watched her pack members dance and have fun, even though she wanted to join them. After the visiting member of another pack almost kidnapped Ciara last time, Vanessa received a stern lecture from Alpha Donovan about her duties as the pack member in charge of caring for Ciara.

As they were seated there, Vanessa saw Jake come in, dressed in a nice suit, and looking much more handsome and mature than he always looked. However, what made her unhappy was the way he stared at the girl beside him and the way she was holding onto his arm like it was her life force.

She tried to catch his eye, but the cheerful smile on her face became very still when he caught her gaze and then looked away without a second glance at her or any sign of acknowledgment. Did she make Jake unhappy? Why was he ignoring her?

Deciding to find out for herself, Vanessa roughly held Ciara's arms and pulled the blind girl to her feet before stalking over to where Jake stood and dragging Ciara along without caring that Ciara's soda had spilled on her only presentable gown.

Jake was walking to the hall used for pack parties when he saw Serena, the daughter of the Alpha of the Red River pack, a pack known to have powerful and well-trained enforcers. She must have been invited as a guest to the party. Jake knew his mother wanted him to mate with Serena and since she looked pretty good and had the support of a powerful and wealthy pack, Jake thought it wasn't a bad idea. He didn't hesitate to turn on the full force of his charm on her as they walked into his coming-of-age party venue together.

When he saw Vanessa smiling at him, he ignored her and asked Serena—who was hanging off his arm—about her duties in her pack. Serena was listing them off when he saw an angry Vanessa marching toward him. He pushed his free hand into his pocket as he prepared to calmly deny any inappropriate thing Vanessa revealed to Serena.

That was when he noticed the girl Vanessa was dragging along with her. She had honey-colored wavy hair, beautiful light blue eyes, and very kissable bow-shaped lips. She also smelled delicious, with a passion fruit scent that brought his wolf close to the surface. And she had a lost look about her, as if nothing in the world was familiar to her.

Before he could get his wolf under control, Vanessa was in front of him. And his wolf took control for a second, forcing him to whisper in wonderment, "True Mate."

Vanessa looked taken aback as she followed his gaze to the girl beside her.

Jake quickly recovered from his momentary trance as his gaze slid from the girl's face to Vanessa's.

Then he smiled sheepishly at Vanessa as he combed a finger through his hair. "Vanessa, who is your friend?"

"This is Ciara. She's the blind girl that stays in the attic room." Vanessa spat out bitterly, taking delight in the frown that appeared on his face.

Jake frowned and was about to tell Vanessa not to joke around when Ciara turned to look in his direction. Their eyes connected, but hers were empty of life. The knowledge that the silver-blue eyes he'd thought were beautiful belonged to a blind person made those eyes so creepy that Jake had to take a step back.

"Ex...excuse me." Disturbed, he pried his arm out of Serena's hold and walked out of the hall.

Vanessa was too busy watching and enjoying the sight of a distraught Jake, that she didn't notice Serena moving toward her until Serena shoved her to the floor.

Then Serena had the audacity to hiss down at her, "Stupid bitch! See what you've done!"

Vanessa was so enraged that she reacted immediately, forgetting that Serena was an Alpha's daughter, and she was just a pack member. She stood up and squeezed her can of soda over Serena's head, releasing a rain of soda on Serena's well-coiffed hair and expensive dress before dragging Ciara away.

"You! You'll pay for this! I'll get my father to get you thrown out of this pack!" Vanessa could hear Serena yelling, but she didn't care. She may not be an Alpha's daughter like Serena, but her father was a council member, so no one could casually throw her out of her pack.

When Vanessa got to Ciara's room, she started pacing restlessly as she tried to come to terms with the fact that Jake's true mate was Ciara.

"I can't believe that stupid Serena pushed me to the floor like that and almost embarrassed me! And you! You're much more despicable than Serena. You stole Jake from me! How could you, a stupid blind good-for-nothing, be his true mate?! After all I suffered by taking care of you to gain his mother's favor. It turned out the blind bat I was caring for was his true mate all along. Ugh!"

Vanessa stopped pacing and stared at Ciara, who was seated on her bed, dozing off. Then it occurred to her that it was impossible for someone like Drew to mate with a stupid blind girl like Ciara. So she still had a chance to be Luna.

After realizing this, Vanessa decided to find Jake and speak to him. He left without Serena, so maybe she was behaving like a jealous hag by responding the way she did when she saw Serena hanging from his arms?

When Vanessa got to Jake's room, she didn't knock. Instead, she turned the knob for the first time. As she pushed the door open, she was shocked to see that the same guy who had led her to the hall looking so distraught, was making out with a girl she recognized as one of the pack's newly adopted rogue wolves that served as maids in the pack.

"Jake?" There was a question in her voice, but Jake didn't respond.

Instead, she had to stand there staring as Jake continued kissing the maid. The short yet hour-long minute of that kiss was enough time for Vanessa to come to terms with the fact that since Jake had slept with her, he was no longer as cautious as he used to be. And that meant that his mother had been honest with her and Jake never planned to mate with her.

"What?" Jake asked, looking at her with a callous look she had never gotten from him before.

The girl in Jake's arms didn't even care that there was someone else in the room as she made a sound that sounded disgustingly like a purr, standing closer to Jake as if she wanted to meld their bodies together. Vanessa felt a little disgusted because she knew that she had probably behaved like this the night before.

"Jake, what's all this? You told me I was going to be your mate and you're here making out with this tramp!" Vanessa growled.

Instead of apologizing, Jake was unrepentant. "You don't understand, do you? Let me spell it out to you then. I was trying to get into your pants. Everything I said was sweet talk. Besides, I wasn't missing anything, anyway. You acted like you were the most innocent nun and hid the fact that you've been with other guys before me. It was fun, but I've gotten what I wanted from you and I don't want you anymore, understand? Now get out! I'm busy."

Tears blurred Vanessa's vision as she turned to walk out of the room. She paused mid-step to look back at Jake. "You'll regret this, Jake."

"Yeah, keep thinking that way if it helps you sleep at night," Jake called out in a mocking tone. "I'm going to be your Alpha. There's nothing you can do to me."

Updated to the latest version: August 22, 2022

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