

## Her Vampire, Her Mate Chapter 15

Vincent POV

It took me some time to soothe my love out of her panicked craze. I almost wish I had never left this morning, but I had to feed. I was cutting it close as it was. My mother was not a lowly vampire, only being two generations from a purebred so I have to feed weekly when I'm exerting too much energy. I exerted far too much yesterday and needed to recharge.

It took nearly 4 blood bags at the coven's main bank to restore myself completely, and then the high from the bloodlust took another hour to reside. I had barely made it to my club by the time Parker had called me, telling me in a panic to go back home to Simone.

She is still naked from her massage, wrapped in nothing but a towel and even that was hanging off her, not offering much coverage to her delicious curves. I didn't like her being exposed to the pup or my employees, though I knew Jerome and Philippe were committed to each other, not attracted to women in the least. I have this possessiveness for Simone I have never felt before in the entirety of my life.

I wonder if it's the influence of the wolf-mate bond? Other races always mocked the were race for their irrational tendencies when it came to their mates, but here I am jealous of a couple of gay men seeing too much of Simone while she was in her panicked state. I'm now being completely irrational.

Carli is shifting through Simone's outfits in the guest room. I hear her before she comes into my bedroom, passing me a pair of shorts and a tank top to help Simone into.

"Underwear?" I ask her.

"Oh, right!" she turns back to go searching in the guest room for a set. Simone chuckles at that, bringing my focus back onto her lovely face.

"Of course, she forgets underwear," Simone shakes her head, making my brows furrow. "Don't worry about it," she chuckles again.

Carli comes back in with a lace set I'm suddenly very excited about putting Simone in them and taking her out of them later. Carli closes the door quietly, giving me and Simone some privacy.

"Sit up, love. Let's get you dressed then we can figure out what's going on."

"I know what's going on, Vin," she mutters, rubbing her nose into my neck, sending those shivering, arousing currents over my skin. "He knows. He's probably been watching us this entire time. He knows you're my mate. He's going to try to kill you."

I scoff, "He can try, my love, but he won't succeed. Don't let my suits and demeanor fool you. I am a vampire. Not a lowly one either. I can handle an arrant fairy brat."

I know I may look less impressive physique-wise compared to Parker and the other werewolf men she is used to being around, but vampires don't need muscle for strength. We get it from the vitality in the blood we drink. I'll just need to feed more, but I'm confident I could overpower a dishonored fairy.

"I don't want you to get hurt," Simone whispers in a broken voice, "I don't want him to kill you."

"Simone," I give her a disapproving look, "I am not just saying these words to make you feel better. I can handle him. He can't hurt me."

She starts crying softly again, her nose back to my neck. I sigh and rest my chest on her head, moving her legs gently so she's straddling me. Maybe I can show her that I'm more than strong enough to handle the silver-haired tripe. I'll ask Parker later to fight with me just to show her I will be okay.

After she calms down, I assist her into her clothes, kissing her between articles of clothing to help her remain calm. When she is finally decent, I call Parker and Carli to join us in my bedroom. Simone is clinging to me and I don't want to disturb her by urging her to move again. If she's content, I want to keep her that way.

"So, what exactly is going on?" I ask Parker.

He sits in one of the chairs next to the glass wall, looking up at the sky. Carli goes to sit on his lap and offers me a sympathetic smile. "He's airborne. He

stole his father's pegasus. You being on the top floor of this building is not ideal."

I nod, "So what's the plan now?"

Parker looks at Carli and I can tell they are communicating through their mind tricks.

"I think it would be best if you both came back to the packhouse with us," he responds.

"I could simply move us to a lower floor or to a new location," I offer, not entirely on board with moving to werewolf territory.

"He knows she is with you, though," Carli argues, "If the freak has been watching for her like we think he has been, then he's watched you guys together and has to know you're important to her." I sigh thinking about us last night on the balcony. It seemed romantic at the time, but if he saw that; saw me devouring her body as she screamed my name into the night sky he would probably take that as a challenge. I would if I were him. I should have moved us indoors. Not that it would help all that much. Most of the walls in the condo, including the ones in my bedroom, are glass. We're practically in an aquarium.

"I told him I found my mate," Simone says softly, looking at the two of them from where she's resting her head against my chest, "He didn't get violent until I told him that. He thinks I'm playing a game with him to have him chase after me. He will try to kill Vincent to get to me," she licks her trembling lips. She turns her beautiful amber eyes up to me, "Please. Can we go to the packhouse, please? I don't want to lose you."

I repress the urge to roll my eyes, sigh, and kiss her adorable nose. "I told you, I will be fine. But, yes. If it helps you feel better, we can move to your packhouse until this is resolved. I just need to make some arrangements with work," I turn my gaze on Parker, "I want my men to accompany us. Simon and a few others. I have a feeling I will not get many chances to leave, nor will I want to leave her side again until this is resolved. I have businesses to run and need my men to be able to come and go as needed."

"Not a problem," Parker agrees easily, which surprises me. I know he is not like his father in his prejudices but I still didn't expect him to so readily agree to vampire men coming and going on his pack lands as I needed.

“We’ll get one of the visiting alpha suites set up for you. They’re larger with an office,” Carli told us, “Matt and Lilly are preparing it now. Mitch and Mark have been taking turns guarding your parents but we can move them to the packhouse too if it makes you feel better. I’m sure they can find someone else to run the charter for a couple of days.”

Simone shakes her head, “Dad won’t agree to that. I don’t think Aiden will go after them anyway. He always tried hard to get my parents to like him.”

I hate hearing that this psycho she’s hiding from was trying to get in her parent’s good graces. That unfamiliar jealousy and possessiveness are creeping into my chest again, making my skin crawl with the urge to tear Aiden limb from limb just for having a past with Simone.

Parker’s eyes meet mine and he gives me a knowing smirk, irritating me further.

“We have an escort on their way here. Why don’t you both pack what you need for the next few days so we can get going? Hopefully, now that we know how he escaped and what we’re dealing with, we can find him soon,” Parker tells us, tapping Carli’s thigh so she stands.

Carli takes one last lingering look out the window, up at the greying sky, and I know she’s searching for any sign of the fairy boy. I hope he comes after me. I hope I get to see him face to face. It would be my greatest pleasure to ease my love’s anxieties by tearing the life from him myself.

Simone POV

Pulling into the packhouse parking lot, I saw Lilly and Matt waiting to greet us at the packhouse doors. Lilly was an amazing host. She and Carli pretty much swapped roles in the pack. The gamma female is usually the one who manages the warriors with the gamma, and the Luna acts as the host and mother of the pack.

That traditional role bull s\*\*t was unacceptable to Carli. She didn’t want to be anything like her mother. Luna Grace, Parker’s grandmother, was a warrior and strong Luna without all the housewife nonsense and Carli was using her as her role model on how to be a Luna; not her mother.

Simon was following behind us in one of Vincent’s SUVs, along with two additional men who were to act as security and runners for Vincent. They

were all vampires, but more buff and muscular than regular vamps. Simon reminded me of Vin Diesel with fairer skin. Vincent said he worked for him since the year before his parents turned rogue, and it was Simon who advised Vincent to let Carli and Parker deal with them so he didn't have to commit parricide. Simon wasn't just the head of his security, he was a wise advisor and he trusted the man fully.

Lilly leads our entourage upstairs to the Beta floor. Trevor is still unmated so he's living alone in the Beta quarters. Thanks to Alpha Jared and Luna Mary the entirety of the alpha floor is just for the alpha quarters now. It used to have a couple of suites for visiting alphas, but those were moved down to the Beta floor soon after Mary had her Luna ceremony.

The story is that a visiting alpha made a comment about her smell while pregnant with Carli, since it didn't match Alpha Jared's, while coming out of his room on the alpha floor and Alpha Jared renovated the packhouse the next week so Mary wouldn't have to share living space with anyone.

Parker and Vincent drop our bags off in the bedroom while Simon and his men do a quick sweep of the apartment.

I've never lived in the packhouse, but I've stayed with Carli plenty of times. I'm at ease being here, but I can tell that the vampires aren't entirely comfortable being on werewolf territory.

"We'll leave you to settle in. Dinner starts at 5:30 and goes on until 7. Lilly said she had the fridge stocked so feel free to eat here if you're not comfortable coming down. Each of the rooms has a bathroom and they should be stocked with clean towels and toiletries. If there is anything you need that's not here, let me know," Parker tells Vincent.

"Will your pack members be okay with vampires impeding on their meal?"

"I hardly think you will be impeding anything," Parker laughs, "We're werewolves, man. We like food and won't lose our appetites because of you guys. I'm not my dad, and most of the older generation is retired. No one will bat an eyelash at you joining us. You'll even sit at our table." He walks over to the wine fridge in the open kitchen, cracking the frosted door so we can see in. "Elena picked this up from Lady Delilah today for you guys. She said if you need more, let her know. Since you are a member of our pack now, being Simone's mate, Lady Delilah is willing to make deliveries out here for you and

your men, but until she can figure out logistics Elena will be bringing them in for you guys.”

The fridge is filled with blood bags. Hearing that Parker’s mother-in-law is willing to go for more when they needed it, and Parker calling Vincent a member of his pack seemed to put the vampires at ease.

“We need to go get Rosie now,” Carli pulls me into a tight hug, “We will be back to eat with you guys. You have a key to our apartment too if you need us.”

“Thanks, babe,” I hug her back, kissing her cheek. I already feel so much better being here surrounded by my pack and so many warriors who I know can protect my mate when I can’t.

Vincent and I settle into our room. He pulls me to the bed and I snuggle into his chest. I know we’ve only been mated for a day, and known each other for a week, but that’s how strong the mate bond is. That’s why I felt like s\*\*t for days when I was fighting it. It totally consumes you, making your mate the sole reason you do anything and everything. I’m no longer worried about my safety. I’m worried about him. Being here with my pack where I know he is safe made much of my anxiety slip away, leaving me feeling exhausted.

Laying on him and smelling his spicy scent brings me so much comfort and relaxes me to the point that I drift off to sleep.

I’m woken with Vincent’s fingers caressing my face. “My love, it’s time to wake. It is dinner time and if you sleep any longer your friend has threatened to come in here and wake you herself.”

“5 more minutes,” I grumbled, rubbing my nose into his chest. His chest rises and falls as he chuckles softly.

“You are a sleepy head. It’s adorable trying to wake you up.”

I groan, pulling the throw blanket over my head so he stops staring at me. I probably have spit on the corner of my mouth again.

“Up, up, up, my love. My men are hungry too. They will not be comfortable going down there without us.

I sigh, stretching out beside him, “Fine.”

We get a few questioning stares coming down to the dining room, but nothing hostile. Just curious. The food is served buffet style and it looks like it's Italian night. Trays of spaghetti, chicken alfredo, lasagna, different loaves of bread and side dishes, and an impressive salad bar are arranged outside of the kitchens. We get our food then Vincent carries both of our trays to the table. Carli and Parker are sitting, trying to console a screaming Rosie who has a breadstick pried between her wet fingers.

Simon surprises all of us by ducking down next to Rosie's high chair. She stops crying to watch him with apprehension, then giggles uncontrollably when he pretends to eat the mushy breadstick in her hand, chomping his jaws dramatically and making biting sounds. He does it a few more times before straightening up and taking a seat with Carlos and Stephan at the end of the table.

"Wow, do you like kids?" I ask him, sitting in the open chair next to Rosie.

Simon blushes slightly and Vincent snickers, "I'm the oldest of 10, ma'am."

So it's not so much about liking kids, he's probably just used to be the one to console them when they get fussy. This makes me like the guy all the more. Even Carli is staring at him with a dreamy look in her eyes. There's something about a man who's good with babies that just makes your ovaries tingle.

I catch the look of displeasure Parker is sending Carli and try not to snicker. The chick has baby fever bad, and I know what's going on in both of their heads without having to ask. Simon looks slightly uncomfortable now and is focusing a little too much on cutting up his lasagna, which makes me smile with amusement.

"Do you want kids, my love?" Vincent asks me, leaning down to block my view of his employee.

I smile up at him, "I want your kids," I say boldly, making his eyes heat momentarily.

"Eww, stop. It's dinner time. Don't make me gag," Matt comes, sitting next to Vincent while Lilly takes the spot next to Carli.

"You don't gag when I tell you I want your kids," Lilly jokes with him.

“That’s different. Nothing you do could make me gag. She’s like my sister though.”

“Casey wouldn’t have gagged and he’s her actual brother,” Carli chimes in.

“No, he would have separated them, though,” Matt looks at Vincent with a serious face, “Trade me seats.”

“No! You go sit somewhere else,” I glare at Matt.

“Okay. Vincent, come sit with me.”

“Screw you,” I laugh. Carli starts giving Matt crap about how cringy he gets with Lilly while Lilly starts asking Stephan and Carlos how they like their rooms. She asks Simon too, but he’s not paying attention. He’s scrutinizing the door with a confused expression.

“Laura’s late today,” Carli sighed, checking her watch. “She was supposed to be here with the evaluation reports on the minors applying for advanced warrior training. The ones taking the warrior career path.”

“She said she had to drop her brother off at home first then she would be here,” Matt looks towards the dining room doors. “Look, she’s here now.”

Laura is Carli’s assistant and right-hand woman. She’s a strong warrior and graduated a year before us from high school. I look over and see her dark hair in its usual french braid and her dark eyes staring at our table. She smiles brightly and waves but stops about halfway to our table. Her face contorts in confusion and her eyes dart away from Carli down to the other end of the table, landing on Simon as her nostrils flare.

I think she’s getting upset at the sight of vampires at our table, and am about to say something about her rude behavior, but Simon suddenly gets up too, his chair falling back with a loud clatter and his ruby eyes looking back at Laura in amazement and....adoration? Is this what I think it is?

Before I can even blink, Laura launches herself at Simon, and he catches her easily in his arms, staring at her with so much wonder and confusion.

“Mate,” she growls fiercely before smashing her mouth to his. The folder in her hands drops with a soft thud and that breaks all of our surprise. Carli jumps up cheering loudly and soon half of the room is joining her.



“Good for him,” Vincent pulls me into his arms, kissing my temple as my hands are covering my mouth in amazement, “I guess I won’t be the only vampire joining your pack.”

“Can I come in?” I knock on the open office door in the suite we’re staying in. Vincent looks up at me from his laptop, raising his eyebrows and a soft smile on his lips.

“I asked you a very similar question last night,” he leans back and smirks, curling a finger at me, imploring me to come to him. I blush at his crude joke, licking my lips at the memory. I sit in his lap, wrapping my arms around his neck, and plant a chaste kiss on his cheek.

“What are you working on?”

“Right now? I have to approve supply orders and matching principles for my club and restaurants. I had to let go of several employees last month and now I try to keep on top of these things myself.”

“Why’d you have to let them go?” I look up at his beautiful ruby eyes, adjusting myself in his nap as I stamp down my desire for him. Our bond makes it hard to concentrate when we’re this close.

“My accountant found it odd all my restaurants were ordering more supplies, but the revenue remained the same. Each one had about a 20% increase in supplies bought, but we didn’t have the sales to justify the increase. It turns out one of my managers who oversaw receiving and a few older employees from my father’s time were taking the excess goods and running their own side business.”

“Did you involve the police?” I ask him. That’s grand Larson, isn’t it? Or is it embezzlement? My parents had a captain skimming funds from their accounts and it took years of lawyers and court cases for the guy to receive any sort of jail time. It was a big stressor for them at the time and Alpha Jared had to get involved or they likely wouldn’t have even gotten him thrown in jail in the end.

“I involved Delilah. The man was one of my father’s friends and he was trying to start his own restaurant to get out from under my authority. She dealt with it and my business got its money back. Since there are so many employees that were hired by my parents I keep a close eye on these kinds of things now.”

I nod, resting my head on his chest. I was going to business school, preparing to one day take over for my parents. I find it fascinating to watch Vincent work. He is very confident and efficient with his work. Everything is done with precision, even working from the packhouse. I'm learning more watching him the last few days than I learned during my first two years in college.

Vincent kisses my forehead, then goes back to reviewing invoices and ledgers while I daydream in his arms.

Laura just left with Simon before I came in to bug Vincent. She marked him the first night we were here so they are mates now. Since he can't mark her without the risk of poisoning her or making her his sire, she's going to get his lips tattooed on her neck. I thought it was an incredibly sweet gesture and ask Vincent to do the same, but he told me he liked my skin and neck unblemished, so he could be fascinated over its changing color when I get embarrassed. That, of course, caused me to blush, making him chuckle and rub his fingers down my reddened skin.

That was a few days ago. Since then, I can feel his agitation and possessiveness whenever we are around other unmated males in the packhouse. Carli was a huge flirt in high school, and I wasn't much different. She never messed with pack members physically, and neither did I, but we were very open with our flirtatious behavior.

That stigma kinda stuck to this day. Since I am technically unmarked that causes many to still openly come onto me, and I can feel the rage build in Vincent each time. I wish he could just mark me the way I did to him.

Vivian Meyers has a human mate who never marked her. She also lives among humans, coming to the packhouse only when necessary. If we live among vampires after Aiden is found, then being unmarked won't be a big deal. Right now, though, I'd love to have some way to show everyone here I belong to him.

"What are you thinking about, my love?" Vincent purrs at me, his lips brushing against my temple.

I suck my bottom lip into my mouth nervously, "It's not too late to slip out and tag along with Laura and Simon...."

"Simone," he looks at me sternly, "I'm not that insecure to need to scar your skin in some way to claim you as mine. That's primal and I'm not doing it." It

makes me feel slightly rejected when he acts like putting a mark on me would somehow taint me or ruin my body. He rather would allow others to think I'm single than put a blemish on my skin?

"Like I did to you?" I glare at him. Does he think it's some menial primal instinct? I know he's not a werewolf, but I thought he understood the deep connection marking your mate created. It connects our souls, making us one. If that's some primal insecurity to him then what does that say about me?

"I didn't mean it like that," Vincent goes to rub my arm, leaning his face into mine but I'm too annoyed for kissing face and hop out of his lap.

"I'm going with Matt and Carli to the training grounds," I inform him, "It's going to be pretty primal, all the half-naked men dripping sweat on the field. Muscles flexing, the thick scent of testosterone in the air," I sigh dramatically, "Maybe I'll try training too. I feel the need to tap into my primal side all of a sudden. Anyway....don't wait up."

I twirl around and high-tail it out of the suite before he can respond. By the tightening of his ruby eyes, I know he caught on to my sarcasm. I jog up the stairs to the Alpha floor. I need to borrow an outfit to train in.

Vincent POV

I did it now. I've been fighting the animalistic urge to publicly claim her for days now, with all these horn dog mutts sniffing around her, but I'm losing the fight. After she told me the story of what happened between her and this Aiden and how he wanted to place his seal on her skin marking her as his I resolved myself to never be like him. I would always put her independence and well-being before my own.

I didn't intend to insult her or make her feel inferior. I just wanted to assure her she didn't have to scar her body to make me happy. I'm happy just being with her.

Rubbing my eyes from staring at the screen all day, I try to gather my composure to follow her out to this pack's training grounds. It seemed like a barbaric thing to me at first, but it's much like boot camp or military training. The warriors are very much the soldiers and watchdogs of the werewolf community. The training they undergo is formal and precise. I was impressed when we accompanied the alpha and Carli to training our first morning here.

They had safety equipment and everything. It was not at all the free-for-all, barbaric act I had pictured in my mind.

I change from my dark jeans and loose button-down shirt into workout attire. Carlos and Stephan follow me out to the SUV and ride to the training field with me. I usually let one of them drive, but I'm itching to get close to my love sooner. I want to make it to her myself.

Pulling up, I barely remember to put the vehicle in park watching the scene before me.

Simone is in tiny underwear-like shorts and a chesty support bra. Her curves and beautiful body are on full display in the skimpy, painted-on outfit. She has a radiant smile as she talks to a very large man I don't remember seeing before. She hooks her arms around his thick neck and pulls him close as his abnormally buff arms wrap around her narrow waist. His shaggy hair is hiding his face, but I can tell by the pull of his ear that he is smiling as brightly as her.

He kisses her cheek, then leans his head against hers as her teary eyes bore into him. I can feel in the bond her relief and overwhelming adoration that he is there with her. I'm f\*\*\*\*\*g livid. She is my love, my girlfriend, and my mate. My mate. Just because I'm a vampire and I didn't force a visible mark on her perfect caramel skin doesn't make her any less mine.

The primal desire to tear her from his arms and defend our bond consumes me and I rip out of the car and storm over to them in an animalistic rage.

Simone POV

Getting up to the alpha suite, I find Carli and Elena talking in the living room. Elena is on the ground with a crawling Rosie, laughing while laying on her side as Rosie squeals, her little chubby thighs and arms working overtime to book it, ramming right into Elena's chest.

"It's scary that she's mobile now," I snicker, thinking about all the damage she can do while crawling around like a hyper pup.

"Tell me about it," Carli rolls her eyes and smiles, "She gets into everything."

"And you want more," Elena smirks at her.

Carli shrugs, "we make cute babies."

I laugh at Carli's antics. Living here and seeing her and Parker together every day I see how crazed her baby fever is. She jumps Parker's bones every time she thinks they're alone. He doesn't mind. Looks like he's enjoying himself teasing her all the time.

"Where's Uncle Tommy?" I asked peering around into the kitchen, thinking I might find him in there.

"Going to run an errand," Elena smiles mischievously at Carli.

"What errand?"

Carli shrugs, fighting a smile as her bottom lip juts out. Elena bites her lip, then coos, "It's a surprise," looking at Rosie.

"Weirdos," I look between them.

"You're a weirdo," Carli sticks her tongue out at me.

"Whatever," I roll my eyes and smile, "You going to training soon? Can I tag along?"

"5 minutes. Yeah. Vincent coming too?"

"Nope," I scoff, "Too primal for him."

"Awe. Poor batty. He doesn't seem like the fighting type," Elena jokes, making me feel irritated slightly that she's teasing my mate who's not here to defend himself. But, she's not wrong. He really doesn't seem like the fighting type. That's what makes me so scared about Aiden finding him. I don't want to belittle his claims of being able to defend himself, but it seems unlikely to me. Maybe I can learn to defend him. It's got to be in my genes. Casey was a freaking beast.

I grab a set of training clothes from Carli's drawer. The chick hates sweaty clothes so they're always minimal, but working out in the Florida humidity and heat that's understandable. Most bikinis are way more revealing than her workout clothing so I just shrug and slip them on. I grab one of Parker's shirts so I have some semblance of modesty going to and from the training grounds.

"I'm glad you decided to come with me today. Makes things easier," Carli muses while driving us.

“Makes what easier?”

“Your surprise!” She smiles brightly at me.

“The surprise is for me?” I ask, my mood lifting at the news. I love me a good surprise. I start thinking of all the shoes I’ve shown her recently I wanted, then grimace thinking about Uncle Tommy picking out a present for me. Maybe it’s an order-online pick-up in-store kind of present.

“He’s not picking it out, is he?” I ask.

“Nope, just picking it up,” she shifts in her seat excitedly. She has me all excited now. I feel like a giddy little girl on the way to the toy store. Or a grown-a\*s girl about to get a new pair of Jimmy Choos.

“When is my present getting here?”

“Soon, actually,” Carli peeks down at a text message on her phone, “f\*\*\*\*\*g soon,” she repeats, a devilish smile on her lips.

When we get to the training field, I slip out of Parker’s shirt and jog over to leap into Hillary’s arms. She and Daryl are police officers now and this is the first training session she’s been able to go to. She catches me in the air and spins me around as we giggle like school girls. It’s been a few weeks since I’ve last seen her, but the way we’re acting you would think it’s been years.

Mark jogs over to us, leaping into Daryl’s arms, mocking me and Hillary as he squeals annoyingly. Daryl laughs, playing along with him and blowing a kiss at Hillary.

It’s like a high school reunion all of a sudden. All of our group from our senior year is here as Carli and Mitch join us. Even Matt and Lilly are laughing at us from the sidelines. The only person missing is my brother. I would give just about anything to have him here with me now. I always felt safest with him nearby.

He’s my twin. We shared a womb and everything our entire lives. Even shared a car and bank account up until the day he moved to Canada with his mate. I still see him on holidays and when I have time to fly up periodically, but I feel myself missing him more than ever now that this crap with Aiden has started.

Even with Vincent, if he was here with me I might have been a little braver about approaching him the moment I found out he was my mate. I knew Casey always had my back. He would protect me and help me through everything in life like my rock. I always had him to fall back on.

“Your gamma sure seems like a lazy prick for letting you guys f\*\*k around as you wish,” an amazingly familiar voice comes from behind me. I freeze, my arms locked around Hillary’s neck still as my eyes widen in shock. Is that....?

“Not as lazy as the dickhead gamma from Blue Cliff Pack,” Matt shouts back, chuckling with Lilly.

“I see you’re letting anyone join warrior training now. Look at this princess,” that amazing voice laughs from right behind me.

I turn around abruptly, screaming as I launch myself into his arms. “CASEY!” I feel tears fill my eyes. Is he really here right now? This can’t be real. I bury my nose in his neck, inhaling his familiar, comforting scent. The scent of my protector and biggest ally. He’s here. He’s really here.

“Hey sis,” he chuckles wrapping his arms around me, squeezing me against him tight.

“What are you doing here?” I wail, unable to stamp down the crying.

“I heard there was a fairy here that requested a thorough a\*s beating. Maybe even death. Parker requested my assistance. Told him it would be my f\*\*\*\*\*g pleasure.”

“Courtney didn’t rid you of that dirty mouth yet?” Hillary laughs at him.

“It’s a Childes trait. Living near her family f\*\*\*\*\*g enhanced it.”

“It’s like he’s Carli’s twin, not our sweet, bubbly Simone’s,” Daryl snickers to his mate.

“f\*\*k you,” Carli and Casey say at the same time, making everyone laugh. The three of us were inseparable since we were toddlers. She’s as much or sibling as each other.

“I missed you, Sim. I’m sorry you’re having such a shitty time right now,” Casey pulls away from me, wiping the tears from my face and holding my hands.

“It’s not all bad,” I shrug, “I have my mate and now I have my brother here with me.”

He smiles brightly, “I heard all about this mate of yours. Carli called him a Latin Edward Cullen on crack.”

“What does that even mean?” I laugh at him.

“I don’t know. Court made me watch the f\*\*\*\*\*g movies before flying here to help me figure it out. Worst day of my life.”

“Day?”

“Whole f\*\*\*\*\*g day. You would have loved it. She bought us team Edward and team Jacob shirts, we ate nothing but Italian food the whole day. I’m only eating with my bare hands and drinking scotch until I get my man card back.”

“You think you can live off finger food for that long?” I laugh, throwing my arms back around his neck, and pulling him towards me. Casey links his arms around my waist, holding me tight, and kisses my cheek.

“I’m glad you’re here,” I tell him as he rests his forehead on mine.

“Me too. I can’t wait to meet this glittery mate of yours,” he chuckles, making me laugh softly as a tear runs down my cheek.

There is movement beside me, and in a flash, Casey is being pulled from my arms and thrown across the field. Vincent is standing beside me, his eyes glowing and his nostrils flaring as he pants in aggression. Why would he do that? What’s wrong with him?

Before I can ask, Vincent looks up at me, meeting my eyes momentarily and the hurt in his almost makes me buckle over. Why is he feeling so hurt right now? What happened?

He turns into mist, then reappears on the other end of the field where he tossed my brother, baring his fangs and hissing at Casey.



“Keep your filthy hands off my mate,” he snarls before he and Casey lunge for one another.

I watch in horror as Vincent strikes at my brother while Casey lunges at him. Casey hesitates momentarily when he hears Vincent say I’m his mate, but he had so much momentum he couldn’t stop his blow in time. Before his claws connect with Vincent’s face, Vincent mists again, appearing right behind Casey and slamming him to the ground by the collar of his shirt.

Casey shifts and shreds his clothes in an instant. The irony isn’t lost on me when I see the ‘#TeamEdward’ shirt he was wearing under his flannel get torn into pieces. I’m not feeling very #TeamVampire right now. Still, the mate bond sends me into a panic as I watch my brother’s wolf face off with a jealous vampire.

“What do we do?” Hillary watches in horror next to me. Carli and Matt are jogging over to the fight, Carli yelling and cursing at both of them while Matt blows his whistle like it has the magic ability to make them stop.

“I don’t know,” I mumble softly, a tear rolling down my cheek at the thought of Casey hurting my mate. Casey is....well, Casey. He’s one of the strongest warriors our pack had that was not one of the ranked wolves, and I know he has just gotten stronger and stronger since becoming gamma of the rugged northern pack. Vincent attacked him first without any warning, so I couldn’t even blame Casey for hurting him.

I can’t see the details of the fight, but the sounds coming from them as their lightning-fast movements blur in front of me sound horrifying. Goosebumps run up my arms as my blood runs cold.

“ENOUGH!” Parker’s voice rings out over the field while he exits his truck in the lot, freezing everyone in place as his alpha aura rushes over us. Vincent, being my mate, even freezes, and I whimper in relief seeing that he is completely unscathed.

My relief doesn’t last for long. Casey shifts back, and his skin is a sickly grey as black veins spread across his bare thigh. Vincent bit him. My mate attacked and poisoned my brother. My knees start to buckle as terror grips me.

I find the strength to run across the field, throwing myself down next to Casey. Matt rushed to the medical cart, grabbing the anti-venom pen. My hands move

across his clammy skin, trying to figure out a way to help him. He's naked, but in my panic, I don't even notice. Vincent clearly does as he hisses striding over to me.

"Get away from him," Vincent hisses, trying to grab my arm. I jerk away, glaring over at him briefly with tear-filled eyes. "You are going to comfort that mutt over your own mate? He will be fine. He will learn to keep his filthy hands to himself from now on."

"Vin, stop," Carli shakes her head at him, eyes as horrified as mine. Vincent hisses at her too, making her growl in response. What is wrong with him? Why is he acting like this?

"He should have stopped rubbing himself all over Simone!" Vincent sneers, trying again to grab my arm but a growl at him, moving out of his reach. I'm not leaving my brother, no matter how much Vincent wants me away from him. He is making it a lot easier to ignore the mate bond pulling me towards him to comfort him and make sure he's okay.

"He's my brother," I mutter quietly, turning back to cup my brother's strained face. I know he heard me based on his sharp intake of breath.

Casey is groaning in pain as the venom travels through his bloodstream. Matt slams the pen into his thigh and all of us breathe a sigh of relief as the black tendrils retract as the venom is pushed from his body back out of the wound. Yellowing fluid oozes from the bite marks and Casey's breathing evens out after several seconds.

"I didn't know," Vincent gapes at what he just did. "I thought he was-"

"Hitting on me? You called me primal, but you start attacking my own brother without warning all because you thought he was hitting on me?"

"I didn't know," he says, still in shock at what he did.

"I'm fine, sis," Casey sits up with a groan, "The fucker caught me off guard, but I'm okay."

"It's not okay," I cry out, examining his thigh and letting my tears fall freely. Casey grips my chin and turns my face towards his.

"I'm fine. Stung like a b\*\*\*h, but I'm fine."

“I’m so sorry,” Vincent breathes out. I can feel his shame and regret through the bond but I’m too upset with what he did to look at him again. I don’t want to do or say something I can’t take back because I’m so mad.

“Thought you said the dude was a desk-work kind of guy?” Casey looks up at Carli with a smile, “He doesn’t fight like some helpless suit. s\*\*t, that was the most intense fight I’ve had in a while.”

“I’ll take you on later then,” Parker smirks at him, coming over to examine Casey’s leg with a pair of shorts for him in his hands.

“Hey, I was close to kicking your a\*s last time,” Casey jokes with him, wincing when Parker wipes the venom off his skin with a gauze pad.

“Keep telling yourself that. I broke your femur.”

“Yeah, Court was pretty pissed at me for that. Told me to not hold back next time.”

“Bull s\*\*t,” Parker laughs.

Their banter lightens the mood, but I think the training session is ruined. Casey needs to get to the medical center and everyone is staring at Vincent with apprehension. I feel the need to defend him, but I can’t defend his actions right now. Yes, he’s my mate, but he bit my brother. He could have killed him if he bit him more than once.

“I can’t tell you how sorry I am,” Vincent looks down at Casey with worry and remorse.

“Hey, no big deal,” Casey smiles up at Vincent. After a second of examining his face, Casey’s smile falters and turns into a scowl. “I remember you,” he sneers, “You’re the f\*\*k-head that had his tongue down Carli’s throat at the cove all those years ago. The sleazeball,” he’s glaring at Vincent now.

“Casey, don’t you start,” Carli scolds him, flicking him on the back of the head.

“Tell me I’m wrong. He’s the guy, right? The gigilo-looking fucker that came onto you the second I left your side.”

“He’s your sister’s mate and a good guy,” Carli tells him sternly, but her eyes falter as she peeks over at his slow-healing leg.

“First and second impressions of the prick say otherwise,” Casey glowers at Vincent.

Sorrow and regret, and maybe even embarrassment flood the link between me and Vincent as his emotions flood into mine. “Again, I am sorry. I’ll,” Vincent looks over to me, biting his lip nervously, “I’ll be back at the packhouse.”

Vincent walks back towards his SUV solemnly, Carlos and Stephan watching us in tense observation.

“What a s\*\*t show,” Carli sighs, nudging Casey with her foot, “You would have attacked a stranger hugging all over Courtney. It was a misunderstanding. I get you’re pissed, but you didn’t have to make him feel worse.”

“Was that night at the cove a misunderstanding? I’m sorry I don’t like the idea of my sister, who’s already going through enough s\*\*t, being roped with a vamp who tried to take advantage of you when you were drunk at a party.”

“I tried to take advantage of him, shithead,” Carli sneers, making me and Parker both growl possessively, “That was nearly 4 years ago. How the f\*\*k do you even remember that s\*\*t. I forgot all about it.”

“He left an impression,” Casey sneers, glaring in the direction of Vincent.

“He isn’t a player or some f\*\*k-boy like you’re thinking, Casey,” Parker tells him, glaring a little at Carli, “I wouldn’t be letting him stay on pack lands or around my mate and family if he was like that.”

Casey growls, then hops up, staggering slightly as he slips on the shorts Parker brought him.

I sigh, tucking myself into my brother’s side and trying to figure out how to tame the emotions filling me through the mate bond. How am I supposed to handle this situation? My brother, my rock and biggest supporter, doesn’t like my mate, and I can’t really fault him for that right now.