

## Her Vampire, Her Mate Chapter 17

“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.