

## Her Vampire, Her Mate Chapter 21

I pull my phone from my pocket, dialing Cathal's number.

"Greetings my fanged friend."

"He was here," I hiss through the line, glaring at the warning clearly intended for me on my bathroom wall. She was never his. She is mine.

"Who?"

"Your apprentice. He was in my office at the club."

"Bloodlust? Or the cigar club on North Beach?"

"Bloodlust," I hiss. Cathal sighs heavily.

"I'll send a troop there. I thought you were residing on the young alpha's territory? Why are you at your place of work?"

"I need you here. He placed some kind of ward in my office. I can exit but my employees won't be able to if they enter it." I avoid answering his questions, shame still filling me from my fight with Simone's twin.

"Curses," Cathal spits out like the word "curses" is a curse word itself. "I will accompany my men. Did you alert Parker already?"

I resist the urge to groan. "No, but I will."

I mist to exit my office, alerting my men of the intrusion and warning them from entering. They look at each other nervously, and I suspect my head of security gave them strict instructions to keep me safe in his absence, and Simon will likely chew them out for not following through. I will have to speak with him and tell them it was my doing. I told them to remain downstairs and snapped at Stephan prior to that. I didn't give them the opportunity to voice their opinions.

I mist and travel the entire club, using my senses to try and detect any other foreign presence. I don't find anything. Just my normal, colder-blooded employees and the vendors delivering alcohol for the evening.

I'm dreading making this phone call. I have to call Parker before Cathal shows up, but I'm dreading the judgment I'm sure will come from him, his mate, and the rest of his pack. More than anything, I'm scared of facing Simone. Not only did I attack her brother unjustly, and poisoned him in my crazed, possessive state, but I also went off her pack's lands, back to my nightclub when she's been so worried about my safety. What do humans say? Three strikes and you're out? That's three strikes right there. Losing her would end me.

Her conflicting emotions are still reaching me through the bond, worrying me more. She can reject me, but once a vampire starts the 'mating' process, or imprinting as most older vampires call it, it is permanent and for life. She can leave me, but I'll never leave her. She is it for me. Forever.

The bond isn't fully formed, but I feel it solidifying every day. Every time we converse, cuddle, and joke around, especially when we make love, the bond grows stronger and stronger. Now that I have her, I don't want to lose her. She is my love. My one and only.

I need to make this right.

Dialing Parker's number, I steady my nerves, readying in my mind what I want to say.

"Vincent?" Parker answers quickly. His voice sounds strained. "Where are you? Simone just went to check on you and you weren't there."

I sigh. I hope she's not there with him right now, but that's unlikely. Wolves' hearing is good, not as good as a vampire's, but still enhanced by their DNA. If she is close by, she will be able to hear, and then she will worry. I don't want her to worry. I don't want to be the cause of any more negative emotions.

"Are you alone?"

"I am now. I just left the apartment to see if I could call you. Simone is worried but...." he lets his sentence hang in the air, making me feel like trash. She is worried about me, but she's still upset. I can feel it in the bond.

"I'm at my club. I think you should come and meet me here, Parker. Now."

"Why? What are you doing there? What happened?" he throws question after question at me in a hushed, panicked voice.

“He was here. That vile fae. He broke into my office. Cathal is on his way but you should be here as well.”

“Did you see him?”

“No. He must have left recently, though. His warmth was still lingering, and the blood was still wet.”

“Blood?!” he exclaimed in a hushed tone.

“Just come. And.....can you do me a favor?” I am nervous to ask, but I need to make things right. I can’t stand feeling Simone’s disappointment in me.

“What’s that?” he sighs in an exasperated tone. I can picture him running his fingers through his hair like he usually does when he’s stressed. A habit he used to do a lot around me, back when I would still come on to his mate. I grimaced thinking about ever liking anyone but my Simone. It now feels like my life began when she came into it. Everything before was irrelevant.

“Can you bring Casey? I would like to apologize. Speak to him without Simone here.”

Parker is silent for several seconds, “I think that’s a great idea, Vincent. Yeah. I’ll do that. Do you want me to tell Simone anything? She may be upset, but I know not finding you in the suite sent her into a panic. Want me to be the middle man for you?”

My slow-beating heart constricts hearing I made my love feel all those emotions.

“Can you tell her....tell her I will be home to her soon?”

I know the packhouse is not my home. It may never be my home after the stunt I pulled today. But, Simone will always be my home. I’ll be content as long as I’m with her if she allows me. Home is where the heart is, and she is my heart.

“Yeah. I’ll tell her,” he sighs, and I’m about to hang up when he stops me.

“Vincent, you still there?”

“Yes?”

“Shoes.”

“Pardon me?” I scrunch my face in question, my mind going back to my Tom Fords in my toilet upstairs. I liked those shoes.

“Simone likes shoes. Loves them. If you want to get back in her good graces, get her shoes. It may work even without you making up with Casey. The more expensive, the more forgiving she will be.”

“Shoes?” I chuckle. Surely it’s not that easy.

“Shoes. I’d tell Carli to help you, but she’s ready to kick your a\*s too right now. I wouldn’t trust her. Maybe Elena or....”

“I can get her shoes,” I smile into the receiver. I’ll buy her all the damn shoes in Miami if I have to, but I have good taste. I’m sure I can handle picking out a couple of pairs of shoes. Maybe matching handbags and accessories to go with each one? If shopping is the way to win her over, that’s too easy.

Parker chuckles, “We can go together. I defended you, along with half the men there at the training grounds. I’m in the dog house too.”

“Why would you defend me? I acted atrociously.”

“Man, any of us would have acted like that if our mate was in the arms of another guy. You didn’t know he was her brother. I thought your actions were pretty tame, considering the circumstances. Do you know how bad I wanted to tear you limb from limb all those years ago? Your a\*s is lucky I was on Carli’s s\*\*t list back then or I probably would have.”

“You could have tried,” I chuckled.

“Yeah, you’re not as prissy as you look. That was an eye-opener today,” he laughs, “I’ll be there soon. With Casey.”

“Thanks, Parker.”

My hopes are lifted. I hated him when we first met, and for many years after, but now I’m really starting to like Parker. I think I can allow him to be my alpha, I chuckle thinking to myself.

## **Her Vampire, Her Mate Chapter 22**

Simone POV

Guilt. All my anger and agitation; all my disappointment and strife are gone. Guilt and worry are consuming me completely right now as I wait on the master bed in our suite for my mate. I should have defended him over my brother. Casey is....well, Casey. A vampire bite with our modern medicine isn't as extreme as me not knowing where my mate has been all afternoon.

Parker told me that he was safe and would be home to me soon. He took my pissed-off brother with him and wouldn't explain anything else to me. Just said it was okay and to stay in the packhouse until they all got back.

I stayed with Carli and Elena most of the afternoon, but when Laura and Simon got back I wanted to go back to the room I share with Vincent and wait for him to return. I'm curled around his pillow, regretting my disposition earlier towards him. I didn't even check to see if he was okay. I fawned over my brother and didn't even allow Vincent to touch me.

I could feel his guilt and shame all afternoon, but still stubbornly held onto my anger, no thanks to Parker and Matt defending Vincent's actions. Carli and Hillary were both adamant that Vincent was out of line, and I let their voices be the dominant voices in my mind instead of listening to Parker's more rational reason.

I knew better. Carli is a hothead. She thinks with her fists before she thinks with her head. Parker is always level-headed and rational, but I listened to Carli over him, and now I'm filled with so much guilt and regret. Maybe that's why he wouldn't let me go with him when he left to get my mate. He took Casey, but not me.

Stupid Casey has been huffing and puffing like the big bad wolf he is telling me all the reasons why he hates the guy. He doesn't even know him. He's just pissed because he thinks Vincent is some sleazy player like most of the other guys Carli would mess around with. That couldn't be farther from the truth.

Casey has always been overprotective of both of us, but me especially. He is the main reason neither I nor Carli messed around with boys from our pack. He wouldn't allow it. He would kick any guy's a\*s if they tried to cross that line. I had a small thing going with Mark in middle school, and Casey almost broke the guy's jaw when he found us making out after school.

Mitch Meyers took pictures of Carli after she shifted and more when she was stretching in gym class at school and started rotating through the photos on his phone, using them as background pictures. When Casey found out, Mitch was out from school for a week waiting for a broken arm to set, and he smashed Mitch's iPhone. Carli had already kicked Mitch's a\*s, but that wasn't enough for Casey. He didn't tolerate anyone in the pack being disrespectful to either one of us.

He will come around once he gets to know Vincent. Vincent isn't like the other guys Carli messed around with. Vincent is sweet, kind, and caring, and I know he would never treat me, or any girl for that matter, like a random hook-up. He's....perfect. Perfect for me.

I moan, rolling over and bringing his pillow with me. My stomach feels like it's lodged in my throat. I want him to come back already so I know he's safe. So I can apologize for not caring for him earlier and only checking on my brother.

Casey is with him, and I'm worried they'll fight again. If it happens, I have to back up Vincent this time. Casey is an animal and can take care of himself. Parker can mediate if things get out of hand. No matter what, Vincent is the one I need to go to when they all come back. If I was an outsider looking in, that's the advice I would give. I need to live it. Your mate comes first.

I hear the front door's lock click and open, followed by muffled male laughter. I jump out of bed, stumbling to the bedroom door. Is he back?

"Thanks for the help, Parker. I appreciate everything you've done today. Really."

"No problem. I'm going to get this baby stuff to Carli but if you need anything let me know."

I peak out just as Parker is walking back out the door, several large shopping bags in his hands.

Vincent has several shopping bags on his wrists as well, all with designer labels on them. Did he go out shopping while I was here worrying my a\*s off? And where's Casey?

Vincent looks up and when his eyes meet mine I can feel his hesitation and worry in the bond.

"Simone," he says my name softly, setting the bags on the table and making his way over to me.

"I, uh, I need to apologize for how I acted earlier today. That was uncalled for and I never should have-"

When he reaches me, I cut him off by leaping in his arms and smashing my mouth against his. I don't care if he fights with my brother. I don't care if I've been worrying my a\*s off the last few hours of him being gone, and I don't care that he went shopping without me. Well...maybe I care a little about that last one, but that's a thought for another time. All I care about, the only emotion running through me right now is the relief that my mate is back safe. He's here with me and not out there in someplace where Aiden can hurt him or take him from me.

Vincent moans softly against my lips, bringing his arms around me and melding me against him. I can taste his relief too.

His mouth is sensual and passionate on mine, but I'm in a frenzy, almost attacking him as tears fill my eyes.

"I'm home," he breathes, his sweet breath fanning over my face as I kiss his jaw.

"Where were you?" I sob, my tears breaking free as I bury my face in his chest, smelling his scent.

I can sense his reluctance to tell me, causing me to look up and scrutinize his nervous features.

“The club,” he murmurs, wiping the tears from my cheeks tenderly with his thumbs.

“Why? Why didn’t you come back here? I was so worried, Vin. Why would you go there!?”

“I know, my love. I know. I can’t even tell you how sorry I am for my actions today. I was so ashamed of myself that I didn’t want to face anyone here. I could feel it; your disappointment and anger at me and I-”

“I’m sorry, Vin,” I wrap my arms around his neck and cut him off before he apologizes anymore. I shouldn’t have made him feel like he couldn’t come back here to face me. “I acted horribly. I should have gone to you before anything else. You are,” I bite my lip nervously, “You’re my mate. I know it might not be the same for you, but for us, a mate is forever. You’re a permanent part of me. You come before anything else and I didn’t do a very good job showing you that today.”

Vincent’s face lights up as he smiles widely, leaning down to nuzzle his nose to mine. “It’s the same, Simone. My bond with you is exactly the same. You are my priority before anything else. I’m sorry I caused you so much worry and negativity today. I only want you to experience the best with me. I definitely did not accomplish that today. But,” he pulls me over to the table covered in bags, “Maybe these can make up for my misdeeds, only a little.”

Vincent slowly grabs the closest bag and pulls out a La Mer fragrance set; one that I told Carli to get me for my next birthday. I squeal taking the case from him, hopping back and forth on my feet, and causing him to chuckle.

There are so many bags. Is all this for me? Vincent must see the question in my eyes when I look up from the perfume and look excitedly at the rest of the shopping bags because he laughs heartily and hands me another bag.

“Yes, my love. They are all for you.”

The Louboutin T-strap sandals are adorable and he even bought me a Valentino quilted handbag that matches them beautifully. This is better than Christmas and almost as good as s\*x with Vincent as I pull each gift out of their shopping bags. If this is the result of Vincent biting my brother, I give him permission to do it every day.

By the way, where is my brother?

Casey POV

Several hours earlier

“I don’t give a s\*\*t what you say, I don’t want that f\*\*\*\*\*g prick sleazing with my sister,” I sneer at Parker as he drives us to the bat s\*\*t crazy’s nightclub. I know this nightclub. It’s the

one werewolves all avoid because of its dark reputation. Vampires wanting fresh blood come here to prey on innocent humans, then compel them to forget them the next day. It's a place we've been warned away from since middle school because of that reputation. Carli may be the only one brave enough in Crystal Moon to go here on the regular.

In some covens, vampires aren't even supposed to drink directly from humans. Because of this being a hot tourist spot, vampires can get away with it at places like Bloodlust. It's f\*\*\*\*\*g disgusting to think about and I don't want my sister involved with that shit. Most werewolves are allergic to vampire venom. This isn't a place I want her to frequent.

"He's a good guy. This is coming from me, Case. I wouldn't tolerate someone I couldn't trust around my wife and daughter."

"You're probably just happy the d\*\*k isn't after your wife anymore," I growl, not trusting his words.

"About as happy as I was when you stopped going after her," he smirks at me, making me growl again.

"We're on our way to that disgusting club that HE owns. The one where they prey on humans. You can't tell me he's a good guy knowing that shit."

"That was his father. His father was not a good man. Even Lady Delilah was getting fed up with his father's dirty morals. That's why Vincent came to us to take care of his rogue family members and not her because she would have shut all his businesses down. He didn't want to lose his mother's inheritance. Vincent changed everything when he took over. Fired tons of corrupt people loyal to his father. He stopped allowing his employees to feed on patrons. He really is a good guy, Casey. Worships the ground she walks on. Carli has been on my s\*\*t like crazy because she wants more babies that could potentially be mates with their kids."

"Sounds like torture," I smirk at him. I've seen how Carli can get when she wants something. Sounds fun in theory, your mate wanting your d\*\*k constantly to get pregnant, but Carli's aggression is no joke.

"For her," Parker chuckles, "I'm making her work for it."

I laugh hearing him talk like the chick in their relationship.

"How?"

"Trying to get her to stop cussing so much. Rosie's first word was 'f\*\*k', I swear."

"You getting Tommy to stop cussing too? You can't bribe him with s\*x," I snicker.



“I can, actually. If he starts one of his rants, I bring up mine and Carli’s s\*x life and he runs out of the room. Elena’s in on it. She starts asking pointed questions and it turns into the most awkward game ever.”

“So you don’t want Rosie saying ‘f\*\*k’, but your okay talking about f\*\*\*\*\*g in front of her?” I raise an eyebrow at him.

He freezes momentarily, “Well, s\*\*t. I didn’t think about that.”

“That little girl is going to need all kinds of therapy,” I laugh, shaking my head.

Parker huffs, “She’s going to be a mini Carli. I’m just going to have to accept it. Cussing and all.”

“You handle Carli so well, I doubt you will have much trouble.”

“I’m going to go gray or bald by the time I’m forty,” he sighs.

“I’ll buy you a hat.”

When we pull up outside the club, my almost light mood from my banter with Parker goes to s\*\*t once again. That sleazy f\*\*k is outside talking to Melody’s dad, the fairy knight. I growl in my chest when he looks up at Parker’s truck.

“Give him a chance. He really is a good guy.”

“We’ll see,” I tell Parker.

Not like I can do anything anyway. Simone already marked him.

I get out of the truck in a huff, slamming the door closed, earning me a growl from Parker. He can suck my left nut. I didn’t want to come here to meet this fucker. The only reason I agreed was that he told me the guy had a run-in with the fairy douche that hurt my sister. That’s what I’m here for. To kill the fairy fucker.

“Cathal,” Parker nods to Melody’s dad, shaking his hand.

“Young alpha,” he tilts his head in the formal way fairies sometimes do. We don’t have many in Canada because of the cold climate, but I’m familiar with them from living here most of my life. Fairy girls were the target of most guys when I was in high school. They could use their fairy magic on you to enhance certain sensations. I don’t know from experience, just locker room talk. I was tame, especially compared to the youngest two of the Meyers triplets and even Daryl before he found out Hillary was his mate.

Matt was my best friend besides Carli and my sister and he was with Lilly long before he found out she was his mate. When the girls were out, I would choose hanging out with him over chasing tail with the rest of the guys in our crowd.

“What happened here?” Parker asks, looking between Cathal and Vincent.

Vincent tells us about coming back here to shower and change, and finding the ward in his office. He told us about his s\*\*t being gone through and being moved around. I’m chortling like a fool when he mentions his expensive suit and shoes being ruined, earning a dirty look from Parker and a confused look from the fairy knight. Vincent doesn’t react at all to me laughing at him and continues on with his retelling.

“Then I saw ‘SHE IS MINE’ written in blood on the wall. The guy needs to die, Cathal. I will not stand for him to continue terrorizing my mate after we find him. I want him dead and I want to be the one to do it,” he states firmly.

My blood runs cold and I immediately stop laughing. Who the f\*\*k does this Aiden guy think he is? Who is he to try and claim my sister when she clearly doesn’t want anything to do with him. Vincent is right. If he is going to so boldly claim her and terrorize her like this after he had to go into hiding, he is clearly never going to stop. He needs to die. He will die. I’m not sure if I can promise this vampire I won’t kill him first.

“I understand, Vincent. Queen Aisling has already put in her degree ‘dead or alive’. If you end his life, there will be no repercussions. Even the fact he stole a royal Pegasus makes the death penalty permissible. They are a sacred, close to becoming extinct creatures.”

“My Simone is a sacred, rare creature as well. Thousands, no, infinitely more precious and valuable than a flying horse. His actions against her alone are reason enough to kill him,” Vincent glares at Cathal. A shiver runs up my spine at the menacing look in his eyes.

“I am not in argument with you, my friend. Simone is my daughter’s dear friend and we are the reason she met him in the first place. Even if there were repercussions for you killing the boy, I would face those consequences in your place. I am telling you, though, that it isn’t an issue. Kill him.”

“I will. Oh, I will,” Vincent snarls softly.

“Why? Because he ruined some shoes?” I scoff. Maybe he is materialistic like my sister. Maybe that’s why they were made to be mates.

Vincent meets my eyes and shakes his head, “No. Because he hurt the most precious thing in the world to me. Nothing comes before Simone. I can replace the shoes. I can not replace nor will I ever replace her.”

The conviction in his eyes almost gets me. Almost.

“You moved on from Carli f\*\*\*\*\*g fast. I heard from Parker just a few weeks ago that you were still chasing after her. What’s to say you won’t move on from my sister just as fast?”

“Because she is my forever. When a vampire mates, to use your term, with a lover, once that soul bond is formed, it is for life. She is my life now. Without her, I would literally die. I could never live without her. Every breath I breathe from the moment she came into my life was for her.”

We stand there in awkward silence for a few moments, but Vincent’s steady gaze never left mine. He was being serious. Dead serious.

“He is right, young one,” Cathal interjects, “My kind and the night children have been close for millennia. Our kinds have intermingled much in the past. A vampire mate is the most loyal and devoted of any mate, in my opinion. They are truly committed for life.”

Vincent takes a step toward me, not in a hostile way, but more in a private conversation standpoint. “I know I was out of line earlier. I can not tell you how sorry I truly am for attacking you the way I did. I can try to make it up to you however you want. If you want to take me out back to the alleyway and kick my a\*s, I will stand there and take it. But please don’t try to belittle or make light of my love for your sister. She is my everything and I hope to prove that to you over time.”

Parker clasps me on the shoulder, and I stand looking back at Vincent apprehensively. I don’t know if it’s his words or the conviction in his eyes, but I believe him. It is clear that he really does love my sister, and he would do anything for her, including taking a beating from me.

“I don’t think you could stand for very long if I were to kick your a\*s. You’d be down and out in a second,” I smirk at him.

“I doubt that,” he smirks back.

“Wanna make a wager?” Parker is smiling, looking between us.

I laugh, shaking my head, “Nah. Wouldn’t want to piss off Sims and Carli by hurting him too bad. Those two women together can be scarier than a badass wolf and pair of fangs.”

“Agreed,” Vincent says at the same time as Parker said, “Damn right,” and Cathal nods his head with a laugh. Carli still has a reputation I see.

“I am going to depart and trace Aiden’s magic to see if I can track him,” Cathal says, “The ward has been removed. It was to alert him of your return and try and keep you contained. He could be close by. I will start the hunt.”

“I’ll come with you,” I tell the fairy, suddenly wanting to find this guy more than ever. I want my sister to be free so she can be happy with her mate.

“Are we okay, Casey?” Vincent asks me, holding out his hand.

I smirk, shaking it firmly, “Not until I get a rematch,” I laugh at him. He laughs with me and agrees. “Take care of my sister for me. I’m going f\*\*\*\*\*g fairy hunting.”

Simone POV

“So you two really made up,” I ask Vincent in disbelief, “You’re okay now?”

“Yes, my love. Well, I think so anyway. Your brother did say he wanted to have a rematch, but if his love language is like your headstrong friend’s I’m guessing that’s an olive branch and not a death threat.”

I laugh loudly, “If he wanted you dead he wouldn’t ask.” I shake my head. Yes, Casey is a lot like Carli with the way he thinks and reacts when he’s mad. Not as headstrong, but he wouldn’t talk about kicking your a\*s, he would just do it.

“You forgive me as well?” Vincent asks, kissing my shoulder after I finished changing into my new silk Christine Lingerie nightgown. I’m in heaven, and it’s more than just the gifts. Since coming back, Vincent hasn’t left an inch of space between us. I even opened the rest of my packages while sitting on his lap, slightly distracted as he rubbed his fingers delicately and sensually on my exposed skin. I don’t even think he means to be sensual. I think it’s natural for him. I used changing into my new nightgown as an excuse to change my panties as well. This man makes my body react to him without even trying.

“Only if you forgive me, Vin,” I turn in his arms and wrap my arms around his neck. His sweet breath washes over my face as he laughs softly in relief. His hands skim down the back of my dress, softly gliding over the silk and resting on my tush....and there goes another pair of my underwear. I can feel the lace front of my thong dampening against my thigh.

His soft, feather-light touches combined with the tingles from the mate bond are lethal. I melt against him and pull his mouth down to mine.

His skilled tongue massages mine in a delicious dance, making me moan and whimper into his mouth.

“You’re getting me excited, my love,” he whispers in my ear, his tongue flicking over my earlobe when he says ‘love’, and I almost combust right there.

“I’m already excited,” I moan. I can feel his breathy laugh on my neck.

“There’s one last gift, though. Do you want it now or.....” he sucks lightly on my neck, and I squirm in need.

“After. Give it to me after,” I plea. I don’t want anything else but him right now.

Vincent pushes me gently until the back of my legs hit the bed. We crawl and scoot back to the center of it, Vincent's mouth never leaving mine except for when he pulls his shirt over his head. My hands instantly go to his firm chest, taunt and flexing under my fingers as he moves.

"I love silk on your body," he says, moving his hands over the smooth fabric of my hip, "makes my hands just want to roam and explore."

Do it, I want to scream. I want him to explore every inch of my body. My need for him is all-consuming and I can't think about anything else.

Vincent pulls the smooth fabric up, exposing my soaked lace underwear. He moans in appreciation as his fingers brush over them, "You're always so wet."

I can't speak. My mind has turned to mush as my body is overwhelmed by his touch. My back arches and I start thrashing as his fingers pump in and out of me, twitching and curling roughly against my walls. His eyes glow as they hold my gaze. I'm unable to look away, my eyes on his are the only non-moving part of my body.

He wants to watch me come undone. The bond between us and demanding it. Demanding I show him the carnal need I have for him because his need for me is on full display. He is the only man that can satisfy this growing hunger inside me, and I can feel that it's much the same for him.

My walls start to flutter, then pulse steadily as my o\*\*\*\*m overtakes me, coating his skilled fingers and they continue their pursuit, drawing my climax out as long as it can go.

Vincent's breathing is harsh against my skin. He wants me as desperately as I want him. He tears my underwear roughly, making me gasp, and pulls my nightgown over my head as I fumble to get his shorts down his legs with my pushing hands and then pulling feet. Before Vincent can thrust in me, I push him over, straddling him as my hands run down his tapered abs.

He's at full attention, firm, and beautiful. I want to taste it, relishing the feel of his smooth, velvety head massaging the roof of my mouth but my body is in a frenzy for him to fill another part of me. The part still pulsing and swollen from his finger's assault.

I slide down his immense length, Vincent hissing and bucking as he stretches me. I throw my head back, absorbing all the pleasure the connection brings me as my hands slide up my torso and I start pulling and kneading my own breast.

Vincent's hands are on my hips, directing and urging me as he slams up into me, meeting my body's movements. This is what we both needed. This deep, almost spiritual, and carnal connection of our souls as we become one, filling all of each other's deepest needs.

Vincent is growling and hissing beneath me, his desire overwhelming him as I cry out his name incoherently over and over again, rocking my body and riding him as violently as he is thrusting into me.

He lifts my hips and slams them back down on him one last time, and I scream out my final o\*\*\*\*m as he shoots his stream deep into me in pulsing spurts that seem to go on forever.

I collapse on his chest, a sweaty, panting mess. His hands smooth back my hair, massaging my back, then kneading my a\*s as he grinds his hips against mine, locking his seed inside me refusing to pull out. I don't mind. Not at all.

"That was amazing," I pant against his chest.

"Amazing. Mind-blowing," he moans, raining kisses on my face.

My eyes are so heavy, The relief from him being back safe, relief from us no longer upset with one another, and the relief my body feels after that intense passion has all my energy spent. I'm a relaxed heap on his chest as my eyes grow heavier and heavier until I pass out.

I wake up hours later, cleaned up, and back in my nightgown. He must have taken care of me. So stinking sweet. Vincent is cuddled into my back as he spoons me, his bare chest cool against my skin. I stretch out in his arms, flexing my muscles and absorbing the delicious soreness from the vigorous exercise we just had.

As my hands are stretched out above my head, the light from the bathroom hits my finger and a glint catches my attention.

A ring? There's a ring on my left ring finger. Did I put rings on today? I don't think I did. I bring my hand down to examine my finger, rubbing the sleep out of my eyes so I can see better. I've never seen this ring before in my life. The rose gold bands have small diamonds inlaid all around with a large oval cut diamond at its center. It's gorgeous. The most beautiful piece of jewelry I've ever seen in my life.

"Do you like it?" Vincent asks huskily behind me, reaching his hand out and locking his fingers in mine.

"It's beautiful, Vincent," I exclaim in hushed surprise.

Vincent chuckles and places open-mouth kisses on my shoulder. "I can't mark you as you did me. I don't want to risk poisoning you or hurting you. I hope this can suffice in place of a mate mark. You are mine, Simone. Forever. I want everyone to know it."

Did he get me an engagement ring because of our argument earlier today? "You didn't have to do this, Vin."

"Yes I did," he husked, pulling me around to face him as continued staring at my new ring, "I want everyone to know you are mine. You will always be mine."

"Is this an engagement ring?"

“It is,” he tilts my chin up, forcing me to look into his luminous eyes, “I want to be tied to you in every way, my love. I hope you feel the same.”

I lick my lips nervously, sucking them into my mouth before taking a deep breath, “Are you asking me to marry you?”

Vincent stares into my eyes for several more seconds, then nods, slowly, “I am.”

I squeal throwing my arms around his neck, “Yes! Yes! Yes!”

“You don’t think I’m moving too fast?” Vincent chuckles as he asks.

“I love you, Vincent,” I tell him as tears fill my eyes, “You’re my forever too.”

Vincent’s smile at hearing me say I love him makes my heart accelerate in my chest.

“I love you too, Simone. More than anything.”

Aiden POV

She marked him. She marked the f\*\*\*\*\*g vampire even though she refused to mark me.

When the ward’s alarm went off and I felt the pull of its magic, I took my stead and raced back to his sordid place of business. The painted black nightclub with its red lettering declaring its shameful intentions, Bloodlust, comes into view and I circle around in the air. I just left this place not half an hour ago. It was dangerously tricky getting in and out with so many workers around. I thought visiting a vampire nightclub during the day would be safe, but it was surprisingly busy with deliveries and employees getting ready for the evening.

After snooping around in his office, getting some useful information, I found a suit of his that smelled strongly of Mona in his cabinet. It infuriated me. Her scent should have never been shared with anyone but me.

I don’t know how, but the bastard somehow got out of the wards and was pacing around on the phone, clad in tacky workout attire instead of the dress attire I always catch glimpses of him in when he isn’t wearing the woman who should be mine.

She marked him, and the betrayal of her claiming him when she would not even consider me makes my blood boil. He is a vampire. A f\*\*\*\*\*g vampire. I am so much more a better choice than some filthy blood-sucking vampire with a seedy business and fancy clothes in place of muscles to defend and protect her. I could have given her the world but she chose him over me.

She lied. She said she found her mate and then marked him. Was she not playing cat and mouse with me? Was she playing with my heart instead? The betrayal I feel is crippling and I ride around stunned for too long. Cathal is there with him before I have a chance to do anything to him.

He needs to die. After he is dead I will force her to mark me the way she marked him. I should have never let her go free for so long. I will right this wrong. This never would have happened if I forced her from the start.

The documents I came upon in his office come to mind and a plan starts forming in my head. I can fix this and get rid of him if I play my cards just right. With all the precautions they are taking, I have to use my head and get to him using other means. If I can draw him out and capture him, maybe she will leave her protectors to save him. She won't be able to, of course. He is a dead man for coming between me and my Mona.

I have to plan this just right. I can't afford to mess up or get caught. I turn my head around, retreating for now to plan my next move.

Carli POV

"And here is another outfit for my baby girl," Parker pulls out another little girl outfit with tulle in the skirt and pink ruffles on the sleeves and I'm melting watching my man fawn over our daughter. Seriously, my ovaries.

Rosie is cooing and baby talking his ear off, and I'm standing in the kitchen watching Parker adorably baby talk back in his masculine voice. Put another baby in me now! Watching him be a kick-a\*s daddy is the biggest turn-on, and by the way he keeps smirking over at me, I know he knows it.

"I got this one for your mama," Parker rubs his nose against Rosie's, and then walks over to me, handing me a maternity wear bag, making me smile brightly.

"I'm not pregnant though."

"No but you will be soon," he kisses my cheek, "We should try all night until you are."

"But, what about the search?" I ask him. We've been taking turns going out with Cathal and his men searching for Aiden, and tonight was my shift with Matt.

"Casey is filling in for you. You're all mine tonight," he whispers in my ear, kissing down my neck. Rosie, still in his arms, starts slapping his face for attention making both of us laugh.

"But Rosie?..." I ask before getting lost in his heated gaze.

"Elena is on her way," he tells me, placing a tender kiss on my lips, then turning his attention to an irritated Rosie and pretending to munch on her little angry fist.

While the three of us cuddle together, standing in the kitchen and laughing at Rosie's attention hogging ways, knocking sounds from the front of the apartment.



“Elena must be here,” Parker says handing me Rosie so he can answer. Elena has a key and usually lets herself in, though. I shrug my shoulders, carrying Rosie to the front to meet her grandma, only it’s not the grandma we were expecting.

Mary and Jared are standing in our foyer, arguing in hushed whispers to Parker about something. Why the f\*\*k are they here? I haven’t seen either of them in quite some time. Mom stopped trying to make me bend to her will right before Rosie was born. She doesn’t try to call, text, or anything, which I’m happy about. I finally had peace and freedom from her, which I always wanted.

Jared will text me periodically, asking for pictures of Rosie or to ask how I’m doing, and he’s cordial when we see each other in passing on occasion in the pack house, but Parker is the one that mainly deals with them, allowing me to be completely free from the pressure of dealing with them. Parker takes Rosie to see them about once a week, which he already did this week, so I’m wondering what they’re doing here now.

“You never gave us a reply, son,” Jared tells him, looking worriedly between him and Mary.

“I did give you a reply, you guys just didn’t accept it. I said no. Maybe when she’s older, but not now.”

“Why not?” Mary glares at him, her arms crossed across her chest. I’ve never seen her act that way towards Parker. She usually bends over backward to make him happy.

“Because I don’t trust you,” Parker says flat out, making me worried about what they’re talking about. Mary scoffs, then looks to her mate, probably wanting Jared to make Parker give in to whatever she is demanding.

“Parker, that’s not any way to treat your mother. We would never do anything to hurt her. She...we just want the opportunity to bond with her like her other grandparents.”

“What’s going on?” I ask, bringing their attention to me. Mary’s hard gaze turns soft when she sees Rosie in my arms, taking a step towards me like she wanted to take her, but I quickly turn, shielding my child with my body. Mary drops her hands and her face falls momentarily before she turns her glare on me.

“I want to take my granddaughter for the weekend,” she states flat out, straightening her shoulders and turning her nose up in the air.

I huff, “Well, that’s not going to f\*\*\*\*\*g happen.”

Parker mouths ‘language’ to me, but I just ignore him and continue to glare at my birth mother.

“And why not?,” she huffs, “Grace mentioned keeping her for the weekend a couple of weeks ago, and I know Elena keeps her all the time. Why am I not allowed the same rights? I’m her grandmother too.”

“Because you were a piss poor mother and until my daughter is old enough to talk and tell me what is going on around her I’m not leaving her with someone I don’t trust. I can’t believe you would even think you have a right to something like that. The answer is no.”

“I am her grandmother too! I would never hurt her!”

“You hurt me!” I scream back at her, making her flinch. Rosie starts crying in my arms. I turn my face to kiss her head tenderly, bouncing up and down to try and calm her down. Parker comes over and takes her from my arms then places a supportive hand on my back.

We’ve talked about this many times. Mary asked Parker since the day she was born to be closer and have more freedom with Rosie, but we both agreed that wasn’t going to happen. I know Parker never really forgave her for all the years of abuse I endured, and I sure as s\*\*t wasn’t subjecting my daughter to the same treatment. No f\*\*\*\*\*g way.

Jared talked with us both once, many months ago, and when we explained to him why we refused he reluctantly agreed with us. I trust him more than I trust my own mother, so I don’t mind him watching our daughter for short periods of time, but I sure as s\*\*t am not letting her take Rosie. No way in hell.

“I tried to keep you safe,” Mary turns up her nose defiantly again, but I can see a tremor in her lips like she’s holding back tears.

I scoff at her ridiculous statement. “You tried to keep your own reputation safe, Mary. I will not trust my infant to a woman that claims she hit me repeatedly to keep me safe. You’re f\*\*\*\*\*g delusional. Parker takes her to see you guys every week but if that’s not good enough for you we can stop that too. I’m not letting you try to dictate anything in my life anymore.”

“Such vulgar talk. What kind of mother are you to try and judge my actions? You had the best of everything. I paid thousands of dollars on your credit card every month and you had a luxury vehicle. You could have had a lot worse. Don’t try to condemn me when you talk like a sailor and dress like a nightwalker,” she sneers waving her hands up and down my body. I’m in a sports bra and leggings. Not even close to dressing like a prostitute.

Parker growls at her statement and wraps an arm around my waist, pulling my back to him. Jared looks almost appalled at his mate, shaking his head behind her but too much of a p\*\*\*y to say anything to her or make her shut her f\*\*\*\*\*g mouth. He must know she is making the situation worse. I doubt Parker will want to see Mary for a long time after this and I sure as hell am not taking Rosie to see them.

The Range Rover she gave me, so I stopped taking rides from Elena and didn’t bother her for them either, I gave back to them the week after I graduated high school. Jared tried to talk me into keeping it, but I didn’t want it. I had my bike my dad gave me and Parker had his truck so we were okay without it. And the credit card thing was because she wouldn’t allow me to eat in the pack house’s dining hall for 4 f\*\*\*\*\*g years. Buying 3 meals a day out and buying all my other necessities when I didn’t have parents to rely on was expensive.

“How much did you spend on her?” Elena’s voice breaks through the tension. She’s standing at our open door and I’m sure by the look on her face she heard everything that just went down. “How much do you think you spent on her credit card expenses and the car she gave back? Tell me and I’ll pay it right now.”

Mary gives her a look full of disgust, making me growl low in my chest.

“Like you could afford to cover any of it. It’s none of your concern. She is not your daughter and this is a private conversation.”

Elena comes to stand beside me, ignoring Mary’s menacing stare, placing her hand firmly on my shoulder, “That’s where you’re wrong, Mary. She is my daughter and I don’t appreciate you trying to guilt her for something any mother would gladly do for their child. So tell me how much? I assure you I can cover it, and gladly would. That’s what a mother does. And I would never try to make her feel like s\*\*t for it.”

“That isn’t necessary, Elena,” Jared comes to stand beside Mary. She looks up to him, and I knew she was searching for support but he was giving her a hard look, for once trying to put her in line. “As you said, it was our duty and I would never expect anything back for doing it. Mary uses the car herself now so it was no loss. We just wanted more time with our granddaughter.”

Jared looks at me, “I’m sorry, Carli. We were out of line coming here like this. I hope you won’t take the time we do have with Rosie away. I also hope we earn your trust enough to have the same privileges as your parents, but I understand your concerns for now. We will respect your wishes,” he looks down at Mary with that same hard look as he says the last sentence. She glares back at him, clearly not happy he’s not taking her side. “I hope you guys have a good night,” he says, pulling Mary with him from the apartment.

Mary looks back, glaring at us one last time until her eyes rest on our daughter in Parker’s arms. Her face turns soft and I can see the longing in her eyes.

“Seems you guys are having a fun night,” Elena sighs, pulling me into a fierce hug, “Don’t let that woman’s words get to you. She’s lashing out at you because she’s angry with herself. You’re an amazing mother.”

I feel heat building behind my eyes, not trusting her words. Am I a good mother? I don’t feel like it right now. I feel like s\*\*t. I screamed and made my baby cry, and couldn’t even stand my own ground with my abusive mother. I had such a horrible role model, I wouldn’t be surprised if other people thought I was a bad mom too. Maybe that’s why Parker was reluctant to have another baby with me?

Feelings of inadequacy are consuming me, along with guilt and an uncontrollable sadness that is tearing a hole in my chest. Maybe I shouldn’t have any other children. I can’t even watch my mouth in front of the one I already have. Parker’s her favorite, and it’s probably because I’m such a horrible mother. I’m not half as good of a parent as he is. He does everything for her

while I'm out stubbornly maintaining my warrior status. I even put up a fight to go back to work instead of staying home with her.

After Elena takes Rosie with her, along with a bag Parker packed because I didn't think to, I go and lay in our bed, letting the all too familiar beginnings of my depression consume me. I shouldn't be pushing for another baby right now. I don't deserve one.

"Are you okay, babe?" Parker asks, sliding in bed behind me.

I nod, not trusting my voice. I don't want to cry right now and I think if I say too much I just might. I don't cry. I hate crying. I'm not giving in to it.

"I can feel you're not. Talk to me," Parker urges, nuzzling his nose into my neck. I lift the comforter, pulling it tight around me to block his face. I don't want my body's reaction to the mate bond muddling my thoughts any more than they already are. I just want to lay in bed and let my negativity consume me.

"I want to go to sleep, Parker," I mutter softly.

"What about the baby-making?" he pouts, trying to lift my mood but doing the opposite.

I turn my face into my pillow just as a tear breaks free. I keep my body utterly still, fighting back the sobs which are trying to overtake me. The last thing I need is Parker worried about me again and putting more tracking devices in my jewelry and clothing.

After a long time of trying to get me to talk to him, Parker leaves our room with a sigh. I can feel his anger and frustration through the bond, deepening my guilt and self-hatred. He deserves so much better than me. He and Rosie both do. I'm a s\*\*t mom, a s\*\*t wife, a s\*\*t luna, and a shitty person. My mother was right. I have no right to judge her.

Parker POV

"She does not come here again. Do you understand? That was...horrible of her. Absolutely horrible of her. My mate has been," I bite my lip, not able to finish my sentence. I've been yelling at my dad on the phone for the last ten minutes and I don't feel any better. I still want to kill both of them for doing that to my mate tonight.

Carli is currently in our room crying into her pillow, not wanting to talk to me or even move. She is trying to go numb and I can see her slipping into her depression once again, which scares me. I wanted to be 100% sure and take her to the doctor later this week, but I can faintly pick up the change in her scent. It's a dangerous time for her body if I'm right in my assumptions to be so stressed and in a whirlwind of negative emotions.

"She was defensive. She didn't mean what she said, but you know how she gets when she feels cornered."

“AND HOW DO YOU THINK CARLI FELT!?” I scream at him through the phone line. “How do you think she feels right now?! You guys had no right to show up here and demand anything, especially of her. If the time you do get to spend with our daughter isn’t enough then maybe you shouldn’t see her at all.”

“Don’t be like that, Parker. You know we both love that little girl. That would destroy your mother.”

“If you love Rosie, you love her mother too. That woman, who is not my mother, by the way, destroyed that relationship herself, and after today I’m not sure I want to indulge her anymore. You wouldn’t tolerate someone treating your mate like s\*\*t, why do you think I will?”

My dad sighs heavily, cursing under his breath. I know he’s stuck between a rock and a hard place, but I don’t care. I’m not going to allow them to hurt my mate anymore.

“I’ll control your mother. I’ll...I’ll see if I can get her to apologize to Carli. I love my granddaughter, Parker. Please don’t take away the few hours a week I get to see her.”

“Don’t make me. We are dealing with enough s\*\*t here, and you guys just added another thing to my plate,” I tell him. Carli comes first to me, before anything else. I’m going to have a s\*\*t time working now trying to focus on anything besides her. With a psychotic fairy boy after one of my members and the everyday stress of being alpha, I’m going to have a hard time until I know Carli is in a healthy place again. The last time she was like this, work helped her to crawl back out of her depression. I have a feeling that won’t work this time.

“What are you dealing with? Do you need help?”

Vampires and fairies are not my father’s favorite. His prejudice towards other races is well-known. Maybe he could help with everyday issues of the pack, though..... No. He would be around more and that would bring Mary around more which could worsen Carli’s condition.

“I don’t need you and your mate sticking around here, making everything worse. I don’t want Mary around Carli again.”

Dad sighs heavily, “I can ensure that she stays home. She won’t like it, but I know she doesn’t want to make things worse either.”

I gnaw on my bottom lip contemplating his offer. If I had his help, I could focus more on Carli.

“Let me talk to Trevor and see. We have vampires staying in the packhouse too right now. You will have to not only be polite but accepting.”

“Why are there vampires staying there?” he asked in a measured tone.

“Carli’s best friend ended up being mated to one and one of our head warriors is mated to another. We have some crazy fairy after Simone too so you’re going to have to accept other races coming and going all day. We are working closely with the Fairy Knights to resolve the issue.”

He sighs, “I just want to help, son. I won’t get in the way of your work or step on any toes.”

I hope I don’t regret this, but I need to free up some time. If Carli is pregnant, and if she stays in this funk, I can’t break her trust by putting tracking devices in her things again. I’m going to have to be super attentive until I know for sure if she is or isn’t. That damn motorcycle needs to be hidden until then. Maybe I can talk Elena or Tommy into taking it and hiding it? Or maybe send it to be worked on and pay the guys extra to be as slow as possible.

“Okay, dad. Can you be here in the morning?”

“Sure, son,” I can hear the smile in his voice, “Thanks.”

“No Mary,” I tell him firmly.

He is silent for several seconds then agrees, “No Mary. I will talk with her and see about getting her to apologize too.”

“Thanks, Dad,” I breathed out a sigh of relief while hanging up.

Now I can just focus on my mate and finding this Aiden fucker who is hiding better than a flea on a mutt.

I peak into our bedroom and see Carli is now asleep, though her body is still shuddering with broken sobs. It breaks my heart to see my fierce, strong-willed wife, mate, and mother of my child so broken and shattered.

I strip down to my boxers, crawl in bed behind her, and pull her to my chest. Carli rolls in my arms, nuzzling her nose to me and after a few breaths full of my scent, her body finally relaxes, and mine does the same. I love this woman so much. Seeing her in pain causes me pain too.

I rub my hands down her side and rest them on her belly. If my baby is in there right now, I hope all the stress surrounding us at this moment doesn’t jeopardize them. I want my mate and children to experience nothing but happy things.

“Good night, baby,” I whisper, talking to both Carli and her belly, “I love you, and I’ll make sure to make this right.”

Simone POV

Excitement bubbled in my chest as I raced up to the alpha floor the next morning ready to show Carli and everyone else my new ring. I’m engaged! I couldn’t take my eyes off it for long. I kept

shifting it in the light, catching rainbows off the diamonds every few seconds, and each time, I swear my smile kept getting bigger and bigger.

Vincent is the absolute sweetest. He woke me up with eggs benedict with delicious smoked salmon and a creamy hollandaise sauce. He even sweet-talked the chefs into bringing him a spare espresso machine and made me a frothy oat milk latte. I love him. Absolutely love him.

He is meeting with Matt this morning to go over safety precautions and security for me. I tried to go with him, not wanting to part from him yet, but he insisted he would be fine on his own. I sensed he was just trying to be considerate since I was still in bed at the time, so I didn't push him.

I texted Casey, asking what he was doing and after a few bites of food, he finally texted me back. 'Sleeping' is all he said. He must have gotten back super late after spending the night with the fairy knights searching for Aiden. I texted him to let me know when he got up and got a thumbs-up back. Butt-head. I feel like he's more excited to be hunting a fairy knight apprentice than he is to see me. I saw him for, like, an hour and he spent the whole afternoon and night with Cathal. I want to hurry and show him my ring. I guess I'll settle with showing Carli first instead.

As soon as I finished my breakfast I got ready and let Simon know I was running up to see Carli. Simon tried to come with me since the other men went with Vincent, but I assured him I would be fine traveling up one flight of stairs in a building full of our best warriors and top-ranking wolves. Laura was still sleeping in his room, now assigned to stay with Simon and help protect us, and I didn't want to disturb them. They're newly mated too and could use the privacy. Plus, I'm going to see Carli, the one and only. I wish Aiden would show up with Carli around. She would cut his balls off and shove them down his throat before he even had time to feel the pain.

I tried letting myself into their apartment, but it was locked, which isn't like them. They usually keep it unlocked during the day. I knocked, bouncing on my feet in excitement. I can't wait to show her. She is going to flip.

After a minute, no one came to the door so I knocked again. I was about to knock for the third time when Parker finally answered.

"Took you long enough," I huffed.

Parker looked exhausted, like I had just woken him up which couldn't be the case. It's 9 AM. He usually is the first to wake up in their house. He and Carli are both early risers, but he gets up extra early to help Carli with Rosie before work. He tries to be downstairs before breakfast most days.

"Sorry. We had kind of a rough night," Parker says, rubbing his hand down his face and then pushing his blonde curls back, out of his face.

“Why? What happened? Was it Aiden?” I ask, suddenly scared for my friends. I was here, in the safety of the pack house walls, being showered with presents and having amazing s\*x while getting engaged, and these guys were probably out looking for the crazy guy that I stupidly shacked up with for a couple of months.

“My parents,” Parker sighed, and I breathed out a sigh of relief. It wasn’t Aiden. Good. I wonder what he means by his parents though. They rarely come here anymore. I know Carli doesn’t have much contact with them and hasn’t seen her mom in a long time.

“Your parents? What happened with them?”

“They showed up unexpectedly last night. Mary said s\*\*t and now Carli’s not doing too well.”

“What do you mean?” I ask, worried for my friend.

“Her depression. It’s back. She’s having an episode.”

What? What depression? What is he talking about?

“What do you mean?”

Parker sighs and steps out into the hall, shutting the door behind him.

“Carli had post-partum depression after Rosie was born,” Parker says this like it was something I already knew, but I had no idea. She never told me. Then again, Carli isn’t the type of person who would share that kind of information about herself. She would think it makes her seem weak and vulnerable, two things Carli does not like being.

“What happened?” I ask tentatively.

“Mary,” Parker growls, “She tried to use my dad to demand taking Rosie for the weekend. When we all told her no and told her why she got defensive and started criticizing Carli as a mother. It triggered something in Carli and she’s been in bed upset ever since.”

F\*\*\*\*\*g Mary. I don’t understand why the b\*\*\*h won’t leave Carli alone.

“Where’s Rosie?” I ask. I can offer to keep my munchkin while Parker helps Carli.

“Elena came and got her. They’re going to keep her for the weekend. But, hey....can you maybe hang out with Carli and Rosie when they bring her back? I will have to work downstairs and leave to handle the Aiden situation sometimes. I don’t want to leave her alone when she’s like this but if I put another tracker in her stuff she will castrate me.”

“Of course,” I tell him. Poor Carli. Her mother is still finding ways to abuse my girl. I should mail her all Rosie’s diapers for the week. She wants to spend time with her, right? It’s kind of the



same thing. More than she deserves, really. She can deal with all Rosie's s\*\*t since Carli is still having to deal with hers.

Parker nods, "Thanks." He yawns and rubs his neck, then his eyes land on my hand, and a slow smile spread on his face. "Congratulations."

I smile softly, still worried about my friend, "Thanks."

"Hey," Parker pulls me into a hug and muses my hair, eliciting a growl from me, "She's okay. Sorry to get you down before you could share the big news. She's going to be thrilled. Might even help her if you go tell her."

"Is she decent? I don't want to go in that room if it smells like s\*x again." I can't even count the number of times I went into their room for something and ran back out gagging. They're like my brother and sister. They used to think they were brother and sister. Some things a just don't want to smell.

"She's dressed, just laying in bed. Don't worry. Mary ruined the night I had planned," Parker growls. He opens the door again and ushers me into the apartment. "Since you're here, I'm going to get ready in the guest room then head down to talk to Trevor and check on my dad."

"Your dad? Is he here?"

Parker sighs, "Yeah. He's going to be helping around here the next few weeks. Don't worry. I told him about Vincent and his men and he promised to be respectful."

He better. I know how he feels about other races. It's not much of a secret. Vincent thought it would be harder living here because of the rumors floating around about Alpha Jared's prejudices. He thought most werewolves would be like that.

After Parker slips in and out of his room, grabbing a change of clothes, I slip in and sit next to Carli on the bed. The thought of slapping her a\*s, getting her back for the last time she woke me up crosses my mind, but I hold myself back, telling myself I'll get her back once she is feeling better.

"Hey babe," I shake her shoulder softly, "Wake up!"

"Wake up and pay attention to me," I demand of Carli, who just grumbles and turns her face to the other side, pulling a pillow over her head. "Nope. Quit moping. I am blessing you with my presence. Wake up," I poke her side, making her back arch as it tickles.

"Go away," she grumbles. I can hear the roughness in her voice, indicating she's been crying. I suck down the urge to coddle and baby her since I know that's not what she needs and poke her sides again.

“I came here all excited to tell you my good news, allowing you to be the first to tell me congrats,” I won’t tell her Parker did just that, “and you won’t even open your eyes.”

“Where’s Parker?” she asks, head still buried in the pillow that I’m guessing belongs to Parker.

“Showering and work. Do not ask for him when this is my time. I’m offering you the gift of my face being the first thing you see when you open your eyes today so accept it and wake up.”

“Goddess, you’re so f\*\*\*\*\*g annoying,” she growls. That’s it. She’s getting spanked.

I lift my hand and bring it down hard on her a\*s, causing her to yelp, then growl as she snaps up to sneer at me.

“That hurt!”

“Now you know how it feels,” I blow a kiss at her, “Good morning, beautiful.”

“No, it is not. Go away,” she tries to bury her face back in the pillow but I pull it out from under her faster than she expects. She grasps her hands awkwardly in the air as I chuck the pillow across the room then scowls at me.

When I know she’s getting ready to snap, seeing the glint in her eyes that means she’s about to step up to a challenge, I hold my left hand up, showing her my engagement ring. Her eyes go from an intense death stare to elation in a matter of seconds.

“Is that...?”

“It is!”

She squeals and wraps her arms around my neck, “I’m so happy for you!”

“Thanks. I’m happy for me too,” I chuckle smugly. After a few seconds of hugging, I feel a shift in Carli’s mood. Gone is the momentary excitement radiating off her as her mood shifts to something cold, like sadness and sorrow. Her arms cling tighter around my neck and I feel a shattering sob shiver up her body.

“Carli?” I try to pull away from her to study her face, but she’s got her arms in a vice around me. “Carli? What’s wrong?”

She shakes her head against my shoulder, then moisture starts spilling from her, soaking into my shirt. Her body shudders against mine as I hold her in my arms, rubbing her back and trying to help hold together the strongest woman that I know.

“Carli! Carli, what happened? Talk to me,” I try to encourage her. I’ve never seen her like this. Even after all of the times when her mother abused her, when she thought Parker abandoned her, when she heard Alpha Jared wouldn’t allow her to put her name in for the running of the gamma

position, through all the s\*\*t she has been through I have never seen her break down like this. Usually, she goes numb when she's upset, tuning out the world and focusing inward, and breaking herself down on the inside. She doesn't show how hurt and broken she feels on the outside. Seeing her do it now scares me.

"Parker, I don't know what to do," I call for him, feeling my own emotions running haywire as I try to figure out how to help my best friend. When Parker told me she was in a depressive episode, I expected the numb Carli. I could always joke and tease the numb Carli until she broke out of that shell. I don't know how to help this version of Carli. This is a Carli I haven't seen before. Her body is shaking violently as her grief and sobs consume her. What do I do?

Parker doesn't reply, but I know he heard me. I sensed his brief panic in the link, and moments later he comes back into their bedroom, soaking wet and wearing the basketball shorts he was wearing before. Water is still beaded on his body and his hair looks like there's shampoo still in most of it.

He takes one look at Carli breaking down and sobbing in my arms then rushes to the bed, crawling in behind her. He wraps his arms around both of us, and I feel his soothing alpha aura encase us, letting us both know he is there and we are safe with him.

Carli's sobbing becomes less violent and all-consuming and she quickly gets her breathing back to normal. I can still feel my shirt growing damper and damper, but the hysterics seem to be gone now. One last shuddering breath travels her body before the girl wipes her snotty nose across my shoulder and lifts her head. I try to ignore it and not let it gross me out, but I'm borrowing a shirt from her the second she is calm and under control.

"I'm sorry. I'm so sorry, Simone. I'm happy for you. I'm just...."

"I know, sweetie. Don't apologize to me."

"Baby," Parker rubs the back of her neck with his hand, turning her head towards him. She whimpers slightly, then crawls into his lap, burying her face in his neck. A tear escapes my eye watching her like this. I could kill that b\*\*\*h, Mary. I don't know what exactly she said, but she is the last person who should be talking s\*\*t about anyone's parenting skills. Look at how much she hurts her own daughter.

Carli clings to Parker, Parker rocking back and forth with her in his arms as he purrs lightly in his chest, comforting her as much as he can.

"Is this normal? Was she like this before too?"

Parker shakes his head slightly, "Not this bad. She would break down when she thought no one was looking. Never in front of anyone. Not even me."

"What are we going to do?" I ask worried for Carli.

Parker sighs in the link, “I think it’s time to take her to the doctor. They gave her medicine before that helped. Maybe we need to discuss a long-term treatment. I don’t think this is just post-partum depression anymore. It feels deeper. Like it’s more than just the new baby causing her to have these episodes.”

“Will she be willing to go?”

“She was last time. Kind of. She went back for a 6-month check-up and I may have mentioned to the doctor about her bouts of crying and her erratic behavior. I thought she was going to get herself killed on that damn bike of hers.”

“Is that why you put the tracker in her earrings?” That makes more sense to me now. Parker is protective, but he’s usually good at balancing his protective tendencies with his rationality. The earring thing kind of threw me when I found out.

“Yeah. I couldn’t force her to stay home. That was the only thing I could think of at the time. I got to think of some other way to keep her off the thing now.”

I think for several seconds before a thought comes to mind, “Did Casey get a pack car or anything yet to use? You could tell her he needs it until he goes back home. Give him her keys and hide the extra set. I can even have Casey ask her to borrow it himself so it doesn’t seem like you’re trying to control her or anything like that.”

“That’s a great idea. Thanks.”

“No problem.” I smile at him before hopping off the bed. I pull my phone from my pocket and go into the closet to find a shirt of Carli’s to change into.

My respect for Parker shot up even more watching the way he is dealing and taking care of Carli and everything else going on at the moment. I don’t think we could have a better alpha and I know Carli couldn’t possibly have a better mate.

I text Casey, and he responds right away. He must be awake because he agrees to let me come see him. This situation and the bike thing need to be explained to him in person so I’m heading down there after I change.

I grab a fitted shirt, dump my tear and snot stained one in her laundry basket and tug hers over my head before walking back out into the bedroom.

“I’m going to grab Casey. I’ll be right back,” I whisper softly. Parker nods, but if Carli heard me it doesn’t show. It almost looks like she’s asleep in Parker’s arms, but I know it’s just her going numb, trying to internalize all her issues. My poor friend. She is so strong and fierce, but this is one thing she can’t fight physically. I hope the doctor can help her figure out something to help her mentally. After years of abuse and neglect, she was bound to have some scars from her past. Not all scars are external, though. The internal ones may be more damaging than the ones on the outside.

While I'm staying here, I'm going to make it my mission to help her in any way I can. She would kill and kick a\*s for me any day and for any reason. I'm not a fighter and I'm not strong physically, but maybe this is one thing I can help her through.

I walk back down to the Beta floor. Casey is staying in one of the smaller suites on this floor. I knock on his door, and several seconds later he opens it, rubbing his eyes with a lazy grin on his scruffy face.

“Mornin’ sis. What’s up?”

## **Her Vampire, Her Mate Chapter 23**

Casey POV

Several hours earlier

“I don’t give a s\*\*t what you say, I don’t want that f\*\*\*\*\*g prick sleazing with my sister,” I sneer at Parker as he drives us to the bat s\*\*t crazy’s nightclub. I know this nightclub. It’s the one werewolves all avoid because of its dark reputation. Vampires wanting fresh blood come here to prey on innocent humans, then compel them to forget them the next day. It’s a place we’ve been warned away from since middle school because of that reputation. Carli may be the only one brave enough in Crystal Moon to go here on the regular.

In some covens, vampires aren’t even supposed to drink directly from humans. Because of this being a hot tourist spot, vampires can get away with it at places like Bloodlust. It’s f\*\*\*\*\*g disgusting to think about and I don’t want my sister involved with that shit. Most werewolves are allergic to vampire venom. This isn’t a place I want her to frequent.

“He’s a good guy. This is coming from me, Case. I wouldn’t tolerate someone I couldn’t trust around my wife and daughter.”

“You’re probably just happy the d\*\*k isn’t after your wife anymore,” I growl, not trusting his words.

“About as happy as I was when you stopped going after her,” he smirks at me, making me growl again.

“We’re on our way to that disgusting club that HE owns. The one where they prey on humans. You can’t tell me he’s a good guy knowing that shit.”

“That was his father. His father was not a good man. Even Lady Delilah was getting fed up with his father’s dirty morals. That’s why Vincent came to us to take care of his rogue family members and not her because she would have shut all his businesses down. He didn’t want to lose his mother’s inheritance. Vincent changed everything when he took over. Fired tons of corrupt people loyal to his father. He stopped allowing his employees to feed on patrons. He really is a good guy, Casey. Worships the ground she walks on. Carli has been on my s\*\*t like crazy because she wants more babies that could potentially be mates with their kids.”

“Sounds like torture,” I smirk at him. I’ve seen how Carli can get when she wants something. Sounds fun in theory, your mate wanting your d\*\*k constantly to get pregnant, but Carli’s aggression is no joke.

“For her,” Parker chuckles, “I’m making her work for it.”

I laugh hearing him talk like the chick in their relationship.

“How?”

“Trying to get her to stop cussing so much. Rosie’s first word was ‘f\*\*k’, I swear.”

“You getting Tommy to stop cussing too? You can’t bribe him with s\*x,” I snicker.

“I can, actually. If he starts one of his rants, I bring up mine and Carli’s s\*x life and he runs out of the room. Elena’s in on it. She starts asking pointed questions and it turns into the most awkward game ever.”

“So you don’t want Rosie saying ‘f\*\*k’, but your okay talking about f\*\*\*\*\*g in front of her?” I raise an eyebrow at him.

He freezes momentarily, “Well, s\*\*t. I didn’t think about that.”

“That little girl is going to need all kinds of therapy,” I laugh, shaking my head.

Parker huffs, “She’s going to be a mini Carli. I’m just going to have to accept it. Cussing and all.”

“You handle Carli so well, I doubt you will have much trouble.”

“I’m going to go gray or bald by the time I’m forty,” he sighs.

“I’ll buy you a hat.”

When we pull up outside the club, my almost light mood from my banter with Parker goes to s\*\*t once again. That sleazy f\*\*k is outside talking to Melody’s dad, the fairy knight. I growl in my chest when he looks up at Parker’s truck.

“Give him a chance. He really is a good guy.”

“We’ll see,” I tell Parker.

Not like I can do anything anyway. Simone already marked him.

I get out of the truck in a huff, slamming the door closed, earning me a growl from Parker. He can suck my left nut. I didn’t want to come here to meet this fucker. The only reason I agreed was that he told me the guy had a run-in with the fairy douche that hurt my sister. That’s what I’m here for. To kill the fairy fucker.

“Cathal,” Parker nods to Melody’s dad, shaking his hand.

“Young alpha,” he tilts his head in the formal way fairies sometimes do. We don’t have many in Canada because of the cold climate, but I’m familiar with them from living here most of my life. Fairy girls were the target of most guys when I was in high school. They could use their fairy magic on you to enhance certain sensations. I don’t know from experience, just locker room talk. I was tame, especially compared to the youngest two of the Meyers triplets and even Daryl before he found out Hillary was his mate.

Matt was my best friend besides Carli and my sister and he was with Lilly long before he found out she was his mate. When the girls were out, I would choose hanging out with him over chasing tail with the rest of the guys in our crowd.

“What happened here?” Parker asks, looking between Cathal and Vincent.

Vincent tells us about coming back here to shower and change, and finding the ward in his office. He told us about his s\*\*t being gone through and being moved around. I’m chortling like a fool when he mentions his expensive suit and shoes being ruined, earning a dirty look from Parker and a confused look from the fairy knight. Vincent doesn’t react at all to me laughing at him and continues on with his retelling.

“Then I saw ‘SHE IS MINE’ written in blood on the wall. The guy needs to die, Cathal. I will not stand for him to continue terrorizing my mate after we find him. I want him dead and I want to be the one to do it,” he states firmly.

My blood runs cold and I immediately stop laughing. Who the f\*\*k does this Aiden guy think he is? Who is he to try and claim my sister when she clearly doesn’t want anything to do with him. Vincent is right. If he is going to so boldly claim her and terrorize her like this after he had to go into hiding, he is clearly never going to stop. He needs to die. He will die. I’m not sure if I can promise this vampire I won’t kill him first.

“I understand, Vincent. Queen Aisling has already put in her degree ‘dead or alive’. If you end his life, there will be no repercussions. Even the fact he stole a royal Pegasus makes the death penalty permissible. They are a sacred, close to becoming extinct creatures.”

“My Simone is a sacred, rare creature as well. Thousands, no, infinitely more precious and valuable than a flying horse. His actions against her alone are reason enough to kill him,” Vincent glares at Cathal. A shiver runs up my spine at the menacing look in his eyes.

“I am not in argument with you, my friend. Simone is my daughter’s dear friend and we are the reason she met him in the first place. Even if there were repercussions for you killing the boy, I would face those consequences in your place. I am telling you, though, that it isn’t an issue. Kill him.”

“I will. Oh, I will,” Vincent snarls softly.

“Why? Because he ruined some shoes?” I scoff. Maybe he is materialistic like my sister. Maybe that’s why they were made to be mates.

Vincent meets my eyes and shakes his head, “No. Because he hurt the most precious thing in the world to me. Nothing comes before Simone. I can replace the shoes. I can not replace nor will I ever replace her.”

The conviction in his eyes almost gets me. Almost.

“You moved on from Carli f\*\*\*\*\*g fast. I heard from Parker just a few weeks ago that you were still chasing after her. What’s to say you won’t move on from my sister just as fast?”



“Because she is my forever. When a vampire mates, to use your term, with a lover, once that soul bond is formed, it is for life. She is my life now. Without her, I would literally die. I could never live without her. Every breath I breathe from the moment she came into my life was for her.”

We stand there in awkward silence for a few moments, but Vincent’s steady gaze never left mine. He was being serious. Dead serious.

“He is right, young one,” Cathal interjects, “My kind and the night children have been close for millennia. Our kinds have intermingled much in the past. A vampire mate is the most loyal and devoted of any mate, in my opinion. They are truly committed for life.”

Vincent takes a step toward me, not in a hostile way, but more in a private conversation standpoint. “I know I was out of line earlier. I can not tell you how sorry I truly am for attacking you the way I did. I can try to make it up to you however you want. If you want to take me out back to the alleyway and kick my a\*s, I will stand there and take it. But please don’t try to belittle or make light of my love for your sister. She is my everything and I hope to prove that to you over time.”

Parker clasps me on the shoulder, and I stand looking back at Vincent apprehensively. I don’t know if it’s his words or the conviction in his eyes, but I believe him. It is clear that he really does love my sister, and he would do anything for her, including taking a beating from me.

“I don’t think you could stand for very long if I were to kick your a\*s. You’d be down and out in a second,” I smirk at him.

“I doubt that,” he smirks back.

“Wanna make a wager?” Parker is smiling, looking between us.

I laugh, shaking my head, “Nah. Wouldn’t want to piss off Sims and Carli by hurting him too bad. Those two women together can be scarier than a badass wolf and pair of fangs.”

“Agreed,” Vincent says at the same time as Parker said, “Damn right,” and Cathal nods his head with a laugh. Carli still has a reputation I see.

“I am going to depart and trace Aiden’s magic to see if I can track him,” Cathal says, “The ward has been removed. It was to alert him of your return and try and keep you contained. He could be close by. I will start the hunt.”

“I’ll come with you,” I tell the fairy, suddenly wanting to find this guy more than ever. I want my sister to be free so she can be happy with her mate.

“Are we okay, Casey?” Vincent asks me, holding out his hand.

I smirk, shaking it firmly, “Not until I get a rematch,” I laugh at him. He laughs with me and agrees. “Take care of my sister for me. I’m going f\*\*\*\*\*g fairy hunting.”

## **Her Vampire, Her Mate Chapter 24**

Simone POV

“So you two really made up,” I ask Vincent in disbelief, “You’re okay now?”

“Yes, my love. Well, I think so anyway. Your brother did say he wanted to have a rematch, but if his love language is like your headstrong friend’s I’m guessing that’s an olive branch and not a death threat.”

I laugh loudly, “If he wanted you dead he wouldn’t ask.” I shake my head. Yes, Casey is a lot like Carli with the way he thinks and reacts when he’s mad. Not as headstrong, but he wouldn’t talk about kicking your a\*s, he would just do it.

“You forgive me as well?” Vincent asks, kissing my shoulder after I finished changing into my new silk Christine Lingerie nightgown. I’m in heaven, and it’s more than just the gifts. Since coming back, Vincent hasn’t left an inch of space between us. I even opened the rest of my packages while sitting on his lap, slightly distracted as he rubbed his fingers delicately and sensually on my exposed skin. I don’t even think he means to be sensual. I think it’s natural for him. I used changing into my new nightgown as an excuse to change my panties as well. This man makes my body react to him without even trying.

“Only if you forgive me, Vin,” I turn in his arms and wrap my arms around his neck. His sweet breath washes over my face as he laughs softly in relief. His hands skim down the back of my dress, softly gliding over the silk and resting on my tush....and there goes another pair of my underwear. I can feel the lace front of my thong dampening against my thigh.

His soft, feather-light touches combined with the tingles from the mate bond are lethal. I melt against him and pull his mouth down to mine.

His skilled tongue massages mine in a delicious dance, making me moan and whimper into his mouth.

“You’re getting me excited, my love,” he whispers in my ear, his tongue flicking over my earlobe when he says ‘love’, and I almost combust right there.

“I’m already excited,” I moan. I can feel his breathy laugh on my neck.

“There’s one last gift, though. Do you want it now or.....” he sucks lightly on my neck, and I squirm in need.

“After. Give it to me after,” I plea. I don’t want anything else but him right now.

Vincent pushes me gently until the back of my legs hit the bed. We crawl and scoot back to the center of it, Vincent’s mouth never leaving mine except for when he pulls his shirt over his head. My hands instantly go to his firm chest, taunt and flexing under my fingers as he moves.

“I love silk on your body,” he says, moving his hands over the smooth fabric of my hip, “makes my hands just want to roam and explore.”

Do it, I want to scream. I want him to explore every inch of my body. My need for him is all-consuming and I can’t think about anything else.

Vincent pulls the smooth fabric up, exposing my soaked lace underwear. He moans in appreciation as his fingers brush over them, “You’re always so wet.”

I can’t speak. My mind has turned to mush as my body is overwhelmed by his touch. My back arches and I start thrashing as his fingers pump in and out of me, twitching and curling roughly against my walls. His eyes glow as they hold my gaze. I’m unable to look away, my eyes on his are the only non-moving part of my body.

He wants to watch me come undone. The bond between us and demanding it. Demanding I show him the carnal need I have for him because his need for me is on full display. He is the only man that can satisfy this growing hunger inside me, and I can feel that it’s much the same for him.

My walls start to flutter, then pulse steadily as my o\*\*\*\*m overtakes me, coating his skilled fingers and they continue their pursuit, drawing my climax out as long as it can go.

Vincent's breathing is harsh against my skin. He wants me as desperately as I want him. He tears my underwear roughly, making me gasp, and pulls my nightgown over my head as I fumble to get his shorts down his legs with my pushing hands and then pulling feet. Before Vincent can thrust in me, I push him over, straddling him as my hands run down his tapered abs.

He's at full attention, firm, and beautiful. I want to taste it, relishing the feel of his smooth, velvety head massaging the roof of my mouth but my body is in a frenzy for him to fill another part of me. The part still pulsing and swollen from his finger's assault.

I slide down his immense length, Vincent hissing and bucking as he stretches me. I throw my head back, absorbing all the pleasure the connection brings me as my hands slide up my torso and I start pulling and kneading my own breast.

Vincent's hands are on my hips, directing and urging me as he slams up into me, meeting my body's movements. This is what we both needed. This deep, almost spiritual, and carnal connection of our souls as we become one, filling all of each other's deepest needs.

Vincent is growling and hissing beneath me, his desire overwhelming him as I cry out his name incoherently over and over again, rocking my body and riding him as violently as he is thrusting into me.

He lifts my hips and slams them back down on him one last time, and I scream out my final o\*\*\*\*m as he shoots his stream deep into me in pulsing spurts that seem to go on forever.

I collapse on his chest, a sweaty, panting mess. His hands smooth back my hair, massaging my back, then kneading my a\*s as he grinds his hips against mine, locking his seed inside me refusing to pull out. I don't mind. Not at all.

"That was amazing," I pant against his chest.

"Amazing. Mind-blowing," he moans, raining kisses on my face.

My eyes are so heavy, The relief from him being back safe, relief from us no longer upset with one another, and the relief my body feels after that intense passion has all my energy spent. I'm a relaxed heap on his chest as my eyes grow heavier and heavier until I pass out.

I wake up hours later, cleaned up, and back in my nightgown. He must have taken care of me. So stinking sweet. Vincent is cuddled into my back as he spoons me, his bare chest cool against my skin. I stretch out in his arms, flexing my muscles and absorbing the delicious soreness from the vigorous exercise we just had.

As my hands are stretched out above my head, the light from the bathroom hits my finger and a glint catches my attention.

A ring? There's a ring on my left ring finger. Did I put rings on today? I don't think I did. I bring my hand down to examine my finger, rubbing the sleep out of my eyes so I can see better. I've never seen this ring before in my life. The rose gold bands have small diamonds inlaid all around with a large oval cut diamond at its center. It's gorgeous. The most beautiful piece of jewelry I've ever seen in my life.

"Do you like it?" Vincent asks huskily behind me, reaching his hand out and locking his fingers in mine.

"It's beautiful, Vincent," I exclaim in hushed surprise.

Vincent chuckles and places open-mouth kisses on my shoulder. "I can't mark you as you did me. I don't want to risk poisoning you or hurting you. I hope this can suffice in place of a mate mark. You are mine, Simone. Forever. I want everyone to know it."

Did he get me an engagement ring because of our argument earlier today?  
"You didn't have to do this, Vin."

"Yes I did," he husked, pulling me around to face him as continued staring at my new ring, "I want everyone to know you are mine. You will always be mine."

"Is this an engagement ring?"

"It is," he tilts my chin up, forcing me to look into his luminous eyes, "I want to be tied to you in every way, my love. I hope you feel the same."

I lick my lips nervously, sucking them into my mouth before taking a deep breath, "Are you asking me to marry you?"

Vincent stares into my eyes for several more seconds, then nods, slowly, "I am."

I squeal throwing my arms around his neck, "Yes! Yes! Yes!"

"You don't think I'm moving too fast?" Vincent chuckles as he asks.

"I love you, Vincent," I tell him as tears fill my eyes, "You're my forever too."

Vincent's smile at hearing me say I love him makes my heart accelerate in my chest.

"I love you too, Simone. More than anything."

Aiden POV

She marked him. She marked the f\*\*\*\*\*g vampire even though she refused to mark me.

When the ward's alarm went off and I felt the pull of its magic, I took my stead and raced back to his sordid place of business. The painted black nightclub with its red lettering declaring its shameful intentions, Bloodlust, comes into view and I circle around in the air. I just left this place not half an hour ago. It was dangerously tricky getting in and out with so many workers around. I thought visiting a vampire nightclub during the day would be safe, but it was surprisingly busy with deliveries and employees getting ready for the evening.

After snooping around in his office, getting some useful information, I found a suit of his that smelled strongly of Mona in his cabinet. It infuriated me. Her scent should have never been shared with anyone but me.

I don't know how, but the bastard somehow got out of the wards and was pacing around on the phone, clad in tacky workout attire instead of the dress attire I always catch glimpses of him in when he isn't wearing the woman who should be mine.

She marked him, and the betrayal of her claiming him when she would not even consider me makes my blood boil. He is a vampire. A f\*\*\*\*\*g vampire. I am so much more a better choice than some filthy blood-sucking vampire with

a seedy business and fancy clothes in place of muscles to defend and protect her. I could have given her the world but she chose him over me.

She lied. She said she found her mate and then marked him. Was she not playing cat and mouse with me? Was she playing with my heart instead? The betrayal I feel is crippling and I ride around stunned for too long. Cathal is there with him before I have a chance to do anything to him.

He needs to die. After he is dead I will force her to mark me the way she marked him. I should have never let her go free for so long. I will right this wrong. This never would have happened if I forced her from the start.

The documents I came upon in his office come to mind and a plan starts forming in my head. I can fix this and get rid of him if I play my cards just right. With all the precautions they are taking, I have to use my head and get to him using other means. If I can draw him out and capture him, maybe she will leave her protectors to save him. She won't be able to, of course. He is a dead man for coming between me and my Mona.

I have to plan this just right. I can't afford to mess up or get caught. I turn my head around, retreating for now to plan my next move.

## **Her Vampire, Her Mate Chapter 25**

Carli POV

"And here is another outfit for my baby girl," Parker pulls out another little girl outfit with tulle in the skirt and pink ruffles on the sleeves and I'm melting watching my man fawn over our daughter. Seriously, my ovaries.

Rosie is cooing and baby talking his ear off, and I'm standing in the kitchen watching Parker adorably baby talk back in his masculine voice. Put another baby in me now! Watching him be a kick-a\*s daddy is the biggest turn-on, and by the way he keeps smirking over at me, I know he knows it.

"I got this one for your mama," Parker rubs his nose against Rosie's, and then walks over to me, handing me a maternity wear bag, making me smile brightly.

"I'm not pregnant though."

“No but you will be soon,” he kisses my cheek, “We should try all night until you are.”

“But, what about the search?” I ask him. We’ve been taking turns going out with Cathal and his men searching for Aiden, and tonight was my shift with Matt.

“Casey is filling in for you. You’re all mine tonight,” he whispers in my ear, kissing down my neck. Rosie, still in his arms, starts slapping his face for attention making both of us laugh.

“But Rosie?...” I ask before getting lost in his heated gaze.

“Elena is on her way,” he tells me, placing a tender kiss on my lips, then turning his attention to an irritated Rosie and pretending to munch on her little angry fist.

While the three of us cuddle together, standing in the kitchen and laughing at Rosie’s attention hogging ways, knocking sounds from the front of the apartment.

“Elena must be here,” Parker says handing me Rosie so he can answer. Elena has a key and usually lets herself in, though. I shrug my shoulders, carrying Rosie to the front to meet her grandma, only it’s not the grandma we were expecting.

Mary and Jared are standing in our foyer, arguing in hushed whispers to Parker about something. Why the f\*\*k are they here? I haven’t seen either of them in quite some time. Mom stopped trying to make me bend to her will right before Rosie was born. She doesn’t try to call, text, or anything, which I’m happy about. I finally had peace and freedom from her, which I always wanted.

Jared will text me periodically, asking for pictures of Rosie or to ask how I’m doing, and he’s cordial when we see each other in passing on occasion in the pack house, but Parker is the one that mainly deals with them, allowing me to be completely free from the pressure of dealing with them. Parker takes Rosie to see them about once a week, which he already did this week, so I’m wondering what they’re doing here now.

“You never gave us a reply, son,” Jared tells him, looking worriedly between him and Mary.



“I did give you a reply, you guys just didn’t accept it. I said no. Maybe when she’s older, but not now.”

“Why not?” Mary glares at him, her arms crossed across her chest. I’ve never seen her act that way towards Parker. She usually bends over backward to make him happy.

“Because I don’t trust you,” Parker says flat out, making me worried about what they’re talking about. Mary scoffs, then looks to her mate, probably wanting Jared to make Parker give in to whatever she is demanding.

“Parker, that’s not any way to treat your mother. We would never do anything to hurt her. She....we just want the opportunity to bond with her like her other grandparents.”

“What’s going on?” I ask, bringing their attention to me. Mary’s hard gaze turns soft when she sees Rosie in my arms, taking a step towards me like she wanted to take her, but I quickly turn, shielding my child with my body. Mary drops her hands and her face falls momentarily before she turns her glare on me.

“I want to take my granddaughter for the weekend,” she states flat out, straightening her shoulders and turning her nose up in the air.

I huff, “Well, that’s not going to f\*\*\*\*\*g happen.”

Parker mouths ‘language’ to me, but I just ignore him and continue to glare at my birth mother.

“And why not?,” she huffs, “Grace mentioned keeping her for the weekend a couple of weeks ago, and I know Elena keeps her all the time. Why am I not allowed the same rights? I’m her grandmother too.”

“Because you were a piss poor mother and until my daughter is old enough to talk and tell me what is going on around her I’m not leaving her with someone I don’t trust. I can’t believe you would even think you have a right to something like that. The answer is no.”

“I am her grandmother too! I would never hurt her!”

“You hurt me!” I scream back at her, making her flinch. Rosie starts crying in my arms. I turn my face to kiss her head tenderly, bouncing up and down to

try and calm her down. Parker comes over and takes her from my arms then places a supportive hand on my back.

We've talked about this many times. Mary asked Parker since the day she was born to be closer and have more freedom with Rosie, but we both agreed that wasn't going to happen. I know Parker never really forgave her for all the years of abuse I endured, and I sure as s\*\*t wasn't subjecting my daughter to the same treatment. No f\*\*\*\*\*g way.

Jared talked with us both once, many months ago, and when we explained to him why we refused he reluctantly agreed with us. I trust him more than I trust my own mother, so I don't mind him watching our daughter for short periods of time, but I sure as s\*\*t am not letting her take Rosie. No way in hell.

"I tried to keep you safe," Mary turns up her nose defiantly again, but I can see a tremor in her lips like she's holding back tears.

I scoff at her ridiculous statement. "You tried to keep your own reputation safe, Mary. I will not trust my infant to a woman that claims she hit me repeatedly to keep me safe. You're f\*\*\*\*\*g delusional. Parker takes her to see you guys every week but if that's not good enough for you we can stop that too. I'm not letting you try to dictate anything in my life anymore."

"Such vulgar talk. What kind of mother are you to try and judge my actions? You had the best of everything. I paid thousands of dollars on your credit card every month and you had a luxury vehicle. You could have had a lot worse. Don't try to condemn me when you talk like a sailor and dress like a nightwalker," she sneers waving her hands up and down my body. I'm in a sports bra and leggings. Not even close to dressing like a prostitute.

Parker growls at her statement and wraps an arm around my waist, pulling my back to him. Jared looks almost appalled at his mate, shaking his head behind her but too much of a p\*\*\*y to say anything to her or make her shut her f\*\*\*\*\*g mouth. He must know she is making the situation worse. I doubt Parker will want to see Mary for a long time after this and I sure as hell am not taking Rosie to see them.

The Range Rover she gave me, so I stopped taking rides from Elena and didn't bother her for them either, I gave back to them the week after I graduated high school. Jared tried to talk me into keeping it, but I didn't want it. I had my bike my dad gave me and Parker had his truck so we were okay without it. And the credit card thing was because she wouldn't allow me to eat

in the pack house's dining hall for 4 f\*\*\*\*\*g years. Buying 3 meals a day out and buying all my other necessities when I didn't have parents to rely on was expensive.

"How much did you spend on her?" Elena's voice breaks through the tension. She's standing at our open door and I'm sure by the look on her face she heard everything that just went down. "How much do you think you spent on her credit card expenses and the car she gave back? Tell me and I'll pay it right now."

Mary gives her a look full of disgust, making me growl low in my chest.

"Like you could afford to cover any of it. It's none of your concern. She is not your daughter and this is a private conversation."

Elena comes to stand beside me, ignoring Mary's menacing stare, placing her hand firmly on my shoulder, "That's where you're wrong, Mary. She is my daughter and I don't appreciate you trying to guilt her for something any mother would gladly do for their child. So tell me how much? I assure you I can cover it, and gladly would. That's what a mother does. And I would never try to make her feel like s\*\*t for it."

"That isn't necessary, Elena," Jared comes to stand beside Mary. She looks up to him, and I knew she was searching for support but he was giving her a hard look, for once trying to put her in line. "As you said, it was our duty and I would never expect anything back for doing it. Mary uses the car herself now so it was no loss. We just wanted more time with our granddaughter."

Jared looks at me, "I'm sorry, Carli. We were out of line coming here like this. I hope you won't take the time we do have with Rosie away. I also hope we earn your trust enough to have the same privileges as your parents, but I understand your concerns for now. We will respect your wishes," he looks down at Mary with that same hard look as he says the last sentence. She glares back at him, clearly not happy he's not taking her side. "I hope you guys have a good night," he says, pulling Mary with him from the apartment.

Mary looks back, glaring at us one last time until her eyes rest on our daughter in Parker's arms. Her face turns soft and I can see the longing in her eyes.

“Seems you guys are having a fun night,” Elena sighs, pulling me into a fierce hug, “Don’t let that woman’s words get to you. She’s lashing out at you because she’s angry with herself. You’re an amazing mother.”

I feel heat building behind my eyes, not trusting her words. Am I a good mother? I don’t feel like it right now. I feel like s\*\*t. I screamed and made my baby cry, and couldn’t even stand my own ground with my abusive mother. I had such a horrible role model, I wouldn’t be surprised if other people thought I was a bad mom too. Maybe that’s why Parker was reluctant to have another baby with me?

Feelings of inadequacy are consuming me, along with guilt and an uncontrollable sadness that is tearing a hole in my chest. Maybe I shouldn’t have any other children. I can’t even watch my mouth in front of the one I already have. Parker’s her favorite, and it’s probably because I’m such a horrible mother. I’m not half as good of a parent as he is. He does everything for her while I’m out stubbornly maintaining my warrior status. I even put up a fight to go back to work instead of staying home with her.

After Elena takes Rosie with her, along with a bag Parker packed because I didn’t think to, I go and lay in our bed, letting the all too familiar beginnings of my depression consume me. I shouldn’t be pushing for another baby right now. I don’t deserve one.

“Are you okay, babe?” Parker asks, sliding in bed behind me.

I nod, not trusting my voice. I don’t want to cry right now and I think if I say too much I just might. I don’t cry. I hate crying. I’m not giving in to it.

“I can feel you’re not. Talk to me,” Parker urges, nuzzling his nose into my neck. I lift the comforter, pulling it tight around me to block his face. I don’t want my body’s reaction to the mate bond muddling my thoughts any more than they already are. I just want to lay in bed and let my negativity consume me.

“I want to go to sleep, Parker,” I mutter softly.

“What about the baby-making?” he pouts, trying to lift my mood but doing the opposite.

I turn my face into my pillow just as a tear breaks free. I keep my body utterly still, fighting back the sobs which are trying to overtake me. The last thing I

need is Parker worried about me again and putting more tracking devices in my jewelry and clothing.

After a long time of trying to get me to talk to him, Parker leaves our room with a sigh. I can feel his anger and frustration through the bond, deepening my guilt and self-hatred. He deserves so much better than me. He and Rosie both do. I'm a s\*\*t mom, a s\*\*t wife, a s\*\*t luna, and a shitty person. My mother was right. I have no right to judge her.