

Her Vampire, Her Mate Chapter 26

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.”

Her Vampire, Her Mate Chapter 27

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 own 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!”

Her Vampire, Her Mate Chapter 28

“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 29

"Mornin' sis. What's up?"

"I thought you would be sleeping longer?"

"I was planning to, but Court called. Calum was at swimming practice and she wanted to show me he could finally do it without the floaties."

"Aww, my nephew is the smartest little 2-year-old in the world. Of course, he doesn't need no floaties," I boasted smugly.

“Damn straight. Gets it from his daddy,” Casey smirks.

“You mean his auntie?” I quirked up my eyebrow.

Casey laughs loudly, “Sure. Tell yourself that.”

“I will,” I smirked at him, “So, can I talk to you for a bit?” I asked him, shifting from our playful banter to a more serious tone.

Casey looks at me, studying my shift in mood. “If this is about your fang boy, don’t worry. No, I didn’t like him. Not sure if I still fully approve, but we talked and I’ll play nice. He doesn’t seem like a bad guy. We just won’t be braiding each other’s hair anytime soon.”

I narrowed my eyes at him, “This wasn’t about Vincent, but while we are on that top, let’s discuss you not being so hostile towards him. He’s my mate, Case. I don’t know why you don’t approve, but he is an amazing man and you shouldn’t judge him without getting to know him.”

“I just don’t like my sister being mated to a guy who has probably seduced and slept with half of Miami. You deserve better than that,” he huffs, crossing his arms over his bare chest.

I scoffed, not liking the judgment in his tone. In mine and Vincent’s relationship, I’m the one that fits that description better than he does. Vincent is a saint compared to my experience, and I feel like Casey judging Vincent like that is like he’s judging me.

“I am the second girl Vincent has even slept with and the first woman he has dated to any degree. You shouldn’t judge people without getting to know them, you a*s. By your definition, I’m the one that doesn’t deserve him. I’ve slept with way more people. Hell, you’re here because of my last f**k buddy getting too attached. Don’t you dare think I’m going to tolerate you talking s**t on my mate just because you’re my brother. He is nothing like what you are accusing him of and you owe him an apology.”

I turn my nose up and cross my arms across my chest, completely pissed at this point. How dare he accuse my mate of that kind of crap. Casey was more of a man w***e than Vin, though I know he didn’t sleep around as much as the other guys, he still had his occasional hook-ups.

“What about him and Carli, then?” Casey asks, stubbornly trying to hold his argument, though I know he isn’t as sure of himself anymore. “He was after her, wasn’t he?”

“And so were you!” I almost screamed at him. “Does Courtney hold that against you?! You tried for years to get with Carli. You’re mated to her cousin now. If Courtney isn’t holding that against you, why the hell do you think you have the right to hold that against him?”

Casey sighs heavily, dropping his arms from his chest before pulling me into a hug. I fought against his hold, still having my arms crossed and pushing against his bulky frame with my elbow.

“You’re right. I’m sorry, Sims. You’re my sister. I’m allowed to have double standards with you, but you’re right. I didn’t want to argue with you. I’ll try to get along with him. I promise.”

“You better, because he’s going to be your damn brother-in-law,” I glared at him, raising my left hand to show him my ring. He leans back and grabs my hand to examine the ring closer, whistling softly.

“Guy must be loaded,” he smirks, “That’s good, cuz you’re kinda high maintenance.”

“Screw you,” I scoffed, pulling my hand from his and hitting his chest, making him laugh.

“Congrats, sis. I’m happy for you.”

“Better be,” I tried to maintain my glare, but a small smile lifted the corners of my mouth.

“I am. I feel sorry for him, though. He hasn’t seen your shoe closet yet, has he?” he laughs, then huffs as I punch him in the stomach. “I’m just kidding! Quit your violence,” he laughs, “So if Vincent isn’t the reason you wanted to talk, what is?”

My arrogance and defiance dropped and my face turned solemn thinking about Carli upstairs with Parker, and the brokenness I had just witnessed from her. Casey, alarmed by my change in mood, instantly tenses up.

“What is it? Is it that fairy fucker? Did he do something else?”

I shook my head quickly to reassure him, “No, no. It’s not that. It’s Carli.”

“Carli? What happened to Carli? Is she okay?”

I offered him a sad smile, “Not really. She’s been suffering from depression, I guess, and her b***h of a mother triggered another episode last night. She’s....not okay, Casey. I’ve never seen her so broken.”

Casey growls softly in his chest. He knows, probably better than even me, how much Mary has abused Carli over the years. He hates her. Loathes her. “What did she do?”

“I’m not sure exactly, but Parker said something along the lines of accusing her of being a bad parent.”

Casey scoffs, “She is the last person who should accuse anyone of that.”

“I know. Everyone knows that. Carli, it seems, took it to heart, though, and is....she’s not good, Case. It’s scary how not okay she is. It’s scaring me, and it is scaring the hell out of Parker. He has so much to deal with already, but you know he is going to put her before anything else.”

Casey nods, “As he should. I’ll talk with Trevor and Matt and see if I can step in and relieve some of his burden with pack s**t. I’ll take over working with Cathal and the fairy knights too.”

I nodded, “Thank you. I’m sure he would appreciate that. I’m going to be sticking around Carli more and helping with Rosie. And....there is one more thing that would be a huge relief and help for Parker and me.”

“What’s that? Anything.”

I bit my lip, “Can you borrow Carli’s bike? Parker said that the last time she was like this he was scared for her when she would leave to ride alone for hours. You know how she is. She’s reckless on a good day. He is scared something might happen to her, and he has no way of tracking her now. If you could borrow the bike, making it seem like it’s your idea and not Parker trying to take her freedom away, then it would relieve a lot of his stress.”

“No problem,” he smiled sadly, “Poor guy. Yeah, I’ll ask her today if I can take it. I’ll tell her it’s easier to maneuver the city in.”

“Thanks.”

Casey pulls me in for another hug, “She’s like my sister too. Don’t thank me. I get a crotch rocket to play on during my stay, so no problem at all.”

I laugh softly, letting Casey’s soothing and familiar scent and strong arms comfort me. I was shaken after seeing Carli broken and crying, but Casey is again being my rock and anchor, steadying me through rough waters.

Her Vampire, Her Mate Chapter 30

Vincent POV

I had a very pleasant talk with the Gamma Matt this morning. We had a conference with some of their warriors, the ones assigned to working with the fairy knights to find Aiden. With the new developments of yesterday when I decided to visit my club instead of going to the pack house, they each wanted to ask me specific questions about the experience.

Cathal got all this information from me yesterday, but because of my little shopping expedition with Parker, I never got around to telling the werewolves who were a part of the investigation everything that happened. They heard an off-hand account from Casey but wanted to verify everything with me too.

I was surprised at how accepting everyone still was of me. I expected hostility after attacking Simone’s brother, but instead, I got the opposite. Lots of jokes were made at my expense, but they were followed by their own stories of moments of going overboard in their possessiveness of their mates. What I did was pretty mellow compared to some of these men. I guess werewolves are naturally inclined to that carnal possessiveness and since I’m mated to one, bearing her DNA through the mark she gave me, I’m going to exhibit some of those traits as well.

Lilly, Matt’s mate, was an exceptional host throughout the meeting, making sure everyone had drinks and snacks, that there were pens and notepads at every warrior’s reach, and every time she walked by her mate, they would smile and caress one another. It was like they were being drawn to each other and couldn’t resist the urge to touch each other, even a little. It was fascinating to watch because that is exactly how I feel with Simone.

Parker never came to the meeting, but his father poked his head in early on telling Matt that his son was indisposed and would make it down later. I had

never met his father, but I heard many rumors about the man. He was very traditional in his values and it was no secret that he didn't like his pack mingling with other races.

Vivian Meyers, one of my late mother's friends from childhood and a woman I do business with on occasion would often complain about his arrogance and bigotry. Her mate is a human and she faced a lot of judgment. He is a wonderful man. A little bit of a hippy and eccentric, but a very agreeable and friendly person to be around. He refused to be made into a werewolf, and Vivian refused to change him. They were happy and loved each other fiercely and wouldn't let their relationship be forced into some tiny mold Parker's father was encouraging them to fit in.

I was surprised to learn that Matt was one of Vivian's sons. I met his brothers when they would visit my club, and Matt is very different from their...wayward lifestyles. I could not even say how many times my security had to pull the other Meyer brothers from bathrooms, supply closets, and once even from my office where they were trying to get it on with some woman during one of their s****l rampages. Matt seems entirely devoted to his mate; very different from his brothers who seem only devoted to their lower extremities.

I'm on my way back to Simone now, riding in the rarely used elevator. I don't understand what werewolves have against elevators. None of them use it, preferring to take the stairs. Where elevators are usually in the front of a building and stairs off in the corners, the pack house was the opposite, the stairs in the center of the building and the lone elevator is tucked away in the corner of the administrative offices.

After exiting, Simone's voice causes me to pause around the corner from our apartment. Her sweet, sultry voice is for once aggressive and defiant, causing me alarm.

"This wasn't about Vincent, but while we are on that topic, let's discuss you not being so hostile towards him. He's my mate, Case. I don't know why you don't approve, but he is an amazing man and you shouldn't judge him without getting to know him."

"I just don't like my sister mated to a guy who has probably seduced and slept with half of Miami. You deserve better than that," I hear Casey's gruff voice. I thought me and him had an understanding yesterday? Does he still think so low of me? Even if I didn't have the precious gift of Simone, I would never be the way he is describing me.

“I am the second girl Vincent has even slept with, and the first woman he has dated to any degree. You shouldn’t judge people without getting to know them, you a*s. By your definition, I’m the one that doesn’t deserve him. I’ve slept with way more people. Hell, you’re here because of my last f**k buddy getting too attached. Don’t you dare think I’m going to tolerate you talking s**t on my mate just because you’re my brother. He is nothing like you are accusing him of and you owe him an apology.”

My irritation melts away hearing my beautiful, awe-worthy love defend me to her own brother. I knew they were close and was very worried he could sway her against me. That was why I so desperately wanted to speak with him yesterday. I didn’t want misunderstandings and assumptions to cause him to dislike me any more than he already did.

I continue to listen as Simone defends my honor and pride blooms in my chest. When I feel Stephan and Carlos approach from the elevator, following me back up after they stayed back a few extra minutes to talk with the pack’s warriors, I hold my hand out to them indicating they should stay where they are.

I do not wish to eavesdrop any longer on my mate and I sure don’t want them to hear Simone bicker with her brother so I motion for them to follow me back into the elevator.

When the elevator doors close Stephan asks, “Boss, is something wrong?”

“Not at all. Opposite, really. My love was having a moment with her brother and I want to give them a moment of privacy. It wasn’t a good time to invade their conversation.”

They both nod in understanding. They look back and forth between each other and me and I can sense there is something they want to ask me.

“Sir, would it be possible for us to train with the wolves as well?” Carlos asks me hesitantly.

My eyes shoot up to his, “I don’t mind, but why would you want to? It is not needed for our kind.”

Carlos and Stephan look between each other, “We are enjoying our time with them, sir. They have been surprisingly welcoming.”

I nod, fully understanding what they meant. Everyone has been surprisingly welcoming since the first moment we came here. I was apprehensive, but I'm glad we came. "Discuss it with Simon, but I hardly mind. I think growing closer to the wolves will be inevitable for our kind in the future."

Carlos smirks, "I wouldn't mind finding me a wolf mate like you and Simon. It seems...passionate."

"And exciting," Stephan laughs, "Very different from our normal, mundane lives."

He's right. Vampires are usually solitary creatures. Besides our immediate family, we don't have this almost hive mentality like the wolves have here. The pack is a literal family. They care for each other deeply, putting the pack, or family, before themselves. If my actions and the treatment I received today are any indications, the care you receive from the pack is unconditional. Once you are in the family, I feel like it would take extreme circumstances to be ostracized or outcasted.

We sit in the dining room as I wait for Simone to finish with her brother. I texted her and let her know that I was down here drinking coffee with Carlos and Stephan and to let me know when she was ready for me to join her again. It didn't take long for her to reply, asking me to meet her up at the alpha floor in 10 minutes. She said she was waiting for her brother to shower and they would meet me up there.

"I'm going up to the Alpha's floor. I doubt you will be needed with me up there. How about you both talk with Simon while I'm occupied about joining the warriors during their training?"

They both smile eagerly, "Thanks, boss."