

Owned by the Alphas |

The Vampire

Brax pushed me toward Tabitha, who grabbed my hand and yanked me back from the dining table. She bashed her cane on the floorboards and the table slid against the wall, making me gasp.

Derik, Kai, and Brax went to the windows, peering out of them with their red eyes as Cain hauled back the rug. Underneath was a trapdoor. Cain opened it and nodded into the darkness.

“Get in,” he ordered, his voice firm, his eyes flashing red.

I had no idea what was down there, but I did know that there were vampires on their way and that was more terrifying than the unknown in that moment, so I ran down the wooden steps into a basement that was surrounded in concrete.

I looked back up from the bottom and Tabitha came hobbling down. Cain slammed the door shut before I could ask what the hell was about to happen.

I wrapped my arms around myself as Tabitha grabbed my hand again and led me to where there was a small lamp. I went to light it, but she shook her head.

“Not that one. There’s a chest in the corner, get out the eucalyptus one. It’ll disguise your scent enough. Hopefully.” She scowled.

I nodded and went for the chest, dropping to my knees to dig through the contents.

My hands were shaking as I read the labels on the hundreds of long stick candles she had in there. My heart was beating so fast, the silence in the basement and even from above somehow even more terrifying.

I pulled out the candle and stuck it in the candle holder on the little table, lighting it with the matches beside it.

There was a wooden rocking chair next to it with some cushions on the floor. Tabitha took the chair, but I couldn’t sit, I was too nervous, so I paced.

I had only ever heard stories of vampires, I had never seen them before. I had no idea what to expect, whether they were going to be terrifying or bloodthirsty, whether they were going to try and kill the alphas.

That thought made me shiver, my heart beating so hard.

I chewed on my lip, tapping my nails against my arm that was wrapped around my waist, pacing back and forth as I waited to hear something, anything, happen.

And then it happened.

A loud thud hit the floorboards above me, and I covered my mouth, holding back the squeal.

All my life I had been told how scary the vampires were, how they were the worst creatures that the world had created and to fear them, avoid them, go along with crazy virgin rituals to avoid going to them.

And now I was beneath a house that was being stalked by them.

Going to the werewolf city hadn't prepared me for that possibility. And that made me wonder if I was even still in the werewolf city.

I had no idea how far out I was. I had never even known a swamp existed, and the wolves had made sure I had no idea where Tabitha lived.

I spun to her, and she was rocking in her chair, her stance relaxed, but her eyes narrowed like she was seeing so much more than I was.

"Where are we? Why are there vampires here?" I whispered, moving closer.

Tabitha eyed me with those wise eyes and held her finger to her lips in a *shhh* gesture. I swallowed hard and followed her gaze that traveled upward. Slow footsteps creaked on the wood above.

"Alphas."

"Leave." Derik's gruff voice was so deep and low it almost had me bowing to it.

“Now is that any way to treat a guest? The swamp is neutral territory, we are breaking no laws,” the responding voice said, and it was much higher. It was pretty and smooth with a seduction to its wording.

I looked through the floorboards, where I could just see a black leather shoe and slacks. There was a red velvet cape covering the floor next to the tiny parting I was looking through, belonging to the vampire.

I didn’t believe there was only one, but it was the only one I could see.

It was powerful too; I knew that by the way my shadows turned and twisted within me. It was almost painful, a sharp sensation, a warning that kept the goosebumps raised on my skin. Kept my adrenaline pumping.

“I was under the impression that dinner was an open invitation. Especially since you brought a human so close to our borders.” I could hear the smirk in the voice, and I sucked in a breath. They knew I was there.

I stepped back, tears welling as images of blood and death gripped my mind.

“You were mistaken, Silas,” Brax warned.

“Oh, I don’t think so, but being a befouled wolf, I can imagine being wrong is your forte,” the vampire said, in a way that sounded like an insult, but I had no idea what it meant.

Why was Brax a befouled wolf? What the fuck was a befouled wolf?

My alphas had questions to answer when we got out of this, but the first one was definitely going to be what the fuck were they thinking bringing me to neutral territory where vamps could get to me?

At Silas’s comment there was scuffling, a roar, and some furniture being broken.

“Kai, it’s okay. Don’t touch him,” Brax warned, and I could just see him through the cracks in the wood, holding a fuming Kai back.

Kai’s eyes met mine through the boards, and he relaxed into Brax, stepping back, his glare going to Silas.

“It seems we have a bit of a problem, Alphas,” Silas started, and there was something in his voice that got to me. Like he thought he was going to win.

"You see, that beautiful dome of power you have over your territory, protecting your villages and cities, surged on the night of the blood moon.

"Now I don't know about you, but I know of only one other time that much power surged through my territory from yours, and I suspect you know exactly why that might concern me," Silas explained.

I was a little lost. I assumed he was talking about the power from my offering, but I didn't understand why it affected the vampires. And that was annoying as hell.

I didn't know nearly enough about the accords with the vampires. In fact, I only knew the blood moon ritual.

"We have no idea what you're talking about."

"Ah ah ah, Derik. Come on now. I have been alive for thousands of years, and even your ancestors knew better than to lie to me. I am no fool, and you would do well not to forget it," Silas warned, his voice changing a little, his tone almost a hiss as he delivered his words perfectly, his back straight.

I wanted to see his face, but there was no way I could see that far up, and I was facing my alphas, not the vamp.

He sounded like an asshole.

"And you would do well to forget what you think you felt, and fuck off," Kai growled.

Silas hissed, properly this time. "You do not talk to me, savage!" he spat, black wings spreading out behind his robe.

They looked like bat wings, with sharp ends. He took a deep breath, then rolled his shoulders and pulled them back in, brushing down his impeccable pinstripe suit.

"I will speak with Derik. Those are the rules," he reiterated.

"Or what?" Kai taunted, and the vamp went deadly silent.

And then the poisonous taste coated my tongue, the sterile smell filling my nostrils. I grimaced at the way it sank in my stomach like acid, made my skin crawl.

More footsteps entered Tabitha's home, and I turned to her.

How the hell were they even getting in? I thought she had an alligator, and as a witch, I expected her to have a little more protection. Where were her traps and magic? Her disappearing cabin thing she had done before?

I eyed her, and she gave me a knowing smirk, holding her finger to her lips again.

I stowed the question in the back of my mind with the ever-growing list that was already there for once the vampires were gone. And there were more of them now, at least five.

Kai chuckled and cracked his knuckles. "Cute. I'll pick their flesh from my teeth with your bones," he warned, a malicious grin spreading on my alpha's face.

I should be disgusted or turned off, but it had the opposite effect. I grinned and licked my lips, watching him dare the vamps.

Silas just laughed, then turned to Derik. "Keep your hound at bay, Derik. We are in neutral territory, and I am simply asking questions."

"I'll order him to rip your throat out with his teeth before I heel him, Silas. Now enough of this bullshit. What are you here for?" Derik demanded.

Silas chuckled darkly. "The winter born. I know you have her," he said, and then the fight erupted.

Derik launched himself at Silas, his teeth gnashing out a growl so feral it rattled the wood of the house. Kai grinned and went for Silas's backup.

I stepped back, sinking back against the wall, shaking, unable to keep up with who was hurting who. That's when Tabitha laughed.

"Well, I thought it would be Kai to break. I would've lost money on that bet, and that has happened exactly never," she said with a hefty sigh and a smirk, getting to her feet.

I frowned at her, swallowing back my tears. "What are you doing?"

"Going to break up those fools before they destroy more of my house," she said, hobbling to the stairs before climbing up them.

I went to follow, but she spun to me, quicker than I had seen her move. “Not you, winter born. I’ll handle them.”

“Then why didn’t you before this?!” I cried in a hushed cry.

She smiled. “It wasn’t time. I needed one of them to break. Like I said, I thought it was going to be Kai, but no matter. It is done.”

She smiled and walked up the stairs, shutting the door in my face before I could stop her. She stood in the middle of the chaos before clearing her throat.

“Excuse me, gentlemen?” she asked quietly, and I had no idea what the crazy woman thought she was doing.

I could barely hear my own thoughts over the roaring and crashing, let alone her voice. That’s when she sucked in a huge breath.

“Excuse me!” she growled.

Everyone stopped. Brax hauled Derik back into my eyeline through the floorboards. He had blood on him, dripping from his fangs.

Kai was crouched on the dining table, picking his bloodied fangs with his claw, his eyes on whatever vamp he could see but I couldn’t. He was covered in blood too.

There were claw marks over his chest, and Brax had a bite mark in his neck.

It broke me to see them so hurt over me. I hated that they were fighting vampires for me, to keep me a secret. I didn’t even know why the vampires cared so much. I was winter born and I had shadows, but I couldn’t do much.

That was obvious, since I was hiding in a basement while the real power fought for me.

“Tabitha. I apologize,” Silas was quick to say as Kai snickered.

Even Cain, who looked pale but had no blood on him, held a frown at the vampire’s words.

“Tabby, Ruby hungry?” Kai taunted, and Tabitha softened her look at Kai.

“Enough, sweetheart,” she said, then hardened her stare at Silas. “My swamp is neutral territory, but my home is not an open door. You will notify me before arriving, and you will not come in without an invitation, do you understand me?” she growled, her voice changing drastically.

“They harbor a winter born. You know the rules, Tabitha,” Silas bit back, and at least someone knew because I sure didn’t.

The alphas hadn’t told me anything and I wasn’t sure why, but I was starting to resent it. I needed to know. I was in their territory, being put in these positions with no knowledge on why or what was going on.

It wasn’t going to keep happening, I was going to make sure of it. As soon as the vampires left and I was back at the estate.

“You have no proof. A surge in the barrier is not a good enough excuse to break my rules, Silas,” Tabitha bit back.

While they were arguing, a darkness grew in my mind. I winced as cold and dread spread slowly through my body. But it was so much heavier than normal. It was like lead, and I dropped to my knees.

I sucked in a breath, the voices of the creatures above dulling, being overtaken by a piercing ring. I held my head, clenching my eyes shut as my stomach twisted painfully.

It was freezing, my skin so cold it stung everywhere, and then I was shivering. I looked up and the shadows were there, dark and swirling in the form of a human but with no features except bright red eyes.

I snapped my eyes away, refusing to look at it. I couldn’t interact, Brax said it would make it worse.

I tried so hard to ignore it, facing the concrete, on my hands and knees, and then it was in front of me and I was staring at the shadowy outline of feet.

“Fuck off.” I trembled, and the shadows chuckled, an echoing sound to it.

“Say yes, my dear, and you will be able to end those vampires. And the werewolves. They will bow to you. They won’t be able to keep all those pesky little secrets from you. And you won’t have to see them hurt over you.

“The power we could be together would make you invincible. You wouldn’t need protecting,” it seduced, bending down in front of me.

I clenched my eyes shut, turning my head, refusing to acknowledge it. But it moved over me.

The shadows reached out, surrounded me, and I let out a whimper at the heaviness in my chest, the coldness aching in every bone I had.

I had to fight back. I had to stop them.

I reached inside myself, working through the fear, the cold, the dark, to find my own shadows. They were deep, but when I found them, when I reached for them, asked for their help, they were there, warming my body up from the inside out.

The connection was instant, and I shoved the dark shadows back from me. But they didn’t let up like they usually did. My eyes went wide as the dark swirling shadows shifted shape and a flash of something within them caught my attention.

A flash of something almost human.

I frowned and stepped toward the form.

“Who are you?” I asked, and it looked like it was grinning, which was impossible because they were shadows, they had no mouth, only eyes.

Eyes that made me want to crawl under a rock and cry for the next ten years of my life at least. But I couldn’t. I had to be stronger than that. I wasn’t the weak little human, I refused to be.

“I am the only thing that can make it possible for you to have a future with your wolves. That’s what you want, isn’t it?” it spoke, the words echoing in my ears, and I hated that it made my heart skip a beat.

It was everything I wanted, but the shadows knew that. I shuddered as the coldness gripped me tighter. I wrapped my arms around myself, narrowing my eyes.

“You gave me until the next full moon.”

“We were reminding you of the stakes, human. You will not make it out of this alive without our help.”

“I don’t want it.”

“You want to be their mate? Have their children? Be theirs? We can give you that power.”

I refused to let their offer tempt me, but my heart felt it. I wanted that, but I had to resist.

I was meant to be ignoring the shadows, but they were sucking me in. I could feel it as my own shadows got less and less potent beneath my skin.

“Who are you? Why are you doing this?” I asked, needing to get the attention off me and what I wanted.

“I am doing this because I have no body—but you do. One that can withstand the shadows and power I have. You already know of me. We are connected. Through shadows, through winter. Through the moon,” it breathed, and the words wrapped around me, coming from everywhere.

The shadows dispersed, creating a tornado around me as I tried to remember to breathe through the panic encapsulating me. My chest was heavy, too tight to get much air through.

Shit, I had been too distracted, but the words still echoed in my head and suddenly I knew exactly who I was facing. I wasn’t facing shadows.

“Elias,” I breathed, and his responding chuckle was clearer than my own voice.

His flurry of shadows settled back on his form, the full figure of Elias coming into view. He looked the same, except his eyes. They were black, and I shuddered, refusing to look at them.

“That didn’t take long. Your brother only just figured it out yesterday.”

That had me standing, gripping a strength I didn’t know I had, glaring at him.

“Leave my brother out of this!” I hissed and tried to shove him away, but he just chuckled again, disappearing then reappearing again behind me.

I spun, and he zoomed up to my face.

“Boo.” He grinned, and I gasped, falling back on my ass.

“See you on the full moon. Say yes or your brother will be the body I choose,” Elias said, and then he was gone.

I gasped for air, the heaviness lifting in my chest, but it was too late. I’d already run out of breath for too long, I’d already expended the last of my energy, and there wasn’t enough left to keep me conscious.

I passed out, shivering and gasping with no idea what had happened with the vampires or how I was meant to say no to Elias when he had my brother as leverage.