

## Silent Mate 141

### Chapter 141 - The Alpha's Rejected Silent Mate

Kai POV

I dashed off to the side, with one last sidelong glance at Winter, reassured that she would be alright. I was certain she could take care of herself, her figure like a blur in the trees. I myself, was weaving through the trees, my feet crunching on dead leaves, my body feeling like it was a tornado. It was exhilarating. I sucked in deep breaths of cold air, feeling my heart pumping loudly in my chest. There was something so thrilling about the vampire side of me, the ease of which I was able to draw on it, astonishing. I leapt up high, landing on a branch, taking time to pause and take stock of the heartbeats I could hear, following behind me.

Six, all men, I could tell. They had their tranquilizer guns held to their shoulder, eyes scanning the forest for a sign of myself. I smirk, seeing they are walking in teams of two. They were making this far too easy. Sure, they are organised, both with their backs to each other, but I had thought they would have had some more tricks up their sleeves. Or were they that arrogant, they felt it wasn't necessary?

I jump from tree to tree, my nails digging into the bark. It's like a scene from those twilight movies, making my way steadily in a zig zag direction. The first team, when I do finally stop, take a while to find me, and as they pass by, I fling myself on top of them, sending both flying to the floor. I smash my fist into the first one's face, rolling backwards and getting to my feet. The other hunter gets up and I do a roundhouse kick, sending him flying into the tree trunk. His comrade shoots and I fall to the ground, the dart flying by. He swears as I turn and grab him by the neck, swinging him wildly around and releasing him. His body hits a tree in the distance and makes a sickening crack. He's either dead or broken something serious, because he's not getting back up. I turn back to the first one.

He swings his hand at me, and I dodge to the side, grabbing hold and yanking it backwards, dislocating it from his shoulder as he screams. I drop it and then punch him several times in the midsection as he doubles over, before grabbing his hair, twining my fingers in it and biting into his neck ferociously, his hands scrabbling uselessly as I drain him dry, throwing his body to the side. I lick my lips. His blood was tangy but sweet with a hint of bitterness. I feel like I could run a thousand marathons and still not be out of breath. Plus my thirst, for blood, was now gone. I grab the tranquilizer gun and find the darts in the man's pockets. I give him a vicious kick, before I start to run again, two more heartbeats closing in on me.

They are persistent, but I'm surprised at the fact there's not many. They must be very arrogant and cocky.

I know Storm. Two hybrids and this is all they brought? It's a joke.

We still have Elena and Lexus to contend with.

I know, that bitch betrayed her own daughter. She's all Winter's, Lexus will be ours I comment viciously.

Storm growls his approval. He too, is feeling bloodthirsty right now, but content to let me hunt down the hunters in my human or rather vampire form. He would get his fight later. I had a feeling Lexus wasn't exactly going to be a piece of cake to beat.

We stop, crouching down behind some shrubbery. I load up the tranquilizer gun. I can only shoot one, but this gives me an advantage over the second one at least, if his comrade is down. I gingerly poke the gun between the shrubbery and wait patiently for them to come pass. The idiots are muttering under their breath, but my vampire hearing, more sensitive than shifter hearing, picks up what they are saying.

"Can't believe we got stuck with this assignment. Fucking Lexus being so impatient. I told him we needed more men."

"He said he could handle it if we failed" the other man scoffs "says he's stronger than a hybrid. Fucking idiot is delusional. I blame that fucking bitch that's with him. She has him wrapped around her little finger."

"Well at least we get paid well" the first man grumbles "but sometimes it's not enough for what we do."

"Where do you reckon the other's are?" the man whispers and they pause, still just out of view, suddenly becoming more cautious. Had they missed their fallen comrades as they came this way?

Their footsteps become a little more cautious, softer now, their voices having gone silent as they became aware that my presense must be close by. I watch, waiting, as they slowly come into eyesight, still a fair distance away, but not so far I can't shoot. I line it up, tracking their movements, keeping the

gun in line with them and then, whoosh, I pull the trigger and the dart goes flying, hit the man in the shoulder as he gives a shout.

"Fuck" he howls as his mate turns to him wide eyed, falling to his knees and yanking out the tranquilizer with one hand, wincing at the pain "he fucking shot me."

He falls face down on the ground, the other hunter nervously looking around, the gun still at his shoulder height, his eyes sweeping from left to right. He leaves the other hunter unconscious, on the ground.

I run towards him and he shoots, wildly, startled, the dart missing me by a mile. I smirk, as he pulls out a knife and waves it at me. To me it looks like one of those plastic ones from the toystore, but I know it's real. He thrusts it at me and I dart to the side, giving him a grin. He begins to wave it back and forth, weaving forward as I continue to dodge, side to side, my fist darting out and punching him in the eye. He howls and pauses, stumbling backwards and I knee him in the guts, before punching the side of his head, sending him to his knees. Before he can move, half blind as he is, I move behind him and grab him around the neck, depriving him of oxygen as he tries desperately to claw at me, his nails digging into my skin. I wince but continue, his face slowly turning blue, until his hands hang limply by his sides, his whole body slumping. I drop him and take the knife that's fallen to the ground. I touch the edges and flinch. It is sharp. I glance down at my arms and notice, absently, that the scratches and gouges he made, are already healing.

"This way" I hear a shout, two more heartbeats coming directly towards me. I dash forward and hide behind a tree. I grip the knife tightly in one hand.

Two more hunters come into my line of sight, back to back. One bends down and checks the corpse's pulse. "Poor bastard is gone" he reports, his voice gruff, his finger tightening on the trigger of his own gun.

The other hunter is fairly young, trembling, his grip slack on the trigger. His eyes are wide as he stares down at the body in front of him, looking as though he's about to be sick. He must be a newbie. I feel a pang of sympathy for him. His whole body is starting to shake and it's a miracle he hasn't accidentally pulled the trigger.

The older hunter shakes his head at him "get it together for heaven's sake" he snaps "christ, god knows why Lexus insisted you had to come along" he murmured. "It's almost like he wants to get his son killed."

"I can't help it" the younger one cries, his blonde hair curled and moving in the breeze "I told father I didn't want to."

Did that hunter just say this young one was Lexus's son? If that was the case, then why would he risk him being killed? Would this mean he was Johnathon's half brother? Was he Winter's half brother as well? It was mind boggling. My mind was awchirl with questions. My head was spinning. So many questions. The older hunter makes the mistake of walking past me, his back facing me, and I move, faster than ever, my arm thrusting the knife directly into his neck, before I yank it out. He gives a strange gurgling sound, blood spurting out of his neck and onto the forest floor, the younger hunter turning green as he gives a loud scream.

The older hunter's body falls to the floor convulsing. I stare at the younger man, who has already dropped his gun in fright, his body shaking so hard his teeth are chattering.

"Are you really Lexus's son?" I ask coldly, moving towards him. He looks like he's paralysed, none of his limbs so much as moving as I stop inches in front of him.

"Y, ye, yes" he stammers "please don't kill me" he continues, begging with me, "I didn't want to come, but he said it was time I learnt to be useful."

I eye him carefully. He does look like he's merely a teenager and definitely isn't a young man, now that I look closely. I feel disgusted that Lexus would put his own flesh and blood in danger. He and Elena are cut from the same cloth, that's for sure.

"What's your name?" I ask abruptly and he flushes, looking down at the ground.

"Simon" he says quietly "my name is Simon."

"Is your mother Elena?" I ask and he nods, looking even worse for wear.

"She hates me" he mumbles "they both do. Because I'm a terrible fighter, even with shifter blood. I would rather read a book, then go train. I'm pretty sure my father was hoping you would kill me."

My lips curl back in contempt. I was fairly certain of the same thing. "Do you know the girl that was with me?" I say delicately as his body slowly begins to relax "Winter?"

He shakes his head "I saw her for a moment" he admits "but that's all."

"She's Elena's daughter" I tell him quietly "your half sister, if you're telling the truth."

He looks upset. "My father wanted you or my own sister to kill me?"

The irony. "How old are you?" I ask.

He bites his lip. "13" he finally says. My stomach churns. He's still a youngling. I could have murdered a child. He was barely a teenager. He was tall for one though, which made him appear older.

"Thirteen" I say in disbelief "you have no business being here at all."

He hangs his head. "I think my father wants rid of me. I was going to try and run away tomorrow and he must have found out, because next thing I know he makes me come here and forces me to hunt."

"Why are you running away?"

"Because I wanted to tell someone, another Alpha about the warehouse and the experiments, the hunters are doing on different supernatural races." He says, steadily looking at me. I believe him, he looks so earnest and his voice is sincere. Lexus must have been pissed when he found out his own son was going to betray him.

"You were going to do the right thing" I say, uncomfortable when I see tears shimmering in his eyes. I glance around at the forest. Winter mind-links me quickly and assures me that she's alright and headed towards her mother and Lexus. I put a hand on Simon's shoulder. "We need to go" I say "you're coming with me. Can you follow orders?" I add and he nods, his eyes flashing with hope.

"Good" I grin "because in a few minutes, you're about to see your sister in action. I just need to know one thing? Will you get in the way of us killing your father?"

He hesitates, then shakes his head, curls bouncing, "I want him dead. He's a horrible man" he says thickly, a catch in his throat "he deserves to die."

"Can you lead us to the warehouse?" I ask, imagining the dreadful building in my mind.

He grimaces. "They kept me blindfolded the whole time we were travelling" he says hoarsely as we walk "I wouldn't have the first clue how to get back. But Elena, my mother, knows where it is."

"Does she now" I say casually "I guess we better not kill her then." I mind-link Winter and begin to include her in on the plan.

Chapter 142 - The Alpha's Rejected Silent Mate

Winter POV

I take my time, savouring the feeling of power coursing through my veins. Kai's mind-linked me and I'm disgusted that my mother would take part in such a thing, not to mention the brief feeling of euphoria at finding out I had a half brother. Too bad, that Simon, grew up raised by Elena and Lexus, his childhood was the worst of all and he was still a child, barely a teenager. I longed to throw my arms around him, but that would have to wait. I had to deal with my mother and her mate first.

I get close and can hear them speaking, cocking my head. My mother is grimacing "we should have brought more hunters, Lexus, I warned you that Winter was strong. So is that bastard mate of hers."

"There's more on the way" Lexus snaps "and neither of them will be stronger than me, I've defeated Alpha's before, I can defeat a hybrid. There's nothing too it" he boasts.

I raise an eyebrow. Someone sure is cocky and arrogant.

"But I don't hear anything" mother frets, pacing back and forth, a scowl on her face "what if they've all been taken down?"

Lexus gives a snort. "A dozen hunters brought down by two hybrids? Not likely Elena, stop being such a worrywort" he murmurs "they're probably busy chasing them. The cowards are probably hiding that's all. My men are professionals, they'll be fine."

My mother huddles into his arms. What a cosy scene, I think to myself sarcastically. I give a glance around, but Kai's still on the way back. I decide not to wait. I walk out, with a wide smile on my face, smirking at the startled looks of my mother and Lexus.

"What the hell" Lexus growls, sniffing the air. His eyes widen. "Where are my men" he demands, stepping sideways and regarding me warily. Now he doesn't look so arrogant.

"Oh" I say casually "either dead or unconscious. It was real nice of you to send me a blood supply, I kind of needed it" I hiss and he gulps while mother turns pale.

"That's not possible, no one's ever gotten the best of my hunters" Lexus counters, his eyes turning pitch black. Man, does he look pissed and I relish it. I can smell mother's fear from where I stand, and it smells wonderful.

I shrug "wasn't hard, in fact, it was almost too easy" I growl "they weren't exactly hard to overpower. Weaklings, the whole lot of them" I snarl, folding my arms.

My mother gives a gasp. "What's wrong mother?" I query, turning towards her and cocking my head "didn't think I would manage it? Or maybe you're afraid of what I'm going to do to you, for your betrayal? I must say that Damien in particular, will be more than glad to have you gone completely from our lives."

She shivers but glares, her face completely cold and livid. "As if. You might be powerful, but together, Lexus and I are unstoppable" she declares, "we've beaten every single creature we've come across and that's all you are" she sniffs "a horrible, disgusting, creature that needs to be put down."

Ouch. Words hurt. But I maintain my angry expression. I harden my heart. I can't allow myself to become weak from the words she flings at me.

"Except that Winter is not alone" cuts in a furious voice, and Kai steps out, looking determined, every inch of him drenched in sweat and blood. Even so, I swoon a little. What girl doesn't, when her mate looks that damn good?

"I see you managed to best the hunters that were after you as well" snarls Lexus, curling his lips "I guess that means that you get to face off with me."

Kai gives me a small nod. Mother, looking a bit frightened now, and frantic, turns and shifts in one fell swoop, a grey wolf with black stripes across her, running away from our small group, as though her life depends on it. Well, I guess it kind of does, I muse. I barely even give Lexus a glance, shifting into my own wolf, my paws thudding against the dirt and foliage as I follow her mad dash into the woods. The chase was on.

She's fast, for a wolf. A lot faster than I would have anticipated commented Sabriel in my mind.

I see that too. But, Sabriel, what if she experimented on herself? To make herself faster? That would explain this speed of hers, wouldn't it?

It would, but I don't understand how she could turn against her own kind like that.

Money, Sabriel, it all comes down to money. That's all that's ever mattered to her, it must have infuriated her that her real mate, father, couldn't make any and gambled or drank it away.

It's disgraceful. Money is no reason to become such a horrid person. Thank goodness you are nothing like her Winter, or Damien or even Drake for that matter.

We're all thankful for that Sabriel, don't you worry. Now remember, we can't kill her.



No, but we can damn well cause her some serious damage! For everything she's done. Show no mercy Sabriel growls and I agree, letting her take full control. Sabriel wanted to fight, her rage easy to feel and I wasn't about to get in her way. Not when she was this determined and bloodthirsty.

We come to a large clearing and mother swerves to the side, but Sabriel jumps and prevents her from continuing, her jaw wide open in a snarl. Mother's wolf glares, hackles rising, snarling at an unconcerned Sabriel who advances slowly as mother backs away. Mother leaps into the air and Sabriel jumps to meet her, both wolves crashing into each other, frantically biting and clawing. Sabriel manages to dislocate the other wolf's shoulder, making her howl loudly as she crashed to the floor. Unfortunately, mother's wolf seems unphased and gets up on shaky feet, racing into the nearby tree and popping the limb back into place with a loud popping sound. She turns and faces us. Sabriel gives a low growl. Our own wounds merely consist of some grazes and scrapes. Flesh wounds, nothing major.

Mother darts towards us and we dodge to the side, turning around and clawing at her back as she yelps. She turns, eyes narrowed, panting heavily. While she's a fairly tall wolf, we're much bigger, and have the advantage. She tries to back away and Sabriel jumps, cutting off her escape and swinging her paw up, scratching mother's wolf across one eye and effectively partially blinding her. She snarls, Sabriel advancing, jumping on top of her, biting deep into her neck, but not enough to break it, shaking her head wildly and sending mother into a nearby tree, making it fall to the ground, along with her.

Sabriel stays still, sniffing the air. The smell of blood is strong, from both of us and we can smell hers. Mother's blood smells slightly off somehow, definitely not just like a shifter's. It's too metallic, for one. Like something has been added to it. Something unnatural. It's not vampire blood either. Mother's wolf gets to her feet, swaying slightly and looking very unbalanced. The wolf is covered in blood that's trickling down from several wounds. Sabriel doesn't wait for her to move, lowering her head and crashing into the other wolf, head on, swiping her paws across the wolf's midsection. Sabriel rips open her fur and blood begins to drip down, trickling onto the forest floor and staining it a bright red. The wolf is barely standing now, and then with a groan and a low hiss, it falls down, scrabbling weakly at the floor. She's too injured, to continue fighting.

There's the loud sound of bones breaking and shifting, before mother lies before Sabriel and I, naked, doubled over and crying, hand clutching at her stomach.

"Winter" she sobs, holding out a trembling hand towards me and my wolf, "please, I'm your mother" she whispers.

I shift, Sabriel reluctantly giving me back control, staring at the woman with nothing but utter contempt in my eyes.

"You are not my mother" I tell her evenly, staying back and eyeing her angrily "you never have been. Where is the location of the warehouse where you perform your experiments? Where you give up the shifters and anything else you catch?"

She shakes her head. "I can't tell you" she coughs "I won't tell you."

Big mistake. But there's something else that's on my mind and bothering me. If I have to torture her to find the location, I will, but right now, I needed to hear something else from her.

"What about Simon" I shout, incensed at her as she blinks up at me, one eye almost completely shut and scratched over "did you even care about him at all? He's your son and you sent him out to hunt us" I growl, shaking my head. "Why?"

She laughs, derisively. "Because he's cut from the same cloth as you and your brother Damien" she spits out blood, "Lexus and I knew what he was about to do. Why do you think he's here? He was supposed to die by yours or Kai's hand. Let me guess" she continues to chuckle, weakly, "Kai was too softhearted to do it. Figures" she exhales, sounding disappointed more than anything "all my children are such a disappointment" she mutters.

I shoot out my leg and kick her, enjoying hearing her gasp and then moan in pain. Her hair is covered in dirt, leaves stuck in it. It looks like a dark brown, rather than it's original cover and her whole body is covered in bruises and scratches. I squat next to her. "You are a despicable and horrible human being" I tell her quietly, my body trembling in indignation "Simon deserves a better parent than you. I'm giving you one last chance to tell me the location" I warn her, picking up some of her hair and yanking it hard "before I have to do something I don't want to."

Her one good eye looks at me. It's gleaming, her lips curving in a small sickening smile. "Do what you have to" she coughs "because I'll never talk. I would never betray Lexus in that way."

It would be sweet, if it wasn't so sad. The only things that mattered to her, money and Lexus. I move slowly, quietly, behind her, my hands moving to squeeze her throat as she gasps and tries to scratch at me. But she's weak, from being so heavily wounded, her flailing and scratching barely even breaking the skin as I tighten my grip. But I'm also careful. I remember Kai's warning, that we needed her. We couldn't afford for mother to die, not just yet anyway. Her lips turn blue and slowly her body stops shaking. I let go, checking to see that she has a pulse. It's weak, but steady. Good. She's not dead then,

merely unconscious. I sigh. The next step was going to be the worst thing I've ever done, but some part of me, didn't care. We need answers, mother has them. I would do what was necessary. There could be shifters and other supernatural creatures in need of rescuing. I would make sure to remember that, and continue to harden my heart.

I mind-link Kai, who is busy fighting Lexus and bend down, picking up the limp body of mother, cradling her to my chest. She's light as a feather, thanks to my strength. I glance down at my nude body with a grimace. Man it's freezing and now I would have to freeze my ass off until I got home. I stare down at mother resentfully. My feet crunch on the ground. I hear a wheezing sound and turn, startled, to see a young teenage boy with blonde curls looking at me, his hands held up in surrender.

"I'm Simon" he says quietly, "Kai sent me to help you. I can carry her, if you want to go to Kai" he offers.

I stare at him in fascination. He looks so much like myself and mother. A mixture of us both, with the tiniest hint of that Lexus guy. This is my half brother. Not to mention Johnathon's half brother., and Damien's and Drakes. He looks shy, but has kind eyes. I melt towards him, trying not to smile when I notice he's blushing and looking away, evidently realising I'm naked. He hurriedly takes off his camouflage jacket and hands it to me. I give over mother, seeing with approval that, despite his age, he's able to carry her. He's quite tall too.

"Thanks" I mutter, putting the jacket on. It goes to my knees, due to his being taller than me. "I appreciate it."

We begin to walk. "Are you really my sister?" he blurts out.

We hear a scream in the distance, one that sounds like it's coming from Lexus.

"I guess so" I say, turning to him "and I would like to get to know you better, I promise I'm nothing like our mother."

He looks relieved "me neither" he admits as the truck comes into view. "Now what?" he adds and I smirk, gesturing for him to put mother on the floor of the back of the truck.

"Now we wait for Kai" I say, leaning against the truck and folding my arms "something tells me he'll be here soon."

## Chapter 143 - The Alpha's Rejected Silent Mate

Kai POV

Lexus shifts, the second after his so called mate, Elena the bitch, has gone running, as though Winter won't catch up with her. I shift into my wolf as well, chasing after him as he streaks into the forest. He dodges and weaves, jumps high over fallen branches. His wolf is large, almost larger than my own, but then he too, from memory, is an Alpha, even if the bastard had gone rogue. It's black with white streaks across him. Reminds me of an overblown zebra. But one that's deadly, rather than cute and cuddly.

I thought he would stay and face us, coward growls Storm annoyed. He's feeling extremely indignant.

He's leading us away from his mate. I bet he thinks he can easily take us alone. Something is off about him Storm, we need to be wary of him. His scent is strange.

You're telling me. He smells disgusting, like a wild animal from the woods. Like part of him is something else. Do you think he's a hybrid?

God knows. Wouldn't surprise me if he'd been arrogant enough to experiment on himself.

Well I'm tired of playing chasey, let's get this showdown started already.

Go for it Storm!

We dart in front of him, halting him in his tracks, Lexus's wolf growling and snapping his jaws together, saliva dripping from his mouth. His eyes are red, like a rogues, and he smells repugnant. My stomach churns even as we stare him down. He tries to tackle us head on and we dart sideways, swiping at him, our claws connecting with his flesh and cutting deep into this side. He howls, as we turn back around, stomping his paws on the floor in a furious rage.

I jump, but he rolls away and then tries to swipe, my reflexes kicking in, as I too roll, in the opposite direction. I get to my feet and turn, ducking just in time to avoid yet another swipe aimed at my face. He lightly grazes my side with his claws as I growl at him. Another jump and this time I meet him halfway, kicking and pawing as we hit the ground, my jaws clamping down on his upper arm and yanking, breaking it as I let go and move backwards. Lexus lets out a whimper. For an Alpha I would have expected more. But to my shock, he seems to almost heal instantly and now his bones are cracking and moving. Surely he's not trying to turn into a human? But he seems to be getting larger, not smaller, right in front of my very eyes. I stare in disbelief.

He's definitely been experimenting on himself Storm, are you seeing what I'm seeing?

Oh yeah. Kai this changes everything. I thought his wolf was weaker than it should be, something tells me that... is stronger than his wolf.

We can do this Storm. We just have to work together.

Right, let's just try not to get killed.

Such optimism buddy, that's why I love you.

Lexus' s body ripples all over, his fur growing and turning into a dark muddy brown, his paws extending and his claws growing longer and larger. His body becomes fatter, more plump and his head grows bigger, along with his snout. He stands on two legs, rather than on all fours. His eyes turn a beady black, squinting down at us, our form a lot, lot, smaller than his now. Instead of being in wolf form, he'd grown and turned into a large bear! It was astonishing to watch and I felt sick to my stomach. He let out a ferocious roar as I blinked at him.

I'm forced to back away slightly as he comes towards me, his claws swiping furiously across as he tries to strike me. He looks a little unbalanced, swaying on his feet and I hope, rather fervently, that it could be because he's not used to using this body. He gets on all fours and races towards me. We get out of the way, just in time, the bear turning around and bowling us over, I kick out and send him flying backwards, rolling onto my stomach and getting up, wincing from the pain of his sharp claws, which had pierced and scratched my abdomen. I hiss, glaring at the bear which races towards me yet again. He's not giving up easy. I turn and dart around the trees. I need a new strategy. The bear lumbers behind me, extremely quick for such a large creature. My legs furiously pump as I run, dodging trees and debris.

Jackpot. A tree that looks dangerously close to falling is close by. I have an idea in the back of my mind, one that's dangerous and requires being lightfooted and agile. Storm is nervous. Rightfully so. If this doesn't work, we'll have to come up with a new plan. The bear comes into view as I position myself, tensing my whole body, my fur on end, panting heavily from the exertion of running so fast. This has to work, I think to myself grimly, it just has to.

Lexus spots me. A sickening smile comes onto his disgustingly furry face, he gets on all fours and races towards me, his paws making heavy thudding sounds on the dirt floor. I tense even harder, my eyes keeping track of his form, so fast Lexus is like a blur as he darts towards me. At the very last possible second, I move, to the side, getting out of the way as he hits the trunk of the tree. It makes a sickening crack noise as he hits it, and then as I move, quickly, it falls onto his stunned body, eliciting a large growl from him as his body collapses underneath the weight of it. But is he fatally injured? Or even injured at all?

Whoosh. The tree trunk gets thrown off of Lexus and he gets on his feet, stumbling around. There's the sound of sickening cracks, his fur beginning to descend if that's the way to describe it, until he's now a wolf, but a badly injured one. He flops to the ground. I'm not about to fall for any tricks though, and I keep my body tensed, prepared to jump or run with a second's notice. I can smell the blood on his fur, the metallic taste putrid. I half expect to see the body healing itself, like before, but that doesn't happen. Instead he makes the most despairing howl I've ever heard come from a wolf, and then his body begins to break, his bones shifting and readjusting, until he lies there, in his human form, head slumped down, blood pooling around his body.

I shift, coming close. He looks up and coughs, spitting out blood.

"Why haven't you healed? Or started healing?" I ask grimly. Even his shifter side wasn't healing him.

He grins, looking like a maniac, his hair dishevelled and drenched in blood, his eyes still glowing that hateful red colour that all rogues possess. "If I get hurt in my bear form, I stay hurt" he laughs "isn't that ironic. I wanted strength and got it, but as a result I'm also weaker in other aspects."

I say nothing, just study the man for a moment. It's sickening what he's done, from leaving Johnathon's mother, to trying to kill his own son, let alone the experiments that he'd no doubt partaken in when he'd hunted down his own species, not to mention others. This man did not deserve to live. I couldn't let him live.

"What are you waiting for" he sneers, lips curling as he regards me "don't be so pathetic. If it was you, I would have killed you already."

I have no doubts of that. None at all. I merely raise an eyebrow. "What about your mate? Or your son? Do you have any feelings at all towards them?"

He laughs, weakly, coughing towards the end. "I have regrets that little bastard still isn't dead. I can smell his scent and you evidently know he's my son. As for Elena" he pauses and a wistful look comes on his face "I love that woman, with all my heart. She's the only one who's ever really understood me. She's a gem, she is" he adds.

I step on his arm, making him swear at me. I grin and look down, pressing down hard as he writhes in agony. "Where is the warehouse or whatever it is that you take your prey to?"

He blinks and then smiles slowly. "That's what you want?" he turns and spits, "I'll go to hell before I tell you."

I bend down and grab his arm, bending it backwards and breaking it. He screams wildly, then fall silent again. "Are you going to tell me?" I ask before pointedly looking down at his legs. "Because you have plenty of limbs for me to break" I taunt.

"Go to hell" he coughs "you and that bitch mate of yours."

I stomp on his leg, crushing it as he yells out in frustration. This is strangely satisfying. I stomp again, enjoying his yells and shouts.

"Feel like talking?"

He just shakes his head.

I really don't think this is going to go anywhere. He's never going to talk. Our best option lies with Elena, of the two, she's the weaker. More likely to tell.

It doesn't hurt to try though Storm. Because we both know what happens if he doesn't speak. Winter will have to drag her mother back to the pack and get the information out of her. I want to spare her that.

Stop thinking Winter can't handle things Kai, she's strong, fearless and one hell of a warrior. You do her a disservice when you think she needs to be spared or saved from certain things.

You know what Storm? You are a hundred percent right, I need to stop thinking of her as the weaker one. She's stronger than me, I just don't want to admit it.

Still think you need to put a ring on it.

Are you seriously pushing that on me right now?

Yep.

Damn mutt. Any chance he gets, he mentions the word marriage or ring to me. One thing at a time. I stomp on Lexus's foot crushing and breaking several toes.

"Fuck you" he manages to breathe out. His pallor is pale, his lips are turning blue and the blood continues to pool around his body. It doesn't take a genius to work out that he's dead in a minute or two, no matter what I do to him.

I decide to show him some form of mercy. I yank his head up, holding his hair and then, with gritted teeth, use my hands to turn his head and break his neck. I drop his body to the floor and sigh. So much for getting what I needed. A quick mind-link with Winter, however, confirms she's waiting for me.

I race back towards the truck, my vampire speed making me feel exhilarated. Within minutes, I'm back on the track, staring at a very cool and bemused Winter, alongside a very nervous Simon.

"You took your time" she purrs.



I shrug. "I was trying to get the information we needed" I say evenly, my wounds healing themselves as we speak. I feel invigorated, rejuvenated.

She just huffs and moves. I see Elena on the floor of the back of the truck, unconscious. "Well, we have mother to deal with" she says sarcastically "she wasn't so forthcoming either. What did you do with Lexus?" she adds.

"Left him back there dead" I say and then it hits me. Fuck. I could at least have the decency to bring him back as well. Johnathon deserved the right to bury his father properly. Damn it.

"I'll go back and get him" I grumble as Winter snickers.

"You have a good heart" she tells me, pecking me on the cheek "I love you. But hurry up, apparently there's more hunters on the way and I want to get on the road before they get here."

"Fine" I mutter "give me two minutes."

It took five before we were pretty much throwing the body in with Elena. Simon had disengaged the tracking device on the truck and clamboured into the back, looking a little green as he shut the door. I got into the passenger side while Winter got into the driver's seat. We both look at each other.

"Let's go" we say in unison and Winter starts the truck.

Chapter 144 - The Alpha's Rejected Silent Mate

Johnathon POV

I met him in the darkness, my heart hammering wildly in my chest. I had never expected to receive such a phone call, and for a moment I pause, grateful for once, that my mother hadn't picked up the phone. Otherwise I would have had to placate her, calm her down when she became a furious tornado of emotion. Instead, I had been the one to pick up the phone, curious to see what it was that Alpha Kai had wanted. The second he'd told me, I'd torn out of there, informing Mason he was in charge and that the

rogues we'd accepted into the pack, were to be put in the dungeon, no excuses. I didn't have time to explain why.

My footsteps were heavy as I paused, Kai's eyes grim and his expression tight. He looked tired, his shoulders slumped as he met me halfway.

"Johnathon" he says quietly "I wish we could have met again under different circumstances."

I give a barely indistinguishable nod. "Are you certain that it's him?" I ask "that she wasn't lying when she said his name?"

I half hope that he's mistaken. I'd given up long ago caring for such a man, especially one that had abandoned me, all in the name of another woman he found far more important, than being with his family.

"She called him Lexus" Kai confirms as we stand there, looking at the closed in fridge that houses corpses in the morgue. A label merely reads 'Lexus' in front of me and I shudder, anticipating what I might find, once I have the guts to open it.

Kai looks guiltily at me. "I'm sorry" he apologises as I glance at him in surprise. "If I could have brought him back alive, I would have."

I shake my head. From what Kai had told me, my father had been experimenting with shifter blood or genes. He'd shifted into a dangerous bear for heaven's sake. It was a miracle Kai had lived, it was nothing to me that my father hadn't. He'd made his choice, and he'd paid the consequences for it.

"You did what you had to, Alpha Kai" I murmur "there are no apologies necessary."

I take a deep breath and reach out with slightly trembling fingers, opening the door to the refrigerator up and pulling the body on its tray towards me. I glance down and stiffen. I've seen many photographs of my father, since I was a child, but I still remembered certain things. Like the way his hair was shaggy or the way his eyes gleamed. How strong and tall he'd been, a giant, in comparison to a tiny child's height. I can also smell the blood in the air, the heavy metallic taste of it on my tongue and I gag, slowly pushing the body back in and shutting the door hastily, swearing under my breath. Part of me wishes Kai

had just left him in the woods, for the animals to feast on, but I knew my mother would want a burial for him, even after everything he'd done to her, she still harboured feelings of love for him. It explained why she'd been so mad at Elena when she discovered who she was. I consider deceiving my mother, or never telling her, but she deserved some form of closure. Perhaps, once this was over and done with, and father was in the ground, she might at least consider the thought of finding a new mate. One that would love her as much as I did, or rather more. It was a hope I would hold onto for now.

"What do you want to do?" Kai asks.

I take a deep breath and exhale slowly. "Keep him in the fridge for now" I tell him calmly "I believe we have other things more important to take care of first. This child Simon, is mine and Winter's half brother?" I ask, my voice thick.

I have always wanted a sibling, but not like this. Still I would not blame Simon for his parents or his upbringing. I was more curious about him than anything else.

"He is, and Damien's and Drake's" Kai says, turning away, while I stepped beside him, both of us starting to slowly walk away and up the stairs leading from the morgue. "He seems like a sweet child. Despite everything he's been through. He resembles Winter a lot more than anyone else" he adds.

Good. It meant I wouldn't be staring at a reminder of father's face when I met him.

"How old is he again?" I check.

He smiles sadly. "Thirteen. They sent him hunting to get him killed" he mutters "and it failed. I would never have killed a child that young, neither would have Winter. Fools" he scoffs.

I have to agree.

I badly want to meet Simon, but there's also the other concern to take care of. "So if Elena has been a hunter with Lexus all these years" I say slowly "they must have killed dozens of shifters and other supernatural races. Hundreds even. How did we all miss this?"

Kai sighs. "They were careful. They took those passing through. How many shifter's have left, looking for their mates and never been heard from again? A lot of the times it was assumed they had met their mate and not sent word back. Other times, shifters were banished and we assumed had gone rogue, when in actual fact, a lot of them were snatched up by hunters. As for other supernatural races?" He shrugs "it's not like we're all on good terms with one another. Something, that I realise, must change in order to prevent this happening again."

I scowl. He's right. We're especially not on good terms with vampires, but here Kai and Winter were half vampires now. We needed to stop thinking we were superior to other races. We needed to start communicating with each other and possibly start thinking about the possibilities of treaties with one another. It was time to let go of all our prejudices and start welcoming the other ones.

"It's going to be difficult" I warn him, but he looks determined.

"Maybe, but it's not worth always being on our own against one another" he says as we make our way down the hospital hallways "we should be helping each other, not fighting amongst each other."

I heartily agree. "I take it Winter feels the same?" I ask, already anticipating the answer.

"She does:" he answers "as does Drake and Damien. Langdon is neutral, but I feel that's because he's never met another race, besides Winter and myself" he chuckles.

"Where is this so called warehouse where they've been taking the prisoners that they've hunted?" I ask eagerly. My men were waiting for my instructions and I had been told that King Axel was also amassing a small army to help rescue anyone that may still be alive.

Kai looks frustrated. "Lexus wouldn't divulge the information before he died" he said with a sidelong glance at me "and trust me I tried to get it out of him. I didn't want Winter to have to get it out of Elena."

I felt that was more than reasonable. I narrow my eyes as we step outside, shivering slightly in the cool air "so what exactly is Winter up to at the moment."

His hair billows around him in the wind. His lips curl back in disgust. "Right now" he says quietly "she's busy trying to get the information out of her dear old mother. That bitch has a lot to answer for" he sneers "and something tells me Winter's not exactly going to hold back this time." He looks slightly upset when he says that, and I know he's feeling sorry for his mate and what she's having to go through, but at the same time, I feel like he should be proud of how far Winter has come.

Winter is a far cry from the girl I met in school and rejected. Her inner strength shines through. Her kindness, her loyalty, her unwavering love for Kai. Everything about her is strong. She might have gone through hell since I rejected her, but she'd risen up and overcome all her obstacles, all the shit that had been thrown at her and she'd come out stronger than ever. Part of me will always regret the fact I rejected her, but another part of me hopes that by doing so, I led her on a path that made her discover who she was, and what she was capable of. It might sound like I'm being smug, but the truth is, I will always love Winter and I will always have a soft spot in my heart for her. Not to mention, it doesn't look like we're destined to be apart from one another, not when we now share a half sibling. We will always be good friends, but never anything more. Her heart is reserved for Kai and I'm envious that he has someone like her that loves him like crazy. I pray one day, I'll have a mate that looks at me, the way Winter constantly looks at her beloved Kai.

"Where are Damien and Drake?" I ask, our footsteps crunching softly on the grass and fallen leaves.

He sighs. "In the dungeon with Winter. Langdon is home, Damien and Drake insisted he get some rest before we have to move out."

A family affair then, in torturing Elena. I shiver. I would not like to be in her shoes right now, with three pissed off children of hers, determined to get the information they need.

"Kai" I say steadily, making him look at me "I'm here to help you and Winter, that's all. But the thing is, we now also share a sibling, a half brother and there is every possibility I may want to take him back with me, and that would be my right" I say firmly, folding my arms across my chest and narrowing my eyes at him.

He stiffens for a moment, glaring at me, before his eyes soften and he glances around, staring up at the sky, his jaw ticking for a moment.

"You are just as in the right as Winter and her brothers are to keep him here" he says steadily "I won't force Simon to do anything he doesn't want to do and I won't make Winter make the decision" he adds. "Simon is old enough to decide where he wants to go but I do ask you" he pauses, as though trying to

pick his words delicately "what it is you would want from him? Would you punish him for being half Elena's?"

I'm incredulous that he would even ask that! Like I'm such a bastard that I would punish Simon for being part Elena's. No way. I shake my head profusely.

"You misunderstand me" I tell Kai thickly, a lump in my throat "there is a reason I would want Simon to come back to my pack, besides wanting to get to know him. I would like him to become the second in line to be Alpha in case anything ever happens to me."

"Isn't that what your Beta is for?" Kai growls and I sigh.

"Usually, but you know that's because I had no siblings. Now I do. You would do the same if you had a brother" I point out and his eyes flash. Bingo.

"Fine" he mutters "Simon makes his own choices, but now I know that you do want him. Shall we go find Winter now" he says, making his pace even quicker as I rush to catch up. I grin. Looks like I won the small argument, now I would have to hope I could convince Simon, when I did get to meet him, to let me take him home with me. The only thing that concerns me, as we make our way down to the dungeon, is how mother will react to him and whether she would fully be able to accept him, knowing that he's born from Elena and Lexus. I would find out, I vowed to myself, because Simon was my brother and I wasn't going to keep away, in order to spare her feelings. As much as I loved my mother, she was going to have to come to terms with it, or risk losing me in the process.

The sounds of screams fill my ears and I cringe as Kai opens the door to the dungeon, his eyes scanning the darkness. "Watch your step" he mutters "and whatever you do, keep your mouth shut or you'll make her lose her concentration."

Chapter 145 - The Alpha's Rejected Silent Mate

Winter POV

She was beautiful. That was the first strange thought that entered my mind, as I gazed upwards at her. So unfair. Even while hanging like a trussed up fish on a hook, my mother still resembled or looked like

an angel. It was ironic. She'd stayed unconscious the whole time we'd travelled back, luckily no sign of the other hunters that were expected, and now she wriggled and flailed around, the silver chains burning her flesh and making it sizzle, the smell of burning in the air.

"You little bitch" she yells, her eyes flashing dark as she stares at me, with contempt in her eyes. "Let me down" she shouts.

I laugh. As if she has some kind of power over me. I would let her down when I was good and ready. For a moment I see a flash of panic in her eyes, but it's just as quickly gone.

Damien and Drake stand behind me, silent observers. Damien had wanted to join in, but I had protested. He was only to join in, if I for some reason, faltered in what I was doing. He'd been none too happy, but reluctantly agreed to my terms. The trolley of torture implements stands next to me. I glance pointedly at mother, who's mouth gapes open as I glove myself up, before selecting a pair of shears. She looks nervous now, as I saunter casually towards her, brandishing my weapon.

"Winter" she whispers, glancing over at my brother's, maybe hoping one of them would step in and rescue her "don't do this, please."

I cock my head. "Are you going to give up the location?" I ask evenly, the weapon clutched tightly in my delicate hands.

She swallows hard. Then shakes her head. I give a big sigh of disappointment and quietly line up the shears with her big toe. She tries to flail around and one of my hands shoot out, gripping her foot and digging my claws in as I force it to remain still. Without another word I shut the shears and cut her big toe off, relishing in the screams that follow as the toe falls to the floor, blood spurting out from the wound.

I have a fire going behind me, Drake silently handing me a knife, which I press against the wound, cauterizing it. She screams again, hysterically and I pull it away, handing it back to Drake, who no doubt, has placed it back into the flames.

"Where is the location" I ask quietly. All she has to do is tell me and I might stop. Then again, I might not. I was having too much fun with her and after everything she'd done, she didn't deserve to die a painless death.

"Fuck you" she spits out, trying hard to kick at me.

"Bitch" I hear Damien mutter to Drake "hope Winter annihilates her. God I wish I could get in there."

I say nothing, circling mother like she's my prey. I place the shears against the big toe on her other foot. Then chomp it off with the shears, taking the knife from Drake and cauterising the wound while mother whimpers like the pathetic bitch she is.

"I think I will take my leave" Drake says from behind me. I turn around and study his face.

"I'm sorry but I have no stomach for torture" he breathes, his pallor looking quite pale. I give him a small nod, Damien taking his place, with a wry look at the back of his twin.

"Guess we aren't exactly alike" he murmurs "either that or it's because of what she's put us through, but my god, I wish I could get my hands on her."

"Patience" I chide him.

"You're despicable" mother hisses behind me and I whirl around, my eyes boring into hers as my lips curl back in a smirk.

"Despicable?" I repeat "no you're despicable mother. You sold Drake to Vanessa, you tricked us into believing that you loved us and you tried to kill your other son by forcing him to hunt. If anyone here is despicable" I say with a chilling laugh "it's you."

She glares at me. I blink my eyes at her and then grab hold of a knife. I examine it, seeing it shine brightly in the flames flickering around us from the fire.

"The location?" I say sweetly.



She just hangs her head in answer. Great, that means more work for me. I step up and eye her back. Slowly I plunge the blade into her right shoulder and move it, hearing her yelp as her flesh sizzles and burns, eventually spelling out 'Slut' in large letters. I watch the blood trickle downwards, droplets falling to the floor.

"That word suits her" Damien comments from the shadows. I give him a grin.

"Thanks, I thought so too" I mutter.

"Is that all you've got" mother shouts, incensed and angry "Winter, you're pathetic" she hoarsely laughs "this is never going to make me talk. So do your worst" she sneers "because I can take it. You're nothing but a filthy hybrid" she says frantically "eventually you'll lose patience and kill me. Your kind can't help itself."

God, I hated listening to her ramble on. Damien glowers at her as I stop him surging forwards. "Stop, don't listen to her Damien" I say urgently "she's trying to get one of us to lose our tempers. She wants us to kill her."

He huffs and calms down. I shake my head at him. Sometimes Damien is such a hothead. I sigh and flex my arms. I have a feeling I'm going to be here for a while. I gingerly hold the knife and wrinkle my nose. I can smell mother's blood and it smells sickly sweet, with a hint of bitterness. The metallic scent is on my tongue and I swallow, tasting it, savoring it.

My mother watches me carefully, eyeing me warily, as I go behind her once again. This time I begin to saw off a huge chunk of her flesh, throwing it to the ground. She flinches and hisses, before throwing her head back and screaming as I lick the tip of the knife.

"Bitch" mother screams, kicking out and flailing around "god it hurts" she howls.

Huh. She's not so cocky and arrogant as she was a minute or two ago. I guess pain will do that to a person. Damien folds his arms and leans against the wall, his eyes taking everything in. So far, he's had no complaints.

"Take it that hurt like a bitch" I whisper into her ear, as she whimpers, "let's do it again shall we."

"No" she screeches.

I raise my hand with the knife and then pause, waiting "are you ready to give me the information?" I growl.

She sniffles. Then her whole body slumps. Damn. For a minute there I was so close. The hand comes down, sawing away at more of her flesh, ripping it off and letting it crash to the floor. Yuck. I try not to look too closely. She shrieks and screams, trembling all over. I wonder if she felt the pain of Lexus dying. If she has, she hasn't shown it. She's been stubborn and prideful. But that will only get her so far.

I'm thankful that Sam is sleeping. He was tired, that poor kid, and practically fell asleep the instant his head hit the covers. Maybe Drake's checking on him. They seemed to hit it off when they first saw each other.

"Give up the location" I sneer "or you'll continue to feel pain mother."

She doesn't look up. I place the knife down and grab hold of my next instrument, a silver flogger. It was going to hurt like a bitch against the exposed bits of flesh I'd ripped off. I crack it once twice, experimentally, watching her body stiffen. The light in her eyes is slowly fading away, as though mother has finally come to the realisation that she isn't getting out of here, or that the torture is going to end anytime soon.

I hit her, her body convulsing from the sheer pain. Her screams are twice as loud and her voice is hoarse, her body slightly swinging.

"Dear God" mother wails, "fuck, it hurts so bad" she gasps.

Well duh. That was the point. I yank her by the hair and whisper into her ear again "give it up and all of this stops" I promise her, my voice dripping with honey "don't you want it to stop?"

"Yes" she sobs "but I still can't tell you."

I give a grimace, feeling frustrated, wanting her to break. Another few rounds of the whip, and she still continues to elude me. It's exasperating. I stomp my foot as I walk back to Damien.

"She was close before" I say thickly "and now she's silent as the grave."

I expect Damien to demand to take over, or to just do it. But instead he places a hand on my shoulder. "Don't give up" he tells me firmly "she's a tough cookie, but you are stronger. We need this information, remember? It's vital. So get your ass back in there and finish it" he hisses.

I scowl at him, then melt and place down the flogger. I pick up some thumbtacks and begin to place them under her fingernails. She squirms and cries out, before I place the dagger in her thigh and leave it there, letting her flesh bubble away and sizzle. Her hair is next, I wrap it around my arm and yank her head back hard, her eyes widening as I begin to cut it off, dangerously close to the scalp. I keep hold of it and walk around her, showing her hair to her as she sobs.

"Not so pretty now" I taunt her, "are you mother?"

She wails, "I hate you" she screams, spittle flying everywhere. "All of you can go to hell" she shrieks.

I tsk at her "you first."

I distantly hear the sound of a door opening and then Kai's scent comes drifting into the room. I can smell Johnathon as well, both boys being extra quiet as they make their way down the stairs. I have one last option to try and I dart over to mother, my eyes gleaming with hope. "I'll make you one of me" I declare, piercing her skin with my fangs.

"No, no, no" she screams, as I begin to suck "dont'. I won't be a hybrid, I won't" she yells out, her body beginning to completely relax. I pull my teeth from her skin and eye her.

"Talk, or I make you like me mother" I threaten "a disgusting hybrid. You'll be one of the things you despise most in this world."

"I'll talk" she says weakly "but promise me you won't do it."

"I promise" I breathe,.

Kai, Johnathon and Damien come closer, all of us pricking our ears as she begins to mumble a bunch of numbers at us.

"Co-ordinates" mutters Johnathon, scribbling them down "they must be co-ordinates to where they are keeping them."

"How many hunters are waiting?" I ask.

"I dont' know, maybe over a hundred" mother snaps, breathing heavily "the whole place is guarded. By hunters and military personnel" she says triumphantly.

I feel sick to my stomach. God, she has no idea, the magnitude of what she's done. I slap her hard across the face and turn to Kai.

"We have our answers" I tell him steadily "there's no need to keep her."

"What if she's lying?"

"I'm not" mother bursts out. We ignore her.

"My tech team are on it, we'll know in two minutes if she's lying" Kai murmurs, his eyes glazed over.

We all wait impatiently.

Kai's eyes go back to normal. "She's not lying" he says simply and that's all the reassurance that we need. I hear a sickening cracking noise and glance over to see that Damien had broken mother's neck, leaving her hanging there and swaying slightly. He raises an eyebrow at us "We need to get moving and she was a liability" he grumbles.

Kai says nothing and we all begin to file upwards, one by one. It was time to get a plan together.

## Chapter 146 - The Alpha's Rejected Silent Mate

Kai POV

"When can we move?" whispers Winter a bit impatiently, from her position behind a shrub. We're a fair distance away from the location, milling about, waiting for the rest of the men to show up. Johnathon, is close by, directing his own men to get into position. King Axel is mere minutes away.

"When the King gets here" I hiss back, trying not to show my own impatience.

Damien and Drake are with Langdon, preparing themselves for what we are about to do.

I glance over at the building in the distance. It's old, decrepit and a warehouse which sold who knows what at one time. It would look abandoned if you glanced at it, but the men in the distance, holding rifles and guarding it, told a completely different story. From what my tech team had advised, the majority of the men were either guarding, or inside guarding what looked like large cages, with people inside of them. Thank goodness Simon had stayed behind; the last thing I needed was to try and be looking after that kid on top of everything else. Even if he hadn't quite been happy to be left behind.

"King Axel is approaching" Drake tells us calmly. I give a start, he'd been so quiet I hadn't heard his footsteps, or maybe it was because there were so many of us, scattered around the perimeter.

"Good" I hiss back, Winter brightening at the words. She was dying to get inside and help get the prisoners out. I'm both proud of my mate and extremely nervous about her going inside. I can't afford to lose her, but I know, deep down, she's more than capable of taking care of herself.

"Alpha Kai" King Axel greets me grimly, surveying the small army with a frown as he directs his own people to join the perimeters of our group.

"King Axel" I say with a small smile "I wish we were meeting under different circumstances."

He gives a short laugh. It's got a twinge of bitterness towards it. I guess he's still smarting over Vanessa and how she'd managed to get him completely under her spell.

"It is what it is" he says drily "now is this all the people we have?"

"It's all we could amass in such a short time frame" I answer a little on edge. Was he criticising me?

"How many hunters are there?" he asks.

I grimace. "At least fifty outside, inside it's hard to tell. There are human beings inside, scientists. I'm not considering them as threats, but they also aren't innocent and I won't be sad if they lose their lives" I say honestly as he grunts his approval.

"Snipers?" he asks.

"I have a few set up outside the perimeter, ready to shoot on command. Drake and Damien will be outside with Langdon, taking care of those threats. I, you, Winter and the rest of the men besides those with my beta,, will make our way inside the building and take down those who are guarding the cages. If the scientists attempt to intervene, the men have orders to kill them as well. I won't have them risk their lives for human beings capable of injuring them."

"Good man" says Axel quietly, "our people must be protected as best as we can. Now, let's get these poor bastards out of their prison" he says stiffly.

I turn to Damien and Drake. "Gather your men, Langdon, you're in charge. Prepare to attack the outside of the building and the grounds."

Langdon gives me a stiff nod. Winter quickly gives her brothers a hug. "Be careful" she whispers thickly "and come back to me alive."

"Same goes to you sister" Drake says, hugging her tight, Damien doing the same. They both glare at me.

"Keep her safe" warns Damien, the threat in his voice easy to hear.

I give Langdon a handshake. "Be careful out there" I say in a hushed voice "and goodluck."

"You too" he says stiffly.

I watch a group of men walk away with them, as we ready ourselves into position. We were going to take advantage of the attack and burst right on through the doors. We would have the element of surprise. Or at least, that's what I hoped.

A few minutes later, we heard the sounds of shouting, gunfire and saw smoke. That was our signal. Winter stepped beside me and together we shifted, King Axel doing the same as our men followed suit. We hit the ground running, paws thudding madly. I dodged and weaved as shifters and hunters fought each other, sometimes clawing and swiping to help as we ran through the crowd, heading straight for the two large doors at the very front of the building.

I don't even hesitate, ripping the doors off their hinges. There is startled shouting and some screams as I run inside, Winter and King Axel right behind me. I barrel right into a hunter and quickly tear their throat out before they can even so much as reach for their weapon. I pause and survey the inside, seeing several doors leading to different rooms, a huge flurry of activity as the scientists in particular get up and run towards the exit, leaving the hunters behind.

"Fuck" shouts a hunter "shoot the bastards" he screams.

I take a move towards him, but see Winter's wolf barrel into him first, her claws swiping furiously, blood staining her fur as she continues to fight. It gives me time to pause, seeing my men and King Axel's dashing about madly as they worked in tandem to take down the hunters together.

I feel a hunter come up behind me and turn, growling furiously. He has his gun cocked to his shoulder, his eyes scanning my every move, a smirk on his face. One that won't be there for long, I might add. Because I jump as he pulls the trigger, the dart hitting the wall and bouncing off it as gouge him in the eyes and sink my teeth into his neck. I begin to drink, loving the taste of his blood, the sweetness of it, with the merest hint of tartness as an aftertaste. I drain the bastard dry and then let his body slump to the ground. In the background I can hear cries for help. I wonder where Johnathon is. He was supposed

to come with us, but then I spot him at the large cages in the back, kneeling beside one in particular, looking frantic.

"Help" a woman is pleading weakly, Johnathon touching her hand. "Get us out of here" she begs.

I shift and grab hold of a scientist who is valiantly trying to sneak around me towards the exit. I grip him by the throat and squeeze, hard, making him gulp, his hands flailing uselessly at me. "Where are the keys?" I ask pleasantly, cocking my head at him and eyeing him with a hard expression on my face.

He swallows and then points with a shaking hand to the far corner, where a rather large and brutish looking man is frantically trying to leave, his hands shaking so much he can't get the door open.

"He has them" the scientist says weakly "he's the only one who is allowed to have them."

I drop the poor scientist to the floor and race towards the brutish man who turns and sees me coming. He renews his efforts but it's hopeless, even in human form I'm faster than the average human.

I swing my hand right at him and punch the man hard in the jaw as he turns. He stumbles back, a look of panic on his face. All around us are the sounds of shifters still fighting the hunters, and he turns pale as he sees what's happening around him still.

"What do you want" he stammers.

I narrow my eyes "the keys to the cages" I snarl, holding out my hand. This man is no hunter, but rather a military man, not used to fighting but merely issuing orders.

He reaches into his pocket and withdraws a ring of keys, plonking them in my hand. The silver burns, but I don't let him see that it bothers me and instead I punch him again, this time knocking the bastard unconscious as his body hits the wall and then the ground.

"Don't go anywhere" I mutter, walking away and heading towards Johnathon. Winter has joined him and is trying to reassure some of the children in the cages, which I was disgusted to see. It was one thing to take adults, but to experiment on children? Cowards.



Winter quickly takes hold of the keys, wincing as the silver burns her flesh. She opens the first cage and several small children come flying out, some sobbing as they hug her. I sniff. They aren't all shifter children, in fact, I was reasonably certain that at least two were vampires. Winter hands the keys to me and I open the next one, letting out a startled looking man, who was a bear shifter. He barely muttered a quick "thankyou" before he shifted and lumbered towards the hunters, one of whom let out a shriek as he saw the large grizzly bear coming towards him. I grin. The bear joins in the fight, the shifters not even pausing as they continue. It's mayhem, but we were doing our jobs and getting out the prisoners. That's all that mattered.

The third cell held a bunch of angry looking vampires. I open the door and brace myself, after all vampires don't traditionally like shifters, but they all stay still, looking at each other. The man in the front finally steps forward, looking a bit apprehensive. He's dressed rather smartly for a vampire, in a suit, with smart polished shoes. I half suspect he might be part of the royal family.

"Many thanks" the vampire man says heartily, shooting his men a look "we are in your debt. If you would step aside, we would like to join in the fight."

I step aside as the vampires give each other thirsty grins. They saunter out and survey the scene, hands on hips. Then together they race towards several scientists. I open my mouth to object then shrug. For all I know the scientists experimented on these men and were getting their just desserts. Only one vampire male stays behind, going over to the children, in particular the two who smelt like them and hugged them tight.

"Daddy" they sobbed, the two little boys, faces creased in their upset, letting go of Winter.

Johnathon turns his head towards me. "Alpha Kai" he calls, his eyes looking at me anxiously "would you mind unlocking this door?" he adds, still kneeling beside it. I wonder at the strangeness of his voice, for it's hoarse but also tight, like he's anxious about something. I move closer in curiosity. The cell contains one female, who is stunning with raven black hair and big blue eyes, her body naked, covered in an assortment of bruises and cuts. Even from here, I can see that she's had blood drawn at the very least, needle marks in her arms. She looks terrified, even as Johnathon tries to reassure her that she is alright.

Winter quietly makes her way over. "You'll be alright" she whispers to the woman who is backed in the corner, crouching and trembling all over "we're here now."

"Hurry" hisses Johnathon. I frown at him but obligingly put the key in the lock as he watches, his jaw clenched tight. It's a shifter in the cell, that I can tell just by her scent. But from the way that Johnathon is acting, it was like he couldn't stand to see her in the cell for one more moment. I throw the door open and he quietly goes inside, careful to avoid the bars best he can as she stays there, her eyes wide, staring at him as he approaches. Winter places a hand on my arm, an intent look in her eyes. But none of us were expecting the word that came out of Johnathon's mouth just then, as he tenderly touched the woman's arm and looked into her eyes deeply.

That one word that he growled, as both Winter and I looked on in shock was 'mate.'

Chapter 147 - The Alpha's Rejected Silent Mate

Winter POV

It's utter chaos and mayhem. I can hear screams from behind me, the sound of running footsteps as people attempt to flee from the building. But what catches my eye is the cages or cells, located in the far back. The sound of children crying penetrates my ears and I run, in wolf form towards them, taking out one hunter in my way, easily tearing through his neck and letting his body drop to the floor. I can see Kai fighting in the background as I get there, and soon enough, the children and other occupants of the cages are free. Two children smell off, like vampires and they greet a vampire male let free, calling out 'daddy' which melts my heart. The other children, two of them stay there, looking miserable, dirt on their pale faces, blonde hair dishevelled and matted.

The little girl is crying softly, hugging the other one. Both look to be roughly the same age, about four years old. Her plait is almost nonexistent, so many hairs have come out of it, and the young boy is clutching her tightly, not wanting to let her go. I go towards them, but they flinch and look back at me with terrified looks on their faces. I frown. I'd shifted to human form, but they were still afraid of me. The fighting appears to be diminishing and I glance over my shoulder, seeing Langdon, Damien and Drake appearing. The little children suddenly brighten, to my shock as they too look up and see my brothers.

"Twins" the little girl breathes out, her eyes wide, blue eyes sparkling as she glances at the other boy, whom I've surmised is her brother "look, just like our daddy was."

I blanch. "Where is your daddy?" I ask quietly.

She turns to me, her lips trembling "he was with us, but the lady took him away and he never came back" she sniffled, "the lady looked like you" she finished.

Oh god. Had mother been involved with this father of theirs and his death? Because I have no doubt that she would have killed him, or experimented on him until he was gone.

"What about your mother?" I ask gently as my brother's approach. Kai comes up and kneels next to me, listening intently to the conversation.

"Died trying to stop them taking us."

My god. I could hear the pain in his voice.

"Hi" Damien says nervously. Him, Drake and Langdon must have all shifted outside before coming in. I can smell blood on them and wrinkle my nose as I gesture towards the children.

"Hello" the little girl says, taking hold of a startled Drake's hand "I'm Milly, what's your name?"

Drake gives her a friendly smile "I'm Drake and this is Damien, and my mate Langdon" he says introducing them all together. She gives him a beaming smile and throws herself into his arms. Drake's arms wrap around her tightly as she snuggles into him. "You're a twin like my daddy was" she tells him. He stays silent, embracing her and picking her up off the ground as she clings to him like a koala bear.

"That's my brother, Jinx" Milly whispers, pointing at the little boy who is approaching a rather apprehensive Langdon.

The little boy gives Langdon the most brilliant smile and then launches himself at Langdon who only just catches him in time.

"I like you" he says, giggling and holding onto the man who looks absolutely terrified.

"Ahem" coughs Langdon "I like you too" he says unsurely, glancing over at myself and Kai "but where are your parents."

I frantically mouth the words 'they're dead' and Langdon's face droops. He holds onto the boy tightly while Damien hovers nearby, scanning the room.

"The doors" I say turning to Kai "have they all been inspected and investigated?"

He gives a small nod. "There's no one else in the building. These are all that's left. The rooms have basic medical equipment in them and more cages. There's also, according to King Axel, what appears to be a mass grave outside. They've been doing this for a long time it seems. I can't believe we never cottoned onto it."

If I could get my hands on my mother for doing this, I would torture her a hundred times over for what she's done. My heart goes out to the kids. A vampire male, clad in a suit of all things and looking very dishevelled, but handsome, I have to admit it, even I swooned a little, approaches us, a bit of blood in the corner of his mouth.

"I wish to thank you for freeing me" he says to Kai, extending his hand, his other men, or the ones captured with him in the cage, coming up behind him, including the father with two children "normally we would not communicate with you, but I sense that you are a hybrid and half vampire. Not only that, but it's time our species learnt to speak with one another, to prevent this ever happening again" he adds.

That, I'm in full agreement of. The sounds of fighting cease outside and the rest of the men, come filing in, in human form, breathing heavily, fully exerted.

"I agree" Kai says roughly, motioning towards a tired looking King Axel, "I would like you to meet our King, King Axel" he says.

King Axel holds out his hand to the vampire who grasps it. "I am Prince Jasper of the Vampires" he says with a grin, "it is a pleasure to meet you all."

We nod. King Axel looks impressed as he slowly pulls his hand away. "I would love to discuss a treaty with your people, if you would be so willing" he says slowly.

Prince Jasper gives a firm nod. "I would very much like that" he murmurs " you must however, visit me at the castle, along with these friends of yours that saved me." He glances over at Kai specifically "we must thankyou properly. My people will be very appreciative" he adds "I have been gone for some months now and no doubt they must think I'm dead."

All around us shifters are sitting on the floor or leaning against walls, waiting for further instructions.

"How did you get taken?" I asked and the vampire turns to me, a wry smile on his face.

"I was travelling the country, meeting the leaders of the packs, when I was taken before I could get to one. I was shot with a dart while ahem, taking a bathroom break" he admits, the tips of his ears turning red. Kai is stifling his laughter. I just feel bad for him. That was a horrible way to be taken down. When you're at your most vulnerable.

Sabriel is snickering in my mind. I can picture it in my mind Winter, oh that's hilarious. I wonder if his pants were down when they shot him.

That's not nice Sabriel, it could happen to anyone.

Yeah, but it's funny, admit it. A vampire prince, taking a bathroom break, is shot by hunters. My god, it's like a terrible tale to warn people about. Be careful about doing your business in the woods, a hunter might shoot you.

Sabriel

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"We would like to help you clean up this mess" Prince Jasper continues, cheeks slightly flushed as he gestures at the building. "What exactly were you planning to do?"

This time I speak up, my voice firm. "Burn it down to the ground. I don't want anything from this place. It needs to go."

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It's not that bad, you're exaggerating.

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I'm truthful. Which is also the same as being mean sometimes, but sometimes the truth hurts. This is one of those times.

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"All done, every single room" Prince Jasper says with some satisfaction "nothing will be left once it starts."

King Axel nods.

I sigh. "Let's go" I motion towards everyone, digging in my pocket for the matches I'd been given "before I burn your asses as well."

We trudge outside. It's nighttime now, we've been fighting for hours and I was tired, incredibly tired. I lift my head to the sky and breathe deeply, as the others begin to walk away. It was all over, we'd saved a few lives and beaten the hunters. My mother was gone, forever, as was my father. I can hear the children in the distance and the other shifters. Prince Jasper suddenly appears back to my side.

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Chapter 148 - The Alpha's Rejected Silent Mate

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Chapter 149 - The Alpha's Rejected Silent Mate

Kai POV

The journey to the Prince's castle is arduous but full of excitement. When we pull up, I can't help but stare in awe as we all gather together outside of it. Prince Jasper's expression is smug, but also happy, grateful to be back home. We don't even make it two steps when guards suddenly appear, vampires of course, their red eyes glowing in the dark. Winter grabs hold of my hand and squeezes it, while King Axel merely examines his fingernails, not fussed in the least. Prince Jasper looks annoyed more than anything.

"Halt" says one of the guards gruffly "what is your business here, especially foul creatures such as yourselves."

King Axel gives a hiss and I notice his eyes turn pitch black at the insult. Prince Jasper looks incredulous.

"Do you not recognise your own prince" thunders Prince Jasper "apologize for that insult at once. These are good friends of mine."

The guards peer at him and then recognition dawns on the one who had insulted us shifters. He shifts uncomfortably on one foot.

"Prince Jasper, we had thought you to be dead" muttered the guard, blinking at us and offering a very insincere apology.

"Well I'm not" huffed Prince Jasper and then motioned towards the other guards. "Inform the King and Queen I'm home" he says with a glare "and take that guard" he points to the one who offered such a pathetic apology "to the dungeon for now."

The guard opens his mouth to protest, but the others drag him away, two others darting off, presumably to tell the queen and king their son had come home.

"I cannot abide rudeness to guests" Prince Jasper says when we glance at him "nor to me."

Seconds later, two more vampires come dashing out, despite the lateness of the hour. The woman, looks like Prince Jasper with the same hair colour, clad in a long plait and sparkling blue eyes, which were currently brimming with tears. She wore a white nightgown, and a dressing gown over the top of it. The male, is tall and very forbidden looking, with brown eyes and a grim expression on his face. He's taller than me and well built. I cringe, wondering how they will take to shifters being visitors to their castle.

"Jasper" screams the woman, flinging herself at him.

Jasper catches her and hugs her tight, as she sobs on his shoulder.

"We thought you might be dead" she sniffles "we've been looking for you for months."

"I'm back mother, and it's all thanks to these people" he says, pointing at King Axel, Winter and myself "they saved me and a few others as well. They have my deepest gratitude and are here as my guests."

"Then you are most welcome and you have the gratitude from ourselves as well" says the man gruffly, patting Jasper on the back. "I am King Stefan and this is my wife Queen Arabelle."

"It's a pleasure to meet you all" said Queen Arabelle, reluctantly stepping back from her son and regarding us with warm smiles. "I cannot thank you enough for saving my precious son."

She reaches out and hugs all of us. King Stefan offers us all a handshake.

"It is late and you are most certainly tired" Queen Arabelle says kindly, perhaps taking in Winter's pale pallor and slightly swaying body "let us show you to some rooms so that you might get some rest."

"Thankyou very much" Winter says with some relief in her voice. She must be more tired than I thought.

The King and Queen are most gracious, showing us to our room, while King Axel is placed in one a little further along.



"I wish you all a very goodnight and will see you all in the morning" Prince Jasper says, shaking our hands again "do you require some food? Something to drink perhaps?"

Winter hesitates and Jasper sees it. "Maybe something simple like sandwiches?" she asks quietly "I have to admit I'm quite hungry."

"Consider it done" Jasper says with a twinkle in his eye, his mother nodding behind him with a wide smile.

We thank them all and close the door.

To my shock Winter instantly turns green and bolts towards the connecting bathroom, sinking to her knees and vomiting profusely into the toilet. Her body is shaking. I rush towards her, concerned out of my mind, wondering if the long drive had gotten to her. She continues to heave as I gently rub her back, the colour completely gone from her face.

"Urgh" she groans, resting her head against the bowl "I think that's everything gone from my stomach."

I continue to rub her back.

"Was it the drive?" I asked "I would have stopped if you had told me you were unwell."

She shakes her head, still looking incredibly pale and green.

"No, just feel a bit off. It wasn't the drive. Maybe after I have something to eat, it will be better."

"Maybe it was all the fighting we did?" I suggest.

She still looks hesitant.

Hey Kai, I think it might be something else. Do you remember when you were under Vanessa's spell? What you did.

Sort of. But I only remember bits and pieces. Not everything. Are you telling me you do Storm?

Not really, but I have a sneaking suspicion. If I'm right then....

If you loved it then you should have put a ring on it,

Seriously Storm. Your'e starting with this again!

I'm trying to give you a hint you stupid man. Oooh, why has the moon goddess cursed me with a man as dumb as you. She truly is a cruel woman.

Storm that's hurtful you know.

You're hurting me by being so dense. Why couldn't I have been the man, I'm so much better at it. Oh the cruel, cruel world I'm forced to live in.

Stop being so damn melodramatic and pull yourself together already. Anyone would think you were harddone by. I'm insulted at how you talk to me.

That's it. I'm not telling you, figure it out yourself.

Storm puts a block up, utterly infuriated with me. Did I just lose an argument to my wolf! What the hell. I shake my head. The mutt better explain himself or so help me I'll. . .

What? Damnit, there was nothing I could do. I'm seething as I help Winter get to her feet. Now I also had that stupid song in my head. Thanks so much Storm.

There's a knock on the door and I sit Winter down on the large four poster bed, before crossing the bedroom and opening it. A woman in a maid's uniform stands there, looking hesitant, a large tray of sandwiches on her hand and a pitcher of fresh water in the other.

"Prince Jasper sent me to give you these" she says looking flustered.

I notice there's two glasses on the tray with sandwiches as well. Quickly I grab the tray off her, giving her a warm smile.

"Thankyou" I say, as she enters the room and quickly puts the pitcher on top of the dresser "we appreciate it. We know how late it is."

"Yes, thankyou" says Winter weakly.

The woman gives us a friendly smile. "It's no problem at all" she tells us "anything that the prince requires of us we do. It's our job. Is there anything else you might need?" she glances over at Winter who looks sickly.

"I think that's it" I check with Winter who gives a slow nod.

"My name is Sarah" she says, flipping her long red hair over her shoulder "I am happy to serve you. Miss, if you don't mind me asking, are you sure you dont' want something to help with the nausea? Flat lemonade? Some crackers?"

Winter looks surprised. "How did you know I was feeling nauseas?" she asked.

"Your pallor. You smell like us vampires as well as like a shifter. We might be a pale species" she laughs "but your complexion is paler than the palest vampire and your body is shaking slightly" she finishes. She cocks her head and looks thoughtful.

I wonder what Sarah is thinking about, her green eyes beginning to sparkle, with just the merest hint of redness around them.

"I can also get a doctor for you if you require one" she suggests "the Prince has one on staff just for him, he won't mind if I wake him."

I glance at Winter.

Winter shakes her head, a rueful smile on her face. "Thankyou but I would hate to wake someone from their slumber" she says politely "perhaps if I still feel sick tomorrow, I might take you up on your offer."

The woman brightens. "I will leave then. Goodnight" she calls over her shoulder, leaving briskly. I close the door and turn to Winter, the tray still in my hands.

I place it next to Winter, who grabs one and begins to slowly nibble on it, while I pour her a glass of fresh water and hand it to her. I then grab a sandwich and practically inhale it, starving hungry. Slowly Winter's colour starts to come back and she happily drains the water. Between us, the tray of sandwiches is slowly demolished and I put the tray up on the dresser. Winter begins to yawn. Her eyelids are fluttering. She's sleepy. I guess food does that to a person, or it's the lateness of the hour. She stands up, swaying and I quickly pull back the lush bed covers. She climbs in, curling up on her side and I rush to the bathroom and do my business, before coming back to the bed. In that short amount of time, Winter has fallen fast asleep, snoring gently as I smile and chuckle to myself. She's so adorable, so cute. She also looks like she belongs there as I climb in beside her. I frown, something suddenly coming to my mind as my whole body stiffens.

Images in my mind of myself under Vanessa's spell. I'm walking to Winter's room, with a purpose, one that Vanessa had given to me. Then it cuts to me sleeping with Winter, but confused because I'm imagining it's Vanessa, not sure what I'm doing. Just that it has to be done. The look on Winter's face when I called her Vanessa, cuts through me deeply. I should have fought harder not to be under that witch's spell. God, I was a right bastard. But why had I gone to Winter's room in the first place? What was the mission that Vanessa had given me?

I look down at Winter and slowly sniff, realising for the first time that her scent has changed once again. There's the merest hint of something else, but it's so subtle you wouldn't even realise it was there unless you were specifically looking for it. I close my eyes, sniffing deeply, no longer puzzled at the change, but angry at myself for not realising this sooner. Then again, what if Winter didn't know or realise yet? With the stress of everything going on, could it have possibly slipped her mind? She was showing all the signs now that I thought about it. The vomiting, the pale complexion, the tiredness. But what if I was wrong? I take a deep breath. This could wait until the morning, but there was a rising excitement inside of me, although the circumstances in which it happened made me feel incredibly guilty. I was a horrible mate, I

could accept that. I needed to do something to make Winter forgive me for everything that happened. But what? Nothing would take those memories away. She would have them until the end of time.

Then make a new memory you dumbass. Christ, how have you survived as a man this long? It baffles the mind.

Ah there's the Storm I know and love.

Yeah, baby. Now, think hard and do something incredible for Winter. Who knows, maybe Prince Jasper will be able to help. Also, yes, you dumb man. She's pregnant with our pup. I suggest you get a doctor to check her tomorrow. I suppose your capable of that at least. My pup is going to be glorious and beautiful with Winter as it's mother. I can't wait to see her belly grow swollen with our child. Winter is going to be a stunning and wonderful mother. You though, I suppose you won't be the worst father in the world.

Gee thanks Storm.

It was a compliment.

Didn't feel like one.

I could take it back?

Alright, alright, goodnight Storm.

Night, man.

I close my eyes content for the first time in a long time, my arm snaking around Winter as I pull her close to me, revelling in the feel of her in my arms, picturing her body and her swollen belly as she gets more pregnant. Soon, I fall asleep, my mind awirl with plans and possibilities.

Chapter 150 - The Alpha's Rejected Silent Mate

Winter POV

God I feel like absolute crap when I wake up the next morning, stumbling to the bathroom and vomiting while Kai rushes to hold my hair back from my face. I feel so nauseas and it doesn't subside even after I've finished, as I lean against the toilet bowl and curse under my breath. This is the last thing I need. I also know instinctively why I'm throwing up and it terrifies me, the notion of a baby developing in my womb, the reason it's there, how it was conceived, all of it is just too much for me to handle right now. I'm still angry at Kai, even though he was under a spell, part of me wishes he had fought harder against Vanessa. Was our mate bond that weak? Or was her power that strong? I would never fully know for sure.

Girl we are having a pup, a gorgeous little pup. Don't tell me you're not excited! Who cares how it happened. It happened, now let's deal with it. You can be as hurt as you want, but I know you want to be a mother Winter, one that's going to be a hell of a lot better than the woman you were stuck with.

But I'm still hurt Sabriel and I'm scared. What if I'm not a good mother? I wouldn't even know how to be one.

You become one on instinct. Your mother was evil, you are not, you will be fine child. We got this. We'll be the best damn mother in the world. Or at least the most loving one.

So I forgive Kai, just like that? Like he didn't do anything wrong?

Sabriel pauses for a moment and then: If it was you, in his shoes, would you not want forgiveness for something completely out of your control? He was under a spell Winter, you know he loves you. He was willing to become a hybrid to stay with you. I think that says how much he wants to be here with you.

I hate it when you're right Sabriel, damnit.

That's cause I'm always right baby, and you know it. Now forgive the poor bastard and focus on the fact we're having a pup.

Kai gently strokes my back. It feels nice. I take deep breaths and thankfully the urge to vomit has subsided. He has a thoughtful look on his face and I feel dread rise inside of me. I know what that expression means, he knows. Sure enough he opens his mouth and his next words are "honey, when were you planning on telling me you were pregnant?"

His hand drops by his side.

I bite my lip. "I wasn't completely sure I was" I admit "and part of me was hoping that Vanessa's spell hadn't taken effect. It's not the way I would have liked to conceive our child."

He winces as the words hit home, looking guiltily at me. "I know and I'm sorry, so sorry for it. Do you hate me?" he asks anxiously.

I shake my head, remembering Sabriel's wise and somewhat sassy words. "I did but now I don't. You were under a spell, it's not fair to blame you for that."

He looks relieved. There's a knock on the bedroom door and he scrambles to open it. I hear him murmuring something to someone and then he comes back, a smile on his face. "Sarah just brought us some fresh clothes. When we're ready, we're to go downstairs to the dining room. She gave me directions."

Fresh clothes sounds like heaven. I glance at the shower and he instantly starts the water for me.

I drag my clothes off and then quickly step inside and moan. The water is heavenly and perfect, cascading down on me and onto the shower tiled floor. Kai makes a move to leave and I glance at him pointedly.

"It will be quicker if we both shower" I say calmly and then firmly "but only to shower."

He laughs and chucks his clothes off, joining me. We soap each other up and rinse off, grabbing towels. Kai turns the water off as I hop back into the bedroom and eagerly examine the clothes. I wriggle into the crimson red dress and put on what thankfully, is new underwear with tags on it. I have to go barefoot though, not wanting to wear sneakers. Kai does the same, but he's wearing trousers and a shirt

and looks devilishly handsome. He runs a hand through his dishevelled hair and then reaches out to take my hand.

"Shall we" he says eyes twinkling.

To my surprise it's late morning, not the afternoon as I'd presumed. Probably from having to get up in order to be sick.

Kai easily makes the way to the dining room where Prince Jasper, King Axel, Queen Arabelle and King Stefan are patiently waiting.

"Forgive us for being late" Kai says as he pulls out a chair for me.

Prince Jasper waves his hand in dismissal. "It was a very late night" he drawls "I'm surprised to find you are up so early."

I give him a small smile of thanks. King Axel smiles at both of us, his eyes twinkling. "Good morning" he says easily.

I glance around at the large table. We're all situated at the end though, sitting cosily in a group.

"King Axel I will discuss this treaty of yours, after breakfast if that suits?" Prince Jasper says grinning "mother and father, will of course. also attend the meeting."

He glances at Kai "would you two like to come as well?" he suggests " I am more than happy for you both to bear witness."

I think that sounds like a fine idea, but Kai has other plans in mind.

He takes a deep breath. "Actually is there a hospital nearby?" Kai asks "that we could possibly go to and get checked out?"



Prince Jasper looks concerned "my apologies I did not realise you were ill. There is a wing in the castle that is used for hospital purposes that you can go to. Would you like us to delay the treaty while you are looked over?"

I shake my head, Kai doing the same. "Thankyou but that's not necessary. King Axel is more than equipped to deal on our behalf" says Kai and I firmly agree.

"Well then, I guess we should get some breakfast in our stomachs" chuckles Prince Jasper as his parents smile at us warmly. He rings a small bell that's on the table, a tinkling sound that's quite sharp to our sensitive shifter and vampire hearing.

Sarah comes in bearing a large tray of different dishes, that she begins to place on the table, but then suddenly she pauses, her body stiffening. I examine her with curiosity. She's a stunning woman, with vibrant red hair and the greenest eyes I've ever seen. Her eyes have the slightest tinge of red around them. She's tall but still quite petite, with lovely porcelain skin and a maid's uniform on, that only enhances her incredible figure, and somewhat, to my envy, large bosom.

"Is everything alright Sarah?" asks Prince Jasper, looking quite worried. I'm impressed that he knows her name and isn't a pompous prince who doesn't care about his workers.

Kai gives my shoulder a nudge. At the table, King Axel has also stiffened, his whole body suddenly going really tense, his hands clutching the edges of the table. His claws have come out, I notice, and is causing gouges in the beautiful dining table. He's gazing down at the table, his hair over his face, so it's impossible to determine what's going on with him and why it's happened so suddenly. He lets out a low growl that startles everyone at the table, everyone that is, except for Sarah, whose eyes were widening in disbelief, her lip trembling as she bites it. I wonder why she's shaking so much.

King Axel stands up abruptly, looking upwards, his eyes pitch black. There's a possessive look on his face. Holy shit, I marvel to myself, suddenly suspicious and aware of what must be happening. The vampires on the other hand look slightly panicked. Maybe they don't do this when they find their mates?

"Ahem, King Axel do you require some medical assistance?" asks Jasper looking at the King as though he's a bit of a madman.

Kai is just grinning widely, enjoying the show. King Stefan and Queen Arabelle look quite alarmed.

"Mine" growls King Axel suddenly, Sarah's eyes shooting towards him. She looks afraid, as he begins to make his way towards her.

His arm shoots out and he grabs hold of her arm, as her eyes begin to glow red. Then she speaks, in a small, quiet voice, but one that's powerful none the less and just as full of possession "Mine, mate" she hisses.

There's silence at the table.

"Mate" roars King Axel and then without further ado, he bends down and kisses her on the mouth, sweetly, gentle, claiming her in front of everyone as his.

Prince Jasper and his parents are in shock. Kai and I on the other hand are beaming widely, hands to our mouths. With the whole debacle with Vanessa, he deserves a second or was it third? Chance mate that loved him. I'm sure he never envisioned it would be a vampire but who cared? She was a beautiful woman, and from what I had seen of her, quite lovely and sweet. She was very polite.

"Ahem" coughs Prince Jasper, snickering slightly "would it be too much to ask you both to rejoin us at the table?"

King Axel reluctantly pulls away and then looks over at us with a guilty expression on his face, Sarah is blushing profusely, her hand still on his arm.

"I um" stammers King Axel, still holding tightly onto Sarah's arm, "do apologise for this."

I laugh. "You should never apologise for finding your mate" I declare "I think you both make a lovely couple."

"Yes, I agree" says Kai.

"Are you really mates?" asks Prince Jasper.

"We are" Sarah says softly "I guess this explains why I've never been able to find one until now, because my mate is clearly a shifter."

"We are happy for you then" King Stefan says smoothly, a wry smile on his face. His wife nods her agreement, also smiling now they've realised what's happened.

King Axel's eyes go back to normal. "I would like my mate to sit with me" he says firmly, leading her to a chair as Kai and I move down one to allow it to happen. Sarah looks uncomfortable sitting down but Prince Jasper nods and then rings the bell, another maid appearing as he issues instructions. The tray Sarah had been holding was on the end of the table, where King Axel had placed it before he kissed her, long since forgotten.

We all devoured the food when it came. Sarah incredulous and sitting quietly as she too ate, at King Axel's side at his insistence. I was sure it was a novel concept for her, but she would be queen of the werewolves if she accepted King Axel and I really hoped she did. He was such a loving man. They would be perfect together.

Finally everyone was finished and seated back in their chairs. I had eaten lightly, fearing I may be sick if I ate too much, or ate something that made my stomach heave.

"Now, we will discuss the treaty" says Prince Jasper, getting up. Then he meets Kai's eyes and gestures him forward. I stay where I am as the two speak in hushed whispers, before Kai comes back and tenderly helps me up.

"I will check in on you both later" Prince Jasper promises "I hope all is well."

King Axel murmurs the same, as does Sarah while King Stefan and Queen Arabelle glide out of the dining room. I gather they are going to the study for the treaty negotiations.

"Thankyou" Kai says easily and begins to tug me away, heading towards what I assume is the hospital wing.

"Let's go get you checked out" he murmurs to me in my ear "and let's see our baby."

