

## Chapter 10 Can't have both ways

It was the last lap and Lucy was slightly trailing behind first place. But she knew what she was doing. You NEVER want to be in first place on the last lap unless you know you can win by a significant amount. She smiled as the all too familiar whistling sound of a blue seeker shell hissed through the television speakers. She made sure she kept her distance away from first place, Ryan, so that she didn't get caught in the crossfire.

"Who threw the blue shell?!" Ryan growled as he glanced over at Enzo and Lenny. Lenny let out an airy laugh.

The blue shell collided with Ryan's cart halting his speed and sending him ying into the air. Through the smoke of the collision Lucy sped through. She had saved her speed boost just for this moment. With the finish line in her sight, she released her speed boosts in a fury. Sweet sweet victory! Aiden would be so proud of her right now. She sat there with a satisfied smile on her face and gently sat the controller down. This was her mic drop.

"You did it Lucy! I admit it I didn't think you stood a chance against these man boys-" Tonya started but was interrupted by an enthusiastic Lucy.

Lucy raised her eyes. "You use man-boys too?!" She said excitedly. This is exactly how she described Aiden and Justice.

"Haha yes it is the perfect term."

"I know right?!" Lucy liked Tonya. She had a comforting personality. Plus, there was a certain genuineness that emitted from her. This was someone she could be friends with. It would be nice to have another friend in the vampire kingdom.

"I see you are well trained in the art of driving kart." Lenny said with a crooked smile.

"Don't take it personally. I have played against the best and won. I always play against my brother, cousins, and also my best friend Jasper." Lucy looked at them. "Maybe you know Jasper? He is Jester and Irene's son."

"Oh, he is your best friend? Like best friend or... you know?" Enzo raised his eyebrows as he insinuated something more. Ryan growled lowly and glared at Lucy from the side of her.

Lucy could see his amber eyes darkening. His lips were slightly pulled up as his eyes stared her down looking for the answer.

Lucy shrugged. "I don't see how my exact relationship with Jasper is anyone's business. Plus, I don't want to self-incriminate myself." She could see Ryan squeeze his fist tightly.

"Oh Lucy... you'll have to tell me later. Jasper is a cutie." Tonya said and then grinned as she listened to Zach's unamused sound. "Oh Zachie you think he is cute too. But don't worry no one is cuter than you." She said as she ruffled his hair, she tugged him down so that she could gently peck at his lips.

Lucy started thinking she didn't want a rumor to insinuate her either. It wouldn't be fair to tarnish her perfect record. "Jasper is just a friend. He is more like a close brother to me. Well at least I think of him that way, but I don't really know how close our friendship is..." She frowned as she trailed off. The truth was that Jasper's friendship seemed to teeter on Derek. He reported back to him yet never reported to her on Derek. "He is Derek's cousin first before he is my friend."

Lucy could feel she was bringing down the room. She didn't want to be that person. It was time to shift gears. "Don't worry guys with a bit of practice, maybe one day you can beat me." She looked up at the screen that still showed her character driving the victory lap around the course.

"Well we have time for that." Ryan said with a small smirk. "It isn't like you'll be leaving my side anyways."

"You know I think you are just a flirt. You can't really be thinking of going against Derek? That is crazy." Lucy furrowed her brows down and gave him a half smile. There was no way he was really serious. He was just enjoying the feeling of the mate bond.

"Lucy." Ryan's face drew serious as he met with her green emeralds. "You are my mate. I am not going to relinquish you to anyone. This isn't a joke. You are mine... And I'll be your best friend. You'll never have to question where my loyalty lies. It is already with you and will forever be with you."

"Ryan! They will kill you over something like this." Enzo said wide eyed. He knew Ryan good enough by now to know when he was being serious.

Ryan continued to stare at Lucy. "You are mine, Lucy. Don't think of anything else but that. And start getting used to the idea of being with me."

Okay, so deep down a sick side of her liked his possessiveness over her. It was thrilling in a way to see his gaze set upon her like she was his prize. There was a re ignited behind his eyes and she wanted him to burn her with it. All of her. She wanted to feel his heat on her body. It wasn't always about what she wanted though. She promised herself that even if she found her mate, she would choose her people. A small smile spread across her face, and she shook her head no.

"I won't ignore the treaty. I was born a leader to my species and my union is something that both species are depending on. It doesn't matter what I want... I have to do what is right. This is the promise my parents made to the vampire king and queen when they united to join forces in the war." She took in a deep breath, closing her eyes for a moment. "Who am I to destroy their plan? How could I possibly go against their wisdom for myself?"

"Have you ever asked Derek what he wanted?" Zach asked in a whisper. The whole room was quiet and drawn in to Lucy's strength and determination.

"I don't think... I don't think he wants me. But no... we have never talked about it. Honestly, we don't talk much anymore. We used to play a lot as children, but he changed as he got older. I guess when he started understanding what he was really giving up maybe made him bitter? I'm not sure." Lucy searched through her memories of her times with Derek. Her most recent visit they sat at a table drinking tea for an hour. Derek was cold and quiet, barely even glancing at her. He seemed a bit preoccupied and looking back it seemed like he couldn't wait for the mandatory hour to be up. She had to blink back the burn she felt in her eyes and nose. She wouldn't cry in front of them. And she didn't want to talk bad about their prince.

"Anyways he has never been mean to me. I'm sure we can manage a clumsy friendship." Lucy forced a smile out as she looked up. Ryan's amber eyes never left her face as he remained xated on her. It was a type of predatory gaze that she wasn't sure she wanted to understand further. But she imagined it had to do with the idea of his mate being discarded.

"I think it is interesting that they chose you to be their son's mate. Couldn't they have come up with another plan to solidify the treaty?" Tonya asked as her eyes watered. Her chest hurt for Lucy and what she would be sacrificing.

"I think there are a couple reasons. One reason is that a child between our two species would form a lasting bond. The other is I think they want my grandfather Gilbert's bloodline. I guess he was sort of special since he had original vampire blood. And for some reason my mother and I have also maintained its purity. I think they looked at me having an heir would be an asset to the vampires. In a sense they want me for breeding." Lucy didn't need to really mince words there, that is exactly why they wanted her. It was to produce a stronger heir for the vampires.

Tonya frowned. "Well I don't want to give her to them. Let's hide her." She looked down at Lucy and pursed her lips together tightly. "You deserve better than our prince."

Lucy smiled and shook her head. "I don't think that is fair to say. After all, none of us really know him. And Jasper has told me he is a good guy. I'm sure he has his own reasons and feelings he is trying to sort out before we get married. His parents are good people, so I have to have faith that Derek is too."

"You are a very loyal person, Lucy." Ryan said quietly as his eyes shined on her. He looked at her face and the hurt she tried to hide. But deep down he could feel it and sometimes she even showed her pain.

She felt herself being pulled into his amber eyes. The more she was with him the more connected she felt to him. She needed to change the topic. She cleared her throat, "So, what are you guys doing out here? Does it have to do with the witch Beryl?"

"The prince has ordered us to figure out what type of experiments are going on here. It took us a long time to hunt Beryl down. To be honest at first we didn't understand the order. But..." Zach got quiet and looked at Lucy. "But he said that Beryl was a danger to the Diamond pack and he wanted the problem taken care of."

Lucy felt as if her chest ran out of air. Derek had ordered them out here? And it was to protect the Diamond pack... her pack. Someone wouldn't order his men to risk their lives like that unless he cared, right? Maybe he was always preoccupied when they were together and busy. She felt bad how she was just talking about him. They were honest observations to her but maybe there was more to it.

"Have you found out anything interesting? Besides the weird mixture of vervain and silver?"

"There is something else she is working on. We aren't exactly sure what it is but the last werewolf she injected it into died in their cell. It appeared to be very painful, whatever it was. And then there was something else..." Tonya looked down at Ryan unsure if she should continue or not. He nodded his head to her slowly and she took in a breath. "We saw weird creatures in there. They were like some types of undead army we call them the voidless. They have an extreme bloodlust that seems to only be quenched by drinking werewolves' blood. These attacks make it look like a savage vampire is killing the wolves. Which is probably the intention."

Lucy shook her head slowly. Her parents needed to know about this. What was Beryl thinking she could accomplish? The werewolves had allies everywhere. With one call the army of the dragons, vampires, fairies and witches would come to their aid. Maybe this wasn't a mission about taking over. It must be a suicidal mission. Beryl most likely didn't care about dying as long as she got revenge on the Diamond pack.

"I guess I'm going to need to go witch hunting." Lucy sighed in frustration looking at her wounds. It would still be a couple more days before she was ready to fight.

Ryan laughed and shook his head. "I don't think so. I'm not letting you anywhere near that crazy witch. It is your pack she is after. She is after you. Like I would let you walk right into her hands."

"You can't tell me what to do. I am going to protect my people."

Ryan sighed in agitation. "Which is it Lucy? Huh? Are you going to risk your life looking for a witch who wants to kill you? And then if she does the treaty is ruined. Or are you going to protect your people by staying safe so you can solidify the treaty? You can't have it both ways. Your people are important. I get that. Then choose the path that makes the most sense. We will take care of Beryl that is why we are here."

Lucy scoffed and folded her arms over her chest. "Well according to you I won't be solidifying the treaty anyways, right?" Her blood was boiling. She didn't know what the right decision was. Did anyone in these situations? You just did what you felt was best. She was strong so shouldn't she fight? Or would it be better for her to stay hidden while others did? What if her being there made less people die though? And yes, there was also the possibility of her own death. But to be honest everyone faced death daily in various shapes and forms. Though she could be honest and know it was more dangerous then say simply waiting around.

What would her mother do? She didn't even need to ask that question. Her mother would be in the battle with her daggers drawn. That was who she was. Her aunt Rhea, the fairy queen, would also be right in front fighting. So would her cousins Alexis, Raine and Destiny. Heck even her grandma Lilly would fight. They were all strong and important. Without Alexis there would be no next generation fairy princess. Unless that role somehow shifted to her.

In the end it was all about balancing your choices. She needed to think about this situation. And what it is that she should really be doing. She looked at Ryan in annoyance. How did she want to strangle and kiss someone so badly? She wanted to punch him but was also craving to feel his lips on her own. Ugh, having a mate was frustrating.