

The Vampires Promised Bride Chapter 26

Lucy smiled as she felt herself wrapped in Derek's arms. There was a feeling of contentment that she never had before. It was like being in a safe, warm, cocoon. But there was also something else... a deep desire. The scent from Derek was more intoxicating somehow than before. She opened her eyes to look at his sleeping face. His eyes were closed and his face was right in front of her. Her focus went to his lips that were deliciously right in front of her.

She would be leaving his side soon. She was about to forcibly be put on a mate diet. And she wasn't sure how long she would have to go without him. How long would it be before she could taste his lips? How long before she would bear his mark? If you know you are going on a diet tomorrow, would you not have one last dessert today?

A delicious moist cake is served right in front of you. Would you not eat it because you are going on a diet tomorrow? Hell no. You'd eat it today because of the diet tomorrow. Derek was her dessert. She knew she couldn't have all of him right now, but his lips were fair game. She had tasted them before and was going to taste them again.

She leaned in closer and gently brushed her lips against his. The sweet tingling sparks ignited where their lips touched. But immediately his lips covered hers. His body pressed into hers and was now capturing her beneath him. He greedily kissed her as his hand held her face possessively. She reached her hand up and brushed them through his hair tugging him into her slightly. He groaned into her mouth and deepened the kiss. Dipping his tongue into her mouth with deep slow massaging motions that soon quickened with passion. His kiss became fiery and possessive. She gasped as she felt him lightly bite her lips. He pulled on her bottom lip and growled into her mouth.

Their breathing was getting faster and faster. Lucy's cheeks were heating red from the passionate kisses. His warm kisses explored her face and down to her neck. Where he began to tease a special spot on her soft skin. He licked and pulled on the skin growling into her as his other hand wandered over her body.

He returned to her lips and desperately kissed her. Growling and claiming her lips. She clutched onto his shoulders pulling him deeper into her. The tingling sensation and sweet jolts of electricity were over taking them both. She instinctively arched into him and his low growl of approval made her body shudder underneath him.

He pulled away. He gripped the pillow on the side of Lucy's head while they both panted for air. His eyes fixated on her, and he growled lowly, "Mine". Then very slowly he kissed the tip of her nose before he forced himself into a sitting position.

Lucy reached out and grabbed his hand as he helped her into a sitting position next to him. She snuggled into his chest as his arms came around her.

“Don’t you think you should leave your mark on me now? I’m liable to change my mind.” Lucy teased and felt his chest tighten underneath her.

“I’ll kill anyone who touches you.” He listened as Lucy giggled and smiled. “I’m serious. It’s our nature. If anyone touches you whether with your consent or not, they are dead. So, you may want to tell me now so I can chalk it up as the past... has there been anyone else...”

Lucy smiled. His voice sounded so meek. She looked up into his eyes and brushed her fingers through his hair. “What do you think?” She giggled but then noticed a very serious reaction. “Seriously?” She raised up on her knees and wrapped her arms around his neck, leaning her forehead into his. “I was betrothed since before I was born. No one messed with me. I was the girl who was always alone. No one to go to parties with, no one to take me to dances... because no one wanted to waste their time with someone already taken.”

“But there was one guy recently...” Derek growled lowly.

“That was the first time that ever happened. Ever.” Lucy shrugged. “Honestly it was the first time anyone ever looked at me that way before...”

Derek growled and grasped her sides. “You are mine to look at Lucy. Only mine.”

“What about you? Going around as Ryan... no one knew you were unobtainable.” Lucy pushed back and sat on her heels. She quirked an eyebrow at him. She watched as he smiled at her. His hands still resting on her sides.

“Were there girls interested in me? Yes. I won’t lie there was a lot of interest... but I refused them all. It was always you Lucy. I told you this and I mean it. I have loved you for a long time now. You were always the one who occupied my thoughts. I just wasn’t interested in anyone else like that. I went to parties and hung out with others... but never as a date. I only went to get to know my peers better as a future leader. But I’ve never been with anyone else Lucy...” He held his gaze on her to show how serious he was. “In my eyes no one else existed but you.”

This lined up with what Tonya had told her too. Lucy leaned back into him, wrapping her arms around him so that she could hold him close. “I don’t want to leave you already...” She breathed out.

“I won’t be washing these sheets or pillows. I am going to need to keep your scent there...” Derek tilted his head into the crook of Lucy’s neck as he took in gentle whiffs of her scent. “I’ll give you my shirt... so it will help you sleep without me by your side.”

“Oh, I’m sure Jasper will pat me to sleep.” She bit her bottom lip and smiled. She listened to his frustrated groan. “If it helps you sleep, I can tolerate it for you...my little mate.”

She was surprised to hear this from him. She was just teasing him, but it warmed her heart that he was suppressing his jealousy for her.

“You know there is nothing at all romantic between Jasper and me, right?” Lucy wanted to make sure he knew this. She didn’t want him to feel like he had any rivals to worry about.

“Mmmhmm I know. I trust you both.”

Lucy leaned forward and took his earlobe with her teeth. She tugged on it lightly and felt him grip in to her tighter.

“I went to talk to your parents again last night.” Derek managed to mumble out to distract himself from ravishing her.

Lucy pulled back and looked into his amber eyes. “You did?”

“After you fell asleep... they were already waiting for me. They expected me to talk to them again.” Derek chuckled. “I told them how I was conflicted, and I wanted to keep you with me. I told them how I wouldn’t leave you if the situation was reversed... It would take a direct order from my parents... like what your father gave you. Separating mates isn’t easy.” Derek smiled sadly. “Our conversation together led us into a conversation where we came to the same conclusion... Beryl is purely after your family. Her goal is to kill the four of you. No matter what the costs.”

“I already thought about it earlier and that it was a suicide mission.”

Derek sighed and cupped her cheek in his hand. “Someone that desperate to kill you... I can’t let you near her. Your parents plan to send you and Aiden to either Elysium or the West Dragon Kingdom. They want you both to be somewhere where the witch can’t get to you... And your father said that if I want to visit you, I can come to them, and they’ll open up a portal to you.”

Lucy listened to him quietly. At least they planned to send Aiden too. Most likely Justice would also come along. And it would at least be fun in Elysium and the dragon kingdom. They would get to spend some rare time with their family and cousins. At least maybe that would help distract her from not being with her mate.

“How long...?” Lucy asked, biting her inner bottom lip.

“I don’t know exactly...” Derek looked into her pooling green eyes. “I hate this too.” He chuckled and frowned, shaking his head. “It’s killing me Lucy. It’s killing me to think about...the only thing that keeps me going is that I am protecting your family... protecting you. But I don’t know how long it will take. But I promise I will visit you. In a few weeks after you are settled I’ll come to see you. And... with the vervain properly out of your system...” He cleared his throat slightly as he looked at her smooth unmarked neck.

“I guess I should probably get ready...” Lucy said sadly.

“Hey... I forgot to tell you, we will be accompanying you. You are my soul mate. The vampires here will recognize my claim on you above the prince’s. It is taboo to break up soul mates. So it is natural for me to give the order to escort you back to your pack... since you are my mate.”

“Will you have to leave immediately after we get back?” Lucy felt his breath on her skin as he leaned closer.

“Depends on how we travel. If we hike to the vehicles, we can save some time. So maybe I can stay with you for a few hours before heading back.”

“I’d like to introduce you to my brother.” Lucy watched him nod his head and smile.

“I’d like that.” Derrick pulled her in closer to him. He brushed her nose with his and covered her lips. He pressed his lips into hers offering a very soft, warm and sweet kiss. He wanted to show her in this kiss just how precious she was to him. He wouldn’t have many opportunities to kiss her without prying eyes. Not that he needed to hide his kisses, she was his mate.

But some kisses were not meant for public eyes. And this was one of them. As his hand trailed over her sides. “Mmm Lucy.” He mumbled through his lips. “You taste so sweet. Your scent... is addicting.” He licked her lips lightly and nudged her nose lightly as he pulled apart. “I love you...my little mate.”

“I love you too.” Lucy whispered out shyly.

Derek smiled as he watched her cheeks redden with her confession. She was simply too adorable. “Come on. If we don’t get moving now you won’t have time for breakfast.”

“I can think of something we can have for breakfast without leaving this room.” Lucy said coquettishly.

Derek’s eyes darkened and a low agonizing groan escaped through his lips. “You are like a rabbit who jumps into the fox’s den.”

Lucy shrugged. “Some rabbits just want to get eaten. Just waiting for the fox’s instincts to take over.” She grinned and bit her bottom lip. She watched his gaze move to her lips. The color in his eyes changed rapidly back and forth as he fought against those instincts.

“You’re everything I’ve ever wanted Lucy. Everything I could possibly want in a mate and more.” He reached his hand out and plucked her up to her feet. He crashed her body into his chest and squeezed her firmly into him. “How am I going to do this Lucy... I feel like I’m drowning already. I’m weak. When it comes to you... I never realized how weak I am.”

“Derek... you are not weak. It isn’t supposed to be this way. We aren’t supposed to be separated.” Lucy leaned up and kissed his jawline. “I’ll be waiting for you. Kill the witch and come for me.” She smiled and leaned up to his ear. She let her hot breath beat against him as her lips brushed his earlobe. “And we will see if you ever figured out how to make a baby.” She gave him a crooked smile. She was told when she was a baby that Derek had asked how to make a baby. He wasn’t a child anymore and she was certain he figured it out. But it was fun to tease him over it.

Derek chuckled lowly. “Mmmm we will see if I can figure it out.” He playfully pulled her hips into him and lowered his lips to her neck. He nipped on her skin slightly and flicked his tongue over her neck.

Lucy couldn’t help the moan that escaped her lips when she felt his arousal against her. It was evident how much he was holding himself back.

“Just because you aren’t marking me now... doesn’t mean...”

A deep growl reverberated from his throat. “Don’t think I haven’t thought about that too. But I want it to be special... for the both of us. I want to mark you the same day we...”

“Derek.” Lucy pressed against his lips lightly. “We can wait. I’m yours. And I’ll be waiting for you.”

He wrapped his arms around her tightly. The two stood there quietly holding one another. Both hoping that time would freeze just for them. But time stopped for no one. They had to reluctantly part from their sweet embrace. And begin the journey back to the Diamond pack... where they would have to say goodbye.

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Lucy held hands with Derek as they rode together. The group had hiked to a location where they had several SUVs hidden. Lucy, Derek and Jasper rode in one vehicle, Jin, Jason, Wyatt and Freya took another and following behind them in the third was Chaz, Sabrina, Tonya and Zach. They left Lenny and Enzo to keep an eye on the activity with the witch.

“This is going to be like camp. Aiden, Justice and I are going to bump chest, have manly shouting contests and drink each other over the table. Oh and we will squeeze in some tea time for you Lucy.” Jasper grinned as he drove the vehicle along.

Derek wrapped his arm around Lucy’s shoulder and pulled her into his side. “Sounds like you guys are all good friends.”

“I wonder what Aiden will think of you? See I’m safe since I wasn’t Lucy’s mate. But you...” Jasper chuckled and looked behind him in the back seat at Derek for a second. He was careful about what he said. The vampires behind them have exceptional hearing. So he made sure he didn’t mention Derek’s name or that they were engaged. “Of course, he has been trying to set me and Lucy up together. He didn’t think the prince deserved his sister so who knows what he will think of you.”

Derek frowned and Lucy leaned up and kissed his cheek.

“Aiden will love you. He will probably do the fun interrogating bit but... as long as you are good to me, he won’t have a problem with you.” Lucy smiled up at Derek. “Justice will be good with you too.”

“Lucy... no going anywhere without Jasper. I mean it.” Derek finally said in a strained voice.

“You want me to follow her into the shower as well? Because I will. I’ll do whatever it takes to keep your mate safe.” Jasper teased. His cheesy grin faded when he looked in the rear-view mirror. If looks could kill...

“I’ve already heard about how you’ve patted her to sleep before. That is about the extent of the line I ever want to be crossed.” Derek said in a lethal quiet tone.

Jasper chuckled. “You sound a bit jealous?” He then cleared his throat when he saw Derek’s darkening amber eyes. “Don’t worry. As long as I am around no one will be able to harm her. It’s when I am not around, she gets in trouble.”

“I have a feeling after this I’m never going to have a moment of peace.” Lucy pouted.

“No... that is what will be coming after I mark you.” Derek said wryly with a crooked smile on his face.

Lucy started to say something when everything went dark. She blinked several times. A face came into focus. First, she saw the brown eyes and then a body. The man had white hair that was pulled back in a ponytail. He looked out from a white building above the clouds. In front of him stood a young-looking man with brown hair and green eyes. Beside him was someone she knew very well. With his dark brown hair and bright blue eyes, it was her Uncle Levi.

“Lucy, Lucy!” Derek tried calling to her but she remained unresponsive. Jasper suddenly slammed on the brakes as the SUV in front of them came to a halt. The passengers ran to their vehicle and swung the door open.

“She won’t respond to me.” Derek looked up at Wyatt.

Wyatt reached in and grabbed Lucy in his arms. She started squirming as beads of sweat formed on her forehead.

“She’s hurting.” Derek jumped out of the vehicle placing his hand on her forehead.

“Give her to me.” Jason said as he walked up to Wyatt.

“You aren’t her guardian. What can you do?” Wyatt shook his head while Freya checked over Lucy carefully. Jin made a slight breeze to help relieve Lucy, it gently swirled around her body keeping her cool.

“That’s fairy magic there. I sense it. I can try. She is your daughter... we are connected, I am certain of it.” Jason watched as Wyatt placed her in his arms. He reached out to her as a guardian. He called for the magic that was stirring and it answered him. He felt the liquid lava flow into his veins. He grit his teeth as he endured the pain. “It’s working. Not as strong as it would with you but it is working.”

“What’s wrong with her?” Jasper asked and looked up at the other vehicle. The vampires stood by the doors just watching quietly. They would wait for an order from ‘Ryan’ before they moved.

“I didn’t think the fairy magic was strong with her. It always appeared dormant... but this looks like a premonition. We’ve seen Rhea go through this before as well as my mother. I’ve never had them... so I don’t know what she is going through. But Rhea told me it can be quite terrifying and numbing afterwards. And also painful...” Wyatt sighed and looked around. They were close to the pack borders at least.

“She’s anxious.” Derek said quietly and grabbed her hand squeezing it tightly. “I’m here Lucy.”

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“I’m here Lucy.”

She heard the voice of her mate and she smiled. It helped ground her to reality. That what she was seeing in front of her was not really happening.

“This is all your fault Aken.” The man with the white hair snarled. “Everything that has happened was all to lead to this day. But finally, I know how to destroy you. I know how to break you completely. And I have...” The man smiled cruelly. He stepped to the side and Lucy could see a girl with blonde hair and closed eyes bound by her wrists and dangling. It was her cousin Alexis. Her lifeless body hung limply in the air. Her body was grey and void of life and dark blood slowly pooled underneath her.

Lucy felt the tears streaming from her eyes. She wanted to do something. She needed to cut her down from there. Yet, she was stuck watching the gruesome sight in front of her. How could this have happened?

“What you wanted to protect... you couldn’t. I found your weakness anyways.” A dark chuckle escaped from the man with silver hair.

The next moment there was a big ball of energy flooding the area. Lucy couldn’t see anything as a whiteout occurred. Yet, her tears continued to fall. Her cousin was dead. Lucy’s fairy blood responded to the possible future and began to awaken. Would this event come to pass? If she was being gifted a premonition that must mean it can be avoided, right? Just like the demon war. There is still a chance to change the future.

If Aken accepts her cousin... will this premonition come to pass? Aken was a tier one deity, the Kraken. He is also her cousin Alexis’s mate but has avoided her. She didn’t know the details but only that he was doing it for Alexis’ sake.

With a threat to the fairy line, she had gotten a premonition. And at the same time her fairy powers were awakening. No matter what, there would be a fairy princess. The fairy’s depended on this. It seems the path is being laid. Either the future will change, or Lucy will be selected to carry on in her stead.

She looked around at the white quiet. Why was she still here in this void? Was there more?

The world around her suddenly changed. She looked out at a city that looked as if it had been through a war. The buildings were run down and covered with vines. In the distance a section had tall walls around it. There was smoke in the air that made it hard to see. Through the smoke she could see something walking out. She gasped when she saw the face. It was the same face from her dream a few years ago. The one when Jasper stayed and patted her to sleep.

A man with one good eye and one red mechanical eye glared at the wall in the distance. Behind him an army started to emerge from the smoke. She couldn’t make out the creatures, only that they were large. From the wall someone walked out slowly. The person was at a distance so she couldn’t make out their face. But it looked like a girl with long hair and at her side she held out a sword. The girl was standing there alone to face against the army that was approaching her. In the smoke behind her was another dark shadow that she couldn’t make out. A werebear? A werewolf? She couldn’t tell. She could barely see its shadow cloaked behind the person.

Lucy held her breath as the army charged towards the girl. The girl raised her sword...

Lucy sat up panting for air. Her eyes were wide and damp with her tears as she focused on the world in front of her.

“Lucy.” Derek squeezed her hand gently. “Lucy, I am right here.”

She looked over at Derek and glanced up to see she was being held in her uncle’s arms. Standing next to him was her parents, aunt and Jasper. They were all looking at her. She gripped Derek’s hand tighter to try to stop it from trembling. What the hell was all of that? Both were visions of the future. One was more recent having to deal with Alexis. But the other one... things looked so different. It looked like it took place a long time from now. She had a feeling that the girl had some importance to her... maybe a family member? Whoever she was... she was facing an army all alone. With maybe one shifter of sorts with her...

Jason slowly lowered Lucy back to the ground and Derek immediately pulled her into his arms. He held her body flush against his as he tried to help calm her down. He could feel her emotions jumping. All he could do was use the mate bond to help.

“Take your time Lucy. Let’s get back into pack territory. We can talk about it after you’ve had time to digest everything.” Wyatt said gently. He watched her green confused eyes look up to him. She nodded her head slowly. “Ryan...get her back in the vehicle. I want to get her back to the safety of pack borders.” Wyatt wasn’t sure what had happened, but he felt it. A strong pulse of fairy energy was beating inside of Lucy now. Jason could feel it too; he could see it in his eyes. Whatever had just happened... Wyatt could feel his fairy blood reacting to Lucy. And this reaction... was that to a fairy princess...

“Follow us just to the border. Then wait there. I’ll send for one of you to take the other vehicle before it is time to leave.” Derek looked at the back SUV with the vampires in it before he hopped into the vehicle beside Lucy.

Jasper didn’t say a word. He started up the vehicle and hummed it along behind the one in front of him. On occasion he would glance up at the mirror to see how she was doing. Her face looked pale and worn. It was as if she had a weight on her shoulders that she hadn’t had a moment ago.

Derek kissed the side of Lucy’s head and tucked her in gently into him. He felt her snuggle deeper into his embrace. She was quiet and still but her heart rate had returned to normal. And her breathing was back to a calm rhythm too. He wondered what she had seen. But he could feel there was a level of fear and confusion emitting into him from her. Whatever it was she seemed to not understand it completely either.

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Visions of her cousin's body flashed in Lucy's mind. She reached her hand up and covered her mouth. Liquid crystals trickled down her cheeks. It was so real. What did she need to do to prevent this from happening? She felt Derek's hand rub over her shoulder gently in a soothing motion. The vehicle came to a stop and Lucy glanced up surprised to see she was back home. She was so lost in her thoughts she didn't even realize it.

The door opened and she was instantly pulled out of the vehicle.

"Damnit Lucy! I was so scared." Aiden wrapped his arms around her, crushing her into him. He looked down and saw the evidence of her tears on her face. His eyes immediately darkened, and he looked up at Derek.

"Easy on her Aiden." Wyatt came over to his son quickly. "Lucy had a premonition. She is still adjusting."

Derek slid out of the vehicle and Jasper was at his side. He looked up at the auburn hair colored man and smiled. "You must be Aiden?"

"Who are you?" Aiden said coldly.

Derek's eyes rested on Lucy. She was awfully quiet and still. So much that he was feeling anxious and worried for her.

Lucy took a small step from Aiden. She wanted to introduce him to her mate. Mate. Alexis mate. She needed to find Alexis' mate so that... the vision of her body flickered in her mind. The dried blood and bruises over her. The pooling blood below her. She must have fought incredibly hard. Lucy's hand started shaking.

"Lucy."

She snapped her head up to a familiar kind voice. Her eyes met with the green eyes of her grandmother, Lilly. She walked up to Lucy with confident commanding steps. And she wrapped her arms around her.

"Don't worry. We are going to fix this. Okay? Shhh, we are going to fix this." Lilly boldly and calmly said.

"Mom? How did you know?" Wyatt asked.

“The light of another fairy princess began to flicker into existence. I didn’t know she had received the same premonition... until I saw her face though. Rhea also saw this. Don’t worry Lucy. It isn’t going to happen, okay? Alexis is going to be just fine. That is the reason we get these premonitions.” Lilly rubbed the back of Lucy’s head and spoke to her in a soothing tone.

“What about the other thing?” Lucy finally spoke quietly. “The girl with the sword.”

Lilly’s fingers tensed. “You saw that too?”

Lucy lifted her head up and looked at her grandmother. She nodded her head slowly. “Who is she?”

Lilly sighed and smiled. “That is a future not to worry about right now. That is centuries and centuries from now. Who knows what can change before then, right?”

“What is this about Alexis?” Aiden asked, taking a protective stance near Lucy. He rarely had seen her look so vulnerable, and he wanted to protect her. He placed a hand on her shoulder and looked at his grandmother.

Freya stood next to Wyatt along with Jason and Jin who walked up with Tyler, Lilly’s husband and mate. (Tyler and Lilly were the Alpha and Luna of the Diamond pack before and are now the King and Queen of the fairies. Since Lilly was the fairy princess.)

“Lucy, let me see you kiddo.” A man’s voice boomed from the side.

“Uncle Tristan.” Lucy smiled and her eyes widened in shock as he picked her up. Tristan was also her grandmother’s guardian. He was a very large man and was also a werebear, like all guardians before had been.

Tristan’s face turned serious as he looked up to Lilly and Tyler. He glanced up at Jason and could see he knew it too. He could also smell Lucy.

“She has the smell... and I can feel her.” Tristan eased her down.

“Hi... could someone please explain what is going on? I seem to have missed the seminar.” Jasper said with a small grin. Derek stood there quietly taking in the information that had to deal with his mate.

“Me too.” Aiden said with a shrug.

“We had a premonition that Alexis is killed. We have room to adjust and remedy this. Just like how Elysium wasn’t destroyed. But the fairy magic in Lucy has awakened. Her royal scent is now allowing other fairies to know her. She is also being recognized as a potential heir. This doesn’t mean anything though. Nothing changes except our Lucy here is a bit stronger now. However... in light of this it is protocol for her to have a guardian now.” Lilly looked up at Wyatt. It was his job to pick one out for his daughter now.

“No... please don’t.” Lucy stared back at her grandmother with determination. “I am not the fairy princess. Alexis is. And giving me a guardian... it feels like you are giving up on saving her. I don’t want one. I won’t accept one. I have Aiden, Justice and Jasper around all the time. I don’t want a guardian to add to that too.”

“We aren’t giving up. It is just you are important Lucy. And protecting you is important.” Lilly added with a frown. “I’m sorry you must have a guardian.”

“Then let me do it.” Justice jogged up from the side. “I know I can’t shift into a bear but I can still protect Lucy. I want to do it. I grew up with Lucy. We are family. It makes sense. Right dad?” Justice looked at Jason with hopeful eyes. He always teased about being their honorary guardian. This was something he wanted to do.

Jason nodded his head. “The guardian power must accept you Justice... and if it does then you were meant to be her guardian. But I have to warn you. You will be accepting a very strong power at a much older age. We all had a long time to adjust to this new strength. It will require some very intense crash course training.” He watched Justice nod his head enthusiastically.

“Now wait a minute.” Derek finally spoke up and all heads snapped to look at this new person. “Could him getting these new powers be dangerous to Lucy? I won’t allow it.” His firm conviction resonated with a sense of power. “If there is any chance new powers could cause him to lose control...”

“That is what the training will be for. Don’t worry. I promise I wouldn’t allow him to be by Lucy’s side unless he was ready.” Jason chuckled. “You can relax. Besides, a guardian by her side would be a good thing. More protection.”

“Okay, who the hell are you?” Aiden fixated his gaze on Derek. Who the heck was this guy to say anything?

Jasper smiled. "They aren't within hearing." He said tilting his head over to Derek for approval to continue.

Lucy smiled and walked into Derek's side. "This is my mate..."

Derek wrapped his arms around her and pulled her into his chest. She was looking normal again and even sounded normal. But he was feeling very protective over her and needed her body next to him.

"This here is Prince Derek... but for now please just refer to him as Ryan. We have comrades nearby and while they can't hear us here it is best to avoid an accidental slip up. For reasons right now he is keeping his identity undercover. But it just so happens that him and Lucy are also mates... actually we believe they are soul mates." Jasper said almost proudly as he looked over at Lucy and Derek together.

"Yeah mom. They haven't marked each other but can already feel each other's emotions." Wyatt said bringing this information to someone who is much more knowledgeable.

Lilly looked over at Tyler. "That didn't happen to us until after we marked... That must be an incredibly strong connection. Something like that..."

"Isn't just an accident, right?" Freya added with a smirk.

"No, it looks like this was a gift from the moon goddess." Lilly smiled. The moon goddess knew about the treaty, and this was a beautiful gift to give the two heirs. She gave them an unbreakable bond with one another. A marked soul mate can't be ruined by misunderstandings because they can read the other's mind. They can hear their thoughts. They would know them like they know themselves. It is baring your soul more than any other mate does. But it is also worth it with the unconditional love, respect and trust that comes with it.

Aiden stared at Derek quietly. He looked how he held a possessive arm around his sister. Even the way he looked at her was like she was his treasure he was greedily protecting. But he wasn't convinced about this guy yet. He would need to hear more about his story.

"We need to have a little chat I think." Aiden said quietly keeping an intimidating gaze on Derek.

Derek smiled and nodded his head. "I figured as much." He rubbed his hand over Lucy's shoulder gently. If her brother cared about her like he was told this was only natural. And he wanted to talk to Aiden as well. Since he would be relying on him to keep his little mate safe.

"So, Mom... about Justice?" Jason asked, seeing his son shifting from side to side.

"There has never been a guardian who wasn't a werebear. But Jason is right. If the power accepts you then you were meant to be. It is up to Wyatt. Wyatt is the one who must feel her guardian and who it is. It is how it works. He can't force it either. It is just how it is. You feel it inside..." Lilly raised a hand and sat it over her chest. "It's how I knew Cody and Jason belonged to me. It's how Rhea was able to pick Micah... even though he was dangerous in the beginning. But Tristan was able to straighten him out."

"Nothing a few gentle slams couldn't correct." Tristan chuckled with a big grin.

"Hey um... Ryan." Justice cleared his throat, noticing he seemed a bit uncomfortable about the guardian idea. "If it ends up being me you don't have to worry, ya know? Like I'd never hurt Lucy. Not even by accident."

"I trust you Justice." Lucy looked at him and smiled. She could get behind the guardian thing if it was Justice. He was always around her anyways. But there was one thing... "But would this mean he would always be my guardian?" She looked over at her grandparents.

"Yes. There is no taking the guardian power away." Lilly looked over at Justice understanding Lucy's point.

"This would be connecting your life with Lucy's. Wherever she goes you would go. Whether it be the vampire kingdom or Elysium. But as you have seen, the whole mate tradition has been changed." Lilly smiled looking at Jason and Jin.

"Yea, I'm not going to be celibate or anything like Uncle Tristan, but I don't mind following Lucy. And I think this would make the family feel more at ease knowing I was always by her side."

Tristan chuckled. "I didn't take a mate... I never said I was celibate."

"Whoa! Uncle T... I never knew." Justice said with a big grin.

“I don’t exactly broadcast my private life.” Tristan chuckled, shaking his head. He never took a mate. He didn’t want one. But he was still a male and had needs.

“Well, I don’t know if I have a fated mate or not, but I definitely plan to have a family one day.” Justice said with a shrug.

Lilly looked over at Wyatt. Do not just pick him because he wants it. It doesn’t work that way. Connect with that part deep inside of you where your fairy magic resides. It will help guide you. It has a will of its own and it will help you choose the right guardian.

Wyatt interlaced his fingers with Freya’s and looked into her green eyes. It has been a while since he really connected with the deep fairy magic that existed inside of him. There has been so much peace that the need for a real deep power hasn’t arisen. It has been twenty years since he had to fight with everything he had.

He searched inside where his energy swirled. An energy that was also connected with Titus and Rhea. One he hadn’t connected with in a long time. He watched as it circled around him in red ropes. The way fairy magic worked was different from other magics. You willed it and it came to light when you needed it. You developed your magic over time. It exposed itself to you when you needed it. And now it was awakening with the need for a guardian. The magic was searching for a protector for their potential heir.

He watched as a bright green rope swirled around Lucy but also connected with Justice. The green ropes circled together in a figure eight motion. The energy was connected already. But what was fascinating was how a white glow emanated from both Derek and Lucy. The glow pulsated together and in perfect rhythm. It was a light he couldn’t see until he pulled his fairy magic forward. And both of their lights were reaching out to Justice. As if it already knew he was the one.

Wyatt didn’t know what that all meant but one thing was obvious... Justice was meant to be Lucy’s guardian.

“I guess I’ll be needing to make a trip to Elysium for the guardian ceremony to transfer powers.” Wyatt said quietly and watched Justice’s shoulders slink in disappointment. “Hope you are ready for the life you are signing up for Justice.”

“You mean it?!” Justice’s eyes grew wide, and he watched Wyatt grin and nod. “Hell yeah! I’m going to be a guardian!” He jumped into the air and raised his fist upwards.

“This will be very interesting. He is the first one not to be a werebear. It will be interesting to see his power merge with fairy magic.” Lilly looked at Tyler and shrugged with a smile. He was already thinking the same thing she was. (Since they were soul mates, they knew each other’s thoughts). And they were both thinking this was not a coincidence. That somehow him being a sword wielding guardian meant something even deeper. And somewhere would be the connection to the vision of the girl wielding a sword in the future. A future that would one day come to pass... (But that is a different story...A spinoff being planned for late 2022).

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“I’d like to head to Elysium immediately so we can start his training now.” Wyatt said looking up at his parents.

“What is the hurry?” Tyler asked.

“That is something else we wanted to talk to you about. Lucy will be heading to the vampire kingdom for their ceremony. Then from there, I want her and Aiden to either stay in Elysium or in the West Dragon kingdom. At least until things with Meryl’s granddaughter are settled.” Wyatt said with a frown.

“We will explain everything in more detail but it seems like the witch has been working on something to take the four of us out. I don’t know how it will affect us directly but it is killing regular werewolves. And she has been experimenting on vampires as well. To be safe, we want Lucy and Aiden out of her reach. And in Elysium or among the dragons is the safest place for them.” Freya added.

“I am not about to tolerate anyone threatening my family. Not after everything we have been through.” Lilly growled lowly.

“Mom, you have werewolf in you too. It is best for you and dad to also stay out of it. The vampires plan to take the lead on this for now.” Wyatt said, looking over at Derek.

“Well, I want this over with quickly. We need to speak with Rhea and Titus over this too.” Tyler rested his arm around Lilly. They both felt the same way. They didn’t risk their lives fighting in a demon war only to have some witch tamper with their family now.

“Well let’s go then. Let’s take Justice and head to the West Dragon kingdom and then meet at Elysium so we can give Justice his powers. Then Jason and Uncle Tristan can give him a crash course on his powers.” Wyatt looked over at Jason who nodded his head in agreement.

“Jin go pack some things we are going to stay in Elysium for a week.” Jason watched as Jin bounced off towards the house. “You too Justice. Pack the essentials. Wyatt wants to leave five minutes ago.”

“Yes! I’m going.” Justice almost squealed in excitement and bolted to the house.

“Dad, I don’t like you sending me away with everything going on.” Aiden met with his father’s grey eyes.

“Aiden, not only is it safer this way... but this way you can look after your sister too. The two of you together are very strong. It is just a layer of safety while we figure things out.” Wyatt understood his son’s feelings. But this wasn’t like she was after the whole pack. This was a mission to destroy his family. They were almost certain of it. And he would make sure she didn’t get ahold of his children.

“We will have you accompany Lucy to the ceremony. Then you and Lucy need to decide afterwards where you will be heading. You are welcome to stay at either place.” Freya looked at Aiden already knowing where he wanted to go. He would want to go to the dragon kingdom. He liked testing his strength against the dragons. They were a real challenge where he could unload his power without worry.

“So uh...Ryan...” Aiden looked at him confused. “Are you coming with us?”

“No... but Jasper will be accompanying Lucy wherever she goes. She is his top assignment and priority. I will be handling this witch nonsense before I can be with Lucy.” A sad smile rested on Derek’s face. “It isn’t ideal... but necessary.”

“Hmm...” Aiden said almost in an accusing tone.

Derek chuckled. “Care to elaborate?”

“Just interesting is all... I mean, Jasper is the one always around her and taking care of her. I always see him... never see you. And instead of leaving the fighting in Jasper’s hands so you can be with Lucy...” Aiden shrugged. “Just interesting... Just makes me wonder which one of you she is really better off with. Jasper is nobility. The treaty should be fine with him too,

right? Maybe he is the better option. Seems like you can't be bothered with my sister." Aiden inwardly was smiling as he watched Derek's eyes grow dark. This was the reaction he was looking for. He needed to see his emotion when it came to Lucy. The best way to do that would be to challenge that he wasn't a good enough mate for her.

"I am the strongest and am the leader of the elite soldiers. It is only natural for me to be there to command them. Also, Jasper is the person I trust the most. I trust in him as a person and his fighting skills. This is why I have him close to Lucy when I cannot be." His eyes flashed at Aiden. "Lucy is my world. She. Is. Mine. And there is no other option but me." His eyes softened and he looked down at his mate. "I just hope I can be good enough for her."

"Aww of course you are good enough for me." Lucy smiled up at him and then turned an annoyed gaze to Aiden. She could see the smirk spreading from his lips and she sighed. "Really Aiden? You just can't help yourself."

"Hey, I needed to see his emotions. He has been awfully quiet there. How am I supposed to know what his intentions are." Aiden shrugged innocently. "I still want to have that chat... come with me?"

Derek nodded his head. "Jasper..."

Jasper extended his arm to Lucy. "At your service." He said in a butler tone with a cheeky grin on his face.

Aiden... Lucy warned through their mental link.

Yeah, yeah, yeah sis. This is customary man stuff. Aiden winked at Lucy. "I'll take you to the office. It is sound proof so we can talk freely."

Derek kissed Lucy on the nose. "We won't be long... I want to spend as much time with you as possible." He gave her one lasting look before he placed her next to Jasper's side. "It was nice meeting all of you. I am sure we will be seeing more of each other in the future given the circumstances." He slightly lowered his head in respect to Tyler and Lilly. Then with a nod to Wyatt and Freya, he walked off with Aiden.

"If he ever mistreats you Lucy just tell your Uncle Tristan and I'll settle it for you." Tristan said with a protective tone.

Wyatt chuckled. "You'd have to get in line. Anyone who mistreats my baby girl will have to deal with me directly."

“I’d never let Lucy be mistreated. You have my word. If it came to her being mistreated, I would protect her... but I can promise you that won’t happen. Lucy is precious to all of them... to her mate most of all.” Jasper smiled down at Lucy. He may follow orders but if he ever thought Lucy was being mistreated, he wouldn’t allow it. He wouldn’t care who he had to go against. She was important to him... she was family.

“We are ready!” Justice came jogging to the group with Jin trailing behind him. Jason immediately grabbed the bags from Jin and gave Justice a reproachful look.

“Next time take your mothers bags too.”

Jin giggled. “I am perfectly capable of carrying a couple of bags. Silly bear.”

“Let’s head to the training grounds before we leave. I need to talk with Sam for just a quick moment.” Wyatt linked his hand with Freya. “We will be back later tonight Lucy. Don’t leave the pack borders...” There was a low threatening growl in Wyatt’s tone. It was a promise to Lucy not to disobey him.

“Don’t worry. I won’t let her anywhere near the border.” Jasper grinned looking down at his prisoner.

“Lucy... don’t over think everything. Premonitions are just that. They are not concrete. It is a warning of a possible future. And we will make sure we stop it from happening. Just worry about yourself.” Lilly looked into the green eyes of her granddaughter. Eyes that were similar to her own.

“Thanks grandma. I’ll try to push it from my mind for now.” Lucy watched her family walk off to the lower training ground. She still wasn’t sure about this whole guardian business but if it was Justice at least she was already comfortable with him.

“Just you and me.” Jasper sighed with a smile.

“Lucy you are back!”

Lucy turned her head to see two guys jogging up to them. It was Kurt, her brother’s future beta (he was also the son of Sam and Renee) their family have always been the beta’s to the alpha. From Kade who was Tyler’s Beta, to Sam who was Wyatt’s beta and now Kurt who would be the future beta. Kurt was only a few months younger than them. He had dark hair and brown eyes. And was a fairly easy going and sweet guy.

The other man was Jamie. Jamie was Aiden's future gamma (he was the son of the previous gamma Winston). Jamie was only seventeen. His father had found his mate, Florence, after the demon war was over. Florence was a witch not a werewolf. Unfortunately, a couple years ago she got very sick and passed away. It was a tough adjustment but together Jamie and his father managed.

"Do you have any idea how much punishment we received? Aiden put everyone to work. We were doing three a days of training because you disappeared." Jamie said with a fake stern tone.

"That was your fault, Jamie!" Kurt said with a twisted face. "If you wouldn't have run off with those other pups Lucy never would have left the territory."

"I was just going after them to keep them safe!" Jamie said with a small pout. "Besides, my dad already punished me enough. He is having me do nightly drills all summer because of it."

"You are a future leader, Jamie. As the pack's future gamma, you need to lead by example." Kurt shook his head in annoyance. "Anyways Luce Luce, you look fine. Is everything okay? I see Jasper found you. Nice going Jasper."

"I'm perfectly fine." Lucy held her hands out with a shrug.

"Lucy can't ever disappear. I'll always find her." Jasper teased and poked the side of Lucy's head.

"Are you both supposed to be at the training grounds right now?" Lucy gave them both a crooked smile. "Skipping?"

"No way princess!" Kurt said in an offended tone. "We are being sent to the kiddies today. We are in charge of seeing which ones are getting close to shifting."

"Which we are now running late for." Jamie grinned looking back at Kurt.

"s**t. Gotta run Lucy. Fill us in on the details later!" Kurt yelled as the two quickly jogged away.

"They are going to get yelled at." Lucy giggled, smiling up at Jasper. "Want to raid the kitchen for snacks?"

“Sure, snacks sound great but I’m on to you. You just want to be as close to Derek as you can.” Jasper gave her a wry smile and winked down at her. He watched her cheeks redden slightly. “You know... I can’t tell you how happy I am that you two are mates. You are both my favorite people and there is no better outcome than this.”

“I don’t think it could be more perfect either. I wish we could spend more time together... but I guess we have our whole future for that.” Lucy’s voice was soft as she stared at the house.

Jasper roughed her hair up. “Let’s see if those legs of yours are fully healed... race ya?”

“Oh you are on!”

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Lucy’s leg was still a bit tight from her injury. While her leg was healed the muscles still needed to be stretched out. Not that she could beat Jasper running anyways... at least not in this form. She never made a sound, but maybe her eyebrows furrowed slightly from the pain? She wasn’t sure but Jasper stopped abruptly in front of her. He turned to face her with a frown.

“How bad is it Lucy?” Jasper asked quietly.

“Not bad enough that I’d use it as an excuse for losing.” Lucy watched as he came closer to her. He then rested his forehead on her head and sighed.

“Lucy... will you promise me something?” Jasper whispered, staring into her eyes. Their foreheads were still touching.

She looked into his deep brown serious eyes as the wind played with his blonde hair. She looked at him confused. “What is it?”

“No more secrets with us? I promise to always tell you everything from now on if you promise to tell me everything. I don’t want you thinking I’m not your best friend because my cousin is Derek. You are just as important to me.” He winked as his lips curled upwards.

“You’ll tell me anything?”

“Yes. And if there is something I can’t say I will tell you it is something I am not permitted to talk about. That way I am never lying to you.”

“Likewise. That sounds reasonable. Okay... I promise.” Lucy smiled.

“I promise too.” Jasper lifted his head up and looked down at her. “Now that we got that out of the way... how does your leg really feel? The effects of the injection may still be affecting you.”

“Tricked.” Lucy said with a laugh. She should have known better. But still it was a relief to know he would tell her the truth. And she trusted him to do so. “It feels tight. Maybe a bit sore. It just needs to be worked out is all. The wound is healed but the muscles are stiff.” She could see the relief in his brown eyes and a faint smile reached his lips.

“Okay, good.” Jasper draped his arm around her shoulder. “Let’s go raid the fridge.”

Lucy walked next to Jasper’s side back to the house. They rummaged through the cabinets and fridge making a little smorgasbord of food. Then they headed to the couches and sat on the floor cross legged in front of each other. They were silly like that sometimes instead of sitting on the couches they chose the floor.

“Justice will fit in well with us. The four of us are going to always be best friends and soon you will officially be my family too.” Jasper said as he plopped a grape in his mouth.

“It probably won’t always be the four of us though.”

“You planning on getting pregnant right away?”

Lucy started coughing and quickly grabbed her cup downing the glass of water. She looked up to see Jasper smirking. “I was talking about you and Justice finding your mates.”

“Maybe Justice? The thing is Luce that vampires don’t usually find their fated mate this early in their lives. Look how long my dad had to wait? What happened in your case is rare... unheard of rare. It will be a while for me. But I don’t mind. I don’t need to settle down anytime soon... or want to for that matter. I don’t live my life the same way as your mate has. I enjoy the experiences. Most vampires do. What if it takes you centuries to find your mate? I can’t live like a monk until then. It is like our unspoken thing. Some of us even date and take on a companion but it is common knowledge that it is just passing the

time until our mate shows up. So yeah... it will be just the four of us for a while or when Justice finds his mate. Or until you pop some puppies out.”

Jasper then looked up at the ceiling. “What do you think they are talking about?”

“Knowing Aiden he is probably just giving him tips on how to ‘handle’ me. As if I come with a manual.” Lucy rolled her eyes.

Jasper chuckled. “They will get along well. Aiden loves you and just wants you taken care of. He wants your happiness more than he wants his own. He is a really good guy. He will make a great king.”

“I think so too. I hope he finds someone amazing to be by his side. I won’t accept anyone who isn’t. I’m stricter than he is. His mate will be amazing or I’ll beat the amazing into her.”

“You must be really relieved... I can’t imagine how you felt when you first met your mate and it wasn’t ‘Derek’.” Jasper watched her roll her eyes.

“I was so conflicted. I hated it. I hated that I would have to reject Ryan. I didn’t want to... but I couldn’t let down our two species.” A faint smile reached her lips. “I was a mixture of so many feelings after... our talk...” She said still keeping a sense of vagueness in the details just as a precaution. “But I would be lying if I didn’t say I wasn’t relieved. It was like a huge weight was lifted off of me. And for once... I was able to see happiness in my future.”

“You are always burying your feelings deep Lucy... I don’t like it. Don’t put yourself second even to your people. You deserve to seize your own happiness.” Jasper’s brown eyes fixed on Lucy’s. It worked out for her this time but from now on he wanted her to think about herself too.

“Hmmm... I think the same should go for you.” Lucy said, raising a challenging eyebrow up at him. “How often did you want to do or say something but didn’t? Because you were thinking about your sense of duty and not yourself.”

“Touché Lucy. Touché. We will work on it together then.”

“Good. Now... ready for the challenge?” Lucy said as she grabbed the bowl of grapes. “First one to miss has to drink one of Aiden’s power juices.”

“Eww sick. That stuff smells like the bottom of a troll’s foot.” Jasper said, scrunching up his face.

Lucy giggled. “I know. But he thinks it is going to help make him stronger...” She rolled her eyes. “Well?”

“Hope you enjoy troll feet.” Jasper chuckled and grabbed a couple grapes. “No unreasonable tosses either. You have to serve them up.”

“Alright, deal.”

—

“I’m glad we are on the same page. I just needed to know that she is more important to you than your own life. Because if she wasn’t then you didn’t deserve her.” Aiden stood up from the chair he was sitting in.

“There is no life without her. I’d rather be dead if she didn’t exist.” Derek’s amber eyes set onto Aiden’s. He was serious. Lucy came before everything.

“Lucy can be feisty, but she is also really forgiving. Apologize quickly and often to save you from staying in trouble.” Aiden laughed and rubbed the back of his neck. “That’s what I do.”

“Thank you for the tip. I have a feeling I may need it.” Derek laughed. “Of course, if we really are soul mates then once the marking happens that should save my butt.”

“I need a soul mate then. I think my mate will want to pull her hair out with me.” Aiden grinned widely. “Of course, after misunderstandings, there is always makeup s*x but that’s my sister and an off-topic subject.”

Derek chuckled. “I’m hoping the soul mate link will help avoid misunderstandings in the future.”

“You sure you don’t want to just get the marking done now?”

“Not like this. Not after just recovering from the vervain injection. But I’m hoping to soon. Either I’ll get the witch stuff sorted out now or I’ll arrange that I can leave for a couple of days. I’m not sure how my venom will affect Lucy. I want to be

able to stay with her afterwards. You both have pureblood in your system but also aren't exactly the same as me. It is weird, to be honest. You are an anomaly. Very interesting ones. It's never happened before from what my father has said."

"There is a lot that hasn't happened before with my family. We just tend to roll with the crazy." Aiden chuckled with a shrug. "I'll have to see what Lucy wants but I think we will head to the west dragon kingdom after the welcoming ceremony."

"I'll plan to come here and have your father open up a portal there. And hopefully, we won't have to be apart for long."

"Derek... I know that you may be a bit anxious being away from Lucy after what happened. But I assure you that won't happen again. Between me, Jasper and Justice Lucy will be on lockdown. She doesn't know it but I've already made some arrangements..." Aiden let a wicked smile spread across his lips. "Actually she is going to be quite angry... but it's her fault."

"Don't tell me. I don't want her thinking I had anything to do with whatever you have planned." Derek shook his head smiling.

"Yeah, you don't want this heat." Aiden chuckled. "Come on, let's get you back to Lucy." He walked over to the office door and opened it. The moment the soundproof door opened the sounds of laughter and loud squeals echoed into the room.

"CHEATER!" Lucy squealed.

"Sore loser, Lucy," Jasper smirked and rolled his shoulders arrogantly.

"You are such a cheater. No. Nuh-uh. That doesn't count. That was gross." Lucy squinted her eyes at Jasper and pouted. "You know some people would consider that an indirect kiss."

"You've drank out of my water bottle before, so same thing." Jasper said arrogantly.

"That is not the same thing Jasper and you know it! That is disgusting and not fair." Lucy stood up and started chucking grapes at him.

"Hey! You are going to have a mess to clean up." Jasper chuckled as he dodged her assaults.

"Mind telling me what is going on here?" Derek asked as Aiden came down to his side.

“Didn’t you hear? He tried to give your mate an indirect kiss.” Aiden grinned wickedly towards Jasper as mischief flashed over his eyes.

“Ryan... wait... I can see that look in your eyes.” Jasper chuckled nervously and took a retreating step backwards.

“We had a game going where you had to catch the grape in your mouth the other person threw. The loser had to drink one of Aiden’s stinky troll drinks.”

“HEY!” Aiden objected.

“Sorry, Aiden... anyways. Jasper put one of the grapes in his mouth first before he tossed it to me. Obviously, I wasn’t catching that in my mouth and now he is proclaiming himself as the winner!” Lucy said, pouting.

Derek pulled Lucy into his chest and glared at Jasper. “You wanted my mate to have YOUR spit in her mouth?”

“I knew she wouldn’t catch it. It was a certain victory. And the only rule was to serve it up.” Jasper smirked with a shrug.

“Yep, sorry Lucy you lost.” Aiden said, clicking his tongue.

“Ugh, I’m getting ganged up on. I can see this is going to be a swell time being surrounded by a bunch of man-boys.”

“I’ll get your juice for you Lucy.” Jasper trotted over to the fridge and pulled out a bottle of green looking liquid.

“You know Lucy, I can make him drink it instead.” Derek said with a cruel grin.

“She knew the stakes.” Jasper said, holding the bottle out to Lucy.

Derek snatched it from his hands and held it up to observe the liquid. He opened the lid and immediately winced from the scent. He turned and looked at Aiden. “You drink this on purpose?!”

“It’s my muscle building juice. It’s not that bad...” Aiden shrugged not knowing what the big deal was.

Derek looked down at Lucy and winked at her. “My mate isn’t to drink this stuff ever. And if I find out she has it will be your neck Jasper. But since a bet was made I’ll drink it for her.”

“No no no you don’t have to do that.” Lucy turned to stop him but he already quickly took it down.

“Yuck... what are you doing to yourself? This stuff is putrid.” Derek coughed and held that bottle out. He tossed it over to Jasper. “I blame you that something that vile is now poisoning my insides.”

Jasper grinned widely and shrugged. “The crazy things you do for love.”

“I can’t believe you drank that.” Lucy bit her bottom lip and looked up at him like he was about to die.

“Like Jasper said... the things you do for love.” He smiled at her warmly and leaned forward to kiss her forehead. “There will be no ganging up on you, at least not as far as Jasper is concerned.” He flashed a quick glance up at Jasper. “I’ll make sure of it.”

Lucy giggled. “It’s okay. They can try to gang up on me. But they will lose. They all know it.” She grinned widely. “I don’t always play fair...”

Derek smiled down at his little mate with adoration. He had had a lot of trials already in his life. But leaving her today would easily be the toughest thing yet. And the time away from her was going to be pure torture. It already hurt just thinking about it. He would make the most out of the rest of the time he had left with her today.