

The Vampires Promised Bride Chapter 36

“Wait... now? As in we are leaving now now?” Aiden said and ran his fingers through his hair.

“I promised we would head out today. Lucy’s mate wants her to be where it is safer.” Jasper watched as Wyatt and Freya walked over to them.

“We have made preparations for your departure.” Wyatt said with a small frown. Even though it was to keep his children safe he didn’t like not having them close. He would feel better when they were at least at the dragon kingdom.

Lucy walked down the stairs as she heard her father speak. “We are leaving, now?”

“Yes.” Freya said with a faint smile. “But we have made arrangements so that you will get to your destination safely.”

“Are you sending us out with a patrol?” Aiden asked.

“No with a dragon.” A deep voice boomed from the doorway.

Lucy turned her head to look at the voice. A towering sculpted young man with dark brown hair and hazel eyes leaned against the doorway with a small smirk playing on his face. It was Brian, the son of Titus and Lila the dragon king and queen of the west.

“Brian!” Lucy squealed happily and ran up to him. He lifted her up into his chest and hugged her. They were all really close. With their family having the black pearls they were able to visit each other all through childhood. And while technically he wasn’t blood related he was family. His father, Titus, was her aunt’s soul gemini twin. Really weird to explain but it was all concocted by the moon goddess. In either case, Brian was family to them and was treated like such.

“Luce Luce... I heard you found your mate... well that’s an interrogation for another time I guess.” Brian’s lips curled upwards as Aiden came and slapped him on the back.

“Brian, what are you doing here man?” Aiden had a wide grin on his face.

“A little slow piecing things together I see.” Brian chuckled. “I’m giving you three a lift. Safest way to travel besides the pearls.”

“Nice.” Jasper liked this idea a lot. “How are things going with the ladies?” Jasper also had built up a friendship with everyone Lucy was close to. Since he made it a point to visit often.

“I’m hoping I’ll find my girl at the next mating ceremony. Until then you know I’m just playing hard to get.” Brian winked with a chuckle.

Lucy openly rolled her eyes. These boys never played hard to get. That was their way of deflecting from not having girlfriends.

“When did you guys ask for Brian to come?” Lucy looked at her parents. Dragons were fast flyers but not that fast. Her parents just got back today so even sending a messenger immediately he couldn’t have been here already.

“We just did. We used the pearl to see if a dragon could escort you to the vampire kingdom. We either would need two dragons or one capable of carrying three people. Levi and Titus are working on this Wicker business but Brian immediately offered his services. So we brought him back with us.” Wyatt felt more at ease knowing they would be traveling by dragon.

“And I was out making sure some werewolf wasn’t the future woman of the house.” Brian said with a chuckle. “Alas, none are lucky enough as of now... so you guys ready to take flight?”

“I need to pack still.” Lucy said looking at Aiden who also nodded.

“Just pack the few things you need. We will have the rest taken directly to the dragon kingdom for your extended stay there.” Freya added as she watched her two children head up towards their rooms.

Only a few moments later both had returned, each carrying a bag. Wyatt and Freya took turns hugging their kids tightly.

“Take care of your sister. And don’t wander from the castles.” Wyatt said sternly to Aiden.

“Trust in yourself, Lucy. And please think before you act.” Freya kissed her daughter’s forehead and walked with them slowly outside.

“Don’t worry. It will be like camp. They will be safe and we will have a blast.” Jasper said, trying to lighten the mood. He then looked over at Brian. “Should we make him take a breathalyzer test or something? We don’t need a tipsy flyer.”

“I could fly you there blindfolded and half asleep. Plus, what are you implying, Jasper?” Brian quirked his brow up and gave him a half smile.

“Now you are a smart guy... I hardly need to explain myself.” A cheeky grin reached Jasper’s lips.

“Yep, read you loud and clear. You are afraid of heights.” Brian said with a chuckle.

“We will visit you. Try to just enjoy this time.” Freya said quietly to her two children.

“Don’t worry about us mom. We will be just fine. It’s you guys and the pack I am worried about.” Lucy hugged her mother tightly one last time as Brian shifted into his enormous dark red dragon.

“We will all be just fine here.” Wyatt patted Lucy on the head. “Be good Lucy. And keep your brother out of trouble.” He winked over at Aiden who snuffed out a blast of air from his nose. “Lucy... here.” He held out a small black object attached to a string. It was the fourth piece of the black pearl. “Use this to go to the dragon kingdom afterwards. With this, you are always connected to your family.”

“Thank you.” Lucy pursed her lips slightly as she stared at the object. Her link to her family.

She took a few steps backwards and then turned, taking Jasper’s hand as she climbed atop Brian’s back. Aiden took his spot beside her and soon they were lifted off into the air. Lucy stared down as her parents became smaller and smaller. She looked over the territory of the Diamond pack. And realized... this was it for her life there. She had thought she was going to have the whole summer to say goodbye but instead, last night was it. They were going from the vampire kingdom to the dragon kingdom. Once everything was settled Derek would be bringing her back to the vampire kingdom. The Diamond pack... was no longer her home.

She watched the land below her until it vanished from her sight and then turned forward to look ahead. She was now heading into the future and to where her new home was. She had been preparing her whole life for this moment... and yet there was a bitter sting about losing her pack. She was sure she would adjust to wherever she was at with Derek by her side. But he wouldn’t be there now. And she was going to have to keep up the pretense that the fill in ‘Ryan’ was her Derek.

Upon the fast wings of Brian, they entered the vampire kingdom in no time. Jasper pointed to an area behind the castle where they could land. It was all enclosed with tall walls with guards around the whole outside perimeter. Lucy had been here before but never saw an aerial view of the place. She never realized just how many soldiers were always very close by.

Jasper slid off of Brian first making sure that the soldiers were all able to see who it was. They immediately relaxed and returned to their posts. Aiden hopped off next and Jasper helped Lucy slide down.

“Thank you, Brian.” Lucy looked back at his colossal dragon. “Do you want me to open a portal for you to go back?”

“No, I prefer to stretch my wings some...” He looked at Lucy and Aiden and nodded his head. “This is where I leave you then. But I’ll be seeing you soon.” Brian flapped his wings creating gusts of dust around him as he lifted off into the sky.

“Well let’s get you two situated. I’ll have our rooms joined together while we are here. We actually have a suite that will work out well.” Jasper grabbed Lucy’s bag. “You are a double princess while you are here Lucy.” He talked as he led them into the castle. The guards bowed their heads respectfully and stood aside. “You are not just the werewolves’ princess but the vampires’ princess. The whole point of the welcoming party is to welcome our new princess and future queen.”

Lucy felt Aiden move protectively closer to Lucy. He hadn’t been here that much. And there was still a lack of trust when it came to his sweet sister. Jasper noticed this and smiled. “She is more special to us than you understand Aiden. She is very safe here.”

“Lucy.” A cool crisp voice said as a figure stepped out from a column. It was Ryan... the real Ryan who was pretending to be Derek while Derek is pretending to be Ryan. Who she had to pretend was her fiancé. He walked up to her and held his arms open for her to walk into. He waited expectantly for them to put on the public show for others.

She slowly obliged and internally cringed when his lips touched her forehead.

“I trust you had pleasant travels?”

Lucy nodded her head and watched him smile down at her.

“I am aware of everything that has been going on. While you are here you will stay with me.” Ryan said matter of factly.

Lucy's eyes widened and she took a small step backwards looking at Jasper.

"Um... I was going to be staying with my brother and-"

"No, Lucy. As my fiancé, you are expected and should be staying with me." Ryan glanced around the room briefly. "My chambers are the safest and as my fiancé, you shouldn't be sharing a room with anyone but me."

"My prince..." Jasper said with a smile that would have looked normal to anyone at a distance. But up close there was malice behind his smile and his eyes were piercing against Ryan. "I hardly think it is appropriate for her to stay in your room... with just you. I know of some who will not think it proper. Might even be a deadly decision..." He dropped his tone and fixed his dagger eyes on Ryan.

Derek will kill you if you lay next to his fiance. Jasper growled in his head.

She is safer with me. My orders are to keep her safe. She can have a bed to herself. But no one would ever be able to come near her in my room.

And like they could in mine?!

Why would my fiancé share a room with you? Don't you think this would cause unwanted rumors? No, she is staying with me.

Derek is not going to like this. Jasper scowled and grit his teeth. He outranked this man and was tempted to order him.

Jasper, we will talk later. As you know there are eyes and ears everywhere. Ryan cleared his throat. "My fiancé will be staying with me. Guards... see to it that her bag is brought to my room."

Lucy watched mortified as a man came and grabbed her bag from Jasper. She knew this guy just from when she met him as her fake fiancé. But she wasn't close with him. They were cordial with one another. And she was supposed to sleep in his room. She looked over at Jasper who gave her a reassuring smile. Though she could see he was struggling with this as well. She needed to fix this... publically.

“I have an idea.” Lucy said, beaming with a more loud childlike excitement. She wanted for those around to be able to hear her. “Let’s have a slumber party tonight. A way for the four of us to really get to know each other. It will be so much fun. We can swap stories and maybe roast marshmallows. I’d like for you and Aiden to become closer.” Lucy bit her lip and smiled. She watched as Jasper’s shoulders relaxed and Ryan’s lips curled upwards.

“Whatever you want my princess.” Ryan’s reply was polite and strangely warm. Much warmer than he had been with her before. “Okay, let’s all head to my room and get situated. Afterwards, we will join my parents for dinner.”

“Sounds great. I am starving.” Aiden chuckled, stepping closer to Lucy. He needed to act as friendly as possible here. He wasn’t just Lucy’s brother but the future king of the werewolves. He needed to do his best to portray them in a positive light. It would help other vampires relax.

Jasper looked at Lucy and gave her a small nod and smile. Thank goodness she was clever. This at least could get them all in Derek’s room which was well protected and of course soundproof. Then he could really talk with Ryan. No matter how trusted Ryan was Derek would probably gut him for sleeping in the same room as his mate. And Ryan would know this. So he must have a very good reason for insisting on it. He could even see how relieved he looked at Lucy’s loud proposition. She didn’t realize it but she probably saved him too.

They walked down the halls and past the guards through two restricted areas before they finally reached Derek’s room.

“After you my dear.” Ryan said calmly, allowing for Lucy to step inside of the room.

Once they were all inside and the door had closed Jasper turned looking at Ryan. “Okay... what is this all about?”

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Ryan went and plopped down on a chair and unbuttoned the top of his shirt. “Maaaaan I can’t wait to be me again.” He chuckled and relaxed into the cushions.

Lucy had NEVER seen him act like this before. She wondered what the real Ryan was actually like.

“Oh gosh Ryan it isn’t that hard. Your hardest part was hiding who you were from Lucy.” Jasper rolled his eyes and motioned for Lucy and Aiden to take a seat of their own.

“Yeah, sorry about all that Lucy. I’m so devastatingly handsome that if I treated you like the princess you deserve to be treated like you would have madly fallen in love with me. I hope we can start fresh from here on out.”

Lucy raised her eyes at him and plopped onto the sofa between Jasper and Aiden. “I see. A poor fragile girl like me just would have buckled under the pressure of your charm. I’m so lucky to have such considerate and capable men around me. I’d be absolutely lost.”

Ryan chuckled. “Oh I like the real Lucy much much better. The Lucy not trying to keep up pretenses.”

“Anyways Ryan.” Jasper said changing the topic. “What is going on? Do you have a death wish? Derek hears you slept with Lucy in the same room you know what will happen.”

“His hyper jealous mode will kick in and he will bury me in pieces on every corner of our territory? Yeah, I know. The thing is... there has been gossiping and talk lately. Rumors are getting out that the relationship between the prince and princess is strained. People are getting anxious that it isn’t a solid treaty. If the prince and princess can’t get along...”

“Then how can the two species get along.” Aiden said, nodding his head.

Lucy looked over at Aiden in shock. For once he was keeping up with the conversation. Which meant what she always suspected... he never paid attention.

“Anyways... Lucy and I need to act close. We should act like a couple excited to be together. Now that there won’t be any misunderstandings we should be able to pull this off without Lucy falling in love with me.” Ryan chuckled as Lucy rolled her eyes.

“You think a lot about yourself don’t you?” Lucy said with a crooked smile.

“I can’t help it. I mean... look at me. Look at this body?! And I’ve had to live like a monk practically to protect the prince’s reputation. After this is all over I am going to go crazy. I’ll let the women feast upon my body until they can satisfy their hunger... if that is even possible.”

Lucy looked over at Jasper. “Is he serious?”

“This is going to be a crowded room. There isn’t much room for anyone else with his ego.” Jasper said, rubbing his forehead.

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It was very obvious to Lucy just how much he was holding his real personality back. He was always so quiet and reserved with her. And it was a bit weird at first seeing him as the guy she had known as Derek. The man she was originally picturing as her fiancé. And now... he was not that guy at all. In more ways than one. And... she liked him. He reminded her of a mixture of the guys she was always around... with maybe some extra ego.

“Wow, I can see Justice and Ryan actually getting along quite well.” Aiden said, almost seeming to read Lucy’s mind.

Lucy giggled. “Yeah, I think so too.”

“Justice?” Ryan asked, quirking his brow.

“That’s her cousin. He will be joining her here as her new guardian.” Jasper watched as Ryan’s brows furrowed.

“There is no need for anyone else to be here for her. That is the point of the elite soldiers.”

“Derek already knows and is for it. Lucy is a special case... in either case, he will be joining us.” Jasper answered pointedly.

“Whatever, that could only lead to more me time and goddess knows I need it.” Ryan sat up and leaned his elbows on his knees while he looked at Lucy. “Are you up for what we have to do? I mean I don’t think it should be too hard to act interested in me... but...”

“I guess we didn’t do a good enough job before or the rumors wouldn’t have started circulating... But that is still on all you guys being morons. Not well thought out at all. Had I known we could have put on a better show.” Lucy clicked her tongue in annoyance.

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Lucy rolled her eyes. "I'll try to contain myself."

Ryan's eyes turned serious as he pushed aside his fun demeanor. "Lucy, it is very important that we do a good job here. All joking aside... can you look at me as you would your mate?"

Her eyes widened slightly. She could see the determination behind his amber eyes. His dedication to his role was evident. And she rationalized for him to be hiding his true self this whole time he must really take his job seriously. Next to Jasper, she supposed he was Derek's most trusted man.

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"Mira," Jasper said simply.

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"Um.. who is Mira?" Lucy asked, glancing at Aiden.

"Mira is the royal family's banshee. She is bound to their family and is unbreakably loyal. She can't ever betray them. It is hard to explain... but she is bound to the royal bloodline for all eternity. It is the price she had to pay for the sins she committed against them a long long time ago. Now she is harmless. Well to them. Banshees are hardly harmless. She is a fierce and dangerous guard dog. But she will be our ticket. Having her in the room at night will spare my neck. She would never lie to the royal family... she can't. And as Derek's fiancé, she will be bound to protect you as well. It is actually quite perfect. Good thinking Jasper." Ryan sighed with relief.

"I have never seen this Mira..." Lucy said as she tried to ponder about it.

“She keeps out of sight so no one knows where she is. She can move through walls except for the royal walls. She must be invited inside those rooms. But because of her abilities, no one knows where she is or what she could overhear. She has warned the royal family time and time again of things taking place that she felt they should be aware of.” Ryan grinned. “And when she doesn’t think they need to know... she deals with it herself.” He made a motion of a knife going across the throat.

“For now let her be. We can ask her later how people are responding to you and Lucy.” Jasper stood up from the couch and reached his hand out to Lucy pulling her up next to him. Ryan and Aiden both followed suit. “You will of course recognize the king and queen... just Uncle Alaric and Aunt Willa to me. My parents, Jester and Irene will be there as well. But there are always noble families who are rotated for the dinners. It is a way to keep connected. These will be the people you will be needing to fool first.”

“Yeah, and one of the nobles this week is Lady Camille... sooo...” Ryan said with disgust.

Lucy arched her brow up for someone to further explain.

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“Is there any danger here to my sister? That’s what I want to know the most.” Aiden finally spoke up. He wasn’t interested in how Lucy had to play house. He wanted to get to the real reason he was staying by Lucy’s side.

“None. The prince’s bride is priceless. Especially among the noble families.” Jasper was absolute in how he spoke.

“But that doesn’t mean women won’t be vying to be the next mistress or two.” Ryan shrugged and looked at Lucy’s darkening eyes.

“There will be no mistress. Anyone who touches what is mine will not live to see another day.” Lucy’s voice was chilled and cold.

“Oh look, she sounds just like Derek. That was basically his warning to me about touching you.” Ryan chuckled and rubbed the back of his head. “Guess you two are perfect for each other.”

“When did Derek talk to you? I’m confused about all of that to be honest.” Aiden looked at Lucy and could see she was now curious about it as well.

“That would be....” Jasper said quietly, looking away a bit.

“What is it?” Aiden asked, feeling something big was being kept from them.

“Like the banshee who is bound to the family, there is also another servant who is bound to them. It is their more recent servant. In order to spare his soul... his soul made a deal with the vampires. It would bind itself to them as their loyal servant.” Ryan looked up at Jasper. This was something he wasn’t supposed to talk about.

“Look... this is a conversation for another time I think.” Jasper said with a frown. “Basically they have a servant who can appear when called for. And that is how Ryan here knew what was going on. The servant delivered messages to him.”

“Why do I feel like you are hiding something big from me?” Lucy frowned and could tell by Jasper’s eyes that it was because he was.

“Not today Lucy. Today the focus is about you pretending to be mated to Ryan... our known Derek here.” Jasper looked at her and then gave her a small smile. “It’s a long talk for another time, okay?”

“Alright... I don’t know what the big deal is but okay.” Lucy couldn’t understand why this was such a big secret. So they had another servant bound to them like the banshee Mira. Why was that a secret?

“Okay Lucy.” Ryan said and opened his arms to her. He watched her look at him like he was poison. “Can you do this or not, sweetheart? You need to be engulfed in my scent, my dear. It doesn’t look well for you to smell more of Jasper than me... your mate.” Then Ryan looked at Jasper and he frowned. “So... should we just get like a rag or should I lick her neck?”

“Lick my neck? Can’t you just rub your arms on me?” Lucy was mortified. What was he talking about?

“Why wouldn’t my mate have the scent of my saliva on her? It is different from my skin scent. You should be wearing it and I should be wearing yours. So how do you want to swap spit?” Ryan smirked and tilted his head down at her.

Oh, he was having too much fun with this. The idea of having his saliva on her skin was repulsive. She hoped they had bleach here because she was going to be bathing in it.

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“Look... this is a conversation for another time I think.” Jasper said with a frown. “Basically they have a servant who can appear when called for. And that is how Ryan here knew what was going on. The servant delivered messages to him.”

“Why do I feel like you are hiding something big from me?” Lucy frowned and could tell by Jasper’s eyes that it was because he was.

“Not today Lucy. Today the focus is about you pretending to be mated to Ryan... our known Derek here.” Jasper looked at her and then gave her a small smile. “It’s a long talk for another time, okay?”

“Alright... I don’t know what the big deal is but okay.” Lucy couldn’t understand why this was such a big secret. So they had another servant bound to them like the banshee Mira. Why was that a secret?

“Okay Lucy.” Ryan said and opened his arms to her. He watched her look at him like he was poison. “Can you do this or not, sweetheart? You need to be engulfed in my scent, my dear. It doesn’t look well for you to smell more of Jasper than me... your mate.” Then Ryan looked at Jasper and he frowned. “So... should we just get like a rag or should I lick her neck?”

“Lick my neck? Can’t you just rub your arms on me?” Lucy was mortified. What was he talking about?

“Why wouldn’t my mate have the scent of my saliva on her? It is different from my skin scent. You should be wearing it and I should be wearing yours. So how do you want to swap spit?” Ryan smirked and tilted his head down at her.

Oh, he was having too much fun with this. The idea of having his saliva on her skin was repulsive. She hoped they had bleach here because she was going to be bathing in it.

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“You touch her neck with those lips and I will kill you myself.” Jasper said in a low growl. He walked to the bathroom and came back with two rags. He handed one to Lucy and one to Ryan. “Here. Spit in these.”

“This is gross,” Lucy said, frowning as Aiden chuckled beside her.

“You can’t be upsetting the vampires’ Lucy...” Aiden then looked up at Ryan and Jasper. “I know vampires are big on scents like wolves are.” He watched them both nod. “Well some of us wolves can tell... after a wolf... you know...” He looked over at Lucy and watched her eyes widen. “So I am assuming you guys can tell that too, right?”

“Not until after the marriage would it become questionable. Vampires can be very traditional in a sense especially because some of them have been around for a very very long time. It isn’t something we have to worry about right now. But even back then a heavy makeout session would not have been avoided. Especially after two lovers were reunited again after being apart...” Jasper looked at Lucy apologetically.

“Well if I hurry and take a shower right now...”

“And be late for dinner? Haha no no no you can’t be doing that princess.” Ryan chuckled. “It’s not like I want to wear your spit either... especially if it is getting transferred by a rag. Where is the fun there.” He listened to Jasper and Aiden’s growl and held his hands up. “I’m just joking and having some fun. Come on. I value my life too much.”

“Will the rag work though?” Aiden asked with a frown. “I mean the scent of a wet cloth mixed with spit is what I smell from your cloth Ryan.”

Jasper frowned. “s**t, you’re right.”

“Can’t we just say he isn’t the real Derek?” Lucy laughed nervously as all eyes rested on her.

“Derek is going to kill me... wait I can lick my hand and rub it on her. That will work. Right? Please... if my tongue touches her skin Derek will chop it off. I know he will. And I am going to need this tongue to show the ladies my magic.”

“Ryan, stop talking. Yes. The hand should work.” Jasper looked up at Aiden who also nodded. “Lucy?”

“Gosh this is just gross.” Lucy licked her hand and walked into Ryan. He lowered himself down and smiled at Lucy.

“Claim me Lucy.” Ryan chuckled.

She rolled her eyes. Another man-boy for the list.

“Brush it on his neck on both sides and again on his cheeks and lightly around his lips.” Jasper instructed.

“What? It’s the scent you need right? Why do I have to have an exact location?” Lucy asked but could see a weird look in Jasper’s eyes.

“Just do it Lucy.” Jasper instructed.

“Sorry about this...” Lucy said and then did as she was instructed.

“Well that was good for me, you?” Ryan said with a chuckle. “Okay, your turn.”

“Just her neck and cheeks Ryan,” Jasper said, fixing his eyes on Ryan. “Lucy is right, we don’t really need the spit around the mouth.”

Ryan chuckled and shook his head. He watched as Lucy closed her eyes tight. "Sorry, Lucy..." He knew she wasn't going to like this. And despite how he treated her and acted cold he actually liked her a lot. She was his future queen and he wanted to be on good terms with her. He licked his fingers and brushed some of his saliva over her neck then her cheeks. He then pulled her deep into his embrace. He felt her body tense as he gripped her head leaning it into his body. "Sorry again for this. I just need to make sure my scent is all over you." He then pulled her back from him and stepped away. "Well?" He looked at Aiden and Jasper.

"Once more but make sure you rub your arms on her and Lucy do the same to him." Jasper said.

Lucy sighed and did as instructed.

"I know it will be hard to think of another man after touching this body but you'll have to try to resist." Ryan teased and looked up at Aiden and Jasper. "Good now?"

"Yes, that is sufficient. If I didn't know any better and came in as an outsider I would assume immediately you two were hooking up." Aiden looked over at Jasper who also nodded in agreement. Lucy and Aiden had an intense sense of smell. While other werewolves would need to get close to smell another's scent they could pick it up from feet away... sometimes even from across the room. And some vampires were like this as well, like Jasper. He had an incredible sense of smell. And he knew there were others like Jasper with their sense of smell. It was best to be thorough.

"Alright, ready for showtime?" Ryan smiled at Lucy and held his arm out for her to walk into.

It went against her instincts. Her whole body screamed to get his scent off of her. But she was doing this for Derek and his people... her people. She could do it. She just needed to think of Derek. She walked into Ryan's arm and he pulled her into his side, walking her out the door.

Ryan tightened his grip around Lucy as they neared the dining room. He glanced back at Jasper with a scowl almost. Lucy didn't know what was wrong but she could tell they were mentally communicating about something.

"Lucy, after this I'll have to give you a tour of my bathroom. It has a wonderful spa in there where I can help you freshen up after dinner." Ryan winked down at Lucy as they walked into the room.

Lucy wanted to hide as all eyes were on her and with their vampire hearing heard what Ryan had just said. Which she knew was the point but it wasn't any less embarrassing. Some of the people chuckled, some eyed her curiously, while another seemed to be studying her. Then there were two women who seemed to be shooting daggers at her with their eyes. Camille and Pamala she presumed.

"Everyone, this is my precious fiancé Lucy. She will be staying with us until after the welcoming ceremony and shortly after will be moving in as my adorable bride." Ryan tugged her lovingly into him more and brushed his lips over her head.

Even though Lucy wanted to rip his lips off his body she instead tilted her head up to him. She smiled as she looked at him with fake adoration. He winked down at her pleased with her reaction before turning his attention to Aiden behind them.

"This here is the prince of the werewolves. He is here as our honored guest and as an escort to his sister. I expect everyone to treat him with the respect you would treat me. And of course, you all know Jasper." Ryan motioned for Aiden and Jasper to each take their seats while Ryan led Lucy towards two empty spots next to the king and queen.

"Lucy dear, so good to see you again." The queen, Willa, said with a friendly smile. "I'm glad you'll be staying with us for a little bit. It will help make the adjustment easier."

"I'm excited to be here as well. Derek has promised to show me around too and I am excited about that." Lucy batted her eyelashes up at Ryan with a sweet smile.

"Whatever my Lucy wants she gets." Ryan wrapped his arm around Lucy's shoulders.

"Lucy." A sweet-sounding delicate voice said from a few seats down across the table.

Lucy felt Ryan's grip on her tighten as he glared at the girl with lethal eyes. She could tell there was some history there that she didn't know about. Even the girl met with Ryan's eyes defiantly.

"It must have been hard this whole time being away from your betrothed. I'm sure this isn't the most ideal situation for you."

Lucy met her brown eyes and smiled. "I'm sorry... I'm afraid I don't know your name..."

“Amanda.” The girl replied smiling.

“Amanda, yes being away from Derek is very hard. He’s my person after all. What wasn’t ideal was having to live apart this long... after all who wants to live apart from the person you love.” Lucy could see the girl’s eyes almost bulge open. Meanwhile, there were soft murmurs of awes and nodding their heads in approval of what Lucy had said. Ryan rubbed her shoulder and smiled down at her. She must have answered appropriately. But she answered honestly so it was easy. She was talking about her Derek, not imposter Derek.

“Oh wow... I didn’t realize. I mean I just thought it was a marriage of convenience so who could have hoped for love. That’s... amazing. Almost too good to be true.” Amanda’s voice sounded almost poisonous as her eyes darkened looking at Ryan.

“No, what is too good to be true is that Lucy and Derek are fated mates.” Jasper spoke up loud and clear and took a sip of his drink. The people around the table began to quietly discuss this shocking news that they hadn’t heard about before.

Amanda’s eyes darted between Lucy and Ryan. So did another young lady who was sitting further down. That young lady was holding a glass in her hand and gripped it tightly with the news of them being fated mates. Too tight since the glass shattered in her hands making everyone turn to look at her.

“Camille, are you all right?” Her mother Pamala asked.

“Sorry, I’m a bit clumsy... I was going to propose a toast to our new fated couple.” Camille smiled sheepishly trying to recover. Everyone seemed to nod their heads in understanding.

After that incident, the food arrived and everyone ate fairly quietly. A few whispers here and there about normal gossip. Anything juicy would have been mind-linked not wanting to offend the royal family. After dinner, Lucy was surrounded by a group of women including Camille and Amanda. Ryan was talking with a group of men on the other side of the room with Aiden and Jasper. While the king and queen were chatting with some other prominent guests.

“So... you must have had other boyfriends. How do they compare with the prince?” Amanda asked with her venomous smile.

Okay, Lucy was getting the mad jealousy vibe from this girl. She wondered what her deal was? Did she have a crush on Ryan or was she also after his position?

“No... I have been betrothed since birth. There was never anyone else but Derek.” Lucy watched as Amanda’s eyes flickered slightly.

“Oh wow. That is amazing. Well as long as you don’t hold it from our prince for maybe have a fling here and there. I mean, after all, he is a young vampire male and those urges are hard to control.” Amanda’s lips curled up maliciously. Her toxic smile stayed on her face as she batted her eyelashes.

Lucy could see she was trying to allude to Ryan having partners. Like she cared. She honestly didn’t care who Ryan saw since he was not her Derek. But how should she respond here? She remembered the idea of a mistress wasn’t completely unheard of... so she needed to at least squash that now.

“What matters to me now is that Derek is mine. And I don’t share what is mine... even if it is his idea... the penalty for cheating on me is death.” Lucy raised her eyebrows and smiled. “I can’t go and kill the prince so any woman who touches him will face this punishment. I hope the women here are smart enough to stay away from him or the population will soon be dwindling.” She smirked slightly as she watched Camille’s mouth drop open in shock. So much for her thinking, she could be a mistress. She soon felt arms slide around her waist... and she had to force herself to relax into his touch.

Ryan leaned his head down into Lucy’s neck inhaling her scent and pulled her back into his front. He let his nose drag over the side of her face before he left a small kiss on the top of her head.

“It’s only you Lucy. There will never be anyone in the royal chambers but you.” Ryan said glancing up to the woman in front of them. He could see Amanda’s face getting red from how intimate he was acting with Lucy. And he nuzzled his nose into her head once more.

Lucy tilted her head up and smiled at him. “Of course it will be only me in there. After all... just because I can’t kill the prince doesn’t mean that I wouldn’t make him suffer in the most excruciating ways possible.” She batted her eyes innocently up at him as his lips curled upwards in a Cheshire cat grin.

“See this is why you are perfect.” Ryan chuckled. Amanda snorted air out from her nose making those around them turn their eyes to her. Ryan’s eyes darkened as he glared at her.

“Oh forgive me. I am just shocked is all. I never heard his highness speak like this about his fiancé before. I never knew he felt this way about you.” Amanda’s sickening sweet smile curled upwards as she batted her own eyelashes towards Ryan.

This Amanda wasn't being subtle at all and she wasn't trying. She was trying to let Lucy know that 'Derek' had been talking and hanging around her. Enough that they had talked on a personal and more than likely an intimate level. But it wasn't her Derek... it was Ryan. Still, she was annoyed at Ryan because he was responsible for maintaining Derek's image. Lucy narrowed her eyes at the girl. This had to get shut down before rumors spread.

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Lucy's eyes returned to her serene green and she plastered a smile over her face.

"You know Amanda... we can be friends if you want... But if you would rather instigate a problem I am happy to put you in your place as well." Lucy started pushing her aura from her body. It was just supposed to be some minor pressure to show Amanda her strength. But Lucy didn't count on one thing... that she was also now recognized as the fairy princess. It wasn't just her lycan strength pushing forward but her fairy aura radiated invisibly around her. It was enough to make Amanda and Camille wince and take a small step backwards.

"Lucy." Ryan's hot breath whispered over her ear. She felt him squeeze her body deeper into his chest and could feel small vibrations on her back from his laughter. "This side of you makes me even hotter for you."

Yeah... that shut her down. Gross. She knew they had to pretend but that made her body shudder and not in a good way. She took in a deep calming breath and met with Amanda's eyes. "Please don't say things in an insinuating way about my mate. It isn't a wise or a healthy thing to talk about... in more ways than one."

"Forgive me. I was too forward." Amanda said with a small curtsy.

"Nothing to worry about. I just hope that is something you have kept to yourself... for your sake." Lucy didn't like this person but she supposed she must be important in the vampire kingdom. She guessed she couldn't completely blame her if Ryan was maybe fooling around with her. She probably felt wounded now. Something she would need to discuss in detail with Ryan later. A dark powerful aura soon hit Lucy and she was shocked as she turned to see the source.

"Lucy... is everything okay?" Jasper's dark eyes were locked onto Amanda and Camile.

“Everything is fine.” Lucy watched as the two women began to tremble slightly at the sign of Jasper’s anger. More so than when she was asserting her aura. There was a real fear of Jasper and all he had were darkened eyes. She looked up at Jasper curiously... what kind of person was he here to elicit that much fear? “We still on for roasting marshmallows tonight?”

Jasper turned his gaze from the two women. His eyes were back to his gentle brown and a small smile rose on his face. “Wouldn’t miss it.”

“Will you roast my marshmallows for me?” Lucy said with a grin.

“Lucy Locke, you can roast your own marshmallows.” Jasper shook his head smiling. She was always trying to get him to roast her marshmallows because she lacked the patience to cook them how she liked them.

“But Jasper... I can’t cook them like you can. I need that yummy crispy golden cover where the marshmallows are crispy and all melted in the middle.” Lucy pouted, sticking her lip out playfully.

“I’ll cook them for you, Lucy.” Ryan said, rubbing her arm slightly. “Let me show you some real roasting skills.”

She giggled and turned her head up to him. “If you think you can do a better job...”

“Oh I know I can.” He winked at her and met his eyes with the women in front of him. “Well if you will excuse us, I haven’t seen my mate for a while. And we have a lot to catch up on.” He turned and looked at Jasper. “You and Aiden planning on joining us later?”

“Later?” Jasper said, raising his eyes curiously to Ryan. “I thought the plan-”

“To hang out later tonight? Yep, that’s still on. I’m going to take Lucy back and let her get freshened up now. Then we will see you guys in about an hour?” Ryan didn’t give Jasper a moment to respond as he tugged Lucy away with him.

Lucy could see her brother’s eyes shoot up towards her.

Lucy...

I'm okay Aiden. Do your political thing. I'll see you soon. She could see the minor annoyance in her brother's eyes as she was pulled out of the room.

When Ryan shut the door to his bedroom she stepped away from him and looked at him curiously. This wasn't what they had talked about. So why was he changing it up now.

"Shit... Okay Lucy... let me explain about Amanda."

Oh... so that's why. She could see the real fear in his eyes as he looked at her. She lifted her hand and waved him off.

"You aren't mine Ryan. I don't need to know the details of what you did. The only problem here is that it is my mate's name you are playing with. And you should have been more careful." She rubbed her forehead and sighed slightly. "It should be fine now. After what I just did to her I don't think we have to worry about her talking anymore."

Ryan chuckled. "That was intense princess and impressive. I never realized how strong you were. Though you shouldn't go all out like that-"

"I didn't..." Lucy said quickly. She looked up at Ryan's shocked face. "I only pushed a small fraction forward... it just ended up being more intense than I thought. With my increased fairy magic, it seems like even a small push of my aura is strong."

"That's very impressive Lucy." Ryan nodded his head in approval. "You are going to be a powerful asset to the vampires." He rubbed the back of his neck and looked away. "Thanks... for, you know... Jasper won't exactly go easy on me over something like this."

"Don't worry. I'm not mad and I'll deal with Jasper. What you have been doing isn't fair to you either... You are a young guy and shouldn't have to act tied down... almost free, right?"

He grinned widely and nodded. "I'm really glad you are going to be my future queen. I promise as long as I am around I will always be your person. I'll always have your back."

Lucy smiled at him. "I never doubted your loyalties. I figured for you to be in this position you must be someone Derek trusts a lot."

He smiled. "What I meant was... I'll always have your back, Lucy. You as in you, not you as in you and Derek. I just wanted you to know you can also trust me. And if you ever need anything I'll help you, however, I can."

"Thank you... that means a lot to me actually. It seems like I may have irritated some of your nobility, huh?" Lucy bit her bottom lip and smiled slightly.

"Don't worry about it. Amanda needed to be put in her place; she was purposely trying to instigate trouble. She knows how important this treaty is and even still she went there. I need to set her straight and-"

"No." Lucy's voice rang firm as she met with Ryan's amber eyes. "It is best for you to avoid her at all costs. We can't afford any more rumors or accidents... After Derek is back then you can have your chat with her and let her know how stupid she was being. Then she can know you as Ryan and whatever happens then can happen."

"No, I'm done with Amanda. Nothing else will happen there. I can't ever even entertain someone who would risk putting a wedge in the treaty. What if you had reacted differently? She wanted you to call it off." Ryan shook his head angrily. "But I understand what you are saying. We do not want any more misunderstandings to spread in secret. So I will not see her privately at all."

Lucy smiled. "So you wanted to talk about this without Jasper around because you were afraid of his reaction?" She giggled and looked at him curiously. "It seems Jasper has a bit of a reputation here, doesn't he? The way those women looked and acted... there was real fear in their eyes."

His eyes looked at Lucy. "Jasper isn't just a strong vampire... he is lethal. And he is the prince's right hand man. NO ONE could even insult the prince without him acting. And I am not just talking about rebuking. There is a darkness to his temper. One that you don't want to know. There are two things in the world that have brought this darkness forward..." His gaze held with Lucy's green eyes. "Derek... and you, Lucy."

Lucy remembered Derek saying something similar back at the cave. He said Jasper had a hard time controlling his temper when it came to who he considered precious. But she didn't really understand what he meant then... and she doesn't quite get it now.

"So he is just really protective?" Lucy was trying to understand this deeper. Aiden and Justice were protective over her too. So what was the difference?

“He almost can’t control himself, Lucy. It is like his emotions take over...” Ryan sighed. “You might as well know... Jasper is so invested in you and Derek that it isn’t a matter of if he will kill for you but when. Someone will cross the line and heaven help them when they do. He isn’t merciful. How he is with you... that is special. Jasper is a killer, a well-trained assassin. If someone does something to upset you...” He looked at Lucy with a frown. “I don’t know if he can control his rage...” He shook his head. “He can’t control his rage.”

“Well if I am there-”

“Lucy, Jasper would never hurt you. But even if you are there I don’t know if you can reach him when the darkness takes over. Derek has had to physically hold him back at times. It is almost like... he blanks out and just reacts.” Ryan chuckled nervously. “That’s why you saw the reactions you did in there and that’s why-“

“Why you talked to me about this privately first.” Lucy whispered out quietly. It was hard for her to picture Jasper in this light. She had seen how quickly his eyes change colors when it came to her but he never seemed unmanageable.

“This isn’t just a Jasper thing though. His father, Jester, was like this as well. Anytime anyone did anything towards his brother he immediately took care of it. It was like he couldn’t help himself. It was the reason he left for as long as he did. He knew he was making things harder on his brother. And that was one person he couldn’t bear to hurt. And somehow he has learned to control his demons better. I don’t know the details but he doesn’t react like that anymore. Maybe it just took him time to learn to adjust? Or it is something else...”

“If it was time...that took him a very long time, right? Like hundreds of years...” Lucy’s eyes were wide and she felt her chest humming. What if Jasper decided he had no choice but to leave because of his temper. No. She wouldn’t allow it. She would figure out a way. If she had to subdue Jasper herself she would. He was never leaving like Jester did.

Lucy went to take a shower as she thought about what Ryan had told her about Jasper. It was weird for him to lose himself so much to almost blank out. Like the rage was controlling him and taking over having a subconscious of its own. It sounded like her father’s blood potion situation only reversed. It was in a protective way. She felt her chest hurt for Jasper. What an incredible burden he must be carrying and he never talked to her about it. He should have told her about it. Was he afraid she would look at him differently? She would never. He shouldn’t carry this burden alone. Yes, Derek knew about it but she should too since she was also the cause of his dark anger.

What was the best way to combat darkness? Yes... it was light. And she didn't have just an ordinary light now... she was a fairy princess. A very special and unique light to the world. She stepped out of the shower and decided... she would find a way to help Jasper. She wouldn't know exactly the extent of it until she actually saw him in action which she hoped she never would. But according to Ryan, it would definitely happen at some point. And when it did she would watch his energy and see what exactly she was dealing with.

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As Lucy finished getting dressed she heard yelling from outside of the room. She heard Jasper's sharp voice and she quickly opened the door. She looked into the room to see Jasper growling in Ryan's face. Aiden had his hand on Jasper's shoulders trying to calm him down.

"What is going on?!" Lucy said angrily as she stormed over towards the guys.

"I want to know what that crap with Amanda was about?!" Jasper snarled again as Ryan looked away avoiding eye contact with him.

"Ryan and I already talked about it, Jasper. It's all worked out. So no need to shout. We can talk about it civilly." Lucy watched as Jasper's gaze stayed focused on Ryan. She cleared her throat and gave Jasper a wry smile. "That part was said as your friend... Do I need to give you an order as your princess?" That did it. She watched Jasper's eyes return to normal as a wide smile spread over his lips.

"You going to start ordering me around princess?" Jasper chuckled with a wide grin on his face.

"It might be fun, yes? Though I would much prefer you listen to me as your best friend, right? Of course... I don't know if you deserve best friend status after the crap you pulled." Lucy watched his face go from angry, happy to now that of a wounded puppy. It seemed like his emotions were more connected to her than just anger.

"Lucy I..." Jasper started but she held her hand out and grabbed his hand.

"Jasper, see? Even you made a mistake, right? And I am not going to punish you for it. You are my closest and dearest friend even if you do screw up sometimes." Lucy smiled. "So have a seat and we will talk about this whole Amanda issue."

Aiden chuckled and plopped down on the couch. “Better do what mom says or you’re going to get hurt.”

Jasper smiled. “Alright, Lucy. I’m calm. You can let go of my hand now.”

Lucy pulled him over to the couch and kept holding on to his hand. “No, I don’t think I will. If you don’t control your emotions then I plan on breaking your fingers.”

Ryan busted out laughing. “You are way more interesting Lucy than I ever imagined. Derek is getting a fun one, for sure.”

“You’d really break my fingers?” Jasper gave her a wry smile.

“Would you care to put it to the test?” She challenged back and listened to Jasper chuckling beside her. She was just doing some minor tests of her own now. The hand connection wasn’t to break his fingers... though she felt like it was an extremely clever idea. But what she was doing was trying to feel his energy. She was hoping she would notice something different when he got agitated. Something she could use as a sign in the future.

She looked up at Ryan and smiled. “So we don’t need the details... as I have already told Ryan. He isn’t my Derek so I don’t care what he does. He made a mistake since his face is the prince’s face. It is something that isn’t going to happen again. And I don’t think we will have to worry about Amanda saying anything anymore either. Not after I made my stance clear and after she saw you...” Lucy looked up at Jasper tilting her head to the side with a faint smile. She could see the shades of his eyes going from brown to dark to dark brown. She couldn’t feel anything different in his energy level but he was definitely trying to control his anger.

Jasper’s eyes were fixed onto Ryans. “Do you realize what could have happened here? What if Lucy hadn’t met the real Derek? The implications alone... and the rumors?! Damnit Ryan.” His tone was growing lethal as he grit his teeth.

“I’m really sorry. I have no excuse. I drank too much and-”

“Like I said we don’t need details Ryan.” Lucy pinched Jasper’s hand directing his attention to her. His eyes turned back to his golden brown and she smiled at him. “And I told you I already handled this, right? Now would be a good time for you to decide where exactly you are ranking me at here. Am I still the werewolf princess where this isn’t my business? Or am I your prince’s mate and your vampire princess?”

“Yeah but Lucy...”

“No buts Jasper. I let him off the hook. He understands and is sorry. We aren’t going to rehash it and dwell on it. We are moving forward fresh. Now... who is roasting me my marshmallows.” Lucy watched as Jasper relaxed. He never seemed out of control there and she never noticed anything different. She would have to witness one of these dark moments herself in order to assess it better. But for now, he was just Jasper, the guy who was like a brother to her.

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Time was going fast, surprisingly, and all too soon the day of the celebration was upon them. Lucy really missed Derek but she was kept fairly busy. She was able to meet the banshee, Mira, who always joined her at night. It was a way for her to be able to stay in the royal chambers that wouldn’t be inappropriate. She took the bed while Ryan stayed on the couch.

To Lucy’s surprise, she found that banshee’s belonged to the fairy family. Mira instantly took to her as the fairy princess and prince’s future bride. She got the feeling that something was being kept a secret from her but she couldn’t figure out what it was. And Jasper... he never had any black-out anger moments. Maybe he had it more under control than everyone thought?

Lucy walked out into the courtyard holding Ryan’s arm. There were hundreds of tables set up to accommodate all the guests. When they walked out together the people stood clapping and cheering loudly.

“See nothing to it.” Ryan said quietly winking at Lucy. “Now comes the worst part... mingling...” He frowned and silently groaned. This was always the part he hated the most.

Lucy could see Jasper and Aiden sitting together near the back. They seemed content to stay out of the spotlight but still keep her in their sights. She agreed with Ryan... this part was the worst. They went table to table greeting everyone before Ryan left her with a group of young ladies while he went to talk with some younger men.

“So what is the prince like? We don’t really know him on a personal level he keeps to himself.” One of the young ladies asked.

Lucy smiled politely. “He is a great guy. He’s fun, has a good personality, and honestly everything I could have ever asked for.” The girls around her all gushed over what she was saying.

“Sounds like you found a boyfriend as awesome as mine.” A shorter girl with dark raven black hair said. She had deep green eyes and ivory skin. And was honestly gorgeous.

“Geez Stella... no one wants to hear about your perfect boyfriend again.” One of the other ladies pouted. “I feel so lonely all of the sudden.”

“Don’t worry I’m sure you will find your mate soon enough,” Lucy said sweetly.

“Stella hasn’t found her mate either. They are just exclusively together until they do find their mates.”

“Oh. Sorry about the misunderstanding.” Lucy bit her bottom lip and smiled.

Stella giggled. “Don’t worry about it. It’s an easy mistake. We don’t always find our mates right away so a lot of us pair up with a steady partner until then. We both know once we find our mates it is over... but it is nice to have someone to belong to now.” She brought out her phone and began flipping through pictures. “See.” She said turning the phone to Lucy. “This is me and my Ryan.”

Lucy felt the air get knocked out of her. It was a selfie picture of Stella with... Derek... HER Derek acting as Ryan. She watched as she flipped through some more pictures.

“This is my cousin Sabrina. She is the one who introduced me to Ryan and we both just hit it off.” Stella gushed over a couple more pictures.

“Please spare our princess the intimate details that you weren’t kind enough to spare us.” One of the women said with a groan.

Stella blushed and waved her hand over her face. “Stop, you’re making me blush thinking about it.”

Lucy tried to rationalize what she was hearing. This girl didn’t know that it was Derek. So she had nothing to gain by saying what she was saying. She had no idea that he was Lucy’s mate. She needed to go somewhere and think. A picture is worth a thousand words... but there are also so many unspoken words there.

She felt her body feel sick. Inwardly she was a mess but outwardly she continued to hold a composed posture as she listened to Stella gush over how sweet Ryan is. It didn't make sense. She asked Derek outright if there was anyone. He could have easily admitted it then right? Did she trust Derek or not? The problem was why would this girl lie about it? She also had pictures of them together. They were smiling looking at the phone... their heads were close together. Of course, their heads were close Lucy. It is a damn selfie. She scolded herself inwardly as her emotions raged against herself.

Why would Derek lie? Maybe because he was ashamed he didn't wait? Or that he wanted to keep Stella as a mistress as accustomed. Her blood boiled thinking of that. In that situation... maybe she could m**m the prince. Nothing major. Just enough that he would have to eat from a straw for the rest of his life. Yes, something minor like that.

Then there was Stella... she knew nothing about her but why would she lie? She even had pictures and from the sound of it a couple of these other ladies seen them together too. This was getting confusing. And honestly, she couldn't listen to Stella going on and on about Ryan, who was HER DEREK.

She has been having the feeling that something was being kept hidden from her. Was this it? Was this the secret? That Derek had Stella? He had a girlfriend even though he knew he was promised to her? And what about all the stuff about him being in love with her since they were kids? Was it all a lie? Did she want love so badly that she became that naïve wimpy fool she hates so much?

"Well, it was nice talking to you ladies. I'm sure I will be seeing you again." Lucy felt her chest squeezing tight as she struggled to breathe. Images of Derek popped into her head. The precious moments they had shared together. Then the pictures she had seen from Stella.

She walked through the crowd trying to escape. She had to escape. She needed away from everyone.

Princceeeeeessssssssss.

A voice slithered in her head. This way princessssssss. Quickly go into the garden passage while no one is looking.

Okay. The first rule of thumb. Creepy voices in your head are people you shouldn't listen to or follow. They rarely have good advice and more often than not it is a trap. However, with the mood Lucy was in, bring on the trap. She slipped pasted a waiter whose back was turned and she entered between two parted pushes.

She looked in front of her. Tall green leafy bushes surrounded paths that led off in various directions. It was like a maze. This was too much like something she would have seen in a movie where she was shouting at the lead to turn their a*s around.

Are you coming princceeeeeesssss?

The voice hissed into her head making her shudder slightly. There was something deep inside of her that wanted to run. But an even bigger part wanted to know who this person was. Besides if this person wanted a fight she would give it to them. She could feel her fairy blood tugging on her to turn back. Almost as if warning her not to continue. But her lycan felt bloodthirsty and wanted a face with the voice.

She followed one of the paths and walked through the twists and turned of the maze. Finally, she reached an open area where a fountain spit water up into the air. There, by the fountain, was a wolf... a dark charcoal color with white ticking.

Finally... Princessss.

Lucy looked at this wolf curiously. A strong breeze blew her way and with it the smell of licorice. There was something familiar about a wolf with the scent of licorice. She furrowed her brows as she tried to recall the stories. The stories of a half-demon wolf who hunted the fairy princesses for his own and he smelled of licorice. But he was dead. Her aunt killed him. They took his heart out of his chest. This couldn't be him... it could not be...

The wolf's tail wagged slowly as he took a small step forward.

We haven't meant but we have a history together. I am Abaddon.