

The Vampires Promised Bride Chapter 51

“Also, about the memories, you were just shown. He doesn’t know that I have these memories and I don’t think he should. I don’t want him to think this is the only reason I accepted him. Because I already did before this knowledge.” Lucy felt Derek squeeze her into his front as his hand brushed over her side.

“Abaddon mentioned that Lilly here may be able to understand the energy build-up. But it seems you also understand this?” Derek said looking over towards the Great Sage.

“You’re soul mates.” Lilly said simply. “The energy is building up together and syncing with each other.”

“It seems like the energy is waiting for something...” The Great Sage said in his gentle older voice.

“Of course it is. Have you accepted him yet as your future prince Lucy?” Lilly asked with a soft smile.

“I don’t plan on being the fairy princess though...”

“Doesn’t work that way. No matter what that part of you isn’t going away now. You don’t have to become a reigning heir to the throne but you are now and forever a fairy princess. The fairy magic has reacted and selected this to be true. Alexis will still be the ruling heir to the throne but you are still gifted the magic and abilities.” Lilly looked over at Rhea who also nodded her head in agreement.

“Think of it as a power boost, Lucy.” Alexis giggled.

“So this should all settle after that?” Lucy asked and watched Lilly nod her head. She turned to Derek. “Let’s see if this works.” She reached up on his shoulders and lowered him to his knees. He kept his amber eyes on her and let her guide him lower.

“I am accepting you as my present and future. Now a prince to fairy kind. They will be your people to protect as well.” She leaned down and kissed his forehead and then his eyes.

Derek felt the warmth spreading through his chest and it flowed through his body. It was no longer being held compact inside of him. He could feel a surge of strength inside of him at a new energy he was being granted access to.

“With this, you’ll be able to see those cave brownies now.” Lucy giggled as he stood in front of her. The energy inside of her was also freely flowing. New powers were building up inside of her but it was impossible to know what they were at the moment.

“There much better now.” Lilly said and turned to Tyler who nodded his head with some silent talk.

“It’s time for us to get back.” Tyler said as he wrapped Lilly in his arms. A moment later a portal appeared in front of them.

“We have a lot of work that needs to get done and a premonition to stop. But with these portals we can get to each other quickly. Wyatt, you and Freya stay safe. I want you to avoid the fighting if at all possible.” Lilly looked at her son with her momma eyes.

Wyatt chuckled and nodded his head. “Don’t worry mom. We aren’t planning on doing anything unnecessary.”

“We need to be getting back too...” Freya said with a frown. They have already left Sam in charge for too long with the new danger to the pack. And now that Lucy was fine they needed to leave as well.

“Thank you for coming... I appreciate it.” Lucy smiled as she looked at her family. She appreciated how much they cared.

“Don’t worry. I’ll take good care of Lucy.” Derek wrapped his arm around her waist. “I’ve decided to return back to the vampire kingdom. There are issues there that must be addressed. I won’t have false rumors being spread. And it is time for everyone to know who their real prince is.”

Lucy’s eyes lit up. This must have been the first he decided because the thought never entered her head until now. She felt so happy knowing that he would be with her for a while.

They said their goodbyes and Lucy watched as her family went through their own portals that were created. Jason told Lucy to tell Justice to uphold the guardian name or else.

She was relieved with how her family was and their forgiving nature. Once they had more information about Abaddon they seemed to relax and understand. Though it was still his fault and his choices. But given his new attitude, they would judge him by that for now.

“So you are going to be leaving us already?” Alexis play pouted.

“At least for now...” Lucy looked up at Derek and smiled.

“I was wondering if someone could take Jasper to where I was taken from. I am going to need him on the front line while I am away.” Derek frowned slightly. He wasn’t sure how long he would be staying away. For now, he was going to test things out. But it meant sending Jasper to the front to take command in his absence. It wasn’t an ideal thing to do in the middle of the war. But given the situation, he wasn’t going to have his fiancé fighting off rumors. He needed to deal with Stella and with Ryan with the rumors with Amanda.

“I’ll take him there.” Lee said. “I need to check around the area a bit more for signs of Wicker. The coward is masking himself with crystals. It’s the only explanation.”

“Same as Aken.” Alexis snorted out.

“We will flush him out eventually.” Rhea said with a faint smile and patted her daughter’s back. She knew it was tough on her daughter during this time but there wasn’t anything they could do. Lee would have to find Aken or he would have to show himself on his own.

“So back to the vampire kingdom again?” Lucy felt Derek’s lips land on her forehead.

“Yes, it is time to show my face publicly. I won’t tolerate rumors like this. The royal family is built upon a pillar of faith and trust. I won’t allow there to be a weakness that crumbles it.” Derek’s voice was firm and authoritative. “Let’s go and let the others know.”

Besides... I want to be in our own room for when round two begins. He said in Lucy’s mind with a low gruff voice. A playful smile rested on his lips as his eyes rested on hers.

“Jasper you promise you’ll be careful.” Lucy said with a small frown. “If Abaddon had his energy restored I would send him with you.”

“Hey! I’m insulted. No offense Aba (The Prince’s nickname had officially stuck) but I am perfectly capable of handling the situation there. And it is my turn for some action.” Jasper grinned widely. He was excited to be able to test his skills freely.

“Tell my soldiers I will be back. Tell them who I am... the real me. They will understand.” Derek rubbed the back of his neck. “Probably too much. I’m afraid they will be too protective over me when I come back.”

“I’ll handle everything. You just take care of the things in the kingdom.” Jasper turned and slapped Aiden on the back. “Take care of yourself. And Justice... make sure you keep them on their toes.”

“And when you come back we will stir up trouble for the royals.” Justice placed his hand on Jasper’s shoulder. “Kill some freaks for me.”

“Ready?” Lee asked and Jasper nodded over to him.

“I’ll see you all soon. And if I find this witch... well if I find her she will cease to exist.” Jasper let a wicked grin form on his lips.

“I’ll make a few rounds with a couple of my soldiers.” Brian said and looked up at his father, Titus, to see him nodding his head in agreement. “So don’t run in fear when you see our towering shadows above you.”

Jasper chuckled. “I’ll try not to.” He turned his head looking at Lucy one last time before walking out of the room with Lee.

It didn’t matter who was going to fight, Lucy felt conflicted. Jasper was family to her. She couldn’t bear to have something happen to him. She wanted to be with him so that she could help protect him. She hated people were out fighting to protect her. It felt wrong. She had a warrior’s heart. She wasn’t like her great-grandmother Alice. She was a fighter.

Derek pulled her back into his chest and wrapped his arms around her front. “He is going to be fine. And we have our own fight to deal with.” He pressed his lips into the side of her temple and rubbed his nose in her hair.

Rhea looked up and met with Abaddon's eyes. "What happened before... let's leave that in the past. I believe that I got my family's revenge on what happened. We don't need to continue with this anymore. Protect her. Take care of her. And don't ever betray her..."

"I don't deserve your benevolence. You don't owe that to me. I'm not sure killing me once makes up for everything-"

"It doesn't matter anymore. That part is over. There is only one thing we need to do with you..." Rhea tapped her chin thoughtfully.

"What's that?" Abaddon asked with a small frown.

"We have to change that scent." Cody said with a loud snort. He knew exactly what Rhea was thinking. "I have no hard feelings either... you know dying and coming back. You ever hurt my family though..."

Abaddon nodded his head in acknowledgment. "I know my word doesn't mean much but I wouldn't... and I can't. It's impossible for me to betray Lucy or Derek."

"Can we change his scent?" Lucy asked tilting her head to her aunt. After all, licorice wasn't her favorite scent either.

"Why do you smell like licorice?" Alexis asked with a scrunched up nose.

"It's just my scent..." Abaddon said quietly.

"Are you attached to the scent?" Rhea asked and watched him shake his head no. "Well then I think a change is in order. I think it would be better for mom if you smelled different."

"Oh I have an idea!" Brian said and looked up at his father. His eyes glazed over and Titus chuckled and nodded his head. "I'll be right back."

"Uh oh... I'm almost afraid." Lucy chuckled she turned and looked at Abaddon. "You don't have to change your scent if you don't want to."

"I'm not attached to it. I'm fine changing it to be honest." Abaddon said quietly as Brian ran back into the room.

“Here.” Brian had a big grin on his face as he handed a small vial to Abaddon. “Hurry get it down fast. He’s coming.”

Abaddon didn’t hesitate and shot the liquid down. Instantly his scent changed to the smell of smoked cedar. It had a very rustic and log cabin scent to it. At the same time the doors shot open.

“Brian you meddlesome little prince. Just as bad as your father. You got into my things again. You think it is okay to take advantage of an old man? Such a troublesome child.” Grandpa Sage clicked his tongue angrily as Brian chuckled.

Rhea giggled. This reminded her of when she first arrived to the dragon kingdom. Titus and Grandpa Sage were always quipping back and forth with each other.

“Too late Gramps its gone. I fed it to the soul here.” Brian said with a smug grin.

“Do you have any idea how hard that is to make?” Grandpa Sage snorted.

“Relax, you have a whole drawer of them. Besides Rhea is the one who wanted it.” Brian said deflected to issue.

“Oh Rhea? If it was for you then you should have just asked. No problem then. You wanted him to have a different scent? Makes sense makes sense. Ho ho ho dear child just ask and its yours.”

“Hey! Gramps!” Brian’s jaw dropped. A completely different attitude for Rhea.

“What was it?” Lucy asked as she bit her lip hiding her smile.

“It’s a potion that alters your scents. Usually, it is used for dragons who wish to leave the dragon kingdom and go rogue. They take on a new scent and identity. Each vial will create a different scent depending on the person who drinks it. It is nothing harmful.” Grandpa Sage said with a chuckle.

“He is so much nicer to the girls.” Brian folded his arms over his chest.

“That’s because they are not sneaky rascals.” Grandpa Sage growled. “Anyways I have important work to do.”

Lucy looked over at Abaddon who had a faint smile on his lips. His eyes met with hers. “I... I like it.”

“I’m glad.” Lucy leaned into Derek’s chest.

“Ready, Lucy?” Derek whispered near her ear.

“Ready. The portal will take us to where we opened it last. It’s last connection that it held.” Lucy watched as a large opening formed in front of them. Time to go back to the vampire kingdom.

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The group walked out from the portal and were back in the hallway of the vampire kingdom. Derek took in a deep breath and a warm smile rested on his lips. He was home. And finally he would be able to act like this was his home.

“You’re back...” Ryan came from down the corridor his eyes immediately rested on Derek with Lucy still clinging to his arm. “Are you planning to make the announcement early?”

“I need to speak with my parents first. But that is my plan.” Derek said and he watched as Ryan’s eyes trailed to Lucy and back to him. He understood what he was thinking. “Mira.”

“My lord.” The small pale young woman appeared in a kneeling position.

“Tell my parents I request their audience in my chambers.” Derek watched as the girl instantly vanished. “Let’s go.” He nodded to Ryan to join them as well. They were in a private hall that was reserved for the royal family so keeping Lucy at his side here wasn’t a problem. He led her to his room with the others following.

They walked into the room and all made themselves comfortable except for Abaddon who remained standing.

“Please have a seat.” Lucy nodded to another chair. She noticed how he hesitated until he locked eyes with her then he obediently walked to a chair.

“Hey if this works out you won’t have to swap spit with Ryan again.” Aiden’s eyes flickered as he stared up at a very pale and uncomfortable looking Ryan.

Derek squeezed his hand around Lucy’s and sighed heavily. “You are lucky I can read Lucy’s mind.”

“That takes a lot of the fun out of it.” Aiden said with a disappointed snort.

“Aiden! I thought we were bros.” Ryan sighed in relief, shooting Aiden daggers.

Aiden chuckled. “We are, but tormenting my new family is sort of my thing. But with Lucy and him connecting memories it is hard.”

“Speaking of bros...” Ryan turned and looked at Justice who had been quietly observing him. He felt like he had a predatory glance on him. “You must be Justice.”

“I must be.” Justice said, trying to hide his personality for a moment longer. “The word I have heard is that you happen to like the ladies... I am also one who likes the ladies.”

“Once I am off the hook from playing pretend fiancé you want to be my wingman?” Ryan grinned widely.

“No. But you can be mine.” Justice snorted and the two men chuckled together.

Lucy giggled and shook her head. She knew they would get along splendidly. The door to the room opened and King Alaric and Queen Willa walked in. They all stood up and Derek walked up hugging both of his parents.

“Is everything okay? We weren’t expecting you.” Alaric watched as his son nodded while adjusting Lucy more to his side. He was making sure they could notice the mark that was now upon her neck.

“Breaking tradition?” Willa said, clicking her tongue.

“Yes. And I need to break it again.” Derek said firmly. “There is someone that is claiming the elite leader Ryan is their steady boyfriend. The girl doesn’t know who I am so she doesn’t understand how damaging her lies are. Furthermore, she has fabricated a video that isn’t true either. I ask to announce myself to my people. I want to clear my name.”

“No. You can’t announce this until you are crowned. The day you are back here permanently will be when you are announced the crown prince. You know this is for a purpose.” King Alaric said firmly.

“And I have accomplished that purpose, haven’t I?” Derek said in exasperation. The purpose was to find faithful allies and he had with his soldiers.

“You must finish the task you set out with and bring your soldiers home.” Alaric said firmly.

“I already told Jasper to tell them who I am.” Derek said and watched his father’s eyes turn dark.

Alaric sighed angrily. “Well, what is done can’t be undone. But I still won’t allow it. If there is a rumor go and dispel it as Ryan. It is not time for you to join us here at the palace.”

“I fail to see why not. Could you explain this to me? Other than breaking tradition, what is the problem with him announcing who he is?” Lucy met with the king and queen in a confident stare. Her eyes pierced against them.

“Derek must prove himself.” Willa said quietly.

“And he hasn’t? And he can’t if his identity is revealed?” Lucy felt irritated. She could feel how upset Derek was and yet he felt trapped. Well they couldn’t trap her. “Furthermore, this is the price I demand for keeping the soul Abaddon a secret.”

“Lucy.” Derek hissed and tugged on her arm.

“No, Derek. You may have made a deal for the prince and Ryan to put on a charade but you never made this deal with me. You have chosen to show me a fake fiancé. And want me now to continue to play this role. I should have been made aware from the beginning. I went through a lot... feelings of being unwanted. And not being good enough. When had I been made aware from the beginning all of that could have been avoided. What is being asked of me isn’t fair. I won’t wear another man’s scent anymore. I am not letting someone else bathe me in their spit. And I am not going to pretend to be another’s mate.” Lucy’s green eyes attacked them. She could feel how nervous Derek was and he was waiting for his parent’s reaction with bated breath. But not Lucy. This was enough. Everything that had happened to her recently was because she couldn’t simply have her mate by her side.

Finally, Willa smiled. “Lucy, you are perfect. Isn’t she perfect dear? If only I could have had a daughter but I imagine she would have been so much like you.” She looked up to Alaric and a small smile escaped from his lips as well.

“You have a leader’s heart. You are right we should have thought things through better. And my guess with you as the new queen a lot of traditions will be getting broken.” Alaric said with a quiet sigh.

“Yes. I will not have any son of mine participating in some quest where he has to prove himself. I understand the identity thing to find loyal soldiers but having to prove themselves? No. Won’t be happening. No child of mine will have to prove themselves to me.” Lucy felt Derek pull her into his front as he beamed down at her. She blushed slightly as his thoughts entered her head. She could feel his pride, adoration, love, and lust.

“She is perfect.” Derek leaned down and gently pecked at her lips.

“I am so happy that you two ended up being mates.” Willa said with wet eyes. “This is more than I ever hoped for. And seeing you two together makes me so happy.”

“Alright son. Do what you feel you need to. But how do you plan to handle the situation?” Alaric asked curiously.

Derek smiled. “Just leave it to me. I’ll handle everything. I just need you to organize a formal event for tonight.”

“We can do that.” Alaric looked from Derek to Lucy. “You two are a good match together. You will have strong children together.”

Derek chuckled and watched as Lucy’s ears turned red. Her embarrassment was adorable. “I couldn’t agree more. There will never be anyone else for me but my little mate.”

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Lucy put on a long formal black sleeveless dress and put the finishing touches on her face. She was left alone to get ready but was to meet Derek in the main ballroom. She wasn’t sure where that was but Abaddon and Mira were left with her. She walked out of the bathroom to see them both dressed nicely as well.

“Princess, you look stunning.” Abaddon said with a half bow.

“My lady.” Mira said, curtsying low to the ground.

“Nuh-uh, you two. Don’t you dare! It is a friendship relationship with me, you got it?!” Lucy tilted her eyes at them sternly and watched as they both smiled at her.

“Now... do either of you have any tips for me? What should I expect? Derek disappeared so fast before I could read the plan in his mind. So I guess he is surprising me too, huh?” Lucy watched as they both shrugged slightly.

“We weren’t told anything. Probably so you couldn’t order it out of us.” Abaddon chuckled.

“The king has arranged for a formal dance tonight. It is considered a ball of sorts. People will be dressed in their finest. And will be waiting for some special news. Usually, these things announce a new mate, visitor, or an expectant pregnancy...” Mira gave Lucy a side smile.

“Oh my gosh. They will be thinking I am pregnant.” Lucy slapped her forehead with her hand. She could hear the gentle laughter from Abaddon and sweet giggle from Mira. She looked between her fingers at the two of them before laughing a bit herself. “I guess it may not be entirely wrong though.” She watched as the two of them immediately quit their laughter. Their eyes darted to her stomach and back to her eyes.

“Are you pregnant my lady?” Mira suddenly asked with a protective air about her.

Lucy giggled. “Well, I hardly can know that after just a couple days. Just after my heat, I can’t say it isn’t a possibility.”

“We should maybe take precautions then,” Abaddon said with pursed lips. His eyes wandered over Lucy with protectiveness. He could feel himself reacting to the possibility of there being a life growing inside of her. And it made him want to shield her to protect her and the future.

“Don’t be silly. You know you fought my grandmother while she was pregnant. And she ended up being just fine. I am from a strong and resilient bloodline. And I am not about to be locked away. Which makes me think...” Lucy grinned and looked at Abaddon. “Can you block the mate link if I ask you to?”

Abaddon furrowed his brows and set his jaw. “I wouldn’t want to do something like that.”

“But you can?” Lucy asked raising her eyes.

He let out a loud sigh. “Yes, I probably can...but-”

“Relax.” Lucy giggled. “I’m just thinking that when the day comes and I am pregnant I would like to surprise Derek. Instead of him just knowing I would like to tell him myself.” She watched as Abaddon smiled and shook his head.

“Okay. Yes, I can do that.” Abaddon relaxed.

“So are you going to be my escort?” Lucy asked, looking at Abaddon.

“No. Mira and I will be doing our job and keeping an eye on things from the shadows. Your escort is waiting for you in the hall.” Abaddon motioned his head to the door.

“Speaking of which...” Mira said with a smile. “You should probably get going.”

“Yes I know...” Lucy inhaled deeply to settle her nerves. She wasn’t a big fan of these public events especially when she felt a bit in the dark over it. She walked over to the door opening it. In front of her Justice stood dressed in a black tuxedo.

“You look amazing Lucy.” Justice beamed and extended his arm to her.

She glanced behind her to say something to Abaddon and Mira but they were already gone. “I hope you were shown the way because I don’t know where I am going.” Lucy turned back to Justice and bit her lip smiling.

“Yes, I know where I am going and I already had a nice peek. There are some delicious specimens here... and maybe I have a chance being the mysterious new guy.” Justice winked down at Lucy who only shook her head with a laugh. He may be her guardian but he was still her same lecherous Justice. She walked with her arm on his down several halls that led to two double doors where two guards were waiting. She wasn’t exactly sure what was being planned tonight but she was curiously excited.

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The large black metal double doors opened as they approached. All eyes were on Lucy as Justice led her inside. She felt Justice pat her hand on his arm and he winked down at her. She scanned the room but didn’t notice Derek or Ryan anywhere.

Towards the front of the room her eyes met with Aiden. He was also wearing a black tuxedo and was talking with a few gentlemen. He gave her a small smile as he continued his conversation.

Justice led her through the curious eyes. They were looking at the stranger next to Lucy and were probably wondering where the prince was. Yeah... she was wondering that too. A man approached in front of her. One she had never seen before. His eyes set upon her neck and his lips curled up in disgust.

“So he really did it? He really claimed a pup as his mate... No offense to you. But to preserve our kind only the purest have been mated to the throne. This whole concept of you having pure blood just doesn’t make sense and is mind boggling. As if we need a treaty with the wolves anyways.”

Justice pulled Lucy behind him slightly with enraged eyes. No one would disrespect her. He felt a strong hand land on his shoulder and he turned his head to see Jester standing there. “I’ll handle this. Continue on.” Jester nodded his head to them before turning a dark gaze on the man in front of him. “I see you think you know more than the royal family? Above all of that she is his soulmate. You know our rules about that.”

Lucy wanted to hear the rest of the conversation but Justice led her away. She looked up at him and his tense expression on his face.

“You don’t need to be bothered with that stuff Lucy. That’s not the point of tonight.” Justice said firmly.

“And what is the point of tonight?” Lucy asked with a small smile. She watched as Justice chuckled and shrugged.

“I guess we will find out.” He winked down at her.

For a moment Lucy was also looking for Jasper. And she frowned as she remembered he wasn’t there. This witch business was taking longer than it should. Why hadn’t she been found? She must be shielding herself well. After this long, she was probably really good at hiding.

“Lucy.” Queen Willa said and motioned for her to join her at the center of the front of the room.

Lucy looked up at Justice and he nodded at her. “I’ll be waiting right here.”

Okay, there was something being planned here for sure. Lucy walked up beside Willa who smiled down at her. She watched as Alaric stepped forward and the crowd came to a hush.

“Today is a day I have been waiting for... for a very long time. Not only has my son claimed his mate... but I am happy to introduce you to the real face of my son.” Alaric’s voice rang with clarity. The double doors opened and both Ryan and Derek walked in side by side. Ryan was wearing a formal military suit while Derek was wearing the colors of the royal family. Derek’s suit was black with gold and purple mixed into it while Ryan’s was purple with gold and black. The crowd’s voices whispered as they watched the two men walk to the front.

“I would like to introduce you to the first knight of the elite soldiers, Ryan. Who you have all thought to be Derek. And to my son who has been leading the elite soldiers in battle up to this point. Today we make his face known to all.” Alaric moved to the side as his son reached the front.

Derek’s eyes met with Lucy’s and he reached his hand out for her to join him. He squeezed her hand gently and turned his attention to his people. “As you know, the elite soldiers must be the most trusted and loyal soldiers to the royal family. To ensure this I have been undercover since I was young. I have discovered many things this way but most importantly I know the sincerity of the loyalty of my soldiers. I am showing you my real face now in light of some disturbing news I have heard. Know this. I have loved Lucy since I was a child. Even before I knew she was my soulmate she was in my heart. She is the reason I live. My everything.” He looked down and smiled at her.

“At no point was there ever anyone else. Anyone who claims otherwise will be saying treacherous words. The banshee and our newest bound servant will deal with any treachery according to our laws. We will forgive only this once. Because any accusations were not done knowingly about your prince.” He scanned over the area until his eyes found Stella’s nervous eyes. A clear warning was shot at her then he continued to look over the crowd.

“I know many of you were concerned about the strained relationship. Well, that’s because it was a feigned relationship.” Derek chuckled and looked over at Ryan then back to his people. “I don’t want there to be any doubt in your mind at how important my mate is to me. None. Not only have I claimed her as such but I have already marked her as my own. Furthermore...” He spun Lucy to face him. His eyes trailed over her, landing on her soft lip and inviting neck. “I will publicly show you our committed unbreakable bond.”

He leaned his head down and bit into Lucy’s neck. He knew she wouldn’t be shocked since she could already read his thoughts and what he was planning. Vampires don’t just mark, they also signify their unbreakable bond through the

exchange of blood. Those who exchange blood can never take another mate again. It is more permanent than just marking their mate. It makes it that only your mate could ever satisfy you. And it is something done quietly and privately among only the most devoted couple. But by doing this publicly a very clear statement is being made. And that is there is no future to the vampires without Lucy.

He licked her neck clean before smashing his lips into hers desperately. He panted against her lips and kept his eyes on her. Now it was her turn. She also had to do the same thing now. He smiled as he felt her bashful emotions coming forward. To make it easier he lowered himself in front of her.

A heads-up over all of this would have been great. This was like the public marking with dragons. Only they at least knew what was coming ahead of time. And Lucy had never drunk blood before. Sure, she marked Derek but it wasn't the same thing. She inhaled gradually and gained her composure. She leaned forward to his neck and brought her fangs forward slowly sinking them into his flesh. She felt the warm liquid trickle into her mouth and was surprised how her insides filled with desire. It was as if his blood was an aphrodisiac and it made her lower part heat up with desire. She had heard about how vampires crave the taste of their mate's blood. It made no sense to her before but it did now. And she knew no other blood could ever quench her thirst but his. How was he able to break apart from this? She felt like she wasn't getting enough and she wanted to devour the rest of him.

She expected his blood to taste bad but it was nothing like that. It was like drinking pure insatiable desire. She felt Derek's desire flowing into her while he drank from her. Hers was more intense. And what she was wanting from him now she couldn't get this instant. No... wanting wasn't right. It was what she NEEDED from him now.

Goddess Lucy if you don't stop those thoughts I will take you right here and right now. Derek's voice rang into her mind. She could feel his lustful thoughts that were only fueling her more.

The only thing that was able to snap her back was knowing how many people were watching them. And that she was really afraid he would publicly cross the line in front of them. So, with great restraint, she pulled her fangs out and licked his neck clean of any blood droplets.

He rose back up and she wrapped her arms around his neck bringing him into her face. She pressed her lips into his as their two types of blood mixed together. She dug her nails into him slightly, she was having a hard time fighting the desire inside of her off. It was Derek who pulled away from her. Though she could see from his eyes it was the opposite of what he wanted. His thoughts were screaming in her head and promising her of everything he planned to do to her.

The sound of cheers and applause snapped Lucy from her unquenchable hunger. She turned to face the crowd shyly and felt Derek's arm come around her, pulling her deep into his side.

"We will be having a formal wedding ceremony at the end of the summer. However, as you can see this is now a bond that will never be broken. I know as my subjects you will both respect and support our relationship. I trust you will also protect any future heirs with your lives. I plan to well secure our future lineage." Derek said with a wry smile. The crowd chuckled and Lucy felt the heat spreading over her face.

"I'm sure many of you would like to speak with your prince now that you know who he is." Alaric spoke up, giving his son a glance. "Derek will now come among you so you can each get to know him." He knew this wasn't what his son had immediately planned but it was important. Regardless of how badly he wanted to escape privately with his mate.

Derek sighed inwardly but kept a warm smile on his face. He and Ryan had already addressed Stella. She was shocked seeing the two of them at her door and immediately knew the jig was up. She was mortified hearing that she was actually implying about being with the prince. She was feeling left out hearing about her friend's trysts. So she decided to make up having a boyfriend. And Ryan was perfect since the elite soldiers weren't around. Not to mention he was incredibly attractive. It was all too perfect. So she took some pictures of the two of them and during her video she edited voices in. The camera wasn't on his face when she reached in to give him a hug goodbye.

What wasn't shown was how Derek immediately pushed her back and told her it was inappropriate for her to hug him. In the video, she froze the scene to look like they were hugging for a long time. And she played with the sound and audio to make it all look and sound real. She went all too far for her elaborate lie. And now she was humiliated. Her friends would know she was lying now after the speech the prince had just given. They would also know he was referring to her. This is what she gets though. It was her fault for not just being honest about not wanting to mess around with others.

Derek leaned over and pecked Lucy on the side of her head before leading her out into his people. As they walked through the crowd Lucy noticed the man from earlier. She felt Derek's grip tighten around her as he saw her memories from before. With the soul mate bond, everything flowed between them when they were close. It just happened. And instantly he knew everything while they were apart and the same for her. She knew what happened with Stella as well.

"Count Basil..." Derek's eyes pinned the man down as his voice let out a lethal chill. "I know my uncle already spoke with you some but I won't tolerate anyone not approving what is mine. And just so you know... I've tasted her blood. It is a miracle but the purity is unquestionable. My bond with her is securing our lineage. And if you have a problem with my bride you

know you can always go rogue. Your position can be filled by another. I don't need anyone part of the kingdom who is not completely loyal."

Lucy watched as the count's face fell. He lowered his head and almost shrank himself down. "Forgive me, my prince. I won't misspeak again."

"That's not good enough. I need more than you not speaking. I will need your blood oath of loyalty to the family. You'll give it to my father or you will leave." Derek wasn't going to play around with the chance of betrayal. And a blood oath would prevent him from ever betraying the family. This was the price the count would pay for his words. He wasn't forgiving when it came to Lucy.

"Of course my lord. I'll give it to him immediately." Count Drake Basil said and slinked away towards the king.

Not into making friends? Lucy tilted her head up to Derek who rubbed his hand lovingly over her side.

I am their leader. They don't follow me for my friendship. They follow me for my wisdom and protection. I will guide them into the future. And I can't have anyone around that I don't trust. And anyone who would dare speak to you like that... calling you a pup... he is lucky I didn't shred him. Derek looked around as people started lining up seeking an audience. This was going to be a long evening. And after the moment he had shared with Lucy the thoughts were plaguing his mind. The desire she had for him was overpowering. Knowing she wanted him so much at that moment showed how much they were meant for each other.

It is true drinking the blood of your mate binds you together. But the more you desire your mate the deeper the connection is. Derek purposely put some vervain in his system to help weaken the effects. He was going to give some for Lucy to drink as well but Abaddon came and warned him it wasn't a good idea. Not after she just finished with her heat. Which made sense to him. But she had to experience the full onset of want and desire. And through her, he felt it too. Knowing she wanted him that much though showed just how much they were meant for one another.

He loved her so much. He watched as her eyes twinkled up at him and he felt her love flow into him. She was feeling the exact same way. And now finally everyone could know she was his. No more hiding. No more her having to pretend to belong to another. She was HIS and he was hers.

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Derek led Lucy through the crowd and onto the dance floor. He spun her as the band started playing and pulled her back into him. He watched her with adoration as he twirled her around on the dance floor. Other couples were soon joining around him.

Lucy noticed Justice, Aiden and Ryan had escorted women out to dance with them on the dance floor. They all seemed to be enjoying themselves and looked at ease. She looked back into the eyes of her mate. Everything was just... perfect. So perfect that she almost forgot about the witch causing problems. And she maybe could have, had Jasper been there too.

“He’s fine, Lucy. I’m sure of it.” Derek smiled, pulling her body close to him. “Jasper is really strong and these voidless aren’t that formidable.” He leaned in and brushed his lips over her forehead.

“That is what is worrying me. There is more to all this. The witch didn’t plan all this time to just keep launching wave after wave of weak armies, right? I know she made some weird potion but there has to be more to it.”

“Or the armies were supposed to lure you guys out in the open and because of us it hasn’t happened. I don’t think the witch was anticipating the vampires taking the lead in this.” Derek could feel her restlessness over the situation.

“And Wicker?” Lucy sighed as she could see Derek was also not sure about him either.

“He has his own agenda in all of this. But he can’t be our problem. There isn’t anything we can do about him. That is someone your uncle will have to worry about. All we can do is focus on what we can take care of. And we are doing just that. Once we find this witch our part in this mess will be done.” He held their bodies tight together as they slowly swayed to the slow music. His hand played over her back with the tips of his fingers. “No Lucy.” He said quietly but firmly.

She frowned and sighed. She looked to the side avoiding his eyes.

“Lucy...” Derek’s tone was quiet and low. There was a slight threat in his voice. He was reading her thoughts loud and clear. And on this issue he would not budge.

“We don’t even know how that potion would affect me. I’m not like the others...” She snapped her head back at him and listened to his soft vibrations from his chuckle.

“I would never be okay with it. Even more because of the unknowns.” Derek watched her frown but could feel she hadn’t given up on the idea.

“Lucy... Your parents forbid you and Aiden to fight. And they are right. I also can’t allow you to fight Lucy. You are the future here. Even more so now. With our exchange, we could never be with anyone else. Which is the purpose of it. I don’t want anyone but you and can never be forced to be with another now. But this is a real problem for the vampires if something happens to one of us.”

“Well if that is the case then you shouldn’t be going to fight either. And I can see that is exactly what you are planning to do. You are planning to leave me again already.” Lucy felt a bit agitated when she just wanted to stay by his side.

“You know I don’t want to leave you Lucy. Now more than ever you know it. I need to see this end.”

“Keep Jasper with you then.” Lucy pinned her gaze against his. “I have Aiden, Justice, Ryan, Abaddon and Mira here around me. I’m safe. So if Jasper is so skilled he should be at your side.” She could feel how he didn’t like the idea. “As you can tell this is one point I won’t be budging on. I’ll die on this bridge, Derek.”

Soft rumbles reverberated from his chest. “Yes my little mate, I can see that. Okay... but let’s not think about that right now, okay? Let’s think about how we can escape so I can do what I really want right now.” He greedily stared her over like a predator. His fingers trailed over her intimately as his mind began making promises to her.

“My lord.” A muscular man said tapping on Derek’s shoulder. “May I?” He asked and looked over at Lucy.

Derek inwardly growled but forced a smile over his face, stepping aside to allow him to dance with Lucy. It was customary to dance with other partners at such an event. Especially so they could get to know their royalty. And soon Derek had a line of ladies wanting to dance with him. He gently took one of the lady’s hands and began to dance with her. He glanced at Lucy longingly as he watched her being led around the dance floor and away from him.

Lucy smiled happily as Ryan was the next to cut in. She was getting tossed from stranger to stranger and finally ended up in the arms of someone she was familiar with.

“Ready to dance with your fake fiancé?” Ryan chuckled and guided her expertly across the floor.

“So now that you are free are you beating the ladies off with a stick?” Lucy giggled and watched him flash her a wide white smile.

“Surprisingly I had more interest when they thought I was the prince. Shallow creatures didn’t want me for my body only for my title.” Ryan clicked his tongue in fake annoyance.

Lucy giggled. “Oh, you poor thing not to have women wanting to use you now.”

“Thank you for the sympathy. It is a tragic blow but I’ll manage. But you know...” Ryan said as he spun Lucy out and back into his hands. “I think what you and Derek have is much more appealing. I want that too... someday. But until I find my mate I might as well be well seasoned for her.”

“Of course it would be horrible if you weren’t, right?” Lucy giggled and he pouted heavily.

“We can’t all find this early in life. My mate might not even be alive right now. I want to live and experience my life. There are no guarantees, right? I could be dead tomorrow. I mean no one expected the vampire king to die when he did.”

“How did that happen by the way? I never pried into the events...” Lucy watched his amber eyes turn sad.

“It isn’t a pretty story Lucy...” Ryan’s voice was quiet and he pulled Lucy closer to keep the conversation more private. “The previous king and queen were a marriage of convenience. The queen was of pure blood so the king chose her to be his queen. One day though the queen met her fated mate. She originally dismissed him and kept a secret of his existence. But soon the temptation of her mate became too much. And they began meeting in secret. Alaric and Jester were young adults at this time. The king and queen had fulfilled their obligations to one another. But the king really adored the queen. Even though she wasn’t his fated mate she was still his and he loved her.”

He looked at Lucy and sighed quietly. “The king ended up catching the two of them together and in a rage, he killed her fated mate. He was hurt but loved the queen so much that he gave her benevolence. He pushed the betrayal away and even defended her publicly when the secret was leaked out. Alaric and Jester had a hard time with the news and their relationship with their mother became strained. I think the pain of losing her fated mate became too much for the queen... One evening she turned on the king while he was asleep and killed him to get revenge for her lover. Then she killed herself.”

Lucy gasped and felt tears threatening her eyes. Ryan gave her a gentle smile. “Like I said it isn’t a pretty story and one that the kingdom isn’t proud of. That was a long long time ago though. Alaric has been the long-standing ruler for centuries now. And the kingdom has flourished under him.”

“You know this is the first time a soul-mated couple will ever be taking over as rulers to the kingdom. I can feel it...” Ryan looked around him with a faint smile. “Everyone has high hopes for the two of you. And already because of your bond and your blood bond they are all at ease. I guess you can probably understand the worry about Derek taking you as a bride. They were all afraid that you would end up finding your fated mate. That what happened in the past would be repeated. They are comforted with your connection to one another. It makes for a strong kingdom.”

“What about Willa and Alaric? Are they...-” Lucy was interrupted by Ryan mid-sentence.

“Alaric refused to take a queen unless she was his mate. I guess after what happened with his parents he wouldn’t risk it. But he found her. And together they also exchanged blood binding them to one another. I guess he wanted to be extra cautious so that she could never cheat on him. But then she couldn’t conceive. Which was a big problem for the kingdom. Usually, the king would find a suitable substitute to procure a future heir. But with their blood bond, it was impossible not to mention Alaric could never have done that to Willa. Luckily with a bit of fairy magic, we were given our prince.” Ryan looked off in the distance where Derek still had a line of ladies waiting for their chance with the prince.

“I thought it wasn’t unheard of for the king to have a mistress? I have heard this several times.”

Ryan chuckled. “That isn’t how things are here. But there is another vampire kingdom on the other side of the world that is run very differently. The king keeps a harem of women at his disposal. And it wouldn’t have seemed wrong for Alaric to take a mistress when Willa couldn’t conceive. No one here would have batted an eye at it. An heir is the most important thing and all that matters. So it isn’t unheard of. It just hasn’t happened here during the last two generations.”

“It wasn’t going to happen now even without the blood bond,” Lucy said with a small shrug. “I don’t share. Before I knew we were mates I already knew that he wasn’t someone I would share. I’m worth more than that. I am not just a breeding machine.”

“You are worth more than that. You both are. Honestly...” Ryan glanced around before dropping his voice to a quiet breath. “Derek was worried about it. He was afraid you wouldn’t want him and it terrified him. He has loved you since you were kids and the idea of you not feeling the same way had him anxious... You know...It was a very tough decision for Alaric and

Willa to arrange the marriage between you and Derek. Because of what happened in the past. This weighed heavily on them. But it was a necessary gamble. Let's face it, it is only a matter of time before our two species come to a head and the outcome... it would be devastating both ways. You and Derek being together was a necessary risk. The relief of you and Derek being mates was felt among a lot of us. And I know Alaric and Willa are incredibly relieved."

"Well maybe if you men weren't morons we could have known a long time ago that we were fated mates." Lucy smirked as a gentleman tapped Ryan on the shoulder.

"Guess my shift is up." Ryan said with a slight bow to Lucy. He turned and eyed the man curiously as he watched him begin to dance with Lucy. He didn't recognize the man.

Lucy stared at the face in front of her. She studied his facial features looking from his brown eyes to his sleek white hair that was pulled back. Realization hit her as he gripped her tighter.

"Shhh shh shh... such a clever girl but you wouldn't want me to kill everyone, do you? Just behave and I'll spare their lives." A crisp light baritone voice came out from his smiling mouth as he showed his experience on the dance floor. He danced with her beautifully and gracefully.

Lucy tried to control her heart rate as she watched the man in front of her. The man she wished she had the power to kill for what she saw him do to Alexis. Why was he here? What did he want with her? He had such confidence about him even being in the midst of the vampire kingdom. This man was powerful. And according to Derek, he was just as strong as her Uncle Levi, the deity Leviathan. If this is the case he could easily destroy everyone here. With determination, she gazed into his eyes and faced evil head-on.

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So my dear..." His brown eyes were almost smiling at her. "Do you know who I am?"

Lucy knew that this was the man she saw in her premonition but he didn't know she knew who he was. Only that she knew he didn't belong. She kept a confident gaze on his eyes. "Judging from your energy I only have one guess... and that is you are the one they refer to as Wicker."

The man chuckled darkly. "I hate that nickname. It was given to me by the demons... of course I am no demon though. But you already know this... don't you?" He arched his brow slightly as the smile continued to rest on his face. Meanwhile he continued to twirl her over the dance floor. "No matter. My name is Erebus. I am the god of darkness. So while I am not a demon it does feel more like home around them."

"And what do I owe the honor of this visit? You here to bring me to the witch?" Lucy asked and listened as he let out a genuine laugh.

"Oh how adorable. No, I only want one thing from that witch and that is her soul. She made a deal with me and upon her death I will devour her soul... The faster she dies the better but I can't physically harm her because of the agreement. The last thing I want is to assist her. No, I am here for a different reason. I heard that the fairy princess was here and that she was the vampire prince's mate..." His eyes narrowed on her trailing to her neck. "Now how is that possible?"

"How is what possible?" Lucy felt his intense gaze upon her. He was studying her. And a realization hit her. He doesn't know there are two fairy princesses. Because it is rare... unheard of. It has NEVER happened before.

"I was under good authority that the fairy princess had another mate..." Erebus' voice trailed low as he studied the magic around the girl in front of him. "Yet, there is no denying that you are the fairy princess... I feel like I am missing something important here... I guess this is what happens when I stay in the dark for too long. Things that happen in the light escape me. Guess it is possible you had two mates..."

Lucy wanted to mindlink to someone to warn them... but she couldn't. Her mind was being blocked from reaching out by a strange energy. Her eyes stared back at his as he continued to look at her.

"I wanted to break you... I wanted him to see you broken. Of course if you have taken another mate he must be pretty broken already..." Erebus mumbled to himself, seeming somewhat disappointed.

"Break who?" Lucy asked innocently.

"Your other mate. The one who is pretending that you aren't his mate. Well... maybe I got my sources wrong... Because you aren't exactly what I was expecting. I thought the fairy princess was... different. Hmmm I'm going to have to think about this... you know this is his fault." Erebus looked upward to his head with a scowl. "My hair used to be darker than ebony."

You could get lost staring into the darkness. But that damn Kraken... He destroyed something I loved so I must return the favor.”

“Wait... you wanted to break me because of what he did to your hair?” Lucy continued to play her part.

“I don’t love much. But I loved my hair. But I suppose I may have another reason... in either case you seem to have already ruined my fun.” He pursed his lips together and stared at her. “What to do now?” He clicked his tongue as he twirled her out and back into his chest.

Lucy felt like a mouse who was being played with by a cat. He was batting her around helplessly. She didn’t stand a chance against him; all she could do was try to think. She wanted to alert the others but at the same time she didn’t want them getting killed. Erebus was a tier one deity. The whole might of the vampire kingdom meant nothing to him. It would be too easy for him.

He stared back into her defiant eyes. Where was her fear? It aggravated him. She should be trembling in his arms and yet she looked at him with those damn confident eyes. Whatever happened to the days when the fairy princess would shriek in fear of demons? Though he wasn’t one he was still part of the darkness. Yet, she challenged him. And he felt annoyed.

“Let’s play a game...” His lips curled upwards as a cruel smile rested upon them. “Yes... a game. That’s what we will do.”

One second Lucy was dancing in a ballroom surrounded by others and in the next second she was whisked away. She looked around the old gray stone surrounding her with bits of moss growing over them. She was surrounded by these stones except for a window that let in light. She felt the man let her go from his hands. The scent of musty mildew hit her nose and another scent. The smell of salty air and the sound of waves crashing. She turned her head to peer out the window and could only see water as far as the eye could see. She looked up at Erebus in confusion.

“What kind of game is this?” Lucy watched his face that continued to hold an arrogant smile over his lips.

“Let’s see if someone finds you. If someone finds you I’ll let you go. Simple. Just like that.”

“You’re trying to lure out the man you said is my other mate...the Kraken.” Lucy watched his eyes flicker as he looked at her.

“Even if you’ve taken another mate... if he is your mate he should come for you.”

“And what does that do?” Lucy was trying to figure him out but she was in real trouble here. She had a feeling escaping would not be an easy task. And how do you escape from a deity? They can just appear right in front of her. She can’t fight him, it would be impossible. So how does she get out of this mess?

“I want to see his pain.”

“Are you planning to fight him?” Lucy watched as his cruel smile spread over his lips.

“I’m not collecting souls for no reason. It’s a nice little power boost to give me the edge over him. But I’m not quite ready for that yet. No... right now I just want to see his pain.”

“What if someone else comes for me?” Lucy asked. His eyes trailed over her slowly.

“If someone comes for you here you have my word that you are free to go. No matter who comes for you. But my lady... who can find you out here?” Erebus nodded his head to the window.

Lucy clenched her hands together tightly and walked up to the opening. She peered outside and her eyes widened. There was no land. She was in a tall tower in the middle of the ocean. What the heck was this place? But she was a fairy... so she could call the marine fairies for help, right?

“Oh and another thing...” Erebus said with a chuckle. “You can’t use your fairy magic in here. And there is a barrier in front of the window... can’t have you jumping out now can I?” Erebus chuckled as he watched Lucy’s green eyes lift to meet his.

“You planned all of this just to capture me?”

“Don’t look at me like that. I have eternity. An eternal life. What is time to me? And you... a future vampire queen... what is an eternity for you? You haven’t even tasted life yet.” His dark eyes bore into her. His eyes traveled over her body and the black dress she was wearing. “I can see how you would have been fitting as a deity’s mate... Maybe the Kraken just wanted to make sure you were immortal. Yes, that must be it. Aken isn’t about to let anyone take what is his. It isn’t that lunatic’s nature.”

“You call him the lunatic yet you abducted me.” Lucy said with a quiet chuckle.

“You have spirit fairy. I wonder... how long that fire inside of you will burn before it is extinguished...” His arrogant smile returned as he rolled his shoulders back. “Let’s see how you handle isolation. I wonder how long it will take for Aken to find you out here? He will find you eventually though. Oh and don’t worry. I’ll send food and drink to you. I need to keep my precious prisoner alive... Well, I will check on you soon.” Erebus gave her a smug grin before he vanished from her sight.

She ran to the window and tried to push through it but she hit an invisible barrier. So he wasn’t lying about the shield. She looked around the round stone room. There were no doors. No way out but the window. But... Maybe he only shielded the window. She walked up and touched the cold stone wall. She would have to break through the wall and hope there wasn’t a barrier on the other side. It was her only chance.

Damn I am really in a situation here...

Loud gasps echoed in the ballroom the moment Lucy vanished. Derek spun his head in the direction where he had seen Lucy last to discover she wasn’t there. And he heard the murmuring of voices and the words that the princess vanished. Derek looked around frantically dropping the hands of the girl he was dancing with. He rushed over to the other end of the room meeting up with Aiden, Justice and Ryan.

“What happened? Where is she?” Derek asked in a panicked voice.

“She vanished. The guy who was dancing with her just vanished with her...” Ryan shook his head. “Damn it, it’s my fault. I didn’t recognize the guy... I shouldn’t have let him...”

“Shit... who could have done something like this.” Justice looked up at Aiden’s dark eyes.

“To bypass the vampire army... only a high-level demon or deity has this type of power.” Derek clenched his teeth. “Abaddon!” Derek growled and the man appeared in front of him. “Can you feel her? Can you use your connection to go to her? She’s been taken...”

“I...” Abaddon shook his head. “I can feel her. But the connection is muffled. I can’t get an accurate reading... I won’t stop. I’m going looking for her.” Abaddon said darkly as anger flashed over his eyes. He was livid. The damn deity masked himself

to have a vampire aura. There was no way anyone could have known. Still... he was enraged that his master had been taken. And the djinn inside of him burned in contempt.

“Wait. We need to think about this. Whoever took her... what if it was Wicker and he took her to the witch? Ryan, I need you to go to the front and find out how things are going with Jasper. If the witch has her now...” Derek felt his heart racing. He couldn’t lose her.

“If a deity has her there is only one person who can help.” Aiden looked at Derek. “Where did Lucy put her piece of the pearl? We need to get to Uncle Levi.”

“Wait... I’m coming with you. I’m going to have my father put out a high-alert distress order. My mate has been taken. This is not something we can take lightly. I will have him march his armies to the witch. If she has her...”

“No matter what we need my Uncle Levi... march your armies but have them wait with Jasper. We will consult with the others and form a plan. We need to think this through.” Aiden knew his family was experienced in these matters. And it was best to seek their counsel. Plus no one else could fight on par with a deity or an upper-level demon.

“You guys sit around and think things through. I’m going looking for her.” Abaddon growled and vanished. To hell with waiting. He wouldn’t wait for something bad to happen to her. He would follow the connection the best he could. Maybe he could map out a general area of where to search. He had to find her... No matter who had taken her... It didn’t matter to him if he was risking his soul. All he wanted was her safety.