

Her Brother, Her Mate Chapter 46

Parker POV

Basking in the afterglow of our mating, I'm running my fingers lightly up and down Carli's arm, mesmerized by her beauty as she snores softly on my chest. Almost midnight on the dot, she woke up, affected by the full impact of the mate bond. I thought my pull towards her couldn't have been any stronger. I was so wrong.

She's mine. Fully and completely mine. And I'm now hers. When I marked her, and felt the rush of her emotions, I could barely contain my satisfaction and relief feeling that she truly loved me too. It wasn't just the pull from the bond. She fully accepted me as her mate and the finality of her decision brought tears to my eyes.

It's almost time to wake up. Her dad will be here in an hour if we don't start getting ready. I need to run up to get my clothes for today and grab the gift I got Carli for her birthday. A garnet and emerald studded infinity necklace; the birthstones for both of us on an infinite loop. Simone helped me pick it out and I hope she likes it. Her dad has an even bigger surprise for her and I hope mine doesn't pale in comparison.

"Wake up birthday girl," I whispered against her skin, kissing her face.

She groans softly, rolling her face into my chest, "No."

I laughed quietly, rolling to wrap my arms around her. I know she won't get up for presents. I can't entice her with that. I know what will get her going though.

"You get to kill the vampires today," I taunted her.

She turns her head, peeks up at me with one eye and smiles.

"Okay, I'm up," she stretches out beside me, her naked body rubbing against mine. I rain kisses on her face, down to my mark on her neck, making her moan with desire. I nibble on it, teasing her as she starts pushing her body into mine. "5 more minutes," she tells me in a husky, heated voice before straddling me.

30 minutes later, we're both rushing to shower and get ready. I ran up to the alpha floor to get my clothes and almost ran right into my dad as he was coming out. It's Saturday. I figured he and mom would still be asleep.

I didn't even acknowledge him, glaring as I slid past him.

"Parker, wait."

"I'm in a rush. If you have anything to tell me, you can text me later."

"Don't be like that. I know you're upset, but I'm still your dad."

I sighed, turning to face him, "You're the a*****e that won't quit harrassing my mate. Seriously, save it. I'll come get the rest of my s**t from here later, but right now I need to go."

"I'm stepping down," my dad blurts out as I turned to walk away. I froze, turning to look at him again.

"What?"

"I'm stepping down as alpha. I don't want to fight you, Parker. You're my son. Even if you don't believe me now, I do love you and want what's best for you. I'm going to step down and relinquish the title to you. You don't need to call grandpa. I already talked to him last night. He's coming next week to perform the oath, then you and Carli can plan your ceremonies together. I don't want to fight you and lose you, son."

I stared at him, weighing his words. I know my parents love me. That was never the issue. But what kind of mate would I be if I overlooked their treatment of Carli just because they love me? That doesn't excuse their behavior towards her.

"Let me know when grandpa is coming." I started walking towards my room, leaving him behind.

I find Mary sitting on my bed, staring at a picture of me and Carli that Thomas took on her 11th birthday. Thomas and Elena took her out for ice cream and she asked me to smell mine, saying she thought hers was spoiled. When I sniffed it, she shoved the cone in my face. Thomas caught the picture right when she leaned in, laughing, and licked some of the mint chocolate ice cream off my nose.

“What are you doing in my room?” I asked in a hard voice, startling her.

She brought her hand to her chest and jumped slightly. “You scared me.”

“What are you doing in here?”

She looks back at the picture, then sets it on my bedside table. “Nothing. I just realized this morning when we were getting ready that I didn’t have any pictures of your sister.”

I growled quietly, the vibration barely leaving my throat, “She isn’t my sister. She’s my mate. It’s your fault you never took any. Please get out so I can change.”

“Parker, please don’t-”

I sighed deeply, cutting her off. They’re not going to give me a moment’s peace to get ready. I slipped into my closet, grabbing what I needed and shoving a few more outfits into a duffel bag, then went to leave. She’s still sitting on my bed, waiting.

“Don’t ruin Carli’s birthday. You guys have done enough damage. Leave her alone. I’m sure she doesn’t want you there anyway,” I told her coldly before grabbing my bag and walking out of the apartment.

When I got back to Carli’s apartment, I heard her still shuffling around in the bathroom, so I got dressed in my slacks and thin linen shirt out in the living room, giving her space. I was waiting on her couch patiently when I heard a knock at her door.

“Can you get that?!”

I laughed, “You do realize that’s your dad coming to kick my a*s for making you late?”

“I’m sure you’ll survive,” she calls from the bedroom.

I chuckled to myself, shaking my head, and opened the door for Tommy. He’s glowering at me with Elena smiling behind him, a glint in her eye.

“My daughter?”

I held my hands up in surrender, “It’s not my fault. She’s still getting dressed.”

“I’m right here!” Carli came hopping out of her room, pulling the strap to her chunky-heeled sandals on her feet. My mouth drops. She looks....wow!

“Oh! I knew that dress would look great on you!” Elena clapped her hands excitedly.

“You bought her that?” Tommy turned his glare to his mate.

She does look great. Too great. The white mini dress makes her tanned skin glow. It’s hugging her body, accentuating all the right places and making her loosely curled hair stand out in contrast. Breathtaking. She is absolutely breathtaking.

I grip the Tiffany’s box in my pocket, walking over to her slowly, waiting till she meets my eyes and c***s an eyebrow in question.

“You look amazing, but I think it’s missing something.”

“What?” she looks down, “I have my cap and gown I’m wearing over it. I didn’t want to be hot.” She probably thinks I meant she needs more clothes on. Her cleavage is rising with each breath and I can faintly tell she isn’t wearing a bra.

F**k. That means she’s not wearing underwear again. I push my hair back, trying not to groan out loud at the thought.

“I’m not talking about that. Close your eyes.”

“Why?” she eyed me suspiciously.

“Entertain me,” I smirked at her. She rolls her eyes, but complies.

I pulled the box out, making Elena gasp softly. I lifted the necklace from the box and fastened it around her slim throat, pulling her hair through the chain and off to the side, kissing my mark on her neck afterward, ignoring the growl coming from Tommy.

“Happy birthday,” I whispered.

She opens her eyes and looks down at her chest, touching the pendant in surprise. “It’s beautiful,” she touches it lightly and smiles up at me. “Is it Christmas themed?”

I laughed at her question, “No. It’s our birthstones. It’s an infinity loop. To remind you, I’ll love you forever.”

Elena cooed from the open door and Tommy rolled his eyes.

“Yeah, yeah. What a f*****g charmer. We’re going to be late.”

“I don’t have to be there for another hour, dad.” Carli is still looking down at her necklace, smiling softly as she touches each stone. I can feel through the newly formed bond that she really does love it. My heart swells with pride.

Thomas shifted nervously on his feet, making Elena chuckle and pat his arm soothingly.

“I may have a present for you too....”

“Where is it?” Carli asks, looking up and examining their hands and finding them empty.

“Outside. Let’s go. Nate’s probably getting it ready now,” Elena encourages us to get moving.

“Do you know what it is?” Carli whispered to me on the way down the stairs.

“Yep, but I’m not telling,” I teased her, kissing her pouty lips.

She huffs and pushes past me to walk next to Elena. So adorable.

I was against this gift, but I know she will love it. It’s so Carli.

Outside, right in front of the packhouse on the curb, is a brand new, massive Yamaha MT-10 SP with shiny red accents. Gamma Nathan is standing there with Courtney, who is jumping up and down, just as excited as if it was her gift.

Carli looks at them in confusion, then turns to her dad, “Is that....is that mine?”

He laughs nervously, rubbing the back of his head, “Happy birthday, Carli. It’s the first one I get to spend with you as your father. I wanted to get you something special.”

“It’s mine?!” Her excitement makes her voice rise 5 octaves as a brilliant smile spreads on her lit up face. She doesn’t wait for his answer; just jumps up and

throws her arms around his neck, making him bob up and down as she jumps excitedly.

“Do you like it?”

“I love it!” she squeals, letting him go and running to the motorcycle.

Elena sighed happily, “It’s nice that he found a way to use all that money we saved to move to make her this happy.”

“You should get one too. We can all get one and start our own motorcycle club,” I joked with her.

“Don’t tempt me,” she laughs.

Tommy won’t let Carli drive the motorcycle yet until she takes a safety course and gets her license, which I’m grateful for, but Gamma Nathan does drive it and Carli rides on the back.

We pull into the parking lot for her school’s football stadium and instantly are on high alert. It’s game time.

Her Brother, Her Mate Chapter 47

Carli POV

A f*****g motorcycle! I never even thought about wanting a motorcycle, but now that I have one I’m so f*****g psyched. I love the way the wind is shooting past us, running through my hair and the rush I get as Uncle Nathan zips through traffic.

“You doing okay back there?” he calls back to me at a stop light.

“This is f*****g amazing!” I yelled back. My dad’s SUV pulls up beside us, the windows rolling down in the backseat.

“Hey, good looking. My friend here would like your number,” Courtney giggles at me. Parker leans over and smirks, nodding at me suggestively.

“Sorry, I’m taken,” I teased him, lifting my necklace and bringing it to my lips. He smiles lovingly at me as I giggle.

When we get to school, Uncle Nate follows my dad's SUV and parks by the field. It's like the energy between all of us visibly shifts, becoming slightly more tense and we scan our surroundings without being obvious. Vincent's parents could be watching me right now. Watching me and Uncle Nathan. It's showtime.

"Dad," I stressed the word as I addressed Uncle Nathan, "Can you help me put on my robe?"

"Sure, honey."

He walks me to check in, and even kisses my cheek like he does to Courtney before he walks off to join our family.

The ceremony goes by super slow. Maybe it's just my nerves. I can't detect anything amiss. If I was being watched, there were no signs.

Dad informed all the other warriors in attendance of what was going on, so there were eyes everywhere. No one noticed anything out of the ordinary.

As our principal drones on about how our lives are just beginning and to learn from our mistakes, blah blah blah, I look back, scanning the stadium again, when I notice my mom and Alpha Jared in attendance. What are they doing here?

I shrug it off, figuring they're here as alpha and Luna to support all our pack members. They never mentioned anything to me about attending. Not that we talk much. They usually just demand and yell at me. When my eyes meet my mom's momentarily, I almost swear I see her smile softly back at me.

Casey and Simone are across the aisle, a few rows back. Casey looks pissed. I know he's not. Just tense as he keeps looking back towards Courtney. He had his parents sit by her, and even talked a few of the older warriors into nonchalantly sitting around her, guarding her in his place. I could take care of myself. Courtney, not so much.

Simone keeps using her finger to redirect his head towards the stage. She has been a little exasperated with all of us since yesterday morning when she woke up at my dad's to find us all whispering around the table about today. Elena told me not to tell the other students in case the school staff hears and ends up canceling our graduation. I wasn't trying to leave her out. I just didn't want her to worry. I will have to make it up to her later.

The school secretary starts reading off our names, one-by-one. Soon, my row was directed to stand and line up by the stairs of the stage. When she gets to 'Childes', Carli Childes, the whole section of my family starts whooping and hollering, embarrassingly loud. I'm blushing by the time I step up to the platform, receive my diploma, and walk back down after shaking 4 different staff members' hands.

I scan the crowd again, and my eyes land briefly on my mom. She is staring back at me, pride in her eyes. I've never seen her look at me like that before. Was she proud I was finally an adult so she could wash her hands of me? I scoff and shake my head.

When it's Casey's turn, Courtney stands up and cheers, probably louder than she should. He smiles lovingly at her, but I can see his worry at her bringing so much attention to herself. She wore a blonde wig Elena had, and she was wearing sunglasses, but it didn't look natural. I think the wig was from an old Halloween costume of Elena's.

As we finish the ceremony with our final reciting of the school's song and mission statement, I see it. There's a black sedan parked but running just outside the emergency exit used for ambulances in case of an injury during a game. That has to be them.

"East gate emergency entrance," I mind link to our group.

"I see it." my dad tells me.

Good. Now that we know where they are, we can know how to set the bait.

All the seniors toss their caps in the air, then a frenzy of proud parents and family members come pouring onto the field. I unzip my gown, but am forced to zip it right back up when I reach my parents and Parker. They want pictures. I rolled my eyes. Even in a situation where we have to be on high alert, dad wants a picture.

I took one with Uncle Nate first, so as not to raise suspicion. Then, take one with my overly proud dad and Elena, one with everyone, then one with just Parker. I place my cap on his head as he wraps his arms around me.

"You better be careful," Parker whispered in my ear, "Don't do anything rash or reckless. Wait for us to get there before you act. Got it?"

I rolled my eyes. Through the mate bond, I can feel his worry. There was no doubt about my abilities there. He was just worried about his mate.

Vincent told us that they would follow us throughout the day, and then tell Satrina of our location tonight so she could come and kill me when I least expected it. We were hoping we could wait till tonight and I could walk off on my own and be the bait, but I know their plans could have changed. Parker is scared I'm going to rush off to confront them now instead of being patient and waiting for them to make the first move.

Courtney ran off with Casey and his family to take pictures. When I looked over, I was surprised to see she had discarded her wig and glasses while they snapped pictures of them together. What is she doing?

It's crowded, people everywhere, so hopefully she goes unnoticed, but she should still have it on.

"I'm going to go see Simone and Casey. I'll be right back."

"I'll come with you," Parker urged.

"It's fine. Look at the crowd. Nothing will happen here."

He looks around, then glances briefly at the black sedan before nodding, "Hurry back."

I rushed to the Lewis's. Simone stripped from her robe but still has her cap on her head. She is rocking it, which is probably why she kept it on. She smiles brightly at me.

"Come take a picture with me!" she squeals. I take a couple with her, then her parents urge me, her and Casey to take a few together. We've gone through all of school together, and now we will probably rarely be together like this again with Casey moving to Canada.

When the pictures are done, I pull Courtney to me, "You need to get your wig back on."

"I know, I know. But I can't get my hair back in it. I tried!" She whispers back.

"Follow me," I told her, pulling her towards the bathroom. It's a little less crowded here, but there are still people all around.

I help Courtney twirl her hair and pin it back on her head, then maneuver the wig in place, straightening it out so it sits right. I brush some of the baby hairs over her forehead to help make it look more natural. When we're coming out, I get a mind link from Parker.

"Where are you?!"

"Bathroom. Courtney took off the wig. I helped her get it back on."

"Tell someone. Jeez. All of us started freaking out, Carli."

I huffed in exasperation, about to give him an earful, when my mom came around the corner approaching me and Courtney.

"Carli! There you are. I was looking for you."

I try to keep the disdain off my face. Courtney, not so much. She is scowling at my mother, reaching out and gripping my hand for support.

"Why?" I asked her, genuinely curious.

"I, uh, wanted to congratulate you. You're now an adult! Happy...." she bites her lip nervously, "Happy birthday. I was hoping that maybe you wouldn't mind having lunch or dinner with us to celebrate?"

Her voice sounds so hesitant and nervous. She's never been like this with me. Why? Why would she want to be nice to me? Because I'm no longer her daughter? Because I'm Parker's mate?

"I have plans with dad," I tell her, going to walk away, but she stops me, reaching for my arm. I flinch back slightly without meaning to, making her face fall.

"Carli, I...."

She never gets to finish what she's about to say. All of a sudden, 2 figures come out of the shadows, spraying something in our faces, and my world becomes dizzy, all the colors fading to black.

"Parker," I cry out, through the mind link, but I don't know if it gets through before I lose consciousness.

Her Brother, Her Mate Chapter 48

Parker POV

I waited another 5 minutes before I started to freak out. She said she was going 20 yards away to see Simone and Casey, not all the way to the bathroom under the stands where I couldn't see her.

"She's still not back yet," I tell her dad, "I'm going to go looking for her."

"I'll come too. The little s**t said she would stay with us. I'm putting my f*****g foot in her-"

"Thomas! We are at school. Watch your mouth," Elena hissed at him.

"I don't give a s**t. She should be more cautious!" he yells at her, "No f*****g self-preservation," he mutters under his breath as we walk towards the bathrooms. He's having an emotional day, with it being such an important day for Carli, and at the same time, there are people out there trying to kill her.

When we got to the bathroom area, I was surprised to find my dad frantically searching the area too.

"What are-"

"Have you seen Mary?" he asks before I can ask what he's doing here. I told them this morning to leave Carli alone.

"No, and I shouldn't be seeing you. I said-"

"I can't find her!" he almost screamed, running his hand down his face, "I felt...it's...I felt like she was trying to reach me in a panic and now I can't find her."

"Where was she?" Thomas asked.

"She went to talk to Carli. She never came back."

My panic rises at the same time as Tommy's does. I ran into the girls' bathroom, ignoring the yells of protest from inside. She's not here. Her scent is lingering, but she's not here anymore. I ran back out and ran towards the field, to the emergency vehicle entrance. The sedan is gone. No!

Carli POV

I wake suspended in the air, my hands bound above me on a metal hook. My eyes burned, and I blinked crusty filth from their seal so I can get a look around. This looks like an old, abandoned meat processing facility. Conveyor belts and grids with hooks are covering the entire open room. I hear grunting beside me, look over, and I'm stunned to see Courtney and my mom there too. Courtney is beginning to wake, but my mom is still passed out.

These f*****g bastards. What the hell do they want with them? Why couldn't they just take me?

I move my wrists, swinging my body slightly to assess the binding. My wrists are tied tightly, but they're tied with normal rope. Vampires can't touch silver and these idiots probably didn't think of using it on us anyway. f*****g idiots.

Murmurs started reaching us from down a corridor off to the left. Courtney whimpers in fright, and I quickly look at her and mouthed, "Sleep". She nods and hangs her head again, pretending to sleep, but I can still see the tremor in her face. She's scared, but she can at least react logically. Good. I want all their focus to be on me until I can make a move.

"Parker? Parker?" I try to mind link him. I don't get a response. I bet they used a witch's potion on us, blocking our wolf's side so we couldn't put up much of a fight. I'm just as lethal in human form, so, the joke's on them. I just have to bide my time, making sure it's just the 3 of them so I can finish this now. I don't want to prolong this fight. I want it finished today. Parker and my dad would never let me out to ride my birthday present by myself if there were still more vampires out there hunting me.

The voices grow louder and louder until 3 bodies finally enter the room. I recognized Satrina right away. Her haunted appearance looks much the same. Even her managed mouth hasn't healed much in the past week. Good. The b***h deserves the scarring. The other woman is beautiful. She looks much like Vincent, but with long, glossy hair. The man, however, is balding, and I can tell by his sickly appearance that he is going rogue. I looked back at Vincent's mom and noticed puncture wounds on her neck. That's what Vincent meant. They were now corrupt with Satrina's idealism. Instead of reforming her, Satrina pulled her brother into her corrupt world.

"I see our friend has woken," the man's eyes narrowed at me, making me smirk.

“Friend is a bit of a reach, don’t you think?” I huffed at him.

Satrina hisses at me, “That’s her. Nathan’s daughter! The one who killed my love.”

“Actually,” the other woman says, “We watched them all morning. I don’t believe she is his daughter. But do not worry, sister. The one next to her, I believe, is the one you seek. You will have your fill of revenge from all of them.”

Satrina’s eyes snap at Courtney, weighing her words, “Yes. That one looks much more like a wolf from the wilderness.”

“It didn’t make sense to me that the other one was Nathan’s daughter. Why would she be graduating from high school in Miami? I think my son fibbed slightly on that.”

“And the other one?” Satrina hisses and nods in the direction of my mom.

The man laughs a sinister laugh, “The Luna of the Crystal Moon Pack. The pack responsible for your torture. She is the mate of the man who whipped and mangled you.”

Satrina lets out a haunting laugh, “Well done, Sergi. Well done.”

“Well, I’m bored,” I state. I see a pile of pallets on the floor against the wall, broken and splintered. If I could swing myself off this hook, I know I could kill all three of them, even with my hands tied. The man is not much taller than the woman, and looks sickly and weak. The full effects of drinking the blood from his own kind haven’t hit him yet. He is still in the first stage. The disease is spreading through his body, weakening it as everything becomes rotten and infected. Parker asked me to wait, but I couldn’t. I don’t even know if he’s coming here and I have no way to mind link him or ask.

“You’re bored?” Sergi asks in surprise. “Bored? Do you not understand the situation you are in?”

I rolled my eyes and laughed, “If it’s just you three, I don’t see a threat. Can you let us go now? I have a graduation and birthday to celebrate, and my arms are going numb.”

“Oh, child,” the woman purrs, sounding so much like her son with his speech, “3 vampires up against a wolfless pup and 2 unconscious wolfless women should terrify you.”

I snorted a laugh, “You’re funny. Vincent must get his smooth talk from you.”

Her eyes narrowed at me, “You know my son well?”

“Intimately,” I said in a bored tone, sighing loudly, “It’s too bad he will be an orphan soon.”

“Why, you little...”

The woman approaches me, fangs hissing and her claws extended. When she’s a foot away, rearing her hand back to attack, I swing forward, hook my legs around her neck and snap it, breaking it instantly.

“Vanessa!” Sergi screams, running to her. I swung back then forward, and kicked him in the face, making him fall back as I freed my bound wrist from the hook and landed on Vanessa’s face. Smashing it under my hard shoes. f**k. Elena bought me these. Now they have brain matter all over them.

Satrina lunges for me, but I duck and roll out of her way in the direction of the pallets. I pick up a broken board, and turned with it in my bound hands, lunging it into her heart right as she springs for me again, her snapping fangs inches from my throat.

A scream brought my focus back toward the man. Sergi has Courtney in his hold, his sickly bruised hand wrapped around her throat.

“You will pay for this,” he hisses a cry at me, “My Vanessa...”

Courtney still has the metal hook in her hand. He must have lifted the whole thing from the track when he brought her down. She whimpers, staining against his hold, then rears her hand back and stabs him in the leg with it, making him drop her. She ducks down, rolling like she just saw me do. I yank the wood from Satrina’s chest, lifting it above my head and throw it right when he frees the hook from his leg and straightens back up to hiss at me. It goes flying through the air and sinks into the center of his neck, making him sputter and fall towards the floor. He’s not dead. Not yet. I pick up another plank, breaking it in half using my foot as an anchor, and sink one piece back in Satrina’s chest, the other in Vanessa’s as I stride by, and then, when I get to

Sergi, I pull the wood from his throat and stab it through his chest. Done. I knew this would be easy.

“You okay?” I asked Courtney. She nods frantically, tears streaming down her face. “Do you have your phone?”

She pats her pockets with shaky hands then shakes her head. Well, s**t. Hopefully, this is the address Vincent gave us yesterday. If it is, everyone should be on their way here.

I walked to a conveyor belt, and used its sharp edge to slice through the rope, then walked over to Courtney, untying her. She throws herself in my arms and starts crying frantically, relief gripping her.

“Shh, it’s okay. You’re okay.”

“I should have kept the stupid wig on,” she wails, making me laugh softly.

“I have a feeling they knew even without the wig. It’s okay. You’re safe now.”

After she calms down, she helps me lift my mom off the hook. I heaved mom over my shoulder, and we searched the building for a way outside. Right when we found the double doors, chained shut, I set my mom on the ground and roundhouse kicked the doors off their hinges. The rusty screws broke with a creak as the doors went falling to the ground.

Right on the other side, 10 pack SUVs come ripping up onto the curb. Parker jumps out of one before it’s even at a complete stop. I stood there triumphantly, a bright smile on my face.

Her Brother, Her Mate Chapter 49

“I told you I would be fine,” I muttered for the hundredth time. Between Parker and my dad, I’ve lost my battle high. I’m sitting in the trunk of an SUV while a medic checks me over for injuries, anti-venom at the ready. Besides the rope burn, and a torn dress, I’m fine. Dad chewed my a*s out for not staying with them and Parker is getting all huffy because I acted without him there.

“We had an agreement,” he narrows his eyes at me.

“I’m so sorry I didn’t wait for you,” I rolled my eyes, “I should have let the bloodsucker bite and maul me instead of defending us. You’re totally right.”

“Carli,” he groans, running his hands through his hair.

Casey is consoling a tearful Courtney, Uncle Nathan yelling at anyone and everyone he can about her being abducted. I know this isn’t her thing, (fighting, battles, blood), but she did a great job reacting to the situation.

Alpha Jared is the one who surprised me the most when he got here. Besides Parker, he was the fastest to get out of the car, running like a madman towards his mate. He picked my mom up, cradling her in his arms as his hands roamed her body, checking for injury, then started crying uncontrollably as he carried her to the car. After several minutes, he came to me, thanking me adamantly for keeping her safe.

I didn’t know how to respond. I was still pissed about yesterday, and a lifetime’s worth of negligence can’t be smoothed over with kind words, so I just nodded and waited for him to finish.

On the way back to the packhouse, I called Vincent, letting him know that they were all dead. He sighs heavily in the line, “My mother too?”

“Yes.” When I said the word, I could faintly hear a sob break from him. He takes a few deep breaths and mutters a “thank you,” then hangs up.

Elena is calling the fae guard, letting them know the vampire has been dealt with. She called Lady Delilah next, breaking the news to her about the two members of her coven. She makes sure to stress that Vincent helped us in every way possible, and I hope he doesn’t get too much backlash because of his family. We can’t choose who we are born to, and he shouldn’t be held responsible for his parents’ mistakes.

Parker won’t give me an inch of space. He pulled me into his lap on the drive back and my dad ordered him to not let me out of his sight ever again. I don’t complain. I can feel through the bond how frightened he was and how much he needed to just hold me to comfort himself. I need him to. He’s grounding me, making me aware of how dangerous a situation we were really in.

We pull up to the packhouse and I hop out of the SUV before anyone, desperate for a shower. When I complain about not wanting to get Vanessa’s brain matter on the floors, Parker scoops me up in his arms and carries me up the stairs and into my apartment. When he sets me down on the bathroom sink, he takes the shoes off my feet and tosses them into the waste bin, then tears my dress the rest of the way off me, tossing it in the trash too.

“I can undress myself,” I told him.

“You’re not doing anything by yourself for a long a*s time, Carli. You gave me a f*****g heartattack.”

“Potty mouth,” I smirked at him, making him growl.

I stood in the spray of the shower, letting Parker wash me from head to toe. I don’t mind his overprotective antics. I got to kill all the vampires on my own and I’m too smug to care much about it, knowing I just took out the biggest threat the pack has been dealing with all on my own. He can wash my hair and body for me. I did enough today. From birthday presents, to graduating and saving the day. I’m having a decent day.

My dad wanted us back at his apartment tonight, demanding we still have a birthday dinner. Fried chicken cooked by Elena and apple pie. Sounds amazing to me.

A few days later, I was kicking Matt’s a*s during morning training. He’s being considered for the gamma position and has to up his training to meet the qualifications. Alpha Jared wouldn’t consider anyone with mixed blood before, but Parker is adamant that he be in the running. Matt is a great fighter. I always knew that he was strong as a warrior, but thought him and Lilly would be taking over the resort for his mom. Vivian was adamant that she was not anywhere near retirement, and told me being gamma would be too good an opportunity for her son. She was elated that Parker didn’t look down on him because of his human father and hoped this was the beginning of changes in our pack.

Matt’s brothers are even becoming more serious in their training. Their egos took a hit from Parker. I didn’t see it but I heard about it from the other warriors. Parker just let them f**k each other up, not putting much effort into the fight. They show up for training in the mornings now, and have quit flirting with me so openly.

Casey left for Canada and Blue Cliff Pack with Uncle Nathan and Courtney yesterday. His parents and Simone are going to visit at the end of summer when he takes his gamma vows. I’m excited for my friend. He’s beyond happy with my cousin and she pampers him the way he deserves.

Matt gets the upper hand for once in the fight and puts me in a sleeper hold. I faux distress, hoping I can trick the bastard into letting up enough so I can

break free and headbutt him, but he doesn't fall for it this time. I have to literally tap out for the first time today.

"f**k you," I sneered in his smug face.

"Hey, my mom raised me to treat women equally," he laughs.

"A*s," I muttered, letting him pull me to my feet.

"Hey babe, can you come back to the packhouse?" Parker mind linked me.

"Why? I'm busy." I don't want to leave training until I get Matt on his a*s again. I hate losing.

"My grandparents are here." f**k. Okay, I gotta go. They were coming so Parker's grandfather, Alpha Cedric, could perform the vows to give the alpha title to Parker.

Parker has been working with his dad for the last 2 days, so Alpha Jared could show him how to handle the business aspects of the pack. Parker went to school and got his MBA, so he would be prepared for the role. He is planning on hiring accountants to help with the business side of the pack while he takes a more central role, being involved in all aspects of pack life.

His grandfather handled all the business himself when he was alpha, so that's what Alpha Jared did. The pack was smaller then, and business was not as time-consuming, so it wasn't an issue. Plus, he had a kickass warrior Luna, Luna Grace, to help with the warrior side of things. She worked along side him in all aspects, not just running the packhouse.

I never met Alpha Cedric or Luna Grace, and I was nervous. Luna Grace didn't like my mom, but Elena told me she had no negative feelings towards me. She just didn't approve of the way Alpha Jared and my mom handled things. Elena and Luna Grace are great friends, and Elena and her even meet once a month for lunch. I was never allowed to go with my mom and Alpha Jared when they went to visit his parents, but apparently they know all about me from my adoptive mom.

I ran up to my room. I've been sharing it with Parker now that we're fully mates. He even moved all his clothes down here and basically moved in while Alpha Jared and my mom looked for a new house to move to. I showered quickly. I didn't want to meet his grandparents for the first time, covered in

blood, sweat and dirt. I raced down to the alpha's office on the main floor after quickly dressing in a sundress Courtney gave me for my birthday and pulling my wet hair up in a messy bun. I remembered to put underwear on this time too. Parker asked me repeatedly not to wear dresses without them. I don't like being sweaty, but I also don't want to give him too hard of a time. Also, it's fun when he tears my panties off me. I like the thrill of knowing he's going to do it when I wear them. It's like a reward for good behavior.

I knocked softly on the office door, then let myself in. Parker is sitting at the desk, and his grandparents are sitting across from him, turning and smiling at me at my entrance. Parker stands, smiling brightly, beckoning me to come around to him. I went around the desk and wrapped my arms around his waist. His touch settles my nerves, then I turn to face his grandparents.

Alpha Cedric is handsome, but looks nothing like Parker. He's insanely tall, but that's the only resemblance. He has kind hazel eyes, and thick salt and pepper hair. His smile is friendly as he takes me in.

Luna Grace, on the other hand, looks just like Parker with her curly blonde hair and droopy brown eyes. Her brown eyes meet mine as a megawatt smile, much like Parker's, spreads across her features, "Carli? I'm Grace. It's so nice to finally meet you, darling." She comes around and pulls me into a tight hug. "I can't wait to get to know you over the next few weeks."

I smiled and hugged her back, "It's great to meet you too."

She releases me, then turns to her mate, "Your turn, you big oaf. Introduce yourself."

He laughs softly at her insult and I finally see the resemblance between him and Parker. Parker has the same laugh when I get huffy with him.

"Call me Cedric, Carli. I'm excited to see my grandson has such a beautiful mate. We have heard so much about you."

"Oh yes, Elena would call us all the time and tell us about this firecracker of a daughter she had that kicked all the boy's butts. To say I'm excited you're the next luna would be an understatement."

Parker leads us out of the office and into the meeting room, where Alpha Jared and my mom are waiting, along with my dad and Elena, and Beta Anthony and Jessica. My mom looked nervous seeing Grace walk in. Grace

gave her a polite smile, and then a brilliant smile and a small wave to Elena. I almost feel bad for my mom. It's obvious Grace doesn't care for her.

I sit at the right side of the head of the table, Grace taking the seat beside me. Mom is across from me, and she smiles hesitantly at me. I offered her a tight smile back. It's been days, and even though Alpha Jared has thanked me numerous times, and even apologized to me for the attempted command from last week, my mom hasn't sought me out once. No thank you, no sorry, nothing.

I caught her peeking at me from across the room all the time, but she never approached me. I don't know if that upsets me or not. I, more or less, just want her to leave me alone. I just want her to move on with her mate who she has always put before me and everyone else, and give me peace.

Alpha Jared and Parker stand before Cedric at the front of the room. Cedric recites the moon goddess's vows, breaking Alpha's Jared's oath as alpha over Crystal Moon Pack and passing it onto Parker.

I study Parker's handsome, serious face, and pride fills me. He is going to do great things. For his pack and for all the ones he loves. If he can help mend the brokenness in me, he can do anything.