Fated to My Vampire Lord

Chapter 3

Mira's POV I picked up my bag and walked to the back row. Every eye in the room followed me. I could feel it — Piper and Alyssa's disbelief, Jason's frozen expression, the careful silence from the other wolves. I sat down in the empty chair next to Damon and set my notebook on the desk like nothing was happening. My hands were shaking. I put them in my lap where no one could see. Up close, Damon was harder to look at than he was from across the room. Not because he was frightening — because he was too much. His skin held a cool, moonlit sheen, and every line of him looked too deliberate — the cut of his cheekbones, the shape of his mouth, the perfect stillness of his body. Like something carved instead of born. I tried very hard not to stare and keep my eyes on my notebook for the most of the time. Damon's friends — Felix and Nikolai— didn't look at me. Not once. Felix leaned across his desk toward Damon instead. "So this is your new thing?" Felix grinned. "The real unity in diversity huh? Should I alert the press?" Nikolai chuckled. Damon didn't look at them. "Discussion's ten minutes. I'd rather not waste it on you." They laughed, but they dropped it. I sat there thinking. Maybe this made sense. Damon's group had been in the news recently — rumors about bullying shifters, abusing their power and status. A student council complaint, some blog post that went semi-viral. Pairing with a wolf shifter in a history class was a low-effort way to look cooperative without actually changing anything. That was probably why he said yes. Not because of me. I'd already been thinking about the project while Ms. Evelyn was talking. I pulled my notebook forward and kept my voice low. "I looked at the syllabus topics. I was thinking we could do the post-war integration policies. I can take the primary research and the first draft. You'd just need to review and add the vampire-side sources." He didn't respond for a second. I thought maybe I'd said something wrong — gone too fast, taken too much control. Most vampires didn't like shifters telling them what to do. Then: "What's your name?" I blinked. "What?" "Your name." He was looking at me now. Up close, his eyes were darker than I expected. Almost black, with something colder underneath. "The teacher said it, but I didn't catch it." "Mira," I said. "Mira Hale. Silver Ridge pack." Something moved behind his eyes. A flash — recognition, maybe. Or interest. It was gone before I could name it, and his face went blank again. "Fine," he said. "Do whatever you want with the outline." That was it. No questions about my qualifications, no power play, no condescension. Just fine. I'd been bracing for something much worse. "Okay," I said. "I'll send you the draft breakdown by this weekend." He was already looking at his phone. "Sure." I realized I was relieved. That was strange. Most people were terrified of being this close to Damon Voss. For some reason, sitting next to him felt less dangerous than sitting across from Alyssa. The bell rang. I packed my bag quickly, wanting to get out before anyone had time to corner me about what just happened. I wasn't fast enough. Alyssa caught me in the hallway. Jason was behind her, jacket already

on, keys in hand. "So." Alyssa tilted her head. "Partners with Damon Voss. That's new." "The teacher assigned it," I said. "Sort of." "Mm." She didn't believe me. "Anyway — Jason and I are going out for Valentine's. Where are you and your boyfriend headed? Maybe we could do a double date." I could feel the trap. If I named a place, she'd show up. If I didn't, she'd know I was lying. "We haven't decided yet," I said. "He's picking the place." "How spontaneous." Alyssa's smile didn't reach her eyes. "Well, let us know. I'd love to finally meet him." Jason shifted his weight. "Lyss, we're gonna miss our reservation." He looked at me over her shoulder. A quick glance — apologetic, almost. The same look he always gave me when Alyssa pushed too hard. It used to make me feel seen. Now it just made me tired. "Have fun tonight, Mira," he said. Alyssa let him take her arm and pull her toward the exit. She looked back once, still smiling. Then they were gone. I stood in the hallway until my shoulders came down from my ears. Jason was still a good person. I had to believe that. He just wasn't my person anymore. I couldn't go back to the pack house. If I was home on Valentine's Day with no boyfriend, no date, no plans — someone would notice. Someone would talk. The lie would start falling apart. So I walked to the café three blocks from campus. It wasn't a pack place, just a cozy little fusion café with warm lights, polished wooden tables, and the best hot chocolate I'd ever tasted. They served everyone there — shifters and vampires. I knew Valentine's day was a big deal especially among shifters, but I didn't expect this small non-pack café was packed too. Almost every table full — mostly shifter couples sharing plates, splitting desserts, laughing at each other's phones. Heart-shaped paper cutouts taped to the windows. A playlist of slow songs I didn't recognize playing through the ceiling speakers. The barista glanced around the crowded café, then pointed me to the only table without a little RESERVED card on it. A tiny two-top wedged by the window, barely big enough for one plate and a mug. I took it. Ordered a hot chocolate and a grilled cheese. Then I pulled out my phone and pretended to text someone who wasn't there. This was fine. I just had to sit here for two hours, look like I was waiting for someone, then go home and say we'd had a lovely time. I was twenty minutes into my plan — hot chocolate half-finished, phone propped against the salt shaker playing a video on silent — when the bell above the door jingled. I looked up out of habit. Alyssa. Jason. Standing in the doorway, scanning the room. Alyssa saw me first. Her whole face lit up. "Mira!" She crossed the café in three steps, Jason trailing behind her. "You're here too? Where's your date?"