

There were around thirteen vampires, almost outnumbering the teenagers two to one. One of them, who Henry assumed was their leader, took a step forward, holding a longsword in his right hand. His skin might once have been caramel-coloured, but it was now a dull dark grey. The vampire's hair was a curly, thick-looking black mess and his eyes reminded him of an adult raven's; stormy grey and intelligent. He wore a pitch-black cloak that covered him from the base of his neck all the way down to the ground, obscuring his feet.

Henry checked his soulmate timer subtly as the vampires began to bare their fangs, their leader examining him and his friends closely.

6:37

Fine, then. Love on the battlefield. Hopefully, his soulmate wouldn't end up being one of his adversaries.

"Come on out here and face us like men!" The leader of the vampire clan pointed his sword at James, who was the tallest on the teens' side of the battleground, clearly challenging him to step up.

"Oh, um, well, only half of us identify as male, so..." James trailed off.

"Alright then, I'd like to apologize."

Henry sighed quietly, rubbing his wrist restlessly and giving Lucas a tired glare as he glanced in his direction, a look of concern written plainly on his face.

"Apology accepted."

"Now, come on out here and face us like adults."

The six teens looked at each other and grinned before facing their respective opponents and charging into battle. The vampire who was trying to kill Henry practically launched himself at his neck. Henry blocked his attack using Excalibur. He deflected all of the vampire's blows carefully, trying to stay on the defensive. His opponent dashed forward and Henry slashed at him with his sword.

Excalibur didn't hit anything important, but the vampire hissed as the blade caught his shoulder. It hadn't made a deep cut, but it was still something. Ice began to spread slowly outward from where Henry had struck the vampire. He threw himself towards Henry, who ducked, his palms beginning to sweat. Henry was tiring quickly. His sword almost slipped out of his hand and he could barely hold on to it.

He swung it at his attacker's head, missing by an inch. Just then, he felt something in his pocket.

*Of course, he thought. The pencil! Almost like a wooden stake!*

Henry reached for it, gripping it like he'd done with his knife before he'd started using his ancestor's weapon. He brought it forward into the vampire's eye, and his opponent stumbled back, hissing and wailing like an angry cat. He spasmed on the ground before frosting over completely.

*0:11*

Henry stepped carefully away from him, looking around to see if he could help anyone and wiping the sweat from his palms onto his pants. He spotted his sister, Gwen, from the corner of his eye. It looked like she was fighting three vampires at once. Henry made to go join her, but Lucas held out his arm to stop him.

"Let me fight, Lucas! I want us to win! Besides, you're injured! There's no way I'm not helping you!"

"You can't, you need to get out of this alive. Besides, Gwen needs you. I won't let you sacrifice yourself!" Lucas argued, and Henry clenched his fists in frustration, glaring up at him.

*0:04*

"And why would that be?" he demanded.

The other boy took a deep breath before looking him in the eyes, his voice softening with his affection for his teammate when he answered his question. "Because I love you, Henry. That's why."

*Zero.*

Henry looked up at him in disbelief. "You... love me?" he asked, unsure as to whether he'd misheard him. He hoped he hadn't. He'd had a crush on Lucas for close to six months now.

Lucas nodded. "More than anything."

"I love you, too," Henry admitted, watching a soft smile play across Lucas's lips as he looked down at their wrists, surely a match for his own expression. So, they were soulmates. That wasn't so bad. It could definitely have been worse.

“Guys, now is not the time!” Henry heard James yell from somewhere off to his left.

Both boys’ faces flushed in embarrassment.

“Really, James?” Henry shot back, turning to see him battling one of the vampires about ten feet away.

“Oh, I’m sorry, did I ruin your moment?”

“I mean, kind of,” Henry heard his soulmate mutter.

James pivoted a little, grinning at the two of them, only dropping his guard for a fraction of a second.

*Be careful, James!* Henry wanted to yell.

He didn’t have to worry, though. The dark-haired teen was able to get his opponent into a one-handed chokehold. He used his other hand to press the blade of his knife against the dull skin of her neck. She hissed at him, trying to fight back with her arms, but James just wasn’t having it. He inclined his chin towards Lucas, who got the hint.

He half-jogged, half-walked over to the two of them, leaving Henry’s side as the smaller boy joined Gwen, Becca and Theo in getting rid of the last few vampires.

As the four of them disposed of their remaining nocturnal foes, Henry watched Lucas intently. His soulmate handed James the silver dagger he’d been holding.

James used the weapon to end the young-looking vampire’s life, striking her right between her ribs. James wasn’t the type to do such a thing, and Henry could see that the consequences of his actions were already taking their toll on him. But at least he had made it out, safe and sound.

All six teens regrouped as the battle was won. They celebrated quietly amongst themselves, hoping that no more potential adversaries were lurking, waiting for a chance to pounce while they had their guard down.

Henry beckoned Gwen over, eager to reconvene with his twin. “Hey,” he greeted her, out of breath.

“Hi,” she replied, her eyes unfocused as they scanned his face. “How’re you feeling?”

“Tired,” he admitted. “You?”

“Same here. So,” her face lit up in a sudden grin at the chance to make fun of him, “what were you and Lucas talking about?”

Henry had been expecting her to ask that question. “Well, you see, I finished off the one I was paired with,” he began, referring to his first enemy. “So I was going to try and help you, Theo, and Becca with yours. You know, to speed up the process, yeah?”

His sister nodded, wiping a bead of sweat from her forehead.

“But Lucas said that he would do it, and that he didn’t want me to get hurt, so I asked him why, insisting that he was already hurt, obviously, because he was. Then, he told me that he loved me, right when my soulmate timer stopped at zero!”

“That’s...interesting, to say the least,” Gwen spoke up, glancing subtly at a spot a little over her younger brother’s head. A small part of him wondered what she was looking at. “Are you two a couple now, or what?”

“Uh...” Henry’s cheeks reddened. He didn’t necessarily want to have this conversation with his sister, especially when he felt like collapsing on the ground and never getting back up. *Oh, the ways in which exhaustion can affect a person.* “We didn’t exactly have much time to talk, so I, for one, have no clue how he feels about this.”

“Same here,” came Lucas’s voice from behind him, scaring the shorter boy. He chuckled lowly as Henry turned around to face him, his arms crossed.

Gwen tried (and failed) to hide her giggles with the palm of her hand. So that was what she’d been staring at.

“Why would you do that?” Henry asked, his voice harsh with a hint of betrayal, eyes scanning his soulmate distrustfully.

“I have my reasons, darling.” With that, Lucas winked at him before pulling him aside, presumably to have a chat about the whole *soulmates* thing. “In all seriousness, though,” he lowered his voice, so that only the two of them could hear it, “is it alright if I call you that, or would you prefer to just keep it friendly?”

Henry couldn’t be bothered with this. He was tired, covered in sweat, and sore, not to mention all the small cuts he could feel on his arms, neck, and face. “I’m comfortable with anything, as long as we can reach a mutual agreement. But, just so

you know, *Lukie*,” he poked the other in the chest to make his point clear, using his (and Gwen’s) nickname for the boy in front of him, “I know that you’re in love with me, and I’ve known for quite some time that I’m in love with you, so don’t even *try* to pretend that we’re ‘just friends.’” He used air quotes on the last two words, giving the young Scotsman in front of him the most sarcastic look he could muster without bursting into laughter.

“Noted,” Lucas muttered under his breath before making eye contact with his best friend’s twin brother. He stepped a little closer to him before muttering a simple question in Henry’s ear, his warm breath grazing the boy’s skin, making him shudder. “Can I kiss you?”

Henry inhaled sharply before nodding.

Upon his approval, Lucas tilted the other’s chin up gently using his first two fingers, before closing the gap between them, pressing a quick kiss to Henry’s cheek and pulling back right afterwards.

James caught their attention from somewhere off to the side, ruining the moment the two boys had been sharing. “Ooh, Lucas kissed Henry! I ship it!”

Mere seconds later, Theo clapped a hand over his mouth, muffling his fanboy squeals. “Sorry about him, guys,” they said, rubbing the back of their neck sheepishly. “Take your time. Not too much of it, of course. We still have to find the Scroll of Whatever and return it to the Underworld with the Quill, but sort things out, I guess.”

“Understood,” the two of them nodded, Henry speaking up.

Lucas turned back to him, his eyes widening in surprise.

“What’s wrong?” The other boy’s voice took on a concerned tone.

“Well, uh, you have a nasty-looking cut right here,” he muttered, gesturing to Henry’s right forearm. “Not to mention a small one just above your eyebrow. I can’t believe I just noticed, but that’s a lot of blood.”

The shorter of the two reached up to examine it for himself, his fingertips coming away wet and covered in his own warm blood. He didn’t know his injuries were that severe, he thought he was just being a wuss. But, oh, were they *bad*. “Ugh,” he grumbled. “Help me out, will you, Lukie?”

Lucas nodded, reaching for the backup roll of gauze in his bag. He took care of his soulmate's forehead injury first, ignoring James's faraway coos of "Aw, Lukie, you *do* care" and making sure he didn't accidentally hurt Henry. Next, he had him hold out his arm, wrapping it with utmost care and precision, as he was known to do.

His soulmate shivered at his touch. His skin was much cooler in temperature, so Lucas's fingertips brushed against his forearm in a way that left a small trail of goosebumps in their wake.

"There," he announced. "That should do it." Before letting go of Henry's arm, however, he pressed another quick kiss to the inside of his wrist, making the shorter boy's heart flutter. "Just tell me if you need anything, alright?"

"Alright," he replied, stunned.

"Thanks, love. Now, we should probably get going, yeah?" With that, he put on his backpack, swiftly handing Henry's over to him. The other boy shouldered his own bag before picking up the pace to match with his sister's.

"So, about you and Lucas," Gwen teased him relentlessly, as she always managed to do. *Siblings, right?* "You two are finally over your own egos, and you now have the strength to confess your undying love for one another. How does it feel?"

"If you're not careful, *Gwendolyn*, he'll hear you," Henry hissed back venomously, taking a quick look over his shoulder. Yep, Lucas was definitely listening. "Why are you both like this?" Henry turned back around to face his twin. "What's wrong with you two?"

"Well, that's what happens when your sister and soulmate are childhood friends, dear brother," she replied smoothly, patting his cheek in a condescending, *I'm-older-than-you* kind of way. "They talk to each other. On a different note, how's your arm?"

"My arm? Perfectly fine, it was only a scratch," he announced, raising his voice a little in the hopes that Lucas would hear him.

The raven-haired boy huffed from behind them. "Oh, *sure*, you definitely weren't whining like a wee Disney princess."

“That was my forehead, actually. You were wrapping the gauze too tightly,” he joked back, clearly not complaining.

“Ooh, a lovers’ quarrel,” James called back mischievously. “Don’t worry, we’re not listening at *all*.”

“Bloody hell, would you just drop it already?” Henry muttered.

“Don’t pay any attention to him, he’s just being obnoxious because he misses Aaron,” Becca advised him. She’d been making sure that they were all set to face their next challenge, continuing the search for the long-lost Scroll of whatever-its-title-was. (None of the teens could be bothered to remember the name, they all just wanted to get it over and done with, so that they could get back home.)

“Aw, does wee Jamie miss his Ronnie? You know, he’s only been yours for a year or so!” Lucas mocked him, earning an indignant “Oi!” from the brunette. Bloody hypocrite.

“Psst, Lukie,” Henry whispered, tugging the taller boy down so that he was level with his ear.

Gwen kept on walking without him at the sight of the look on his face.

Henry had just figured out the actual reason behind James’s abnormal and slightly concerning behaviour. “Leave him be,” he muttered. “He had to kill someone just now, I doubt he thought he’d ever have to do that. I don’t think he’s taking it very well.” He gave his soulmate a meaningful look, nudging him.

“Mhm,” Lucas hummed in understanding. “But is it really killing if she was already a vampire? Does that count?”

“For him, Fantasy Central, it probably does.”

“Alright. We should probably keep going now. Don’t want Becca yelling at us the way she did with Theo.”

“Agreed. Race you to catch up with Gwen.”

“On the count of three.” Lucas stated it as if Henry had no other choice but to obey his wishes.

He nodded, getting ready. “One,” he announced.

“Two.” His soulmate mimicked his movements, taking a deep breath.

“Three!”

With that, Henry pushed Lucas to the ground gently, dashing off to catch up with his sister. He glanced back triumphantly, smirking as the other boy jogged over to them both.

“Get that smug look off your face, darling, before you regret it,” he hissed, clearly bitter about that turn of events.

What? It wasn't like Henry had cheated. He simply hadn't warned him. “What're you gonna do, snog me until my lips fall off?” *I love you.*

“You wish.” *Believe me, I know you do.*