

## The Alpha's Captive Matew by Taylor Caine Chapter 20

Chapter 20

I couldn't figure out why I was so on edge as I sat at the

table with the Crawford brothers, trying to ignore where Harper was moving around the kitchen, helping Sandy make

breakfast.

Things very rarely made me nervous any longer. I'd become Alpha two years ago, finally killing the cruel bastard who'd run what'd been left of the pack to nothing but a smattering of pitiful wolves too fearful and weak to escape him.

And when I'd started building the pack back up from scratch, I'd had my share of challenges from alphas locally and across

Montana who'd thought the young, true heir to the Holland pack and territory would be easy pickings, but I'd soon proved them wrong.

After killing a few challenging alphas with ruthless efficiency, rumors about me had started spreading and the challenges had stopped coming.

So it'd been a long time since I'd feared anything, or felt even the slightest bit nervous, secure in my role as Alpha and the

hold I had over this territory.

Yet I found myself with an unsettling sense of apprehension

over what the Crawford brothers would have to say about

their half-sister and her fate, especially in light of what'd

happen to her yesterday.

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I would be talking to Sandy about that later. I knew she hadn't intended to kill Harper, or even cause her serious harm. She'd been trying to do as I'd ordered and take responsibility.

And since Harper had attacked Beau without warning or being provoked-as Melody had tearfully told me this morning when I'd gone to get the clothes for Harper-then she had

deserved punishment for daring to lift a hand against a member of the pack, especially if he'd only been trying to help

her.

"So, Aaron," Noah said, pulling me from my brooding thoughts. "What did you have in mind?"

"It's simple, really," I replied, motioning for Sandy to refill my coffee. "If you claim Harper as blood, as pack, then I'm willing to take her in lieu of some of your blood debt that's way

overdue."

"No way!" Heath immediately protested, but clamped his

mouth shut when Noah sent him a quelling glare.

"Why?" Noah asked me, gaze sharp.

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This was the one question I'd been hoping he wouldn't ask,

because I wasn't even sure of the answer myself.

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"Because this way, we get to improve relations between our

neighboring packs, and I finally start getting some justice for what happened to my family."

Noah nodded thoughtfully. "Would this be a full blood *Ww.w(n)ovel@0rm.c@m*

sacrifice?"

Heath's eyebrows shot up in alarm, and it seemed everyone in the room went still, waiting to hear my answer about whether I intended to kill Harper in a sacrificial blood ceremony. Everyone except for Harper, that was, and it occurred to me she probably didn't even understand what was

happening here because she'd grown up in the human world and didn't understand how pack law worked.

"No," I eventually replied, making Heath puff out a relieved breath, while Noah simply nodded again. "This would be a life subjugation deal. Harper would belong in servitude to the Holland pack until I deem the debt repaid."

At this, Harper finally stopped and looked at me, gaze wide

with shock.

Little did any of them know, I wouldn't ever consider the debt

Harper could spend the next sixty years working the ranch house and lands of Holland pack territory, and it wouldn't ever come close to making up for the amount of blood Ian Crawford had spilled in a single night.

"Do you want her to be bitten to make sure she's pure wolf as part of the pack claiming before her servitude begins?" Noah asked, seeming to realize he would be foolish not to take this

deal.

"It makes no difference to me," I replied with a careless shrug.

"Noah, you can't seriously be considering this," Heath put in, cutting a disbelieving look between me and his older brother.

"It's a good deal, Heath," Noah said in a low voice.

"She's our sister!" Heath argued. "And we only just got her

back."

"She's not our sister," Roman half-yelled, slamming a fist down against the table. "Why don't you get that, Heath? She's

half-witch. She's an abomination. She doesn't deserve to be

claimed as Crawford pack, even to repay our blood debt."

"Enough, both of you," Noah growled menacingly, making the

two simmer down.

Heath, however, wasn't done it seemed. *Ww.w(n)ovel@0rm.c@m*

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"No, you know what? This is crap. If you're going to give Harper away to Aaron Holland-even knowing his ruthless reputation-then you can throw me into the deal as well. I'm not leaving her alone here."

"Are you serious?" Noah demanded, fully turning his

disbelieving attention to his younger brother.

"Heath, don't be an idiot," Roman scoffed. "You're really going to give your whole life over to servitude for some half-breed

sister you don't even know?"

"Yes," Heath said resolutely and without hesitation. "She's got no one and now you're just going to make her pay the debt for a family she doesn't even know?" Heath then shook his head in

disappointment at Noah. "I thought we were better than that, man. So yes. Someone needs to look out for her. And if you don't care about one of your siblings serving the Holland pack for god knows how long, you won't care if it's two."

"Deal," I said before Noah could reply.

No way was I pa'sing up this opportunity.

Heath was smart and a tough, scrappy fighter. He valued pack loyalty above all else, and I knew-even in apparent servitude to the blood debt-he would be an invaluable a'set

to the security of the Holland pack and territory.

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"I'm not sure-" Noah started, brows lowering in contention.

"It's done, Noah," Heath said with a note of finality, as if he

hadn't just signed away his entire life. "Be glad Aaron gave us this opportunity to finally start clearing our family's name."

Noah stood with a sigh. "Very well, it's your life, I suppose. I'll

have someone send over your things later today."

"You're not staying for breakfast?" I asked, gesturing to where

Sandy and Harper almost had the meal prepared.

Noah, however, shook his head, looking uncomfortable, as if

he didn't like how things had played out here, but knew he

couldn't argue against it without putting his pack in a worse

position.

"No, but thank you for the hospitality," Noah replied with a

polite nod. "I'll be in contact over the coming days about Harper's pack initiation. I a'sume you'll want to hold it here?"

"I think that would be the best idea," I replied, even though I hadn't thought that far ahead. "The more low-key, the better."

Noah came around the table and held out his hand. I got to

my feet as we shook on it.

"I trust there won't be anymore unfortunate incidents," Noah

said, eyeing me with a sharp gaze, the barest hint of Alpha

warning in his tone. "With neither Harper nor Heath."

I nodded my agreement. "They won't live as pack, as per the subjugation agreement, but they won't be purposefully

mistreated."

Noah gave one last nod, his gaze skipping over to Heath, a hint of sadness in his eyes before he looked away again.

"Thank you, Aaron. It was generous of you to find a way to

help mitigate the blood debt and smooth things between our

territories."

"I think we can both agree that our packs living in peace, despite our shared history, is the best outcome," I answered.

Noah bid me goodbye and then motioned to Roman.

The younger wolf scoffed at Heath one more time, muttering

something about him being a moron before leaving the

kitchen in a huff, as if offended by his older brother's choice.

Noah simply rolled his eyes at his youngest brother's antics, *wWw@ovEl@o@.(c)om*

paused briefly to hug Heath, before sending Harper a quick,

somewhat awkward wave, and then leaving as well.

Sandy walked the pair out while Harper began serving

breakfast.

"Where do you want me, Aaron?" Heath asked as Harper sat a plate of eggs and bacon in front of me. *wWw@ovEl@o@.(c)om*

"That's Alpha to you," I said mildly, but the warning was clear.

There was a chain of command. I was at the top, and as of

this moment, both Harper and Heath were at the very bottom.

"Head out to the barn. Find Connor. He'll have breakfast and

work for you."

"Yes, Alpha," Heath replied calmly, not seeming the least bit

bothered by his new status. Probably because he was an omega himself, I belatedly realized, he was probably already

used to life at the bottom.

With how few omegas there were around these days, I was

surprised Noah had let his younger brother go so easily. Not

that they'd had much of a choice.

Heath left and Sandy returned, bringing Beau and Melody along with her.

Harper busied herself preparing plates for everyone else but didn't serve any food for herself I noticed. I'd have Sandy

handle it later. Properly this time.

My plan was in motion.

It'd all worked out more smoothly than I'd hoped, and I'd even

gotten myself a bonus omega in the process.

Once we got through Harper's pack initiation, making the payment of the blood debt official, we could put all this behind us and I could start getting on with my life.

I just hoped there was no more trouble before then.

Where Harper was concerned, however, trouble seemed to

follow in her wake.