

CLAIMED BY THE ALPHAS {18+} by JenCooper

Chapter 1

THE HUNT

KAI POV

“Where is she?!” I roared at my useless pack who had searched the entire werewolf territory without finding a damn thing. Glaring down at the brand on my wrist that was stopping me from going after her myself, I contemplated removing it from my skin just to see if fate could be thwarted so easily.

She had been with her mother, there should be a scent but there was nothing. I smashed my fist into the concrete wall next to me, the mansion in serious danger of being pummeled to death if one more wolf came back without her. The link was numb and I wasn't about to look too much into that or I'd never come back from the edge.

“Kai. We'll find her.” Brax tried to reassure me but nothing would until I could feel her again. I was empty, my chest heavy, everything inside me a storm growing stronger and stronger, ready to explode. I turned and kicked my seat back from the meeting table. The council were trying to organise how to get her back, not because she was the essence I needed to breathe but because she was a winter born with too much power to let into the wrong hands and she carried the heir. But if she was so powerful then why the hell couldn't I sense her? Our connection should be strong enough. I clutched my head again, closing my eyes and focusing on the feel of her, remembering the taste of her, the scent, pushing at all the corners of magic in my head. There was nothing.

“Fuck!” I growled as Derik barked orders at the pack, much more put together like always. He was talking with the council, he was organising the search parties and I was falling apart. I wanted to be out there, looking for her, destroying every human who smelled even a little like her until I found where she had been taken. But I couldn't. I was a prisoner to a fucking brand on my wrist. I wasn't risking that, fate was a fickle bitch and would be petty enough to have me find my little human at the same time I mated with someone else and broke her more than whoever had taken her.

I wasn't mating. If I felt the bond, I'd sooner end my life. I was my human's. I belonged to her and she was ours. She carried our child. I saw red again, turning to Brax who was trying to sense her shadows but I knew that wouldn't work. Lorelai wouldn't use them. Not after Tabby had said it would hurt the baby. But she would survive because she was strong and the alternative wasn't something my erratic brain could handle. I turned to Derik.

“Anything?” I demanded but he shook his head, his eyes glassy, his lips pursed. I snarled at that, my body vibrating in anger.

“Taylor says-”

“No! Don’t mention the females.” I growled and Derik rolled his eyes. Easy for him to get annoyed when he wasn’t the one with the death sentence.

“You’re not going to mate from hearing their names, Kai. And I doubt it could happen if you’d just connect to the pack link.” He sighed but I wasn’t risking it.

“No females. At all. And there’s no point connecting when you are. It’s an unnecessary risk.” I snapped and Derik eyed me like he was deciding whether to push the issue or not. I turned away from him, trying to find the link again. It was an empty void inside me that was almost painful. I wish it was more painful so it would drown out the burn from my wrist. I rubbed over the bright red mark, wishing it was as easy as removing it. I had thought about it so many times but I knew deep down it wouldn’t make a lick of difference. I was fucked. But I was going to avoid it for as long as I could.

“Alphas.” Cain said, rushing in, out of breath. Weak little hybrid. Helpful little hybrid but still weak. He relied on his magic more than his wolf and I didn’t like it but then again, it meant he might be able to find my human so maybe there was a reason for everything.

“Did you find her?” I demanded. He shook his head.

“I can’t sense her. Something is blocking her. An herb or something making it impossible for me to see much more than you can.”

“And Tabby?”

“I’m on my way there now.”

“I’m coming with you.”

“Kai.” Derik growled, “You are part of the pack, you are needed here.”

“Being here is doing fuck all to find her. I’m going to see if Tabby can help. She might be able to use the link or something.” I said and before Derik could get in my head about it more, I shifted, ripping through my clothes, the burn of my wrist searing brighter making me hiss as I did. My muscles ached, the fur growing, my senses fine tuning. And then I was a wolf, my mind immediately searching for her, whining when it felt nothing again.

“Let us know if you find anything.” Brax grimaced, his shadows darkening, swirling around him as he kept pushing to find hers. I was going to do more than try, I was going to do whatever I had to, I was going to find her. I snarled at Cain who nodded and took off running. I’d give the little hybrid that, his lean body was fast. Much faster than a

human and as fast as a wolf for sure. Not as fast as me though. I surged forward, running from the city towards Tabitha's swamp. I bet Cain there, barely breaking a sweat, using my nose to drive me forward, refusing to open my eyes until I knew I wouldn't see a single female.

I splashed through the swamp, ignoring Ruby who wanted to play and shifting as I came up on the wooden porch of Tabitha's cabin. She opened the door with a frown and I greeted her swiftly, a kiss on each cheek before taking the pants she offered me. They were light and hung low but they'd do.

"Tabby, please tell me you can help." I begged.

"Come. I have tea ready." She said and went inside as Cain came up on to the porch, breathing hard again and wiping his forehead. I said nothing and went inside, sitting at the table, taking a customary sip of tea before waiting for Tabby to stop pacing. She was frowning hard, holding her temple with one hand, the other clutching amethyst beads dangling down from her neck at least four times.

"Tabby." I urged, not patient enough to wait. I needed answers. She huffed and pursed her lips.

"These humans have made the witches very angry. Nothing good can come of this, what are they thinking?"

"So it is the humans? Which ones?" I asked, hope springing in my chest but Tabby tsked and shook her head sadly.

"I don't know, Sweetie. The witches won't let me get involved. We are sworn to not harm the humans. We can't use our magic on them, not those of us protecting the balance anyhow. Not without completely pure intentions which I will not feign that mine are." Tabby explained and this balance shit was really starting to get on my last nerve. We were the ones fighting the war for balance, the wolves had protected the humans for years from the vampires, fucked so many virgins year after year to keep the magic renewed in the border that separated them, kept them from becoming dinner just for them to turn on us? Biting the hand that feeds them was not a good idea because I was going to bite back and my bite was so much bigger. Deathlier. Stupid, naïve humans had no idea how the delicate magic that held everything together always demanded something. Like virgin sacrifices, like an eye for an eye, nothing was free and the wolves had been paying that price for a long time. For the humans. Where was the balance there? Or maybe this was a lesson for them. If it was, I was happy to let them learn it. As long as Lorelai wasn't a part of it.

"I don't want you to find the other humans, I don't care about them, where is Lorelai, Tabitha? Find the baby, the link, I don't care, just give me something." I tried again, my mind just as blocked as hers seemed to be. She shook her head again and placed a hand on his shoulder, kissing his forehead.

“Patience, sweetness. This realm would not have granted you such a blessing as a winter-born Alpha child just to rip it away from you.” She tried but I was done with the patronising. I stood up, kicked my chair back, anger rolling through my body so fast and hot, it ached core deep. My heart pulsed with dangerous beats that spread an enraged storm through me. People died when I felt that happen. I was done caring about the balance and the rules. The humans had taken what was mine and I was going to slaughter every single one of them until I found the ones responsible. She had been at her mother's last, I had left her there, stupidly believed she was safe and yet her mother thought she had gone home. So I would start back there, knock down every house like the big bad wolf making the piggies squeal until she was in my arms again. And with the way I was feeling, that wouldn't take long.

“Thanks for the tea.” I said and went to leave when Cain dared to step in front of me.

“Mum may be bound by the witches' laws but I am not. I am hybrid.”

“Which means?” I demanded, giving him a second before I forcefully removed him out of my way by his nose ring.

“They wouldn't let me take the oath that stopped me from using my magic against the humans.” Cain smirked and Tabitha gasped.

“Cain. Son. Don't. The witches' anger is on the humans, you will redirect it if you thwart them this way.” She warned and Cain shrugged. He flared some purple magic along his fingers then snapped and it turned to a flame in the air before dissipating.

“They already find me offensive which is why my magic is not limited to their laws. Let me try this, for her and for the child.” He said and I raised a brow. I wasn't sure why he cared enough to try but I wasn't going to question it. I needed the answers he might be able to get more than my next breath.

“Do it.”

“Cain. You are not strong enough to do the spell needed. Not without the witches backing.” Tabby warned and there weren't many times I had seen her afraid, she was now which had me hesitating.

“What does that mean?” Cain pushed my hand off his shoulder and shrugged.

“It means I'll get what I can before my magic overwhelms me. It might be nothing but it might get us something.” He said then went to the candles, blowing each one out until a singular flame lit up the altar in the living room. The one with all the ingredients used to make Tabby's potions.

“You won't die?” I asked but he snickered.

"If it gets her back, do you really care?" He asked and I pursed my lips. No. The truth was no. I'd swap his life for hers in a heartbeat. He nodded and smiled.

"I mated, Kai. Yesterday. If she was in trouble, pregnant, I'd do whatever it took too." He admitted and I couldn't help the shock that rocked me at that.

"Mated? The pack didn't feel it."

"I know. I want to keep it private for now, if you don't mind." Cain said and I nodded. He was lucky he could stop that from happening. I could stop the link to the pack hearing my thoughts or getting to mine but I couldn't stop the feeling that was always there. The pack was always heavy in my mind, always letting me know they were safe or if there was danger. Cain could switch that off but it meant the pack kept him at arm's length.

"Help me find her and I'll keep your secret."

"I already told you I would." He smiled then started mixing things like a madman in his little wooden bowl, crushing things together, whispering as he went while Tabby stood back, watching warily. I stepped back with her, my wrist burning even more. I winced and looked down at it.

"It'll get worse the longer you ignore it." She whispered in the dark but I said nothing. I knew that. I knew every day I ignored the brand was a day closer to death. It would kill me. Eventually. But I wasn't giving in to the brand. I would rather give in to the darkness than let fate destroy Lorelai. And it would, seeing me mate with someone else would break her, especially with a child in her. Our child, all four of ours, one I desperately wanted.

"I won't mate."

"I know, sweetie." She placated and I held the silence, waiting with tense breaths as Cain made whatever concoction he needed.

"I need your blood, Kai. For the link." He said and I held my hand out. Cain came over with the bowl then sliced over my hand and I squeezed it shut so the drops of my blood fell into the bowl. It sizzled at the contact then steamed, a floral aroma filling the room, making me a little dizzy. Cain drew it in then grinned.

"I can sense her. I just have to see her." he said and I almost fell to my knees at the words.

"Do it then." I demanded and he nodded, closing his eyes, breathing in the steam again, it fizzled louder and Cain whispered some words. He frowned and I watched, waiting, my heart pounding in my ears, my blood rushing as I tried not to get too excited. Cain frowned, sucking in a breath as he coughed. I frowned as he grunted and fell to his knees.

“Cain...”

“I got it Mum. I’m almost there.” He breathed and if I was a better wolf then maybe I would have told him to stop but I almost had what I needed and I wasn’t going to tell him not to go there. Not when Lorelai needed me, not when she was missing.

“Where is she?”

“I...” Cain coughed again, falling forward, clutching the bowl close to him, the other splayed as he trembled. Blood started dripping down his face from his nose, his breathing laboured. He whispered some more words then cleared his throat, “There’s a door. A solid wooden one with an open grate in it. I think she’s behind it but I can’t see through it. There’s no windows, like a tunnel or-she’s underground. This place though, I’ve never seen it before, anywhere. The humans have her for sure, they’re everywhere, they’re easy to sense. They’ve been busy, Kai and I’m pretty sure that’s why I’m allowed to see-” He collapsed to the ground, “I can’t see her, but she’s there.” He breathed before he passed out, blood streaming down his nose onto the wooden floors. Tabitha rushed forward, pushing the bowl away before, running her hand over his forehead, pushing his hair back. I listened for his heartbeat, it was steady.

“He’ll be okay. I have to go.” I said, my voice thick with emotion. I wanted to stay and make sure he was okay but I wanted Lorelai more. Tabitha nodded her dismissal, whispering over Cain, pulling her head into his lap. I ran. I left the house without a look back, my heart thundering in my chest as I leaped over the banister, bursting into my wolf form and taking off towards the city.

“She’s with the humans. Underground. A locked wooden door with a grate on it. There’s lots of tunnels there. We know exactly where there are humans hanging out where there shouldn’t be.” I growled in my mind, knowing Derik and Brax would do what they needed on their end and with the pack. I wasn’t stopping. My paws hit the ground heavily, the swamp and forest a blur as I ran with all the strength and muscle I had towards the men’s village in my area. Those fuckers had been lying for too long, getting away with their bullshit because more humans meant more magic to draw on but not anymore, not after this. My teeth drooled, my snout sneering in the wind that whistled around me. I was hungry, I wanted blood.

They had taken her and expected to win. I wasn’t going to let them go and I was not going to hold back. They took the only thing I had, the only thing I had ever craved with every fibre of my being and in doing so, had signed their own death warrants.

I’d squash their little bodies with a single paw and laugh while I did, just to see her again and I swore to the witch’s power that if she was hurt, nothing, not even begging would save them.