

## Owned by the Alphas 2: Claimed by the Alphas |

### The Tea

LORELAI

It was more awkward than I thought to sit there with my brother and Mom. Of course Mom was chatty, proper, and polite, but all I could do was sit there.

My brother looked so different. He was pale, his eyes red, and he wore clothes like Silas now. It was off-putting. So was the feel of him.

My shadows were prickly, wary, like they knew they had been inside him once, knew he was connected to me, but since he was now a vampire, they couldn't figure out the reason for the connection.

It was disorienting.

"Don't be nervous. I assure you, I am in control," Lucas said, and I smiled tightly.

"I know, you just feel different from last time," I said.

He shrugged. "I am different. I am a vampire now."

"I'm sorry," I said, guilt eating at me for the compromise I had made on his life.

It shouldn't have been my decision, and I had made it anyway. He was a vampire because I had made it happen, and it sucked knowing that I had made him the cold and distant thing he was.

"Don't be. It has been enlightening. And I would prefer this life to the werewolf one you have chosen, but I respect your decision, sister, and I thank you for the protection you have given our mother," he replied, his voice deep and different.

He sounded like Silas. It wasn't what I wanted to hear.

I missed the slight nasally tone to his human voice, the rasp in it, but it didn't matter now, and the smile on my mother's face made it a little bit more worth it.

"I'm just glad you are both sitting in front of me. With your father on this revenge path and with everything that has happened, I consider myself extremely lucky for that fact," Mom said, and I grinned.

She was right; we were lucky to have that at least.

"I miss you," I murmured, turning to Lucas, who smiled softly at me, his eyes going to my stomach.

I had worn my silk dress. The fabric wasn't restricting against my stomach and was easier to use the bathroom in, but a woolen cloak hung around my shoulders.

The sun faded behind gray clouds above us, the wind brisk and fresh, a warning for the winter that was on our doorstep.

"And I miss you. I am quite excited to become an uncle. Have you thought of names?" he asked, and I smiled.

"Not yet. I have three alphas to convince whenever I think of a name, which is not as easy as I thought it would be." I laughed and rubbed my tender stomach.

Mom placed her hand against the bump and smiled proudly. "I think something strong."

"He is strong," I agreed.

Lucas held his hand out. "May I?" he asked.

I looked between his hand and my stomach, my eyes catching his. He knew I struggled to trust him and was waiting for my okay, but it sat on the edge of my tongue.

My shadows bristled, and I trusted them.

"We'll get there," I murmured, and he nodded, his hand falling down before he smiled easily, his sharper canines white and prominent.

"We will," he promised, and I nodded, reaching forward for my tea.

I had just pulled it in my hand when the baby kicked hard, sending a sharp pain across my stomach and down my leg.

I cursed beneath my breath, the cup dropping to the floor, the porcelain crashing over the courtyard.

I touched the spot he had kicked with a grimace. That was going to bruise. Damn, I had almost gotten rid of them.

I blinked a couple of times and let the pain subside as Mom moved forward.

“Do you need Galen?” she asked, and I shook my head, but she didn’t seem convinced.

Or she wanted to see Galen. I hoped it was the latter.

“You are struggling?” my brother asked, and I shrugged.

“Physically, this little wolf is much stronger than my human body. It makes his movements harsher on me than we expected, but I’m managing.

“Once he’s born, I will be a werewolf like him, so all will be fine,” I breathed, rubbing the spot as two of the humans from the village came to sweep away the shards of teacup.

One of the ladies bent down and picked up a piece, hissing as she fell back on the stone, crying out.

We all looked down as she dropped the shard and grabbed her arm. It was mottled with bubbles and boils, burning the flesh there, steam hissing from her skin.

“Get Galen here!” I called, and my mom ran off as I went to bend down to help, but Lucas pulled me back.

“Don’t. That is flesh-eating magic. You touch her and you’ll get it,” he warned.

My heart faltered. The woman’s screams filled the air, and the sound pierced my heart.

“The baby...” I held my stomach. “It must’ve sensed something wrong with the tea,” I whispered.

Kai came running out, his claws and teeth extended, his red eyes going to the woman holding her arm, then to me with Lucas holding me away from helping.

He went to come to me, but I shook my head.

"If you can help her, then do it. I'm safe, Kai," I promised, and he nodded, kneeling in front of the woman.

Derik came running into the courtyard from the gardens behind us, in his wolf form. He shifted and took his pants from Anetta, who had been running with him. He shrugged them on and grabbed me from Lucas.

"You do not touch her. Those are the rules."

"Apologies," he said, not explaining himself, both of us knowing my alphas weren't exactly reasonable when it came to me—or him.

"What the hell happened?" Brax demanded as he came out, sweat over his brow, his eyes bloodshot.

"Are you okay?" I asked, and he blew out a breath.

"One of the humans, something infected them, which fucked with the link I was using to keep tabs on them," he bit, then turned to the woman on the floor.

Kai had her arm in his hands, the disease clearly only affecting humans. "Only a bite will save her from this."

"She'll turn?" I asked, and Kai shrugged.

"Maybe. I can try to release enough toxin to heal only, but I can't promise anything."

"You'd have to bite her?" I asked, swallowing as jealousy poked its ugly head in.

I didn't like the idea of him biting another woman, but I didn't think it was fair to ask him not to when she was being tortured by an infection that was clearly meant for me.

"No! Please, no! Don't bite me!" she screamed, and Kai smirked.

"No worries, sweetheart. My mate wasn't a fan of the idea either. The only other option is saying goodbye to your arm," he said.

The woman froze. She whimpered, her face crumpling as she sobbed.

"I've got Galen!" Mom ran in, Galen at her side.

She dropped next to the woman, wearing some mittens made of some kind of green plant with white flower buds.

She grabbed the woman's arm and ran her plant-covered fingers over it as Galen grabbed some bottles out of his satchel.

"This is a deadly herb. It only grows in the swamp by Tabitha's," Galen murmured, and I frowned, looking at my alphas, who were surrounding me.

"How the hell did it end up in the tea then?" I asked, and Derik's gaze snapped to the mess by the table.

"It was in the tea? The one meant for you?"

"Well for me, my mother, and Lucas, of course," I admitted, but even I knew that was weak.

I was the only target that had something to lose.

Kai rounded on my brother so fast. He grabbed him from behind, his claws ready to rip his throat out, his teeth at his neck.

"Say something that stops me from ending your life, vamp, or I'm going to go with the easiest theory, that you tried to poison our luna, our mate," Kai warned, but Lucas was calm, like Silas always was.

"Tabitha's is fair game. Anyone could have gotten to this herb if they knew what they were looking for."

"Not the confession we are waiting for," Brax warned, his shadows starting to spill from his shaking frame.

"Fine. I will give you the explanation that you are not going to believe anyway. I didn't try to poison my sister. I happen to be excited about the nephew she carries, and I am not a threat.

"My mother could have had that tea at any moment, and I would not risk her life either.

“Whoever did this does not have a personal connection with my sister or mother or they would not have done it,” Lucas said as Galen and my mom used herbs and weeds to stop the infection.

The woman finally stopped screaming and slumped into my mother as Galen worked. I didn’t miss their eyes meeting before I turned to my alphas, still holding my brother.

“He didn’t do this. Let him go,” I said, not sure how I knew that, but I did.

If he wanted me dead, he wouldn’t have agreed to meet, and he definitely wouldn’t have done it in front of my mother. Whatever he thought of me, he didn’t think the same of her.

“How the hell did this happen?” Derik swore as Kai reluctantly let my brother go.

Brax stepped between me and Lucas, slipping his arm around me, his shadows a barrier that only we could see.

I gave him a small smile, and he kissed my cheek.

My alphas would always protect me, and I would do the same for them—even against a friendly face. Sometimes those were the deadliest. We had learned that the hard way, so I appreciated the cynicism.

Even if it was against the brother I was trying to build a relationship with again. I’d barely had a chance to know him.

Between being separated by villages, going to the wolves, the shadows and Elias, and now the vamp thing, it was like we had been purposely set apart our whole lives, and I was trying to fix that.

Derik walked over to the table, kicking some of the shards of cup on the floor, then grabbed the tea in front of my mom’s seat. He grimaced when he went back to mine.

“It’s only hers,” he whispered, but we all heard it.

“How?” I asked, shivering.

“Where’s Cain?” Brax demanded suddenly, and Derik rolled his eyes.

“Now is not the time for your prejudice, brother.”

“Now is exactly the time,” Brax bit, and I held on to him tighter.

“I’m here, and no, I didn’t do this,” Cain said, walking out of the bushes at a suspiciously convenient time.

“Where have you been? You were meant to be close in case anything like this happened,” Derik asked, his own suspicions leaking into the accusation.

“Took a break with my mate, sorry. She’s a little hard to convince that other people matter, but she is trying.” He sighed like it was an ongoing issue for him.

“Not good enough this time, Cain. We need to verify you were with who you say you were with.”

“I...can’t. She’s not ready.”

“She doesn’t have a choice. That’s an order, Cain. Who is your mate?” Kai demanded, stepping around me and moving in on Cain, who looked up at him with his hands on his hips.

He shook his head before chewing his lip and meeting Kai’s gaze. “It’s your sister, Nikolai. Beenie.”

Everyone froze. I wasn’t sure how Kai was going to react to that until he laughed, deep and heartily.

“Well then, good riddance. The little freeloader deserves all the shit you’re going to give her. And my parents will turn in their grave to learn a hybrid mated with their princess. Fucking perfect.”

He laughed again, and it was infectious. I laughed with him, and even Brax snickered.

“I imagine getting her to do anything that doesn’t involve her entitled ass is extremely difficult.”

Kai laughed again as Cain rolled his eyes. “And we thought you were going to be pissed,” Cain said, and shook his head.

"Pissed that I wasted time to go check in on her since she doesn't leave her area of the mansion unless it's important.

"Meanwhile she was totally fine and I could have been dealing with mate and pack shit," Kai said, then clapped Cain on the back. "Congratulations, you've mated a spoiled brat. She's all yours now.

"But just in case it's not coming across, I still love her, and if you don't treat her as well as my own mate then I will kill you. Understood?" he continued, his voice turning threatening.

"There's the Kai she warned me about."

"Enough of this. We need to figure out how this poison made it into Lorelai's tea and who got their hands on it," Brax snapped.

Derik spun to us. "It can't have been a human or it would have affected them too. We'd notice burned flesh. And Brax would've caught the link.

"Which only leaves werewolves. That is going to cause issues, especially if we start interrogating over hurt humans."

"Then we don't," I said, and they looked at me like I had gone crazy. "Whoever this was didn't achieve what they wanted so we be more careful and wait for them to try again.

"We'll get them next time they do, and I'm sure now that Tabitha knows her herbs are being used for nefarious uses she will cease to allow access to them."

I shrugged, the adrenaline from the potential fatality leaving me.

"I don't like the idea of you playing bait." Lucas frowned.

My alphas said nothing, but that was as good as agreement.

"Well, I am. That has already been decided, since I am the target."

"Or we lock you in your room until they have been caught." Kai smirked, and I scowled at him.

I was not going into hiding. I was just going to be more careful.



“Not an option,” I said firmly so he knew I wasn’t joking, but it just made his smirk wider.

“I bet we could convince you otherwise.”

I smiled, blushing a little at his implications because if he was offering what I thought he was offering then he was probably right.

“Galen,” Derik interrupted.

We turned to where he was holding the woman, my mother holding the other half of her.

“We are going to take her into a separate room and tend to her there,” the doctor said, lifting the woman and leaving my mother to take her plant gloves off.

“I would also prefer it if you were closer. For our humans’ needs and for Lorelai. How would you feel about moving into the mansion until our child is born?” Derik asked.

Galen frowned. “You trust my control?”

“More than any other wolf in our pack. Not even I can resist the heat. Your will is a power on its own,” Derik said, and Galen frowned harder.

“I’m afraid that may change this following heat with the human here, but nevertheless, I suppose being closer to Lorelai for the baby would make sense.

“Okay, I shall bring my supplies,” he agreed, then started to cart the woman off with him. He looked over his shoulder.

“I will require your assistance, precious Pearl,” he said, then walked off with the confidence of a man who knew his woman was following him, and she did start to before she turned to me and my brother.

“I have to go and make sure the humans are okay and that Marabelle is okay,” Mom said.

“Of course, go,” I said.

"We shall have tea another time." My brother nodded toward her, and she smiled, then ran off after Galen.

I turned to my alphas, who were all staring after my mother.

"I think Galen may have just found his weakness." Derik frowned.

I smiled. "I think so too."

"I know romance is your thing, but I don't know that this could lead to a good outcome.

"Your mother is not you, Spitfire. She may not take too kindly to Galen losing his control on the next heat, and I think if your mother is here, that is a very real possibility," Brax said, and I shrugged.

"Maybe she deserves to know what the devotion of a wolf feels like," I said, and he smirked before he turned to my brother.

"Cain will take you back to your vampires," he said.

"Of course. May I tell them what happened here?"

"Yes. They may have seen or sensed something at Tabitha's," Derik answered before Brax or Kai could snarl out their negative response.

"I will ask. And the next meeting? I would like to stay in contact as much as possible.

"As much as the past has been tested, I do want to be in my sister's and my mother's lives. My nephew's too." Lucas smiled down at me, and I grinned back.

"We'll organize something and let you know," I said, and he nodded before heading away with Cain.

"I'll go check in on Marabelle and see if I can get a magic scent of some kind when I get back," Cain said, then left with Lucas in a blink that had me disoriented for a second.

The other humans had been taken back to their quarters with Anetta, and now it was just me and my alphas with a poison teacup shattered over the ground.

“Do you really think one of the wolves would be so against you or me that they would do this?” I asked, and they looked at each other.

In that look, I had my answer.

“We think that Fractum has its roots deeper in the wolves’ minds than we’ve thought so far. They are very susceptible to intrusive thoughts, and those thoughts can be dangerous,” Derik said.

I nodded. “What do we do about it then?”

All of them looked at one another before closing in around me.

“We protect you, at all costs,” Kai growled.

“All costs,” Brax agreed.

“Not all,” I whispered, touching my stomach, and Derik placed his hand over mine.

“We will do whatever it takes to make sure Fractum doesn’t bleed into you or our child, beautiful,” he said before kissing me.

I met his mouth, the intensity in his words making my throat close with emotion as he deepened the kiss, his tongue sliding against mine.

His hands went around my waist, and I moved my mouth with his as he did.

He picked me up in his arms and carried me inside, Kai and Brax following as we made sure we spent our time together forgetting that danger rested in every dark corner of our lives.

Because every single time we thought we were safe or let our guard down, more threatening things revealed themselves.

I knew things were just starting with the Fractum effects, but with my alphas’ hands and mouths on me in the privacy of our suite, I could pretend for a few hours that everything was okay.