

Owned by the Alphas 2: Claimed by the Alphas |

The Mark

LORELAI

“Lorelai. I was hoping you would arrive. Just in time to see me slaughter your new family.” My father smirked, and I closed my fists, anger coiling through me.

“They’re more of a family to me than you ever were.”

“But they are not blood.”

“That doesn’t matter,” I bit back, but my father just snickered.

“Naive little winter born, aren’t you, sweetheart?” he said patronizingly, and I pursed my lips, my eyes narrowing on him.

He was such an arrogant prick. I was glad I hadn’t known him growing up. If I had, maybe I would be on the other side of this war.

But my mother’s influence flowed in me, and there was no way I was backing down and letting my father destroy the pack I was meant to be a part of.

They may have taken awhile to warm up, but they were my family. I felt them in my link with the alphas, I felt when they hurt, and I felt the respect and trust they placed in me.

I was not going to let them down like my village had done to me.

“No. *You* are naive. You are fighting a war that you have no place in.

“Why couldn’t you just let the humans be happy? Now everyone is dying, and it is your fault,” I bit back, wishing there was any point in reasoning with him, but by the way his face contorted into a sneer, I knew that wasn’t going to happen.

“The humans were slaves!” my father roared, and my alphas growled in warning, stepping forward so my father had no hope of getting to me.

I grabbed their hands and kept them back.

If anyone was taking my father out, it was me. Not just for the way he was treating me but for the way he had treated the ladies of the village and how he had manipulated my brother.

“You have no idea how big of a role the humans played in the overall balance, Father.

“We may not have the luxuries of the city, but we weren’t dying, and if anything, our own customs kept us tethered to the life we led.

“We didn’t have to have a choosing ceremony. We didn’t have to have a widows’ village. We chose those things.”

“Of course you would lay the blame on your own kind. The virgin ceremony broke something inside you, I think, daughter.”

“Agree to disagree,” I snapped back.

There was no point in arguing with him. He would never see my point of view or understand what he had done, or was still doing.

“It has come to our attention, wolves, that you are harboring prisoners of our kind. You do understand what this means?”

He smirked, and I knew something was coming. I felt the buildup inside me, a warning.

They didn’t plan on talking their way out of this stalemate, they were going out the hard way. I just didn’t know how many targets they were planning on taking out with them.

I looked around the clearing they had made in the forest, trees destroyed, roots and debris littering the moss floor covered with blood and bodies.

The sides were even, divided like a barrier was between us, and my eye caught a few of the humans at the back stepping farther away. I narrowed my eyes on the movement.

“They are not prisoners. They have chosen to make peace with our race and are enjoying the benefits of that.

"They have all the luxurious comforts of our city and are free to leave if they wish," Derik said, and my shadows bristled.

They wanted to leave my body, but I couldn't let them. I wasn't strong enough for that. I did have border magic though, and that warmed my palms.

"Keeping our kind behind your walls is an act of war."

"That ship has sailed." Kai scoffed.

"We want our females and widows back."

"No. They have chosen their side. You can't hurt them now," I said, my voice strong and falling into the silence.

My father considered me for a moment as I reached Kai and Derik in my mind.

"They're stalling us. I can feel something, and my magic wants out. I think they're going to attack," I said, and they both tensed.

"The humans are lessening, retreating one by one," Derik answered, realizing, and I offered a small nod.

"Well then. I guess we will have to come and get them ourselves. We'll be seeing you soon, wolves." My father grinned before backing up, not turning his back to us.

I saw red that he would dare threaten to infiltrate us. So much bloodshed, so many wolves dying for his petty bullshit. I was done with it.

I threw out my magic, and a purple shield formed in front of the rest of the humans.

"Call a truce," I demanded, my shield stopping them from going anywhere.

"Careful what you use," Cain said in my mind. ~"Your body will tire before your magic does."~

Kai grabbed my hand, Derik my other, lending their strength through the link.

And then Brax's shadows were there with us. He pushed them through my body, and they reinforced my magic, renewing the energy within me.

I could take on my father and his humans. He had no idea what he had created by destroying the trust I held in him.

My father slowly turned to me, his eyes narrowing on my hands entwined with my alphas'.

"Traitor," he spat, my magic highlighting him and the humans that flanked him.

"Call me what you want, I don't care. Stop attacking, go back to the villages, and fix the balance by being a good human for a change, and then we can all go back to our lives as they are."

"No," he said simply.

I knew that was going to be his answer.

A vine of magic from my shield whipped out and latched around his neck. I pulled the vine tight, and he glared, grabbing at it. It seared his skin and he cried out.

I walked forward, anger turning and thrashing through me. I was powerful, I had shadows, border magic, an alpha heir, and the strength of three pissed-off alphas.

My father apparently wanted to learn that the hard way.

"Because of what you did, the border almost collapsed," I snarled, clinching my magic tighter on his throat.

Tension clouded the air, his humans watching, their hands ready on their weapons, but I didn't care. My wolves would take them out before they could get to those.

Well, that was the hope. If not, I knew my magic would protect me.

"Good. The vamps can help eradicate you all." He chuckled, half choking.

I rolled my eyes. "You are delusional if you think the wolves will be the first stop on their bloodlust train.

"The vamps have even less control around humans than wolves do. They'll kill every last one of you and then say oops, sorry, just like last time.

“Are you really that stupid that you think you can come out of this alive when facing vamps and werewolves?” I asked, and he spat at me.

I growled, telling the alphas to stay where they were before another vine whipped out and grabbed his hands, tying them behind his back.

“And you are delusional if you think I haven’t thought of every way this could play out and made contingencies for every single outcome.

“This has been in the works for years, daughter, and I wouldn’t have done it without knowing I would come out of it.”

“And the rest of the humans? Will they come out safe?”

“Casualties of war are inevitable. I made plans for you and your brother, even your mother, but it seems you have all chosen the losing side and can lie in the bed you made with your choices,” he snapped.

I grew hotter, angrier. Fucking asshole.

One more tightening and I was pretty sure his neck would snap. A split second and he would be gone.

But Fractum wouldn’t be. And he wasn’t scared, which made me nervous.

Something inside me wouldn’t let me finish him. I pushed all my anger out, trying to convince my magic to let me end his miserable life, but it didn’t let me.

“What now then? We keep killing each other until a single human remains? There will be nowhere to hide when the vamps get through that border, and right now, I am the only thing preventing that fate,” I said.

He chuckled, blood slipping down his chin from his stained lips.

“Now, my humans destroy you and your pack,” he said, then looked up.

I snapped my head up and sucked in a breath at the boulders that were hurtling through the air toward us.

“Lori!” Derik growled and went to run, but arrows flew everywhere.

I threw my shield up around the wolves, and the boulders smashed down onto it, crashing open, a cloudy mist settling over the shield, slipping down it as the arrows dissipated against it.

The mist burned, fucking burned, and I sank to my knees as more boulders crashed against the magic. I gritted my teeth as Derik grabbed me and Kai gripped my shoulder.

“Let him go. You need the strength in your shield,” Derik said, and my father laughed.

“Who will you choose, I wonder? Kill me or protect them? I know what your decision will be, and so do you.

“So run along now, daughter, and we’ll see you soon,” he said.

I hated that he was right. I was fading fast. My breath was tight in my chest, my brow line damp with sweat and effort.

Whatever that mist was had some herb or component from the debris of the boulders that was pressing in on my magic. I couldn’t use any more to take out my father if I wanted to save my wolves.

I let him go.

He grinned and started retreating back into the forest, which made me even angrier.

I drew on my alphas more as more arrows rained, more boulders came soaring down. They crashed down, breaking, releasing more mist.

I coughed out the sour taste it left, the pressure almost making me crumble, but my eyes were trained on my father, who was walking away with his humans, thinking he had won.

That bastard had forgotten who I was though. I wasn’t just a conduit for werewolf magic. I was a human, a winter born.

I grabbed the athame in Kai’s waistband that I knew he kept there, then launched it.

My father turned just in time for it to sink into his gut. I grinned back as his eyes went wide and he roared, ripping the small blade from his flesh.

Blood stained over his shirt and leather, and I smirked. Good. I hope it fucking hurt.

He glared, grimacing as he held the wound before looking up at his humans in the trees.

“Send it all down. Crush the fuckers. Take out as many as you can,” he said, then barked orders at his army to help him get back to the village.

I turned to Derik and Kai, who were next to me. Derik was ordering the pack into formation, getting them ready for the fight as Kai held me up.

The pressure of the mist, the constant attack of the boulders was something I wasn't used to, and through all my training with the alphas and Cain, we hadn't anticipated something so intense.

I would never admit it to my father, or anyone probably, but I had been naive. I hadn't given my father enough credit to come up with things like this to use.

I grunted as another boulder crashed, clutching Kai, who kept me steady.

“We'll fight off what we can and retreat,” Derik said.

Kai nodded, but I shook my head.

“No. It's going to get worse; they won't just let us go. We have to get moving now so I can keep my shield up long enough to get out of here,” I breathed.

Brax's shadows pushed farther inside me, and I welcomed the strength as another assault landed.

“What are we doing here, Alphas?” Taylor puffed, shifting into a human, her skin covered in blood, sweat, and dirt. She looked up at the weapons that were still being fired at my shield.

“She's not going to be able to hold this much longer,” Kai bit, and Taylor nodded.

“So we rip them to shreds.”

“I don't want to lose any more wolves today,” Derik replied, his eyes going to the ground where our fallen lay.

“Wait, you want us to retreat?” Taylor spat, saying the word like it was acid in her mouth.

“Retreat with the shield and figure out what to do after that.

“Every time we come out, we learn something new about their tactics, including that they have catapults and rocks with herbs that we haven’t gone up against before.

“Whoever is pulling their strings has given them more than we thought.”

My mind flashed to the vision I’d had at the border, and I winced. “The vamps?” I whispered, and Derik shrugged.

Kai’s snarl made me shudder, and I held him tighter.

“Maybe, but they made it up the mountain with good intentions.

“They’ve also been truthful at Tabitha’s when saying they don’t want the border down or she would have sensed the lie and kicked them out,” Derik said, a frown forming as he tried to think.

I wanted to give him that luxury, but I needed to get going. Whatever herbs they had were directly attacking my magic, and it felt like shit.

“We should go,” I said, and Derik nodded.

He went to tell the wolves when the sky broke, the sun disappeared, and rain poured over us. I was instantly soaked, the shield doing nothing against the rain.

The mist disappeared, and I grinned as the pressure started releasing. Energy pulsed inside me, and my purple shield pulsed with it. Like the border when I was close.

Brax burst through the foliage, entering the shield with a cocky grin as he came forward, his shadows caressing everywhere inside me, even more potent since he was there.

“The witches are on our side, and you know what that means, wolves?” he said, holding his arms out as the rain soaked into his skin, his eyes cloudy as the water fed whatever part of him relied on it.

“Brax, no. Rain means winter. Rain means we need to be in the city,” Derik said, but Brax shook his head.

“No, brother. Rain means we get revenge for our brothers and sisters today and we hide tomorrow.”

Brax patted Derik on the shoulder and guided his gaze back to the forest floor. Seeing the others pale and lifeless there with poison blackening the veins beneath their skin had me agreeing with Brax.

Derik’s eyes narrowed as Kai let out a howl at the next load of arrows that tried to land. They had no hope of getting through now though.

No mist, and Brax’s shadows brimming with power thanks to the rain meant I was full of that same energy, my magic strong and holding within me.

“Drop the shield, beautiful. We’re winning this round,” Derik said, his voice low and angry.

Taylor let out a howl, then shifted into her beast as my alphas rallied. I waited for their signal, my adrenaline racing as another boulder came down.

It crashed, and the rain washed away the mist.

“Now!” Kai growled, and I nodded, the shield falling away as the rain soaked through my dresses and the wolves’ coats. But that didn’t deter them.

As soon as the shield dropped, the wolves attacked.

They leapt into trees, clawed up the bark, reaching the humans, who screamed and squealed as they were ripped apart by the savages they had brought out.

I had a feeling a part of their frenzy wasn’t just revenge but the Fractum craving that they’d all been trying to keep a lid on. They were letting it out now though, and as much as I understood it, it was hard to watch.

So, I didn’t. I went hunting myself, finding the humans I could through the rain and on the ground, wrapping my vines of magic around them and piling them up on one of the flat-bed carts they had there.

Using spurts of magic was much easier, especially with the pack fighting, feeding my strength with the use of their shifting magic. It all linked back to the border and fed me.

I leaned against the wheel of the cart and waited for my wolves to be finished with the last of the humans, who were few and far between now.

My cart was filled with five of them, all passed out, wrapped in magic so they couldn't escape.

I'd send them on their way soon, not willing to kill them for my father's mistakes. He would get his own justice.

I looked over the group of humans, inspecting their leather vests and the armor they wore. It wasn't stuff I had seen before, some metal sculpting with a Valarian crest on it because my father was that egotistical.

A scream pierced the air, and I grimaced at the sound, turning away from it, my eye catching on the wrist of one of the humans.

I frowned and stepped forward, the small marking that was on the man's skin glowing.

"What the hell?" I said out loud as I yanked his sleeve back and found an X there. A red, glowing, throbbing ~X~.

"*Cain?*" I asked in my mind, able to reach him thanks to the magic he used on the potions he gave me.

It wasn't a strong link or one he let me tap into whenever I wanted, but he must have sensed my urgency because he opened the door in his mind.

"*What is this?*" I asked, and showed him through my eyes the red marks, checking every wrist, every single one of them wearing it.

It was magic, something the humans shouldn't have access to or be able to use.

~"Lorelai, run! Get away from them!" he screamed, getting my attention away from the marks just in time for explosions to go off in the clearing, for my alphas to call my name through the chaos, for the bodies on the cart to explode right in front of me.

