

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

### The Demon

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BRAX

The rain pelted down over my bare skin, my chest puffing as fury filled me.

The sky was gray, dark, and angry, just like the pack. It infiltrated everything, sizzling between everything as thunder boomed and lightning cracked. It was what I needed.

My shadows riled inside me, and I grinned at my next target. I ran toward the tree where a human hid, launching poison arrows at my pack.

The taste of that poison polluted my tongue and I roared, running up the tree, my claws sinking into the bark and launching me onto the branch with the human.

It shook it enough that his next arrow fell and he gasped, backing up against the thick trunk behind him.

He yanked a sword out of the sheath at his hip, and I edged forward. My packmates fought better as wolves, but my shadows fed my human side, and that made me much more lethal in that form.

Maybe the man thought that was not the case, but he had never faced a wolf like me. I was pissed at the scar they had left on my shoulder, the wound that had taken strength from me and the mage keeping my girl and baby alive.

I wasn't a fan of the humans at the best of times, but now? I hated them. Everything that made them human made me angry. Especially when they had their sights set on destroying my life and my family.

I inched forward and growled, my canines extending, flashing my red eyes at him. He shivered, his hold on his sword wavering as I grinned.

"Quick and easy means you stay right where you are and don't fight the fate you have been given.

"If you fight, if you strike back, I will choose the hard way and make sure you feel every single second of the breaths leaving your body," I warned, still slowly getting closer, the blood in my veins boiling higher, my rage trying to break out, my shadows hissing as I did.

He narrowed his eyes on me, strengthening his pose.

"Wolves will die at human hands before the moon is full. Humans will be victors, riches and spoils for all," he said, and I frowned at the words.

They sounded rehearsed, like they were not his own, and there was only one creature in this godforsaken Fractum realm who would say them like that.

"Not for you though," I said, crouching so the tip of his sword reached my chest.

"It is prophesied."

"The humans are fools. Prophecies in this realm are given by a creature with a single interest at heart. Themselves.

"And they will lead you all to your deaths. Kind of like now," I warned, and he seemed to take that just as seriously as his prophecy.

He shook, and I took the opportunity. I grabbed his sword, yanking it out of his hand at the hilt so the poison touched nothing, and threw it down.

It landed on the ground, sinking into the mossy earth as I grinned up at my new plaything.

He started praying, crossing over his chest, but his god would not save him now. Not when I had the fury of Fractum within me and the rain of my people sinking into my skin.

Then Cain pulled tight on the pack link and I scowled, turning to the direction he was focused on.

Lorelai.

I pinned my human into the tree with my claws at his throat, then turned to her. Our link had confusion and wariness in it. I frowned and watched as she turned the arms of each human she had piled on a wooden cart.

*“What’s she doing?”* I asked to any of the alphas.

They were busy with the humans, bathing in their blood, especially Kai, unleashing the Fractum demons that whispered at us constantly.

Derik spared a glance, regretting it when he was hauled back by three humans. He bit each one, tearing them off him before they could get their blades into him.

I snapped my head to Lorelai as Cain’s tug got stronger, more urgent. I never let him fully in, but this time I knew I had to. Something was wrong.

I let him in just as he screamed at Lorelai to run, and the human chuckled. I ripped my claws through his throat, then jumped just as the cart of humans exploded in front of her.

“No!” I roared, then threw out my shadows. They caught her just before the fire touched her, but the distance was making it hard to keep them there.

I ran as fast as I ever had as her body flew back, aiming for a thick tree that I knew would hurt like a bitch if she hit.

But my shadows were holding the explosion back; I didn’t have enough in me to grab her too.

I ran faster, the rain pelting me, doing nothing against the fire that fought my darkness. The flames pushed like they were possessed, aiming for her, like they were alive and had a single purpose.

I would not let them reach her.

Sweat beaded over my forehead, my breath misting as the rain mixed with it down my body.

I shook as my shadows tried to back down, to forfeit, but I didn’t let them back to me, keeping them against the fire like a wall.

And then I was there, reaching her. I kicked off a thick tree root and leapt into the air, catching her from behind just before she hit the tree.

My back crashed into it, the wood cracking and groaning as I did, my head hitting it with a thud.

Pain ricocheted in my mind and I groaned, shaking as I struggled against the fire that fought against the shadows.

But she was there, in my arms. Safe. She clutched me, her arms around my neck as I held her tight to my soaked body. Hers was too, but she was alive, and that was all I cared about.

"You okay?" I breathed as she opened her eyes that had clenched shut.

She blinked a few times, looking around, then up at my wall of shadows that were being burned and penetrated by the fire throwing punches like it was just as determined to win as I was.

"This is not normal," she whispered, and I shook my head.

"Something powerful is helping these humans, and that fire is part of that."

"The humans had red Xs on their wrists," she said, standing up slowly as I did.

We both looked toward the wall of fire, which was too close for comfort, the heat inching closer as my shadows buckled.

"The witches can't interfere. This makes no sense," I bit, then looked over to where the pack was, not sure why the hell Kai and Derik hadn't raced over yet.

But they were surrounded by fire too. The lifeless bodies they had created had exploded as well, and the fire was burning its way to ours.

They were screaming orders, piling rocks and dirt, but the fire ate it all.

"We have to get out of here," I said, knowing we couldn't keep this thing at bay without help.

We needed backup, we needed the elders too—the ones that could still shift.

"We can't. This will burn through the entire forest until it reaches the city," Lorelai said, then stepped forward.

I grabbed her wrist to stop her getting closer, but my shadows stole my breath, begging to come back.

I grimaced at the pain and strength it took to keep them there, go against their ask. It took everything. I collapsed to the ground, breathing hard as my head pounded.

"It's burning through," I gritted out as Lorelai bent down to me.

"I can help," she said quickly, then ran forward before I could stop her.

"Lorelai!" I growled, and she shook her head.

"I've got this. Call everyone back to the city."

"And leave you here? No fucking way," I said, a growl in my voice that I couldn't stop because the pain was too much.

It grew in my bones, making me shake as I watched her shake her hands out, then rub her stomach right before her hands glowed.

I wanted to stop her. This fire was unlike anything we had dealt with, the magic in it something we hadn't anticipated, and the power tasted acidic against my shadows.

I didn't want it near her, but there was a reason she was given this magic, and what if this was it? What if she held the only magic that could beat it in her veins? I had to trust her.

"That's right, you do." She grinned, then threw out her magic. It was an intense purple that left a mist surrounding it as it created a wall.

*"Back to the city, wolves,"* I ordered down the link.

*"The fire will reach her,"* Kai growled, but I showed him what she was doing.

She had her magic making a new border, growing out of thin air.

She gently pushed my shadows out of the way, replacing them bit by bit until I could breathe easy again, my chest untightened, and my body stopped trying to pass out.

*"I've got this, Alphas. The fire isn't getting through it. I can feel it there, but it can't attack it. It's jabbing it. Almost testing the magic,"* she said.

I frowned. Testing it? They wanted to know what she could do, what her limit was, what her threshold was.

That was not a good sign, especially because there was no way she could let that fire come at us.

“Don’t use everything you have, Lorelai. Pace yourself,” I warned, standing behind her, whispering in her ear, her scent something like a drug to me.

I inhaled it, breathing in before smirking and doing the only thing I could think of that would help, so that whatever was wielding that fire, targeting her, wouldn’t get the information they were pushing for.

The other pockets of fire burned their way through the forest to the blaze we were fighting, so I joined my shadows with her magic. She let out a sigh as my shadows poured into her, gave her strength.

I ran my hands over her arms, her body, kissing down her neck as my shadows filled her and entwined with her magic the way our souls were. Tight and formidable.

She smiled at me over her shoulder, her hair blowing back as the force of the magic and fire wall in front of us roared loudly, the rain dousing us.

It was a perfect moment, one I had wanted with her for a long time, and there was a tug inside me, something strong and powerful.

I knew what I wanted it to be. I wanted to mate, I wanted to be linked with her like that, and as the feeling and the connection grew, that feeling intensified. But it never crested.

The wave of love and contentment, the safety, the power, it all connected, and yet our souls stayed linked through magic, nothing more.

I gritted my teeth and kissed her cheek, giving her more of my shadows.

The wall of magic and shadow was a cloud, pushing the fire back finally, a border stopping it from being our end.

We fought it back together as the wolves retreated, Kai and Derik checking in every few seconds as they got everyone back to the city safely.

Some were hurt, some were beyond that, but all of them were silent, stressed, fear trickling through. None of us had seen this kind of thing.

Even in the Great War, things like this hadn't happened. The alphas before had only had to contend with vampires, and somehow, things were worse this time.

I had no idea how we were going to get out of it, defeat whatever it was, or even figure out what we were up against because the big picture just wasn't what the wolves were getting.

We were getting bits and pieces at a time, and it was frustrating as hell.

"I'll see if I can get something from it, a magic sense or something," Lorelai said, pushing her magic out farther.

I couldn't push my shadows as far. I hated leaving her exposed, even if it was just her magic, but I reinforced us, planting my feet behind her, holding her, making sure we weren't going anywhere.

Then I steeled my shadows against her magic, making sure whatever it was was not going to be able to read her through them.

And then Derik and Kai were directly in the link, forcing their magic in, staying as wolves so they could give us everything. And it worked.

The fire roared, sizzled, hissed as Lorelai ran her magic over it, coating it until it was dissipating instead of burning. My shadows pierced it, her magic and mine strong and entwined.

The heat was intense, whatever was controlling it fighting back, trying hard against us, but I felt it in our will, hers and mine, even my brothers'.

We were going to beat this thing. This time.

We pushed down on the fire, the force lowering it so the magic was taller than it, creating a dome over it. She shook a little, and I made my shadows stronger.

Then I called on the water. It was a strange connection, not magic but some connection that my pack had to it that the others didn't.

It was a spiritual thing, and it might not affect the fire, but it meant more strength within me, which meant more for her.

So, I gave her everything I had, every last ounce of fight that I had, and she pushed everything she had combined with what the alphas were giving, screaming out as she forced it all down on this fire demon we had never faced before.

It squealed so loud we both shook, the intensity pushing back, but I kept us steady as she clutched our magic and wielded it like a damn queen. No, like a luna.

And then it was gone.

The fire collapsed into the ground, disappearing into thin air like it was never there, the only sign that it had almost destroyed us being the scorch marks on the forest floor and the foul scent of smoke permeating the air.

I shuddered as my shadows pinged back to me, her own magic falling back on her, the weight heavy on us both.

Lorelai let out a deep breath before turning into me, her body shaking. "I need to be stronger," she breathed, her eyelids drooping, her face pale.

I held her to me, kissing the top of her head as she shook. "We'll practice more."

"We need more than practice. We need to know what the hell the humans have that is letting them do these things.

"How do they have magic on their side when we can't even get Tabitha to go against them?" she asked.

I wished I had an answer, but I didn't. Instead, I kissed her again.

"We'll figure it out. We have to.

"In the meantime though, we need to get back to the city before they decide to come back and we're alone," I said, looking around us, my eyes narrowing in on all the trees and the dark shadows that seemed ominous and threatening now.



“I got him though.” She smirked up at me, her voice dragging and lazy. Almost like she was falling asleep. The link was drowsy, and I picked her up in my arms.

“Who’d you get, Spitfire? The fire demon?” I smiled, trying to keep her talking, but she leaned into me, slowly closing her eyes.

“We got him together. But I got my father. I threw Kai’s blade at him.” She smiled again, her eyes still closed.

“Good little luna, aren’t you?”

I kissed her forehead again, walking toward the city with her in my arms, glad that at least it wasn’t just us hurting, that he was too.

The rain was only a drizzle now, the thunder and lightning gone, but the sky was dark. Just as ominous as the forest.

Everything was turning and I wasn’t sure how to fix it, but at least we had beaten the humans this time—and whatever they had conjured.

“He’s not dead though. Wounded, but not dead. My magic wouldn’t let me.” She sighed, and I frowned again, not answering her as she slipped into sleep.

Her magic shouldn’t have held her back, not after everything the humans had done, her father had done, especially kidnapping her.

She was owed that life in blood; it was a realm fact. So why had it stopped her?

Nothing was making sense anymore. How were we meant to beat an entity or a race when the rules didn’t apply to them?

We were savages and we could be monsters, but we had a balance to maintain. They should have that obligation too, and I couldn’t think of a single thing that would erase that. Or maybe Fractum had?

My steps crunched over leaves and branches as I walked with Lorelai passed out in my arms.

Her heartbeat was steady, so was the baby’s, but I still pushed my shadows in, joining ours together to keep them both as strong as possible as they healed.

I could heal later, once she was safe in the city walls.

*"Thank you,"* Derik breathed through the link, and I smiled.

*"For helping her defeat a fire demon?"*

*"For getting to her in time. That explosion should have killed her,"* Kai growled, and I grimaced.

*"It was trying to. Does Cain have any information from Tabitha?"* I asked.

Cain had left as soon as the explosion had hit to go and find out what the hell we were dealing with. He was still out of the link, so I had no idea whether he had made it or not.

*"He's still there. But the wolves are feral here, so we don't have time to go check on him. He's in the attic of the mansion with his candles doing whatever he does to talk with her."* Kai scoffed.

I hated that they left him alone to do his magic whenever he wanted. He could be a part of this.

*"Don't, Braxton. He is a part of our pack, we would feel it. He will feel your disconnection. It weakens us."*

*"What's wrong with the pack? Feral how?"* I ignored his condescension and moved on. I would never accept Cain the way they did. Not when I knew what he was capable of.

*"They're having trouble fighting back their wolves. We're holding them off, but there are a lot of them, and even with Galen, we're a little outnumbered."* Derik sighed.

I checked through their eyes, wincing as I saw the gnashing teeth and angry red eyes surrounding the entrance to the mansion.

Galen was there, casual as ever, his face stoic, his hands in his pockets as he bared his teeth at any of the wolves who dared to come forward.

My brothers were giving warning growls in alpha voices, but it was only reaching half of them.

I pushed strength back through to reinforce the alpha tone, and Derik released a howl that I heard from where we were.

I grinned as they all froze, whining and whimpering, howling back before sinking to their knees. The pack link was a frenzy of emotions, and I had to back away from that so I could concentrate.

I was so focused on my shadows on Lorelai, my alpha strength in the link, that I heard the crack of the branches behind us when it was too late—it was already too close. I knew we were being followed.

I broke into a run, ripping my strength back and forcing my aching body to do what it needed to keep us safe.

I just hoped it was enough.