

CLAIMED BY THE ALPHAS {18+}

Chapter 3

THE PROVOCATION

DERIK POV

I had to stay focused, lead the pack, be the Alpha.

All I wanted to do was link to Lorelai like Kai was and make sure we were going to make it in time. Not being able to link at the same time as him was driving me insane, made me feel out of control and that was the last thing I wanted to be. But I had my role, we all did. And we had to work together.

Kai had the strongest mental connection with her which she needed so she could hold it for longer, Brax could use his shadows to strengthen her and help keep our child alive. My role was the pack. I had to be the one with the level head, the one who knew where to send the others, the one who could keep everyone in line. They listened to me and I was glad they did but I couldn't help wondering if I was getting the short end of the deal. They got to feel her, be with her in some way and it was hard not to take that luxury for myself. But I would handle it because I had to. It wasn't safe for her and by doing what I needed to do for the pack, it meant we were going to be able to find her quicker. I had to hold onto that.

We raced towards the men's village in the Grassland Area, following the lead from Cain. Brax ran next to me as the pack moved in position and Kai met up with us on the way back from Tabitha's.

I hated that I had let go of my instincts. I had known something was going on with the men's village. The reports hadn't been truthful for months. I had assumed the human was simply an imbecile but I had been naïve. I wasn't usually but I had been living in some kind of blissful ignorance since Lorelai. I wanted to believe everything was fine so I didn't have to deal with it and that meant more time with her but I shouldn't have been so irresponsible. Now she was gone and it was my fault.

"It is not. We all knew the numbers were fucked. We all should have followed up. And I shouldn't have left her with the humans." Kai growled through our link. I shook him free of my head and ran faster, the burn in my bones and the wind in my fur distressing me bit by bit. But the tension that stirred in my stomach at finding Lorelai was still there. I had no idea what state she would be in and that was the worst of all. I was hoping because she was her father's daughter, that might give her some protection but I had lost my faith in humanity a long time ago and was terrified of what that could mean for her.

The men's village came into view and all three of us came up on it, faster than we ever had, a speed the human's had no idea we had and meant we might have a chance of getting there before they did something about us coming.

"Are you in position?" I asked Taylor and a resounding howl ruptured the silence of the day. They were ready. I came to a stop, shifting into a human with Kai and Derik, pulling on our pants that we were handed by others in our pack before they shifted and ran off to help the rest of the wolves surround the men's village.

I sauntered forward, my eyes darting everywhere as Kai and Brax flanked me. We were always equal but they always flanked me. I was the diplomat, the face of us and that carried so much weight that sometimes I wondered whether it was worth it. Then I remembered that Kai was a psycho and Brax resented the leadership role because of his shadows and history with being a shifter. Which left me and I would take that on for my brothers. Not by blood but by bond. It was even stronger.

I stepped forward, through the slodgy mud that made up the ground, sniffing, investigating. It was eerily quiet which had my skin prickling. Kai growled low and I knew why. We couldn't smell her.

"What is she saying?" Derik asked and Kai huffed.

"She's weak, trying not to speak down the link too much but she's underground. We just have to find the entrance. She's not the only human down there but I can't get anything." Kai growled, his anger making the sky thunder. Grey clouds rolled in, deep and dark with thunderous claps and threatening lightning.

"I will tear them apart with my teeth." He roared then sauntered forward, his body trembling as he got closer to the first hut, his fists clenched, his eyes red. I grabbed his arm and he swung to me.

"Let go."

"The laws forbid it, Kai. We have to do this properly or they have every right to her."

"Fuck your laws. She is not theirs and I'll have a fucking good time proving that to them." He bit back and yanked his arm out of my hold. I eyed Brax who was paler than normal, his shadows taking their toll on him. He wasn't going to be able to help hold Kai back, at least if he did then it would take from her.

"Let me handle this, Kai. I know you want to go in there and kill them all but we can't. We have a contract with them. We cannot attack or harm them unless they attack. If we do, the contract falls apart and everything we have built with them means nothing. We can't risk that, Kai." I explained, hoping to get through to him.

“I want his head. I want to feel the life leave his body as I squeeze it from him.” Kai glowered, looking over the father’s hut that we were surrounding.

“And you will. You know he has been hiding these humans for a reason. He took her for a reason. If they attack, so do we. Until then, we find her the right way. If they refuse, then there will be consequences. We can claim provocation.” I said, already having the loophole up my sleeve I needed. I hated that we relied on the humans for so much magic. Their souls fed our magic, it took nothing from them but we felt it. And we needed it. Otherwise we were just werewolves, capable of nothing but savagery. The magic kept us somewhat human. I couldn’t risk that being what happened to my pack, the descent into madness was swift and it would be too late by the time we figured out how to stop it.

Kai stepped back, his lips pursed as sniffed the air again.

“He’s here. His arrogance is permeating everything.” Kai muttered, rolling his shoulders back. I frowned, he shouldn’t be arrogant. I would expect some anxiety or something towards fear but if he was arrogant then it means he thought he had more than just a chance at beating us. I sniffed the air harder, frowning when a foul scent stung in my nose. I coughed and spluttered out the taste, spinning to the others.

“Wolfsbane. They’re growing it.” I bit, anger coiling through me. That was an act of war. I sniffed warily, inching toward the hut, refusing to touch it if there was wolfsbane in the air.

“And Gardenia. A neutralizer of scent. That’s why we can’t get anything on her.” Brax interrupted. I frowned, trying to work out what the hell the next move was. I ordered the wolves to step back a little, keep an eye out for the two plants. The anxiety ran deep inside me from the pack and I tried to soothe them but I was nervous too. The humans had never been so bold.

The door to the hut creaked open then and all three of us growled, towering above the smirking human who had his hand on the hilt of his sword, the other in his pocket like this was just another meeting. Kai roared and I knew how much control it took for him not to destroy him. I was having to exercise the same control, something I had never had to worry about losing so much as I did in that moment.

“Where is she?” I demanded and Mr. Valarian shrugged.

“Around.”

“You will give her back.”

He chuckled at that and I almost shifted. My spine tingled, begging to let the wolf take over. My eyes had already shifted colour and I didn’t miss the way Valarian’s eyes shifted to it before he returned to being a smug prick.

“I don’t think so wolf.”

“This will be considered provocation. Either you bring her out or we go hunting.” I growled, not caring that there was a contract anymore. I thought he was going to feed us some bullshit about protecting his daughter but his demeanour said anything but that. He had nothing to redeem himself over what he’d done so I was not holding back and I was not leaving without her.

“Actually it won’t and no you won’t. I’m taking my daughter back which under the contract, I have every right to do if I take the compensation accusation off the table. Without that, you have no reason to hold her.” Mr. Valarian said as sure as anything, his body straight, his eyes meeting mine. I roared at the intended challenge before stepping forward, into his space, overbearing him. He didn’t flinch and I snarled, my teeth snapping. Maybe there was more Kai in me than I had thought because one wrong move and I was going to kill him.

“Stop challenging me. Your dominance is irrelevant when it comes to us. You may be the Alpha of your humans but in these lands, you are nothing but a servant.” I spat at him, my voice deep, dominant, Alpha-like. I could feel my pack bowing to me, offering up their surrender to my power. Even Kai was letting me channel him. That was rare, especially since it was connected to the pack.

But it was Brax that broke me. He coughed, falling to his knees, his eyes drooping, breathing hard.

“I couldn’t hold onto it. She passed out again.” Brax breathed and Kai roared, rushing forward, shoving passed me, slamming Valarian into the door. It broke in half and Kai stepped over him, pressing his boot onto his chest. Valarian went for his sword and held it up to Kai, narrowing his eyes. Kai laughed and I stepped back. Fine, psycho could win. They weren’t going to give her back and if she was that weak then they had run out of time to do this the nice way.

I stepped forward and slammed my boot on his arm, pinning it down and grabbing the sword from him. I held it at his throat as Kai grinned, a malicious threatening grin that intimidated the hell out of most people, even me sometimes. He ran a long black talon down Valarian’s cheek as he smirked.

“I have wolfsbane everywhere. I have arrowheads made of it, I have spears made of it. I have an arsenal that you couldn’t imagine. If you kill me now, I promise you, I will be avenged.” He promised and Kai laughed maniacally. He hauled Valarian up and threw him towards Brax who yanked him up from the ground and held him there. I sauntered forward, looking directly into his stubborn gaze.

“We know she’s here. We are linked, magically which is something your stupid human brain could never comprehend. Going against us will make that a very steep learning curve for your kind though.” I warned, knowing they had no idea just how much magic

controlled the realm they lived in. Making the witches angry, upsetting the balance, turning on the wolves, it was all going to lead to the culling of a lot of humans and I'd bet it wouldn't even be the wolves to do it. It would be forces much bigger than us. But they could figure that one out on their own. I only wanted Lorelai back.

"We are not your slaves and we are sick of bowing to you. We will not do it any longer." He spat back and I shrugged, not interested in the words of a dead man.

"Taking her signs your position in our realm over, keeping her from us against her will, signs your death warrant. Your choice." I offered but I knew what his answer was going to be. Which is why I was really going to enjoy tearing him apart with my brothers.

THE ESCAPE

LORELAI POV