

Owned by the Alphas 2: Claimed by the Alphas |

The Truth

I needed to distract this crazy witch from hurting Kai.

Just seeing him under her foot, struggling, his pain writhing inside me through our link was enough to have me clutching my fists, my magic balling there despite it being weak and trying to crawl back inside me.

“Hmm, intermittently for a while, but then he started to figure out that he was being seen in two places at once, and his annoying little soulmate was starting to clue on to when I was there and when he was.

“Couldn’t have that now, could I?” She sneered.

“So you poisoned her?”

“Yes.” She chuckled. “Just enough to dull her senses when it came to him and make her feel awful enough not to raise suspicions. Clearly it worked.”

“And Vaughn?”

“I have no use for the human now. He can rot in the human dungeons.”

She laughed, then shook her head like she was telling a cosmic joke, but it just made me want to kick her cosmic ass.

“Your father didn’t even realize it was me. He thought he had Vaughn as a spy in your midst, but really his Vaughn was dying in the dungeons while I fed him whatever information I needed him to know.

“He really is dull for a human, isn’t he? Your father, that is. Vaughn is a little tastier, but his blood is annoying. Just screams for that woman of his all the time.”

She rolled her eyes, and I gripped Derik’s arm, pulling strength from Brax’s shadows, my heart racing even more.

I owed Vaughn, I couldn’t let him die, but we couldn’t leave. I was about to have a baby. Sweat dampened my forehead as my body reminded me of that fact.

“Why? What is the point in any of this?” I snapped, my hand holding the bottom of my stomach as another pain assaulted me.

My fingers dug into Derik harder as it stole my breath, the ache searing down my legs, but I refused to let her see it.

I stood still, using my alphas on either side of me to keep me grounded. I knew I didn’t have long before my will wouldn’t matter because our child was coming, but I had to last as long as I could.

Adrenna brushed her hair back from her face with her talons and eyed me before taking a deep breath and letting Kai up.

She nodded toward me. “Go to your mate, Alpha. It may be the last night you spend with her. Wouldn’t want you to miss the big event.”

She chuckled, then watched through a sly smirk as Kai backed up toward me, refusing to turn his back on her.

He tried to shield me with his big body, but I pulled him back, taking slow breaths to help with the pain that was becoming more taxing on my body.

“I’m sorry about what happened to you, but the wolves did not cause it. The witches turned you away, not us,” I tried, and she cackled loudly, her hand going to her chest as she arched into the noise.

“Oh, dearie, how kind, but the thing is, the witches don’t care about much. The only thing they have ever cared about is their stupid balance.

“Now, unless things have changed in the last hundred years I have been held in my prison world, you wolves are the very reason they hold so much power over that balance,” she said, and I hated that it was the truth.

They gave the wolves their power to counteract the necromancer magic of the vampires. To keep the balance.

“So now we must be punished?”

“Well. If it was up to me, then no. But to get out, I did have to make a deal with a powerful being that really likes the taste of werewolf.” She grinned, and I sucked in a breath.

“Who pulls your strings, witch?” Derik demanded, and she looked straight at me, pointing a long taloned finger.

“She knows.” Adrenna smirked playfully.

“Vampires,” I whispered, the image of Silas stuck in my head.

Beenie’s picture, their refusal to help. It all made sense, and yet, I still couldn’t accept it.

My alphas tensed, the wolves growled, and Kai’s snarl ripped through the air as Adrenna swirled her sand in a threatening swarm behind her like angry bees, waiting for their queen to give the order.

“Clever little winter born. Years ago, Silas saved me from a wretched fate worse than death. He gave me something to hold on to. He showed me mercy when no other would.

“Those witches left me bleeding out, leaching magic, and they didn’t care because I dared to fall in love with someone they didn’t approve of. Like the heart has a choice.

“They exiled me with all the races present on top of that godforsaken mountain, and not one of them stopped it. Until Silas.

“He knelt down as the magic took me and offered me a lifeline. I had to promise to help him take down the werewolves and claim the realm if he helped me get out of my prison.

“I agreed, and he branded me before I was taken.”

She sighed, then started pacing.

I sucked in a breath as she spoke, my contractions getting worse.

I knew I couldn’t stay here, I had to find somewhere safe to birth, but she was giving us all the answers we had been asking for, so I shut my mouth tight and pulled strength from my alphas.

They held me up, stroking my back, my arm, my hand. I forced myself to be silent in the pain, the mating link drenched with a begging that I couldn’t help.

It wanted them to do more, to stop the pain, but that wasn't going to happen until our son was born. Which felt like it might be soon.

"So you waited?" I prompted, and she nodded.

"I had to. Silas was a master at stalling, always coming up with excuses.

"Until the blood moon came. The realm shook, even mine, and we both knew it was time. That fool of a human."

She kicked my father's clothes for dramatic effect, and I had to admit, it had me grimacing.

"He was weak-minded, easy to manipulate, and with the promise of power and riches, fell for every line we fed him. I told Silas what to teach him, the word to say that he was forbidden from.

"And then I had him sacrificing his people to me, feeding my magic, distracting the beast so when my world broke, I could escape.

"It worked. You have been chasing your tails ever since." She eyed us. "No pun intended."

She cackled, then looked over all of us, the air tense with what she might do and what we had to protect ourselves from.

I urged my magic to work with me, but it hovered around my stomach.

It needed to be with me and the baby to get us through the birth, I knew that just from the feelings it gave me, but the urge to use it was so strong.

How could we just let her have everything she wanted? How could we let the wolves go, to her?

"Now, you lot look like you are about to be very busy, and I have a border to break." She laughed manically and hoisted her skirts up before her black sand followed her back toward the gates.

"Wait," I said, "the border? Why do you want it down?"

"Because I have to. As long as I am the one who wants it down, Silas won't get the witches' wrath. It was his condition. I do this one last thing and then I am free."

She grinned, her wide mouth so creepy with its sharp teeth and red lips. Her eyes were red too, a wavering red that looked like it was moving.

I shuddered at the sight of it, but that might be the betrayal from Silas stabbing me.

He had played us all, the witches, the wolves, the humans. The whole time he had a plan, one that we played along to without paying him any of the attention he deserved.

The witch climbed up on my father's horse and flicked her dress out over its back before peering over her shoulder.

"I'll be seeing you, wolves. Don't go anywhere." She winked, then her eyes went bright red, glowing.

The black sand swirled, and we all stepped back. The sand pulled the humans back up, bloodied and broken corpses with red eyes that started snarling.

"This should keep you busy. Have a nice birth, winter born!"

She cackled, and then she was gone, riding out of the city without a care in the world while the humans—that weren't human any longer—attacked.

The wolves ran past us, snarling and ripping their teeth through the "humans" as another pain filled my stomach.

I sucked in a breath, almost letting it take me down. Kai turned and picked me up.

"Inside!" Kai nodded toward Galen, and he shifted back, slowly and reluctantly, but he did it, and that was all I needed to see to finally be sure that he would not hurt my mother.

"Get the humans out here, they can fight these things with the pack." Derik started shouting orders. "We need to get somebody to that border. Send half the pack there, we can't let her take it down."

"We'd be sending distractions, she's too powerful," Cain said, but Kai shook his head.

"Not if you and Beenie go. Take head on this, take our best. Stop her from taking down that border," he growled, but Cain shook his head.

“Didn’t you hear me? She’s too powerful. The only thing that is going to slow her down is alpha magic,” Cain urged as we moved up the stairs to the mansion, leaving the sound of howling and screaming behind.

I curled into Kai, clenching my eyes shut, wishing I wasn’t so useless right now, but the pain, the deep ache in my bones kept me focused on getting the baby out, and it had to be my priority.

“We can’t leave Lorelai. Not now,” Derik said as we burst into the mansion and they slammed the doors shut.

My mother came rushing out with the women who were going to fight.

“They’re going to help,” Mom said, and Kai nodded.

“Stay in pairs, don’t get bit, and if you get tired, then hide in one of the buildings. We’ll find you as soon as we can,” he said, letting them out.

The women of my village, who used to shudder at anything that didn’t include cross-stitch or gardening, wielded their swords and weapons like they had been born for it, running into the thick of the battle to fight alongside the werewolves in a way that made me so proud of Mom.

She had gotten them there, she had made it happen, and we might just survive because of it.

“Where’s Vaughn?” Ryleigh ran out, holding her stomach, her face pouring with tears.

I looked over her as Brax stopped her getting closer. “You knew it wasn’t him.”

“No. I just knew he was different. Then he said he would take me to the other girls and locked me in a cupboard. Your mom only just found me and let me out.

“But I know that wasn’t him, he would never do that,” Ryleigh pleaded.

I knew my alphas didn’t care about Vaughn like I did, but I owed him my life. And the only reason our child was alive was because he had shown mercy, he had believed in the wolves.

I couldn’t let them abandon him.

“We have to save him.”

“We’re a little short on wolves right now, beautiful,” Derik said, but I shook my head.

“No, Galen said there was something I could have to slow down the contractions,” I said, turning to Galen, who was pulling on pants my mom handed him with a blush on her cheeks.

“It won’t work for long. The contractions are getting too close together.” Galen eyed my stomach, and I made Kai put me down.

“Then give it to me. How long will that give us?” I asked, still holding Kai to help me stand.

Brax kept his shadows inside me, soothing the aches every time they came, but Galen was right, they were getting more intense.

“An hour. It’ll stop them for an hour at the most,” he said, and I’d never heard him sound so unsure. “It will dull them, and even then, I’ve never used them on a winter born with your kind of magic.”

I nodded, turning to my alphas. “Go stop the witch. I’ll take the herbs. Galen and Mom can monitor me, while Cain and Beenie can go get Vaughn back,” I urged.

Kai growled, his denial shadowed by Derik’s outright refusal.

“We’re not leaving you,” Derik bit, but I needed everyone to be okay, not just me.

“The witch is too powerful; you are the only ones who can slow her down. Galen can tell you when I’m close and you can come back.

“And Cain can heal Vaughn when he gets there. He might even have information, a weakness we don’t know about,” I said, trying to convince them.

I couldn’t let the pack take on that witch knowing they were going to a slaughter if they didn’t have the alphas. My alphas gave them a chance.

“Spitfire,” Brax said, pulling my mouth against his, kissing hard before leaning his forehead on mine, “how are we meant to leave you when you are about to have our child?”

"Use your shadows, Brax. Slow her down and then come back to me. I'll wait for you," I whispered back, but my mom tugged my arm.

"Sweetie, it doesn't work like that. The child will come when it is ready, not when you are."

"Not if I take the herbs. Go get them," I ordered, not arguing and not backing down. It was the only way to keep everyone safe.

Galen looked hesitant, then nodded and walked off.

"Lorelai—"

"No, Kai. I can take care of the baby with Mom and Galen. You all need to go and make sure there is a realm left for it to be born into," I said, pain piercing my words as I clenched my jaw shut.

I didn't want to argue, I wanted to get it done. I needed them to do this.

I couldn't give birth knowing that seconds later our child could be at the mercy of vampires because we did nothing to protect the border.

"Cain, get Beenie and go to my village. In the men's huts, underground, there are cells. Find Vaughn, heal him. Understood?" I ordered, and he nodded, taking off, not even waiting for permission from the alphas.

"My mating bond is very against this," Derik admitted, frowning, and I nodded. Mine was too.

"I know. But it has to be—" I was cut off when my entire body shook with a pain so fierce I cried out, falling to the ground.

Brax caught me before I hit it, and I gasped into his arm. My magic was searing hot in my body, screaming, hissing.

I cried out again as my shadows fought it away from my stomach, but my bones felt like they were melting.

Cain hadn't gotten far when he jumped over the banister, landing in front of me, his eyes bright and his brow furrowed.

"What's happening?" I gasped, and he snapped his head to the alphas.

“The border! Adrenna’s there, she’s siphoning the magic into her. It’s pulling from Lorelai,” he rushed, his tone desperate as he pushed his own healing into me, but it did nothing, just put more pressure on my body.

He yanked it back. “I can’t heal her.”

“Fucking try!” Brax snapped, holding me against him as I clutched my stomach, the pain too much for me to talk through.

“I did! She’s right. The only way to stop this is to stop Adrenna.

“Lorelai won’t survive the birth without that magic in her. She hasn’t had the potion in weeks, the bite only once a day, she’s not strong enough,” Cain said, standing up and backing away.

Despite my organs screeching inside me, I still felt the tension that pulled at everyone.

“She is strong enough. She’ll make it. Galen and I will help her with whatever herbs we can.

“You three need to go and yank that bitch off the border because I swear to all that there is, if you stay here and she dies because of it, a witch will be the least of your problems,” Mom snapped, her mom voice hitting something inside me that I remembered from childhood, like when I did something she had told me not to or I needed to remember a new rule of the village.

“Go,” I whispered, “Stop her.”

Galen came back through then, frowning at me. “We’ll get her upstairs,” he said, taking me off Brax, who reluctantly let me go.

“We’ll be back soon. Hold on, Little Human,” Kai said, then kissed me, holding my cheek a second longer before stalking out the door.

Derik took his turn, saying nothing, but his words were in the feelings he sent through the link, so that was enough.

Brax gave me one last caress of his shadows before pulling them away, and I slumped against Galen. Without Brax’s shadows, only mine could fight the turning magic inside me.

I kept fighting the entire way up to my room.

Galen laid me down on the bed as Mom fussed around with hot water and linen, opening the windows for fresh air.

"Ryleigh, go get some more blankets," Mom ordered. "Galen, give her the damn herbs already."

Galen smirked and pushed the bottle under my nose. "Breathe it in, winter born," he said, and I did, the smell sharp.

I sucked in a breath, then coughed, wincing as it made the pain worse.

I fell into my head, clutching the links tight as I trembled, Mom coming over to hold me, brushing my hair back as she held my hand on my stomach.

"You're strong, Lorelai, you'll get through this," she whispered, kissing my forehead.

I nodded, my eyes clenching shut as I checked the links again. My alphas were wolves, running fast, trying not to let their worry in. But my magic was faulty now, and the wolves were all feeling it.

"Pull it back, they can fight as humans. They'll survive, you won't," Derik said in my head.

"I have no control over it. If I try, my shadows can't fight it. Tell the wolves to shift back to human on their own," I said back, and Derik disappeared from the link for a second.

"We're almost there, Spitfire, just hold on," Brax said reassuringly, and I swallowed hard, my body sweating from the pain, from the internal fight it was fighting.

But the contractions were less, and that was something. The herbs were working.

"They're going to shift back, but they've almost cleared out the humans. Then they'll come to the border to help."

"The village women will stay behind to protect you in the mansion, just in case, until we can get there," Derik said.

I kept my eyes closed, rubbing my tight, aching stomach, gritting my teeth against the scream that tried to escape. *"And Cain?"*

"Vaughn's scent is there, but there is blood too. He's searching."

"I found him." Cain's voice came through, and I let out a sigh of relief. "He's not in a good way, but I can heal him. It'll take a bit though.~"

None of us responded. I shut out the images and focused on breathing, the war of magic and shadow inside me making my skin feel like it was stretching too far.

I curled my legs in farther, tears falling down my cheeks as I clenched my jaw against the pain.

“What if it’s too much? The magic leaving me? What will I be left with?” I asked Mom, and she gave me a small smile.

“You’ve never needed magic before, sweetheart, you don’t need it now. Just let it go and let your shadows help,” she said, but I shook my head.

I couldn’t. If I let Adrenna pull it from me, she’d get stronger, the border would fall quicker.

“I can’t. The longer I hold on to it, the more chance my alphas have.”

“And what about your chance?” Mom asked, raising a brow at me like I should’ve expected that answer.

I still shook my head and clenched my jaw again. I would hold on. I had to. If all I could do was stop her from getting the last bit of border magic to bring it down completely, then that’s what I was going to do.

For as long as I could.

Next Chapter

Continue to the next chapter of Owned by the Alphas 2: Claimed by the Alphas