

The One He Claimed Chapter 9

Chapter 9: Food and Water

Sophie

“What are you talking about? I didn’t start anything,” I say to Penny.

“You may not have meant to, but you did. Word of you running, of your father standing up to the Alphas and refusing to track you down, spread like wildfire. Our mothers and sisters began to realize that we didn’t have to a**e by the laws that we don’t agree with, that we have a choice. Granted, it’s not a great choice, being on the run, but it’s better than being forced into something that you can’t live with.

She reaches out, taking my hands. “Some of the Alphas are on our side. Some of them agree that we need to stop this process.”

“But not all of them,” I tell her, remembering the girl in the woods. “Some Alphas are still out hunting, otherwise we wouldn’t have to run.”

“You’re right, and some Alphas have put so many restrictions on their ranked females that they’re not even allowed to leave the packhouses. Ranked she-wolves have started taking extreme measures, some of them taking their own lives to get away from this process.

“What? Why? Why would they kill themselves?” I ask shocked. “They would rather die than live with the embarrassment of having been claimed publicly. For some, it’s not worth it.”

I scrub my hands over my face. This is why there are so many she-wolves on the run now. When I first ran, there weren’t any. It was just me, and it was easy to hide. Now it seems I’m going to have to be much smarter about hiding.

“Where are you going? I ask Penny.

“There are rumors of a place, a pack that is leaving food and water for those of us on the run. I never learned to hunt in my wolf form, and it’s been a really long time since I’ve eaten. So, I’m heading there in the hopes of getting food.”

“It could be a trap, you know,” I say to her.

“I know. But I’ve heard it from more than one source, and no one stays. They take the food and water that have been offered and they keep going. That’s what I intend to do as well.

“But don’t you think that the Alphas that are hunting the ranked she-wolves will hear about it and they’ll start staking the place out. If I were an Alpha hunting a ranked she-wolf, that’s what I would do,” I tell her.

“Maybe, maybe not. I don’t know, but like I said, I’m hungry and I have to do something.”

I turn and go to my bag, grabbing some granola bars that I stuffed into it when I left. “Here, eat these,” I say, tossing them to her. “It’s not a hamburger. But it will take the edge off.”

She devours them quickly, and I pull out my last two bottles of water, giving her one. “Make it last. I only have two left, one for me and one for you,” I say.

“Thank you so much. I don’t remember the last time I ate.”

“You’re welcome. You said my father stood up to the Alphas. What does that mean?”

“I don’t know everything. But what I heard was that the Alphas threatened war against your father unless he came after you.”

“What?” I ask, terrified that my family had to go to war to protect me.

“Some other Alpha sided with your dad threatening to fight alongside him if a war broke out. Apparently, that was enough to keep the Alphas from going to war.

“Do you know anything about my sister, Amelia? It was her birthday the night that I ran. She found her mate that night, Alpha Calvin. Do you know anything about them? Anything about her? Is she okay?” I ask.

“Alpha Calvin is one of the Alphas that stood beside your father, I believe. I don’t know much about your sister, but in cases like this, no news is good news, right? It means she hasn’t tried to kill herself and hasn’t done anything drastic.”

I feel terrible, having had no idea that I was causing this many problems for my family.

“Maybe I should return home,” I mumble to myself.

“NO! You can’t! If you do, all of this will have been for nothing. You are the reason that it’s working. You were the reason that there’s a possibility that things might change. Please don’t go back.”

“But my family...”

“They’ve survived this long, right? Even if you didn’t realize what was going on, they’ve managed to get by this long. You going back would change everything. Please, you have to continue.”

“What about you? Where are you going? Where does this end? Where do we find a safe place to live our lives?” I ask her.

“I don’t know. I only know that I’m not being held prisoner in my pack, waiting until the day I turn 18, so that some man who calls himself my mate can claim me in front of my pack. How could I even face them every day after that? How could I look them in the eye? How could I be their ranked member after they had seen me in that position?”

I understand exactly what she means. That’s why I ran. As a Ga**a, she has the potential to be a Ga**a, Beta, or a Luna. But for me as an Alpha female, I know that an Alpha will want me. The thought of having to lead a pack who had seen me in such a personal state still makes me sick to my y stomach.

“So where is this place? This place where they provide free food and water to the wolves on the run?” I ask.

She gives me a general sense of where the place is and I realize it isn’t far from where my father’s pack is. That makes me wonder if it isn’t him and my mother leaving this food and water out. Even if it’s not for me, they are still able to help those who are like me.

“Maybe I’ll go and check this place out too,” I tell Penny.

She looks at me a moment. “Please don’t take this the wrong way. I’m thrilled to be spending time with you and to have finally met you. But if the two of us stay together for too long, the possibility of both of us getting captured is higher, do you know what I mean? I think it’s better if we split up soon.”

“I understand. But we don’t have to split up yet, right? I mean, there’s protection in numbers too, and we could at least get there to see if it’s safe, before we split up. If they only provide food once a day, you could take the first batch and go, and I could wait for the second day.

“You would do that?” she asks, surprised.

“I’ve been on the run a lot longer than you have. I found ways to survive, and I’ve eaten more recently than you have. So yes, I would do that.”-

“Honestly, I would love the company for a while. If I wasn’t afraid of being captured, I would ask if we could stay together. But as it is...”

"I understand, truly I do. None of us want to be captured. While we're on this train, I think one of us should stay awake and make sure we stay safe. If you're tired, I'm happy to take the first shift," I tell her.

"Actually, I found a safe place and was able to sleep last night. So, I'm good if you need to rest."

"Thank you. I only got a couple hours of sleep. If anything scares you or worries you at all, wake me up. If we start to slow down, wake me up."

"I will."

I use my bag as a pillow and find a spot away from the open door. I lay staring up the ceiling of the train car, listening to the sound of the metal wheels on the rails as the car rocks back and forth.

It's been two years since I've seen my family, two years since I've spoken to them. Even if this isn't them leaving food and water, I'll still be close enough that maybe I can sneak onto their pack lands. Or maybe I can somehow let them know that I'm alive and well, and that I love them. If I'm really lucky, maybe I can spend the night, safe, in a warm bed in my old packhouse.

The thought of being tucked into my old bed, safe on the Alpha floor, my parents down the hall, is the last thought I have before I drift off to sleep.