

## MARKED BY THE ALPHAS {18+}

### Chapter 3

## THE CAVES

*THIS IS AN EXCERPT ONLY. FULL STORY ON COMING TO GALATEA. IT IS THE THIRD BOOK IN THE SERIES.*

Lorelai

I spent the next few hours hauling stone, rock, and debris from the piles caging in the beast. I didn't mention the witch who he was spelled to hunt, I didn't even mention Zale. I just focused on what I was doing.

My body was warm now, damp with sweat as the exercise ached in my muscles. My arms hurt, my stomach, my legs. My throat was bone dry, burning, my head pounding from lack of food and I had no idea how much actual time had passed but we were getting closer.

The beast only got angry every few minutes, and didn't constantly growl at us so that was our upside.

The shadows helped, flicking rocks out of the way but we had to be careful which ones we moved or the whole cave was going to collapse on us.

"When we get you out of here, follow the cave out towards the water, there's a portal on the bank there. It will take you to her," I whispered to the beast as I finally got the boulder from his back that was pressing down on his neck, making it bleed.

Brax helped me move it to the side and the beast shook out his head, his bones crackling as he stretched. He turned to me and nodded once, his lip curling.

Brax moved down by his feet, clearing each paw as I tried to find safe ones to move on him.

I found one and went to pull but my shadows hissed. I frowned and looked to Brax who wore the same expression. The beast gnashed his teeth, snarling with a feral look as he tried to move more.

It made the rubble move with him, the same rubble I was standing on to balance.

A pang hit my stomach, almost like an electric shock.

"I think there is something trying to use the portal," I frowned, hardening my hold on my shadows as they swirled and moved back inside, confirming my suspicions. My hold on my magic was distant but my shadows could feel it too.

"We need to get to that portal," I said and Brax nodded just as the beast roared.

"Stop!" I screamed as his movements shifted everything beneath me. I toppled down. Brax went for me but his human pace wasn't fast enough. My head bounced off the edge of a concrete slab with a sickening thud before I rolled down.

I grimaced as the ache grew increasingly painful, blood trickling down my forehead.

"Fuck, your head," Brax breathed and looked at the top of it, "It needs stitches," he said.

I shook my head, "It needs healing, which we can do once we're back. C'mon," I said and ran to where the restless beast thundered and roared. The caves groaned too, threatening us again and my shadows were on high alert, urging me to leave but I wasn't finished. I had to get the beast free.

It wanted out too and apparently we had cleared enough because it let out another deafening sound before it bashed the rest of the debris away.

It had the caves shaking again.

"Shit, it's going to come down on us!" Brax growled through the crumbling walls and roof.

The beast shook out his body, bones crunching, teeth frothing before raking his claws through the rubble.

If I understood beast, I would say he grinned and then he was gone, running, taking off through the tunnels, leaving us behind in the collapsing caves to be crushed to death after we had just saved it. Great.

I turned to Brax.

"We've got to run!" I screamed and he nodded, grabbing my hand and taking off, almost dragging me through the caves. They were definitely trying to kill us. I couldn't make a step without faltering on more debris, more skin scratched up and my head was pounding.

It had stopped bleeding I think but it was hard to tell when there was new blood breaking free of the cuts on my arms and face. Brax was getting cut up too and I pushed my protesting legs faster.

The shadows were helping, catching whatever they could but mine were also keeping my will strong over the portal. Whatever was trying to test it, to see if it could get through was still trying and I had no idea if it could or if I could stop it without having a tether to my magic.

*“Run, Little Luna. Your beast is almost here, he is just killing his way through the shadows that are inspecting the portal,”* Kai urged. I tried to listen but my breath was harsh as it passed through my chest, the caves were filling in quickly.

*“The beast can kill shadows?”* Brax asked.

*“Looks like,”* Derik said, his voice low and I raised a brow at that. We hadn’t come across something like that before. But the witches said he would only go after Adrenna.

*“It’ll only come for you if you stand in the way of what it wants,”* Derik explained and I knew that so I focused on where my feet were going and not dying.

By the time we got to the bank, the water was thrashing as it filled with rocks too.

“Fuck,” Brax cursed and I looked at the dark water, swallowing hard as panic settled in.

“What are the chances the cave out of here is still open?” I grimaced and Brax shrugged.

“Probably about the same as getting into the shadow realm and out again with all our body parts,” he tried some dry humor and I was not amused. I sucked in a breath.

“We have no choice.”

“It’s not far, now I know where we’re going we should get straight through.”

“And hopefully some help from the shadows.”

Brax nodded and we looked behind us as there was a huge crash. The cave collapsed behind us, debris and dust rushing for us. We had run out of time. I took a deep breath and jumped with Brax, sinking into the water as he dragged me along, through the cave opening.

It was just as hard as last time to get my limbs to work in the water as well as his did but it was the pain in my head that had me fighting my consciousness.

Blood trickled into the water, leaving a trail behind us as Brax hauled me up towards the surface, dodging the black spikes in the lake bed once again.

He almost got us there too, the lake surface close enough to touch when something wrapped around my ankle again. I didn't struggle, I didn't even try to fight it because I thought we had an accord with the friendly shadows but that was my mistake.

Whatever had me, was not the same shadows and its touch burned, searing my flesh.

"Brax!" I screamed through the water as another black shadow grabbed him before he reached the surface. He fought them off but heaviness filled me, a lead feeling, my shadows quiet as I was pulled back down to the spikes, my skin brushing them.

The second it did, my body erupted, fire filling everything inside me and not in the same way it did when I was with my Alphas, this was pure heat, like lava in a volcano erupting inside me.

My organs, my veins, and my flesh was on fire beneath my skin and I screamed, the air rushing out of my lungs as my shadows screamed in my head, no longer quiet.

The dark shadows pressed me against the spikes and the longer it held me there, the longer my own shadows burned. I blinked hard as Brax fought above me but these things were stronger.

I could hear my Alpha's screams in my head but they were distorted. I couldn't make out what they were saying and my heart stuttered, my entire body shaking. I knew that I was dying. Brax too. I could feel his body giving up the air in its lungs.

My heart screamed, trying to start through the fire that melted it but it couldn't, not when the roar of the fire was so loud.

I was ready to go, the beast was free, Enzi was safe and I trusted Kai and Derik to get Zale back now, I just had to fall asleep.

But when I thought I was going to, the pain endured and so did my consciousness. I frowned and looked up to Brax. He had gone limp in the water, his body slowly sinking to where I was being held.

The fire still burned inside me but something in my chest kept me hanging on to the black edges of my mind. I had to survive, I had to see this through. I promised Enzi and I couldn't let her down too.

I reached down deep inside myself, passed the wall of flame, passed the pain and the emotions to my shadows that were crying, screaming, burning.

I hauled them up, whispered back to them, told them we had to fight back, told them we were doing this, and gave them every ounce of my will. If magic worked on will then surely they did too? It was a theory but it was all I had.

My brother's will turned his dark, my will had turned mine the opposite way and we had defeated the dark shadows before, we had consumed them. We could do that again. They perked up at that and started filling my body again.

I smirked at the black form floating in the water in front of me, holding me against the fiery lake doomstick. Asshole was going to get munched if that's how they were going to play it. I reached out and grabbed it.

I wasn't sure what to do with it once I had it though. Luckily my shadows did. As soon as my hand touched the shadow, my shadows covered it, suffocating it, forcing it into me.

I cried out, not sure how I had breath left to expel from my lungs but when Brax's body landed on the lake bed beside me, I didn't care about why. Only about getting out. I grabbed him, tucking him into me before kicking off the ground.

It propelled us up to the lake surface, my legs kicking like crazy until we finally broke the surface. I didn't try to catch my breath. Instead, I kept kicking, dragging Brax's body which was at this moment, inconveniently big until we were out of the death water.

I dropped us onto the bank that had a much nicer texture than stone, a grainy kind of sand but with sprouts of grass too.

I started CPR. I didn't have magic but I was human and technically he was too. I had to get him breathing or getting him to Cain wouldn't matter.

*"Lorelai! Get through the fucking portal! Now!"* Kai's voice finally came through clearly in the link and I snapped my head to the portal at the urgency he was using. It was wavering, fraying at the edges and I gritted my teeth. This realm fucking sucked.

I dragged Brax up the bank, not giving in to the hysteria that bubbled in my throat at the look of his pale face and blue lips. I yanked and yanked until we were at the portal then spun him so his legs went through.

*"Drag him,"* I said, wincing as the portal shrunk further. Brax was pulled through and just as I was about to go through, a dark shadow hissed, yanking me back, and throwing me away from the portal.

I screamed as I hit a tree, my back arching away from the pain that ricocheted through it before I dropped to the ground. The portal was getting smaller and my breaths were raspy as more shadows came out of the dark forest. I backed up as they circled me.

"Winter born," the one in front of the portal hissed and I clenched my jaw.

"Lorelai or Luna preferably," I spat back and it hissed louder in the silence. I had to get to that portal. My shadows were angry inside me, betrayal lacing my body thanks to their emotions and I frowned.

“My shadows recognize you,” I said and it looked like it was nodding. Kind of. But it said nothing and I wasn’t sure what else it could say. I was guessing, that since it was literally a puff of black smoke in the air, its vocabulary was somewhat limited.

“Okay well this has been fun, I’m going to need you to move so I can go home,” I said, edging closer but the shadows stepped closer too. Defeat tried to sink inside me but I refused to let it, despite the portal getting smaller by the second.

I was pretty sure I wasn’t going to get through it now even if I reached it. The idea that I was going to be stuck in this bullshit realm for the foreseeable future was kind of pissing me off. The shadows said nothing and I sighed irritably.

“Look, I just consumed your buddy down there in the water for backing me into a very angry rock of death and I’m trying to be nice and leave the rest of you alone so can you please just move?” I asked nicely.

I thought it was creepy having them hiss but having them all tilt their head slightly like they were trying to understand me was creepier.

Finally, the one blocking the portal stepped aside. It seemed too easy but I couldn’t argue, I had to get back. I ran up to the portal, it was waist-high and didn’t reach my head- which was still pounding.

I went to go through when I was yanked back with a shadow tendril around my waist. It hauled me back and I screamed at it, trying to get free. But it kept me there, holding me as the portal slowly closed. The purple magic disappeared, bathing the area in complete darkness.

The shadows moved around me and I could barely see them. The one that had me, let me go and I breathed heavily, tears springing to my eyes as fear kept me checking every where. My eyes had to adjust, they had to.

When they did, I wished they hadn’t. There were more of the dark shadows. They were everywhere. I backed up, trying to reach the mating link but it was completely severed. Fear filled me, my body in a state of panic as I tried to figure out a way out.

My shadows were ready, determined, wanting to fight but I was pretty sure this was not my fight, it was theirs I was just a host- an unwanted one- in their territory.

Then the dark shadows started advancing, stepping slowly closer as I backed up.

“Okay, this is going to suck,” I whispered, jumping as I backed into a shadow being. I spun to it and it gripped my arms, the feeling of cold dread and death filling me.

“Stop!” I screamed as it reached for my shadows inside me. I consumed it. Just like the other one, it’s essence added to my shadows, filling me. I gasped for air at the shiver of cold it created.

Like ice on the charred bones inside me. I clutched my stomach as my shadows tried to contain that essence. It thrashed and I forced it to conform. The others came closer and I swallowed.

I couldn’t take them all, not when every time they moved inside me, they felt like grinding sandpaper rather than the smooth silk that my own shadows felt like. It was wrong and made me feel wrong. They were not mine and I hadn’t earned them like I had with Elias.

Damn, Elias would cream his fucking pants to be faced with all these shadows, he’d consume them all in a heartbeat but I wasn’t him and I didn’t want them. I told them that, trying to force them out of me.

They clung, clawed and screamed inside me as I used every ounce of my will to get them out of me.

They had just leaked out when a rip in the air opened, a stream of shadow poured in and grabbed me, yanking me through the new portal. They dumped me on the floor of an empty hut back in my realm before the rip in the realms closed again.

My magic filled me instantly and I sucked in a breath, the power tingling in my fingertips going straight for my wounds, sealing them up.

I let out a breath and stood slowly, looking around the hut. It was the hut I shared with my Alphas and it was not empty. Enzi laid in a bundle on our bed, cooing happily and I frowned at her.

Her eyes met mine and I frowned at her. I tested the strength and will of my shadows before reaching into her.

Zale was right there, I could feel him. His shadows, his magic with Enzi’s. They had pulled me out. Tears welled in my eyes and I quickly wiped them away before bending down to grab her.

“Well, aren’t you full of more secrets than your birth,” I smiled back before kissing the top of her head, her soft little forehead skin making her snuggle in more. I held her tight and then spun to a roar outside of the hut.

“Get her fucking back! Now!” Kai roared, footsteps shaking the ground. Snow dropped onto the tent and I smiled.

“We better go tell him I’m back before he destroys the camp,” I smiled at her before leaving the tent.

“*I’m okay,*” I sent through the link and all three of them stilled. Kai was being restrained by multiple pack members including Tatum who looked like he was the only one of them who had a hope of stopping him.

Kai’s eyes snapped to mine but before he could get to me, Derik was there, wrapping me in his arms, holding me, kissing over my face, checking my healed head. I kissed him back then handed him Enzi knowing I had Kai coming at me.

Within seconds Kai had scooped me up and pinned against the tree next to our hut. The snow shook free from the pine branches and soaked through my clothes but I didn’t care because his mouth was on mine, crushing my lips beneath his.

I sighed into the kiss, wrapping my arms around him.

“Kai. I’m okay,” I reassured.

“I told them you would be,” Tabby said, hobbling over, Kai’s coat still around her shoulders.

“How did you know?” I asked as Kai put me down and I stepped around him. He refused to let me go, tucking me under his arm and keeping his hand on my lower back.

“I told you. She is not what she seems,” Tabby smiled, looking over at Enzi. Derik looked down at her.

“She pulled you back?”

I nodded. “Yeah.”

Then my heart sunk, I only had two Alphas here.

“Brax,” I whispered, looking over the pack members who were slowly giving us privacy and dispersing. But I could feel them listening in, feeling the pack link for any signs of trouble.

I appreciated them looking out for me and the tangible feeling of relief of me being back was nice but I really needed Brax to be okay too. I was going to find it really hard not to have a breakdown about everything that just happened if he wasn’t.

“He’s fine. Breathing. Just sore. He’s pissed though, Beautiful. We’re giving him some space.”

“Why?”



“Because Kai is a brute with no compassion.” Derik eyed him and Kai shrugged.

“He left you behind, Little Luna. I was not going to let him off easy. Now he knows not to do that again.”

My jaw dropped and I shoved Kai away.

“Fucking hell, Kai,” I shook my head and went to find Brax, using my shadows. He was in the healing tent and I went straight in.

“Lorelai,” Brax breathed, slowly sitting up. I wrapped him in my arms.

“It’s Spitfire, actually,” I murmured into his shoulder but he didn’t chuckle.

“It wasn’t your fault. Don’t blame yourself,” I said but he didn’t answer, just held me closer. I left it there, knowing the guilt was something he had to give up on his own.

All I could do was reassure him it was misplaced and I fed that through the link to him and to the others- strongly at Kai. Derik came through holding Enzi with Kai and Tabby behind.

“The beast came through,” Kai murmured and I swallowed.

“And? Did it find Adrenna yet?”

Derik shook his head.

“No, but it sniffed the air then took off so I think it’s got her scent. The wolves are tracking it but the thing is fast,” Derik shook his head. I stood up and pulled Enzi into my arms, holding her, missing her little body against mine.

I let it soothe my head for a minute so I could figure out what to do next. I had no idea whether the beast was going to hurt Zale to get to Adrenna or whether Adrenna had a fail safe in case she got caught.

That meant the only way to make sure nothing happened was to follow the beast as it chased her. Not camp out and wait.

“We need to get ready to move. We’ll pack camp up later, only take what we need. We’re tracking that beast properly and I want to be there when it catches up to Adrenna,” I said and Tabby smiled at me with a small nod.

“This beast. It was human once, does it understand our language?”

“Averagely. It is...difficult for it. Some things are clear, others not. Same with it’s vision. The only thing it sees, feels, and smells clearly, is Adrenna. At the moment, sensing her after not having her for so long, is probably sending it into a frenzy.”

“Then let’s go make sure she gets what’s coming to her,” I murmured before turning to Brax and placing my hand over him.

Cain had been teaching me bits of magic, enough to heal my Alphas and I did, sealing all of Brax’s wounds and taking away every ache and pain before looking at my Alphas.

“Organize the hunting teams. We’re leaving within the hour,” I said, determined as anything. I had just been through so much to get that beast here and I was not going to let it be for nothing.

Adrenna wanted a war, now she had it and I’d be damned if I let the vampires get near us before I had Zale back.

## **Chapters**

### **3. THE CAVES**