

Owned by the Alphas

TheWolves

I ate my breakfast, piling more fruit and pancakes onto my plate while scooping oatmeal into my mouth. I was starving and hadn't eaten so well in, well, forever.

Brax dug in as heartily as I did, while Derik ate bit by bit and Nikolai just stared.

I ignored them all and concentrated on my food until I couldn't fit anything more in. Finally finished, I sipped some water and looked up at my alphas.

"So. What happens now?" I asked, and that earned me three frowns on three sexy faces. "Okay, specifics. What am I to do now that I am here, and how long am I here?" I asked.

"Stay in your room," Derik stated, and I only just refrained from rolling my eyes at the order.

"You belong to us now. Your stay is indefinite," Nikolai said, and I smiled at the answer.

"Indefinite meaning I go back to the village for winter and then come back?" I asked, grinning, but it had Derik glaring at Brax.

"You told her about winter?" Derik snapped, pushing his plate away and straightening his spine. Brax wasn't intimidated and shrugged with a lazy grin that seemed to be a constant expression.

"She's winter born, she's linked. Of course I did," he said, and Derik glared harder. Nikolai was silent, but his lips were pursed.

"And what if she says yes to the shadows and they go digging in her head for that information? I'm sure the vampires would love to know that we are locked in the city for winter. That our shifting is uncontrollable as well as our magic and tempers."

"I won't say anything," I interrupted, but Derik pinched the bridge of his nose and sat back in his seat.

"You may not mean to, but your intentions won't matter if you keep talking to the shadows like you were." He sighed tensely and I took a sip of my water, wishing I'd kept my mouth shut.

"Derik, She's with us now, she won't give in."

Nikolai finally spoke, and I smiled softly at him, feeling all warm and fuzzy that he trusted me so fully. Same with Brax.

Derik was a work in progress, but I had a feeling that was because he was the most responsible and had the weight of the eldest on his shoulders.

"But I am not sending her back for the winter," Nikolai finished, and the other two tensed, going silent, the room filling with tension as they looked at each other.

I waited for someone to move, to do something, then realized they were doing that head communication thing.

"Can someone fill me in on why it just got super awkward?" I asked, and Derik pushed his chair back, walking from the room.

I looked after him, a heavy ache in my chest at the way he rolled his shoulders back and walked away. I went to go after him, but Brax grabbed my hand.

"He'll be fine, Spitfire. He's just going to run it off," he said, and I nodded, glancing over at the doorway before taking a drink.

"Why don't you want to send me back for winter? I thought it was going to be too dangerous?" I asked, eyeing Brax, who looked down at his hot drink.

"I don't want you that far away from us. Maybe we're dangerous, but without Brax to sense those shadows and with our marks on you, you'll be too unprotected. You're staying, or I'm not locking the gates," Nikolai shrugged, and I smirked.

"How alpha of you," I teased, and he grinned.

"You haven't seen alpha yet, human."

"Looking forward to it," I challenged, and he narrowed his eyes in a playful way.

He stood from the chair and walked over to me. His finger went under my chin and made me look at him.

"Mine," he whispered, his thumb brushing across my lips as I sucked in a breath, my tongue darting out to taste the tip of it. His eyes dilated as stared at me like a hungry lion, seducing his prey. I liked being the prey.

"Ours, Nikolai," Brax warned, but Kai didn't even acknowledge that he'd spoken.

"What does it mean?" I breathed. "Mine. Ours. What do those words mean to you? What do I mean to you?"

Nikolai's stare intensified. "Everything it shouldn't," he said, then walked out of the room, leaving me even more confused.

I turned to Brax with a huff. "I know that is meant to be all romantic or whatever, but a straight answer right about now would be fucking great," I tried, and he laughed.

"You won't get that out of either of those two. Derik is all about the good of the wolves, the responsibility of being alphas, and because you are human, he is fighting everything he feels. Well, trying to. When he fails at that, he feels all guilty for it and tries extra hard to follow the rules.

"Nikolai is obsessive and possessive. He wants to keep you forever, but he can be a little much, so we've got to be careful not to let him indulge fully or he might get carried away and do something stupid."

Brax rolled his eyes, and I couldn't help but ask the question that left me with.

"Something stupid like what?"

"Like turn you," he finished, and the solemn look he gave me made it sound like that was the worst-case scenario.

"And that's a bad thing, I'm assuming."

Brax nodded but didn't elaborate, which was even more infuriating. "Then you've got me, and I think that since you are human with shadows like mine, we should train you to use them and not ignore this epic opportunity to find out who is messing with our territory.

"I also think that since Nikolai is determined to keep you locked up here forever, there's no harm in you knowing what you need to know to survive. Derik disagrees. Nikolai doesn't care what you do or don't know as long as you are available to him whenever he needs you."

Brax shrugged, then emptied his drink with a big *aaaahhhh*, smacking his lips together.

"I'd like to train with my shadows. I want to help."

"I'm working on it." He grinned, winking again before abandoning the table and, subsequently, me.

I stood up and frowned after him. "Where are you going?" I asked.

He turned, walking backward. "Wolf shit to do. Hank will take you back to your room. Be good, Spitfire," he said with a knowing smirk, before leaving.

Hank was towering over me in the next second. "Let's go," he said, and I huffed, following him back.

"How's the balls?" I asked, and he grunted.

"Is that good in wolf language?" I tried again, and he smirked.

"Fuck you, actually," he corrected, and I laughed, glad to finally get a rise out of him.

"Got it. I'll have to remember that one. So, is there anywhere else I'm allowed to go in this place? Kind of boring sitting in my room without the alphas," I admitted, and he pursed his lips.

"You're meant to stay in your room today."

He opened my door, but I ignored it and sat down on the bench seat by the window that looked out on the gardens.

There were people out there that I was guessing were wolves, but they looked so much like humans without their claws and fangs that it was hard to tell.

Except maybe taller.

"Can I ask you questions?"

"I'd prefer you didn't."

"How similar are wolves and humans? Do we need the same sustenance? Sleep patterns?" I asked, and Hank's eyes widened a little at that.

"I thought the humans were taught of us? We gave permission last year for classes to be a part of training," he asked, narrowing his eyes suspiciously, but I just shrugged.

"Not for those of us with vaginas."

"We were under the impression that the classes were needed to maintain the safety of the villages so the wolves and humans understood each other's limitations. Do your women not worry about their own safety?" he asked incredulously.

I had no idea how to answer. I don't think they thought of anything other than their next cross-stitch pattern or who's turn it was to muck out the barn.

"We don't get a choice. Our men protect us, or something chauvinistic like that," I shrugged, turning out the window again.

Hank went silent for a bit before scoffing. "So if the vampires broke through, or a faction of wolves went rogue, or we decided that we were sick of babysitting humans, all we'd have to do is attack the women because not a single one is trained to fight back or has any idea what we can do?" he asked, like it was the stupidest thing he'd ever heard.

And it was. I nodded a couple of times, then sighed and looked up at him.

"We are to be seen and not heard. To carry children that we don't know how to protect. To live in a territory we know nothing about. All we learn in classes is our roles as women. We make your wine, rear your food, and grow your crops. Outside of that, we are useless," I muttered, shame heavy in my chest, as I wished we had something else to live for.

"Then you'll be lucky to survive here, winter born. Maybe you'll get lucky with those shadows, but our wolves all know how to fight. How to save their own lives," he said proudly, and I decided it was time to go and sulk.

I went to my door and shoved it open, before looking back at Hank.

"Maybe by the time the alphas are done with me, I'll know those things too," I said, and as I went through the door, I was sure I heard him whisper, "Or you'll be dead," but I ignored it.

I looked around my room that was so spacious and had everything to make my life here easier, except something to do. It was clean, my bed had been made while I was at breakfast, there was nothing left of the glass mirror

I sighed, going back to the door and poking my head out. "Do wolves read books?" I asked, and Hank scoffed.

"Of course we do. Knowledge can be just as powerful as brawn," he said, and I grinned.

"So is there a library or something where I can find some books?"

"You are an annoying human."

"Compared to all the other humans running around here, of course. Exactly how many have you met, by the way?" I daunted, and he growled warningly.

"You are the first, and hopefully the last."

"Humm. So, the library?" I asked, and he rolled his eyes, staring at the wall ahead. "You can all communicate in your heads, not just the alphas?" I assumed, and he nodded once before motioning down the hall.

"This way," he said, and I smiled, walking alongside him as he led me down three halls, right, left, right, third room down, with wide open double doors.

He walked me in, and my jaw dropped. The library was bigger than the barn I had to clean out back home.

There were rows and rows, shelves and cubbies filled with books. Ladders moved between shelves so the top books could be reached, and tables sat at the start and end of each row.

There were no other wolves.

"Is this place normally so empty?"

He shook his head. "You are not to be in contact with the wolves yet. Alphas' orders."

I wondered why that was, but it was a question for later because I had books to read.

"Point me in the direction of something good to read," I said, and Hank pointed to a shelf ahead of us.

I picked up the book and gave him a doll stare. "*Finding the Joy in Silence*?"

"Something you need to learn," He eyed me, and I smirked, heading off to find a book at the other end of the aisle.

"And this would be perfect for you," I dumped the book in his hand.

"*Communication for Dummies*. Ha ha. Go find your little romance books or whatever it is you humans read," he snapped, but I saw the smile in his eyes.

And he wasn't wrong. I usually read the filthiest books I could get my hands on.

The widows' hut in between the villages was technically out of bounds, but I usually snuck out there to trade Ms. Malara's sexy writings for some of the wine from the barrels I stole when no one was watching, or too scared to tell me not to.

But those were not the books I was looking for today.

"I was actually hoping to find some stuff on the wolves. I'm here for a while, and as much as getting ravaged every day sounds super fun, I want to know when they have to eat and sleep compared to me in case they get carried away and forget that I have other needs."

I smiled and he nodded once, almost looking impressed with my choice.

He pointed to the wall on the far end of the library, next to the window.

"Wolves. Our history, habits, whatever you want to know," he said, and I walked over there, reaching for a book, when his hand clamped on mine.

"Problem, Hank?" I asked, hiding the fear in my voice and facing him with a straight stare.

"If anything you read here passes your lips outside these walls, I will kill you," he warned.

I wanted to bite back, but I knew he was just looking after his kind.

I was human, and I could tell my father their secrets. I could go to the vampires, or worse, the shadows. I couldn't fault him for that, so I placed my hand on his and smiled.

"I know I'm just a human and my word probably means nothing, but I care about them. Hank, I'm not going to do anything to put them in danger," I reassured him, then turned back to the books and piled them high in my arm as Hank stepped back against the wall and guarded.

The same as usual, but the air was definitely lighter so I took that as a win.

I spent the next half hour taking in the information I could about the wolves I now lived with.

They only need to sleep every forty-eight hours.

They are always hungry but never starve. They don't have to eat unless staying in their wolf form for longer than twenty-four hours.

They need sex at least once every lunar cycle (twenty-eight days) to keep the wolf and magic at bay.

That little fact had me eyeing Hank.

"So if wolves don't have sex, they actually die? Never mind food or sleep, just sex?" I asked, and Hank shrugged.

"Sex and grinning. As long as we do those two things, we're good."

He shifted like it should unsettle me, but it didn't. I was intrigued and kept reading.

"It doesn't say anything about marriage in these books. Do wolves have husbands and wives?" I asked, and he shook his head.

"That's a human thing. Wolves do what they want until they find their mate."

"And wolves only mate with one person?"

"One wolf," he corrected, and I tried to ignore the pang in my chest.

I hoped the alphas didn't find a mate. That information I could've done without.

"Do you have a mate?" I asked, closing my book and turning to Hank.

He nodded once, not looking at me, so I kept facing him and crossed my leg over the other.

"What's her name?" I asked when he said nothing else. He scowled.

"None of your business."

"Funny name," I teased, and he let out an exasperated sigh.

"Here's a fact: wolves still need to use the bathroom on a regular basis, which is where I am going to go and enjoy two minutes of peace and quiet. Stay here," he warned, and I smirked, trying not to retaliate to the challenge that his words gave me.

I nodded once and indicated to the pretend halo around my head with the most innocent smile I could manage. He scoffed and left the library.

I looked out the door wondering whether I should go venturing while I could, but I was quite fond of my life and I'm pretty sure I'd lose it if I went wandering the halls full of werewolves.

I turned back to my books, picked them up, and went to switch them with others that might give me more details on werewolf magic itself, even the shadows if I could find something.

I went humming through the shelves when there was a bang from behind me. I jumped and spun to the sound. A book had fallen from the shelf, but there was no one there.

I frowned and picked it up, putting it back before checking the empty aisle for any red eyes or shadows that might be fucking with me.

There was nothing there. I turned back around and shook off the goosebumps that made me think I was being watched. I took a steadying breath, telling myself to stop being a paranoid freak, then carried on looking.

Another book fell.

I gasped and spun so fast my heart raced as a man with all three areas tattooed across his bare chest stepped down the aisle, a hungry look in his dark eyes and a dangerous saunter as he came toward.

His fingers ran across the spines of the books, slowly, and something about the smirk he wore screamed threat.

I swallowed hard and backed up into the bookshelf behind me.

"I spy with my little eye something beginning with ...," He paused, walking closer, in my face. "Human," he growled, and I sucked in a breath.

"Hi," I said, not sure what else to say, not sure how much danger I was in at that moment, but it felt like a lot.

"You shouldn't be here, little girl," he warned, and I knew he was right.

So I ran.