The Control

I ran through the halls, my dress slightly torn, stained with the blood from the claw marks on my body, the top falling off my shoulder.

I tried to use my shadows to find Derik, but every time I tuned into them, I found Kai again.

He was still fighting Brax. Not that I needed the shadows to tell me that. I could hear them with my human hearing. It would be hard for anyone not to. The roars and growls shook the estate.

I shook my head, my heart racing as I tried to keep my shadows away from Kai, pleading with them to find Derik. Or my suite. I had to find one or the other before Kai found me.

Although I wondered what would happen if he did. Would I be able to take him? He would take me for sure, but maybe I could handle more than what Brax thought? I had no idea, and I wasn't going to test it today.

Not when Derik had already lost control too.

I ran, trying to keep my shadows on task, when I slammed into an invisible force, falling back on my ass. I looked up, breathing hard, but there was nothing there.

"You'll always be running if you don't say yes. They'll catch you, tear you apart. Your brother knew that. Knew the wolves and what they were capable of. Knew the humans had no chance."

It was a whisper near my ear, an echo that I couldn't find the source to, but it was only ever one thing. Those nasty shadows that were trying to corrupt me.

want to be. Five years down the road, would I still be running away from them because they lost control? Or would I have tamed

They had a point though; I was running, and I hated that it put doubt in my heart. Would I always be running? I didn't

them enough?

"Just leave me alone," I hissed at the shadows, and they gave me that eerie chuckle.

I shook off the voice, remembering Brax's warning not to react to them, not to interact with them.

"You will say yes, winter born. They all do."

I gritted my teeth and concentrated, finding my own shadows deep in me and using them to find Derik. He was

wearing a deep frown and heading toward me. I ran.

I found him three corridors away and ran into him. He stumbled back, catching me and tucking me into his grasp. "Fucking Kai," he breathed, then pulled me back and looked over my face.

"Brax is with him."

over my body. The V in his brow deepened as he stepped forward.

"I heard. Are you okay? Did he hurt you?"

I shook my head, but he frowned and pushed me further away from him, holding me at arm's length to roam his gaze

under his breath and yanked me with him. He pushed me through a door that looked just like all the others—heavy and wooden—into a bathroom in the next

His thumb touched my bruised, bleeding hips, and I sucked in a breath. It hadn't hurt. It still didn't, but he cursed

corridor. It was huge, with a clawfoot tub in the center and a wooden vanity along the wall. There were double sinks, and he lifted me between them. Then he tore my dress and undergarments to shreds, exposing my body to him.

I shivered at the cold that hit, but he pushed my arms away when I tried to wrap them around myself. He checked my hips and the sting had me blinking hard, clenching my jaw against the accompanying ache.

It looked worse than it felt though.

Claw marks had torn the skin, blood dried and smeared over the bruises that discolored my skin. More claw marks on

my thighs, bruises over my ribs where they had held me, leveraged me to thrust inside me.

It was worth it.

"We need to be more careful with you. It's hard to remember you are still human when we are with you like that. Our

"I'm okay, Derik," I said quietly, but he shook his head.

magic feeds off the connection between us, and it can be a powerful feeling," he admitted, like he was ashamed.

but I am not fragile. I enjoy you, all three of you."

I hated hearing that in his voice, so I reached up and put my hand against his cheek. "I can take it. I may be human,

"You are fragile to us, beautiful," he said, then grabbed some things out of the drawer to clean me up. He had just finished clearing my claw marks of blood when Kai burst in, his fangs bared, his eyes red, his claws

dripping blood. I gasped as Derik growled in warning, standing in front of me. "Where's Brax?" I whispered, but Kai snarled.

He was terrifying; I was human enough to know that. He was in predator mode, beast mode. His wolf was huge, black, and on its hind legs.

I pursed my lips and met Kai's eyes. And then I did what I shouldn't. I channeled him.

Derik shivered, stepping forward with another warning growl. "Don't talk, beautiful."

almost toxic kind of feeling that made me instantly drunk on the desire.

I sucked in a breath as my shadows found him. He was desperate, panicky, needing my touch. It was a powerful,

I slipped from the vanity and walked toward him.

Derik went to pull me back, but I smacked his hand away.

Calm, affection, desire, and comfort pulsed through me to him, but I wasn't sure if I was doing it right until I saw the sliver of green in his eyes trying to push through.

"I can get through to him," I promised, and pushed my own emotions back through the connection.

Derik's tension was there, warning me that I was in trouble, but I didn't care because in the next second, Kai shifted back, his hot, bare chest beneath me, panting hard.

I smiled and went into his arms. The hair of his beast was softer than it looked, and I nuzzled against his chest.

His arms tightened around me as he held me. I sighed and clutched him back. Then he lifted my chin to look at him and kissed me hard. I melted into the kiss, pulling back my connection so the feelings didn't overwhelm us again.

Brax burst into the bathroom then, pushing Kai into me. I stumbled back, and Derik caught me.

Brax snarled at Kai. "Pin me to that fucking statue again and I'll replace the head of it with yours," he warned.

Kai's eyes narrowed. "Don't take her off me then," he said almost casually, but the warning was there. "You lost control."

"I hadn't yet."

"You fucking had. So had she." Then he turned to Derik. "And so did you," he accused.

"Stay in control or I'm sending her back," Brax warned, then left the room.

Somehow I felt like I had been told off in that statement too. I probably deserved it. I had used my shadows,

Derik pulled off his shirt and handed it to me. "Put this on. I'll take you to your room. I need you to get dressed in one of the lesser dresses for dinner," he instructed, and I pulled his muslin onto my body.

"Dinner?" "With Cain's mother," he said, then led me out of the room.

I blew out a breath and hated that Brax was angry with me too.

channeled. I shouldn't have let it go so far, but sometimes it just happened.

Derik clenched his jaw, still ashamed that he had.

Kai followed closely, shadowing me, his eyes narrowed everywhere. I tugged at the shirt, not used to being so exposed in the open, but there didn't seem to be any other wolves in the estate at the moment. "The one who put eyeballs in your stew?"

"She appreciates promptness to dinner."

Derik smiled and nodded, still walking that little bit ahead. I almost had to jog to keep up with his huge steps.

"You're a slow human." He smirked, and I laughed. So my legs weren't giant size. I was keeping up ...ish.

nagging at me. "Would Brax really send me back?"

"Oh." I was in trouble then. I hadn't been on time for anything in at least three years.

Kai lifted me then and walked next to Derik, with me hanging in his arms like a bride.

Kai tensed beneath me, and Derik nodded once. "If he thought it was better for you," he said, then sighed and added, "and better for the pack. It's harder for him because of his gifts. He can feel things so potently, and he can't switch off the emotions that Kai and I emit.

"So that's why you can talk to each other without actually talking?"

his alphas.

smirking.

And fell asleep.

being so honest it had me shivering.

not to because of it, but sometimes, we make a mistake," he explained, and I nodded, keeping quiet as I thought about what he said.

Brax always seemed like the light one, the carefree one, the one that didn't care, but he obviously did when it came to

"We have this connection as alphas and it keeps us linked. That makes it hard for him when we lose control. We try

It was quiet then as Derik led me back to my room, Kai holding me, and I had to break it because a question was

Derik nodded once. "Can you feel what the other is feeling? Or can only Brax do that?"

Kai spoke this time. "Only Brax can fully feel it. We get an instinct or a leftover kind of feeling, but it's only a secondhand thing because of the link."

"And you can feel it when I channel you?" I asked, remembering how they knew when I had found them.

"Yeah, we feel the presence. I felt it when you found Kai," Derik said as we made it to my suite. Derik opened the door, and Kai carried me inside. He put me on the bed, then kissed me. When he pulled away, he was

"I can feel it when they are inside of you," he whispered against my ear, and I gasped, looking for the lie, but he was

I looked at Derik, and he rolled his eyes before going to the wardrobe. He came out with a simple peasant dress that looked more like something I would wear in the village. "That's enough sharing for now, Kai. Lorelai, wear this for dinner. You have an hour to bathe and dress. We'll come get

you just before sundown," he said, and I nodded. Derik and Kai left after that, and I ran my fingers over the material of the dress.

It was much nicer than the village clothes, of course, but it looked similar, and I was looking forward to it. It didn't

need a corset and was much lighter on me. I lay back on the bed, closing my eyes for a second.

I woke to jostling in my room and froze. My eyes flung open when there were strong arms lifting me and tucking me under the covers.

"We've got half an hour, Spitfire," Brax breathed, and I nodded, closing my eyes again.

A huge body climbed in behind me, holding me against him. The scent of rain hit me and I smiled, turning into his

"Don't send me back," I whispered, and he kissed my head again. "I don't want to."

"One day at a time, Lori," he breathed back, before the heaviness in my body and lids stole me away to sleep.

"Lorelai!" a deep voice growled a while later, waking me up.

"Then don't. I'll keep control and I'll help them keep it. I promise."

body. He kissed my forehead, and I snuggled into him.

I stirred and opened my eyes. Brax was gone, and I shot up. Shit, I was going to be late for dinner. And I was almost one hundred percent certain I wasn't going to like eyeball stew for dinner.