

Owned by the Alphas |

The Questions

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Brax and I walked back to the women's village hand in hand. It could've been romantic if Brax's strides weren't at least two of mine so I looked like I was trying to play hopscotch to keep up with him.

"You're in a rush."

He nodded. "I need to tell the alphas."

"What about your link thing? Can't you just tell them through that?" I asked, and he nodded.

"I can, but sometimes what we say doesn't come through as clearly as we want. It all depends on the height of our emotions and the physical distance between us," he said. "And I can't let this information get distorted."

"This dagger information is really important then?"

"It means that the people going missing are being used in a ritualistic sacrifice. We had considered it but hadn't believed it possible. Now they have a conduit for it; that makes it even more dangerous," Brax explained, still dragging me along while I half ran to keep up.

"How is it more dangerous?" I puffed, and he turned back to look at me.

He smirked as he looked at me clutching my dress, hiding the tear he had made but also keeping it from snagging on the bits of broken stone on the path.

"The shadows can absorb the power from a sacrificial conduit. Makes them more powerful but can also give the shadows a foothold in our world. Means Elias might not need your brother as a body if he completes the ritual.

"But there are so many things he could be using power like that for, none of it good. I have to see Derik and Kai."

He urged me on faster before getting sick of my human pace and carrying me.

We went to my mom's hut first. I think Brax had every intention of trying to ditch me there, but when we went in, Derik and Kai were already there, drinking tea while she pottered.

Good, because I had no intentions of being ditched.

"Mrs. Valarian. Would you excuse us for a moment?" Brax said, and that had them all pausing their cozy conversation for frowns.

Kai and Derik stood as my mom nodded. They left the hut and stepped away, huddling close. I turned back to my mom, who was pouring me tea.

"Sit, let them talk." She smiled, and I followed her advice, my legs aching after getting railed in the bathroom.

I sipped the tea as Mom stirred her huge pot of stew.

"Mom, I think you're overestimating how much the wolves eat. It's not actually much different to our servings," I said, and she waved my worries away, sniffing her handiwork before stirring again.

"They've already spoken of those concerns, sweetie. Don't worry, your father and sister-in-law will be joining us too." She smiled.

I tensed at the mention of my father. I hadn't had a chance to find out which whore he'd been cheating with, but I should've. Then I could have warned her to stop.

"Is Ryleigh okay? Has she been lonely without my brother home?" I asked, digging a little.

Mom shrugged. "Well, she spends most days here or out in the orchards, but she hasn't mentioned being lonely. As far as I'm aware, your brother does pop in every now and then."

That had me raising a brow. "How often? When was he last here?" I asked, and she didn't catch the urgency in my tone, only sipping her stew and sighing.

"A day ago. Just popped in for some tea, then had to go back to his post," she said absentmindedly, and I shook my head.

“Mom! You were meant to tell me if you heard from him!”

She turned with an innocent expression on her face. “He said he had already talked to you, love. Sorry, I’ll let you know next time.” She huffed, then went back to cooking.

I shook my head. How dare he be so brazen to come here, knowing it would irk me. He was baiting me, letting me know he could hurt her if he wanted to.

I had to hope he wasn’t that far gone. Or I might just let Elias end him. I might anyway if he was choosing to be such an asshole.

Just then the alphas came in, my father trailing behind with a sheepish expression. He avoided my glare, so I hardened it, and I’m pretty sure he shivered.

Good.

Dinner was served, but Ryleigh never arrived. She said she wasn’t feeling up to it, and Mom grinned.

“I am sure she is with child. Oh, can you imagine? It has been a long time since we had a baby around here. It would be magnificent.”

My mother swooned, holding my father’s arm as if he gave a shit about the nostalgic memories, as she did. He pretended well though and smiled at her, kissing her softly. My hand clenched on my silverware.

Kai’s grabbed it and kissed my white knuckles, burning a stare into mine. I tried to calm down, but the more times my dad showed his affection, the more times I wanted to stab him with my fork. And knife.

My mom deserved devotion, not him.

“Speaking of babies, I was interested in the dynamics for werewolves and humans. Is it possible?” my mother asked, as upfront as she usually was.

Derik stiffened as Kai smirked. Brax’s lips pursed. None of them great reactions, so I intervened.

“Mom. I don’t think it’s possible. We’re not the same.”

She shrugged, undeterred from her potential grandchildren. "There are hybrids born every day, vampires and werewolves, why not a human?" she asked, and I smiled softly at her.

Kai spoke then. "If it happens for us, then we would be grateful."

"So it is something you want? With Lorelai?" she prodded, and I tensed.

Not even I had gone into such a conversation with the alphas.

"I'd marry her tomorrow if the laws allowed," Derik vowed, and I raised a brow. He didn't look at me.

"And since the laws don't allow it, what happens? She is to be labeled a lover of yours, grow old and die without the love of children or a husband?" My mother took a swing with her words and packed a powerful punch because all three of the alphas winced.

I just glared at my father. "Husbands are overrated," I sniped, and she looked at me.

"But children are not," she finished, and then it was silent.

I had never cared if I had children. I had always seen them as a way for husbands to have more control over the wives they had picked, but thinking about children with the alphas was different.

If it was possible, I would want it. But it wasn't. For me, that wasn't a dealbreaker, but it did look like it broke my mother's heart.

"Lorelai is not our prisoner. She may leave and find the future you wish for her at any time. We will not keep it from her. But if she chooses to stay, understand that we will look for every answer we can to give her whatever she wants, including children," Derik explained.

My heart grew heavy with the words, a fullness that swelled and warmed me at the same time. I hadn't heard him be so devoted before. It had me clenching my thighs together.

And that should have been where I announced that we had to go, but I let my mother keep picking, and she asked the one question I had been hoping wouldn't slip out.

“Will you turn her?”

The silence fell again, and finally Brax answered.

“No.”

Then it was my heart breaking. I wouldn't be theirs because I had the mortality of a human and they aged so much quicker than werewolves.

My mother checked my reaction, then pursed her lips. “Hmmm,” she said, then stood and cleared the dishes.

I stayed quiet before Kai huffed. “Nice, Brax. I'll tell you why, Little Human. Most of us are born into this.

“To be turned by a bite is risky to us because it is not just a bite, we have to give some of our magic, use our toxin in the bite. Your body will either take it or reject it. We won't know which until it is too late.”

“We don't want to risk it,” Derik murmured.

I understood that. I tried to. I just hated it.