

## Owned by the Alphas |

### The Brand

I was sweating, so damn hot as I uncurled from Brax's hold. I sat up, rubbing my eyes as the shouting that had woken me up came through from my closed door.

It was Kai and Derik. The link was covered in anger and resentment, something more twinging in it, but I couldn't place it when I had just woken up and still felt like shit.

"Fuck off! Let me go in, Derik. You do not own me!" Kai roared, and there was a thud that startled Brax awake. He frowned and turned to me as I wiped the sleep from my eyes.

"Stay here," he whispered, kissing my temple before heading out the door.

Muffled voices filtered through, and my frown grew. I stood on shaky legs, my head still thumping.

It was actually getting annoying constantly having a headache that I couldn't get rid of and a sick stomach that swirled when I moved too fast.

I clenched my eyes shut and held the bedpost tightly, heading for the door.

There was another thud against it, and Kai's anger filled me.

"You will not stop me from seeing her! This is my decision!" he snapped, and Derik grunted.

"She's not well enough, Kai! Go in there with that news and you'll make it worse. I'm not letting that happen!" Derik argued.

"He's right, Kai," Brax tried, his voice still a little thick from sleep.

"Let her decide what she can handle. This changes nothing!"

"Like fuck it doesn't," Brax growled.

"I won't let it," Kai said, his rage finally lessening.

I waited for more but their voices lowered so I couldn't hear anything.

I wasn't sure how they were keeping their thoughts from me and the link, but they were, and that was getting on my nerves, so I made my way to the door and swung it open.

Derik and Kai stood there with no shirts like Brax, but they looked like they had been running. They were both covered in sweat, and Kai had a claw mark on his face.

Kai went to step forward to me but Derik stepped in front, their eyes locked in some kind of power war.

"What's going on? I don't like it when you fight each other," I said quietly, not speaking too loud so my head wouldn't rebel.

"Nothing, beautiful. Go back to bed and rest."

I frowned at him harder. "I don't like it when you lie either."

I winced, my head still assaulting me. It started swimming, and I swallowed hard as the nausea tried to make it worse. I clutched the door for support.

I should want to get better because being sick was frustrating and a little less dignifying as a human, but really, I just missed my alphas.

I missed their touch, their bodies with mine, their comfort. They were sleeping in their own rooms at the moment. Brax sometimes joined me, but the others said I needed rest and I had to admit, resting did feel good.

"We'll tell you about it later. Once you're better," Derik insisted.

I wanted to argue, I wanted to know what they were arguing about, but my body wasn't cooperating. I shouldn't have gotten out of bed.

I realized my mistake too late, right before the spinning got too bad and I couldn't hold myself up.

Kai cursed and then his arms were under me, lifting me easily before I fell to the ground, my legs giving out.

"I've got you, Little Human," he whispered, then kissed my cheek.

I sighed and kept my eyes closed against him, my body so weak and tired.

It was a strange feeling, and one I was getting really tired of.

I wanted to be able to celebrate our win against Elias with my alphas, to see my mother and find out what she knew about my brother, and then discuss seeing my brother, since he had turned successfully.

He had sent a note saying thank you and that he was fine, that he was looking forward to seeing me, but it wasn't the same. I needed to see him.

I needed to heal. The problem was, I wasn't healing. My human vitals were still low, my concussion still making me feel and look like shit, day in and day out.

Not even the healers could figure it out, and neither could I. It had me wondering about Elias's shadows in me, but they felt normal. I had nothing else to give me any clues as to why my human genetics were failing me.

Kai placed me back in bed and I closed my eyes, holding his hand to keep him with me. Just that touch was enough of a comfort to stop the nausea.

The bed sank next to me, and I knew all my alphas were there with me.

"Should I call the healer again?" Brax whispered.

"The healer said they had done everything they could do," Derik said back, his voice sad, and I hated being the cause.

I reached for him, and he curled up behind me. "I'll be fine," I breathed, not opening my eyes, scared of the spinning.

"What if we...?"

"No," Derik bit, anger harsh in his voice in my ear.

My eyes fluttered open to look up at Kai.

"It might work," Kai argued again.

"What could work?" I asked with as much strength in my voice as I could. Which wasn't very much.

Derik tensed behind me, and I gave Kai my best pleading look.

"I want to turn you. You're not healing, and I think Tabby could help you survive the transition. Derik thinks it's too risky, and Brax is still hating on Tabby for calling us to fulfill our oath when she did," Kai explained.

I tried to filter the answer through my tired, aching brain. Turn me? Did I want to be turned? Did I want to risk it? Wasn't I too sick?

"You don't think I'll get better?"

"The healers have been very vague about your chances, and I don't like it," Kai said, but Derik was still tense, and I knew there was something else.

"It's just a concussion though. I'll be fine with some rest. That's what they said."

"Yeah, when they first assessed you," Kai argued, and I rubbed his hand with my thumb, sitting up a little.

Derik helped me up, propping my pillows as Brax sat at the end of the bed, close to Kai, like he was waiting for him to do something stupid.

It was so tense it was almost suffocating, which meant I was still missing something.

"So are you asking me or telling me?" I wondered, not sure what I would say if he was asking.

I had never considered in any actual depth becoming one of them. Not yet anyway. Especially since they had shut down the idea on me. It had hurt, but it was one of those things I had pushed away.

Now the option was in front of me again, or at least the discussion was.

I didn't know what to think about it, what I was supposed to feel about it, because all I could think about was how my stomach was turning and my head still hurt.

Not conditions I wanted to make a life-altering decision under.

"I don't know," Kai said, his voice low with his honesty.

I grabbed his hand tighter in mine and brought it up to kiss it.

And then I saw it.

The reason they were all tense. The reason Kai wanted to turn me. The reason they had been fighting.

A bright red mating mark was branded into Kai's wrist.

I dropped his hand like it had burned me, tears pricking my eyes as I looked at him, begging him to deny what I had just seen.

His lips were pursed, the tension thickening as I swallowed hard against the block in my throat. My heart added to the ache in my body, hurt clutching my chest.

"Congratulations," I whispered, my voice dead as I tried to be happy that he had either met or was going to meet his soulmate.

Someone who could give him all the things I couldn't as a human.

"I'm not going to let it happen, Lorelai," Kai bit, anger filling us both thanks to the link.

"You can't stop it, Kai, it's already been decided," I cried, the tears spilling, the pain becoming more unbearable.

The idea that he would be with someone else, touch someone else, or love someone else the way he did me was almost too much. My head and stomach were getting worse as pain clouded the rational part of my mind.

"No. I haven't met her yet. This just tells me I will soon. But I'm not going to let it. I'm not leaving your side, Lorelai.

"I don't give a fuck what else goes on outside these four walls, I'm not leaving them—or you. If I don't see another female or meet another female, then I can't mate with them," Kai said, his voice determined and rife with hostility, his hand gripping mine back in his.

I shook my head, wincing as it felt like a hammer on my skull. "You can't just hide forever," I argued, but he smirked.

“Little Human, I can hide with you for as long as we live. That is how sure I am that this mating brand is bullshit.”

“So that’s why you want to turn me? So I’m a wolf like you? Can give you the things a wolf can?” I asked, and he shook his head.

“No. I want to turn you because then I’d have a chance at the mating brand being ours,” he said sadly, but we all knew that was wishful thinking.

I sniffled. Derik’s arms tightened around me.

“I’m sorry, beautiful,” he whispered, and I nodded, wiping my tears away and running my thumb over the brand on Kai’s wrist.

It was lumpy and smooth at the same time, like a welt. A welt that represented everything I hadn’t wanted to happen. And it had.

“Stop it!” Kai growled, then yanked his wrists back and found my lips, crushing his down on me.

I kissed back as the searing heat that always came with kissing my alphas assaulted my body. I wrapped my arms around his neck, kissing him harder, desperate for the intimacy that came with connecting the way we did during sex.

“I told you, I’m not getting mated. Fuck the brand. If it’s not yours, I don’t want it,” he said against me.

Derik slid his hands out so he could push Kai back as he got more possessive. “Not yet, Kai. She’s not ready,” he said, and Kai moved back, collecting himself as I breathed hard, my cheeks still sticky with tears.

I wanted so badly to just give in and tell him to claim me, but I knew it was for the wrong reasons. I wanted him to feel me, to make me feel, to take away the brand using our bodies.

But it was pointless. We all knew it would stay there until he met whoever he was meant to mate with, and I wasn’t a werewolf so it wasn’t going to be me. That truth was in all of our faces, but Kai was stubborn and determined.

He didn’t leave my side for the next three days.