

## Owned by the Alphas |

### The Feast

The food. Holy fuck, the food. If I didn't have a tingling bite from an alpha on my thigh that was still making my blood burn then I could've sworn I was in heaven.

I never cared about food, it was a means to an end, a by-product of survival instinct, but one meal from the wolves and I had changed my mind.

Flavor burst in my mouth. A succulent piece of pork with loud crackling and mouthwatering apple sauce coated my tongue, and it was better than anything I'd ever tasted.

I moaned as it slid down my throat, closing my eyes to savor the taste. When I opened them, Nikolai was smirking at me. I glared.

"Some of us don't have the privileges of food with flavor," I snapped, embarrassed at the way I had fawned over the food like it was the first meal I'd ever had.

In my eyes, it was. The village did what they could and we weren't starving, but it was always dry and not worth getting excited about.

Soggy veggies from the garden, dry meat from the slaughter hut, and some grown herbs that tried to cover the taste of it.

We got by, but the wolves? They got the best of everything: our best chickens, our best pigs, our best cows, and all our best garden growth.

It was all to go to the city, while we kept the leftovers, the ones the wolves would punish us for passing on.

All the gross shit.

"Then enjoy." He nodded toward the food.

I wanted to push the plate away then, give in to my pride and refuse to do what I was told, but I was enjoying the food too much.

I dug in, scooping some mashed potatoes onto my plate and shoveling them into my mouth. I was disgusting, but I didn't care. If he was going to fuck me anyway, then what should I care?

I looked around the table. The girls were happy, eating as ferociously as me, drinking, laughing with each other. Had they forgotten what we were there for?

I hadn't.

I peered up at Nikolai, who wasn't eating. He was watching. Not just me, all the girls, especially the ones from his village.

He looked at Derik and Braxton, who sat next to him, along the three-wide head of the table. They were eyeing the offerings too, and it made me nervous.

I didn't mean to channel them, but I wanted to know what they were thinking and why they weren't eating.

I froze as my emotions blended into theirs. There was hunger there, but it wasn't for food.

I looked down at my plate, clearing my throat, unmoving as their want became mine, their lust became mine. Behind that, though, was an urgency, a lingering taste of what I could only describe as anxiety.

I frowned at that. They were nervous too? That made no sense, and they definitely didn't look it.

"Stop it, Spitfire. Or I'm going to have to put you in time-out." Braxton grinned, a hint of annoyance in his brow as he shoved me out of whatever emotions tainted my body.

I shuddered and went back to my own feelings, a sickness spreading in my stomach. I pushed my plate away, swallowing hard, ignoring the frowns from Nikolai and Derik.

"I can't help it." I shrugged, but he just smiled.

"Learn."

"Why? You won't see me past tomorrow, why does it matter what I feel inside you tonight?" I bit, and he laughed at that.

“I suppose it doesn’t.” He shook his head and took a sip of his wine.

I took a sip of mine and had to admit, we made some great wine. Our village was known for it and supplied the werewolves. I snuck some all the time, and the comfort from home made me feel better instantly.

Derik looked down at his watch then, before sighing and looking at the other two.

“It’s time,” he said, and they nodded once.

Derik stood first, walking down the table. The girls carried on as if he wasn’t behind them like a silent stalker, waiting to pounce.

He found a girl from the Forest village, one of his offerings, and bent over her, his hand landing on her shoulder. She jumped and looked up, shrinking back a little before her smile fell and she nodded.

She stood up, tucking her shoulder-length brown hair behind her ear. Derik kept her hand in his and led her through a door.

There were three of them, and I hadn’t even noticed them before. Each one had a gold plate on it, each alpha’s symbol on one of them.

So those were the rooms.

I looked over at Braxton, who was taking his offering to his room, disappearing inside.

I gulped, sipping more wine.

Nikolai scraped his chair back, then leaned down by my ear. “That’s your last drink,” he ordered, and I scoffed.

“You’re about to get my pussy. You’re not telling me how many drinks I can have to get through that,” I hissed, and he scowled.

“So damn stubborn,” he breathed, pulling my hair to the side, kissing my neck.

My breaths turned shaky, my hand clutching the wine cup.

“Last drink, Lorelai. Or I’ll tie your hands behind your back until it’s your turn,” he promised, and I shivered at the idea of being tied up by him, not as much of a threat as he intended it.

He chuckled, probably sensing that.

“Why?” I asked.

“I don’t want you incoherent when I’m inside you.”

He walked off then, going to get Perfect Portia while I took a gulp and watched him leave.

It took seconds for the moaning to start. Then the gasping, the screaming, and then more moaning.

My stomach turned at the noises. The other girls went quiet, enjoying their food in silence, drinking more wine as they pretended they couldn’t hear the noises.

I looked up at the girl opposite me. Her face was pale, her hair dark, her eyes wide and transfixed on the doors.

“Have a drink.” I pushed a cup toward her.

She grabbed it and gulped it down, then nodded in thanks.

“You’re from the Water village?” I asked, and she nodded again.

“Are you excited for the picking ceremony tomorrow?” I tried to distract her. It worked, her eyes lighting up at that.

“I have my dress picked out, and my mom bought some flowers from your village to put in my hair. I can’t wait. My dad visited me a fortnight ago and said he had arranged a suitor for me. He’s so handsome,” she rambled, and I tried to stay interested.

I wasn’t though.

The idea that I was going to stand there and get judged by boys from the village I wasn’t allowed to visit just so I could bear children to them made me sick.

I had never met them before, and I was supposed to give them my life? Didn't sound like a perk to me. Luckily for me, I was winter born. No one was going to want me.

"What does he do? What's his name?" I asked, keeping her talking.

"Oh, well, I don't know the details, but my father was quite certain he was suitable. All the girls wanted to have him, but he's choosing me. He likes my body."

She grinned as if that was something to be proud of. Maybe it was, maybe I was just broken, but maybe they could stop marrying off their kids based on their physical attributes.

Admittedly, the girl was stunning. Her body was thin but full in all the right places. Her nails were manicured, and her face had a small nose, rosy lips, wide, innocent eyes.

She was a natural beauty that would have her pick of husbands, if I had to guess.

I wondered what happened to the girls who were less desirable...like a winter born. What if they weren't picked?

"Then focus on tomorrow. It'll help." I ended the conversation, going back to my own thoughts.

What if nobody picked me? I had no idea what that meant. Nobody had ever had that happen.

My mom reassured me I'd be fine, that having her figure and my father's coloring of skin and hair meant I was bound to be chosen.

I had tits, I had an ass, men liked that, but what they didn't like? Curses. Winter borns. Rumors. And I came with all of that.

My brother was meant to choose a wife tomorrow too. Luckily for him, a girl can't say no. Otherwise he would be in the same boat as me, with no one.

I was excited for him to find a wife though. It meant he was moving back to the hut with me and Mother.

Until they had kids, of course. If it was a boy, they'd move back to the men's village at puberty. If it was a girl, they'd stay. I hoped for that.

My attention was snapped back into place as the alphas came back out. The girls they'd just fucked were nowhere to be seen as they came and took their next offering.

My mouth ran dry at the sight. All three of them, sweating, flushed, shirtless. It was distracting and hot. Yeah, the whole winter born thing had really fucked me up if I was lusting after wolves.

They disappeared again, and the noises started again. I huffed and emptied my glass. This whole offering thing was such bullshit.

A whole bunch of virgins giving themselves over for protection? Like we needed it. The vamps hadn't been on werewolf territory in years, and if they did, we'd handle it ourselves. We had an army.

My dad ran it.

The men's village was full of soldiers for my dad's army. He collaborated with the wolves, the only one from our village who was allowed access to them.

That's why he and my mother weren't cast out as cursed for bearing winter born children. Because the army was his, and he had the respect of the alphas.

I suppose that should make me grateful, but I wasn't feeling very grateful yet, so I grabbed Nikolai's cup and drained the last of his wine too.

The alphas came and went, in and out of those rooms, the numbers at the table dwindling as the hours dragged on.

Dessert had been served, but I wasn't hungry anymore. It didn't look like the others were either, most of them making their way over to the couches by the fireplace.

They sat there, waiting for their turns, talking, whispering, listening to the moans of pleasure coming from the other girls.

I sat on the edge of one of the couches, being ignored like usual, when the cold hit me. I swallowed and turned, looking over my shoulder.

It felt like I was being watched, my skin crawling, the hairs on the back of my neck rising. I stood up, stepping away from the others. They didn't notice.

I could feel the red eyes. I just had to find them.

I looked in every corner of the room, behind the pillars. I couldn't see them. But I wanted to. They terrified me, the coldness, the heaviness made me feel numb, but they also gave me a rush. One I wanted to feel again.

I pressed into the door from the oath room we had come from and looked inside, the room bathed in the red moonlight.

"Where are you?" I breathed as a strong arm wrapped around my waist, yanking me back. The door slammed as Derik's body blocked it, his eyes narrowed, but the fear he felt broke through me.

Braxton held me back, his arms tight and warm on me as Nikolai grabbed the sides of my face.

"What are you doing?" he demanded.

I blinked a few times, the coldness leaving me, but I was sure I heard a chuckle whisper in my ear. I shook it away.

"The shadows, can I see them?" I breathed.

Nikolai frowned as Braxton tensed around me.

"They don't manifest. They're a part of you," Braxton said slowly.

I nodded and pushed away from him.

"Right. Sorry," I said, and went back to the table, sinking into my chair so they wouldn't see how weak I was after the cold and heaviness left.

I had no idea what it was or why it left me like that, but I didn't want them to know. Or anyone else for that matter.

They already thought I was cursed. Seeing red eyes that came with whispers and numbness was not going to convince them otherwise.

I ignored the stares and reached my shaky hand out for another drink. Nikolai's hand landed on mine.

“I said no more,” he snapped.

I scowled, then leaned back in my seat. “Whatever. Carry on.”

I shooed him away, and he growled under his breath, stalking away and grabbing another offering, half dragging her through to the room. I let out a shaky breath and closed my eyes. Why did I have to be the broken one?

I was still being watched though. I opened one eye and Braxton was watching me.

“What’d you see?” he asked, looking up at Derik, who pointed to his watch. Brax gave him a nod, then looked back at me for an answer.

“I...I don’t know,” I said, telling the truth because I really had no fucking clue.

I’d never seen the eyes before. I’d never felt them on me, or the voices. I was pretty sure the channeling thing had always been a part of me though.

My parents said I was intuitive, but they meant cursed. And I was starting to believe them.

Braxton narrowed his eyes. “Don’t leave this room. Even if something makes you feel like you should,” he said knowingly, and left with his next offering.

It took two more hours—most of which, I napped through—before I was the last offering.

Nikolai seemed to take a little longer with his girls. I don’t know whether that was a good or bad thing, but I was about to find out because the door opened and his eyes went to mine.

It was my turn.