

## The Alpha's Captive Matew by Taylor Caine Chapter 14

CHAPTER 14

Aaron

As I'd guessed, it was dark by the time I got back to the ranch. Snow had started falling a few hours ago, though it'd stayed light and was mostly melting when it touched the ground.

I was glad to get home and into the ranch house, the cozy

warmth from the various hearth fires around the building

a relief as I stepped in out of the freezing cold. However, something left me feeling uneasy as soon as I was inside. Like something wasn't quite right around here.

It was probably just because I knew that half-breed witch was currently under my roof, reminding me of my painful past.

Sandy greeted me, taking my coat and boots, telling me my dinner was at the table already, and I thanked her as I moved through the house, my stomach rumbling at the smell of something hearty being cooked.

The dining room was large, featuring a table that easily could have sat twelve people. My plate was set out at the head of the table like always, Sandy's place to my left, Melody seated to my right with Beau on her other side.

The trio were the closest thing to family I'd had since my own parents had been killed, though I'd never felt truly

comfortable with them.

2/6

Many nights I took my meal out in the barn with Connor and the other senior members of my pack. Or, when the weather

was nice in the summer, we had cookouts in the village square

and I sat surrounded by my pack and the pups who always

seemed to want my attention.

Being Alpha was lonely sometimes. I had to hold myself apart to lead them, and no one could really understand the kind of demands and pressure that came with dozens of people relying on you for protection and survival. Still, the nights.

when I could share a simple meal with my men or the larger pack was a good reminder of why I had to live like that.

"How was your trip into Ellisville today, Aaron?" Melody asked me sweetly, smiling shyly from beneath her lashes.

She was the only young omega in my pack right now-well, apart from Harper I supposed, except the half-breed witch offspring of Ian Crawford didn't count for anything-and everyone expected that I would take Melody as my mate one day in the future.

I'd just gone along with it, since I didn't really have any other prospects and Melody was agreeable enough. A little spoiled and self-centered, but I was confident I could coach it out of

C

her if or when we mated and I put some effort into it.

"Fine," I replied, not sure what else to say.

3/6

In actual fact, I'd been distracted and irritated and yelled at

some poor human man at the farm supply place when he'd gotten my order wrong for horse feed. [www.novelworm.com](#)

But I doubted Melody wanted to hear about that.

"How was your day?" I asked politely, earning a smile from

her. [www.novelworm.com](#)

She immediately launched into a detailed retelling of all the baking, chores and preserving she'd done in the barn kitchen

with the others who'd been getting the fruits and vegetables we'd grown over summer ready to store for the coming winter.

I was only half listening, unable to shake the feeling that

something was wrong.

Sandy returned at some point, and the conversation flowed around me, tidbits about things going on in the pack that I

probably should have been paying attention to, except my

mind kept wandering.

I couldn't help glancing toward the kitchen, wondering if Sandy had left Harper in there, or put her somewhere else. How was Sandy ensuring that Harper wasn't taking the

opportunity to escape while we were all out here eating?

4/6

However, I'd given the responsibility to Sandy, and I knew she was loyal and steadfast if nothing else. She would carry out

my orders to the letter. I didn't need to question her.

Still, the urge to ask about Harper was building up and up

within me, like a dam filled past bursting point.

However, before I could say anything, there was a knock on

the front door, halting the conversation.

"Who could that be at this time of night?" Sandy asked, pushing her empty plate away as she got to her feet.

I stood as well when she went out to the foyer to answer the door, because likely whoever was out there wanted to talk

with me.

The murmur of male voices reached me as I stepped out of the dining room, along with a mildly familiar scent-Crawford

wolves.

I bristled, just a little, same way I always did when I ran across any of the Crawford pack. But I forced it down to maintain an air of civility. After all, since Ian had gone rogue, his sons had been doing all they could to restore the pack's reputation.

In the foyer, I found all three brothers; Noah, Heath and

[www.novelworm.com](#)

Roman standing there, looking uncomfortable about being so

deep into Holland pack territory. [www.novelworm.com](#)

It must have been something important that'd brought them

here. They'd never venture onto my lands unannounced like

this otherwise.

Sandy was telling the trio they'd have to come back tomorrow at a reasonable time, but I interrupted as I stepped up behind

her.

"It's fine, Sandy, I'll talk to them now," I said, nodding at Noah

in greeting.

I led the three to my large study, off to the other side of the living room. I stopped in front of the roaring fireplace and turned to face them. Noah stayed standing, while Heath and

Roman sat in adjacent armchairs.

"What's so important that brought all three of you out on a night like this?" I asked, crossing my arms as I regarded Noah,

who looked troubled.

Noah matched my pose, crossing his arms, and I could tell it was taking all of his willpower not to bristle or flex his Alpha status in challenge to me.

"We're here about our half-sister," Noah replied, features tight.

"Do we have a problem, Aaron?"

The Alpha's Captive Mate

1/5