

The Alpha's Captive Matew by Taylor Caine Chapter 16

CHAPTER 16

Aaron

"How did you hear about Harper?" I asked, casting a glance

across the three Crawford brothers.

"A few people from our pack were in town late today and saw

Bella Benson," Noah answered. "She said you took Harper to

see her coven without even realizing who she was."

I growled a little under my breath, not liking the fact that the young witch, Bella, was gossiping about what'd happened and making me look like a fool.

"Harper was wearing a charmed necklace that hid her true

wolf nature. No one other than a witch could have realized

who she was," I replied in a short, sharp tone.

"That doesn't matter," Heath put in, waving a dismissive hand.

"What I want to know is why you brought her here instead of

bringing her to Crawford territory."

"Heath," Noah warned in a low voice.

"What?" Heath demanded heatedly, getting to his feet. "She's

our sister. We don't get a say in what happens to her?"

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"She's our half-sister," Roman said, voice dripping with scorn.

"She's not even pack. Who cares what happens to some half-breed our father whelped after he went rogue?"

"We should care because she's our blood, and it wasn't her fault how she was born." Heath argued, and it seemed out of the three of them, for some reason he cared most what happened to Harper even though he didn't know her.

"Are you forgetting she's half-witch?" Roman argued in disgust. "If she deserved to be part of the pack, Noah would have tracked her down years ago. There's a reason he didn't

"Enough," Noah said in a hard voice, a hint of Alpha threaded in with warning, instantly making his younger brothers calm

down.

Noah returned his attention to me. "I'd like to see the girl, before we decide what should be done about this situation."

"Of course," I agreed, trying to ignore the strong surge of relief that went through me since now I had an excuse to see

Harper.

My wolf wanted to set eyes on her, scent her, ensure for myself that she had been fine in the few hours since I'd left her.

Which was so stupid.

I didn't even like her.

3/12

I needed to figure out a way to get my wolf nature to let go of this mounting obsession before it became a problem.

Shoving aside all those confusing thoughts, I went to the doorway of the study and called out to Sandy. She appeared within a moment, as if she'd been waiting for me to summon

her.

"Where's Harper? The Crawford wolves want to see her."

Sandy's eyes widened a little. "Oh, well, it'll take me a few moments to fetch her."

Something unpleasant twisted in my gut.

"Why?" I asked, trying to keep the heated demand out of my

voice.

I must not have been very successful, however, because Sandy shrank back slightly, while Noah strode over, concern deepening his features.

"Is there a problem?" Noah asked, the Alpha edge to his voice hinting that there better not be a problem, or he was not going to be impressed.

"Sandy, where is Harper?" I asked in a tight voice, ignoring the

Crawford brothers for the moment.

My heart had started beating faster, and that feeling I'd been trying to ignore all night since I'd set foot in my home roared up stronger and sharper than ever, telling me something was definitely very wrong.

Something was wrong with Harper.

It was all I could do not to let the claws and fangs of my wolf

nature take over.

Noah eyed me warily and shifted uneasily, as if he could tell

how close I was to losing control.

"Where, Sandy?" I growled when she didn't answer right

away.

"She-she attacked Beau and insulted me with her vulgar defiance. She needed to be punished," Sandy replied, suddenly looking unsure of herself.

She backed up as I prowled forward, and I knew by now my

eyes had entirely changed to the golden color of my wolf.

"What did you do to her?"

"I chained her up to the hitching post in the field next to the

barn," Sandy said, pushing her shoulders back, as if daring me to tell her she'd done anything wrong.

"How long ago was this?" Heath demanded from behind

Noah.

"I don't know," Sandy replied with a careless shrug. "Mid-afternoon I suppose."

"It's been snowing all afternoon!" Heath yelled, not bothering

to rein himself in, his fang appearing with his anger.

"So?" Sandy replied in confusion. "She's spent a few hours being cold and miserable. Maybe it'll make her think twice before repaying kindness with violence."

"Damn it, she's only half-wolf, Sandy," I snapped in fury, already pushing past her. "Witches can't survive the cold like

we can!"

I sprinted through the house, only dimly aware of Noah and his two younger brothers on my heels. Outside the snow had grown thicker, beginning to swirl in flurries, finally starting to pile up on the ground where it landed.

Even with my more accurate wolf eyes in the dark, it was hard to make out the hitching post in the field next to the barn, I could only just see the small form slumped unmoving next to

My heart plunged into my boots as I pushed myself faster across the open space, barely pausing to leap the fences with superhuman speed so I could reach her that much quicker.

If Harper was dead-

No.

I refused to even let the thought fully form in my mind.

She couldn't be dead.

Not when I'd only just found her.

Maybe I didn't want to acknowledge how my wolf was trying to recognize her as my mate. Maybe I'd never claim her or

even like her at all.

But at least she would be alive.

At least I would know she existed somewhere.

Even entertaining the idea that she might have perished in the snow and freezing cold was making my inner wolf crazed with fury and anguish.

I went down on my knees next to her in the snow, gently

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pulling her up against me.

Noah and his two brothers reached me as I pressed my shaking fingers into her neck.

7/12

"Is she-" Heath started in a strangled voice, but then seemed

unable to finish the words.

"She's alive," I almost slumped in relief.

Alive, yes, but still in danger if we couldn't warm her up fast enough.

I reached up and yanked at the chains, using every bit of

Alpha strength I could muster. The whine of broken metal had barely faded into the night when I hefted her slight weight into

my arms, carrying her quickly back toward the house.

I could feel the weight of the Crawford's brothers' anger and disapproval as they trailed me back to the house, but I couldn't consider the implications of that right now. [www.7\0\w0e\Wxrm.com](#)

The only thing I could concentrate on now was saving Harper before it was too late.

Sandy and the twins were hovering in the kitchen when we burst through the backdoor.

"Alpha, I'm sorry, I didn't realize," Sandy rushed out, coming

over as if she was going to take Harper from me.

She reared back, however, when I snarled and bared my fangs at her.

8/12

No one but me was touching Harper. Not until I knew she was going to survive this.

I shoved past them and went up the stairs to my bedroom, not even thinking twice about why it was there of all places I

wanted to take her.

I could feel her freezing wet clothes soaking through to my

own skin.

How had she even survived as long as she had?

"Let us help you," Heath demanded, and it was only then that I noticed both he and Noah had followed me all the way to my

room.

"Go get some towels from the bathroom," I told Heath, gently setting Harper down on the thick rug in front of the fireplace.

Noah went to my bed and yanked back the pile of thick blankets, before hurrying over to the hearth and adding more

wood to the fire.

"Harper?" I gently shook her, looking for any signs of her

stirring.

9/12

Now that I had her in the bright

light of my bedroom, I could see how badly off she looked.

She had vicious claw marks streaked across her face, neck

and the top of her chest.

The manacles had bruised and cut up the skin of her delicate wrists. She was pale white, like a ghost, making her blue lips

look even more vivid and shocking.

Truthfully, she looked like she was dead already.

I feared she growl, and looked up to see Heath had returned with the towels, but had pulled up short, his features shocked and enraged at the sight of her.

I couldn't blame him.

But I wouldn't put up with anyone growling at me in my own

home, no matter what the circumstances.

"Growl like that again, and Sandy will be cleaning your blood out of my carpet for the next month," I snapped at Heath, snatching the towels from his limp grasp.

Heath looked suitably chastised, shifting back as Noah

crouched next to us.

"We need to get her out of those wet clothes, dried and into

bed," he said calmly, voice breaking through the anger and

panic going on inside me.

I nodded, handing Noah one of the towels. Between the two of us, we stripped her down to her underwear, covering her with the towels to preserve her modesty and dried every inch of [w\wW.No\w0e\W0rm.com](#)

her flesh.

She didn't rouse the whole time, and worry continued to build

inside me until I wanted to tear my own hair out.

"We need to get her under the blankets," I said, getting to my feet with Harper in my arms even as I said the words.

"Body heat will warm her up faster," Noah suggested as I set

Harper down on the soft mattress.

I looked up to see both Noah and Heath staring at me

expectantly.

"You want me to do it?" I asked in disbelief.

"Well, she's our sister," Heath said with a shrug. "I mean, I'd do

it if it meant saving her life, but it'd be awkward and weird."

"And you don't think it's awkward and weird for me?" I

demanded, even as deep down, my body started heating at

the idea, my inner wolf getting all sorts of notions I had no right to entertain when Harper was at death's door. And also

my enemy.

"We're staying the night," Noah announced. "You make sure Harper survives this, no matter what it takes."

Noah didn't wait for me to reply or agree, simply gripped Heath on the shoulder and steered his younger brother out of

the room, leaving us alone.

A small whimper brought my attention back down to the bed.

Maybe it was my imagination, but Harper's lips didn't look quite as blue any longer.

didn't let myself think about things as I stripped down to my

boxer-briefs and crawled into bed next to her. I settled her on

top of my chest, shivering as her wet hair fanned out across

my arm.

I bunched up the blankets around her as best I could, praying that she would warm and wake quickly, that I wouldn't have to

endure this torture for too long.

Except even as I had the thought of how much I hated the fact that the person I loathed worst in this world was currently draped almost naked across my body, my inner wolf was practically humming with satisfaction.

Traitor.

It didn't matter.

12/12

I was only doing this because I needed Harper alive to

fulfill the blood debt and settle a decades old rift between

our packs. Plus I knew if Harper died, it could start a new pack-war between the Crawfords and Hollands, and no one

wanted that to happen.

Still, with what the Crawford brothers-the Crawford Alpha

-had witnessed here tonight, I knew my troubles where they

were concerned were only just beginning.

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