

Broken by one, claimed by three novel

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Another bout of thunder echoed around me. It was already raining heavily. The first drop fell an hour ago and it had been falling harder and harder since then. I was soaked to the bone, freezing cold, and I seemed to be walking in circles. My panic had long since faded. I had accepted the fact that I was going to die. In a few hours, I would be joining my parents. I was okay with that.

I had tried to find my way out of the forest, but no matter how hard I tried or how far I walked, I couldn't get out. The trees seemed to go on for miles and miles, and I had yet to find a sign of something familiar to help me get home. My foot caught on something, sending me falling to the ground. I tried to stop my fall, but ended up twisting my wrist. Instead of getting up, I curled into a ball with my injured wrist cradled to my chest.

It took too long for me to realize that the thunder wasn't the only thing echoing in the air. My body jerked when a twig snapped behind me. I sucked in a sharp breath and held completely still. Every instinct inside me warned me to run. To fight because there was a predator behind me. Another twig snapped, closer than before, and a second later, something touched my back. Squeezing my eyes closed, I bit my lip to stop my chattering teeth. I could hear the animal sniffing me.

Its nose moved up my back and all the way up my neck. It pushed the wet strands of hair away and pressed its snout against my skin. Tears mixed with the raindrops, and

before I could stop it, a whimper fell from my lips. The animal froze and did something unexpected. It licked my cheek. I whimpered again when it nudged my shoulder. For a moment, nothing happened. I flinched at the first snap of bone. The second made me feel sick. I curled tighter into a ball.

"Are you injured?" a deep, slightly accented voice questioned. "I don't smell any blood." Was he a friend or an enemy? My pack has never given me any reason to trust them or to interact with the other packs that visited. So I had no idea which packs were enemies or which were allies. "My name is Lucas. I'm the beta of the Crystalvalley Pack." I had been right about not being in pack territory. But I was in another pack's territory and that could only mean trouble. A howl pierced the air.

Lucas muttered a curse. "Axel, can you take care of her?" Bones snapped and a moment later, a wolf jumped over me and took off into the forest. It was the perfect opportunity to get the hell out of here before he came back. But my limbs wouldn't move. I was too cold, and it was starting to seep into my bones. Silence surrounded me. The rain slowed to a drizzle and a few minutes later it stopped completely. I blinked. The silence was deafening. Whoever Axel was, he hadn't shown up.

I could try to find a way out of the forest again. However, the fact still remained, I was on another pack's land. I slowly sat up and glanced around. There was no one around. No more howls echoing in the air. Whoever they had been chasing seemed to have been caught. Which was why it was the perfect opportunity to leave. Based on what I knew about pack rules, wolves invading another pack's land without permission was punishable by death.

I was human, but that didn't mean that I wouldn't be punished. Getting to my feet, I stumbled slightly and hit the ground again. I froze. I hadn't imagined it. That was definitely a growl, and it was close by. Careful, as not to draw any attention to myself, I felt around the ground, searching for something I could use as a weapon. My fingers brushed sticks and dirt and then something more solid. I gripped the rock tightly and waited.

The wolf approaching me was not the same one who had first found me, and I had a feeling it wasn't the so-called Axel. It had a sense of danger radiating off him. I couldn't fight the fear and panic filling me. A twig snapped. I jerked upright and spun around with the rock raised and ready to use. But a rock would have had no effect on the animal charging me. It was three times as big as me with canines half the length of my forearm. It growled as it lunged at me.

I closed my eyes and mentally prepared myself for the pain I knew was to come. Only it never did. My eyes snapped open when I heard a thud, followed by a pained whine. The wolf was no longer in front of me. It staggered to its feet a few feet away from me, swaying slightly. A man appeared behind it. He stared straight at me as he leaned over the wolf, gripped the wolf's upper and lower jaw, and then tore him in half. Blood and body parts were sprayed everywhere.

With the fear of the impending attack fading, I blinked at my rescuer. He must be the man the beta told to take care of me. The dark cloak he wore fluttered in the wind behind him, making him look like someone out of a movie. His eyes, I realized, were glowing red. Scary-looking, but for some reason he didn't scare me as much as the wolf

had. One thing I knew for certain was the fact that he wasn't human even though he looked like one.

"You give up too easily," he muttered as he stepped over the body and walked towards me. "If you hit it hard enough, you might have been able to crack its skull." "A-Axel?" I stuttered. "Yes, little human." Axel crouched in front of me. "Are you lost?" I nodded. "It's too dangerous for your kind to be wandering around the forest so late at night on a full moon." I swallowed, debating whether I should tell him I wasn't there by my own free will. A howl pierced the air, followed by three more.

"Looks like the hunt is over." "H-hunt?" Axel tilted his head to the side slightly and silently studied me for a few seconds. "You're not a werewolf," I muttered. "No, I'm something far scarier and much more dangerous." "W-what?" "A vampire."