

Broken by one, claimed by three novel

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I frowned. The girl didn't scream or try to make a run for it like they usually did. I wasn't sure what to think of her. When Lucas found her, she hadn't tried to fight, but then the beast came and she was ready to fight him one moment, and just gave up the next second. Humans were pathetic things...but this girl was...different. A shiver shook her body when the wind started picking up. My eyes dropped, taking in her soaked attire and the goosebumps covering her skin.

She wasn't dressed for a midnight stroll in the forest which made me believe that she might have been kidnapped and escaped, or someone had used her as bait for the rogues. "What's your name?" I asked her as I stood to pull my cloak off. "C-Cora." Throwing the cloak across her shoulders, I knelt in front of her again and gently helped guide her arms through the sleeves, and then did up the button at the front close to her neck. "Do you have a last name, Cora?" I questioned. She pursed her lips.

I studied her silently. Now that I could get a closer look, I realized that she looked familiar. It took a second for it all to click into place. "I'm going to get you home." "I don't have one," she whispered. I was certain that those words weren't meant for me to hear, so I didn't comment on it. Reaching out, I pulled the hood up over her head. She flinched slightly when I pressed the back of my hand against her cheek. Her skin was freezing.

It was clear that she had been out here for a while before Lucas stumbled upon her. I slipped an arm around her thin waist and pulled her against me as I stood. "Arms around my neck," I ordered. "I want you to hold on as tight as you can and keep your eyes close until I tell you to open them." Cora nodded. Gripping her thigh, I guided her leg as high up my waist as I could. I pressed my hand to the back of her head to guide her face to the crook of my neck.

"Close your eyes." I kept one hand pressed to her head, and wrapped my other arm under her ass to keep her pressed against me. Her arms tightened when I took a step forward. I moved slowly at first, and then increased my steps. Within a few seconds, I was back at the clearing where everyone had gathered before the hunt started. I made my way over to one of the cars and opened the back door to lower her onto the seat. My hold loosened.

"You can let go now." Her hold hesitantly loosened and then fell away. "I'll be right back," I told her. "Stay in the car." With a nod, she clutched my cloak tighter around her body. I hesitated a moment before I stepped back and slammed the door closed. My eyes darted around, searching for one particular person. I spotted him a few feet away having a conversation with one of the pack members. Halfway there, he looked up and spotted me. I stopped, and waited for him to excuse himself.

"Lucas said you found a human," he muttered the moment he reached me. "Yes." I paused. "A female named Cora." I watched him closely, waiting for him to connect the dots. "Where is she?" Turning, I led the way back to the car. The moment we reached it,

Keiran pulled open the back door. Cora slowly raised her head to look at him. "Cora Milton?" Keiran questioned softly. "Y-yes." Keiran ran a hand through his hair.

"This is not how I had imagined our first meeting to go." He held his hand out towards her. "I'm Keiran Garrison, Olivia's eldest brother." Cora hesitated, and then slowly placed her hand in his. She might not have noticed it, but I definitely did. Keiran sucked in a sharp breath. Fur sprouted along his arms for a second before it disappeared again. He cleared his throat, trying to shake off his reaction to her touch. "Axel is going to take you home," he said huskily.

"Once you're dry and warm, we can talk." She said nothing. Hesitating for a few seconds, he finally stepped back and closed the door before he turned to face me.

"Don't," he warned. I pursed my lips, but I needed an answer. "She's your mate, isn't she?" "Take her home," he growled, ignoring my question. "Mom should still be awake. I'll let her know that you're on your way." I nodded. I turned away, but he gripped my arm. "Stay out of her head." My lips twitched.

"I don't make any promises." Keiran growled. If looks could kill. It was so easy to rile him up. He hated the fact that I was able to get into his mind. Reading minds was just one of the special abilities I had inherited from my bastard father. In a way, it was similar to the mind-link alphas shared with their packs and the links mates had. Only I wasn't bonded or...linked to any of them. I liked it that way, but Keiran didn't. He hated it when I invaded people's privacy as he called it.

However, it came in handy when we found ourselves in enemy territory. I climbed into the car and glanced over at her in the rear-view mirror. Our eyes locked for a few

seconds, but she was the first to look away. Starting the car, I turned it around and headed in the direction of the road. What the hell was she doing in the forest on a full moon? Despite Keiran's warning, I slipped into her mind. It was surprisingly...silent. She was in shock and cold.

Probably completely normal after what just happened. I could feel her eyes burning into the side of my face as I drove. It took about five seconds for the sweet scent of her fear to start filling the car. My hold on the steering wheel tightened. "You have nothing to fear," I told her softly. "Do you turn into...into a monster like those men in that movie *Morbius*?" she questioned. I chuckled. "I'm not that kind of vampire." "That's what he said," she stuttered.

"I'm more...old school, Cora." I glanced at her. "What I am is nothing like those vampires you see in the movies or read about in the stories. I'm not your modern-day vampire, little human." "T-that must mean that y-your o-old." The conversation was not going how I had planned. I wanted to ignore her, but I realized that she was trying to distract herself. "Did Rowan not inform you that you will be coming to live with Keiran?" "In three days," she whispered.

"What were you doing in the forest in the middle of the night, Cora?" I asked her. She didn't answer. "I can feel you in my head." "Then you know that I will eventually find the truth," I told her. Cora sighed. "I'm tired." I retreated from her mind, and focused on the road instead. Once we got home, I was going to hand her over to Mother and leave them to handle it. But for some damn reason, I didn't like the idea of that. "If I was human, I would be around forty years of age," I lied.

"How old are you?" "Don't ask questions you already know the answer to," she said.

"You know more about me than I know about you." I scoffed. "A-are we there yet?" she

breathed. "I don't feel so good." "How do you feel?" I questioned, risking a glance back

at her. "S-shaky," she whispered. "C-cold, but hot. It feels...feels like I'm going to faint."

"The shock is starting to set in." Pulling over to the side of the road, I got out and hurried over to her side of the car.

Jerking the door open, I reached inside and pushed the hood off. Her face was sickly

pale, but her skin was covered in a fine layer of sweat. I moved the strands of hair from

her forehead and pressed my palm against her forehead. "I want you to breathe with

me," I ordered. "Deep breath in through your nose and slowly blow it out through your

mouth." My hand slid down to cup her cheek so she could keep her eyes locked with

mine. Her hand shot up to grip my wrist as she mimicked me.

As her breathing calmed down, my eyes dropped to where she was touching me. I had

no urge to throw off her touch. I wasn't repulsed by it. It unnerved me. "Feeling better?" I

questioned as I gently freed my wrist from her hold. Cora swallowed and gave me a

nod. "We'll be home in two minutes." I hesitated a moment before I stepped back and

closed the door. After sucking in a few deep breaths myself, I got back into the car and

started driving again.

Mother was waiting for us when I pulled up in front of the house. "The bath is ready,"

she said softly. I opened the door for Cora, but she didn't move. The scent of her fear

slowly drifted over towards me. My fangs pulsed as a sudden need to have a taste filled

me. "Mother will help you warm up," I told her. "You have nothing to fear." Cora still hesitated. I held my hand out to her.

"Promise nothing, and no one will hurt you." Her eyes burned into the skin of my hand for a few seconds before she placed her hand in mine. I helped her out of the car, and led her up the porch steps to where Mother stood. Her smile faltered when her eyes locked on Cora. "This is Cora Milton," I explained. "Keiran's new ward."