

Owned by the Alphas 2: Claimed by the Alphas |

The Word

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The Word

BRAX

I surrounded myself in shadow, flipping chairs out of my way as I moved down the stairs into the underground tunnels that had hidden my Spitfire from me.

Wolfsbane. Gardenia. Two herbs that were not so great for a werewolf.

Wolfsbane was a toxin, one that would poison us, one that humans shouldn't have access to, but it was the gardenia that stressed me out. With that stuff, they could take away our senses.

It hid the scents we needed to seek them out, and I was guessing there was a lot of it to be able to hide our linked female and all the humans they were hiding.

We had sensed a few extra, but nothing like what the tunnels suggested.

The pack moved fast in their wolf forms, sniffing and searching through the tunnel, taking in everything, feeding it to the rest of the pack through the pack link.

I moved slower, committing everything to memory, my shadows feeling over the walls, the intent, the humans' souls.

It was all bad news. There was so much anger, resentment, and hatred. It permeated the air and filtered through me until I felt just as angry. But at them.

We had protected them for years, kept them from becoming a meal to the vampires, and they thought they could do a better job? Fuck them, let them try then.

They wanted to learn the hard way then I was happy to let them, but Derik was determined to do things by the book. I'd let him for now, but something told me the humans were against that idea too.

Every part of the tunnels and rooms I found was against the contract, but I doubted it was enough to make Derik order an attack. He wouldn't attack first; it was his thing.

I sniffed the air, my shadows catching a whiff of Lorelai's. I followed the scent, pausing as a human came out of one of the rooms, his eyes going wide, fear falling out of him.

His arms were full of blades, and he froze. I locked my eyes on the weapons and sniffed before growling low in my throat and pushing past him into the room, my own eyes going wide.

An armory.

An impressive one. And Valarian hadn't been lying. Everything reeked of wolfsbane. Little fucker was going to get eaten at this point.

Shit, I was starting to sound like Kai. I shook my head and backed out of the room.

The human was still frozen in place, and I gripped his hair, yanking it back so I could whisper malice in his ear.

"You will get rid of every single one of these blades. Bury them, forget them, because if a single blade touches me or one of my pack, I will find you and rip out your tongue before peeling the skin from your body. Do you understand?" I warned.

The human whimpered, nodding quickly, then running away.

I sneered after him. These humans were only following orders. At least that one was. He didn't want to go against the wolves any more than I wanted those blades in the hands of humans.

I frowned as my shadows tugged at me, covering a door at the end of the hall. My frown deepened as I inched toward it.

Lorelai's scent hit me hard, and I opened the door, grimacing at the stench that billowed out.

I covered my mouth with my hand, my eyes watering as I looked around the cell she had been kept in. It was disgusting. Inhumane. She should never have been here.

I cursed, kicking an overturned plate on the ground that was covered in rotting food, and turned away. There was a bucket of vomit in the corner, and all I could smell was piss. It wasn't even hers.

I backed out of the room, anger filling every fiber of my being. I couldn't control it; my shadows hissed and sputtered, angry and seething just like me.

I ran back through the tunnels, charging up the stairs, throwing chairs and everything I could out of my way, roaring as I ripped the hinges off the door of the hut.

My eyes landed on the father. Fucking piece of shit.

I went for him, my claws growing, my body shaking, begging me to turn. I wanted to tear him apart for the way he had treated her.

I pinned him against the wall of the stone hut, not caring when I heard the slight crack or saw the way he winced.

I didn't even care when I smelled the blood that dripped down the wall from where I had hit his head against it. I kept him pinned there, my hand on his throat, his feet off the ground.

"You worthless prick," I snarled, and Derik ran over. He tried to haul me off, but I snapped at him with my bared teeth.

"Brax," Derik ordered, but not even his alpha voice could get through to me. I was too angry, my shadows feeding that rage.

"You should have seen it, Derik. The cell they kept her in.

"In fact, why don't I show you, then you can decide if you really want to save this asshole or not," I sneered, then let Derik into my mind to see the cell.

Derik gasped before he went deadly silent, stepping back from me.

"That's what I thought. Now"—I held Valarian's throat tighter—"I want a reason good enough to convince me not to end your pathetic life right now," I said, lessening my hold by a fraction so he could speak.

I kind of hoped it was a shit excuse so I could justifiably end him, but then that would start a whole world of shit. After seeing Lorelai's cell, I wasn't sure I cared.

"She's an abomination. I should have killed her as soon as she was born in winter. Her brother too, but at least he sacrificed himself for our cause—unlike her.

"Now she carries one of you. She deserved everything she got. If it wasn't for her power her cursed blood would already coat my sword," he spat past my grip that got tighter and tighter.

It was the only ammunition I needed. I roared, my wolf desperate inside me, releasing a howl with my shadows.

They burst out from me, the rage with them, swirling around us, pushing Derik away, his shouting falling in the wind.

He couldn't stop me now. Nothing would.

How dare this mongrel think he was above Lorelai? She was better than him in every way, better than the humans he was so fond of.

She could have killed every single one of them with her shadows, but she had decided to save the wolves and the humans instead.

"You will regret your words, human," I growled lowly, darkness spreading through my veins, the shadows crawling over my body like a second skin.

They agreed wholeheartedly with my decision to end Valarian's life.

I didn't usually lose my shit. I usually had such a strong hold on my control, keeping the darkness at bay, keeping a lid on the psycho that warred inside me, but Lorelai carried our child and owned our hearts.

There was nothing in this world I would let survive harming her the way her father had.

I gripped his throat tightly, his face blubbering, turning red as he tried to escape. He yanked his sword out and went to pierce my body, but I thwacked it away faster than the next harsh breath that barely made it past his discolored lips.

The skies swirled with angry clouds, rain coming heavier as my shadows kept a wall around us, stopping anyone from saving his worthless life.

Until Valarian said the one word that made everything change.

“Fractum!” he sputtered, struggling against my grip as my claws dug into his neck, enough to have blood dripping down his neck.

But that single word made me freeze. I sucked in a breath and stepped back, my hand dropping as he fell to his knees, drawing in huge raspy breaths before glaring up at me.

“What the fuck did you just say?” I demanded, hoping I had heard wrong.

If he had said what I thought he did, then we were all fucked. Humans. Werewolves. Vampires. The entire realm was going to go to shit.

The skies thundered dangerously, which was not a good sign. I dropped my shadows, and Derik raced forward as the word fell from Valarian’s lips again.

“Fractum,” he said clearer, and with that word, the entire realm shuddered.

The ground quaked, and torrential rain fell as the witches screamed in my ear. My heart stopped, thoughts stampeding in my head as Derik froze next to me.

“No,” he whispered.

Valarian grinned, standing up, holding the concrete wall with one hand, the other on his throat.

“Yeah, you heard me,” he said, brushing off his clothes before picking up his sword and putting it back in his belt. “I was told that would work.”

He smirked, and I shook my head. Someone had been feeding this fool information, half-assed information that was going to get us all killed. Stupid fucking human.

“You should not utter words that you do not know the meaning of,” Derik whispered, the rain falling from his barely moving features.

Pretty sure he’d just been dropped into his worst nightmare. The pack were probably running home to their families now. They wouldn’t be the same anymore.

Humans were stupid to play with such power so lightly. But Valarian didn't look like he gave a shit. He would learn his mistake the hard way then.

"I do know, actually. That word means that I just broke all binding contracts in our realm. Including the one that we have.

"We no longer have to supply your food, your wine, your virgins. We no longer have to abide by your rules.

"We are equal. Our races, equal." He smirked, and I shook my head, a sad smile playing on my lips, because he had been fed some very selective information.

There were perks, of course, but it was now open season on all races because nothing bound them to the law. There was no law.

The border was still in place, but it wouldn't be for long, not without the wolves' magic feeding it. And we weren't going to be able to do that without the humans connected to us.

He had just severed that.

We could grow our own food, we could ferment our own wine, but we could not settle our magic without humans, which meant our wolves were about to descend into madness, a savagery that would see the death of so many.

It had happened before, but this time, the humans were the only available chew toys. The vamps were cut off, and last time they had been the targets.

I had no idea how we were going to survive this. I had no idea how we were going to be able to keep Lorelai without putting her in danger.

It put my head in a spin as Derik stepped toward Valarian.

"Your source has played you for a fool. Such words were only created for magical creatures to use. You have no idea of the magnitude of what you have just done," Derik said, his voice low and serious.

We weren't angry anymore, just sad. It didn't matter if Valarian survived now, he would die with the rest of us.

“I do, actually. I know a lot about what happens once that word is uttered. I know that the werewolves will grow weaker. I know that we are now considered an equal race, same as you and the vampires.

“I know we can make our own laws, our own traditions, and we are to be included in the balance of the realm and be protected by the overall laws that govern both of you,” he explained.

The information had been manipulated to be exactly what the human wanted to hear. Whether through research or a rat, it didn't matter now because he had already said it.

The rain soaked us all, and I wanted to end his life, punish him for what he had just done, but he was right, the laws protected such action.

Just as I couldn't slaughter a vampire without being attacked.

I would have to answer to the witches, and they were already going to be pissed as hell.

“Not entirely true. There is so much more to the magical balance that you just disrupted.

“Did whoever gave you this information explain the consequences? Or just the benefits to get you to say the word?” Derik demanded, his fists shaking.

But I didn't want to argue. I wanted to go find Lorelai and get her behind city walls before everything went to shit. I grabbed Derik's arm.

“We have to go find her, D,” I said, and he nodded once, sneering at Valarian before backing away down the path to the women's village.

I looked back over my shoulder as I moved with him, giving Valarian one last glare.

“We'll be back, human, and you'll regret the day you took away our shackles.

“Our laws, ones that are included in the balance you want, mean anything that happens on a full moon is just part of our nature and can't be helped.

“So, you better lock up your piggies because the wolves are coming to town every month, and we might just knock everything down,” I warned through my smirk.

Valarian's smug face dropped a little, and I glowered with my red eyes at him before turning away and heading down the path with Derik.

He was panicking. I felt his heart racing, his head going around in circles.

"We're fucked," he ground out through the rain.

I shrugged. "Yeah."

He scoffed at my answer. "Thanks. That's encouraging."

"It's done, and even if we are, they're more than fucked. As long as I take him with me before my wolf eats every part of my humanity, then I'm good," I said, and Derik frowned, his eyes raking over me with a calculating gaze.

"I wonder if it will happen to you. Your shadows might not let it get to you like us," Derik said, true jealousy tingling through our bond.

I smirked. The first thing Derik had ever been jealous of.

"We won't know until it happens," I said, not wanting to get worked up before I saw Lorelai.

I needed her more than ever. So did Derik. Even just to touch, to hold, to feel the warmth of her before it all changed.

Derik hesitated, and I knew what we were both thinking.

Kai.

He was already volatile. He was already obsessive. This was going to make him worse, even more dangerous, and he would never willingly stop seeing Lorelai, not even on a full moon.

But he was going to have to. She wasn't going to be able to with us over that time.

And with winter coming and possibly keeping us locked in the city for months... It was going to be a true shitshow.

"What are we going to do about him?" I asked.

Derik frowned, shoving his hands in his pockets. "I have no idea."

He sighed. “Do you think he’ll mate? I don’t know if it would be a good thing because it would chill him the fuck out or a bad thing because he’d destroy Lorelai and possibly see his mate get fucked up by this Fractum bullshit.”

Derik shook his head at the two horrible predictions.

I was selfish though and hoped he didn’t mate.

Yeah, it’d hurt him, probably make him weaker, but we were heading for that fate anyway, and if it was me, I’d rather die than hurt Lorelai the way mating would hurt her.

The doc had said that would cause too much emotion and hurt the baby. But then, this might too.

I growled as I thought about it. I didn’t want the wolf to be in control, but it was what was going to happen to most of us. I hated the idea of having to push her away before that happened.

She carried our child too, so who the fuck knew what that was going to mean or what was going to happen inside her body when this balance shifted to include humans and shifted to strip us of the magic we drew on from their souls.

The magic we claimed during the virgin ceremony would be stripped away, and we would get weaker. And then all hell would break loose.

I wasn’t going to let that happen around her.

I had to teach her to use her shadows properly, without risking the baby, and figure out how we were going to keep biting her without giving in to our nature—that was slowly going to start taking us over.

I fucking hated humans. Except her. But she wasn’t just human, she was winter born. She was ours. And that made everything so much more complicated.