

The One He Claimed Chapter 5

Chapter 5: On the Run

Sophie

Nearly two years later

“Sophia! Get your head out of your a** and come get this food for table six!” my boss, and I use that term lightly, yells from the back.

I’ve been on my own for almost two years. I tried changing my name, but it became obvious quickly that I didn’t answer to the fake names that I made up, so I had to go with something close enough that I’d actually realize they were talking to me. Sophia area.

When I left my pack, I had run for weeks, barely stopping and skirting around the pack lands that I knew were in my Once I was out of our area, I had to be more careful. It wouldn’t be good for me to end up on someone else’s pack lands. They might just hold me until my 18th birthday and force their mark on me.

I finally stopped running in a small town full of humans. In the time I’ve lived here, I’ve only stumbled across two lone wolves passing through. They had asked if I was okay, recognizing me as a pup, but because they were also running, they didn’t argue when I said I was fine.

When I got here, I found a small apartment, or rather, an efficiency. The entire place is smaller than my bedroom back home. But I don’t care. Here, I’m free. There’s no chance that any Alpha or ranked member will claim me publicly. I still wake up with nightmares about what happened to my sister.

“Coming Josephine.” It’s not her real name. Her real name is Jane, but she hates it, saying it’s boring and plain. We live in a town that is boring and plain, so I’m not sure what she thinks changing her name is going to do for her.

I grab the food and head to table six. I lift my nose, identifying which one of them is the shifter. I smelled him when he walked in, but I didn’t make eye contact, choosing to watch him subtly. When I walk to the table, his eyes lock on mine, and I look at the others at the table. They are all human. He’s hiding as much as I am.

“Patty melt?” I ask, waiting for them to point me to the person who ordered the food.

“Reuben?” I ask, again waiting for them to tell me which one.

I sniff the next one. “Burger, rare?” I already know this one is going to the shifter.

“He likes it bl**dy, miss. I hope they didn’t overcook it,” one of the humans says, laughing at the shifter.

I look at the plate. “There’s blood running off the burger, so I hope that works for you,” I say, handing him the plate. He nods. and I hand out the rest of their plates and ask if they need anything else.

When they don’t, I go back to my other tables and it’s not long afterward that table six heads out.

“Sophia, break!” my boss yells at me. I don’t need a break, but I’ m required to take one by human standards.

I walk out back, where most of the humans go to smoke. I’m about to step out of the alleyway when the shifter from earlier steps up.

“Hey, Sophia, right?”

I’m instantly on alert, Hedda’s canines extending.

“Hey! I don’t want any trouble,” he says, his hands up in front of him. “I just wanted to say thank you for not saying anything.”

“I figured you were hiding since you were among so many humans. They didn’t seem to know what you are.”

He shrugs. “Anyway, I just wanted to say thanks and see if you’ re okay or need anything. Us lone wolves have to stick together.”

“I’m good, thanks. Just don’t tell anyone that you saw me here.”

“Same goes. I’m Jethro,” he says to me.

I raise an eyebrow at him, and he smiles.

“Okay, J’m Jaime. James. You smell like an Alpha. You running from the claiming process?” he asks me.

“What’s it to you?” I growl.

“Again, just asking. I don’t mean anything by it. I’ve seen several ranked females, several of them Alpha females on the run from the claiming process. It’s a nasty business.”

I sniff the air again. “Would you still say that if you were a ranked member?”

“I have two sisters, one older and one younger. I have no desire to see either of them treated like that, especially if it meant that my friends got to see her in that position. What kind of standard does that set, especially if she’s the Luna of her pack. Not everyone agrees with me, but if they don’t figure it out, there won’t be a lot of ranked females left in the packs. Take care of yourself and watch your back. I’ve heard that Alphas have started hunting for the missing females, specifically Alpha females, to bring them back whether by force or by forcibly marking them.”

“Thanks for the head’s up,” I say.

We both hear someone calling for Jethro.

“You’d better go,” I tell him.

He nods. “Remember what I said, be careful.”

That night, I think about what Jaime told me. I haven’t come across any Alphas or Alpha females, but in the forest where I let Hedda out on the weekends, I’ve found faint trails that smelled like ranked females.

Over the next couple of days, I worry about whether or not it’s time for me to move on. If Alpha females are passing through this part of the country, it will only attract more wolves. And if Alpha males are hunting Alpha females, it’s only a matter of time before they find me.

I decide to head back to a different forest this weekend, one that I don’t go to often. The terrain is rockier than the one I usually go to, but that’s where I’ve been smelling the Alpha female scents.

When I get there, I sniff the air, making sure there are no Alphas or other ranked werewolves in the area. I listen, making sure I can’t hear any sounds of wolves running or people whispering in the forest around me. All I hear are birds and the creek that runs through this part of the land.

I find a spot where I can tuck my clothes away and I shift. Hedda is a big wolf, and we have to be careful not to run up on any hunters. She’s been shot at before, but she’s faster than the hunters and so far, she hasn’t been hit by any bullets.

I let her take over as she runs. She hates that she can only come out a couple days a week, but she understands that it’s necessary to protect both of us.

This landscape provides a much-needed challenge for Hedda, and she has to focus to climb up the rocky terrain to find open land to run through. Then, she has to make her way back down the rocky terrain to run again.

She’s feeling pretty good and has been running for hours when we hear a scream.

'Hedda, what is that?'

'I'm not sure,' she says, turning to head in the direction of the scream.

As we get closer, my stomach tightens and Hedda slows down. We can hear what sounds like crying from a female and what sounds like encouragement from several males.

Hedda gets on her stomach and crawls to some bushes, carefully and quietly pushing her way through. Once we can see, my stomach clenches and nausea rolls through me.

There's a woman, a she-wolf, on her hands and knees. She's sobbing as a male, most likely an Alpha pins her head to the ground while he pumps into her from behind while three other men cheer him on. The Alpha, or whatever he is, has practically stripped the woman and she's bare to the men watching her.

As I watch, his canines extend and he grabs her by the hair, pulling her up to him. "Never run from me again," he snarls before slamming his canines into her marking spot.

She screams as her body jerks with pain.

'Hedda, get us out of here.'

She hurriedly crawls away from the scene and once we're far enough away, she begins running at full speed.

'What are we going to do?' she asks.

'We have to go. We have to get away from here. Our town is the closest town. If they are looking for a place to stay...' I can't

finish and I don't need to.

'They'll find us,' Hedda finishes.

I stop to get my clothes, but Hedda reaches up in the tree to grab them in her teeth, not wasting time for me to shift. Then she races to our little apartment. By the time we arrive, it's dark, so I quickly shift and go inside, packing my bag and grabbing the money I've set aside over the last couple of years.

As I step outside, I look down the street and see several men, large enough to be ranked shifters, standing outside the diner, noses lifted in the air, sniffing.

'HEDDA!'

'I see them. Quick, get to the bus station. They won't be able to follow our scent once we're on a bus.'

I stay in the shadows, running to the bus station. There's only one bus leaving tonight, and it won't be leaving for another hour. That's too long to wait.

"Where's the next nearest bus station?" I ask the attendant.

"Sixty miles north sweetie, but you'll never make it there to catch their last bus. It leaves at the same time ours does," the attendant says.

"Thank you," I say.

'Hedda?'

'I can make it.'

'Let's go,' I say, moving into the shadows and shifting. She grabs the bag, and we race through night to get to the next bus station.

We haven't been running long when I hear the howl of the hunt go up behind me. They've found my little apartment. They're after me. I can only hope that my trail from earlier today throws them off.

As I run, I hear gunshots. The ranchers in this part of the world don't like wolves getting too close to their livestock. I know where to stay in order to be safe, but the Alphas, or ranked members chasing me don't. It won't kill them, but it will slow them down.

We arrive at the bus station with five minutes to spare. I get my ticket and jump on the bus just as the doors are closing. As the bus pulls away, I see several men racing up to the station, their noses in the air. I slide down in my seat, hoping they won't figure out that I'm on this bus until it's too late