

The One He Claimed Chapter 6

Chapter 6: Kinsley

Hunter

“Why hasn’t Alpha Aiden returned my f**k**g call,” I growl at Lucas.

“He’s out hunting Alpha females like the rest of them,” he says, gloomily.

Lucas found his mate a year ago. Once he claimed her, he realized just how right I was to hate this process. His mate, while a good Beta female and role model for the pack, still struggles with their mate bond. Every time he touches her in public, she flinches away from him.

I know he hates it, but she’s actually more comfortable with me than she is with him. I asked her about it once and she told me that she saw me walk out of the room during the claiming process. She said that she trusts me because I did what I could to give her a bit of privacy. The same couldn’t be said for the others at the party, and so, she still struggles with Lucas’ touch.

I also know that it extends into their bedroom. I don’t ask, and he hasn’t said anything to me, but Kinsley hasn’t gotten- pregnant yet, so I doubt they are having sex and I know it must be killing him to not be able to touch his mate.

“Anyone in their right mind who’s paying attention realizes that all we’re doing is causing more problems for our packs. They need to end this ridiculous process and stop having these public claimings,” I growl, standing and pacing.

“Yeah, I agree with you,” Lucas says contritely.

There’s a knock at the door and before I tell her to come in, I already know it’s Kinsley. When she opens the door, she looks surprised to see Lucas in here. She collects herself quickly, then glances back at me.

“Alpha I was wondering if you wanted lunch. I wasn’t sure what your plans were for today.” She glances at her mate. “I could bring you lunch as well, Lucas.”

“I’d rather have lunch with you, Kins,” he says.

“There’s a lot going on. I don’t really have time to stop for lunch today.”

“You have to eat Kinsley,” he says to her. I watch the interaction between them, but I stay out of it. This is their mate bond, and he has to figure it out. There was a time when Kinsley did lose too much weight and I had to step in. It was soon after they had been mated and she had stopped eating completely. As much as I don’t want to interfere in a

mate bond, she is a pack member, and I was worried about her. I brought her into my office, and I told her that she either needed to start eating or that she would have to start having all of her meals with me.

I'm not sure if she didn't believe me, but when I started insisting that she sit beside me at every meal and I watched everything that she ate, she finally took me seriously. She doesn't eat as much as she should, or as much as Lucas would like her to eat, obviously. But she hasn't gotten dangerously thin again.

Lucas turns to look at me, a pleading look in his eyes. Where he is unable to make headway with his mate, I am able to as her Alpha.

I sigh internally, I can at least try to help. "Kinsley I was going to talk to Lucas about the missing ranked she-wolves over lunch. You might have a different perspective, different insights, something that we're overlooking that could help us find some of these females. Would you be willing to have lunch with us and talk through that?" I ask her. leave the decision up to her. I won't force it.

She looks at me a long moment, then looks at Lucas. "I'm not. sure what information I can provide that would be helpful."

"Neither do I, but you're a Beta female, and these are ranked females on the run. They're in danger and we need to do something to help them. You have insights to that different than what Lucas and I have."

She looks thoughtful for a moment, and I wait her out, letting her make the decision.

"All right. I'll get three trays of food and I'll be back."

When the door closes, Lucas looks at me. "Thank you, Hunter. I know our mate bond is not your problem, but as my Alpha, as her Alpha, you seem to have a better understanding of how to get through to her than I do."

"I give her choices, Lucas. I don't tell her what to do, except in the one instance where she was killing herself. Everything I do leaves the decision up to her. Perhaps you should try that."

His lips press together, and I know that he understands that their very first meeting, his claim of her, has caused all of these problems. That night, she had no choice. It didn't matter how kind he was during the process, it didn't matter what he had done to make it as private for her as possible. She can't move past it, and they can't move past it together.

One night, not long after they were mated, he got **t-faced drunk and told me that the moment that his canines sank into her flesh, he felt her fear, her embarrassment, and her shame at what was happening. The strength of her emotions had flooded into him,

and it had made him almost incapable of completing their mate bond. He hadn't even been able to o**m. He had immediately pulled out of her and scooped her up in his arms, taking her from the room. But the damage was done.

I walk to the conference table thinking back to that birthday party two years ago. That party seems to have been the catalyst that started it all. Sophie Meyers, the younger sister of Amelia, ran the night of her sister's claiming. Calvin, like Lucas, had done everything that he could to make that evening better for his mate. Like Lucas and Kinsley, Calvin and Amelia had a rocky start. However, they seem to be finding their way, unlike Lucas and Kinsley.

I remember the outrage that occurred after Sophie ran. Many Alphas bonded together in a way they never have before, fighting against her father Alpha Carter, wanting him to go after his daughter. But he refused. He said if she was unwilling to participate in these events, then who was he to force her into them?

Several Alphas threatened to go to war with Alpha Carter if he didn't find his daughter and bring her home. But several of us, including Robin, Dutton, and Kayce, stood beside him. I was surprised when Alpha Ezra, my sister's mate, also stood beside him. I guess I shouldn't be, though. My sister killed herself to get away from the mate bond. Alpha Ezra has never recovered from that.

Alpha Carter has been an outspoken activist on eliminating the public claiming process since the day that Sophie left. For a long time, the Alphas kept tabs on him, certain that he knew where his daughter was, ready to go find her and drag her back. However, from everything that I could tell, she never contacted him, and he never sent anyone out to find her. They still keep tabs on him, just not as aggressively as they did at the beginning.

That was two years ago.

Somehow the word of Sophie's disappearance, of her rebellion against this process, sparked a revolution of sorts among the ranked females. Rather than waiting until their 18th birthday to tell them what was going to happen, mothers began telling their daughters at younger ages, helping them plan their escape.

Some Alphas have locked down their packs, refusing to allow any ranked females out alone. Rather than fixing the problem, this has actually made things much worse. In some instances, ranked she-wolves are choosing death rather than the public claiming. This has only made the Alphas become even more strict in keeping tabs on their ranked female members, and therefore causing those females to go to even more dire extremes to get away from them.

The packs have become divided, creating clear alliances, and splitting the packs into one of two sides. One side is in agreement that the public claimings should end and the other is still fighting to continue with this antiquated process. In some packs, such as my

own, there is disagreement within the pack itself. So far it has not become a problem for me. I don't have any young ranked she-wolves that will be coming of age in the next few years. But eventually this will need to be resolved. I refuse to have a public claiming in my pack.

I think back to that night, of Sophie Meyers and her excitement at the thought of finding her mate. That's how it should be. A young she-wolf excited on her birthday to find the man that the Moon Goddess made just for her I remember how sweet and innocent she was, how she smiled as we danced around the dance floor. Something about her has stuck with me for these last two years. And I've wondered more than once if she survived on the run. If she did, she would be on the verge of coming of age and her time on the run would most likely be coming to an end.

'We should try to find her,' Shaw says in my mind. I'm not the only one who was taken with that young she-wolf that night. Shaw felt very protective of her, and he howled sadly when we heard that she had run.

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'Shaw, she could be anywhere. How do you propose that we find her? I ask him.

'Well, the typical way is that we actually would start a search, Hunter,' he says sarcastically.

'Really? You want to begin hunting her, just like every other Alpha wolf out there? She would run from us. You know she would. And I couldn't blame her. You saw the look on her face, same as I did.'

Her look of horror as she watched her sister claimed in front of that group of people has haunted me for two years. I hated that look. It was such a stark contrast to the happiness that she had on her face all night before that moment.

I shake my head, putting thoughts of Sophie out of my mind as Kinsley walks back in. Lucas jumps up to grab the trays from her arms.

"Thank you," she says politely, almost painfully polite, as if they are acquaintances and not mates.

I ignore the interaction, sitting down to start the conversation about how we can possibly help these she-wolves. With our own pack divided, I'm resistant to bringing them inside our pack. However, they need our help and I have to do something.