

Owned by the Alphas |

The Link

I woke up back in my bed with the worst headache of my life.

I was still cold, and when I opened my eyes, my alphas were huddled together, standing at the foot of my bed, whispering in angry tones, holding frowns on all of their beautiful faces.

I sat up slowly, my head heavy. I leaned against the headboard and waited for them to notice me, taking in the three of them.

None of them had shirts on, all were only in their pants, which usually meant they had been running. And that they were stressed out.

“What happened with the vampires?” I asked, and all three turned to me.

Their faces softened. Kai walked around beside the bed, then climbed on it, pulling me against him. Brax sat down on the edge of the bed, grabbing my hand as Derik pressed a kiss to the top of my head.

“The vampires are not the ones taking the humans,” Brax said, and I frowned.

“Then why are they disappearing?” I asked.

“That’s what we have to go find out,” Derik replied.

“How?”

“We’re going out to the Forest villages. There should be a scent of some kind that will tell us what happened. We assumed it was the vampires and didn’t look into it as well as we should have,” he answered, shame covering his voice.

I grabbed his hand and kissed the back of it.

“And what about the winter born thing? They know I’m here now,” I remembered, and they all tensed.

“What? Is it bad? I need to know. You’ve kept so much from me, but if I’m to be safe here then I need the rules,” I bit, that anger from earlier coming back.

Kai nuzzled in my neck and kissed it. “Any winter borns that have the shadows are meant to be reported so all sides can be prepared. We didn’t notify them, and they are seeking rights to hold you as the only fair option since we hid you from them.”

“You mean go to the vampires?” I shook, but Brax squeezed my hand.

“It’s not going to happen. Tabitha made sure of that,” he spat with venom in his voice, and I frowned.

“What is that supposed to mean?” I demanded.

“She gave them your brother, Lorelai.”

Derik sighed, and I froze. They had sent my brother to the vampires?

“They took him?!” I demanded, and they all refused to meet my glare.

“They know he is here. It is too dangerous to have two winterborns in the same territory. I’m sorry, Lorelai. It was you or him, and we will never pick you in this scenario. You stay, he goes. Or the vampires kill you both. We aren’t letting that happen,” Derik said.

I didn’t even know what to say. The anger was so real inside me, hot and red and so dark. They had given up my brother just to keep me?

“Why do either of us have to go with them? We’re not evil like Elias!” I swore, but my memory triggered at the name.

“Oh my god. Elias.” I shook and my chest tightened, my arms going around myself, the room getting colder. “It’s Elias. The shadows,” I remembered, and they all snapped their gaze to mine.

“What?” Brax asked, and I looked up at him.

“The shadows visited me at Tabitha’s. It was Elias.”

“That’s impossible. He is dead,” Derik said, and I shrugged.

"I don't know how he was there, but he's the shadows with the red eyes. He's the one threatening me. He wants my body, to use my shadows with his and become powerful," I recapped, and Derik scowled.

Kai leaned back from me and looked at the other alphas.

"Tabitha said your brother is going down the wrong path, Lorelai. The vampires will sense that on him; if they sense that he is helping Elias, they'll kill him," Derik murmured, and I sucked in a breath at the pain of the thought he put in my head.

I scrambled out of bed and stormed to the wardrobe, stumbling against the door a little as my head tried to adjust to moving fast. I pulled myself up as Derik tried to help me, but I shrugged him off.

"Take me home," I demanded, and Kai growled.

"We can't. The vampires know what you are now. You must stay watched at all times," Brax said, and I glared at him.

"I don't care. I have to go to my brother before the vampires take him," I said, then yanked a dress from the hanger.

I spun to the alphas, who were in my wardrobe, taking up all the space and oxygen. My heart was beating so fast, and I tried to calm it down but I didn't know how.

My brother was going to get taken, get given to vampires. And he was probably going to get killed because he had said yes. He didn't have the shadows that I did, and the vampires would definitely sense that.

"You can't," Derik sighed as I shoved my legs through my dress, not bothering with corsets, glad I was already in my other undergarments.

"Lorelai, the pack has already been sent to get him. He's getting taken across the border tonight."

I dropped my jaw, then grabbed the dresser next to me, trying to draw breath in as the panic consumed me. I clenched my eyes shut, my head pounding.

"Say yes. Say yes. Say yes. Your brother will be killed. You can stop it. His blood will be on your hands."

I clutched my head and spun away from the wolves, trying to block out Elias's voice in my head. No. Stay strong. I was a good winter born. I could save him without taking in Elias. I had to.

"His voice is so strong," I whimpered, dropping to my knees as my headache got worse. Warm liquid seeped out of my nose and I wiped it away, looking down at the red.

Brax wrapped his arms around me, drawing on my shadows, helping me pull them out and fight back.

It unlocked them and I shook as I pushed back against the darkness in my head, slumping into Brax, breathing hard as my headache slipped away.

"How do I get rid of Elias? If I can get rid of him then my brother won't have shadows, right? Since Elias merged with my brother's?" I asked, and Brax grimaced.

"I don't know if it works like that, Lorelai. It's never happened before."

"I don't care. Can I get rid of them?" I demanded.

"Not in the time you need before the handover," Derik said, ever the pessimist, the realist.

I gritted my teeth and pulled out of Brax's grasp. "Then how do I buy time? Can't my brother stay here?" I begged, and the wolves looked at each other.

Kai was the one to break the tension. "Tabitha can link them," he offered, and I frowned, but Brax scowled.

"No. It'll corrupt her. Give them more of a hold on her."

"But it could give her more of a hold on him," Derik offered, and I yanked my dress on properly.

"And what would a link do?"

"The link is a magical connection, but a physical one. It'll mean you and him have to stay within a certain distance of each other. If we did that, the vampires would have to keep you here while we worked to break the link. At least that's the story we could give them."

“Do it.” I jumped at the opportunity.

“The council—” Derik started.

“Fuck the council,” Kai growled, and Derik snarled back.

“The pack will not accept two winterborns in the city! They’re already pissed about her!”

“Actually, the link will make their scent the same. The wolves won’t have to know. They’ll assume it’s her, and he could be the human they sent to keep an eye on her. It could work,” Brax admitted, thinking hard.

I pulled on my shadows again, trying to feel an instinct on whether it was the right thing to do, but they gave me nothing this time.

I swallowed and looked at Brax. “If we link, how strong will his hold be?” I asked, hating that I sounded unsure, but I was.

My shadows didn’t want the link, and the darkness was already so strong. I wasn’t sure if I could take on my brother’s too, even though I wanted to save him.

“Much stronger.” Brax grimaced. “For the record, I don’t think this is a good idea, but I can feel you and I know what you’re planning to do if we don’t think of something.”

He eyed me, and I blushed, looking away. I had been planning on manipulating my way into the handoff and offering myself in exchange. It was me they wanted, and I knew they would say yes.

Kai and Derik waited for my explanation, but I wasn’t giving them one. So, Brax did.

“She was going to offer herself instead.”

“No.”

“Not going to happen.”

They spoke in unison, and I scoffed.

“Well, I’m not letting my brother get handed over to the vampires.”

I folded my arms. Derik went rigid then and closed his eyes. I frowned at him when Kai fell into the same stance.

“Something happened with the pack that was sent to find your brother,” Brax said, his eyes going white.

My heart stopped. “What?” I whispered.

They all opened their eyes as Derik looked straight into mine.

“He’s missing.”