

## CH 13

Nick POV

Jeremy was in hysterics, literally rolling around in his bed, laughing so hard that tears were coming out of his eyes. He thought it was absolutely hilarious, that Nick's Mate had turned out to be the knife-wielding, bow-toting she-wolf. Who had showed him up and was more than happy to piss him off at every turn.

Laughed even harder when he'd found out it was his Mate, who had taken a full set of claws to his vehicle. Then the tears had rolled out of him when he'd heard she'd yelled "Hell's No." and stormed out of the Alpha's oce and away from him. Especially when he could see how Nick was dressed, to impress. Which clearly it had not. He'd nally found a she-wolf who could resist his Goddess given good looks.

"When you're done laughing at my expense," Nick huffed at him. He'd known this was going to be the reaction, and Goddess, help him, when Jeremy relayed it to the rest of his unit. And Nick knew the man well enough to know he was going to, the rst chance he got. In person, so he could see their expression himself.

Even if Nick Alpha ordered the man not to say a word, he would nd some bloody loophole to get out of it, and inform them. He was a devious bastard with a streak for pure mischief.

"Might take more than a minute." he'd laughed at his Alpha.

Nick walked over to his Beta and put a boot into him, shoved him clean off the other side of the bed, and heard him land on the oor, with a satished thud. His laughing nally stopped, but he was still smiling up at him.

"I want you to watch her."

"Why? I'm tired boss, barely had any sleep; a few hours. Just walk over there, you know where she lives. Knock on her door, introduce yourself properly, and for once in your life, suck it up, apologize for the insults you called her, your mate. Problem likely solved."

"Somehow I don't think it is going to be that easy." His mind recalled the way Alpha Corey and his unit had laughed, just like Jeremy had done, actually.

"Ah!" he watched Jeremy nod and then chuckle "you're probably right...you've probably pissed off the Moon Goddess herself. By refusing, all these years, to attend or hold her mating balls for your pack members... Now she's seen t to punish you. With a Mate who's stubborn, deant and only does what they want... Hmm, remind you of anyone in particular?" he snorted at Nick, when Nick turned angry eyes on him.

Nick knew what he meant; a Mate with the same temperament as himself. Dicult to say the least.

"She'll come around." he knew she would. She was female, and he was drop-dead gorgeous. No woman could hold out on him for long.

"And if she doesn't?" Jeremy said, nding clothes to put on, "there is such a thing you know. Rejection."

Nick stared at his friend now, wide-eyed. "Really! You think she would reject me?"

"I don't know Nick. I know nothing about her... Neither do you, for that matter."

"Will you trail her for the day, currently in her house sleeping, I believe. Just set yourself up by the house, doze if you like, but make sure Cal is on alert for her movements. I have to go and sort out my pack members, nd out who mated off to other packs and who and how many will be joining ours. Get them organized and send them back to the pack ahead of us. It'll be just you and I here after that, to deal with Lucinda."

"Yeah, can't you see I'm getting dressed here." he raised an eyebrow at Nick, and his tone implied: are you blind?

Nick frowned at him, but just shook his head, "Thanks, link me if she does anything," he shrugged "You know..."

"You worried she's got a boyfriend somewhere here, boss?"

"What? No!.. Well, now I bloody do." Nick had not even considered that, s\*\*t she might well have. A high-ranked warrior with a tiny human, curves in all the right places, and a wolf that pretty. s\*\*t, it was more than likely. If she did, he would have to go. Right away, no one was touching his Mate.

Jeremy started laughing all over again, as he watched it dawn on Nick that his Mate, might be f\*\*\*\*g some other wolf out there. "I'll watch her, go do your Alpha duties."

"Thanks!...anything out of the ordinary."

"Sure thing boss, but what's out of the ordinary for us, might not be for her."

Nick glared at his Beta before leaving the room. It was nearing lunchtime, and he should have squared away his pack members by now, but had been preoccupied pacing around in his suite most of the morning. He found his pack members, kicked a few of the lazy bastards out of their beds. Shocking their new Mates and had them all report to the front of the packhouse for inspection. He could see her house from here, and Jeremy casually leaning against a tree, just off behind it.

13 members of his pack had Mates now. They were all loved-up and looking happy, it seemed. He lost six females to other packs, two to the Half Moon Pack itself, one warrior and one school teacher. Seven of the ten males had found Mates here at the ball. That was good.

Mated wolves were generally happy wolves. He noted the other Alphas were all waiting around for him, to sort out some of his going to them. They didn't seem all that annoyed. One of them, Alpha Frederick, who he knew, smiled right at him; a knowing smile and, as he'd headed off, had nodded and hollered "Good luck, Nicholas."

It was clear the man knew about him nding his Mate and that he was having a dicult time with it. Who had spilled the beans he didn't know, had to be Alpha Corey or his unit. No one else really knew. Jeremy may laugh at him and be itching to tell Kevin and Braidy, but he wouldn't be so disrespectful, as to blab to other packs.

'Boss, she's leaving pack territory, eastern border. Wolfed right out of her house and headed off clear in her direction.'

'What the hell?'

'Cal will stay with her, you'd better get out here and catch her.'

'Yes.' Nick agreed. He was mad now. What was she thinking? Was she just going to run away and not deal with their Mate Bond? Neither one of them would be able to move on if she just left, and neither of them broke the bond. Was she so dumb? Did she not know how a bond worked?... Maybe being wolf-less for most of her life, she didn't. s\*\*t, did she not have an education at all!

He was stalking his way past the packhouse headed for the eastern border when Alpha Corey's, Delta, Pete, called out to him "Alpha Nicholas, Alpha Corey needs a word."

"It will have to wait, my Mate just bolted."

"No she didn't, please come and speak with Alpha Corey."

Nick stopped walking and looked at the Delta. "She didn't?"

"It's very unlikely. Please, Alpha Corey will explain."

Nick sighed, her Alpha would have been alerted to her leaving pack territory in all likelihood. He would know her better and if they thought it was unlikely, then it probably was, he would have to take the chance. They did know her better. He tried to link to Jeremy but got nothing, already too far away. That didn't bode well. It meant he was running full tilt, as was his Mate. Right into rogue territory at that. It did not make him happy in the least.

He walked into Alpha Corey's oce. "We need to make this quick, I have to go and hunt my mate down, it seems."

"No need for that, she'll come back."

"And you're certain, because?"

"Her twin sisters are here. She's probably a little on the emotional side right now. Besides, I heard your Beta Jeremy went right after her."

Nick nodded. "He did. Where is she going?" he was curious. There was literally nothing out there.

Alpha Corey sat there in his chair, seemingly debating what to tell him, what information was either relevant or what would placate him. "There's an abandoned pack out east. She goes there sometimes to clear her head and think things through."

"Across rogue territory." Nick could only think of one abandoned pack out this way. He didn't like it at all, a horrid history to that place. Why would anyone go there, to think, of all places. "And you just let her, a lone un-mated she-wolf, roam out there at will like that?"

"I heard you helped out the other night, on border patrol. You would have seen her wolf ght. I'm not concerned particularly, and you know what Lucinda is like," he smiled pointedly at Nick. "Do you think they can't handle themselves? Because I assure you, she can, they can."

"That is not the point. My Mate just left pack territory and ran off into rogue territory."

"She has a history, something you should discuss with her. She'll be safe, and your Beta is tracking her. I'm sure he's a capable man, yes?"

"Yes, very." Nick acknowledged.

"Then try to relax, just give her some space."

"I'm not exactly known for my patience." Nick reminded him.

Alpha Corey chuckled "Neither is she. You two will annoy the hell out of each other. Be fun to watch."

"She'll submit." he shrugged.

"Can I put bets on that?" Corey laughed.

Nick frowned at him, this man was infuriated. "Tell me about her. How old is she?"

"26."

"26? You said she just got her wolf a few months ago."

"She did. Aggressively exploded out of young Lucinda, let out a mighty howl, snarled at all of us like we were the enemy, actually. Angry wolf right from get go. You don't want to piss her off. And a real short fuse to match."

Nick was frowning now even deeper. "Aggressively exploded?"

"Yes son, it took less than 2 minutes, her rst shift was akin to an Alpha shifting for the rst time."

"Who are her parents? Where are they?"

"Parents killed, I believe."

"You believe? She's part of your pack. How can you not know the answer to that question?"

"Didn't see it? Nobody here did." he shrugged.

Nick didn't like that answer. His pack was much larger, but he still knew all his pack members' histories. Every pack member had a le with all their details in it. How else were you supposed to keep track of family lineage, who was mated to whom, pups born, lost family members to rogue attacks. Everything was in those les, and they were updated regularly.

Even those four young girls he had rescued, the day he'd come across Lucinda, had les, and the trauma they had suffered was documented, their medical les from his pack doctor included, due to the trauma of the situation.

Trauma was not to be taken lightly, it could cause all sorts of issues. Turn a she-wolf rogue, if it was too much for them to handle, turn them mute, or even make them completely isolate themselves from other pack members. Male wolves could become so aggressive they would turn on other pack members for seemingly no reason, and could go rogue as well.

"You got a le on my Mate, I could read?" he asked, hoping the man at least kept records.

"Yes, but not my place to give it to you."

"What. I'm her Mate and an Alpha. You will give it to me." Nick demanded.

To his amazement, Alpha Corey shook his head, no. "Yes, you are an Alpha, as for her Mate?... You haven't claimed her, and she has not accepted you, so that doesn't count right now."

Nick glared at him, this man was insane. "I am her Mate, and I want that le."

"You may have been gifted to her by the Goddess, son. But I didn't see either of you accept each other, or have I missed something today?"

Nick was starting to lose it. "I already told you I would be claiming her."

"Mm, you did," he nodded, "but you haven't, so without Lucinda's permission I won't give you her le. I already told you, she has a history and if she wants to tell you, she will. It's actually not for me to say."

Even Rip was getting pissed off now, this man wasn't going to talk, he'd only met the man two days ago, and he, for all appearances, looked like the most laid back and relaxed Alpha he had ever met. Yet here he was, stubborn like an Alpha, alright, his appearance was deceptive.

Nick had thought him to be a bit of a joke, a betting, gambling man, who just made fun of everything. Seems not. He felt Rip surface, in his anger, he wanted to know about his Mate too, and was getting to the point of expressing his dislike and rage.

Alpha Corey's hands lifted, "Now, now. Calm down son. I swore to her, I wouldn't tell anyone. Now if I go telling you. What good is my word?"

Nick's jaw tightened and was now ticking away, "Why would you swear something like that?"

"Because I needed to, no one in this pack will readily give you her history, and I mean no one. Or I will punish them myself."

That gained Nick's undivided attention. "Is it that bad?" He changed tactics.

Alpha Corey was no fool, stared right at him for a full minute. "You'd have to be the judge of that, when she tells you, and that. Son, will take trust."

"She told you?" his anger was abating. If she had trauma he would have to give her some leeway.

"She had no choice at the time. That is all I will say on the subject. But try and relax. She will come back like I said, her twin sisters are here, she will never abandon them."

"There is room in my car for both of them as well. I'll just take them too." he shrugged what was two more females in his pack.

"No, actually you won't be. The twins will be staying here."

Nick frowned, and it took less than 10 seconds for it to dawn on him "The Gamma's twin girls, that's who you're talking about."

"Yes and neither Gabby nor James are just going to hand over the girls to you. Not after your display the other night...not that, that would matter."

"Why are they with your Gamma and not Lucinda herself?"

"Again, you might want to talk to her about that one."

Nick was not getting anywhere with this man, whatever her story was, Corey was not going to part with it. Her history couldn't be all that good, if no one was allowed to talk about it "Do you think she will go willingly with me?"

"I don't know, to be honest" he shrugged. "You handle her the wrong way, you might nd yourself facing a formal rejection."

Nick nor Rip were impressed at all now. "She's that stubborn?"

"Not usually, but can be at times."

"I'll just mark her then." Nick shrugged and made a hand dismissively. Once his mark was on her, she'd have no choice and the Mate Bond would grow, and she would submit to him in a matter of days. If she still didn't want to be his Mate once she produced him an heir, he would just reject her and set her free.

Rip growled at him at this thought and Nick ignored him.

He found Alpha Corey glaring at him now. "You will not forcibly Mark or Mate her. I guarantee you she will kill you if you do. Marked or Mated, it will make no difference to her and her wolf. If you do take her from here, and she calls me and tells me you have forced her, I will come and collect her myself." there was anger in every word he spoke.

"That would start a war!"

"Only if you're still alive when I get there. And I will not come alone."

Alpha Corey actually meant every word he said, the man was in full Alpha mode, Nick realized. He was suddenly treading on thin ice with the man.

"Okay, so I am getting that her history is that bad... So, why don't we do this the Alpha way? Let's treat Lucinda as though she is your own daughter and organize an alliance between our two packs. That way you are assured of her safety. You can even put in a no Marking or Mating by force clause."

Nick watched as Alpha Corey sat back and really thought about it, long and hard it seemed, it was a good ten minutes of silence before he nally nodded "Alright, I actually think that might help you out, she's not going to like it though."

Nick nodded, "Yeah, akin to being sold off I know, but I am her fated mate. It's not like I'm some Alpha who took a look at her wolf and has chosen her, and she has no say in it. She knows the Goddess picked me for her Mate as well. Got to be some room to move there right. I don't much like it myself. I would rather she just came willingly, of course... It will just take time for her to come around to it, right?"

"Hmm, maybe." Alpha Corey nodded, "I'll need some others in on this, do you mind?"

Nick shook his head, "No, let's get this sorted out, or start to at least."

"It might take a day or two."

"That's ne." Nick nodded. He knew alliances couldn't be just worked out in minutes, this agreement might be about his mate, but he was going to get a proper alliance out of it as well. Though this pack was ve hours away, it would be nice if he or his men, when out this way, had somewhere safe to stay.