

CH 4

Nick POV

Jeremy, his Beta, had dropped an envelope on the desk in front of him. He was smiling, that stupid grin he got when there was something mischievous about to happen. Nick raised an eyebrow at his Beta. Who's grin just got bigger, and he just stood there staring at him, 'it seriously couldn't be that funny,' Nick thought.

Though Jeremy thought lots of things were funny nowadays. The man was six-four, with dark brown eyes, light sandy blonde hair, a dimple in his chin, and one deep dimple in his right cheek. Which was showing with his clear amusement, over whatever he thought was funny.

The man took great pleasure and delight in ribbing him about that bloody mutt, who he'd had a showdown with a few months ago, just wouldn't bloody let it go. Because according to him and Braidy, he, their Alpha, had lost to a girl, 'A teensey, weensey, little girl.' as they like to phrase it.

He occasionally would nd a black arrow stuck in his chair, or a knife in a shoe of his. They thought they were being funny. And no amount of punishment he dished out, stopped it. Troublemakers, both of them. Braidy feeding off of Jeremy's desire to annoy and play practical jokes, the two of them troublesome, but also his closest friends.

Nick, however, did not see it that way. His showdown with the mutt had been interrupted and so, therefore, no-one had won it, according to his recollection. He was actually itching for a rematch. Her skill, he had to admit, was a little impressive, but he was willing to bet if he stood next to her on the training ground, his knife throwing skills would surpass hers with ease. His wolf Rip just wanted a chance to use his Alpha aura, to put her in her place and show her who was boss.

Though it was unlikely they would ever get the chance, Half Moon Pack was in no way aliated with his pack, and it was a good ve-hour drive away by car. There was also nothing but rogue territory between his and theirs, and the terrain was pretty rough going. Many wetlands were dotted along the way and an abandoned long dead pack territory as well. A sad story, he'd heard it, everyone had. But it was before his time. Three years before he'd taken over, in fact. No one had gone to their aid; it was very sad.

Nick turned his attention to the envelope Jeremy had dropped on his desk, the very thing his Beta was nding highly amusing. It was a soft metallic green envelope, with a moon seal on the back, which indicated it was a mating ball invitation. He sighed and tossed it into the bin next to his desk. Why Jeremy would nd that amusing? He had no idea.

He knew Nick would not attend it, wouldn't even open the envelope for that matter, "Why is that so amusing to you?" he asked, turning back to the budget he had been working on, for the new school he was building.

To his complete surprise, Jeremy retrieved it from the bin, and put it back in front of him again.

"Are you trying to test my patience today, Beta." Nick used his rank instead of his name, allowing Jeremy, who he'd known since he was six years old, to show his annoyance and displeasure at his actions.

"Read it." Jeremy stated, his amusement still with him.

Nick sighed "I don't have to, it's a mating ball invitation, I can tell from the full moon seal on the back."

"Indeed it is," his friend chuckled.

"Why? Jeremy, do you nd this outdated thing so amusing...you know I am not going to attend, I'm not even going to reply." he moved to toss it in the bin again.

Jeremy's hand stopped him. "Oh come on Nick, just this once, open it, read it...humour me just this once."

"No!" Nick snapped and was about to tear the envelope in half to make his point, and show his displeasure with his Beta, but to his complete disbelief, Jeremy snatched it from his hands before he could, used his wolf's speed to grab it.

"You have a death wish today?" Nick snarled.

Jeremy just laughed at him. "Maybe... Just maybe, today I do." He then walked around Nicks' desk and sat himself down in one of the chairs in front of his desk. Tore the full moon seal off and opened the letter.

"For the love of the Goddess," Nick muttered to himself.

"Yes." Jeremy grinned again "The Goddess herself requests that you, Alpha Nicholas of Blue Moon Rising Pack, attend one of her mating balls." he laughed and then proceeded to read the invitation out loud.

Nick leaned back in his chair and watched him. It was the same bullshit every time, bring your un-mated wolves, male and female, for a chance to see if they can nd their fated mates upon the next full moon. He was apparently allowed to bring 20 wolves. It also indicated that six other packs were invited, so a total of 140 un-mated wolves would be visiting and there would also be wolves from the pack holding the mating ball. It was the only information Jeremy hadn't parted with, which was curious.

After a full minute of silence, and the two of them just staring at each other, Nick nearly yelled at him "Well you made me listen to that bloody dribble, who sent the stupid thing?"

Jeremy's grin was back in full force, only now there was a mischievous glint in his eye as well. "Thought you didn't care."

"For Goddess's sake Jeremy!" he was starting to lose his patience.

"Half Moon Pack, Nick."

Oh, now he knew why Jeremy found it so amusing to himself, that was the mutts pack. Hang on, how'd he know that, without opening it rst? Nick held out his hand, a frown on his face. He hadn't seen a pack symbol on the thing when he'd glanced at it.

"You're not going to rip it up now, are you?"

"Just give it over." he snapped, annoyed with his Beta "You're tiresome. Do you know that?"

"Yes boss, I do know that." Jeremy was still grinning and there was full amusement in his voice, he sat there tapping the envelope in his hand "I think you will destroy it," he suddenly said, and pocketed the invite in his shirt's front pocket, then stood and headed out of the room with it.

Rip let out a warning growl, not liking being dismissed by his own Beta. Jeremy stopped at the door, turned and looked right at him. That blasted mischievous glint back in his eye "I thought you didn't care about mating balls, Nick." Then he closed the door behind him.

Nicks wolfen hearing, picked up his Beta's footsteps. They were running away from his oce. He knew better, but it seemed that today, Jeremy did indeed have a death wish. Nick gave him a ten count and then got up from his desk, walked across his oce and opened the door, cracked his neck, rolled his shoulders and smiled 'Let's go get him,' he told Rip, and they were off after him.

He shot out of the packhouse using Rips wolfen speed, passing by Braidy, who was laughing. He was just outside the packhouse's front door. Jeremy, he could see, was off and running towards the training grounds at full wolfen speed, himself. Nick could hear the man laughing as he ran away.

' He can't outrun us! Rip snorted, amused at the thought that his Beta was trying to get away from him.

'No he can't.' Nick agreed, and the chase was on. Jeremy used the training ground obstacles to help delay his capture, but it was still all of only a few minutes before he was crash tackled to the ground and pinned down. Nick ipped his Beta over, who'd stopped ghting him, now he was captured, and reached into that pocket for the invite. Jeremy, however, was still laughing, hysterically almost. His amusement was even more so now than before.

Nick came up empty-handed. He pat his Beta down and checked all of his pockets. There was no envelope; he'd palmed it off to someone. "You bastard." Nick got up, thinking about who he'd past. Bloody Braidy had been laughing outside the front of the packhouse. He put a boot into Jeremy's ribs just hard enough to make him say ouch, "you'll keep." he muttered.

'Oh Braidy, where are you?' he asked through a mink-link, his voice soft and deadly.

'I don't know boss! Never been in this part of the pack before.' clear amusement owed down the link towards him, then Braidy severed the link.

Right the boys wanted to play, it seemed 'Rip, go get him.' Nick smiled to himself, no one in this pack could hide from his wolf. It was a hunt, so it seemed. Rip was on it fast. He loved a good hunt, straight back to the packhouse, to pick up the scent of the last place they'd seen him. Rip knew the scent of his Delta, and tracked him, moving quickly through the packhouse and out through the dining room, out the back door and off into the woods heading north. The mission hunt and capture.

It took a further seven minutes till his Delta was pinned down on the ground beneath him by the north lake. He was laughing so hard he could barely lay still.

Nick, again, came up empty-handed, nothing in Braidy's pockets either. "Where is it?"

"I have no idea what you are talking about." he laughed, claiming no knowledge of what he was being hunted for.

"Who'd you give it to?"

"Give what to boss? Jeremy just mink-linked me, to run and play along...you know me, I can't resist boss."

Nick grit his teeth, clearly Jeremy's game was still afoot. 'Oh Jeremy,' he shot down the link to his Beta.

'Yes Nick.' he answered all proper like, Beta respect showing.

'Where is it?'

'What would you be referring to now?' he feigned innocence.

'You know what!'

'You sleepwalking again boss, having weird dreams again maybe?' there was amusement in his voice now, that he was unable to disguise. The game he had set-up was clearly not close to being over yet. Bloody boys had nothing to do, it seemed, well they would have, when he was done with them.

As he walked back towards the packhouse he could only think of one way to end this quickly. 'Oh Jeremy...' Braidy was trailing him, still amused as well. Though wouldn't be for long, punishment would be dealt out.

'Yes boss'

'That pretty red head you like...tell her I want a dinner date with her.' his voice had dropped to a soft husky note, so his Beta fully understood his intentions '7pm suits me.'

'You wouldn't?'

'Oh wouldn't I?' Nick was the one smiling now, he was un-mated and enjoyed the company of a she-wolf. Jeremy's latest ing was quite pretty, and he would know, no she-wolf turned down the chance to climb into the Alpha's bed.

'You're no fun.' Jeremy huffed down the link 'it's in your oce boss.'

'It had better be, or your red head will be in my bed tonight.' Game over.

Even Rip liked the way he had ended it.

He walked into his oce to nd Kevin his Gamma sitting on the comfortable couch, smiling up at him and in his hand was the invite. Jeremy was leaning on the side of his desk, still smiling about the game he had set up.

Nick held out his hand "how'd you get that?"

"Jeremy gave it to me as he came out of your oce." he shrugged, but was smiling just as much as the other two were, "link me to wait in the oce with it, once you went after him."

He took the envelope which contained the invite and stared at Jeremy.

"What boss? What you were looking for was right in your oce the whole time."

Nick glowered at him, sneaky bastard, he turned the envelope over, to try and gure out how he knew where it had come from without opening it. There were no pack markings on it to indicate the sending pack.

"How'd you know where it came from?"

"I asked the courier who delivered it."

"What? It was hand-delivered?" That was odd.

"Yep and had to be signed for by a ranked member of the pack, so I went, I was down that way," he shrugged.

Nick was staring at the actual invite now itself. He could smell a female scent on it, the sending packs Luna he presumed. "They don't normally need to be signed for, right?"

"Correct." Jeremy nodded, but that stupid grin was back on his face again.

"What now, Jeremy?"

"Nick, I didn't see anywhere on that invite for you to indicate your reply."

"No they wouldn't." he snapped, reading the invite once more, looking for the RSVP section; there wasn't one.

"Yes, I think they would." Kevin smiled from across the room, joining in on the conversation. "I read it several times. Signing for it is an agreement that you'll attend the ball."

"Are they so desperate to mate off their wolves, that they have to use this archaic tradition?" he muttered, his hand had now been forced. His Beta's signature was as good as his on a matter like that.

Jeremy's game had started the minute that bloody courier had shown him the blasted envelope. He thought it would be fun to make his Alpha go to a mating ball. Well, he would be punished, that was for sure. His mind was clearly twisted.

Nick turned to look at the date and when the next full moon was, just nine days away. He frowned, short notice, and he knew that he would be expected the day before. He might not do these things, but the former Alpha had, and so had his father. He knew how they worked. You had to arrive the day before to give all the arriving packs time to settle in and mingle rst.

"Braidy, you will be in charge of selecting the 20 wolves for this bloody thing."

"What not! That's a nightmare of a job, they will all want to go."

" Yes, for your part in this little joke, you get to deal with all the wolves begging and crying to go, then angry they didn't get selected."

He watched very satished as Braidy glared at Jeremy, whose actual fault it was, but if you want to play you might just get burned.

"Jeremy, you will be going with me to this stupid thing. And as punishment for actually having the hide to sign for it, you get to do Crêche duties for the next ve days."

"What?" his Beta practically yelled in outrage.

Nick was very satished with Jeremy's response, he wouldn't be so bored now, the next ve days was going to be keeping his Beta very busy. The pack crêche hours just over 40 rambunctious toddlers and screaming pups, it would be so very loud and annoying, just the thing to remind him not to do it again.

Rip snorted at him, he had actually enjoyed the hunt around the pack, it wasn't often they just let loose like that. Nick now could see the fun of it too. But punishment was fun to dish out. He was going to enjoy strolling by the crêche on a daily basis and watching Jeremy suffer for his foolish game. He could also play, just didn't do it often.

He was the Alpha and had to be seen as the authority, not a joker. To be in control at all times, he had to command respect and wield it.