

## Mated To An Enemy - Chapter 8

In the days leading up to Ashleigh's eighteenth birthday weekend, guests arrived in dozens. Though Winter had many rules and restrictions of intermingling, they still managed to have close relations with numerous wolves outside their pack.

Many of the guests arriving were not Ashleigh's friends alone. Her parents both had their own guests arriving, and several others were added to the list by her good friends.

Ashleigh did, in the end, decide to invite each of the other Alphas. Telling herself, it was, as she had told her friends, for diplomatic purposes. Which was almost true. She was actively trying to avoid a fight with Granger if and when he found out that Alpha Caleb had been invited.

A fight she knew would happen the moment she sent the invitation, but until it did, she would hold on to even the tiniest thread of hope.

Like every celebration in the Werewolf community, her party was a weekend-long event. First was a day of relaxation and light socializing, followed by a night of partying until dawn. And finally, a day of rest before returning home.

As such, the preparations for her party were quite time-consuming. So much so that she had traded patrol rotations several times to accommodate her need to make sure everything was done correctly.

But this also meant that she was stuck on a double patrol rotation the day before her birthday weekend officially began.

Due to this change, she was deep in the forest that bordered their territory, miles away from her home. As a result, she could not greet the last guests on the evening before her party weekend began. So instead, she would be leaving her friends and family the task of welcoming them.

Those guests, of course, being the wolves of Summer.

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Two dark SUVs pulled up in front of the building. A tall blonde man stepped out of the passenger side of the first SUV and approached Granger, who stood alongside two other pack members serving as valets.

Granger thought for a moment that the man looked familiar, but he couldn't quite place him.

"We will park our own cars if that's alright," the blonde man said in a friendly tone.

Granger nodded and released the others to return to their other duties. These were the last cars they had been notified about.PANDA-NOVEL.COM

He headed to the only other people standing outside now.

"Why am I being forced to do this?" a stern-faced man of about twenty-four years asked, making no effort to hide his disinterest.

"Because I asked really nicely?" Renee replied, giving him a hopeful smile.

He scoffed and turned to walk away.

"Because your sister overextended herself. And you love her even more than all the Nutter Butters you keep hidden in the back of the pantry?" Replied Bell, who walked up behind them. She placed her hands on his shoulders and turned him back towards Renee, who giggled at the comment.

"How did you –" he began.

PANDA NOVEL "Axel, come on, don't insult me. I know everything, like, all the time." Bell laughed, pushing his hair out of his eyes.

Like most pack members, he wore his dark blonde hair long and tied up in braids and knots. But often, he chose to have just a small amount of fringe hanging down over the upper right side of his face, covering a deep scar he had earned when he was still a child.

He swatted at her hand and gave her a sharp look.

"Would it kill you to show me some respect?" he growled.

"Would it kill you to earn it?" she growled back.

"Hey, hey. Come on, man, everyone knows you would do anything for Ashleigh. So what's the point in denying it?" Granger laughed, rejoining the party. PANDA NOVEL

"You too? We're brothers now. Why are you joining in against me?" Axel grumbled.

"Not yet." Bell smiled playfully at Granger.

She was surprised by his reaction. She had expected a retort or a laugh, but the look that passed over his eyes, however quickly it disappeared, was dark.

"Soon enough," he answered back.

"Axel!" a voice called out from the entrance to the building behind them. It was one of the men Granger had sent back. "The Alpha has called for you!"

"Right away!" he called back. "Oh, darn, I guess host and hostess roles are passed back to you three. Such a shame."

He smiled as he backed away from them. His expression and the thick sarcasm in his tone told the others that he was definitely gleefully lying.

“Bell, you better keep your filthy hands off my Nutter Butters!” he shouted, pointing at her. “I’m serious.”

“You wish my hands were near anything of yours!” she shouted back with a laugh.

He shook his head and scoffed loudly as he entered the building.

The others laughed together until the sound of a throat being cleared brought their attention back. They all looked up to see the blonde man from before standing in front of them. There was a tension in the air now, each of them realizing they had not even noticed his approach.

Worse still, they had not noticed the approach of the group of people behind him. ρ□□d□□□□□□

Bell was the first to recover. Taking a good look at him, she smiled.

The grey suit he wore highlighted his broad shoulders and height. The black shirt and tie did nothing to hide his muscular body. His beard was a darker blonde than the hair on his head by a shade or two. It was thick but not long. Trimmed to hug his jawline but not his cheekbones.

“Hey, handsome. Welcome to Winter. I’m Bell, and you are?” she smiled at him flirtatiously.

He smiled back with just a touch of reluctance.

“Galen,” he answered, his green eyes holding on Bell a moment longer before looking away. Finally, he stepped back and motioned to the rest of his party. “And this is Alpha Caleb of Summer.”

The group of men and women behind him stepped back to form two straight lines revealing a tall, stunning man between them.

They all recognized Alpha Caleb.

His auburn hair and grey eyes were unique and recognizable on their own. Still, no one, not even a jealous mate, could deny his presence was also quite intense.

Like Galen, Caleb also wore a suit. In fact, they all did, and the same one, including the women.

Only Caleb wore a tie of burgundy rather than black. He walked forward, his men falling in line behind him as he passed by them.

He stopped when he reached Galen, who moved to stand just behind him. Caleb looked down at Bell.

“Alpha Caleb, welcome to Winter,” was all she could manage to say. She brought a fist to her heart and bowed to him, as did Renee.

Granger, however, did not.

“Granger!” Renee whispered to him.

Galen growled angrily.

Granger looked directly at Caleb, who did not bother to look at him. Then, finally, he hit his fist to his chest aggressively and bent his head forward.

Clenching his jaw the whole time.

Caleb did not react other than to continue on his way toward the building, his wolves following behind him.

Bell righted herself and pulled Renee up, pushing her after the wolves with instructions to lead them to their rooms.

She looked to Granger, who stared after them with his jaw still clenched.

“Hey, hey!” she pushed him until he looked down at her. “What was that, man? You can’t show that lack of respect to an Alpha.”

“You’re lecturing me on showing respect?” Granger laughed.

“Yea and that should tell you something about how dumb what you just did was,” Bell replied seriously.

“He’s a jerk who thinks he is better than every wolf in Winter,” replied Granger.

“Maybe, but he’s still an Alpha,” answered Bell, turning to go inside.

Granger was left feeling a rage building within him.

“Oh my, what a surprise this is,” called a cheerful voice from behind him. He turned to see a short man with brown curly hair smiling up at him.

His smile reminded Granger of the Cheshire Cat from Wonderland, and something told him to be wary. However, his focus was still held mainly by the arrogant prick walking into the building.

“I had not expected to see any of the Summer wolves at this party, much less Alpha Caleb himself.”

“Yes, we are all stunned to see him,” Granger growled in response.

“It’s a good thing,” the man smiled up at him, “Alpha Caleb must be here to mend fences with Alpha Wyatt, right?”

Granger did not respond.

“I mean, what other reason could that young man have for coming to Ashleigh’s birthday party?” the short man whispered. “Surely, they don’t know each other well enough to be friends—”

“Is there something you need?” Granger growled, looking down at the man.

The man let out a light, friendly chuckle and waved his hands in the air as though he were showing his peaceful intentions.

“Oh no, no, young man. I was simply observing the moment,” the man said before reaching a hand toward Granger. “I am Holden, by the way. I came as a representative of Spring for my Alpha who is unable to attend.”

“Granger,” he replied curtly, shaking the man’s hand briefly.

“It is truly a pleasure to meet you.” Holden smiled, just a little too wide.