

## CH 6

She took herself into the city for her birthday when not even Jace knew it was upon them. She'd just turned 20, and he'd said nothing at all, not even so much as a happy birthday. She knew why, because he didn't even know when it was.

She knew when his was; June 12. She knew what his favorite food was, baby back ribs with a tangy mustard BBQ sauce. His favorite suit was the double-breasted navy blue that he wore into the city to his human world oce. He had ve of them identical to each other, that he just switched out the shirt and tie.

She'd learned a lot about him in those rst ve weeks, asked a lot of questions about him and what he liked. Though now, as she sat in a café alone, by herself for her birthday and stared at the piece of chocolate mousse cheesecake she'd bought for herself, she realized he'd not asked anything about her in return.

"Happy Birthday, Nora." She murmured to herself and made herself eat that cake even though she really didn't feel like it, wanted to just smash it and scream out loud, before bursting into tears at the way her life had turned out, here in the human world where she didn't have to hide how she felt when inside that pack.

She spent the day out just walking around the shopping center looking at things, window shopping. She'd checked her bank balance, thinking about buying herself a present and then decided against it. She knew she needed to save every penny for her leaving pack life in a few months' time when that new semester started. So she only allowed herself to buy that piece of cake and a latte to go with it.

But she would be damned if she'd be in the pack for her birthday when no one knew about it, or cared about her at all. So, she would spend the day just her and Rosa, looking at pretty dresses and clothes that one day, far off in the future, she would be able to afford for herself, when she had nished her degree and had a job of her own.

Driving back to the pack later in the afternoon, she saw a sign for the botanical gardens and, seeing that she nor Rosa weren't really ready to go back there, she pulled into the parking lot and just walked about looking at the gardens.

She was still doing this when her parents called to wish her a happy birthday. She smiled and thanked them, asked how they were and put them off, when they asked what Jace had given her for her birthday.

"I don't know yet," she stated simply, and then followed it up with, "He's in the city at the oce. It will come in the evening with dinner," is all she said as she sat herself down under the shade of a large tree. Again, she was lying to them. It was all she ever seemed to do nowadays, because she didn't want to tell them the truth.

There was no present coming her way, and she knew it. She closed her eyes as she leaned on that tree and changed the subject to her studies. How she thought she was going to ace that last exam, and was hoping the results would push her to her rst ever 4.0.

They both chuckled at her excitement over it, and even she could hear the happiness in her voice about it. Her studies were her one solace right this minute, the one thing in her life that brought her joy inside that pack. So, she let it ll her up and allowed her parents to hear it all. It was kind of her normal, so it led them to believe she was all good and kept the lies she was telling them from being picked up.

Because how could one be so super-happy and full of excitement when their entire life was a lie and misery lived in her soul, that her own Wolf wouldn't surface while inside the pack, only when outside of it.

They'd not asked she noted about her Luna Ceremony, not once brought it up during this conversation either. It was likely they knew something was off, but with her being so happy about her studies and telling them nothing was wrong, they were leaving her alone.

They were, she thought, now just waiting for her to either tell them, when she was ready, that something was wrong, or maybe they thought things were still being sorted out. Not all Mate bonds were perfect, and Jace was a lot older than she was; there was a massive age gap. So sometimes there was an adjustment period that was needed when that happened.

They could well think she was busy attending to Luna Lessons, not that Jace had brought it up even once. He had a Luna in that oce and if she happened to walk past it, Gloria was only too happy to remind her she was the Luna. She had gotten up and closed the Luna's oce door on her once, looked right at her and stated, "Please don't interrupt the Luna's business, it's not for you to do." Gloria had been in there with one of her friends at the time.

Nora had simply been walking past, hadn't been going to interrupt at all. She understood very well what her place inside this pack was. She leaned on a tree after the call to her parents ended and wondered what Jace would do the day she opted to reject him. Wondered how he was going to feel when she opted to go home in a few weeks without him.

Would she even tell him she was going home? She didn't know. He wasn't going to be there away himself, she could just leave after he did. He'd likely never even know. She doubted Gloria would call him and tell him, she would just be glad to have her gone from the pack, and Nora knew it.

She'd not lied to her parents about him going to be away in another pack for a mating ball. Three months here in the pack and every full moon was fully booked for him to either have a mating ball or attend a mating ball.

She wondered what his reaction would be. A part of her was curious as to if he would be annoyed by her up and leaving or not. Or would he just blip over it altogether? Hell, for all she knew, he might just state "Go, have a nice time, spend a few more days there if you like." so he could spend quality time with Gloria and not be concerned about her seeing it.

Hell, she wondered if she'd smell that woman in the Alpha Suite when she got back. It was likely, though if he caused her pains of betrayal while inside her home pack, she'd just opt not to go back at all. Her old Alpha would see to protecting her, and she knew it. He was a good man and would even accept her back into his pack for that very reason.

A part of Nora wanted Jace to do that, cheat on her while she was gone from the pack, have her parents see it, the Alpha see it and, when it was over, just have him initiate her back into her home pack. She might not be able to reject Jace without him being right in front of her, but he'd feel her sever from the pack even if there mate bond was still intact.

He'd also have to call her home pack and ask if she was there, because she wasn't going to be picking up the phone. He'd have to talk to her Alpha, and she knew he'd be told she had gotten hit with the pains of betrayal, and opted to stay in her home pack and that he could come and reject her due to his unfaithful ways.

She wondered what he would do if he was not only outed to her old Alpha, but had to go to her to reject her. Would he go to her or would he just refuse it and continue to betray her, hell he could Mark and Mate Gloria and effectively destroy her, which would see him get what he wanted.

Another part of her just wanted to issue a rejection and get it all over and done with, but Gloria hadn't suffered at all, she still had that man's love and attention every damned day. She'd yet to nd a way to hurt that woman, and she did want to for Rosa as well as herself.

Though if she walked into the packhouse today on her birthday and issued a rejection, would he stare at her completely shocked or would he just nod his head and accept it? Turn to Gloria and take that woman to his bed because he'd not been able to for months now.

She knew he wanted to, touched her often enough for Nora to know, he had run a hand through the woman's hair just this morning, and he had walked with Gloria on his arm to his car for all to see, for Nora to see. Even today, on her birthday, she had to suffer through him touching another.

A part of her really wanted to touch someone else in the same manner, just to pay him back, but it wasn't in her, she wasn't going to be like him. No, she would not betray her mate bond and give him the excuse to call her unfaithful. But she would, she knew, make sure that the whole pack knew that he was before she left.

She hadn't exactly gured it out yet, exactly what she was going to do or how she would do it, but she would show him she knew exactly who and what he was. Show that pack he was a lying, cheating asshole, that didn't deserve to have a Goddess-Gifted Mate. He could have Gloria after she was gone, and Nora wouldn't care to ever think about him again once she left.