

CH 4

Her birthday arrived much quicker than she wanted it to, it was just two days away now, and she had to present herself to Alpha Franco in the morning with her decision. He'd not called upon her in the past month. Though she had seen him watching her out there on the training grounds, both in the morning and the afternoon. Standing at times by himself, just watching her and she knew it.

For the rst time in her life since her dad had died, she turned away from the Alpha to the pack; every time she saw him, she no longer wanted to look at him anymore. She'd always thought of him as one that was fair and just, a good Alpha to this pack, an Alpha that everyone liked and trusted. She now no longer thought that about him at all.

Ryder knew that she could live here inside this pack as a full warrior. Make her way up through the ranking system, become an Elite or, even better, a War General if she was fully dedicated and had no distractions. It would just take a decade or two was all, with full devotion.

But no, if she had no mate, he saw her as useless, worthless even, to his pack. She did not understand her Alpha at all anymore and didn't want to try and rationalise out his decision, if she was honest with herself. He wasn't an Alpha worthy of leadership in her eyes anymore.

That choice he had given to her to make now made her wonder about all those others within the pack's brothel, if they were actually there willingly, of their own accord; like she'd thought.

She did know that some of them had been deemed Mate-less, like she herself now was. Had Alpha Franco sent them there? Like he was trying to do to her now. She didn't know, but she was now thinking the answer was, yes. In fact, she was willing to bet it was a yes.

She now believed some of those wolves, male or female, hell likely most of them down there in that brothel, were solely in that place simply because they had not wanted to go off to the kingdom and live a life of war.

To be in servitude to their Wolfen King for the rest of their lives: A wolf none of them had even laid eyes upon, because he'd never left the Kingdom to come to the human realm and meet his subjects.

She, herself, would rather go to war and die in battle, take a warrior's death than to let any wolf maul her body for a fee. Let their Alpha put a price on the use of her body, and slave her out, not only to his pack, but his allied packs as well.

She turned and looked out the window at the rising moon. It was not yet full, still a few days away, she'd gotten that pack-wide mind-link like everyone else in the pack, about their Heir their future leader of the pack, Lauchlan, and that he would be returning from the Kingdom in just on a week's time.

They'd served their time and were now big, strong warriors that would be got at protecting the pack, that Lauchlan and his unit were going to be given a big celebration on the next full moon. A massive welcome home party, the entire pack was allowed to come and celebrate.

Ryder, however, was not going to be here for that, when it happened. She understood the moment she turned 18, she was out of this pack. Alpha Franco couldn't ocially send her off to the Kingdom until she was actually of legal age. None in the military could join until they were 18. That she knew from schooling, and that day for her, was the day after tomorrow.

She wondered if she would be expected to up and leave at dawn or if she'd be allowed to spend that day, her last day, in the pack with her friends. She didn't know how it was going to go.

Ryder made her way to the Alpha's oce at 7am as she'd been requested to, Alpha Franco sat behind his desk as always, and once again it was just her and him inside this oce. No Alpha Unit, like the last time they had discussed her choices.

She'd seen his Beta Mal leave the oce as she'd walked in. He'd smiled right at her, "Morning Ryder." He'd greeted her quite friendly like, as he'd always done, appeared happy to see her even.

She'd realised at that moment as she'd greeted him back, that no one, not even the Alpha Unit, knew what was going on. Understood at that moment that this was to be seen as her decision, no one inside this pack knew of their own Alpha's dealings, and his sending of wolves to be w****s for the pack.

No, if anyone chose that path, it was just seen to be as their choice to be there.

That she realised was why it was done in the privacy of the Alpha's oce, between just her and him. Not even the Alpha Unit or Luna had knowledge of these kinds of dealings that he was making with their pack members.

Without their knowledge of it, he could state with honesty, that it was the wolf's choice, that yes, he'd spoken with them about it in private; which he had done. That the she-wolf or he-wolf in question had opted themselves, to go and work in the pack brothel; which they would also have done.

He would never mention that he'd not really given them a choice: be shipped off as cannon fodder for the king of wolves, or become one of the pack's brothel workers. Ryder could only guess it was not a choice for many; more along the lines of; which they believed was the lesser of two evils.

If Franco was a good, kind and caring Alpha, there would have been a third option: to remain here, be a warrior, to live in the single dorms, and maybe nd a Chosen Mate with another of the Mate-less within the pack.

She no longer saw him like that, as most of the pack did; as she had once done. He was a liar to this pack, and likely only those just like her knew the absolute truth about their Alpha. Her own father had lived inside this pack for 17 years after she was born, without a Mate, though she supposed he'd had a child, so had been considered useful, had grown the pack by one.

She didn't want to be inside a pack with an Alpha like the one she now sat before. A part of her was glad to be getting away from him, away from a man that had fooled this entire pack into believing he was a good kind man; when he was anything but.

Ryder sat and looked at him, her Alpha, no longer the man that had once been her personal cheer squad, that man was gone. She could see there was a scroll on the desk in front of him, it was already rolled up and had his wax seal on it. She even knew what it was, a formal wolfen scroll from him to the king, or whichever War General she was supposed to report to.

There was also a single piece of paper on that desk next to it, an employment contract to work in the pack's brothel. She could see it clearly. It was only a few lines that stated her name, that she was voluntarily going to work in the brothel, and how much was to be paid for the use of her body. She did not look at the price, did not want to know what he'd deemed was the price of her.

She did not smile at him, though he did at her, brie as he greeted her. He also didn't beat around the bush. "Let's make this quick Ryder. I've seen the way you have thrown yourself into training. I believe I know what path you've chosen. But please state your decision out loud for the record."

He was right, and he had gotten straight to the point of this meeting, so she would as well "I'm going off to the Kingdom, to serve as a warrior." She stated atly, it was her only choice, as far as she was concerned.

She watched him pick up the scroll and hold it out to her with a single nod. "This is a letter of introduction, give it to the admitting War General."

"And how do I nd that person?" she asked right back.

"You'll be escorted there for your own safety. It's a few days' walk out to the closest portal, and through the realm, you'll remain my pack member until you swear loyalty into the king's army. I've already asked the General to look after you. I know him, is the General that signed me up, Lauchlan and his unit as well. I trust him; that he will look after you. Send you to a good war camp."

She took it and then watched him burn that letter of employment for the pack brothel, leaving no evidence of his dealings with her for anyone to nd, "I think Ryder, you chose the better option."

"When do I leave?" she asked him. She didn't care what he thought anymore or to sit here and converse with him, like she'd once done.

"I've checked your time of birth. 0320 it's recorded as, I'll have your escort come get you at that time. You don't need to take anything with you, the King will provide you with all you need for the rest of your life."

Ryder nodded and stood up, turned to leave. She was being kicked out of this pack, just not banished formally, but that was what it was she thought deep down, the polite way of banishing a pack member. She was being made to leave the second she turned 18. Though he'd told her friends they could give her a birthday bonre, she wasn't even getting the option to celebrate her 18th with her friends, sent away before any of them even woke up for the day.

Her birthday had been something that had been celebrated every year without fail. Her father always celebrated her birthday, made her a cake himself every year. It was always lopsided, but he'd made it himself out of love, and she'd loved that about him.

Now her birthday, that moment at 0320 for the rest of her life, was going to be the most miserable day of her life. She didn't even have 24 hours left inside this pack, and she was to take nothing with her either.