

Chapter 18

Nicola's POV

I'm pacing back and forth in the armory trying to get ready to present. I know he's going to be there and while my head keeps telling me to be weary of him, my body keeps telling me to get closer. My emotions are all over the place and it feels like I'm starting to break out into a nervous sweat.

"Hey, you're going to be okay." Cameron says as he walks into the room. He gives me a hug and Freya rolls her eyes at the embrace.

"Thanks." I mumble and slip out of his arms to grab the gear.

Cameron will always be my best friend, but I'm trying to put some distance between us after what happened. I know he feels more for me than I do for him and I don't want to see him get hurt in the end. I already feel terrible that he lost his mate and don't want him to go through any more pain because of me.

Taking a deep breath, I walk towards the room that I know is holding my mate on the other side. As I get closer, his scent floods my senses and seems to wrap itself around me as I step into the room. He seems at ease as he lazily sits in a chair and watches me, but the flash in his eyes lets me know he's not as collected as he looks.

Kane jumps up and strides over to me with a smile. I'm slightly taken back at his new demeanor and I look at him with suspicion. He's usually a short, clip, no bullshit kinda guy and I'm not sure I've ever seen him smile, especially not at me.

"You don't have to worry, I'll be the one trying everything on today." He says as he begins to strip.

My face turns red and I look over to Zander who still seems unphased. In the beginning I would have been happy about his lack of concern, but part of me now is slightly disappointed. I turn back towards the Beta

and grab the chest plate. I watch as he begins to slip out of his jeans, noticing how lean he is compared to most of the other men in the pack. Every inch of him looks sculpted but he doesn't have near the mass that Zander has. I notice the mark from his mate on his neck and I can't help but wonder if the Beta female also knows about Zander.

"Ready." He says as he stands there with his hands on his hips in nothing on but his boxers.

I begin to strap all the pieces to his body as I explain the changes that have been made.

"To make everything more adjustable, we added breakaway pieces that are actually designed to snap when you shift. These thin leather straps temporarily hem the material and then break to allow for expansion once you shift." I say pointing to the leather straps about 1/8" thick woven in the sides of the armor.

"We are planning on having a few standard sizes since most of the warriors have similar body types." I continue as I synch up the last piece.

"Can I shift?" He asks me.

"Whenever you're ready Beta." I nod respectfully.

He gives me a side glance "Kane."

"Kane." I repeat back and fight the urge to roll my eyes.

Satisfied with my response, he shifts. His wolf is a deep chocolate brown and quite large, as he should be considering he is the Beta of all Betas.

I asses the armor and smile when I notice that nothing has broken this time. Some pieces could fit him a little better but that's why we're making different sizes.

"Sick." I hear Rivers say and I let out a laugh.

When I look over at Zander, the pride in his eyes as he stares at me makes my heart flutter.

"We're having a meeting here in just over a week in the War Room. I need you to be there to show everyone this." Zander says as he stands up from his seat. His muscles pull at his shirt and the material across his chest strains, but I quickly shake out of my drool session as his words register.

"The War Room?" I start to panic. "But the War Room is only used when all the pack's alphas come."

"Exactly." He states as if it should make sense.

It doesn't.

"But why?" I ask flustered. I really don't want to be in front of all the alphas showing them a product that isn't 100% complete. It was bad enough when I had to show it to Zander, Kane, and Rivers.

His eyes hold mine before he lets out a long breath and pulls out a chair, gesturing for me to sit down as he takes the seat next to it. I slowly walk over and sit, my body hyper aware of how close he is to me, and yet, not close enough. He goes to reach for my hand and my eyes snap down to his. He pauses, as if he had just been caught doing something he shouldn't, before retreating back.

"I'm going to tell you everything." He says cautiously, like he wants to trust me but still isn't sure, and I notice the other two men leave the room.

My heart rate picks up as I realize how serious this is. How serious the issue that he's been hiding from me and everyone else must be. And not only that, but he's deciding to put faith in me as a mate and share this information.

His words pour out as he tells me everything. The killings, the letters, even the attack that happened yesterday. Yesterday. I could have lost my mate yesterday and I was absolutely clueless. When he's finished speaking, I stare at him, completely lost for words.

"There's one more thing." He says.

"What?" My voice coming out as a whisper, not sure what else more

there could possibly be.

"We will be holding a formal ball here the night following the meeting with the alphas. I plan to step up and make myself known as the King." He says and this time my jaw drops.

I'm not sure what I was expecting him to say but it surely wasn't this. I jump up from my seat and stride across the room, trying to take in all the information.

"I'd like you to be there, with me." He says as he moves towards me.

I freeze and look to him, his eyes on me as if he were stalking a prey. I try to swallow the lump in my throat as he continues to move closer, his face looking like he wants to devour me. My back is to the wall as he places his hands on each side of my face and I can feel the warmth of his breath, my lips just inches from his while he leans in closer. His eyes dilate as they stare into mine and then down to my mouth. His tongue slowly sweeps his bottom lip, sending shivers down my spine as I take in the sight of him.

"Say 'yes'". He growls out in a husky voice.

I can hardly think as he gets closer still and I tighten my legs together as wetness pools between them.

"Yes" I say breathlessly.

He smiles.

"Good." His voice thick with lust. "I can't wait to see you in a dress."

I squeeze my eyes shut and all too soon I feel him disappear. When I open them, I realize he's left the room along with me in a puddle. A part of me wants to run after him and demand him to finish what he started, but isn't this what I wanted? For him to give me some space? I groan in frustration as I realize I won't be able to get this man out of my head tonight, or any other night probably, for a very long time.

