



## Chapter 145

78 - Kennedy

I move closer to Ryker, but it's not out of fear. I heard the insult in this little man's words and felt Ryker tense, those old walls slamming right back up. I haven't seen them in a while, but away from his pack he must use them like armor. I can't link him to ask and he won't tell me what his issue with this asshole is on his own, I just know there is one. This should be an interesting game.

Ryker's arm goes around my waist as we turn to face the intruder. "I didn't expect to see you here, Claude. I thought gatherings like this were beneath you." He's gripping my waist like a lifeline, or maybe to keep himself from doing or saying something in front of this guy.

He's small for a male werewolf. Not short, but scrawny. I don't know if I have ever really seen a non-muscled werewolf. I thought that was a given. Tommy was always leaner than the rest of the guys, like a runner, but he still has a powerful body. Even uncle James is still super fit. In his forties he doesn't look much older than Jeremiah. This guy looks like he's suffering from some sickness.

"I thought I should check in on our young friend to see how his transition is faring." There's another threat or warning there. His tone tells me we need to keep an eye on Rory. Maybe Ryker already is. I don't know anything about this kid, haven't even met him yet, but he means something to Ryker and that is enough for my protective instincts. 1

"Like any alpha learning to take over his pack. He is doing his job."  
Ryker shrugs, giving a vague answer.

Claude ignores him, turns his attention to me and blatantly looks me up and down. The look in his eyes isn't hungry or wanting though. I think



he might be trying to make me uncomfortable. This idiot has another thing coming.

"Are you finished?" I ask sweetly, gesturing up and down myself. I am literally covered head to toe in a cream sweater dress that hangs off one shoulder, brown leggings and brown ankle boots. Even my hair is simple in a half up business casual top knot. "I don't think I have had anyone take that long to peruse my outfit before." His eyes snap to mine and flash in annoyance. I wonder if he's one of those 'women are seen, not heard' guys? Or maybe he thinks I'm lesser because I am human. He's easily riled up anyway. Good to know. I look up at Ryker. "We should go. I want to see Antonia and Rory before he gets lost in the party somewhere." I hope it sounds convincing that I know them. 1

The blazing smile I get in return is worth putting up with this clown. I have a feeling he's not done with us, but I can move us away for now.

"Anything you want." Ryker kisses me on the forehead again then starts to move us out of the driveway and towards the house, but we don't make it two steps before Claude opens his mouth.

"It's so nice to meet you...?" His hand is out like he might want to shake or he's gesturing for me to finish the sentence. 1

I don't take his hand. Something about him tells me he's slimey and I won't ever want to. Looking back into his face I plaster the biggest smile I have and say, "Luna." Then keep on walking, Ryker attached to my side, a rumbling laugh in his chest. Bennet and Josh just behind us doing a better job of schooling their features. 3

"You know you're going to have to explain that idiot to me later right?" I ask, not looking up at Ryker, but surveying the room as we walk through the front door.

"I figured as much. That was brilliant though. For now we just avoid him. I really didn't think he would show today. He's been avoiding us for a while now. He hates that I am helping Rory."

"Is that the Demon Claw alpha?"

"Former alpha." Ryker amends as he nods his head at a few people we pass. He doesn't smile at any of them. But that must be normal since no one reacts.

"And the plot thickens." I muse to myself.

We spend the next couple hours mingling with other visiting alphas and lunas and pack members who stopped by. Ryker doesn't say much to anyone. His standard scowl firmly in place. No one expects more than a few words and head nods from him. I wonder if my big, bad alpha is shy.

"So, in this scenario, when will Rory officially take over?" I ask after we finally got to see the birthday boy and find a table to sit and eat. Copyright © 2024 Miss L Writes and Ember Mantel Productions

"Really, he can take over at any time. He could have taken full control whenever he wanted. Like me, he could have been a young alpha. The only difference is I still have my dad to guide me when I'm stuck on something. He doesn't have that support system. His mom is great though, but was a warrior's daughter, so her knowledge is limited. I am treating it as if he were my son and I am still capable of running things, but allowing him more and more control and responsibilities as he learns the job. It allows him to ask questions, make mistakes that are small and learn from them. That's how it will be when..." He cuts off and clears his throat.

