

The Luna's Alpha

Chapter 1

Tess

"Alright, Tess, that's enough for today." My father tells me with that indifferent tone of his. I wipe my brow then remove my mouth guard. He gives me his sly smirk then helps Prentis to his shaky feet. "Go get a drink, Prentis. You did pretty well

today." Prentis blinks hard and I hold the ropes apart so he can get out of the ring. Daddy tosses me a water bottle and I nurse that sucker. "I wonder if your mate will be able to take you on," Dad says almost to himself. "He better be able to or he won't be worthy to be the next Alpha," I answer as I lean my arms on the ropes while catching my breath. "That is if I ever find the poor bastard." Daddy cracks up then separates the ropes for me to climb down. "Whoever he is, he'll be the luckiest wolf alive. Don't stress so much. He'll show up eventually."

"Daddy. I'm 26 years old. I'm the oldest unmated female this side of the Mississippi, hell, probably all of America."

"I'm sure there are other spinsters out there." He muses my sweat-soaked hair and I huff.

"Thanks a lot." I pack up my gear and we head home so I can shower then make dinner for the two of us, maybe three if Beta Morris stops in. It's not a sexist thing; my dad seriously can't cook for shit. When I was 9, he burned a pot trying to boil water for boxed mac 'n' cheese. It's a good thing I'm a natural in the kitchen, just like my mom. She was killed

in a robbery gone bad at a convenience store when I was young. Daddy hunted the bastards down and killed them both very slowly.

My dad is the greatest Alpha in America. Even pushing 60, he's a tough son of a bitch. Alpha Micco Denton is the only Alpha that's not opposed to associating with humans. We live on the California side of Lake Tahoe and we own a few ski resorts. Our territory is pretty secluded and further into the woods, but we still have to play nice with the humans to keep the money flowing. I have a degree in business management and I actually keep the books for both the pack and the resorts. Right now, they're not nearly as busy since it's summer.

Beta Ben Morris has his feet up on our porch rail with a beer in his hand as we climb the few steps. He gives us a nod. "Alpha, Tess."

"Morris. Are you staying for dinner?" I ask then open our front door.

"Nah. Leslie is making her pulled pork and baked potatoes. You two are welcome over." Leslie is his mate and she makes the best pulled pork. She smokes it for a minimum of 16 hours with her own special rub. Delicious! "We're down. We'll bring a case of beer and something for dessert." I tell him then head inside to let them talk about whatever it is Morris came over for. I take a quick shower then throw on my denim shorts and tank top. My dark, almost black hair is still wet so I just put it in a quick bun then grab a flannel shirt and my Timberlands.

Morris is gone and Dad is pacing his office. He growls and shoves his files off his desk, sending papers flying everywhere. He's so buff and he has his sleeves rolled up on his blue dress shirt. "Daddy?" For being old, he's still handsome, considering he looks about my age.

He pinches the bridge of his nose then lets out a breath. He slowly turns to face me. "Tessalee." Uh-oh. He's using my given name. He gestures to his chair and I take a seat. "Ben's dad let slip what the elders are talking about." Jerry Morris is one of the twelve elders. He's super cool, he's also like 85 but looks to be in his late 50's.

"Me?" I answer knowing dang well those old bastards are trying to usurp me. Once Dad retires, the pack goes to me. I've been training for it my whole life and I'm better than any male in our pack, however, the elders are a bunch of misogynists. Dad has placated them by telling them my mate will be the Alpha. I came up with this setup because he and I both know who the real leader will be. The Luna runs a pack anyway, am I right? It doesn't matter, they can't overthrow my dad, and Jerry is a huge fan of mine.

Dad lets out a sardonic tsk. "Of course. But there's more to it. They want to make you take a chosen mate."

"What? That's a bunch of bullshit." I knit my brows and shake my head in frustration. "They're not forcing me to do a damned thing. Fuck them."

"Tess."

"Sorry, Dad, but you can't expect me to go along with that shit." I blanch as I get to my feet. This is outrageous.

Dad shakes his head. "No. They can't. I won't let them. But Tess, I'm not getting any younger. I have to hand off the pack at some point. You and I both know they're not going to follow a female. I have no problem with you being the Alpha, but if the elders don't support you, the pack won't be easy to sway. You and I have already agreed to you keeping the title of Luna for their sake."

"It's a bunch of bullshit if you ask me. I mean you're the Alpha and I can kick any guy's ass."

He slams his fist against the oak desk. "You're right, it is a bunch of bullshit. Enough is enough."

I grip his thick tense shoulders and rub with my thumbs. "Don't burst a vein, dad. Let's go hang out with the Morris's. Leslie's cooking always makes you feel better."

Dad lets out a breath then nods. "Yeah, it does." He clears his throat. "They're uh... they're tossing around names of who they think would make the best Alpha." "You've got to be kidding me." I roll my eyes. "Who?"

Dad looks up at the ceiling and lets out a breath before answering. "Parker, Silas... and Griffin."

"Griffin?" I nearly spit out. I know my face is contorted into one of disgust. "He's a cocky arrogant asshole and Silas and Parker have both kicked his ass a handful of times. I would have too if the wuss would actually fight a girl." I say imitating his city attitude. I sneer at the thought. "Besides it's not my fault he rejected his mate. Why should I have to settle for him?"

"Yeah, well he's also Elder Bram's grandson." I groan. Elder Bram is the most misogynistic of the bunch, he also has the most sway when it comes to the council for some reason. You would think Elder Denton would have the most sway, being my grandpappy and all. Dad wraps his thick arm around my slender shoulders. "Like I said; I'm not letting this happen. The elders have yet to bring it up and the next council meeting isn't for another three weeks. The only reason we know anything is because of Jerry. Let's not out him for keeping us informed. We have to act like we have no clue that they're going to push for this."

I grunt but nod my head. "Fine. After dinner, I'm grabbing the guys and we're going to the bar. I need to let off some steam."

"Try to be back before morning. You're working the tots tomorrow." The tots are what we call the really little ones; the pups that aren't quite pups yet. They're around five or six and should be getting their wolves within the season. I say should because sometimes there are late bloomers, like me. I didn't get my wolf until I was almost eight. Most pups get their wolves around six. Being a late bloomer made me work even harder.

“Yeah,” I respond then head into the kitchen. I text the gang while I whip up a quick batch of brownies then grab ice cream and beer. Dad hops up into my Chevy Trailblazer while I load up everything in the back seat, then we drive to Ben and Leslie's.

Leslie has become a second mom to me. She and Ben have three offspring; Indy, Donnie, and Val. Donnie is 22, has a mate, and is the next Beta for our pack, once Dad and Ben decide to retire. His mate Trisha is expecting so he's always catering to her. They probably won't be here. Indy is the same age as me and she's my best friend. Indy and her mate Justin will most likely show up for dinner. Her mate is in his early thirties and happens to be the pack doctor. Val is a total book nerd and just finished her senior in High school. Her mate could show up any time now.

There's no specific age when you find your mate. Indy and Justin have known they're mates since grammar school. Justin lived in another pack, but he knew he wanted to be a doctor. He finished school before they actually mated officially. He marked her when they were 16 though.

Indy's car is parked outside the house and I smile to myself for being right. "Tess you whore! Get your ass in here!" She yells from just inside the screen door.

"Hang on, super snatch! I gotta grab the brownies." I yell out. We call each other sexually explicit names all the time, even though technically I'm still a virgin and she waited for Justin.

"Special brownies?" She asks as she steps out on the porch.

"Not this time." Dad grabs the case of beer then walks past her and into the house.

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"Damn." She says under her breath, but of course we can all hear her. She shrugs her shoulder then grabs the ice cream and we follow my dad inside. We drop off the food then Indy pulls me into her old room. "So, guess what?" I shake my head having no idea, but I know she's going to fill me in on the gossip that for some reason, I'm always the last to know. "Silas and Mavis broke up because he caught her going down on Griffin. This was after she told him she had a crush on an older guy... You're never going to believe this. She wants to hook up with your dad."

"Ewe! What a whore. No wonder her mate rejected her. I still can't believe Silas went out with her."

"I know, right? Silas told me he still has the hots for you and wanted to make you jealous, but I'm not supposed to tell you that."

Indy has my head spinning. Mavis was once our friend back in middle school days, but she became a power-hungry bitch. She started hanging around anyone she thought would give her a good standing, hence why she hung out with us to start with. Silas and I dated in high school, but we broke up while he was away during our senior year. His granddad was pretty sick so I wanted him to focus on his family. I started dating Griffin at the start of the school year, which was the biggest mistake of my life because he thought he could get into my pants, thus becoming the Alpha.

Silas and I are still pretty tight and he never blamed me for dating other guys since that was what he told me to do. After Griffin, I became more serious in my training and haven't really had a boyfriend since. Silas and I have had a little fun during some lonely nights, but never rekindled a relationship. "Silas screwed up when he started hanging around Mavis. Is Avery coming out tonight?"

"She'll meet us there." Avery is Mavis' cousin. She's Donnie's age, super sweet, and has yet to meet her mate. "Silas is coming too."

"What did he do when he caught Griffin and Mavis?"

Indy shrugs her shoulder. "They didn't fight or anything. Weird, huh?"

I shake my head. "Not really. Silas has always been pretty level-headed."

Val knocks on the door. "Indy, Tess. Dinner."

"Okay," we both answer then get to our feet. I follow Indy out to the copious piles of food.