

Chapter 8

Tess

"Well, you weren't kidding. He's a big guy." I open my eyes to my dad standing over me with his arms crossed. I look down at my still-sleeping mate. "What's with your leg?"

"I stepped in a bear trap. I was pretty hungover yesterday. That's how Cody found me. It's probably healed already, but he's been taking care of it. I had to re-cut it open once already." "That's why you want your knives?" I nod. "Why not just tell him since you're going to mate him anyway?"

"I can't. He would think I'm crazy and go running for the hills, never to be seen again. What about the law?" Dad tilts his chin to the armchair where my duffel bag and a garment bag sit. "Thanks Daddy," I say and he moves to sit in the armchair.

"So dramatic." He huffs then nods.

Cody jerks awake and looks ready for a fight as his focus is on my dad sitting completely relaxed. "It's okay. He's my dad."

Cody relaxes back onto the couch. He looks me over "Did I hurt you?"

I shake my head. "Huh-uh. Cody may I introduce my dad, Micco Denton? Everyone calls him Alpha." That's a nickname, right? "Dad, this is Cody Johnson." "My mate."

Cody sits me gently on the sofa then stands to greet my dad. "I'm honored." He offers his hand.

Dad stands up, looking Cody over. He extends his hand to shake. "Thank you for taking care of my Tessie." I hold back a growl and notice Cody stiffen at my dad's possessiveness of me.

"It's no trouble at all. It's been nice having her here." Cody looks my way then back to my dad. "Have you had breakfast?"

"Just coffee and it tasted like shit." I can't help but laugh.

"Let me clean up then I'll cook. I'll start the pot first." Cody kisses the top of my head then gets the pot going, my dad watching him the entire time. "I'll be quick. Tess, I'll change your bandages once we're finished with breakfast." Cody disappears into his bedroom.

"You better cut yourself quick. It's going to sting and it's not going to heal. Damn it, Tess. I can't believe you were so careless."

"I'm just as mad at myself." I look up to my dad's face. "Can you do it please? It hurt so bad I was shaking yesterday." Cody comes out after just that short amount of time. He goes straight to the kitchen to busy himself.

"I'll help Tess to the bathroom. You look busy." My dad offers then grabs my duffel bag. "The kunai are in here." Dad sets me on the counter then pulls my leg over the sink. After removing the bandages he pulls out one of my kunai. "I can't believe I'm purposely scarring my daughter. Are you sure about this?"

I nod. "I'm sure."

With a grunt, Dad asks, "You ready?" I take a deep breath then let it out. Dad covers my mouth with one hand and begins cutting open the pale red marks on my leg. I scream into his hand, but Dad moves super fast and he's done quickly. He rinses the blood from my kunai then bandages my leg back up then grips tight to make the bleeding stop. "Don't ask me to do that again." He lets go and leaves the room.

I keep pressure on the bandage until I'm comfortable enough to get down from the counter and do my morning routine. After slipping on shorts and a tank top, Cody knocks at the door. "Hey, Darlin'. Breakfast is ready." "I'm ready," I call out.

He opens the door and stops to stare. "You're so beautiful." He tells me as he looks me over from head to bandage. I smile at the compliment but then his face gets a look of concern. "Shit, your bandage is a mess. I'm going to change it now." He sits me on the counter where I was before to remove the blood-soaked cloths. The wounds look about the same as they did yesterday. He redresses everything then lifts my chin for a quick kiss. He pulls away too quickly. "I would kiss you longer, but your dad is waiting for us."

"As long as he has his coffee, he can keep waiting." I hear my dad grunt from the kitchen, but I pull Cody back in for a better kiss.

"You two quit making out. Breakfast is getting cold." Dad yells loud enough for us both to hear.

Cody pulls away then rests his head on mine. "To be continued. Come on, your stomach has already grumbled twice." I hop down from the sink and Cody steadies me. "Are you good, can you walk?"

"I can hobble." Cody chuckles but grabs my bag then holds me with his free arm to escort me to one of the bar stools. He sets me up with ice and painkillers and this time, I'm more than grateful.

After breakfast, which was delicious, we head outside to a small clearing. Cody sets me down at a stump then pulls up another log to rest my leg on. Dad removes his dress shirt and slacks, leaving him in his black fighting shorts, which he always wears. Cody follows suit, but his shorts are dark grey with a horizontal white stripe. "Are you going to be alright while we're gone?" Cody asks.

Dad groans. "She'll be fine. You're the one that needs to worry about being alright. Let's go." I giggle at the face Cody makes. Dad doesn't wait and takes off at a brisk jog making Cody rush to catch up. I know my dad, he's going to push Cody to his limit then make him go farther. Maybe this wasn't such a good idea, but then again, Cody needs to be Alpha material. While they're running, I get some exercises in, being mindful of my now-injured leg.

Right around the 45-minute mark, they return from running, I'm assuming, five miles. My dad is breathing harder, but it's a light run for him. Cody is holding his arms behind his head trying to catch his breath. "This should be easier for you." My dad chides.

"I'm used... to running... but not at... that pace. I can see I have... a lot to learn." Cody gets some water then slowly begins to breathe easier.

"As long as you're willing to work, I'll be here every morning." My dad gets some water then grabs his training gear. They both don their gloves and mouth guards then loosen up before meeting in the center of the clearing. I watch on in fascination and trepidation as dad and Cody spar. Cody is stronger and pretty limber for being human, but my dad is an Alpha and will not lose a fight.

After about an hour of back and forth, with my dad giving Cody pointers, Dad lands a few blows knocking the wind out of Cody and he goes down. Dad cracks his neck. "He's pretty tough, I'll give you that, but he needs work. Tessie you're going to have to train him once you leave. He needs to be ready before the elders' meeting. Jerry said they're seriously thinking about making you choose. As of now, I think he could take in Griffin, but Parker and Silas would likely take him." I nod agreeing with his assessment. "But it's not impossible, right? He could be the next Alpha?" I bite my lip, hopeful.

Dad looks Cody over. "If he can prove himself worthy, I'll back him, but he's going to have to take on wolves."

"So I have less than three weeks to get him ready?" Dad just shrugs his shoulder.

Cody begins to stir. Dad offers his hand which Cody takes and gets to his feet. "Tess will be your trainer from now on. She knows what you need and how to work with you, listen to her. "I'll be back tomorrow morning."

Cody looks to me, not quite sure that I'm capable of training him. I cock my brow in challenge. He smirks then nods. "Thanks, Micco. I'll have your coffee and breakfast waiting for you." Dad hums then kisses my cheek. He grabs his gear then heads to his truck. Cody watches as he drives away. "Your dad is fucking tough."

I smile up at him from my seat on the stump. "He is. Your run took 45 minutes. I want you to cut it down to 40 minutes. You'll run with my dad, then again just before sundown. For now 200 push-ups and sit-ups, 100 up-downs, then 100 climbers. After that ladders."

Cody looks at me like I have two heads. "Can you do all that?"

I smile at him innocently. "Of course. That's my daily warm-up. I also do 100 pull-ups, but we'll have to find a branch to suit you first." This sounds like a lot but for a wolf, it's not that bad. It is a workout for the newbies, but the seasoned wolves can do it. Although Griffin throws a fit when I'm in charge of training, it's more because I'm female than it is difficult for him.

"I gotta see this. 100 pull ups?"

"Oh, ye of little faith. Find us a pair of branches and we'll start working." Cody tilts his head as if saying 'alright'. Then starts looking for branches.

"I found some over here."

I get to my feet but it still hurts way too much to walk on my leg. "Cody, can you help me please." Cody comes back through the trees to the

clearing. He squats down and picks me up like I'm a backpack to carry to the tree. "Alright, big guy. I can't really jump right now, you know."

"Oh, right." He takes my hips and lifts me until I'm holding onto the branch.

"Let's go. Get on your branch." I just hang there waiting for him to jump to a branch in front of me. "You count 'em out then you'll have to help me down." I start the first pull up and Cody stays with me until about 66, then he begins slowing down. "Come on, Cody. Don't let a girl best you."

He growls but picks up the pace. "It's not that you're a girl, 67, but that you're my girl 68. I need to be able to protect you. 69."

"Do you really think I need protection?" I ask on the way down from one pull-up and up into another.

"70. No. But I'm still going, 71, to be protective of you. 72. It's who I am. 73. And you're mine to protect. 74."

"I like that. I guess it's a good thing you're sparring with my dad after all."

"76. Yeah. He's fast. 77. And I won't hold back next time 78, we spar. 79."

"Don't ever hold back in a fight. Even just sparring. We can make that a rule if you need it."

"84. Do you think I need rules? 85"

"For training, yes. For life with me absolutely." Cody stops moving with sweat dripping down his face. "Come on, big guy. 15 left. You can do it. Seeing you like this is sexy as hell."

Cody gives a small chuckle then starts up again. "86. Right back at ya, Darlin'. 87." Cody muscles through the last 10 then drops immediately. I

wrap my legs around his body then let go so he doesn't have to use his arms.

"Sit-ups, up-downs, then push-ups. I guess I just get to enjoy the show while you do the up-downs and push-ups. Darn." I say with sarcastic sweetness. He chuckles, but we get working.

After he finishes his ladders, he lays on the ground beside me. "I thought my last trainer was tough."

"What were you doing before?" I ask as I hand him his water.

He sits up on his elbow to take a drink before answering. "5-mile run, at my own pace, then about half of everything else, minus the ladder sprints. I also do weight training."

I lay down facing him with my head in my hand. "This is what we do. We meet your limit then push you to pass it. You did very well today. You still have another run later, but I think you've earned a rest."

He drops his water then takes my waist. "I'm exhausted. I earned more than a rest." He leans forward, forcing me onto my back. "I'll never be too tired to kiss you. You are incredible." He says as he hovers over me, then takes my mouth. His

kiss is sweet yet satisfying. I wrap my arms around his shoulders, holding him to me as I kiss him right back. If my kiss is enough to inspire him to get through a tough workout, I'll gladly take it, I don't even mind the sweat.