Chapter 5

Ali’s POV

Whenever Alpha Ralph’s thumb rubs against the back of my hand, I know what I want to say.

I know what I want to do.

But I can’t.

Right?

Can I?

His skin rubbing against mine is making my head feel foggy and I shut my eyes and rub the side of my face to try to clear it.

Alpha Ralph’s other hand covers my hand so that it’s sandwiched between both of his large ones.

Oh, why does he have to make me feel this way?

“Tess?”

Could it possibly be okay if I stayed?

Am I far enough away from my pursuers?

When I first escaped, I traveled in the wrong direction for four exhausting days before using my spray and going a completely opposite direction to throw him off track.

Did it work? Buy me time?

Maybe I could stay here for just a few days…until my little white bottle runs out.

It would be so nice to pretend to be normal for a while.

It would be really nice to stay with Alpha Ralph for a while…

“Tess?”

Oh! Whoops! That’s me. I'm Tess.

I open my eyes and look up into Alpha Ralph’s brilliant blue ones.

“Will you stay?”

“Can I think about it?”

The corners of his lips curl upward.

“Absolutely.”

His smile is contagious and I find myself staring and smiling in a kind of daze back up at him.

What would it have been like if he hadn't put a stop to last night...?

I have only thought about it every other minute today.

Especially when he smiles like that...

“I can't stay here forever. I can't join your pack.”

I lick my dry lips as I pull my hand out from between his, feeling sorry that I did so even as I did it.

“That is fine. I will take you as long as I can have you.”

My knees feel a little wobbly at his low, sexy, perhaps suggestive words and excitement seems to bubble up in my stomach.

“You are mine and you cannot escape me. This is what happens when you try…”

Spinning around, I cover my mouth as the cold, harsh reality feels like it slaps me in the face with the sudden memory of the last bloody scene before I fled my old pack.

I am behaving selfishly, again.

If I stay…

I have already stayed too long, exposed myself to too many people.

“Actually, I should go.”

My voice comes out a whisper and I feel Alpha Ralph tense behind me.

We stand in silence for what feels like eternity, then his hand is on my shoulder.

“Can you tell me what kind of danger that you are in? I can help.”

I want that to be true, so so much.

But I shake my head.

“I will protect you. You are safe here.”

I sigh and rub my face with the palms of my hands.

“How about we make a deal?”

He takes my silence as confirmation to continue.

A part of me, the part that is feeling all hot and bothered from his hand on my shoulder, really wants him to convince me to stay.

“Stay for the week. Just one week. Help me train the new pack members. Teach me how to relate to them, for them to relate to me. Then you can see if you like it here. Maybe it will turn out that you might even want to stay here in the end.”

I lower my hands to protest, but he continues quickly.

“But that’s okay if you don’t want to, you are free to leave. I will even pay you for the help.”

He removes his hand from my shoulder to pull something out of his pocket.

“This envelope...”

I glance over my shoulder to see him twist the envelope of cash in front of me.

“You can earn it. Then you would have a very healthy purse to fund your…escape or new start...whatever you need it for. I will be happy to give it to you if you stay to help.”

I run my fingers through my ponytail and tug on the end.

Tempting.

Very tempting.

That is a lot of money.

It didn’t feel right to keep it after he was so nice about the whole pick-pocketing and attempted escape through the window ordeal…

But if I earned it…then I could feel like I had even “earned” the money that, um, he already gave me.

He is not wrong about the money helping me get a new start. That amount would get me far. As far as I needed to go.

It could get me to true safety.

But I only have about a week’s worth left of my potion…

And I will need at least two day’s amount of it to cover my scent to get away from here without leaving a trail so that Alpha Ralph and his pack aren’t in any danger.

I mean, it could work…right?

If I keep a low profile and don’t leave the pack territory…

Alpha Ralph seems to know my answer before I even voice it. He grins widely at me and pockets the envelope as I nod in acceptance.

“Okay, I will stay to help. But I can’t stay an entire week. Five days. Tops.”

Alpha Ralph taps his finger against his chin, looking thoughtful.

“I’ll take it. Deal.”

He thrust out his hand again and I eye it cautiously.

Maybe the less touching the better.

The attraction to this man is undeniable and if we keep this up…

What will happen?

The humiliation from last night still stings.

He might kick me out of his bed again?

Talk about embarrassing.

Obviously, the attraction is one-sided.

What is the deal with that any way?

He seemed all for it, seems all for it now, but then stops it before we really do anything?

Hmm.

Wrinkling up my nose, I jut out my chin and give him a professional smile as I shake his hand, ignoring the gentle tingles it gives my fingers, and then pull it back quickly.

Alpha Ralph’s grin widens, and he rubs his hands together eagerly.

“Perfect. I guess I had better let Beta Chris know about the plan.”

He gives me a wink and I can’t help a small laugh in return.

“Better you than me.”

We make our way back inside the large concrete building and Beta Chris cuts through the mats of fighting partners to make his way towards us, looking slightly baffled.

“How’s it going?”

Alpha Ralph looks around the room.

“Not…bad. It seems like the training is going…smoother.”

Alpha Ralph laughs and thumps Beta Chris’s back in a good-natured kind of way.

“That’s a good thing, Chris. That’s what we’ve been wanting. Clearly, Tess here is a huge help.”

He winks at me and pulls me closer, as I had been standing slightly behind him, feeling hesitant for some reason.

“Which brings me to some good news. Tess here just offered to stay for a few days to help us with the training, help us connect more with any newcomers.”

Beta Chris raises his eyebrows and slowly lowers his eyes to look at me, giving a little non-committal grunt in response.

“Tess, was it?”

A moment of panic swells up as I meet Beta Chris’s eyes.

Does he know me?

Does he know who I am, where I came from?

No, he couldn't know me...

I nod a little too enthusiastically, my ponytail swinging against my cheek.

“Yep! That’s my name!”

I give an awkward laugh and both men look at me curiously.

Yeah, way to go, Ali, that wasn’t suspicious at all.

“So, shall I just jump in again?”

Without waiting for an answer, I walk away from the men and to a couple on a mat nearby.

Five days.

I can do this.

It’ll be fine.

Totally fine.

“Great job Tracie! You are defiantly rocking that new spin move.”

We've been training for at least three hours, and I have been working with Tracie for the past two.

I smile at Tracie, who is a pretty girl around my age with a blonde pixie cut, who told me while I was working with her that she had only joined the pack a little over a week ago.

Then she went on to tell me her full story.

Her family had been living as rogues since she was just a tiny baby. She never belonged to a pack, so she always felt like she never truly belonged anywhere.

A few months ago, her entire family was killed when they got too close to an aggressive pack’s territory and she barely escaped herself and has been living on her own since. That is until Alpha Ralph invited her to join his new pack.

She is super sweet and seems excited to be here instead of roaming all alone. Like I am fated to do...but no need to worry about that right now.

Tracie's fighting is still a little rough around the edges.

But that’s okay.

I will make sure she feels more confident in her fighting before my time here is up.

“Thanks for all the tips, Tess! You are such a good teacher.”

She beams at me as she bends to grab a towel and dabs it on her face.

“We should meet up later. I mean, if you want to, we could hang out…”

Her eyes go wide as she waits anxiously for me to answer.

“Sure.”

She beams again and heads towards the lockers.

“Nice work yourself today.”

Alpha Ralph steps beside me in just his athletic shorts and no shirt.

To say that he has been distracting me ever since he took it off an hour ago, would be a wild understatement.

Not only is he ridiculously tall, almost as tall as his Lycan Beta, he has these incredible, lean muscles that bulge and flex every time he moves.

It’s a problem.

A problem that I would have a lot of difficulty hiding if it weren’t for that white spray bottle in my backpack.

Thankfully, he can’t smell my overwhelming lust for him, or the desire to run my hand over his broad chest, down those hard, bumpy abs…

“Tess?”

Oh s**t.

I bend down to tie my not-untied shoelaces to hide the flaming of my cheeks.

If I don’t stop this dopey eyed drooling over him, then the spray is pretty much useless.

Speaking of spray, my stomach does a little swooping sensation as I glance at my wristwatch.

I am cutting it close until I am due for my next spray. I better get up to my room, fast.

“Want to grab lunch?”

“Huh? Oh, uh, yeah, sure. I have to shower first though.”

I straighten up and glance at the door.

“I’ll walk with you. I need a shower too.”

Alpha Ralph throws his shirt over his shoulder and I watch the movement, a drop of sweat catching my eye and I distractedly follow it's path as it drips down the middle of his abs, all the way down, into the waistband of his shorts.

I swallow and look away, feeling his eyes on me, and make my way to the door, passing Beta Chris who is frowning at his cell phone.

We are barely a few feet out of the building when Alpha Ralph stops and his lips form an ‘O’ as he looks ahead, then breaks into a smile, and I follow his eyes curiously.

An attractive woman, tall, thin, with brown shoulder-length, wavy hair, is practically skipping as she makes her way towards us, waving excitedly at Alpha Ralph.

The wolf inside of me stirs as I cross my arms over my chest and watch the pretty girl smile at us, feeling a ridiculous desire to try the new flip kick that Sandy showed me on her face.

Who is she?

Who is she to Alpha Ralph?

I could totally take her.

I am so intent on watching this woman make her way towards us from a far distance, that I don’t notice Alpha Ralph leaning close to me until I feel his hot breath against my ear, making my entire body light up.

“Forgot to mention, my sister arrived last night. Right after you left my room, actually.”

I glance over at him in relief.

Sister.

That's his sister?

Oh, okay.

That’s cool.

Relaxing, I smile as we wait for her to make her way towards us, enjoying the fact that Alpha Ralph is standing so close to me that I can feel the heat from his arm against my shoulder.

Wait, what is wrong with her?

She freezes, mid step, her face going slack in shock.

“What’s wrong with…”

The door creaks behind us and we both turn to watch Beta Chris step out, looking tense.

He takes a step and then stops, staring past us.

Alpha Ralph and I both spin back around to look at his sister, then back at Beta Chris.

“No.”

Alpha Ralphs says in a quiet breath.

“No.”

Swiveling back and forth between them, it dawns on me just as Alpha Ralph steps in front of Beta Chris, his arms outstretched and violently shaking his head, his eyes bulging.

“No! Nope! Uh uh! No way in hell. Not happening!”

I cover my mouth with my hand as I watch Alpha Ralph, who is clearly struggling with the new development happening right before our eyes.

“Turn around, sis! Turn around! This is not happening! There is obviously some sort of mistake!”

Beta Chris doesn’t move. His face is completely unreadable, which is in stark contrast to Alpha Ralph’s, um, enthusiastic denial.

Which is totally not funny.

Alpha Ralph puts his palm against Beta Chris’s chest, still shaking his head, and I look back around just in time to see his sister shift in an explosion of shredded clothes, and take off towards the woods.

Honestly, I would run away too if I had just mated with Beta Chris.