

Chapter 1

"I heard there's going to be two werewolves at school this semester," Carmen says, turning on the blinker to turn into the school parking lot.

I shrug, fixing my hair in the mirror. "They've probably been at school with us since kindergarten. Its only this year that werewolves have to register with the CFSS." The Committee for the Safety of Students. I've never really given it much thought, mostly because I've never known a supernatural being personally. I don't plan on it either.

Carmen turns quickly right in front of another car, which stops on it's breaks and honks. "I was here first, idiot!" she yells through my window, her silver hoop earrings swaying as she shakes her head.

"Can't you be a little more careful when you drive?"

Carmen just looks at me. "Nope."

She pulls the Tempo into an empty parking spot near the front, where kids and teachers are already buzzing around the doors. "Hopefully some freshman didn't steal our table." She grabs her backpack, her dark eyes scanning the area.

"We had it last semester, didn't we? Plus, we stole it when we were freshmen," I laugh, slamming the door.

"That's not the point. Come on, I see Adam and Deon."

We head over to the fountain where Adam and Deon are, sitting with a guy I've never seen before. He has blue highlights in his black hair and he's wearing an ACDC t-shirt over a white long sleeve tee. He looks like he really doesn't want to be here.

"Hey guys," Adam says, shifting his black baseball cap on his head. His brown hair flips out from under it, which I think is kinda cute. "This is Anker. He's new this year," he nods at the blue/black haired guy, "And Anker, this is Carmen and Tess," he looks at me with his crooked smile.

"What grade are you in?" Carmen asks immediately; she made it clear back in June that she wasn't gonna be "frolicking" with any freshmen her senior year.

"Junior," Anker says, not looking at her. Yep, he was angry. Carmen nods just as the first bell rings. Anker gets up and walks away without a word.

"What's his problem?" I ask Adam, waving goodbye to Carmen.

Adam shrugs and holds the door open for me. "I think he's mad because he had to switch schools. What do you have first?" he pulls a crumpled piece of paper out of his jeans pocket.

I look down at my schedule and scowl. "AP Biology."

"I have painting 1. Wanna trade? I can't paint shit."

And I can? "No. I gotta go up to C hall so I'll see you at lunch. We can see if we can guess who the werewolves are," I joke, but I see

something flash across his blue eyes that I can't put my finger on. He looks so tanned. I'm almost jealous.

"Yeah, sure. See you later," he says quickly, distracted. He disappears into the crowd, leaving me staring after him.

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I went through the day like I was in a daze, occasionally seeing Adam or Carmen in the hall and trying to keep up with all the AP classes my step-dad signed me up for. I'm going to punch him the day I graduate. Just four and half months to go.

I stop at my locker, waiting until the last minute to enter McAllister's classroom. My brother Ben caused a lot of trouble in his class so I'm pretty sure he'll hate me. Hope won't change anything but I still hope anyway.

"Hey, Tess."

I jump, nearly dropping my math book on my foot. "Deon, you scared me," I accuse when I see Deon's familiar honey brown hair sticking out of his hood.

"Sorry. Just thought I'd say hi," he pretends to be offended. Me, Deon, Adam and Carmen have been friends since we all got put at the same table in Mrs. Hadley's 3rd grade class. I still haven't figured him out.

I straighten, "Hi."

A group of people walk by and Deon steps out of the way, leaning against the lockers. I've always wondered what people think of him, having never taking his hood off and all.

I slam my locker. "You have history next?"

He frowns. "Yeah. With McAllister. So does Adam and Carmen."

My day just got a whole lot better.

We enter the classroom right when the bell rings and sit at the back table by Adam and Carmen. Adam raises his eyebrows at me but doesn't say anything.

"Tess! You'll never believe what happened..." Carmen babbles on but I space her out without meaning to. Anker just entered the classroom, and the moment his eyes lock on mine I feel cold all over. He looks away after a moment and hands a late pass to the bald man whom I'm sure is McAllister. The cold dissipates as soon as he looks away.

"He's got all the same classes as me," Adam mutters with discontent. He sees me looking at me and tightens his jaw. I think he didn't want anyone to hear him.

Anker sits down at our table. And just by observing I see Deon throw Adam a warning look and Adam nods. I start to wonder if they know something about Anker when McAllister speaks, his voice louder than it should be. Carmen gives me the evil eye for not paying attention to her and looks at McAllister. I forget what I was wondering.

“Welcome to second semester AP World History. I’m Mr. McAllister. First off, I need to do a seating chart-” there was a chorus of boos from everyone in the class, including Carmen, “Now, not an assigned seating chart. I just want you to tell me your names so I can write them on a chart. No need to freak out.” He smiles, and I realize he’s younger than I thought he was. Maybe like 30? I should ask Ben.

He starts going to tables, writing on a sheet of paper.

“Didn’t Ben have him?” Carmen brushes her fingers through her dark curly hair.

I nod. “For world history his sophomore year.”

“Your brother is crazy. He was probably McAllister’s least favorite student, right?” Adam asks, leaning back on two legs of his chair. I’d like to know how he does it.

“By far the least favorite. He-” I was about to tell a story of something Ben did in his class but McAllister appeared at our table.

“Names?” he asks, pen ready to write. He looks at each of us.

“Carmen Velasquez.”

“Adam Foster.”

“Deon Sawyer.”

“Tess...McKay.” I hesitate on my last name. McAllister grimaces but doesn’t say anything. He looks at Anker who looks back at him with a burning stare.

"Anker Creed," he says coolly. McAllister writes his name down and goes to the next table.

"Interesting name," I say to him, just trying to be nice and start a conversation.

He glances at me. "Really? I thought it was too," he sneers.

Adam throws him a look and Anker sighs heavily, "It's Danish," he says, trying to hold back some insult that was probably about to come out of his mouth. "You know, like the doughnut." He starts tapping his pencil against his denim clad knee rapidly.

"So you're named after a doughnut?" Carmen leans across the table to look at him, her charm bracelet clanking against the wooden table top.

He cocks a brow at her and looks away.

Adam and Deon are staring at each other, some unknown words flowing between them. They've done that more in the last couple years.

McAllister starts talking at the front of the class but none of us are really listening, except for maybe Adam who we rely on to tell us what's going on his class.

Carmen catches my eye and sneaks me a little piece of paper. I smile and unfold it.

Is it just me, or is something weird going on between the 3 of them? I'm getting the oddest feeling.

I look up at her but she's busy drawing on the front of her blue binder. I take a pen out the side pocket of my backpack and write back.

It's me too. Text later??

I throw the note at her and she reads it. She nods.

Some kid wearing a Mario tee sets five papers on the table and goes to the next. I think his name is Matt.

McAllister opens the blinds and sunlight streams in through the high arched windows that this part of the school has. It's the older part of Benson High School where all the old windows are and all the old, smelly lockers that squeak when you open them. I blink in the sudden brightness and somebody turns off the lights.

Deon is the first to grab a paper. "Make a mini poster on any major event in history. Must have color, a picture, a summary, and works cited. Due tomorrow. It's a partner assignment," he explains.

"Excellent," Adam takes a paper. "Wanna work together?" he looks up at me, practically pleading with his crystal blue eyes.

I take a paper also. "Sure."

"My place or your place?" he asks, and Anker narrows his eyes at him. I think maybe he's a little different.

"Your place. Both my mom and Dwayne will be home tonight. You won't want to be there. I don't want to be there."

Adam nods, understanding. That's one of the things I love about him. He's so understanding and never really makes me explain anything. He minds my business. And I try to mind his. Not as much though, unfortunately. I'm too curious.

"I'll text you when you can come over. I got some...stuff to take care of after school," he says the last part looking at Anker. He doesn't know I see him.

"Yeah, you do," Anker says, glancing at Deon then back at Adam.

"Ok," I agree reluctantly, wondering what Dwayne, my step-dad, was gonna accuse me of today when I got home.

Anker doesn't speak for the rest of period.

Chapter 2

As soon as Carmen dropped me off, I went around back so I could sneak in without Dwayne seeing me. I glance at Adams' house next door as I cut across the patio; his truck wasn't in the driveway so he's not home yet. Dang it.

Once I'm in my room, I toss my backpack on my bed and tangle the hair tie out of my hair. I throw my leather jacket on my beanbag on top of my pajamas from last night and sit in front of my make-up table. My blue-gray eyes looked misty against my cascading brown hair. Same old Tess.

"Theresa?"

I jump when I see my mom appear at the door in the mirror "Don't call me Theresa anymore. My name is Tess."

"No, your name is Theresa. I'm glad you're home; we need to have a talk about colleges." She folds her slim arms over her chest and looks around my room, her eyes lingering at the few piles of clothes on the floor and the papers strung out all over my bed. "And about cleaning your room."

I mentally roll my eyes. I've already applied to Portland State. She knows that. Or at least I thought she knew that. "I have to do a project with Adam. It's due tomorrow."

And like I summoned it or something, my phone beeps with a text from Adam. I jiggle my phone at her, already taking my cardigan off.

She sighs heavily, looking disappointed. "Be home before dark. Three girls have disappeared in Portland now. Dinner's at five with the family," she smiles at the last part but I'm too busy digging for my red Portland State sweatshirt in my hamper to really take notice to what she's saying. Yes, I'm messy, but really: who cares?

I pull it out of the bottom and shrug it on, sticking my phone in the back pocket of my jeans. I fly past my mom, who just stares at me while she follows me down the stairs.

Family dinner. What is she thinking? Dwayne is *not* my family.

I throw open the back door just as Adam is getting out of his truck. Anker is with them, and I can tell that they're arguing: Adam only slams his door that hard when he's angry.

I decide to but in. "Hey," I say, walking up to his driveway.

He turns, startled, but calms when he sees it's me. "Hey. Is it cool if Anker works with us? His partner bailed."

Anker gives me a cold look. My first instinct is to say no, but he's kinda already here. "I guess."

We get settled in Adams' living room on the floor in front of his makeshift coffee table (made of two crates and an old window. Creative, right?)

He turns his stereo on to break the awkward silence. "Ok, so, what do ya want to do the project on?" he asks, looking at both me and Anker.

Anker grunts. "World War 2."

"Everyone does World War 2. We should do like the assassination of Kennedy or..." I look around the room trying to come up with something else. I snap my fingers, "The Salem Witch Trials."

Adam scrunches his nose. "Shay won't like that."

Oh. I forgot. Shay was one of the 7 witches that went to our school. She was in our history class.

"Well then, we'll do the assassination of Kennedy," Anker says, and his eyes flash a weird color of red but they're back to his normal sea-green eyes a second later. I wonder briefly if he's one of the werewolves. I don't know where that thought came from.

Adam nods and sets in laptop on the floor in front of us.

"I'm gonna use the bathroom first," I get up to head to the bathroom door behind the couch.

"Good to know," Anker sneers.

I roll my eyes even though he can't see. Once in the bathroom, I splash cold water on my face. I don't like being here with Anker. It makes everything feel contaminated. I dry my face on my sleeve.

I was about to leave when I hear them talking, in hushed voices.

“Human? Really Adam? You can do way better than a human.”

That was Anker.

“I’ve known her since 3rd grade, before the shift.” Adam says.

Something clinks on the glass of the coffee table.

“So? You need to get rid of her. Riordan will be pissed when I report to him. This is exactly why he asked me to go to school with you so we can keep an eye on you,” Anker snaps, his voice low and angry.

“I’m not 8 anymore, Crank. I can handle myself.”

The coffee table thing creaks. “Whatever. That’s a conversation you’ll have to have with Riordan later. You better be there tonight.” That was Anker. Sounded like he was leaving.

“I’ll be there. I always am, aren’t I?”

Ankers’ answer was the slamming of the front door. I wait a few minutes then I come out of the bathroom, trying to put on my poker face so he know I didn’t hear them, even though he owes me some answers now. I’d like to know who Riordan is and who Anker really is. And why Adam called him Crank.

Adam sees me and his angry expression softens. “Anker had to leave. Looks like it’s just you and me.” He smiled at me, but it really doesn’t reach his eyes. I decide to play dumb for a little bit until I can come up with a plan to get him to talk. I know I’m being nosy but that’s just my nature. I mean, I tell him everything.

“Oh ok, that's fine,” I sit down on the carpet next to him, my shoulder brushing his shoulder. He's tense; I glance at his hands which are shaking slightly. He gets this way when he's nervous, or if he's hiding something big. I know him.

I sigh. “I heard you guys talking.”

He looks at me with wide blue eyes, which I can see because he's not wearing his hat for once.

“What did you hear?” he demands, turning toward me.

I hesitate, wondering if I should say nothing or if I should really just tell him the truth. “Someone named Riordan, something about me being human is bad, you called Anker Crank, um...the shift, you not being 8 anymore, and Anker going to school to keep an eye on you,” I say truthfully. His face goes from angry to confused to scared in a matter of seconds.

“All that, huh?” he mumbles so quietly I almost don't hear him. He rubs his forehead with his hand, thinking.

“Yeah, all that. Care to explain? I mean, you don't have to tell me everything. I was just wondering what it was all about,” I say, cutting him some slack.

He looks at me with sad eyes and sighs. “You probably should know everything. I don't want anything to happen to you, but I don't want you

to be in the dark. You should be prepared if anything does happen to you.”

I squint. “Um, ok,” I really don’t know what to say.

He looks into my eyes, determined. “I’m a werewolf.”

My jaw drops.

His mouth twitches but he doesn’t smile. “Before you say anything, I need to explain from the beginning,” He stops, obviously waiting for my conformation.

“Ok, well go on,” I say. Werewolf? Really? Somehow that doesn’t surprise me. Jumper, my old Jack Russell Terrier, never liked him.

He takes a deep breath. “Ok, so you know my mom left when I was 8, a couple weeks after I met you, Carmen, and Deon. Well a couple weeks after that, I was in the woods behind my house; I was upset about something I don’t really remember. I was walking and then I saw something, like a shadow of some sort of animal, run past me and a branch snapped in front of me. I got scared and started running toward my house but I didn’t make it. The wolf tackled me from behind and I fell to the ground, it on top of me breathing stale, hot breath into my face. I screamed and it dug its canines into my neck. It was this hot white pain that I’ve never felt before and I passed out. I woke up 3 hours later in that exact same spot. I was still bleeding when I got back to my house to see my dad was gone, never to be seen again. I turned into a werewolf that

next night on the full moon. That is a story we'll save for later. Hunter is the wolf that bit me. Hunter Riordan. He's the leader, or the alpha, of the pack. He calls us The Drifters," He stopped, his eyes flooding with pain and regret. I went to talk but he silenced me. "I'm not done. Let me finish before I can regret this. Anker Creed is Hunters' second in command. He's been a wolf since he was 12. We call him Crank because he's on way too many drugs. Then there's Hunters' girlfriend Mercedes Rayne, who's been a wolf since she was 11. She used to go to school with us but she dropped out sometime in middle school. Then Blaine Woodruff, he was bitten when he was 13. I don't know him very well. Then there's me, and this girl named Victoria Winters. I don't know when she became a werewolf. And then there's Deon. Deon Sawyer."

I gasp. "Deon's a werewolf? How?" There's probably a whole a fleet of people I know that are supernaturals.

"Yeah, Hunter bit him 2 years ago. It's gonna be interesting have him *and* Anker at school this semester." He looks down at the floor.

"So, who are the two registered werewolves at school then?" This is insane. I can't believe I've know about werewolves all my life and I hadn't realized by best friend was one.

He glances back up at me. "Me and Anker. Deon isn't registered. His dad wouldn't allow it."

We're silent for a moment, and Adam starts to tare up paper into little tiny pieces that flutter onto the carpet as he drops them.

"That secret has been clawing at my insides all my life."

I nod, watching him rip the paper. "So, you can only shift at the full moon?"

He drops the remaining paper and brushes it off his lap. "No, but the first shift is always at the full moon. I can shift any time if I get angry enough. I can shift deliberately but it's harder. The others can too."

I'm sort of intrigued. I've always wanted to know more about the werewolves and the other supernaturals but they don't teach it in school because of "racism issues". I heard a story once about this kid who got turned into a vampire came back to his middle school and killed the teacher that failed him. "What's happening tonight?"

He looks at me again, and it makes my heart leap. "Well, it's sort of confidential, but since you're here and I've told you everything else...it's a meeting. Hunter wants to discuss "assignments,"" he finger quotes assignments, "That's all you should know. I'm surprised you believe me."

I shrug. "The Adam Foster I know wouldn't lie to me. He just wouldn't tell me so he didn't have to lie," I tease, smiling. He smiles back, looking a little relieved. "Plus, I've always known werewolves exist. It wasn't that too big of a shock."

“You’re amazing you know that? Just like your eyes,” he says, and I feel heat rush to my cheeks.

I shove him playfully. “Oh, stop it.”

We’re interrupted by phone buzzing. I pull it out of my back pocket to see my moms’ picture blinking on the screen.

“Don’t tell anyone, okay? I mean it. I don’t want anybody else to know,” Adam stands up, a serious look on his face. He helps me up, and I get lost in his eyes; the ring of my phone completely blocked out.

We stand there until my phone beeps, letting me know I have a missed call. “I…better go.”

“Yeah. Tell Dwayne and your mom it’s all my fault, okay?” he holds his front door open for me and places his hat back on his head, backwards this time.

I laugh. “Okay.”

I’m halfway across his lawn, heading to my house, when he stops me. “Tess, wait.”

I turn around and all of the sudden he’s kissing me with such force and warmth I lean into him, kissing him back. His arms wrap around my waist and my hands find his neck, his hair and the tip of his hat brushing against my wrists. Then just like, he pulls away and flashes me his crooked smile.

“See you tomorrow, Tess.”

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