



Chapter 0013

But no. Rafe grabbed my arm and hauled me towards the last task of the day: a five-mile run that left me gasping for air because Jesse and Rafe refused to let me finish last again and made me keep up with them the whole time. Honestly, I had thought I was a good runner – I’m usually pretty fast – but my exhaustion, combined with my lack of sleep, combined with my realization that Jesse and Rafe really have been going easy on me all these years?

Let’s just say that when they drag me back to the barracks, each with a hand under my arm to help hold me up, they’re not doing it for show.

“I hate this,” I grumble, glaring at them. “I hate boy stuff.”

“Yeah, well,” Jesse breathes, his words barely audible from his stupid smirking mouth, “you’re the one that wanted to be a boy.”

Rafe just glares down at me, drawing my eyes to him. “What?” I ask, frowning. “I tried!”

“You didn’t,” he says, frowning at me in turn. “You gave up. A lot. If you’re going to make it, Ari, you’re

going to have to give it your all. You're going to have to –“

“Oh, shut up,” I grumble, yanking my arms from theirs and willing myself to walk on my own, pushing myself to keep up with their long strides. “I can do it. I just need more sleep.” And to not have my wolf howling after my mates constantly.

“That’s better,” Rafe snaps, his eyes again focused forward. “Hurry up, we want to get good showers – the hot water will be gone if we’re last.” Jesse nods eagerly and we all pick up our pace as we enter the barracks. When we get to our bunks we all yank off our boots as fast as we can and then hurry into the bathroom, beating the majority of the candidates there.

As we grab bathing packs off the shelf – just towels and soap again – I see Jesse and Rafe look longingly at the tiled rows of open showers which are already spurting hot water. But then they glance at me, sigh, and join the short line for the three curtained showers with me again standing between them.

I scowl, hating that they’re again giving up what they really want to stand with me, and I glance at the long row of open showers, hoping desperately that there’s still hot water by the time we have a chance to get in

– and that the shower stalls aren't disgusting already, like they were yesterday –

But suddenly my mouth drops open as I realize what I probably should have noticed instantly –

Which I only didn't notice because I'm a naïve idiot who had the sense knocked out of her in training –

But all the guys that are standing in front of the open showers?

They're completely naked.

My jaw drops open with what I swear is an audible click as my eyes go wide and scan the line of naked boys in front of me, some of them laughing and chatting with each other as water streams over their bare shoulders, the skin of their backs –

Some of them are quiet though, clearly thinking through their day as they run the bar of soap over their muscled chests, dipping between their legs –

My eyes go even wider as one guy half turns towards me, tilting his head back and closing his eyes as he takes the spray of water on his face. Because it's...it's Luca.

I. Stop. Breathing.

My entire world narrows to the sight of him before

me – to the way that the water runs down his muscled chest, and ripples along his abs, drifting like a river all the way down to the defined v-shaped muscles alongside his hips –

Luca twists his bottom half away before my eyes can drift any lower, but this just allows my gaze drifts over his perfect ass – god, I didn't even know there was anything to like about a guy's ass before today – but then my attention moves to the swell of his biceps, and then to his hands, which run lazy strokes through his water-darkened hair as he exhales a deep breath, water dripping down his cheeks – over his lips –

Rafe and Jesse step forward.

I do not.

I stand transfixed, staring, practically drooling at the sight of my mate –

Rafe suddenly turns back to me and goes still, his eyes flaring. “Oh my god,” he groans, grabbing me and yanking me forward before smacking me lightly on the back of my head. Jesse frowns at us for a second and then, realizing what happened, bursts out laughing.

“Ari,” Rafe growls, pushing me in front of him and

turning me decidedly away from the view of my gorgeous, naked mate. "What is wrong with you!?"

I blush horribly and don't answer, doing everything I can to cool the reddening of my entire face before someone else notices.

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