

Alpha Kael

TWO

~Jada

I'm not an easily intimidated girl. Never have been. But no one has induce a cold chill across the surface of my skin like the woman in front of me.

Her eyes are a steely, intense hazel. Usually hazel is a warm, inviting colour. Not in this case. Her dark hair is pulled away from her face, revealing the sharp facial structure created by her jaw and her cheekbones. I don't know what hole she crawled out of, but it's clearly a very immaculate one.

"Is your name Jada Luccana Michaels?" she asks coolly. Her accent is Discipline Pack bred, but there is something about her that seems unnervingly unfamiliar. Foreign.

I reach for the cool I keep deep within me. "Who's asking?"

Ignoring the sharp glare Mistress Cunningham shoots me from the corner of my eye, I continue to smile sweetly. She returns my smile tightly, lacing her fingers together.

"You may refer to me as Miss Prior," she tells me. Her tone is no nonsense. Miss Prior it is, I suppose. "I am a representative for a corporation who took interest in your speech. I am here to inquire if you are interested in joining us for a period of time."

"My speech?" I recall flatly. "I didn't say anything."

By the look on Prior's face, I'm not catching onto something very obvious. "We are interested in your defiance. I spoke to your Mistress earlier and she expressed you don't fit in here very well. You also seem to have a knack for not following the rules."

What kind of backwards world have I stepped into?

"It's not a knack," I say tiredly.

I'm walking along the thin line of patience she is offering. If she is so interested in my defiance, this shouldn't surprise her. In fact, she should adoring this. However, the tensing of her jaw muscles, and the slightest frown line above her brow suggests otherwise.

"There is a competition, that requires a great amount of commitment, that we are certain will be a great experience for you," Prior suggests, that rather fake smile gracing her face again. She could at least try seem genuine.

“A reform, if you will,” Cunningham cuts in.

My expression twists. “If you’re a representative, you should be doing a better job of explaining this. Currently, sweeping criminals cells for a living seems like a better time than this.”

“Then let me explain,” she says calmly, although poison seethes between her words. “There is a competition only twelve subjects are selected for. Three are eliminated at a time, before only three are left. Those three shall work a lucrative job that includes many perks. Such as working for the Alpha himself. And travelling, even.”

I take a moment to answer - letting them all anticipate my next move. “Okay. Now I’m interested. However, I’m still unsure on what this whole competition is about. And why I’m good for it? Let’s be real, I’ll not even make it through the first round, no matter what it is.”

“You don’t know that,” she says, swallowing some kind of snide remark. At least that’s what I assume that expression belongs to. “Unfortunately, this is highly confidential, which means that I can’t tell you exactly what the competition entails. You will just have to believe me, and sign the contract.”

I raise an eyebrow at her. “That doesn’t sound reasonable, does it?”

“Many will never receive such an honour. Guarding cells in utter darkness at all times, with no reprieve will not reap rewards as lucrative as these,” she tells me.

She reaches for a briefcase, pulling it up to her lap. Unclipping it, she delicately pulls a piece of paper out, laying out in front of me. A single page contract. I go to reach for it, but she slaps it away with the opposite hand that holds a ball point pen.

“Listen. We are taught in this Pack that faith should be opposed. So, I can’t be faulted for not really thinking this is going to work out for me,” I remind her, leaning back in the chair.

“Completely understandable,” she says sourly. “But imagine an auspicious life of travelling, or working for your Alpha. I promise you, this contract applies only to your acceptance into the competition. We have another contract to be signed later, once things are explained to you in detail.”

I weigh my options in my mind.

“Alright, I’m in,” I say abruptly, much to the surprise of everyone in the room. I motion with my fingers for her slide the pen over to me. “I have nothing to live for at this point, so I’m in.”

The truth is, I had accepted the fact that my life would most likely entail being locked underneath the ground, a slave to a prison warden. I would escape eventually, surely, however, in order to remain inconspicuous, I would have to work for a few months at least. And I dreaded such a job. I hated the idea of it with every fibre in my bones. As much as I don’t admit it, the idea of this competition, or potentially being able to travel and see the rest of the land seems very appealing.

I sign the paper before allowing Miss Prior to take it back off me. She attempts to conceal her triumphant smile, but I can see the underlying smugness in that smile. She's achieved her goal.

She plucks a phone out of her pocket as she stands. "I have a phone call to make. These men behind you will escort you out to the car."

Glancing over my shoulder, two very broad shouldered men stand behind me, looking at the far wall. One is bigger than the other, with bulkier muscles and scruffy blond hair. The other seems meeker, but as intimidating as the other. I turn back around, looking at Miss Prior in surprise.

"Now?" I question.

"We have to be prompt," she tells me, punching numbers into the screen of her phone. "This is a one chance thing. You don't get another if you had said no. We leave now. You will need to be briefed by sunset."

With that, she swiftly walks out the door, leaving me stunned and speechless. Did this really happen? I have no idea what I signed up for, but regardless, I'm anxious.

"You should go," is all Mistress Cunningham says before she also departs.

I don't waste much time. When I ask the men if they would stay here while I collected my belongings, they refused, insisting I move with words, then by physical contact, which I ver much despised. Grabbing my arms, they push me out the Halls, and out the building. Mercifully enough, everyone is too distracted by their own ministrations to notice my situation.

I haven't left this institution in years. So stepping foot out, feeling the freedom surround me, is euphoric enough, despite the men plastered to my side.

Their car is a sleek dark blue vehicle which the blond man opens for me. I look in, and then around me. The building behind me stretches tall, shadowing the courtyard. There is a massive scale fence to keep any one who wanted to escape in. I was never that foolish. I'm marvelling more at seeing the clear blue sky in real life, then through a foggy window.

I take my seat in the car, the door being slammed behind me. This is real. I inhale the leather upholstery smell as I watch Prior skip down the steps, before joining us in the car.

"Where are we going?" I question, as the car starts up, and we pull out of the courtyard.

Prior turns in her seat to look at me. "The institute where you will live, train and compete for however long you last. It's on the other side of the Pack, so sit tight."

I'm too interested in seeing the rest of the Pack to get bored in the hours that follow. The place as institutionalised as I have always assumed. Every business district is immaculate, neighbourhoods tidy, prisons kept hidden behind large fences. By the time we had made it to

where we needed to be, I've convinced myself I must have seen everything possible in this Pack.

But when we arrive, I've decided I've never seen anything like this.

An incredibly large, looming wall shadows the gate. It must be made of obsidian or something, because it's large, thick and ebony black. As far as I can see, it reaches. In front of the car is a gate which opens upon arrival, and we glide on through.

The other side opens up onto a smooth asphalt road. Around are bare fields, surrounded in short fences. In the distance, we approach too large buildings. One is a home, I assume, which is surrounded by another wall - not nearly as large as the border one. It conceals most of the building beyond.

We cruise past that one, and continue on, the road turning into gravel.

My home for an unknown period of time approaches quickly. From what I can see, there are multiple buildings scattered in close proximity, paths leading to each. The middle is the smallest, only one story. While the others around it are much larger and bulkier.

"Welcome to your new home," Miss Prior says, turning around to smile at me.

What have I gotten myself into?