

Chapter 34

Violet

With a lump in my throat, I stared at the guy who always seemed to walk like he owned the place. His hair was in a bun, his black shirt hugged every line of muscle, and he looked so good in those pants.

Too fucking good, and I despised myself for noticing.

While Kylan didn't give me any time of the day, Dylan, who was right beside him, shot me a smile which I had returned.

Since when did those two get so close anyway?

And where was Nate?

I didn't have to wonder long. The door opened, and Nate walked in, immediately locking his eyes onto mine. He looked handsome as always, with that friendly, approachable smile that never seemed to vanish.

My heart skipped a beat, and I wasn't sure if it was from relief or nerves. After days of no contact, seeing him brought a confusing rush of emotions.

What had changed his mind, and how could he casually smile at me as if he hadn't just agreed to taking my virginity?

I gave him a smile in return, although my lips slightly trembled. My expression looked anything but natural, but at least I tried.

"Looks like everyone's here!" Rochwall called out, walking over with a clipboard in his hand. He squeezed his eyes, looking around the room.

I glanced at the equipment around us, wondering what he would make us do today.

I just hoped I could make it through without embarrassing myself.

"You know what," Rochwall grinned, tossing the clipboard into the air. "Since today is our first training, and my wife was in a good mood this morning—we're going to freestyle!"

His announcement was met with loud cheers from the group, but all I could do was look around nervously.

Freestyle?

What did that even mean?

"Alright, partner up! If you're new, find a veteran!"

I swallowed hard, looking around the room, feeling completely clueless. Everyone else paired up rather quickly, while I had no where to go.

I didn't even know what a damn freestyle in combat training was in the first place.

Just as I was about to panic, Nate stood in front of me. "Do you want to pair up?" he asked, motioning with his head for me to follow him.

I nodded awkwardly. "Yeah, sure."

It wasn't really like I had a choice. My heart raced as I followed him to a corner of the training hall. It was Nate—and if anyone could make this less terrifying, it was him—but then there was this thing about that text, that would possibly make things more awkward than they had to be.

I laughed nervously. "What the hell is a freestyle, anyway?"

He chuckled. "It means we entertain ourselves until class is over. No strict drills, just freeform training."

I slapped his back playfully. "Good, that means you'll take it easy on me!"

Nate released a chuckle, and for a moment, it felt like everything was normal between us again, as if that text hadn't happened. Except it had, and I couldn't get it off my mind.

"So, how are you with...uh," he paused, pointing to the mat, "basic conditioning? Push-ups, planks, that kind of thing?"

"Are you serious?" I gave him a look. "You saw me struggling with that backpack last time."

Nate laughed. "Right. So we'll work on that. It'll be fun."

Unfortunately it didn't seem as if Nate had any plans of taking it easy on me. I pouted, feeling hopeless. "Fun for you, maybe."

"I'm looking out for your best interests, I promise. Especially since we have such an..." he glanced over at Kylan, who was paired up with one of the other guys. "...annoying team leader."

I followed Nate's gaze, noticing Kylan wasted no time. He was already doing pull-ups, his muscles tensing with each lift while his face remained calm. He looked like he could do this all day without breaking a single sweat.

A warm feeling rushed through my heart as I thought about the way he held me in those strong arms, how he used those strong hands...

My mind betrayed me as I was forced to think about what he had done to me that night. That walking devil was a man of many talents.

I quickly scoffed, trying to clear the ridiculous thought. "I don't think annoying is the right word for him."

Nate laughed. "Exactly—now, let's start with some push-ups."

I groaned, dropping down to the ground against my will.

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"Are you trying to kill me?"

"Come on, you got this!" Nate encouraged, watching me closely as I struggled through the first set. "Just try to keep your body in a straight line, you're doing great."

"Great?" I huffed, barely able to push myself up again. "This is torture."

"You'll thank me later," he sighed, kneeling.

I watched him from the corner of my eye, and before I had time to react, he placed his hands on my back to adjust my form. His touch was gentle, soft—somehow, it made me feel safe.

Of course I felt safe.

It was Nate.

Our eyes locked, and we both froze, neither of us saying a word. There was this tension, and I knew it was because of the text. I hadn't replied to him yet, and he hadn't brought it up.

Nate wasn't the type to be shy, so I couldn't understand why he hadn't said anything yet. Was he already having second thoughts? The idea of him backing out made me even more anxious.

"Okay," Nate blinked, clearing his throat. "Now let's hold a plank for thirty seconds."

"Thirty? I can barely do five!" I groaned again, dropped down into a plank. I had barely done anything, and my legs were already shaking.

"Less complaining, more focus!" Nate encouraged. "Thirty seconds is nothing—you got this!"

I tried to focus, but all I could feel were my trembling hands under the weight of my own body. Every second felt like an eternity, if not a disaster. "How many seconds left?"

"Thirty more because you keep complaining," Nate grinned.

I glared at him through the pain. "You're the worst!"

"And you're the best—come on," Nate replied, completely unbothered. Even when being called the worst, Nate was still kind. Although my muscles were burning, a smile grew on my lips as I tried to push through.

"So," Nate spoke after a moment of silence. "Did you get my text?"