

## Read Untouchable (Unstoppable 1) by Danielle Hill

Chapter 11

Eleven

Riley

"So, you're like the original sour puss these days, huh? What's eatin' ya, sugar plum?"

Running my tongue over my upper teeth and biting down on it, I inhaled deeply through already flared nostrils. Calm. Just stay calm.

Hard to do when there was a rage coursing through me like venom, threatening to turn me green like The Hulk. Which was the color of the day apparently, what with my entire vision being clouded by jealousy. The kind I was desperately trying to avoid acknowledging.

Fury burned a path right through me. It simmered from the tips of my toes to the top of my scalp.

"O-kay." A hand gripped my elbow firmly, guiding me from my seat and escorting me through the cafeteria, abandoning the tray of leftover food and viciously squeezed water bottle on the table.

"Please explain while we walk it off," Liss chirped as we paced the empty hallway, "why you look like you're a nanosecond away from cutting a bitch with a dirty blade."

Tugging my arm from her hold, I pounded forward through a set of double doors, frustration and anger lashing through me. How did I answer this? How did I explain to her that Reno put his lips on me—uninvited—a few weeks ago and sliced a hole into a can of worms that we should never have opened? That, after ignoring him for days, fighting to force the mangy little beasts back where they belonged and seal it the hell shut again, he'd cornered me by a dumpster on Thanksgiving and tore the lid to my fucked-up feelings clean off. Literally bared my soul. Now a barrage of emotions overwhelmed me, and I couldn't seem to control them. And, as if he sensed my weakness, he'd decided to use it against me.

I laughed, a bitter, cackling sound. "I thought I'd won," I muttered to myself, shaking my head. Slamming my open palms against my head, I yelled my frustration. "God, I'm an idiot!"

I genuinely thought he'd given in that night, heard the plea in my words and backed off, like the gentleman he was not. But no, he hadn't finished messing with me just yet. And what was his endgame? Get in Riley's pants? Was that his goal now that Leon was no longer an issue? He could spout bullshit about wanting more, but really, he wanted to screw me. That's what it came down to and I knew it.

"Whoa! I'm not about to stand here and listen to you talk shit about my best friend if that's what you're thinking, so calm the hell down, back the eff up, and kindly tell me what the hell has been going on." Sympathy shone from her narrowed blue eyes.

"I don't know," I said, inhaling resignedly. "I don't know what I've gotten myself into."

Defeated. I sounded defeated.

I groaned out loud, slipping into the nearest empty classroom and planting my ass down on a hard plastic chair. "Goddammit."

Dragging a chair behind her noisily, she fixed it into place and sank down opposite me. "I know what this is. Don't let him do this to you."

"I'm trying, believe me. I stupidly thought we'd called a truce to this... this... whatever it is. I don't even know anymore. But now he's pulling this shit."

Liss eyed me, thoughtfully. "And by this shit, I assume you're referring to him practically dry-humping Raya at the lunch table, yes?" I felt my jaw clench. She just nodded. "Spill."

I sat silently for a minute, my body still thrumming with agitation. Reno had upped the ante. He was letting me know he'd decide when he was ready to end our game, and that he didn't plan on playing fair. No, he planned on using the dirtiest tactics available to him in order to get his way. Liss raised perfect, sandy brows a fraction, inviting me to hit her with it. She was a safe place, a place of trust. It was me I couldn't trust.

I blew out a heavy breath. "Reno kissed me."

Her head dipped in quiet understanding. "Ah."

Lowering my gaze, I took a moment to consider my next words. I'd gagged and bound my feelings, tossed them in a trash bag, and dumped them in a shallow grave, where I stupidly thought they'd go undiscovered.

Spoiler alert: they did not. I had no plan for what to do with them now, and I couldn't seem to figure out how to stop them.

"Fine. I know you're dying to." I sighed, rolling my eyes. "So why don't you explain it to me."

Tilting her lips to stifle a grin, she clasped her hands together, knocking them against the tabletop. “Okay, so don't kill me.” She paused. I glared. “But you might be the only person in the whole school who's surprised that Reno kissed you. And that includes Leon. And Raya, which is why she hates you so much.”

My eyes slid shut. Why did people keep saying this to me? Making out like Reno and I were a forgone conclusion—some foretold fairy tale—instead of the path to my complete destruction. And by fairy tale, I meant the Grimm brothers variety. Foretold or not, no sane person would seriously think this would ever be an actual love story with cute singing dwarves, sparkly glass slippers and a shiny, happy ending. Ours would be a twisted, cautionary tale. Either way, though, screw that for a laugh. Reno and I weren't meant-to-be, or fated, or any other variation of that bull. This was lust, plain and simple. Unwanted, a little perverse, hugely inconvenient, but whatever. Ultimately, it was goddamn manageable. I could fix it. I could make it go away.

“Fine, oh wise one,” I said on a growl. “Tell me what to do? How do I get myself out of it? Like, stop him invading my head or whatever. Do I get under someone else, do I have to just wait it out or... what... why are you looking at me like that?”

She tucked her bottom lip under her teeth to hide a smirk as I pinned my narrowed eyes on her. “You think you can? Get out of it, that is?”

My brows drew down as I levelled her with a look of total incredulity, one that silently queried whether she was certifiably crazy for asking such a question. “Oh my god, one hundred percent yes! I don't, I mean, it's not an option. I don't... Jesus... I don't want this.”

She whistled low, shaking her head without even trying to hide her self-righteous smirk. Man, I wanted to peel it off and give her a little slap with it.

“Wow, Ri, you lie to yourself so convincingly I might even consider believing you. If I hadn't just witnessed you strangling the shit out of a plastic bottle while imagining it was Raya Mitchell's throat. Your lies are decent, girl, but your knuckles are white and your poker face? Well, that's just fucking atrocious. Reno is back there rubbing his damn hands together.”

Launching to my feet, I speared her with a frosty stare and spread my arms wide. “Oh my God! How the hell is that helping me, Liss? You are the fucking worst!” Her laugh almost pushed me over the edge. “It's not freaking funny! How the hell do I stop him from getting to me? I can't spend every lunch time caring that he's molesting Slutty McSlutson and throttling my water bottle, I'll frickin'... I don't know... implode, or at the very least dehydrate!”

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Her attempts to sober herself had me grinding my teeth. “You know, you're being super fucking unhelpful, by the way. I expected more from you.”

Clearing her throat dramatically, her face pinched tight as if it pained her not to laugh at my joke of a life, she said, “Okay, okay. But seriously, what do you expect? You're giving him exactly what he wants, playing right into his hands. Duh.”

“What?” I snapped.

“You are his biggest challenge, Ri! How do you not see this? He basically feeds off the attention you give him, always has. You know that, right?” She threw her head back at my blank expression. “How did you two leave things, you know, last time you did... whatever it is you do?”

My mouth dropped open as I gaped at her. “We don't do anything. I mean, yeah, we have these... interactions where we antagonize each other or whatever, but this isn't a thing. He kissed me. Without permission. Once. As in one-time event, never happening again, leave me the hell alone or I'll tear off your balls and present them to Old Man Hammersmith's Rottweiler as a chew toy.”

A sardonic brow lifted. “In other words, you presented a giant red flag to an angry as fuck bull who's never heard the word no before? One who's already borderline obsessed with you. And don't give me that look, like I'm talking out of my ass. You know this. Everyone knows this.”

My mouth flopped open and closed like a fish, before I slapped a hand to my head and sank back down. “I know we have this weird need to rile each other but that's as far as it goes. I seriously begged him to back off. I didn't think he'd see that as a challenge.”

“Well, he did. And he's pushing pretty hard for a reaction. She was riding him like a bronco. He did everything except stick his dick in that ho in front of the entire student body.” She quickly thrust a hand out to stop me when I shot out of my seat and scrunched my eyes closed. Her far too accurate recap of our lunchtime entertainment caused bile to rise in my throat and my nails to bite into my skin painfully. “But that show... was all for you, Riley babes. He might have had his hands all up in her junk, but you were all up in his head. Raya knew it, too. And for the love of God, Ri, it can't be news to you that Maddox Renner has had the biggest boner for you since you outgrew your training bra and sprouted those little boobies! Have you seriously not realized that's the reason he can't leave you alone? He might have toned down his efforts when Leon was in the picture, but the chemistry between you two has always been damn near combustible. You can bet he's coming at you all guns blazing now.”

The most mortifying thing about her words? How much they appeased me. The spark that had been a second from blowing as images of Reno and Raya replayed in my head, fizzled out like a faulty firework. The vomit climbing my throat receded like someone hit rewind. Her words left a warm fuzzy feeling that should have had me slapping some sense into myself. I shouldn't be hap

py I was in his head. I shouldn't relish the thought that when his hands were full of another girl's ass, it was mine he imagined, or be grateful for the validation that there was something between us. I shouldn't be. I shouldn't.

But I was.

I sighed heavily as my mind whirled. What if I want more? Clearing my head with a shake, I muttered with as much feigned disinterest and forced conviction as I could muster, "Yeah, well that still doesn't help me, does it?"

The bark of laughter that hit me had my eyes rolling to the back of my skull.

"Oh babe, you're practically purring like a little kitten now. Seems Reno isn't the only one who wants to play dirty, huh?" She curved a brow. "You're in trouble."

Awesome. Just effing awesome.

"You didn't need to ask why it bothers me so much to see him with Raya, did you?"

She winked, mouth hitching up on one side as she clucked her tongue. "I don't ask questions I already know the answer to. You think I don't see you? You're as clear as glass, Riley Mason."

My eyes climbed up Liss' face and landed on her knowing gaze. "Well, you saw more than I did."

"We both know that's not true."

Deep down, I knew she was right... I'd always known it. It just used to be easier to convince myself otherwise.