

Read Untouchable (Unstoppable 1) by Danielle Hill

Chapter 9

Nine

Riley

Thanksgiving was one of the rare occasions my mom cooked. And by cooked, I meant nuked some frozen turkey and canned veg, and made up some powdered potatoes. The cranberry sauce came from a jar left over from last year. It was probably fine to eat.

We sat on the couch with plates in our laps, watching the parade. Normally, Mom would invite Mrs. Weston to join us, but we'd had a wet spell when November hit and she'd taken a fall on soggy leaves taking out her trash. Now she was in Claremont General, her leg in a cast.

I shifted my attention from the screen and looked at my mom. My heart squeezed. Her smile rounded her cheeks and the slightest of crinkles formed at the corners of her eyes. She'd tried. I knew she'd tried. She'd just had no business having a baby at fifteen. And she'd had no business giving her heart away so carelessly, or so young. It was reckless, and I wasn't going down that road. Ever.

I'd successfully avoided, ignored, or dodged Reno for over three weeks now. He'd tried speaking to me the day after the kiss. I'd told him to shove it and never talk to me again. At lunch, Raya perched herself on his thigh as usual and finger fed him fries, shooting daggers at me in between. He let her. If that wasn't the slap in the face I desperately needed, then I didn't know what was. Of course, I didn't love him. It was the heat of the moment. And even if I did harbor some feelings, well, I'd just damned well refuse to. I'd pretend he didn't exist until it didn't matter that he did. People did it all the time.

By the time the parade ended, my mom was snoring softly, her empty plate tilted precariously across her lap and her drained soda can loosely clutched in her fingers. I took both without waking her and scraped the dishes, washing and drying them before grabbing the trash and heading outside to the nearest communal dumpster.

Hushed voices traveled from behind the wood housing and I halted my approach, fingers tightening on the plastic bag in my hand. Straining to hear better, I recognized one of the voices immediately. I should; I heard it in my dreams every night, damn him. Debating whether to carry on or just turn around and cram the trash in our overflowing can, something about the tone of Reno's voice edged me closer, my steps feather light against the leaf-strewn ground.

"Get the fuck out of it, man. It's never just one time, Owen, and you know it."

"I'm not fucking in, Madd. They helped me out. I'm returning the favour. One-time deal, nothing owed. They're even gonna throw in a sweetener, man."

"A sweetener? It doesn't work like that. They saw a fucking opportunity."

"Fuck you. I can handle myself. I don't need my kid brother telling me my shit."

"O, I don't fucking like this—"

"Don't sweat, dude. Look, I gotta split. Gwen's waiting and she won't put out if I piss her off. Ain't got the energy to go looking elsewhere for pussy tonight."

"Christ, you're an asshole."

"Don't worry, little brother, one day you'll grow up to be just like me."

With a guffaw, Owen Renner headed off in the other direction and I plastered my back against the fencing, slinking as far as possible into the shadows and holding my breath as his silhouette danced out of view.

"So... you won't speak to me, but you will listen in on my private conversations."

The scream that left my lips pierced the night sky, probably waking my mom and disturbing every resident in the trailer park. My heart thundered behind my ribs and the garbage fell from my grasp. Palming my chest to stop the frantic thumping, I bent forward.

"You stupid jerk!" I screeched, glaring up at him from my bent over position and gasping for breath. "You scared the ever-loving shit out of me!"

Reno grinned as he settled his shoulder against the wooden post, folding his arms over his chest and crossing his ankles. "Nosy tonight, aren't we?"

I remembered then that I was pretending he didn't exist. Dropping my hand from my chest, I snatched the bag from the ground, shoved the plastic lid up, and dumped the trash inside. Slamming the lid back down with a bang, I lifted my chin and stormed past him. His hand wrapped around my wrist and tugged me backward. My back landed flush against his solid chest and both of his arms wrapped around my middle immediately, locking me in. His mouth dipped to my shoulder, effectively sucking all the fight right out of me in one breath.

Man, this was bad. I didn't speak, didn't dare utter one word or make one move. I needed to think. To figure out how to keep my wits about me and maneuver myself into a position of power so I didn't wind up sucking his face off again.

"This feels familiar." His breath skimmed the skin on my neck, sending a subtle tremor through me.

Clearing my throat, my voice still managed to come out husky and low. Sultry. Jesus. "Yeah? Well, it's not going to play out the way you're thinking."

His fingers strummed across my stomach. "No?"

I shook my head instead of using my newly acquired sex voice and squirmed against his hold.

He loosened enough for me to claw back some breathing room, but kept me trapped in the circle of his arms. The scruff of his jaw grazed my cheek as he murmured, "Why are you fighting so hard?"

"I'm not going to fuck you, Ren."

He was silent but for his soft breaths stirring the hairs at my temple. Then, "And what if I want more?"

My body tensed. "More? More... what?"

"More than sex."

Something like hope bloomed inside my chest. My heart clenched with possibility. I shut that down fast, dragging in a breath and choking out a forced laugh. "You don't do more than sex."

"What if I do now?"

Pushing against his arms, I forced myself out of his hold and spun to face him. The idea of more with Reno, whatever more was, had my blood rushing and heat flooding my cheeks.

But I couldn't. I couldn't let him in, not even an inch. "You think you promise the world and I spread my legs? Is that it?"

His left shoulder lifted in a shrug. "Not making any promises."

He took a step forward; I took one back. And then another, and another, until I had nowhere left to go. His toes brushed mine, that's how close he was. Close enough to smell the earthy, clean scent that was all him. His head dipped until his full lips were almost grazing mine.

“Screw you!”

Reno’s hands circled my wrists and pinned my arms above my head before I knew what had happened. His torso pressed into mine hard enough to crush vital organs. God, I loved it. The feel of him pressed against me. I fucking loved it. My chest swelled with a heavy intake of breath. My hips rolled of their own accord. When I tried to swallow, my throat felt dry and clogged.

Unlike his normally cool, collected facade, when my lust-addled gaze lifted to his, his dark eyes simmered with a burning intensity, the heat blazing from within them promised to melt me from the inside out.

“Reno,” I started, but he pushed himself further into me and my eyes shot wide. I bit my lip. I could feel him. Hard and big against my stomach. Talking suddenly seemed like a physical impossibility.

“I can have sex with any girl. Any time. Including you,” he murmured softly.

I couldn't even balk at the sheer arrogance of his claim. Couldn't lash out at the audacity. It was true. I closed my eyes, partly to shutter them from him, partly because I was starting to fall apart. He was breaking me down. He was right: he didn't have to promise me anything. It wouldn't take much more, and I'd fold like a deck of cards. Which meant I had to fight back. I had to try, goddammit.

“You're right, if you wear me down enough, I'll give in.” Smoldering eyes bored triumphantly into mine, while mine filled with tears. “But please don't make me,” I whispered.

He inhaled sharply, his chest expanding against mine. I wanted him so much it hurt. Physically, emotionally. It ached. I was too vulnerable, too exposed.

I might crave him; I might even love him... but I didn't want to.