

## CHAPTER 105

105 Ava: Training (II) Halfway around the track, Jericho pops up again. There's never been a person I've love-hated as much as him, and I have a f@cked up family that inspires all kinds of hate to go with the love a family shares. "What," I grunt as I lunge forward, stretching my legs and dipping down with my wildly weak arms. They're beyond trembling. They're like jello, and I can barely raise the dumbbells from my sides. But I don't stop. "Straighten your back," Jericho growls, eyeing my pose critically. "Keep your core tight." I adjust my stance, trying to maintain balance as my leg muscles quiver. Jericho grunts, apparently finding my form acceptable, before shoving something at me. "Here. Two pound dumbbells. Never had to start someone so low before." I glance down at the weights, surprised to see they're a cute, bright pink color. They look pristine, like they've never been touched. 105 Ava Training (1) "Did you have someone buy these for me?" The question slips out before I can stop myself. Jericho's eyes narrow. "None of your business," he barks, turning on his heel and storming off towards Lisa, who's struggling through her own set of lunges. I can't help but giggle—in my head, because I have no breath to spare—as I continue the exercise, the small weights clutched in my hands. Despite Jericho's gruff demeanor, the fact that he went out of his way to get these for me sends a unexpected wave of warmth through my chest. It's a small gesture, but it speaks volumes. Beneath his tough exterior, maybe Jericho isn't quite as cold as he seems. "Lift those arms higher, Grey! You think this is a game?" Jericho's voice cuts through my momentary warmth like a knife. I grit my teeth, forcing my arms up despite the burn radiating through my muscles. Sweat pours down my face, stinging my eyes. The weights feel like boulders dragging me down. Nope, I take it back. Jericho is a heartless bastard after 15:23 105 Ava: Training (II) all. A sadistic, merciless drill sergeant determined to break me. I glare at him through the strands of hair plastered to my forehead. He meets my gaze, unflinching, a smirk playing at the corners of his mouth. He's enjoying this, the jerk. "Face forward! Did I say you could stop? Keep going!" He barks, folding his arms across his chest. I resist the urge to throw one of these pretty pink dumbbells at his head. Barely. Instead, I force myself to continue, each lift sending fresh shockwaves of agony through my body. My arms are on fire, trembling uncontrollably. I'm pretty sure this is what dying feels like. But I won't give Jericho the satisfaction of seeing me quit. I'll finish this set if it kills me. "Come on, Ava! You got this!" Lisa calls out from somewhere to my left, her voice strained but encouraging. Of course, Jericho yells at her, too. Poor Lisa. She's struggling as much as I am. Still. I cling to her words like a lifeline drawing 15:23 <105 Ava: Training (II) strength from her support. We're in this together, suffering under Jericho's tyrannical rule. United in our misery. Just a few more reps. I can do this. I have to do this. For myself, for Lisa, and maybe just a little bit to spite Jericho. I summon every ounce of determination I possess, pushing through the pain, the exhaustion, the overwhelming desire to collapse on the ground and never move again. One lunge. Two. Three. Each lift is a battle, a war waged against my own limitations. But I keep going, fueled by sheer stubbornness and the refusal to let Jericho break me. Finally, mercifully, I make it around the track. I have no idea how long it's been. I'm basically dead now. Dropping the weights to the ground, I lose all control over my shaking arms. I'm panting, my heart racing, my entire body drenched in sw

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eat. Do all the Westwood wolves go through this level of hell? "Not even close" Jericho scoffs, answering my unintentionally spoken question. "Not a single Westwood wolf is born as weak as you are right now." If I had the energy, I'd protest his cruel words. But I don't have any. Like I said, I'm basically dead now. Lisa, still struggling through her own exercises, pipes up. It's amazing how she still has the energy to talk. after everything. "Hey, this isn't fair! You're putting me through shifter-level training, and I'm human!" I mean, I'm basically human too... Jericho speaks under his breath, just loud enough for us to hear. "Please. These are conditions for a human baby, and yet all you two do is squawk about it." "Not squawking," I point out weakly, having at some point falling to the ground to stare at the sky and wonder when I'll have bodily function again. "Babies can't even walk until they're toddlers," Lisa mutters. "And that sass right there is exactly why you can't progress, Miss Prissy." I can't help it—a snicker escapes my lips. Jericho's no-nonsense attitude and Lisa's fiery retorts are like watching an unstoppable force meet an immovable object. Lisa grumbles, her voice meant only for my hearing. "I've never been treated this way in my entire life." "Well, maybe you'd be a better person for it if you had been," Jericho snaps back, his tone leaving no room for argument. Wolf ears. Lisa's still not used to those. I close my eyes, letting Lisa's grumbling fade into the background as I focus on the sensation of the cool breeze caressing my sweat-drenched skin. It's a small respite from the grueling workout Jericho just put us through, and I'll take any moment of peace I can get. But just as I start to relax, something brushes against my mind—a fleeting sensation, like a whisper just out of reach. My eyes snap open, my heart racing with a sudden surge of hope and longing. Selene?1 call out mentally, desperately reaching for that familiar presence. Selene, is that you? Silence. I unit mu hroath aaught in my throat atraining to fool 105 Ava: Training (1) even the slightest hint of a response. But there's nothing. Just the emptiness that's been haunting me since Selene disappeared. Disappointment crashes over me, a heavy weight settling in my chest. I should be used to this by now- but it cuts just as deep every time I think of her. I close my eyes again, trying to push down the lump in my throat. I miss her so much. The constant ache of her absence is like a physical pain, a hollow space inside me that nothing else can fill. I take a shuddering breath, letting it go in a soft exhale. Focus on what I can deal with right now. Don't wallow. Push forward. [www.NoVêLWôrM.com](http://www.NoVêLWôrM.com)

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