

CHAPTER 79

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<79 Ava: Fighting Back 79 Ava: Fighting Back Todd's wolf form prowls closer, his hackles bristling with menace. His eyes burn with a feral hunger that sends tremors through me. Anticipation hums in the air between us. The tree trunk is rough against my back as I use it for support, forcing my body to its feet. The cool weight of the pocketknife in my hand keeps me centered. I will not cower. The mysterious energy from before, that primal force filling my veins, is gone. It's a fleeting whisper of the past, eluding my grasp no matter how desperately I search for it. All I have is my training and the small knife I'd stolen from home. I flip open the blade with a flick of my thumb, the soft click lost amidst the snarls and growls of the ongoing battle around us. At least, I hope it's lost. I know wolf hearing is keen, but I don't know its limitations. Todd's lips peel back in a vicious snarl, revealing 13:10 1/7 79 Ava: Fighting Back yellowed canines. It figures that even his wolf's teeth would need some work. His breath had always smelled like those tuna sandwiches he eats. He lunges, a blur of ruddy fur and gnashing jaws. Instinct has me diving to the side, scrabbling for purchase on the uneven ground. He whirls to face me as I roll to my knees, gripping the knife tightly as I swipe at his muzzle. The blade catches a superficial level of skin and fur, drawing a thin line of crimson that only seems to enrage him further. A deafening snarl rips from his throat and I dash to the side, my heart pounding in frantic rhythm. The rush of blood overcomes all sound in the area, a static thudding in my ears. -His jaws snap shut inches from my face. Nausea churns in my belly, courtesy of his rancid breath. I lash out with the knife again, the blade slicing through fur and flesh. A guttural yelp tears from his throat, but his momentum carries him forward, ramming into me with all the force of a large adult wolf and an entire lifetime of anger issues. Air whooshes from my lungs as I hit the ground, the 13:10 2/7 79 Ava: Fighting Back knife clattering from my grasp. Stars explode across my vision before it fades, just for a moment. It all comes back in a rush. I'm pinned beneath Todd's paws, pressing down on my shoulders with crushing force. His hot breath washes over me in waves of putrid stench, his muzzle inches from my face. I thrash and writhe, but his claws are like miniature daggers digging into my skin, immovable and unyielding. With a burst of adrenaline-fueled strength, I manage to free one arm and lash out blindly, my nails raking across his muzzle and smacking against one eye. I don't hit my mark, but it startles him. He rears back with a snort, giving me a moment of opportunity. I roll to the side, scrambling for the knife as he lunges at me again. Leaves and dirt get in my way as my fingers scrabble for the knife, its silver blade glinting in the moonlight. I'm bleeding. The scent of my blood mingles with the earthy aroma of the forest floor, a sickly metallic tang that pushes me to move faster. 79 Ava: Fighting Back Faster, damn it. I snatch the knife and whirl onto my back just as Todd crashes down where I'd been lying just moments before. His jaws snap shut with a resounding WwW(w).(n)©veLwô©m.c.(m)

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clack. Flecks of spittle and foam coat my cheeks. Clutching the knife with a white-knuckled grip, I lash out wildly, the blade slicing a shallow gash across his ear, his neck. A guttural yelp rips from his throat as he snaps at my arm, ripping skin as I dash backward, scrambling to my feet. There's no escape route. No other weapons. The other wolves are still involved in their own struggles several feet away. How many have set upon us? Too many to count. Did the entire pack make it here? 'But I can't worry about them. I have to deal with Todd. He lunges again, his body slamming into mine like a f@cking freight train. I stumble, gasping for air as his claws rake across my abdomen, tearing through fabric and flesh alike. Agony. 14:17 79 Ava: Fighting Back Setting my teeth against the pain, I stab into anything I can, wild jabs of my hand. I hit something, because blood coats my hilt and my grip slips time and time again. He shoves me to the ground with a wide movement of his head and upper body somehow and I backpedal, my heel catching on a gnarled root. I sprawl back with a startled scream, and he's on me again. I'm in no position to dodge. I have no time to think. I raise an arm to protect my face as I stab low and blind, grunting as his weight slams me into the ground beneath him. My fingers scrabble against the knife as I yank it out and stab again and again, even as he snaps and bites at my face, my shoulders, in between shrieks. Todd's body shudders violently, his blood coating my hands in slick streaks of crimson. A strangled whine escapes his muzzle before he finally goes limp, his full weight collapsing atop me. I gasp for air, no longer suffocated by his rancid breath. There's no breath at all. Only blood and earth. 13:10 C 79 Ava: Fighting Back My arms tremble and I leave the knife stuck in him somewhere, almost hidden by his fur. There's so much blood. I must have hit something important. Luck. Thank the Moon Goddess for luck. He remains motionless, the only sound a faint gurgling as blood bubbles from one of the many wounds I've managed to inflict. Many of them shallow, some of them deeper. I'm bathed in the last remnants of his life. Adrenaline ebbs, leaving me hollow and shaking. My chest heaves with ragged breaths as I struggle for air beneath his weight, but the fear is gone. I'm a blank slate, an Ava without fear or relief, staring up at the canopy of branches above, the moonlight filtering through in soft, silvery beams. The night sky is gorgeous, a blanket of stars, peaceful and ignorant of the terror hidden in its shadows. It's over. I'm alive. A tremor wracks my frame. I killed him. 13 10 < 79 Ava: Fighting Back Bile rises in my throat, burning like acid, but I swallow it back with a convulsive shudder. Now isn't the time for hysterics. I have to focus. Have to stay alert and ready for whatever comes next. Except I can't. I have nothing left in me. 66 There's a good chance I'll be uploading only 1 chapter a day for a while as I work on rebuilding my stockpile! Comment 14 Post your first comment!

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