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Looking at the determination in Claire's eyes, Sebastian felt a strange fire flare in his veins. He always thought she was beautiful, but with that confident glint in her eyes, she looked like an ethereal being that descended from the realms of gods. Her hair flew around her face, adding to her mysterious allure as a confident smile graced her cherry red lips. Just perfect... Sebastian had never been attracted to a girl before he met Claire, but at this moment, he felt like a thirsty man seeing water after days. He was deeply, irrevocably, attracted to this mysterious girl.

"Yes," he said, as if in a trance, before gathering himself. "Yes, I will train you," he repeated, his voice sharper this time.

"Thank you so much!" Claire grinned before raising her hands as if to hug him. She paused awkwardly, her hands still raised and a reddish stain spread on her cheeks as she realised what she was about to do. She slowly put her hands down before picking on a loose thread on her dress, as if that was the most important task in the world.

'Act as if you did nothing and it will be fine,' she coached herself while gathering her courage. Then she cleared her throat and looked up at Sebastian, who was looking at her with amusement.

"Well, can we keep this training thing within ourselves?" She asked and Sebastian raised his brows.

Claire opened her mouth to explain, but Sebastian beat her to it.

"You have your reasons, I know," he said, and Claire blinked at him

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before nodding slowly and looking at him expectantly.

"Sure. It will stay between us." He promised and Claire beamed. He should have been immune to that smile by now, but he didn't think he would ever get over that radiant smile that lifted his whole spirit. He wished he never would.

Sebastian shook off his thoughts before focusing on the matter of her training. His mate had trusted him with the job and he would damn well do it perfectly.

"Before beginning the training formally, I need to test you first. I have to know your strong points as well as weaknesses before devising a training plan for you."

Claire nodded in understanding.

"Of course."

"So when shall we begin, then?" Sebastian asked, and Claire grinned.

"There is no better time than now."

Sebastian raised his brows at her, seeing her enthusiasm.

"Alright. So where shall we train, then?"

Claire looked at him as if in thought and nodded, as if coming to a decision.

"Follow me. I know the perfect place for it."

As Claire walked out of the packhouse and entered the forest behind

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the pack, Sebastian followed her without any questions. Even when she deviated from the trail and walked deeper into the forest area that looked as if no one had ever ventured into it, Sebastian just walked silently.

Finally, Claire stopped at what looked like a deadend, only greenery surrounding her. For a moment, Sebastian wondered if she had lost her way, but then she turned around with a proud smile.

"Ready to see my secret place?" She asked and Sebastian raised his brows.

"Secret?"

"My father brought me here first when I was a child. It was the place where he and my mother used to go on dates, their secret place. When I grew up, it became the place where my father and I got a few moments alone from the pack and its responsibilities, just being a normal father and daughter," Claire said fondly, reminiscing about her childhood. Seeing the excitement in her eyes, Sebastian watched with a fond smile. Claire leaned against a tree and continued speaking.

"Only a few of my father's most trusted warriors know of this place's existence, and even they are sworn to never enter this place without his permission."

Then she sighed.

"What happened?" Sebastian asked, his instincts to soothe his mate activating the moment she stopped smiling.

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"Nothing. I just miss those times. It has been years since my father came to this place with me. It is just me who comes here occasionally and even that had been a while ago."

Claire looked at Sebastian with a sad smile while he stared at her strangely. Her secret place... She said no one knew of its existence and she trusted him enough to show it. He felt pride and confusion warring inside him as he looked at her. Just why did she bring him to such a place if it was so special to her?

Beside Sebastian, Claire stood there, lost in her thoughts. Even in her last life where she loved Liam, she had never brought him to this place. Maybe her soul recognised that she couldn't trust him, even if she didn't realise it herself? But when it came to Sebastian, oddly, she only felt excitement at sharing this with him, no nervousness whatsoever. How strange...

Sebastian shook off his warring feelings before looking around, trying not to frown. It was just bushes and trees everywhere, and he couldn't understand what was so special about this place. But if she thought it was, he would never tell her otherwise.

Claire looked up at him, only to see the confused look in his face, and grinned at him.

"You didn't answer my question yet."

Sebastian frowned at her.

"What question?"

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"I remember asking you if you were ready to see my secret place. You forgot this soon? You really are forgetful, Sebastian!" She teased him, and he raised his brows.

"I like your secret place. It is... special?" He said, his voice sounding more like a question and Claire burst out laughing.

"You think this is my secret place?" She asked in between peals of laughter, looking around at the thick shrubs surrounding them. They weren't certainly special.

"It isn't?" Sebastian asked. He looked around with a frown. Well, there was nothing else here other than the way they came.

"Wait! I will show you," she said, sounding like an excited kid, and Sebastian raised his brows curiously.

Claire turned towards the bushes behind her and, with an exaggerated flourish, parted them to reveal a path behind it.

"Tada!" she sang proudly.

Sebastian followed Claire, passing the bushes and into a trail which led to a beautiful clearing. Colorful flowers bloomed around the clearing and in its middle, there was a spring with water as clear as Claire's eyes. The entire space was full of tranquility, the only sounds that of the occasional birds chirping and the rustling of the leaves from the wind. It was beautiful. Special...

When Claire held his hand and looked at the clearing with a proud smile, Sebastian looked at her with a smile, changing his opinion. It

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wasn't just special. With his mate beside him, it was a piece of heaven.

"How is it?" Claire asked excitedly.

"Perfect," Sebastian replied, but he was looking at her instead of the clearing. She was just so perfect.

They both stood there for a while, enjoying the peaceful scenery, before Claire turned to him.

"Shall we start then?"

Sebastian grinned at her in response, and she felt a shiver run down her spine. That grin looked so devilish! She was certainly going to regret this.

When she nodded at him hesitantly, Sebastian raised his brows.

"Remember, you asked for this," Sebastian said, sending chills down Claire's spine.

"Is that a threat?" Claire asked nervously, and Sebastian grinned. Somehow, the predatory grin on his handsome face did nothing to alleviate her worries. Go figure.

"No. It's a warning."

Uh huh.

As Claire gulped nervously, Sebastian started speaking.

"Before we start, I am warning you. I will not go easy on you just

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because you are my ma-," Sebastian stopped himself from uttering the word mate and looked at Claire like a deer in headlights. Claire stood there with a blank face, as if she didn't understand what just happened.

Sebastian looked visibly relaxed when Claire showed no reaction, thinking she didn't notice his slip of tongue.

"Just because we are friends, I won't go easy on you," Sebastian repeated, emphasizing the word 'friends'.

As Claire stared at him, Sebastian continued.

"If you want out, now is the chance, because I am going to be the toughest trainer you will ever see. I will do whatever it takes to bring out the best in you, and believe me when I say it won't be a walk in the park. Got it?"

Claire shook her head at him, a small smile on her face.

"I wouldn't want it any other way. I want to be the best and I know you are the only one who can help me reach there," Claire replied, her eyes full of trust.

Sebastian smiled at her in response and without further ado, he took on a fighting stance. Then he raised his hand, motioning her over to him.

Claire grinned at him in response before taking a running leap, her legs raised towards his chest. Sebastian was bulkier than her and hence her agility was the only skill that she could use against him. She intended to use her speed against him and go on the offensive

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before he could. Her plan was solid, and she executed the kick fast and perfectly, just like she wanted. And it would have worked too if Sebastian was as slow as she calculated. But to her surprise, he was anything but slow. Because Sebastian moved away from her path with a fluidity that looked impossible with his large size, making Claire stumble behind him.

Claire regained her footing quickly and did a somersault, landing right in front of Sebastian. As she stood there panting, sizing him up, he stood there without even breaking a sweat. How unfair!

Claire raised her hand and swung towards his head only for her to change the path at the last moment and aim for his stomach instead. She was aiming for a surprise attack but as if he had read her mind, he just raised his hand and blocked her punch without even bothering to defend his head.

Damn. This man was good. No wonder he was so feared by all. She felt a strange mix of pride and frustration as she faced Sebastian again. To his credit, he was looking at her with a calm expression, no hint of gloating in his face.

Claire knew that if she wanted to land a hit on him, she had to make it quick as well as powerful. Planning her next move, Claire tried to appear relaxed, as if she had given up. But then she suddenly raised her hand to punch Sebastian, pulling her full strength on it. But shockingly, he was still quicker. He simply caught her hand before twisting it behind her back in a fluid motion.

As Sebastian stood there holding Claire, her hands tied behind her back, he breathed in her alluring scent mixed with her sweat, which

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somehow made it even more enticing.

Claire knew that there was no way she could win against Sebastian in a fair fight. He was a warrior alpha who was used to fighting all the time. Even trained warriors didn't stand a chance against him, let alone someone rusty like her. But did that mean she would give up that easily? Hell no!

Suddenly Claire let out a cry, startling Sebastian, who looked at her with worry. As he let go of her anxiously, Claire held her hand close to her chest, a frown on her face as she let out a groan.

"Ouch! It hurts," she cried out, and Sebastian's eyes widened, remembering her wound. Shit! How could he forget that she was hurt? He told her he won't go easy on her and he intended to keep that promise but not when she was wounded. What had he done?

"Are you okay? Should I take you to the doctor? Does it hurt too much?" He shot question after question, his eyes full of worry as he leaned towards her.

Suddenly Claire stopped squirming and looked at the unguarded Sebastian with a devilish grin. Then she leaped at him and pushed him to the ground with her on top of him. She sat on top of a dazed Sebastian; her face glowing victoriously, all traces of pain vanishing as if it was never there. Maybe because it never was. Then she cheered triumphantly.

"I got you!"