

Defy The Alpha(s) 2: Rebel Beast

Chapter 171: You're Ashamed Of Me

Maverick knew even before his eyes opened who was in his arms. Just as he had discovered the first time he touched her, there was that silence again.

It wasn't the same silence the suppressors provided, stripping everything away only to leave that aching emptiness behind. No, this was peaceful. Nothing had been taken from him, and yet for once, there was no restlessness beneath his skin. There was only a strange sense of completeness, as though after years of wandering, he had finally stumbled upon the rest heaven had always promised him. He was home.

Aria.

He already had his arm wrapped around her, bringing her even closer than she already was. She smelled divine, that familiar blend of lavender and mint teasing his senses with every breath. Maverick buried his nose against the curve of her neck and inhaled deeply, greedy for more, while his teeth ached to sink into skin he already knew would yield so sweetly beneath them.

His bare chest pressed against her warm, soft body as he rubbed his aching erection against her ass. Aria made an unintelligible sound in her throat, still caught somewhere between sleep and wakefulness, before her body responded instinctively and she pushed back against him. The movement sent a rush of pleasure through Maverick, and he ground against her again, only to suddenly become still.

Bare chest. Aria's soft body. Raging Erection.

Feral.

Maverick's eyes snapped open at once, finally taking in the woman stirring in his arms. Horror struck him so quickly that he pushed himself away from her with enough force to send himself tumbling off the edge of the bed. He landed hard on the floor but was back on his feet almost immediately, staring at Aria as if she was responsible for putting him there.

Having been thoroughly awakened by his dramatic departure from the bed, Aria slowly turned onto her back and stared at him through narrowed eyes.

"Let me guess," she said. "Maverick?"

Maverick's eyes widened slightly. "You know?"

Aria gave him a knowing smile as she propped herself up on one arm. "Feral was quite a delight."

Maverick stared at her for a moment before his gaze dropped over her body, searching for any indication of what exactly had happened while Feral had control. Then he looked down at himself and the ridiculously small shorts clinging to his body, which quite obviously belonged to the woman lying in front of him.

"Did we...?"

He didn't need to finish. Aria could already tell exactly what he intended to ask.

"No, we didn't."

Relief like no other washed over Maverick. Although he wasn't entirely certain whether he could technically call himself a virgin after that incident, Maverick knew one thing for certain. If he and Aria ever crossed that line, he wanted their first time to be something he was actually present for, something special.

More importantly, the thought that Feral might have taken things too far or hurt her while he had no control over his own body made his stomach twist. He would never have forgiven himself.

"Although," Aria added, drawing his attention back to her, "I didn't see it, but I can't exactly say I didn't feel it." Her eyes deliberately lowered to the front of his shorts to emphasize exactly what she meant.

Heat rushed into Maverick's face so quickly that Aria had to press her lips together to keep herself from laughing. Last night, Feral had teased her without an ounce of shame. Apparently, the wolf had forgotten that eventually he would have to hand the body back to Maverick, and Aria saw no reason why the poor professor shouldn't inherit the consequences along with it.

"You don't remember?" Aria questioned.

Maverick's expression turned almost sheepish as he glanced away from her. "I don't. Whenever Feral takes over, he decides whether to let me in on the memories afterward or keep them to himself." His gaze returned to the tiny shorts he was wearing before he released a quiet breath. "I'm guessing this is one of those times."

Aria decided to sit up this time, finding herself more comfortable in that position. Having a half-naked Maverick standing in the room with her should have bothered her, but after last night, something had changed. She felt more comfortable around him now, more confident too, although she wasn't entirely sure when that had happened.

Not to mention there was suddenly this ridiculous need to impress him. Did he like what he saw when he looked at her? Aria knew she wasn't unattractive. She was tall, had been told more than once that she had a nice ass, and she liked her face well enough.

But compared to someone like Trisha, who had the body of a model and was so insanely hot that even Aria could admit it, there wasn't anything particularly remarkable about her. She had a pretty face and a slim body. Beyond that, she was still the same weirdo everyone had spent most of her life reminding her she was.

What did Maverick even see in her? What qualifications had the Moon Goddess, or whatever gods wolves worshipped, found in Aria Aspen before deciding she should be mated to someone like him? It still didn't make sense to her.

And while she was willing to give this thing between them a chance, there was still a small part of her that couldn't stop wondering how much of Maverick's interest was truly his. The mate bond had chosen her for him. Feral obviously wanted her. But if there had been no bond and no wolf whispering inside his head that she belonged to them, would Maverick have looked twice at Aria Aspen?

"Yeah, I can see why he'd be mad at you," Aria said. "Feral wasn't exactly as dangerous as you made him out to be."

"Don't be conceited," Maverick suddenly said. "Feral is as feral as his name. Why do you think I'm averse to every other woman's touch?"

Aria immediately perked up. "It's about that story, isn't it? The one he wouldn't tell me. Feral said you wouldn't like it if he told me and that you'd be the one to tell me the truth."

Maverick stiffened. For one terrible moment, his heart nearly leaped out of his chest because he thought Feral had told her everything. Then her words properly registered, and he realized the wolf had apparently retained some measure of loyalty after all.

Aria was his mate, and a part of Maverick knew she wouldn't judge him for what had happened. Still, he couldn't bring himself to tell her yet. What if something changed between them afterward? What if she looked at him differently?

He had spent years dealing with people's assumptions because he couldn't stand a woman's touch, with some regarding him as damaged while others simply thought there was something wrong with him. He could tolerate that from anyone else. But if Aria learned the truth about the abuse and began to see him as tainted, as less of a man because of what had been done to him, Maverick wasn't sure he could bear it.

Something was wrong. Aria sensed it the moment Maverick's body went rigid. Whatever had happened to him was far more serious than she initially thought, and judging by the sudden guarded look in his eyes, it wasn't something he was ready to talk about. So rather than push him, Aria changed the subject.

"I'm willing to give us a chance."

The instant she said it, Maverick's eyes widened with such disbelief that Aria almost smiled.

"You are?" he asked, as though he couldn't quite believe he had heard her correctly.

Aria nodded. "You should probably give Feral some credit. He put on quite a convincing show of why turning the two of you down might be a terrible decision."

"Oh, is that so?" Maverick was impressed.

So his wolf had managed to accomplish something more useful than dropping bodies. Then again, Maverick knew better than to mistake Feral's behavior last night for proof that he had suddenly become harmless. Perhaps that gentleness existed only where Aria was concerned.

"However..." Aria added, and Maverick immediately became wary of the word. "There are still some rules to this, and I want them respected."

"What rules?"

Aria hesitated briefly before answering. "For now, I want us to keep the mate bond a secret."

At the mention of that, the light in Maverick's eyes dimmed almost immediately.

He should have known there would be a catch.

Only moments ago, she had told him she was willing to give them a chance, and like a fool, he had allowed himself to believe that meant she was finally ready to accept him. Apparently, accepting him privately and being seen with him publicly were two entirely different things.

"You're ashamed of me?"

"What? No!" Aria's eyes widened, immediately realizing where his mind had gone.

"That's not what I mean at all. I don't want people knowing about the bond yet because I want the two of us to have a chance to figure this out without everyone else getting involved."

She held his gaze, wanting him to understand. "I want to get to know you, Maverick. Not Professor Nightshade, not the Therion Prince, and not the man everyone expects you to be because I'm supposedly your mate. Just you. And I want you to have the chance to know

me the same way before the entire academy starts tearing whatever this is apart. You have to believe me."

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Chapter 172: Get A Vasectomy

"So..." Maverick's voice remained skeptical. "We can be seen together in public, but there'll be no official announcement about the mate bond yet?"

Aria finally got up, unable to have this conversation seated on the bed any longer. She nodded. "That's exactly what I mean."

Relief washed over Maverick so strongly that he released the breath he hadn't realized he was holding. Aria wasn't asking him to hide whenever they were together or pretend there was nothing between them when someone else was watching. She wasn't ashamed of him after all, and knowing that eased something inside him almost instantly.

Even when he had believed she wanted to hide their relationship entirely, Maverick had already known he would do it. He might not have liked it, and Feral certainly would have raised hell over being expected to conceal his mate, but if secrecy was what Aria needed to feel comfortable enough to give them a chance, he would have respected it.

Now that he understood what she truly meant, his confidence returned.

"Fine," Maverick said. "We'll just keep it amongst our close circle. Is there anything else?"

"Urm..." Aria cleared her throat, gathering the courage to say what came next. "Secondly, I want a life outside of just being your mate."

The crease that appeared between his brows had her continuing almost immediately. "I don't mean that I don't want to be your mate. I'm saying I don't want that to become all that I am. I had a life before the Concordia Selection dragged me here, Maverick. I had plans for what I wanted to do after graduation, things I wanted for myself and people I needed to take care of. None of that disappeared just because some goddess decided you and I belonged together."

Maverick remained silent, but Aria could tell from the way he watched her that he was listening, she went on.

"I've seen what happens to women after they become someone's mate. Suddenly everything becomes about the man they're bonded to. Where they live, what they do, the family they're expected to build, even how everyone else sees them." Aria swallowed before meeting his gaze again. "I don't want to wake up one day and realize Aria Aspen disappeared somewhere along the way and all that's left is Maverick Nightshade's mate."

Maverick's brows drew together even further, prompting Aria to clarify before he could take her words as another rejection.

"I want you," she admitted, and saying it aloud brought heat to her cheeks. "Or at least, I'm beginning to want whatever this could become between us. But I want myself too. I want to make my own choices. I want to have something that belongs to me outside of you, and I don't want being your mate to mean I have to give any of that up."

Aria hesitated before adding, "And I definitely want to graduate before I start thinking about settling down or having children. I've heard enough stories about females mated to wolves getting pregnant before they even finish school, and I'd rather not become one of them." She didn't need to mention that Maverick's own mother had been one of those females.

Judging by the way his expression changed, the thought had already occurred to him.

Maverick swallowed. Of all the conditions Aria could have given him, this was probably the one he was least confident about promising. Werewolves were extremely virile, particularly where their mates were concerned, and protection and family planning could only reduce the chances, not erase them entirely. His parents were living proof of that.

Still, Aria wasn't asking him for the impossible. She was asking him to respect the future she had spent years planning before he came into it.

"I'll try my best."

Aria stared at him. "You'll try?"

Maverick winced at how terrible that sounded. "That came out wrong."

"Yeah," Aria told him. "It sounded like you're already preparing an apology for getting me pregnant."

Despite himself, the corner of Maverick's mouth twitched.

"I'm saying we'll be careful." Maverick paused for a moment before adding almost casually, "If you're really worried about it, I could always get a vasectomy."

Her mouth fell open. "You could get a what?"

"A vasectomy." Maverick didn't understand why she suddenly looked as if he had suggested cutting off something far more important. "They're reversible, aren't they?"

Aria could only stare at him. Technically, yes, vasectomies could sometimes be reversed, but that wasn't even the point. She had never heard of a werewolf voluntarily getting one, much less one as young as Maverick.

And this wasn't just any werewolf. This was Violet Purple's son. What if his mother found out her son's new human mate had barely accepted him before he went running off to get a vasectomy because she didn't want children yet? What if her future mother-in-law hated her for—

Aria froze. Mother-in-law?

Whoa. How the hell had they gotten there so fast?

Aria cleared her throat and dragged her thoughts back to the present before her imagination could have her married, pregnant, and attending family dinners by lunchtime.

"You don't have to get a vasectomy. We'll just..." Aria drew a deep breath. "...be careful."

Maverick studied her for a moment before nodding, a smile slowly returning to his face.

"I promise I'll never make that choice for you. If you want to graduate before we even start discussing children, then you'll graduate first." His gaze held hers as he added, "Aria, I want to be part of your life. I don't want to become the entirety of it."

Aria's heart warmed at that. "Thank you."

Maverick glanced toward the window before letting out a breath. "Is that all of your rules? Because I actually have to start thinking about how I'm going to sneak out of your room, Aria. It's morning."

"Damn, you're right." Aria followed his gaze toward the window as the reality of their situation finally sank in. If anyone caught Maverick leaving her room this early, keeping their relationship quiet might become a little more difficult than she had anticipated.

"What is it?" Maverick asked, catching the sudden nervousness in her scent before she could hide it.

"My third rule..." Aria swallowed, knowing this one might be harder for him to agree to than the others. "You can't start fighting every male who comes near me just because we're mates."

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Chapter 173: Fight For You

Maverick knew exactly where this was coming from, an instinctive growl rumbling from his chest.

It was about the confrontation with Rhydian yesterday.

"Maverick...?" Aria's voice turned cautious at the sound.

"Rhydian Drakhar is dangerous, Aria."

"I had the situation under control yesterday until you provoked him."

"This isn't Feral we're talking about, Aria. It's a fucking dragon. Rhydian could have incinerated you on the spot and there wouldn't have been enough left of you to find." The mere thought of it made Maverick's stomach twist all over again. "Do you have any idea how scared I was for you yesterday?"

"I'm well aware of what he is, Maverick," Aria said, frustration beginning to creep into her voice. "But things wouldn't have gone the way they did if you had only kept a level head."

Maverick stepped closer until their bodies were touching, another growl vibrating through his chest. "He was coming after what was mine."

"Exactly what I'm talking about right now," Aria pointed out. "He wasn't hurting me. He was just giving me some jewelry—"

"Which was an invitation for courtship, Aria?!" Maverick's voice rose before he could stop it, and from the way Aria's eyes widened, he knew there was a hundred percent chance her roommates were aware of his presence now.

"How do you expect me to react when I see my own mate accepting a courtship gift from another male? Put yourself in my shoes, Aria."

Just like that, Aria went speechless. When he put it that way, she could understand why he had reacted so badly. If she had walked into a room and found another woman offering Maverick something that amounted to a marriage proposal in her culture, she couldn't exactly promise she would have smiled politely and minded her business.

"I only accepted the jewelry because I was scared he would hurt me if I refused," she confessed.

"I know." Maverick's anger receded almost as quickly as it had risen. He knew Aria hadn't understood what the jewelry meant, and holding that against her would be unfair.

"I understand," he said.

"But why would Rhydian do that?" Aria asked, the question clearly bothering her. "Doesn't he hate humans? Why would he..." Her face scrunched at the thought, as if even saying it sounded ridiculous. "...propose to me?"

Maverick's expression became guarded as he clasped her cheeks between his palms.

"I don't know what's going on in Rhydian's head either, but I think he's playing some kind of sick game." Maverick's thumbs brushed slowly over her cheeks, his hold possessive despite the very conversation they were having.

"Maybe he's decided to toy with a human for a while and discard her when he gets bored. Maybe humiliating me by going after a member of my House is part of it. Whatever his reason is, I don't trust him, Aria."

Goosebumps broke out across Aria's skin wherever his fingers touched, and her pulse picked up. Just like that, it became annoyingly difficult to lecture him about being possessive when he was holding her face like she already belonged in his hands.

"But don't worry." Maverick's voice lowered as one of his hands slipped from her cheek to the side of her neck, his thumb lingering beneath her jaw. "I'll beat the crap out of him tonight for your sake."

Aria's breath caught as he slowly traced her neck in a way that made her pulse stutter. Maverick had to feel it. There was no way he couldn't, not with his thumb resting so close to the frantic beat of her heart, and the faint curve of his lips told her he knew exactly what he was doing to her.

"Every punch I land in that arena will be dedicated to you," Maverick promised, his gaze dropping briefly to her lips before returning to her eyes. "Consider it my way of making sure the Drakhar Lizard understands that making a move on my mate is a very bad idea."

Aria should have been telling him that beating another man senseless was the exact opposite of the rule she had just given him. Instead, the mention of the fight fueled her imagination.

She pictured Maverick in the arena tonight, probably bare-chested, his body slick with sweat as he fought. She could already imagine the muscles of his arms tightening with every punch, the hard planes of his chest rising with each breath and the strength behind every movement.

Except Maverick wasn't the only man her traitorous imagination placed inside that arena. Rhydian appeared opposite him just as easily, equally bare from the waist up, those broad shoulders and powerful arms on full display as he faced Maverick.

She had seen enough of the dragon prince to know exactly how much strength that body concealed beneath his clothes, and her mind was suddenly far too interested in discovering what the rest of him looked like without them.

Aria snapped out of the thought with such a start that she jerked beneath Maverick's hands, horrified by the direction her imagination had taken. She had only just agreed to

give Maverick a chance and was already picturing another half naked man? There had to be something seriously wrong with her.

Maverick's brows furrowed as he felt her tense beneath his touch. "What's wrong?"

Aria avoided his eyes.

"Do you really have to fight him tonight?" she asked instead, the embarrassment fading beneath the more genuine concern. "I don't want you to get hurt."

His thumb dragged back along the curve of her cheek until it hovered dangerously close to her lips. "I don't plan on getting hurt, little wolf-tamer."

Aria raised a brow at the nickname. "Really?"

Maverick chuckled, his eyes lowering to her mouth. "Although right now, I'm starting to think the wolf-tamer deserves a little taming of her own. Preferably with my mouth."

Fuck.

Aria's stomach did a nervous little dance as heat rushed straight to her face.

Did he have to say it like that while staring at her lips, as if he were already imagining exactly what he wanted to do with them?

Moreover, she was supposed to be the one teasing him, not the other way around. Maverick had finally remembered how to flirt, and Aria wasn't sure she liked how effective he was at it. Now she was the one struggling to meet his eyes while heat burned beneath his wandering fingers.

So Aria rose onto her tiptoes instead, threw her arms around his neck, and kissed him before her courage could leave her.

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Chapter 174: Show Me

For one suspended second, Maverick simply stood there, stunned by the boldness of the kiss. He had not seen that coming at all. Then his arms banded around her waist, hauling her flush against him, and any illusion that Aria had been the one in control disappeared entirely.

Maverick kissed her like he'd been starving for this moment, deep and consuming, tilting his head to fit their mouths together more perfectly. Aria's fingers dug into the bare skin of his shoulders, holding on as the floor seemed to tilt beneath her.

She could feel the heat radiating off his chest through the fabric of her top, the ridges of muscle pressed firmly against her.

Somewhere beneath the haze of sensation, Aria registered the room around them, the same room where they'd argued about Rhydian minutes ago, morning light slanting through the window, her roommates still asleep just beyond the wall. Except none of it mattered anymore.

The mate bond pulsed heavy and persistent between them, a current that strengthened every time his mouth moved against hers, almost as if her body had been waiting for permission to stop fighting this. Heat bloomed low in her belly the second his tongue traced the seam of her lips, asking without asking.

She let him in.

Maverick Nightshade groaned against her mouth, hoarse with need, the sound alone sending a shiver skating down her spine. His hand slid up from her waist to cradle the back of her neck, tilting her head exactly where he wanted it, deepening the kiss until she forgot to think about anything except him.

His other hand splayed wide against the small of her back, fingers pressing into bare skin where her tank top had ridden up, and Aria felt the warmth of his palm sink straight through her.

Aria yielded against him, her fingers sliding from his shoulders up into his hair, tugging lightly, and the answering growl that rumbled through his bare chest vibrated against hers.

He walked her backward without breaking the kiss, guiding her until the backs of her knees hit the edge of the bed. She barely had time to register the change before he lowered her onto the mattress and followed, until his weight settled fully over her, one knee braced between her thighs, his body pinning hers into the sheets.

"Maverick," Aria breathed against his lips, even though she had no idea what she meant to say after that. Perhaps some warning about her roommates or timing or sense that evaporated the moment his mouth trailed along her jaw instead.

He kissed a slow path down to her throat, and Aria's head fell back into the pillow, giving him better access, her hands fisting against the bare skin of his back as his lips found the same spot where his thumb had lingered earlier, right over the frantic thrum of her pulse.

Maverick lingered there, tasting, sucking gently until she gasped, her whole body arching up into him, her hips brushing the hard line of him through his shorts.

"You have no idea," he murmured against her skin, "how long I've wanted to do this, Aria."

Had anyone told Maverick that he would one day touch a woman this way, much less have a mate whose body he couldn't seem to get enough of, he would never have believed them.

He'd had a plan once.

If the time ever came when he needed an heir, his seed would be given to a suitable woman willing to carry his child, and that would be the extent of his involvement with her. His parents could help him raise the baby afterward.

His family was ridiculously large, with more relatives than he cared to count, and he'd never doubted that his child would grow up surrounded by love. His fathers alone would probably smother the poor kid with enough affection to make up for an entire household.

At least, that had been the plan until Aria.

"Show me," Aria whispered, the words slipping out before she could stop them, bold in a way that surprised even her.

That was all the invitation Maverick needed. His mouth found hers again, hungrier this time, one hand sliding down her side to grip her thigh and hitch it around his waist, anchoring her beneath him as the kiss turned messy and lascivious, both of them chasing the pull of the bond neither had any intention of resisting anymore.

Maverick's hips rocked forward instinctively, dragging a broken sound from Aria's throat that he swallowed instantly. He kissed her deeper, unable to get enough. Feral would no doubt be proud of him right now.

Her fingers gripped his back, feeling the muscles ripple beneath his skin as he moved against her, his hard length pressing insistently between her thighs.

"Maverick, do you..." she gasped, breaking the kiss just enough to breathe, her eyes half-lidded, pupils blown wide.

"I know." His voice came out rough and strained, his forehead dropping to hers. "I feel it too."

The bond hummed between them, making every point of contact feel electric, amplifying each sensation until Aria wasn't sure where its pull ended and her own desire began. She didn't care to find the line anymore.

His hand slipped beneath the hem of her top, palm flattening against her bare stomach before drifting higher, slow enough to give her every chance to stop him. Aria didn't. If anything, she arched into his touch, silently urging him on, and Maverick groaned at the encouragement.

His fingers finally closed over the curve of her breast, and Aria's breath hitched sharply, her hips rolling up against his of their own accord. He caught the movement, answering it with a slow roll of his own hips that had her nails biting into his shoulders.

"Fuck, Aria." His voice was wrecked now, barely more than a growl against her throat. "You have no idea what you do to me."

"Show me that too," she whispered, echoing her earlier words, and felt him shudder above her at the challenge.

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Chapter 175: Touch You Like This

Whatever restraint Maverick possessed snapped at that.

He pulled back just far enough to grip the hem of Aria's top, and she lifted her arms without hesitation, letting him strip it free and toss it somewhere over his shoulder.

His breath caught audibly at the sight beneath him. Her breasts were full and round, nipples already tight and dusky pink, rising and falling with the unsteady breath she took, while her skin flushed from her collarbone down.

"Beautiful," Maverick murmured, almost reverent, before lowering his head and dragging his open mouth slowly down her sternum, pressing a hot, wet kiss right in the valley between her breasts.

Aria's fingers tangled in his hair, gripping and guiding him lower without shame, and Maverick let himself be pulled, closing his lips around one tight peak and drawing it fully into his mouth. His tongue flattened against it first, broad and slow, before he began circling the tip in deliberate, unhurried patterns, sucking with just enough pressure to make her hips buck up hard against him.

"Maverick," she gasped, the sound cracking halfway between his name and a moan, her hips grinding shamelessly against the thick, rigid line of him trapped between her thighs.

He growled against her skin, the low vibration of it traveling straight from her nipple down to her core, and released her with a wet pop before moving to the other side, giving it the same treatment. His tongue flicked and lapped while his fingers pinched and rolled the peak he'd just abandoned. Beneath him, Aria writhed, her nails scraping lightly down his scalp, breathing faster, and open-mouthed.

His free hand slid lower, tracing down the curve of her ribs, over the soft plane of her stomach, until his fingers hooked firmly into the waistband of her shorts, thumb brushing against bare skin just above the seam.

Maverick lifted his head then, dragging his mouth off her nipple with obvious reluctance, and held her gaze steadily, silently asking for permission even with the bond roaring at both of them to keep going.

Aria lifted her hips off the mattress, arching them toward his hand, an unmistakable invitation carved into every line of her body.

A dark and deeply satisfied glint flickered across Maverick's face at that, his jaw tightening as he finally began dragging the fabric down her legs, slow enough to savor every inch of newly bared skin beneath his fingertips.

Maverick drew her shorts down slowly, dragging his palms along her legs as he went, savoring every inch of newly exposed skin before tossing the fabric aside entirely. His breath caught the moment she was finally bare before him, the sight of her already flushed pink and glistening, slick arousal coating her inner thighs, evidence of exactly how much that kiss and the grinding of their hips had affected her.

Aria's chest rose and fell in quick, shallow breaths, her cheeks burning as his gaze lingered there openly, unashamed. She should have felt embarrassed, exposed like this, but the way Maverick looked at her, dark-eyed and hungry, like he'd found something he intended to devour slowly, only made heat pool tighter low in her belly.

Her mate settled back over her, propped on one forearm, his other hand trailing back up her thigh with slowly.

"I never thought I'd get to experience this." His voice dropped, the roughness giving way to something more vulnerable. "You have no idea how many times I've imagined touching you like this."

Aria might have been sympathetic to that confession under any other circumstances, but right now, with her body still aching for him, she had very little interest in talking about all the times he'd imagined touching her.

"Then stop imagining," Aria said, hooking a hand around the back of his neck and pulling him down until their mouths met again.

They kissed slowly, his tongue moving against hers in an unhurried rhythm even as his fingers finally found her, easing through her slick, swollen folds already soaked for him. His sensitive hearing caught the obscene wetness of every stroke, the sound only feeding the desire already burning through him. Aria's whole body jerked at the first pass, a sharp gasp escaping her only for Maverick to swallow it with another kiss.

He slowly circled her clit first, testing her, watching the way her hips twitched up into the touch before he finally slid two fingers lower, easing them inside her with agonizing patience. Aria's back bowed off the mattress at the intrusion, her inner walls clenching

hot and tight around him instantly, and Maverick groaned against her mouth at the feel of it.

"Fuck, you're tight," he rasped, curling his fingers slightly, testing the angle until her thighs trembled.

He found a rhythm then, deep, measured strokes that dragged against a spot inside her until her vision blurred, pulling back until only his fingertips remained before sinking deep again, over and over, maddeningly patient despite the desperate roll of her hips begging him to move faster.

Aria bit down hard on her bottom lip, muffling the moan building in her throat, painfully aware of the thin walls and her roommates, though every drag of his fingers made it harder to stay quiet.

"Let me hear you," Maverick murmured against her ear, nipping the lobe. "Just a little."

"I can't," she gasped, shaking her head, though her hips betrayed her, rocking harder into his hand, chasing the pace he refused to speed up.

Maverick smirked against her throat and finally picked up his pace, his fingers moving faster now, curling against the spot he had already discovered drove her wild. Her thighs began to shake, her free hand flying up to clamp over her own mouth as pleasure coiled tighter and tighter, unbearably close.

"That's it," he growled, watching her fall apart beneath his hand with satisfaction. "Let go for me, Aria."

Aria's whole body went rigid as the coil finally snapped, pleasure crashing through her in violent, uncontrollable waves. Her back arched off the mattress, thighs clamping tight around Maverick's hand, trapping his fingers deep inside her as her walls pulsed and clenched around them in rapid, involuntary spasms.

A muffled scream tore into her palm, barely contained, her whole body shaking as the release ripped through her harder than anything she'd ever felt on her own.

Maverick didn't pull his fingers free, not right away. He kept them buried inside her, curling them slowly, drawing out every last aftershock while he watched her come apart beneath him, utterly captivated by the sight. Her chest heaved, slick with a light sheen of sweat, her eyes fluttering as her hips continued twitching against his hand in small, helpless motions she couldn't seem to control.

"Fuck," he breathed, awe bleeding into the word, watching her ride out the last of it. "You have no idea how good you look right now."

Aria could barely form words, her mind still hazy, her body trembling with the kind of satisfaction that left her limbs feeling weightless. When Maverick finally withdrew his fingers, she felt the sudden emptiness keenly, her inner walls still fluttering, still sensitive from the intensity of it.

He lifted his glistening fingers between them, holding her gaze on purpose as he brought them to his mouth and sucked them clean, groaning low at the taste of her.

"Better than I imagined," he murmured, dropping a slow, lingering kiss to her parted lips, letting her taste herself there too.