

## Chapter 12

Maya

"I'm ready to start training," I said as soon as I found the gym Caden told me about three days ago when he initially invited... no ordered me to start training with him.

Caden did a double take as he gazed at me, and his eyes trailed down my body in that assessing way that I've gotten used to from the men in this damn house. He smirked, as usual. "So soon? You're still recovering, no?"

"No," I said coolly. It has been all but three days, and I was fully recovered.

It made me wonder if I really didn't get beat up as bad as I thought, or if I had a sudden boost of blood circulation.

Regardless, I didn't question it.

I had the entire week off, courtesy of Ms. vale, although I was able to attend my classes virtually so I wasn't behind anymore than I already was. So, I has nothing to do for the rest of the week.

This morning, I got sick of laying down. So I threw on my tank top and a pair of gym shorts I dug from the bottom of my suitcase that I stole from my foster brother, and went to the basement where the gym was.

I was surprised by it, although I shouldn't have been. It was like I left the house and went into an actual professional gym.

What took me by surprise was the rack of weapons mounted like artwork. They weren't props either. Weapons of every kind lined the wall, and I had a feeling there were much more.

I tried not to think about it too much. These people evidently who I thought they were, and if I thought about it any more, I'd end up running for my life.

"You cant start looking like that," he said in a way that I expected from Tylon, not him. "You need to change."

I hugged myself self-consciously. "Well, excuse me for not having anything else."

I thought he would have flashed me with his signature grin, but he didn't

t. It was then that I realized that down here, Caden wasn't my Caden.

He was my ruthless teacher.

And maybe that's what I needed.

He slipped through a side door and came back with a folded stack of black leathers. They were sleek and fitted, the same kind he wore like a second skin.

He tossed them, and I caught them against my chest, mumbling a thanks before ducking into the room to change.

The material hugged where it should and showed what it didn't need to. When I stepped out, the room changed temperature.

He did that thing again with his eyes. They dragged from my throat to my shoulders, down the line of the top and the snag of the waist, lower over the clean fit of the pants, then back up just as slow.

His pupils dilated as he swallowed. His bottom lip tugged between his teeth like he'd considered saying something and decided to keep it.

I shifted under the weight of it. "Is this okay?"

"Better," he said, but his eyes said everything else and none of it was neutral.

He closed the distance with unhurried steps, never dropping my gaze.

He stopped mere inches away from me, then reached behind me, wrapped his hand around my hair and pulled.

My mouth opened on a sound I didn't plan to make. Images of that night in Tylon's room flashed past my eyes... the way he held the girl, the way my body had betrayed me watching it.

I noticed how similar Caden was holding me now, and nothing about my reaction was confused.

My breathing went ragged. He was right there... warmth and clean skin and the faintest trace of coffee. The blue of his eyes had gone midnight-dark, not playful, something heavier.

He dipped his head, mouth close enough that his breath warmed the edge of my ear.

"Your hair," he said, low enough to crawl down my spine.

The famous smirk flashed, familiar and suddenly dangerous. He

tugged a little harder and my knees forgot their job.

"Caden," I heard myself plead, and my body betrayed me by pressing closer to him.

But it was gone as soon as it came, and I actually whimpered—freaking whimpered as he left.

"You need to tie it up," he said, as I tried to get my wits together. "Wh-what?" I stuttered, watching as he crossed the mat and faced me.

"You need to get your hair into a braid, or ponytail or preferably a bun. It's a liability to you in a fight."

I blinked once. Then twice. Until I realized what he just did.

"You... You! You prick!"

Here I was... All hot and bothered and he was just telling me to put my hair up?

I saw him fighting the smirk. But he simply raised an eyebrow at me.

"Rule number one. Never trust your opponent."

I narrowed my eyes at him, and he raised an eyebrow, as if asking if I was challenging him.

But I really was just embarrassed. Here I was, ready to throw myself at him, and he was just toying with me.

"Got it?" he asked folding his thick arms across his chest.

"Loud and clear," I said through gritted teeth.

"Good," was the last thing he said before he charged at me.



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