

Their Hidden Princess – Chapter 20

Several times, I almost felt like Valentin could sense the warm in me. I caught him staring at me a few time before jerking his head back and rattling off the next stretch. Finally, we both lined up on the start line.

We took off, I was pushing my legs to keep up with Valentin.

After the tenth lap, Valentin pulled off to keep timing me. I lost track of the laps but managed to cross the line just as he yelled “Time!” My throat felt raw. Valentin handed me a water which I chugged down.

“How many?” I managed to get out.

Valentin smiled down at me. “Eighteen.”

“In fourty-five minutes?” I gasped. Valentin nodded, smile still on his skin. I fell back on the track in exhaustion and excitement. I punched at the air and squealed. Valentin chuckled next to me and brought me out of my winner’s party.

I turned my head to look at him. We made eye contact and it felt like every other thing in the gym simply melted away. It was him and I in a vacuum of time and energy. His eyes, so white-gold they glowed, were stunning. They were just as handsome as his lips and as prominent as his bright white teeth.

Suddenly, he cleared his throat and we were back on Earth. I sat up from my spot on the track and dusted off my knees. “I think I can do twenty by Friday,” I said softly.

“No doubt,” Valentin replied. His voice had gone slightly hoarse. He cleared his throat again. “Just keep up with the drills Coach had you running. Get another good run in tomorrow morning and we’ll shoot for twenty on Thursday.”

I nodded and pushed myself up on to my feet. “Sparring?” I asked.

“Sparring,” Valentin nodded. We made our way over to the mats. I dropped my water on the outside. of the area then took my fighting stance in the middle. Valentin mirrored me and then we were off.

I tried to focus on his strikes and the way he’d taught me to defend against them. But every time I blocked a punch or a kick, a bolt of electricity burned through me. knew it was the fated mate reaction but tried to shove away any feeling I felt towards it.

It was clear that Valentin had no intention of acting on it.

Valentin circled me and tried to attack me from behind. I side stepped then brought the bottom of my foot to the middle of his chest. I kicked, hard and Valentin flew backwards. I immediately panicked.

“Oh my god, oh my god!” I shrieked. “I’m so sorry did I-”

Before I could even finish my apology, I was on my back. Valentin had used his free leg to swipe my feet out from under me. I scrambled back but I was too slow. Valentin climbed on top of me and pinned my hips down. He took both of my hands in one of his then used his other hand to wrap around my neck and hold my head down.

I was frozen. My chest was heaving up and down and up and down.

Valentin’s was moving in time with mine. The gentle thrum I’d heard before came back.

Lub dub, tub dub, lub dub.

I stared up at Valentin. He was so close, I could make out the freckles of gold in his white eyes. Electricity burned up and down my body in waves. It made my knees feel shaky. I arched my back off the floor and up into Valentin’s chest, chasing the feeling surging through me.

My lips parted slightly as more of us touched. Valentin’s lips did the same. His eyes fluttered shut slightly, a pained grunt coming out. He dropped his head to lay in the middle of my chest. His grip strengthened on my wrists and neck. I extended my neck and Valentin pressed his face into the space between my shoulder and the floor.

I let a whimper escape. Valentin stilled, he was trying so damned hard to fight it. But it was inevitable. We were inevitable.

“How was that?” I whispered against the shell of his ear.

Then, all of his hands were off me. He was standing above me, calm, cool and collected. He smoothed out the front of his shirt and turned – around. He brought a hand to his lips, all while I was still on the floor. I sat up.

“Valentin?”

“It was barely adequate,” he bit out. It was harsh and rough. Not the normal way he addressed me. He turned around to lock eyes with me.” Get up and go again.”

The days flew by at Alpha Academy.

After that training session with Valentin, he continued to be cold towards me. He avoided touching at all costs, even going so far as to wear thick long sleeves and pants. Though I could still tell, through every grit of his teeth as he blocked me or every flinch as he

accidentally stood too close. He seemed like he was in pain. I don't know why he was resisting it so much.

Part of me wondered if it was because of my Aunt. Did he see her in me? Was he afraid to be hurt again? The thoughts plagued me each time that I trained with him the following two weeks.

In addition to training with Valentin, I went to classes and learned incredible things I could only dream of. They taught us attack formations, defense patterns and interrogation skills. I felt as if I had been sent to a spy school and not a school for werewolves.

It all made more sense the more World History classes I attended.

Vampires completely suppressed wolves for hundreds of years. Since the dawn of time. They were brutal, blood-thirsty and enslaved the wolves to do their bidding. Until my mother that was. All the talk of her made me begin to think differently of her. Maybe she was trying to hide me from this for long enough that I could become my own person.

I fleshed out my friendship with Loren during those two weeks as well.

She was quirky and a bit too peppy for me at points, but she was sincere. She truly seemed to want to be my friend. Even going as far as to stop her sparring to watch me beat the Run.

Twenty-three laps in forty-five minutes. Eleven and a half miles. At a bruising four minute pace. Unheard of in the human world.

To say I was stunned was an understatement.

My body was changing in ways that were made me confident that maybe I could beat Kairos. My arms and legs had gone from sticks to lean and long, toned with muscle. My core was so built that even a full jab from Valentin was not enough to take me down. My speed was improving as was my hearing.

I didn't feel hopeless anymore.

But I couldn't help but feel as though I had much more to go. Especially as one of Valentin's kicks landed right in my jaw.

I grunted in pain then shook my head. Don't let the pain shake your focus, Valentin's voice said in my head. So I did exactly that, I took a side step and then re-fired, sailing my fist into the back of his ribs.

Valentin grunted in the same way I did before doing a one-eighty and landing his foot in my back. The force crumpled me as I cried out. I fell flat on my face, chest heaving. It felt like he'd cracked one of my ribs.

-I punched the floor in frustration. It only sent more pain shooting down my spine. I felt Valentin's hands grab me by my armpits and pull me to sit up. Hot, angry tears streamed down my face. He took the sleeve of his shirt and wiped them.

"Come on now," he said softly. "That was unfair of me. I've never pulled that move on you before. It was too much for you."

I sniffled. "Kairos is going to pull moves twenty times worse," I croaked.

I straightened my back. It felt as if my rib had righted itself back into place. That was another fun thing, the healing. For every bruise I should've had, I now had nothing.

"He may," Valentin mused.

"But now you'll be ready for it."

I brushed under my eyes and sighed heavily. I stood back up on my feet and faced Valentin. I nodded once.

"Again," I said, dropping into stance. "And don't hold back." The day of my duel with Kairos, everyone and their mother seemed to know about it. Eyes followed me across campus at eight in the morning. Kairos wanted this done by the time Basics started. I didn't blame him..

Loren walked next to me. Her arm was tightly laced with mine. She had a nervous jitter to her, yet growled everyone someone tried to say something to me. I patted her hand.

"It's fine," I whispered.

"No, it's not," Loren said sharply back to me. "They're all looking at you like you're going to fail."

"I might," I mused. Loren pulled back and I rolled my eyes at her. "I might I said. I didn't say I wasn't confident in my abilities."

"You have to promise me you'll know when to give up," Loren said. We

- were only a hundred feet from the door to the locker room. A crowd had formed around it. "Promise me!"

"I do!" I whisper yelled. "Now, let me go. I have to walk in there with my chin held high."

Loren nodded. She stopped in front of me and put both her hands on my shoulders. She had to reach a bit to get up to me. Her purple eyes were bright with hope.

“Zora,” she said, stern. “You are a bad ass bitch. You’ve trained for weeks. I know you can do it. So go in there and kick ass.”

I laughed and covered her hands with my own. I gave her a wink. “You got it, Moonbeam.”

I turned and started to walk towards the locker room. Unfortunately for me, Bella decided she need to tell me something. Just as I saw her swishy black hair creep into my view, eyes piercing me, I heard Loren start screaming behind me.”BELLA I WILL GUT YOU LIKE A FISH IF YOU FUCKING TOUCH HER!”

Bella snarled at me then moved back in line with the rest of the crowd.

I gave her a sickly, sweet smile and pushed into the locker room. I replaced my day clothes with tight training clothes that id been practicing in for the past week. I curled my hair up into a tight spiral and secured it with pins. Valentin told me the less Kairos could grab, the better.

I splashed water on my face one last time before heaving a heavy sigh.

This was it. The moment I’d been pushing myself for. The moment id spent weeks training for, I had to prove to Kairos I belonged here.

There was so much at risk, the biggest being my secret. If they knew I was the Princess, none of them would ever look at me the same way.

That was, until one of them had to marry me...

I blew out a raspberry then shoved the doors to the gym open, welcoming whatever fate had coming my way.