

CHAPTER 106

106 Ava: Training (III) Getting home is like a reward. 35 Every damn day, I stagger through that front door and fall face first on the couch. Lisa takes the recliner, saying she prefers to curl up and face the pain in a fetal position. I like to stretch out. It works. Kellan has tactfully avoided mentioning how we look since the first day he brought us home and made a small misstep, getting verbally eviscerated by Lisa. He’s in the kitchen now, ordering food from somewhere. I don’t care where. As long as it’s edible and I can eat it without having to care about table manners. Lisa usually complains when Kellan orders something without input from either of us, but she’s too absorbed in napping her pain away to care, either. My phone buzzes on the table next to the couch, startling me out of my exhausted daze. I grab it, my muscles protesting the movement, and see Clayton’s name on the screen. 106 Ava: Training (I) [Clayton: Just checking in. Hope you had a good day. Let me know if you need anything.] He’s been so thoughtful, texting instead of calling ever since that first day when I could barely string two words together without yawning. He seems to understand that I need space now. It’s nothing like when I was at the Aspen pack and his desire to take me as a mate was clear between us. I’ll take it at face value for now, because I can’t handle thinking much deeper than that. [Ava: Training was brutal as always but I’m hanging in there. Hope you’re doing well too.] I hit send and toss the phone back onto the coffee table with a sigh. Guilt twists in my stomach, an all too familiar sensation these days. I’m texting Clayton, though I asked Lucas for space. Maybe I should text Lucas, too. After a minute, I grab my phone, driven by those complicated emotions stirring within me. [Ava: Hope everything’s going okay for you! I’m doing great here. Kellan’s been taking good care of us. Lisa loves it here 1 2/9 106 Ava: Training (1) Okay, that’s not quite a lie. She does like it—the little bit of it she’s seen. Every interaction with Clayton or Lucas feels loaded with complicated emotions and things left unsaid. I wonder if I’ll ever be able to face either of them without this knot of uncertainty and longing tangling me up inside. A cramp seizes my belly and I wince, shifting on the couch to try to find a more comfortable position. But there’s no escaping the pain. It’s an ache that grows in time, gripping my insides, twisting them around, squeezing with each shallow breath I take. I press my hand against my abdomen, as if that will help the relentless onslaught of pain. But it does nothing. I tu_{w(w)}*w*.[Ⓢ]*oveLW**o*ℝ**M**.*có*Mℓ

Updates...*ww^w.nóveⓈ*w*ℝMℓ.co(m)*

W^(w)Ŵ.nô^Ŵ*VeⓈ*w*ℝm.C(Ⓢ)M*

n to my other side. Still no relief. It’s futile. The pain is inescapable, pulsing through my body with a cruel insistence. It’s as if my very bones are being twisted, my muscles knotted and strained to the point of breaking. Tears prick at the corners of my eyes, but I blink them 15:24 3/9 108 Ava Training (1) back. It comes in waves. God, it hurts. I curl in on myself, my knees drawing up towards my chest as if I could somehow contain the agony. My fingers dig into the couch cushions, seeking purchase, seeking anything solid to cling to as the pain threatens to sweep me away. I breathe through the worst of it, focusing on the soft give of the cushions beneath me, the distant sounds of Kellan puttering around in the kitchen. Gradually, the cramps ease and I relax incrementally back into the couch. Time is the only thing that ever takes care of it. It always feels like hours, but it must be no more than minutes. Either way, it’s gone. It shouldn’t come back for a while. My eyelids droop as fatigue tugs at me again. God, I’m so tired. I’m not usually this exhausted after training, but some days are bad. Today, I guess, is one of them. 15:24 4/9 106 Ava. Training (1) I’m tired of hurting, tired of doubting myself, tired of missing Lucas and Clayton and Selene. I just want to sleep and forget about all of it for a little while. Maybe when I wake up, things will seem a little bit clearer, a little bit easier to bear. I let my eyes drift shut, surrendering to the exhaustion. Just a quick nap before dinner. Just a moment of peace. That’s all I need. *** A familiar voice stirs me awake, but I can’t open my eyes. Or move my body. Or do anything. I don’t know what they’re saying. The world is dark, and I slip back into blissful sleep. *** Pain wakes me the second time. Searing. Scorching. Raging and roaring through my veins. I can’t scream. I can’t see. Everything hurts. I’m a helpless victim to it all. 15:24 It’s like being stabbed and burning at the stake all at once. My body’s torn asunder. I’m afloat somewhere, but that somewhere isn’t here. Or there. Or anywhere. Where am I 17 can’t feel myself. I’m only sensation. What’s my name What is it? Who am I 17 I am pain. Something cool surrounds me. Water. It’s everywhere. I can’t breathe. I’m drowning My lungs scramble for air, only to fill with more water. 106 Ava: Training (III) It hurts. I can feel my body, but it moves without conscious thought. It isn’t a flailing, violent death. I try to escape, but there is none. Only the deep. Only the pain. *** I’m awake again, but there’s nothing. No air. No wind. No sound. Only a heavy weight crushing me down. Down. Down. My fingers scramble against the dirt. Dirt? But there’s no room to move. 15:24 7/9 106 Ava: Training (1) No way to escape. It’s in my mouth. It’s in my nose. I can’t breathe. Always, I can’t breathe. I’m tired of pain. *** This time, my eyes open. Clouds pass. The sky is blue. The sun shines. It’s beautiful. But there’s no air here. Ah. Is this death? Over, and over, and over again. Waking like this. I’m sick of it. 15:24 8/9 100 Ava: Training (III) Just end it all. I don’t want to die again. Comment 4 R Post your first comment! Vote

WW^W.no^{V(e)}*Lw*o^r*m.có(m)*