

Chapter 11

Travis

I stood off in the shadows of the training grounds. I watched as various instructors ran through opening drills or taught lessons. My chest filled with pride at how well everything was coming together. There were still a plethora of problems to smooth out, but I could see the camp's future. My attention goes back to the reason I'm waiting against this wall. I wanted to check in with my Beta, Sammy, about pack business, but he was running late. I couldn't help but notice the gathering of people. Whatever was happening, a lot of remarks floated my way.

"She really is going to challenge Cassandra? Who does she think she is?"
A woman giggled.

"10 bucks on the hot one." Some guy elbowed his buddy, who responded with, "Which hot one."

"Cassandra was the top candidate, but challenging an instructor is a little much." A woman comments.

A man nudged the bettaker, "I bet that instructor assistant will let me play doctor when she loses."

My blood boils as I realize they are talking about Rue. I shoved off the wall and glanced around for high ground. I hopped onto a small landing area above a window so I had a quiet, hidden area to overlook the scene. My heart raced when I caught sight of Rue's raven hair pulled tight into a high ponytail again. It wasn't the first time I'd wondered about the woman since

meeting her yesterday, but my curiosity kept me squatting down on the landing. The other woman, Cassandra, shifted into her wolf form, yet Rue kept her cool and remained human. Rue's expression was deadly cold. Her killer aura vibrated with controlled dominance that woke my Alpha instinct. I roughed my hair with my hands to erase the sharp desires before observing the first clash in the fight.

Cassandra lunged to and fro, wasting energy with every stroke. Her actions were why the rogues had taken so many of our lives. The rogues are raised to fight from the time they can walk, so they are highly trained and do not tire quickly. Cassandra is demonstrating strength and power, but there needs to be a technique that conserves energy. In contrast, Rue is all technique and talent. The fact that she remains in human form while easily dodging Cassandra's flurries is seriously impressive. I'd never seen such raw muscular power controlled with such elegance. My wolf salivated at the chance to bring her into our pack.

Cassandra shifted, her neck becoming entirely exposed, a rookie mistake. Instantly, Rue strikes hard, punching at the right angle to knock Cassandra out. If this had been a real battle, Cassandra would be dead. Even though I had made Rue an instructor to appease my obligations to her mother, I could see her teaching a course herself shortly. Her skills, techniques, and killer instincts are an asset that I wouldn't waste. Movement pulled me from my thoughts, and I growled when the other two shifted and attacked Rue. It was unfair to do two-on-one and expect an easy fight. Rue held her own, still refusing to shift into her wolf form. There was more hesitation in her movement now, and I could see a tiny bit of worry in her features. Why wouldn't she pull from her wolf's strength and shift? My curiosity roared in

my ears; how powerful would her wolf be if the human was unstoppable? My wolf licked his chops at the possibility of finding out. The fight didn't last long as Rue out-manuevered all three women. They lay unconscious in their human forms on the training ground as Rue stared out at the crowd with a cold indifference, "Who else wants to challenge me?"

My gaze roamed Rue's body from head to toe; she was truly impressive. I stood up and launched my body to the middle of the crowd, an easy leap from the landing. Gasps sounded off around the group, but Rue stood in the middle with a determined set to her expression. I raised my hand to clap, and she twitched into a fight stance. Her cold glare made my dick twitch.

I slowly clapped a few times before others joined in. Rue watched me with suspicion and readiness that even my most experienced soldiers sometimes lacked. I stopped clapping and waited until the crowd followed suit before speaking, "Rue, I hope that this display of power was by an instructor for a lesson."

The three she-wolves began to move about on the ground, groaning from the pain Rue inflicted. My admiration for her abilities grew when I saw that none of the injuries were open wounds or life-threatening. Rue folded her arms across her chest, making her breasts fuller, and I stifled a sudden desire to bury my face in them. The thought had me frozen to place for a second, but her next words shot through me like a bullet, "Yes, sir."

I felt like a teenager with how turned on just two words made me. Shit, I needed to get away from this very public conversation. Like clockwork, my perfectly timed Beta steps through the circle, "This was a lesson in

respecting those your royal highness has personally selected as instructors.
”

I gave him an expressionless nod while conveying my thanks through our mind link. I stepped toward Rue; her face fell into panic for only a second before dropping back into the bored expression I’d previously seen on her. I grabbed her wrist, pulling her arm out and seeing the deep wounds from the she-wolf’s canines. I looked directly into her eyes to ensure she understood my command, “You need to go get these looked at.”

Her jaw sets as she turns to assess me, “They will heal by tomorrow.”

I tighten my grip on her wrist, giving my words more authority, “Come with me now.”

Her eyes sparked with defiance. I was in awe of the strength defined there, and a small memory tugged at my subconsciousness: Had I seen these eyes before? Sammy started to say something to move the crowd away from our dramatic display. I took the opening and pulled her toward the hall that leads to the infirmary room. Rue tried to yank her wrist out of my grip several times, but her power, although strong, paled in comparison to mine.

“Let go, please.” She says with a frustrated huff.

She’s cute.

Where had that come from? I pulled her into an empty room and crowded her against the wall, “you need to be looked at by a medical professional.”

Rue met my gaze directly, "That's not your concern."

"That is where you are wrong. As an instructor under my employ, you are required to report all incidences of injury. You have to be cleared to go back." I exaggerate. It is a requirement to report the incident, but she doesn't have to be examined. Yet my body propels me forward to make sure this woman is okay.

"Fine. I'm barely hurt. I have two feet to get me there so you can go back to your work," she said stubbornly. My eyes dropped to her lips. She wets them, feeling my gaze there, and I took a few calming breaths to refrain from licking her lips myself.

After what felt like an eternity, I asked the question that was clawing to get out, "Why didn't you use your wolf?"

Rue freezes, "What?"

I lean back to give her space and put my hands in my front pockets, "When that woman attacked you, there was grounds for you to shift and defend yourself, yet you remained in human form. Why?"

She bites into her lower lip, and a quiet rage takes over her features. The murderous spark in her eyes is alluring. I lean in, hoping to memorize her scent, but I find none. After a few tension-filled breaths, she finally scrubs her face with her hand, "I don't have one."

It was my turn to freeze in confusion, "What do you mean?"

She lets out a hard, breathy laugh. "I used to have one, but there was an accident, and now I cannot shift or communicate with my wolf."

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I stare at her. This proud, strong woman doesn't want my sympathy. "That must be very painful. I mourn your loss."

Rue flinches, but her eyes round in surprise. She ducks under my arm, clumsily walks through the room, and opens the door, "Thank you. I'll go get checked out, then return to the class."

Then she is gone. My mind is reeling from all the feelings and events leading to this room. Something about her continued to call out to me. A wolfless shifter was interesting, indeed.



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