My Inescapable Fate

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Ava's life has been hard, between her mother's death, her abusive step father and all that he life was turning out to be she is excited when a new opportunity comes her way and spirals her into a life of fight, mystery and pain that she never knew was possible. With the new friends that she meets, what is it that she is going to do?

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My Inescapable Fate : Chapter 1

Slap The sound reverberated through the house a I reached the bottom of the stairs and ran straight into my lowlife good for nothing, piebald, alcoholic stepfather. Things had changed since my mother passed away mysteriously. After that my "Daddy Dearest" took abject interest in a sick new hobby, me. It started with an occasional beating when I got a bad grade or spilled something, but it rapidly became daily beatings and nightly rape. For some sick, twisted reason even ater it all I pitied him, well that was what I thought then.

"Ava, I told you an hour ago to get down here, you haven't done any of the shit you're supposed to, and now you're going to be late for work you lazy, dirty, cheap slut." The years of beatings had tempered my anger and made me heartless. I stared at him with utter contempt and dropped my bag next to me.

"You know you pompas ass, it is about time you figured out that if you ever hit me again, touch me again, or rape me again, I will kill your drink sodden ass. I don't pity you anymore, I am not afraid of you and I most definitely will kill you. I advise you to get this through your head, I am done with you and all of this shit you put me through. Since I am paying all of the bills now, I advise you to shape up or get the fuck out."

His face became red, his eyes bulged out of his head and he lunged for me. I gasped and tried to scramble back as I dialed for help on my cell. As I hit send he grabbed my ankle. I screamed as he pulled me down the stairs. I flailed and tried to hit him, but I felt the panic and couldn't calm down to think rationally enough. He grabbed the sides of my head and bashed the back of my skull into the stairs. I felt dizzy but clear headed. I worked my leg in between us and launched him off me. I quickly got to my feet and rushed him. I sat astride him and connected my fist with his face repeatedly. I don't remember how long I hit him, but I felt arms lift me off and restrain me as I lunged again.

"Miss stop, you need to stop." The voice was calm in the red haze that was my brain. I screamed once before I broke free and walked out the front door. I moved slowly and carefully as I was watched by five sets of eyes all cold and calculating as I sat on the porch. I stuck my head in my hands and proceeded to make my rapidly beating heart slow. I could still feel the urge deep within to grab the kitchen knife and tear his throat out, cut open every artery and watch him bleed out. Years and years of pain moved to the surface of my brain and I slammed my hands down.

"You know, you can damage yourself that way." It was the calm voice again. I looked up and actually saw the face for the first time. He wasn't smiling but he didn't look pissed off either. I took in a deep breath and let it out with a big sigh.

"Right now I don't care about the damage I do, but the damage that has been done to me, over an over again." I gripped my hands to the back of my head and winced at the pain I hadn't felt in my head. I brought my hands down and saw them covered in blood.

"Wow miss, we need to get you checked out, that looks particularly nasty." He helped me up and steadied me as I almost toppled over. I caught myself as I grabbed his shoulder.

"I am fine, a cloth and some rest and I will be fine again. Don't trouble yourself over me. I am not worth any of your well paid time." I looked at him for a moment I started to walk away. I looked back for a moment and sucked in a breath. "Am I under arrest for anything, or am I free to go?"

He looked at me with a raised eyebrow. "No not under arrest, just need you to answer some questions for me."

I nodded. "I can do that, but it will have to wait until after I am done with work. I am already late and need every hour I can get."

His look told me he was distressed by my decision. "You mean you actually want to go to work after all this?"

I nodded my head and sighed. "This is the story of my life, you don't get it do you? This has been my life since my mother died. Until I weas eighteen I put up with more than I do now. I never had the extra money I needed to leave, so I turned my room into a type of fortress he couldn't get into, the only safe haven I have from him. Work and school are the only other escapes I have. So do I want to go to work, yes and if I an not there in the next ten minutes, my boss will be in a panic wondering if I am alive. She is great to work with me when he puts me in the hospital."

He looked at me in shock. "You are telling me that this isn't the first time he has done this?"

I shook my head and let out a hysterical giggle. "New to the force are ya? We I guess you did something bad to be stuck babysitting me. Don't worry they will put him in lockdown for twenty four hours then tell me the same thing, never enough evidence to keep him locked up. He will be home tomorrow and telling me he won't do it again. Now if you will excuse me, I have to go, Boss is about to call."

He nodded. "Well then how about I take you to work after I check our your head?"

I shot him a look and nodded as my phone rang. He moved behind me as I answered.

Me* Hello

Boss* Thank goodness Ava I have been worried sick.

Me* Don't worry Joy, just another on of those days. I called this time though. Listen, I will be there in about fifteen minutes, getting my head check out.

Joy* That bad huh? Well I will clock you in and get your stuff set up for the day. Get here as soon as you can.

Me* Will do boss lady, see you soon.

I hung up the phone and put it on the porch next to me. As I felt the stranger's hands on my scalp I winced at the pull of the string as stitches were put in my head.

"Hurt any miss?" His tone was sincere but curious.

"A bit, but not as much as it should. My name is Ava by the way, not miss or ma'am. Just Ava."

I felt him chuckle as the string jerked a bit. "Ava then, well my name is Thomas, Thomas Schultz. You know, I have never met anyone like you, definitely a change. Now let's get you to work and give me the chance to talk to you."

I looked at him a moment and noticed that he wasn't in a uniform, but he still wore a badge. I shook loose the cobweb feeling that was assulting my brain and felt a revalation hit me. "You aren't a cop are you?"

He shook his head and opened the passengers door for me. I moved to get into the vehicle then gasped. I ran into the house, grabbed my bag then rushed to the porch to grab my phone before I moved back towards the SUV. I smiled at Thomas as I got in, a bit of a blush on my cheeks embarrassed I almost forgot my things from looking into his beautiful eyes. He closed the door and moved to the driver's side and got in. As he started the SUV he looked at me.

"No I am not a cop, nor detective. I have other things to speak to you about. We have been watching you since high school and my superiors are impressed with how quick your mind is. It is like you can see it once and memorize everything in front of you. We have a name for that of course. You can also learn something after you are shown once."

I was a bit creeped out by what he was telling me, that I had been watched. After the creepy feeling, the dread hit me. I had been sneaking onto the nearby army base to learn how to protect myself. I looked over at Thomas and knew I was in so much trouble. I had a paniced look on my face and he laughed.

"Yes, we know about you sneaking on base and no we aren't mad about it. You are going to need everything you have learned so far. I have a proposition for you if you could spare some time after you're done at work."

I looked at him confused as we pulled up in front of my customer service job. "What proposition could you possibly have for me? I am nothing special."

He raised his eyebrow at me. "Ava Dean you have special talents that a friend of mine could truly nurture and turn into a weapon. All of that anger you hide under the surface is an asset that we could use. I know you are off tomorrow and I would be grateful if you would give me time to explain. Tomorrow, nine AM in the diner, then we will move on from there. How does that sound?"

I shurgged my shoulders and looked at him one last time as I grabbed my bag and slung it over my shoulder. "We'll see." I opened the door and walked out into the humid air and my same old job.

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Chapter 2

As I walked through the door to my job I was bombarded by Joy as she hugged me tightly. Every line of her body screamed stress as she held me back at arms length.

"Ava, when are you going to move in with me? I told you that it wouldn't bother me one bit to have you there, hell you would rarely be there with as much work and school as you are keeping up with. "She looked at me with a dark look as she moved away for me to follow her.

"I know Joy, but I figure he will either die of alcohol poisoning or I will push him down the stairs. Either way I will be rid of him. I am really trying to save all that I can, while trying to be as independent as possible. I may not care too much for his bullshit, but I am taking care of myself and providing for myself."

She stopped moving completely and looked at me. "I can't believe you just said that. I wouldn't charge you anything to stay with me. You would be able to save more if you stay with me. What is so bad about that? YOu think you wouldn't have freedom, the ability to come and go as you please? Ava, try a better excuse this time, I am not falling for another half thought out lie."

I looked at joy in shock. My meek and mannered boss who never raised her voice, was yelling at me. I knew I had been lying to her, but she had never called me on it. I looked at her for a moment before I sighed. "I made my mother a promise to watch out for my step father no matter what happened. I know he has put me through so much, but I feel like I would be letting her down if I just gave up ya know. So yes, he gets violent sometimes but he is still the man my mother chose. That is the real reason that I haven't left, because I promised my mother. That was the reason I decided to wait it out. Soon enough I will be done with school, I will have my degree and I will be gone. No one wants to see this town in the rearview more than me."

She looked at me shocked. "You put up with that jackass of a mouth breather because your mother asked you to? I get it now but still I don't know why you haven't left. You don't have to be here. You could take your forensics classes anywhere. I can't stand the calls from the hospital saying you can't come in again. Ava it's heartbreaking. Do me a favor and work back in here in case they don't pick him up. Goodness knows that the last time was almost more than I could take."

I nodded and set up to restock the back room, then my phone began to ring.

Me* Hello

Voice* Hello Ava, I wave wanted to speak to you for sometime now. How are you?

Me* Um, fine actually. Who is this?

Voice* I am Thomas' boss and I would really like the chance to speak with you. I really hope that you will come with Thomas tomorrow.

Me* Do you have a name or are you trying to keep me in the dark?

Voice* I have a name, but if I have piqued your interest then come see me and I will tell you my name and so much more. We can use a woman of your talents. If you can make it thorugh the initial hell w plan to put you through that is. Of course I have every confidence in you.

Me* You know nothing of the hell I have endured. You could try your hardest and never break me. I have been raped, beaten, stabbed, hospitalized, starved and hung by my arms and thrashed. Don't tell me you know anything about putting anyone through hell, because I have lived it.

Voice* Yes Ava we have watched you for a very long time, and we know the hell you have lived. We want to train that anger, turn it into a weapon you can use.

Me* I'll think about it, but my curiosity isn't that strong sir. That was taken from me a long time ago. Now I have to work so I can keep on track today.

Voice* Be careful Ava, when you go to do your training today there will be an ID card waiting for you even if you don't take our offer you are going to need the skills you're learning to stay alive.

The line went dead and I turned on the radio in the corner to drown everything out. I shrugged off the feeling of dread that tried to fill me. As the beat moved through me I smiled, it was times like this that I felt the most clear, the most free. I moved to the music and smiled as I started to put things away. The beat helped me to work faster than I usually would and the headache I had started to disapate. After stock I cleaned and polished the back room. I smiled as the music changed and I started to dance around as the tempo picked up I laughed for the first time in a while. I felt hands grab mine and I looked down to see Joy's son dancing with me. He was an exuberant little boy with his mom's chubby cheeks and sweet demeanor.

As we danced I felt my phone vibrate in my pocket, I quickly pulled out my phone and turned off my alarm. I gasped as I saw how late I was for my workout and school. I kissed Joy's son, quickly changed and walked out of the back when joy ran at me and handed me a package that had my name written messily on it. I opened it and found a note.

~Ava,
I know you didn't get a vehicle so consider this yours. Now get to the base and enjoy what I set up for you.
Thomas~

I tipped the package and a set of keys fell into my hand, I smiled to myself. I walked out of the building and clicked the alarm and smiled as the lights flickered on a brand new red Chevy truck. I giggled and jumped up and down then opened the door. The smell of new truck hit me as the heat permeated from the truck. I jumped in and put the key in the ignition and shivered as the engine roared to live. I giggled as I put it in reverse and backed out of the parking lot. I turned the music on and went to the base where an ID was supposed to be waiting. As I pulled up to the gate and handed them my driver's license he nodded at me and handed me a package before he opened the gate and let me through.

I pulled over and put the truck in park and opened the package. Inside was two beautiful purple pistols and a military ID. There was a note wrapped around a thigh holster, I took it off and read it.

~Ava,
I figured you would like something with flare, now pull out the GPS and follow the directions to the gun range. There is someone there waiting for you to do two hours before you go to school. Now don't be late and the guns you can also keep.
Tom~

I smiled, pulled out the GPS and turned it on. I followed the directions and smiled as I approached the range, turned off the engine and grabbed the package Tom got me as I got out. I walked over to the guy loading weapons on a small table. He looked at me and smiled.

"You must be Ava. I am Chris, I am here to teach you to shoot the pea shooters Tom gave you. I see you brought the whole package. Well then how about we get you holstered and quickly go through the basics. Now I am going to get the holsters for you the first time, after that princess you are on your own." He quickly holstered the guns then attached them to my sides and then smiled. "There."

I smiled at him. "Alright now, how about you walk me through how to load these so called pea shooters so I can get to some practice in before I have to go to school. You go through the process and I will try to keep up."

He nodded and went to work on two fully unloaded weapons. He loaded each clip in turn and placed them into the weapons before he cocked the hammer back, loaded the weapon and removed the safety. I watched in awe at the fluidity of his movements, years of practice made his movements graceful. When he was done he looked at me and opened his mouth, I put my hand up to stop him, moved over to the table and put my guns down and copied each thing he did and then put each weapon down carefully.

He looked at me with his eyebrow raised and nodded. "Tom said you had talent, he didn't tell me it was a photographic memory and a mimic response. That is something that may come in handy. Now I am going to teach you to--."

I quickly picked up one of my shiny purple guns and pointed it at the target furthest out on the field. I gently squeezed the trigger and popped off a couple of shots. I put the weapon down, turned my back and slightly moved my head his direction. I raised my eyebrow and nodded. He moved over to the table and put his gun own and then moved down the field to the target. I kept my back to him as he brought the target sheet up and put it down on the table between us.

"Impressive, you have watched people shoot before. Well, I really think you need to meet with Tom tomorrow. You have raw potential that could take you places. Have you learned any hand to hand?"

I nodded. "I usually sneak in and practice hand to hand with the troops. For the first week I just kinda watched, then I started to joing in. After that I would pay for a Karate lesson here, Tae Kwon Do lessons there, Ju Jitsu, Kung Fu and any other I could find. I have learned a lot of things so far. Of course I am no where near where I want to be, but I've had a good start."

He nodded approvingly. "Excellent. Well then, just meet with Tom and he will be able to set you up with everything you need. Now get to school before you are late. Hopefully I will see you on the range again."

I smiled and walked away to my new truck. I smiled as the engine roared to life. What started as a crappy day was turning into one of the best days of my life.

Chapter 3

School ran like normal and I smiled as I pulled into the driveway. The lights were off and I took a deep breath before I walked up to the door, took another deep breath and grabbed out my phone. I dialed Tom's number as I put the key in the lock. He picked up just as I opened the door.

Tom* I thought you would be calling me Ava.

Me* Yeah, yeah. I wanted to call and thank you for the gifts. It isn't everyday that I woman gets to feel like an army princess. Is the truck mine or just a loaner?

Tom* Yours, it's all yours. Did you get the package from the gate?

Me* I did, thank you. They were absolutely beautiful, my favorite color no less, well second favorite.

Tom* Well I couldn't find them in red. So can I expect you tomorrow?

Me* Yes, I will be there at... No, what the hell are you doing here. LET ME GO YOU ASSHOLE. NO, FRANK, LET ME GO!

I dropped my phone as he drug me to the kitchen, the grip on my hand tightened and I started to get mad, I felt the anger in me begin to build. I turned to him and grabbed the pressure point in his wrist wrenching his hand off me before I kicked him in the chest then moved to punch him in the face. As he fell to the ground I heard Tom screaming at me. I walked calmly over to my phone and picked it up.

Tom* Ava, Ava please are you okay?

Me* Tom, I'm fine, but do you know a place I could stay, I am done with this shit.

Tom* Sure Ava, I will get right on it.

Me* Oh and Tom, do you think you could come help me pack so I don't kill the drunkard?

Tom* *laughs* Sure I'll be there in twenty minutes. If he wakes up, knock him out, don't kill him Ava.

I sighed. I would rather just kill him and be done with it.

Me* Fine, just hurry please.

Tom* On my way Delicious.

I hung up the phone and ent up the stairs to my room. I unlocked the door and looked at my immaculate room. I sighed and walked downstairs and stepped over my unconcious step father to grab some heavy duty trashbags and headed for my room. As I stepped back over the step loser his hand lashed out and grabbed my ankel. I grabbed the skillet and hit him over the head. I watched as he slumped back to the ground then walked over him and opened the front door as I heard a knock. I looked at Thomas and smiled.

"Well Ava, you are a handful. You can stay in one of my spare rooms and depending on your decision you can either get a barracks room or stay with me until you find a place."

I raised my eyebrow at him and nodded as I walked up the stairs to my room. "Thanks, if you would rather I could stay in a hotel. I don't want to put you out."

He shook his head. "You aren't putting me out, I volunteered to do it. I just had to clear it with my superiors before I offered. Now let's get your stuff together."

I nodded as I kept putting things in the bags I gathered and the boxes joy had been giving me over the months. I packed up all my school books and smiled as I grabbed everything I had ever bought myself. I heard heavy footsteps on the stairs and rolled my eyes as the step loser came into view. I smiled a bit at the large lump on his head. I watched as he glared daggers at me and didn't even notice Tom. He sauntered up to me and tried to tower over me.

"Think you're slick don't you hitting me with a frying pan. You fucking bitch I should have killed you years ago just like I killed your doe-eyed mother. Should have chosen a faster way then poisoning that stupid bitch. She did everything she was told, made me a hell of a lot of money though. Apparently her body was irresistable. Well, at least that's what the other guys told me."

I clenched my fists at my sides and looked at him, he was trying to goad me and I wasn't going to let it happen. I just smiled at him and kept packing my things. I wasn't going to give him the satisfaction to see me riled anymore. As i moved to put my mother's picture in the bag, Frank moved forward and grabbed my arm.

"Did you not hear me you fucking bitch? I raped, gangbanged and poisoned your mother. Doesn't that bother you?"

I looked at his hand on my arm and then at his face. I was completely impassive. "Father dear, if you would like to keep that hand attached to your body then I advice you to remove it from my arm. Of course if you would like to call my bluff, well I can't stop you. I have a witness that I advised you against it."

He looked over at Tom for the first time confused. "Who the fuck are you and what are you doing in my house?"

I glared at Frank. "This is my new boss Tom and it doesn't matter since I pay the bills here you freeloading cock juggler. I could have you evicted and thrown on the street. The payments have been in my name since I turned 18. Fuck with me again Frank, one more time and I will. Actually how about you pack your shit and get out. I am going to make sure you are homeless by tomorrow."

I turned my back on him and kept to what I was doing. I didn't pay Frank any more attention as I gathered up the last bits of my things. I grabbed my duffle bag, threw it over my shoulder, put my backpack on and walked past Frank. He eyed me as I walked past him but made no move to touch me. I walked down the stairs and out to my brand new truck and put my things inside. As I walked back into the house I could hear Frank talking to Tom.

"I bet you aren't her boss, more like her pimp I bet. She makes you a ton of money doesn't she. Exotic she is with all that red hair and how built she is. I bet you have tasted her too." I looked up the stairs in shock. As I stood there Tom began to laugh.

"You know, that woman right there could kill you in twenty different ways and barely move a muscle. Whore, no not in the slightest and I am most definitely not a pimp. I work for a private sector of the US Military, recruiting specially talented people that could be an asset to our country's defense. Now go away before I have to show you what I mean."

I walked up the stairs and grabbefd a few more bags. The silence was thick as I walked past them. I rolled my eyes and walked back down the stairs and out to my truck. AFter I put my bags in the truck I grabbed one of the guns out of the holster, took off the safety and slid it into the waistband of my pants before I started my trek up the stairs for the last of my things. I grabbed my bags and slung them over my shoulder and looked at Tom and nodded. He picked up the two large boxes and follwed me out. As I walked past Frank he grabbed my arm and tried to yank me towards him and off balance. I caught myself and dropped the bags as I reached for the gun at my back. I put it to his head and smiled.

"I expect you out of my house by tomorrow night and make sure you get all your grimy shit out. I will have someone come escort you off my property by gunpoint if I have to. Do I make myself clear?"

He nodded dumbly at me.

"Good if anything is out of place, and I mean anything. I will come back here and rip your head off. Cut open and flay every vein and watch you bleed to death. I am very serious Frank, piss me off again and I will kill you. I am done with you."

I walked out of the door and to my truck without looking back. I would keep paying for the house and when it was done, I would convert it and make it nice for some family and profit from it. I looked over at Tom and smiled as he put the two boxes in the front seat. I nodded and closed the door. I was relieved that whole thing was over.

"Follow me and I will take you to your temporary home." He laughed at his joke and headed for the SUV I saw earlier. I got in and as he took off I backed out and followed with a new sense of self confidence and power I never felt before. It was an intoxicating feeling and it stayed with me as I sped through the streets.

It took about half an hour to get to his place, which really made me think that he was staying somewhere close by. As we turned into his building I looked at the high end security and someting started to cross my brain. If Tom lived in a place like this, then I Could do well and save up a lot of money. He parked in a covered spot by what looked like a very large quad set of apartments. I was in awe of how beautiful the building was when I felt a hand on my back.

"Nice isn't it? How about we get your things in, get you a stiff drink of your choice and get some sleep. Nine in the morning is going to come quickly and I actually have to work tomorrow. I am going to be dropping you with a friend of mine."

He grabbed my things and put his key in the door. I quickly grabbed two of the large bags and followed him. The inside was enormous and absolutely beautiful. He moved through the living room and quickly up the stairs into a large what looked like entertainment area and two long hallways. He went down the right hallway and opened a door on the left.

"I spoke to my partner Conner and we think it would be fine for you to stay here until you feel better about the changes in your life. Don't worry about anything we ahve it covered, you need to learn to take care of things you need."

I looked at him glassy eyed and shocked. "Thank you so much. This is more than I could have asked for. Is Conner around for me to thank him too?"

Tom shook his head. "No, he got deployed five months ago. He called while we were on our way here. Of course he wants to meet you as well, but for now let's get your stuff in and get you settled a bit, tomorrow is going to be busy."

It took two more trips to get all my stuff up and then Tom and I sat down in the kitchen and he pulled out two shot glasses and a bottle of Tequila. He poured the shots and smiled at me.

"You look so lost and confused. What is rattling around in that head of yours?"

I downed the drink and sat down on the floor. "Nervous I guess, I don't trust a lot of people and I have worked hard to put my life together and now I feel like a snow globe that got shoot up and now everyone is laughing as the pieces start to fall apart."

He nodded as he downed his shot. "Don't worry my friend Imi might be young but she has been through more than her fair share of shit, but she is real awesome. I wouldn't hand you over to her if I didn't think that you two would get along. She is tough but fair. Now get some sleep, trust me when I tell you that you are going to need it. By the way, the bathroom is just across from your room if you need it."

He gave me a soft shove to my room and I smiled as I closed the door. My life was changing fast and I was bound and determined to keep up.

Chapter 4

Morning came before I was ready but I still got out of bed before my alarm. I opened up a few bags of clothes until I found some work out clothes. I walked into the kitchen and grabbed some juice and found that breakfast was on the table waiting for me. I sat down and ate quickly. It tasted wonderful to have a balanced breakfast for once. I got ready to go, finished my plate as Tom came out of his room. He looked at me and smiled.

"You ready to go?" He was to chipper first thing in the morning and I didn't have coffee yet but I nodded anyway.

We walked out the door and he led me over to his SUV and we got in.

"Today I am going to take you and drop you with Imi that wayo you know how to get there tomorrow if you decide to stay with us after the hell she is going to put you through today." His expression was bemused as he pulled out and headed to the base, the ride was quiet except for the music and I smiled to myself.

It didn't take but five minutes to get to the base and get parked. Tom led me over to an old building about half a mile from the SUV. He opened the door and the cacaphone of noise was staggering. I looked at him for a moment before I walked through the throngs of training women before Tom stopped me in front of a super hot model like chick with long dark hair and scars that marred her beautiful honey tanned skin.

"Heya Imi, been a while." He stepped up to her with confidence and offered her a friendly hug.

She hugged him back fiercely. "Hey Tom, it has been a while, how have things been?"

Tom shrugged. "Same thing work, recruiting, business as usual. And speaking of recruiting, I have someone for you. Brass thinks she is going to rival everyone here." He pointed at me and smiled. "This is Ava and they want you to give her your worst."

She raised her eyebrow at him and he coughed.

"Well not your worst, but the worst you can dish out, that way she knows what to expect the whole time she is here. Goodness knows she doesn't need to be coddled, she has been through hell herself. If you agree to do this, you are going to be her mentor and no one else. You have to decide this for yourself, the Brass won't force you to do it, but I believe it would be beneficial for the both of you."

Imi looked him over for a second with her hands on her hips before she walked past Tom and over to me. "So you think you have what it takes to be on MY team?"

Her look could have melted a car bumper, but she just stood there and waited for my answser. I shrugged my shoulder. "Honestly I don't know, but my life couldn't get any worse than it already is. I want to do something meaningful with my life and since I can't seem to keep myself out of trouble then the military told me that maybe you could do something with me."

Her expression changed slightly and a ghost of a smile appeared on her lips. "Well, if you can survive today, then you will be able to survive the rest of the eight weeks and we will see if I will give you the advanced training that you will need to be a part of my team."

I nodded. "Then I guess I have to do my best. I know this is going to sound odd, but what else do I have to do with my life, go back to the house to get my ass beat by my step loser."

She nodded at me and looked back at Tom. "Oh, I'll take her on alright, but I can promise by the time I am done with her she will be the best that there is here, of course second only to me because there are somethings I just can't teach."

He nodded. "Alright I will come back at 7pm and pick her up. Give her hell Imi, I will see you later." He hugged her again and walked out leaving me with the female equivilant of the grim reaper.

She smiled at me evily. "Come now Ava we have a lot to do and you have little time to do it. Come with me as I explain the finer details of what you are going to be doing."

I nodded and followed her through the fifty or so women who were training hard. She walked me out of the building and to a field with a lot of obsticles and stopped.

"Alright Ava, now you are going to warm up by doing sixteen laps which is four miles and you have to do it in under fourty minutes. If you don't you will keep going until you do. Once you get your four miles under fourty minutes then you are going to do the obsticle course in under ten. Most of our girls can do the obsticle course in under nine, but this is your first day and I am going to make sure you are somewhat caught up with them."

I nodded and started to stretch and Imi shook her head. "If you stretch now before the warm up you are going to lose power in the obsticle course. You might as well start running and don't stop until I tell you."

I took off around the track and kicked myself for not bringing my Mp3 player to keep me motivated. I ran and ran around the track and with each pass I become more and more exhausted. After I ran my first set of sixteen she looked at me, shook her head and motioned for me to do it again. I rolled my eyes before I moved to take off and I felt a hand grab me and a sharp slap to my face.

"Do not ever disrespect me, I don't need you here, this is a privilage not a right. I don't tollerate anything but the best from my soldiers and if you think I don't see anything well don't be too sure. Now I advise you to run another sixteen before I beat the ever loving shit out of you."

I didn't say or do anything but what she told me to do. I ran my next set of sixteen wondering just what those scars of hers were from. I imagined many things and wondered what made her as she was, but I was too afraid to ask. As I finished my second set of sixteen she looked at me with an odd expression.

"What was it that kept your mind occupied as you ran?" Her curiosity made me smile a bit.

"I was thinking of random things a few things in particular and trying to keep my mind occupied while I ran. Thought of a few things in my life and others that weren't about me. Anything to keep my mind busy while I ran. What's my time?"

Imi kept quiet for a moment and then smiled. "You just did the fastest four miles of any female here at twenty seven minutes. Now for the hard part, which is going to be able to get through the obsticle course in under ten minutes. I will do it once and then you will have to do it. Make sure you watch me closely that way you can pick it up."

I nodded as she moved over to the start and with speed and grace moved through the obsticle course. I watched in awe as she was moving in and out, up and down and through many different obsticles until she

was standing in front of me panting for breath. I was amazed at how nimble she was. She looked at me expectantly and grabbed the stopwatch.

I got in position as she told me to go and I failed miserably for the first six times that I did it, not even coming close to ten minutes. I could see that Imi was disappointed, but I was winded long before I even started and as seven o'clock rolled around I was dead tired, wiped and in massive amounts of pain. Imi looked at me with a with a saradonic smile.

"I knew I was going to kick your butt, but goodness Ava, they told me you worked out daily. I don't see that as much of a work out if I can kick your butt in less than twelve hours. Be here tomorrow at 6am. If you don't show I will know you aren't serious about what I can do for you. Sometime soon I might tell you just what it is that we do and maybe give you some insight into what others could only dream to know. You have to earn this Ava, I won't hand you anything, you have to bust your ass for everything."

I nodded as much as I could and watched as she walked away and left me where I was laying. It felt like eternity until I found arms lifting me off the ground. At that moment in time I wouldn't have cared if it was Satan himself that cradled me as long as he put me in the hottest bath imaginable and then laid me in my grave because I was done.

"Seems like she actually likes you." Tom's voice broke the wonderful silence I had been craving since my pulse started to resound in my head a few hours ago.

I huffed a laugh as he placed me carefully in the passengers side of his SUV. The short ride was a welcome relief to the stretching and painful movements that were about to follow the trek I had to make up the stairs to my bathtub and then to my bedroom. Ugh, if only the bath would just come to me.

I got out of the SUV with a loud groan and walked slowly into the apartment and even slower up the stairs. By the time I made it to the bathroom and started the bath I was almost too stiff to go grab clothes and a towel. I shuffled over to the bedroom, grabbed out my most comfortable PJs and the softest towel I had before I closed the door. The immediate knock on the door startled me and I almost fell over. When I opened it Tom stood there with a few small packages and a little container.

He smiled at me and handed them over to me. "Put a teaspoon from each of those packages in the water and when you are done I will put some ointment on the scrapes on your back. I promise all of this is completely worth it. The salts are to alleviate pain and stiffness and the ointment will make those cuts heal three times faster then they normally would."

I nodded, smiled and closed the door after he walked out. I did as he instructed and when I sunk into the steaming water I sighed in relief. My long red hair was tied back out of the way and I could feel the salts soaking into my skin and the pain started to disappear and I felt my joints start to loosen. It felt like I could go another twenty rounds with Tyson and enjoy it fully.

After about fourty five minutes and my skin completely pruning, I got up, turned on the shower and washed the sweat and dirt out of my hair before I got out and got dressed in my comfiest sleep clothes. I smiled until I looked in the mirror and saw the scratches from the barbed wire crawl I had to do over and over and over again. It was just like being back at the step loser's house and in his clutches again. I started to shiver until a knock sounded at the door.

"You still alive in there Ava or did you fall asleep and drown?" His voice held a hint of humor as he spoke and I couldn't help but to laugh.
"I am still alive, just looking at the handy work the barbed wire did on me. I will be out in just a second for

your to put that ointment on."
I heard him take a step away. "Take your time, goodness knows you still have to be hella sore after everything."

I nodded then remembered that he couldn't see me. "Yea a bit, but those salts work wonders and I should be right as rain by morning."
I walked out of the bathroom after I put on my ratty old PJs, the tshirt holey from so much wear. "Alright, well now that you are out of the bathroom, come with me into the living room and we will get the salve on your skin and get you a drink and send you off to la la land. Tomorrow I think you will find that you aren't done with the hard stuff, but when you are it will be a piece of cake for you."

I let out a hysterical giggle. "Yeah, kill me now and play later. If I can take the beating then I get the sweets."

He pushed me down in front of his chair and lifted the back of my shirt and placed it over my head. As the shyness started to come over me I almost hunched my shoulders anticipating the beating that just might be coming my way. As his hands touched me I flinched and gasped and I felt him tense up immediately.

"Sorry I should have warned you that I was about to touch you. I forgot, I should be used to partially broken women already as I work for a bunch of them." He wasn't sarcastic about it at all and he sounded a bit sad.

I was curious at his words. "Do you mean the unit I am joining is a bunch of women that come from similar situations kinda like mine?"
I felt his body move as he nodded. "Yes, they are. Take Imi for example, she was sold into slavery, beaten, raped and lost almost everything. I will let her tell you the whole story, but that is the beginning of what made her who she is today." His hands worked steadily, and it felt wonderful as the pain slowly started to go away and the warmth from the ointment penetrated into the rest of the sore muscles in my back and soon with him working out the kinks, the pain was gone.

I smiled at him as I put my shirt back over my head and then stood up. "Wow, seems like I need to finish the hard part of my training so I can learn more. She seems like a wealth of information."

He got up and I followed him, sitting on a stool in front of the bar. "She is very clever, strong as can be, kind, compassionate, but she has had it rough and wants her girls to be as strong. She wants you to be as ready as you can be for everything that may ever come your way, but you will have to also be able to think on your feet. The more you show her you are capable, the more willing she will be to make you a part of her team. Goodness knows she needs the best of the best and you can be just that Ava, I know you can."

I looked down in front of me and saw a shot placed there. I quickly took the shot and started to get dizzy instantly. I looked over at Tom questionably. "What the fuck was in that shot?"

"Just a little sedative to help you sleep a bit better tonight, now let's get you to your room so you can sleep the shit off and you will be as good as new in the morning. Trust me you will thank me later."

I felt myself start to nod off and smiled, content that for once I wouldn't have to sleep with my door locked or scared that someone would try to get in. For the first time in my life I felt safe and thanks to Tom and his kindness, I knew I could move forward.

Chapter 5

When the alarm went off at 5:30 am I quickly silenced it and moaned expecting to be in a world of pain after the beating I was given. As I got up I noticed a little discomfort, but all and all I was feeling pretty damn good. I quickly got dressed in my black and camo work out clothes and comfy sneakers before I headed into the kitchen. The aroma of coffee filled the room and I started to drool. I moved to the coffee pot and grabbed a mug from beside the pot and poured myself a big glass. It was like heaven in a mug as I moved about the kitchen making myself a quick breakfast before I was out the door and to my truck. I got it and placed the mug in the cup holder before I started up the truck and made my way to the base. As I got to the gate I yawned and smiled at the guard as I handed over my ID.

"Mornin Ma'am, how are you today?" The burley guard at the gate greeted me with not umph in his voice and I smiled.

"I feel like you sound, tired, beat about about to get my ass beat again. Have a good day." He nodded as he handed back my ID and waved for the gate to be raised. I nodded back to him and made my way to a parking spot close to where Tom had parked yesterday. I grabbed my phone and things from the truck along with my piping hot coffee and made my way over to the training building where a bunch of differently dressed women were beginning their day as well. As I got in I went straight for the locker room and looked for the locker with my name on it. On the locker was a lock with a key in it and a quick note.

~Ava,
Keep this key with you at all times so you are able to get to your things as needed. When you get settled come join me out back for your four mile warm up and then back to the training course.
Imi~

I sighed and put my purse, keys and phone in the locker before I shut it. I took another long drink of my coffee and headed out to the practice field when I bumped into someone.

"I am so sorry, I am still not much of a morning person. I didn't spill anything on you did I?" I looked at the beautiful woman apologetically and moved to let her by but she just huffed and tried to get up in my face. That was when I saw that she was pink from her head to toe almost. She looked so girly that she really didn't seem like the type that would be here.

"Ugh, are you serious, another elephant footed, clumsy bitch to get in my way. What are they thinking bringing in trash like you. I hope you know you will never make it, you may made the Beta team but never Alpha if you clomp and stomp like that. Of course I wouldn't want you on my team anyway. Get your overly dyed red hair out of my way before I stomp you where you stand."

I looked at her shocked and felt my temper start to rise. "Listen here Hawaiian Barbie, you need to get the fuck out of my way before they can't tell your bones from dust. I was polite and apologized as I wasn't watching where I am going, but hun you might want to watch your back cause you never know where I am going to be. Now get the fuck out of my way before I start stomping mud puddles in your ass then walk them dry."

I didn't even wait for a response, I walked past her and out of the locker room door to my destination at the same pace I was before the barbie doll got in my way. As I made my way outside Imi spotted me and signalled for me to move faster. I hurried over and smiled at her.

"Good morning Imi, how are you this morning? I smiled at her and sank the rest of my coffee.

She nodded at me. "Alright Ava start your four mile warm up and and then back to the course. You only have a few hours today before you meet two associates of mine, they are going to expand your education. Now warm up we only have four hours before I hand you off to Nora."

I started my run and put my MP3 player in my ears and started my run faster than I ever have. I enjoyed the serenity of the music and had my four miles done in under thirty minutes. I was winded by the time I was done and Imi had me take a break before her and I started on the course. She ran it with me the first time and then every time after that I was on my own. I started to get faster and faster as the music pumped in my ears. She knew that it was playing and didn't stop me so I kept it up even after my lungs started to burn and my breath came in gasps.

Imi nodded at me and then held up the stop watch. I smiled at her and then fell on the ground trying to catch my breath.

"Good job Ava, looks like you are really pushing yourself, that is a good thing. I can bet the music helps, but you aren't going to have it tomorrow. Why don't you take a twenty minute breather and then try the course without the music. I want you to motivate yourself without it cause if someone is trying to kill you, music is going to help them target you."

I nodded and started to pick myself up off the ground. As I dusted myself off I walked towards the locker room and smiled as I opened my locker and looked at my phone. Twenty new messages from Joy asking if I was alright and why I wasn't in to work. I texted her my abbriviated version of the story and got a call right after the message was sent.

Me* Yes mistress of the universe.

Joy* Well at least you are joking, that is a good thing.

Me* I am dog ass tired and been working my ass off since six am.

Joy* You haven't been here. Did you take them up on the offer, are you going to do it?

Me* Yea, what else am I good for honestly. I know I could have worked for you for the rest of my life, but then I wouldn't get to do what I really want to do.

Joy* You know I would never hold you back Ava, but I understand what you are saying.

Me* I know you wouldn't Joy, but they are going to teach me things that I wouldn't learn anywhere else. They have taught me things already that I have a feeling that I am going to need.

Joy* Well good luck Ava, and you keep in touch, I don't want you to get hurt, goodness knows you have had enough of that.

Me* You are too right Joy, thank you so much and I promise that I will. Have a good one.

Joy* Bust ass Ava.

I laughed as I hung up the phone and put it and my MP3 player in the locker. I headed back out to the course and didn't even wait for Imi to nod, I had a lot on my brain and I ran the course until I felt Imi's hand on my shoulder.

"Ava you are like a woman possessed. It is time for you to go and see Nora, it is time for you to also become books smart, things that you aren't taught outside of this facility."

I nodded at her and followed her into the building where all of the women were working out and into a room off the main workout room. I saw a woman dressed in purple from head to toe, well as much purple as she could wear. Imi went over to her and nodded to her before she crooked her finger for me to go to her. As I did she smiled.

"Ava this is Nora, she is going to teach you all different types of medicine and trust me, when I tell you that nothing leaves this room I mean it. Unless you are in the field you don't ever repeat what it is you learn."

I nodded. "Now you have four hours with Nora before you meet my Demo specialist. I think you and her will hit it right off. I think it will be sparks at first sight." Imi laughed at her own joke and walked away.

I sat down at the table and Nora handed me four notebooks, four textbooks and a purple pen. I smiled to myself and waited for her instructions.

"Hi Ava, first off we are going to teach you how to heal before you hurt, it is an essential part of learning to kill. I understand that it doesn't make sense to you now, but trust me, it will. Now take out your Summit book and work through the first five chapters then I am going to give you some hands on. Understand that this is a crash course that you will only be taking for two weeks and we have to get all through these books and then some."

I nodded and started to work through the chapters. The words lept from the pages to my head and I smiled to myself. I loved crash courses, they were easiest for me. For the first two hours I worked on the book work then she started to show me hands on what each herb looked like, how to tell the similar ones apart and what each of them was for. It amazed me how quickly she could speak and how she remembered over five hundred herbs all at once. By the time my first class with her was over my head was spinning. She picked up my books and notebooks and took them with her. She was serious that nothing was to leave that room.

"Be here tomorrow at the same time and we will go over it some more. You have wonderful potential and I think the bossman saw that."
I looked at her for a moment curiously. "Who is the bossman. I got a call before I started here and he told me he would introduce himself to me, but I have yet to meet him."

Nora nodded. "Yea, he is really busy so seeing him is almost next to impossible. He won't forget you though, when he comes back to base he will be happy to meet you."

I nodded. "Alright so which way to the Demo Specialist?"

Nora giggled. "Come, it might be better if I am there with you. She is overly rambunctious and very over zealous."

Nora and I chatted as we made our way over to the Demo field. I laughed as she started to tell me stories of Cherry, their Demo expert and the things she did as a kid. As we got over to her I could see her head moving back and forth and barely made out a set of headphones in all of her red and black dreadlocked hair. She wasn't even paying attention when Nora tapped her on the shoulder causing her to jump sky high.

"Good saints Nora, you scared the living tar out of me, luckily for you I didn't have a detonator in my hands. That could have been catastropic." She looked over at me and inclined her head a bit questionably.

"This is Ava, you are to train her in Explosives. They want her as good as you are and we all know you are the best."

Cherry's pale skin blushed a bit pink at the compliment. "Well, this is a first. Usually they want me to teach basics, but now they want me to crash course you on everything I know. Looks like they are trying to get you as good at Imi and quickly to. Alright then I am guessing we only have two weeks before they want you ready, since that is all the time they ever give me so I hope you retain things very well."

Nora laughed at her. "Oh you have no idea. I was trying to test her limits today, turns out she has a photographic memory and she can mimic things she has only seen once."

Cherry jumped up and down with joy and hugged Nora before she scooted her on her way. "Well then this is going to be one symphonic cluster fuck I hope you can make sense of." She laughed. "I am going to work you through how many different types of bombs their are, how to build them so you can better disarm them and then we will go through placement for maximum distruction."

She was like a kid in a candy store that didn't give me any notebooks or textbooks, she was all hands on. I made sure to remember everything that she taught me as we moved from one to another. My mind was reeling with all of this new information and they were a lot tougher than my professors at the college. I had a feeling though the things that they were teaching me were going to keep me alive in more ways than one. As she prattled on about bomb detonation types and started pointing to all the different components I decided to start making maps of them in my head. When she had me repeat them back she was surprised that I had about 98% of it correct and the things that I didn't were easily corrected until I had five different bomb types and detonators memorized piece by piece and could assemble them. By the time that our four hours were up I headed back out to my truck with a wealth of knowledge that I wasn't sure when I would need, but I knew I would at some point in the crazy life I was about to lead.

As the trip home didn't take long I stopped by the store and picked up some things to make a nice healthy dinner for Tom as he was nice enough to let me stay there with him and Conner. As I grabbed all my ingredients and went to the house I saw that Tom wasn't home yet. I unlocked the door and went in and quickly jumped into the shower before I started dinner. As the meat cooked I saw a stack of books on the table with a note attached. The note had my name on it.

~Ava,
These are the books that you will only study under this roof. They are advanced studies of what you are learning on base. The quicker you learn the faster we can get you out in the field. I am happy that they are moving you along so fast. Also your deposit slip for your first paycheck and your bank account information are in the manilla envelope for you, we went ahead and opened it for you and your direct deposit is automatic per the military. I will be just a bit late tonight I got called into a meeting and I have to stop the end of the world (figuratively speaking of course). I already know you are going to cook so I will come home hungry and you need to make sure you at least have the first two chapters of those books done. You can take notes, but when you leave they are locked up in a safe before you do anything else. Now make me some food bitch, LOL, just kidding, just kidding.
Tom~

I laughed at the note, went over to the stove and stirred the meat around before I opened the envelope and saw the check stub with an amount that I had never seen before. I was shocked and wondered if there was a mistake in my pay. There was no way that I was supposed to make $5,000 salary every two weeks. I about dropped to the floor, I had worked for three months to even get to two thousand dollars and here I was just handed five. I smiled as I put the information away and finished my hearty meal.

It took about an hour and a half to cook dinner and by the time I was done Tom was walking in the door. I smiled to myself and laid out the plates as I cracked open the first book and carefully read through the first two chapters, writing down notes where I needed. By the time I finished with dinner, dishes and studying I could tell these next two weeks were going to kill me.

Chapter 6

As the days passed, I learned so much and was quizzed over and over to make sure I had what Imi called "Maximum Retention". It was interesting that I had such a blast and my life was over a hundred times better than it was before. The step loser had moved out and I had been paying the landlady to keep the house. I may not want it, but I could fix it up and give it to a family that really deserved a home. I smiled as I got dressed for another day at work, my body had begun to adjust to the arduious work out that it went through every day. I was shocked to see that I had become more fit, my muscles toned and things that were flabby were finally the way the should be. I smiled to myself as I ate the last bite of my breakfast and grabbed my coffee. I ran out to the truck, I was a bit late and had already called Imi to let her know. She wasn't happy about it, but then again no one was perfect she told me.

I sped as fast as I could to the base and handed the guy at the gate my ID. He smiled at me and shook his head as I sped off and almost forgot my ID. I laughed at myself and grabbed my ID and rushed to the building to start my day. I got out of the truck, grabbed my coffee, turned around to rush into the building and ran into a brick wall.

"Oof." I looked up and it was like I was looking at a God. His blond hair shone in the early morning sun and his blue eyes were like pools of crystalline water. I was mezmerised by him and didn't see the hand he was holding out to me. I quickly grabbed it as he pulled me to my feet.

"Sorry wasn't watching where I was going. Maybe rockin out and running isn't such a good idea after all." He smiled a lopsided smile and I felt my stomach start to get butterflies.

"No completely my fault I am late for training and I really wasn't watching where I was going." I gasped, grabbed my things and rushed away not noticing that I left my keys behind in the mad rush to pick up the bags that held my guns in them.

As I rushed in the door and into the locker room to get fully suited up I looked over and Imi looked pissed.

"Really Ava, half an hour. I know you said you were going to be late but this is just unacceptable."

I took in a deep breath. "You are right Imi and I apologize, I will do my best to make sure that it never happens again."

She looked me over for another second before she nodded. I was expecting miracles when Tom said that she was nice, but here I stand with bitchzilla and the whole pissy possy. I just can't stand it but I push my way through. We start our day as usual with me running four miles and doing the obsticle course. I finally have it to under nine minutes and I know that she is impressed with my progress but she never tells me. After the warm up she starts to kick my ass with all different forms of martial arts. She is so quick and agile that I start to wonder if she is really human. After two hours of brutal ass kickery she finally gives me a break hydrate and cool off before the final showdown I knew was coming.

I move away from the building and start to catch my breath when the mysterious Adonis that has been in the back of my mind ambles with a group of people. I watch him as he moves, the fluidity of him makes my mouth water and I wonder just what it would be like to be touched by him. All of a sudden I am staring at him eye to eye and I can't help but lose myself in their depths. I see him say something to the people he is with before he starts to jog over to me.

"Hey I just wanted to apologize to you again about this morning. I am not the most graceful person without enough coffee to hype up an elephant. My name is Alex by the way, I go by Lex or on the rare special occasion dumbass or clumsy work just fine."

I smile at his quip and stand up and draw myself up to full height. "Ava and only Ava. Unless I run into Princess Barbie then I am Bitch, which I handle and wear just fine."

He laughs then and it is a wonderfully alarming sound. "Yes, well I am guessing by the Princess Barbie comment you are talking about Tori. Don't worry about her, they never could unjam that stick from up her ass. You have the most stunning eyes I have ever seen. Maybe we could talk again soon, I would really like the chance to get to know you."

I looked at him shocked and tilted my head to the side like a confused puppy. "You know that may have sounded sincere in your head, but coming out of your mouth it sounded like 'I want to get you drunk and fuck your brains out.' and I am just not that kinda girl. So I am going to go back to my training and when you learn what the word 'Lady' means, well then you can try again."

I stood up and made my way back to Imi to finish up the grueling hour of ass kicking she had in store for me. As I got back to her she smiled at me. "I see you ran into Lex? How interesting that you didn't fall for him like the rest have."

I raised my eyebrow at her. "You know I am not the type of person to fall for some 'I wanna get to know ya' line at all. I actually want to be treated like the lady that I am. I am done with the bullshit of being mistreated by people and I have been weeding those out of my life that don't think I am an amazing person. It may not leave me very many people but I will damn sure be glad to those very few true friends I have."
She nodded at me approvingly and then moved forward into position. I mirrored her and took in a deep breath for the pain that she was about to inflict on me. I still wasn't as fast as her when it came to hands on combat, but I tried my best. As she rushed me I started to block and block as she began to back me into a corner. I started to feel my confidence wane and that was when she kicked me in the jaw.

"Ava, get your damn head out of your ass and strike back. Staying on the defensive will get you killed in no time. If you don't fight back how are you to survive. I find this training to be a waste of time on you to be honest. You have no fight in you to do what you must. This isn't a job for little pansy ass bitches that can't get their head out of their ass. This job is given to broken women because they are stronger and have more to live for than the rest of the populous. You are showing me that the stuff your step father put you through is not enough to break you. I don't think you are cut out for this Ava, I think you like being the victim, the one that deserves pity. Such a waste of God given talent that you are just going to piss your life away like the rest of

the drones in this world."

I looked at her shocked and I could feel the anger rising deep inside me. I knew what she was doing, I could feel the sarcasm as it rolled off her skin. I smiled at her and she just stared.

"You don't think I can sense reverse psycology a mile off. Fuck that shit, if you really want me to fight then fine, but honestly that isn't the way to do it. That is a bullshit method that may work on others but never on me. I am a lot stronger than I look and you may look sweet and innocent but even before I talked to you I could sense how hostile you are. I don't know what you went through to make you so fucked up but you should know to never judge a book by it's cover. You might want to try a different tactic on me and if you can't think of one then sorry for your damn luck. Unless you have walked a mile in my shoes don't presume that you know jack shit. Don't make my Barbie list cause there is no coming back from that."

Imi looked at me and I could see that she was grinding her teeth. I was pissing her off and I wasn't sure that was a good thing. She could kill me in twenty different ways with a chalk eraser and I would just have to take it.

She nodded after a second and looked at me. "Sit down Ava, you and I are going to have a discussion. There are a few things you need to know and a couple of things I want you to know. One of the things I want you to know is that I didn't think you were suited to this kind of life. I figured you for one to soft, for someone to break you so easily that you would give up all of our secrets. Now that I see you I am starting to wonder if maybe I have misjudged you. I haven't seen this side of you before Ava, and I wonder if maybe the brass had it right. They don't seem to understand that not even a third of the women that are here don't belong in this unit. To me they are just disposable assets. Yes, I know that sounds cold, but it is truth. They don't have any real talents, they want to be here because it sounds badass. None of them work as hard as we do."

I looked at her for a moment in total disbelief. "So what you think that because I smarted off to you that I am a better fit?"

She shook her head. "No because you didn't let your anger get to you, you didn't fall for the tricks I have been playing and you're very level headed. I judged you way too harshly by how you looked. I figured that since you were a red head then you were automatically a hothead but in the past few days you have shown me different. I am going to tell you something that not many people know."

I looked at her for a moment confused. I could tell she was very uncomfortable. "Imi you don't have to tell me anything that you aren't comfy with. Goodness knows I didn't want my personal business aired out, but that it was."

She shook her head. "My life wasn't always bad. I had a great life until I was headed off for college. My father had gotten into debt with the wrong people and instead of going to college I was sold and sent overseas. I was raped, beaten, burned, flayed and that was when I made a huge life decision. I learned to fight back, I was taught weapons, hand to hand and a few other things that saved my life. What I wasn't expecting was to fall in love. His name was Lolek and he was an amazing person. He helped me get the strength to escape, he gave his

life for mine and left me with two of the most amazing people in my life. My twins Marek and Marika."

I looked at her shocked. "Wow, makes you wonder just what life has in store for you doesn't it?"

She nodded. "Yes, but right now I am just trying to do the best I can for my wonderful children no matter the cost. Right now my mother watches them while I am at work, they go to daycare and she picks them up if I am going to be late. Some things in life change and if you can't roll with it then it will kill you. I learned the hard way and no one should have to learn like that. You are soon to go on missions that could take you weeks or even months to get what you need, and you may have to be something you are not. You would be surprised what I would do for my children, how many times the government has tried to whore me out. I find alternatives though and I always will. Now come, there is someone that wants to meet you."

She helped me up off the ground and we talked as we headed towards an office building across the base. I never knew how immense it was and compared to the base I was going to it was amazing. I laughed as she told me about some of the blunders that the others had made, and the large head that Tori still had even after being ground into the dirt for the first week of her training. I found out that each person on her team was essential in what they did and she explained how I would fit it. It amazed me just how efficient they were and with each word I wanted more and more to be on the team.

As we entered the offices she led me straight through until we got to a very large office at the end of a hallway. As she entered I saw a middle aged man behind the desk on his phone. He smiled and waved us in as he tried to hasten up his phone call. Imi made a gesture that it was alright and her and I sat in the chairs. It felt good to sit somewhere soft other than my bed and my body luxuriated in the overstuffed chair.

Before I knew it he was off the phone and looking right at Imi. "How are you Imi, it has been a long time."

She nodded. "Yes Rodger, it has at that. Let's get the pleasantries out of the way. You called me in here and now I want to get this over with. You always call people into your office at the worst times. Hurry, I have to get her to Nora and I don't think you want to deal with her."
He nodded. "I called you here to tell you that right after her training Ava is to report to Thomas for the specs on her first mission. If you think she isn't ready well, then she will have to leave the program. Things have come to my attention and we need more resources, threats to our way of life have been detected and we need more people to infiltrate them. I know that it may sound harsh but right now we are sending in half trained assets that are coming home to us in body bags and I have no more patience for those who aren't fully committed with us."

I could feel my anger rising in me, but just smiled at him. He seemed to bristle a little bit at that and it made me smile more. "Don't ever underestimate me. I could have sworn we had that conversation about a week ago when you thought you could test yourself against me. You can ask any one of my trainers and they will tell you I bust my ass from sun up to sun down and I have probably learned more in a week than your half trained assets have in a month. Now get off my back, I am tired of people always thinking to sell me short. When I am done with my training I will report to Tom as instructed for whatever hell you think you are going to put me through." Each word was punctuated as I stood up more and more until I was resting on my fingertips poised to rip out his throat. I smiled sweetly at him as Imi put her hand on my arm and we walked out of the

office.

She waited until we were fully out of the building before she started to laugh. She was giggling like a maniac, holding her sides and stamping her foot on the ground. "Oh my goodness Ava, I have never and I mean never heard anyone fuck him up like that. He was actually scared of you. Good, very good shows me you aren't intimiated by anyone. You are doing good, but you have a long way to go. Now let's get over to Nora before she reams your ass like I did this morning."

As my day progressed I thought long and hard about the things that I wanted from my life. I wanted what Imi had, the respect and admiration and I knew I would have to work my buns off to get it. As the day wore on I started to wonder if I was even good enough to fill her shoes, or to even stand beside her, and as the day came to an end I poured myself in my truck close to tears and started my trek back to the apartment. I wanted to pour my sorrows out over some tequila and I would feel right as rain in the morning.

Chapter 7

It was close to dinner time when I got to Thomas' apartment and I was beat. I had mentally beat myself down for the fifteen minute drive back to the apartment and I could feel the tears welling in my eyes. I put the key in the door and started to unlock it when the door was jarred from my hands and I was looking into pissed of ice blue eyes. I gasped as he grabbed me and pulled me into the apartment. I knew this was Connor even though I had never met him. He grabbed my keys out of the door, slammed it shut and threw my keys across the room. He bunny marched me up the stairs shedding me of my bags as we went. At the top of the stairs he gripped me hard and pressed me against the wall. His hands worked into my hair and he pressed his lips to mine. All thought process shut off and the only thing I could think of is that he was with Tom.

I pushed him away from me and gasped. "WHAT THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU ARE DOING?"

He gripped my upper arm again and led me into the bathroom. I fought against him as he started to undress me and he threw me into the shower. He turned on the water and turned me around where my front was against the wall of the shower and my back was in the spray of warm water. His body covered mine and his hands worked expertly along my skin.I felt my breath catch in my throat and I knew it was wrong but I felt my hands go to his soaked clothes and I wanted so much to turn around. He pushed me a bit harder into the wall, started to bite on my shoulder and nip at my back. I could feel the heat in me begin to build and I tried so hard to fight off the sensations he was causing on my skin.

"Who are you" He whispered along my skin and I could feel my knees start to get weak.

I smiled to myself and giggled as I pushed off the wall and placed my ass in his hands. "I am Scarlet hun, haven't you heard of me?"

I felt his movements stop for a moment. He was violent again as he pushed me against the wall of the shower. "Tell me who the fuck you are."

My hand grasped his and I turned myself to face him. I planted my lips on his and wrapped my leg around his hip. "I told you I am Scarlet fucking O'Hara and if you want this ass then you better believe it."

He rammed his body against mine and I could feel that his weapon was primed and ready, his hand made it's way around my neck and he held a little bit of pressure there as he leaned into me. The heat that radiated off his body was sending my mind into a tailspin.

"One last chance, tell me who you are." The request was more of a growl and I knew he was as carnal as could be.

I ran my hands over his warm delicious skin, down his chiseled abs and across the rock hard muscles of his ass and pulled myself as close to him as I could. "For the final time I am Scarlet, you can either take it or kill me now, but make sure you get me off first, I don't wanna die half satisfied."

I felt the water start to get cool on my overly hot skin and I shivered. He grabbed me out of the shower, pulled me into my room, dried me off and quickly braided back my long red hair. He pushed me back onto the bed and stripped himself down. As he placed himself over me, my breath caught once again at the size of enormous phallas in front of me. He started down at my ankels and worked his way up, each expert kiss and touch was fuel to my fire. As he toyed with me I heard a movement from the doorway. I looked over and blushed as Thomas watched Connor lick and suck every part of my body.

"Connor, it seems you started without me. Is she as delicious as she looks?"

I saw the corner of Connor's mouth twitch into a smirk and he nodded to Thomas. I watched as he shed his clothes and headed for the bed. I was so confused and my head was spinning. I felt Connor sit me up on his lap and Tom got in behind me and moved my head around to kiss him. Oh the rapture that was taking place on my bed. All at once I felt myself pushed at Tom and he laid me on the bed and started his on tantilizing game of "Drive Ava Crazy." I smiled as Connor came into view and I grasped his hard throbbing cock in my hand just as Tom started to suck on my clit. Oh the euphoria that passed over me. The heat that built in my core was unbearable and I wanted so much to release the pressure that had built up in me but Tom kept me right on the edge and left me there constantly until I thought that I was going to implode.

Thomas grabbed something off the floor and tied it around my wrists and then to the post to hold me in place. I jerked back and forth to be let go but once Thomas grabbed Connor I was enraptured. Each movement and caress was like a choreographed dance between the two of them.

Kneeling before me were two Gods among men caressing and petting each other, frustrating me to no end. It seemed like ages before they turned their attention back to me, but when Connor came towards me on his knees I wanted nothing more than for him to fill me to the hilt. He knelt between my legs and gave me one last loving lick before he gently pushed himself into me. I moaned in sheer ecstasy only to have it muffled as Thomas kissed me. He started slow, easing his long hard shaft in and out of me as my body ignited into a wildfire. Thomas alternated between us, caressing, touching and accentuating the pleasure.

My hand went to Tom's hard cock and I stroked him in time with the motions that Connor made into me. Tom's moans rocked through me and sent me over the edge before I could blink. My head threw back and my body arched as the waves of unadultered orgasm ran through me. As I came back to myself I could see them both smiling at me. I placed Tom's hardness into my mouth and rolled my tongue around it as they kissed and Connor fucked me hard.

All at once Connor slid out and Thomas took his place. His hard manhood was at my entrance and I was panting for him to enter me. I felt him nuzzle into my neck and his cock entered me with tender ease. With each movement he made my body ache all the more, with each caress, every pump I felt myself reach new heights of pleasure. His touch was sheer torture as Connor sucked and nipped gently on my breasts, I move my hand along the hard contours of Connor until my hand grasped his throbbing phallus and I worked my way along his shaft hearing him moan as Thomas drove relentlessly into me. I felt my body begin to reach it's boiling point and knew that soon I would combust. My hand sped up it's movement on Connor as Thomas began to pound into me. I felt myself on the verge of an orgasm and let the waves consume me fully as Thomas began to grunt and Connor spilled his seed all over my stomach.

Each took turns taking me into the farthest reaches of pleasure and every minute of it was sheer ecstasy.

Chapter 8

The ever annoying sound of my alarm clock wrestled me from the euphoric bliss of sleep. As I moved to turn it off my hand met with warm naked flesh. I sat bolt upright in bed as the memories from the night before assailed my brain. I smiled as I reached over Connor and turned off my alarm. The alluring sounds of the two men waking up made me smile. I kissed Connor on the hip and Thomas on the stomach before I jumped out of bed and got ready for another day of ass kicking that awaited me. I took my clothes and went into the bathroom to splash water on my face before I went down for coffee. As I looked in the mirror I saw my body covered in love bites and bruises. I smiled to myself as the blissful pain assulted my body. I laughed quietly to myself at the thought of what my day would be like, nothing could bring me down at this point.

As I hopped in my truck, I turned up the music and jammed all the way to the base. As I handed over my ID, the guard looked at me funny and laughed to himself. I didn't know that I still had the glow about me from the most amazing sex that I had ever had. I smiled at him and grabbed my ID back nodding my head.

As I pulled up to the locker room I started to hum to myself. I quickly changed into my workout clothes, grabbed my MP3 player and headed for the track. As I made my way around the track I decided I was gonna push myself harder. I sped up, the music thumping in my veins, the cool morning air brisk on my skin and the adrenaline pumping through my body. I moved without knowledge of time or distance, a smile alighting my face when I thought back to the night before. I ran as far and as fast as I could, so many things consuming my mind that I didn't care where I was.

I felt something hit me in the shoulder. I stopped and looked around and saw Imi staring at me. I bent over and caught my breath before I walked over to her. She looked me up and down and then smiled.

"You know I don't know what has gotten into you today, but I like it. That was the fastest you have ever done the 4 miles. It was like a lap a minute for you. Right on."

I smiled. "Do I have to do the training course today?"

She shook her head. "Nope, I need to work more on your hand to hand. You have that training course down to a science, and now that would just be repetitive to you. So come with me and prepare for another ass kicking."

I laughed. "Oh bring it on. Nothing could bring me down today."

As we headed over to the practice field I hummed to myself. I stripped off my sweater and laughed at the expression on Imi's face.

"Looks like you had a good night last night. I see Connor is home." The light in her eyes shocked me.

I tilted my head and looked at her. "How did you know?"

She laughed then. "Conner's handiwork on your shoulders and stomach. They are all about each other, but every now and then they love to add a bit of variety to their relationship. They share really well and, well his mouth is bigger than Thomas'."

I laughed. "Well when you get bombarded when you walk in the door, then you just have to go with it. Goodness knows I had a blast."

She giggled. "You know, I bet it was just that. I would be jealous, but I guess they thought you needed the stress relief. Plus, my heart still belongs to Lolek. Not sure how long that will take to heal."

I nodded in her direction, and was shocked to see tears in her eyes. I walked over to her and hugged her as I whispered in her ear. "The pain will stop, it is okay to have a weak moment every now and then. No matter how strong you are, you can't let the pain eat you up inside. He gave you two beautiful children and a purpose. What more could you ask for?"

She nodded her head and hugged me back. "I'm sorry, sometimes it gets the best of me. I think of all that he is missing and the pain stops me in my tracks. I shouldn't bother you with this. Goodness knows the people I already lean on take a lot of it themselves."

I shook my head. "Look, I know it has only been a week and a half, but you can always talk to me. I look up to you and see some of my pain reflected in your eyes. Don't think you can't turn to me as well. I am a phone call away if you need someone to talk to, or you can stop me any time to talk to me. I would like us to be friends."

Imi smiled through her tears. "Me too, doesn't mean I am going to go easy on you though. I want you to survive this shit that we go through and that is why I am tough on you. I have seen what it has done to the others, I don't want you to be like that."

I nodded and put my hand around her shoulders. "Come master, it is time."

She put her arm around my shoulders and laughed. "Who knows, today may be the day that you finally whoop my ass."

Four hours and twenty ass kickings later, Imi was laughing on the ground while I groaned in pain. "You are ruthless. My goodness, if I didn't know any better I would say you don't like me."

She rolled her eyes as she kept laughing. "Oh give it up Ava, you know better than that. I have to say, you almost hit me on that last one. What ever happened to the retention. I thought by now you would have all of my moves down."

I laughed. "I would if you wouldn't keep changing them up on me. How many different types of martial arts do you know?"

She looked at me. "More than you can imagine. Fighting for your life makes it easier to learn what you need to survive." She thought for a moment. "Maybe that is why you haven't been able to beat me. I need to give you an opponent that you aren't sure about. I know you won't like the idea, but it might be for the best. You have seen everything I can do, maybe it is that you know I won't kill you. Meet me here tomorrow after you run your four miles and you will have a new opponent."

I nodded. "Whatever you think is best. I know I just need to be ready to go by the time they want me done or else I am gone."

She nodded. "You will be ready, I know you will. I just have to think outside the box with you. You are so level headed that I am not sure how to get you to react. The level headed is a good thing. I just need to make sure you can defend yourself if you get into a hand to hand situation."

She put her arm around my shoulders as she led me to Nora. As Imi pushed me into the room Nora was on me in seconds rattling off things, testing my knowledge. It went on for about thirty minutes before she nodded

and started on new material. At the end of our second hour she looked at me and smiled.

"You know, honestly I have nothing else that I can teach you. You have everything I know memorized. You know herbal medicine, field medicine, field surgery and poisons and cures. You are all set on my end. For the final few days I am going to quiz you so that I make sure you have everything inside your head. Did you finish the books that were sent to Thomas' place?"

I nodded. "I went through all ten books, finished them the other night and gave them all back to Thomas with my notes. I am pretty sure he has given them to Imi by now."

Nora nodded. "Yeah, she usually likes to look over it herself and judge where you are. After your first mission, you usually come back for remedial training. Not because we don't trust that you remember, but because we want to make sure that you know what you need to know to continue."

I nodded. "Not a problem, I understand. Should I go see Cherrie now?"

Nora nodded. "I don't think she has much left to teach you either. She will do the same thing that I am though and quiz you. You learn fast Ava, that is a gift. It can also harm you though because it could make you brash. Your first mission is a test to see if you can not only do what needs to be done, but be covert enough not to get caught. Being brash could be your downfall, and this mission will be the ultimate test."

I looked at her, my eyes wide as I nodded. I felt like I was being thrown into the lion's den in a few days and I wasn't sure how to react to it. I walked to the demolition field and went through my daily routine with Cherrie. In the back of my mind I wondered just what my mission would be and thought about everything that Nora had said. I would have to be careful no matter what my assignment. I wanted this to be my life, I wanted to make a difference in the world and if I could do it by being a disgruntled woman military agent, then that is what I wanted to do.

I guess that time would be my only deciding factor.....

Chapter 9

The time for my testing had come and I was nervous. Connor and Thomas had done their best to keep my mind occupied the night before, but as I drove to the base my nerves kicked in full gear. I wasn't sure what to expect or what I would do, all I knew was that I had to pass. My future depended on it, and I wanted something meaningful for my future.

The guard at the gate took my ID and smiled at me. "Testing today huh? Good luck girl, you got this."

I smiled as I took my ID back and headed for the locker room. As I changed I took a couple of deep breaths before I headed out to the field. There would be no music today, there would be no smiles or fun for the day. This was the day that would decide my future.

As I walked out of the locker room, Imi was there to meet me. "Are you ready for this?"

I nodded my head. To me it didn't matter if I was ready or not, I was going to do the best that I could. She led me to the track and as I got set, everyone came filing in. I didn't look at the faces, I looked down at the ground until I heard the shot that would release me. I focused all of my pain, anger and heartbreak into a drive that would get me through. As I heard the shot go off I ran as fast as I could around the track. My mind was a blur of everything that was driving me forward. Each step I took was to get away from the pain of my past, each breath I took was to get away from the hurt that had locked itself around my heart.

Before I knew it I heard the horn and I slowed down before I came to a complete stop, catching my breath before I had to move on. Today there were no acolades, no jokes or smiles. It was all a serious matter. I moved on to the obsticle course and moved my way through it as agile as I could. I knew I had a time to beat, but if I messed up, what would the time matter. As I went over the wall I could feel myself vault into the next part of it. As my body went under the razor wire, I stood and put my hands behind my back, my stance relaxed but awaiting orders.

The man that Imi had called Rodger came over to stand in front of me. "I hear that hand to hand is not your strong suit, so today your fight will be life or death. You will either be the victor or vanquished, this is your deciding factor."

I nodded my head in acknowledgement and awaited my opponent. Before I knew it I felt a kick to my back and it sprawled me on the ground.

I looked around and saw Tori's wicked smile, it sent chills right up my spine. I quickly got up and got into stance. This just wasn't happening. As she made ready to strike, I let all of the training I got from Imi come to the forefront of my mind. At first I couldn't get into a rythem and she kept landing punches and kicks. She was fast and light on her feet. It took me by surprise, but I definitely had to get into gear. I took a breath and started to fight back. Tori was looking to kill me. Psycho Barbie was going to kill me if I didn't finish her off first. I wasn't worried about killing her, just imobilizing her to the point of unconciousness. I started to feel the

rythem of her movements and almost smiled to myself.

I stepped forward and started to swing at her, each strike almost striking its target. I was starting to get mad. I moved faster and pushed harder not backing down. I brought my leg up in between us and kicked her right in the chest. As she stumbled back I rushed forward with a barrage of punches and kicks. I knew if I let up for a moment she would end me. I felt a punch connect with my jaw, but I pushed the pain back and let it fuel the fire that was burning deep down inside me. As Tori tried to rush me I grabbed her in a headlock and started to choke her out. I could feel her body give way, but I didn't let up. All the hatred inside of me had rushed to the surface and my killing instinct kicked in. I didn't care at that moment if I killed her.

I felt an arm on my shoulder and I saw Imi's eyes, all the pain inside her was at the surface. I let go of Tori and dropped to my knees. I screamed at the top of my lungs as all of the pain I dealt with in my life came to the surface. Once I stopped screaming I started to cry. I felt arms encircle me as I was lifted up off the ground. I could hear people talking all around me, but I didn't care. I felt broken, so broken inside and pissed off that I put up with so much for so long. I felt a seat underneath me but didn't register what was going on around me. The next thing I knew I was surrounded by warm bodies. I slid into a deep sleep, my mind in a downward spiral of depression I had never experience. Whether I passed or failed my test..... Well that was still to be determined.

Chapter 10

I woke up in the morning and I felt like death warmed over. My chest was on fire, my head full of cotton and to top it all off I was shaky all over. As I slowly made my way out of bed I looked over at the clock and saw that it was 10am. I gasped and ran into the bathroom and quickly showered before I ran down stairs grabbed a cup of coffee and headed out the door. I quickly made my way to the base and put my head down as the guard at the gate tsked me. I shook my head as he handed me back my ID. I went into the locker room and changed as quickly as I could. As I headed out to the field I heard people calling my name. As I looked over I saw Imi, Cherrie and Nora headed in my direction. I stopped and looked over at them before I put my head down and scuffed my feet.

"Oh don't look like a beat dog. You did better than you think you did." Imi smiled at me and put her arm around me."
Nora smiled. "Hey I broke down too when I got to that part. I find it an important part to just let go of all of the pain. Others try to channel it and it doesn't seem to go very well. They usually end up dead."

Cherrie started to giggle and we all looked at her. "What, I find it funny that they try to send underprepared women out there to fight a war that they can't even fathom. I mean think about it every one of us standing here has had the same reaction that Ava has and we have stayed alive. Maybe if the brass thought about that, they would give the other "troops" the training needed until they got to the point they need to be at."

We all shook our heads. Imi steered me towards the offices while we talked the whole way. I was starting to shake when we got to Reynold's door. As Imi knocked on it I started to walk away. As I turned away from the door I met a wall of Cherrie and Nora both shaking their heads.

"Come in." Oh the omnious voice of my future, the voice that would decide my fate.

I stepped through the door and walked like a woman to the gallows. I sat down across from Reynolds and looked down.
"You know I really expected something a bit different from you Ava. I expected perfection, of course with as little training as you have had, and everything that you have been through I guess that perfection is a bit optimistic. I have had nothing but excellent reports of your training so I am going to go ahead and give you a trial. Your first mission is going to be in a week and I want you to keep training everyday until you have to leave. You will have the specifics by the end of the day and the rest will be up to you. There is no time length for this mission so you may be gone for a while."

I looked up in shock. "Are you serious? I'm in? Not complaining at all, just shocked is all."

He nodded. "Yes, I am deadly serious. Now go finish your training for the day. Imi and I spoke yesterday and they are going to bring in a special trainer for you. We are going to expand your weapons training. Knowing a handgun is good, but you need to be versatile for this mission. You can't hide a handgun at all times."

I nodded before I was swept out the door. As it shut behind me I was jumped on and tackled to the floor enthusiatically. Squeals and laughs came from the top of the pile and for once, I finally felt like I belonged.

I felt myself pulled up off the floor and shoved out the doors of the offices. I was taken into the gym where I was introduced to a small woman named Chen Li. I liked her instantly. She was a no nonsense type of woman, a go getter and knew how to teach. By the end of the day, I had learned how to use a throwing knife, staff, and small items around me. I looked forward to my training tomorrow.

As I got back into my truck and headed off base, I decided that I would drop by my old house and see how things were going. What I saw wasn't what I expected.

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