

CONTROL EXCERPT

Men are on women.

Women are on women.

Grunts and groans fill the air.

There is cheering from the sidelines as bystanders watch them writhe and buck and try to get the other off them.

"It's like a big orgy in here," I say to the woman standing beside me. I don't know her, but she's standing like we are, back against the gym wall, eyes glued to the men and women fighting for positioning—moving, bucking, defending—on the mats where they're lying. She emits a nervous laugh and looks to me. Prim and proper, she resembles a Stepford wife, and all I can think is that her ladies' club decided to do this together and she's the only one who decided to show up.

At least I'm not the only one nervous about being here. There could be worse things I guess...like actually needing to use the skills I'm supposed to learn here in Sunnyville Self Defense Class to protect myself.

A group at the far side of the gym erupts in applause, and I stand on my tiptoes to see a woman standing with her foot on the instructor's throat while he's lying on the mat. His red SSDC T-shirt matches everyone else standing around trying to look official with a whistle and gym pants on.

"Exactly," a deep rumble of a voice on the other side of me says.

I glance over and *whoa*...all my attention shifts from the grunts and groans on the floor to how I wouldn't mind grunting and groaning with the man on his cell beside me. Our gazes meet for the briefest of seconds—chocolate-brown eyes giving me a passing glance and a curt smile before turning back to whoever is on the phone while watching the action beyond. Taking my time and trying not to pay attention to HottieMcTotty, I scan the gym. Basic blue gymnastic mats cover the majority of the hardwood floors, basketball hoops hang from the lofty ceiling but have been drawn up, and championship banners hang, partially hiding the painted mural of the Sunnyville High School mascot on the wall at the far end.

But no matter how hard I try to not look back at him, that is where my attention lands. He's a good six inches taller than I am, has dark hair, and his body beneath his Under Armour workout shirt hints at how ridiculously fit he is. His bicep closest to me stretches the fabric and is covered in a dizzying tattooed array of colors and images I can't openly look at to decipher. *You can only do so much with a sideways stare.*

But his voice. It's like liquid sex with a rasp and a rumble and a whole earth-shattering orgasm in between.

Hello to you, Mister A-Little-Rugged-And-Whole-Lot-Sexy.

I listen to him talk. Not stalkerish-like...well, maybe stalkerish-like, but damn if the background of grunting and groaning only serves to enhance the things my mind is dreaming up.

And then it hits me.

He's not here as an instructor—no red SSDC shirt on. So that means he's here as a boyfriend or a husband and therefore completely off limits.

Damn it.

If he were an instructor, I'd make sure to be in his group so he could grind on me for a bit...and I'm talking the pelvis kind of grind...if I'm being truthful.

