

Excerpt:

The Scars Between Us by MK Schiller

“May I help you?” he asks, his smile tight like it’s forced. Struggling to find my voice, I finally respond. “Aiden Sheffield?” “Guilty. Are you here to adopt?” “No.” The pit bull whines at that. Without taking his eyes off me, Aiden pulls out a plastic bag from his pocket and throws him a treat. Unable to keep staring at him, my gaze shifts down. I get a good look at Aiden’s pal. The dog’s tail wags, but only one of his ears perks. The other ear is completely missing, and the poor boy’s jaw is misshapen. Aiden draws my attention back to him. “You’re making my pack nervous.”

That’s exactly what they look like...a pack. A family where he is the alpha. All the dogs have now come toward the fence, sitting in a straight line. They seem calm but curious as they flip their heads between us. “They don’t look nervous.”

“They are. They can smell your fear. They won’t hurt you.”

“I know.”

“Then what are you afraid of?”

*You.*

He smirks, moving forward so we are only inches from each other, separated by the chain-link fence. His gaze lingers on me, far too long for comfort. He smells masculine, of soap and sweat and something distinctively him. “Who are you, mystery girl? Too old to be selling cookies, too young to be from the Gazette, and too innocent to be spouting religion.”

“I’m Emma Cooper. Angela’s daughter.” It’s a flicker in his features, but I catch the scowl before it disappears. The dogs start surrounding Aiden and stare at me with suspicion. It’s as if they are protecting him...from me.

“What do you want?” His tone is curt, almost demanding. I shift from foot to foot.

“Can we talk?” The dogs stand at attention now.

“Go to the house and wait for me.” He snaps the words like a command.

“Um...”

“Now.”

Short excerpt –

He stops close by but still hasn’t seen me. He focuses all his energy on the dogs. His muscles aren’t obnoxiously huge, but they define his sleek body as if an artist chiseled them in perfect proportions. Taking a hose, he fills a trough with water. As the dogs drink, he reaches into a small blue cooler and brings out his own water bottle. He sips it greedily before dousing his head. My throat runs dry, then pangs of guilt hit me. What am I doing? I have a boyfriend. Shaking my head, I open my mouth. But still, no words come. The largest dog in the mix, a beautiful pit bull with shiny black fur, strolls over to him. The dog begs the man for attention, standing on its back legs. The man slaps his chest three times and the dog rises, placing its front paws there. He gently strokes the animal’s head and says a few quiet words I can’t hear. I swear the dog nods back. It almost

looks as if they are conversing. This is perhaps the most beautiful creature I've ever seen. And the dog is gorgeous, too.