

"Stop," Tim called out from behind her—his breathing ragged. "Please."

Heather stopped and turned while jogging in place. Aww... Poor Tim. She let a grin spread over her face. Should she rub it in? Yeah, it was her duty as his girlfriend. She jogged the more than ten feet back to him down the inclined path. She almost felt sorry for him—almost. She held back a laugh while her gaze went over his bent form and hands braced on his thighs.

"What's wrong," she asked, stopping in front of him, her voice light and innocent—her own breathing heavy, but not to the point of being labored.

Like Tim's was.

He looked up at her—one eye squinting from the sweat dripping from his hair. She had told him to wear a sweatband—girlie-looking or not. He didn't say anything right away, just continuing to breath hard and shaking his head.

"Are you okay?" It was so hard not to laugh. "I thought you said a five-mile run would be okay."

"You..." Pant, pant. "You..." Pant, pant. He raised a hand off his thigh, giving her the universal "wait a second" sign.

"I, I, what?"

He straightened, wiping his face with his hands and rubbing the one eye he had been squinting out of.

"You..." He took one deep breath, a look of relief coming over his face, before taking another, and then another. He finally let out a long sigh, his breathing almost returning to normal.

"You!" he said, his fisted hands on his hips. "You said a five-mile run." She nodded, smiling. "But what you didn't say was where."

"But you said it didn't matter. I think your exact words were 'Heather, I can keep up with you—anytime—anywhere.' Am I wrong?" She tilted her head at him in question.

"Well..." He narrowed his eyes at her, his frowning face and pinched lips not his most attractive look. "You could've at least warned me we were doing the fucking Death Run Trail! The damn path is almost a ninety-degree incline!"

She smiled at him, giving him a wink. "Next time you should probably make sure of the terms before issuing me a challenge." She turned her back on him, resuming her run up the hill.

She slowed down when she heard him coming up beside her, his breathing not quite as heavy as before, but they still had a ways to go. "You know," she said, "you really need to be

breathing deep from your belly instead of all this shallow breathing you're doing." Might as well impart some words of wisdom.

"I need you to remember that later," he said, his voice low, even with his panting breaths. "Because I plan on paying you back later with a workout of my own." She frowned at him. "A naked workout."

She stopped running and watched him continue up the hill. He turned around, running backwards, a wicked grin spreading over his face.

"And believe me," he said, "you'll be the one doing the heavy breathing then." He gave her his own wink before turning around and leaving her to catch up with him.

They generally said payback was a bitch, but hey, she would just have to suck it up.