



HUNT THE VILLAIN



NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

RINA KENT

KISS THE VILLAIN

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ALSO BY RINA KENT

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To the hunter who became the hunted

AUTHOR NOTE

Hello reader friend,

If you're new to my books, you might not know that I write darker stories that can be intense, unsettling, and even disturbing. My characters and their journeys defy societal norms and aren't meant for everyone.

The following paragraph contains content warnings and specific kinks that may spoil plot details. If you have no triggers, feel free to skip it.

Hunt the Villain contains depictions of parental abuse, homophobia, the death of a parent due to cancer, and scenes of violence and shootings. Please be mindful of your triggers before reading.

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BLURB

I'm hunting a monster.

The first time I met Yulian Dimitriev, it was hate at first sight.

He's brash, chaotic, and a violence junkie.

In short, everything I disregard.

As heirs to two notorious mafia organizations, we were shoved together in an unorthodox setting.

The more I learn about Yulian, the deeper my loathing seeps.

Until I truly see the person within, and something forbidden sparks between us.

But our coexistence is cut short when tragedy strikes.

Yulian and I go back to our respective parallel worlds that shouldn't cross.

But they do.

And once again, I'm dragged into the orbit of a man I shouldn't want.

Two men can't be together in our world.

But Yulian blurs every limit I thought existed until everything is in jeopardy.

Our hearts included.

PLAYLIST

Chokehold – Sleep Token

Saints – Echoes

We never dated – sombr

12 to 12 – sombr

Sucker – Arcane, Marcus King

The Emptiness Machine – Linkin Park

Pacify Her – Melanie Martinez

I Wish I Knew How to Quit You – sombr

Why'd You Only Call Me When You're High? – Arctic Monkeys

Good Luck, Babe – Chappell Roan

Sugar – Sleep Token

Aqua Regia – Sleep Token

Substitution – Purple Disco Machine, Kungs, Julian Perretta

Feel Me Now – If Not For Me

The First Time – Damiano David

Kiss Me – Rob Vischer

Fallin' – Why Don't We

Ocean Drive – Duke Dumont

Wait So Long – Swedish House Mafia

Gethsemane – Sleep Token

You can find the complete playlist on [Spotify](#).



VAUGHN

AGE FIFTEEN

I t's hate at first sight.
For this setting.

For these people.

For the entire charade, really.

I truly believe this is a waste of time, and I would like to leave immediately if possible. Please and thank you.

Unfortunately, that's not something Dad would appreciate, especially considering his parting words this morning.

You're my pride, Vaughn. You go out there and show them what the New York Bratva are made of.

So here I am. In this absolute clusterfuck of a place, exchanging pleasantries and empty words with one of the mentors overlooking this mess.

Sorry, it's called a *summer camp*.

The Adirondack Mountains aren't exactly my ideal location to spend the summer. Usually, I'd be off to Russia to stay with my maternal uncles and cousins for some intense training or somewhere in the Mediterranean soaking up some sun. Not this year, obviously, as I have to spend time in the

mountains in what's being described as a "historical" moment for the New York and Chicago Bratvas.

Also known as the strongest branches of the Russian mafia in the States.

As the Pakhan's son, it's my duty to represent my family at this camp. The mountain is supposed to be a middle-ground location, picked by both sides.

Apparently, our "mentors" for these hellish summer months are older people who are trusted by my dad and the Chicago Bratva leader since they served both sides. They're "pure" Russian, as the house manager who's now leading me to my room insisted.

Aside from the security surrounding the cottage-turned-dorm with its wooden walls and outdated common area, we're not allowed personal guards or phones, and there's no electricity after dark.

It's a form of training—both physical and mental. A way to force us into relying on one another, to scrape at decades of rivalry that probably took root back in Mother Russia before my father even existed.

An old Russian ballad drifts through the halls from an ancient radio system, the melody warped by age. The house manager's voice threads over it, polished and deliberate, speaking about the facilities and the "opportunities" this place offers.

While his refined Russian seeps into the air, my attention catches on the corners, the hairline cracks in the untreated wood...and then I see them. Small blinking cameras, half hidden.

Of course.

Doesn't matter that Dad sent me here—neither he nor the leader of the Chicago Bratva trusts the other side. And with their heirs shoved into cohabitation, they'd both want full access to whatever happens here.

I let my gaze slide over the thick slabs of timber making up the walls, the clean but worn carpets dulled by years of footsteps, the rural paintings in faded gold frames, showing a romanticized version of eighteenth-century Russian countryside.

The windows capture my interest next. Unlike the scaled-down comforts of the cottage, they're fitted with bulletproof glass. Too narrow for anyone to climb through—not that anyone could reach this place without an army.

The camp squats on an off-limits peak, far from any trace of human life, surrounded only by towering pines and an unbroken sky.

I can already tell this summer will be long.

And painfully boring.

Outside the large balcony doors, the grounds sprawl down below, with soldiers patrolling from both sides. I can tell they're as wary as the rest of us, considering how each group keeps to half of the terrain.

There will be a lot of testosterone wars this not-so-beautiful summer.

I can't wait for the hassle to be over.

In the meantime, I need to study the other side. If there's anything I've learned from my parents, it's to always be prepared.

Whether this truce proves to be lucrative or not doesn't matter. The Chicago Bratva will always be a thorn in our side for as long as I live, just like they've been in Dad's and the Pakhans' who ruled before him.

As much as I loathe this whole charade, I can't deny that it's realistically my only chance to get close to them and study their tactics.

While the house manager explains the facilities, I keep my attention on their men through the doors. All dressed in full-black combat gear, not suits like our side. While everyone is carrying precision rifles, theirs seem more sophisticated.

I need to figure out their weapon supplier.

The bald-headed one with a scorpion tattooed on the side of his head seems to be the leader, considering how the others stand behind him.

Hmm.

I tilt my head to the side to watch him closely. Blond beard, taller than average. Bulky, too. Scarred hands. Army background? No. Prison?

How do I find out more about him without garnering suspicion? Should I ask a guard to spy on them?

Dad specifically told me not to go into investigative mode and just enjoy this camp, but that's simply impossible.

However, the guards are under clear orders from Dad and won't listen to my instructions if I choose to infiltrate the other side.

I need to figure out a different method—

My feet still when a black ball rolls into view, stopping dead in the middle of the invisible line dividing our side from the Chicago Bratva's. The patrolling guards freeze mid-step, rifles snapping up, barrels tracking the harmless-looking object as it rocks lazily on the dirt.

Bang!

The blast rips through the stillness, echoing off the wooden walls, rattling the air. I move before thought can catch up, striding toward the balcony, my hand sliding to the familiar weight at my waistband. My fingers graze cold steel, but I stop short of drawing.

I shove open the balcony door and am met with a burst of laughter—raw, unbothered, and out of place in the charged quiet that follows an explosion. A guy about my age darts out from behind a massive oak, a small wired device clutched in his hand.

His white sleeveless shirt, smudged with dirt and torn at the edges, has a ragged hole in the side, and his jeans are ripped at the knees. His dark hair is a mess of waves falling over his forehead, and his skin is marred with lacerations—on his elbow, his cheek, his hands. Like he rolled down the mountain. Or fought a bear and half won.

“Yulik!” The bark comes from the bald-headed leader.

A nerve twitches in his temple, the skin flushing red as his glare locks on the guy he called by the diminutive of his name.

Yulik.

Yulian Dimitriev.

I've heard the stories about the infamous son of Yaroslav Dimitriev. Didn't expect him to look like the human embodiment of a migraine.

“Sick new device, right?” His laugh—split by a busted lip—cuts through the air, sounding unfazed by the rifles still aimed in his general direction. “I

came up with it. Cy helped a little.”

“A lot.” Another guy leans against the tree, lazily chewing a toothpick.

I narrow my gaze.

I didn’t hear anything about a Cy or even a Cyrus joining this camp. He wasn’t on any list from their side. Which makes him something I don’t like—

A variable.

Scorpion Tattoo Man’s voice hardens, dripping with irritation. “We were seconds away from shooting at each other. Do you realize how reckless that was?”

My thoughts match his word for word. In a place that’s strung tight over a fragile truce, his stunt wasn’t just reckless—it was a spark in a room full of gunpowder. All it would’ve taken was one twitch of a finger, and we’d be stacking bodies.

“Nah.” Yulian shrugs, his voice light, almost mocking. “No one’s stupid enough to be the first to pull the trigger and blow up this peace.” His grin widens as he calls out, “Cy! Looks hot as fuck!”

A black hole—that’s what looks *hot as fuck* to this lunatic.

Might call my dad and tell him we’re done here, and we should wrap it up.

“Don’t mind Yulian.” The house manager who’s standing in the doorway tries to smooth things over, his tone apologetic. “He’s...” He hesitates, his face tinting red before he finishes, “Never mind. He enjoys defying logic and gravity for some reason.”

“For some reason,” I echo, not caring what that might be.

“You should go change before we meet the New York kids,” Cy says to Yulian.

The latter glances at himself—dirt, blood, smudges of black powder staining his fingers—then smirks. “I’m perfectly presentable.”

The sound I make isn’t quite a laugh. More like a scoff edged with disgust. It ripples through the air loudly enough for both Cyrus and the guards to look up.

Yulian’s head lifts last.

He stares up at me, and I look down from the balcony, standing taller because I was taught to always present myself as the most powerful from the get-go.

The most dominant.

Yulian's lips curve and it's lopsided, as if he's intrigued. Maybe entertained.

By what?

He holds my gaze, and I stare square into his creepy eyes. One is pale blue, and the other is dark brown, like a drop of ocean in the middle of a forest. A touch of mud on ice.

It's disturbing.

But somehow...slightly riveting. I've never seen such a mismatch before.

Of course, someone like him would be a paradox of epic proportions. I've done enough research on Yulian Dimitriev to know what I'm dealing with, and he seems to be an absolute wreck of a person in every sense of the word.

He runs toward the cottage at full speed, and I expect him to come inside, so I get ready to leave, which will force him to follow me around, begging for scraps of my attention.

Because that's how it'll be at this summer camp. I don't care that he's a year older than me; I'm the one who'll dominate this relationship.

Instead of coming inside, Yulian grips the wooden pillars, uses them for balance, and then leaps and grabs the railing of the balcony, pulls himself up with impressive strength, and jumps directly into my space.

I have to step back so he doesn't crash into me and stain my perfectly clean clothes with all that grime.

To my dismay, up close, this dirty heathen is slightly taller than me, but we're about the same build, though his shoulders are wider. His face is less angular than mine, more square and defined.

He smells of musk and the actual woods and pine. Leaves cling to his skin and hair, one stuck stubbornly behind his ear.

He offers his hand—the one covered with dirt, dried blood, and multiple lacerations.

I stare down at it but make no move to take it.

“Ah! Sorry.” He wipes his palm on his equally soiled jeans, rubbing it back and forth before he offers it again.

This time, I reach into my pocket, then drop a handkerchief in his hand. “I don’t touch unclean things.”

If my jab affects him, he doesn’t show it on his face. He’s still smiling, displaying an unsettlingly open expression, not attempting to school his features or mask his emotions.

Surely, he was taught how to control his reactions.

Though it does seem like he couldn’t care less about the traditional ways of doing things.

Yulian scrunches the handkerchief in his grip, running his dirt-smudged fingertip along the embroidered initials at the corner.

V.K.M.

Now, I regret giving him a high-quality handkerchief.

“Vaughn Kirillovich Morozov.” He stares at me as he reads out what the initials stand for, then lifts the handkerchief and blows his nose in it.

My jaw grinds, but I force myself to remain calm and not allow his antics to get to me. My eye twitches, though, when he wipes at the blood in the corner of his lip.

“My name is Yulian. Dad told me you and I need to get along.” He speaks in perfect Russian.

When I say nothing, mostly preoccupied with the view of my ruined handkerchief, he snaps his fingers. “Oh! Do you prefer to speak in English? Heard New York kids barely know any Russian.”

“I know enough to call you a rabid dog,” I say in Russian.

“Rabid wolf?” he asks in English.

“Dog.”

“Wolf. You said *волк* (*volk*), not *нѣс* (*pyos*).”

“I said dog.”

“Hmm. If you say so.”

His grin has grown wider, stretching his cheeks as he tilts his head to watch me closely. “You have a bit of an accent when you speak Russian.”

“I do not.”

“Then your tongue prefers wolves?”

“I said it correctly the first time. Not my problem you have hearing issues.”

He just continues to grin like an idiot, savoring his correction.

Fire blossoms at the center of my chest and tightens my muscles.

“By the way.” He steps closer, and since I refuse to give up any ground to the pest, we’re standing nose to nose when he speaks.

He smells of cigarettes. Nauseating.

A headache is pounding at the back of my head due to interacting with him.

Everything about this prick makes my eyes twitch.

“Let’s fight!” he shouts, bouncing in place like a hyperactive toddler.

I get distracted by a strand of dark-brown hair the wind has shoved into his eye.

The blue one.

The strand is damp, like his whole head of hair is, falling in long, haphazard locks past his nape and right above his shoulders, as if he dunked his head in a bucket of water.

He blows it away, his eyes gleaming, his grin widening as he shifts back and forth in place, almost as if he’s an idling engine ready to go.

“What do you say?” He jumps up and punches the air. “It’s a yes, right? Right?”

I just stare him down and say nothing.

“Come on! We have to know who’s the top dog around here. Or wolf. See what I did there?” He bends down, clutching his stomach as he laughs at his own distasteful joke.

“No, thanks.” I turn toward the door, noticing that the old man has disappeared, abandoning me to this heathen.

Yulian leaps in front of me, his arms open wide, forbidding me from moving. “But how will we figure out who’s the top?”

“I’ll defeat you at actual training, not whatever this absurd thing is.”

“You won’t dare fight me, will you? You know I’ll drag you in front of your prim-and-proper friends, don’t you? Don’t you?”

“Nice try, but it’s not that easy to provoke me.”

“Boo. New Yorkers are cowards!” he shouts for everyone downstairs to hear.

“Who did you call a coward, motherfucker?” someone shouts behind us.

I recognize the voice without having to see who it’s coming from.

Before I can stop him, Nikolai, the son of two leaders in our Bratva, jumps at Yulian, and soon, they’re wrestling on the balcony, punching each other on the floor.

Yulian hits Nikolai, then hops up. He shoves the handkerchief I gave him in his pocket and hooks his index finger in my direction. “Come join the fun.”

Nikolai slams into him from behind, shoving them back onto the floor.

I walk inside, leaving them to bloody each other senseless.

Now I know who Yulian reminds me of.

Nikolai.

Both spring into action first, both are reckless, and both share one brain cell.

Only, I don’t dislike Nikolai. I just think he’s uniquely chaotic, and I actually have some form of respect for his authenticity. This Yulian, however, seems like an absolute nightmare.

I’d prefer our other friend, Jeremy, be here to rein in Nikolai.

Unfortunately, Jeremy is training with his father this summer.

Something I’d rather be doing instead of this. Hell, I’d like to be in Russia instead of this.

Whatever *this* is.

“Wait!”

I come to a halt in the middle of the hall when Yulian catches up to me. He stops in front of me, panting harshly, his chest rising and falling

chaotically, causing the scraps of his shirt to stretch against defined muscles.

“What do you want now—”

My words are cut off when he lunges at me.

I pull away, but it’s too late, because the asshole is rubbing his palm on my face.

His *bloodied* palm.

The hygiene hazard is in my goddamn face.

I throw my fist in order to shove him away, but he’s already stepped back, my hand barely connecting with his chest.

A dark glimmer shines in his mismatched eyes. “Hope that’s clean enough for you, Mishka. You know, because you’re such a baby.”

Then he turns toward Nikolai, who’s chasing him.

And I’m left behind, my fists clenched, my blood boiling, with literal blood handprinted on my face.

That’s it.

I officially hate the bastard.

And I will make his summer hell.