

CHAPTER 112

Winter POV

I'm screaming, at the top of my lungs while thunder crashes down in the distance and the rain pours outside. It helps to muffle the sounds coming from the basement. My father is grinning, enjoying the sounds of my screams while Damien stands in the background. My eyes meet his, pleading for help, but he just looks away.

Slap. My father's hand slaps me directly across the face as I dangle in the cell, my hands chained over my head, my legs dangling uselessly. It hurts, but no more than what he's already put me through already. I feel the sharp stinging pain of the knife as he trails it lightly across my back.

"Should I write something" my father sneers as I try to stifle my sobs and remain quiet. Besides it's not me that he's asking, but Damien who hovers in the background, like the coward he is.

"I think she's had enough" Damien says lightly "if she can't make it to school then they'll know something is wrong. Winters never missed a day in her life."

For a brief second, a brief moment, I had thought he was trying to save me. I should have known better.

"Nah, she can take more" my father mutters.

The tip of the blade pushes in harder as he drags it across my skin. My flesh burns and bubbles from the silver, a sharp cry emitting from my throat. Blood trickles down to the floor.

"Your turn" my father says quietly and my head whips up to see Damien. He looks like a deer caught in the headlights. But my father shows no mercy. He hands the knife to Damien, who I bitterly realize, has already gloved up, like he was expecting this to happen. Damien eyes the knife, twisting it over and over in his hand, a dark look on his face.

"Do it already" my father barks out and Damien slowly, wanders over to me, the knife held firmly in his grasp, his eyes looking up at mine.

My body tenses in preparation. He plunges the knife into my side, stabbing me and leaves the knife in as my father crows with delight in the background. I scream, hysterically trying to dislodge the knife with no luck, my legs kicking and my body bucking wildly. There are tears trailing down my cheeks. It's with relief that I feel Damien pull the knife out, but just as quickly he plunges it into my abdomen, blood pooling around the wound. This time when he yanks the knife out, I feel woozy and dizzy. My body's been pushed past my limits. I no longer care if I live or die, I just want the pain to stop. The torture. The torment.

I'm lowered to the floor and the chains are torn off. My father hums under his breath. "Make sure she gets food and water" he tells Damien "Can't have her dying on us now can we."

I stare at my brother hazily and for a moment, I swear I see regret on his face. But it's gone just as quickly, as though it had never been there in the first place.

Another flashback. Another piece of the so-called puzzle slotting neatly into place. I try not to rock back and forth on the bed, even as tears come to my eyes. How anyone could do that, to their own daughter and sister defies all belief. Was I not good enough? Other than apparently killing my

mother, was I such a terrible person that I deserved to be punished? Why else would Damien have taken such joy in it?

You're not a terrible person Winter.

Sometimes it's hard to tell Sabriel.

Why don't you just ask him? See Damien face to face? He owes you an explanation.

You're right. He does. He can damn well start explaining himself.

You go girl, sock him one if you have to. Get those answers you've been asking for.

Right. I'm going. My hands clench into fists. Damien does owe me an explanation for everything. Kai is currently in his study but I know that Damien and Langdon have been walking around the house lately and staying close by. I yank the door to the bedroom open and stomp down the stairs, now in a full-blown foul temper. No matter how much I eat and drink lately, nothing seems to satisfy the hunger and thirst I seem to have. This just makes me angrier.

I check the house first. No sign of Damien. I even check the grounds outside quickly, but don't venture too far. For some reason I can't seem to bring myself to go too far from the bedroom. The bedroom is safe, secure. It feels like a haven to me. I sigh. Something tells me that the person I want, has to be in the study or Langdon's house. I'm betting on the study. Damien is literally clinging onto Langdon lately and doesn't like to be too far from him. Just like I don't like to be too far from Kai at the moment.

I walk down the corridor and reach the study door. I sniff and wrinkle my nose. I can smell them all in there, but they smell weird to me. Slightly unpleasant which is odd, because Kai's scent should smell delicious to me at least. I must be getting sick or something. I shrug. I'll deal with it later.

I tense and then smack the door to the study open. As I suspected, Kai, Langdon and Damien are all in there, discussing God knows what.

Kai goes to get out of his seat. "Winter now's not really the time" he begins, but I ignore him.

I focus all my glaring on Damien who's cringing in his chair. Obviously, he can see just how much of a temper I'm in.

"This is between me and Damien" I say calmly "both of you can get out."

Kai opens his mouth to protest, but then Langdon shoots him a look and they both excuse themselves. I fold my arms across my chest. Damien stays silent.

Finally, I can't take it any longer. "How could you!" I burst out "You tortured me with father and you didn't do anything to save me!" I almost scream in my rage.

"You don't understand" Damien mumbles and I turn to him, my eyes flashing and my lip curled up in a sneer.

"You're right I don't understand. I don't understand how a brother can take part in torturing his sister. How you just kept quiet. How you didn't try to stop him, not even once and how you even participated with him on occasion."

Now he looks pale. "I didn't have a choice." he pleads. "You think he wouldn't have done the same to me if I'd refused?"

I think Damien's full of shit. "Dad never laid a finger on you" I scoff "You were his precious son. It was his daughter he hated. You weren't responsible for mother's death, I was."

Damien stands up, sending the chair he's sitting on to the ground with a large crash. "You have no clue how hard it was to stare into your eyes and still torture you while you cried."

"No, because I was the one being tortured. Maybe you should have seen how much that hurt from my side" I say sarcastically. He swallows nervously.

"Look, I was terrified of father," he admits "enough that I would have done everything he said, if it meant that he didn't hurt me instead."

"You were a coward" I spat out.

"Yes, I was a coward" he yells out spreading his arms wide "and I regret what I did to you, every damn day. I have nightmares about what I've done. I know that no matter how hard I try, I'll never be able to make it up to you."

He's damn right about that. My rage feels like it's spiraling out of control. My breathing is heavy, my hands won't stop clenching and unclenching as I stand there and I'm gritting my teeth. I so badly want to punch the lights out of him, but even now, I can't bring myself to hurt him. Damn it. My eyes fall on the desk instead and before I can stop myself, I pick it up, which astounds me, I didn't know I was that strong, and throw it against the wall, shattering the desk into splinters while Damien stands there in shock. I feel mildly impressed with myself. Fuck, I'm strong.

"How did you do that" breathes Damien in disbelief, staring at the ruins of the desk on the floor.

"I used my anger" I snap at him, trying to breath and still feeling the urge to kill him.

"Look Winter, I don't know what it is you want from me" Damien says quietly, wringing his hands and standing on the spot, putting his weight

on one leg, then the other. "I am truly sorry for everything I did to you in the past. I can never make it up to you, because you're right. I was your brother and I should have protected you instead of doing what I did. There are no excuses. I stuffed up, made a horrible mistake and you suffered because of me. "

It's like he's taken the wind out of my sails. I'm starting to feel deflated. Instead of rage, I'm starting to feel overwhelming sadness. "I have scars all over my body that won't go away" I choke out.

"I know" he whispers.

"The memories, they'll never fade" I continue.

"I know" he whispers.

"I have nightmares Damien" I say, bursting into tears "and I'm afraid all the time. Why couldn't Johnathon have just killed him" I howl "because waiting for him to come is killing me."

"I know," he whispers "because the same thing is happening to me. I can't eat, I can't sleep, I have nightmares and I feel like I'm constantly looking over my shoulder. I feel the same way you do Winter. If it wasn't for Langdon, I would have probably lost my mind right now."

I sniffle. If "it wasn't for Kai, I'm pretty sure I would have had a nervous breakdown by now. He's been my rock this entire time.

Damien's eyes are shiny with unshed tears. "I can't make up for the past Winter" he says with determination etched on his handsome face "but I can try and have a future with you. That is if you're willing to let me. I don't blame you if you never want to forgive me, but you forgave me once before. I do love you as a sister and I want to show you that I can be the brother you deserve."

I'm openly crying now. My emotions are a mess. He closes the gap between us and hugs me, pulling me in tight against him as I rest my eyes and place my head against his chest. His hands grip me tightly around the waist and I breathe in his scent which still smells strange to me.

We stand there, for several minutes, just clutching onto each other and saying nothing. I finally let go of all the anger that I've been holding onto with Damien. There's no point holding onto an old grudge. He can't change the future. He did travel this way for me. I know he loves me and a small part of me, despite everything, loves him back.

There's a tentative knock on the door and then Kai and Langdon step in, looking at the destruction of the room with raised eyebrows.

"Sorry." I apologize sheepishly "I let my anger get the best of me."

Kai looks at his desk. "Who broke the desk?" he asked curious.

"I did" I say very quietly.

He looks amazed. "That desk is so heavy and solid that I struggle to lift it on my own and you managed to throw it across the room" he exclaimed "strange" he mutters to himself.

"Is all forgiven?" asks Langdon and I give him a nod, stepping away from Damien.

"All is forgiven" I say and mean it, sailing out of the room. Kai and Langdon look at the desk as I leave and shoot each other a glance full of meaning.