

CHAPTER 113

Damien POV

I'm too little to understand but I can't stand to watch him hurting my little sister Winter. I pull on his arm, "Stop daddy." I tell him, Winter cowering on the ground in an effort to stop his fists from hurting her face. She's crying and it makes me feel sad for her.

He glares at me. "Your sister is a murderer!" he spits out "She's the reason that your mother is dead. She killed her and now she gets to pay. Don't get in my way or you'll be next!" he threatens. He waves his arm and sends me flying, my back hitting the wall as I crumple to the ground in tears, before he starts hitting poor Winter again who is crying and begging for him to stop.

It's raining and there's thunder in the background. Winter is in the cell, the one that father purposely built just for her, crying and screaming as he whips her. I can smell the blood in the air. I'm older now, but no less afraid of him. I can barely stand the screams, the crying as he hurts her. She's lying there on the ground, completely helpless. She's much weaker than either of us, and the fact she has no wolf, makes her even more helpless. It also means she's slow to heal, something that the old man takes sadistic pleasure in.

"Please stop!" she screams, as I watch, feeling numb.

Whenever she is getting hurt I either feel angry because I'm the one carrying it out, or numb when father does it. Her voice is pitiful and weak.

She's begging for mercy, but it's pointless. She should know by now, it's been years, that father is incapable of mercy or forgiveness. He's incapable of anything but drinking his precious alcohol and inflicting pain.

I can hear the thwacks of the whip as it meets her flesh. The sound of her cries in the small basement. The sizzling sound of the silver meeting and touching her bare flesh. The smell of burning flesh is sickening. I gag.

My father is smiling. He's not holding back, using his strength to whip her and I can't even remember the reason for it. It takes very little to make him angry these days. But I hate the cell. It's monstrous. But the thing I fear the most and which makes me ashamed, is that he'll use it on me one day when I make him angry. That's how much of a coward I am.

"Please." Winter sobs, her hands scrabbling at the cold concrete floor, her body covered in gouges and scratches, her voice is hoarse from screaming. "Please stop."

Father hits her again and she falls silent. Her head turns to the side and she looks at me. I suck in a breath. Her eyes are dead, staring blankly. The light's gone completely from them. It's like she's given up completely, no longer even making a sound as the whip continues to strike her back. I feel sick. I'm a coward. But if I step in, who's to say father won't turn on me with the whip? The bastard is a lot stronger than me. To my shame, I say nothing, turning away and walking upstairs as my father continues to torture the little sister I've long since stopped trying to protect. Now, I protect myself, no matter what it takes.

The flashbacks are coming more regularly now. More intense, more in my face than ever before. I don't know what's caused it. It could be the argument I had with Winter, or it could be the fact that I know father is on his way. I place my head in my hands. Why can't I stop remembering? It's so painful, it sticks in my mind and won't let go. Every sound, the pain, the feelings, all there as I relive what I don't want to remember. My breath

comes out in short heavy puffs, my heart is thudding wildly in my chest. I glance over at Langdon, who is sleeping peacefully, his brown hair all tousled and across the pillow. Thank god I haven't disturbed him. He needs sleep. I know he's gotten very little since I've started with the flashbacks and he hasn't really left my side. He senses my fear, even though I've tried not to show it. How pathetic am I? Even fully grown with a wolf, I'm afraid of my father. I don't see what Langdon sees in me sometimes. He could do so much better, you know?

I climb over him slowly, trying not to jostle him. If he wakes up, he'll insist on staying awake with me and I can't have that. This insomnia is slowly killing me. I can't sleep. My whole-body trembles as I get out of bed, putting on a heavy sweatshirt of Langdon's for comfort and slowly creeping into the kitchen. Warm milk is meant to help you sleep right? At this point I'll try anything. I open the refrigerator and grab the milk, pouring it into a saucepan. I grab a mug and place the saucepan on the stove, stirring constantly until the milk is warm. Then I sit at the dining table.

I yawn. I'm so tired. You would think that if I were this tired, that sleep would come naturally to me. But no. No matter how exhausted I feel, my body refuses to sleep. It's infuriating. I sip my warm milk. At least that's making me calm down somewhat. The milk soothes my sore throat and I relax in the chair. I don't even mind that I'm sitting in semi darkness, the only light that there is, is coming from the few windows that are in the kitchen.

There's nothing to fear here, I chant to myself. It's just Langdon and myself in this house. I'm perfectly safe. But my body, even though it's slowly relaxing, refuses to stop trembling. Then I hear the sound of footsteps and my heart sinks. I was so sure I'd gotten out of the room without disturbing the poor bastard. Sure enough, Langdon comes walking in, his hair all disheveled, looking all sleepy and adorable I might

add. He yawns widely, putting a hand to his mouth. I feel guilty that he's awake.

"Do you know what time it is?" he comments quietly.

I shake my head. His eyes soften as they gaze at me. "I'm guessing you couldn't sleep again." he said pointedly. I flush and look at the table.

He doesn't look angry. In fact he just looks calm, grabbing himself a hot drink of coffee and sitting opposite me. "I thought I told you to wake me up when you can't sleep." he chides.

"I don't want you to have to sit with me when I have insomnia." I burst out "it's not fair to you and you need your sleep. Kai relies on you as his Beta."

He's silent for a moment. "Kai might rely on me, but I care about you Damien. We're mates. I am happy to stay up with my mate and comfort them when they can't sleep."

I lower my head in my hands. "They won't stop Langdon. I can't make them stop."

"The memories" he guesses "the flashbacks? They only started when Winter stopped talking to you and you found out about your father escaping his cell. I think that your fear is producing them."

He's probably right. "You must think I'm pitiful" I say weakly "to be afraid of my own father like this. Not to mention disgusting. I treated Winter horribly just to save my own skin" I tell him, tears forming in the corner of my eyes. "I could have stopped hurting her, could have stopped bullying her at school at least. Instead I chose to keep going. It's a wonder that Winter's forgiven me when I can't even forgive myself."

Langdon runs a hand through his hair, making it stick up in different directions. "Has it occurred to you, that maybe you need to forgive

yourself" he argues "you were a kid Damien, making the best of a bad situation. You already confessed that you were afraid he would torture you as well. You were trying to survive" he argues "even if it meant hurting another person. We're not perfect, none of us are. All you can do is look forward and try to make amends with Winter now. She wants a relationship with you, you want one with her. The flashbacks are preventing you from looking forward."

"How can you even stand to be with someone like me?" I ask him thickly "you're so damn handsome, you're perfect, you're confident and you make me feel like I'm the only person in the world for you. Not once have you even judged me for what I did."

He gives me a small smile. "I don't judge you, because you're judging yourself enough for the both of us" he says calmly "and I am with you, not just because we're mates, but because you're funny, kind, sweet and pretty damn good looking yourself" he adds as I blush. I'm pretty certain my cheeks are like a beet red right now.

I glance down at my empty mug and push it away. I hadn't even been aware I was still drinking from the mug.

"Damien" Langdon says quietly "your father is not going to lay a hand on you or Winter. You are both safe from him. Kai and I have patrol on the look out for him. He's never going to harm either of you again. I wish you believed that" he said with a shake of his head and an exhale.

"I wish I could too" I say feeling ashamed and angry "but until the bastard's caught, I'm always going to be looking over my shoulder expecting the worst and so is Winter. I just want this all to end."

"It will" Langdon says firmly "you just have to hold on for a little longer.

It was easy for him to say, but not so easy for me to actually do. Still he's trying to help and it's sweet. My mate genuinely cares for me. I love the

fact he cares so much, even when I feel guilty about it. After all he's probably got other things that need attention, besides myself. Still it gives me a warm feeling inside.

Langdon finishes off his drink and stands up. "Do you feel able to go to sleep?" he asks.

I feel wide awake but give a small nod. The worst case, I'll just lie next to him until it's time to get back up.

His eyes narrow on me and he looks suspicious. Uh oh. Maybe I wasn't convincing enough? He comes round to me and grabs my hand. His hands are nice and warm, although rough with calluses from all the training he does. He rubs my hand gently. His eyes search mine and then he bends his head down and gives me a kiss, soft, gentle, his lips soft against mine.

"Let's go to bed" he breathes, pulling back and I willingly follow him as he tugs on my hand and leads me back to the bedroom. Langdon plumps mine up as I quickly go to the bathroom and I slowly climb on to the bed and snuggle down. Langdon climbs in beside me and pulls the bedcovers over the both of us. His arm snakes out and pulls me against him, so that my back is resting against his chest. His other hand reaches over and to my shock, he begins to stroke my hair.

It's soothing. His touch is gentle. The last time I was touched like this, had been my mother soothing me back to bed. Despite myself, my eyelids begin to flutter closed. It's so relaxing. Langdon smiles down at me.

"Sleep" he soothes "sleep Damien."

I yawn and my eyelids close. He never stops stroking my hair. My body relaxes underneath the covers and I feel myself beginning to get sleepy. I can't even fight it and I don't want to. My body begins to drift off and the last thing I hear, or think I hear before I'm fully asleep, is Langdon's voice saying "I love you."