

CHAPTER 118

Winter POV

The dungeon is cold and dismal. But I don't dare complain. I had insisted they put me down here in the first place, for everyone's safety, even when they had tried to protest against it. But my actions seem futile, stupid. I should never have bothered. Because if I wanted to, I could easily get myself out of here. There's the smell of old blood in the air. and it's disgusting, my nose wrinkling in disgust. I huddle underneath the blanket Kai gave me, shivering profusely and wondering at my actions. Will this really keep all of them safe? I doubt it. I can't get the image of my father out of my mind. What I did to him. The perverse pleasure I took in pulling out his entrails from his lifeless body, the screams that echoed through the forest. It was like another person had taken over, a different Winter, one who was evil and enjoyed every bit of harm she did to him. Who, even now, wished he'd put up more of a fight so that she could have hurt him even more than she had.

I feel numb, it's hard to explain. I should have felt happy, satisfied, joyful that my father was dead. After all, I certainly enjoyed killing him. But the happiness and satisfaction have worn off. Now I'm just glad that he won't ever touch or hurt me again, let alone Damien. He was a horrible person; the pack would be much better off without that drunken alcoholic loser member. I won't ever have to look over my shoulder again and wonder when the next hit is coming. Or feel his flesh as it smacks into mine, or

feel his breath as he whispers things into my ear. That bastard is gone and part of me is guilty that I feel nothing over it, no sadness or guilt.

We need to get out of here. Why do you keep us locked up Winter? Why do you not embrace the power that you possess? You hunted down your father and he'll no longer hurt you ever again. Did you not enjoy it, Winter? Hearing his screams and pleas for mercy. Forcing him to die as a pathetic human instead of a shifter? That man will never lay a hand on us ever again. Why won't you convince Kai to let us out of this pathetic prison? It won't be long now until we need to drink again and sate our thirst.

The voice is persistent, ever present in my mind, even as I try desperately to tune it out. It's loud though. More of a constant hiss than anything. A lot different to Sabriel. God, I miss her. I would give anything to hear a bad or lame joke from my wolf right now. She would make me laugh without even trying. God damn she was a sassy wolf. Not to mention pretty. I'm sure she would have a solution to this problem. One that didn't involve a dungeon cell.

Heavy footsteps on the stairs. Kai walks down slowly, holding a food tray. He manages to open the cell door and place the food down on the floor without spilling a single drop. Reluctantly he closes the door again. I eye the food with interest. There's juice, a muffin, bagel and some fruit. I reach for the juice first, but the second the liquid hits my throat, I begin to gag and convulse, throwing up the contents. I wipe my mouth feeling miserable and slowly reach for the muffin. It tastes like dust in my mouth; I cough it up and the food goes flying across the room. I look at Kai who is staring at me grimly.

"I think we need to face the facts, Winter. You don't need food or drink, you need blood" he breathes.

I shake my head. I refuse to believe that. I don't want to face the facts; I want to shy away from them for as long as possible.

Idiot, we drained your father's blood remember. It will only keep you going for a small amount of time until you need more. You will need more, I'm warning you. So, I would start accepting that we are a vampire and get over it already. Unless you want to slowly starve yourself to death, which is a painful way to die. Be free Winter. Save yourself.

"I can't drink blood" I tell Kai miserably "I won't do it. There must be something else we can do" I say desperately, but he looks completely stymied.

"What if you just drank a little" he suggests quietly, a determined look on his face as he holds out his wrist. Surely, he must be joking?

Something comes over me and I stare at the veins, licking my lips. I can hear the steady sound of his heartbeat and the sound of blood rushing through his veins. I begin to feel thirsty as I stare at it. Kai moves it closer to me.

"Kai, no don't" I say weakly, but he doesn't listen and shoves his wrist and hand through the bars of the cell as I look at him completely horrified. Does he have any idea what he's doing to me right now?

Doesn't his heart beat sound so nice and the blood pulsating through his body? We don't have to take all of his blood, we can take just a little. Enough to keep us going and get rid of this hunger and thirst. It's better than killing someone for their blood, isn't it?

Damn this voice that won't shut up. But it's beginning to make sense. God, I feel disgusted in myself. Kai is holding steady, his eyes staring directly at me.

"Winter drink" he says with a low growl "I want to see if you can restrain yourself from taking too much. I want you to do this for me."

I sidle closer. I feel my canines (I hate calling them fangs so canines it is for now) slowly protrude out of my mouth. Kai's eyes widen but he doesn't move. I grab hold of his wrist tightly, making Kai wince in pain from the strength of my grip, and bring his wrist to my mouth.

Slowly, gently, I pierce the skin of his wrist and blood rushes into my mouth. It's sweet, flavorful and I moan out loud as I begin to suck, letting it trail down my throat. It's refreshing and I drink, until I see Kai's hand trembling. Feeling repulsed, I immediately drop his hand and move back away, wiping my mouth with the back of my hand.

I no longer feel thirsty or hungry. Instead, I feel amazing, refreshed, like I could run ten marathons and never get tired. All my cuts and scrapes are miraculously healed and I find myself almost jogging in place. Kai licks across his wound and I feel overwhelming guilt. "I'm so sorry" I begin to apologize but he holds up his hand, stopping me.

"I told you to do it" he interrupts "and I would do it all over again. You can't see yourself right now, but you're practically glowing and you look much healthier." He sounds amazed. Like it's a massive transformation that occurred right in front of his eyes.

See how good we feel with fresh blood in our system? Don't you want to feel like this all the time? Be this strong all the time?

"I guess the vampire side of me is stronger than the shifter side" I mutter without thinking, still disgusted in myself.

"Maybe, but you held back from taking too much. Now will you stop being so foolish and come out of there?" he asks looking exasperated. "I

trust you Winter, not to kill me if that helps" he says trying to lighten the mood.

I can't help but laugh at that. But I'm still a little hesitant. Kai gives me puppy dog eyes. "Look vampire chick or not, I still love you as my mate, this doesn't change that. I will stay by your side no matter what" he promises.

I sigh and step back. "Fine, will you let me out please" I say lightly and he grins, opening the doors to the cell at once. I walk out slowly. It's like my eyesight has become sharper, even sharper than a shifter as I take everything in. He grips my hand and gently gives it a squeeze. We walk upstairs together. I spot Damien on the grounds with Langdon, training. He looks ferocious and I'm impressed at how well he's doing against his opponent, as I slow down to watch. Kai follows my gaze. "I'm impressed that you can see the training" he comments "because while I can see it, I can't make out who is actually doing the fighting."

"Langdon and Damien" I tell him with a smile "and Damien is kicking ass."

"He's gotten really good" Kai comments with a grin "Langdon has really been training him hard."

"Are you sure that I should be back up here in the house?" I ask nervously "I still think the dungeon is safer for all of you."

"Let me decide what's safe for me. None of us wanted you to lock yourself up in the first place" Kai said sternly "that was all you. I'm willing to bet you're exhausted after spending a night in there."

I shake my head. "Not really. I feel like I could go and run for hours."

"Well, I'm' hungry" Kai comments with a sidelong glance at me "how about we go sit in the dining room?" he suggests.

I'm more than up for that, sitting at the table while he grabs himself some sandwiches to eat. I swear the man can eat his body weight in food and still want more.

He munches on the food while I relax against the chair. I don't know how to feel. I should feel repulsed at being part vampire but part of me is slowly embracing it. I can't change what's happened to me, although if Thomas wasn't already dead, I'd be killing him with my bare hands right now.

"Kai what if we can't find a way to turn me back?" I ask hesitantly.

He swallows hard. "I have an idea about that. The werewolf king's wife is a witch. I thought we could maybe ask her for help. She might know a spell or ritual that would take away the vampire part of you so you would no longer be a hybrid."

I don't know how to feel about that, but I do feel a tiny bit of excitement at the thought that something could be done.

"When can we do it?" I ask hurriedly.

Kai shakes his head. "The werewolf King is currently on the other side of the world, visiting packs. We can contact him once he's back on our side of the world."

"Oh" I say quietly feeling a little deflated. I guess I shouldn't have gotten my hopes up so quickly. Silly Winter, I chide myself, at least Kai has come up with some sort of plan. It was better than nothing. It was a possibility and that was something to cling onto.

I twirl my hair with my finger, looking off into the distance.

You will not be able to get rid of me. I will never let you go. Foolish girl. Do you really think a witch is able to help you? You are stuck being a hybrid whether you like it or not. It is time you accepted it.

"Your brother is a little upset at the moment, but once he's calmed down, I'm sure he'll want to see you" Kai suggests.

"He's upset about what I told him about our mother, isn't he?" I ask lowly.

Kai gives a small nod. "How does he think I feel" I snarl, scratching the table top "finding out after all this time mother was alive, and father was lying while torturing me. Does he think I found it easy to listen to it? Or does he think I'm lying?" I hiss.

"Calm down Winter. I think he's finding it hard to come to terms with the possibility that your mother is alive" Kai says delicately.

I just grunt at him, feeling disgruntled. Stupid Damien.

My hand goes up to my neck subconsciously, tracing where the mark from Kai used to be until Thomas managed to remove it. I feel sad at the loss of it. Wait a minute, my eyes widen in disbelief. Is the reason that I can't hear Sabriel anymore, because I lost my mark? My mind begins to race, a mile a minute. If that's the case, then would having Kai mark me bring her back? My mind begins to go into overdrive. I feel a spark of joy at my idea.

I jump up and grab Kai by the hand, insistently tugging at him, almost dragging him up the stairs as he tries to keep up with the pace I'm setting.

"Slow down" he exclaims, panting.

We make it to the bedroom and I sit on the bed and regard him eagerly. He raises his eyebrows at the look on my face, clearly wondering what it

is I'm thinking. I can't help but give him a goofy smile. God, let this work, I pray to myself, please let it work.

I clear my throat. "Kai, will you mark me again? This time I'm asking you to and consenting to it" I point out and watch his expression turn grim.