

## CHAPTER 13

### Winter POV

I sat in the bleak-looking hospital room, grateful that Johnathon had the common sense to leave me alone and sit in the hallway. I'm so angry at him for forcing me to come here when I don't want to go. I feel a sense of panic. What if they call my father and tell him I'm here? He'll kill me for sure. I try to hold my tears at bay as a young woman comes walking in, dressed in a doctor's coat. She looks concerned and I wonder if she's been told about my injuries already. I bet Johnathon told her.

"Winter," the woman says quietly, and I glance at her name tag. It reads Laura. She continues with a smile that I'm sure she means to be reassuring. "I hear that you've been badly hurt. Can you show me where?"

"I really need to get home," I said hastily. "I was expected to be there ages ago."

She frowns. "I'm sure your family is worried about you. Would you like me to call them?"

I shook my head. "No, it's fine. I don't want to bother them."

She gives me a strange look, but there's no way I want them to contact my father or my brother. I shudder at the mere thought.

"It hurts here" I finally mumble as she looks at me, patiently waiting. I know she's not going to leave me alone until I show her and so I reluctantly push up my shirt and jumper so she can look at my ribs. Laura gently prods my rib cage and I give a yelp, unable to help myself. Christ that hurt. Now Laura is looking away and I fidget as I see her looking over at my old bruises.

"Well," she says finally, motioning for me to pull my top and jumper back down, which I do, feeling a lot less vulnerable now that my body is covered. "Your ribs are broken. I can wrap them up for you until they heal properly", she offered "give you some painkillers to help with the pain. Would you like that?"

I think about it. Having the painkillers doesn't seem like such a bad idea considering I was in a massive amount of pain. Maybe, if I rationed them, I could keep some for home when the pain from my beatings gets too bad. I'm also not going to complain if she wants to wrap a bandage around my stomach and rib cage to make me more comfortable. At this rate, I won't heal until late tomorrow and I want to be able to walk without feeling like I'm going to faint. I gave her a little nod and she began to rifle through her trolley.

"Lift your shirt back up" Laura orders me and I do, wincing as she puts the bandage on tight, not enough to restrict my breathing, but firm enough that I felt myself beginning to relax as the pain diminished slightly.

I'm hoping she'll just grab the painkillers and let me go, but instead, she sits down on the visitor chair and stares directly at me, making me feel extremely nervous. I know what she's about to ask and there's no way I'm going to tell her the truth. I value my life too much. "Winter, I can tell that you have old bruises and new ones on top of them. Is there trouble at home?" she asks delicately and for a moment I hesitate. Yes, I want to scream, my own family beat me, starve me, and are cruel to me. Help me. But I don't. I can't and my chest feels tight as I answer, lying completely to the kind woman "I get bullied at school a lot. It's fine."

It's not, but I put on a brave face and I can tell she's trying to tell if I'm telling the truth or lying. I fix my big blue eyes on her and it seemed to work.

"We can get the officers down here if you'd like to speak to them. Make a report about the people bullying you". She tries again and I feel bad for her. She's trying to help me and I'm shoving it back in her face.

"No thank you," I say firmly and she bites her lip and sighs.

"It's up to you," she says sadly and I nod, watching as she leaves, hopefully, to grab the painkillers she promised me.

To my annoyance, he strides in, all confident and cocky-like. I curse myself for thinking he's handsome. The bastard rejected me for heaven's sake. I shouldn't feel anything for him, but every time he comes near me, my heart flutters as though there's still part of the mate bond between us. I frown at him but he doesn't seem to notice, or he doesn't care.

"I'll take you home," he tells me, and I gape at him. I can't have him do that. I can't have him near my house or my family. I can't let him know my shameful secret. It's none of his business. I don't even want to imagine the consequences of having a boy take me home and my father seeing it. Heck, Damien would punish me for it as well and make fun of me. I can't stand the thought and I feel my body starting to tremble.

"I really need those painkillers" I forced out and, as I had hoped, he sprung around to go and fetch the nurse. I waited for a minute and sure enough, when I peered around the corner he was gone. I limp towards the hospital's exit, frantically dashing through, hoping that I'll make it to the main road before he finds me. I'd barely taken a step outside though when his voice boomed from behind me, stopping all the staff and patients in their tracks.

"Where are you going? You are hurt, injured, and trying to run. How can you be so stupid" he roars, and I flinch and turn around, eyeing him warily.

"Get back inside your room" he hisses, and I can't ignore him. What would be the point? He'd just use his alpha tone on me anyway, so it would just be a waste of time and energy.

It doesn't stop me from stomping over to the bed though and plonking myself down, foolishly forgetting about my broken ribs. I flinch and swear as he glowers at me.

"Do I have to tie you to the bed" he grumbles, and even though I know it's wrong, my imagination goes into overdrive as I picture him doing just that, dressed in just his underwear, his bare chest. I blink and know that I'm blushing from the amused smirk on his arrogant face. Damn him, I think crossly and sulkily folded my arms over my own chest, saying nothing, and looking away.

"Here are your painkillers" Laura announced from the doorway, handing over a small pill bottle "one every four to six hours as needed. You should be good as new by tomorrow night," she says, looking between the two of us warily. "Did I interrupt something?" she asks innocently.

"No" I mumbled, and Johnathon shook his head.

"Can she be discharged?" he asks Laura and she nods, giving me one last searching look.

"Unless there's anything else you need or want to do Winter," she says lightly and I shrug.

"Thanks, but I'm all good," I tell her "Thanks for the painkillers."

She turns to Johnathon while I scowl at him. "Be careful when driving and try not to stop suddenly while she's in this much pain. Take her straight home, the pills may make her slightly woozy."

Hello I'm standing right here, I think to myself sarcastically. Laura remains oblivious as she gives myself and Johnathon a cheerful wave goodbyes as she leaves us both staring at each other, me resentfully while he looks stony.

“Well,” Johnathon mutters “let’s take you home” he exhales and offers me a hand. I ignore it and begin to shuffle towards the exit, knowing I was irritating him.

“Is it really so hard for you to ask for help” he huffed indignantly and I stop, leaning against the outside of the building, panting heavily. Damn it was harder to walk than I thought it would be.

“I’ll go get the car” he whistles and strides off as I wince, grimly staring into the distance. How was I going to persuade him to drop me off away from my house so that my father and brother don’t see?