

CHAPTER 17

Winter POV

I started the next morning with a big smile on my face. Last night had been so much fun, laughing and joking with my brother, actually reminiscing about mum without him getting angry at me. I get dressed and rush downstairs, stopping in my tracks as I spot my father waiting for me. I glance upwards hoping to see Damien but there's no sign of him and I hesitate, wondering if I should call out for help. But it was also possible that Damien had left for school already, in which case, I was on my own anyway.

My father's beady little eyes rest on me and I flinch, smelling his breath and the beer from there. It's repulsive, almost as though he's bathed in it. I stop on the steps, too frightened to make a move, but to my surprise, my father gives me a smile that instantly makes me suspicious. Why was he suddenly in a good mood? Had he maybe gotten another job already? Normally it took him weeks though. Even then, he never smiled at me. My stomach churns with dread.

"Winter," my father says heartily, and I eye him suspiciously.

"Yes," I said quietly, my feet still firmly rooted to the ground, my body beginning to tremble in fear. Something was up. He was acting too strangely for my liking.

"You look pale," he says, and I place a hand on my cheek. It's true that I'm pale, but then, other than walking to school and back, I don't really see much sunlight. So being pale was normal for me, not that he'd notice, of course. Or it could be because it felt like all the blood had drained out of my face the second I saw he was home.

He comes closer and I instinctively flinch, raising my arm as though to shield off a hit that I suspect was coming. Instead, nothing happens and I place my arm back down, to see a wounded expression on my father's face.

"I wasn't going to hurt you," he says quietly, and I want so badly to believe him, but nothing on this god-green earth would ever get me to believe my asshole of a father. Instead, all I can wonder is what he wants. He's never acted this civil to me ever and, if anything, I'm even warier of him than before.

"Come down already," he says slightly irritably and I exhale, cautiously moving one foot in front of the other, reluctantly making my way down to the foot of the stairs, my heart thudding loudly and quickly in my chest. I wish Damien had been here, at least then he'd probably fill me in on what was happening.

"Kitchen," my father said and I almost gagged as I smelled his breath, saying nothing and walking into the kitchen. I assume that he wants me to prepare breakfast, but to my surprise, he places his hands on my shoulders and forces me to sit at the dining table.

"I'll make us some toast," he says jovially "coffee?" he asks, and I'm stunned. Had father had a change of mind and decided he was going to stop abusing me? What had brought this on? Was I dreaming?

"Yes please" I mumble and he nods, brusquely making one up as I stare down at the table. I feel uncomfortable, awkward even. This is the most I've ever spoken to him in who knows how long and I'm not quite sure what to say.

When he places the toast and coffee in front of me, I inhale deeply, appreciating the strong aroma, giving father a tentative smile as he joins me.

"Thank you" I whisper and he nods, biting into his toast. I take a small nibble of mine, feeling emotional. He'd put peanut butter on it but he'd cut it into triangles, the way I'd liked to eat it when mother was still alive.

"So, I was thinking," he says gruffly, staring at his coffee, "that maybe today it would be a good idea if you stayed home. You look sickly anyway," he adds.

I'm confused. I've never missed a day of school in my life. Not only that, but I felt fine, I wasn't sick at all. I shake my head.

"I can't miss school" I protested thickly, taking a sip of my coffee "I can't afford to miss any classes" I added tensely, waiting for him to explode. Instead, he just regards me calmly, still drinking, and I pick up my own cup and continue to sip while I wait.

I blink. Was it my imagination or was father looking slightly fuzzy? I shake my head, putting it down to tiredness, my body feeling relaxed. My father looks calm. "I'm afraid the school isn't expecting you," he tells me firmly, shaking his own head "I've already called to advise them you're sick and won't be in for the rest of the week", he adds.

I'm shocked. "Why would you do that," I say slowly, my mouth beginning to feel dry.

"Well, you're needed elsewhere," he says quietly, and my jaw drops open. I make an attempt to stand but it's like my limbs refuse to cooperate with me and I stare at my father, realizing that he's laced my drink with some sort of drug. It's the only explanation I can think of as the room starts to spin around me.

"Why" I managed to utter as he came over to me, my body sliding out of the chair onto the ground. I blink tears from my eyes. How stupid of me to even trust my father for a moment. I should have instantly known something was up. But why had he drugged me?

"You see," my father says, coming into view, a large grin on his fat, puffy, face. "I'm in desperate need of money and last night I was given an offer I just couldn't pass up."

"What" I mumble, trying to scrabble at the tiles, and get a grip on anything that might make my body move. I pray for Damien to magically come home, but it's futile. I scream as I feel his foot on my back, squishing me and making it impossible to attempt to move. "Well, it came to me that you're a very pretty girl", my father says, and I feel my heart skip a beat. Surely, he's not about to? Not to his own daughter!

"You can make me a lot of money," he says gruffly, "and I owe someone money, so it's a win-win for me."

He chuckles and I open my mouth but nothing comes out, my voice merely a croak. I feel defeated. There's no getting out of this situation and all I can do is lie there completely helpless, my whole body paralyzed and my vision slowly beginning to diminish as blackness began to creep in.

"I suppose it's only fair to tell you where you are going, Winter" he chuckled, and I felt nothing but hatred towards him. If I could have killed him right then and there, I would have. As it was, I wished I could kick him in the nuts. He leans down and bends close to my ears, his stubble tickling my face as I feel the bile rise up in my throat, dreading what he's about to say or tell me.

"I've sold you" he growls, satisfaction in his voice "to someone who wants to have a lot of fun with you, and when he's done" he threatens, "then I'll sell you gain. You are useless, worthless, the only thing your good for is being a whore and now I've made you one."

I wish I could scream, yell, anything, but as he moves off of me, the darkness creeps in and I lose whatever hold I have on keeping myself awake, my eyes closing against my will, my breathing beginning to even out and to my horror, there's now only darkness as I fall unconscious right there on the kitchen floor.