

CHAPTER 26

Winter POV

I managed to force my eyes open and I frowned, taking in the white sterile walls and hearing a familiar shout. "She's awake" as Alpha Johnathon's face came into focus. I blink, realizing he's holding my hand, but it's the searing pain in my chest that concerns me most and as I open my mouth to shout, nothing comes out. Not even a whisper. Now I'm panicking. What's wrong with me? Why can't I talk? The pain in my chest gets worse and I hear an annoying beeping sound.

"Let go of her hand," a voice says and I see a doctor examining me, blinking as bright light floods into my eyelids, a needle piercing my skin and making me relax, the pain beginning to fade.

"Winter, can you hear me?" the man in the white coat says, and I give a small nod, seeing Damien in the corner of my eye, standing out of the way, his eyes wide open in what looks like shock.

"Alright, well, I need you to calm down, alright? That beeping noise is because your heart rate picked right up. Take a few deep breaths for me", he instructs, and I do, breathing in and out until the beeping noise steadies out.

"Good", the doctor looked pleased. "Now do you know where you are?"

I nod. "Do you remember what happened?" he asks and I shudder, my body beginning to tremble in fear. I'll never forget what happened. It's etched firmly in my mind.

I place a hand against my throat and the doctor looks at me with sympathy in his eyes. "During the attack, your vocal cords were damaged", he explains "I'm afraid there's no telling if they will heal or not."

I said nothing, my eyes welling with tears. The moon goddess could have warned me about this before I chose. How does someone manage without their voice? I can't yell or scream for help and I begin to feel vulnerable.

"Your brother and your mate are here. Do you think that you'll be alright while I go and fetch some medicine for you?"

I hesitate. But the moon goddess had said that they hadn't left my side and so I gave a small nod, watching as the doctor left. Damien comes to my side and tries to reach for my hand and I instinctively flinch. He looks hurt but I can't help it.

"I guess I deserve that" he mutters, "I'm so sorry Winter, I swear I had no idea that father would be so evil and cruel. I know I should have stayed behind instead of leaving you alone."

I looked at him. Part of me hates him for doing that, but part of me wants to forgive him as well. After all, it's not like he could have known what father was going to do, but the part that really rankles is that it was his friend Thomas who bought me and tried to rape me.

"I'll make this up to you, I swear," Damien tells me, and I give a small nod, deciding that I'll believe it when I see it. Until then I'm reserving my judgment. I glanced over at Alpha Johnathon, wondering why the hell he was there. He'd rejected me, so why did he give a damn what happened to me? I feel bitterness towards him.

"Winter I" he exhales as I sit there still as a statue "I don't know what to say" he admits, "on the one hand, I've rejected you, and yet part of me still cares about you. I never wanted to hurt you as much as I have and it wasn't my intention."

That's all he had to say? I felt a spurt of anger and glared at him. I don't need this right now. If he felt bad, then that was his problem, not mine. I accepted his rejection, so why was he still having feelings for me? Cause I sure as hell wasn't having any towards him, well not besides anger and bitterness.

He sees how angry I am from the expression on my face. "I think it's best I take my leave" he whispers, and I nod, feeling bad but not wanting to face him right now. I'm grateful that he's helped me, but that's as far as it goes. He shakes hands with my brother Damien, who slaps him on the shoulder.

"Thank you for everything man, I don't know if I would have found her without you," he tells Damien, who just grunts and then walks out the door. Before he leaves, he shoots me one last look that I can't decipher and then he's gone, his footsteps sounding down the corridor.

I watch warily as Damien sits on a chair beside me. He looks exhausted, with dark circles under his eyes and pale. How long have I been out? I can't even ask. It's frustrating. You think they would have given me a notepad and pen or something so I could communicate.

"Winter", Damien begins, and I cock my head and listen "you don't have to worry about going back home. Father's gone for good this time. You'll never have to be scared of him again."

That's one good piece of news for me at least. My skin crawls just thinking of the man who sold me without a qualm. Some father he was. I actually hope he's dead. That's how much I hate him.

"When we get back home I'll take care of you. No more bullying or forcing you to do my homework. We can even live in the pack house if you want", he offers.

I think about that. I had wanted to live in the pack house when I was younger, but now I wasn't so sure. Damien reckoned I wouldn't be bullied

still, but how would pack members react to having a mute shifter in the house? Would it be safer there? I highly doubted it. If dad was gone, then it would be safer, at least for me to stay in our house away from the pack where I wouldn't be made fun of or worse. I gave a firm shake of my head and saw the light dim from my brother's eyes. If he wanted to live in the pack house then he could. I sure as hell wasn't stopping him. But he shrugs at me instead.

"No problem, we'll stay home then," he says, just like that, and for the first time I smile at him.

"How are you doing?" a voice asked and I watched the doctor come back into the room, clutching a bunch of pill bottles. He lines them up next to me on the little food table. "These are for pain," he tells me, and I see Damien listening closely "one a day. These are antibiotics" he points to another one "three times a day. And this" he points to a third one "is for when the pain is so excruciating you can't take it anymore and need instant relief. Only when needed" he warned, and I nodded.

"Does that mean I can take her home?" Damien asks, and the doctor looks at me.

"That's up to her. Winter, would you like to go home today or stay overnight?" he asks. How am I supposed to answer?

I pointed to Damien. "Go home?" Damien checked and I nodded. I'd rather sleep in my own bed than a hospital one that's uncomfortable. I'm already freezing.

"Take the pills and there's a prescription for repeats if she needs them" the doctor informs him as Damien hastily places them all in his pocket. I go to swing my leg out and silently gasp at the pain.

"Crutches" the doctor exclaims, and fetches two that I hadn't noticed leaning against the wall, he hands them to me and I get on my legs

experimentally. It takes almost no time to learn how to use them and Damien supports me all the way to the car.

"Best of luck," the doctor says warmly "we'll have a check-up in six weeks' time and see how your vocal cords are looking then" he adds, and I nod, crossing my fingers. With any luck, I'll be speaking again in a few weeks. All I have to do is be patient.