

CHAPTER 28

Damien POV

I spend the whole night tossing and turning and checking on Winter, who's fast asleep in her bed. I'm terrified of leaving her alone too long and, in the end, I end up sleeping in the hallway on a mattress in case she needs help with something, anything during the night. When it's bright, my eyes open and I groan as I sit up, my muscles stiff and protesting. She hadn't called out last night, but then again, she couldn't, and when I poked my head in, she was still out for the count.

I get dressed for school, tossing on a shirt and any old jeans, glance at the time, and make my way into Winter's room. I gently shake her awake. I don't want to startle her. Her eyelids flutter at me and then her eyes widen when she sees me, her mouth making a shocked O. I wonder if she's scared of me still because she still trembles every time I touch her or I'm near her.

"It's time to get ready for school," I said lightly, and glanced down at her foot. Is it healed yet?

She pats the bandage. "You want it off?" I ask and she nods. I softly take hold of the end of the bandage and unwrap it, watching Winter's face the entire time. I can barely believe my eyes once it's off and I can see her skin, perfect, except for a tiny scar that the bullet presumably left. There's a broad smile on Winter's face as she stands up and takes a few steps.

She whirls around and hugs me, my breath catching in my throat as I hold her tight, not wanting to let go, and I step back, looking into her eyes. "School," I say firmly and she nods, pointing to the bathroom where I assume she wants to take a shower first. I give a nod. "I'll make breakfast",

I offer and she nods again, before going into the bathroom and firmly shutting the door close on me. I figure, since she's walking fine now, that she won't get into any harm and head downstairs to the kitchen.

It's easy enough to make toast and coffee for her and by the time I've finished eating my own breakfast she comes walking in looking somewhat downcast. I got her to sit down.

"What's wrong Winter?"

She pulls at her hair and I have a look, realizing that it's still matted with dried blood. Clearly, it hadn't washed out for her. "Do you want me to help you wash it?"

She shook her head, looking miserable. "How about you try again tonight?" I urged. "I'm sure it will come out with some elbow grease."

She just sighs and glances down at her toast. I watched her take a tentative nip and then push it away, opting to drink the coffee instead. Did I burn the toast too much? I didn't think it was that bad. Maybe she's not hungry. I think to myself, she's probably still nervous about school.

I waited for her to finish and then pointed to her school bag. She grabs it without any expression on her face and walks to the front door while I follow. She gets in the passenger seat of the car and I drive, keeping an eye on her the whole time, noting that her body is shaking and that her face has gone completely white. By the time we get to school, she's clutching the side of the car door and looking panicked as all hell.

"Winter," I said sharply, "calm down. The principal knows your situation and so do the teachers. They all know you can't talk. I've already called the school. If this is too much for you, I can drive you home", I added, and she relaxed slightly.

I opened the door and climbed out, hoping she wouldn't lock herself in the car. I'm pleased when she gets out on her own and I take her hand, ignoring the strange looks from everybody as we walk together into the building.

"Lead me to your first class", I order her and she slowly, timidly leads the way as I stand right next to the door along with her. She's biting her lip and looking frightened; Alpha Johnathon suddenly comes up beside me.

"It's nice to see you at school Winter," he says cheerfully while I scowl at him. The nerve of this guy. "I forgot to mention that Thomas's parents know the full story of what went on and the police have no interest in getting your statement. It's all taken care of. "

I watch as Winter gives Johnathon a shy smile and mouths the words 'thank you' at him. I'm slightly disgruntled by it.

The bell rings. Students begin to file into the classroom and I release Winter's hand. "I'll come for you after class" I mutter, but she shakes her head. She showed me the notepad.

I can get to class on my own. If you keep holding my hand and taking me, then we'll both be teased. Let me do this myself, please.

I don't care about being teased, but it's evident that Winter does and I sigh. "Fine" I agree, even though I don't like it "but if there's trouble, come and get me", I mutter and she nods, quietly going into the classroom while I watch until the door closes.

Naturally, I'm late for class, but I don't give a damn, merely scowling as the teacher lectures me on punctuality. I barely even remember what subject I'm in, let alone what I'm supposed to be doing, because my mind is on my little sister the whole time. I hope she's doing okay and that no one is harassing her. Johnathon had already pulled me aside and told me he'd told other shifters to look out for her too. It was a nice gesture on his part, but I don't see why he's going to so much trouble. From what I can see, Winter has shown no interest in him whatsoever. But he doesn't seem to be getting the hint or maybe he's just too stubborn for his own good. I groan and look at the clock which is ticking slowly, counting down the minutes until the bell finally rings. Winter might want me to stay away,

but that didn't mean I couldn't keep watch from a distance and intervene on her behalf if someone dared touch or abuse her in any way.

But she makes her way to her next class without incident and I'm somehow not surprised to find I'm not the only one keeping a close eye from far away. Johnathon meets my eyes and gives a small nod of recognition before going into his own classroom and I sidle over to mine. It looked like Winter was safe enough today after all.