

CHAPTER 34

Winter POV

The cave is small, dark, and dank. It reeks of some sort of animal's piss but it's well hidden and camouflaged. I'm fairly certain it's not bear piss at any rate and, for all I know, the creature it belongs to has moved on. I lean against the rough, hard, rocky edges and let myself slowly slip down to a sitting position, both my legs right in front of me. I can't move, my shirt is plastered to my side where all the stabbing marks are and I feel hot and feverish all over. It still stings even now and I slowly peel up my shirt to have a proper look. My eyes, thankfully due to my shifter genes, are able to see quite well in the dark.

The blood has stopped dripping, thankfully, and from what I can see the wounds have started to scab over. I closed my eyes in relief. If I'd had my wolf, the silver would have had an even bigger impact than it had. It's cold in the cave and I shiver slightly as I let my shirt fall back down. I'd bent down to drink from the stream and almost collapsed right there and then from the pain. My trail, however, has been hidden and I know I'm safe for a little while at least before I need to move on.

I wonder what Damien's doing, whether he's even realized I'm missing yet. It's been over an hour since school finished, so he should have some sort of inkling by now. I feel a moment of regret that I'm choosing to leave him like this. I have written a note but I was supposed to leave it in the kitchen for him tomorrow and it's safely tucked away in my little desk. Maybe he'll find it? He'd have to search my room though. Had Johnathon felt my pain? Then again, I guess he shouldn't, not with our mate bond

severed. That, I guess, is a small blessing in itself. It means I have more of a chance of getting away.

It begins to rain outside and I sigh. I've always loved the rain and the way it made the pine seem even stronger when you smelt it and the soothing sounds as it hit the trees and the ground. Even when there was thunder, I'd always been fascinated. I inch back further into the cave, swearing silently to myself as my body protests, all my muscles feeling like they are on fire. I might like the rain, but right now the last thing I need is to get soaked to the bone, even if I consider that it might make me feel slightly cooler.

I stood there, keeping an eye out for any signs of wild creatures coming close, my ears strained for any strange noises. It seemed to be clear and I relaxed slightly, still panting from the pain, my eyes blurred, everything hard to focus on. I feel exhausted, drained, and completely lacking energy. Who could blame me? I doubt anyone wants to run a marathon after being stabbed. Or move at all.

The rain stops just like that and I crane my neck, seeing that the sun is beginning to set. That means that there are only a few hours until it gets dark and that means it's going to get extremely cold in the cave. I shiver, wishing I had a blanket or even a damn jumper on. How was I supposed to know I was going to need it? It was a perfectly sunny day this morning. My shirt has rips and tears through it and I sigh. It was one of my favorites too. Just my luck. I don't even dare think of heading home to get spare clothes. Damien would freak and then he'd never let me out of his damn sight again. It's best not to risk it.

I huddle against the wall and bring my legs up slowly, wincing as pain reverberates through my entire body. Heat seems to flare through me and I moan, muffled, my hands and legs feeling shaky and my body trembling all over. Was it my imagination or did the cave seem to be well, longer? The distance to the entrance or exit seemed to be further away, but how was that possible?

I closed my eyes tight, my head dropping back against the wall with a thud. Everything hurts. It wasn't an easy task getting to the cave and at one point I was certain I wouldn't make it and contemplated going back for help. The sound of twigs and leaves crunching beneath footsteps makes my head whip back up, my eyes blearily looking toward the entrance. I'm in no position to run or fight off whoever is coming and I begin to shake. Please don't let it be a wolf or a bear, come to eat me. It's not the way I envision dying.

Whatever it is, thankfully, he has no interest in the cave whatsoever, and my head pounding and my lips and throat dry, I quietly lean back against the wall. If I'm lucky, I'll be safe inside here for the next few days or however long it takes to heal. In fact, even if I hold on until tomorrow night, I'll be able to shift. It will be my first one as well, considering it's my eighteenth birthday, but my god, that was going to be useful in this situation.

I can't wait to see what my wolf looks like. It's hard to picture her, but I imagine a delicate, silver or gray-looking wolf with big eyes and a cute adorable tail. I wish I could speak to her, but that only happens after your transformation, so I'll have to wait a little longer. I can be patient though, especially since it means I won't have to be alone, not so long as I have my wolf with me. The moon will be full tomorrow night and it will light up the forest. It's the perfect opportunity to go for a run and leave the space. All I have to do is reject my pack and I'll be known as a rogue, a wolf who has no pack or home and merely travels in search of one or remains on their lonesome. Some go crazy from lack of company and others choose to go bad. I won't though. Because part of me is hoping that I'll be able to find a pack to call home, one that's vastly different from this one, where I can make a new start and a new life. One where I finally feel accepted for who I am and one where I'm a valued pack member. Does such a pack exist? Or am I dreaming?

I started to feel nauseous and promptly threw up next to me, wiping my mouth in disgust, my wounds smarting with every move. I wrinkle my nose at the smell, which is disgusting by the way, and back away slightly, the cave feeling like it's spinning around me until I'm so confused I don't even know which way I'm moving. My eyes begin to close and my head throbs like you wouldn't believe. I try to hold on but before I know it, my body has dropped completely to the ground and I welcome the darkness that obliterates me.