

CHAPTER 44

Kai POV

I'm watching the training ring and some of my warriors sparring, correcting their moves every so often. It's boring and sometimes tedious, but I take pride in how good my warriors are, training some of them personally myself. An Alpha needs to keep himself in shape, you know.

"Watch your stance" I roared to one, in particular, watching with approval as they immediately corrected themselves. They know better than to talk back to me or ignore my instructions.

I see something out of the corner of my eye and turn to see it's none other than Winter. What's she doing out here, I wondered to myself, feeling highly irritable. Omega's hardly stepped foot outside, unless it's for a good reason. I spotted the water bottles and heaved a sigh of relief. That's why she's come out then. Not because she's seeking me out. I paused to observe her for a moment. She looks so beautiful, even as pale and delicate looking as she is. I can't help but wonder what her wolf looks like and whether or not she knows how to fight. Well, there was an easy way to find out. I decide, ignoring my wolf who's protesting that this is a very, very, bad idea.

"I need someone to spar with Winter", I asked the crowd, ignoring the pleading look in her eyes. This was for her own good, I tell myself. Esme volunteers to my relief and I order them both into the training ring, Winter looking very hesitant. Don't tell me she doesn't know how to fight at all. It's clear when they go at it in human form, that Winter knows absolutely nothing when it comes to defending herself and I notice that she doesn't go on the offensive at all. Clearly, she doesn't like fighting.

I don't like seeing our mate fighting. She's going to get seriously hurt Kai; you should stop this.

She'll be fine Storm; she just needs more confidence.

I don't think so, Kai. I really think you should stop this.

I'm not going to Storm; she can start training like everyone else.

I put up a barrier against my wolf and turned to view both of them. I want to see Winter's wolf and how she handles herself against another wolf. I stopped Esme and her from leaving.

"I want Winter to shift and dodge your attack, Esme," I say, and Winter looks decidedly nervous. I felt a pang of sympathy towards her but waved it away. Everyone should learn how to fight. This would be a good lesson for her.

Esme shifts and waits patiently for the signal, Winter shooting me covert looks as though she's trying to tell me something. Whatever it is, it's unimportant. But part of me is suspicious she's not going to willingly shift.

"Now" I boom and Esme straight away leaped towards Winter, who is hesitating. "Shift" I thunder, using my alpha tone, and watch as her body cracks and adjusts itself until the most beautiful wolf I've ever seen is right in front of my eyes.

Fuck. She's a runt. If I'd known that, I never would have insisted on her fighting. She's way too small to be able to fight back against a full-blown wolf. This must be why she'd sought help on my grounds from the rogues. Damnit, Langdon, I grumbled to myself, he could have at least mentioned Wolf was a runt to me. I watch wide-eyed, helpless to stop the inevitable, as Esme tackles poor Winter to the ground, her claws shredding into her skin and blood pouring out of the wounds around her.

I'm already racing towards her, Esme looking like she's in shock, as I bend over and cradle Winter into my arms. God, she's so small, so frail looking. My heart skips a beat and bile rises in my throat. This is all my fault.

"I didn't know" she whispered apologetically.

"It's not your fault, I didn't know either," I told her, looking down at Winter, who was unconscious. I start walking towards the hospital, my heart thumping wildly in my chest, sparks sizzling where our flesh is meeting. No doubt the work of the mate bond.

Thank God the hospital was close by and I raced through the front doors, to be met by a frazzled doctor. Dr. James is one of the best and this is a shifter hospital so I don't have to worry about protecting her identity or anything else. He's discreet as well, always a bonus when you are an Alpha in need of keeping something secret.

"What happened," he asks as he leads me to an empty room. He motions for me to place her on the bed. I place her down gently, feeling immensely guilty, seeing blood on my clothes and arms from her wounds.

"She was sparring," I said quietly, avoiding his gaze, "and got injured."

He looks suspicious. "Sparring wouldn't normally cause wounds this deep unless it got out of hand," he says prodding.

I exhaled. "I ordered her to shift and didn't know that she was a runt" he explained as he harrumphs at me.

"I'm assuming she shifted before falling unconscious/"

I nod. I don't think Winter was even aware she'd done it. It had taken all of my self-control not to look down at her naked body.

He begins to examine her wounds, frowning in concern. "They're quite deep and will take some time to heal, but she also appears to be malnourished and dehydrated as well. Is she not getting enough food?"

I flush. I did not have any idea if she was eating properly or not. I didn't tend to check on the omegas. I would have to ask Maria if Winter had been stopping to have breaks. Now I feel even worse and more of an asshole.

Winter didn't deserve this, any of it. It was my cowardice and not wanting a mate that had led to this.

"Well, I can definitely build up her strength while she's here" Dr. James mutters, still examining her and checking her pulse, "but when she goes back, you'll have to ensure that she continues to eat and drink."

"I will," I told him firmly, meaning every word of it. He stares at me for a minute and then gives a slow nod.

"How long will she need to stay here for?" I asked quietly and he thought for a moment, his eyes piercing into mine. Does he know that she's, my mate? He couldn't, could he?

"A few days. The wounds will take a day or so, but I want to keep her and get her eating well before she leaves", he tells me calmly. I nod.

"Keep me informed as to her condition" I said, turning around and about to leave.

"Alpha Kai," Dr. James says, stopping me in my tracks. "It's plainly obvious for everyone to see that your mates. Do you not want to stay with her?" He sounded puzzled.

I flinch. I can't afford to stay with her, not when Candice is still my girlfriend.

"I haven't accepted her as my mate" I growled. " Please don't tell anyone else."

He looks mystified but nods his assent, and I leave the building, my thoughts full of Winter and how pale and fragile she looked, lying on the hospital bed.