

CHAPTER 50

Kai POV

I sighed and put my head in my hands. Winter's been entrusted to Langdon, so I should feel relieved, but if anything, I'm even more nervous. We haven't been able to find the culprit who deliberately increased Winter's morphine and tried to kill her. Nobody saw anything, which meant the person responsible had to be in and out of her room within seconds. It was infuriating not being able to get the information I required. As Alpha, it was my responsibility to find the person responsible.

I wonder how Langdon's getting on. I know he wasn't pleased with me when I demanded that he take Winter in and she became his ward, but what else am I supposed to do? It's not like I can take her in. I can't help but remember the look in her eyes when I apologized for kissing her. How hurt she looked, as though I'd betrayed her and the guilt was slowly eating me inside. Why had I done that? I could have just said nothing, instead of breaking her heart the way I had. God, I was such a bastard. I've really sunk low.

That's it, I can't keep myself back anymore. Winter's in Langdon's house right now, and I need to know exactly how she's doing. I mind-link him, not caring how grumpy he sounds when he responds. I'm the Alpha, he does as I say. Besides, this was an emergency of sorts. What if she was in danger? I ignored the small voice in my head that reminded me that Langdon would mind-link me if that was the case.

Langdon, how is Winter going? Is she safe? Are you treating her well?

He sounds irritated when he replies. *Depends on what you mean by how she's going. She's a right pain in the ass if you ask me. Not that you care, you're the one who stuck her with me.*

My wolf gives a low growl at that. *Remember who you are speaking to Langdon. Don't piss me off right now.*

He sighs. *I apologize, Alpha. But ever since we've come back here from the hospital, she hasn't done much. She's just moping around and looking bored. Nothing I do seems to spark any interest in her. It doesn't help that she cannot speak at all. I've provided her with paper and a pen, but she doesn't want to write unless I ask her some sort of question. She seems to be severely depressed.*

I flinch at that. I have the feeling that I'm responsible for that.

Are you saying she's being difficult on purpose? Or is she upset? If she is upset, I know it's because of what I've done. It would have nothing whatsoever to do with Langdon, especially since he was only following my orders.

It's more like she's given up. I don't know how else to describe it. She's just not happy, I think you might have broken her when you apologized for kissing her. She hasn't even smiled once since she's been here.

Ouch. It sounds really bad now. But what could I do to make things any better? Is she taking care of herself at all? Eating, sleeping, all of that?

No, Alpha Kai. She has barely touched a thing and hasn't been sleeping well at all. If I didn't know any better, I would say she was having nightmares. She gets up at night and just wanders through the house, eventually passing out on the couch. She won't let me put her back to bed either, seems to prefer sleeping out there instead.

I really don't like the sound of that. What could she possibly be having nightmares about, that would make her prefer to walk until she collapsed exhausted on the couch? My wolf is also in agreement, his concern almost

overwhelming for our mate. I resist the urge to go out there and check up on her, although my resistance seems to be weakening when it comes to Winter.

Has she confided in you at all?

No Alpha. She hasn't attempted to communicate with me much at all, even though I've provided the necessary stuff, pens and paper, and whatever else she needs. She's just not interested in anything. Perhaps it would be best if you took her in instead?

I hesitate. It does sound like Winter isn't doing well, but then, I still have Candice to contend with. Besides, Winter wouldn't want to be with me anyway. At least I assume she wouldn't. I trace the scars on my face thoughtfully. If I just rejected her, she would be free to leave, but my wolf howls at the thought and begins to furiously threaten me, calling me all sorts of vile insults. Not only that, but he begins to berate me over Candice, calling her a gold digger and a hussy, not worthy of us and a bimbo. He was not holding back. Then again, when it came to Candice, he never did. Plus, I don't want to reject Winter, as I've started daydreaming about what it would be like to be with her instead of Candice. Another bad sign.

If the situation doesn't resolve itself soon, in the next few days, I'll consider moving her elsewhere. Do you think she would be more comfortable living with a female member of the pack?

I can tell that Langdon is mulling that over. It'd never occurred to me that Winter might possibly not want to be living with a male, but there are really no females that I trust completely to take care of my mate. There is no way in hell I'd even consider having her close to Candice. That was a sure way for a recipe for disaster. Plus, Candice gets jealous when another female so much as looks at me too long.

I don't know. It's entirely possible that she would be more at ease in a female's company. She could be afraid of men, for all we know.

I frown. I thought this would have been the perfect solution and now I was going to have to think of something else. I don't want Winter to be completely miserable. That's not fair to her. Then again, was any of this current situation fair to her? My wolf didn't think so. My heart is screaming out to take her in, to do what's right and even my wolf won't let up. I'm forced to put a block up rather than continue listening to him rage and vent at me.

Continue to inform me of her condition. If she continues to deteriorate or show signs of starving herself, then I'll take her out of your custody. In the meantime, think of someone we can entrust to her care. Which female member of our pack do you trust implicitly with something as important as taking care of my mate?

That's a tough one, Alpha Kai, but I'll do my best to think of someone. Give me some time to think about it. I can't think of anyone off the top of my head, but it will come to me. Just wait and see.

Take all the time you need Langdon. That's all I need to hear right now. Thank you for your report.

I cut off the mind link and groaned out loud. I hope Winter's not being difficult because she's mad at me, but another part of me is worried that I've completely broken her heart. A small part of me is whispering that I should go and see her for myself, but another part of me is desperately ignoring that voice, saying that Candice is more of a priority. But why? For the first time ever, I find myself questioning why I'm continuing to see Candice when I had a real-life mate right in my grasp. Was all of this worth it? Was Candice worth holding onto? She's been loyal, that part is true. But she's also had her eyes on being Luna right from the beginning.

In fact, even now as I think about it, I can't think of a single thing that Candice has done for me in the relationship, that doesn't include sex. Have I been a fool and been swayed by the fact that she's been one of the only women wanting to be with me and willing to look past my scars? Was I

letting my fears hold me back from finding true happiness? Was my unwillingness to be vulnerable ever again ruining any chance I have of having a relatively normal life and a family of my own?

Maybe it is time to seriously ponder the possibilities and what I want in my future. Because if I'm forced to be entirely honest with myself, I didn't see Candice as my future wife. In fact, I have never seen her in that role. But when I picture Winter, I can clearly see her in a wedding dress, looking beautiful as she walks down the aisle. My stomach churns and my head begin to hurt. Then there's a knock on the door and I shudder, knowing instinctively just who is on the other side, the last person I want to see, let alone talk to right now. Why did she have to come and interrupt me right now, while I was feeling like this?