

CHAPTER 51

Damien POV

It's been months since Winter has been gone and I've gotten myself a regular job in a cafe as a barista of all things. Can you imagine that? I never would have thought I would have to be as responsible as I now am, taking care of the bills and still going to school at the same time. Is this how Winter felt every day when she had done all the household chores and responsibilities?

"Thanks, have a good one" one of my regulars yelled out as they left, the last customer of the night, and I closed the door gratefully and locked it. Now all I have to do is clean up and I'm done for the night. It doesn't take long, I've got myself into a regular routine and before I know it, I've put my coat on and ducked out the door. Brrr, it's slightly cold and I shiver, putting my hands in my pockets.

I walked home slowly. It's otherwise a beautiful night and the stars are twinkling overhead. I don't bother to use the car anymore. Not when I can avoid it anyway. Walking saves gas and means I have more money to take care of the bills. Besides, it's not like home is that far away and I'm not frightened that someone's going to jump me. I'm a shifter for heaven's sake, not to mention, the town is mainly made up of pack members and shifters.

I stared at my house, feeling strangely hesitant. It looks so uninviting and cold. Then again, it's felt that way since Winter's been gone. I never really saw just how having my little sister around made the house feel more like home. I miss her laughter and her smiles, even if her smiles were rare and

few and far between. I miss Winter. I miss my little sister more than I ever thought possible.

I unlocked the door and put my keys away in the entrance hall, turning on the lights. It might seem silly, but I hate that the house is dark when I get home. I really should remember to at least leave the front porch light on, but it always seems to slip my mind. Sigh, the refrigerator is practically empty. Damn it. I'll have to go grocery shopping tomorrow. My stomach growls. Damn, I'm hungry.

Then it hits me. There's a scent in the house and it doesn't belong to me. It's not Winter's either. It's also frighteningly familiar, although I can't quite place it. It's definitely not father's; I'd know the smell of that bastard anywhere. It seems to be throughout the entire house. Has someone broken in while I've been working? But nothing appears to have been stolen. Then again, it's not like there's anything worth stealing in this house anyway.

I sniffed and began to do a methodical search of the rooms, my body tensed and poised to fight. But there was no one there. The smell is faint like it's been several hours since whoever it belongs to has been here, but there is one more place that I have yet to check and I'm not looking forward to it. But the basement needs to be checked and I'm not going to shy away like a coward. But why the hell is this scent so familiar to me? It's like I've smelt this scent before but I can't for the life of me think who it might belong to.

The smell is stronger as I approach the door leading down to the basement and I give a grin. If the person is still down there, they are in for one hell of a beating. I opened the door cautiously and began my descent down the stairs, listening for any signs of a person waiting to ambush me, the smell getting increasingly stronger. I have no doubt that there's someone waiting down here for me and my eyes continually scan my surroundings. My

whole body is tense, ready to shift at a second's notice in order to protect myself.

Where are you, you bastard, I think fiercely to myself, prepared to shift at a second's notice. I reach the bottom of the stairs and begin to move forward, ears pricked for the tiniest of sounds. The basement is dark and I curse the fact that I've never gotten around to replacing the light globe that's no longer working. Some light would be really useful right about now.

I'm cautious about moving around the various bits of junk and furniture that are piled haphazardly all over the place. The basement's been used primarily as a junk room over the years, but it also contains one other thing that makes me sick to my stomach as I stare at it. The cage, or more accurately a cell, stands in one corner, made of silver with shackles and restraints against the wall, to keep someone immobile and unable to move. A cell, that I remember with remorse, Winter was often placed in and locked up for what our father deemed as misbehavior. Even now, I can still remember her screams as she pleaded to be let out. The crying. God, my stomach churns to look at it and I resolve to get rid of the cell as soon as humanly possible. There's nothing but bad energy down here and it's like it sucks all the happiness out of you.

The sound of footsteps rushing towards me, has my body turning, but too little too late as I feel a sharp pinprick in my thigh. I fell, my knees buckling to the ground, feeling strange, my body almost paralyzed. What the hell have I been dosed with? How could I have been so stupid and let my guard down, even for a moment? What is it that this person wants from me? They'd been hiding in the shadows, awaiting the perfect opportunity to strike and I'd given it to them. I'd let myself be distracted by the cell and gotten lost in my memories. How stupid could I be?

My head feels like it's spinning and becoming hazy as I drop to a lying down position on the hard concrete floor. My body refuses to move, let

alone shift, and it's now that I realize I'm unable to hear my wolf at all. That meant only one thing. I've been dosed with wolfsbane.

"Who are you" I managed to mutter, my throat seizing. The footsteps are slower now and the person comes right around to my front, giving me a perfect view of them. My eyes widened in horror. I must be imagining things surely. The wolfsbane must be playing havoc with my mind. That's the only logical explanation I can think of, as they bend over me. They're not real, this is just a dream of some sort. I'm hallucinating. This wasn't possible at all. Had I been drugged back at the diner? Had someone put something in one of my drinks?

Because this can't be happening. My eyes are feeling heavy now and I'm struggling to keep them open. The person chuckles down at me as I flinch. The person sounds real, but do they feel real? The prick in my leg had felt real enough.

"Well now" he murmurs, " it looks like you're in a bit of a sticky situation now, aren't you Damien", he says with a smirk. He's getting blurry now but the voice, the voice is exactly how I remember him. How is he here? Why is he here and what is it that he wants? Oh god, is he after Winter? Darkness surrounds me and I succumb to it, passing out completely unconscious and left to this person's mercy. How is he still alive and what does he want from me after all this time?