

CHAPTER 53

Jonathan POV

I scowl. It's been only one day, but even I've noticed that Damien didn't make it to school today. Normally, I would shrug it off, but since Winter's been gone, Damien has attended school without fail, as well as doing that job of his afterward. Either he's sick and I'm being paranoid or something has happened to him. I suspect it's the latter because that's what my gut is saying to me.

I impatiently wait for school to finish, the ticking of the clock driving me insane. As an Alpha, I can just get up and leave, and nobody would dare to stop me. But as a son with a scary mother, it's wiser to just wait rather than deal with something horrendous later. My mother scares everyone when she's angry.

Thank God. The final bell rings and I peel the hell out of there, getting hurriedly into my car, and ignoring the girls who continually try to swarm me. Jessica, in particular, has been nothing but annoying and almost throwing herself into my path. No matter how much I tell her that I'm not interested, it's like she thinks I'm playing hard to get instead. I shudder. As if I wanted her lips anywhere near mine.

Damien's house isn't far and it looks dilapidated from the outside. It's certainly in shoddy shape and that's putting things kindly. I frown. I never realized just what bad a shape his place was in. The door is locked and I rattle it, knocking on the door. There's no answer and I sigh. But I'm positive that I can smell his scent, it's quite strong in fact, so it would make sense that he was in there. I ponder what to do and then shrug. I could worry about the damage later. I picked up a rather large rock and broke a

window in the living room, using my elbow to push out the stubborn bits that still clung there. At least now I can get in. Damien can curse at me later for what I've done.

"Damien" I called softly, but there was no reply. I glanced around. The kitchen is empty and all the lights are off. I sniff, his scent is strong and permeates throughout the entire house. Still, it seemed to be more pungent towards a certain door and I opened it, seeing stairs descending into a dark room. The basement. I tread lightly, my body tense, prepared for an attack, but nothing happened. Bile rises in my throat as I smell the metallic scent of blood, both old and new. Something has happened down here.

I have to move past bits of furniture and various piles of junk to get to the source of the smell and once I'm there, I halt in my tracks unable to believe what I'm seeing with my own eyes. My heart gives a jolt. Damien is shackled to the wall inside a large cell, his body slumped and there is blood, so much blood everywhere, a lot of it dried on his body. Someone's beaten the living shit out of him. I raced to the cage and it was unlocked. I ignore the burning of my flesh as I rip the door open and rush inside. I can see his chest moving, slowly, so he's still alive, thank God, but barely.

I need a key for the shackles and restraints. Damien's head is slumped and I gently tap it, hearing him moan as his eyelids fluttered open. "Damien, where's the key?" I ask urgently and he blinks at me, still confused and disorientated.

"Kitchen, pantry, hook" he rasped out and I raced upstairs and located the key exactly where he said, hanging on a hook in the kitchen pantry. Seconds later, I'm cursing and undoing the restraints, etc. while my flesh burns. Unfortunately, Damien drops to the ground and I fail to catch him. He moans.

I rolled him over so that he faced me. I can tell he's been stabbed multiple times and whipped as well. "Damien", I whisper "who did this to you?"

He stays silent and I wonder if it was just a random attack. But his eyelids flutter and then I hear his voice. "Thomas" he moans and I stop cold.

I must have misheard him surely? Maybe he was thinking about Thomas but it couldn't have actually been him, because Thomas was dead, everyone knew that.

"Who?" I asked again as his face turned towards me, ashen and drained of color.

"Thomas" he whispers hoarsely, and I flinch. No, that can't be.

"Thomas is dead," I said firmly, but he shook his head.

"Not dead," he rasps, "alive. He's a hybrid now, half shifter, half vampire. I saw it with my own eyes."

Fuck. Hybrids are dangerous creatures and shifters and vampires are the two strongest races in the world. I'm amazed that he survived the transition, most attempting to become hybrids don't. I can't believe Thomas risked it, but it explains why Thomas is still alive.

He struggled to sit upright and I helped him, panting heavily from the exertion. Now that he's no longer touching the silver, his wounds are slowly starting to heal in front of my eyes.

"Thomas is alive," he tells me in a slightly stronger voice as I blink at him astonished. How was this even possible?

"What does he want?" I ask, but part of me suspects that I already know the answer, feeling sick to my stomach.

"Winter" answers Damien and bile rises in my throat. I had thought that this had all been put to rest, that Thomas was no longer a threat to Winter. She believed him to be dead. She had no way of knowing he was still alive and out to get her. She was in danger and she didn't even know it.

"Fuck" I swear, punching the wall in a fury while Damien chuckles lowly behind me.

"He's already gone after her," he says bitterly, "has at least a day's head start. He won't rest until he finds her" he exhales, placing a hand on his side and wincing in pain.

"I need to take you to the hospital", I tell him, but he shakes his head.

"There's no time for that. I'm going after him. Either I take him out, or I find Winter so that I can warn her." His voice was resolute. There is no arguing with him, not when it sounds that final.

"Why didn't you mind-link me?" I asked.

"Bastard injected me with wolfsbane, so I couldn't. It's barely worn off yet."

I don't blame him for wanting to protect his sister. But if Thomas is this determined and this crazy to find Winter, it would be suicidal to go on his own. He wouldn't stand a chance if he came across a group of rogues during his travels. Idiot. I ran a hand through my hair in frustration. I'm not about to let Thomas get his hands on Winter either. She might no longer be my mate, but she was a kind and loving person, who deserved far better than to have Thomas try and take off with her. Besides, part of me really wants to know if she's alright and if she's found a pack to call home. This was my chance. If only to make sure she's happy. Besides, I can't just stand around knowing she's in danger. Not when I can help save her.

I looked at Damien grimly. "Fine, but I'm going with you," I said, helping him to his feet as he stumbled awkwardly.

"I can't ask you" he protests weakly and I wave it away.

"You're not asking me, I'm telling you", I snapped and he grinned, his eyes lighting up with fervor.

"Let's go then," he says and I roll my eyes.

"We need supplies, clothes, and food. Medical items", I say pointedly, and he swears, vehemently. I merely stare at him and wait until he grudgingly agrees. For a man that's wounded, you would think he'd realize that medical supplies were a necessity for Christ's sake.

I get my own clothes delivered to me and sort out the rest. Within an hour, both of us are ready to go on foot so that we can travel like wolves and be inconspicuous. Besides, I doubt Thomas is driving, especially given his state of mind. I walked into the forest, Damien close on my heels. I pray we get to Winter first or come across Thomas because if we don't, there's a high chance that this time, she won't survive her meeting with him.