

## CHAPTER 66

### Winter POV

I felt the sharp prick of Kai's canines piercing into my skin before excruciating pain ripped through my entire body. I'd never heard of such a thing happening before. Whenever I'd heard of someone being marked by their mate, it had always sounded pleasurable and painless. Why did it hurt so badly? The pain is so bad, that I feel my body beginning to stiffen and before I know it. I collapsed towards the ground and then there was only darkness surrounding me. What the hell has he done to me?

I don't know where I am, only that I feel like I'm wrapped in a cocoon as time slowly passes by, like I'm awake but asleep at the same time and it's surreal, like an out-of-body experience. It gives me time to think. I don't know how to feel about the marking. It came out of nowhere. I hadn't been expecting it at all and I don't know what suddenly possessed Kai to do it all of a sudden. It made me angry but confused at the same time. Isn't this what I wanted? To be fully claimed by my mate and marked?

A small voice in my head pipes up.

You wanted it to be special, didn't you, Winter?

Yes, I did and he'd taken that from me.

You wanted to do it back to him at the same time, mark each other when you were more in tune with each other's needs and wants.

That was true. But was there any sense in being angry about it? It couldn't make Kai take it back, could it? My throat feels like it's on fire, heat spreading all around it, as I lay wherever I am, my hands gripping my throat in a futile attempt at getting whatever is happening to stop. Instead, it gets worse.

Then just as quickly it's gone and I hear voices above my head. "Is she going to be alright?"

That was Kai's voice.

"She should be. It's a miracle what's going on right now. I can only speculate as to why, but it appears that the mixture of your Alpha blood and her blood has caused this sudden reaction."

Caused what? I wonder rather stupidly. What reaction? Damnit, tell me!

"She's going to be so surprised", Kai's voice again, this time with a tinge of excitement. How dare he sound so damn nonchalant after what he did to me! Bastard!

"I think she's coming out of it" Dr. James' voice is distant like he's far away and I struggle, my eyes suddenly shooting open of their own accord, blinking against the sudden harsh white light coming from the hospital ceilings.

"Winter," Dr. James said to me jovially as I frowned up at him.

Why the hell was I in the hospital again for heaven's sake, "How are you feeling?" he asks, and I glance over at Kai, whose face looks absolutely devastated, realizing with a gasp that he's holding my hand tightly, as though he never wants to let go. I might be angry, but not enough for him to look so damn miserable. Although, a tiny part of me takes pleasure in his guilt. Maybe I should let him stew for a while after all.

"Sore" I rasp out and the room, goes still. I stiffen in shock. Had I just spoken that word out loud, or was this all in my head? My throat is sore and my voice is hoarse as I try again. "Sore" I repeated, and then looked at the doctor confused. Why am I now suddenly able to talk? Especially when the other doctor, before I came here, had seemed certain that my vocal cords were damaged beyond repair.

Dr. James speaks to me as Kai listens from his position by my bed. "I think that Kai's blood mixed in with yours when he marked you, sped up the healing process of your damaged vocal cords", he answers my unspoken question.

I frown. I thought that they were damaged beyond repair. Isn't that what the first doctor had said?

"Your vocal cords were extremely damaged but were slowly healing on their own. It might have taken another year, but you would eventually have been able to speak. Kai just sped up the process, so to speak" he chuckles at his joke.

My eyes widened in excitement. I turned to Kai, who was eyeing me tentatively. I threw my arms around him. I can speak again; it's a miracle and I feel like crying in my joy. "Thank you" I rasp as he hugs me back.

"You have every right to be pissed at me" he murmurs back, but I shake my head.

I'm ecstatic to have my voice back. What he did to me wasn't right, but when this was the end result? It was more than worth it. We would have a discussion on boundaries and consent later. But now I can talk! I want to shriek in happiness.

*You can talk now Winter! Hell yeah, this is awesome.*

*Thanks, Sabriel*

*We can finally tell people how we feel about them, to their faces. Let's start with that bitch Candice. I dare you.*

*I think it might take a few days before I can talk properly, Sabriel.*

*That's alright, we can practice. Start with Kai, because you are still pretty pissed at him, even if you're happy to have your voice back. Step out of your comfort zone girl, tell him. Tell him what a bastard he is. Go all out and do some swearing at the boy.*

*Alright, enough Sabriel. I get it. But I'm not angry at him anymore.*

*Sigh. That's the problem with you being nice Winter. It means you ruin all my fun.*

*Sabriel!*

*Sorry Winter. I didn't mean it.*

Dr. James is excitedly chattering away in the background, but all my focus is on Kai who's still holding my hand and looking sheepish. He damn well knew what he'd done was wrong and there's something hovering in my mind as the rage builds.

'Winter', Dr. James says as I swivel my head to look at him "you can go home as soon as you feel ready to, but would it be impertinent to ask if I can take an x-ray of your neck and vocal cords again? I just want to make sure I've gotten pictures from every angle to examine."

"That's fine" I rasp painfully, and Dr. James scurries out of the room, presumably to set that up.

"I can't believe you have your voice back," Kai says quietly. "Are you happy about that Winter? I swear I didn't know it would happen, but I can't say I'm sorry this happened because of what I did."

I'm conflicted. I am happy to have my voice back, but at the same time, part of me hadn't really missed it all that much. It was like I'd just retreated with the loss of my voice and now that I have it back, I'm wondering if it's time to find my voice for real, instead of hiding in the background. Would I have the strength to step forward and become the new me I want so badly?

I eyed Kai. "What you did was wrong" I whispered, and his face fell. He looks at me with remorse on his face.

"I know," he says, looking away,

"Why?" I ask and he knows what it is I'm really asking.

"I got jealous" he whispers, "so did my wolf while you were talking to the Alpha. I rationalized that marking you would keep you safe from unwanted attention, but that doesn't excuse the fact I should have asked you first. It was wrong and I'm sorry", he apologized.

I nodded emphatically at that. Consent was important. Right now, though, I'm annoyed at him. He could have just told me how he was feeling instead of going to such extreme lengths. I would have listened and tried to reassure him. I hadn't been interested in the other Alpha one bit, I only had eyes for Kai. Stupid foolish man, letting his feelings get the better of him. Although part of me is thrilled that he got jealous.

I tugged on his hand gently.

'Come closer' I whispered, my throat feeling like it was closing up every time I uttered a single word. Still, this was important to me. I was determined to do this.

He moves so close that he's inches away from my face, his eyes staring into mine as I give a small smile. What's good for the goose is good for the gander, I decided triumphantly, but I wouldn't go about it like he did.

No, I would at least give him the courtesy of being able to refuse. Unlike what he'd done to me.

Slowly, I let my canine's inch out of my mouth until he can see them, nice and pointy. For a minute, he looked extremely confused and then his eyes lit up with realization.

'You want to mark me?' he asks uncertainly and I give a very firm nod, my eyes never leaving his.

"Are you sure?" he asks, "you could still try and reject me. If you mark me, it will be a lot harder to do so."

I'm beginning to feel impatient now. I know what I want. I don't need other people making decisions for me. I've had enough of that. This was my choice. He doesn't need to keep me from making a mistake. Mistakes are made so we can learn from them.

"Yes," I said as firmly as I could with the hoarseness of my voice.

He hesitates and I think he's going to refuse, but then, to my surprise, he submits, showing his neck to me as I lick my lips.

'It would be an absolute honor for you to mark me' he whispered with a crack in his voice.

I bend my head down to his, licking along the nape of his neck as he shudders, aiming my teeth at the perfect spot and slowly, gingerly, lowering them down until they pierce his skin. I go deeper, wanting the mark to remain, not wanting to have to redo it. He stays completely silent as I slowly retract the canines and lick the spot I've pierced him, sealing the wound closed. An image of a wolf, a tattoo the same as the one I now have, appears instead and he traces the mark with his hand, his head shooting up as he stares at me with awe and something that looks remarkably like pride.

Now he's mine. I've claimed him, the same as he claimed me, and no one has the right to try and take him. That Candice bitch is fresh out of luck. He's mine now.

I point to his chest. "Mine", I growl and he does the same, pointing his finger at my chest and gazing into my eyes.

"Mine," he says back and my heart skips a beat. Now both of us are bonded together, forever.