

## CHAPTER 85

Kai POV

I'm not even remotely sorry about what I'm going to do. My whole body is trembling in indignation as I take Johnathon for a tour of the pack house and pack grounds. He, the little pup, arrogant, cocky, bastard, has said nothing as I take him outside, scowling and just looking like a petulant teenager. My hands itch to strangle the bastard around his neck. I'm pissed that Winter asked me to take him on a tour.

"She was mine first, you know." he says suddenly and I halt in my tracks, anger making my head whip around quickly, my eyes flashing between black and normal as I glare at him. He did not just say that to me did he?

"If I recall what Winter told me, you rejected her on sight, didn't you?" I snap and he shrugs, looking nonchalant. I'm tempted to throw the bastard across the grounds with my bare hands.

"Doesn't mean I can't change my mind" he says softly.

My hands clench into fists "I've already marked her and she's mine now." I hiss "you had your chance with her and you blew it."

"I shouldn't have rejected her" he muses as I stare at him, does this kid have a death wish or what? "But I was too much of a coward to think about having a mate. I should have gotten to know her first" he adds sadly.

"You've left it too late." I snap "she wants nothing to do with you." My god, I'm really going to kill him.

He raises an eyebrow at me. "Are you so sure about that Alpha Kai?" he challenges.

God, I'm dangerously close to ripping this moron's head off. I'm damn sure Winter wants nothing to do with this miserable excuse of an Alpha, but there's always the slightest chance I'm wrong.

"Winter's made her choice." I say evenly "whatever she decides is up to her."

He looks annoyed now, like he's trying to push my buttons. "That's it" he explodes as I glower at him "you're not going to yell at me or even fight me? I've been waiting for you to hit me and you haven't even tried!"

Great, apparently he wants me to hit him. Storm is more than ready to oblige. I can't get a handle on what this kid wants. "If you want a fight, I'm more than happy to give you one in the training ring."

His eyes light up. This was what he must have been wanting from me, because he gives me an arrogant grin. "Bring it on Alpha Kai."

Sigh. The kid has a death wish. The worst thing is I can't even kill him without getting into trouble with Winter. Not to mention, I guess I kind of owe him for bringing us the news of Thomas. Still, I was more than happy to fight and vent some of my frustration out on him. The kid has no idea what he's in for.

We approach the training ring. "Clear the grounds" I thunder and the small crowd quickly disperses, leaving Johnathon and myself alone, sizing one another up.

"A friendly fight, nothing more." I say between gritted teeth. No matter if I would prefer to the death. Winter would never forgive me if I killed him.

He gives me a small nod of agreement and the two of us shift. I stare in disdain at his wolf. Like mine, his is black, but I'm pleased to see his is

several inches smaller than Storm. Already I have the upper hand. Size does matter, I think smugly to myself.

I don't waste time, circling around him and then tackling him to the ground with a large snarl. He kicks me off and we both begin to circle each other, waiting for an opening. He jumps and I meet him halfway, sending him flying to the ground, my body landing on his as I bite and claw at him, backing away hastily as he kicks out and gets to his feet. He growls lowly in his throat and I can tell he's taking this seriously.

Another tackle but I sidestep and swipe, clawing across his midsection, careful not to gouge him too deep. The last thing I need is for this arrogant cocky pup to end up in hospital. Winter would never forgive me. He races towards me and I leap overhead, twisting and turning, my claws scraping against his back as he lets out a howl, a chilling sound that fills the otherwise silence. He's injured now, not severely, but enough that I'm hoping he'll have the common sense to stop. Apparently not though, because he crashes towards me and sends me rolling across the grass, hitting the trunk of a tree. I swear silently in my mind, before getting back up to my feet. Now he's becoming a nuisance more than anything. A real annoyance.

He snarls and I snarl back, opening and closing my jaws, my eyes focused on my target. I need to end this, he's starting to seriously piss me off. Why is he so intent on fighting? We circle each other, both of us with moderate injuries and I wait for him to attack. He lowers his head and pushes off, but I jump, landing on the back of him and immediately clamping my jaws down on his neck, not letting go as he frantically bucks and kicks out, trying to get me to release him. It's not happening. This fight is ending with me the victor.

I clamp down harder as he whimpers. Concede, I think to myself furiously, concede already you obstinate brat. My jaw is getting tired, but finally, Johnathon lays down on his stomach and bares his neck, submitting and

conceding defeat. Finally. I let go, crinkling my nose at the smell of his blood and back away from the prone body, giving him time to get up on his own. He does and stares at me for a minute, before getting to his feet and shifting back to his body.

I shift back to human form as well and stare him down. I fold my arms across my chest. God, I feel angry and a little sorry for the young man too. It must be hell to realize you've made a mistake and found the mate you rejected and now want, is with someone else. I feel sympathetic towards him.

"What the hell was that?!" I almost explode, staring right at him "why insist on fighting. You must have known you were going to lose! I have several years on you. It wasn't exactly the fairest fight."

He looked slightly sheepish. "I was angry and a fight was the only way I could cool my temper. Besides I wanted to see what kind of man you are."

He wanted to see what kind of man I was. How did he tell that just by fighting me?

"You wanted to see what kind of man I was?" I repeat, narrowing my eyes at him. "Well what kind of man am I then Alpha Johnathon?" I sneer.

"Strong." he says promptly "brave, but also kind and protective of your mate. You would fight to save Winter in a heartbeat. Even I can see that." He sounds sad.

"I could have been pretending." I point out. He shakes his head.

"No, you were fighting fair without trying to fight dirty. You could have, heaven knows you're pissed off I'm here, but you still fought fairly."

He was right. I could have easily fought dirty and caused a major accident where he couldn't walk for several days. But that wasn't my style.

"Why didn't you?" I say quietly "why didn't you give her a chance?"

He's silent for a moment, a gutted look on his face. "My father abandoned me and my mother for someone else. I told myself that true love doesn't exist, that it just makes people vulnerable. I told myself that having a mate would be a hindrance and that it would make me weak to have one. So instead of getting to know Winter, I rejected her straight away."

"Stupid thing to do." I commented "having a mate is meant to make you stronger, not weaker. Not that I was any different towards her, if anything I've been more of an asshole than you were to her." I'm ashamed to admit.

"I know it was stupid. I had to reject her twice to get the mate bond to completely sever, but she doesn't know that and I'd prefer you not tell her."

I give a low whistle. "For the mate bond to not sever the first time you had to have not been certain about the rejection. What made the second rejection work?"

"I realized I wanted her to be happy and it wasn't going to be with me. So I had to let her go." he explained.

We both bend down and retrieve our clothes, getting dressed as the cool breeze makes us shiver. He hesitates and gives me a sidelong glance. "Tell me," he says softly "is she happy here? I know she was bullied at school and in her old pack, but she looks like she's thriving here. She's gained weight and there's more color in her face."

I hesitate. "I think she's happy. God, I hope she's happy" I exhale. "She's certainly had her own issues in this pack and I've not made things easier, but I'm trying to show her how much I love her."

"You love her then?"

I give a small nod. I feel partly embarrassed about this, but he needs to know he's got no chance of getting Winter back. Not if I can help it.

"I do love her" I admit "she's everything I could have ever asked for in a mate. It's just taken me a long time to see it."

"Then I guess I can't ask for anything more." he says with a shrug. "I'm happy for her."

Just like that? Now I feel like a right bastard. He was testing the waters. He wanted to make sure I was going to take care of Winter. I guess he's not that bad after all. I reach out to shake his hand and notice he winces as he shakes. I hadn't hurt him that badly, had I?

"Do you need medical assistance?" I ask and he shakes his head.

"They'll heal." he mutters.

We hear a shout and turn to look at Winter who is racing across the grounds. "What on earth do you both think you are doing?!" she is shouting incensed.

"Having a friendly fight." I say guiltily. Johnathon looks just as guiltily at her.

"Don't get upset at Kai, it was my idea" he says hastily.

Winter glares at the both of us, her hands on her hips. It's actually quite adorable really. "Don't you think we have enough to deal with?" she roars as we both flinch at the anger in her voice "without the two of you acting like stupid teenagers."

"Sorry Winter." Johnathon murmurs and she turns to stare at me. I gulp.

"Sorry sweetheart." I say trying to get her to smile. She looks at me frostily.

"We have Thomas possibly coming and you both decide a fight between the two of you is in order? Are you both complete morons" she huffs.

We both look at the floor. She throws her hands up in the air exasperated and shouts several nonsensical things under her breath.

"I thought you were going to catch up with Damien?" I say hastily, stopping her mid rant.

She raises an eyebrow at me. "That can wait until dinner." she says crossly "we're all eating together, that is" she glares "if you two think you can be civil enough to eat together!"

"We'll be civil." I assure her gruffly. She doesn't look like she believes me.

Johnathon clears his throat awkwardly. "Where is Damien? I might go and have a talk with him, if that's alright."

Winter's hand shoots out and prevents him from walking any further. She shakes her head adamantly. "No can do." she says with a catch in her voice "he's spending time with his mate and I don't want him interrupted."

Well that was news for me. I wonder who on earth Damien's mate could be in my pack. My eyes narrow. If his mate is here, it might mean he stays here permanently. Damn it. Then another thought springs to mind. "Winter" I say with my jaw clenched "who happens to be Damien's mate?"

She takes a deep breath. "Langdon."