

## CHAPTER 87

Jonathan POV

We all sat down for dinner, like a family. It was laughable really, seeing that Langdon fellow fawn all over Damien like that. It was seriously disturbing. Not because they are both males, don't get me wrong, I could care less about that, but because they couldn't stop touching each other, long enough to even eat. I also feel like a fifth wheel, sitting all by my lonesome while Winter sat with Kai and Damien sat beside his new mate.

I can't stop glancing over at Winter. She's really filled out some. Not in a bad way either, just in a good healthy way. Her skin is literally golden brown and it's clear she's been getting outside some. The biggest shock of all for me was the fact that she could now talk. So much for her vocal chords being damaged beyond repair. The doctor had completely gotten it wrong. I scowled at that. Poor Winter had been told not to have any hope and now look at her. I'm glad to see how much she's changed and how much she seems to just glow.

She looks so happy. It's almost painful to watch. All I can think about is whether we would have been this happy if I had just accepted Winter as my mate? Would we have been this close? This friendly with each other? I feel like I ruined the best chance I had of actually being happy and it's not a nice feeling at all. Would my life had turned out differently with Winter as my mate?

"So, Winter" Damien says as there's a lull in the conversation, Winter turning towards her brother with an eager look on her face. It's clear to see

how much she's missed her brother. Had she missed me at all? "What made you run away so suddenly? I found the note in your desk, so I know you were planning it, but you didn't even bother to come home to grab clothes or anything. You just vanished" he said quietly "and I had no clue where you were."

She stiffens, looks down at her bowl of soup, as though she's debating what to tell us. I wait, wanting to know the reason as well. She'd just up and left and hadn't really given us a chance to change her mind. Not that she would have been talked out of it. I'm fairly certain the fact she'd bothered to write a note at all, meant she'd well and truly made up her mind.

Winter looks at us guiltily and Kai looks interested, very interested. Has Winter not told him the reason either? Well this should be good. At least we're not the only ones in the dark then. Damien looks concerned. Is it my imagination or has she gone extremely pale?

"Well the thing is" she starts to stammer, and Kai reaches over to grasp her hand, giving it a squeeze as I glare at him. It's stupid, but I just can't seem to help myself. "I didn't really have much of a choice" she explained.

Damien and I look at each other confused. What on earth does she mean she didn't really have a choice?

"I know I was late that day" Damien began. "I didn't mean to be, the headmaster kept me back with Johnathon." He sounds apologetic.

She shook her head. "It wasn't because you were late Damien." she said breathing heavily. Whatever happened, it's not a pleasant memory judging by her reaction. I tense. Something had made her run away, she just needed to spit it out.

"Jessica and her groupies attacked me" she finally said quietly as my blood began to boil. That bitch, I thought to myself furiously. I had told

her and everyone else that they weren't to touch Winter anymore and they'd gone and done it anyway. When I got my hands on them, they were going to pay big time for their actions.

"I'm sorry Winter, we should have..." I trailed off. She shrugged.

"Look, it would have happened eventually" she interrupted me as Kai looked on silently "they blamed me for Thomas's death and if I hadn't managed to get away, I would have been killed."

She laughs bitterly as the room goes silent. "Isn't it ironic" she commented "blaming me for Thomas's death and it turns out he's still alive" she said sourly "and still wants me."

"He's not going to lay his hands on you, I swear to god" Kai growled and Damien echoed the same.

"Winter, we'll keep you safe" I promised thickly. It was the reason I had come after all, wasn't it?

"You guys can't stay here forever." Winter said with determination "and I can't keep relying on everyone else to save me. I'm grateful that you travelled all this way to tell me, but this isn't your fight. It's mine" she finished and I stare at her in awe.

She's like a completely different woman. Stronger, fiercer and more stubborn. I'm not sure if I like the change but Kai seems to adore it. He leans over and kisses her. I look away.

Damien looks at her pointedly. "I may not be leaving at all" he says quietly, Langdon reaching over and grasping his hand "it really depends on how Langdon and I work out" he adds quietly.

Winter looks stricken. "Oh my god Damien, I wasn't thinking. . ." she trailed off sheepishly "of course you want to stay here with your mate.

Forgive me" she added, twirling her fork in her hand and staring down at it.

"No apologies necessary" broke in Langdon. So he does have a voice, I think a tad bit sourly. I hadn't heard him speak a single word since we'd sat down at the table.

"We need to make a plan" Kai said decisively "because Thomas is a hybrid, it's entirely possible that he's faster than a shifter."

"If he was that fast, wouldn't he have made it here first?" asked Damien puzzled "we stopped at every single pack so that we didn't make a wrong move and go in the opposite direction. You left a pretty decent trail" he told a glum looking Winter. Guess she wasn't really trying to do that.

"That is strange" Kai agreed, stroking the stubble on his chin "he should have beaten the two of you here with no problems at all" he added "unless he went in the wrong direction and travelled a little too far" he said thoughtfully.

"What do you propose we do?" cut in Langdon, looking at his Alpha seriously, seeing the worried expression on Kai's face. I say nothing. I'm not going to propose anything unless I'm asked to. This isn't my pack, this is Kai's and as such, anything he says goes. I'm not about to interfere in his business. As it is, I'm not sure if I'm going to stay or leave them to it. God, now I feel like I'm acting like a spoilt brat or a complete asshole.

"We've already increased patrol" Langdon assured his Alpha who gave a grim nod "and they are checking the woods far more often for intruders. I've even got two warriors who are capable of being snipers around the perimeter as a back up. I'm not sure what else we can do."

Kai looked thoughtful and I have to admit, they've managed to cover all the bases. I'm impressed despite myself. I wouldn't have thought they were

capable of such plans. The sniper bit is awesome, I'm totally organising that when I get back to my pack.

Winter is looking grim herself, fidgeting relentlessly with her hands, dropping her fork to the table and staring off into the distance. Kai looks concerned. "Winter, what are you thinking?" he asks her, "because I can tell something is on your mind" he adds softly.

Well duh, I think to myself sarcastically. Any idiot could tell that there was something on Winter's mind. All you had to do was look at her for heaven's sake.

When she speaks, it's barely above a whisper and I have to strain to hear her. Kai even moves closer, his eyes darkening as he hears what she utters. "We could use me as bait."

The words echo in my mind and I inhale a sharp breath. There was no way in hell, I was going to let Winter use herself as bait. No matter how much sense it seemed to make. No, she could end up killed or worse.

"No" bursts out Damien furiously "he'll either kill you, or take off with you before we could follow. Have you forgotten what he tried to do to you last time?" he almost growled. "I can't bear you to be hurt Winter."

"We'll find another way" Kai told her gently "I'm not letting you put yourself in danger Winter. Your brother is right. It's too dangerous."

"What do you propose we do" Winter bursts out, sounding extremely frustrated. I raise an eyebrow, surprised at her vehemence. She's really determined. Way to go Winter.

She turns to Kai. 'I can't spend who knows how long, looking over my shoulder, wondering when he's going to attack. What he's going to do. It will drive me insane, can't you see that" she pleads "it's my life and I'm

not going to spend it like this. I'm not asking Kai, I'm telling you this is what we need to do."

"Winter, you were broken after his attack" I say harshly, ignoring the tears welling in the corner of her beautiful eyes "you couldn't speak and you moved around like a ghost at school. It was horrible to watch and now you want to give him the opportunity again? Are you insane" I spit out.

She looks shocked. Good. She really needs to think this through.

"I'm not broken anymore" she hisses at me, her hands clenching into fists "I'm stronger now and I have Kai beside me. I might have been a coward at school but I'm not afraid anymore. I want to do this, I want to show Thomas that he has no hold over me anymore."

Kai looks torn. Say no, you moron, I want to shout at him. Tell her no, that you can't have her put herself in danger. Tell her there are other ways to deal with this! I almost growl at the other Alpha in frustration. He taps his hands on the table.

"You'll carry weapons on you" Kai says firmly, his eyes staring into hers as I listen in disbelief "and you'll do everything I tell you to do. Is that clear? Otherwise it doesn't happen" he says folding his arms across his chest and staring directly at her. Damien makes a strangled noise in the background, but I'm staring at Winter and Kai, wanting to intervene and knowing that I can't. Shit. He's really going to let her become bait in a trap.

My own hands clench into fists under the table. I can't believe she wants to do this. I want to beg her not to. I didn't come all this way, travel through so many packs, so that she could put herself in harm's way, the idiot!

"I'll do everything you ask of me" Winter answers and I sigh. Well that was that. I guess I'm staying after all and helping. Winter reaches down and takes hold of Kai's hand. "I'm tired," she says gently "let's go to bed."

She looks at all of us, but I look away, feeling very disgruntled and angry. I know Damien will be sleeping in Langdon's house and Winter will be with Kai. I've already been shown the guest room. They take their leave and then Langdon turns to Damien. "Shall we?" he says, offering his arm to Damien, who reluctantly takes it. I stare obstinately at the table, wanting to smash my fist right through it. I feel sick to my stomach. If Winter is going to put herself as bait, then I was going to be one of the ones constantly patrolling, whether Alpha Kai likes it or not. I'm not letting Winter be hurt, not under my watch, not again. I wasn't going to fail her this time, I promised myself, this time I would save her, even if it was from herself.