

Psycho Shifters Chapter 20 - Tips

SADIE

SPIDERWEBS AND BIG SNAKES

The three spider fae screamed behind me as I struggled to remove myself from the web.

They laid the trap and led me here. It was all planned.

My muscles burned with pain as I struggled to remove myself from the web. The tiny threads were impossibly strong, wrapping around my arms and legs and holding me tight.

We had been debriefed by Auntie on the spiders after the last attack, and no one had said anything about them making webs. The web had sharp little grooves, and everywhere it touched, my skin burned.

Every small movement caused a stabbing pain.

I held myself still and tried to catch my bearings.

The three spider fae continued to scream and chitter behind me. Visibility was still shit as a mix of sleet and hail hammered the mountainside.

The sun was high in the sky, but it was completely obscured by heavy gray clouds. It might as well have been dusk. Good thing my advanced vision worked better in the dark than in the light. Although, right now, there wasn't much to see.

Hail clacked all around as it ricocheted off frozen rocks. The world screamed around me, a swirling tempest of rage that promised only pain.

The conditions were so rough and the mountain was so steep that I doubted the betas would be able to climb the boulders to reach me.

It was all up to the alphas.

There was nothing soft about the shifter realm, but today was a particularly brutal day.

While I was ensnared on the side of the mountain, the low visibility made it seem like the rock face plummeted at an impossibly steep angle.

Stay still. Wait for them to make the first move.

The numb didn't care how precarious the conditions were. All that mattered was I was an alpha, a saber-toothed tiger, and I would prevail. There was nothing else in my mind.

Inside, I was colder than the freezing temperatures that swirled around me.

So I waited.

They had trapped me in the web for a reason, and I would uncover it.

There was a loud bleat as Ascher launched his half-ram body over my web-entangled form and landed behind me. His massive onyx horns and colorful tattoos flashed by me as he cleared at least a fifteen-foot jump easily.

Screams and shrieks sounded behind me, and Ascher bleated loudly. The web had ensnared my head, so I couldn't turn around.

Wetness slapped against my back, and the scents of blood and burning tar filled my nostrils. Whipping my head to the side, I chuffed in frustration.

I couldn't turn enough to see what was happening behind me. The struggle to turn hurt, as the web bit into me with every moment.

"Need help?" Cobra lisped slightly as he suddenly appeared in front of my face.

His eerie snake eyes glowed, bits of green, red, and were black visible in them. With my cat eyesight, I could see more of the colors from such a close distance.

They were breathtaking.

I chuffed in his face, and he blinked back creepily.

Nope, his slit eyes were weird.

Behind us, the sound of crunching exoskeleton echoed.

Cobra should have been in a frenzy, working hard to defeat the fae and helping Ascher battle. Instead, like a total creep, he stood and stared at me with his head cocked to the side.

I was held off the ground by the web, so Cobra's eyes were aligned with mine.

I opened my mouth to show off my dagger fangs.

A smile split across Cobra's pale face. It wasn't a smile of happiness.

He stood eerily still, the backbreaking winds hammered against him, but the only sign was his inky black hair slapping back and forth atop his head.

The longer he stood, the more shadow snakes slithered across his icy jaws and darkened the crystals and emeralds embedded in his face.

The thousands of tiny jewels sparkled and winked as if they physically responded to the snakes' caresses.

I chuffed louder to let him know I didn't need his help.

Apparently, Cobra spoke saber-toothed tiger, because he threw his handsome head back and laughed like what I had said was hilarious. Like we were old chums hanging out, and we weren't in the middle of a vicious war.

Ascher bleated behind us, and the noise was louder and more frantic, like he was screaming at Cobra to help.

Stay perfectly still.

The numb sounded subdued, like it was afraid I would startle Cobra and would have to face his snakes.

On my back, obscured by the web, I felt the small snake that had been with me for the last week give a little zing of excitement. It was excited by Cobra's proximity, and it slithered in joyful circles across my back, zigzagging amid my downy fur like it belonged there.

Even numb, I rolled my eyes at its antics.

Its happiness left as something slammed into my back and pain shot down my spine.

The force threw me forward with ridiculous momentum, but somehow the web was strong as steel. I didn't break free. However, the collision banged the sharp edges of the web deeper into my flesh.

I roared loudly.

Stay calm. Chew through the web to free yourself.

I leaned forward and tried to drag my dagger-like fangs across the web. Unfortunately, the web didn't break and some of it got snarled on the corner of my lip. A gush of tangy blood flooded my mouth.

It had razored through my mouth deep.

Do it again. I ignored the numb. Most of the time, it had great ideas, but sometimes its lack of self-preservation was concerning.

More pain streaked down my back, and it felt like someone had taken a hot poker to my flesh.

Burning tar filled my nostrils, and if I weren't numb, I probably would have passed out from the onslaught of pain.

A spider is stabbing you with its leg.

Writhing in the web, I growled at Cobra to do something.

There was a frenzy of bleating behind me, followed by loud crunching, and the hot poker sensation stopped. It sounded like Ascher had barreled into the fae with his massive horns.

"Watch and learn, little kitty," Cobra said, and then maniacally chuckled like it was all good fun.

He needed serious psychological help. Even while numb, I noted that was ironic, coming from the person with the homicidal voice.

All of a sudden, the shadow snakes that writhed across Cobra's skin started slithering to the ground. However, they didn't stream forward in the hundreds like in the last battle.

Each snake seemed to lie atop another snake.

The writhing pile grew and grew as an endless stream of snakes appeared on Cobra's pale skin and slithered down to join the...thing.

In less than thirty seconds, hundreds of separate snakes had expanded and combined.

Into a monster snake.

The creature was as tall as Cobra and as wide as my beast. It was also disturbingly long. So long that I couldn't see where its mammoth body ended on the side of the mountain.

Shockingly, the massive snake was three-dimensional.

Before, Cobra's snakes had been completely flat, like shadows. This creature was thick and wide, with glistening black scales darker than the onyx of Ascher's horns.

The massive snake's mouth opened up and showed off twin dagger-like fangs longer than my body. A forked bright-red tongue tasted the icy air.

It wasn't the creature's size, scales, or massive teeth that shook me the most.

It was its eyes. The huge snake had Cobra's eyes—the same startling swirl of colors stared back at me.

When Cobra blinked, the snake blinked.

The little shadow snake on my back twirled around and sent zips of happiness and wonder across my back. It gave off a distinct impression of shock and amazement. Apparently, Cobra had not released the full creature in a very long time.

Ascher bleated in annoyance behind me, and before I could blink, a huge black body slithered over the boulders beside me.

Cobra's hand ran along the side of the snake like he was petting a favorite dog. Not a terrifying beast.

Even as screams echoed behind me, the snake head hissing and rattling, Cobra kept his hand on the massive snake's body.

I still couldn't see its tail.

All at once, something banged into my back, and a spider fae jumped over the web and faced me. Before I could growl or do anything, two of its legs cut the web on either side of me and folded it inward.

I was completely ensnared.

Before Ascher or Cobra could react, it jumped ridiculously high, and I went airborne down the side of the mountain. The fae creature barely caught itself.

Bite it.

The spider fae scurried through the brutal conditions, down the side of the mountain, slipping and sliding on icy rocks. My body was wrapped up in the web, held by its giant pincers, but my head and maw were free.

Still, with how tightly it was wrapped around me, there should have been no way for me to gain purchase and bite.

If I weren't numb, that was.

As I wrenched through the barbed web, every inch of my body screamed with agony. I shut the pain away in the deep recesses of my numb brain.

I would have passed out cold if I weren't numb.

A copper tang filled the air as cuts skewered almost every inch of my skin. From the sticky sensation on my fur, I knew I was completely covered in my blood.

The spider ran quicker, but then scuttled slower down the side of the mountain as dangerous ravines jutted out around us.

One wrong move and we both would be dead.

I tensed all my muscles and pulled my head forward again until my maw was close to one of the spider's dagger-covered legs. The sharp pain intensified.

Do it now. Too much blood loss. Act now.

I lunged.

Three things happened at once.

First, my teeth caught one of the spider's legs and its thousands of tiny daggers stabbed through my jaw as the leg crunched in two beneath my bite.

Second, the spider fae screamed, slipped on ice, and tumbled to the side. Ascher had already taken out two of its legs, and it didn't have enough left to control its movement.

Third, the spider released the web from its pincers as the creature tumbled down a ravine.

Claws extended. Grab purchase now.

The web still dug into my skin like a sticky blanket, but when the spider had released the sides, it had flapped open, allowing me to move.

I reached both of my front claws forward and dragged them along the side of the mountain. My skin burned as the web hooks bit into it at the movement, but the strands no longer constricted me.

My furry body skidded across the rough, icy boulders, my paws screaming in agony as my claws struggled to find purchase. With each bump of rock, it felt like they were being pulled out of my paw.

Finally, my claws slid deep enough into rock that they stopped my momentum. My back feet kicked at nothing.

I was hanging, with only half my belly on the mountain.

The other half dangled over the ravine.

Beside me, the massive spider screeched as it slammed against a large boulder balanced on the edge of the ravine. Its black body clattered in a splay of limbs.

It twitched in pain. With the boulder slowly rolling back behind it, its hundreds of eyes turned to stare at me.

For a long moment, beast and fae stared eye to eye. Both of us were covered in blood.

Help it.

The strangest urge overcame me. The longer its hundreds of eyes stared into mine, the more I became certain that it needed my help.

We weren't foes. We were two animals on the side of a mountain, staring at our deaths.

I dragged my aching limbs forward, crawled away from the edge, and stood on my four legs. A part of me noticed that my fur was no longer white. It was blood red.

I opened my maw and took a step forward to help the fae.

Abruptly, Cobra's massive snake barreled down the side of the mountain like a shot.

Its scales glimmered like stars in the night sky. There was a loud crunch as the snake slammed into the spider fae, broke the boulder behind it, and plummeted it into the ravine. Turning, I watched them both fall hundreds of feet.

The spider fae splattered into tiny pieces at the bottom of the rocky outcrop. Cobra's snake bounced and turned its creepy eyes back up the mountainside. It slithered calmly into the forest.

"Boom," Cobra said behind me.

I turned and roared into his perfect face as Ascher climbed down behind him, covered in cuts and blood.

Cobra smiled down like I was a little kitten and patted my head.

Whatever, I probably couldn't have helped the spider fae anyway. It had likely been some trap.

Together, the three of us limped down the side of the mountain to find Jax. He had all the betas. He's fine.

With his snake eyes gleaming and a creepy smile on his face, Cobra buried his cold hands in my bloody fur, on my back. I was so large I stood near his shoulder.

Ascher limped beside us but stood proud, his horns big and his terrifying snout puffing frosty clouds in his wake.

Even numb, I noted we looked like a creepy macabre painting, red blood and black fae blood dripping a trail behind us.