

Silent Mate 71

Chapter 71 - The Alpha's Rejected Silent Mate

Kai POV

Winter is placed carefully in the backseat of the car. The doctors managed to get her condition stabilized and it looks like she'll survive, which is excellent news. Langdon has personally come down with a small entourage of vehicles and warriors, dragging a kicking and screaming Candice out and throwing her into the back of an SUV. Her screams are muffled by the gag that's been placed in her mouth. I see it with a great sense of satisfaction. Oh and she's doing plenty of screaming. She knows what's coming and what's in store for her. Good. I'm reveling in her terror.

"She has been secured," Langdon said, coming to my side and gazing in at Winter, highly concerned. "What are your orders involving her Alpha Kai? What would you have us do with her?"

"Secure her in the dungeon but no one touches her. I want Winter to have a say in what happens to her. But she's not getting out of this one alive. It's rather a matter of how slowly she dies, instead" I say, "after all the crap she's pulled and the number of times she's hurt, my mate."

He gives a nod but looks rather grim. I open my mouth, intending to ask him what's wrong, when another voice interrupts me.

"Alpha Liam has been secured and the elders are on their way," Teddy said cheerfully, clapping me on the back with a wide smile on his face. "Chantelle is on her way back to her family" he added, and I gave a small nod. That's one bit of good news. I feel bad for cutting the girl's fingers off though. I wish she had just talked in the first place, but at least we can make sure her family is safe.

"Langdon, this is Teddy the ahem" I cough "chief of security. Teddy this is my Beta Langdon."

They shake hands.

"I've gotta go, but I wanted you to know you're all set," Teddy said with a low whistle and a shake of his head "I hope your mate will be alright."

"Doctor says she'll recover" I mumbled automatically, not wanting to talk about it.

Langdon squared his shoulders. "We're ready to move out. Two of the other cars will stay behind and be your guard on the way home" he explained, as though he hadn't already told me all of this in the mind-link earlier. But he looks pale and haggard, withdrawn. Something is amiss. Something is wrong and I need to know what it is. He's keeping something from me, I can sense it.

"Is something wrong, Langdon?" I probed delicately and he shook his head at me, seemingly startled out of his thoughts.

"Nothing is wrong, Alpha Kai," he says politely and I swat at him.

"Cut it out with the title" I growl and he huffs out a laugh.

Langdon gathers his troops and they get into their cars, in a line, a procession, leading the way back to the pack house. I get into the driver's seat of my own car and glance back over my shoulder at Winter. She was covered in bandages but her wounds were already beginning to heal. She would have scars though, from the silver dagger and that pissed me off. Her beautiful pale skin was already covered in traumatic scars and now she would have even more to look at and remember what happened. My hands clench on the steering wheel. Damn it. Damn it, Damn it, I swear in my mind, thumping the steering wheel with my hands. She never should have had to go through what she had in the elevator. It was all my fault.

I let her down, there's no denying it. Hell, I wouldn't be surprised if she hated me when she woke up. It's the least of what I deserve. I should have been protecting her. Heck, if I'd been by her side she probably never would have even been attacked in the first place. Candice was going beyond obsessive and I hated the fact she was still ruining our lives and our chance at happiness. She was going to pay, but it would never be enough to undo the hurt and all the damage that bitch had caused. Why hadn't I seen just how crazy and obsessive Candice was? Why hadn't I seen her as a threat? The signs were all there, I had just been completely oblivious.

Winter mumbles incoherently and then stills as I start the car. I've got her tucked in and belted up, but I'm still not going to take any chances on accidentally jostling her if I can help it. We could have stayed another night, but Winter's attack had effectively broken up the all-important summit and I didn't trust that Candice and Alpha Liam didn't have a plan b of some description. She was safer at home, with me and the pack. At least, that's what I'm hoping. I'm starting to doubt my ability to keep her safe at all. Considering I was failing miserably at it.

I pull out, watching in the rearview mirror as the two cars follow behind me, as Langdon promised me they would. I don't need a guard, but I guess for Winter's sake that it was good I acceded to it. It's cold, slightly chilly. Is Winter cold? Maybe I should stop and pile more blankets on top of her? I hesitated but then turned the heater on in the car. It would have to suffice, the trip is only a few hours, and she would be alright. At least she won't freeze to death in that time. Plus, my heater is quite strong and before I know it, the car is toasty warm.

We finally made it back to the pack house and I parked the car at the front of the pack house in relief. God, we've made it. My fingers are numb from clutching the steering wheel so hard with my fingers, and my shoulder hurts from constantly looking over my shoulder to make sure that Winter is alright. But I can't help myself. Storm also feels the desperate need to continually check up on her and make sure she's doing alright. Both of us are feeling overprotective towards her right now.

Langdon greets me before I can gather up Winter, who's sleeping peacefully, her soft snores reassuring to hear. Clearly, the drive hadn't caused any more damage to her body. Thank god. I gave a small smile. The fact she's sleeping so peacefully despite being in the car is very reassuring to me.

"Everything has been carried out. Candice is in the dungeon, awaiting your arrival", he tells me, and I give a wicked grin.

I had gone easy on her the last time, because of all our history together, but this time it wasn't going to be anywhere near as soft or held back.

"She stays there. I want Winter to have a say in whatever happens", I ordered, reaching out and stroking Winter's hair, pulling a stray strand of hair back from her face. She looks so vulnerable, so innocent. My guilt is overwhelming me and it's killing me on the inside.

"That's been arranged," Langdon says briefly and then hesitates, something flashing across his eyes. Just as quickly, it was gone and I blinked my own in confusion. I knew something was going on with him.

"Alpha Kai. I have a request that I would like to ask of you", Langdon says with a quietness that makes me stiffen. Never once has Langdon ever asked me for a favor. Not for himself, not for anyone. So it had to be important for him to even bring it up. I straighten. Winter's still snoring in the background, but I'm not walking away from this car. I fold my arms and give him a stern look as he looks away sheepishly. Whatever this request was, it had better be good.

"Ask me and I will tell you if I'm able to grant it" I challenged, watching as he took a nervous gulp and then a big breath. He looks pale, ashen and I realize that he's worried about telling me whatever it is.

"I only ask that I not be involved with torturing Candice," he says, and my mouth drops open in shock.

Was he really asking me such a thing? Not once had Langdon ever balked at torturing prisoners, not even female ones, who deserved it. Why was he suddenly avoiding my gaze and looking off into the distance? What made Candice so different from the others he'd helped me with in the dungeon?

I'm tempted to shout at him for an explanation, but one glance at Winter has me gritting my teeth and clenching my hands into fists instead.

"Explain why," I said tightly.

He looks away, a flush rising up his neck as though he's deeply embarrassed. He's silent for so long, that I'm pondering whether or not he's turned mute.

"I can't be involved in torturing my mate" he whispered, and I stared at him in utter shock.

What the hell did he mean by that? Candice had told me she'd never found her mate when we got together. Had she lied to my face? Oh god. My stomach churns. How had Langdon felt when he'd watched me be with her? It must have killed him and he hadn't said a single thing.

"Candice is your mate," I said numbly.

"Was my mate," he said seriously, "she rejected me the first chance she got. I wasn't far enough in the hierarchy for her", he added bitterly.

Poor bastard. She'd really done a number on him, as well as myself.

"Then why," I started, and he interrupted.

"I just couldn't. I can stand by while she's being hurt but I can't partake in it myself", he hisses, and I nod, my hands relaxing by my sides.

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"I wanted you to be happy and if Candice made you happy, then I wasn't going to ruin that," he said bluntly, "even if I hated her guts for it. You deserved better but you wouldn't listen" he points out.

I might have listened better if he'd told me the truth, I think to myself a little grumpily. He didn't have to protect me. I'm not a damn child.

"I won't make you do it" I promised him, hurting when I saw a look of relief in his eyes. I'd put him through the wringer and he was still loyal to me. It boggles my mind.

"Did you accept the rejection?" I asked and gave a hiss when he shook his head.

"I was too much of a coward" he mumbles and I give a shudder.

"So every time we were together..." I trailed off.

"I felt it" he finished. God, I feel sick to my stomach.

"You might want to accept the rejection, Langdon," I told him quietly, trying to persuade him, "because she's going to die and that's the last thing you need to feel."

"I know," he says grimly. "I'm going to, it's been more than enough time. I just can't torture her."

I bend back down and undo all the restraints and seatbelts off Winter, cradling her in my arms and slowly backing out of the car. Langdon was polite enough to shut the car door closed.

"I'm going to be inside with Winter until she wakes up," I told Langdon staunchly. "we don't get disturbed unless it's a damn emergency and someone keeps an eye on that bitch Candice the entire time. Do you hear me?"

He nods. "Take care of your mate Kai," he says a little wistfully as we begin to enter the pack house. "Mates are precious" he finishes.

Mates are precious, I think, holding onto mine tight as I ascend the stairs. One day, I hope Langdon gets a second chance, mate. If anyone deserves it, I think it's him. I pray to the moon goddess to grant him that gift as I put Winter to bed and snuggle up against her.

Chapter 72 - The Alpha's Rejected Silent Mate

Langdon POV

My first initial reaction is shock when Alpha Kai informs me of Candice's subterfuge and willingness to kill Winter out of revenge for Kai breaking up with her. I've always known that Candice was nothing short of a detonator ready to go off at any moment. She's always been slightly unstable, desperate to climb to the top, and coveted the Luna position above all else. Nothing, and no one, not even her mate, was going to get in the way of that. Still, it doesn't stop me from feeling a little sorry for her. What can I say? The mate bond still works on my side. I curse the fact that I never accepted the rejection, it would have saved me a ton of heartbreak. I guess I'm just a glutton for punishment. No more, I decide.

Poor Kai. He looked so shocked when I told him. I think he was hurt as well. But what could I say? Candice had rejected me on sight because I wasn't an Alpha and she'd set her sights on Kai. I close my eyes and exhale slowly, picturing that day in my mind. It's forever imprinted in my memories, a painful reminder that I'll never be able to get rid of, no matter how hard I try.

I'd just come back from another trip to the Cold Ice Moon Pack on business. We'd successfully negotiated yet another treaty and our pack was becoming stronger under my and Alpha Kai's leadership. I was ecstatic to be back home, tired of the traveling and needing some rest and relaxation. It had been a long trip and an even longer visit. I was happy to be back in the pack and even happier to be home. I couldn't wait to get to bed in my own house.

I'd no sooner gotten out of the car when the most delicious and amazing scent of caramel wafted towards me. At first, I thought someone was baking, but as I followed it, sniffing out the source, I came across a woman I had never seen before. Damn, she was beautiful. If I'm honest with myself, she still is. Her pale smooth ivory skin, those big eyes of hers that had blinked up at me in astonishment. Her hair gleamed in the light and a figure to die for. I'd almost been drooling when I stopped where she was apparently walking and touring the pack grounds. I knew instantly why my wolf was going insane in my mind. There was no doubt about it. She was mine.

"Mate" I growled in disbelief and watched as her eyes had changed color, her wolf coming close to the surface. God, I was delighted. I'd waited so long for my mate and now she was finally here. I didn't have to keep looking at each pack I went to anymore. I finally had her. She was all mine. My heart was swelling with joy and contentment. This was what I had been waiting for. The moon goddess had finally blessed me with my own mate to cherish and love.

But then she took a step back, and then another as I stared at her confused. I didn't understand why she looked so hesitant at me. I wasn't going to hurt her. I would never hurt my mate.

"No" she breathed and I flinched, hearing the disgust and the repulsion on her face. "God no, I won't," she said, and my mouth dropped open. She won't what? Won't accept me? Surely she was kidding? She didn't mean what she was saying, did she?

She squares her shoulders and looks directly at me, crinkling her nose and looking like I'm something on the bottom of her shoe.

"I, Candice of the Silver Shining's Pack, reject you, whoever the hell you are, as my mate now and forever more" she spat. I stared at her numbly.

She hadn't even let me get my name out and rejected me on the spot. She flips her hair over her shoulder and storms away as my jaw drops open. I hesitate. Should I go after her? Maybe I could convince her to take it back? If she got to know me better, she would see that I was a loving mate. Wouldn't that be enough to convince her she'd made a mistake?

But my pride is stung now and I glumly begin to walk back to the car. So much for that, I thought to myself sourly. Should I just accept the rejection, or would she change her mind once she'd had time to calm down and collect herself? I lightened. Maybe she was just in shock at the whole thing. She probably just needed time to think things through. I would wait, and I would speak to her again. I would give her time to adjust to finding her mate and get over her shock. I would cling to the hope she would come back to me and realize she had made a mistake.

But she hadn't been interested at all, not in the following few days when I'd attempted to reach out to her, snubbing me and turning her face away, every time I tried to so much as utter a word in her direction. I'd finally given up when Kai called me into his office.

I'd hurried to the study, thinking it was something wrong, that Kai had mind-linked me for something important. I knocked on the door and waited impatiently, feeling sick to my stomach as I smelt her scent there as well. What was she doing in his office? Did they know each other? Maybe they were friends, I thought to myself hopefully. In which case, maybe Kai could convince her to give me a chance.

"Come in" called Kai and he sounded happy, deliriously so. My stomach drops. Something's wrong.

I walk in and see Candice standing behind him, hands on his shoulders, a broad smile on her face as he sits there looking relaxed.

"You called for me, Alpha Kai" I muttered, glaring at Candice. Kai, thankfully, doesn't seem to notice the look I'm giving her.

"I want you to meet Candice," he says with a large smile, "my girlfriend. Candice, this is Langdon, the one I was telling you about. My best friend and my beta." I flinch. He has no idea how much he's just hurt me.

So Kai knew nothing about us being mates then. I opened my mouth to tell him but then paused. I can't tell my best friend that she's using him. Not now. Maybe later, when the flush of the new romance has worn off. Otherwise, I may have to try and hint at it, but I don't want him to be unhappy. God knows he's barely dated due to those scars of his that he thinks are hideous. Women can be so cruel sometimes. I have no doubt Candice is going after him due to an ulterior motive, but I doubt Kai is going to listen to me, and I'm too ashamed to tell him about my rejection.

I hold out my hand and force myself to grip hers, my eyes cold and icy as I stare into hers. "It's a pleasure to meet you," I say with gritted teeth, ignoring the tingles that travel up my fingers and hands. I almost yanked my hand away. Kai looks confused.

"It's so nice to meet you Langdon" she coos and I scowl at her. I can't help it.

"Is there anything else, Alpha Kai?" I said pointedly. I needed to get the hell out of the room before I completely lost my temper and my senses. He looks a little surprised at my abruptness but reluctantly shakes his head.

"No, I just wanted you to meet each other," he said a little sadly, "you may go Langdon. Thank you for coming."

"Actually, I really want to go for a walk if that's alright," Candice says hastily, "it's a little stuffy in here darling," she says, bending down and giving Kai a peck on the cheek while I try not to gag.

"Sure," he says, "I'll just do some paperwork until you come back."

I rolled my eyes and walked out the door, almost jogging out of the packhouse. I just want to be left alone. I'm not in the mood to speak to the bitch right now.

"Wait" she breathes, rushing to me as I fold my arms and glare daggers at her. "Why haven't you accepted my rejection?" she says, annoyed "I'm not going to change my mind. You might as well get it over and done with," she points out, "otherwise it's going to hurt like hell every time I'm with him."

"I'll accept it when I want to, not just because you're asking it of me" I snarled back. "now get the hell out of my sight you bitch."

She scurried off, looking once over her shoulder before she gives a smirk and blows me a kiss. Arrogant bitch. I hate her now but know I have to keep that from Kai. Not that I've ever been good at hiding my emotions.

Now I curse my stubbornness. Ever since that day, I've felt the pain of the mate bond as she slept with Kai, more times than I've wanted to count. My heart's been ripped to shreds and I don't think I'll ever find a true mate to love me. It would have to be a pretty special woman for me to trust her again after what Candice has put me through, that's for sure. I don't know that such a woman even exists.

My footsteps are loud and my heart is heavy. I trudge downstairs, my head staring down at the ground intently. I should have done this in the first place. I should never have let it get this far. Still, it's a struggle to put one foot in front of the other, to keep going until I've reached the bottom of the stairs and greet the guards. They let me through without a problem, used to seeing me in the dungeon whenever we have a prisoner. They give me my privacy.

I stared at her with disinterest. Once upon a time, I would have believed she was the most beautiful woman in the world and now I feel nothing. I'm completely numb inside. I don't even feel hatred towards her. She's conscious, trussed up like a lamb to the slaughter, but there's still a smirk on her miserable face. Does she think I'm going to help her? After everything, she's done? She's in for a rude shock.

"Come to see the torture have you, Langdon." Candice sneers, her voice hoarse from screaming. I don't answer.

She tries another tactic. "Langdon, you have to help me" she whispers, "we're mates, you can't let me be killed. I'll even take back the rejection", she promises, and I smirk at her. She was really feeling desperate then.

I took a deep breath. "Correction," I told her gruffly "we were mates. I've come to rectify that."

Her eyes widened. She wasn't expecting this. But I won't let her be the death of me. She's made her bed, now she has to face the consequences alone. I steel myself.

"I Langdon, accept your rejection, Candice," I tell her, feeling something like an elastic band break as my knees buckle and I fall to the ground, the guards crying out in the background in shock.

She screams, feeling the same pain that I do and then just as quickly it fades away. The mate bond has been completely severed. It's done. I'm finally free, I think to myself sadly, but it's come at a cost.

The guards help me to my feet and I dust myself off, thanking them. I turned away without another word and began to ascend the stairs, ignoring her screams behind me.

"Langdon, Langdon, don't do this to me."

I'm not doing this to you, Candice. I think to myself bitterly, you brought this on yourself. You reap what you sow.

Chapter 73 - The Alpha's Rejected Silent Mate

Winter POV

Fuck, my entire body is throbbing. My head feels like there's a ton of bricks lying on top of it, and my stomach feels like it's been hacked with an axe or something. No, I'm not being melodramatic, it hurts that freaking much. What in the hell happened? Why am I in so much fucking pain? I felt like a truck ran over me.

We got shishkebabbed Winter.

We got what now, Sabriel?

We got attacked in the elevator, remember? By a little punk bitch? She used wolfsbane on the dagger. Coward.

Um, I sort of remember. We were going to go and see Kai, right?

Yeah, you finally got laid and gave up your virginity. Nice going, by the way. Then the morning after you were taking the elevator to see lover boy and a woman, well, a teenager is probably more accurate, attacked us with a knife? Do you remember? Remember Winter?

I remember now. I can see everything so clearly again, in my mind's eye. The knife gleaming in the lights, the wolfsbane dripping from it. The look of desperation on the girl's face. As though someone had put

her up to it. The pain and the struggle to fight back. I had thought I was a goner, but I guess someone found me in time. I blink, my eyes open and stare groggily around the room. At least it's not the hospital, I think grimly, I've had enough visits to the hospital to last me a lifetime. In fact, they're probably sick of seeing me as well. The bed I'm in is nice and comfortable at least.

It looks like I'm in my bedroom and I turn my head and exhale, seeing Kai slumped in a chair, his head to his chest as he snored away. He looks haggard, like really haggard. Pale and with more stubble on his chin than normal, like he hasn't taken the time to shave. Has he stayed here by my side the entire time? My lips are bursting with questions. Clearly, I'm not at the summit anymore. Did this mean they had caught the person responsible for the entire thing? My heart sinks as I think about the fact that the summit might have disbanded because of what happened. Had I ruined it for Kai?

You idiot. You didn't ruin anything. You were attacked for heaven's sake, Winter. Stop feeling guilty for something you're not responsible for.

But Kai was looking forward to the summit, so much.

There will be other ones and you'll be with him. He'll live.

I wish I could have shifted in the elevator Sabriel.

Me, too, a bit sneaky about using wolfsbane as a poison. Clever but sneaky. Otherwise, that bitch would have gone down.

My hand reaches below the bedcovers and feels the bandages covering my body, especially my midsection where I remember getting stabbed. It itches slightly and I peel it back to see that my wound is almost completely healed now. It's a miracle. It will leave a scar though, but considering my body is covered in them, it's no big deal. At least I'm alive.

"The doctor says not to touch that until at least tomorrow," says a gravelly voice that makes me look over at a now wide-awake Kai.

He struggles to his feet and awkwardly walks over to me, gripping hold of my hand as I give him a shaky smile.

"How are you doing?" he asks quietly.

I thought for a moment. To be fair, I don't really feel that bad. Sore, tired, and itchy, but on the whole, it could have been a whole lot worse. I could be dead after all.

"I'm just sore and a little tired" I admitted as he gently smoothed my hair back from my face. Good god, I must look like a complete mess.

Nah girl, we're pretty no matter how messy we are. Nothing makes us look bad.

Sabriel, you have so much confidence.

You could too Winter, you just have to think like me.

I'll try and remember that.

"I'm glad," Kai says in a low voice. Then he startles me even more by exhaling and bursting out "I never should have left you inside that hotel room, especially after what happened during the night. I should have stayed by your side, and then you never would have been attacked", he grimaced.

I stared at him incredulously. Was he blaming himself for what happened? Because I didn't blame him at all.

"Kai," I said, fixing my eyes on his, "this wasn't your fault. Even if you had stayed with me, they would just have waited for another chance. It was going to happen either way, at least this way, you weren't hurt as well" I said firmly. I can't bear the thought of him getting hurt because of me.

He looks disgruntled, but I'm beyond caring. What happened during the night is one of the most memorable nights of my life, and I'll be damned if it gets ruined in any way. I stand up on shaky feet, my body trembling, and begin to walk towards the bathroom.

"Let me help you" Kai offers, but I fix him with a glare. Some things should remain private and doing my business was one of them.

He backs down and sits, reluctantly watching me disappear into the bathroom. I'm shaky, but I can manage on my own. There's no way I'm about to ask Kai for help.

I do my business quick smart and look at my reflection in the mirror as I wash my hands. I'm pale, with dark circles under my eyes. I can see a bruise near my hairline but other than that, I look alright. My hair was disheveled but that was to be expected after being asleep. I shrugged and walked back out, Kai looking relieved to see me again. Like I was going to run off in this condition. Give me some credit, geez.

"Did they catch the person responsible? Was it the girl who attacked me?" I said with a quiver in my voice.

Kai's eyes flashed black for a moment. What was that I just saw on his face? Was it regret? An apology of sorts?

"They caught the person. The girl who attacked you was put up to it. If she didn't attack you, they were going to kill her family" he said grimly.

My eyes widened. The poor girl. Now I feel so bad for her. But what did Kai mean by them? Was more than one person responsible for the attack on me?

"They?" I repeated to him, trying to confirm what I had heard.

"Alpha Liam and Candice were responsible for the attack on you," Kai said quietly.

Somehow, the notion of Candice being behind it didn't surprise me in the least, but Alpha Liam? What did he have against me? I'd never even met him before the summit.

"I understand why Candice," I say, stiffening, "but Alpha Liam..." I trail off helplessly.

"He did it because Candice manipulated him into doing it. She's very good at getting men to believe everything she says." He sounds bitter now. "Alpha Liam never stood a chance once she put her sights on him."

I didn't want to ask, but I needed to know "where is Candice now? Did they keep her at the summit?"

He shifts his feet and glances down at the ground. This doesn't bode well. What is he hiding?

"About that," he mutters "I insisted that Candice be brought back here, to be punished."

I stare wide-eyed. I must have heard him wrong. Surely, he wouldn't have been so stupid as to bring the woman responsible for me almost dying, back to the pack house where I now lived? He was joking, right?

He flinched from the look on my face and the dawning anger.

"Just wait" Kai cries out as I glower at him "I wanted you to have a say in her punishment, Winter. You deserve that, as the victim, at least, don't you?"

I can't believe him. Even now, after all this time, he was asking me to deal with Candice again. Did he not understand my desire to never see this woman again, ever? He wasn't going to keep her at the pack house indefinitely, was he? I feel bile rise up in my throat. I can't stand to even look at him now. I'm so incredibly angry, my whole body is trembling with rage.

"Kai," I said deadly quiet "I don't want Candice punished, I want her dead, gone, buried forever from my life. Do you understand me? I'm not going to keep her around for your sake" shouted out, frustrated as all hell. Men were such idiots sometimes. I just wanted Candice gone. Why was that so hard for him to get?

"Then we will kill her," Kai said gently, and I halted in my tracks. Did he really mean that? "As I said, you get a say in the punishment and if the punishment is death, so be it" he adds. Oh, I want her dead alright. I'm sick of always looking over my shoulder and wondering what's going to happen to me. I want to feel safe again and the only way I can is to remove the person who constantly wants me gone. I don't care if it hurts Kai. I want Candice gone forever from my life.

I can hear the sincerity in his voice, and I'm so angry, so bitter towards Candice right now. It's as though she's sucked all the joy and happiness out of me. Why couldn't she just have been happy with Alpha Liam? She still would have had a chance to be Luna. But I knew her kind. She would have been obsessed over the fact that Kai had broken up with her instead of the other way around. But a small part of me is wavering. I couldn't bring myself to kill a rogue before. How can I bring myself to kill another shifter? Or order the death of one? Alpha Liam certainly doesn't deserve to die. Not when Candice had manipulated the man.

"Where is she?" I demanded.

"She's in the dungeon," Kai says quietly, "but there's something else you should know" he adds, as I almost scoffed. Of course, there was. I waited impatiently for him to tell me.

"She was Langdon's mate but rejected him," he said in a rush.

My eyes are flickering now, between normal and going dark, my hands clenched into fists. She'd rejected Langdon? The man was a sweetheart! A little boring but an otherwise perfect gentleman! It didn't take a genius to work out why she'd rejected poor Langdon. Kai had been a much bigger fish for her to catch, especially if she wanted to be Luna. I feel indignant on Langdon's behalf.

I make a move to storm off and Kai hurriedly follows the back of me. I stomped out of our bedroom and downstairs, in a fit of pique, my footsteps loud in the quietness of the house, my face scowling the whole time. Kai, wisely, says nothing, opening the door to the dungeon and gesturing me inside. I barely cast him a glance before stomping down the stairs, almost shoving the guards to the side, in my efforts to get my hands on Candice. I'm so angry, my chest is heaving and I'm almost frothing at the mouth. The guards look taken aback and Kai has to reassure them that I'm allowed down here, patting me awkwardly on the back.

I sniff and I can smell her disgusting perfume, wafting towards me from the last cell. I stomped in that direction pointedly and stopped in my tracks, staring up at my nemesis with a repulsed look on my face.

I ignored Kai's calls to stay back, to calm down. I don't need to bloody calm down. Christ. He needs to stop nannying me. Her head lifts up and she stares directly at me, while I'm glaring at her, my entire body tense.

"I never thought you would have the guts to come down here yourself" she spits out and I cringe, watching spittle fly across the bars. Disgusting.

"I guess you thought wrong," I said evenly, between gritted teeth. "now how about we discuss your punishment?"

Chapter 74 - The Alpha's Rejected Silent Mate

Winter POV

I stare at Candice, directly in her eyes, noting how pale she is. She has dark circles under her eyes that are almost black, but then again, how much sleep can a person get in a dungeon? My bet is not much. She doesn't look as beautiful as she normally does, her black hair dishevelled and looking like a rat's nest, her body suspended above the ground, her arms over her head, silver restraints and shackles keeping her upright. I could see where the silver was burning her body. There was no smile on her face now, only a grim expression and hatred in her eyes. Hatred, directed at me. I flinch. It's not like I ever did anything to her. My only crime is the fact that I turned out to be Kai's mate. Apparently it was enough for her to want to kill me.

"You don't have the guts, to handle a punishment" Candice hisses at me, looking triumphant.

I feel Kai's hand on my shoulder and turn towards him. He looks at me apprehensively. "Winter, I can take care of this, if you want to go upstairs."

I shake my head at him. I'm tired of being beaten down all the time. Tired of being treated like shit from other people. Tired of being constantly underestimated because I'm a nice person. I'm especially tired of women like Candice. So many bullies in the world. When does it end?

"Where's the trolley" I say evenly and he looks taken aback, but motions for a guard to bring one, pushing it right in front of me as Kai gives a nervous gulp. Even Candice is beginning to look worried now. Good. That's what the bitch gets for thinking I won't do it.

Winter, you have my support in this, do whatever you feel needs to be done. I won't judge you.

Thanks Sabriel, but I'm going to block you anyway. I don't want to make you ashamed of me.

I won't darling heart.

It's still for the best. I can't bear to have you watch what I'm about to do.

I block my wolf for the first time since I began speaking to her. I don't want her to see this, don't want her to think any less of me for finally breaking. I place the gloves provided on and survey the trolley, my head cocked to the side. All of the tools glisten on the trolley, beckoning for me to choose one.

"Kai, open the door" I say quietly, grabbing hold of a whip with silver threads in it.

He opens the cell door reluctantly. "Do you want me to come in?" he asks.

"No" I tell him "I've got this." Or at least I hope I do.

Candice snorts. "Listen to her, she thinks she's got backbone all of a sudden" she laughs mockingly. Laughter that's cut short as I draw back my arm and strike forward with the whip, using all of my might. She gives a howl, swearing as I stand there. my face full of determination.

"You little bitch" she hissed and then screamed as once again, I hit her with the whip.

I tuned out her little insults, Kai's staring, the guards commotion. I focussed on one thing. How good it felt to take out all of my anger, my resentment, my frustrations out on her. Candice had to have been the one behind the poisoned tea and the incident in the hospital as well. I could have died each time because of her. She's never getting another chance to get near me or try again. I won't let her.

I wasn't merciful and I didn't hold back, striking the bitch, over and over again, watching her blood trickle down her body and onto the floor, blood splattering the walls and even the ceiling as I ripped her flesh open. When I tired, I stopped. She'd stopped laughing, and she wasn't joking now. She was deadly quiet, sobs filling the air. Even Kai's mouth was open in shock. I guess he didn't think I had it in me. To be fair, up until now, I didn't imagine I had it in me.

I placed the whip down on the trolley and then grabbed hold of the small dagger, examining it carefully as Candice blanched.

"I'm sorry" she wheezed "please Winter. Stop please."

I cock my head at her. "You caused that incident in the hospital didn't you Candice? Poisoned the tea as well with wolfsbane that time?" My voice was like a sing song as I waited. I already knew the answer, but I wanted her to admit it as well.

She gulped nervously. "Yes, Yes, I was" she screamed "please, please, show some mercy" she begged. I laughed, openly laughed at her, feeling incredibly powerful.

"You want me to show you mercy" I whispered thickly "where was your mercy when it came to me?"

She shut up, realising nothing she said was going to dissuade me, tears flowing down her ashen cheeks. I grabbed hold of her long raven black hair and sawed away at it, cutting it in chunks and letting it fall to the floor. She cried the entire time. I thought I was being generous leaving her hair at shoulder length, when I could have made her bald instead.

She wore no clothes and I perused her carefully, circling around her, like a hunter circles it's prey. There. A perfect unblemished patch of skin. Without warning, I thrust the dagger in and begin to cut through her flesh, Candice's head thrusting backwards as she let out a mouth gurgling scream. I took my time, being slow but diligent, wanting my artwork to stay perfect. When I was finished, there was one single word on her back that read Traitor

I give her a smile of satisfaction, listening to her weeping as I look over at Kai.

"Winter, are you feeling alright?" he asks and I look at him confused.

What does he mean by asking that? I feel perfectly fine, in fact, I feel powerful and have never felt better. It was a rush.

I stab Candice in the mid section. "That's for me" I tell her with gritted teeth as she bucks and writhes in her chains. Another stab, this time to her back "this one's for the girl you used" I snap, a little upset I hadn't asked what her name was "and this one" I pause, thrusting the dagger into her back severing her spinal cord, making her paralysed from the waist down "is for Alpha Liam who you manipulated into doing your bidding."

I pause and then remember someone else. "This is for Langdon, the man you rejected" I say stabbing the knife into her shoulder and gritting my teeth as she screamed loudly. Her body isn't capable of moving anymore and I back away from her slowly, pulling the knife back out.

I slam the knife onto the trolley and turn back to survey her. Her face looks green, like she's going to vomit and I'm impressed she hasn't so far. Her body is slumped now, there's no feeling below her waist but that will fix itself in time. Beauty of being a shifter I guess, but it will take weeks to heal completely, not days, and it will be painful. The least of what she deserves.

"Kill me" she whispers, so quiet, that I almost miss it completely, my body stiffening as I pick up the words. She really has some nerve.

"Kill me" she repeats and I turn to her, my eyes blazing, my jaw tight and my hands clenched into fists.

"I wouldn't give you the satisfaction" I scream, venting all of my rage as the guards back away and Kai clenches his jaw. "You ruined my life and all for nothing" I laugh bitterly "you were never going to be Luna, you stupid girl. You should have just walked away."

She opens her mouth and spits out blood, that I easily dodge. She's panting, her breathing weak.

"What, do, you, want, with me" she gasps out loud.

I have to think. Even though I'd managed to torture Candice, I still can't bring myself to kill her. Am I a weakling? Or is there something I'm missing to be able to be that cold? Why can't I do it? Why can't I bring myself to kill?

I sink to my knees. "I can't do it" I mumble, frozen solid "I hate you, despise you and everything you are" I laugh bitterly "and still I can't kill you. I guess I'm weak" I mutter, rocking back and forth as her eyes gleam with tears.

"Enough" Kai growls "Winter might not be able to kill you, but that doesn't mean I won't" he snaps, picking me up and cradling me towards his chest.

Candice says nothing, her head slumps back down to her chest. But I stop him, raising my head and looking at the woman who just looks defeated and broken. What good could possibly come from killing her now?

"Don't" I say quietly as Kai looks at me in disbelief "don't kill her."

"She tried to kill you" he growls and I look away.

"I know" I respond "but look at her. She's weak now. That wound will take weeks before she can walk again. Do you really think she'll try again after this? When everyone will be on the lookout for her? She'd have to be insane to do it."

"I don't know Winter" Kai growls warningly "you've seen what she's capable of. Do you really want to risk it again?"

I start to sob. I feel so repulsed at myself, of what I just did. It was like I had been another person for a few minutes, that my anger and hatred had taken over me. I need to wash myself and get clean. I can smell her blood on me and it's making me hysterical.

"Just leave her at the edge of the boundary and banish her from the pack" I plead between sobs "please, don't make me responsible for someone's death."

"What about the girl whose family she threatened" Kai said in an icy voice.

That stops me for a moment as I look up at him stricken. I had forgotten about that. Shouldn't she have the right to feel safe and secure as well.

"I can't kill her Kai" I whisper, my heart thudding painfully in my chest as I snuffle against his shirt, which I notice, with a wince, is covered in my tears and blood from my clothes.

"I know sweetheart, but I can't let her live" he finished and I can see the pain his words are causing. I slump in his arms. Candice can't be forgiven for what she's done and the poor girl and her family need to be kept safe. What I want is no longer relevant. It still pains me to know she's going to die, but I have to accept it.

"Get me out of here" I whisper shakily. I feel so sick, not just for what's about to happen, but what I've done. How could I?

His hands tighten and he begins to take me upstairs, but he's met by a miserable looking Langdon at the top. I flinch at the pain on the man's face. My god, this was killing him. Kai hands me to him. "Take her upstairs" he orders and Langdon gives a shaky nod and turns with me in his arms.

"Langdon, I'm sorry" I tell him and he looks down at me with the tiniest hint of a smile.

"You have nothing to be sorry for" he whispers.

We both stop as we hear Candice scream out for mercy before just as suddenly it stops, the air around us growing cold and silent. We both know, instinctively that Kai has killed her and without another word, Langdon starts to take me upstairs as I cry silently into his shirt.

Chapter 75 - The Alpha's Rejected Silent Mate

Kai POV

I slit her neck. Winter didn't want me to kill Candice, but I couldn't let her live. So despite everything, I made Langdon take her upstairs and I went back down to where Candice was waiting. She sneered at me. Brave, even as she watched me slowly put the gloves on and grab ahold of the knife. Even as I approached her she stared at me, daring me to do it.

"No, don't" she begs and I ignore her, even as she begins to scream and thrash wildly in her chains. My main concern is Winter's safety and finally getting rid of this danger, once and for all.

"You have to die" I growl and walk to the back of her, placing the dagger at her throat, her eyes wide in disbelief. Feeling no remorse whatsoever, I pulled the dagger across her neck, blood spraying the walls in front of her, her screams suddenly stopping. Now there's nothing but silence and it's beautiful. Sorry Langdon I think with a wince, hopefully he did what I suggested and accepted the rejection before I tortured and killed her.

I drop the knife to the ground, it making a large clattering noise and turn to the guards who look nervous now. "Take care of that" I hiss, indicating the corpse hanging from the ceiling "clean up this mess, do you hear me" I growl with my eyes pitch black. Both of them nod quickly as I tear the gloves off and go bounding upstairs. No doubt, Winter heard Candice's screams stop and knows what I've done, but I did it to keep her and everyone else safe. She has to realise that.

Langdon meets me at the bedroom door. "She's pretty distraught" he comments "won't stop crying. She thinks she's a monster for what she did to Candice."

I'm incredulous. Winter had gone easy on Candice, at least as far as I'm concerned she had. I would have tortured the bitch for far longer and far worse than what she'd done. But Winter had never tortured anyone before, in fact up till now, she was the one who'd been beaten and tortured. Was it any wonder she was conflicted? I don't think so. But she's not a monster, she would never be a monster to me.

"I had to do it" I tell Langdon, feeling sorry for the man, but he just nods and looks away, his claw clenched.

"Don't apologise" he mutters "you did what was right. Winter will understand that too."

I nod and then make my way into the bedroom, closing the door cautiously as I hear Winter's quiet sobs coming from the bed where she's lying, curled up in a foetal position. They tear me apart. She sounded so devastated. I perch on the end of the bed, trying to think of what to say and how best to try and comfort her, or at least distract her, but I'm coming up empty. I'm not good at this sort of thing and it shows.

Come on man. There's got to be something you can say to make our mate feel better Kai.

What do you suggest Storm?

I don't know, how about I'm sorry you're hurting right now?

I guess I could, but nothing is going to make her feel better right now.

No but at least distract her from her misery, her crying is making me want to cry.

Really?

No but I feel very uncomfortable from the crying. Fix our mate.

You can't just fix someone.

Do it anyway.

Stupid wolf, I grumble to myself, focussing on Winter who is weeping into the pillow. I reach out and touch her hair, stroking it softly. "Winter, Winter, will you look at me?"

She continues to sob, but her eyes glance up at me, tears trickling down her cheeks. She looks stricken.

"I'm a monster" she wails "a horrible human being."

I'm confused. Why would she think that?

"Winter" I say delicately "you're not a horrible human being. Why are you saying that about yourself?"

She cries harder as I wait patiently, sitting closer to her and rolling her to face me.

"Because" she stammers "because I enjoyed hurting Candice" she cries "that's what makes me a monster."

Oh the poor sweetheart. She thought because she'd enjoyed it that made her horrible. After all the times she'd almost died at Candice's hand, she had every right to enjoy inflicting pain on the woman responsible. That didn't make her a monster, if anything that made her human.

"Winter, she's almost killed you, several times since you've come to this pack. She's hurt you in so many ways and not just physically. You enjoying hurting her back? That was revenge and it doesn't make you any less of a person. In fact that makes you human" I tell her honestly, trying to project compassion into my voice. Please god, I think to myself, let this work.

Should we go get a tub of ice cream and some wine? That always helps when chicks are sad in the movies?

Storm, this isn't a movie.

Still think it's a good idea Kai. Let her binge her problems away and her sadness.

How do you know she won't bang us over the head for your stupid suggestion?

Chocolates then, what woman doesn't like chocolates? Or Flowers.

You're really uncomfortable with her crying aren't you?

It makes me feel odd Kai, I don't like it. Make it stop, throw some jewelry at her or something.

Do you want to take over and comfort her?

Would you let me?

Hell no, you'll get us both banished from the room.

You have so little faith in me Kai.

No, I'm just a realist.

"You really don't think I'm a monster" Winter says in a wavering voice as she wipes the tears from her eyes and sits up, now meeting my eyes.

"Of course not" I tell her "if anything I was slightly impressed with how you held it together. Winter, you don't enjoy hurting people and that's alright. Your kindness and your inner strength is one of the things I love about you" I say and watch as her tears begin to fade away and the stricken expression falls from her face. Now there's a tentative smile there instead. I open my arms and she falls into them, sniffing against my shirt, her eyes closed. I kiss the top of her head, grateful to see that she's calmed down somewhat.

"Kai" she says "I love you."

It's like an arrow pierced my heart. I'm in awe at how simply she says it, how easily. Like it's second nature to her. My heart is thudding wildly in my chest.

"I love you" I say stammering back, but I mean every word. I have fallen in love with Winter. It's taken me this long to admit it to myself. She's everything to me. I don't think I can imagine my life without her.

She wrinkles her nose and gives a sniff, looking up at me repulsed. "I think we should freshen up" she says with a grimace "you have blood on you and so do I" she says with a sigh. I give her a wicked grin. "You could join me in the shower" I say with a wink and she bats her hand at me with laughter.

"No thank you. I'm thinking more, that I soak in the tub while you shower" she says pointedly.

"But what if I want a bubble bath?" I ask whining.

Dude, I'm not getting in a bubble bath. It's not manly

Chill Storm, it's not like it affects you.

It affects my image and my reputation.

Really Storm? I think you're getting a bit obsessive over how you're perceived.

Not obsessive enough. You get in that bubble bath and I swear to god, I'll refuse to speak to you for a week.

Well now it sounds tempting. Besides bubble baths are relaxing.

I don't like the feel of bubbles! Alright! No bubbles!

Sheesh, my wolf has serious issues.

"Do you want the tub after me then?" Winter asks, breaking up my thoughts.

I laugh and shake my head. "No, I'll take the shower, that way I get to feast my eyes on you naked" I tease as she blushes. God she's adorable. Even after that fantastic night together, she still gets embarrassed about showing her perfect body to me.

I start the water to the tub first, Winter turning her back to me as she struggles out of her clothes. I look at the bandages and very quietly, begin to help her peel them off. God, her wounds are healing but it's clear to see she has new scars now over the old ones. I trace them with my finger, swallowing past the lump in my throat.

She climbs into the tub and fills it, soaking in it luxuriously as I shrug out of my own clothes and fling them to the floor. I'd have to organise fresh sheets on the bed as well, but that could wait until we were both dressed.

I've barely stepped into the shower, moaning as the water hits my muscles, when that dratted Langdon decides to mind-link me.

Alpha Kai, we have a bit of a situation.

Whatever the situation is Langdon, I'm certain that you're more than capable of dealing with it, aren't you Langdon?

Well yes, but I really think you should weigh in on this. It does affect Winter after all?

Speak plainly man. What the hell is wrong then Langdon.

God, I was going to murder Langdon with my bare hands. My hands clench into fists in my anger and Winter looks at me startled, seeing my eyes are glazed as I continue to speak to Langdon, my back slightly to her. Surely, Winter was not going to be affected by anything else? Shit. Then I remember the reason for Alpha Laurence coming through. Could this be to do with that?

Patrol caught two shifters near the boundary line. Both male, both teenagers.

Well, just throw them in the dungeon, like we do with all trespassers. Candice should have been taken out of there by now and the guards were told to clean up. I'm not really understanding the problem here.

The thing is, Alpha Kai, they say their name's are Johnathon and Damien. Damien claims he's looking for Winter and he's her brother.

Fuck. This is the last thing Winter needs right now. I guess we really have no choice. Have them escorted to the study then and guard them. They better be who they say they are, else I'm going to strangle them both to death.

What about Winter?

I'll inform Winter, but I'm guessing we'll both be coming down to the study in a few minutes. Do not tell them anything. Is that clear?

Perfectly Alpha Kai. I'll see you in a few minutes.

I break the mind-link, cursing silently in my mind, turning around to face a very puzzled and concerned looking Winter.

"Kai" she says tentatively "what's wrong?"

I take a deep breath. I'm just going to have to break it to her. Even though she's just had a traumatic experience. But maybe she'll be happy to hear about her brother Damien? I'm pissed to find Johnathon, the son of a bitch who had the audacity to reject her, is also there. My hands itch to teach him a lesson. Then again, if he hadn't rejected Winter, I wouldn't have her by my side as my mate.

"Winter" I say slowly "that was Langdon. He caught two shifters near our boundary line."

"Oh" she says relieved "so it was just a patrol thing."

"Not quite" I admit, my eyes gazing into hers "their names are Johnathon and Damien. One of them is claiming to be your brother."

I watch the myriad of expressions cross her face. First there's shock, then surprise, then fear, concern, worry and then hope, followed by a small spurt of happiness. Damn it. She's glad to find out he's come all the way here.

"Damien's here" she breathes out excitedly, her eyes dancing "my brother came to find me" she says, hastily standing up and sending water sloshing over the tub. "He must have been so worried" she whispers, almost leaping over the side of the tub in her haste.

I quickly turn the water off and reach for the towel. "Steady" I warn her "we don't know why he's come, and I get you're excited, but I don't want you to get hurt. We'll go see them together."

She clasps her hands together with glee. "My brother wouldn't have come here to hurt me" she says confidently.

Maybe not, I think to myself bitterly, but he had no issues hurting you in the past, or have you forgotten about that already Winter?

Chapter 76 - The Alpha's Rejected Silent Mate

Damien POV

The rogue was nice enough to abandon us near a pack, the boundary line close by. "Goodluck" he muttered and the next thing we knew, he was gone, as though he'd disappeared along with the wind. Damn, he was fast when he wanted to be. Was a damn decent bloke too.

"Lovely" muttered Johnathon, scowling darkly in the direction the rogue had gone.

"He was nice enough to show us the way" I protest "he didn't have to."

"Who's to say he wasn't lying? This could be any random pack. In which case he just wasted our time."

"We won't know until we actually approach the pack" I mutter, walking forward, my hands in my pockets, feeling quite casual while Johnathon continues to swear silently under his breath. Man, how everyone puts up with him as Alpha of his own pack is against me. I'm ready to strangle him with my bare hands, he's been that much of a nuisance and a whinger.

So what if it had taken another two weeks to get here? That was nothing, not if we actually came across Winter. Johnathon needed to lighten up. At least the rogue hadn't killed us and trust me, he'd had plenty of opportunities to attempt it. All he'd asked for in return was food and water, even helping to hunt some food down which we all shared. I'd enjoyed the company, he'd made a nice change from just Johnathon and his constant whining. Not to mention had all sorts of interesting stories to tell. I really felt sorry for the rogue at the end of it. Maybe he'll find a pack to take him in.

A low growl, stopped us both in our tracks. Several large wolves came out of the woodwork so to speak, their heads lowered, their eyes focussed solely on the both of us. We must have been closer to the boundary line than I'd assumed. I held my hands up in surrender, noticing that Johnathon, thankfully, was showing common sense for once and doing the same. One of the wolves shifted, his eyes staring hard at the both of us. I sniff, wondering why I was smelling the most delicious scent of apple and cinnamon coming from him. I'm almost drooling at the man, he looks so fucking god like standing there, naked and completely at ease. What the fuck is going on with me? I'm not into guys. I like chicks. But I'm drawn to this one, like a moth to the flame. My mouth goes dry. The man's eyes are intense, but there's also another expression on his face. It's hard to tell if it's pure anger or something much deeper than that. I can't stop staring at him.

"State your business" the man growls and my wolf purrs in my head.

Oh fuck no, I know what this is. My wolf begins to prance around in my head, almost dancing triumphantly. If I can feel it, shouldn't he be able to feel it as well? If he is, he's doing a damn good job of hiding it from me. Without thinking about it, my mouth pops open and speaks of it's own accord. "Mate" I growl but the man looks away, his jaw clenched tight. My heart sinks.

"You must be mistaken" he mutters lowly but it's enough to anger my wolf.

'Mate" I growl louder, Johnathon looking wildly between me and the man, concern on his face. At least he has the decency to avoid interrupting.

"State your business" the man booms back. I can't believe he's ignoring the mate bond. Bastard.

I scowl at him and then remember the reason that we were here in the first place. "We're here looking for my sister Winter" I say quietly "she's been missing for a few months now and I'm worried about her."

The man is silent for a moment.

"What are your names?" he asks with a raised eyebrow.

"I'm Damien" I say shyly, my wolf pouting in the background.

"I'm Alpha Johnathon" Johnathon says, sounding very arrogant. God could he just act normal for once? Who cares if he's an alpha. He's on someone else's territory.

The man's eyes are glazing over and I can tell he's most probably mind-linking their Alpha, whoever the hell he is. We're so far from my old pack, that I don't even have a clue on what this pack is called, let alone how far away it is from mine. I couldn't tell you who the Alpha was.

"Come with me" the man orders, the other wolves dispersing. He ducks behind a tree and begins to get dressed, rather to my and my wolf's annoyance. We'd enjoyed staring at him naked.

"Wait" I say with annoyance and he stops to glance over at me. Sure he's slightly older than me, but that doesn't explain why he's not acknowledging the mate bond. "Why won't you accept that we are mates?"

He groans out loud. "Now's not the time for that" he snaps "I have to get you to the study for Alpha Kai. We can discuss the mate bond thing later" he hisses and I smirk. Well at least he's willing to discuss it later. I'm not sure what to think. I'd never really dreamed that my mate would be a guy. My mind was in turmoil and I was conflicted over the whole damn thing.

"Is Winter here then?" I ask eagerly and he shoots me a wry look.

"I can't confirm or deny it" he says arrogantly "the Alpha wishes to speak with you, so that's what he'll do."

The pack house is glorious, beautiful with lush gardens and the house itself is huge, a monstrosity. A lot larger than the one in my pack, that's for sure. I guess my pack is small potatoes compared to this one. Even Johnathon seems to be in awe. For once the other boy is speechless.

"My name is Langdon" the man says quietly as he opens the door to the pack house and motions us inside. We enter slowly, our eyes taking in all of the details, the elegance and yet it still seemed really homely. Like a pack house should feel.

"Langdon" I repeat, the name rolling off my tongue. It really seemed to suit the man and I actually liked it, a lot. So did my wolf.

"Down this way" Langdon ordered, leading the way down a corridor that stemmed off the main entranceway. It seemed rather long, but the room he directed us to, was none other than the study.

"Sit" he orders, gesturing at the two armchairs in front of the rather large, impressive desk.

We hastily sit and he stands behind us, his arms folded in front of his chest, scowling. I fidget nervously in my chair.

"They must have Winter, otherwise why go to all this trouble? Besides don't you think they would have shoved us in the dungeon?" Johnathon whispers, leaning back in the chair and looking like he didn't have a care in the world.

"Maybe, or maybe the Alpha wants to tear us a new one for being near his land before taking us prisoner" I say back to him, frustrated beyond belief.

I could tell my mate was listening but not saying anything, which pissed me off even further.

"He wouldn't dare put another Alpha in the dungeon" Johnathon said with certainty.

I wasn't so sure. I figure after meeting Johnathon, the Alpha might be all too willing to throw him in the dungeon, after finding out how annoying the boy was. I really hope he keeps his mouth shut during the meeting.

"How much longer?" I ask, turning around and facing Langdon.

He stares at me. "As long as it takes for Alpha Kai to come down and see you" he spits out "show some respect and wait patiently. He's a very busy man" he adds. Of course he is. Still he was the one who wanted us to wait in the study so you'd think he would hurry the hell up.

Sigh. Johnathon's busy taking the office in, looking out the window and looking at the greenery. "Man you're pack is awesome" he tells a very unimpressed looking Langdon "you've got a sweet operation here."

Thanks Johnathon. I'm sure that impressed Langdon, not. God I hope this Alpha gets here soon, because my hands are itching to wrap themselves around his neck and squeeze until Johnathon's massive head falls off.

I can't help it anymore, the words burst out of my mouth before I can take them back. "Are you going to reject me?" My voice is wavering and I'm near tears. The thought of being rejected was slowly killing me inside. No wonder Winter had run away after Johnathon did what he did. I felt so embarrassed at divulging my feelings like this.

"Reject you" Langdon mutters, sounding surprised. Then his eyes narrowed. "We will discuss this later" he sighs but he doesn't sound as annoyed or angry as before. Instead he sounds remorseful. "I have no intentions of just rejecting you off the bat, if that helps" he says lightly. That does help. My wolf is a lot happier hearing that.

I see Johnathon stiffen in his chair and just know that he's thinking about Winter and how he'd done exactly that. Rejected my poor sister without getting to know her first. I wonder how she's being treated in this pack, whether she's made a home here and if she's being treated kindly. I hope so. I hope she's found what she's been looking for and wanting all these years. Now I feel uncertain. What if Winter didn't message me because she doesn't want me to be in her life anymore? I could have made this trip for nothing.

No, not for nothing, I quickly correct myself. Johnathon and I had made this trip to warn her about Thomas, who we, thankfully, didn't come across. One could only hope he'd gone in the complete opposite and wrong direction. If Winter didn't want me to be in her life, then I would respect her wishes, although that might prove hard, considering my mate was from this pack. If it means keeping my sister happy, then I may have to reject Langdon, or let him reject me. God, that stings, just the thought of it is making tears form in the corner of my eyes.

"Screw this" I hear Johnathon mutter and turn to see him stand up from his chair. "I'm not going to sit around and wait for this bloody Alpha to show up" he snarls "I don't wait for nobody, do you understand."

Fucking great. Of course Johnathon had to get impatient. Are all Alpha's hotheads like this? It's a miracle they survive if they are. I go to put a warning arm on Johnathon's shoulder but he shrugs it off, glaring at Langdon who merely raises an eyebrow and looks nonchalant.

"You will wait as long as it takes" Langdon repeats, rolling his eyes.

"Johnathon for god's sake, we've come all this way. Don't ruin it now, when we're so close to getting answers" I plead with him. "I have to know if Winter's here, can't you just sit for a few more minutes?"

He looks like he wants to protest, but I shoot him a beseeching look and he sighs, plonking back down on the chair and folding his arms across his chest, a pouty look on his face.

"Fine" he sulks.

I swear Langdon is fighting back a grin. Johnathon looks like a sulking schoolboy instead of a big bad Alpha. It's not really something one wants to see. Langdon's eyes glaze over. I guess he's mind-linking someone, because he ushers us to our feet. "Alpha Kai will be in, in a moment. Stand and be respectful" he advises and I give a nod.

Johnathon just shrugs and I almost lose my cool at him. God, at this rate I hope Alpha Kai throws him through a window. Wouldn't that be a sight to see? I can hear footsteps now and frown. It sounds more like two people coming, instead of just one but Langdon just stays silent. They get louder. My heart is thumping in anticipation. Johnathon looks completely unfazed. But I know him better than that. He's just trying to pretend he's cool.

The door bursts open, Langdon shifting out of the way. A pair of feet scurry across and someone throws themselves into my arms. They are light as a feather and I stare down at the face of the girl, I've been hoping to find all this time, as she beams up at me and hugs me tight.

"Winter" I breathe, embracing her tight "thank god, I finally found you" I mutter fervently. Finally, the search was over.

Chapter 77 - The Alpha's Rejected Silent Mate

Winter POV

Kai and I continue to argue with each other as we walk downstairs.

"I just don't understand how you can forgive him for everything so easily. Besides what if this isn't your brother?" he asks looking angry.

I eye him pointedly. "I forgave you everything" I pointed out and he looks taken aback. I have a point though and he knows it.

"I never beat you" he protests. He falls silent at the look on my face. He sighs.

"Look" I say with a sigh, turning to him at the base of the stairs "I know it doesn't make sense to you, but Damien was afraid of our father. He did everything he was told to do, because otherwise our old man would have turned on him. It might not make it right, but try and put yourself in his shoes. If you were afraid of your father, wouldn't you do anything to keep him from being angry at you?"

Kai looks thoughtful, but no less angry. I shrug. He would eventually see reason, maybe after he's met Damien, he'll loosen up somehow. Besides, Damien is my brother and the only family I have.

We approach the study, my footsteps getting louder as I begin to rush in my excitement. I know Langdon is there, guarding my brother and who I'm assuming is Johnathon that's with him. I almost slam the door open and bounce in. Straight away I see it's him, my older brother, standing there with his eyes twinkling at me. I throw myself into his arms, enjoying the way his arms feel around me and his scent. How I've missed him. I don't want to let go of him. But in the end a "ahem" and a loudly cleared throat, forces me to step backwards and look at my mate, who is glaring profusely at poor Johnathon who looks distinctly uncomfortable. I understand my brother coming after me, but why on earth is Johnathon with him?

"Damien" I say quietly "this is my mate, Alpha Kai. Kai this is my brother Damien and his friend Johnathon."

"Nice to meet you" Kai says between gritted teeth and I shake my head at him, my eyes warning him to be kind.

Kai shakes their hands and I notice both Damien and Johnathon wince. Is he squeezing their hands hard, eliciting a warning of his own towards them?

Kai lets go and strides to his seat behind the desk while I perch on the corner, absolutely beaming at the both of them.

"I can't believe you're both here" I gush and Damien sits down tentatively while Johnathon's more relaxed, plonking himself down.

"I can't believe you can talk" Damien says in awe, staring at me wide eyed. "It's like listening to music" he adds and I grin at him. He was always a charmer when he wanted to be. Even though I swear my voice is nothing like music.

I wonder about Langdon though. He looks like he's swallowed a bunch of sour grapes. His arms are folded across his chest and he hasn't made a single move, let alone cracked a smile. Hmm there's a story to that. Especially since Damien's eyes keep shooting to look at him over his shoulder. That's very interesting. I have an inkling of what might be the problem, but that's something to bring up later.

"Let's cut to the chase, shall we" Kai growls as I stiffen. "You better have a good reason for coming here because if I so much as think your trying to bullshit me, I'll throw your sorry asses in the dungeon."

I scowl at him.

However that made the two boys blink and sit upright.

"I came because I was looking for my sister" Damien says huffily "do you have any idea how worried I've been? You've been gone for months and I hadn't heard from you" he exhales. Man he sounds pissed. His concern is touching. I hadn't realised I'd worried him so much. Or maybe I hadn't realised how much he actually cared.

"I was worried about her too" Johnathon says sourly from his own chair. I almost laugh in amusement. He sounds like a petulant child.

"I'm sorry Damien" I apologise softly "I was going to write you when I was fully settled in, I just have been busy" I add hastily.

Yes, busy. Busy not being killed and dealing with a stubborn jack ass of a mate who refused to reject me. I somehow don't think it's appropriate to bring that up to Damien. The last thing I need is a fight between my mate and my brother.

Damien's eyes darken. Is he that angry at me? Why the hell was Johnathon here anyway. The last I'd heard we were officially no longer mates. Maybe him and Damien had become good friends in my absence. It's the only explanation I can think of at any rate.

"We can get to that later" Damien says slowly "Johnathon and I came here for another reason as well. You're in danger Winter" he says and I look at him confused. In danger from what?

I'm safe, aren't I? Candice is finally dead. I can finally breathe and relax. I begin to hyperventilate. No, no, whatever this was, it couldn't be too serious. Kai would keep me safe. Damien as well. All I need to do is clarify what he means by danger, but Kai gets to it first.

"Explain yourself" Kai hisses and Johnathon glowers at the man. Geez, what is his problem.

Langdon at least, has dropped his arms and sidled closer, his hands going to the back of the chair that my brother Damien is sitting in. Damien fidgets slightly and I swear there's a flush on his face. I hold back a smile.

"Winter, I don't want you to freak out" Damien says nervously.

It's a little too late for that, I want to scream out. Tell me already. Tell me, damn you.

"Well Thomas isn't dead, Winter."

Thomas isn't dead. Thomas isn't dead. Thomas isn't dead. The words keep repeating themselves in my mind and I'm at a complete loss. Of course Thomas is dead, I killed him myself. I hadn't meant to, it was self-defence but he was very clearly dead. Damien had to be mistaken.

I give a short laugh as Kai surveys me. "Good one Damien" I say forcing my voice to sound light "but not a funny joke, don't you think."

He looks apologetically at me. "Winter, Thomas is alive. I saw him with my own eyes."

I can feel myself shaking now. "Not possible Damien, he's dead. There was no coming back from what I did. It's impossible, now stop, the joke isn't funny."

Kai pulls me onto his lap, stroking my hair as I turn into him, gripping his arms tightly. I can't even bring myself to look at my brother anymore.

Johnathon speaks up "it's true. He's no longer just a shifter either, he's a hybrid."

No, no, no that was impossible. How on earth did he become a hybrid. There's only one race that would have saved Thomas and that would have been a vampire. It's a miracle he survived the transformation.

Kai continues to soothe me. "It's alright Winter, we'll be alright. I'll protect you."

But I can't help it, beginning to sob on his shoulder.

I can't deal. I just can't. Candice is finally gone and now someone else is after me. Why can't I just be left alone?

"What's he a hybrid of?" asks Kai calmly.

"Vampire and shifter" Damien says bitterly "apparently money does buy everything."

"That's a potent combination, especially when you're not born one. It's amazing he lived through the transition" Kai says with a murmur.

"We didn't mean to distress you like this" Johnathon says as I slowly turn and look at him "but we wanted to warn you before it was too late."

"I don't get it" I shout, now feeling myself growing angry "what does he want? What is it that he has to have so badly that he can't leave well enough alone? Is it revenge he wants, for killing him?" I trail off and see my brother and Johnathon go pale. I'm trembling all over now and still they stare at me. Somebody speak, I beg in my mind, speak.

"He wants you Winter, but not for revenge" Damien says finally.

"He's still obsessed with you" Johnathon says above a whisper and I stare at them both, tears trailing down my cheeks.

I knew full well how obsessed Thomas had been with me, but now it seemed much worse. I'm terrified and it shows.

"Winter look at me" Kai says sternly, and I turn my head around, my eyes meeting his which is pitch black. "You are safe here, he will not get his hands on you, not ever. I will protect you. Stop panicking sweetheart" he said, kissing me on the cheek. It works. I begin to relax. I'm in a strong pack with strong warriors. Thomas won't stand a chance if he attempts to get at me. Not to mention this time I have my wolf.

Exactly right girl. We kick ass. You're bigger now, stronger. Did I tell you that Johnathon looks hot right now?

Sabriel, Thomas is on his way to find us and you're still checking out other men?

I'm not blind Winter, I appreciated beauty when it's right in front of me. Like smelling the roses, sort of.

Um, it's nothing like that. Johnathon rejected me remember?

Oh yeah, my bad. How about after this we pee on him?

Um, no thanks Sabriel.

Bite him in the ass?

Tempting but still no.

Kick him in the man bits?

Also no.

Change his shampoo to hair dye so it goes a purple colour?

No idea how you came up with that one, but still a no. Let's just leave him alone.

Fine, you never let me have any fun.

You'll survive Sabriel.

"We should increase the patrol" Kai was instructing Langdon who was standing there nodding, mind-linking as they spoke. "No one gets near the boundary line without being thrown in the dungeon" he growls "and" he adds looking at Damien "anyone that matches this Thomas's description is to be killed on sight. Is that clear?"

"Yes Alpha Kai" Langdon says obediently.

"As for the both of you" he says darkly, shooting Damien and Johnathon a black look "if it were up to me, you'd both have your hides in the dungeon right now. It's only because Winter has requested that I don't, that's saved you from it."

They both went quiet and silent.

"Kai" I say sweetly "I would really like for my brother and I to catch up some. Do you think you could give Johnathon a tour of the grounds? Show him the pack house."

Johnathon looks annoyed but I could care less. Kai looks just as pissed.

"I can do that" Kai says between gritted teeth "but if he so much as does anything that upsets you" he growls pointing at Damien.

"He won't" I promise.

Kai gets up, pecks me on the forehead and looks at Johnathon with a scowl on his face. "You're coming with me" he snaps and irritably stomps out of the room.

Johnathon hesitates but something in my face must have told him to leave, because he gives a long suffering sigh and follows Kai out the door. Good, one less thing I need to worry about.

Langdon is still there and looks hesitant. I don't even worry about it, blurting out what I know must be the truth. "You two are mates aren't you?" I ask.

Langdon blushes. "Yes" he mutters, looking away.

I couldn't be more thrilled but I also know that Langdon is going through stuff right now, especially as that bitch Candice was his first mate. Damien just looks concerned.

"I couldn't be happier" I declare "but I also think you need to work out what you both want. Damien" I tell him with a wicked grin "you and I can get to catch up with each other another time. But right now, I think you and Langdon need to have a proper discussion. Langdon" I say turning to the man who looks startled "don't let your past mate, ruin what could be a good thing. Let her stay in the past where she belongs." He gives a small nod.

"Damien" I say lightly "you so much as upset Langdon a little bit and I will throw your ass in the dungeon. Langdon deserves to be treated respectfully and I suggest you remember that" I say, a deadly look on my face as my brother stares at me and gulps.

"I'll remember" Damien whispers and I give a smile of satisfaction.

"Fantastic" I beam "then I'll see you both at dinner. We're all going to eat as a family."

Langdon is about to protest then thinks better of it. I head to the doorway and give them a casual wave. "See you later" I sing out and leave the both of them staring at each other, completely speechless.

Chapter 78 - The Alpha's Rejected Silent Mate

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 over head, 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 commonsense 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 focussed 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 realise 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 realised 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 colour 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."

Chapter 79 - The Alpha's Rejected Silent Mate

Damien POV

When the door closes to the study, I eye Langdon with uncertainty in my gaze. He looks so powerful, so handsome and was slightly older than me. I have no idea what to think or feel. I always thought my mate would be a girl, a woman. I never, in a hundred years would ever have thought my mate would be a male. But what stung the most, was that my mate didn't even seem to want me, or like me very much at all. I hadn't anticipated this when I went searching for Winter, and now that I've found her, I have another issue to deal with. Why is life so difficult sometimes? Heck I don't even know if I want to be mates with a male. But my wolf is going berserk in my mind. He refuses to reject our new mate. Part of me, a small part, doesn't want to either. I'm so confused.

Langdon peels away from his stance by the door and reluctantly sits down next to me. He looks a bit annoyed and I bite my lip. Is he angry at me? Like it's my fault this has happened? He eyes me with a sidelong glance.

"Listen kid" he mutters and my temper flares.

"I'm not a kid" I snap "I'm an adult and I'd thank you to remember that." The audacity of him!

He shrugs. "I don't know what to do about the whole mate thing either" he says slowly "I mean, I wasn't expecting it to be a man or a teenage boy at that. I'm still getting over my first mate" he explains to me. I wince.

That hurts. The knowledge that I'm not even his first mate. That he's already had one. But if that's the case what happened to them? Clearly it hadn't been a male.

"What happened to her?" I ask and his eyes go hooded for a moment, as though he's debating with himself on what to tell me.

"She rejected me" he exhales and my eyes widen in shock. What kind of insane person would let this beautiful hunk of male, slip through their fingers.

"Why?" I ask timidly. God, this is hell. I'm normally so confident. He looks away for a moment.

"She didn't want to be the Beta's mate, when she could have a chance on being Luna of the pack. She pursued Alpha Kai instead" he admitted lowly. I feel a pang of sympathy for him.

My god. What a bitch, I think to myself sourly. That must have been so painful for Langdon as well. To see his mate everyday with his Alpha, right in his face like that. It's a wonder he didn't go insane with jealousy, even if the mate bond had been severed. No one should have to go through something like that.

"You should know" he says, staring directly into my eyes "that she tried to kill Winter numerous times. She almost succeeded. My mate was that desperate to be Luna."

I stay silent. I'm angry that someone's tried to kill Winter, but I also can't blame Langdon for his mate's choices. It's not like he had encouraged his mate to do any of it. I feel so bad for him. The pain he must be feeling inside right now, and then having to deal with yet another mate he's not sure about. One that's male as well.

"Is that why you don't want to be mates?" I ask shyly and he looks away, avoiding my stare.

He runs a hand through his hair in frustration. "It's not that I don't want to be mates" he bursts out, as my heart swells with happiness "it's just, I don't know. You're a man" he points out. Well isn't that obvious, I think annoyed.

Yes I'm a man. I'm still coming to grips with the fact my mate is as well, but there's a small part of me that wants to try and see where this leads. Maybe he feels the same.

"I know I'm a man, but does that even matter. Doesn't this happen all the time in packs? Male shifters finding their mates amongst other males?" I ask.

"It does" he says lowly "there's a few in this pack in fact."

"Then why are you so scared?" I push "are you ashamed of being with me? Ashamed of being with another man? Are you some sort of homophobe?"

Okay, even I know that was hitting below the belt. But I need to get some sort of reaction from him. I'm getting angry now.

It seems to work. Now he looks angry. "I'm not a homophobe" he spits out "I'm trying to adjust to the idea, that's all. I would never be what you just accused me of being."

I shrug. It seems to incense him further. "You have no idea what kind of man I am" he growls and I watch in fascination as his eyes begin to flicker between dark and normal. His wolf must be dangerously close to the surface. It means I'm getting somewhere.

"Maybe I want to find out" I point out, staring at him challengingly.

He cocks his head at me. "What if I scare you?" he hisses "what if I'm too much for you to handle?"

I almost laugh but keep it to myself. Now he's trying to frighten me away and it's not going to work.

"I'm not afraid of you" I answer honestly and he looks disappointed. I wonder what else he's going to try to get me to either reject him or leave.

"Maybe you should be" he says with a catch in his throat. Now he just looks miserable.

I shake my head and move closer, my eyes staring into his as he gulps, seeing his adam's apple move up and down in his nervousness.

"Maybe I just want to get to know you a little better" I breath and watch his body as it begins to wriggle in the chair uncomfortably. "Maybe this could lead somewhere" I continue persuasively "but we'll never know if we don't' give this a try. What do we have to lose?"

He looks thoughtful and slightly impressed with me. Because I haven't run away from him? Or because I'm pushing back despite his objections? He seems to be wrestling with himself now. Some sort of internal conflict. Debating with himself. Suddenly his eyes narrow on me and I feel him move closer to me, his eyes never moving from my face. My breath hitches.

God, I can smell his intoxicating scent wash all over me. It's like an aphrodisiac. My heart is thudding wildly in my chest. He looks so serious now. His muscles ripple underneath his shirt as he stands, overtowering me and making me sit back in my seat, feeling slightly apprehensive. He smirks now. Looks dangerously in control of himself and his emotions. He reaches down and pulls me upright, kicking the chair from behind me and sending it slamming into the wall.

I feel like I can't breathe. He's so intense and his eyes are pinning me down. His arms begin to caress and grip mine, sparks and tingles flying throughout my body. His eyes are incredibly dark now, a fierce expression on his handsome face. I shudder, feeling his breath on my skin as he bends his head, mine raising to meet his.

His lips are incredibly soft. That's the first thing I notice as they descend onto mine, before they become more hungry, like he's trying to devour me. His arms move to my waist and grip me tight. I feel like I'm swimming underwater. His tongue slowly caresses along my mouth, demanding access and I give it to him, moaning as my lips open and his tongue delves inside. He begins to caress my own, forcing my mouth even wider as he plunders me, my hands reaching up of their own accord and twining around his hair, my body beginning to press hard against his. It wants more, it's craving more.

Oh god. I can feel his arousal pressing into my leg. He's hard as a rock, but to be fair, my own cock is twitching and becoming hard, the more we kiss, the more I feel myself losing control. My hand lets go of his hair and begins to trail down his chest and slowly come up his shirt. I can feel his bare skin against my hand and his taut muscles. God, my body is trembling and I'm so horny I'm almost ready to throw him on the floor and ravish him. I'm not sure how much of this I can stand. He doesn't look like he's faring any better.

"Langdon" I moan and he gives a low growl deep in his throat.

"Say it again" he hisses "say my name again."

"Langdon" I repeat and then I feel his hands grip my waist, lifting me effortlessly, sitting me on the desk, without breaking the kiss. I shudder and quiver, my whole body aflame.

His hand moves under my shirt and feels me along my abdomen as I lean into him.

"So delicious" he's muttering and I stiffen, feeling his hand slowly move underneath the waistband of my pants.

I pant, my cock becoming erect as he slowly slides his hand towards my boxers. I wriggle in pleasure on the desk. At this rate we're going to end up doing it on the desk and while my wolf more than wants it, I really think my first time should be a little more private.

"Langdon" I gasp, peeling away from him reluctantly. "I'm not ready for..." I trail off helplessly and he seems to understand, his hand slowly coming back up from underneath my waistband, while letting go of my hair with the other one. He seems to be a little dazed, disoriented. But there's a wide smile on his face and his eyes are twinkling. I on the other hand feel like I'm gasping for air, like I can't get enough oxygen.

"Fuck" he mutters shakily, eyeing me with concern. "Did I go too far?" he asks sounding worried.

I shake my head. I let him go that far and if I hadn't stopped him, I would have let him go even further. "No" I answer honestly.

He gives a broad grin. "I think we can safely say that we have chemistry. "

Oh boy, do we have chemistry.

"So what do we do now?" I ask feeling completely out of my depth.

He eyeballs me. "What do you want to do?"

What do I want? Christ, after that makeout session all I want is to be with him. Even now, I can't stop staring at his lips and his tussled hair. I take a deep breath "I want to see where this goes, that is if you're willing to try."

He laughs out loud. I feel slightly hurt. Does this mean he has no intentions of trying? But then he explains "I want nothing more than to see where this goes. But I have conditions" he says firmly.

"Name them."

"I want you to stay with me in my house" he says and my heart skips a beat. "I also want you in my bedroom" he adds.

My head is swimming. He wants me to stay with him? I'd been planning on staying in the pack house with Winter, but to be fair she did have her own mate to contend with and I'm not naive enough to think that they're staying in separate bedrooms. It might be a good idea to have some space between us.

"Deal" I say decisively "I think it's a good idea" I add. He looks pleased.

"I think it's a good idea" a voice sings out as they come crashing through the study door. Winter looks at the both of us, taking in our dishevelled hair and clothes, the puffy lips, the way we're staring at each other, and gives a small laugh.

"You're both so cute" she beams "I'm so happy for you both" she adds. Then gives us a wicked grin, Kai and Johnathon peering in with curiosity on their faces "let's go and get some dinner now and catch up properly" she exclaims, fairly bouncing back out the door.

I stifle a grin. Winter's excitement is contagious and to my shock, Langdon takes hold of my hand and begins to lead me towards the dining room. I say nothing, just enjoying the feeling of him holding my hand. Maybe this will work out after all then.

Chapter 80 - The Alpha's Rejected Silent Mate

Johnathon 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 its 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 worst.

"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.