

CHAPTER 12

Jonathan POV

I head back to my next class, listening to my wolf's growls and protests, pushing them aside. But something doesn't feel right to me. Why did she look so defeated back there, as though she'd been expecting to be rejected? Mates generally stayed together and I felt a pang as I remembered the sad look in her eyes. She'd looked so broken and I had helped make her that way.

The class seemed to take forever and, to be honest, I had no clue what subject I was currently in, let alone did I care. All I could think about was her and the niggling feeling in my gut. Something was wrong, I could feel it and my wolf could sense it. The bell couldn't ring fast enough for me and, to my dismay, I was held back by the teacher, who had a serious look on his face.

"Johnathon, I understand you're the alpha, but that doesn't mean not paying attention in class," he said gravely, and I glowered at him, causing him to take a step back. My eyes turn pitch black in a warning and he babbles something at me and then lets me go.

I've never moved faster in my life, packing up my things and dashing out the door. I'll just look in on her and then go home. I say to myself and my wolf says nothing, instead telling me to run. I remember the last place I'd seen her and make a run to her classroom, surprised to see a crowd of cheerleaders coming out of the room, smug looks on their bitchy faces. Almost as though they had done something. When they see me, they scatter, making me even more suspicious as I open the classroom door, blood draining out of my face as I see her.

Winter had clearly been beaten, holding her ribs and I watched how she trembled as she got to her feet. I should have moved quicker, and reacted, because before I could do anything she fell down again in front of me as I roared "Somebody get a doctor here now" at the top of my Alpha tone, sending students and teachers scurrying to do just that. I kneel in front of Winter and push back the hair covering her face, my heart breaking in two as I stare at the poor girl and her bruised face. She looks so childlike in that instance, so fragile, and I quietly pick her up and cradle her against my chest. Why she barely weighs anything at all, I noticed absently as I maneuvered her carefully out of the classroom with me.

A nurse comes running and stops as she stares at me and Winter. I growl at her and she blinks. "Follow me," she says, and I follow, my legs feeling like dead weights as we go into the nurse's room. "Put her on the bed" the nurse instructs, and I carefully place Winter down, gently, not wanting to hurt her. She still hasn't woken up.

The nurse comes up beside me and gasps as she takes in Winter's condition, "What happened" she exclaimed, and I give a helpless shrug.

"I don't know," I said grimly, "but I intend to find out. "

The nurse hesitates. "I need to look her over," she says slowly, and I raise my eyebrows at her, refusing to move and she sighs, unable to order an Alpha away.

I watch as the nurse slowly peels her shirt and jumper up, exposing her body. I could cry at the number of injuries and bruises on her body. The nurse blinks back a tear.

"Those aren't all new" I growled and the nurse nodded.

"Some of these are older than others" she agrees, "as though she's been beaten a few times. The poor girl, I had no idea," she said, shaking her head.

The nurse tenderly feels across her ribcage and I watch in shock as Winter's eyes suddenly open as she inhales in shock.

"Ouch" she cries and the nurse profusely apologizes.

"I'm so sorry," she says, and Winter just nods, a tear trickling down her pale cheek. Without thinking, I wiped it away, trailing my finger down her cheek.

"Winter, I need to examine you. Can you tell me where it hurts", the nurse asks, and Winter points to her ribs, looking exhausted and going quiet.

The nurse felt her ribs and I flinch as Winter cries out from the pain, feeling helpless, wishing like anything I can take her in my arms and comfort her but knowing that I have no right to do so. Not after I'd rejected her.

"You have some broken ribs," the nurse says quietly. "I think it's best you go to the hospital. "

I agree, am about to offer to take her, anything to help her in some small way when she shakes her head and bites her lip.

"I'll heal" she murmurs and my mouth falls open. What kind of person refuses to go to a hospital? My wolf is becoming angry at her and so am I.

"You don't have a choice", I snap with all the anger in my voice I can muster and feel contempt at myself when she jumps startled, and winces. I didn't mean to make her do that.

"I don't have time", she argues, and I refuse to listen to her.

"Not good enough," I say and fold my arms, staring at her intently as she blushes and stares down at the ground.

The nurse hesitated. "Winter, sweetheart, you have a lot of older bruises on your body. Is someone hurting you?"

Something flashes across Winter's face so quickly that I almost miss it.

"No," she says hastily and I know instinctively that she's lying. The nurse knows it too from the look on her face, but she decides not to push. That's alright because I'll be pushing to know the truth once I've gotten this stubborn girl to the hospital.

"Hospital" I growled, and the nurse turned towards me.

"She'll need to lie down in the car and you'll have to drive slow or she could get hurt even more than she already is", she advises me, and I nod grimly. I glare at Winter. "Stay here", I snap using my Alpha tone. It's the only way I can guarantee she won't leave while I fetch my car. Without another word, I headed outside, rushing to my car. If I have to drag her inside the hospital, I will.