

CHAPTER 18

Winter POV

It's just a dream, it's just a dream, I chanted to myself in my head, forcing my eyes, which feel really gritty, open, only to see nothing more than darkness surrounding me. Wherever I am, there's not much light to see. My head is fucking throbbing and I wince as I try to move my arms and legs to no avail. Something was chaffing and I looked down to see that I was firmly tied to a chair, my legs tied to the legs and my arms behind me. I swear, but it's muffled by the gag that's been shoved in my mouth and tied around my head.

"Mmmm" I cry out, but there's no answer and my eyes scan whatever the hell this room is for any sign of escape. It appears to be a basement of some sort, the floor a hard concrete, various pieces of furniture in states of decay. The air smells disgusting and moldy and I try not to inhale too much. There's nothing that I can use to free myself and I feel sick to my stomach.

Even on the saddest of days, I had never once thought my father was capable of selling me to someone for money. I thought maybe, in the smallest bit of his heart, he might have actually given some sort of damn about me. How naive was I? He'd never forgiven me for mother's death and if he wanted to destroy any love I might have had for him, this was the way to do it. I shove frantically at the chair, scraping it across the floor, and curse at the noise it makes. Maybe there's something in one of the drawers of the various furniture that might have something useful.

But as I'm moving, something catches the corner of my eye and I whip my head around and begin to feel a rising sense of panic. There's a bed in the room, something that might be unremarkable considering all of the other bits of furniture in the basement, but it's almost new, and it's made up. Why would a bed be made up in the basement? There was only one answer that came to mind and it wasn't a good one. I need to get out of here and God I need to do it quickly. There was no telling when whoever had bought me would come back.

I scrape the chair as I sort of drag it with my body, careful not to tip over and fall. It makes a racket, but I'm past the point of caring. My only focus is getting out of here before it's too late. I can't count on anyone to save me. The desk I make it too is empty, or at least it feels like that, it's kinda difficult to see properly and feel with hands that don't have much give. I wonder about using the corner of the desk to rub the ropes against, but it would take forever, and even attempting to undo the knots isn't working.

I try to scream for help but the gag just muffles everything I try and my lungs get full of dust which makes me heave and cough. I'm terrified. I'm all alone and I don't know if I'm even in the same town, let alone if I'm close to the pack house. I don't even know how long I've been out for. What if I was taken to a different town? Would my brother Damien come looking for me or would father lie to him? Probably the latter.

I feel tears well up in my eyes and I break down crying, sniveling as I wait for the inevitable. I know what the person who bought me plans to do to me and it's the last way I imagined losing my innocence. Bile rises in my throat. Finally, there was only one other thing I could think of, and with my eyes scrunched closed so I couldn't talk my way out of it, I tipped myself sideways and let the chair fall, hoping that it might make it easier to get out of my restraints.

Success. The ropes seem to be slightly looser and I wiggle and pull and tug as hard as I can to try to undo the knots. I feel the tiniest bit of hope

as they begin to get slack. Way to go Winter, I cheer myself on, ignoring the chafing on my wrists and the feeling of my skin peeling off as I tug at the ropes. I can deal with the pain later. Right now, I was focused on getting these damn ropes off and then untying my legs.

I groan as the ropes come off and wriggle my wrists around as the blood begins to circulate again. God, it hurts, it's excruciating as the numbness fades and the pain begins. I reach around, my shoulders protesting, and begin to untie my ankles, which are just as tight and just as annoying to get undone. Sitting doesn't make it easier, and I'm forced to stay lying down as I tug and pull, swearing to myself. I take the gag off and am about to call out for help when I stop. If I called out, he, whoever he was, would hear me. For all I knew, he was upstairs waiting for me to wake up. So, I keep silent and the ropes begin to slacken and then finally pull off, leaving me free to get to my feet, which are full of pins and needles.

I can't believe I've done it. I searched the room for any windows or doors besides the exit and found none. There's only one way out of this room and that's to go up. A weapon would be useful, but I'm not about to waste time searching. I start to climb the stairs, clutching the banister for support as I make my way up, placing my feet as lightly as possible and praying they don't creak. The door is unlocked and after debating with myself, I slowly turn the handle and poke my head out. There's no one waiting on the other side and I begin to creep out, closing the door gently behind me.

I'm in some sort of mansion, the rooms are huge and I can see the front door, my excitement rising. In fact, I'm so damn excited that I threw away any sense of caution in my mad dash to get to the door. However, before I can put my hand on the doorknob, I hear a strange clicking sound behind me, one that makes my whole body go tense and still. I would know that noise anywhere. It was the clicking sound of a gun and I had no doubt it was aimed at me. I stopped instantly, letting my hand drop down to my side.

"Turn around" the voice growls and I frown. It sounds oddly familiar to me, as though I know the person it belongs to. I turn, slowly, petrified of who I'm going to come face to face with, and when I do, it's all I can do not to scream, astonished at the person who would be my ruination.