

## CHAPTER 30

Damien POV

Something's wrong, I can sense it, but I can also see by the expression on Winter's face that today hasn't gone as well as I'd hoped, even with myself and Johnathon looking over her. She's so quiet, walking slowly back to the car. She hasn't even looked me in the eyes, not once, and I feel concerned about her. Had something bad happened to her today? I'd struggled to find her at lunch, having looked in the cafeteria and then outside. Apparently, Johnathon had been doing the same thing. I hadn't considered the fact that Winter wouldn't have come and got me, or that she would sit outside, especially with the loss of her voice.

I want to ask, demand answers, but she stares out the window and I sigh, starting the car. Maybe she will write down everything when we get back home.

"Winter," I say quietly while driving, and she finally looks right at me as I ponder the words to say. I don't want to upset her. "Did something happen?"

She fidgets with her hands and stares down at the floor, tentatively shaking her head. I sigh. She's always been a terrible liar. Clearly, there was something she wasn't telling me.

"Winter, were you hurt?"

She shakes her head more adamantly. I wish I could believe her but there's such a look on her face, it's clear she's trying to hide something from me. I just wish she trusted me enough to tell me what it was.

We pull into the driveway and she almost scrambles out of her side, rushing to the front door and pulling on the handle. I raised my eyebrows. Ever since father was conveniently taken by Johnathon's men, I'd been locking the door. We didn't have to worry about father coming back, but I was still worried about our safety. I take my time getting out of the car as she waits for me, her arms folded, looking impatient.

"I'm coming, I'm coming" I grumble and she stamps one foot on the ground. I pull out the front door key from my pocket and unlock the door, pushing it open and watching as she almost bolts upstairs. I debate whether to go after her and decide it might be best to let her have some space.

I closed the door and locked it from the inside, going into the kitchen and staring miserably at the contents. There's barely anything in the refrigerator and I curse. It looks like I'll have to start picking up some hours at my casual job. Especially if I want to keep myself and Winter fed with a roof over our heads.

My phone rings and I absently answer it, holding it to my ear as I rifle through cupboards.

"Did she make it home safe?" the voice asks and I roll my eyes. Of course, it's Johnathon. He'd practically forced me to give him my phone number. Stupid Alpha tone that you can't ignore, I think with a huff. He used it to his advantage.

"Yes, she's made it home," I said, a little irritable. As if I can't take care of my own sister, I think a tad sarcastically.

"Good" he exhales and pauses for a moment "how is she?"

He sounds as if he genuinely cares and all I can think about is how he rejected her. He seems remorseful now.

"I don't know," I said a little ungraciously, "she seems to be alright but she won't write to me about today and I think something must have happened."  
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I glanced up at the stairs and lowered my voice. "She's hiding something."

"Keep an eye on her" he instructs, and I almost want to swear at him. What did he think I was going to do? Leave her alone. I wasn't even that stupid.

"Right well I need to go", I snapped, and before he could answer, I hung up the phone. It's takeout tonight, I decided, looking around the dismal kitchen and shuddering. The whole house still smells like dad and I begin to open up some windows and let some fresh air in. The whole place still reeks of alcohol and cigarettes. It will take months before it smells nice again. I guess I'll have to start cleaning the house properly at some stage. Winter can help.

I glanced upstairs. She still hadn't come down and I slowly walked upwards. I try to be as quiet as I can. For all I know, she's showering and that's why she's taking so long, but as I walk down the hallway, I hear something surprising, something I wasn't expecting to hear. It's a strange noise and I know it's because she's mute, but there's no mistaking it. It's muffled but I still make it out. She's crying to herself and I find myself on the other side of the door, hand up to knock and hesitating. She'd clearly come up to her room to cry and I didn't know what to do. Do I knock on the door and go inside or do I leave her to cry? I'm not good with crying females and I feel slightly panicked the more I hesitate.

Finally, I can't stand it anymore. I knock and then barrel inside. It's not like she can answer anyway and she turns to look at me startled, tears flowing down her pale cheeks. I knelt, taking her face in my hands. "Winter", I said quietly, "whatever it is you know you can talk to me, right? I'm not going to abandon you; I just want you to trust me enough to tell me what's wrong."

She reaches over and hastily grabs her notebook, scribbling something inside.

It's not that I don't trust you, it's that I can't tell you. Sorry Damien

She stares at me with those big blue eyes of hers as I read. I got back up and walked to the doorway. I'm not going to push. "Well, when you're ready, come downstairs, I'm ordering takeout for dinner again. "

I walked downstairs with a heavy heart. I no sooner closed the door before my little sister started weeping again, and my heart gave a pang. What is it that's making her act this way and making her so miserable? It's times like these that I wish mother was still alive, she would know how to comfort Winter in a heartbeat. She'd always been good with us as children. Whereas I feel useless as the older brother who's clearly out of his depth when it comes to helping or comforting my little sister.