

CHAPTER 32

Winter POV

It's the day before my eighteenth birthday and it completely slipped Damien's mind. He's been too upset and distraught over the fact I'll never speak again, to even give it a thought. Johnathon continues to slip through the corridors and follow me from class to class. If he wasn't an Alpha, he'd be in detention for being so late to his own. That also reminds me. I wonder how on earth he was expelled from two other schools. Who would dare expel an Alpha? It boggles my mind.

I'm so busy staring out the window, lost in my daydreams and plotting, that I fail to notice the last school bell has rung and that everyone, almost everyone, has left. Except for me. How could I have been so stupid? The only reason Jessica and her cronies had stayed away was because of Johnathon and Damien. Everyone had noticed them following me. I gulp as I look at her and the small group of friends that have gathered in a crowd around my desk. Where the hell was Johnathon and Damien when I actually needed them for heaven's sake?

Jessica leans over, her long blonde hair trailing over her shoulder as she pushes it back impatiently. "You know you never got punished for Killing Thomas" she murmurs to me, "the police just let it go but I know that you're a murderer. Thomas was our friend and because of you he's dead" she snaps, her eyes flashing black for a moment. Just like me, she's close to her eighteenth birthday and her wolf is dangerously close to the surface.

I shake my head. Thomas deserved to die. I wanted to cry out, protest, after everything he'd tried to do to me. But, of course, I can't utter a sound as she laughs and motions toward her group.

"Get her" she orders, and I push back my chair and try to run, muffled screaming coming from my mouth as someone pulls at my hair, dragging me to the floor, my back hitting the hard wooden floor. They drag me to the doorway and I glance through, my heart sinking as I see the corridor is completely deserted.

"Your brother and Damien have been delayed for a bit", Jessica laughs and I flinch. She knew exactly what I was thinking, but what would have distracted them both from coming to my side? It had to have been something extremely important.

One of the boys, whose name, I strangely don't remember, grabs me and roughly begins to shove me toward the door. The girls surround me and I'm stuck, going in the direction they are motioning to. I start to panic, my chest heaving frantically, as I see where we are going. The forest where the trees will hide me from sight and I wave my arms wildly, kicking and scratching as they pull me with them until we are a fair distance inside.

Ouch. That stung. Jessica took great delight in kicking me to the ground, my body rolling on the hard wooden dirt, leaves, and debris all over me and even tangled in my hair as I lay there, looking up at them all as they gathered in a circle around me. They are all smiling and enjoying this. No compassion or empathy in them at all.

"We decided we would punish you for murdering Thomas, seeing that the police aren't interested."

I began to shake in fear. What was this? Clearly, it was revenge and it was going to be brutal. I had no doubts about that.

Another kick and I curled up into a fetal position, each of them taking turns to kick or spit on me. It's the most humiliating and degrading experience of my life and tears flow down my cheeks. Why can't I just be left alone? I'm so close to leaving all of this behind me. One more night and I would have been gone from their lives forever.

Something glints in the light and my eyes, which are bleary and narrowed, focus on a dagger being held by Jessica. She's wearing gloves and I know instinctively that means the blade is a silver blade. I flinch and crawl backward, scrapes and bruises stinging all over my body, my shirt and pants covered in dirt, and even some of my blood splatter.

"Mmmm" I tried to say. But this just makes them giggle.

"Do it already. Her brother and fucking Johnathon will be here soon. Come on" the other boy urged, looking over his shoulder nervously. I glare at them all, the girls pushing me back down, every time I try to get to my feet.

There's a broad smile on Jessica's face and it's chilling to see. I feel cold inside, numb. As though I'm not even inside my body but outside of it, watching everything going on at a distance.

"Hold her" she snaps and both boys drag me upright, holding me firmly as I struggle wildly, watching Jessica approach, the blade glinting in the sunlight.

She stops right in front of my face and, with no hesitation, she drives it into my thigh, my screams muffled as the silver begins to burn my flesh. God, it hurt. It was excruciating and made worse by the fact she kept it there, instead of yanking it out straight away.

I whimper. She yanks the dagger out and then looks at my ribcage, a calculating look in her eyes. She stabs me and the only reason I'm up right now is that the boys are holding me up, otherwise I would have collapsed to the floor in pain right now.

"This is for Thomas" Jessica whispers furiously, as I stare at her weakly, blood dripping down my body, the dagger held securely in her palm. "This is for turning Damien against me" she utters, stabbing me again "and this" she hisses, my body slumping now, the boys loosening their grip as they realize I'm barely conscious "is because Johnathon still wants you, you

pathetic little bitch" she finishes with one last stab. She pulls it out, the boys leaving me to collapse on the floor, my hands pressed against my wounds. She spits at me one last time and the others follow suit. Then I hear them leaving as I gasp for breath, my breath coming in short spurts as I try to drag in oxygen.

I struggled to my feet. I could go back and tell Damien what happened, or I could bring my plan forward a notch. I'm afraid they might come back and even though I feel myself staggering and barely holding on, I start to walk even further into the forest. No one knows it but there's a cave nearby, one that I've found and spent time in whenever I need sanctuary and that's where I head to now. I need somewhere to hide and the stream close by will hide my scent. All I have to do is get there and make sure that my blood trail doesn't betray me. Sorry, Damien, I think hazily to myself, I just can't take it anymore. You'll forgive me for this one day. Or at least I hope he will, as I use the trees to steady myself, forcing each step forward. Just a little more and I can rest. Just a little more.