

CHAPTER 5

Jonathan POV

My mother is standing in my doorway, and I roll my eyes and mutter something under my breath “geez can’t she leave me alone?” knowing she can plainly hear me. Good, because right now she’s being her usual annoying, overprotective self.

“Listen smart ass” she growls and I grin, trying to be my usual charming self, “I’m trying to make sure you are all ready to go tomorrow. Have you got your timetable?” she asks for the hundredth time.

I laugh. She’s given me multiple copies as though afraid I’m going to get lost or something. “Yes mother”, I tease and she gives me a sheepish smile as she fidgets with her hands.

“I know, I know,” she says quietly, “I’m overprotective, but ever since your father....” It trails in the air and I stiffen, feeling nothing but resentment for the man who supposedly raised me. The man who, without a second thought, abandoned his son and rejected his mate for another woman. I hate him. No, I despise him.

“Ever since father decided to leave and make a home with someone else” I replied bitterly and she sighed. It’s a point of contention between us. I hate the man and will most likely kill him on sight, whereas my mother is more soft-hearted and more likely to forgive the bastard.

“Can you please just try and make this school work” she pleads and I frown. It’s true that this is the third such school I’ll be attending, but it’s not my fault that I refuse to take crap from no one. As an Alpha, it’s my right to demand respect even when my mother doesn’t quite see it that way. She doesn’t truly know what high school is really like and how hard it is to avoid fighting with other shifters.

“I’ll try” I grunt, making no promises, and she gives me a genuine smile.

“Thanks” she murmurs, coming over and eyeing me critically. I frown. What is she doing now? Is she criticizing my clothes?

I look down at myself satisfied with what I see. I chose my usual leather jacket and plain shirt topped with ripped jeans and sneakers. Unfortunately, I still resemble that bastard father of mine with my black shaggy hair and dark green eyes. I hate looking like him, avoiding the mirror at all costs. It hangs there broken now after I put my fist through it one day in a full-blown rage.

“You might find your mate” my mother was saying excitedly, and I gave a cynical laugh. A mate is the last thing on earth I want, especially after seeing what my mother went through with my father, who rejected her when I was five. To me, love doesn't exist and it's the last thing I want or need in my life. Love is just a fairytale. The school is a shifter school, so while it could be likely, I feel sorry for any girl that has the misfortune of being my mate. Because I won't be accepting her, no way. I have every intention of rejecting the girl and living my life the way I want to and it doesn't involve being tied down or having a family. I don't want any more burdens to deal with.

My mother looks disappointed, she knows how I feel about mates, but it doesn't stop her from hoping that one day I'll change my mind. I know I won't though. It would take a pretty special girl for me to ever consider it, and from what I've seen from girls at every single high school I've visited, they are all shallow, vain creatures who wouldn't even so much as help someone in need. Too self-centered and constantly worrying about their looks. If I did want a mate, I'd want a kind, caring girl who wasn't so fussed with her looks and was genuinely down to earth. I almost snort at my fanciful thoughts. Not gonna happen, I remind myself.

“Sorry mother, but any mate of mine is going to be instantly rejected” I drew, watching as her eyes lost their sparkle. I hate hurting her in this way,

but she refuses to give up on me. She bites her lip but hesitates to say anything more, heaving a large sigh as she turns towards the doorway. I feel a slight pang of guilt which I wash away. It's not my fault she wants something from me that I'm not willing to give. Life is unfair, if anything, my father has taught me that.

“You know,” she said softly, stopping for a moment and looking over her shoulder, her big brown eyes full of what looked like sadness or maybe it was pity? Either way, I don't like it one bit. “Having a mate is the best thing that can happen to any shifter. I wish you could see that” she whispers, "not every shifter is like your father or every relationship doomed to fail. Your mate will love you, Johnathon, keep that in mind, will you?" and she leaves as I stare at the back of her with a scowl on my face. She just doesn't understand me at all. There is nothing on this god-green earth that will ever change my mind when it comes to having a mate, or rather the lack of one. I decide to go and do some training and work some of my anger out of my system before school tomorrow. An Alpha needs to stay in shape after all. Besides, maybe it will help me calm down and become more focused. School should be interesting tomorrow, I thought to myself with a big smirk on my face, the school wouldn't know what hit them when I got there tomorrow and took over. I'm the Alpha and no one would dare disobey my commands, not if they wanted to keep their heads attached to their bodies at any rate.

###chapter 6

Winter's POV

I don't know how much more of everything I can possibly take. Every day it's the same old story, the same boring routine, and the bruises that never seem to fully heal before they are taken over by new ones, either from my brother or my father, let alone the kids at school. I'm currently in the shower frantically trying to wash my hair due to the soda it took earlier during the day. It's so sticky and horrible, even smells slightly and I wrinkle my nose in disgust. At this rate, it might take another shower later

to get it fully out of my hair. Or I'll have to cut it, something I flat-out refuse to do no matter how long it takes to get this bloody stuff out.

Finally, I've done what I can to get rid of the sticky residue and I step out, stopping short as I see none other than my brother Damien sitting on my bed, looking amused at my terror. There's a broad smile on his face and I am instantly tense when I see it. He holds up a book and I feel my heart sink. I've got so much homework already and he was going to add to it. I silently breathe and count to ten. Please don't hit me, I thought to myself, I'm still hurting from earlier today. Maybe he'd leave me alone? Maybe there was something else he wanted, but I very much doubt it.

"Calm down," Damien says, sounding impatient even as I flinch, waiting for the inevitable slap or punch that was usually forthcoming. To my surprise, it didn't come. I start to relax even though I know that it's possible he'll still hit me.

"I just want to give you my homework," he says and tosses the book. I catch it awkwardly and he eyes my hand, the fingers having been bent back to straight but so painful it is all I can do not cry out in pain. He saw it and his eyes narrowed for a moment.

For a moment, there was silence and I saw something flash in my brother's eyes. I blinked, astonished. Had I just seen concern in his gaze for a moment or was I hallucinating? Since when does he show even an ounce of concern when it comes to me? It's enough to shock me. He bites his lip as he gets up and ambles toward the doorway. I stand still, expecting him to just leave, or hit me, but again he catches me by surprise.

"Word of warning" he mutters under his breath, my ears straining as I heard his words "father's downstairs and drinking again", he breathes, almost as though he's trying to warn me and I feel my heart skip a beat. Great, that's the last thing I need to deal with today, even though I'm used to it now. Then, just like that, he's gone. I'm astonished by his concern, but it's fleeting as I feel dread rise in my gut. There would only be one

reason father is home this early and it's because he's either left work early or because, once again, he's lost his job. I suspected the latter. Fuck.

I want to scream in frustration, bang my hands against the door and just give vent to the feelings I hide inside, but instead, I just bite my lips, so hard that I can taste blood before I venture downstairs to make dinner. I try to be as quiet as I can so that I don't draw any attention to myself. If I'm lucky, he might even be completely passed out. I actually pray that he is as I make my way toward the kitchen.

When Damien said father had been drinking, he hadn't been kidding. Halfway down the stairs and I could smell the putrid scent of alcohol combined with his sweaty, disgusting body odor from never showering. It's actually a miracle that it's taken this long for him to lose whatever job he was currently doing. His hygiene is disgusting. The smell is disgusting and I shudder and try to tip-toe down the steps. In times like these, when he drank worse than normal, it was best to be as quiet as possible, invisible if you can manage it. But he heard me and turned from the couch. I watched him get to his feet, staggering, a beer bottle in his hand, his eyes beady and puffy, red from his alcoholism, the scent of his unwashed body drifting over me. He has a small twisted smile on his face as he gets close, his breath stinking to high heaven as I try not to gag. I wait, feeling sick to my stomach, and instinctively back away slightly, knowing that whatever is about to happen isn't going to be anything good. He's staring too hard at me to hope it's just my imagination. Then again, when was it anything nice, I thought to myself sourly. I considered making a run for the door but that would only delay the inevitable and I would have to go home eventually, face the music, and by then Damien would most likely join in my punishment. I brace myself and hope that whatever is coming will be over quickly and I can get to cooking dinner, my stomach growling loudly in hunger. Maybe he'll just throw insults at me if he's too drunk to hit me accurately.

“Well, well, well if it isn’t the little murderer,” he says in a slurred voice and I flinch instinctively while he gives a derisive laugh. He's clearly drunk, so many beer bottles scattered around the floor that even I'm astonished. It's a lot more than his usual amount. How long has he been drinking while I've been upstairs? I said nothing, knowing that it was best not to provoke him any further. That will just make him even angrier than he already is. He waves the beer bottle threateningly in my face and I hesitantly take a step back. It was still half full of liquid and heavy in his hand, not that he appeared to notice, too busy studying me with pure hatred in his eyes. I'm not a murderer. I chant silently to myself, but it's so quiet, almost as if I'm starting to believe I am, I've been told it so many times. I'm so used to his hatred and contempt that I don't even react to it. Then he swings his hand high up in the air and I try to move, try to run, but he grabs me by the hair and pulls until I stand still, my eyes closed, tears dripping down my cheeks. I feel nothing but a sharp pain in the top of my head before everything turns to darkness and I no longer know if I'm dead or alive. Right now, being dead would be considered a blessing.

###chapter 7

Damien POV

I don't know what's come over me lately, but I'm no longer enjoying the cruelty I usually show to my younger sister Winter. There's just something about the way that she stares at me, so much pain in her gaze, that I feel a flash of guilt. If our mother was still alive, then Winter would still be happy and a go-lucky child or teenager, but instead she'd grown up in a house full of abuse. I never used to mind, but lately, it has been weighing heavily on my conscience. My mother would be upset to see the way that my father and I treat her. She loved Winter so much. Died protecting her little girl. I sigh.

I guess that's why I warned her about our father being on the warpath. Normally I wouldn't, but today I felt like I needed to. The drunken old man had gotten himself fired again, but I guess that's what happens when

you constantly turn up to work either drunk or severely hungover. I've lost count of how many jobs he's been fired from. It's quite pathetic really. I know that he misses mum but surely, he needs to move on at some stage? The last time I suggested that, though, he turned on me and I'm not planning on trying to get him to move on anytime soon.

Something seems wrong, my stomach churning and nausea coming to the surface and, for whatever reason, I can't get rid of a niggling feeling in my gut, turning to my friends and blowing them off as they protest. Whatever this feeling is, I sense I need to go home. They can deal without me for one night, for heaven's sake. It's not like they don't see me at school every day. Well, at least on the days I bother to go. I rush back to the house but don't run. The entire time, I try to convince myself that everything is fine and that I'm just overreacting. After all, my gut could be wrong, couldn't it? I didn't even like facing my father when he was on a complete bender.

The house is quiet, too quiet as I let myself in, my father snoring wildly in the recliner, a beer bottle loosely clutched in his hand. Where was Winter? Dread rises up inside of me. Normally, she would already be in the kitchen cleaning up after dinner, but I couldn't see her from my position. Nor could I sense her anywhere, but I could smell the disgusting metallic scent of blood in the air and my heart sank. I know instinctively that it's Winters because father is not bleeding from any wounds that I can see. I went round the corner and stopped, absolutely horrified, all the blood draining out of my face. I can't believe my eyes and I force the bile down that tries to rise in my throat.

Winter is lying there on the cold hard ground and she looks like a rag doll, both of her eyes closed, completely unconscious. There is red blood pooling around her head and I can see its change of color, some of it old. How long had she been lying there like that? God, what had father done? This was the first time I'd seen her in such a bad state. Something occurred to me and I bent down and wrinkled my nose at the smell of her blood,

relieved to see her chest rising and falling. She was breathing at least and had a pulse even if it seemed a little weaker than normal. I feel a small sprinkle of relief.

“What have you done, old man,” I said grimly, bending to pick her up, feeling her head draped against me, and, for some inexplicable reason, I found myself feeling protective of her. I shake the feeling off. I can’t afford to be merciful towards her, no matter how much I was softening. She was the reason for our mother being dead and that, I couldn’t forgive, no matter how much she begged me to. But was she, I thought? What if she was telling the truth? I had no reason to doubt her story, even though my father was certain that Winter had somehow caused our mother's death. But Winter had only been a child at the time, hardly capable of what our father said she was, and I shook my head, trying hard to clear the dozens of thoughts now flooding my mind.

I took her to her room. I can see part of her wound is healing and know that though it will be slow, by tomorrow she’ll be fine as though it had never happened. I doubt she will ever forget the memory though, and I feel a tiny bit of grief at that thought. Another unhappy memory to hold onto; the poor thing has very few happy ones. I lay her in her bed and gingerly placed her blanket over the top of her, pausing for a moment as I pondered what to do. Was it safe to leave her in that kind of condition? Would father stay away or did I need to lock the door? I sigh. Father's too drunk to do anything more to Winter and I doubt he was capable, anyway, in his condition. Poor Winter's body had seen worse than this and she’d survived. Something I wasn't exactly proud of. Besides, I couldn’t risk being seen in her room helping her. Father would take all of his anger out on me if I did.

She can sleep it off, I tell myself, backing away from the door and refusing to look at her face, how innocent my little sister looked when she slept. How vulnerable she suddenly seemed. She’ll be fine, she always is. Always will be. The last thing she needs is the brother who torments her

to stay in her room. I leave without a backward glance, going to my own room. I guess I'll have to do my own homework tonight, I think a tad bit absently, my mind still on Winter's injuries and how broken she seemed.

Winter POV

God, my head is pounding like you wouldn't believe. I force myself to open my eyes, my throat feeling sore and completely dry as I lick my chapped lips, confused and disorientated. Where was I, I wondered, looking around the room, realizing it was mine. But how had I gotten here? I distinctly remember being hit on the head by my father downstairs and then nothing. I was certain I had fallen unconscious from the pain in my head. So, who had put me to bed? I doubted it was father, but it was equally astonishing to think my brother Damien would show that much care for me. But he was the only one who could have possibly done it and I feel a small bit of gratefulness towards him.

I force myself to roll out of bed, blinking against the bright sunlight and trying not to scream at the pain in my head. I feel the back of my hair and can tell it's matted with dried blood and I groan, it's going to take forever to get it all out and I'm hoping I won't have to do something horrible like cut it. It's taken forever for me to grow it as long as this. I hurry to the bathroom and am ecstatic to find I'm able to wash it out with a bit of elbow grease, my hand now fully healed along with my head injury. It's the small things in life I think to myself sourly, to be grateful for.

I take my time and tiptoe downstairs, disgusted by the mess that greets me. There are dishes piled everywhere and dozens of empty beer bottles scattered all over the lounge room floor. Thankfully, father is snoring loudly in the chair, possibly still drunk judging by the smell of him, and I take the opportunity to make breakfast, putting his on the table. There's no way I'm going to wake him up and face his wrath when I have school

to get to. For the first time, I almost inhaled my bacon and egg sandwich, no sign of my brother anywhere and I assume he's gone to school already. Good riddance, I couldn't have been happier this morning. I leave his breakfast out in case and grab my school bag. So far, it's been a non-eventful morning and part of me feels hopeful that it will continue, walking to school uninterrupted by anyone for the first time in months, and I can't believe my good fortune. What was going on? Had the moon goddess taken pity on me?

A group of cheerleaders is gathered in the hall and I instinctively duck my head down and try to cover it with my long hair as I inch past them all. I could hear their conversation clearly and to my shock no one noticed me as I went past. Too busy with their conversation or possibly gossip. Whatever, as long as it has nothing to do with me, I could care less.

“Can you believe there's a new kid at school today?”

“That's not all, guess what?”

“I heard he's an Alpha”, Jessica speaks up and I flinch, still working on getting past them without being caught. I catch her tossing her hair over her shoulder, a massive smile on her face. “I just know that he's going to be my mate, it's obvious” she almost purrs while her friends look a bit put out. Trouble in paradise, I think to myself smugly. Looks like her friends also want a piece of this poor Alpha kid.

“What if you're not though,” another one dares to question her and falls silent at the scorching look on her face.

“He'll still want me,” she said smugly, “after all, I'm the most beautiful girl in the school. We don't always have to agree to be with mates, we can choose to mark each other.” I almost scoff at her blatant display of confidence. Mates are meant to be together forever and I wonder why she thinks just being beautiful will be enough to get his interest. Were male werewolves really that shallow? Well, she could have him. I doubt with

the way I look that I'll even get a glance from him and that's perfectly fine with me. I prefer to be invisible rather than have attention on me.

The other girls begin to chat excitedly amongst themselves and I make it to my locker without incident, grabbing the books I need. My heart sinks a little. With what happened last night, I wasn't able to complete my homework and I feared what the teacher might say. It wasn't exactly my fault, but it still hurt nonetheless. I hated letting my teachers down. Unless it was beyond my control, like last night when I was unconscious, I passed it in every day without fail, and I knew my grades could take a hit and it was all because of what my father had done to me last night. Damn him, I thought bitterly as I began to make my way to my algebra class, feeling angry and full of hatred at the man who was no longer a real father to me. Hopefully, the homework, or rather lack of it, won't affect my grades in any way. If I have to, I'll offer to do extra credit to make it up. I refuse to let my grades fail when I need them for college.

I find myself wondering about this so-called new boy that has everyone so excited. Like we haven't seen an Alpha before. Then again, there were no other Alphas at this school. Most tend to go to private ones over public, I guess because of their status as leaders of their packs. Would this Alpha be kind or would he be like the rest of the school and torment me along with them? Or would he keep away from me? Because being bullied by regular shifters is bad, I don't really want to find out how much worse the bullying can get when an Alpha decides to join in as well.