

## CHAPTER 67

### Winter POV

I'm not going to lie, I'm in complete shock over what's happened and being able to finally talk is a miracle in itself. According to Dr. James, I would have healed eventually but Kai choosing to mark me sped up the process. I got angry, I'll admit, but it all worked out in the end. Besides, now I can tell Kai how I really feel and I claimed him, the same way he claimed me. No more trying to protect me out of jealousy, no more just taking things lying down. Now I can really begin to stand up for myself. There's going to be a new Winter, I decided. No more trying to please everyone else, or keeping quiet about what I want. That old Winter is gone. I'm going to be changing things for the better.

Kai leads me out of the hospital room, still feeling guilty, and I tug on his hand and force him to look at me once we safely reach the grounds outside. I can't deal with him looking like that. It's frustrating me.

"Kai" I rasp out, "stop, look at me." God, please look at me for heaven's sake.

He does, but he avoids my eyes and it's irritating the hell out of me. Is he going to wallow in his guilt forever? He needs to get the hell over it. I've already forgiven the idiot. Even if he doesn't really deserve it.

"I forgive you," I said hoarsely and he sighed, looking at me and running a hand through his hair. He looks frustrated with me.

"Has it ever occurred to you, that sometimes you're a little too forgiving? A little too kind" he complains, "wouldn't it be much better to torture me for a little by hating me and, well, yelling at me when you're able to," he finishes dramatically.

I give a raspy giggle. Somehow, I can't picture myself yelling at the big bad Alpha, like a harpy. It gives a funny image though.

"No" I whispered, "I want a clean slate. You're taking me out on a date", I tell him, poking his chest with my finger, a look of determination on my face. This was the least he could do. Take me out somewhere nice. Let us finally start the transition forward and let go of everything horrible that happened in the past. Let us forge our future together.

*OOoohhh a date. What an awesome, good idea Winter. Make him take us somewhere nice.*

*He still has to agree to it, Sabriel.*

*He'll agree, because otherwise, I'm going to bite him, in a not-so-pleasant place that will make him limp for the next few days right between his legs. It will be my pleasure to do it as well.*

*That's sadistic, Sabriel, and very unkind of you.*

*I have other ideas I could do instead if that helps. But they all involve pain of some description and even removing his manhood.*

*No, no, no Sabriel, no more. Let's just let him speak.*

*Fine, but I want to go somewhere where there's a steak! I want to dance and I want to get laid!*

*I'll let him know about the steak. But that's a hell no to getting laid. We have already talked about this.*

*Prude.*

## *Horn bag*

"A date" murmurs Kai, looking thoughtful "Somewhere nice and I can show you I'm trying to change for the better" he mutters, cocking his head. He's clearly trying hard to think of something and my heart is swelling with joy. He's really going to do it; he's actually listening to what I want. I wonder what he's thinking. What kind of place might he have in mind? Whether it will be a relaxed atmosphere or something else. So many choices. Whatever he does, will give me some more insight into what kind of person he is as well.

"I have a great idea," he says, "But you're going to need time to be ready, and" he takes a deep breath "I want a few days to prepare. That way, your voice might improve to the point we can have full-on conversations without you struggling or without it hurting you to speak."

I contemplate that. It sounds fair, doesn't it? A few days is nothing, I decided. Besides, now I'm intrigued as to what he is planning on. It gives me something to look forward to. Maybe I can guess where he's taking me? Ooooh, it's all so fun. I want to squeal but don't. It might hurt my voice.

"Agreed" I rasp out, and he looked pleased, not to mention excited at the prospect of the date. Is this something he'd been wanting as well? Men were such obtuse creatures. He could have asked me before, for heaven's sake.

"Fantastic," he says with a wicked grin and a wink. I giggled again and let him start tugging me toward the pack house.

It's a beautiful day and I breathe in the fresh air with a smile. There are big fluffy white clouds overhead and a gentle breeze that makes the leaves on the trees and the branches sway back and forth. The sky is so blue, so bright, it lifts my spirits up instantly. The sun is warm as it shines down on me and I can hear the sounds of birds chirping in the distance. It's

perfect. I almost want to skip how happy I'm feeling. My heart is singing for joy. I close my eyes and let the breeze flow through my hair. Kai looks surprised at my happiness even though he's the one to put it there.

Instead, I let go of Kai's hand and he stared at me perplexed. I give him a grin of my own and, without ceremony, begin to strip off my clothes nonchalantly. I've been wanting to do this for a long time, it's been far too long since I last went on a run with Sabriel, and today is a good day for it. The weather is beckoning me to go running.

*We're going for a run Sabriel*

*Oh my god, yes, girl. I need to be free, to race through the trees, feel the wind in my glorious fur. Chase down wild animals and scare the crap out of them.*

*I wonder if Kai will join us.*

*He'd be crazy not to. I want to see that spunky wolf of his. He's handsome and I want to nuzzle him and lick him all over.*

*Way too much information, Sabriel, way too much.*

*I won't tell you the rest of it then, prude.*

*I'm not a prude. I just don't believe in oversharing.*

*Yeah, you're a prude. You need some girlfriends to gossip with, even if it's just for my benefit. I need some good gossip to listen to and girly talk. Think about it.*

*I'll try and make some friends for you then.*

*For yourself too, no need to be such a loner Winter. Bet there are heaps of friends we can gather. Heck, I'll frigging talk to their wolves if I have to. But you'll always be my best friend, Winter.*

*You're my best friend too, Sabriel.*

I begin to shift as Kai watches wide-eyed, his jaw dropping open. I'm sure he's seen a naked woman before. In fact, I know he has, so it's kind of annoying to see how shocked he is. I can hear my bones cracking and adjusting until I stand before him in all my glory as a wolf. I frowned at myself. I feel like I'm slightly bigger again and as I examine my paws, lifting one up and then the other, I'm certain that they are larger. I don't feel like a tiny runt, but I'm still not as big as the average wolf. Still, it's nice to be a bit bigger. At this rate, I might grow into a normal-sized wolf.

*Sabriel, are we bigger? Or am I just imagining things?*

*I told you, girl. The more confident you get and the more you grow as an individual, the bigger you'll get. Did you not hear me the first time?*

*But how big will we get?*

*That's up to you. Continue to believe in yourself and become the confident woman I know you're capable of becoming and who knows how large we'll grow to be. Maybe we'll even be as big as Kai's wolf. Wouldn't that be a hoot?*

*I doubt that will happen, but it's nice to imagine it will.*

*Let's run, girl.*

*Wait, let's see if Kai wants to join us.*

*Hell yes, I want to see if he gets naked. Up close and personal*

*I don't think he'll appreciate us staring at him.*

*You never know. Besides, isn't it a compliment to look at him?*

*Just don't do anything embarrassing.*

We sit down on our haunches and, regard Kai who looks at me with a large smile on his face. He reaches out a hand and I nuzzle him as he pats my silky fur, his eyes wide and gleaming.

"I take it you want to go for a run?" he asks, laughter in his voice as I give an adamant nod. He shrugs.

"Why not," he mutters, "it's been ages since Storm and I have gone for a run ourselves. The pack can wait" he added and, right in front of my eyes, he too began to take off his clothes. He looks entirely comfortable doing it too.

I swear my eyes nearly bug out of my head. He rips his shirt off and I drool, seeing his taut abdomen with a six-pack. God, he's glorious. Sabriel steadily agrees, waving her tail in my head. Horny mutt that she is. His pants are next and I pant as he throws them to the side. God, at this rate, I might have a heart attack, he's like a male Adonis. Male perfection in human form, there's no one that could compare to him. No one would even come close. Sabriel's fairly purring with satisfaction in my mind, openly ogling him like he's a piece of meat. She really has no shame, but then I'm not much better. I can't seem to force myself to look away and he doesn't seem to expect me to. It's like my eyes have a mind of their own. Maybe I'm becoming a bit of a horn bag myself. Or it's Sabriel's influence.

When he starts to peel off his underwear though, I get a bit skittish and my heart starts thumping. Sabriel is urging me to go closer, but I refuse and look down at the ground, hearing Kai chuckle in the background. I only look back up when I hear his bones cracking, the sound loud in the otherwise quietness of the outdoors, until a large black wolf stands where he was moments ago.

He's handsome. His fur is dark as night, his paws large on the ground. He easily towers over my wolf, but Sabriel's not intimidated, instead, she's in awe at his largeness. His eyes are black but stand out against his fur and

his claws are silver and gleaming in the sunlight. It's intimidating, to me at least, while Sabriel prances in the background of my mind, impatient to go for a run. We walk closer and nuzzle our head against his fur, Storm doing the same to us. God, his fur is so silky and smooth. Sabriel purrs.

Kai mind-links me to lead the way. *Winter, you choose where we go*

*Hope you can keep up then.*

*Oh, I'm sure I'll have no problems with that sweetheart, but if it helps, Storm loves the backside on you and is more than happy to watch it as we run.*

God, sounds like he's just as much of a horny mutt as Sabriel is.

## Kai POV

When Winter strips naked in front of me, I'm taken aback at how nonchalant she is. There's no self-consciousness at all in her movements and the sight of her beautiful body has my cock twitching in my pants and Storm going absolutely crazy in my mind. I can't stop myself from staring at her, knowing I should look away, but my body refuses to cooperate, my eyes widening. I can see the scars on her body and I so badly want to touch them, and trace them with my fingers, but I don't want to frighten her or cause her to shy away from me either. Those scars are part of her, and if anything, they show just how brave she is.

She shifts and I'm blown away again by her beautiful wolf as she sits on her haunches. I blink in disbelief as I stare. It might be my imagination, but I swear her wolf has grown by several inches. It looks bigger to me at any rate, but then I could be wrong. Clearly, Winter wants to go for a run and I can tell she's waiting for me, her little tail wagging. It's adorable.

Well, if she wants to go for a run with me, who am I to stop her? In fact, right now I can't think of anything better I would like to do. Storm is more than game to go for a run, he's practically dancing in my mind with excitement.

*Hell yes, it's been so long man. Look how cute our mate is. She's tiny, like so small but sooo cute.*

*I don't think you should tell her that though Storm, she might take it the wrong way.*

*Can I tell her she's beautiful? That nothing can compare to her beauty?*

*Yes, I suppose you could. Women like that sort of thing, so I imagine a female wolf would love it too.*

*Ah, sweet. You know you should take a leaf out of my book.*

*Steady boy. You sound lovesick.*

*That's because I am Kai, that's because I am.*

*Storm, you have so much self-confidence, it's astounding.*

I begin to peel off my clothes and smirk, realizing she's not looking away from me either. I'm not self-conscious, in fact, I take it as a compliment that she can't stop staring at me. I hope she likes what she sees. Storm is raring to go for a run with our mate and I'm hard-pressed to keep him from taking over as we shift to our large black wolf form, easily towering over poor Winter. She's not afraid though, coming over and nuzzling us to Storm's ecstasy. He's really pushing hard and reluctantly I mind-link Winter, for the first time, since I marked her. It's relatively easy, and to my surprise, there's no resistance at all from her, even though this is the first time we have mind-linked each other.



*Winter, Storm really wants to take over and run with your wolf if that's possible. I understand if you say no though. It's entirely your decision and how comfortable you are with it.*

*That's okay, Sabriel really wants to run with Storm. I had to warn her about no funny business though. You might want to say the same to Storm. I'd rather not have sex in wolf form, no matter how horny Sabriel is. That's not a joke, by the way.*

*Hear that, Storm? No funny business or I will take back control.*

*Fine, but if she jumps me, I'm not saying no.* He grumbles and I sigh. Storm is going to lose control if he so much as attempts to do the naughty without Winter's consent. I suspect the same goes for Sabriel.

I give Storm control and Winter does the same with Sabriel. It's always a surreal feeling being in the back of my mind like a passenger in a car seat, but it's cool at the same time. Sabriel takes off at a run and Storm trots to keep up with her. Because Sabriel's still quite small, Storm doesn't have to fully run to stay in stride with her, but he doesn't care, he's fully enjoying himself. I watch as my big bad Alpha wolf, turns to putty in Sabriel's hands, nuzzling her constantly and licking her neck. Sigh, I'm almost embarrassed at my wolf's public display of affection. Not that Storm cares. He just smirks at me.

They run together, through the trees which pass by in a blur. For fun, they track down a nearby buck and scare it, rather than eat it. According to Sabriel, Storm tells me, Winter would rather not eat anything raw. I agree. I've never liked eating animals in wolf form, but when hunting and traveling it was a necessity and I understand that. Storm's a little disgruntled. He loves to eat animals but he respects Winter's wishes, knowing that she might take control otherwise of her wolf and he would lose his time with Sabriel.

The hours pass by as they frolic together, play fighting, and enjoying the outdoors, but even wolves get tired eventually, it must be said. Storm is sad to stop and so is Sabriel, but Winter and I are starving now, as well as tired ourselves. We need food to replenish our strength and soon. Not to mention fluids.

We make it back to our clothes and I shift first, Winter seconds later. I finished dressing and turned around to see that Winters's cheeks were bright red. Is she blushing? I gave a slow grin. She must have been checking me out while I dressed. Not that she'd admit it. But still, I feel a sense of satisfaction. I should have dressed more slowly and teased her.

"Hungry?" I asked teasingly, holding out my arm and feeling a glow inside as she took it, nodding her cute little head firmly.

"Yes," she rasps, laughter in her voice. She seems to have enjoyed herself.

We made it to the kitchen and I made her sit down, noticing that, except for the flush in her cheeks, she looked extremely pale.

"How do omelets sound with some chicken?" I asked and she looked at me in surprise.

"You cook?" she says incredulously.

I pretended to be offended. "Of course, I cook. Not all of us men are hopeless in the kitchen", I tell her gruffly.

"Sounds good" she gets out and I grin, whipping up the ingredients in no time. I do make a mean omelet if I do say so myself. Although contrary to what I told Winter, it's one of the few things I'm competent at. I'm not so good with complex recipes, but she doesn't need to know that. This will impress her and that's what I'm after.

I slide the plate in front of her, sitting across from her and watching with delight as she picks up the fork and takes her first mouthful, moaning in

delight. Fuck, my dick twitches at the sound and I squirm in my seat, hurriedly beginning to eat in the hopes of distracting myself. It doesn't work and I continue to shift, trying my best to stop myself from hardening.

There's silence as we eat, but it's not the awkward type of silence. Rather, it's a comfortable silence and before long, I push my plate away, Winter's still half full and she glances at me sheepishly. I guess I gave her too much to eat.

"I thought you were hungry" I commented, a little nonplussed and slightly panicked. What if she didn't like it and was just being polite? Maybe I could offer to make her something else? A sandwich, or crackers or something?

"I'm not used to eating large portions", she admits dryly, and my heart stops.

Of course, she's not, not with all the abuse she told me about. I decided not to make a big deal about it, not wanting to make her uncomfortable. Still, the mood is slightly awkward now.

I grab the plates and place them gingerly in the sink, returning with two sodas, one of which I hand to her as she looks at me gratefully and begins to sip. There's an idea playing around in my mind and I don't know whether it's a great idea or not. Still, I can't stop myself from mentioning it.

"I know you want to go on a date," I said delicately as she nodded, "and I very much want that too, but there's something else I want to ask you about while I have your full attention. It's important to me and I want to get your opinion."

She waits patiently, hands on the table as I ponder what to say. Stuff it, I'm just going to tell her.

"There's an annual meeting every year with us Alphas. We take our partner to the summit and there's dancing, talking, just a casual sort of thing. Would you mind attending with me? I can show you off to the other Alphas" I said, feeling a bit hopeful that she might agree to it.

She looks pensive, sipping at her soda, while I wait on tenterhooks. Is she going to agree or have I moved way too fast for her liking?

Finally, she gives a broad smile. "I would like that," she says hoarsely as I reach over and grip her hand, a smile on my face.

"When is it?" she asks.

I stop and think. Shit. It's actually not that far away. Hopefully, that won't matter. I met her eyes feeling sheepish. "It's in two weeks' time," I said slowly, "which means we need to organize a dress for you before you go."

Winter looks at me and shakes her head. My heart plummets to the ground. Did she not want to go with me now? Was it too soon for her liking?

"No dress," she tells me and my heart begins to speed up again "I don't like them."

It's unusual, but if she doesn't want to wear a dress, I'm not going to make her. But I can't help myself from asking "What would you like to wear?"

She shrugs. "A skirt maybe, not sure."

Fair enough. Why shouldn't she be comfortable in her own skin and clothes? I guess we men have it easy in that respect. It's easier for us to get dressed and go. I want her to dress however she likes, even if it means a sweatshirt and pants. She looks beautiful no matter what she wears.

"In the meantime, I'll get started on this date of ours," I said with a wicked wink as she giggled and asked, "Are you going to be okay if I go and do

some business?" I asked. "You could always sit in the study with me" I added, my eyes lighting up.

"Can I come with you?" she asks uncertainly.

"Oh, you bet you can" I growled, picking her up and carrying her down the hallway. I place her on the couch in the corner as she watches, sitting on my computer and doing the bare minimum I need to do for today.

I'm still contemplating date night when I finally close the laptop and glance over at the couch. Winter's asleep, tossing and turning slightly as I walk over. Do I wake her? Or let her sleep? She looks so innocent and childlike, I can't help but reach over and touch her face, her pale lips partially open and her soft snores filling the room. It's so endearing.

Quietly, I gathered her up and began the long trek upstairs, careful not to wake her. Date night was going to be the best damn date Winter had ever been on, I determined, looking down at my beautiful mate. It was time I started making everything up to her and showed her just what a great mate I could be and show her my adoration at the same time. Make up for all the crappy things I've done to her.