

CHAPTER 71

Winter POV

The summit is unlike anything I've ever seen before. It's unreal, the number of Alpha and Luna's that are present and mingling in such a large crowd together. I felt underdressed in my outfit but at least I was comfortable. Some of the women here are wearing such tight dresses that it's a miracle in itself that they are able to walk, not to mention their shoes! I feel sorry for them. It can't be much fun being barely able to move. Plus, Kai has already told me I'm beautiful, so he doesn't seem to think I'm underdressed.

"Are you alright?" Kai asks me and I try to give him a smile, albeit a bit of a shaky one. This is nothing I'd anticipated ever going to but that didn't mean I wanted to spoil it for him. After all, he was really trying, being the perfect gentleman and I was appreciative of all his efforts. He's trying to make sure I'm comfortable, even with this large crowd.

"I'm alright," I said quietly, the rasp was almost completely gone from my voice now. "Just overwhelmed" I admit, after all, it's not a lie, I am extremely overwhelmed and uncomfortable in such a large crowd.

"I'm right here with you sweetheart," he tells me, and I feel his hand on my back as we slowly walk into the room, Kai making a beeline for another man, making sure I'm by his side the entire time.

"Alpha Terrence" he exclaims, and the man turns, one of the few present without a Luna by his side. He lights up the second he sees Kai and it's

clear to see that they not only know each other but that they know each other well.

I eyed the man curiously. He's large and well-built, but he's nothing compared to Kai, who seems much bigger and more muscular in comparison. Still, he's a handsome man with dark brown hair and a sheepish-looking smile on his face, his green eyes twinkling as he greets Kai back. He seems nice. I like the look of him.

"Terrence, this is Winter, my mate", Kai tells him with a smile, pushing me slightly forward as I shoot daggers at him. I'm feeling shy.

"It's a pleasure to meet you, Alpha Terrence", I manage to croak out, and the other Alpha smiles and shakes my hand eagerly.

"I never thought I'd see the day you actually accepted a mate, you old dog," laughed Terrence. "I approve though, Winter, you're a very beautiful woman", he compliments me and I nearly glow at his compliments, while Kai looks slightly disgruntled. Ha, serves him right for putting me on the spot like that.

"How do you two know each other?" I asked in curiosity.

"Terrence went to school with me", Kai explains, "we were friends and have tried to keep up with each other since. We don't catch up as much as we'd both like too though. Being Alpha of our packs, keeps us both busy regretfully."

This was news to me, but welcome. At least I now know that Kai does have friends and isn't as much the loner as I initially thought he was. Plus, this friend was lovely and definitely not female, which made me feel even better. For some reason, I had thought there would be loads of women hitting on him, and even now I'm keeping a wary eye out. God, I'm a jealous little thing, I thought to myself, cool it down Winter, Kai's marked you remember? But I can't help comparing myself to some of the women

here and finding myself lacking in some way. I really need to work on my confidence, Sabriel's already scolding me inside my head. I need to be more like her, I think, with a chuckle. Nothing gets Sabriel down. She's got killer confidence in spades.

Then the music starts and Terrence gives me a glance while Kai stiffens. I know my mate's not much of a dancer, but I'm itching to dance to the slow music. It's easy to dance to.

"May I have this dance?" Terrence asks me and Kai gives me a small nod, letting me know it's okay.

"I would love to" I answered and he swept me onto the dance floor, holding me close, his hand on my waist and the other one holding my hand. We begin to sway to the music.

"He looks different" Terrance comments as we move around the dance floor, a gleam in his eyes. He sounds pleased.

I frowned, perplexed. What did he mean by that?

"He seems to be smiling more, more relaxed" he clarifies, "At school he was always so angry, so mad, and when that girl rejected him" he trailed off and I didn't need him to finish the sentence to know that's when Kai changed for good, believing he was unworthy of being loved. I felt a pang for the boy I never got to know. But at least I get to know the man, I remind myself.

"You've made him into a happier man, Winter, you're a miracle worker," he tells me with a smile, but I'm in disbelief. Had I really managed to change Kai that much, that even his friends could see the difference? Because to me, he was just his normal self. I must have blinkers on.

Kai pats Terrence on the shoulder as he gives me a wink.

"May I cut in?" Kai asks, but his tone brooks no arguments, and Terrence chortles as he reluctantly let's go of me.

"You may," Terrence says, resigned, "but only because you'll rip my head off if I say no."

I giggle as Kai grins and takes hold of my hand, swaying back and forth to the music. Just being in my mate's embrace made me feel so loved and cherished, although it was hard to ignore the pointing and muttering amongst the crowds, especially from the women. I can tell Kai is getting self-conscious and rise to my tiptoes and give him a peck on the cheek.

"They're just jealous I'm with the most handsome man in the room tonight" I declared hotly and his eyes sparkle down at me with good humor.

"You are, are you" he growls and I nod my head emphatically, my eyes smiling up into his. He twirls me around as I give a small shriek. He laughs and I adore the sound of it. He's having such a great time, and if I'm honest with myself, I am too.

The music stops and I look over at the refreshments. "How about I fetch us some drinks" Kai offers, pointing to a table, where I'm relieved to see Terrence is sitting and chatting with another person. "That's our table," he tells me and I nod, slowly walking towards it while Kai heads in the opposite direction. Terrance is giving me a welcoming smile. I grin. Looks like I get to know Kai's friend a little better.

Someone stumbles into me and almost causes me to fall as I turn around in annoyance. A well-built man, dressed in a suit and with his hair slicked back like some sort of mafia man, glares down at me before his expression changes to one that instantly chills my blood and causes me to stiffen. I've seen that look before and I hate it.

"Well, aren't you a pretty little thing" he drawls, and I feel the bile rise up my throat as I smell the scent of alcohol on his breath. His words are slurred and he's weaving slightly. Great, the last thing I need is a drunken Alpha to contend with. What is it with these asshole men thinking they're gods' gifts to us women? Why can't they just get a goddamn clue? Besides, can't he tell I'm here with someone? Wanker.

"Let's go back to my room and have some fun" he slurs, and I shake my head, even as his eyes turn pitch black.

"No, thank you," I said firmly and turned back around to go to the table when his hand gripped hold of my shoulder so hard that tears came to my eyes. Can he not see that I'm marked and claimed? Or is he so arrogant that he doesn't care? The crowd is watching closely now and I can see two men coming towards me, presumably to help me, but I'm not waiting around. I'm sick of people thinking they can have whatever they want by using force. I don't care that he's an Alpha or that he has authority. In fact, I'm so angry that my whole body is shaking now as I turn and face him again. I'm ready to rip his head off with my bare hands.

"Let go of me," I said between gritted teeth, and his smile grew wider. God, he really is an idiot.

"Come with me" he repeats, and that's it. I raise my hand and slap him across the face, the sound loud and sickening as the crowd falls silent. Even the Alpha looks shocked for a moment as he finally let's go and clutches his cheek. I guess he's not used to being refused, something else that makes me feel sick to my stomach.

"You little bitch" he hissed, dropping his hand and advancing. I stare right at him, not intimidated at all, not even when he raises his own hand to strike me, the other two men trying to get to me frantically before he can strike me.

"She told you to let go" a voice growls from behind me and my heart skips a beat. He came to my side and the Alpha let his hand fall down.

"Bitch slapped me," the Alpha said loudly, looking around the room. "We all know that means she has to be punished."

I open my mouth to protest, and Terrence comes up beside Kai.

"You tried to force someone who's mated to go to your room, if anything, you're the one that's going to be punished," Terrence said thickly, on the other side of me. "That slap was well deserved" another man chimed in and the crowd began to agree. Thank God they seem to be on my side. Not that Kai would ever let something happen to me.

The two men from before gripped hold of the man's arms and dragged him away, cursing and kicking, furious that he was being thrown out of the summit. I watch him go and give him the finger just for added emphasis as Terrence chokes behind me and Kai slaps me on the back in pride.

"That's my girl" he declares approvingly as the crowd begins to talk and chatter amongst themselves. "So strong and so brave" he compliments me as I blush.

"That's one hell of a girl you have there, Kai. Make sure you don't lose her", Terrance says, sounding envious as he walks back to the table.

Kai leans down and gives me a kiss that has my body trembling and feeling like complete putty in his hands. "Don't I know it" he murmurs in my ears, "I have the woman of my dreams" he declares, taking hold of my hand and tugging me towards the table "and damned if I let anything else happen to her tonight. Not when there's still plenty of fun to be had", he tells me with a wink, and I relax, grateful that he doesn't want to leave just yet. I still want to dance and there are plenty of people to meet. Not only that, but both of us are staying in a hotel room and I wasn't quite sure where the night might lead to. But I knew that there was a decision I was

going to have to make and it was going to involve complete trust in Kai. The question was, would Kai show me that trust or would I be disappointed in him and myself again?