

CHAPTER 80

Winter POV

Fuck, my entire body is throbbing. My head feels like there's a ton of bricks lying on top of it, and my stomach feels like it's been hacked with an axe or something. No, I'm not being melodramatic, it hurts that freaking much. What in the hell happened? Why am I in so much fucking pain? I felt like a truck ran over me.

We got shishkebabbed Winter.

We got what now, Sabriel?

We got attacked in the elevator, remember? By a little punk bitch? She used wolfsbane on the dagger. Coward.

Um, I sort of remember. We were going to go and see Kai, right?

Yeah, you finally got laid and gave up your virginity. Nice going, by the way. Then the morning after you were taking the elevator to see lover boy and a woman, well, a teenager is probably more accurate, attacked us with a knife? Do you remember? Remember Winter?

I remember now. I can see everything so clearly again, in my mind's eye. The knife gleaming in the lights, the wolfsbane dripping from it. The look of desperation on the girl's face. As though someone had put her up to it. The pain and the struggle to fight back. I had thought I was a goner, but I guess someone found me in time. I blink, my eyes open and stare groggily around the room. At least it's not the hospital, I think grimly, I've had

enough visits to the hospital to last me a lifetime. In fact, they're probably sick of seeing me as well. The bed I'm in is nice and comfortable at least.

It looks like I'm in my bedroom and I turn my head and exhale, seeing Kai slumped in a chair, his head to his chest as he snored away. He looks haggard, like really haggard. Pale and with more stubble on his chin than normal, like he hasn't taken the time to shave. Has he stayed here by my side the entire time? My lips are bursting with questions. Clearly, I'm not at the summit anymore. Did this mean they had caught the person responsible for the entire thing? My heart sinks as I think about the fact that the summit might have disbanded because of what happened. Had I ruined it for Kai?

You idiot. You didn't ruin anything. You were attacked for heaven's sake, Winter. Stop feeling guilty for something you're not responsible for.

But Kai was looking forward to the summit, so much.

There will be other ones and you'll be with him. He'll live.

I wish I could have shifted in the elevator Sabriel.

Me, too, a bit sneaky about using wolfsbane as a poison. Clever but sneaky. Otherwise, that bitch would have gone down.

My hand reaches below the bedcovers and feels the bandages covering my body, especially my midsection where I remember getting stabbed. It itches slightly and I peel it back to see that my wound is almost completely healed now. It's a miracle. It will leave a scar though, but considering my body is covered in them, it's no big deal. At least I'm alive.

"The doctor says not to touch that until at least tomorrow," says a gravelly voice that makes me look over at a now wide-awake Kai.

He struggles to his feet and awkwardly walks over to me, gripping hold of my hand as I give him a shaky smile.

"How are you doing?" he asks quietly.

I thought for a moment. To be fair, I don't really feel that bad. Sore, tired, and itchy, but on the whole, it could have been a whole lot worse. I could be dead after all.

"I'm just sore and a little tired" I admitted as he gently smoothed my hair back from my face. Good god, I must look like a complete mess.

Nah girl, we're pretty no matter how messy we are. Nothing makes us look bad.

Sabriel, you have so much confidence.

You could too Winter, you just have to think like me.

I'll try and remember that.

"I'm glad," Kai says in a low voice. Then he startles me even more by exhaling and bursting out "I never should have left you inside that hotel room, especially after what happened during the night. I should have stayed by your side, and then you never would have been attacked", he grimaced.

I stared at him incredulously. Was he blaming himself for what happened? Because I didn't blame him at all.

"Kai," I said, fixing my eyes on his, "this wasn't your fault. Even if you had stayed with me, they would just have waited for another chance. It was going to happen either way, at least this way, you weren't hurt as well" I said firmly. I can't bear the thought of him getting hurt because of me.

He looks disgruntled, but I'm beyond caring. What happened during the night is one of the most memorable nights of my life, and I'll be damned if it gets ruined in any way. I stand up on shaky feet, my body trembling, and begin to walk towards the bathroom.

"Let me help you" Kai offers, but I fix him with a glare. Some things should remain private and doing my business was one of them.

He backs down and sits, reluctantly watching me disappear into the bathroom. I'm shaky, but I can manage on my own. There's no way I'm about to ask Kai for help.

I do my business quick and look at my reflection in the mirror as I wash my hands. I'm pale, with dark circles under my eyes. I can see a bruise near my hairline but other than that, I look alright. My hair was disheveled but that was to be expected after being asleep. I shrugged and walked back out, Kai looking relieved to see me again. Like I was going to run off in this condition. Give me some credit, geez.

"Did they catch the person responsible? Was it the girl who attacked me?" I said with a quiver in my voice.

Kai's eyes flashed black for a moment. What was that I just saw on his face? Was it regret? An apology of sorts?

"They caught the person. The girl who attacked you was put up to it. If she didn't attack you, they were going to kill her family" he said grimly.

My eyes widened. The poor girl. Now I feel so bad for her. But what did Kai mean by them? Was more than one person responsible for the attack on me?

"They?" I repeated to him, trying to confirm what I had heard.

"Alpha Liam and Candice were responsible for the attack on you," Kai said quietly.

Somehow, the notion of Candice being behind it didn't surprise me in the least, but Alpha Liam? What did he have against me? I'd never even met him before the summit.

"I understand why Candice," I say, stiffening, "but Alpha Liam..." I trail off helplessly.

"He did it because Candice manipulated him into doing it. She's very good at getting men to believe everything she says." He sounds bitter now. "Alpha Liam never stood a chance once she put her sights on him."

I didn't want to ask, but I needed to know "Where is Candice now? Did they keep her at the summit?"

He shifts his feet and glances down at the ground. This doesn't bode well. What is he hiding?

"About that," he mutters "I insisted that Candice be brought back here, to be punished."

I stare wide-eyed. I must have heard him wrong. Surely, he wouldn't have been so stupid as to bring the woman responsible for me almost dying, back to the pack house where I now lived? He was joking, right?

He flinched from the look on my face and the dawning anger.

"Just wait" Kai cries out as I glower at him "I wanted you to have a say in her punishment, Winter. You deserve that, as the victim, at least, don't you?"

I can't believe him. Even now, after all this time, he was asking me to deal with Candice again. Did he not understand my desire to never see this woman again, ever? He wasn't going to keep her at the pack house indefinitely, was he? I feel bile rise up in my throat. I can't stand to even look at him now. I'm so incredibly angry, my whole body is trembling with rage.

"Kai," I said deadly quiet "I don't want Candice punished, I want her dead, gone, buried forever from my life. Do you understand me? I'm not going to keep her around for your sake" shouted out, frustrated as all hell. Men

were such idiots sometimes. I just wanted Candice gone. Why was that so hard for him to get?

"Then we will kill her," Kai said gently, and I halted in my tracks. Did he really mean that? "As I said, you get a say in the punishment and if the punishment is death, so be it" he adds. Oh, I want her dead alright. I'm sick of always looking over my shoulder and wondering what's going to happen to me. I want to feel safe again and the only way I can is to remove the person who constantly wants me gone. I don't care if it hurts Kai. I want Candice gone forever from my life.

I can hear the sincerity in his voice, and I'm so angry, so bitter towards Candice right now. It's as though she's sucked all the joy and happiness out of me. Why couldn't she just have been happy with Alpha Liam? She still would have had a chance to be Luna. But I knew her kind. She would have been obsessed over the fact that Kai had broken up with her instead of the other way around. But a small part of me is wavering. I couldn't bring myself to kill a rogue before. How can I bring myself to kill another shifter? Or order the death of one? Alpha Liam certainly doesn't deserve to die. Not when Candice had manipulated the man.

"Where is she?" I demanded.

"She's in the dungeon," Kai says quietly, "but there's something else you should know" he adds, as I almost scoffed. Of course, there was. I waited impatiently for him to tell me.

"She was Langdon's mate but rejected him," he said in a rush.

My eyes are flickering now, between normal and going dark, my hands clenched into fists. She'd rejected Langdon? The man was a sweetheart! A little boring but an otherwise perfect gentleman! It didn't take a genius to work out why she'd rejected poor Langdon. Kai had been a much bigger fish for her to catch, especially if she wanted to be Luna. I feel indignant on Langdon's behalf.

I make a move to storm off and Kai hurriedly follows the back of me. I stomped out of our bedroom and downstairs, in a fit of pique, my footsteps loud in the quietness of the house, my face scowling the whole time. Kai, wisely, says nothing, opening the door to the dungeon and gesturing me inside. I barely cast him a glance before stomping down the stairs, almost shoving the guards to the side, in my efforts to get my hands on Candice. I'm so angry, my chest is heaving and I'm almost frothing at the mouth. The guards look taken aback and Kai has to reassure them that I'm allowed down here, patting me awkwardly on the back.

I sniff and I can smell her disgusting perfume, wafting towards me from the last cell. I stomped in that direction pointedly and stopped in my tracks, staring up at my nemesis with a repulsed look on my face.

I ignored Kai's calls to stay back, to calm down. I don't need to bloody calm down. Christ. He needs to stop nannying me. Her head lifts up and she stares directly at me, while I'm glaring at her, my entire body tense.

"I never thought you would have the guts to come down here yourself" she spits out and I cringe, watching spittle fly across the bars. Disgusting.

"I guess you thought wrong," I said evenly, between gritted teeth. "Now, how about we discuss your punishment?"