

CHAPTER 95

Winter POV

This time when I open my eyes, there's a piercing pain in my neck, the pain is still there and it's excruciating. Not only that but I still feel dazed, out of it and extremely disorientated. I don't know how much blood Thomas decided to help himself to, but it feels like it was a lot. Otherwise, why would I be so damn weak? I trace the mark which is now nonexistent on my neck sadly. I loved that mark. Now I was going to have to get Kai to mark me again, and there were no guarantees he would want to. Damn you to hell Thomas.

A coughing noise, draws my attention and I glance up towards the altar, where it appears to be coming from. My eyes widen in disbelief. Tied to the altar is a man, but not just any man, a man dressed in a priest's uniform. I take a long sniff and crinkle my nose. I can't sense him being a shifter and I'm relatively sure that he's not a vampire. Why was he there? How could Thomas have tied up a human for heaven's sake. I had thought this church was abandoned but apparently it wasn't. Where were the rest of the people? Thomas couldn't have killed them all, could he?

He's gagged, so he can't speak. I sigh and then move my hands, my eyes looking down in shock as I realize while they are still restrained, they aren't shackled to my legs anymore, giving me some freedom to move around. The silver burns, but it's a slight annoyance in the grand scheme of things. That's not the worst part though. I shudder. I can't believe how violated I feel. He touched me while I was sleeping, saw my naked form.

I'm no longer wearing the clothes I had originally put on. Instead, I see with dread, I'm wearing a white gown, that definitely resembles a wedding dress. I feel bile rise up in my throat. Had he taken liberties with me while I was sleeping? Surely not. I feel sick to my stomach. Bad enough he dressed me while I slept. I wish I had the bracelet that Kai gave me. Thomas took it and I don't know what he did with it.

Where is he? Then I see the pair of glowing red eyes behind the priest and swallow. He looks mad, half crazy. His hair is disheveled. I wonder if it's due to the result of being a hybrid and one that hadn't been born but created. He steps forward and I instantly cringe, curling up into a ball. I'm afraid, my teeth are chattering. He seems to be unhinged and that's what frightens me the most. As for Sabriel, I cannot hear her and I'm wondering if he gave me more wolfsbane while I was unconscious. I would have given anything to have heard my wolf in that moment, even if it was just for some reassurance. She would have kept my spirits up in a heartbeat.

"How do you like your dress?" Thomas asks smoothly, stepping forward.

I glance at him in contempt. He too has gotten dressed up and is now wearing a tux of all things. It doesn't take a genius to put two and two together. He's trying to get us married, it explains the poor priest who's tied up at the altar. This is definitely not how I envisioned getting married in my dreams.

"I can't say I like it" I spit out at him and his eyes narrow. Before I can stop him, he takes a step forward and swings his hand forward, slapping me directly across the face. It's the first time he's hurt me since he's taken me and I put a hand up to my stinging cheek, staring at him as he looks apologetic all of a sudden.

"I'm sorry Winter" he croons at me, looking worried "it's just that I went to so much trouble to get that dress for you and then you insulted it."

"I'm sorry" I say automatically. Man, he was stronger than he realized, the pain was much more than just a simple slap.

He looks pleased at my apology.

"Good, good" he mutters, helping me to stand and supporting me as I sway back and forth on my feet, feeling dizzy and lightheaded.

"This is no good, you can barely stand" he says slightly annoyed. Then he places me leaning against the altar and darts forward. He begins to untie the poor fellow tied to the altar and I know it's not because he's about to let the man go free.

"Stay back from me demon" the priest says shakily as he's untied. I see Thomas roll his eyes at the man, and his fangs slowly protrude from his mouth. The man flinches. I see on his shoulder two marks and realize that Thomas has taken his blood as well. The poor priest must feel as dizzy as I am.

"I'm not a demon" Thomas roars at him "but so help me I can turn into one, if you don't do as I say. Don't make me kill the rest of them" he snaps and I realize he must have stashed the other people somewhere so that the man would be forced to do his bidding.

"What do you want from me" the priest asks shakily, swaying back and forth on his feet. He's completely pale, ashen and there's sweat beading on his forehead. He looks unwell. I wonder if I'm faring better, simply because I'm a shifter and not completely human like this poor guy. My shifter blood probably replenishes the lost blood far more quickly than if I was human.

"Isn't it obvious" Thomas growls with a grim expression on his face, gesturing towards me as I stay leaning against the altar, feeling weak as a newborn kitten "I want you to marry the both of us."

All the blood drains out of my face. I don't want to marry him, but I can't exactly force my body to move, to run. If I managed to, he'd snatch me up in a heartbeat, being much quicker than I am at running. Stupid hybrid powers, I think miserably. I wish Sabriel was here.

God, where was Kai when I needed him. If I was to marry anyone, I wanted it to be him. I even pray that he, Damien, Johnathon, Langdon are all searching for me. If only I could have left some clues for them to follow! But I'd been unconscious for the majority of it all. Maybe they had a backup plan I think to myself, I was violently hoping if they were to find me, it would be soon.

"I cannot marry someone who is unwilling" the priest says quietly, though he's trembling all over "and the young lady does not look like she wants to get married."

I want to smile at the man, but I know that Thomas is furious. "Marry us" I say, before he can threaten the innocent people he's got tied up somewhere "it's for the greater good, Priest, if it means saving innocent people" I say pointedly.

Thomas gives the man a wicked grin and comes back to my side, holding me firmly at the waist as tears come to the corner of my eyes. "After the ceremony, I'm going to mark you as mine forever" he promises and I stifle a sob. This was my worst nightmare coming true. The priest looks uncertain, but I give him a pleading look. I don't want people killed because of me, not when I have the ability to prevent it.

"We need witnesses" the priest says uncertainly.

"The hell we do" snarls Thomas, "just do it already. You can pretend there are witnesses, now get a move on" he threatens. I say nothing. If I do, I might just be sick all over myself.

The priest takes a deep breath, a bible laying on the altar in front of him, a nervous expression on his face. He looks at me apologetically but he's not to blame for any of this. Instead, I blame myself. I was so sure I'd killed Thomas back then, but I'd apparently failed. This is all my fault. It's karma getting back at me. I close my eyes as the priest begins to speak.

"Ladies and gentlemen, we are gathered here today, to witness the union between this man" he motions to Thomas who speaks "Thomas" and this woman "Winter" Thomas fills in "today."

I can't bear to listen to the words as he speaks them. I tune out. I feel numb, dead inside. I know what Thomas is going to do after this ceremony and I'm tense, preparing myself. I would rather die than let him mark me. I won't let him violate my body like that, let alone have a wedding night of nightmares. If I have to kill myself first then I will, but I'd rather fight until the end. The priest, I'm fairly certain is going on and on, prolonging the ceremony for as long as possible. I thank him with my eyes when I open them, but it's all for naught. Unless Kai comes bursting in, but the more time goes by, the more deflated I feel.

"Not much longer" Thomas whispers, licking his lips as I stare at him in revulsion. "Just think about our wedding night Winter. I'm going to make it so special for the both of us" he whispers. Tears trail down my cheeks and the priest pauses, seeing it. I move my head, imploring him to continue as Thomas's eyes turn even more red in his anger. The priest looks at me helplessly as he continues the ceremony.

"If anyone should object to this holy matrimony" booms the priest "let them speak now or forever hold their peace."

There's silence. Then the doors to the church burst open, and a disheveled Kai comes racing in, with Damien, Johnathon and Langdon. His jaw is clenched and he looks absolutely furious, especially when he takes in the scene. A growl fills the air. The priest looks like he's about to faint.

"I object" Kai growls as Thomas grips me tightly, holding me in front of him, hissing.

"She's mine" Thomas hisses "you no longer have a claim on her Alpha Kai" he adds triumphantly, indicating my bare neck.

For a moment there's silence as Kai looks at my neck and sees his mark is now gone. Then all hell breaks loose. "You son of a bitch" Kai roars and there is a low growling coming from the rest of them as they shift to their wolf forms. Thomas moves my head to the side, even as I try to fight it, his fangs pointing out. "Come any closer and I'll drain her blood before you get to me" he threatens.

Kai is pissed and stuck. He makes one move and Thomas takes the blood from my body. He's too frightened to put me in danger. The priest makes a bolt for it and Thomas lets him go, more focused on keeping me from moving. He lightly places his fangs against my neck as I shudder. Kai's eyes widen.

"Don't do it" he cries and Thomas grins.

"Back away" he orders and Kai slowly backs up, the wolves doing the same, although they look angry, snapping their jaws up and down at him. Thomas ignores all of them.

"How dare you ruin my wedding day" he says and Kai looks nonplussed.

He's crazy, I mouth to Kai and he gives a small nod.

"Winter is mine, mark or no mark" Kai says firmly "she is my mate and I love her. You are a crazy piece of shit hybrid that needs to be put down" he spits out, making Thomas angry. Great. Both of them are fighting with words. Screw this, I think to myself and tense my body up. I have one shot at this and if I fuck up, then I'm a goner. But would that be such a bad

thing if Thomas is going to kill me anyway? At least this way I would have attempted something instead of standing there and letting it happen.

I look at Kai, trying to convey I was about to do something. I hope he gets the message. His eyes darken at the look on my face. Without further ado, I smack my head back into Thomas and drop to the floor as he gives out a howl. The next thing I see is a large black wolf, leaping over my body, aiming directly towards a stunned Thomas.