

I sprinted across the street, waiting for the police to just catch up with me already. I was terrified that they would find me; that they would drag me back to that living nightmare I called home. Streetlights lit up certain sections of the dark sidewalk and I stepped into the light of one hesitantly. Ow! Why does it have to be so bright?

Deep breaths, Dymi. Just find your pace and then start running again. I had no clue where I was going or how I was going to get there, but one thing I was certain of. If I didn't leave right then I was bound to get the cops called on me. That would have been just what I needed. Getting arrested for trespassing instead of running away. The irony might have been enough for me to collapse to the ground. That would have looked good for my sanity.

A deep growl sounded behind me and I turned, the entire moment seeming to be in slow motion. Police soon followed, their boots rumbling against the cement. Great, I have to start running again. Now!

But I couldn't. My legs were paralyzed, all blood flow ceasing, numbness spreading like a wildfire throughout my entire body. At the exact moment I needed to leave them in the dust, my immense strength failed. Okay! Don't panic! You can talk your way out of this. You've charmed your way out of more trouble spots than anyone you know. Granted, I was something of a troublemaker and I didn't know a lot of people, but...

"Freeze! Hands above your head and don't move a muscle or-or we'll shoot," a nervous voice demanded.

Why is he nervous? He's the one who has a gun? Not me.

But, I looked at my hands and sure enough they were holding a shotgun. When did that get there? I definitely didn't have that earlier. Confused as ever, I started to explore the surface of the black instrument and how the dead weight felt in my hands. The officer somehow took this as a sign I was going to send a bullet into him. Wasn't planning on it, considering I've never shot anything before, let alone a human. Not happening now; not on my time.

A bullet blasted out of his handgun, and my mouth opened in a scream, the sound piercing the air and making the man cover his ears.

"Dymi!" a familiar voice yelled, making my own scream break off.

My body jackknifed up, panic making adrenaline flood into my system. I pulled myself into a fighting stance, ready to take on whatever was coming my way. Living on the street hardens you to the edge, I'd heard, but I hadn't been on my own out here for long. I'd maintained

my mostly naive innocence but there was only so much time before that changed. My gaze searched the abandoned alley where I had been sleeping, but not a hair was out of place. But not like I could see if anything was out of place anyway. Strange.... then what made me wake up?

The voice repeated itself, this time the sound more urgent. "Dymi!"

Pinpointing the particular location of the voice, muscles bunching tightly, I prepared to tackle whoever it was head on. Just as I tensed my legs to leap, a rough set of hands turned me around. Whoever this person is, I'm going to end up killing them. My fingers curled into a fist, arm moving back to deliver a punch this person would never forget. My fist connected with a loud snap, effectively hitting the persecutor.

I heard a moan of pain. Good, they deserved it. "Dang, remind me not to get on your bad side. You have a mean right hook."

The infliction in his voice finally allows me to figure out who this guy is. "Will? Is that you?"

"Yes! Who else is it going to be?" He moaned again. "God, I think you broke my nose. What were you thinking?"

Squinting my eyes, I reached for my glasses. I hate these things, considering I'm almost blind without them. His figure came into focus and I immediately felt guilty. His skin really did split. Guess I can deliver a blow without my glasses better than I can with them on.

I scurried up to his side, fingers fluttering over the surface of the injury. "I'm so sorry, I'm so sorry, I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to hit you, I promise. And don't take the lord's name in vain, it's not proper."

"Yes, mom," he told me, grinning.

I swatted him in the arm, crossing mine across my chest. "And what are you exactly laughing at?"

"Your expression. I'm fine; it's already healed up. No biggy." He moved his hand from where the wound previously was, the only evidence of it an already fading bruise. k. The healing power of a shape shifter will never cease to amaze me, even though I've felt the tingling sensation run through my bloodstream, healing a major injury in a matter of minutes.

I let out a breath I didn't know I was holding. At least he's okay. As annoying as Will is I don't know what I'd do without him. Probably fall into a fetal position until I die of starvation or dehydration. Since we're prone to extreme healing powers, it's not like I can fall off a cliff. With

my luck, I'd end up living the impact and lay in pain as my body knit itself back together.

Will waved his fingers in front of my face, peering at my face. "Earth to Dymi." My eyes snapped open, pulling me out of the dark place where Will didn't live. "What's wrong?"

"N-n-nothing." Yes, I had a stutter too, unfortunately for me. Life's been really difficult, but it only came out when I'm nervous or lying.

He shook his head. "Right and I'm going to be the queen of England. Now, seriously, what's wrong?" His arms wrapped around my body in what was supposed to be a comforting manner. It just succeeded in making me mad. I hated my glasses. I hated my stutter. And I hated that Will thought... I don't know, but I just wanted to strangle someone. And since he was the only one around, I was going to let out my rage on him.

"I said nothing was wrong!" I fought to release his grip on me, but his arms pulled me even closer to his chest, constricting my movements as best as he could. I'm stronger, by only a tiny fraction, but as I fought with all my might to escape, I couldn't. "God, Will, let go of me!" I yelled, ignoring my own words about taking His name in vain. I was a devoted Christian, or my family was and old habits die hard.

Shock was what made him let go of me. Shock that I screamed at him and shock at what was happening. A whitish light wrapped itself around my body, covering me completely in the glow. When the brightness died down, I only stood there. Will was slowly backing away, fright evident on his face. But what was he...? I tried to turn and almost fell down on my butt. Looking down, I saw four huge tawny paws. The reflection of something in the store window caught my attention. A lion was standing right there. Where is it?

My head looked around of its own accord, while the creature in the mirror copied my movement. Lifting a paw, the realization hit me. I was the lion. That's impossible though; I've never Shifted before in my life. We thought it was never going to happen because we're supposed to start changing around our fifth birthday. What's up with me being eight years late?

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Will still trying to make a run for it, walking backwards while still keeping me in his line of sight. He wasn't going anywhere, considering he was backing right into a dead end. I growled, and he jumped into the air, looking like he knows he pushed me too far. But he didn't, I just wanted to get his arms off of me.

Practically shaking from fear, he holds his hands up in defense. "I guess it's a little too late to say sorry." He laughs weakly.

The light enveloped me again, the color black this time around. Human again; thank goodness. Will stopped shaking, but was hesitant to come to me, probably thinking I'll change again and rip his head off.

Eyes wide with shock, heart beating wildly, my knees shook. My vision started to blur at the edges. Breathing heavily, I fell to the ground. Will ran towards me, fear gone and replaced with panic. Catching me and lowering me to the ground gently, he got down next to me.

Will asked, "Hey, are you okay?" He smacked himself in the forehead. "Of course you're not okay! You look like you're about to pass out."

I batted at him halfheartedly. "Just leave me alone." I don't know where it came from, but then I burst into tears. I don't mean the small ones but giant tears, sobs wracking my body.

"Hey, hey, hey. Calm down." Will gathered me to his chest and started to rock me back and forth. But I still didn't stop crying. If anything the sobs were even worse.

"I-I'm s-s-sorry." I managed to hiccup out. Will's eyes were full of worry, his eyes crinkling at the corners. I knew my eyes were puffy and red, but against him I felt safe. Like nothing bad could happen to me.

"You're fine. Don't apologize for crying." He told me, cutting me off from apologizing anymore. "Now tell me what happened, why you started screaming."

"I'll give you three guesses."

"Was it the dream?" he asked softly.

Will knew everything about me, the embarrassing and the sad. He knew about my entire past, abuse at the hands of my foster parents, and everything else. Ever since I had ran away a few years ago, I'd had the same memory repeated over and over. The only exception: the ending with the gun. The officer did have a gun, but I didn't. I was able to escape, with only a few cuts and bruises.

I nodded my head in response.

"Good," he told me, touching his forehead to mine gently. A strand of my auburn hair fell into my face and he tucked it behind my ear. He started to lean in, eyes closing, lips puckering.

What-is he doing what I think he is?

Will's lips met mine, applying only the smallest of pressure. I had no clue what I was supposed to do, having never been kissed before, but I hastily closed my eyes too. He pulled back, a triumphant smile evident on his face.

The only emotion I could feel was confusion. Why did he kiss me? Does he like me? He saw the confusion and questions in my amethyst eyes and answered it in three words.

"I love you."

He stated it so simply too like he was talking about the weather instead of confessing his love for me. The words stopped all thoughts running through my head in its tracks. I could feel my mouth plop open into an O, searching his eyes for any sign that this was all a cruel joke.

Will frowned at my lack of acknowledgement of what he just said. I wasn't capable of forming a response to this new revelation. I just stood there, speechless, as he waited patiently.

"I don't know what to say."

"All you have to do is answer my question. Will you love me too?"

"Will I love you?"

"You do!"

Dang it, he thinks I said "Will, I love you." instead of a question as I meant it. What was I going to do? I only had one option left, that I could see.

As fast as my legs would carry me, I ran.