

Chapter 30

Kyson

Damian panics the moment he sees me step into the foyer with her in my arms. Her blood runs down my arms, although it has slowed considerably. Ivy infuriated me; I wasn't supposed to mark her, but when she refused to submit, I lost control.

She hasn't shifted yet, but she did partially shift when she slashed me, so she must be close to shifting, and now I could have put everything at risk.

Damian's eyes fly wide open when he notices the blood trailing down my arms, and he tries to rip her away from me. I pull her closer, and his arms drop as his eyes take her in searching for any injury.

"I marked her; she is fine," I spit through gritted teeth, annoyed at how he goes straight for her as if I have fatally hurt her. He exhales, and his shoulders sag with his obvious relief.

“Not ideal, but we can work with that. Just means changing her will be harder and require a few attempts,” Damian sighs. Ivy looks like a ragdoll in my arms. Looking at her, it almost looks like she is dead with how floppy her body. Moving her around, I pull her closer, so her head rests on my shoulder instead of craning back awkwardly.

“Help me get her upstairs,” I command, and he walks ahead, opening the doors for me before finally opening the bedroom door. I stop, peering around my room before walking back out.

“What is it?” Damian asks, and I look down the hall toward the other wing.

“I can’t stay in there with her; I don’t trust myself,” I tell him.

“Kyson, you can’t just mark her and lock her away in her room and leave her there,” Damian says, and I gaze down at her in my arms.

“Just have them move my stuff tomorrow to hers, just not... It’s Claire’s old room; I can’t,” I tell him before walking off toward her room.

“But you will stay with her. You will move back to your old quarters?” Damian asks.

“I said I would. I know I can’t leave her now; I fucking marked her.”

“And you do not seem the least bit happy about that,” Damian states.

“Damian, stop. Just leave it be.”

He chuckles and shakes his head.

“Whatever you say, My King,” he adds as I step through the threshold, tugging Ivy closer. Damian moves toward the fire, throwing another log in it before going into the bathroom. I hear the bath running. I glance at him as he emerges, and he shrugs.

“What, do you plan on putting her to bed filthy and covered in blood and dirt?” he asks.

“I know what you’re doing,” I growl at him.

“And what is that, My King?” Damian smirks, and I narrow my eyes at him, his lips tugging into a smirk. He knows exactly what he is doing, trying to force me to break down the walls of the bond. He knows the more time spent with her would awaken the bond, awaken her shift.

“Don’t play dumb,” I snap at him before staring down at her. She’s filthy, mud matted in her hair, and her porcelain skin is now stained red. Blood also drenches my chest, neck, and face from her claw marks, and I sigh.

“I will have some clothes sent over for you,” Damian says before turning and leaving.

Biting the inside of my lip, I sigh. I move toward the bathroom before sitting on the edge of the giant bathtub with Ivy on my lap. Quickly stripping her bare, I look away from her naked body. My urges tempt me to taste her flesh and smother her in my scent.

The bond may be weak for her, but it has never been stronger for me, especially as I feel her essence weave through mine. Reaching over, I shut the taps off before stepping into the bath and settling her on my lap, keeping her head above water. Her back rests against my chest. Reaching for a cloth, I begin to wash her.

Not once does she stir as I clean her, her mark still weeping with blood as it tries to heal. It isn't until Damian clears his throat from the bathroom doorway, his back turned slightly, that I realize I am licking her. I shake my head, not remembering when I gave myself over to instinct. Her neck and face are completely clean, and I glare at the ceiling. A growl slips from me at Damian's following words.

“Does she taste good, My King?” he taunts.

“Are you trying to irritate me on purpose? I didn't fucking realize I was doing it until you made a noise,” I snap back.

“Instinct shouldn't be ignored,” Damian says simply. That's easy for him to say. He hasn't found his mate, and his mate probably isn't a traitor. “Clothes are on the bed, towels by the sink,” he says, sauntering out.

I glance at the sink basin and shake my head before reluctantly climbing out and bringing Ivy with me. What a mission it is trying to dry her and me when she has no movement.

Giving up on trying to dress her after pulling one of my shirts over her head, I lay her on the bed, tugging the blankets up over

her before pulling on the shorts Damian brought in for me. Moving back to the bathroom, I examine my face. Her claw marks are deep, especially across my cheek and temple. I prod it, and it starts bleeding, so I grab a hand towel, pressing it against it as I walk back out of the bathroom. Grabbing her hand, I examine her fingers.

I wonder how she managed to claw me up so badly. Werewolf claws could do some damage, but it's like I was slashed with a knife. The only damage that causes this sort of destruction to a Lycan is usually caused by another Lycan's claws.

Placing her hand down, I move toward my old bar, searching for liquor. Finding none, I call for Dustin to retrieve it for me, along with a set of handcuffs, before settling on the couch by the fire. I turn my chair so I can see her while I wait for him.

A few hours later, whiskey in hand, I watch her. The dimly lit room casts shadows on her face as she sleeps across the room from me, her eyes closed. Her hair cascades over her shoulders in waves, the moonlight catching hints of blue. Ivy's hair is that black; it gives off strange hues under the lighting.

The air is filled with the rich aroma of whiskey, its spicy notes mingling with the smoky scent of the fire. Underneath it all, her

sweet honey nectar scent invades every inch of the room, sending my senses wild. Her scent is intoxicating to me.

As I take a sip of the whiskey, the smooth liquid burns down my throat, leaving a warm trail in its wake. Its flavors dance on my tongue, hints of caramel and oak, but it does nothing to stop the ache in me to go to her, to bundle her up in my arms and devour her essence. I feel out of control and it's all because of her. She will send me insane with love or hate. They seem to blur into one these days. I can't stand to be near her, yet it pains me to be away.

For some reason, I can't shake the image of her eyes glowing with an unearthly light, or the surprising strength she displayed as she struggled against me. It was clear she was angry, and it took nearly all my strength to subdue her.

What really bothers me is how she resisted my command in her anger. The calling overwhelmed her, but my command, she fought. It puzzles me. In those moments, Ivy had a strength that seemed beyond what a werewolf should possess. She fought my command but couldn't withstand the calling. I keep telling myself it's because she's my mate, yet something nags at me as I ponder. There must be more to it.

The sun is just beginning to peek over the horizon when I finally climb into bed next to her. She stirs and rolls into me. I growl at her touch, her small hands pressing into my side, seeking me out, but then I notice she's still unconscious, just reacting to the bond. Reaching over to the bedside table, I grab the handcuffs I placed there earlier and clamp one around her wrist, securing it to the headboard.

I can't risk her waking before me and trying to run again. Now that my mark is etched into her skin, there's no place she can hide from me. She'll learn that her place is with me, and whatever I choose to do with her rests solely with me. She has no choice in the matter. So until she learns that, I'll make the choices for both of us. Settling back beside her, I rest my head on the pillow and close my eyes.

Sleep takes me almost instantly with her by my side. I haven't slept completely since I forced her out of the castle, but now, with her snuggled into me and her scent enveloping me, I plunge into oblivion.