

Chapter 32

Ivy

My muscles throb with an ache as I force my heavy eyelids to flutter open, my gaze landing on the plain expanse of the ceiling. A dull throb pulses through my head, leaving me feeling groggy and disoriented as I shift on the bed. But as I attempt to rub my eyes, a shock of icy metal snags my wrist, freezing me in place.

With a tilt of my head, I discover one of my hands is shackled to the headboard, the cold handcuff biting into my flesh. A gasp escapes my lips as I jerk my trapped wrist, desperate to break free, only to find the restraint refuses to yield. Panic slithers its way through my veins as the memories of yesterday surge back with a vengeance, flooding every corner of my mind.

A tightness constricts my chest, making it difficult to draw a full breath as my free hand instinctively travels to my neck. The tingling sensation of his touch lingers on my skin, accompanied by a stinging reminder of how he marked me.

The haunting echoes of his threats to bind me to the bed reverberate in my thoughts as I scan the room for his presence, but he remains elusive, nowhere to be found. Judging by the soft glow filtering through the window, it appears to be midday. My struggles against the restraints intensify, the unforgiving metal digging deeper into my wrist, leaving behind angry bruises as I desperately try to free myself.

Warm tears carve their path down my cheeks, proof of the inescapable truth that he has ensnared me, trapping me within the confines of this bed, leaving his mark upon me.

I sob at how easy it was for him to hurt me and chain me up like this. My head swivels, angling toward the entrance as his intoxicating scent wafts over to me. The king strides into the room, his gaze momentarily flickering over me in my futile attempt to break free.

“There would be no need for such measures, but I cannot trust you,” he asserts, making his way to the bar area. Clutching a book in one hand, he observes my struggle while pouring himself a drink, placing the book on the coffee table before settling into an armchair.

“You tried to flee,” he remarks casually, as though that alone justifies his harsh treatment. All I can think of are the countless times Mrs. Daley confined and imprisoned us, triggering my claustrophobia to soar to unbearable heights. Despite the room’s ample size, being trapped on this bed with a hand rendered useless makes the space feel small, as if its very walls conspire to suffocate me.

“You’re afraid,” he states matter-of-factly, taking a sip from his glass and studying me intently over its rim.

“Release me, Kyson,” I stammer, my voice trembling.

“Never, Ivy. What part of ‘you are mine’ did you fail to comprehend? Did you believe that being destined to a king would grant you the freedom to depart without consequences?” he challenges, eliciting a defiant glare from me. My sudden anger doesn’t stop the tears from sliding down my face or the feeling of unease at being trapped. His presence only makes me more nervous. I turn my gaze to the closet before lying back down on my side.

The sound of his glass gently clinking against the coffee table and his footsteps growing nearer indicate his approach. “You cannot simply walk away; the bond forbids it, at least for me,”

he declares, his voice drawing closer as he edges toward the edge of the bed.

“Then reject me and be done with it,” I tell him.

“Lycan’s cannot sever their connection to their mates. Even if I desired it, I would be incapable of doing so, and truth be told, I have no desire to sever that bond,” he confesses, though his words seem more like an attempt to convince himself rather than me. It doesn’t offer me any hope.

“I will release you from these handcuffs once I sense I can trust you again. As long as the anger coursing through our bond persists, you shall remain restrained. Do you understand?” The words catch in my throat when I feel his fingertips firmly grip my chin, tilting my face upward to meet his gaze.

The faint scarring from my claw marks on his face have healed, leaving behind a subtle trace of our encounter. Strangely, these marks only seem to enhance his god-like good looks, adding character rather than detracting from them. His features remain as striking as ever, despite the evidence of our conflict.

With a cool detachment in his voice, he speaks, his thumb brushing lightly against my lips. “All you had to do was

submit,” he said. I instinctively jerk my head away from his touch, a small act of defiance that seems to disappoint him. A sigh escapes his lips as he continues, “But since you didn’t, I can’t guarantee you won’t try to run again.”

His words hang heavy in the air, a reminder of my captivity and the powerlessness that comes with it. As he turns away, retreating to his whiskey, I find myself lost in a sea of memories. The silence of the room amplifies the haunting echoes of my past, particularly those from the orphanage where I was bound and restrained, trapped both physically and mentally.

In these moments of silence, my mind becomes another prison, leading me down paths I desperately wish to forget. I yearn for the presence of Abbie, whose whispers had once kept me grounded during such torment, usually because she would be locked in that cramped space with me. But now, all I have is the suffocating silence enforced by the king, a silence that threatens to consume me.

My muscles ache from the lack of movement, reminding me of the stagnant existence I am now leading. Somehow, this feels worse than the orphanage. Suddenly, the urgency to relieve myself washes over me. As if reading my thoughts, he appears by my side, undoing the handcuffs with an air of impatience. “Go,” he commands, nodding toward the bathroom.

“You forget I can feel you, Ivy. Now hurry up.”

“Then, if that were true, you wouldn’t have me handcuffed to the damn bed.”

He seems perplexed at my reaction. He tilts his head to the side, observing me, but I pay him no mind. I stumble over my own feet as I climb off the bed before rushing to the bathroom.

Emerging from the bathroom, my gaze is immediately drawn to the handcuffs in his hand as he stands waiting by the door. My heart rate quickens, anxiety coursing through my veins, as he observes me with a tilted head. His fingers graze his chin in contemplation.

“Come here,” he murmurs, and I take a step back, shaking my head, my gaze darts to the handcuffs. He takes a calculated step toward me.

“I thought you weren’t scared of me,” he muses, raising the handcuffs as if they are a symbol of fear. My heart lurches in my chest, pounding relentlessly. He studies me for a moment before shifting his gaze to the handcuffs.

“But these are what scare you?” he questions, frustration etching lines on his face. He sighs and runs a hand down his tired features, biting his lip as he ponders. Meanwhile, I stand frozen in place, shifting my weight nervously from one foot to the other, bracing myself for the inevitable moment when he will force the cuffs back onto my wrists.

“Do I need these?” he asks me, he watches me intently and I swallow the lump forming in my throat.

“If you try to escape again,” he warns, his voice laced with a dangerous edge as he steps closer. “I will lock you in the cells beneath the castle, or perhaps I’ll resort to using these again,” he states.

“Am I understood?” he asks, and I bite down on my lip.

“Ivy!” he growls when I don’t answer him. Tears burn my eyes, and I nod in reluctant understanding, aware of the consequences that await any further attempts at defiance. He curses under his breath, shaking his head then tosses the handcuffs onto the bed.

“One chance, Ivy,” he states firmly. “Don’t ruin it. I don’t take pleasure in punishing you.” His words hang in the air like an

unspoken promise, though lately it seems that punishment has become an all too frequent occurrence.

“Then don’t give me a reason to,” I whisper defiantly. He glances over at me, a low growl escaping his throat. He storms toward me, reaching forward and gripping my wrist tightly. In one swift motion, he yanks me toward him, pinning me beneath his weight on the bed. The suddenness of his movements leaves me breathless, caught off guard and vulnerable.

“You can be a stubborn little thing,” he growls, a trace of frustration evident in his voice. The calling surges through my veins, his proximity drawing out an instinctual response within me that I am beginning to despise. His hands lock around my wrists, pulling them above my head and holding them captive with a strength that leaves me powerless underneath him. His chest presses against mine, the vibration reverberating through my entire body, the clash between desire and anger intensifying as he uses the calling.

His nose trails along my cheek, inhaling my scent before pausing near my ear. “You can fight me all you want, Ivy,” he purrs, his warm breath sending shivers down my spine. “But I possess something you don’t.” His tongue grazes the seam of my lips, eliciting a moan from deep within me. My body betrays me, succumbing to his touch even as tears threaten to spill from my eyes.

“I don’t want to force you,” he whispers against my lips, his voice laced with a hint of desperation. “I’ve told you this before. I don’t want to become that kind of monster.”

He thrust his hips against my barely clothed body, the pressure causing another moan to escape my lips, mingling with the whirlwind of conflicting emotions inside me. I know if he desires it, he can use the calling to make me submit completely, to surrender myself entirely to him.

“See, Ivy,” he growls, an edge of control in his voice. “I have power over you. Don’t make me abuse it. I don’t want that, and I know you don’t, either.” With those words, he abruptly withdraws, the overwhelming sensation vanishing as quickly as it had appeared leaving me feeling suddenly cold.

“Tread carefully, Ivy. You don’t want me to snap,” he growls before rolling off me.

The moment he does, my entire body shudders like it’s going through withdrawals. It takes everything in me not to throw myself at him and rub myself on him, needing his skin, wanting to bite him. He smirks knowing the war he has caused inside me before his face falls when I don’t give in to the urges, my anger at him overshadowing them, and I grit my teeth.

“You’re fighting it,” he snarls, his voice dripping with frustration and impatience and he grips my face with his fingers. His eyes bore into mine, searching for any sign of surrender.

“You would rather be in pain?” he asks, his tone laced with a mix of concern and anger. His brows furrow as he waits for my response.

“I used to love it when you did that. Now, you just make me hate it because you’re taking my choice,” I tell him, my words tinged with bitterness. He lets me go. The weight of broken promises hangs heavily in the air between us. “You promised I would have a choice. But you never meant it, did you?”

He looks away from me, his gaze fixed on some distant point in the room. I catch a glimpse of his throat bobbing as he swallows, a flicker of guilt crossing his features before he masks it.

“You’ve given me no choice. You want to make choices. Then don’t make me take them,” he pleads, his voice tinged with desperation. “Stop fighting the bond and you don’t run from me again.”

A bitter laugh escapes my lips, laced with a tinge of disbelief. “You’re a hypocrite,” I spit out, the words dripping with venom. “You say don’t fight it or deny the bond, but you broke mine. You had no issues breaking me. I won’t allow you to do it a second time.”

My anger boils over, my voice rising in volume until it fills the room, leaving me breathless. He seems taken aback by my outburst, his eyes widening momentarily before he regains his composure. Without saying another word, he gets up from his seat and storms toward the door, his steps heavy with frustration.

“You try to leave this room before I say, and you will find yourself in the cold confines of the cells,” he snaps, his voice sharp and cutting.

With one final glare in my direction, he stalks out and slams the door behind him, the sound reverberating through the room like a gunshot. I jump at the sudden noise, the bond between us flaring to life, tugging at my very core, urging me to chase after him.

It takes me days, endless nights of torment, for the bond to ease its grip and allow me to breathe again. But it takes him only

seconds to force it back, to tighten its chains around my heart. One bite, one act of dominance, and he is destroying me all over again.

Only now, in the aftermath of our heated exchange, do I recognize the signs, the insidious influence he has over me. The twisted way the bond works against me, stripping away my autonomy. It isn't fair, and with Abbie gone, I fear I may not survive the relentless push and pull of this bond, the agony of losing it once more, if he so chooses.

Yet, despite the overwhelming despair that threatens to consume me. One thing has become startlingly obvious: he is fighting the bond just as fiercely as I am. He may have the calling, and the power that comes with it, but I am not entirely powerless. I have this bond, this connection that binds us together. And if he wants to break me, to shatter every piece of my being, then I will make sure he breaks, too.

I'll show him how intertwined pain and desire truly are. There can be no winner unless we are both scarred. Every touch brings a sting of pain, but pain itself is an old acquaintance, a constant shadow in my life. What are a few more scars to a soul already so deeply lacerated? My skin might heal, but the soul remembers.

He awakened feelings in me, a dangerous stirring of life where once there was only numbness, he gave hope, only to take it away. Now, I find myself craving the cold embrace of that void again. And soon, so will he.