

Chapter 36

Kyson

Clarice lied to me; she knew where Ivy was, but not once did Ivy check in like she was supposed to, which infuriates me.

“Where is she?” I snap at Clarice, and she seems to recoil in fear.

“Outside helping Peter,” Clarice explains.

“I will deal with you when I get back,” I say, turning toward my guards. “Fucking find her,” I order them, and they take off.

“She isn’t doing anything wrong, My King; she is only helping clean the graves,” Clarice says in her defense. Hearing that only infuriates me further.

“You let the daughter of their killer, clean their graves. The disrespect, Clarice fucking think,” I roar at her, and she narrows

her eyes at me before pointing an accusing finger in my direction.

“You listen here, Kyson, you may be king, but I have watched you grow, I helped fucking raise you, you do not speak to me like that.” She jabs me in the chest with her finger. “That girl is not her mother and if you are too blind to see it, then you have no right being her mate,” she snarls at me.

Clarice rarely gets angry at me but right now she is furious, so furious her canines have slipped out, as she fixes me with her glare. My fist smacks down on the counter beside us and she jumps but her glare doesn't waiver. This old woman is putting her foot out of line if she thinks she can speak to me this way.

“You are a fucking idiot. That girl has suffered enough. Stop punishing her for the crimes of her mother. She didn't kill Claire.” Her words are like a physical blow, I growl at the mention of my sister's name, and I feel the urge to shift rush through every cell in my body, making my skin vibrate.

Turning on my heel, I storm out before I hurt the woman. She is right about helping raise me. Clarice was more my mother than my real one. She did most of the raising. She was my nanny since mom was always busy being queen and ruling alongside Dad.

Stalking outside, my men are all standing at the top of the graveyard. Shoving past them, I growl when I don't see them grabbing her. Searching the rows, I find her at the very last one and stop beside her, I growl, and she peers up when I notice her hands. Her fingertips are bleeding, and she is covered in mud, the heat emanating off her skin I can feel even with the cool breeze. "My entire guard is out looking for you!" I growl angrily.

Taking the scrub brush from her hands, I snarl, "Damn it, Ivy, look at your hands." But she snatches it back from me, turning back to the grave. Snatching the scrubbing brush back, I toss it in the bucket. The water splashes against her, and I notice a few of the guards step closer. I glare at them, making them take a step back.

'Kyson!' Damian snarls through the mindlink.

'Quiet, you don't interfere when I am dealing with her,' I order back, ignoring his protests.

"You didn't check in; Clarice is now in trouble for covering for you. Why are you out here? You disobeyed me," I snap at her, bending down and gripping her arms. She turns to dead weight

in my hands, so I shake her, her skin so hot it is making me angrier seeing how sunburnt she is.

“You’re sunburnt; your skin is blistered,” I growl at her. Trying to drag her toward the castle, but she starts thrashing and manages to yank out of my grip. “Ivy!” I snap at her disobedience, reaching for her about to toss her over my shoulder when Gannon and Damian move closer, and I growl at them.

“I’m not fucking hurting her, now step back,” I order as she grabs the scrubbing brush and starts frantically scrubbing. She hiccups a sob, making me look at her.

“Ivy?” I whisper, and she looks up at me.

Ivy’s eyes are bloodshot from crying, the whites now a deep shade of red. Tears stream down her cheeks, leaving tracks in the dirt and grime on her face. Her skin is sunburned and blistered, her hands coated in dried blood. As she cries, her whole body shakes, and her face contorts with grief.

However, it is her following words that make me realize something is wrong, I should have paid attention to the bond instead of my red-hot anger.

“She killed them. I loved her, and she killed them. How could she love me and kill them?” Ivy cries, staring at the graves before peering back at me. The scent of sweat and dirt mingles with the metallic tang of blood in the air. The smell of tears and anguish is also present, making the air heavy and suffocating. I swallow down the emotion that tries to choke me upon seeing her frantically scrub the skin off her fingers as she tries to clean the tombstones.

Clarice’s words echo in my head. She is not her mother. Clarice is right. Her mother never shed tears over the lives she took. Ivy is not that sort of monster and the guilt on her face is proof of that. I don’t know how to help her; looking at her like this, I can see the errors I made. Ivy is as much a victim as the rest of them, only she is a living one. She has to live with her mother’s sins.

Kneeling down beside her, I grab her hands, dropping the scrubbing brush “You’re not her,” I whisper, string into her cerulean blue eyes.

“I am, I am. She made me; can’t you see?” Tears burn my eyes at seeing her so distraught as she holds her hands out to me like she can see their blood staining her.

“No, you aren’t,” I try to tell her, but she doesn’t listen, rambling about having to take it back, that she needs to clean them, they need to be clean.

I look to Damian wanting to know what to do. He moves toward her before dropping beside her.

“My Queen, you need to come inside. It’s not safe out here,” Damian urges her, he tries to grab her arm, but she growls at him and he puts his hands up.

“Please My Queen,” he murmurs, trying to get her to go with him, but she doesn’t move, intent on cleaning the other fifty or so graves in this row.

“Get me rag,” I tell one of the guards.

“Sorry, My King?” Dustin answers my request, and I look at him.

“I said get me rag,” I tell him, taking the scrubbing brush from her fingers again and she reaches for it, her lips twisting into a snarl. I grip her wrist.

“Stop, I will clean it, but you need to stop,” I whisper before sitting in front of the grave. I drag her closer, pulling her between my legs and grabbing the scrubbing brush that is almost down to the wood that holds it together.

Ivy has worn the bristles down from scrubbing and she tries to take it from me again, and I growl at her before locking my legs around her and using the calling to calm her. Though the moment I do she lashes out, hitting and clawing at me. I grunt as her hand comes in contact with my face, a furious growl leaves me, and Damian jumps to his feet when I pin her to the ground beneath me. Her chest rises and falls heavily, and her eyes are glassy. She bucks beneath me, and I sigh heavily resting my head on her shoulder waiting for her to tire herself out beneath me.

“I will clean it, stop or I will force you inside,” I warn her, and she stops thrashing. She breaks down beneath me, struggling to breathe through her gasping sobs. Seeing her like this breaks my heart, crushes the air from my lungs, and I pull back worried my weight on her will make her pass out as she has a panic attack. I sit up, pulling her into my lap and wrapping her legs around my waist to keep her off the hard ground before gripping her face in my hands.

“Breathe, Ivy,” I urge, not wanting to use the calling on her, but if she doesn’t breathe soon, she’ll give me no choice. “Breathe,

I'll clean them, but I need you to breathe," I tell her, kissing her mouth. I pick up the scrubbing brush, letting my calling slip over her. I almost shatter and break down with her when I feel her press closer and take a gasping breath.

"Good girl," I whisper, and she turns, watching me. She relaxes seeing me start scrubbing the tombstone. All the guards have left us. "Take my shirt off," I tell her, but she is so out of it, she is barely able to follow instructions, and I don't want to hurt by commanding her. I drop the brush, and she reaches for it, but I grip her hands in one of mine. Using my other hand, I undo the buttons. She watches me, lulled by my calling as I remove it before draping it over. Letting her wrists go, I pull her arm through the sleeves before picking up the scrubbing brush.

A few minutes later, my guard returns with more buckets and scrubbing brushes. Dustin hands me a fresh scrubbing brush, taking his bucket to another grave when some of the kitchen staff also come out with Clarice, cleaning buckets in hand, and I grip Ivy's chin, forcing her to look at me.

"See, they will be cleaned," I tell her, pecking her lips, that are just as blistered as her skin. I turn her face so she can see all the guards and workers that have come to help.

“They aren’t here for me, they’re here for their queen,” I whisper to her.

“Where I should have been,” I tell her, grabbing a fresh brush. It takes an hour for us to finish them but not one of my staff or guards stop until we have cleaned every single one of them.