

Chapter 38

Ivy

The morning light filtering in through the drapes wakes me up early. Kyson is snoring softly beside me, and I sit up, he stirs in his sleep rolling toward me, and I hold my breath. His heavy arm draped over my waist makes me glance down, and I quietly and slowly slip out from beneath the blanket and his arm.

Moving around the room, I find some clothes when his alarm sounds, my heart races as I run toward his phone, my fingers tapping the screen trying to shut it off.

I suck in a breath when the loud beeping stops, and my gaze darts to him on the bed. He has rolled but is thankfully still asleep. Setting the phone down, I carefully slip out the door before he can lock me away in the room with him. I'm sick of being cooped up inside all the time, it is driving me insane. How does he not see that his actions are driving me to the brink of insanity, his mood swings not helping in the slightest.

I am excited at the prospect of having a morning to myself, perhaps helping Clarice in the kitchens. I make my way down to the kitchens when Peter enters and stops by the counters. He keeps shoving his fringe out of his green eyes as he wanders into the kitchens.

“Clarice, is Gannon or Dustin around? I need help moving the barrels from the shed into the barn.”

“Barrels?” Clarice asks questionably, entering the room, and Peter sighs.

“Yeah, the empty wine barrels. Jamie wants me to cut them in half so he can make garden beds out of them, but I need to cut them and paint them first,” he says with a huff, clearly not liking being given extra chores by the gardener.

“Do it in the shed,” Clarice tells him with a shrug.

“Can’t, there is not enough room; it’s full of the furniture from the east wing,” he whines.

“Well, you will have to go look for them. I have no idea where either of them—”

“I can help,” I offer, cutting her off. Being outside sounded great, and Clarice hardly let me do anything to help besides peel potatoes, saying I shouldn’t even be helping. However, with Abbie gone, I am constantly bored, and I still haven’t forgiven the king for marking me or healing me while I slept. I also hate that he used the calling on me to force me to submit the other night.

“The king will pitch a fit if he finds you in the stables working,” Clarice says.

“Let him, I am helping Peter,” I tell her, and Peter’s eyes light up at the offer of help.

“Ivy, he will lose his mind if you get hurt,” Clarice says, grabbing my hand gently.

“It’s fine, Clarice; I will deal with the king if needed,” I growl, grabbing Peter’s arm and tugging him out the door.

“Are you sure, My Queen? I don’t want you to get in trouble,” Peter asks nervously as he sucks his lip between his teeth.

“Yes, I want to go outside, anyway, I’m sick of watching people work and not letting me help,” I tell him, dragging him through the castle. I know the king is still asleep, so I don’t have to worry about him sending someone to look for me for a few hours, anyway.

A few hours pass, and we manage to create enough room to drag the old wine barrels out, then we restack the shed, making it more accessible in the future. I watch as Peter cuts the wine barrels with a chainsaw by the stables. Peter won’t let me try because he is too worried the king will be angry if he finds out, so I just watch. He does, however, let me help paint them.

When we finish, Peter heads up to see the gardener so he can let him know we are just waiting for the paint to dry when I hear a loud squawking, which causes me to look toward the pier that extends over the lake from the stables.

I furrow my brows at the noise when I hear it again, making me rise to my feet. Peering toward the pier the only thing I see moving is something flapping, so I suspect it is a bird.

I step cautiously onto the wooden pier and nervously glance at the blackened water beneath it as I move to the end. Upon reaching the end, I notice a beautiful swan flapping his wings frantically and squawking in the water as it tries to fly away. It

appears to be caught in something, as every time it tries to take flight, it's pulled under once more. I move to help the poor, helpless creature.

I call out to Peter, but he is nowhere to be found. So I drop to my knees hoping to be able to reach it. Holding firmly onto the wooden pier with one hand, I reach my other hand out to grab the swan by the neck in an attempt to pull it closer. The bird seems to be caught in some netting or something. The creature shrieks and flaps its wings as it tries to free itself, and my fingertips graze the surface of its face and snapping beak. The bird flaps more frantically at my touch, causing its wing to become further stuck. I lean over more, attempting to save it once again before it gets dragged under. "Stop flapping," I growl at the silly swan.

I am in the process of grabbing the feathers of its back end when my weight and angle overbalance me. I scream, tumbling into the blackened water.

I frantically kick back to the surface, my arms flailing as I try to grip the pier that has quickly become way out of reach. Panicking, I tangle myself in the mesh netting that the swan is trapped in and am pulled under. Water burns my nose as I sputter for air.

When I breach the surface, I choke on the water as the swan flails frantically and takes off.

“Peter!” I rasp, screaming as loud as my burning throat allows.

“Peter!” I try to scream as my legs become more tangled. Desperately, I stretch my arm out to reach for the pier, only to be pulled further down.

I can feel myself being dragged under by the weight of what I am caught on. I choke on the water as it spills into my mouth, filling my lungs, and I know I am drowning. As my effort begins to die out, calm sweeps over me. It is an odd sensation. I know I am dying, yet I feel an overwhelming sensation of peace fall over me and I sink further, the surface darkening when I hear a loud splash.

My gaze flutters as ripples in the water steal my attention and suddenly an arm wraps tightly around my waist and I am dragged toward the surface.

The moment I breach the surface, the pain hits. Hands grip my waist, and I am hauled upright, gasping for breath, only to be ripped back under because my feet are still tangled in the netting. While I attempt to blink through the murky water, my

eyes sting while someone untangles the mesh from around my legs. The moment we breach the surface, I panic, sputter, cough, and lock my legs around their waist.

As I shove him under, he coughs and splutters on the water, when a furious growl rips from his throat, and I am turned so I won't be able to push him beneath the surface again. Kyson wraps his arms across my chest and pulls my back to his chest.

“Calm down before you drown us both,” he snaps at me while I suck in much-needed air. My lungs feel like they have been put through a mincer-like razors slicing through my chest with each agonizing breath.