

Chapter 39

Ivy

As I struggle to catch my breath, I see guards running in our direction down the steep hill leading from the castle. I peer around frantically, still feeling disoriented and unsure if I'm completely out of the water.

"I'm going to turn you around. Don't push down on me," Kyson growls, and I can feel the movement of his legs behind me as he treads water. He turns me around, and my legs wrap around him, and he grabs them, pulling me up higher.

He sighs, pressing his head against mine, and my teeth chatter.

"What were you doing in the water when you can't swim!" he demands angrily.

"I was trying to help the swan!" I retort and he stares at me dumbfounded.

“Why would you risk your life for a fucking swan?” he demands, his grip tightening, a manifestation of his barely contained fury.

“The swan was tangled,” I manage to say, my voice hoarse from coughing.

“You nearly drowned for a swan?” His voice is thick with disbelief and outrage.

“I slipped!” I retort, my fingers digging into his shoulder with a mix of fear and anger. He floats onto his back, effortlessly treading water. The guards on the hill, having halted their approach, still watch us intently until the king dismisses them with a wave. He growls, swimming further out into the lake, his movements fluid and confident.

“How can you not swim?” he mutters, more to himself than to me, shaking his head in disbelief.

As he moves further out, I reluctantly loosen my grip on him. “Just get me out of here if you’re going to berate me! I nearly drowned, you don’t need to be an asshole about it,” I snap, my patience fraying.

He stops abruptly, his piercing gaze locking onto mine. “What did you just call me?” he growls, the dangerous edge in his voice sending a shiver down my spine.

I bite my lip, avoiding his gaze, but he’s insistent, capturing my chin in his hand and forcing me to meet his eyes.

“Ivy,” he says, a warning clear in his tone.

I swallow hard, indignancy replacing my fear. “I called you an asshole,” I admit, my voice small. I sigh, rubbing my face. “Look, I’m sorry, it just slipped out.” His eyes soften slightly but the hard lines don’t disappear completely.

He stares at me for a moment before breaking silence, his voice an angry growl. “You do not speak to me like that, I am your king!” he snarls, his canines slipping out. My own anger rises, I scoff, a maniacal laugh in my tone.

“You are not my king. In fact, you’re supposed to be my mate and all you do is fucking yell at me and order me around. You should have let me fucking drown if you were going to be a...” I grit my teeth when he growls. The man makes my blood boil, and tears spring in my eyes.

For a moment, we are locked in a silent battle of wills. Then, unexpectedly, his expression softens, the anger giving way to something more complex. A flicker of guilt passes over his features, and he sighs, the tension in his shoulders easing.

“I’m sorry,” he murmurs, the words seemingly foreign to him. “I shouldn’t have reacted that way.”

His apology catches me off guard, and I stare at him in shock.

He pulls me closer, our bodies almost touching in the water, his muscles rippling under my hands. “Let me teach you to swim,” he suggests, his voice gentle. I hesitate, then shake my head.

“You should know how to swim, Ivy,” he reminds me as he swims backward pulling me with him. I freak out when I am dragged on my stomach. My legs instantly wrap back around him, and he sighs, moving upright again and treading water. His hands move to my thighs under my dress, rubbing gently.

“Unwrap your legs.”

I shake my head, my legs gripping him tighter.

“Ivy,” he urges.

“It’s too late to teach me to swim, that’s something kids learn,” I tell him.

“Nonsense, now unwrap your legs. I won’t let you drown, I’m right here,” he says, his lips brushing my cheek gently.

“Please don’t make me order you, you should know this, Ivy, let me teach you,” he murmurs. Reluctantly, I untangle my legs from him, and he sighs. “Now put your arms around my neck,” he orders, and I do as he says. He grips my waist tightly and kicks off, propelling us forward through the water. His arms encircle me, and he starts to move up and down, my legs dangling loose. As he moves against me, the fabric of my dress shifts slowly upward, covering his chest.

“Relax,” he murmurs in my ear, and I attempt to copy his movements. It doesn’t work at first but gradually, I find the rhythm until I feel more comfortable. Kyson smiles down at me “See, you’re doing great.”

My cheeks warm as he continues teaching me while the sun beats down on us.

Despite my embarrassment and initial anger, it feels nice having him this close to me. Soft ripples stretch out around us.

He guides my movements, his hands supportive under my body. “Kick your legs like this,” he instructs, his tone patient and encouraging.

I mimic his movements, and to my surprise, I find myself floating. Laughter bubbles up inside me.

“Good girl, you’re doing great,” he praises, and there’s a warmth in his words that makes my heart flutter unexpectedly. Kyson pulls me closer. “Wrap your legs around me again for a second.” I do as he says when he suddenly grabs my dress pulling up.

“Kyson!” I clutch it.

“No one can see you, but your dress is weighing you down,” he murmurs, and I glance around to find the guards nowhere in sight. “See, I ordered them away,” he tells me, and I stare at him. He peels the dress off before moving closer to the pier and tossing the dress on it. I try to cover my breasts.

“Move your hands, I’ve seen you naked, don’t shy away from me,” he murmurs.

Reluctantly, I drop them, and he keeps his gaze trained on mine. He shows me how to move my arms, his hands guiding mine through the water. Our eyes often meet, and in those glances, I see a flicker of something tender, something that makes my breath catch.

As we continue, our proximity remains close, his body occasionally brushing against mine. Each touch sends a jolt of awareness through me, and I find myself increasingly conscious of him—not just as the king, but as a man.

Then Kyson takes my hand and tugs me toward him, pulling me onto his lap. I straddle his hips, feeling the hardness of his erection against my lower stomach. My eyes widen, but he doesn’t let go, instead wrapping his arms around me. “Relax,” he whispers.

His skin is warm against mine despite the cool water, and it sends shivers up my spine. Slowly, I relax into him, allowing myself to melt into his embrace as he teaches me how to synchronize my movements properly.

The water laps at us gently as we move together, and I feel the rhythm of our breathing begin to match. He leans in and kisses my forehead.

He stops swimming and treads water, pulling me closer to him. My heart races as I look up at him with wide eyes. His eyes roam over my face, his fingers tracing the line of my jaw before cupping my cheek softly. “You’re beautiful,” he whispers, his voice low and deep.

His touch is firm but gentle at the same time; it’s almost hypnotic how easily he guides me through each stroke as if we’re one being moving together fluidly across the water’s surface. We spend hours like this, just swimming when he pulls my hands from his shoulders as we are halfway to the other side. I freak out, kicking and trying to reach him as the king moves. He smiles before standing.

I huff, thinking I am drowning when I realize the water here is only knee-deep, and my face heats at my idiocy. Kyson laughs at my embarrassed face, and I splash him.

“This side is shallow,” he chuckles before bending down and grabbing me.

“You let me sleep in and left the room without me,” he growls before sitting in the water and pulling me into his lap.

“You wouldn’t let me go if I hadn’t,” I say, to which he nods but says nothing. He grips my chin gently with his fingertips, tilting my face toward his. The calling washes over me, and I sigh instead of fighting against it as he leans closer, his lips molding around mine. Turning my face away, he growls before gripping my chin tighter and forcing my mouth open so he can kiss me. His tongue sweeps over my lip before he nibbles on my bottom one, becoming cranky when I don’t answer his kiss.

“Stop fighting it,” he snarls, breaking my soft skin when he bites a little harder. I wonder how he could stand to touch me after the horrible things my mother did. I wanted the bond before he broke it, and now I no longer feel worthy of it. The king sighs before pecking my lips.

“Why are you fighting the bond, it’s driving me insane,” he mutters more to himself than me.

“You broke our bond,” I remind him.

“And I am trying to fix it, but you won’t allow it,” he snaps. “Don’t pretend you can’t feel it, I know you can,” he warns,

and I grip his shoulders to stand, only for him to pull me back down on him.

“Admit it,” he tells me, and I glare at him. He watches me for a second.

“You can be so stubborn,” he growls, and his hand moves to caress my ribs reminding me about my lack of clothes, his gaze roams down and my skin heats under its intensity when his hand cups my breast gently, making me gasp. “So beautiful,” he murmurs, his thumb brushing over my hardened nipple.

“You tempt me then refuse me,” he frowns and I look away from him when he sighs, his lips press to my temple gently.

“We should head inside; I have meetings this afternoon,” he whispers, and I nod. The king stands, picking me up with him, his hand caressing down my back gently as he walks toward the pier. He picks up my dress, wrings it out before helping me pull it on, then walks me back toward the castle, and I shiver at the coldness of the breeze caressing my skin.

We make our way upstairs to our room, and I go to run a bath. Goosebumps cover my skin, and the cold starts to sink into my bones when the king comes up behind me.

“No, you shower with me,” he says, gripping my hip. I go to protest when he grabs my hip tighter, tugging me back against him, his other hand going to my throat as he dips his face into the crook of my neck. He purrs. My eyes flutter shut before I shake my head, fighting against the urge to give in to him.

“You shower with me,” he repeats before his lips cover mine, our tongues tangling, and his hand moves from neck to my breast as he squeezes it.

“Stop fighting the bond, Ivy. Let it reforge. Why do you keep fighting it?” he murmurs against my lips.

I resist the urge to scoff at him. How could he ask that? He shouldn’t want the bond, not with me, anyway. He growls, nipping at my lips. The calling washes over me like a tidal wave before I can resist it or struggle to stamp the urges down. I bite him, and he groans, my teeth raking down his flesh, and I know it is his doing, know he’s using it against me. And I hate him for it.

“Don’t fight me, and I won’t use it,” he mumbles, picking up my anger as I sink my teeth into his chest and bite him. Kyson moves, spinning me around and shoving me into the sink basin, his hands gripping my hips as he places me next to the sink.

The king presses himself between my thighs, his erection throbbing against me, and he groans while I try to shove him away. The calling grows more potent, and tears prick my eyes when he grips my hair as he tugs my head back. His tongue invades my mouth, and I moan into his mouth, the bond pulling to the surface as he forces it out.

A whimper escapes me as I tug him closer, my claws slipping free and scratching down his chest. Needing him, arousal floods into me, making my pussy clench. My entire body is buzzing from the bond in anticipation. His hand moves between my legs, and he rubs my throbbing core, my arousal spilling onto my thighs. All too soon, he pulls away, making me growl.

“You don’t leave without telling me,” he purrs, and I nod, anything to get his touch back. I reach for him, and he leans down and pecks my lips, the bond forcing my hands to his chest, needing his touch, wanting it, and craving him. He then pulls away and turns the shower on. I stare at his back as he removes his clothes, glaring at him that he riled me up and used the calling on me to force out the bond and then stop as soon as I answer it.

“In the shower,” Kyson says while stepping under the water. I growl at him, stalking out of the bathroom and going to my

closet. I hear him protest but ignore him, embarrassed that he tormented me that way, and I let him.

“Ivy, don’t make me come get you,” Kyson calls out, and I snarl before burrowing inside my den, seething at what he did. He will pay for that; he had caught me off guard. I won’t let it happen again.

“Ivy!” he growls, and I reach up, locking the closet door.