

Chapter 40

Kyson

Ivy is driving me up the wall. I can't even kick the damn door down because I don't know if she is directly behind it or not. All night I wait, and damn, does she test my patience. I am back to swallowing the amber liquid, letting it scorch the back of my throat while I glare at the door.

I move off the bed and away from my stare off with the closet door separating us. I meander toward the small bar area in the corner, growling and muttering under my breath as I pour the last remnants from the bottle into my glass.

Her discomfort is beginning to make me nervous, her scent growing stronger as it permeates from under the door. Grabbing my glass, I move back toward the bed, pausing for a second by the bookshelf. My eyes move over the shelves before spotting the book we were reading before everything turned to shit. Moving the small jewelry box off the shelf, I accidentally drop it. The lid cracks open and the music starts playing. Bending down, I scoop the small box off the ground when I notice an

engraving on the side of it. The inscription is small in the back corner of the tiny box.

Azalea. I. Landeena.

12.3.2004

Love Mom & Dad.

I furrow my brows, and I glance over at the door. Ivy and Azalea share the same birthday. Shaking my head, I place the box back before glancing at the door again and grabbing the book off the shelf, I move to sit by the door, and she growls, sensing my presence. I open it up to where the ribbon lay between the pages and reading aloud. Her growls and snarls quiet, and after about five minutes, I hear her move within the confines of her closet and makeshift den.

I know she's cozy, yet I can also sense her discomfort at being there. It is a weird sensation to feel from her. Almost as if it is her safe place, but also a place that torments her. Her emotions fluctuate between peace and panic, and I know she is claustrophobic. I have witnessed her distress not only through the bond when she made her den the last time but also saw it for myself. But as much as she hates the closet, it is almost as

if she fears the outside world past the door or maybe just me, which makes me shift uncomfortably.

Eventually, all noises stop inside the closet, and I can hear her heart pounding as she draws nearer to listen to what I'm saying. My purr reverberates around the room, echoing off the walls as I call her to come to me. Her anger and fear amplify as she fights not only an invisible war within herself but also against my calling. I tone it down a little, giving her the choice to fight it or answer it, while still encouraging her to come to me. However, reading simultaneously is also a little tricky trying to maintain both tasks. Coughing, I take a sip of my drink, resting my head back against the wall.

"If you come out, I will read to you," I tell her. She doesn't answer straight away. When she does, it isn't the answer I am hoping for.

"No, you will use the bond against me," she growls.

"You are my bond, Ivy," I tell her, turning my head to look at the door handle. I twist it, but she still hasn't unlocked it.

“Don’t you want the bond?” I ask her, wondering how she can fight so hard against it and refuse me when I am hers as much as she is mine.

“You broke it,” she says, and the sadness through the bond stings me.

“And I am trying to fix it,” I reply, closing my eyes as I lean my head back.

“It wasn’t just yours to break,” she states.

“And I said I am trying to fix it,” I repeat.

“And what if I don’t want you to?”

“It’s not up to you; I told you already. You are mine; I meant that Ivy; I won’t let you go again,” I tell her, becoming annoyed that she dares to challenge our bond. I don’t understand what she wants. She wanted the bond. I broke it, and now I am trying to fix it. What more does she want from me? I can’t go and take everything I did back.

“Until you find something else to hate me for or I do something you don’t like, then you will cast me aside because you can, and there is nothing I can do about it,” she murmurs. “You hurt me,” she whispers so softly I nearly missed it.

“I didn’t mean to break your hand, Ivy; I didn’t know it was there,” I snap at her. I bloody healed it, for god sake.

“I’m not talking about my hand, Kyson. I know you didn’t do that on purpose.”

I growl, annoyed, shaking my head.

“You think broken bones hurt? Scratches, wounds that refuse to heal for months on end. They hurt, but they also mend when the skin closes over. After that you’re left with a scar, a distant memory of what was once painful. Yet that hurt ends,” she pauses, and I pick up my glass, draining the last of it about to break the handle and drag her out, tired of playing these games of hide and seek. Standing, I go to grab the handle when she speaks again.

“Do you have any idea how humiliating it is to allow yourself to trust someone, let them see every dark ugly piece of you only for them to throw it in your face?”

I pause, wondering what she is on about now.

“Are you going to finish, or are you going to make me guess?”
I ask her, gripping the door handle; the metal creases as my grip tightens around the brass knob.

“I trusted you; I allowed myself to love you despite knowing better than to get my hopes up.”

She takes a moment’s pause, perhaps waiting for me to answer. When I don’t, she continues.

“Mrs. Daley taught me to know my place, and you made me believe I could find that with you. That I was free to choose that place.” Her words sting. I know I messed up, but I never would’ve thought she’d compare me to Mrs. Daley, the woman who tormented her for years.

“Freedom. My version of freedom for years was death. I was ready to die on that podium that day, ready to be set free. I was convinced it would be better than the life handed to us. Then you showed me another sort of freedom.”

I take my hand off the door handle, figuring it's better to let her finish.

"I realized I was never living. We were already dead, and then you gave us our names back, and our lives back, for a while, anyway. Then just as quickly as you gave it to me, you took it away. The ultimate puppet master with a god complex that I can't compete against."

"Ivy," I say, her name coming out as a choke whimper.

"No, Kyson. You took it; you made me wish for freedom again. I wished that you would have left me to die that day; it would have been a more humane thing to do than give me hope only to show me how foolish it was to have it in the first place."

My heart twists painfully in my chest as I feel the truth behind the words she speaks.

"Now that is pain, and nothing haunts me more than knowing you have the power to send me back to a place that the only freedom I will long for is death."

I bite my tongue and swallow, feeling guilty. “I made a mistake. I blamed you because you were there to blame, not because you did anything wrong. I see that now,” I tell her.

“I get why you hate me, Kyson; I am the by-product, the spinoff version of my mother...”

“You are not your mother,” I tell her, cutting her words off. That much, I am sure of. Ivy laughs, and I furrow my brows.

“My mother was a monster. Therefore, I am.”

“No, you were just her last victim, only you survived to live with what she took from you,” I tell her. She falls quiet. I mean what I’m saying and only wish she could see that.

“You have your freedom with me, Ivy,” I tell her.

“No, you give the illusion of freedom, Kyson. You give false promises, you built me up, only to then show me how beneath you I truly am.”

“No, Ivy, that is not what I am doing, just open the door, please,” I beg, a note of desperation in my voice.

“I should have died on that podium; at least it would have been quick and final. Instead, you showed me the glimpse of what living could be, teasing me with a hope I’d have rather not known. I’d rather have died without ever longing for something I’d never truly have.”

“And what is that, Ivy?” I dare to ask.

“Happiness. You let me taste it, let me put all of mine into you, only to show me how easily you could take it away.”

“That was never my intention, I was blinded by my anger, Ivy. I don’t want to take your freedom,” I tell her, pressing my forehead against the door.

“Prove it,” she murmurs. I sigh, wanting her to come out, to stop ignoring me because it is driving me insane. It takes every fiber of my being to ignore my own instincts to drag her out, kicking and screaming and force her to submit to the bond.

I sit back down and let her be; instead, picking up the book and continuing to read to her. She falls quiet, and after a few chapters, I hear the door unlock, making me stare at it before the handle twists. Her scent wafts to me as the door cracks

open. Before I can muffle it, the calling slips out, my purr resounding yet not forcing her, leaving her choice, just enough to coax her out if she chooses. Letting her know I mean no harm, so I let it be instead of stifling the sound. I hear her bones cracking from lying on the hard ground and feel the ache to go to the comfy bed.

Glancing up at her, I see she has an armful of my clothes, her werewolf side reappearing stronger no matter how much she fights against it. At least she has changed out of the wet clothes and is now wearing one of my shirts. The bond is reforging and solidifying despite her attempts to ignore it.

“You can take them to the bed, or you could let me sleep next to you,” I tell her, and she walks part way to the bed before stopping and glancing between the bed and me like she is fighting against what she knows she needs and wants. Her urges are all over the place. I remain still as much as it kills me to do so.

“You won’t use the calling on me, I mean no more than you are now?” she asks, and I can feel her uncertainty. I wouldn’t tell her this, but I also know she hates the calling as much as she likes it. Mostly because she doesn’t understand it. Sure, she sees the barbaric side of it, but doesn’t realize that more often than not, I can’t even control it myself. It’s a natural instinct to soothe your mate when they’re distressed. The bond forces it,

drawing off her energy. Sure, there are plenty of ways to abuse it but at base, it's instinctual.

"No, but I can't help it sometimes. It reacts to your emotions," I tell her. Ivy chews her lip and nods once before moving toward the bed again. She climbs in, dragging my pile of clothes with her to burrow down in. I sigh before turning the next page, expecting to sleep on the couch when she speaks.

"You can sleep in the bed," she says, and my eyes flit to hers. I can sense her heart rate picking up. My skin ripples as I stand, feeling a surge of excitement that she's finally letting me close to her. Grabbing the book, I crawl in beside her and reopen it, ready to keep reading. Ivy moves closer, her claws scraping down my ribs as she wiggles closer, to see the tiny pictures in the corners of the pages. Fighting the urge to drag her on top of me, I continue reading, content enough with her beside me.