

Chapter 44

Kyson

Anxiety fills me as I approach our room, wondering if she managed to sneak out without a guard. However, I am surprised to walk in and find her sitting on the floor in front of the fireplace. One of my books is open on the floor beside her and the tablet is in her hand. Her tongue is poking out the side adorably as she presses her fingers to the touch screen before holding the tablet up to listen to the words.

Once she is done, she sets the tablet down to do the following sentence. I stop behind her, and she doesn't look up until my shadow blocks out the heat from the fireplace. Only then do I realize she is shivering, and goosebumps cover her skin. I bend down and pick up my book, and she sighs. "I was going to put it back," she says, her teeth chattering. *Pride and Prejudice*. I hand it back to her, and she takes it.

"You can touch whatever you like, Az." I pause, almost calling her Azalea. "Whatever you want, just ask, Ivy. What's mine is

yours,” I tell her, and she nods, taking the book from me and finding her page.

“I thought you wanted to go for a walk?” I ask her, sitting behind her and propping my arm on my knee. I lean back against the armchair, trying to figure out how to ask her if I can not only look between her legs but also tell her she isn’t the daughter of a monster. Before she can answer, though, Clarice opens the door, bringing in our dinner.

“What chapter did you get to, My Queen?” Clarice asks her, bringing her tray over and setting it on the coffee table.

“Only page eight,” Ivy says with a frown.

“You’ll be able to read by yourself in no time,” Clarice nods.

I do notice that Ivy doesn’t bat an eyelash at Clarice using her title. It’s as if she has come to accept it. Ivy thanks her, and I see how she subtly sniffs the air before frowning when she realizes the meat is what I consider to be burned or ruined. I swap our plates, handing her mine.

“Can you ask the kitchen staff to prepare Ivy’s meals the same way as mine from now on?” I ask Clarice.

“From now on, My King,” she says, her eyes flicking to Ivy, who is typing away again.

“Yes, Clarice,” I tell her, and she glances between the both of us.

“And you’re sure, My King?” Clarice asks, and I sigh. News clearly travels fast. I haven’t been here five minutes, and the entire castle is now aware. Would it kill my guard to have a little discretion? I think, annoyed, realizing I have no choice but to tell her tonight.

“Positive,” I nod at her.

“Very well, My King. Enjoy your book, Ivy,” Clarice tells her, but Ivy isn’t even paying attention, too busy typing into the device. Clarice smiles before leaving. I eat, watching Ivy let her food get cold before taking the tablet from her.

“Eat first. Your food is going cold,” I tell her, and she growls. Ivy folds the corner of the page and shuts the book. I internally cringe. My biggest pet peeve is folded book pages, and it’s a first edition, making it even more cringe-worthy. I remain quiet,

knowing if I say anything, she won't understand. It'll take some time before she realizes the importance of first editions.

Ivy picks up her knife and starts cutting her meat, devouring her food hungrily. She shivers, her entire body shuddering from it. Her teeth are chattering, yet her skin is flushed like she is overheating. I reach over her, touching her head to find her skin blistering hot, and the moment my hand comes in contact with her skin, she sighs, pressing against it. Yet her scent hasn't changed, so it couldn't be her going into heat, her pheromones aren't strong enough for it to be heat. I move my hand off her head, and she shivers again before going back to her food.

"Did you find Gannon?" she asks. I nod, watching her. She's eating like she hasn't been fed in weeks, and I remember I was the same way before I shifted.

"Yes, I did. What did you do today?" I ask her.

"Nothing, I couldn't find Dustin, then I got distracted with the tablet and tried to read the book," she says, shrugging. Ivy goes back to her food, only slowing down when she is nearly finished. She chews slowly, exceptionally slowly, and her face pales before she jumps up, running for the bathroom.

“Ivy?” I call, setting my plate aside when I hear her gag. Rushing into the bathroom, I find her head in the toilet bowl as she throws up.

“You alright?” I ask, grabbing her hair as she continues to be sick. She eventually falls backward on her butt.

“Must be the stupid fruit salad, been feeling sick since eating it,” she groans, clutching her stomach before laying on the cool tiles. I flush the toilet and move to turn the shower on.

“The fruit salad?” I ask.

“Yeah, I think some of the fruit is off; it tasted funny?”

I nod, gripping her shoulders and sitting her upright. “I don’t think it’s the fruit salad; I think you may be going to shift soon,” I tell her.

“I can’t shift; I would have already,” she murmurs.

“Well, I would say that is wrong; you are just a late bloomer since I hurt our bond,” I tell her, peeling off her sweater.

“I don’t want to shift; I don’t want to shift without Abbie!” she says, sitting upright. Her face threatens panic. I grip her shoulders, stopping her from getting to her feet.

“I am right here with you, Ivy,” I tell her, but she pushes my hands away.

“No, I want Abbie.”

I grit my teeth and look away. It hurts me deeply to know she’d rather be with Abbie, but I can’t blame her. Taking a deep breath and willing myself to remain calm, I face her, cupping her face in my hands. “Abbie isn’t here, but I am. So calm down. You won’t be alone,” I tell her, but her eyes brim with tears as she starts hyperventilating, evidently experiencing another panic attack. Her breathing turns rapid and shallow.

“No, no,” she shakes her head.

“Shh Ivy, calm down. Let’s just get you in the shower first,” I tell her, but every time I go to remove more of her clothes, she slaps my hands and tells me not to touch her.

Unclipping her bra, she growls at me. “Get out!” she snaps.

“Ivy?”

“Get out, this is your fault, now get out!” she screams at me. Her eyes blaze brightly, almost glowing as she continues to panic. I chew the inside of my lip, knowing it is just the shift bringing on her sudden change in emotions. It truly brings out our monstrous side. Yet I can feel her resentment toward me and hurt that I am the reason she is delayed.