

Chapter 13

KYSON

I can't help but feel annoyed as I watch Ivy leave the room. What an idiot I am for tossing Ester to the curb when Ivy clearly doesn't know what she's doing. She might know how to clean, sure, but she doesn't understand what it takes to tend to an actual person. Ester was always on time, and she knew what I expected. Maybe I am being harsh. It is clear that the girl is terrified of me, and yes, I am aware that I can be an overbearing prick at times, so I should have known better than to throw her into a position she has never served in before. Maybe I should have asked Ester to train her...

But the thought of her being in someone else's chamber or with the male workers irks me. I am unsure why it bothers me so much. She's just a rogue girl, yet the pull I feel toward her has affected my choices and all day I have been distracted at work. My mind is constantly wandering back to her.

Even now my mind wanders back to her as I sit here reading – wondering if the deep lashings on her back were inflicted by that woman in the orphanage.

I can't believe Alpha Dean would allow such treatment of such a young girl, even a rogue. She is still his responsibility since she lives in his pack. Maybe that is why she couldn't perform her duties; perhaps she was in pain? Or perhaps I am insane for allowing a rogue girl I know nothing about to be my personal servant when she evidently has no experience.

I shake my head, trying to get my thoughts away from the girl sleeping in the room across from me. This is easier said than done. Everything in me screams for her to be close, my fingers itching to touch her. I want to feel her skin on mine, feel her curves against me, and to explore every inch of her body with my hands and my lips. I want to taste her. Feel her heart beating against mine. Listen to her moan with pleasure. I crave her in ways I shouldn't; ways that would be entirely inappropriate given our positions.

The urge to have her by my side dominates my mind. My body is here, yet my mind is with her, my thoughts utterly consumed by my rogue servant.

Could she be my mate? My other half and part of my soul, like Damian believes she is? Lycans rarely find their mates. We have immortal lifespans, so you would think that would make it easier to find our mates, but no.

Lycans are supposed to be mated to other Lycans. Apparently, our species is adapting these days, and now we are finding our mates in common werewolves—evolution at its finest. But for royalty to find a mate in a common werewolf is unheard of.

Unable to pull my attention away from her, I get up. As if my feet are making up my mind for me, I push the doors open and stride across to her room. Standing there for a few seconds, I try to conjure up a reason to have her come into my room. What am I thinking? I am the King. I can ask what I want of her! I don't need excuses. She'll do as she is told. Gathering enough courage, I push the door open slightly, peeking through the gap. Relief washes over me, and I let out a breath when I realize she has fallen asleep. She has half a sandwich in her hand but is clearly passed out, sitting upright on her bed.

Did it hurt too much to lay on her back? The urge to heal her is driving me insane because I don't understand the reasoning behind it. I will have to change her dressings again, I think to myself before realizing I shouldn't be doing that. She's a servant, I remind myself, realizing that people will eventually start to talk after observing this strange behavior.

I shake the thought away. It sounds ridiculous, a King tending to a servant. Someone else can tend to her, but why do I have the urge to do it myself? It overwhelms me—I want to be the one to look after her. I don't want anyone else touching her.

The possessiveness I feel over her is ridiculous. I am losing my damn mind. No one has ever had such an effect on me.

Doing my best to remain quiet, I slip further into the room, reaching down, taking the plate off her lap and the sandwich from her hand. I place it on the bedside table. Ivy doesn't even move. I go to pull her blanket up when I realize she is lying on it.

Looking around the small room, I don't see another one in here when I notice her feet. Blisters cover her heels, the skin red and angry; a few toes are even bleeding.

I look down at her shoes and sigh before walking into my room. I grab the spare comforter off the chair and a few pairs of my bed socks; they will be thicker than the thin ones she has been wearing. Walking back to her room, I drape the blanket over her, and she shifts in her sleep.

Her face twists in discomfort, and I freeze, hoping she doesn't wake up to me lurking in her room like some creep. I place the socks next to her shoes with her maid's outfit.

The urge to touch her consumes me. I want to run my fingers through her luscious, wavy locks. However, her hair is tied up, preventing me from doing such a thing. I turn to leave the room before hesitating when I notice the cut across her brow.

Stepping closer to her, I brush her cheek gently with the back of my hand. I then lick the pad of my thumb and trace it across the cut. The wound closes quickly, leaving a small scar, but otherwise, it has healed her. Leaning down, I...

What the heck am I about to do? Quickly regaining my senses, I force myself out of her room before I do something stupid, like mate her!

I have already done more than I should, and I certainly shouldn't be in her room while she sleeps. It doesn't look very appropriate for a King to be in his maids' quarters, and I should have known better after Ester. I could have given Ivy the wrong idea as I did with Ester.

I need to find out more about this girl: who she is and where she came from because I should not feel the things I do toward her.

My Lycan side has me wanting to climb into bed with her and wrap my body around her petite one. It yearns to feel the warmth of her skin pressed against me. I want to shield her away from the world and keep her tucked tightly in my embrace, where I know she will be safe.

Lying back down in my bed, I hear a soft knock and lurch to my feet, wondering if it is her. Opening the door, I see Damian. I do my best to hide my disappointment.

"Expecting someone else?" he chuckles, and I step aside so he can enter.

"What is it?" I ask him while walking over to the bar and pouring us a drink. I hand him a glass of whiskey then pick up my own and sit on the edge of my bed.

"More bodies were washed up; one was a rogue child," Damian tells me.

Fuck. How many more before we catch the culprit? People are beginning to talk. It is one thing to find rogues—you expect them—but rogue children are supposed to be off-limits.

"There is more: this was found on one of the bodies. The guard said it was dropped off ten minutes ago by a messenger," Damian says, holding out a piece of fabric. I reach over and take it from him, unfolding the small piece of fabric. My blood instantly boils. Emblazoned on the blue patch fabric is the hunter's insignia - a circular symbol with a black wolf silhouette in the center and a bloody sword running through the wolf's head.

"Hunter's insignia," I growl, and Damian nods.

We deal with human hunters, but this group isn't human. Their patches are red, and two swords are crossed over a shield. But in this one, the fabric is royal blue, meaning they are the hunters that specifically target the royal bloodlines.

Lycan bloodlines.

This patch belongs to the very people that have been hunting down Royal Lycan bloodlines for centuries. Four kingdoms have fallen, and four royal bloodlines have been snuffed out, leaving me the last remaining Lycan royal. They already killed my sister, her unborn child, and her husband.

They won't be happy until every royal is eradicated. I constantly have a target on my back.

"Kyson?" Damian asks gently as I glare down at the piece of fabric.

Lifting my head my eyes meet Damian's. "They're back..." I growl.