

## Chapter 20

### IVY

The movement makes me cringe in pain as my ribs throb, and I clench my teeth to stop crying out. Quick movements always give me sharp pains and cause my breathing to become stifled.

"Sorry, did that hurt?" he asks. I shake my head. "Don't lie. Why do you lie about being in pain?" he asks while unraveling the bandages.

Unsure whether to answer, I remain quiet.

"I asked you a question?" he says, tapping the side of my leg and making me jump and blurt out an answer.

"Mrs. Daley would double our punishment if we made noise," I murmur, remembering the first time I cried out. I was eleven the first time she whipped me. Before that day, she would scold or smack us. But she never gave us the cane or whip until my refusal to sit on the butcher's lap which lost her the meat rations that week.

I had cried, begged, and cried some more, which turned three lashes into six. The next time the butcher visited, and I was ordered to sit on his lap, Abbie quickly took my spot. Had I known what it would cost

her later, I would have taken the lashes; his vile touching only grew worse, just like Mrs. Daley's punishments. After a few times, we learned quickly not to make noise. It was always awful if we did.

"Is that why you have so many scars?" he asks.

"No, we learned to keep quiet. It just didn't matter how well we did our chores; Mrs. Daley always found something to punish us for."

I grit my teeth as the pressure supporting my broken ribs slips away when the bandages get down to the last layer. It feels like he's peeling my skin off from how soiled the bandages are.

"What happened to your ribs and back?" he questions, his fingers brushing my ribs.

I cringe away from his touch, gritting my teeth. A stifled whimper leaves my lips as he presses on the most painful one.

"You don't have to be quiet, Ivy. I won't punish you for being in pain. You would have to do something pretty extreme for me to punish you," he murmurs.

"Can you lift your arms above your head?" he asks, and I try to lift both arms; the left pulls at my side making my arms tremble.

"That's enough; this side looks like you have broken it. How did you do that?" he asks.

"I tripped down the stairs, sir," I tell him.

"When?"

"The day we arrived?"

"You have worked for days with broken ribs and said nothing?"

I choose to say nothing.

"You should have said something, Ivy. If you are in pain, you can't be expected to work in this condition."

"It's fine; I can still work," I tell him quickly.

"No, you will remain here with me, so I know you're resting."

"That's unnecessary; I can still work."

"It wasn't a choice. You'll remain with me," King Kyson says, grabbing a jar of ointment and rubbing it on the cuts.

I remain still while he cleans the markings that brand my skin. My face heats the longer he touches me. I feel dirty and embarrassed that he is touching me, his servant.

Yet the feel of his skin on mine feels oddly warming, my skin tingling everywhere he touches. He moves behind me, and the bed dips more.

"Stay there," he says, climbing off the bed and walking over to his dresser. He grabs a black shirt out of the drawer and climbs back onto the bed, then retakes his place behind me.

"I think you should leave the bandage off; let it get some air," he says when I feel his fingers pinch my bra, releasing the hooks. I shriek, covering myself before feeling his breath on my neck.

"Shh, Ivy, I can't see you," he whispers, and I stiffen at his closeness, feeling the heat radiating off his chest and seeping into my skin. His nose skims along my shoulder to the back of my ear; his hand on my stomach pulls me closer to him.

"I love your scent," he whispers, and tingles wash over me everywhere. He suddenly clears his throat, pulling his face away from me. "Sorry, I didn't mean to... you just smell nice," he states.

"It's fine, sir," I tell him, somewhat startled that he admitted to sniffing me and thinks I smell nice. Most rogues smell awful to pack wolves. Then again, he is a Lycan, so who knows?

"Kyson," he murmurs.

"Pardon me, sir?"

"My name. It is Kyson. I'd prefer you to use my name. Say it, Ivy," he whispers behind me. I shake my head at his words, looking toward the door.

"You can say my name, Ivy; I won't let anyone punish you for using my name," he whispers, sliding my bra straps down my arms and away from my body. He places it beside him.

"Say my name Ivy," he whispers once more, and I shiver when his breath skates across my neck. His fingers trail along my sides, but he avoids touching my saw ribs; instead, he grips my wrists and pulls my arms apart that cover me. He places my hands on his knees, and I breathe out shakily. "You don't need to fear me, Ivy." I peer at him over my shoulder to find his lips only a breath away.

He stares at me with fiery intensity, and I feel my heart pounding in my chest. I close my eyes, knowing I am powerless against him. His lips move closer to mine, and I quiver in anticipation of what he'll do. "If anyone needs to fear anyone around here, it is me that should fear you," he purrs, and my brows pinch in confusion. I open my eyes to see him press his lips on my shoulder.

He then pulls a shirt over my head.

It's the black shirt he retrieved from the dresser. His fingertips graze the sides of my breasts as I push my arms through the holes. The shirt falls to my hips. Yet his hands inside the shirt don't move. Instead, he brushes his thumbs across the sides of my breasts, making me shiver. I look down at it before pinching the front of the shirt and sniffing it, his scent making my mouth water.

"Do I smell alright?" he asks with a soft laugh, and his hands fall to my thighs.

"Yes, like vanilla and berries," I tell him before slapping a hand over my mouth for what I embarrassingly blurted out.

He laughs softly, his fingers fiddling with my ponytail. He gently removes my hair tie.

The King leans forward, his hand holding my hair aside as he inhales my scent, his breath skimming over my flesh as he speaks. "Don't be embarrassed, Ivy. You smell just as delicious to me, good enough to eat," he chuckles before sitting back and letting my hair fall. My hair falls to my waist, and he runs his fingers through it. I shiver at the feel of his fingers on my scalp.

"You still haven't said it yet," he says.

"Said what?" Having lost my train of thought, the only thing I can focus on is breathing as he uses his fingers to untangle my hair.

"My name," he says, and I shake my head. "I will get you to say it, eventually." He almost seems to be taunting me, his tone playful.

There is a knock on the door. I try to get up when he pulls me back down, his hand moving under his shirt, his thumb rubbing my belly.

"Come in, Damian," he says, and my heart beats erratically. Beta Damian walks in with a tray of food and a glass filled with ice cubes.

"Where do you want it, Kyson?" he asks.

"Just leave it there," the King says behind me, and my face heats up when King Kyson presses his face into my neck again. His Beta never looks in our direction, like he expected me to be half-undressed here and practically sitting on his King's lap.

How many servants has he found in this position, I wonder? Surely this isn't normal behavior, or maybe it is. Is this why Ester hates me?

"Anything else?" Beta Damian asks him.

"No, that is all. I will mindlink you if I need anything," the King says. I see his Beta nod; he walks out and shuts the door.

"Relax, Ivy," the King tells me, but I find that nearly impossible. I know if I anger him in some way, he can tell the guards to kill me, and they

would without hesitation. How does he not see that being in his presence is intimidating? He climbs off the bed and retrieves the tray before pouring whiskey into a glass.

"Have you drank alcohol before?" he asks, and I shake my head.

He hands me the glass, and I sniff it. "I won't tell if you don't, but it will help with the pain," he says, pointing to my ribs. I sip it and nearly spit it back into the glass. He chuckles and pours the ice from the other cup into my glass.

"There, I watered it down a bit," he says, pouring himself a glass. I sniff it again and shake my head, trying to pass it back to him. But he adds more whiskey to the glass, half filling it.

"Drink it," he orders, and I am unable to help myself. I bring the glass to my lips. He watches me over the rim of his glass, and I cough when I finish drinking it all in one go.

"Sorry, I don't enjoy ordering you, but I knew you wouldn't drink it. You may feel woozy, but you won't hurt as badly."

Well, I definitely woozy alright. But I also feel warm and, after a few minutes, very heavy.



"Eat," he says, placing the tray between us. The tray is filled with small sandwiches cut into triangles and carrots, sticks, and dips. It also contains an assortment of cheeses and different crackers.

I stare at him confused. Despite being unfamiliar with a few things, it smells delicious. But a servant should not eat with a King. I shouldn't even be here.

"Ivy, eat. Or I will hand feed you," he warns. Still, I don't move. This is wrong. I shouldn't be here. That thought has me glancing at the door.

When I feel something press to my lips, making me pull away and look at the King.

"Do I need to feed you, Ivy?" I shake my head.

"No, My King," I answer, yet he insists, pressing the piece of cantaloupe against my lips. He isn't seriously still going to try? I briefly consider biting his fingertips for embarrassing me—instead, I open my mouth.

He pops the piece of cantaloupe into my mouth, and I chew it, the flavor coating my tongue. I have seen cantaloupe, though I've never tried it before. It tastes bitter but sweet, just the right combination.

Kyson rubs his thumb over my juice-covered lips, and I gape at him when he sucks the juice off his thumb.

Yet, before he can do it again, I pick up a cracker and nibble on it, not wanting to be hand fed. Gosh, how awkward! Although, he seems to enjoy watching me eat, pointing to different things, and telling me to try them. He only hand-feeds me fruit twice after that, both times just as awkward as the first. Yet he doesn't seem to notice the tension in me when he does. Almost as if he doesn't find it odd that he's feeding me.

I shake my head when he offers me a cantaloupe piece. He raises an eyebrow at me, pressing the fruit against my lips. Giving in to him, I open my mouth for him.

He smirks. “Good girl.” I slowly chew and savor the taste, letting the sweet juices flood my mouth. He watches me, a satisfied smirk on his face.