

Chapter 23

IVY

The sound of banging and crashing wakes me up. As soon as I hear the sound, my body is immediately on high alert. My heart races as I turn my head to peer over at the door. The shadows of movement flicker in from the gap beneath the door. The next thing I hear is running in the corridor. The banging and crashing noises are loud and abrupt, echoing through the hallway and making my heart pound. I can hear the shuffling of feet and the clattering of objects being smashed into the walls. The noise becomes increasingly louder, making me sit up, wondering if we are under attack. Rising to my feet, I rush to the door and peer out through the gap as I open it.

It takes me two seconds to realize the noise is coming from the King's room. Guards rush into his room only to be tossed back out, and my heart races when I see one thrown into the wall next to my door as the King bellows furiously at them.

"Get the fuck out!" he screams, and I flinch when I hear the sound of glass breaking. The guards rush out, and I hear one of them scream and say to get his Beta.

The smashing sounds and growls continue, and my heart rate increases as I'm frantically trying to figure out what's going on and what has

angered the king. While one guard rushes off, the rest are standing guard in the hall. The man on the ground shakes himself off, and another grabs his arm hauling him to his feet. Yet as he turns, I see the deep claw marks slashed down his chest, having ripped through his clothes. I gasp at the sight. Did the King do that to him? I glance at the clock, which tells me it's a little after 2 am.

"What is going on?" Beta Damian asks as he stalks down the corridor in just his boxer shorts. The guards stiffen, and one steps forward.

"The King appears to be drunk, and he's destroying his room," I overhear a guard explain.

The Beta growls and looks up at the ceiling. "I knew it wouldn't last." Beta Damian growls again as he runs his hands down his face.

"You know what date we are approaching, and you also know what we found a few hours ago, so why didn't someone inform me he was drinking heavily?" he snaps. The men look away guiltily.

"Leave all of you. I will deal with it. Dustin, you remain on guard - he is used to your scent in this state."

I wonder which one is Dustin?

"And one of you, get me his servant before you leave." Beta Damian looks at my door, where I stand frozen, watching. I have been caught.

"Ivy, I need your help to clean up," he says, and my hands tremble as I glance at the King's bedroom door. Surely he doesn't want me to go in there while he is angry.

"Ivy!" Beta Damian snaps, yanking me from my thoughts.

"You'll help me clean up!"

"Yes, sir." I gulp down my fear.

I look down at my clothes before nodding, knowing I have no choice. Turning around to grab my shoes, I spot the blanket that was covering me. Picking it up, I sniff it; it's drenched in the King's scent. It is the one from his bed. The other one from my bed is missing. Did he replace it with a new one while I was asleep again so that I could have his scent?

"Ivy, now please," Beta Damian says more urgently, and I spin around to see him standing in my doorway.

Hearing another crash from the room, Beta Damian growls and rushes out. I quickly follow, grabbing my shoes as I move to the door. He pushes the door open, and I gasp at the sight. The walls are marked with deep claw marks, furniture is overturned and smashed to pieces, and all the decorations and paintings have been ripped down and thrown across the room. Shards of broken glass and ceramics from broken tall vases and other items litter the ground, and the curtains have been torn and slashed. The King's bed is the only thing that seems to have been left

untouched, but even it is in disarray, with the sheets and blankets haphazardly thrown around. Stepping inside, I see most of his precious books have survived his wrath, but even some of those have been destroyed too.

As I venture further into the room, my heart races as my eyes scan the room to find the King is sitting in a corner with his head in his hands. Beta Damian murmurs to him as he calms him down. The drapes are torn with claw marks down them, and a mirror is smashed; I can't do much about the drapes, so I decide to pick up the broken mirror while also stacking his precious books that have been tossed around carelessly.

However, once I have finished picking up the bigger chunks of broken mirror, I realize I stepped into the room without any supplies. I quietly walk backward toward the door.

I quickly rush out and down the stairs. Clarice is already in the cleaning cupboard with a basket full of supplies and a broom.

"Go, take this, give this to Beta Damian or Gannon. They are the only ones that can get close to him when he is behaving like this. Just leave it at the door and knock," she says, stuffing everything into my arms. My brows pinch because I was just in his room, yet having said that, he was distracted by Beta Damian. However, I am relieved I don't have to go back in there after seeing what he did to the guard.

"Does he get like this a lot?" I ask.

"Only when it's nearing the anniversary. The rebels making an appearance seem to have set him off. I thought this might be the year he didn't break. Unfortunately, I was wrong." Clarice sighs heavily. "Keep those supplies up there. You will need them," Clarice tells me.

Excellent, I'm going to be awoken every night because of some anniversary that triggers him, and no one will even tell me the significance of it. I can't help but wonder what anniversary affects him this way.

Walking up the steps, I hear Beta Damian talking and someone growling. The sound is menacing, and I freeze on the steps. "Fuck, where did she go?" Beta Damian snaps at someone when I am nearly at the top of the steps. "Kyson, you need to calm down. I will find her." Damian assures him.

Find who? I wonder.

I quickly rush up the last couple of steps and stop outside the door, listening to things being tossed around. Beta Damian opens the door when I knock. Clarice said he would take them from me, and I needed to stay away from the King. What I am not expecting is for him to grab me by the front of my shirt and jerk me inside the room!

Taking in the room, I observe the King is pacing like a caged animal, and I can't tear my eyes away from him. Fur is sprouting along his

arms, his claws are slipping out, and he rubs a hand down his face before he stops in place.

A deep, menacing growl leaves him when he suddenly shifts, his bones cracking. It is a terrifying sight to watch him shift into a tall and powerful Lycan. His body contorts and expands, and his height rises. Thick fur grows across his entire body, his bones crack and change shape, and his claws extend out of his fingertips. He towers over me when he is done, his eyes glowing with a feral intensity. His muscles ripple beneath the thick layer of fur, and his sharp teeth glint in the dim light. Within seconds, he has gone from man to beast. Fur covers every inch of him, and his teeth have elongated to sharp points. He is terrifying to look at, and a gasp escapes me, making his gaze flicker to mine. I stagger back when he turns on me, bumping into his Beta.

A scream bubbles up my throat and leaves me when he stalks me. I have never seen a shifted Lycan before. I know they stand on two feet and have heard the stories, but it's one thing hearing the tales and quite another witnessing them. Beta Damian grips my arms. "Don't you dare run!" he snaps at me. My feet become rooted to the spot. My fear paralyzes me.

"Kyson! It's just Ivy, your servant!" Damian tells him. Yet the beast he has become doesn't seem to register his words. Instead, his cold, calculating eyes are fixated on me.

"It is Ivy! Kyson. It's not an intruder. Can't you smell her?" Beta Damian shouts as he launches himself in front of me and into the King's path, just as the King barrels towards me.

My heart beats like a drum in my chest as I clutch the broom in my shaky hands.

He shoves past his Beta and sniffs the air. And I turn to run when Damian moves to hold up his hand.

"Ivy, hold still!" Damian snaps and my eyes dart to him. Is he mad? Does he not see the monster on the verge of killing me? However, my feet stop, doing as he has asked. The King stops in front of me. His canines protrude; his face has lengthened into a Lycan, revealing his sharp teeth.

He is at least three feet taller than before, and I only come up to his stomach. He would need to duck to fit through the door! It's obvious his claws are deadly- they're so long and sharp looking. The evidence is around us with the deep gashes in the walls. His breathing is harsh, and his fur is so black it has a blue hue under the dim lights.

Despite knowing I should run from this monster, I cannot move. His gaze is inhuman, calculating, menacing, and curious all in one. I can't help but feel a strange sense of wonder for the creature in front of me. I am terrified, yet strangely mesmerized. Is he going to eat me? Or rip me to pieces? He leans down and sniffs my face. I am shaking and worried I might wet myself! My legs tremble so badly that I think they might give out at any second.

The King moves closer. My feet finally seem to work, yet it does me no good because he backs me into the wall. My eyes widen as he stalks me. I can feel his breath on my neck. It's hot, and I can feel the hairs on my body standing on end. He pauses.

With the wall behind my back, I close my eyes, waiting for death. I feel a soft breeze in my hair as he sniffs at me. His nose trails down the side of my face to my neck. His breath brushes my skin when he puffs softly and licks my cheek. His furry rough hands grip my arms, his claws sliding gently around my arms when he presses closer.

"Ivy!" his voice rumbles, and I shiver. Beta Damian lets out a breath that makes my eyes open. I turn my face away from the King's sharp teeth as he dips his face lower and continues to sniff me.

"Yes, Kyson. Ivy. Your servant girl, remember her?" Beta Damian comes and takes the broom from my hands; my hands lock around it, not wanting him to take it.

"He won't hurt you. He has trouble recognizing people in this form; his anger sometimes blinds him to everyone. Just remember not to touch him or approach him from behind; he is more animal than a man in this state."

I blink at him. I have no intention of touching him at all; he's the one touching me. I don't even want to be in here right now, especially while he's like this! He looks terrifying. Gosh, what chaos my life has turned into so suddenly.

Beta Damian pulls him away, and I let out a breath. Slowly, I reach down, grabbing a trash bag, refusing to take my eyes off the King in case he attacks me.

Beta Damian helps me clean up while the King watches, following me around the room. Damian a few times reminds him of who I am, yet the King still stalks me, he seems almost fascinated with everything I am doing when I hiss. Picking up a piece of cloth, I don't notice the broken glass, and slice my fingers. I jerk my hand back only to have it snatched away and caught in his grip. He growls holding my hand before his face when the door opens. The King moves with impossible speed and grabs me. I shriek. He shoves me behind him like he is protecting me from whoever just entered his quarters.

A feral growl leaves him as he turns to face the intruder. I peer around him and recognize the person who has just stepped into the room: it's the man from the car, Gannon.

"It is Gannon, My King," he addresses him, barring his neck, yet he isn't afraid of the King at all as he enters, moving to help Damian.

"Sorry, Gannon," the King says, and the man nods, walking over and grabbing a bag. I am still trapped behind the King between the bed and the wall, and he blocks my way.

Would it be rude if I walked over the top of his bed to get past him? I push that thought away. It would definitely be rude.

I clear my throat awkwardly, but he doesn't hear me over the low growling emanating coming from him. I look at the other two men for help. Is his Beta laughing at me, trying to squeeze past him?

No matter what I do, I will brush up against him, so I hesitantly reach up and tap his shoulder with my index finger. His reflexes are so quick I don't even see him move. I trip over my own feet, stepping away from him when he suddenly has my hand that taps him in his grip. He is suddenly facing me.

He blinks, cocking his head to the side and staring at me strangely like he is trying to remember who I am. His silver eyes reflect back at me. I swallow, bumping into his bedside table when I step back.

"I, um, can I get past?" I squeak out, trying to maneuver around him. But everywhere I step, he steps in my path until I step into him. He growls when his eyes dart to my fingers, and his tongue sneaks out and licks them. I gasp at the tingling sensation when his tongue laps up the blood that runs down my arm. He's going to eat me!

I jerk my hand from his grip, finding my fingers healed when he tilts his head to the side, watching me. Feeling his dark gaze on me, I try to step around him, but he blocks my path and keeps doing so. He growls, the sound becoming annoyed. His furry hands grip my arms and lift me. My feet leave the ground and dangle in the air when he brings me face-to-face with him.

"What are you doing?" he asks, his voice sounding much deeper and rougher in this form. I didn't expect him to be able to talk so well in this form. Werewolves can mindlink but not speak with their mouths in wolf form. And also did before when he spoke my name so seeing it is quite shocking. My feet dangle as he brings me to eye level with him.

I blink at him, stunned at how close his face is to mine, before hyperventilating. I think I'm having a panic attack. My clammy hands grip his huge furry shoulders, his head dropping to look at them touching him when he growls, his eyes snapping back to mine. He tilts his head to the side, watching me closely when I notice his tongue roll across his razor sharp pointed teeth. It suddenly becomes extremely hard to breathe as my panic sets in. My heart is racing so fast I can hear it in my ears.

He is going to kill me.

He is going to eat me.

His teeth look sharp. I'm about to be a Lycan snack.

"Please don't eat me," I blurt out, fisting the fur on his shoulders, trying to push away from him. He laughs, his eyes twinkling with amusement. The sound is odd, rough, and echoey. My breathing becomes harsher, and I feel dizzy as I push away from him, yet his grip does not waiver. He pulls me to him, crushing me against his chest, his tongue running up the column of my neck and I gasp at the feel while one arm moves to wrap my legs around his waist. My hands gripping his thick fur loosen as my body turns languid in his strong arm. I need air.

I can't breathe...

I'm aware of the sensation of falling as I tumble back in his arms, the room spinning around me as I choke for breath. His hand moves quickly to catch me, his claws scraping the sides of my neck.

"Ivy?" he purrs, sniffing me, then he growls, the sound thunderous.

My eyes roll into the back of my head, and darkness swallows me.

He can kill me now; at least I won't feel it.