

Chapter 25

IVY

I peek over at him. He hasn't moved, and his eyes remain closed, which makes me wonder if I imagined his words. I am exhausted after all. I take another step toward the door, wondering if he's sleep-talking.

"I do not advise you to move another step, Ivy," he says, and my entire body turns rigid. So he is definitely awake, then. I don't move, and I wait for him to continue speaking, but he doesn't. I feel a chill down my spine. I swallow hard, my heart racing as I turn to face him.

"Can I... just go back...?" I try to ask, but he cuts me off.

"One," he purrs. Frantically, I turn to look at the door. It's just there. A few meters away...

"But..." and I suck in a deep breath glancing at him.

"Two," he says, opening one eye to peep at me. He smirks before closing his eyes again and yawning.

"My King, I don't think..."

Suddenly, he moves too quickly for my eyes to track, and the air is knocked from my lungs. A shriek of fear escapes me, and the next second, I am pinned beneath him on the bed. My brain suddenly forgets how to breathe, forgets a natural bodily function as fear steals my capacity to function.

"Three..."

The King smiles down at me. He purrs, the noise making his chest vibrate against mine. When he moves, I become very aware of the fact that he is pressed between my legs, and his entire body covers me. I gulp, seeing his face so close to mine, and he smirks. His eyes flash as he stares back for a second.

He drops his face closer to mine, running his nose along my cheek.

The purring emanating from him grows louder before he presses his nose in my neck and inhales deeply. This sends my heart rate leaping and spluttering in my chest.

I try to remind myself that Lycans don't eat people – he said they don't eat people – yet he sniffs me like he's about to devour his favorite meal and is savoring its scent before consuming it.

"I could devour you, and it would never be enough," he growls as if to corroborate my thoughts, and goosebumps rise on my arms at the sound of his voice.

"But Lycans don't eat people," I squeak, praying he wasn't lying. He runs his nose back up my neck and across my cheek, stopping at my lips. The King laughs, his stubble tickling my face while I stare wide-eyed at his erratic behavior.

"Not that sort of devouring," he laughs, shaking his head. "So pure," he mumbles, rubbing my lips with his thumb, his eyes trained on them. I silently pray Damian and Gannon will return. I don't even care about the position they find me in as long as they can get me out of here.

"No, I am a rogue," I blurt, confused. Does he not see that I am the least pure there is? Rogues have no pack, nothing. We are the mutts of society.

Kyson pulls away from me, sitting up on his elbows and looking down at me. Although his position never changes, his weight no longer crushes the air from my lungs.

"How old were you when you were brought to the orphanage again?" he asks curiously.

"Ten, My King," I answer.

"And you had no schooling at all? Not even before that?"

"No," I tell him. Kyson clicks his tongue and looks away. He appears annoyed by my answer. Did I say something wrong?

Wiggling, I shuffle beneath him, trying to get out from underneath him. However, when his eyes move back to mine, they make me freeze and shrink back into the bed.

"You know nothing about Lycans or werewolves or anything at all?" he questions.

"I know how to clean. I can cook a bit, too," I say, not understanding why he questions my ability. What purpose would knowledge serve me when I am a rogue?

"Do you know what sex is?"

My jaw drops, and my face heats up. That word, I do know. I nod, shrinking away from him.

"But yet you're a virgin...pure," he emphasizes the last word, and my face heats further at my idiocy of what he meant before.

The lack of oxygen must have muddled my brain or stunned it. I must have sounded like an idiot. No wonder he questions me. He must have thought something was with me... mentally. I mean I can't read, and from the way I'm talking, it sounds like I don't know anything about

the world. Embarrassment floods through me when his words finally register.

Wait.... Did he want me to become his sex slave? The thought horrifies me. Tears suddenly burn the backs of my eyes, and I squeeze them shut, trying to will myself to calm down and not make noise.

He is the King; he can do what he wants with me. I am a rogue; he could kill me, and no one would care even to ask why.

"Is that why I am here? Are you going...?" I ask before stopping, like not knowing would somehow lessen the horror of it.

"Ivy, I am not going to have sex with you. I was just asking a question," he says, brushing my cheek with his hand. I open my eyes and peek up at him. He almost seems sad before his eyes flicker black for a second. He sighs heavily and drops his head on my chest.

"I hate how skittish you are; it makes me want to kill your headmistress," he growls. I don't know what to say.

"I don't want you to be scared. I don't know how many more times I can say that before you believe it. Even Abbie spilled stew all over Damian earlier, and she begged at his feet for her life. It's madness," Kyson growls.

His words make my mind wander to Abbie, and I wonder if she is alright. I haven't seen her in what feels like forever. I miss her terribly.

"I won't hurt you, Ivy. Not ever. Do you understand?" I nod, and he growls.

"No, say it," the King growls.

"I understand," I whisper.

"No, say it. Say, I won't hurt you."

"You won't hurt me," I sputter out, turning my face away from his angry gaze. Only his fingers on my chin turn my face back to his.

"I won't hurt you. I don't want to hurt you. Therefore, I won't," the King tells me. He may not want to hurt me right now, but that can change. It always changes.

He studies me for a second. His hand moves back to my face. His thumb brushes over my lips again before he tugs the bottom one down.

"Um, sir...?"

He smiles as if my awkwardness amuses him in some way.

"Kyson," he murmurs. His eyes flick to mine for a second, yet his thumb keeps playing with my bottom lip. He settles his weight back on top of me, and my breath lodges in my throat like a ball threatening to choke me to death.

"I have to leave the castle tomorrow. I need to go to a nearby kingdom. Damian and Gannon will remain here with you unless you want to come with me," the King says.

Are there more kingdoms nearby here? I wonder.

"I thought you were the last Lycan Royal?" I ask without thinking. He smiles back at me.

"There is that voice. You can ask me anything, Ivy. I like your questions, and I like hearing your voice." I swallow. The King laughs softly, his chest rumbling against mine.

"It reminds me that you are still breathing," he laughs again. Wow, even the King is aware of my brain cells that randomly die in his presence.

"And yes, I am the Last Lycan Royal. Damian and Gannon don't want me to leave the castle since the rebellion has risen from the shadows again. However, we need to go back to the old crime scene. The castle I will be visiting used to belong to the last fallen King and Queen."

A memory tinkers in the back of my mind, pulling me back to a time I try not to remember... A time I wish I'd forgotten. Before I know it, the room fades as the memory surges back in.

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We were camped out by a stream. The night was warm and still. The air was heavy with humidity, and the stars twinkled in the dark night sky. The sound of the stream rushing down toward the waterfall drowned out the sound of the crickets. I remember that night so vividly, from the breeze in my hair to the smell of damp earth and wildflowers that filled the air. The moon shone bright, casting a gentle glow over the area and illuminating the trees and grass. Abbie and I, just two young girls, had been lying on the grass under an old oak tree, our feet on the trunk. My mother and Abbie's mother, Lina, sat around the fire, talking softly when Abbie suggested we dip our feet in the water. Abbie and I both got up to wade our feet through the water. I hummed to a tune. I have no memory of where I heard it, but it always brought comfort to me for some reason.

"Girls, not too close to the water. It is deeper than it looks," my mother scolded.

I peered over my shoulder to my mother who was suddenly on her feet, alert. She always panicked when either of us came too close to the river. Neither of us could swim a stroke to save our lives. I nearly drowned once when we were on the run; I sank straight to the bottom like a stone.

My father pulled me out, but it has made me wary of water since. We turned back and moved closer to the edge when a sound startled me.

I looked back to the river when a noise sounded among the trees, and her startled expression went to both of us. My father burst through the trees looking terrified. I had never seen him so scared. He was typically the stoic one.

His eyes scanned the area frantically, looking pale as though he'd seen a ghost. His hair was wet, and he was sweating when the cloying scent of wolfsbane reached my nose. He was drenched in blood, and he had an arrow sticking out of his shoulder. Seeing his pain-stricken face was like something out of a nightmare. Every alarm bell in my brain sounded. My mother rushed over to him, her face contorted with worry.

"What happened?" she demanded to know as she quickly broke the arrow, leaving the point in his shoulder. She tried to pull it out, but my father stopped her, telling her we didn't have time.

"We need to run." His eyes scanned all of us when the sound of shouting in the distance drew closer.

"Dad?" Abbie questioned, and I looked for him. Where was he?

"Run!" he bellowed as he ran straight toward me. My mother grabbed Lina, Abbie's mother's hand, and yanked her up.

"It's the King's guard! They have found us! They have come for..."

"For what?" I had asked as my father gripped me around the waist and jumped into the water, swimming to the other side. Lina had Abbie, who was screaming for her father, but Lina said nothing as she swam across;

"Why are they chasing us?" I asked, scared when something burst from the trees with savage snarls.

"Because of King Garret and Queen Tatiana. Now run! Don't stop, don't look back, run!" my father growled.

"Go, girls, hurry!" Lina snapped at us.

"Wait, where is dad?" Abbie demanded. Lina shakes her head.

"You need to run!"

"Not without dad." Lina grabbed her face in her hands.

"They took him."

"Who?"

"The King's guard," Lina shouted, half crying.

"We don't have time for this!" my mother snarled at her while my father's eyes scanned the trees.

"I don't understand..." I looked at my father for answers, but it was my mother who answered.

"That wannabe Queen bitch... Landeena...Now the Valkyrie's," she snarled furiously. I still don't know what she meant to this day. Something sounded across the river, and my father snarled.

My mother spun, glancing across the river, then she turned on us. "Run!" The panic on her face set us moving.

Abbie gripped my hand, and we both took off running through the darkened forest until we could run no more, not knowing our lives would be forever changed.

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That was how we came across Alpha Dean and his cruel son's pack; we were driven right into their clutches after running for days. Our families were originally headed in the other direction.