

Chapter 47

IVY

He motions for them to wait, and they stop their approach as I ask my next question. "What was her name?"

"Azalea," he replies, just as the men step closer to speak to him.

The King stops to talk to one man, and I wander around before stopping at the door. A song I used to love pops into my mind, probably because it is the only one that ever stuck with me, and I whisper the tune as I enter the room.

In this charade, a dance of hate,

A broken alliance, we still create.

The throne may bind us, but I stand tall,

A Queen unbowed, refusing to fall.

Through the fire, I'll rise above,

My spirit strong, my heart full of love.

You'll never break me, I'll never bend,

My voice will echo until the very end.

You have my hand, but not my heart,

A mere possession torn apart.

Bound by duty, a kingdom's will,

In a loveless union, my heart lies still.

It was the King and Queen's bedroom, and I knew I stumbled into the old murder scene by the old flaking forensic tape. It was like this place was untouched, left in the exact state of how it was in this room. Though no evidence was left behind, I could tell by the disarray it had been combed through but not put back exactly the way it was.

"Where did you hear that song?" the King asks, spooking me and making me jump; his footsteps were silent as he came up behind me.

The King enters beside me, and I look at him. "I don't know, I just know it," I tell him, and he watches me curiously.

"Do you know it?" I ask, and he nods.

"Yes, only the version I know is slightly different," he tells me, watching me. His gaze makes me uncomfortable, scrutinizing almost.

"What version do you know?" I ask curiously. I don't even know where I heard it.

"It's the same, but has an extra verse the Kingdom people added on to the end. Hang on." The King looks around and calls out to one of his guards.

"Trey!" he calls out, and a man wanders over. He is wearing all black, and the Valkyrie Kingdom emblem is emblazoned on his chest, showing he is one of the king's guards but not as high up as Damian or Gannon. I've seen it on the other guards, like the guard that the King usually has following me around while in the castle.

The man looks me over curiously. "Yes, my King?"

"Do you remember the Landeena Anthem? The part added on to Tatiana's wedding song?"

“Of course, as if I could forget,” he says before swallowing, and looking away.

“Well?” Kyson asks him, and Trey’s brows furrow.

“Why?”

“I was telling Ivy about how the anthem came about.”

Trey clenches his jaw and nods once. However, he doesn’t sing it, he recites it like a poem, yet as he does, he looks on the verge of becoming emotional. Yet when he gets past the part, I know the song changes significantly from what I know.

“So sing this anthem, a testament bold,

Of love and loss and courage untold.

In the anguish, we’ll find our grace,

A warrior's spirit, as fears we face.

From the ashes, we rise, our voices clear,

A warrior's heart conquers all fear.

Our voices echo far and wide.

A spirit unbroken, we'll never hide.

In the midst of pain, we find our might,

To stand our ground and embrace the fight.

Fueled by anger, a force untamed,

A burning ember, a heart inflamed.”

“Is that all, my King?” Trey asks, and Kyson nods once, and he quickly wanders off.

“He seemed upset,” I tell Kyson.

"Yes, it was Queen Tatiana and King Garrett's wedding song. It then became the castle anthem, which was the song the Queen sang at their wedding. Trey came from the Landeena Kingdom," he tells me, and my brows furrow.

“Doesn’t sound like a wedding song,” I tell him.

“Because it was an arranged marriage, she didn’t want to marry him. But the kingdom’s people thought it was an anthem. Somehow it turned into the Landeena anthem.”

“So they hated each other?”

“Maybe at the start, but I don’t think so, kinda like my mother and father. Arranged marriages are common among royals to strengthen alliances. They stayed together and had a baby, so she couldn’t have hated him that much in the end,” Kyson shrugs.

“So, did many survive from the Landeena Kingdom, and how many other kingdoms remain?” I ask, curious.

“Around fifty or so. They reside in the Valkyrie Kingdom. And no other kingdom remains but mine. They were taken out by the hunters. There are a few survivors from each kingdom still. Why your sudden curiosity about the kingdoms?”

I shrug; I just find it interesting.

He eyes me suspiciously, which I find strange, before he starts looking around the room. He stops by the bed; the old sheets are gone, but the mattress is still covered in blood. Old stains and stab marks litter the mattress.

"Come, you shouldn't be in here," he says, showing me back out. The King leads me away, but he seems distant and deep in thought.

"Your parents' names. What were they?" he asks.

"My father's name was Jordan, and my mother Della. I was ten when they were killed," I answer.

"Do you know their last names?" I shake my head, unsure.

"Why?"

"No reason. It's just odd that you know that song. It was only sung by the Queen and townsfolk; it was a ceremonial song and an anthem, as I said," he says, and I notice Gannon and Damian have come over to listen to our conversation.

"My King, I know we were planning on staying the night, but the men are nervous. Security is hard to keep here, and they found tire tracks through the forest close to here," Beta Damian says when the King waves him off.

"No, it is fine; I want to get Ivy home, anyway. You also need to call that Alpha; I need her paperwork. I believe she is closer to shifting than we believe." They both look at me, and I blush. I know they didn't miss the two bite marks on him that his shirt didn't cover.

The moment I climb into the limo, Kyson is pulling me onto his lap. He has been tense since we left the King and Queen's quarters, but even more so now. I try to scramble off his lap into my seat, but he pulls me back.

"What about my seatbelt?" I mumble as I feel the same senses that awoke on the drive here, reawaken, only now with a vengeance since he barely touched me while here. He quickly clips the surrounding seatbelt, effectively trapping me against him.

"Go to sleep. We will be driving through the night," he informs me, and I sigh. His touch is like fire as his hands graze beneath my shirt. His skin is hot, his hands are scorching, and the moment he touches me, my senses go wild.

Kyson's purr is primal and animalistic as it vibrates against my chest. The rumble reverberates through my body, forcing me to relax against him.

"Please don't force me to sleep," I groan, fighting it with all my might. He chuckles, gripping my chin and forcing me to meet his gaze.

His eyes meet mine, and I can see the flames of desire dancing in them. His hair is as dark as the night, and his lips are mere inches from mine when he turns my face away.

He kisses the side of my neck, his teeth brush against my skin, and a shiver slivers up my spine. "You should sleep," he murmurs against my skin.

"I'm not tired," I whisper, my voice barely audible as sparks rush across my skin at his touch.

"I can help with that," he promises darkly when his lips graze mine. The taste of him is like the sweetest honey, warm and inviting.

I let out a shaky breath as his lips move over mine, our tongues tangling as he deepens the kiss, and I can't help but moan into his mouth as he pulls me closer. His hands run up and down my back, causing shivers to run through my body.

Kyson moves his hands to my shirt, pulling it up and off in one swift motion. The cool air from the AC in the limo caresses my skin, making me shiver as his hands trace up my sides, teasing me as he goes. He unclips the seatbelt.

"God, you're beautiful," he murmurs against my skin as he runs his hands over my breasts, his thumbs circling my hardened nipples.

My senses go wild, his scent becoming all-consuming. Unable to take it anymore, I tangle my fingers in his hair and pull him towards me for another kiss. This time it's wilder, fiercer than before as we both struggle to catch our breath.

"Kyson," I moan out his name as he moves down to leave kisses on my neck and collarbone. "Please..."

He pauses, looking up at me. "Please what?" he smiles mischievously.

"You know what..." I groan, rocking my hips against him, when suddenly his shirt is torn to pieces, and my teeth sink into his chest.

"Hmm, maybe... maybe I want you to say it, though," he purrs as my fingers fumble for his belt. Only he seizes my hands, making me growl.

"So impatient," he purrs, nipping at my lips; he moves my hands to his chest and releases my wrists. My hands instantly move to seek what I want, but he growls.

"Place them back," he orders, and my hands move back to his chest. He undoes the buttons on my jeans while his lips trail down my neck so slowly that my hands shake with my desire to touch him.

His hands grip the waistband of my pants, and he tugs them down before slamming me down on the spacious leather seat; he tugs them all the way off, and before I can sit up, his mouth is on me, his hot tongue swiping between my folds to my clit.

His hands skim over my thighs, teasing me more and more with each stroke of his tongue. The flicks of his tongue become harder and faster until I can no longer contain the pleasure radiating through me.

The fabric of the leather seats, the friction of stubble against my thighs, and his fiery tongue have my senses in overdrive when I feel the warmth spread through me, stealing my breath as waves of ecstasy ripple through me, so powerful that it makes everything else disappear but him.

I gasp for breath, pushing my fingers through his hair as he looks up at me with a sly grin on his face while setting off such a blissful calm throughout my entire being. My body turns languid, and I would be content never to move again with how relaxed I feel. He pulls me back on his lap, and I am a rag doll, limp in his arms as he tucks the blanket around my naked form.

"Now try to sleep," he purrs, nibbling on my lip when I yawn, fighting sleep.

The King hardly speaks on the way home, and we only stop for fuel, driving through the night. We reach home the following day, and Abbie is waiting out the front for the luggage. I bounce in my seat excitedly, wanting to go see her as we pull up.

The King rolls his eyes when I reach for the seatbelt.

"Go on, I have a few things to do, anyway," the King says, and I rush to open the door.

“Ah, Ivy...” he speaks, and I glance back at him. His eyes trail the length of me.

“You’re still naked,” he chuckles, and I glance down. My eyes widen, and I rush to snatch my clothes off the floor while the King puts his ruined shirt on, and groans. “Your senses are growing stronger. At this rate, I will run out of clothes,” he tells me, and I slip my shirt on. I giggle, watching as he climbs out of the car. A few seconds later, I step out after him.

"Remain with Ivy," I hear him tell the guard that usually followed me everywhere before he walks off, clearly distracted by something. He nods, and I rush to Abbie's side. She embraces me and helps me carry the luggage to the laundry room. As we enter, I spot Clarice.

Clarice smiles warmly at me, while Abbie gushes excitedly after telling her the King wanted to claim me once I shifted on my birthday. Seeing her excitement put me more at ease. I reach for a tunic on the shelf when Clarice clears her throat.

"Ivy, the King has told me you are no longer his servant."

"But I want to help Abbie with her chores," I tell her. Clarice looks at my guard, who also doesn't know what to say and only frowns.

"I'm sorry, Ivy, but unless the King allows it, I can't let you put on that uniform. Those here would treat you like a servant in that uniform, and

I don't want any staff killed for that mistake," Clarice explains. I look at Abbie, and my shoulders sag.

"It's fine; I can just wear this, I guess; I will speak with the King later," I tell her. Clarice glances at my guard, who shrugs, and Clarice sighs.

"Very well, but you make sure you tell the King you wanted to help. I don't want to be scolded for making you work," Clarice states.

"But what else is there to do if not work?" I ask her.

"Live," Clarice answers, squeezing my shoulder gently.

For hours, I follow and help Abbie. However, once evening comes, the guard steps away from the wall where he stood watching us.

"Ivy, the King, is looking for you; he wants you back to your chambers," he says. I press my lips together, wanting to spend time with Abbie, but she shoos me away.