

Chapter 48

ABBIE

For two days, Ivy was gone, and when Clarice finally tells me she's on her way back, I remain by the front door for over an hour. I need to make sure she's okay. I am excitedly bursting at the seams when I see the limo pull in. The King says something to Ivy before she rushes over and hugs me. I squeeze her tight, relieved she is okay.

Grabbing their luggage, Ivy helps me haul it to the laundry room. "Abbie, I have something to tell you," Ivy says, nudging me as we walk down the corridor. She has a guard following closely behind her.

As Ivy and I walk down the corridor, I can't help but notice the delicate patterns on the wallpaper. The intricate designs lend an air of sophistication and elegance to our surroundings. The sound of our footsteps is softened by the plush carpet beneath us, and the warm glow of the sconces on the walls casts a welcoming light.

"What?" I ask, glancing nervously at her. The excitement in her eyes is contagious. Her cheeks are flushed with a rosy hue. I see her lips tug up in the corners slightly before she leans into me. "The King wants me to be his mate," she whispers, and I stop dead in my tracks.

I take a moment to absorb the news, my heart pounding in my chest like a wild animal, desperate to break free. "Mate, as in his mate, he wants to make you his Queen?" I ask, my voice trembling with emotion. I blink back tears that threaten to spill over, a mixture of joy and disbelief clouding my vision.

"Means we will be free, we won't have to go back, Abbie, we can stay here for good," she tells me, her voice full of hope. As Ivy whispers the news of the King's proposal, a myriad of emotions wash over me. Surprise, joy, and an overwhelming sense of relief mingle together, creating a tidal wave that threatens to engulf me. The tears that brim in my eyes seem to shimmer in the warm, golden light that bathes the hallway, casting long, dancing shadows on the walls.

"We can stay?" I ask, the words sounding like a dream as they leave my lips. She grabs my arm, tugging me along as the scent of fresh flowers wafts through the air. She smiles and nods, leaning her head on my shoulder as we walk through the kitchens. The kitchen we pass through is a whirlwind of activity. The aroma of freshly baked bread and savory spices fills the air, tickling my nostrils and making my stomach rumble in response. Cooks and kitchen staff bustle about, their faces flushed with heat and exertion as they prepare the evening meal.

When we reach the laundry room, the hum of the washing machines fills the space, providing a soothing rhythm to our exchange. The scent of detergent is sharp and clean, a sensory reminder of the new beginning that lies before us.

As we talk about Gannon, my cheeks grow warm, and Ivy notices my reaction. "What's wrong?" she asks, her brow furrowing with concern.

"Nothing, but are you sure Gannon will want to change me?" I ask, trying to keep my voice steady. When Ivy mentions Gannon, I can't help but feel a warmth blossoming in my chest, accompanied by a flutter of butterflies in my stomach. I struggle to tamp down the rising tide of emotions. However, the thought of him wanting to change me and caring enough to ask fills me with a giddy sense of hope and wonder. I couldn't believe our luck. Just a couple weeks ago we thought we were as good as dead.

Ivy shrugs, her eyes sparkling with determination. "If not, once the King changes me, I will ask him how to change you and do it myself, but I think Gannon will change you," she tells me, her confidence in her words bolstering my own.

As we move to load the clothes into the washer, Ivy leans in next to me, her voice barely more than a whisper. "I think Gannon likes you," she giggles, her laughter like music to my ears. As we load the clothes into the washers, the comforting hum of the machines fills the laundry room. The scent of detergent fills the air. Its clean, sharp fragrance cuts through the lingering traces of our earlier excitement. Ivy's giggle is a bright, melodious sound that echoes through the space, and I can't help but join her laughter. The idea of Gannon liking me is both thrilling and terrifying, making my pulse race and my cheeks flush with heat.

"What makes you say that?" I laugh, my heart skipping a beat at the thought.

Ivy grins, her eyes gleaming with mischief. "Just something the King said. He mentioned that Gannon has never shown interest in anyone. He also asked Damian and him if he could have you as his personal servant. Gannon doesn't want you working as a servant," she explains, her excitement for me evident in her voice.

We stand there for a moment, the implications of her words sinking in. "We would be safe here, Abbie. I think the King is a good man, don't you think?" Ivy asks, her expression earnest. I nibble my lip, considering her question. The King had been nothing but kind to us, even though his presence is always intimidating.

"I do," I agree. The words feel like a weight lifted from my chest. "He's done nothing to harm us, and if he can offer us a real home, a life of safety and happiness, then maybe we should take it, especially if it means we can remain together."

Clarice's entrance brings new energy to our conversation. Her presence is a calming, grounding force. Her warm smile and gentle demeanor bring a sense of order and stability to our whirlwind of emotions.

She smiles warmly at us, and we eagerly share our good news. As we speak, I notice the way the light catches in her eyes, her genuine happiness for us shining through.

I can't help my excitement that I could stay with Ivy and that she would become the King's mate. This was the best news we had received in eight years, and it was like all our missed Christmases came at once.

"You have your chores, Abbie," Clarice tells me, and I almost forget with my excitement, and I rush to grab my cleaning supplies, and Ivy comes to help me.

"Ivy, the King, has told me you are no longer his servant," Clarice says, making us stop.

"But I want to help Abbie with her chores," Ivy tells her. Clarice looks at Ivy's guard, who also doesn't know what to say. He only frowns. Ivy had introduced him as Dustin, and he had remained silent. I already know who he is; I had seen him sneak into Liam's room and Liam into his a few times.

"I'm sorry, Ivy, but I can't let you wear that uniform unless the King allows it. Those here would treat you like a servant in that uniform, and I don't want any staff killed for that mistake," Clarice explains. Ivy looks at me, and her shoulders sag.

"It's fine; I can just wear this, I guess; I will speak with the King later," Ivy tells her. Clarice glances at the guard nervously, thinking she will get into trouble. Dustin shrugs, and Clarice sighs, wiping a hand down her face.

"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 tells her, and Ivy rocks on her back heels excitedly. My heart gives a flutter of excitement, knowing I could spend the day with her.

"But what else is there to do except work?" Ivy asks, and she is right. It would be bloody boring sitting in my room all day. I would rather work, and I knew Ivy would feel the same.

"Live," Clarice answers, squeezing her shoulder gently and walking off.

Later, when Ivy's guard tells her that the King is looking for her, I can see the reluctance in her eyes, and her desire to stay and help me. But I shoo her away, reassuring her that I'll be fine on my own.

"Ivy, the King, is looking for you; we really must go; he wants you back to your chambers," he says. Ivy's shoulders drop, and she presses her lips together, wanting to stay, but I shoo her away.

"Go, maybe the King will let you hang out with me while I work tomorrow," I tell her, and she sighs.

"I will ask. Hopefully, he will say yes."

"He did say he had to go away tomorrow, so I don't see the harm in it," she says, a glimmer of hope in her eyes as she looks at her guard, Dustin.

As Ivy leaves, I feel a pang of sadness, but it's quickly overshadowed by the anticipation of what she told me. I turn back to my chores, determined to finish them quickly.

I'm nearly done when Gannon appears, sticking his head into the sitting room where I'm dusting.

"Abbie?" he says, his voice deep and rough. I turn to face him, my heart racing as I wonder what he wants. He waggles his finger at me to come to him, and I wander over, my stomach fluttering with nerves, wondering if I did something wrong or if he wanted me to clean something.

As I approach him, I notice the way the light from the room casts a soft glow on his features, highlighting the strong lines on his face and the intensity in his eyes. He reaches out, gently taking my hand in his.