

Chapter 54

KYSON

A nauseating feeling washes over me as I contemplate leaving Ivy. However, seeing her excitement at the prospect of meeting up with Abbie eases my tension ever so slightly.

Together, Ivy and I make our way to the kitchen, where Clarice instructs several servants with a firm yet kind voice. She looks up as we enter, her eyes narrowing in disapproval as they land on Ivy.

“Ivy, dear, this is no place for our future Queen,” she says with a hint of concern.

I can see Ivy’s shoulders tense at the title, and it doesn’t escape my notice. “The King said...”

I interrupt her with a low growl, irritated by the formal title she uses for me.

“Want to rephrase that, Ivy?” I ask. My voice is firm but gentle. Her eyes widen in surprise, and she stammers for a moment before I

approach her. The heat of my chest brushes against her back, and I feel the tension in her body dissipate.

“Kyson said I could help Abbie until he returns,” she says with newfound confidence. I reward her with a soft kiss on the cheek and a nod, confirming her statement. Clarice lets out a resigned sigh.

“Very well. Abbie is in Beta Damian’s quarters,” she says, her tone relenting. Ivy turns to leave but then hesitates, caught in indecision between continuing to Abbie or returning to me.

“Ivy, are you okay?” I ask, concern lacing my voice. I’m close to changing my mind about leaving her today, but she nods. Quickly, she rushes back to me and wraps her arms around me in a tight embrace. I lift her up, allowing her to bury her face in the crook of my neck and inhale my scent, finding the comfort she seeks. When I set her back down on her feet, she seems torn about leaving, but ultimately, she hurries off to join Abbie.

With a heavy sigh, I turn my attention to Clarice, who has been watching Ivy with a worried expression. She offers me a warm, sympathetic smile, and I beckon her closer.

Clarice steps forward, and I guide her to a more secluded corner of the room. “I need to leave, but I won’t be back until late tomorrow. I wondered if you could organize a cake and dinner for Ivy’s 18th birthday tomorrow,” I request in a hushed tone.

“I thought her birthday wasn’t for a couple more weeks,” Clarice says, a questioning look in her eyes.

“Damian spoke with the Alpha from her old pack. Ivy had her dates wrong. Her birthday is tomorrow, and I want to celebrate when I get back,” I explain, hoping to make the day special for her.

“Of course, my King. I would be honored. Am I right in assuming you want this to be a surprise?” she asks, anticipating my answer. I nod in agreement, grateful for her knowing me so well.

“I will organize something special for her then,” she says, her eyes twinkling enthusiastically. I place my hand on her arm and squeeze it gently. Then, I turn on my heel and exit the kitchen, my footsteps echoing down the castle’s corridors as I walk to the front entrance.

As soon as I step outside, the cool air greets me, and my instincts urge me to find Ivy to ensure her safety and comfort. Gannon, a trusted ally, waits patiently by the car, and Damian approaches us, his steady gaze meeting mine.

“She will be fine, and I will call you if anything happens,” Damian assures me, his words carrying the weight of years of unwavering loyalty. I glance back at the castle one last time before nodding and climbing into the car. I trust Damian with my life; I know he will protect Ivy with the same devotion he has shown me repeatedly.

The drive is long and boring, and I can't help but feel a gnawing anxiety about leaving Ivy behind. At the same time, curiosity stirs within me about what Alpha Dean might have discovered regarding my little mate's lineage and her life before the orphanage. I hope that this meeting will provide some much-needed answers.

A dark thought crosses my mind – I must visit Mrs. Daley, the headmistress who had abused Ivy. By the time I'm through with her, her back will bear the same marks she inflicted on my mate. If I'm in a merciful mood, I might even let her keep her miserable life and not kill her. But I can't make any promises; the horrific stories I've heard and the whispers from the castle guards enrage me beyond measure. Just seeing the jumpiness and fear that bitch has conditioned into Ivy and Abbie is enough to make me see red.

I also need to deal with Ester, I think to myself. I realize I long for the ability to communicate with Ivy through a mindlink. That way, I could hear her voice whenever I desire. Damian's presence interrupts my thoughts as our connection opens.

'Yes, Damian?' I ask, sensing his aura through the link.

'Just checking in,' he replies, his voice steady and reassuring.

'How is my mate?' I inquire, concern evident in my voice.

'She is okay, helping rake leaves in the garden.'

I can't help but growl at the thought of her working. Ivy has spent her entire life doing constant labor, and now, given the chance to do as she pleases, she reverts to performing household tasks. It's infuriating. She could be enjoying her freedom, painting, anything but cleaning and acting a slave.

'Make sure she is in bed by eight. She needs to sleep before tomorrow night,' I instruct him, my tone firm.

'Yes, I was going to tell her to come in soon, anyway. It is getting quite overcast. How far out are you now?' he asks, genuine concern in his voice.

'Why are you worried about me, Damian?'

'Always, Kyson. It is my job to worry. I understand why you left me with Ivy, but that doesn't mean I have stopped worrying about you,' he answers sincerely.

'An hour out, not much longer,' I inform him, trying to put his mind at ease.

'Good. Tell Gannon to check in when you get there and keep in touch.'

I sever the mindlink, and Gannon nods at me as if he already knows to check in with his Beta.

“Do you know what Alpha Dean wants to see me for?” I ask him, my curiosity piqued. Gannon shakes his head.

“No idea, Kyson. I called him this morning, and he only said it was about her parents, that he thinks he found something alarming.” I nod, pondering what could be so secretive.

“Anything on the children yet?”

“No, but I believe it has something to do with that no-good son of his,” Gannon replies, his tone darkening.

“Just remain alert. I want to get back to my mate as soon as possible, in and out. Shit, I also need to deal with the headmistress.”

“I called ahead. I figured you would want a word with her. So the Alpha has had her strung up in the town square waiting for you,” Gannon smirks, his eyes flickering with anticipation. I can’t help but feel a spark of satisfaction at the thought of exacting vengeance on the woman. She will pay for what she has done to my mate, and she will pay dearly.