

Chapter 55

KYSON

The sun dips low in the sky, casting long, golden rays across the landscape as we near the sleepy little town where I first discovered my mate. The once bustling center of life now appears to be a shadow of its former self, the streets littered with broken signs and crumbling buildings. The scent of decay and neglect hangs heavily in the air, starkly contrasting the vibrant, bustling town it once was. I hate this place, I think, feeling like I'll be happy to never set foot here again.

As we pull into the town square, true to the Alpha's word, Mrs. Daley stands with her bony wrists tied above her head, shivering against the wind that whips at her ragged clothing. The once proud headmistress now looks half livid, half terrified. Her eyes dart around wildly, seeking an escape from her impending punishment. Seeing her struggle, I feel a deep sense of satisfaction.

Alpha Dean and Alpha Brock stand nearby, waiting to greet us. Alpha Dean steps forward first to shake my hand while his son Brock keeps his head hung. The older Alpha is dressed in a suit with his jacket undone, his shirt wrinkled as though he had been working all day. He looks tired, his once strong frame now slightly hunched, and his hair peppered with streaks of gray. In contrast, his son, Brock, appears careless in his attire, dressed in shorts and a tank top. His bare feet are covered in dirt, and I sneer at his lack of respect for my arrival.

Brock bares his neck to me, a smart move considering my growing impatience and need to return to Ivy's side. The air around us feels tense, and I can practically taste his fear.

"Tied and waiting, sir, as you asked. May I ask what she did wrong?" Alpha Dean inquires, his voice steady but edged with concern. Mrs. Daley whimpers at his words, her eyes wide with terror.

"I think the question is what she did right because there is no reasoning that could explain why you would leave a cruel, spiteful woman in charge of raising innocent children," I tell the Alpha, my tone icy and unyielding.

"Right, right. I um. I can see that she is punished if I know what I am punishing her for?" Alpha Dean stammers, casting a wary glance at his son. Clearly, he wasn't aware of the treatment, but the palpable fear emanating from Brock suggests he knew all too well.

"Punishment is already decided, Alpha. I wanted to do it myself, but Gannon has volunteered so that we could get this over with quickly. He even brought his own whip." I smile coldly at Mrs. Daley, whose face pales further.

"How many lashings did we count on the girls' backs?" I ask Gannon, turning to look at him.

“Damian and I believe around 70 on Abbie’s,” Gannon states, his voice devoid of emotion.

“And from what I could count, roughly 135 on Ivy’s, though I know that number is a lot higher because it’s hard to count when the skin is terribly marred,” I growl, my fury boiling just beneath the surface.

“My King, 200 lashes, she won’t be able to stand. She couldn’t possibly heal fast enough,” Alpha Dean interjects, his voice laced with unease. Mrs. Daley’s pleading eyes meet mine as she begs for mercy, but I remain unmoved. It’s not like Abbie and Ivy were ever able to heal.

“Quite right, we can’t have that,” I muse.

The Alpha lets out a breath, seemingly relieved. I turn to Gannon, my voice cold and firm.

“Double it; I don’t want her standing at all.”

The woman screams and thrashes against her restraints, her desperate cries echoing through the run-down town square. The two Alphas look at me in horror, but I don’t waver. They must understand the gravity of the situation and the severity of her actions.

“Shall we get this meeting over with?” I motion toward the pack house. Both Alphas hurry ahead, their shoulders tense and their steps quick. As we make our way to the house, I can’t help but glance back at

Gannon as he prepares to unleash his fury on Mrs. Daley. His eyes gleam with a twisted sense of revenge, reflecting the darkness within us all.

“Gannon?” I call out to him.

“Yes, my King?” he responds, looking up at me with an unsettling eagerness.

“Make sure you swap arms. I wouldn’t want you to get a cramp or tire out.”

“Of course, my King,” he nods before stalking towards the cowering headmistress. Her blood-curdling scream follows the sharp swish of the whip slicing through the air as it comes down on her back. The chilling sound resonates through the town square, a stark reminder of the consequences of cruelty.

I climb the steps into the pack house, where both Alphas stand, staring out at the headmistress with a mixture of horror and disbelief. Ironically, they have no problem killing children, yet witnessing Mrs. Daley’s much-deserved punishment unsettles them.

The only thing better would be to do it myself, but my eagerness to return home to Ivy prevents me from indulging in that pleasure. When Gannon offered, I took him up on it without hesitation.

“My King, would you like coffee, water, maybe tea?” Alpha Dean asks, his voice unsteady, clearly shaken.

“Have you got whiskey?” I inquire, needing something more potent to calm my nerves.

“Yes, of course. Go fetch some Brock. We will be in the basement,” Alpha Dean orders his son, who looks humiliated by the command. I raise an eyebrow at him, and he scampers off.

Two of my guards follow me, and the other stalks ahead of Alpha Dean, pointing to a door. Alpha Dean nods, and we wait until he goes down and calls clear before descending into the dimly lit basement. The damp, musty air clings to our skin as we navigate the cluttered space filled with boxes upon boxes of files. A table and lamp sit in the middle of the room, surrounded by pictures and various documents.

“What is all this?” I inquire, peering down at the table.

“Her parents, my King. I have some distressing news about little Ivy. I have no idea how I didn’t put the pieces together before,” Alpha Dean admits, looking ashamed. He hands me a picture of a dead woman, her throat torn out and her guts spilled open on the autopsy table. Her face is barely recognizable as female, if not for her long, mangled hair.

“What is this?” I demand, my heart pounding in my chest.

“Ivy’s mother. She went by the name Della Hunley, and this is her father, or so he claimed,” Alpha Dean explains, handing me another gruesome autopsy photograph of a man. Their faces are riddled with teeth and claw marks, unrecognizable even if I had known them.

“Okay?” I shake my head, irritated by the apparent waste of time. Alpha Dean then retrieves a clear bag from a box filled with dirty, blood-stained clothes. My eyes are immediately drawn to the hunter’s insignia patch as he tips the bag, letting it fall onto the table. I pick it up, my grip tightening around it.

“Where did you get this?” I demand my voice tight with anger.

“Both her mother and father had matching ones,” Alpha Dean reveals, his expression grave.

“Abbie’s parents?” I ask, still confused about who owned the insignia.

“No, Ivy’s. Abbie’s parents were indeed who they said they were and posed no threat. They fell in with bad people,” Alpha Dean clarifies.

“What do you mean?” I question, my eyes scanning the documents and photographs on the table. My stomach churns, and I struggle to suppress the urge to vomit.

Alpha Dean rummages through the paperwork before producing two photographs. As he hands them to me, my blood runs cold. I snarl,

recognizing the woman instantly. I've been hunting her since she killed my sister and her family.

"I take it you recognize her," Alpha Dean says grimly.

"Marissa Talbot wanted for murder in the highest degree," I growl through clenched teeth.

"Yes, that is why I asked you here. You see, Della Hunley is Marissa Talbot. We have yet to identify her father; he has no records, but fingerprints for the mother match everything else. Ivy's parents are part of the hunter's organization. They are also responsible for not only your sister and her unborn child's death but also King Garret and Queen Tatiana and their murdered baby. You have a traitor living in your castle, my King," Alpha Dean warns me.

Fury and betrayal washes over me as I process the information. The air in the basement feels heavier, suffocating me as I try to wrap my head around the fact that Ivy, my mate, is the child of the very people who took so much from me.

"Thank you for bringing this to my attention, Alpha Dean," I say, my voice steady despite the storm raging inside me. "We will deal with this situation accordingly."