

## Chapter 7

### IVY

King Kyson gets out of the car and leaves us with his Beta and another of the King's men climbing into the car in their place. He stares at us with his arms folded the entire time and doesn't say a word.

The intimidating man has scars on his hands, and through the open top buttons, I can just make out more scars covering his chest. He has a stern expression on his face, and his eyes are cold and calculating as he stares at me. His body is muscular, and his head is shaved on the sides but messy on top. He wears a black leather jacket and a gray top that is tightly fitted to his body beneath it. This man must be one of status too, or maybe one of the main guards. Yet his silence is almost bothering along with his cold gaze.

Was he ordered not to speak to us? The silence is deafening, yet he keeps his aura low like he doesn't want to scare us. His eyes watch our every move. Abbie picks at her fingers nervously, head down and eyes glued to her lap, and his gaze turns to her. He watches her strangely. He seems curious about her, and his eyes move to her hands which I quickly grab. His eyes dart to me before he leans back in his seat.

The drive lasted hours; it was the afternoon when we left. Over an unknown amount of time, I watch the night pass through and the morning rise. Hours of silence, except for the sound of the tires on the road and the roar of the engine, before we finally stopped.

We had stopped twice for fuel. The Beta even tried to feed us, but my stomach was in knots, so I touched nothing. Abbie tried, even though she lost her appetite. Along the way, Abbie passed out, exhausted by the events leading to this.

Abbie had fallen asleep beside me again, her head on my shoulder. When we arrive, I reach over and gently shake her. I wasn't able to sleep; I was terrified of what would happen next. My brain conjured up many scenarios, all ending with our slow and painful demise.

My back is killing me from sitting so straight, and the lashes that cover it strain when I move to wake her. Cringing, I feel the warm trickle of blood dribble down my back as my wounds reopen with the movement. The man across from us leans forward and sniffs the air slightly. After hours of profound silence, he finally speaks up for the first time, which startles both of us.

“Which one of you is injured and covered in herbs?”

We both shake our heads, knowing complaining usually gets us punishment, and snitching carries severe punishment. His jaw clenches, his eyes darting between both of us when he speaks again.

“Don’t lie to me. Clearly, the King wants you both for some reason. So answer, or I will call him over and ask permission to strip you to find out.” he threatens.

The door suddenly opens, saving us from answering.

Beta Damian looks in the limo. The man gets out and stops beside Beta Damian, motioning for us to follow him.

Abbie slides across the seat to the open door and climbs out first, then grabs my arm to help me out. The bending movement slices through my back, and I blink back tears and grit my teeth. Abbie squeezes my fingers gently in reassurance, and I smile and squeeze hers back. When I look up, I find the King standing next to his Beta, whispering to the man that sat in the car with us.

“Thank you, Gannon. I’ll handle it,” King Kyson tells him. The man Gannon looks at us both and nods while Abbie and I look at each other, fear in both our eyes at what the King means by those words.

“Follow me,” King Kyson orders, walking around the limo. We follow before stopping on the cobblestone road. We are at his castle: an actual sandstone castle. It looks like it belongs in a fairy-tale, not real life.

The place is tremendous, and both of us freeze in shock, having seen nothing like it. Vines wrap around the high stone walls with purple and pink blossoming flowers. The gardens surrounding the place are in pristine condition, with not a weed in sight. A tall, wrought-iron fence

surrounds the castle's perimeter, hidden by hedges just as tall. A large water fountain sits in the middle of the cobblestone road next to where the cars are lined up on the circular driveway.

We knew the King lived in a castle. However, knowing that and seeing it are two different things; the place is exquisite.

“Why are we here?” Abbie whispers nervously while nudging me. Rogues aren't allowed at the Lycan King's castle.

“I said to follow,” the King snaps, and we both realize he has stopped and is waiting for us, looking at us impatiently. His Beta touches my back, urging us along, and I hiss. My body arches away from his touch as pain ripples over my back.

Abbie grips my arm, knowing crying out will get us whipped again. I suck in a breath, trying to keep my tears from falling so we aren't beaten for them.

Swallowing down my pain, I start walking, but the King doesn't turn when we approach him. His gaze is stern as he stares at me. His jaw clenches, and his hands ball into fists—Abbie's hand trembles in mine. Maybe if I beg, he will spare her for my stupidity.

He suddenly turns and continues walking while we stumble to keep up with his long strides. A man in uniform rushes to open the heavy wooden double doors. The King moves so quickly we don't even have a chance to look at where we are heading as we try to keep up with him.

Abbie's grip tightens when I slow down; the pain from moving makes everything ache. We pause at a set of stairs, but the King proceeds down a corridor alongside them. We enter a huge kitchen bustling with a dozen workers. The kitchen is immaculately clean and well-organized, with gleaming marble countertops and stainless steel appliances. It is nicer than anything we've ever been able to imagine. The workers are dressed in blue uniforms and hats, and they are busy preparing an array of foods at the designated stations. The air is filled with mouthwatering aromas of roasting meat, freshly baked bread, and simmering sauces. A long table contains fresh vegetables and fruits. In the corner of the kitchen, there was a large hearth with a crackling fire.

"Clarice!" he calls out. Everyone stops what they are doing and bears their necks, tilting their heads to the side out of respect for the king.

A woman looks up before nodding and walking over, wiping her hands on a kitchen towel. She's an older woman, probably in her late fifties, which would make her the oldest-looking Lycan I've seen so far. I know they stop aging eventually, which makes me wonder how old she is. She has a warm smile and soft features and wears a maid's uniform with an apron tied around her waist, which is different from those working in the kitchens. She wears all black, and her apron is a beige color.

"My King," she acknowledges before giving us a strange look, no doubt wondering what we are doing here.

“I have two new girls for you to train, and they need uniforms,” he tells her.

“Right away, my King. Come with me, girls,” the woman says, giving us both a friendly smile as she motions for us to follow her.

Abbie and I quickly obey, and she leads us through the kitchen and down another shorter corridor. Turning a corner, we find ourselves in a giant laundry room.

Rows of uniforms line the shelves. She looks us up and down before handing each of us a gray button-up dress with short sleeves and aprons with pockets on the front. The material is thick yet soft.

“What are your names?” she asks just as the King suddenly walks in, making her turn her attention to him. We turn to look at him.

His movements are calculated and purposeful as he strolls into the room, stopping in front of us. He looks at both of us and then walks slowly around us, only to stop in front of us again. His gaze is scrutinizing, his eyes glowing like polished silver. My breath lodges in my throat when they fall on me, and he tilts his head to the side.

“My King, is there something you need?” Clarice asks gently, clearly shocked that he has followed her and his strange behavior.

I get the impression he hardly comes into the servant station. He shakes his head and leans on a counter, his eyes not leaving mine. Clarice waits to see if he will leave. Only he doesn't.

Clarice turns back to us, clapping her hands, making us jump and look away from the imposing King that continues to stare.

"Girls, I asked for your names," she says, drawing our attention to her.

"Ivy, ma'am," I tell her in a rush.

"Abbie, ma'am," Abbie answers softly, bowing her head.

"Very good. Now quickly get changed through that door," she says, pointing behind us. We look over our shoulders when the King speaks.

"Not you. You change here," he says, and Abbie and I look at each other nervously. Clarice also stares at the King, unsettled by his words.

"My King," Clarice asks, clutching her chest.

"Abbie, get changed in the room... Ivy, you will remain where you are," he says firmly, and my heart thumps erratically in my chest at his words.

Am I in trouble? I try to remember if I did something he might think is offensive or whether it was because I touched him. I thought maybe he

had forgotten to hand down the punishment. I know I shouldn't have touched him, and now I will pay for that mistake.

The look on his face is unreadable, yet his gaze is intense. I don't remember doing anything else that would have provoked his attention, so it has to be the reason. But Abbie touched him too?