

Chapter 9

IVY

Abbie and I are escorted to the area where we are supposed to work. The woman whose job I took does not look happy when Clarice opens the door to the King's quarters and gives her the news. She stands with her hand on her hip, her pouty lips pursed before her green eyes flick to me giving me a look of disgust. She flicks her long blonde hair over her shoulder, as she stomps off smacking my shoulder as she does. Well, she seems pleasant, I think.

I groan as I look back down at the stairs I just walked up. I will probably have to walk those stairs every day, toting cleaning supplies and laundry up and down constantly.

"Are you coming?" Clarice asks. I nod and chase after her down the long, wide corridor, where I can still hear echoes of the other woman whining about her lost job.

"Did he explain why? Did I do something wrong? I just don't understand why he moved me to the kitchen! I can't even cook!" shrieks the woman, Ester.

I think she's around the King's age. But come to think of it, I'm not exactly sure how old the King is, since Lycans are immortal. He appears to be in his late twenties or early thirties, if I had to guess.

Despite her age, Ester's tantrums make her seem more like a toddler. She is clearly unhappy about being transferred to the kitchen and still refuses to leave, even after Clarice dismisses her multiple times. Ester is quite petite, with a small waist and curves in the right places. She has long, wavy blonde hair and bright green eyes glistening with anger. Her face is pinched up, her lips pursed in a thin line, and her posture is rigid and hostile. She is dressed in the maid's uniform, but it is too tight, showcasing her figure and ample cleavage more than it should.

"Come on Clarice this is bullshit and you know it!" she screeches in her high nasal voice as she complains. Clarice exhales loudly.

"Ester, it is out of my hands; the King specifically asked for Ivy to be placed in his quarters and you to be removed. Take it up with him if you don't like the decision," Clarice snaps at her.

"What the fuck does he see in her, anyway? What are you, like, twelve?" the Lycan woman shrieks before she shoves a broom at me which makes me take a step back. Her green eyes glare at me. She sneers, then tosses her blonde curly hair over her shoulder and looks at me with disgust.

"Ester, leave, or I will have you escorted out by the guards," Clarice warns her.

"This is bullcrap, and you know it," she snaps before turning her evil gaze back on me. She smiles and scoffs. "Oh well, the King will get bored with his new plaything anyway," she says, shoving past me and storming off down the corridor toward the stairs. Turning, I watch her leave, shocked by her tantrum and that that kind of behavior is tolerated around here.

"Never mind her. Ester has always been obsessed with the King. He let her in his bed once and now she thinks she owns him. She will get over it. The King has been looking for a replacement for a while now," Clarice says while ushering me along.

"Now, this entire floor needs to be kept clean at all times; the King likes things a certain way, so pay attention to detail. Everything must be placed exactly where it was. So, if dusting, make sure you remember what and where you moved things. The King also likes to eat at certain times. If he is not here, you wait a bit and then return it to the kitchen if he does not arrive after twenty minutes." Clarice explains slowly so I understand everything clearly.

This entire floor is his quarters; there are at least five rooms that I can see off this corridor. It will be like cleaning the whole orphanage by myself. I peer, taking in the long and wide corridors with a sparkling marble floor and walls adorned with paintings and sculptures. In the middle of the corridor, on one wall a large set of double doors opened up to the King's chambers, guarded by two guards.

"Does the King spend much time in his quarters?" I ask nervously, wondering how much time he would be here.

"Not usually; he is usually tending to meetings or in his office downstairs. He is very particular about how he likes things to run and can be very impatient, so make sure you never leave him waiting and get everything done in a timely manner," she says as she wanders over to a door directly across from his bedroom.

"Now, this door— you must never go into this room, understand? The girl before Ester broke that rule, and she—never mind what happened to her, but you must never go in unless he tells you to," she says.

Okay, one less room to clean, I think to myself. Clarice moves across to the guarded double doors.

"Now, this is the King's bedroom; everything must be kept in order and the linens changed daily," she explains as they open the doors for her.

"Each morning at sunrise, you are to open the drapes and let the light in. Usually, he wakes at seven. The bathroom is through there; make sure everything is stocked and fresh. The King has a love for reading, so make sure the books remain in order unless they are on the bedside table; if they are, do not touch them," she says, giving me a pointed look at the last part.

How am I supposed to know what order they should be in? I can't read. As rogues, Abbie and I weren't allowed that luxury and even when

reading to the kids back home, we would just look at the pictures and interpret how we thought the story would unfold.

I nod, praying he puts his own books back because these bookshelves, I can tell, are going to be a nightmare. There are hundreds of books on them and nothing shows a specific order in which they should be placed.

There is a chair sitting beside the shelves next to a large lamp; I guess that's where he spends most of his time reading.

I look around the room. An enormous bed sits in the middle of the room along the wall. There is also a dresser with a mirror and two bedside tables. Huge, heavy maroon drapes cover the windows, which go from the floor to the ceiling, making the room darker. I turn to see another door leading to a bathroom off the side.

It appears the only personal touches are his books, except for one picture, which sits on the bedside table. I wander over and peer down at it. It depicts a woman and the King. His arms are wrapped around her shoulders and they're both laughing.

She has the same dark hair and glowing silver eyes as the King. However, her features are a little softer and she has a natural beauty that makes her glow. He looks younger in the photo, and I wonder where she is and who she is to him.

"Now, I will show you where the King has placed you if you'll follow me," Clarice says as she walks off.

I chase after her when she stops at the door directly across from the King's room and opens it up to a small room.

It has a single bed, a bedside table with a lamp, and a small wardrobe, but that is it. It will feel weird not sharing a bed with Abbie. Plus, the room's proximity to the King's room makes me nervous.

"He wants me to stay up here? I thought I could stay with Abbie?" I ask.

"The King asked for you to remain in his quarters; this is the only other room up here on this floor, so yes, you will stay here," Clarice answers, and I gulp.

"Can't I stay with the other maids and Abbie?" I plead.

Clarice smiles sadly and places her hand on my shoulder, gently squeezing it.

"I know you're scared, but he is a good King. Just stay out of his way and try to go unnoticed. Don't linger; he likes his privacy, and unless he speaks to you, remain quiet. Whatever you do, don't lie to him. As long as you stick to your work and keep your head down, you will be

fine. You would have to do something terrible for him to punish you. Easy," Clarice advises, and my heart beats like a drum in my chest.

I nod and look at the room. The thought of being trapped with the King terrifies me and staying here means less time I will have with Abbie.

"Now, I need to return to work. All linens are kept in the laundry room. Ester has done most of his room already; you only have the study down there to do and bring him his dinner tonight at six pm, so don't be late. Try to come down just before as the cooks will have it waiting. You can place it on his table in his room. The maid's bathroom is downstairs for use. Make sure you bring your dress down every night to the King's laundry and grab a fresh one off the shelf. I will have some pajamas sent up for you and toiletries to keep in your room. You must always remain tidy and..." she glances down at my patched up flats and then looks up at me, pursing her lips. "I will have some new shoes sent up for you too," she adds, clicking her tongue.

"Make sure you sweep and mop the entire floor. You remember where to fill your buckets?"

I sigh but nod.

"One of the guards will send up some stuff for you to keep in your room. Once the King has finished dinner, come down to the kitchen with his plates so you can also eat. One of the guards or servants will bring you lunch today while you settle in. Breakfast is at six am, giving you plenty of time to wake the King at seven am," Clarice tells me. I

try to remember everything she says by making a mental list and repeating it over and over.

Sighing nervously, I nod to the guards and turn around when she disappears. They remain still as statues not even acknowledging my presence. Shaking that thought off I set to work, praying I don't get punished on my first day.