

Chapter 23

KYSON

Azalea is so damn stubborn, her defiance pulsating through the bond that connects us. I feel her agony, every ripple of pain amplifying my own. Pressing my skin against hers offers a modicum of relief, but it's fleeting. With each passing moment she denies us both my patience wears thin, festering into frustration.

The waves of her heat crash against me, causing my muscles to tense involuntarily. I clench my teeth, fighting the urge to sink my canines into her flesh, forcing her to submit. She demands Abbie's return, oblivious to the fact that Abbie appeared perfectly fine—excitable and true to her usual self.

As the king, I bear the weight of consequences far greater than Azalea can comprehend. She is thinking like a child, desperate to see her best friend. But there are complexities she fails to grasp, such as the pact I have forged as the ruling monarch. She believes it's as simple as issuing commands to our kind, but the reality is more complex. I'm bound by obligation to provide the five founding council members with my blood each year, rendering them immune to my control and my command.

Lycan blood in itself holds power, extending lifespans well beyond their natural limits. But a king's blood? I can't command them even if I wanted to.

Azalea has tasted traces of my blood when biting me, and during those moments, she grows stronger, defying my attempts to rein her in. However, the council members have been consuming my blood for years, rendering them immune to my commands. It's a bitter pill to swallow, but a necessary one. What good are laws if the one who created them doesn't abide by them? It's what makes me a fair and just ruler.

Impactful decisions require input from all parties involved; I can't direct and enact laws without considering the council's perspective. They are immortal beings, advising and guiding alongside me for centuries, thanks to the immortal blood coursing through their veins.

This system is precisely why some packs have chosen to assist the hunters. They find it unfair that one individual possesses such absolute authority over all Lycan packs. If I were a tyrant, I could command them to take their own lives, and they would obey without hesitation. By having a council that can hold me accountable for any wrongdoing, we establish a balance of power. Consequently, only a handful of packs now side with the hunters in their quest to eradicate Lycans. The system was put in place shortly after my sister's death to ease tensions among the packs.

Now, though, I regret that pact, as Azalea perceives me as nothing more than a jerk for denying her. Little does she realize the consequences for someone of my status defying the werewolf community go far beyond those faced by an ordinary wolf. They would come for me swiftly and relentlessly. Until Abbie explicitly instructs me to retrieve her, my hands are tied, and unfortunately, I can't solely rely on Azalea's gut feeling.

Eventually, she will understand once she encounters the council. Until then, I will have to endure her tantrums and her wrath.

Another intense wave of heat washes over Azalea, causing her body to tense against mine. Beads of sweat form on my skin where she lies atop me, her scorching heat growing more unbearable with each passing moment. She is burning herself from the inside out. Her teeth sink into my chest, her claws digging into my sides as she writhes, her bare pussy rubbing against my pulsating length, eliciting a deep groan from me. My blood surges hotter, and I instinctively grip her hips, grinding her against me. Azalea moans, but then her claws dig deeper into my flesh.

"No!" she growls.

"Azalea, your temperature is dangerously high. Lycan women can die if they don't mate during heat!" I snarl, my frustration seeping into my voice.

"Then bring Abbie home!" she retorts, attempting to roll off me. The scream that tears from her throat as her skin leaves mine sends chills

down my spine. Dustin's voice immediately echoes in my mind, responding to that soul-shattering sound.

"My King?" he calls through the door.

"Fetch the pack doctor," I snap at him. I can't afford to let Azalea continue like this for much longer; it will jeopardize her life. How she resists succumbing to the instinctual urge to mate in this state baffles me. I have never heard of a Lycan female enduring such prolonged heat without giving in. Her stubbornness will be the death of her.

"Yes, My King," Dustin replies as I seize Azalea's arm, pulling her back on top of me. Her temperature drops slightly, but not enough to alleviate my concern for her.

She is leaving me no choice but to stop her heat forcefully. Either she surrenders to save her own life, or I intervene at the risk of endangering myself. Undoubtedly, she will choose Abbie over me—I know that much. The day I discovered them together, it became apparent they are a package deal. They are both willing to die for the other, preferring death over a life without the other one. Their bond is unbreakable, unreceptive to any outside interference, which right now has my anger rising.

Azalea struggles to free herself from my grasp, but I growl menacingly, sinking my teeth into her shoulder, eliciting a moan and shiver from her. I press the points of my teeth near her mark, acutely aware of the laboring breaths reverberating through my sensitive ears, and amplified by her heightened state of arousal.

“Move, and I will make you submit,” I growl in warning, retracting my teeth. “The doctor is on their way. Stay put. If you move off me again, I will mate you!”

She nods against my chest, and I glare at the ceiling, cursing her stubbornness. It will only worsen when she discovers the extent of her power—the ability to defy my commands through her Alpha voice. Especially once she realizes what power is running through her veins. She is half Landeena and half Azure and those two bloodlines are in history books for a reason. She is not merely royalty, she is so much more, and that thought frightens me most.

“Azalea, I am not above begging,” I plead with her as she continues to squirm, her desire and heat coating my throbbing length. She buries her face in my chest.

“Not until I have Abbie back,” she snaps, sinking her teeth into my arm. I groan, half in arousal and half pain at the feel of her teeth. She is acting on instinct, she wants my blood, my bond, me, but still, she refuses.

As sparks rush up my arm, I hiss as my cock twitches against her. She growls at the feeling like she thinks I will pin her down and force her, not understanding for Lycan men, it is involuntary. Our urge to mate is just as painful as her heat.

“Stay still then,” I tell her, gripping her hips and holding them in place. My control slowly wanes, and I hope this fucking doctor gets here soon. Although parts of her are turning savage and running off of instinct, she remains where she is, unable to fight my command.

She could resist my commands. She may not be able to resist my calling, but my orders she can and until she trusts me, I can't risk using the call to make her submit. Azalea needs to understand I will only use it to calm her or for her safety. Unfortunately, I ruined her trust and now am stuck earning it back. My father used it on my mother constantly for the same reasons once he forcibly marked her since she wasn't his mate and it was an arranged marriage. She didn't want to marry him, he gave her no choice and after a while it just became easier to get his way and a breach of trust after a while, not that mom noticed, or he did anything wrong to her. Still, it wasn't always necessary, and I didn't want that with Azalea. I rather she seek out my calling than me use it against her.

It was a big mistake for me to not see how close Azalea and Abbie really are. It took me too long to understand their bond. They've both been through so much pain and horror together. When things became too much for one, they leaned on other to keep going. They shared and endured everything.

For so long, they needed each other to survive. It's like they're two pieces of the same puzzle, each reflecting the other's pain and being the other's strength. Without the other, they both seem lost. They protect each other fiercely, ready to face anything rather than see the other get hurt. The saddest part is that they refuse to live for themselves, choosing only to live for the other.

Understanding how much they rely on each other shows a deep kind of sadness, a darkness they face together. Their bond is their way of fighting back, their promise to each other that they'll never have to face the world alone again. They see each other through everything, sharing both the pain and the hope for something better.

I should have noticed the depth of their connection from the very moment Azalea threw herself at my feet, her desperate pleas for Abbie's life echoing in my ears hauntingly. It gives so much more meaning to their words: More Than My Life.

They truly believe life isn't worth living without the other.

As I ponder upon this revelation, I realize their bond is unlike anything I have ever witnessed before. It transcends the realms of mere friendship or a mate bond that I have come to associate with pact bonds or the brotherhood forged over centuries, or through blood ties like the unyielding connection I share with my guard.

And now, as I stand at this precipice of understanding, I know I can never hope to win if I were to force Azalea to make a choice between us. Her loyalty to Abbie runs deeper than any mate bond she might feel toward me.

Hearing a knock, I sit up. Azalea groans as she slides lower on my lap. I rip the blanket over her naked body to cover her.

“You can enter,” I call to him. The moment his scent wafts to me, Azalea growls at the intruder in her nest, which is currently me, as she burrows under the blanket, her claws scratching my sides.

Doc approaches cautiously. She is dangerous in this state. You never intrude willingly on a nested she-wolf, let alone a Lycan. I grab her arms, wrapping them around my waist before laying back down, trapping her arms underneath me, and wrapping my arms around her shoulders, pinning her as she goes to attack him.

“Be quick,” I tell him, feeling the mattress shred beneath my back. The growl that leaves her is more predator than prey. I smash her with the calling when I feel her start to shift, and she melts against me. Doc’s eyes are wide as he stares at her and watches me. He is not just intruding on her nest but looking at my heated mate. Not a scenario anyone wants to be in.

“My King, what you’re asking...” Doc tries to say.

“Will stop her heat, now do it!” I tell him.

“Yes, but, My King, it isn’t...”

“I said do it, stop her heat. I will not force her,” I snarl at him, and he seems perplexed.

“She is resisting?” he asks, and I growl. He shakes himself, startled by that information just as much as I was that she could resist it.

“You want to argue with me, do it through the mindlink. I know what’s at risk, do not make me order you, Doc,” I warn him, and he sighs, staring at her as she purrs, licking my chest, having forgotten we have people in our presence, unable to fight my calling as it has lulled her into a sedated state. Doc pulls herbs and vials out before making the concoction up in a bowl and extracting it with a syringe.

‘My King?’ Dustin asks through the mindlink, and my eyes move to him over Doc’s shoulder.

‘I know, but I won’t force her,’ I reply through the link. Dustin nods once but looks away. We all know what I’m risking, but I’m not willing to guilt trip her into giving in because I know she would, but then she would resent me afterward or may accuse me of lying.

Doc clears his throat awkwardly, and Dustin averts his eyes while mine go to Doc’s. “My King, I have to... the injection site, I have to...” he stutters, and I growl, knowing he has to inject it into her ovaries. I have seen it happen to a Lycan woman who was in heat just as her pack was attacked. It stopped her heat and saved her until the bond was severed when her mate was killed. She ended up killing herself not long after her mate died, anyway. She went insane after about a month.

“Which one?” I ask him.

“Either,” he states, averting his gaze while I rearrange her by pressing my leg between hers to cover her. My hands and the blanket tangle around her to cover her nakedness. But the moment he turns, the savage growl he receives from me has him jumping back. I can’t help but to covet and protect, my instincts are going haywire. Knowing he can see what is mine and is about to touch her while she is in this state is sending me overboard.