

Chapter 5

IVY

Strangely, despite spending so much time sleeping, I feel even more fatigued than usual. The exhaustion weighs heavily on me, making it a grueling task to keep my eyes open as I hastily throw on whatever clothes my hands can find. Unconcerned with my appearance, I glance at myself in the mirror, only to be met with a disheveled mess of hair resembling a haystack.

Who would have thought that shifting would be so draining? I can only hope this level of exhaustion isn't a constant issue every time I shift. Grabbing Kyson's phone, I attempt to call Abbie, but there is no answer.

Where is she? She told me she'd call me all the time.

Frustrated, I hurl the phone onto the bed and hastily gather my hair into a messy bun, determined to find Kyson to see if he can get a hold of Kade to get Abbie to answer. It feels like there's a big hole in my life without her here. Stepping out of the room, my eyes land on Dustin waiting by the door.

“Morning,” I greet him, though Dustin can’t help but chuckle.

“You mean afternoon, My Queen,” he replies teasingly. I blink at him, it’s afternoon already?

“How long was I asleep?”

“Only a few hours. I heard you earlier with...” Dustin’s voice trails off, and he clears his throat, his entire demeanor suddenly changing as he side-eyes me awkwardly. It doesn’t take long for my brain to register why he has grown uncomfortable.

“Wait, you were outside the entire...” I turn to look back at the door, my eyes widening in horror, just imagining the things he heard last night.

“I heard nothing, My Queen,” Dustin quickly states.

“Well, clearly you heard something,” I retort, noticing the blush creeping onto his cheeks. The embarrassment is palpable, engulfing both of us. Clearing my throat, I shift my gaze toward the end of the corridor. “Have you seen the king?” I ask, changing the subject.

“He is in his office, My Queen.”

“Ah, enough with the formalities. I hate being called queen, But silly especially after what you overheard, don’t you think?”

Dustin chuckles. "I heard nothing," he insists, lips curling up in the corners as he keeps his gaze fixed ahead, desperately trying to suppress his laughter. Shaking my head with a click of my tongue, I gesture toward the end of the long hallway.

"Come on, then, let's find my King," I huff before striding off. Dustin hurriedly follows, then races ahead, opening doors along the way, which irks me. It becomes a silent competition to reach each door first, a reminder of how everyone is constantly doing things for me. Finally outpacing him, I swing open the next door, only to collide with Kyson's chest.

The impact expels the air from my lungs, leaving me stumbling backward. Dustin swiftly grabs hold of my arm to steady me as I clutch my head, feeling the dizziness overwhelm me. Eventually releasing his grip, Dustin discreetly places his hand behind his back and stands taller.

"And where are you rushing off to?" Kyson asks, amusement evident in his voice as he surveys me. I rub my forehead where I had collided with my mate like a bulldozer.

"We were looking for you," I groan.

"Well, you found me," Kyson snorts, though I can't resist slapping his chest without considering how much stronger and quicker I have become since shifting. The force causes pain to shoot through my hand and makes the king grunt, but I don't even move him. Kyson shakes his

head, draping his arm over my shoulder and pulling me closer as we retrace our steps toward the stairs leading back to our quarters. As we cross the foyer, we spot Clarice coming down the steps.

“Ah, there you are, My Queen. I left your afternoon tea upstairs on the table for you,” she informs me.

“Thank you, Clarice,” I acknowledge, preparing to climb the steps when Beta Damian’s voice rings out from down the corridor, causing us to pause. Kyson leans down, pressing his lips to my head, and I purse my lips in response.

“I’ll be up soon,” Kyson murmurs before striding off toward his Beta.

“What’s happening?” I question Dustin, my gaze fixated on Kyson’s retreating figure. Dustin remains silent, prompting me to glance in his direction.

“You’re not allowed to tell me, are you?” I ask, already aware of the answer.

“The king has everything under control,” Dustin replies, and I bite the inside of my lip as I contemplate whether to go after him to find out, by the look on Damian’s face, it seems serious. My eyes wander toward Kyson’s office, where he has vanished.

Curiosity piques within me, wondering if this has anything to do with the missing women. Against better judgment, I begin to make my way toward his office, only to be halted by the sound of arguing. Dustin grabs my hand, trying to steer me in the opposite direction, but my feet don't move, the arguing grows louder, and Dustin tightens his grip on my hand, attempting to steer me back toward the stairs, but I find myself transfixed by what is happening.

"The king doesn't want you in there right now, My Queen," Dustin advises. I try to pull away from Dustin, ignoring his words.

"Ivy!"

"I want to know what's going on," I tell him when I hear something smash in his office. Dustin attempts to grab me when I rip my arm out of his gentle grip. Escaping Dustin, I shove the door open to find the king has shifted, and he has Gannon pinned on the desk, who is also shifted. They appear to be fighting while Damian is picking himself up off the floor. His lip is bleeding, and I see the healing bruise on his chin, showing someone has hit him.

Gannon snarls and shoves the king before swinging at him, only for Kyson to punch him, sending Gannon stumbling backward before hitting the ground. The pungent aroma of alcohol in the room emanating from Gannon tells me he is drunk. He growls, trying to get up but stumbling, and Damian goes to get between them when Kyson glares at him, and Damian backs away with his hands up.

“Stand down. She will see reason soon and come back, stop this,” the king orders Gannon.

“This is fucking bullshit, and you know it,” Gannon snaps at him.

“My hands are tied, you know this,” Kyson says, letting him go, and glaring down at Gannon.

I stand back, confused at the scene before me. Normally it’s the king who throws alcohol-induced temper tantrums. I’ve never seen Gannon act this way before. What could get him so worked up? Unless he’s talking about... Abbie.

“You’re the fucking king. You can make him give her back,” Gannon snarls when his eyes fall on me standing in the doorway.

“I wonder what Ivy would say to that. Would you offer her the same excuse?” Gannon sneers.

“If I knew what?” I interrupt, stepping further into the room, my presence now visible to all men.

“Nothing, Ivy. Go back to our room, love,” Kyson orders. At his command, my shock quickly turns into rage, feeling its subtlety wash over me.

Gannon goes to say something, and the king turns, a furious growl tearing out of him, but the look on Gannon's face shows he doesn't care about the consequences, or maybe he is too intoxicated to realize the trouble he is about to get in for disobeying a direct order.

"Dustin, get her," Kyson snarls, and Dustin grabs my arm, trying to pull me from the room when Gannon speaks up.

"Kade is mistreating Abbie," Gannon says. I stop.

I had just spoken to her the night before, and she seemed fine. Turning to face him, Dustin tries to yank me out, but I shove him off. I turn to Kyson, wanting to know what he is talking about, when the king snarls, pivoting and punching Gannon so hard it knocks him out cold. I gasp, my hands covering my mouth as Gannon suddenly becomes sprawled on the floor.

"Out Ivy, now!" Kyson snaps angrily, but I glare at him.

"Where is Abbie, Kyson?" I demand, my voice filled with a mixture of fury and concern.

"She is with her mate, where she chooses to be," Kyson replies, his tone daring. I furrow my brows, shifting my gaze toward Gannon, who lies on the floor.

"Then what is Gannon talking about?" I press.

“It doesn’t matter. I will join you soon.” Kyson once again evades my question.

“You’re lying.”

“Pardon me?”

“I said you’re lying. Now, tell me what’s happening with Abbie?” I snap, my mind racing as I desperately try to make sense of the situation, searching for signs in her tone and demeanor that something was off. Has something happened since we last spoke?

“Go back to the room. Do not force me to give you an order, Ivy,” Kyson warns.

“Then answer the damn question!” I retort, frustration and fear intertwining within me. My gaze darts between Kyson and Gannon, Gannon still unconscious.

“Ivy...” Kyson grits his teeth, his eyes darting behind me to Dustin, and he glares at him in some silent message.

“Don’t glare at him. I want to know what’s going on and why you are all fighting,” I demand.

“Dustin, get her out of here and keep her away!” Kyson snarls. Dustin grips my arm, attempting to pull me from the room, but I forcefully wrench myself free. Regrettably, Dustin collides with the wall this time, and I feel a pang of guilt as he groans from the impact. Turning my attention back to Kyson, I want answers.

“Tell me,” I demand, causing Dustin to reach out once more in an attempt to remove me from the room.

“Leave, Ivy,” he growls.

“What is happening with Abbie?” I repeat, my anger now consuming me.

“Go back to our room. Do not test my patience further,” Kyson warns, stepping around his desk to stand directly in front of me. Folding his arms across his chest, he meets my defiant glare. I can feel my hands trembling uncontrollably, a fact not lost on him. But this is Abbie we are discussing, and she means everything to me. More than my own life. And that truth remains steadfast, even in the face of my mate’s domineering presence.

“Then answer the fucking question?” I snap.

“Abbie is with her mate, you know this. You spoke with her last night,” Kyson says, and my eyes dart to Gannon.

“If I find out you’re lying to me, or something is wrong with her...”
My words trail off.

“You’ll what, Ivy?” Kyson takes a threatening step forward. “I would advise you not to finish that sentence, love,” Kyson says.

“Do not forget, Kyson, that I have other options now, other places I can go,” I retort, my voice filled with anger. His growl ripples through the room violently.

“Excuse me?” Kyson snarls, his eyes flashing dangerously as his hands clench into fists.

“You dare address the Queen of the Landeena Kingdom so casually, King Kyson,” I growl back. It may have been petty, but if he wanted to assert his dominance, then I would do the same.

Despite my reluctance to embrace the role of queen, the fact remains I hold that title and possess a kingdom, even if it has a population of zero. It is still mine by birthright, and I won’t back down, especially when it comes to Abbie. Even if it means risking my own life.

“Is that so, Ivy?” Kyson responds through gritted teeth.

“Queen Azalea,” I clarify, catching him off guard. If I am going to make claims, then I will claim it all, including the name. Damian edges closer at my words, his eyes on Kyson like he is afraid Kyson will hurt me for

challenging him. Dustin's fingertips brush my arm like he is preparing to rip me out of the way if needed. While Kyson and I stand locked in a battle of wills, neither of us is willing to yield to the other. The tension is palpable as the muscles in Kyson's jaw clench.

Though I fear his ability to use his calling or issue orders to me, unsure of how to combat his aura, I can't forget I possess the command and aura of an Alpha as a Lycan Queen by blood. With this realization fueling me, I wait for Kyson's next move.