

Chapter 33

Ivy

The next few days go the same. The king forces me to go with him wherever he goes, making me follow around like a lost puppy and it's starting to get on my nerves. I stare longingly out toward the forest through his office window at Clarice and Peter.

Peter has a bucket and a scrubbing brush in his hand. Clarice is talking to him, and it looks like she is about to hang out the washing. I press my forehead against the cool glass. Fresh air would be good, anything to get away from the king or the guards, even if only for a few moments.

“I will take you outside later,” the king says, as if he can read my mind. He is staring down at his laptop screen, not paying any attention to me whatsoever. For the most part, we ignore each other. However, I can see he is becoming bothered by it. It is almost as if he is picking fights with me when we do talk, just to give him a reason to grab me or touch me.

He never hurts me, I don't believe that is his intention, anyway. The bond draws him closer to me, and Damian has admitted that is why the king drinks the way he does; to fight off the urges for him to give in to the bond, something I have refused to do myself. I have also been refusing to sleep in the bed with him even though I can hear him pacing because of it. It gives me some weird sick satisfaction that it disturbs him. Like I am winning at something while being held prisoner. Though it pains me refusing him, I am becoming desensitized to the pain. It's not like I know anything else, but I see how frustrated it makes him.

He can't complain about it because he said I can't leave the room, and technically I haven't or tried to, so he has no reason to force me into bed with him or use the calling on me, though I can see the temptation too clearly on his face.

"Can I call Abbie?" I ask, and he briefly looks over the laptop screen at where I am sitting.

"You tried her earlier, and she never picked up. You may try tonight, and if she doesn't answer, I will call her mate, so you can speak with her, that is if you behave and eat tonight," he adds. I turn my gaze away and glare out the window. I have had

no appetite since being back. Just the smell of food makes me want to throw up.

“Can I go help, Clarice?” I ask.

“No, I am busy,” he growls, and I chew my lip. It is boring sitting here and that’s all I ever seem to do, sit around, and wait for him to drag me somewhere else.

“Damian can take me,” I say, and he sighs, sitting back in his chair, staring at me.

“Damian and Gannon are working; I can’t pull them away from their duties just because you’re bored, Ivy,” he says. A growl slips from me, and he folds his arms across his chest, arching an eyebrow at me while pressing his full lips in a line.

I stare at them, and I have to rip my gaze away, making me lick my own. I notice he does this when he is debating with himself and not liking his own trail of thoughts.

I stand, seeing his eyes watch me make my way over to him before I stop next to his desk. He swivels in his chair to face me straight on like he thinks I am about to make a run for the door. Then, I notice his computer screen. Seeing my gaze, he glances

back at what is a beautiful woman on the screen and hurt rushes through me. There are lots of them, all tiny pictures of women displayed in different stages of undress and posed for the camera.

“It’s not what you think,” he murmurs, and I glare at him. He reaches for me, but I jerk my hand away. He has been sitting here this entire time looking at other women while I sit across from him unable to do anything but stare out a window because of the pain he’s causing me.

“Ivy, come here,” he snarls, leaning forward and wrapping his fingers around my wrist. He pulls me on his lap, locking his arm around my waist when I try to get up.

“Let me go,” I thrash trying to escape his grip. Kyson growls and nips my shoulder with his teeth, his grip tightening.

“I’ll show you, stop,” he growls.

“I don’t want to see your side pieces,” I snap at him. At that, his arm tightens around my waist. His growl turns menacing as he presses his teeth against the back of my neck.

“You are overreacting, settle down,” he warns. “I don’t have side pieces, only you. Now stop it,” he growls, moving the mouse around and clicking on one. I growl at him. I can’t help it until the image clicks open, and then the screen opens up to her mutilated body. My stomach lurches, and I look away, my heart thumping in my ears loudly and my eyes widen in horror.

“Are you still jealous of a dead woman?” Kyson asks as I turn my gaze away, unable to handle looking at the screen.

“Get rid of it,” I whisper as tears burn and sting my eyes at the thought of what she endured to look like that.

“I clicked out of another file. I didn’t think about the picture on it, or I would have shut the screen completely down.”

“Why are they all half-naked? Did they not have better pictures?” I say, wiping a stray tear. I can’t get the image out of my head. It seared forever in my memory. The way she is torn apart and the look of anguish in her dead eyes.

“Unfortunately, no, their owners didn’t take normal pictures of the girls, they wouldn’t sell if they did,” the king says.

“Wouldn’t sell?” I ask, confused.

“Yes, these women are rogue sex slaves, Ivy. We have been trying to find out where they are kept, and we also believe the children’s bodies that have been washing up belong to some of these women. We know the hunters are behind it, but we don’t know why so many are suddenly popping up or why the children are older each time.”

“Older?” I ask and he nods.

“Yes, most are children, but they seem to be targeting young adults or late teens. Barely above 18. I’m now wondering if the children are just collateral damage now because every time new bodies show up they are mostly women.” He answers.