

Chapter 14

“Hello, everyone.

My name is Nora Bluemoon. Until now, very few werewolves had any idea of my existence. I was born in the Gold Moon Clan and raised in the Jade Moon Clan, but my mother was originally from the Blue Moon Clan, a much older pack. If I’m able to mind-link all of you like this right now, it is thanks to her blood. My mother was a Royal, and so am I.

This is most likely the first time Silver City ever had a Royal, but I am only using this power because I need all of you to listen. Our city is threatened. It is serious, and nothing we will be able to fight if we keep acting separately. I am calling all of the Alphas, and all of the werewolf packs. As children of Moon Goddess, we need to stand together against what is coming. You all saw, heard, or took part in the fight against vampires a few weeks ago. It was a serious thing, and some lost their lives or friends. But that was only a beginning. Something much worse will come someday.

I know this won’t be easy to listen to, but I am the future Luna of the Blood Moon Clan. My mate, Damian Black, and I are calling all

werewolves today to join us in this fight. There will be no submitting, only alliances if you're willing to.

I ask of all Alphas to discuss this with their packs. Any pack can be represented. We do not care about how many you are, your wealth, or your strength. All we ask is for everyone to come unarmed and in small groups of fifty people maximum. We will all gather at the Silver Stadium in three days at dusk. No weapons, no vehicles. Wolf or human form doesn't matter, as long as we can communicate.

I promise this not a trap, only a way for all of you to be heard. I know a lot of you will be scared. But I promise the Blood Moon Clan means no harm in this. Only a chance for us to find the way out in a crisis. Thank you, and may the Moon Goddess bless all of you."

I stop and open my eyes. In front of me, everyone is frowning or nodding. We are in Damian's apartment, in the living room. They all heard my inner voice clearly. Elena smiles gently at me. She is sitting on a couch, Nathaniel standing behind her. I asked my cousin to be here as a guide, because I wasn't sure I could do it properly. We didn't tell Nathaniel about our relationship, just that we were friends for now. For some reason, she asked me not to tell anyone else about it for now.

Damian is facing me, and he was holding my hand the entire time. He gives me a smile.

“You did great, Nora.”

A few steps behind him, Neal is massaging his temples.

“I have to admit, I didn’t think you could really do it, but I guess this headache is my retribution for doubting you.”

I laugh a bit. I feel sorry for the Betas and the others, as other than the Alphas, everyone probably didn’t enjoy having my voice echoing in their head. After a few seconds, I’m submerged by voices.

“Who was that? A Royal? Really?”

“Blue Moon, what is that Clan? Who are you?”

“I heard it, too! I really heard her!”

“The Blood Moon Clan? Since when do they have a Royal?”

“How did you do this!”

“The Blood Moon Clan has gone mad!”

“What threat, anyway?”

“Who do you think you are, commanding us!”

I close my eyes and try to shut myself out. Gosh, I didn’t expect to get all the answers at once... Guess the mind-linking opened way too many doors. Dozens of voices are using the link backward, and I need my wolf’s help to shut them down.

“Nora, are you okay?” Asks Damian, concerned.

“Sorry... It’s my head...”

He helps me sit down while I try to concentrate. My wolf is confused, and it takes me a while to shut the ones I don’t know out, while only keeping the voices I do recognize.

“Long time no see, kid!”

“Grandpa Seaver?”

“That’s me! Great job, young lady. Anyway, we will be there. I would have said no to Black, but with you, that’s a different story. I don’t forget

my debts. I still owe you for my daughter's life, so consider it done. The Sea Moon Clan will come."

"Thank you!"

It might not be a big Clan, but I'm still happy to get at least one positive answer. When I'm about to tell Damian, I hear William's voice.

"So, you learned how to use your Royal voice. Impressive."

"Will you come?"

"I said I would, didn't I? But do not expect us to suddenly act friendly toward Black. We still have too many issues to settle..."

I bite my lip. I expected this, but I really hope this meeting won't turn into a big fight between all of the packs... I tell Damian and the others about at least two Clans coming. Meanwhile, Vince also confirms the Jade Moon will come, though a lot of them are concerned.

"We expect this, but this is how it always works between werewolves anyway, miss Nora. No matter what happens, you did what you had to. We know how risky this is," says Neal.

“Don’t worry, baby girl. It’s going to be okay. Even if only a few packs show up, it’s plenty, okay? We just need to open up a dialogue,” adds Tonia with a reassuring smile.

I nod. Honestly, I wish Liam were there. He probably would have said something to make me laugh and taken my anxiety away. Since the younger Black’s disappearance, I feel uneasy. I don’t know what happened to him or the witch. He was supposed to be the one to capture her! Why did she free him? I hope I was right to trust her...

“Anyway, we need to get ready. Three days is a very short time to get everything ready. Securing the stadium, informing the human police, and preparing the lieutenants won’t be an easy job,” says Neal.

He takes out his smartphone and gives orders very fast, though he already did as soon as I agreed to this. A real Beta’s job, I imagine.

Damian gets up to talk to Tonia, and as he leaves me alone on the sofa, Bobo jumps on it to lie next to me. The giant wolf puts his head on my knee. I know he wants to comfort me, and I scratch his ear.

“A bit higher, please.”

“Bobo! It’s funny to hear your wolf voice!”

“You’re the one who opened the link. But It’s tough to maintain for me. Your wolf’s too strong; it’s like sending rocks in a waterfall.”

“I don’t care, you’re the one always in your wolf form, it’s hard to talk to you!”

“I can hear from you anytime.”

I roll my eyes, annoyed.

“I mean, when you can actually answer.”

“Daniel says the same thing...”

“See?”

“Can you keep scratching anyway?”

My gosh, is he a wolf or a dog?

Anyway, it’s good to know I can talk to Bobo like this, but it’s hard for me to concentrate on a single Beta’s inner wolf. Damian, Tonia, and Neal leave for his office, but I guess this is not really something I should be

concerned with. Instead, I get up and head to the small kitchen. At least he has what I need to make myself some tea...

When my cup is ready, I exit the kitchen to get back to Bobo. However, I hear voices before coming in. Nathaniel and Elena are having a heated conversation, and neither of them heard me. Unsure what to do, I stay at the door a few seconds and hear some of it.

“Talk to me! Elena, I can’t go on like this!”

“I told you, I’m fine, Nate. Stop asking, please.”

“I don’t believe you! You’ve been avoiding me for days; I can’t take it! Do you think I haven’t noticed it? You’re pale, you lost weight... Elena, are you sick?”

“What? No, I’m not, I swear, Nate. I’m fine, okay? I really am.”

“Then why...?”

“I’ll tell you later, okay?”

“Later? What later! Elena... When?”

“After the pack meeting. Once it’s over, we can talk. I promise, but not now. It’s not the right time, with all that is going on. Nate, please.”

I hear him sigh.

“Okay, but... you have to stop avoiding me, please. ...I miss you.”

My cousin whispers something I can’t hear, and after a few seconds, I hear enough to know I can’t come in now. I’m blushing, but I’m happy for my cousin... From what I just overheard, Nathaniel really does love her, right?

I feel a gentle push behind me. Bobo! So, he left the living room after all. I get to his level and sigh deeply while playing with my best friend’s fur.

“Bobo, everything is going to be okay, right?”

“I got your back.”

I smile, feeling a bit better. I’m about to suggest we go back to Damian and the others, when I hear someone running across the apartment. What is going on? Bobo and I both get to the entrance, and I almost run into Sean, who just barged in, panting.

“Sean? What is going?”

“Where’s the Boss?”

“In his office, but what is it?”

“The rogues. A hell lot of them. They are gathering at the borders!” He yells while running to Damian’s office.

Oh, crap. Why now...?

When I arrive, right behind Sean, Damian is already standing in front of the glass wall. I slowly walk to my mate, and he naturally puts an arm around my waist as I stand next to him. He probably already knows. I follow his stare, and indeed, he is looking at our borders.

Close to the East border, I see them. A large group of people and wolves. It’s hard to tell from here, but... There should be about a hundred, two hundred people. What is going on? I have never seen so many rogues gathering...

“What are they doing?” I ask.

“For now, nothing. They all suddenly started gathering a few minutes ago, but now, they just stand at our borders. It’s really weird, Boss. They are not doing anything,” explains Sean.

Why then...? Is this a threat? But rogues don’t usually wait, they just burst into territories and attack. They are not supposed to be organized at all, and never in such large groups. It doesn’t seem normal at all... From here, they seem rather calm. I use the mind-link to reach Vince.

“Everything seems rather calm, but the scouts are looking out, Nora. They are a few meters away from our border. I think they are establishing some sort of camp.”

“A camp?”

“Yeah. Actually, it seems like they have a few children among them, too.”

Children? Families... Are those wolves really rogues? It feels more like... Strays.

“Nora? What are we supposed to do?”

“Nothing for now, but keep watching closely. Just let me know if there are any changes, and alert everyone if they show any sign of an attack.”

As you wish.

For a while now, Vince has started behaving like this with me. Whatever I ask or order, he will do without discussion. Apparently, the whole pack is okay with that, too, though it is still all new to me. I feel like I'm a secondary Alpha to the Jade Moon Clan or something.

I turn to Damian, but he seems rather calm about this whole situation. Is he suspecting those are not rogues, as well? If not, the fact that they suddenly gathered...

“Do you think they came because of me?”

“We don't know how far your voice reached,” simply says Damian.

“The calling of a Royal may have had a bigger impact than we thought...”

Neal's words scare me for a second. It's true, I never knew how this ability could work before, and obviously, I had no idea how far it would go. My only thought was to reach as many werewolves as I could, I didn't really figure how far. But to gather so many outside people? The question is... Why? These people are obviously not from Silver City, why would they suddenly come to my calling?

“Let them be,” suddenly says Damian. “They will most likely move in three days. We will see, then. Just keep watching them and our other borders. We never know if that Witch might strike again.”

“Got it, Boss. About the... other topic...”

Sean’s eyes are going from me to Damian with a hesitating look. From his attitude, I can guess right away who this is about. I turn to Damian.

“You are still looking for Marcus?” I ask.

My mate just nods, his eyes turning colder than ice whenever that name is spoken. Sean shakes his head, looking annoyed.

“Apologies Luna, we haven’t been able to find him yet. Our hunters are on the lookout, but the bastard is good at hiding.”

It feels a bit unreal to hear him call me that... But after my words earlier, I guess that’s a real thing for everyone now. Damian gently caresses my arm and leans in for a quick kiss on my forehead.

“He won’t be able to approach you, anyway. He can only stay hidden until I can get rid of him...”

His angry voice makes Sean and Neal look down, but as usual, I'm unaffected by his Alpha aura. I just nod and sigh. If only this could be all over soon...

The next three days actually became quite busy for me.

I go to work as usual, but as soon as I get home, Neal takes me for what he thinks are necessary lessons for the future Luna. Mostly, it is about Silver City's History, the complex relationships between the Clans, territories, and the basics of the economy and businesses. For me, who has never even been to school and is only self-educated, it is really tiring. I am willing to learn, but Neal is a severe teacher, and we didn't have much time for me to know enough before the gathering. We only finish really late at night, when Damian comes home from work and basically chases him out.

However, I start living with Damian during that time, and I love it. Everything I possess is promptly moved to his apartment, and once he gave me a bit of space in his wardrobe, that was it. I really never possessed much, anyway, except for what he had bought me, and my birthday presents, so...

Even if we couldn't be together by day, my mate wouldn't let me go every minute of the nights we shared together. Any worry I had melted like snow under the sun as long I was in Damian's arms.

But the nights were way too short. When the sunrise hit me on the third day, I woke up with my heart filled with nervousness. I was alone in bed, but I could hear the shower running. Waiting for Damian to come back, I lie there, watching the sunrise with pink and orange shades over Silver City. My city.

Within those few days, the feeling of being a Luna became more and more real to me. In the lieutenants and Betas' behavior, they made it clear they already saw me as such. Even at the restaurant, almost every werewolf staff member's attitude changed towards me. I guess it must be a bit unusual to see the Luna washing dishes and taking orders...

I feel fingers caressing my arm, and Damian's lips on my shoulder.

“Good morning, my Love.”

I chuckle and turn around to give him a long, deep kiss. This has gotten so natural between us now... I put my hands around his neck and enjoy the taste of his lips. Damian's beard is exactly the length I love, a bit scratchy against my skin. He looks older and more serious, but I like that. We keep kissing, and I don't want to let go. My mate groans.

“Nora... We need to go...”

I don't care, I want him now. I keep kissing him playfully and manage to take off his shirt he just put on. Damian laughs and starts attacking my

neck, his hands reaching for my underwear. I smile because I know it's my win. I feel my mate already excited above me, and as usual, he catches my hand to intertwine our fingers together. I feel his member against my thigh, and my body temperature rises immediately. His fingers reach for my most vulnerable part and start caressing me, making me feel good. I start breathing harder.

How did we get used to each other's bodies so quickly? I don't know, but gosh, this is the best feeling in the world when Damian finally enters me. I give out a sound my voice couldn't possibly make otherwise, and my mate kisses me passionately. We start moving, the oldest dance in the world. I reach for his skin's warmth, ask for more kisses, and let out my voice as I please. Damian's gentle, yet passionate. I relax under him, indulging in that pleasure as he keeps going. I love his erratic breathing against my ear. His voice makes me crazy, and I close my eyes to concentrate on those sensations. He accelerates, and I can't hold it in when it overtakes me. A wave of heat and pleasure, hitting me, blowing me away. Damian joins me, too, and groans loudly.

We both calm down, catching our breath. My mate puts his head in my shoulder and kisses my bare skin before letting out a sigh.

"Damn, Nora, you really make me crazy..."

I chuckle. Who knows how long Neal will scold him for being late...? As an apology, I kiss him on the corner of his lips.

“I know. But you love it, and I love it, too.”

“You do?”

This time, it's his turn to give me a sneaky glance. Stop teasing me like this! I blush a bit and try to grab my panties, but Damian catches my hand first.

“Damian! Enough, I need to dress up, too!”

“Oh no, you need a shower!”

Without warning, he suddenly puts me over his shoulder. What is he...? Moon Goddess, why is he getting up, I'm totally naked! I try to protest, but he gets up and carries me like a potato sack to the bathroom. I can't believe him! He is still laughing when I finally chase him out of the bathroom to shower. Gosh, I know I started it, but still!

I take my time to shower, washing my hair and all, and when I exit, wrapped in my bath towel, I'm surprised to find a full outfit ready for me on the bed, brand new. I check it. A white woolen dress, a black leather belt, and laced booties?

“Tonia prepared it for you. She thought you might want something Luna-like...”

In her mind, it must have meant expensive! Though I have to admit, the dress looks gorgeous and very chic, with the back open and a lot of embroideries. I try it on, and indeed, I look very... respectable and pure in this. I definitely get a princess vibe from the long skirt, too. When I add the belt, I notice there are actually shiny stones embroidered in it, matching my diamond necklace. I add one of my pairs of black tights, and Damian helps me put my hair up with a hairpin.

My mate is already all dressed up, with his usual jet-black suit. I pick a black silk necktie and put it on him, as he taught me, and finish with a quick kiss on his lips.

“Ready?” He asks.

I nod. “Ready.”

He takes my hand, and we exit his apartment. We meet Bobo and Neal downstairs and take the elevator to go a few stairs down. It’s still early, but the Blood Moon lieutenants are gathered in the meeting room. I recognize Sean, Vane, Thaddeus, and Joshua, as well as Isaac, Nathaniel’s Beta, among the people present. When we enter, they all bow, but this time, it’s not just to Damian, but to me, as well. Wow, this is definitely new...

Sadly, the youngest Black Brother is still absent. We still haven't heard from Liam at all, and everyone is starting to get nervous about it. According to Tonia, he's never gone missing for so long, it's getting serious. Yesterday, Damian sent scouts looking for him, and we tried mind-linking him again without success. I even tried asking the witch's butterfly, still hanging around me, but nothing happened. Could something have happened to him? I almost told Damian about the Witch yesterday. Still, even if I did, I'm not even sure she had anything to do with him escaping the Sapphire Moon Clan...

Damian faces the whole group, and everyone listens in total silence as Neal starts talking.

“So far, the following Clans responded positively to the Invitation: The Jade Moon, the Pearl Moon, the White Moon, and the Sea Moon Clans. If we add the Sapphire Moon Clan, that makes a total of five Clans, two hundred and fifty people. Seven smaller packs also announced they would show up: The Ruby Moon, the Flower Moon, the Asphodel Moon, the Lotus Moon, the Ivy Moon, the Twilight Moon, and the Winter Moon packs.”

So many? I don't know how many small packs Silver City has, but seven seems already like a lot, though this is my first time hearing those names.

“They're not big?” Asks Vane.

“Not really. About thirty to fifty adults, at most. Most of them only have a couple of properties or businesses,” explains Thaddeus.

“Not that important...” Says a guy I don’t recognize.

“Any pack that is willing to come is important,” I say. “Any willing werewolves will be welcome, regardless of their wealth or strength.”

The guy looks down and apologizes right away for his words. Neal resumes talking about the security measures this time. I notice Nathaniel is absent, too. Why isn’t he here? I ask Damian, but my mate shakes his head. Where could he be? I feel some fur against my leg.

“Bobo, do you know where Nathaniel is?”

“With Elena. He knows... about the baby.”

Gosh, so she finally told him? Why now? I hope it goes well...

The rest of the day is spent talking about security measures, emergency situations, and how to organize the gathering. Everyone is getting tenser by the hour, including Damian. Neither of his brothers shows up, and soon, it’s the end of the afternoon and time to go...

Black cars are all lined up outside of the building, and Damian and I take the second one, with Vane driving us. A lot of the lieutenants shape-shifted to follow us in their wolf forms— the others are going by car or motorbikes. It's really intimidating to be moving along such a vast group. Damian doesn't let go of my hand a single second. As agreed, only fifty of the Blood Moon Clan members are going, and Isaac left us about an hour earlier to meet with Nathaniel.

It takes half an hour to get to the stadium, and we left only a little before sundown. I try to reach out to Liam again, without success. I really hope he is okay...

When we arrive, Vane parks away from the gathering point, and we start walking towards the stadium, followed by fifty men and wolves altogether. To my surprise, the Jade Moon Clan, led by Vince, appears as soon as we approach. They only give me a quick bow of respect and move along.

As we get closer to the stadium, my nervousness rises. Not only that, but I also hear a great hubbub, coming from a large crowd. How many people came? I knew a few Clans were willing to come, but... It's still early, and I hear a lot of voices.

For the occasion, all fourth gates are wide open, allowing us to walk into the stadium easily. When Damian and I finally come in, I can barely believe my eyes. This is such a large crowd!

Did Neal say we should expect a few hundred? More like a few thousand! The stadium's benches are literally full of people! With the Blood Moon and Jade Moon packs arrival, a hundred more people add to the number. Despite the number, it is quite organized, though. Each pack stays as a group, sitting together and keeping their distances from the others. This way, it is easier to differentiate the bigger packs, with their leaders in front of them, from the smaller ones. Still, I have never seen so many werewolves gathered in one place. It is both impressive and scary.

Even with my Alpha features, I can feel the tension in the air. A lot of it. Everyone is eyeing each other. Those who haven't shape-shifted are ready to jump into their werewolf form at any moment. Moon Goddess, can this really go well?

Our arrival is actually the main point of focus for most of the people present. I have never felt so many eyes on me, and if it wasn't for Damian holding my hand tightly, I would be petrified. However, I can tell they are eyeing the both of us. No one can look at Damian directly in the eye. However, people are still intrigued by the Alpha King, who only rarely appears in public. Whispers come from all around, but Damian is perfectly indecipherable. His stone-cold expression, dark allure, and tall stature are enough to impress. Still, most of all, his Alpha aura is radiating, intimidating everyone around us.

“So that's him...”

“Is that the Luna who contacted us? She looks like a child!”

“He really looks like his father...”

“Hey, don’t stare. Show some respect.”

“I’ve never seen that girl before! The Jade Moon, she said?”

“You really think she is a Royal then?”

“I was wondering if they would really come...”

“He is really marked? What about the Gold Moon daughter, then?”

As we walk toward the center of the stadium, where a large stage has been installed, I look around, trying to find out which packs actually came. I notice Nathaniel, standing with Isaac on one side. What’s wrong with him? He seems impassive, but I can tell he seems... annoyed? His eyes look a lot like Damian’s when he is unhappy. Is it about the meeting? I hope this has nothing to do with his conversation with Elena earlier. I try to look around, but I don’t see my cousin anywhere. Is the White Moon Clan there, as promised? Suddenly, I catch Marina and Grandpa Seaver’s eyes, in front of the Sea Moon Clan. They both salute me in a very discreet but respectful gesture.

Next to them, to my surprise, is Lysandra Jones. So, the Purple Moon Clan came, too! Moreover, the other pack on their left must be her father's, the Violet Moon Clan. The man in front looks a lot like her, with his dark skin and amber eyes. His name is Andrew Jones, Neal mentioned him during our lessons.

I don't recognize any other group, though. But a lot of them are smaller, meaning they are smaller packs like the ones Neal mentioned earlier. But as I try counting, I found there are roughly twenty-five different groups around us. Even if not all of them brought fifty members, it's still a lot of people... A lot more than we expected. And the number keeps growing with the arrival of other groups behind us. I notice no one from William's Clan is here yet, but we still have time.

Damian helps me up to the stage, and we are now literally standing at the center.

This is... impressive. Hundreds of pairs of eyes are on us. I don't feel as intimidated as I thought I would, though. My wolf feels confident enough, especially with her pair right by her side.

"This is great, Boss. A lot more people than we thought come," says Neal.

"They are wary of us, though. Most of those wolves are warriors..."

They look at me, surprised. This is a bit new, but my wolf is observing our surroundings, and can quickly find which wolves are actually warriors or not. I can't say I'm surprised, though. With the Blood Moon Clan's reputation, we shouldn't have expected people to react any differently. Its obvious people are here to hear what we have to say, but do not trust us for a second.

The sun slowly comes down, and everyone awaits. There isn't as much noise as people lowered the chattering to listen to what the Alphas have to say. All of the leaders are standing in front of their packs, within a reasonable distance from each other.

I only recognize a few of them for now, but it doesn't really matter. Suddenly, I see Sean running to us.

"The rogues, they started moving."

"Nora, the sentinels said the rogues are coming."

I get the information from two sides, and I answer both out loud and through the mind-link, so they can know what's going on.

"Vince, what are they doing?"

"Just walking, they are not menacing. ...One of them asked to talk to us."

Next to me, Damian is frowning, listening to this with concern.

“Nora, he wants to talk to you.”

I give Vince my phone number, and within a minute, I get a call from an unknown number. I put it on speaker for Damian to hear.

“Respects, Luna.”

“Hello. Who am I talking to?”

“My name is Ryan. I represent all of us who came. We all heard your call, so we came looking for the Luna.”

“...Where are you from?”

“The Western territories, but we were chased out by a Witch. First, she sent vampires to weaken us, then she poisoned all our water and food until we had no choice but to leave our home. There is nothing left back there, so we became strays looking for a new place to settle in. When we heard there was a Royal, we had to come. We encountered a few rogues on our way here, Luna, and we only have this many fighters. We have families, children. We are seeking Asylum.”

The Witch. So, she came from the West. Not only that, but she already used the very same pattern somewhere else. This is serious. But that could also be an opportunity for us.

“You are one whole Clan?” Asks Damian.

“Yes. We are called the Steel Moon Clan. There are about two hundred of us. When we heard the Luna’s call, that there were many packs assembled in one city, we thought that might be our chance to start over.”

I exchange a look with Damian, but we already are thinking the same thing. My mate nods, giving me what I need.

“I give you permission to enter our grounds. Leave your pack outside the Jade Moon territory and gather fifty people at most to join us.”

“Thank you, Luna!”

I hang up and leave Vince’s men to deal with them.

Next to us, Neal is nodding slowly. “For now, this is fine. That way, we will have witnesses about the Witch’s threat.”

“But this might be an issue later, right?”

I understand right away. Even if we choose to welcome this new pack for now, there will be another issue sooner or later: We don't have any empty territory for a new Clan, especially such a large one.

“...That was an interesting display of generosity.”

I turn around, and a man I've never met before is facing us. He is tall, with completely white hair, despite looking in his forties. He has a very clean-shaven beard and is wearing an elegant dark blue suit. Very politely, he bows slightly to Damian and me.

“Pleased to meet you. I am Clark Hamilton.”

The White Moon Clan's Alpha! I was wondering if they were coming at all. William did say he would try to convince them. Does he know about the Opal Moon, their branch Clan, meeting with Taaron King? And more importantly, is he really on William's side?

We introduce each other, both parties staying extremely polite and expressionless before he leaves us to take his pack into an empty spot of the stadium. Right after him, William Blue comes in, followed by fifty people from the Sapphire Moon Clan. Gosh, I hope he and Damian can stay respectful toward each other...

He addresses me first. “Hello, Nora. How have you been?”

While he asks, his eyes are on the marking on my neck, but I act like I don’t notice.

“I’ve been fine, thank you. How about you?”

“Well, I did have a couple of fights with my father about coming here. But after all, I do happen to have a few things to say, too...”

I really don’t like the way he says that while glaring at Damian. What does he have to say? I’m afraid things will get ugly if those two argue. Damian doesn’t say a word despite William’s stares. His ice-cold silver eyes are just glaring all their might at my cousin, and his arm tightens slightly around my waist.

Those two look ready to jump at each other’s throats. How are we supposed to negotiate alliances like this? Thank Moon Goddess, William soon leaves to go back to his pack.

When it’s finally time, every wolf or man stands up. All the Alphas are in front of the packs, on the grass, all around us. There are a few empty spots, but from Neal’s estimation, we have gathered over ten thousand people... Damian and I exchange a glance, and I step forward to address all of them.

“Thank you all for coming. I am Nora Bluemoon, who called you here today. Most of you probably came with a lot of questions in mind about that threat I mentioned. As I already said before, the vampire attack was only a beginning. Silver City is about to face someone much more dangerous: A Witch.”

Right after my words, a lot of people start talking. This comes as a shock for most people, and I hear a lot of questioning in the ranks. They’ve faced vampires before, but a Dark Witch?

“How do we need this was really a Witch’s doing?” Ask someone. “We only saw vampires in that attack.”

“Something was definitely off about this attack. Any nearby water source attacked us,” states Clark, the White Moon Alpha. “Some of my guys died from poisoning, not from their injuries.”

“At least four packs witnessed it,” says Nathaniel. “And we may have not had any Witch around for a while, but we do know how they work.”

“That’s right. Witches can subjugate other species and use their elements. Trust me, I’ve lived long enough to see a couple,” adds old man Seaver. “A Water Witch, that’s what we were facing!”

A lot of people nod in agreement. Grandpa Seaver may not be from a big pack, but he is well-respected.

“So what? Even if there is a Witch, who says she will attack again? We gave those vampires a hard time...” Says an Alpha with a strong accent.

“Great idea, Gregorovitch. Let’s stay on our lazy asses in case nothing happens!” Scoffs Lysandra.

The man doesn’t let the insult go, and both packs start growling at each other. Damian and I growl too to have them stop.

“Enough!” I yell. “We came to talk, not to fight!”

The man named Gregorovitch turns to me, looking annoyed. He points the finger at me with a disdainful look.

“Why should we believe you? You may call yourself a Royal, but who says you are? What proof do you have?”

Almost immediately, not only Damian starts growling furiously at him, but the whole Blood Moon Clan, too. I try to calm Damian down, but to my surprise, the next one to speak is William.

From where he is, my cousin turns his head toward the man who spoke with his eastern accent, looking even more cynical.

“Do you think anyone can summon so many packs like this? Are you able to mind-link other Alphas as you please, too? Anyone here who has seen Nora Bluemoon shapeshift into her white wolf form, with blue eyes, knows she is a blessed child of Moon Goddess.”

The Alpha named Gregorovitch seems a bit reluctant to believe William. Still, he doesn't dare talk back and just crosses his arms. I was afraid we would lose time tracking my family history to prove myself capable, but William stepping in certainly helped. However, we need to resume to our main topic.

“As I said, a Witch is threatening Silver City. A Water Witch, according to Alpha Seaver and the White Moon Clan. She will attack again, but we can't know where and when. In any case, it will be a bigger blow, and we won't be able to handle it if we are not prepared for it.”

People start talking between themselves again after my words, and mostly they seem concerned or anxious. Some are still staring at Damian and me with suspicion in their eyes, but at least they heard us. I turn to my mate, but before I say a word, Sean runs to us.

“Boss, Luna, they are here. The ro— I mean, the Steel Moon Clan.”

“Let them in,” orders Damian.

Soon enough, fifty members of the Steel Moon clan enters, agitating all the other packs present. The arrival of a different and unknown Clan raises a lot of suspicions, and I hear people calling them strays, protesting against their presence here.

“Who are those people?” Asks Lysandra.

“Strangers. Another Clan, chased from their land by the same Dark Witch that is now targeting us,” I explain. “We called them here as witnesses.”

I turn to the man who came forth, probably Ryan, the man I heard on the phone. He bows in a very respectful manner to Damian and me, all of the people behind him doing the same. Gosh, those people do look exhausted... A lot of them are quite thin, and some even have visible, fresh scars and injuries. I show him the crowd, and he nods, understanding what I’m asking of him.

Once again, he addressed to everyone present, telling them their story, in more details. How the Witch first sent vampires, killing almost half of their pack, then poisoned them little by little until they had no choice but to leave. With all the packs listening, he made sure to be as detailed as possible, and by the time he was done, most of the audience appeared to be shocked, some even look sorry for them. All the Alphas stayed silent, listening to him with deep concern.

“We heard the Luna’s calling, and thought this might be our last chance at settling somewhere decent. Our pack is only a third of what it used to be, and our people are exhausted. We don’t have any wealth left, only our people. But we would be more than happy to help you fend off that wretched Witch if we can,” finishes Ryan.

“Why did the Witch target you?” Asks Andrew Jones.

“We still have no idea. We only saw her from afar. But anyone she killed, she kept their corpses. We couldn’t even bury our people as we kept losing them to her.”

Oh, Moon Goddess, she kept the bodies? I exchange a look with Damian. Why would she take dead werewolves’ bodies for? My man just looks as confused as I am, and so does Neal. On the side, Nathaniel looks at a loss, too. This is too scary and disgusting to think about! Behind Ryan, a few of his people can’t hold their tears. I can’t even begin to imagine the nightmare they went through. Even the Alphas present seem truly sorry for them.

“May Moon Goddess protect her children and save their souls,” says Tiffany Pearl.

I didn’t see the Pearl Moon Clan Alpha arriving. But I recognize their Alpha instantly, she is one of the most beautiful women in Silver City.

From what I've seen of her previously, Tiffany is not only pretty, she's also extremely smart. If she could be on our side, it might be easier to convince others...

"Princess, while gathering us all, you mentioned a plan against that Witch?" She asks, looking directly at me.

I feel a bit awkward being called that, but this is not the time to be embarrassed. Especially since I feel she is giving me more legitimacy this way.

"That's right. Most of you know that last time, we survived because a few packs helped each other. The White Moon Clan was supported by the Blood Moon and Blood Moon, and the Purple Moon helped the Sea Moon Clan, too."

I notice Andrew Jones gives a glare at his daughter, but Lysandra ignores him. Grandpa Seaver is nodding. Meanwhile, Clark Hamilton, the White Moon Alpha, gives a glance towards Nathaniel.

"This wasn't part of any alliance, yet they helped each other because they knew everyone's safety was at stake. I know some of you already have alliances, new or old. What I want to ask you all today, is to consider a global alliance. All of the packs present, working together against whatever that Witch will throw at us."

Immediately, a hubbub of shouting and talking raises from the benches, despite the Alphas attempts to moderate their own packs. From what I can hear, most of them are already against it. Why would they help other packs they have fought with countless times before? Why should they help smaller packs? My wolf is annoyed at all the jabbering, and so am I.

Suddenly, after a while of all the Alphas trying to calm them down, Damian lets out the most terrifying growl, and all the attention is on him once again. As if his Alpha aura had suddenly exploded in the middle of the stadium, the benches suddenly go totally silent again. Some people even fell from their seats or retreated by instinct.

My mate is so close to shape-shifting, his pupils turned black like an animal, and his teeth grew longer. He isn't the King of Silver City for nothing. I can tell a lot of the people present are totally scared, but I don't care if that's what it takes for them to listen. For a while, the whole stadium goes as silent as a cemetery as everyone calms down.

"...Why should we accept an alliance?" Asks a female Alpha. "We have been fine on our own so far, and the other Clans never lifted a finger to help while we were in trouble!"

"I know this won't be easy. Many of the packs here are used to cohabitating with others but also being on your own. However, if we act separately next time, we might all lose everything. If each pack only sticks to defending their own territory, the Witch will wipe us all one by one. You heard the Steel Moon Alpha. They were such a big pack, yet they

couldn't do anything against her. Even our biggest Clans won't be able to act on their own this time," I explain.

"That's easy to say for you. But allying with the Blood Moon Clan? Do you know how crazy that sounds?" Says another Alpha.

Damian stares at that man, who seems to shrink under his glare, and for the first time, addresses the crowd. "I know many of you still have in mind the crimes committed by my father. You all referred to him as the Mad King, and he deserved it. I am not him. I haven't sought to expand my territory, nor have I attacked other packs before. Most of you see my face for the first time today. Why would I go ahead and betray you now?"

"What about your alliance with the Gold Moon Clan, then? We are all aware of the financing issue that is going on. They have been closing off the banks, cutting us from our funds, and threatening us to use your very own name when we rebelled. Are you telling us you haven't been pressuring the other Clans through them?" Asks the Asphodel Moon Alpha.

"That's right. Was this a way to ensure we would obey to you today? Isn't it a bit too much to ask for alliances when you are using another Clan to threaten us on the sidelines?" Asks someone from the Lotus Moon Clan.

I knew the Gold Moon Clan issue would come back sooner or later... And everyone really thinks Damian is still allied with them. On the side, I spot William smiling. He was obviously waiting for this topic to come up.

Damian stays very calm and addresses everyone. “The Gold Moon Clan has been using my name to act on their own. The engagement is not real anymore, nor is our alliance with them. I know the rumors, but the Blood Moon Clan has had nothing to do with them ever since Nora had me cancel it.”

Me? He is making it look like I forced him to do it! Well, I did make him choose between Alessandra and me, but still!

“I am now addressing you all as the King of Silver City. I took over a position my father didn’t deserve because I had to. Our pack needed a new Alpha, and I became that man. Killing him also gave me the position as the King, with an even bigger Clan than the one my father led. I am the strongest werewolf; I am the King Alpha. Yet, I am mostly the Blood Moon Clan’s Alpha. I haven’t acted any differently since the Blood Moon Clan rose. I am not looking to submit anyone, but as Nora said, to find allies. Enough to protect Silver City. My brothers and I won’t be able to do it on our own.”

“you are only trying to raise an army!”

Everyone turns their heads to see who yelled that. Oh, Moon Goddess. Walking towards us is Alessandra King and her father.

The Gold Moon Clan just arrived.

As soon as I see that woman, my wolf and I want to attack her. How the hell does she dare to come here with that smirk on her face! Neal holds me back, a hand on my arm. He does well because otherwise, I might seriously go for her throat this time. In front of me, Bobo is growling like crazy, too.

Damian is glaring all his might at them, and they have no choice but to look down as they approach. Yet that doesn't stop the Gold Moon Alpha, who ignores him to address the rest of the packs.

“Do you really believe this would be an innocent alliance? Damian Black is here to have you submit to him!”

All the Alphas look at each other. Some seem surprised or confused, but others, like Grandpa Seaver or Lysandra, are obviously exasperated by his words. Tiffany Pearl and Vince are glaring at the Gold Moon Alpha.

“You have guts to show yourself, Taaron. After the mess your people put us into,” says a man I believe to be the Celtic Moon Alpha. “Half of my businesses are about to go bankrupt because of you!”

Taaron King is a small man, with the exact brown hair as his daughter, and tiny black eyes. He is wearing an oversized coat and a golden chain that both look too big for his size, walking confidently like he owns the place. A trait Alessandra inherited from him, apparently... I glare at those two, like half of the people present in the stadium. Ryan and the rest of his pack look lost at what is going on, but they still positioned themselves between the Gold Moon Clan and us.

“Do you believe me to be responsible for this? You all know Damian Black is the King in this city; all I did was obey him! I did tell him, cutting off any funds to the other packs would be a bad idea, but who am I to oppose him?” Says Taaron with a pitiful voice.

How can he lie so blatantly? Don't tell me people are going to believe that? I should tear off this snake's tongue! A lot of werewolves are now looking at Damian with dubious or angry eyes. They can't believe this nonsense! He is so obviously lying! Before I can find any words, Alessandra starts talking, too, trying to act like a victim.

“My fiancé made use of our relationship as soon as he could. He said we should act quickly to prevent the packs from moving their money somewhere else, like the Sapphire Moon Clan he hates so much. This way, everyone would promptly consent to this alliance.”

I'm going to spit blood if this bitch says another word!

“How dare you! Damian broke off his relationship with the Gold Moon Clan weeks ago!” I yell.

She turns towards me, but my wolf is standing on all fours and growling furiously, she can't even meet me in the eye. Instead, she pretends to look a little lower. “We held our engagement party not two weeks ago. Why would it make any sense for him to have broken it off now?” Says Alessandra.

“Because I am his Luna, you bitch!”

Alessandra laughs at me. Moon Goddess, if it wasn't for Neal holding me back, I would kill that woman. How dare she!

“You are no one! Suddenly, a little girl comes out of nowhere, claiming to be a Royal, and you become his Luna overnight? Who will believe that? Isn't it obvious he just picked someone to play the part and give him more power? I couldn't have pulled the Royal pretense off!”

“She really is a Royal, we saw her shapeshift,” says Clark Hamilton. “They cannot fake the marking either.”

Alessandra glares at him. “Royals mean nothing. They have been extinct for ages! Who cares about the Royals, anyway? It’s all about wealth nowadays, and the Blood Moon Clan made sure to have both!”

William’s pack starts growling furiously, as they hate for anyone to show disrespect to the Royals. Clearly, the Gold Moon Clan did not expect that from them. Both packs start yelling and growling at each other, but Damian silences them with a growl.

Then, he turns to Taaron King and addresses him with his deadliest glare. “I never asked you to put an embargo on any Clan, and our business relationship ended two weeks ago, as Nora stated. This gathering was my mate’s attempt to protect all of Silver City, not for me to submit anyone.”

“Really? Isn’t it what you are doing right now?” Asks Taaron, without lifting his eyes.

“He is teaching you to show some respect, you damn mutt...” Growls Lysandra.

I see her father tell her to shut it silently, but she ignores him. So, the Purple Moon Clan also has a feud with the Gold Moon. Next to her, I catch Clark Hamilton and William exchanging glances, too. I wish I knew what my cousin is thinking, but for now, I really have to shut those liars up if I want to have a chance at unifying the Clans.

“You are just spouting nonsense, King. Is that all you came for? What’s your aim?” Growls Damian.

So many wolves from the different Clans are growling, that he has to speak louder and use his Alpha aura. King and his daughter are avoiding eye contact with Damian and gaze at the audience instead.

“I don’t have any wrong ambition aside from enlightening our fellow citizens about your actions, Damian Black. A Witch’s attack? Vampires? Why should we believe that?”

“Are you deaf? We witnessed it ourselves!” Yells Marina Seaver.

Taaron King shrugs. “What you saw were vampires. There isn’t any proof anyone witnessed a Witch, or that those vampires will come back! Who can tell if this wasn’t a one-time thing? Are you all willing to surrender to the Blood Moon out of fear? Black is just using this as an excuse to have you all submit to him!”

“We are seeking alliances, not a submission!” I growl.

“Isn’t it the same? The Blood Moon Clan is too powerful! Any smaller pack will have to obey you once they accept this alliance! They might as well surrender their territories and wealth right now! Is there any Alpha here would believe they will be able to oppose any command from the Alpha King, Damian Black?” Asks Taaron King.

All around, despite the hostile faces, no one says a word. Of course, Damian is the strongest werewolf miles around. Now he is making this look like it's all a conspiracy!

“You’re wrong,” I say. “We will not submit the other wolves...”

“Why seek a stronger Luna, then? If you really are a Royal, as everyone here believes? Aren’t you only another tool to make him powerful? No wonder he changed his mind and left my daughter!”

This time, Alessandra glares at her father. It seems like she didn’t appreciate that reminder.

In the sidelines, I hear Andrew Jones click his tongue. “So, he did leave the King daughter...”

“No wonder,” laughs Tiffany. “Isn’t it obvious that miss Nora is a better Luna? That woman can’t even hide her nasty jealousy.”

Alessandra is red with embarrassment, serves her just right!

“A man with the most power, the biggest territory,” her father continues, “and a powerful Luna. And now, not only that, but he brings an army here?”

While talking, he is pointing at Ryan’s group. Seriously? He is even using the Steel Moon Clan now?

Ryan growls, outraged. “We only answered the Luna’s call!”

“Oh, really? How convenient is it that a full pack showed up right before this gathering? How many did you say you were? Strange, isn’t it? How Damian Black seems to be gathering more and more people?”

“We are refugees! The Luna spoke to us for the first time not even an hour ago!”

“And what right did she have to let you in Silver City, hm? Did Nora Bluemoon ask other packs while letting you in? The Blood Moon Pack is in the middle of Silver City, so which territory did you cross on your way here?” Asks Taaron.

“They crossed the Jade Moon Clan territory. Nora was raised in our pack, and she has every right to say who can come in or not!” Growls Vince.

Taaron King seems a bit surprised by Vince's reaction. The Gold Moon Clan probably had no idea of my ties with the Jade Moon Clan or did not expect it would still be relevant. But since Vincent submitted to me, I don't believe he would oppose me in anything.

However, King just decides to ignore Vincent's words. "Anyway, they did bring an extra pack here. Isn't it too much? Asking other packs to bring only fifty people, and bringing more wolves on their own?"

"Where did you go to school, King?" Asks the Asphodel Moon Alpha. "There's only fifty wolves of the Blood Moon here."

"You don't believe me? The Jade Moon Clan is backing off their Luna! If I add this new pack, they found who knows where, doesn't that seem a lot already? Who knows how many more Clans here are already on their side?"

Suddenly, people start muttering. I see William Jones and Lysandra argue, too, and now even Clark Hamilton is watching our group with suspicion. This can't be happening!

"We allowed any official pack to come! Every Clan here knows there are already alliances ongoing, don't you? All we ask for is to unite bigger!" I claim, trying to convince everyone.

“So, you admit it! You are already seeking to grow an army inside Silver City! And what of those who don’t go along with your plan then? Aren’t you going to use brute force to submit them? Or will you leave them to die once this Witch attacks?”

“Enough!”

I’ve had enough of this! I used my wolf’s Alpha Voice, silencing everyone. Taaron King just crossed a line there, and I won’t tolerate it. Stepping away from Damian’s grasp, I step forward. The whole Gold Moon Clan actually retreats a few steps back right away.

“I’ve had enough of you accusing my mate! We gathered everyone here to seek alliances against a threat that could be the end of all of us! Yet you come here, acting like you know anything! Where were you when the vampires attacked? Only defending your own territory! Now, you dare to say Damian manipulated anyone? You are the one playing around with business deals and finances until the packs can’t take it anymore! You act like you own everything and use his name to get what you want! Alessandra comes uninvited to the Blood Moon territory, to the Sapphire Moon territory, and you dare to accuse me of inviting people in? At least I know where my place is!” I yell.

Taaron King look like he lost a few more inches under my Alpha voice and my wolf’s growling, but Moon Goddess, I needed to put it out. In the assistance, I see William and Tiffany smiling, and Lysandra even applauds loudly.

After hearing me, some of the crowd seems confused, not knowing who to believe. I see Clark Hamilton exchanging glances with William, and Andrew Jones isn't showing any expression at all. Some of the smaller pack Alphas are glaring at Taaron King, but others are also giving Damian suspicious glances, too.

“Anyway,” says Alessandra, “we will never agree to this alliance. All of those who think Damian Black cannot be trusted are welcome to join, us as well. Of course, there is no way we will keep any form of financial pressure on our allies.”

Oh, Moon Goddess... So that was their aim. Having their own alliance, using people's distrust towards Damian, and the financial struggles for that. I look around, and some of the smaller pack Alphas seem hesitant. I can't believe this is happening.

Suddenly, a group goes to their side, led by an Asian woman. The Rising Moon Clan. Of course, they had to show they have allies, too. I bite my lip. This isn't going as planned at all. I wanted to form alliances, not to have one against us!

“I have to say...”

Surprised, I turn towards the voice. It's Andrew Jones, from the Violet Moon Clan, speaking. Everyone stops to hear him.

“I would be curious to hear the Sapphire Moon Clan’s opinion. From what I know, you are enemies with both the Gold Moon and the Blood Moon, but this new Luna changes the odds, doesn’t she?”

I turn around and find William staring right at me with a smile. Oh no, I do not like that expression of his. What is he thinking now...?

“That is right, Andrew, she could indeed change my mind towards the Blood Moon Clan... If Nora was willing to marry into our Clan, for example.”

...What the hell did he just say?

I stare at William, totally speechless. What is wrong with him? Why would I ever agree to marry him, when Damian is right there!

“Who is going to marry who? William, are you crazy!”

“You say that one more time, and I’ll put you to shreds!” Growls Damian.

He is ready to jump at William’s throat any second. I’ve never seen Damian so angry before, and I must hold him back with both hands. But what game is William playing at? Around us, everyone is acting confused

or surprised, waiting to see what will happen next. Due to Damian's sudden burst of rage, some people even shape-shifted out of fear.

However, my cousin looks perfectly calm. "It's not unheard of before. Especially for Royals— that's a way to strengthen the pureblood within our family."

"You know I don't care about the Royals' blood, William," I protest.

"But I do. And as far as I know, you are the only one left carrying so much of Queen Diane's pureblood."

"Wait a minute. The Sapphire Moon is related to Royals?" Asks Tiffany.

"That is right. The Blue Moon Royal family are our ancestors. The Royal blood had gotten so thin that the Blue Moon family was almost ready to give up that name. However, we were blessed with a Moon Goddess' reincarnation two generations ago, Queen Diane. And Nora Bluemoon, here, is that reincarnation's granddaughter."

A lot of reactions are heard around us. People are stunned by this revelation; some are looking at me in astonishment.

I shake my head. "Stop this nonsense, William. I'm already Damian's fated mate! Don't you respect Moon Goddess' will above anything?"

“Fated mate? With the Blood Moon Alpha?” Says someone.

“That would explain his sudden change of mind...”

“Anyone can pretend to be fated mates!” Yells Alessandra. “Isn’t it obvious this is all just an act?”

I give her a deadly glare, making her shut up. All around us, people start talking again, raising suspicions about my relationship with either Damian or William. But I don’t really care what they think.

I turn to William, annoyed. “I won’t marry anyone else, William. I don’t want to be with anyone but Damian, and you know that.”

“...One of you may change your mind, you know.”

I shake my head. Damian’s arm grabs my waist, and he holds me against him while growling furiously at William. There is no way Damian will ever agree to that, even William knows that, so what’s his aim?

“Enough, Blue. Nora is already my mate. What’s your game?” Asks Damian, still growling.

My cousin sighs and puts a hand through his curly hair. Everyone can see his blue eyes and our physical resemblance. Funny how I look so much more like him than Elena, to whom I am closer in blood... I guess she took after her mom mostly.

“Maybe... I could consent to an alliance between us,” says William. “If Nora was willing to come to my Clan.”

“That’s still a no,” replies Damian right away.

My cousin raises an eyebrow, a bit surprised. His eyes go from Damian to me, but he soon addresses my mate again. I have a hard time figuring out what William is thinking, but I don’t like what is happening.

“Really? Not even for the sake of your Clan? This might be your only chance...” Whispers William.

“Fuck you, Blue. I will never give up Nora.”

Damian is in a defensive position, almost hiding me from William. Yet my cousin doesn’t move an inch or seem impressed in any way.

Everyone is listening, to see if the Blood Moon and Sapphire Moon are going to fight or reach an agreement. This would be a first, and for the Gold Moon, a fatal blow. I look around. From what I’ve seen so far, aside

from the Jade Moon, I'm pretty sure Lysandra and Grandpa Seaver are on our side, too. Lysandra's father, however, will most likely follow William, and I suspect Clark's White Moon, too. This puts both sides on equal grounds, though I'm not sure about the Pearl Moon Clan. Their Alpha Tiffany Pearl has been listening very closely, but aside from her disdain toward the Gold Moon, she hasn't taken any sides yet. Moreover, all the smaller packs appear to be torn and paying attention to whatever we say.

No matter how I look at it, everyone is already picking sides or making up their minds about it. Moon Goddess, this is not what I had hoped for... I turn to William, and I see my cousin smile.

"Do you understand, Nora? I may be able to forgive your mate and agree to an alliance with him if only you joined us."

I just don't get it. William has nothing to win in this. Me joining the Sapphire Moon has no benefit for him! The only thing is that he would tear Damian and me apart.

"That's the place you belong to from the start. You are not part of the Blood Moon yet; you can still join us."

"I am mated, William! Are you insane?"

"Aren't you going to consider it? This is what you wanted, Nora. Returning to your family, avoiding war, and unifying the Clans."

That's true, but not at the cost of my relationship with Damian! I look at my mate, but his eyes have gone ice-cold with hunger. If a single glare could kill, William would be reduced to ashes by now.

"Nora is not leaving me," growls Damian.

William turns to him with a smirk. "Are you so sure, Black? Wouldn't it be best for the both of you, anyway?"

Damian doesn't move an inch, still glaring at him with eyes full of resolve. I know there is nothing that could make him change his mind. My mate's arm is holding me tightly against him. Yet, William's smirk won't go away. Bobo is growling at him, and Neal is frowning. The Beta probably also thinks there is more to it.

"Blue, are you talking seriously? You could forgive the Black Brothers?"
Asks Clark Hamilton.

"Why not? As Nora said, they are not their father," says William, very calmly. "After all, out of all of us, Nora should be the one who hates them the most."

What does that mean? Why would I hate Damian, Nathaniel, or Liam? I was never involved with their father in any way, either! I spent my

childhood in the streets before Vince picked me and Alec up to raise us in the Jade Moon Clan. Even before that, my roots are linked to the Sapphire Moon and Gold Moon Clans, I have never had any chance to even get close to Damian's father, the Black King.

William tilts his head, with a little smirk on. "You look confused, Nora. Maybe I should have told you everything from the start, it would have been less cruel. Didn't you want to know why we hated your mate's Clan so much to begin with?"

That's right. William never explained that to me. Why all of his pack had this deep hatred towards Damian's father, to begin with. Aside from his father's anger, we never really got close to the subject. To be honest, I sort of forgot this issue, things got too tense on other matters...

"The Mad King, Judah Black... Everyone hated him so much. He was a violent, crazy, only empowered by his brute force," says William.

Nathaniel shakes his head. "We already all know what kind of man our father was, Blue! That's the reason we went against him. Damian killed him to put an end to that madness. The Black Moon Clan ended that day, and our father's deeds, too."

"Really? Then tell everyone. Let Nora know what your father did," says William.

Nathaniel gasps. He is reluctant to say it out loud here. We all know this will bring nothing good, reminiscing about the Mad King. For most of the werewolves here, this is nothing pleasant to hear.

To my surprise, Damian starts talking, in a very calm tone, despite still glaring at William. “Our father was a monster. He killed more than a hundred wolves. He banished three Clans out and eradicated another one. He was a man who would fight with anyone who opposed him, including his own sons. Our father was mad, ruthless, and paranoid. He chased any witches and vampires that lived here away from Silver City.”

Many people lower their heads. They all remember the darkest age of Silver City when it was ruled over by fear. No one knew when the King would unleash his wrath, where, or to whom.

What does this have anything to do with me? I was born far from there, in the Blue Moon Clan, in the North. After that, I lived hidden among the Gold Moon Clan and the Jade Moon Clan! What is William not telling us? When my cousin resumes talking again, I feel some uneasiness growing inside my heart.

“My pack parted with the Blue Moon Clan many years ago. As I told you, Nora, we were supposed to find a new place to settle in, somewhere our Royal Family’s children could grow in peace, far from any threat. It took years to find it, and when we did, it took many more years for us to properly settle down in Silver City. We lost contact with the Blue Moon Clan along the way.”

That's not so surprising... Fifty years ago, the means of contacting another pack weren't the same, and the original Clan stayed far in the North. William is continuously staring at Damian while talking, and my mate is doing the same with him.

"Do you know what happened to the Blue Moon Clan, Nora?"

I nod slowly. William never told me, but Elena did. When we met, she said someone had found her as a baby in the middle of a slaughter. No one from our original Blue Moon Clan had survived whatever attacked them.

"They were all killed," I answer.

"It couldn't possibly have been our father," interrupts Nathaniel. "He never went that far outside Silver City, not even when he..."

He suddenly stops talking, and his face goes white. Damian and Nathaniel exchange a look as if they both suddenly understood something. I see William smirk, and Damian seems in shock. Moon Goddess, what is it? I feel my heart sinking, and for some reason, it's harder to breathe. What is it they not telling me?

"Nate! When he what?" I ask.

After a few seconds, his eyes shift from Damian to me, and he answers with a blank voice.

“...When he chased all the vampires to the North.”

It takes me a while to process what he just said. Their father chased their vampires to the North. That very same North where my original Clan was living? So, this is what William was aiming at from the start...

“Those vampires... killed the Blue Moon Clan?” I ask.

“That’s right,” says William.

Damian grabs my hand. I can’t decipher his expression right now. My mate seems lost between anger, confusion, surprise, and... resolve. I know this hand just won’t let go of me. I look at those silver eyes, and despite everything, they bring me some sort of confidence. My wolf agrees with me, too.

William is watching my reactions, and so are Nathaniel and Neal. Even Bobo stopped growling and is just standing between my cousin and me in silence.

“You should have told me earlier, William. What happened to my mother.”

“Yes, I apologize for that. We had other matters at hand. I wasn’t sure of your identity, either.”

“And now you are?”

He nods but turns to Damian. “Don’t you have anything to say?” He asks. “About what your father did?”

“...I stand by my words. My father was a monster, but I’m different from him. However, I am truly sorry for your pack and what your Clan went through. I cannot undo his wrongdoings.”

“What do you think you can do, then?”

“Be a better King.”

Without adding another word, both of them stare at each other in silence. I try to understand William’s intent behind his cunning expression. Around us, people are holding their breath, waiting to see what’s next. A few of them are talking about what was just revealed.

“The Mad King was even responsible for another Clan’s death... A Clan with Royals, no less.”

“The Black family has no shame. Shouldn’t they be taking responsibility for their father’s actions?”

“He already killed his father! Isn’t it obvious they never were on his side?”

“So what? A man who murdered his own family, who knows against whom he will turn his fangs next?”

“It’s not the same. We were all glad the Mad King died...”

“The new Luna is there, too.”

“I don’t trust the Black family. With them being already so strong, who will stop them if they turn to be like their father?”

The chattering gets louder among the ranks, but I don’t see any of the Alphas talking. Instead, all of them have their eyes on Damian and William, gauging them. Are some of them changing their minds? The atmosphere is so tense, some more people shape-shifted just in case. My own wolf is restless, too.

“Don’t tell me you are going to overlook this!” Yells Alessandra. “The Blacks are a family of power-hungry, bloodthirsty murderers! Remember

the Snow Moon Clan? They didn't survive, either! Are you going to push that one on the Black father, too?"

Both William and Damian turn towards the Gold Moon Clan, but I'm the first one growling. Can't someone make her shut up already? I wish I could do it myself!

"The Snow Moon Clan was—," says Neal.

"I'm not talking to a damn Beta!" Interrupts Alessandra.

Neal sighs, but I can tell a lot of people from the Blood Moon behind us are now even more pissed. Who does she think she is to disrespect a Beta like this!

"Watch your tone, King..." I say, warning her with a growl.

"I don't take any orders from you, either. Stealing my fiancé, pretending to be an innocent girl, a Royal? You're the one who should watch it! I am the Gold Moon's heiress! I say we will not stand by your lies!" She yells.

I growl at her even louder, until she has to lower her head. Her father suddenly stands up and addresses the other Alphas.

“Respectable Alphas, it is obvious this is all a well-thought scheme from the Blood Moon Clan! Think about it. A Witch? Why would a Witch attack now, after what their father did to her peers and the vampires? How convenient would it be that Damian Black would suddenly find a Royal mate? Right after ditching my daughter, too? They are the ones who ordered to cut all the other Clans’ funds! Don’t be fooled! That man used my daughter, and now he is using this Witch attack that will never happen to force you to submit to him!”

“We never sought to bind other Clans! We only asked for alliances!” I talk back.

Why is this man so stupid? Does he really think what he’s saying? This is ridiculous! I am the very reason that Witch attacked us, and there is no way Damian could pull off something as wicked as that!

“It’s no use talking, Nora. This idiot mutt has already made up his mind...” mutters William.

I’m not sure if Taaron King didn’t hear him or decided to pretend he didn’t. Either way, the packs are agitated now. It’s obvious they don’t know if this is going to end well or not, but everyone is expecting the worse if it doesn’t. Even my wolf is ready to attack at any moment.

In the middle of all this, Tiffany Pearl, on the side, appears exceptionally calm. Playing with the long sleeves of her pale pink dress, she speaks in a

clear voice. “Do we understand that you will release all control on the withheld funds, King?”

This time, Taaron King seems a bit flustered. He hesitates for a few seconds and tries to regain his composure. “Of course, we don’t hold any hostility towards the other packs. However...”

He turns to point at Damian.

“I believe it would be dangerous to let this man hold any more power than he already has. It would be my duty to ensure this doesn’t threaten anyone with the financial pressure of some sort. Of course, it would also require close attention to his relationships. If, after careful consideration, there is no way to—”

“In other words, you intend to retain any money that belongs to the Blood Moon Clan and those who associate with us,” I growl, annoyed.

“This is only as a preventive measure! To protect the lesser Clans from this man!”

“Who is putting pressure onto the others, now, King?” Growls Lysandra.

He turns red from embarrassment and anger as the packs suddenly get even more agitated. Moreover, a lot of them are now growling at the Gold Moon Clan. Tiffany just put in the clear the Gold Moon intents.

“You’re wrong! There is no Witch attack, and no one should trust Black! I am only doing what is necessary! Who needs an Alpha King, anyway? The Clans are doing just fine, why would we suddenly provide this man with any more power?”

“He’s right!” Suddenly yells Gregorovitch. “Each pack for itself, that’s how it should be!”

“We are all cohabitating in one city, you idiots! How do you think we can live together without fighting if there is no King to oversee all the packs?” Growls Lysandra.

“Just hand the woman over to the Sapphire Moon! We don’t need a Royal to support Black!” Yells a female Alpha.

“That’s right! The Sapphire Moon should take over! If they are Royals, they should be the ones to preside over us!”

“Are you crazy? They don’t have any rights to rule Silver City! Black is the most powerful Alpha; he is the one who should be our Alpha King! Even our Moon Goddess gave him a Royal Luna!”

“Enough!”

My yelling shuts everyone down for a few seconds. I use my wolf’s Alpha voice to address all of them. I’ve had enough of all this childish bickering!

“We are not here to discuss a new King or not! The threat is real; we don’t have the luxury to fight each other! I don’t care if you doubt my status as a Royal. I won’t marry into the Sapphire Moon Clan and I won’t acknowledge anyone but Damian Black as King!”

“Stop lying!” Yells Alessandra. “There is no Witch, no threat, you are just lying. Even your status as a Royal is—”

Before she can finish her sentence, a rumbling rises suddenly. What is this? Where is this noise coming from? Everyone looks around, and before I can understand what’s going on, the ground starts shaking under our feet.

“What the...?”

Creaking noises are heard all throughout the stadium, and the packs start spreading in panic despite the Alphas trying to yell orders. The sounds are growing like something is coming closer. Damian starts growling, his eyes on the ground, where the soil starts tearing apart. Wide cracks are

spreading fast, and tree roots suddenly come out at an incredible speed. I hear people screaming.

“A Witch! It’s a Witch!”

“Don’t stay on the ground! Climb the stairs!” Yells Damian.

Finally listening, most of the werewolves start running to the stadium’s stairs, the Alphas trying to lead their packs. Suddenly, Damian pushes me into William’s arms.

“Take Nora away!”

Wait, what? Before I can say a word, William starts running, forcefully taking me along with him.

“Damian!”

My mate is already running in the opposite direction, towards the crowd still downstairs. Moon Goddess, he is going to help the others!

“William, let me go! I have to go with him!”

My cousin isn't listening at all, pulling me with him up the stairs. I'm not leaving Damian! I struggle until I finally free myself from William's grasp. I hear him yell my name, but I don't slow down one bit. I feel another wolf right behind me, and Bobo arrives even faster than me to Damian's side.

"What...? Nora, go back!"

"No way, I'm not leaving you!"

He growls, but we both know this has no effect on me. Around us, the field is not cleared yet, but the ground is now totally invaded by roots. Still, a lot of werewolves that couldn't run fast enough are trapped by the roots and calling for help. I even spot Taaron King, lost under a large trunk that's pinning him face against the soil.

A few steps away, Lysandra Jones, too, is fighting to free her leg from some mud in one of the cracks. The roots keep progressing, and some of them even reached one side of the stadium, running between the benches and capturing more people. How do we stop this! I hear screaming, but aside from Bobo and Damian standing next to me, I can't recognize anyone else I know. Ten thousand people are running in all directions, and I suddenly notice all the stadium entrances have been barred by branches.

We are trapped.

“The Witch! Catch the Witch!”

I turn around. Right in the middle of a stadium, a woman is standing alone. No doubt possible— this is not a werewolf. She has crimson hair, and strange dark symbols are covering her arms. But...

Before I can say a word, I see Damian jumping into his wolf form and running straight at her. Moon Goddess, no!

“Damian, no!”

I scream, but it’s too late— he’s already jumping at her. A split second before my mate’s fangs can catch her throat, a black shadow jumps in. I hear loud growls, and Damian is pushed back by another wolf.

The large black wolf growls at him and stands in front of the Witch, obviously protecting her from my mate. I recognize him immediately.

Liam.