

Chapter 2

It hurts...

My throat is so painful, every breath feels like a raging fire. I feel so numb.

My body aches all over, and I feel so tired... I can't even find the strength to move or open my eyes. I just lay here, listening to the regular beeping of a machine, and those unknown voices.

"... consciousness already. We just grabbed her and ran here. She was so... He would have killed her. Too bad we lost him."

"How did you know that was her?"

"We didn't..."

I hear a growl, and someone's agitating the soft sheets around me. So, I'm in bed... A real, comfy bed. I can feel someone's breathing close to me.

“Well, she’s better. That shouldn’t take too long for her to wake up, now.”

“She’d better. Our brother is making everyone freak out since that girl’s here. Looks like he’s about to murder someone or something...”

I’ve heard that voice before. Where was that? I can’t remember.

Why am I so tired? I feel like going back to sleep...

I’m half-awake again. This is such a weird sensation... My body is too tired to fully wake up, yet too tired to go back to sleep. I find the strength to open my eyes, but I’m in the dark. No, wait... It’s nighttime. I can figure out some furniture in the room. Some small lights are blinking on a machine next to me, too.

A large window lets the weakly gleaming moonlight in.

The sky is cloudless, and I can see a bit of the moon and stars. I feel a cold breeze coming through. Oh, that fresh air feels so good... But, more important, a tall silhouette stands alone against the window frame.

Two cold silver eyes are staring right at me. I’m mesmerized. Those eyes are scary and... attractive.

What is this? I can feel it stirring me up inside like something's suddenly blooming. What is this sensation? It's nothing like I've ever felt before. I can hear my wolf, she's... crying? Her voice is so faint, I don't know what's going on.

I'm too tired, too weak. I can't hear her. So sleepy...

I slowly open my eyes.

Such a high ceiling... Where am I? I turn my head. I'm in the biggest bed I've ever seen. I'm surrounded by medical monitors, and it looks like a hospital bed, but... Brick red walls, wood flooring, and fancy furniture? The room is so huge, thirty people could fit in. But there's only three. A man and a woman are chatting on the sofa. There's one younger guy too, playing with his smartphone.

"Oh, I think she's awake!"

A tall woman gets up from the sofa and comes to me once she realizes I'm awake. She has honey-colored skin and two very long, dark braids. Her fingers gently examine me, although she doesn't look like a doctor at all. She looks young, maybe twenty-five or so. She's a bit muscular, wearing a sports bra, tight leather pants, and high heeled boots.

“Okay, her blood pressure’s still a bit too slow, but at least she’s awake for good. Can you hear me, baby girl? How do you feel? Drowsy?”

I shake my head and try to answer her.

Gosh, my throat hurts! Breathing’s so painful, let alone uttering a word. Even while breathing from my nose, I almost tear up just from the pain. There is no way I can talk right now. I try to touch my neck and feel a thick bandage around it.

“Oh yeah, sorry about that. Your throat is damaged, so it might be difficult for you to talk for a while. Don’t force it, okay? It will get better, don’t worry. You think you can sit?”

I nod, still a bit shaken up by everything that is going on. That woman helps me sit up and puts some big cushions behind me for support. It feels unreal. I don’t know these people, or where we are. I look down. I’m perfused and linked to several medical machines. Someone even put me in a hospital gown. Seeing me so confused, she starts explaining.

“It’s okay. This is the General Hospital. You were in a coma for about five days. We found you in the eastern district, and someone was attacking you. My brother and I intervened, but you collapsed right away.”

I realize there is one more person in the room I hadn’t noticed before. A huge golden-brown wolf is lying at her feet against my bed. I can only see

him now that I am sitting up. But still, I have never seen such an imposing beast before—he looks like a bear rather than a wolf!

“Yes, that’s my baby brother, Bobo. I’m Tonia, by the way.”

Bobo? Is that his actual name? Tonia gives me a reassuring smile but won’t introduce the two other people in the room. One of them suddenly gets up from his chair, looking irritated. He’s most likely in his teens, with dark, messy hair and a dozen piercings in his ears. He grabs a backpack and puts his hands in his pockets, looking annoyed and ready to leave.

“Great, can I go now that she’s awake?”

He is not asking Tonia, but the last person in the room. A man in his twenties, wearing a very elegant black suit, waits a few seconds and nods.

“But don’t come home late, Liam. I don’t want to have to send people to fetch you again.”

“Yeah, yeah...”

The teenager exits the room, and Tonia shrugs and focuses on me once more.

“Don’t mind this brat. Okay, can you show me the parts where it hurts?”

Now that I glance down, I’ve got bruises all over, and I can tell my right eye is probably not good either, judging from the pain. I still feel weak, too.

Trying to think about where I feel the worst, I point out my throat, my right flank that is still aching badly, and my arm. Tonia explains to me that I had surgery for internal bleeding, but I am recovering well.

But why? All this medical care can’t be free, and I don’t think they are just nice to me out of charity. While Tonia comments on my wounds some more, the man behind her is staring at me non-stop. He has a gentle look, with blue eyes and thin facial features. Now that I observe him some more, he looks a lot like the teenager from earlier. Are they brothers? He seems taller, though, and his hair is blonde.

“If you feel dizzy, just lay down, okay? That’s perfectly normal, considering you had surgery and lost a lot of blood. And you are way too skinny. By the way, how old are you exactly?”

I raise my fingers to show her. She looks surprised.

“Really? Seventeen? You look younger! I would have said fourteen or fifteen. Well, that’s not too bad then.”

What is not to bad? I frown, but she doesn't notice my perplexed expression as she suddenly turns towards her brother. The huge wolf sits up and puts his head on her lap. They stare at each other for a while.

“Oh, right. Bobo asks, what's your name. I should have asked earlier, too.”

I realize the siblings must have been using telepathy since they are most likely from the same pack. How nice... I never succeeded mind-linking with my pack, since I've never shape-shifted.

I can't talk, so they hand me a notepad and a pen. I write down my name.

“Nora Bluemoon,” The man reads out loud. “A pretty name.”

He looks like our fated mate...

Wait, what now? What was that? My inner wolf? How would my inner wolf or I know he does? It makes no sense... How would we know that man looks like our mate?

While I'm trying to understand, some vague memory of a pair of silver eyes flashes, and I realize this guy as almost the same eyes. Only his are

not exactly silver, but more of a blue-ish grey. Was that just a dream? Or did someone else really come to visit us while I was unconscious?

I grab the pen once again to write my questions and show them to Tonia.

“Why are you here? Well, you were in horrible shape when we found you.”

“I don’t think that’s what she means, Tonia.”

The man addresses me, standing still next to my bed. “The hospital belongs to my family, so that’s why Tonia brought you here. And we believe you are someone special for my older brother, so we got you this VIP room.”

How am I unique? And how rich must his family be to own the General Hospital? I didn’t even know hospitals could be bought!

His gentle voice really has a way to make people feel calm and weary at the same time. Why does it look so familiar?

Oh, Moon Goddess.

I know where I've met him before. He was at the meeting with the Blood Moon Clan! He's one of the Black brothers! And saying I'm special to his older brother means...

Suddenly, I can feel it. A loud pounding, like a warning. I tense up. My whole body knows.

He's coming near. He's coming here. I shiver.

We hear a step outside the door, and I can barely breathe. Is that what it feels like? Feeling my mate being close to me? That is indescribable. I feel apprehension, and at the same time, I want to see him so badly... My heart's going crazy.

The doors open quickly, and everyone in the room immediately focuses on Him.

I'm seeing him for the very first time, so why does he feel so... familiar to me? Like I've known him forever. Like we've been waiting for him forever.

The whole atmosphere surrounding him gives off an oppressive feeling. He's very tall and immediately dominates the room without effort. I was right, I've seen those ice-cold silver eyes before. He stares at me as soon as he comes into the room and walks up straight to me.

No, don't approach. Yes, please come.

I'm going crazy! This inner turmoil won't let me think for one second, and my wolf won't hold still either. The beeping next to me suddenly speeds up, but no one says a thing. I couldn't care less. For now, all I can think about is this man coming up to me. His swift steps bring him to me in seconds, and I can't even prepare myself before he sits on my bed, facing me. I barely notice that Tonia immediately shifts back and takes a few steps away.

His face is so close to me. I can barely breathe, but he won't show any expression. Am I the only one in that helpless state? Is it my wolf only that finds him so handsome? No, he really looks like he was carved in marble. A chiseled face, with a strong jawline, a five o'clock shadow, and thin lips. I just can't take my eyes off him, and those two diamonds won't leave me, either.

Without warning, he lifts his hand to come and very gently caress my cheek. His fingers feel so warm and pleasant against my skin...

"How do you feel?" He asks, in a low and deep voice

I just nod, so intimidated. I can't take my eyes off him, as if I wanted to engrave all his features in my mind.

“She just woke up. She can’t talk yet, but she’s definitely better.” Says Tonia.

“Her name is Nora,” says the other man.

“Nora...” he repeats softly.

Why does my name sound so beautiful when he’s the one saying it? I feel so shy and helpless, never have I been in such a turmoil of emotions before. Thankfully, I’m lying on a bed, because I’m sure I couldn’t have faced him on my own two feet, otherwise.

“What else?” He suddenly asks, not taking his eyes off me.

“Nothing much, Boss. She told us she is seventeen, but that’s it.”

Tonia calls him “Boss”? Now that I think of it, both she and her brother reacted to his presence and stepped back. They’re behaving differently since he entered the room, being respectfully still and quiet.

I can tell his Alpha aura is such that it won’t be ignored, and any wolf would most definitely submit right away and show respect... It can’t even be compared to Vincent; he’s on a whole different level. I don’t even get how I can stand looking at him in the eye for so long. Is that a mate thing to be somehow immune to him? Only the other man, who must be his

brother, is still standing next to my bed, smiling confidently. He's the only one that won't lower his head while talking to him.

"She really just woke up, Damian. We only asked her a few things before you came. How did you know?"

"I felt it."

So, his name is Damian. Damian Black, I suppose... It suits him, his jet-black hair, and his elegant dark suit, like his brother. I bet his wolf form is black, too.

Looking at his collar, I realize he has a large tattoo on the side of his neck. A black crescent moon, adding to his imposing aura.

"Who did this?"

He's asking me.

His hand goes down from my cheek to my neck, and his expression subtly changes into something frightful. His commanding tone means to know who attacked me. And his eyes... scare me. I can feel the cold anger in his voice as he stares at my injury. I try to think of an answer, but when I try remembering, it's so blurry...

I remember my brother dragging me out of the main house of the Clan. The suggestive white dress. Walking to the city, entering a building...

The fright all comes back to me. Alec pushing me in front of Marcus. The lewd smile and his eyes on me. My brother abandoned me there. I unconsciously start quivering. Oh, Moon Goddess, I can't remember what happened next. I just feel terrified as soon as I try. Wait, I think I remember. Yes, the disgusting feeling of his hideous paws on me, holding me while I struggled to escape, pushing Marcus away. It's so sickening, I feel nauseous again. The tremendous fear as I tried to resist him, and...

Blood. Lots of blood.

Oh my gosh, what did I do? I start panicking, unable to remember the rest. I glance down as if I could see the blood-stained dress again. I just remember all this hideous red, on my hands, my legs... So, so much blood! What could have happened? I don't... I feel like I did something terrible, but why is it that I don't remember what happened!

All that comes to me after that is pouring rain, the cold, and my running away in a deserted street. The voice of Alec calling me, chasing me. His cold hands on my neck, tightening, choking me.

"Nora, Nora, calm down. You're gonna be okay now, baby girl." Says Tonia, worried.

She approached my bedside again, worried by my panic state. I realize I've started shaking and tearing up while remembering this horrible night. I hurriedly wipe it off with my sleeve. All of this is so upsetting, and now I wake up in this unbelievable hospital room, like a dream. I don't want to reminisce right now. I'm exhausted, scared, and confused.

"Boss, I think she just needs a bit of rest. It won't be good for her recovery if she gets too agitated now."

I see him hesitating. Is he going to leave? My wolf is whimpering. Stop it! I met him like two minutes ago. Stop confusing me and making me want him to stay. This is so... disturbing. He looks very angered. Is it my fault?

But I can't just tell him about my brother. He gives off a killing aura like he is about to murder someone as soon as I give him a name. My instincts are telling me I should fear him, be wary of him. I know. Even if he is my mate, I know he still is a Black brother. Dangerous. I don't want to get Alec killed like this! He's my only family...

"Nora. Who was it?"

He asks again, but I just shake my head and avoid his gaze. I just can't. I can't.

I see him clench his fists. He's definitely angry now. He suddenly gets up and storms out of the room without a word or a look for me. When he reaches the door, we hear him from outside.

"Nathaniel!"

His imperious tone leaves no room for refusal. His brother, who has been patiently waiting, sighs, and winks at me.

"That's my time-to-leave call. Don't you worry about a thing, and rest well, Nora."

So, the second brother's name is Nathaniel. He follows Damian, closing the door behind them. I can finally relax a little. He was there for only five minutes, but it feels like I just got off an emotional roller-coaster...

Moon Goddess, he really was my mate! I lay back on the cushions and let out a sigh of relief. I just woke up; how can I feel so exhausted? I close my eyes, so shaken up.

"Nora?"

Tonia came to sit next to me, and the wolf-bear, Bobo, is sitting right by the bed, his big black eyes looking at us. They don't look as tense now that Damian is gone. She helps me get in a more comfortable position.

“You need to stay hospitalized for a few more days to recover fully. But don’t worry, baby girl, you are in the best hands, okay? Like I said, your voice will get back to normal after a bit of a rest, so don’t use it for now. I know it’s inconvenient, so just use the notepad if there is anything. Bobo and I are here to take care of you, and we won’t leave you.”

I grab the pen to start writing again. “Is it really okay for me to be here?”
I show her.

Tonia rolls her eyes. “Yes, it is! I told you, this whole hospital belongs to the Boss. You’re his Luna, so of course, he won’t just leave you anywhere. He went crazy when he saw what state we found you in! Trust me, the medical team will remember it for a long time. You got other silly questions?”

His... Luna... It feels so odd to hear. I grab the notepad again.

“Are you part of the Blood Moon Clan, too?”

“Yep, Bobo and I both. So, you already know about the Blood Moon Clan. Nora, we have to ask you, do you have a pack, too?”

What happens if I answer this question? I remember Damian's angry eyes... Like for Alec, will the pack be in danger if I mention the Jade Moon?

Tonia might be kind to me for now, but she still is part of the Blood Moon Clan. And my instincts tell me she is no way near clueless. Even if Damian is my mate, and seems to care for me, is it safe to trust them? His actions from earlier might have been gentle, but his eyes... Those are the eyes of a killer.

Tonia takes my silence for an answer and frowns.

"You won't tell us, I guess... That's okay. You might as well concentrate on your recovery for now. Well, don't worry, Nora, okay? If there is anything, you just tell me, baby girl."

I nod.

But exactly how safe am I here? I am not that oblivious that I would forget about the Blood Moon. And Damian and Nathaniel act friendly with me, but... This hospital suite, Tonia and Bobo guarding me, the anger in Damian's eyes. Everything about this is unsettling.

After a few days of being hospitalized, my throat is still horribly sore and painful, but my bruises are slowly disappearing, and I feel less tired. I remember the terrible look I had when Tonia helped me to the bathroom.

I never considered myself as pretty, but now I really looked horrible. I had a small cut on my lip and a large blue bruise covering my eye and cheek. Alec really beat me up badly...

The siblings really don't leave me all day. Tonia only goes out occasionally for a few minutes when she needs to discuss something with the medical team or to get me something. She watches my every and won't let anyone else near me. I haven't seen any nurse or doctor since I've been here. She even brings in the meals herself.

I've realized the room is actually locked 24/7, which had me wonder why. It's locked from the inside. Are they afraid I might run away? Tonia doesn't seem too worried about that, but I've noticed that Bobo is a light sleeper. If I wake up in the middle of the night and get up to fetch water or go to the bathroom, he instantly wakes up and watches me.

I wonder if he's guarding me. He has never shifted into his human form yet, which is a bit odd to me. I have never seen someone stay in wolf form so long! When I asked about it, Tonia said he's just more comfortable in his wolf form, like this is nothing unusual for him.

I wonder what the Jade Moon Clan thinks of me disappearing. Did Alec leave too? What did he tell them? And what about his debt?

The thing I'm most worried about is the part that I can't remember. What happened in that apartment? Whenever I try, this disgusting feeling of

Marcus' hands over me comes over and makes me panic. I know for sure I tried to defend myself, but the blood... I can't remember, and I'm not sure I want to.

“Nora? What do you think, baby girl?”

Tonia is showing me a dark blue sweater dress, brand new. Today, I can finally quit the hospital gown, and she got me new clothes for the occasion. I couldn't bring myself to ask what happened to the white dress.

I nod. It's pretty and looks really comfy, too. Tonia seems happy with my approval and takes out some more clothes from the shopping bag. She got me black tights, a belt, and camel leather boots.

“Great! Now go change so you can show us how pretty you are!”

I blush and take the clothes to go change in the bathroom. Thankfully, the bruise on my face has faded. After the hot shower, I'm facing my reflection, and I don't really like what I'm seeing. I am so thin, and I look pale, too. Annoyed with my frail body, I put on the new clothes Tonia got for me. I'm a bit embarrassed that she bought me underwear, and it's a bit sexy, too. I have never worn such lingerie before! Well, I like the pastel blue color, and it's exactly my size, but it really makes me look... Sexy? I just forget it and put on the rest of the outfit. I really like it.

I brush my curly hair and do a braid so that it will hide my scar, as usual. But as soon as I get out, Tonia clicks her tongue.

“No, Nora, what’s with the stupid braid? It hides half of your face!”

That’s actually the point! Didn’t she notice my scar? Anyone would find it ugly! But Tonia won’t have it. She does my hair all over again and gives me a messy low bun, with an elegant but simple look. I really love it, especially with my curls and the two strands of hair that escapes at the front, but what about my scar?

I point it with my finger to show it to her, but she just frowns.

“Oh, stop it, Nora. Yes, you got a scar, so what? You are a pretty girl! So just show your pretty, little face and stop trying to hide behind your hair.”

I’m not pretty... But I can’t argue anymore. Let’s forget this, Tonia won’t let me win this fight anyway. And at least I’m glad I get to wear this outfit. I haven’t dressed that pretty in... forever! I point out the door to Tonia, to ask if we can go out now that I’m better.

But she shakes her head.

“Not yet, pretty girl. You have to stay here for now...”

What? Why? I'm much better already; I can walk and everything now. Sure, my throat is still not healed, and my right flank hurts a bit sometimes, but I still thought I would be well enough to go out now.

I grab the notepad.

“Can't I even take a walk? I've been locked up here for two weeks! Please?”

“No. I'm sorry, Nora, but these are the orders.”

What, orders? Does she mean from Damian? He hasn't come back here ever since... Why is that? I was kind of... waiting for him. My wolf misses him. Doesn't he feel the same? And what's with him having me stay here? I ask Tonia again.

“Yes, it's the Boss's orders. I'm not going to go against it, Nora, sorry. Do you want me to get you a new book? Or we can order a movie!”

She's trying to be enthusiastic, but I don't buy it. Tonia did provide me anything to keep me from getting bored. I've read a few books, and we can watch as many movies as we want on the room's TV. It was nice when I couldn't get up, but now I want to go out and get some fresh air too. It's like I'm a prisoner here!

I shake my head and keep pointing at the door. Tonia looks sorry, but when she was about to answer, Bobo suddenly gets up from the couch and comes to my side. She frowns and stares at him for a few seconds, meaning they're telepathically talking. It lasts a while, but then she suddenly sighs.

"It's on you if anything happens! And yes, I am texting him about your idea."

She takes out her phone and types for a while. I exchange a look with Bobo. What is this idea of his? A ring announces a reply text, and Tonia reads it.

"Lucky for you, brother, he says it's okay, as long as we're with her. Nora, Bobo just got you a tour of the hospital. It's not much, but there is an indoor garden, so you will actually get some fresh air!"

It's not much indeed, but I can't help myself and smile. Fresh air at last! I thank Bobo with a big smile, then tuck my notepad and pen under my arm to take with me, but Tonia just laughs and takes them away from me.

"Don't bother with those, baby girl, I'll let you type on my phone if you need it, okay? Come on, let's go."

Getting out of my VIP room really seems like a big step. It's silly, but I just feel so happy to get to walk a bit. Bobo is literally stuck to me, keeping so close I could feel his fur against my leg with every step I take.

I did have doubts for a moment that I was not in a hospital, but really a hotel with some medical equipment, but this is a hospital indeed. We walk by lots of rooms, patients, nurses, and doctors. And no one seems surprised to see the enormous werewolf walking by my side. Shouldn't it be... not okay somehow?

Tonia just keeps texting and silently walks behind us. Turns out, she doesn't look so worried about my little outing after all.

I might be just walking around in a hospital, but... It's nice. I feel like I'm in a dream. I've been having this feeling since I woke up. All of this is so different compared to the last ten years of my life. Now I just have a walk, and I don't fear that someone might hit me or get angry at me for not doing my chores. I don't have any chores anymore! I just get meals every day without having to prepare it myself or sneak it out. I laze all day, sleeping, reading, and watching movies.

Bobo takes me to some ample outdoor space. This really looks like a garden! There are even a fountain and a few benches where patients are sitting to enjoy the sunshine. Bobo guides me to an empty one.

"Thank you," I mimic on my lips.

He just lays down and starts dozing off. Tonia finally puts her phone away and comes to sit next to me, putting her feet on him like he's some stool.

“So, how do you feel now?”

I smile and nod happily. This feels great. I am a bit disappointed we are not really outside, but this is still really enjoyable. Feeling the warm sunshine on my skin, smelling the fresh air.

“Good, you could use some more tan, baby girl. You're white as a sheet.”

I agree. I've always hated my pale skin, but I guess that's what you get from living in a dark basement. Tonia sighs and turns out to me. She hands me her smartphone, with the keypad activated.

“Okay, I understand there are some things you don't want to talk about. But I have to say, Nora, we know nothing about you. We couldn't find where you come from, what happened to you... I get that you've had a hard time, but...”

Bobo suddenly raises his head and starts growling. Tonia pushes him with her foot.

“You, shut up. I’ll say it if I want to. Listen, Nora, the Boss is really... mad about what happened to you. Nathaniel’s got him focused on other things for now, but he won’t let it go. Someone attacked you, and I can tell you know who it is. So, won’t you tell us?”

I shake my head slowly. No, no, I can’t. Even more, if Damian is going after my brother next. Tonia scratches her head and just nods.

“Okay, so you really don’t want to. So, how about you tell me what you can, huh? Even stupid things, okay? Tell me about... I don’t know, your family? Your friends?”

I hesitate a little. I’m not sure how much I can really say without endangering anyone. I take Tonia’s phone, and slowly start typing. She reads out loud.

“Your parents are dead, okay. I’m sorry, baby girl. Oh, you have a brother. Is he older? ...Okay. And no friends... Well, you got us now!”

I smile and nod shyly. That’s right, but... Tonia looks at my question, surprised.

“Oh, you want to know about us?” She chuckles. “Okay, so what do you want to know, let me think... So, Bobo and I have an older brother, Neal, who is the Beta to the Blood Moon Clan, actually.”

Is their brother Damian's Beta then?

"We have our mom, but basically, we don't have many friends, either. To be honest, the Boss kind of... picked us up when we were in big trouble, let's say. The pack is everything to us now."

I nod. I suddenly remember something I heard.

"Why you don't smell like a werewolf? We were kind of curious about that, too... What? You've never shapeshifted? Are you kidding?"

I shake my head and bite my lip. No, I haven't. Tonia frowns.

"That's really unusual. Most werewolves turn for the first time when they're around ten. Of course, some earlier, some later but... You're seventeen. You... Can you feel your wolf? When did you start feeling her?"

I nod and show her my fingers to answer.

"Seven? Nora, that doesn't sound like a late bloomer. More like... some barrier or something."

I nod. I know... I know I should have been able to shapeshift long ago by now. But... I just can't.

“Do you have some sort of trauma? I know it is bizarre to ask, but... Wait, you do?”

I keep nodding slowly. Well, I don't know if it can really be called a trauma for real, but... I put a few words down and show her, but she frowns.

“...From when you were seven? And what happened? Can you tell me?”

I hesitate a bit, not because I don't want to tell her, but because I'm afraid. It's not exactly a happy story, and I've never told anyone before. It just makes me so... sad and miserable. And how much can I really tell her without revealing too much? I hesitate a while and end up giving her back the phone. She reads it and sighs.

“Your parents were... Oh, I see... I'm sorry, baby girl. Did they belong to a pack?”

That question again. Somehow, I feel that's what Tonia really wants to know. If I belong to a pack, and if that's the case, which one. I'm pretty sure it's Damian who wants to know where I come from, and I don't like it. Why does he want this information for? Before I can answer, Bobo suddenly gets up, turning his head in a new direction. I thought there was

something, but as I follow his gaze, I realize it's Nathaniel Black coming to us, with his usual gentle smile. He has a motorbike helmet under his arm. Since his shirt is slightly unbuttoned at the top, I can see the crescent moon tattoo he wears on his chest, the same as Damian. I figured it's a common thing within the Blood Moon Clan, since Tonia has one, too, though smaller, on her arm.

“Hello, guys. I took a small detour to come to check up on you. How is our princess feeling today?”

I give him a smile as an answer. It's not the first time Nathaniel has come to visit me since I woke up. He never stays long, but he always displays a friendly smile and will talk to me about anything but himself. I have noticed that he just likes to inquire about my tastes, like my favorite colors, or my personal tastes. Like today, he hands me a small carton box, and when I open it, it turns out there are four delicious-looking French canelés inside. I love those!

“Glad you like it, princess. You really have a thing for French cuisine, don't you?”

I nod and thank him silently. Somehow, I'm a bit more comfortable around him now. Maybe it's because he's always acting extremely nice to me, bringing me gifts like these and all, but I somehow got used to talking to him, forgetting who he is.

“Really? Well, next time I’ll invite you to my restaurant then, you can try it all to tell me your thoughts on our menu. Deal?”

“Oh, the Boss will love the idea,” says Tonia, with a mistrusting look.

But Nathaniel doesn’t seem intimidated at all. He just winks at me, as if we were now sharing some secret, making me blush. Gosh, why is he so handsome, too! His mid-length hair gives him a wild and juvenile look, and his blue eyes must have all the girls fawning over him. He may not be as breathtaking as Damian, but he still is very attractive—and yes, I do realize my judgment is most likely totally clouded by my wolf-self. But he’s more angel-like beautiful, while Damian is the devilishly handsome type.

“Nora, I actually came to tell you that you’ll probably be able to leave the hospital soon.”

What? Really? That’s great! When will that be, and why do I have to wait again? I frown to show him I’m a bit curious about this delay since no one will explain to me.

“Don’t worry, I assure you it will be pretty soon. I...”

But then he stops talking and grabs a smartphone. Oh, it must have been vibrating. He answers it in front of me while I take one of my canelés to start eating it. This is so good!

I take one to give it to the siblings. Tonia frowns and declines it -I've learned that she's not too fond of anything sweet or sugary by now-, but Bobo happily gulps it all in one go.

“Yes, yes, understood. No, wait, brother. I'm actually with Nora, do you want to talk to her?”

I suddenly raise my head. Damian? Is that Damian on the phone? I look at Nathaniel with eyes full of hope, but he suddenly gives me a sorry look and hangs up. Wait, what?

“Sorry, Nora, he is... busy. But you'll see him real soon, okay? I have to go now. Tonia, Bobo, take good care of the princess, okay?”

He puts his phone back in his pocket, and he just leaves like that in a hurry. But while watching his hand, I saw it.

A stain of fresh blood on his sleeve.

Back into my room sometime later, I'm still thinking about it. Was that real blood? Gosh, I know it was, I've seen blood like a million times; how could I be mistaken about that? But I just can't help but wonder about it. Like, how did he get it on his shirt; what was he doing before coming here?

I'm not naive. I know werewolves get into fights, and it's not pretty. But the Jade Moon Clan was never very aggressive, so I've seen very few fights so far. We usually stand our ground and stay away from trouble. But everyone knows how bloody the Blood Moon pack is... How could they have gone from the shadows to domineering half of the city unmatched? They have wiped out an entire clan overnight.

And the leader is Damian Black.

I usually try to not think about my mate, as he is still a big, intriguing mystery to me. We barely talked, and I know next to nothing about him. Do I want to know more? I can tell from my only meeting with him that he is as frightening and dangerous as the rumors say. Any werewolf could tell he is the ultimate Alpha material, made to dominate people into submission. Tonia calls him the Boss, and even Nathaniel acts differently around him. They are very clear about this position toward him. What about me? How do I fit in this picture as his mate?

"Nora? Everything okay, baby girl?"

I'm sitting against the window, lost in my thoughts. I completely forgot about the book on my lap. Tonia seems concerned, and even Bobo won't pretend to sleep. I just nod and smile faintly before resuming my reading.

It's been a few days now.

Bobo takes me every day to the small courtyard, but we didn't hear from Nathaniel or Damian anymore after that day. My throat is a lot better, as I can now make some sounds and speak in a soft voice. Almost all of the medical equipment has left my room now, and I should do the same sometime soon.

Then, one night, I suddenly woke up.

I just felt it. That state of nervousness, grasping me from the inside. I instantly knew he was near. The room was completely dark, but I knew it. Sitting up, I reached my hand out in the dark, and I felt his fingers grasping mine.

"You okay?" He whispers with that deep voice of his.

I shiver. That's really Damian, his warmth close to me. My wolf instantly relaxes—she missed him. A lot.

"Ye...Yes."

It feels so weird to be able to touch him at this moment. I feel like I might still be asleep, dreaming, I'm not quite sure. But I know. This feeling is so unreal, I couldn't invent it on my own. I sit up and try to figure his traits

in the dark as my eyes adjust. I find the pair of glowing silver eyes right away.

“What are you doing here?”

“We’re going.”

“I’m leaving the hospital? Now?”

But... It’s the middle of the night! Before I can say a word, I suddenly feel him lift me up, and I’m in his arms, carried like a princess. Gosh, thank god we’re in the dark, I must be totally red right now! So embarrassing and intimidating.

What is this feeling of emergency? I can tell he’s tense, and I immediately pick up something’s wrong. Why would I have to sneakily leave the hospital in the middle of the night, otherwise? At least I’m not wearing anything too childish or revealing, just a long, silk slip dress. I grasp his shirt hesitantly.

“Damian, what’s wrong?”

But he won’t respond to me. Instead, I feel him walking away, taking me across the room. What about Bobo and Tonia? What’s going on? The door

suddenly opens in front of us, and we're in one of the hospital's bright hallways. I can finally see him.

He looks so serious, and his eyes are ice-cold. I don't dare to ask again and just hold on to him as he takes me away. I realize Bobo is just ahead of us, leading the way and walking fast, looking around as if he's looking for some sort of threat. They're both so tense, it makes me worry. Where is Tonia?

Everyone lets us pass as soon as they see Damian. Some even show a scared look before running off, but he doesn't care. He carries me all the way to the elevator, where Bobo chases some nurses with a growl. The machines go down, and I find being in his arms even more embarrassing now.

"I can walk..."

"No."

His tone makes it clear we are not discussing this. I bite my lip and don't dare to argue anymore. What time is it, anyway? I still feel so sleepy... I lean my head against his shoulder, trying to forget all this tension. I feel his shoulders relaxing a little from my touch. Is he reacting to me because I'm his mate? He won't show any expression, though... Now that I'm close to him, I can smell him for the first time. He's wearing some cologne, nothing too strong, though. Something that really suits him. It's

fresh and cooling like the sea, though, wild and strong like a pine forest at dawn. I really might get addicted to this...

The doors of the elevator open in a garage, and Damian takes me to a big car. Tonia's there! She smiles at me and opens the door for us. Damian carries me inside and won't let me go even as we are sitting. Instead, he takes off his jacket and covers me with it. Tonia takes the driver's seat and starts the engine.

"What about Bobo?" I ask.

"Don't worry, baby girl, he's following us. We will meet him there."

But where is "there"?

Tonia starts the engine, and we exit the parking lot. While leaning against Damian's chest, I look out at the window, drowsily staring at the skyscrapers and lights of the city. I love watching the city at night... So beautiful and mysterious.

I fell asleep while gentle fingers stroke my hair, surrounded by this soothing and relaxing smell of his.