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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?" Asks 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. They subjugate other species and use their element. 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 along 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 some hard time..." Says an Alpha with a strong accent.

"Great idea, Gregorovitch. Let's stay on our lazy a.sses in case nothing happens!" Scoffs Lissandra.

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 a finger at me with a disdainful look. "And why should we believe you? You may call yourself a Royal, who says you are? What right do you have?"

Almost immediately, not only Damian starts growling furiously at him, but the whole Blood Moon and Velvet Moon Clans, too. I try to calm Damian down, holding him back, but to my surprise, the one who speaks next is no other than 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 shapeshifts 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, but he doesn't talk back anymore, 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 Grandpa Seaver and the White Moon Clan. She will attack again, but we do not know where and when. That is the most worrying. 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 Lissandra.

"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.

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?

Once again, he addressed to everyone present, telling them their story, in more details. How the witch first sent vampires, k!lling 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 k!lled, 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 Velvet 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 Lissandra 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 have history, and you 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 using your very own name when we rebelled. Are you telling us you haven't been pressuring the other Clans through them?" Asks Lucian, 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 Liu Xi 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 sp0t William smiling. He was obviously waiting for this topic to come up.

But 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 fvckingd him to do it! Well, I did made him choose between Alexandra 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 lead. 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 Alexandra King and her father.

The Gold Moon Clan just arrived.

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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 with a hand on my arm, 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 Lissandra, 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 Lynch O'Crowley, 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 a big coat and a golden chain that both look too big for his size and walks confidently like he owns the place. A trait Alexandra 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 to his orders! 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 ridiculous 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. Don't tell me they believe this nonsense! He is so obviously lying! But before I can find any words, Alexandra starts talking, too, trying to act remorseful.

"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 bl00d if this b***h 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 if off now?" Says Alexandra.

"BECAUSE I AM HIS LUNA, YOU b***h!"

Alexandra laughs at me. Moon Goddess, if it wasn't for Neal holding me back, I would already have k!lled that woman. How dare she?!

"You are? 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!"

"But she is a Royal, we saw her shapeshift," says Clark Hamilton. "And they can't fake the marking either."

Alexandra glares at him. "Royals mean nothing. They have been extinct for ages! Who cares about the Royals, anyway? It's all about power and wealth nowadays, and the Blood Moon Clan just made sure to have both!"

William's pack starts growling furiously. I know how much they hate for anyone to show disrespect to the Royals, but clearly, the Gold Moon Clan did not expect that from them. Both packs start yelling and growling at each other. To my surprise, Damian is the one who silences everyone once again with a growl and glare at both parties.

Then, he turns to Taaron King and starts talking to him with his most deadly glare. "I did not ask you to put an embargo on any Clan, and I already canceled any business relationship I had with the Gold Moon Clan two weeks ago, as Nora says. 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 mutt..." Growls Lissandra.

I see her father tell her to shut it silently, but she growls back at him. Apparently, 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. But once again, both King and his daughter are avoiding eye contact with Damian and gazing at the audience instead.

"I don't have any wrong ambition aside from enlightening our fellow citizens about your actions, Damian Black. A witch attack? 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! Besides, 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 powerful, rich, large! 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 him look like this was all a conspiracy!

"That is not what it is," I talk back. "Damian will not submit the other wolves..."

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

This time, Alexandre glares at her father. 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 miss Nora is a better Luna? That woman can't even hide her nasty jealousy."

Alexandra is red with embarrassment, serves her just right! But her father isn't done yet. I have a hard time not jumping on him, but next to me, Damian is holding my arm back. I see Nathaniel is growling from where he stands, too.

"A man with the most power, the biggest territory, and a powerful Luna. And now, not only that, but he brings an army here?" Says Taaron King.

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 two hundred on their own?"

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

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

"You don't believe me? The Velvet Moon Clan is exactly the same as the Blood Moon! And the Jade Moon Clan is backing off the Luna, as well? 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 Lissandra argue, too, and now even Clark Hamilton is watching Nathaniel's group with suspicion. This can't be happening!

"We allowed any official pack to come! And 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 full Alpha Voice, silencing everyone in the stadium. My wolf is growling furiously, using all her might. Taaron King just crossed a line there, and I won't tolerate it. Freeing myself 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! Alexandra comes uninvited to the Velvet 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 Lissandra 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 Alexandra, "we will never agree to this alliance. And 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, I hear a group coming, led by an Asian woman. The Rising Moon Clan. Of course, they had to show they have allies, too. I bite my I!p. 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 actually Andrew Jones, from the Violet Moon Clan, who is 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. Marry me, for example."

...What the hell did he just say?

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

"Who is going to marry you? 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 have to 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' bl00d, 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 pure bl00d."

"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 bl00d 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 mate. Moreover, we are cousins!"

"...Second cousins."

Seriously? This is nonsense!

"Even so! I don't care about strengthening the Royal bl00d! Damian is my 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 being fated mates!" Yells Alexandra. "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 you, 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 wa!st, 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 actually closer in bl00d... 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, as my fiancée."

"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.

"fvck 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 take a look around. From what I've seen so far, aside from Nate's Velvet Moon Clan and the Jade Moon, I'm pretty sure Lissandra and Grandpa Seaver are on our side, too. Lissandra's father, however, will most likely follow William, and I suspect Clark's White Moon, too. This already puts both sides on equal grounds, though I'm not sure about the Pearl Moon Clan. Tiffany Pearl has been listening very closely, but aside from her disdain toward the Gold Moon, she hasn't taken any sides yet. Moreover, there are all those small Clans who 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?"

"Don't you know? Royals can reject their mates at any time. Your scar will heal right away if you do. You just have to say it, that you reject him, and that will be a done deal. So easily."

What the...? This can't be! There is no way I will ever reject Damian! I shake my head, unwilling to listening to this nonsense anymore.

"William, enough."

"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 k!ll, 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?"

But 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. Around us, Sean and Bobo are growling at him, and even 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 Williams, very calmly. "And 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 wasn't ever 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 Mad King.

William tilts his head, with a little smirk on. "You look so 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 along the way, things got too intense on other matters...

"The Mad King, their father... Judah Black... Everyone hated him so much. He was a violent, crazy, bastard wolf, only empowered by his brute force and his own father who had actually been a decent Alpha," says William.

"The Mad King, their father... Judah Black... Everyone hated him so much. He was a violent, crazy, bastard wolf, only empowered by his brute force and his own father who had actually been a decent Alpha," says William.

On the side, 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 k!lled him to put an end to all 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.

But to my surprise, Damian starts talking, in a very calm tone, despite still glaring at William. "Our father was a monster. He k!lled more than a hundred wolves. He banished three Clans out and k!lled another one. He was a man who would fight with anyone who opposed him, even his own Beta or his

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 they were all ruled over by fear. No one knew when the King would unleash his wrath, where, or to whom.

But what does this has anything to do with me? I was born far from there, in the Blue Moon Clan, in the North, and after that, hidden among the Gold Moon Clan, which was never affected by that either! Same with 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, many years ago. As I told you, Nora, we were supposed to find a new place to settle in, somewhere our Royal Family's miracle 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 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 s*******r. No one from our original Blue Moon Clan had survived whatever attacked them.

"They were all k!lled," 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 completely white. Damian and Nathaniel exchange a look as if they both suddenly understood something. I see William smirk, and Damian seems in shock. Oh 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? I grab my mate's hand.

"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."

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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, the Blue Moon Clan. So, this is what William was aiming at from the start...

"Those vampires... k!lled the Blue Moon Clan?" I ask.

"That's right," says William.

I feel Damian's grip tightening around me. I can't decipher his expression right now. My mate seems lost between anger, confusion, surprise, and... resolve. I know. 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. But we had other matters at hand. I wasn't sure of your ident!ty, 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 not 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, but my cousin only has a cunning expression on. Around us, people are holding their breath, waiting to see what's next. A few of them are talking about what was just revealed.

"So, the Mad King was even responsible for a full 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 k!lled his father! Isn't it obvious they were never on their father's side?"

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

"Isn't it different, though? Everyone was glad the Mad King died..."

"The 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 Alexandra. "The Blacks are a family of power-hungry, bl00dthirsty 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!

"Not all the Snow Moon Clan," says Neal. "The Boss let-"

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

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! And I say we will not stand by your lies!" She yells.

I growl at her even louder, making her lower her head, but 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 pick a Royal mate, right after ditching my daughter once she gave orders to cut all the other Clans' funds? Do not 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 i***t 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 way too agitated right now. It's obvious they don't know if this is going to end well or not, but everyone is getting ready in case it doesn't. Even my wolf is ready to change with me at any moment.

However, Tiffany Pearl, on the side, appears extremely 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 fl.ustered. 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 anyone who associates with them," suddenly cuts Tiffany, visibly annoyed.

"This is only as a preventive measure! In order to protect the lesser Clans from this man's—"

"Who is putting pressure onto the others, now, King?" Growls Lissandra.

The man becomes red from embarrassment and anger as the packs suddenly start getting 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 intends.

"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 Lissandra.

"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 over Silver City! Black is the most powerful Alpha, he is the one who should be our Alpha King! Even 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, but I won't marry into the Sapphire Moon Clan and I won't acknowledge anyone but Damian as King!"

"Stop lying!" Yells Alexandra. "There is no witch, no threat, you are just lying. Even your status as a Royal is—"

"Stop lying!" Yells Alexandra. "There is no witch, no threat, you are just lying. Even your status as a Royal is—"

But 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, and I realize William grabbed my hand. But both of them have 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!" Suddenly 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!"

But my mate is already running in the opposite direction, towards the crowd that's still downstairs. Oh 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 and takes me with him up the stairs. I'm not leaving Damian! I struggle and finally free myself from William's grasp. My cousin realizes he let go of my hand, but I elude him to run back. 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 yet cleared, 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 sp0t Taaron King, lost under a large root that's pinning him face against the soil.

A few steps away from him, Lissandra Jones, too, is fighting to free her leg from some mud in one of the cracks. But 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 b.ranches.

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. Oh Moon Goddess, no!

"Damian, NO!"

I scream, but it's too late—he's already jumping at her. But 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 on all fours in front of the witch, obviously protecting her from my mate. I recognize him immediately.

Liam.

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I finally reach Damian's side, and I think it takes him a few seconds to realize the other wolf is no other than his younger brother. Even I am still gathering the pieces. But the most important is that this witch, the young woman facing us, has a few b.utterflies flying around her. The very same kind of b.utterfly as the blue one that has been staying with me these last few days, except for the fact that hers are of multiple different colors and somewhat smaller.

She looks quite young, too, with gentle emerald eyes and fair white skin. While I'm staring at her, I realize all the roots have stopped attacking, and silence befell the stadium.

"Liam, what are you doing?!"

Nathaniel, from one of the benches, is staring with confusion at the scene. He runs toward us, approaching his brothers who are facing each other. Some of the Alphas come back down, too.

But instead, the witch turns to me, looking very calm. "Hello, Nora."

"Hi…"

She smiles softly at me. I was right. She is not the Dark Witch, but the one who sent me the letter and the b.utterfly. Damian growls, and I know he wants his brother to push aside. But Liam is growling back, too, not moving an inch. I put my hand in my mate's fur, trying to calm him down a little for now.

"Damian, it's okay."

"What is the meaning of this, Nora?" Asks Nathaniel.

"She's on our side. I think..."

William arrives at my side too, frowning. "What do you mean? Why is the Black boy standing for her?"

"It's all right. Nora is right, I'm not the Dark Witch you were mentioning earlier. I don't want to harm you in any way."

"Are you kidding me? You just did!"

No, she didn't. As everyone starts to look around, it becomes quite obvious: No werewolf was actually injured. Despite the panic, all the tree roots did was capture some people and trap them on the ground. Maybe about two hundred wolves. Even Lissandra is still growling at some b.ranches, trying to free herself.

"What was that, then?" Asks Nathaniel.

"A little reminder."

She makes a little movement of her fingers, and the b.ranches suddenly untighten their grip to release Lissandra's arm. The Purple Moon Alpha growls and massages her wrist with an annoyed look.

"Listening to all this nonsense you were all arguing about, I thought it would be good for you all to remember or witness how powerful a witch can actually be."

She's right. As soon as she attacked, most of the werewolves panicked, and it even took us a few minutes to understand what was going on and look for her. Even the Alphas had a hard time holding their packs together until Damian intervened. And this was just a warning... If she had intended to k!ll, this would have been much worse.

All of the Alphas have come down and are staring at her with shocked eyes. Even Tiffany Pearl and Andrew Jones lost their composure.

"I thought all witches had left Silver City..."

"Well, I'm the last one."

The werewolves around us, while some are still catching their breaths, all start whispering. I hold on to Damian, and try to take him back.

Damian, it's really okay. She's on our side.

I feel my mate hesitate, but after a while, he shape-shifts back to his human form. Nathaniel hands him a pair of pants, and Damian dresses up, still staring at the witch and Liam with doubtful eyes. Actually, Liam shape-shifts back, and the witch gives him his shorts.

"Hi, guys..."

Both his brothers and I glare at him.

"Liam, you i***t! You should have told us you were fine!" I scold him.

"Sorry about that. Syl needed me, so..."

"Syl?"

He suddenly takes the witch's hand, and the smile she gives him makes no doubt about their relationship.

Nathaniel swears. "You've got to be fvcking*g kidding me, Liam..."

"I told you guys I had a girlfriend."

"You never said it was a witch!"

But Liam acts as if it was nothing. Or he probably expected this kind of reaction from his brothers. Actually, he's even standing a little in front of the witch, ready to shield her at any moment. Nathaniel looks like he can't even believe what he's seeing, while Damian is frowning.

He turns to me. "...You knew?" He asks.

"I... She contacted me a week ago. She said she could help."

"You believe her?" He asks.

I hesitate a bit. Do I? I look at the witch, but no matter what, my wolf isn't the slightest worried by her. My instincts tell me she is not a bad person, one we should be wary of or anything. I slowly nod.

Damian sighs, takes my hand to keep me close to him and turns to face Liam and the witch. "What should we call you? And why would you help us?"

She smiles. "My name is Sylviana. I come from a very old and long line of witches; my ancestors lived in Silver City long before werewolves came. We have always lived in peace with both werewolves and humans. Sometimes in secret, when the situation called for it, like I was until now. But we never had any conflict with your kind."

"That doesn't explain why would help us against one of your own..."

Sylviana shakes her head, and takes on a very serious expression. "Witches aren't like werewolves. We are solitary individuals; we do not feel the need to interact with our peers or get along with them. On the contrary, we are territorial creatures, and don't usually enjoy sharing."

"But Silver City is a city of werewolves..." Says Nathaniel.

"I meant that we do not like to share with other witches. Werewolves, humans, or animals do not have the same needs as we do, neither do you perceive a territory like us. To you, a turf is a land your pack has rights on. For me, it is a source of life, a way to draw more power and energy. I don't need buildings or money. The same way you wouldn't argue with humans or animals about your turf, I do not need to dispute my homeland with you."

"Then, this witch is a threat to you as well, isn't it?" I ask.

Sylviana nods, and as more Alphas get closer, she makes some movements with her hands, calling back all the roots to the ground.

"That's right. As I said, witches don't share territories. If this Dark Witch seeks to gain control over Silver City, she will eventually become a threat to me, as well. We do not have any special feelings towards other witches, though we usually respect each other's boundaries. But the woman who attacked a few weeks ago is looking for more power, and she won't stop because I'm here. So, as another resident, I believe we could find a mutual agreement and work with each other to keep her out of Silver City."

That sounds quite reasonable, indeed... The same enemy, a reason to work together and protect Silver City. Nate and Damian exchange looks, probably mind-linking each other, as well. Liam is eyeing his girlfriend, but they gently smile at each other. They do seem like a genuine, loving couple...

Meanwhile, Bobo arrives at my side, standing against my leg. I wonder if Daniel is there? No news from Elena, either... After a while, I see Nathaniel looks pissed, but Damian turns to Sylviana again.

"You said that other witch, the Dark Witch, was looking for more power... If our land and wealth is of no interest to her, what is she attacking Silver City for?"

Sylviana nods and takes a few seconds before answering, looking a bit unsure. "Witches divide into two categories: Light Witches and Dark Witches. I belong to the first group. I draw my powers from my own life energy and my relationship to nature."

She shows us her arms and the dark markings I had noticed earlier. Now that I can see them from up close, they are not black, but dark red... Those are scars! Like carved in her own flesh, or burn marks. Moon Goddess, does that mean she has to injure herself to use her powers? Next to me, Damian is frowning, too.

"As you can see, light magic comes at a cost... I can heal myself, of course, but the more powerful my spell is, the bigger is the cost."

"Sylviana could really die if she was to face that Dark Witch directly," explains Liam.

Now I understand why he is so adamant about protecting her.... As well as why she did stay hidden for so long. That attack from earlier was impressive, but now her arms are covered in severe injuries... And there might be more under her clothing, as well.

"Wait a second."

I turn around. Clark Hamilton, the White Moon Clan Alpha, just joined us. The Joneses and Seaver are there, as well. I try to decipher Old Man Seaver's expression, but the elder Alpha is just frowning behind his white beard.

"You... you helped us, didn't you? Last time... During the vampire's attack, the water kept turning on us and poisoned some of us. We were losing ground until the trees suddenly moved, too, and the water stopped. The b.ranches shielded the injured wolves and tore vampires apart. That was all you, wasn't it?" Asks Clark.

Sylviana smiles. "Well, vampires don't so well with wood... And that witch didn't want to face me directly, either."

"What does a Dark Witch do, then? How is she different from you?" Asks Nathaniel.

"As I said earlier, I sacrifice my own life force and body to use powers... Dark Witches do the same, but with other bodies."

I gasp. "You mean... like sacrifices?"

"Exactly. What's worse is, while a witch's body is made for this since can heal fast and recover, other species can't withstand powerful magic. Not only does she need bodies, but she also needs a lot of them. And alive, too."

Oh Moon Goddess, this is... disgusting! How can someone be as evil as that? Injuring other people to be more powerful! I was wondering why Sylviana would go through the pain of injuring herself, but this other witch is so hateful!

"Light Witches give their lifeforce to others, while Dark Witches take it. This is our fundamental difference. This also why we don't usually cohabitate: We have very different mindsets," explains Sylviana.

"Wait, who would be more powerful then?" Asks Andrew Jones.

Sylviana sighs. "I think... for now, that would be me. I won't get into the details, but in terms of brute magic, mine is much more powerful than hers. However... she is very aware of that, and working to change that. She will keep gathering as much as she can until she can overpower me."

"How?" Asks Damian. "Is that why she is attacking us?"

"She was gathering bodies. Some from our pack," says Ryan.

"That's right. The more she can get, the better. However, corpses aren't nearly as... good as living people for a witch. And the more those people are filled with Moon Goddess' power, the better..."

Damian and I exchange a look. I see horror and anger on my mate's face. Which means...

"That's right. A living Royal would be exactly what she needs. The perfect prey..."