

## 4. Conditions

\*\*\*Soa's POV\*\*\*

I felt bile rise up in my throat at the thought of having to stomach Julian's presence for a whole evening. My skin crawls at the thought of having to spend the rest of my life with him by my side, ruling my -err- our kingdom. But as much as I hated this, our joining would bring some much needed security from the cartels. There was no point in running away from my future husband and king.

But what about our mate? Solana whines.

The Gulf cartel is getting stronger every day and I will not risk letting a drug war tear apart my Kingdom! I snarl back. I don't love him, Solana, but I have to put my kingdom first. I'm sorry for putting you through this but please don't make this harder than it needs to be!

Solana replies with another whine but says nothing more. I understand her pain. I dreamed of meeting my mate and having him lead by my side. I dreamed of his perfect smile that would melt away my worries and his laugh that would undoubtedly bring joy to my life. I dreamed of a man who would light up my world in the darkest of times. I dreamed of raising a family with the man Moon Goddess picked for me... but then again, those were just dreams and this was the real world. I could not dream if I was to lead. Dreams would not help my kingdom, actions would and I would act like a Queen even if my heart was shattering to pieces.

Cassandra helps me into a red slip dress that ends just above my ankle and I pair the look with some black heels. I leave my hair down to cover my shoulders as I knew Julian the creep had a staring problem.

I take a deep breath before descending down to the main lobby. As much as I hate to admit it, Julian looks incredibly good in his black suit. He boasts gorgeous tan skin and black hair that matched my own. If it weren't for his lust lled gaze, his hazel eyes would be mesmerizing. To an outsider, we made a perfect couple but inside, I was screaming to get away from his arrogance.

When I reach the bottom of the stairs, he extends out his elbow for me to take and we fall into step perfectly as we walk towards the restaurant.

"You look beautiful, your highness," he smirks. "Lucky me to have such a stunning ancé."

It takes all the will strength left in me not wince at the word ancé.

"You look good yourself, my prince," I reply coolly.

My prince? Solana gags.

Shut up! I panicked!

"We have many things to discuss, Princess," he says with a voice of silk.

My father must have booked the entire restaurant for us as it is completely empty, save for a small table in the center.

Julian is, much to my surprise, a gentleman and helps me into my seat. We settle in silence as we make our dinner selections and give the waiter our orders.

He's the first to speak after the waiter drops off our food and drinks.

"You are full of surprises, Princess," he says, his hazel eyes lost in his drink. "I didn't expect you to agree so quickly to the arrangement." He looks up at me and leans forward in his seat. "So why did you accept the proposal?"

"Why does it matter? I accepted didn't I?"

He ashes me a perfect smile and if it were anybody else, I might've swooned.

"I just want to know what kind of girl I'm marrying. No need to get defensive. I have my own motives as well."

I shrug, keeping my face emotionless. "My kingdom is my only concern," I say coldly. "We have peace among our packs but I fear it won't last long with the cartels in the mix. I know some wolves are already involved or will be involved in the drug war and I need to protect my packs."

"And you think I'm the best person to help you protect your kingdom?"

No, you arrogant snob.

"So... why did you propose to me?" I ask, avoiding his question.

He leans back in his seat, amusement dancing in his eyes but he answers my question without an ounce of hesitation.

"I've met my mate and I'm not impressed," he says nonchalantly.

I feel my blood simmer almost to a boil but I shove away my anger.

He has the privilege of knowing his mate and he has the audacity to give her up? I still had two months before Solana could sense her mate and I would kill to know who they are!

"Who is she?" I ask, my annoyance getting the best of me.

"She's a human, a weakling," he shivers in disgust. "Estrella del Monte has never had a human in its royal family and I'm not about to be the first, especially when the power balance is so delicate in the region with the current situation in the human world. It would be a death wish for my kingdom to accept her."

I couldn't argue with him there. A human mate was a complicated situation and to many, a potential weakness. They did not possess strength like werewolves and even with training, would always be a liability. Moreover, humans were messy. They were the reason the world was in disarray with their greed and their drugs and their weapons. They did not understand what it meant to be part of pack. We protect our own, whatever the cost, without fear and without selfishness. They did not understand loyalty like werewolves did.

But then again, even werewolves could be cruel to their own and not all humans were self-absorbed. I had seen how selfless humans could be. I had seen how they persevered with their kindness and their never-ending hope.

"Perhaps you should give her a chance," I reply.

Julian rolls his eyes in dismissal and clears his throat. "I believe now is as good a time as any to sort out the details of our marriage," he says, ignoring my input. "My coronation is just a year away so I'll be needing a Queen soon."

Seeing that I won't be getting anywhere with him on the subject of his mate, I decide it's best to just give things on our impending union.

"Before we sort out the details, I have some conditions," I say.

"As do I," he chuckles as he sips his drink.

"One. I want to stay in my territory."

"Our territory," he interrupts with a cruel smile.

I want to claw his eyes out but simply clench my hands into fists under the table to stop myself. "We will reign from my home in Mante," I manage to say through gritted teeth. "If I am to endure this marriage, I want to at least be somewhere I'm familiar with."

He taps his fingers on the tables as he weighs my words. "Is that all?"

"No," I respond. "Two. As Queen Luna, I will be your equal. Every decision you make, I must agree with, especially when it concerns the packs of Sol de Oro. We will be a team, working together, not against each other. I expect you to treat me and my judgments with respect. Three. I, and only I, will decide who my gamma will be and it will be I who will handle the selection process to ensure I get the right man for the job. And four. No matter how angry we are with each other, we will never take it out on our people. As King and Queen, we will always look out for the best interests of both Sol de Oro AND Estrella del Monte. There will be no favoritism or discrimination."

He leans back in his seat and examines his now empty glass. He snaps his fingers and waiter comes running over to refill it. Julian, however, simply takes the bottle of wine from the waiter's hands and dismisses him with a wave of his hand.

"And what if I don't want to abide by your conditions?" he questions deantly.

"Then the wedding is off."

"And your kingdom will suffer for it," he chuckles, his laughter laced with insolence. "You forget, Princess, I don't actually need you. I can choose any other werewolf to fulfill your role with the greatest of ease, believe me. But you cannot do the same. You need a king by your side or your kingdom will suffer far greater than mine. Veracruz has its problems with the cartels, but it's nothing compared to the situation here in Tamaulipas. You have a larger army, but your tactics are outdated and you are ill-equipped to handle the re-power of some very greedy humans. You need my soldiers. They're smaller in numbers but superior fighters than yours and you know it," he sighs contently as he once again nishes his drink. "Face it, Princess. You're not in the position to be making demands...."

I'm about to argue when his voice cuts me off before I get a word in.

"So here's what we're going to do. One. We will reign from here in Madero. I quite like it here. The views are... incredible," he adds, glancing at towards the door leading to the pool area of the hotel.

I know exactly what view he's referring to. Madero was a tourist attraction despite the violence and plenty of beach babes ocked the area in the summer. The thought of spending the rest of my life with this pig made my stomach churn but I quickly swallow the bile threatening to erupt and glare at the prince.

"This arrangement works both ways-

"I wasn't finished," he snaps. "Let me make this perfectly clear for you, Princess. You and I are not equals. At the end of the day, it's the King who gets the last word, not the Queen, so I suggest you get accustomed to knowing exactly where you stand with me. I will be your husband and as your future husband, I have certain expectations from you. You will give me an heir within the first six months of our marriage as a symbol of unity between our two packs and it will be a boy."

I can't stop my hand from reaching across the table and slapping his cheek so hard, my hand stings. I feel complete satisfaction at the stunned look on his face. Just who the hell did he think he was speaking to anyways? A breeding w\*\*\*e?

In retaliation, he grabs my throat, cutting off my lungs from the air they desperately craved.

Solana surfaces instantly and I feel my palms heat up with ames. To my horror, however, Julian's hands grow warm as well and his eyes darken to a jet black.

Fear must have ickered in my usually composed eyes because he laughs.

"Did I forget to mention what my element was?" he snickers, leaning over the table as I feel his breath on my ears. "Don't play with me unless you're prepared to burn yourself, your highness," he hisses, inhaling my scent and sighing.

I nearly scream when I feel his rough tongue slide across my neck but then an unbelievable rage ripples through my every muscle when one of his hands slides a strap of my dress off my shoulder.

Any remnant of fear I had leaves me at once and my instincts kick in. As his lips explore my skin, my hands carefully search for the bottle of wine still on the table and grasp its handle. With a quick swing, I slam the bottle against his head and he drops me from his grip to soothe the now gaping wound of his temple.

Gathering my bearings, I take the jagged bottle and hold it against his neck.

"I underestimated you, your highness," he chuckles when I dig the sharp edges into his flesh, drawing a few drops of blood. "Do it. I dare you," he challenges.

"Touch me again and I will gladly bury this bottle up your ass," I snarl.

He laughs with amusement and I dig the bottle a little deeper to show I meant business.

"Feisty," he growls as a few more drops spill over.

At incredible speed, he takes the bottle from my hand and slams me against the table as he towers over me. He presses the bottle to my cheek. Not willing to let him win, my hands find a steak knife and I lift it to his throat, the tip grazing his Adam's apple.

"I like feisty," he says, a laugh bubbling in chest as he leans close to my face. "This might actually be interesting," he adds before straightening up and taking a few steps away from the table. "Well this has been a thrill Princess, but I'm afraid I have to let you go. I have some things to take care of. As for your other conditions, I accept so long as you agree to mine. I need an heir. Do you accept or should I tell my father to declare war on Sol de Oro?"

Within 30 seconds, this man had single-handedly pushed every one of my buttons. He was even more infuriating than the moron at the beach today who apparently forgot to how to properly walk and speak to a woman.

What was his name again? Teo or something? Goddess, just how many incredibly handsome jackasses existed in Mexico? Wait, why am I suddenly thinking of that asshole, anyways? I had my hands full with the one standing right in front of me.

I quickly shove away the thoughts of the other i\*\*\*t and attempt to prepare my arguments.

This bastard wants a child -no- a son. He wants a son within 6 months. I was not planning on having children until after my own coronation but-

You are not seriously considering mating with this low life, are you? Solana snarls.

A wife and husband mate, I gulp. It's only natural he wants a child from me. It's insurance, I add coldly. A foolproof way to ensure our kingdoms are united with one future king. He's not demanding anything out of the ordinary, though his presentation could use some work.

Julian's stupid voice invades my thoughts.

"I don't have all day, your highness. Yes or no?"

Without thinking, I throw a reball at his head, intentionally missing by a few mere centimeters. He doesn't inch and it's almost as if I didn't just attempt to kill him.

"Make no mistake, Prince Julian, I don't take threats lightly," I sneer, my palms engulfed in ames. "No me busques, porque me vas a encontrar (don't look for me because you will find me), I accept. I will give you a son but just to be clear, I control our armies. I don't do sidelines. I lead."

"We'll see about that," Julian shrugs before turning on his heel. "The wedding is in six months."