

7. A Royal Ball

Soa's POV

I lay in bed for a few extra minutes, stretching out my tired muscles. I had a rigorous day of training yesterday and pretty much passed out when my head hit the pillow. As I yawn, Solana's smooth voice sighs happily in my head.

It's our birthday! She squeals excitedly. 18 at last!

I don't share her enthusiasm. Today was supposed to be the day I met my mate, or at least the day I could start to sense him, but the excitement of a mate had long ago faded when I became engaged to Julian. Over the past 2 months, Julian and I spent an unfortunate amount of time together and I was convinced he would drive me insane. His arrogance hadn't waned and his macho mentality annoyed me. But it didn't matter. If he thought I would just stand by and look pretty, he had another thing coming. Sol de Oro was mine to rule and no Alpha would ever take that from me.

Solana growls at the thought of spending the rest of our lives with that prick but it was out of my hands at this point. The entire kingdom knew of our engagement and work had already begun on improving relations between our two kingdoms.

My mind drifts off to my birthday ball. Julian would be there and the thought makes my skin crawl.

What if our mate is there? Solana whines.

I hope to Goddess he's not. In fact, I'm begging Moon Goddess I don't meet my mate tonight. I don't think I'll be able to reject him if we meet.

I shake the idea off, letting my mind roam on the many things I had to do today. Luckily there's plenty to keep my mind busy. The kingdom has been buzzing with news that a healer was now among the ranks of the Altamirano clan, elevating their status to the most powerful silver wolf clan in all the Western Hemisphere.

Father even personally asked Alpha Manuel to bring the special wolf and present him to the royal court. A wolf with that kind of gift would be an excellent asset to the kingdom.

I nally crawl out of bed and get ready for my very long day.

"Feliz cumpleaños, mi amor! {Happy birthday, my love}," My mom chirps when I waltz into the kitchen. She pulls me into a bear hug, kissing my forehead. "Que cumplas muchos mas! {May you have many more}," she murmurs in my ear.

"Thank you, Mami," I reply with a hug.

I hear my father come running in with a small cake in his hands, nearly dropping it as he rushes towards me. My mother scolds him and he ignores her glares, beaming proudly at me.

"Stop, Carlos. Lo vas a tirar! {You're going to drop it}," my mother protests as he sways his arms side to side whilst singing happy birthday to me. I burst into laughter as he sings off key with a goofy smile. If only the kingdom could see they had a child for a king!

"Make a wish, Soa," he smiles when he nishes his song. He brings the cake closer to my face.

I wish to not meet my mate...

I blow the candles out and carefully pluck them out, setting them down on the counter. As I take the last one out, my father pushes my face straight into the cake, shoving frosting up my nostrils.

He howls with laughter as I wipe the frosting from my eyes and peer back at him. My mother looks like she might explode, only making Dad laugh harder.

I giggle as I lick my lips clean and Mom groans in disapproval before storming off to get a towel for me. Dad lifts his hand up for a high ve and I happily give him one. When Mom returns, she nds Dad and I stung our faces in a separate cake that was hidden in the fridge.

"This is completely undignied," she scolds us. "The King should not- "

Before she gets another word in, Dad grabs the soiled cake off the counter and smears it on my mother's pretty, made up face.

Without a word, Mom silently wipes her eyes, scowling at her mate who giggles like a school girl. With frosting covered ngers, she smirks at my father, stalking towards him.

He waves a nger at her, stepping back. "No, Ana don't you dare-" he laughs as she approaches him with her ngers.

Before I know it, she begins to chase my father around the kitchen, smiling and giggling as Dad evades her advances. After a few minutes, she corners him between the refrigerator and the wall, wiggling her ngers at him. As she smears his handsome face in frosting, Father pulls her by the waist, pressing her body against his and kissing her passionately on the lips.

I roll my eyes at their affection for each other, but secretly admire how much they loved one another. I prop an elbow on the table and sigh heavily before digging into my cake. I wanted what they had, but I knew with Julian by my side, that would never be possible.

The party would be held in the ballroom of my father's hotel in Madero so after breakfast, we make the drive out to the city. Cassandra and some maids help me get ready while my mother runs last minute checks on the food and venue. Around 7pm, Mom walks into my suite, tearing up when she sees me in my backless black satin gown. Cassandra was placing my tiara on my head while the maids were smoothing out the skirt of my dress.

Mom wears a simple blush pink gown with an A-line waist and has her hair arranged in perfect curls around her own tiara.

"Te ves preciosa {You look precious}" my mom says, clasping her hand together near her mouth to hold back her tears.

I blush at the compliment and smile into the mirror beside me.

"Thank you, " I reply as we both hear a knock at the door.

Father pokes his head, grinning when he sees me. "You look beautiful, mi nina," he beams proudly. He has his hands behind his back as he approaches before whipping out a velvet box. "Feliz cumpleaños."

I take the box and carefully open it, revealing a gold chain with a heart locket. A tiny family portrait sits neatly inside the locket, the smiling faces of our small family warming my heart.

"It's beautiful," I smile, reaching for a hug.

Dad happily obliges and twirls me around the room.

As a family, we walk down to the ball room and wait patiently at the door for the guards to announce our grand entrance.

"Presenting His majesty, Juan Carlos Reyes and Her Majesty, Ana Lucia Reyes, King and Queen of Sol de Oro."

Mom and Dad walk through the doors, arms intertwined as they they descend down the stairs.

"Presenting, her Royal Highness, Soa Isabel Reyes, Princess of Sol de Oro."

I walk through the double doors, hoping I don't trip on my dress and look out into the large crowd of smiling faces. Sol de Oro is made up of 12 Packs and 3 Silver wolf clans, all of whom were present for the occasion. From where I stand, I could easily see the Alphas of the Orozco Clan, Hernández clan, and of course, the Altamirano clan.

It was an honor to have the Kingdom's silver wolf Alphas present at my birthday party. It was rare that all three alphas would appear together given how far apart they lived. Thus far, I had only ever seen Alpha Manuel bried at the coastal pack meeting but I was excited to formally meet him and his new healer.

From the corner of my eye, I see Julian and his disturbing stare aimed at me, his hazel eyes lled with lust. Holding back a shiver, I smile for the crowd and descend down the steps to meet my parents. With a strong voice I begin a small toast, thanking the guests for coming and for their gifts.

Music lls the room when I'm nished but I run immediately to the display of food, lling up my plate with little cakes and desserts. I sit down peacefully to eat my food when Julian strolls over and sits in an empty chair beside me.

He lifts his index nger up to my face and caresses my cheek with the back of his knuckle. I want to gag at his touch but there are too many people watching. This arrangement was meant to bring our people together so I could not openly reject the touch of my future husband, no matter how much I hated it.

He leans forward so that his breath lightly brushes up against my ear. "Your dress is nice, but I'd prefer you without anything on," he whispers, before placing a lingering kiss on my cheek.

Solana snarls at the comment and it takes every ber in my body not to lean back and slap him across the face.

"Get your tongue off of me," I hiss back, my forced smile never faltering.

"Make me," he smirks, his kisses traveling across my jaw and towards my neck.

Did this man have no shame?

I reach my hand under the table, placing it gently on his knee. He chuckles as I slowly creep up on the inseam of his pant leg until I reach his family jewels. I wipe the smirk off his face when I squeeze with all my might and he groans in pain.

"You b***h," he snarls through gritted teeth.

Thank Moon Goddess the music was loud enough to mue his insult.

"Touch me again and I promise you'll be sterile for the rest of you life," I sneer, turning back to my food.

He rolls his eyes and sits back in his chair. "The day will come when you'll be screaming my name and begging me to c*m inside you. I look forward to it, Princess," he shrugs before disappearing into the crowd of people mingling about.

I brush him off and sit up straighter in my chair, determined to look the part of a happy princess when my father approaches.

"Soa, there's someone I'd like you to meet," he says, offering his hand to me.

I just wanted to eat but I quickly wipe my mouth and hands before following my father through the ballroom. My mood instantly changes when I come face to face with Alpha Manuel and his wife, Luna Valeria.

They both bow before my father and I and I struggle to hide the blush on my cheeks.

The Altamirano wolves just bowed before me!

"Happy birthday, your Highness," Alpha Manuel says with a deep voice. "We are honored to you join you this evening."

I blush even harder. It didn't help that man carried his age well and was devilishly handsome, with dark brown curls and beautiful grey eyes. Grey eyes that oddly reminded me of a certain intolerable wolf...

Ugh! Why am I thinking of that him all of a sudden? Mateo hadn't even crossed my mind since we last spoke!

My father squeezes my hand gently, breaking me from my thoughts.

"Thank you for coming," I nally manage to say, mentally kicking myself for getting so ustered in the Alpha's presence.

He and wife smile politely.

"I would like to offer my congratulations," I add, trying my best to lift the awkwardness in the air. "I hear you have a healer amongst you."

The Alpha's face lls with pride. "Yes, our twins just completed their rst shift and we couldn't be happier. Moon Goddess has smiled upon my children. All of them are incredibly gifted," he beams. "My daughter can self spawn multiple copies of herself and my son is the healer. And of course, my eldest son is very powerful. He's a telekinetic."

He looks behind me and waves his hand. I hear steps approach behind me and a set of twins appear. My heart falls to the pit of my stomach. It's the twins. The same twins from the beach...

That must mean....

Suddenly, the ever so annoying Mateo appears behind them, his face contorted in a polite but lifeless smile.

"Happy birthday, your Highness," he says offering his hand to me.

You've got to be kidding! He's an Altamirano wolf?

Not wanting Alpha Manuel to think me rude, I quickly compose myself and take Mateo's hand. Little sparks shoot up my arm when our hands meet and Solana purrs contently.

Mate.