

## 9. Exclusive

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

The girl's breath hitches as she tries to scramble off the bed but Julian tightens his grip on her hips and continues rocking in and out of her, the smirk on his face never wavering. The girl looks mortified and gives me a look of pity, infuriating me. I did not need her pity and I would certainly not give Julian the satisfaction of knowing how much this hurt me and my pride.

"Wanna join?" he grunts, picking up the pace of his pumps.

The girl whimpers, desperately trying to contain her moans but Julian smacks her ass as punishment, making her succumb to her pleasure and cry out. Thoroughly disgusted with the scene unfolding before my eyes, I face the wall, my anger still lingering in my tense muscles.

"It's time to cut the cake," I say quietly, swallowing the venom I wished to spew at him. "I'll wait for you in the sitting area."

Without another word, I close the door to the bedroom to let him finish his activities. Meanwhile I pace back and forth around the room, collecting my emotions and gently tucking them away. The more I thought about the situation, the more I realized this could be a blessing in disguise. I did not love him so he could w\*\*\*e around as he pleased. Better than me. And perhaps, I could have a chance to find someone I really cared for and help me endure this marriage.

Yes, I thought to myself. An open marriage will do just fine.

Solana snarls her disapproval but I have no time to delve into an argument with her because the next thing I know, Julian and his slut come out.

She nervously curtsies and whispers a quick "excuse me" before quite literally bolting for the door and taking off.

Julian and I remain silent for a few minutes, me staring out the window of his suite and him studying my reactions. It was a beautiful night in Ciudad Madero, the moonlight shining over the ocean gently swaying back and forth.

"So you have nothing to say to me?" Julian nally speaks.

"What is it you want me to say?" I reply casually, still staring at the waves crashing against the cliffs below. "I do not love you nor do I harbor any desire to be with you. You have needs I do not wish to fulfill anytime soon. Seems like the perfect arrangement to me," I shrug. "We will marry but that doesn't mean we have to be exclusive. To the kingdom, you and I can be one big happy family, the perfect King and Queen, but we don't have to pretend we love each other when we are alone. You can have your whores and I get to be with whomever I chose. Deal?"

He bursts into laughter and I remain at a loss at what was so funny to him. When he sees the confused look on my face, he proceeds to explain himself.

"You're funny," he smiles, shaking his head in amusement.

"And why is that?" I ask, still not understanding the joke.

His face turns serious as he closes the distance between us with three quick strides. He grabs my wrist firmly in his hand and squeezes.

"Because you seem to think you could ever be with another man but me," he snarls.

"But you-"

"I told you, Princess. I don't share. You are Mine. Only Mine. No other man can ever have you! Do I make myself clear?" he demands, squeezing my wrist so I hard, I fear he might actually break it.

"Let go of me!" I demand, using my free hand to try to push him off but he doesn't budge.

"Do you understand?" he snaps again.

"f\*\*k you!" I scream before slapping him across the face.

I immediately regret it when he returns the favor, hitting me ten times as hard on my right cheek. My lip splits open and I taste a little blood in my mouth as I stumble into a nearby wall.

"Don't you ever raise a hand at me. It was funny the first time but not anymore," he says, xing the collar of his shirt. "You will be my wife," he adds, once again closing the distance between us. "You will satisfy me whenever I please. And should you not be enough, I will look elsewhere. Let it sink in your head, you are MINE!"

Without a second thought, my palms light up in flames and I aim a fireball at him. Unfortunately for me, his reflexes are lightning fast and he manages to dodge the fire. Creating his own flames, he directs a ray of blazing fire in my direction. I duck in the nick of time, narrowly avoiding being roasted alive.

He swiftly yanks up me by my hair and leans into my ear.

"Do that again... and will kill you," he whispers, raising a finger up to my face and tenderly stroking my bruised cheek. "Now go get refreshed. You're makeup is a little runny. I'll be down in bit."

He kisses my cheek before letting me go and shoving me towards the door. Eager to leave this monster, I smooth the skirt of my dress and gracefully walk out the door without hesitation. My legs carry me down the hall and I allow myself to walk aimlessly to gather my bearings.

Did that just really happen? Is this what I am to expect from my marriage to this man?

The thought sends shivers down my spine. I was strong but Julian showed me just how weak I was compared to him and it frightened me that I had put such a brute in a position of power over my people.

Lost in my thoughts, I don't realize I've made it to the stairwell and up to the roof. The cool evening breeze brushes up against my skin, my arms fling up with goosebumps. I walk over to the edge of the railing, staring at the roaring waters of the Atlantic ocean.

I feel a sob caught in my throat as I replay the scene in my head.

Oh Moon Goddess, I whimper. I can't live like this!

No matter how hard I try, I cannot stop the tears from spilling onto my cheeks.

Soa, breathe, Solana soothes. Just take a deep breath. We can stop this. Just cancel the engagement.

But the Kingdom! I retort. I can't risk going to war with Estrella del Monte. I can't do that to my people. Not after what my grandfather put them through during his reign and not after all the work my father put into restoring the kingdom.

Solana tries to calm me down but the stress is too much and I begin hyperventilating, desperately trying to fill my lungs with air.

Suddenly, the door bursts open and I turn to see Mateo freeze in the frame.

"Oh sorry, I thought-"

He stops mid sentence when he sees me gasping for air.

"Princess?" he calls out, rushing towards me.

I try to back away, still panting frantically but I soon run out of room and back into the railing. He grabs hold of my shoulders, worry swimming in his pools of liquid silver and I try my best not to react to the tingling in my body as he touches my bare skin with his rough hands.

"Hey, just breathe," he says, taking a deep breath. "Just like me. Breathe."

I mimic his actions, inhaling and exhaling at his pace. We do this a few times before my breathing slows and I finally calm down.

"That's it," he soothes, his smooth voice bringing me a sense of peace. "Good."

"Thank you," I mutter and try to shake off his hands. "I should really get going."

I try to walk past him but he grabs my chin, seemingly catching a glimpse of my lip and cheek. Flinching at his touch, my palms light up and I accidentally burn his hand.

"f\*\*\*\*\*g hell!" he screams, releasing me instantly to inspect the burn.

"Oh Goddess, I'm so sorry. I-I didn't- I-"

I'm an incomprehensible mess as I pathetically try to apologize for hurting him.

After a few seconds of cursing, he looks up at me with a hint of mischief in his eyes before bursting into laughter.

"Why are you laughing?" I ask, completely dumbfounded.

He waves his perfectly fine hand in my face and I feel my cheeks burn with anger.

"You - why you- Ugh!" I snarl as he howls in laughter.

"Goddess, the look on your face!" he cries hysterically.

"You have got to be the most irritating wolf on this planet!" I snap and he grins in agreement.

"You looked like you needed a distraction," he shrugs before his face turns serious. "Now care to explain why on the night of your 18th birthday, your royal ass is up here having a panic attack rather than being downstairs with your prince?"

I frown at him. "That is none of your business."

"I guess not," he shrugs once more, looking out at the ocean. "But you will explain how you got that bruise and cut on your lip. As one of your many loyal subjects, I demand to know who hurt my future Queen."

"I thought you didn't like Royals," I sneer.

"I don't," he sighs before turning back to me. "But unless you are at the training grounds or fighting in battle," he says, walking over to me. "So that his frame towers over mine. "A woman should never have bruises on her face or cuts on her lips." He places a thumb on my lip, slightly parting them and for some odd reason, I let him, liking the tingling sensation of his touch. "So tell me Princess. Who hurt you?"

We remain like this for a few seconds, neither of us moving away or speaking. Solana purrs contently, loving our close proximity.

The spell is broken, however, when he clears his throat expectantly, still waiting for an answer. I blink repeatedly before pushing aside his hands and staring at my feet.

"I should really get going," I says, turning on my heels.

I feel his hand grip my arm to stop me and I pull at it.

"You're not going anywhere," he says, his eyes fogging over.

"Just who the hell do you think you are?" I snap, tugging at my arm. "Let go of me Mateo or I will actually burn your hand this time."

"Would you just calm down, please? I'm not going to hurt you."

I glare at his hand still holding me back. "Let go."

"If I let you go, will you relax?" he questions.

I roll my eyes at him but agree to his conditions. He lets me go and digs his hands into his pockets.

"So what do you want?" I demand when he says nothing.

"Just wait," he mutters.

We wait for a few minutes in awkward silence when we hear the door to the roof open and Emiliano bursts through. His presence brings a smile to my face. He looks around frantically and rushes over to his brother.

"What's the emergency?" he asks, bowing politely at me.

Mateo nods in my general direction. "She's hurt. Can you heal her, please?"

Emiliano gives me a concerned look. "Are you okay, your Highness?"

"I'm fine. It's just a bruise," I smile quietly.

The boy frowns at me and steps closer to get a look at my face. He lifts his hands in front of my face. "May I?" he asks timidly, his cheeks slightly blushing.

I chuckle softly and give him permission to touch me. With the greatest of care, he places two hands on either side of my face. His eyes glow turquoise and I feel a jolt of electricity enter my body from his fingertips. A few seconds later, I sigh in relief, any lingering soreness disappearing completely from my face.

He steps back, smiling sheepishly while his brother steps forward to examine his work. I feel my cheeks heat up as she stares at my face before he gives a nod of approval to his brother.

"Excellent work, amigo," he says, ruing up Emiliano's hair. "Now lets leave her royal Highness. I think she needs some air."

Emiliano smiles at me and I quickly thank him for his help, effectively making him blush once more. He walks towards the exit but Mateo stays behind, looking at me with his intense silver eyes. Flustered, I play with my fingers and look out at the incredible view of the sea. Mateo sighs and starts to walk towards the exit but not before leaning down to my ear, his breath dancing on my skin.

"If he ever touches you again, I'll kill him."