

The Ivory Queen Chapter 86

Salvador's POV

My mind hasn't been right since the night I left River Moon. I've kept myself busy on the training grounds, working out my body until it's numb or locked away in my room. I haven't spoken to Mia or Javier either and I avoid Mom at all costs to keep the doubt from creeping in.

Doubt. Just a little doubt and my world came crashing down on me. As much as I hate to admit it, a very small part of me believes Aurora's claims and its slowing eating me alive, gnawing away at what's left of me. Because if what she said was true then I've been blaming the wrong person all these years while I've allowed the person responsible to slowly destroy what's left of my family.

I've been lenient on Mom all these years, excusing her short comings as a mother because of her pain. Mom's depression kicked in immediately after Dad died, making her bitter, cold, and distant. She would lock herself in her room for days at a time, leaving Mia, Aurora and I to deal with our pain on our own. Mia and I luckily had each other to lean on, as well as the rest of the pack, but not Aurora. She was left to mourn Dad in the basement, completely alone. Just a few months after his death, Mom turned to alcohol to numb her pain a bit and we didn't mind. We were happy she was finally coming out of her room again and speaking to us.

But the alcohol could only do so much and it wasn't long before she sought refuge in the local bars. When she'd return, her anger would be on full display. Mom aimed her cruelty solely at Aurora and of course, we did nothing to stop her, believing Aurora deserved every punch, kick, and slap she received. Soon, even when sober, Mom would beat Aurora relentlessly, scarring her flesh and sometimes leaving her unconscious. On rare occasion, I felt a tiny pain in my heart to watch the torture inflicted on Aurora but it would quickly fade when I remembered my father was dead because of her.

After three years of drowning in alcohol, however, Mom became increasingly restless and the drinking became problematic. Miguel and Ximena would threaten to put her into rehab when she got out of control and each time, Mom promised to be good. And for a few weeks, she'd keep that promise. We'd rejoice at her sobriety, desperate to have our Mom back... But it wouldn't last.

Without fail, Mom's thirst would return and we'd be forced to watch her fall apart all over again.

And then it happened... I can't exactly pinpoint a specific time or day when it happened but it was unmistakable. Mom turned on Mia and I. It started with the occasional pinch on the shoulder or even a few slaps to the face when she drank, but then it slowly developed into something else entirely. I tried my best to keep Mom from hurting Mia, often taking the blame for any mistakes or literally stepping in her line of fire so Mia wouldn't get hit with whatever weapon Mom chose to use at the moment. When she got excessively violent with Mia, Javier and I would lock Mom in her room for a day or two to cool off and sober up. When I'd let her out again, she'd apologize and shower us with love. Craving her motherly affection, we'd readily forgive her for hurting us. And then the cycle would repeat.

Since Aurora left, things have gotten exponentially worse. Mom doesn't even try to control her rage anymore. Any minor inconvenience could send her on bender and Mia and I usually pay the price.

I'm grateful, though. Throughout this entire ordeal, Javier hasn't left my side, helping me convince Miguel and Ximena to let her stay in the house for a little while longer while I figure out what to do with her. Mom clearly needs help.

As I toss and turn in bed, reflecting on the past 5 years, a dark thought enters my mind.

Could her guilt be keeping her from sobriety?

You think Aurora is telling the truth? Marcos, my wolf asks, equally conflicted. Could Mom really-

Look, I don't know anything anymore! My dad is dead, my mom's a raging alcoholic and I'm f*****g tired of being angry at everything all the f*****g time! I hiss back.

Suddenly, a figure materializes right in front of me. It's Dad... or at least what I remember of him. I project him whenever I feel lost or upset. But the thing about projections is, I can only project what I remember and I can never get him right. Something is always off and it reminds me that he's not real. I always make him too tall... I was only a kid when he died and I remember how he used to tower over me. One feature I never get wrong, however, are

his chocolate brown eyes, their warmth and kindness unforgettable. Mia has his eyes.

“Why are you mad, mijo?” He says, grabbing my desk chair and sitting down.

I sigh. His voice isn’t right...it’s too deep.

“Go away. You’re not him.”

“Are the things I taught you not real? Are the words I once said not real?” He asks, softening his strong features. “What’s on your mind, mijo?”

I grab the covers and pull them over myself to avoid looking at him.

“Chava...” He yanks the blanket away from me, forcing me to look at the distorted memory I have of him. “I love you, mijo. Mi niño cabron...” He murmurs.

My heart fills with pain and I lash out at him. “Then why did you leave me? Why didn’t you fight harder? Why did you have to go outside with Aurora? Why did you choose to save her instead of yourself?” I snap, sitting up in bed and pushing him away. Tears suddenly start falling down my cheeks and I bury my face in my hands. “I miss you so much! Why can’t you be here anymore? Don’t you see how much we need you?”

The bed dips under his weight as he sits next to me and wraps his arms around me.

“You are not alone, mijo. I never left you...”

This lie infuriates me. I yank myself free from his grip and get to my feet, glaring daggers at the projection.

“Not alone? Look around you!” I snarl. “What is left of this family?”

He stands up on his feet, reaching for me. “Mijo...”

“No, don’t touch me! You’re not real. You’re not my father and I am not your mijo!” I shout at him, grabbing a shoe and throwing it at him with all my force. “LEAVE ME ALONE!”

Upon contact with him, Dad’s projection disappears into a cloud of smoke and the shoe collides with the door just as someone knocks.

"It's just me," Mia calls out. I take a few deep breaths and I let her in. "You okay?" she asks, worry swimming in her chocolate eyes.

"Yeah," I mutter, picking up the shoe off the ground. "What do you want?" My words come out a little harsh and Mia flinches.

"I was just checking in. I haven't seen you since... well never mind. Anyways, Javier and I are planning on going over to River Moon to see Aurora and help with the search-

She freezes and I know she's hiding something from me.

"What search?"

She hesitates, studying me silently before finally spilling the truth. "Oliver's missing... and we're doing a search to help find him," she whispers quietly.

Oliver is missing? My thoughts drift off to our mother. That kind of pain is unbearable. Aurora must be devastated...

"Not interested," I sigh, drooping my shoulders and tossing the shoe in the closet.

Mia's face falls but she quickly forces a smile and nods. "Okay, I'll leave you alone then-

"Why are you going over there and sticking your nose in someone else's business?" I snap.

Her eyes fill in indignation and anger. "Because she's my sister and she needs my help," she says firmly. "I wasn't there for her all these years but I'll be there for her now."

I purse my lips at her reaction. "Whatever," I mutter. "Do what you want. I don't care anymore."

"You still don't believe her, do you?"

I'm silent and she shakes her head in disappointment. "One day you're going to realize you've made a mistake, Chava. I just hope it's not too late for you."

I turn my back to her. "Leave," I order.

There is silence for a moment before I hear her exit my room and slam the door shut. My mind and body hurt as I drag myself into the shower and get ready for another day of existing. Maira fixes me a bowl of oatmeal and some fruit and I sit in the dining room silently as I eat. Other pack members come bustling in, including Alpha Miguel and Luna Ximena.

“Chava, have you seen Javier?” Ximena asks.

My body goes stiff. Javier is at River Moon with Mia. If they knew, Miguel would likely start a war and at the moment, River Moon is preoccupied with Oliver’s disappearance.

Javier has covered for me all these years with my mom. I owe him this.

“Javier and Mia went to the ice rink,” I lie.

Miguel smiles. “Those two have been spending quite a bit of time together lately... could Mia be Javier’s mate?”

I choke on my oatmeal and Ximena and Miguel burst into laughter.

“It’s okay, Chava. Mates are a beautiful thing and I know my Javier would treat Mia right,” Ximena chirps. “Mia would make a lovely Luna.”

I choke again and excuse myself from the table.

If only they knew Javier was mated to Aurora’s twin sister. I don’t think they’d think mates were such a beautiful thing after all. I’m sure they’d hate Celina.

I drop off my plates in the kitchen when I run into Mom. It must be one of her good days. Every so often, a bit of mom pokes through the drunkenness, my real mom. Today, she’s miraculously managed to clean herself up, having washed her hair and even put on a hint of makeup to liven up her face.

“Hola, mijo,” she says, her voice cheerful.

She’s doing good, this is your chance to figure things out, Marcos sighs.

“Mom, can- can I talk to you for a second... in private?”

She looks confused but agrees and I tell her to meet me at the tree by our old house.

Twenty minutes later, we both find ourselves sitting in the old tree Dad used to climb with Aurora. They'd spend hours up here, just laughing and telling stories. I remember being so jealous of their relationship. I never understood why, but Dad and Aurora always had a special connection. She was always his favorite, no matter how much he denied it, no matter the fact that she wasn't even his daughter. He loved her most. Perhaps this was why I tortured her so eagerly.

"Que paso, mijo? What did you want to talk about?" Mom asks.

I take a deep breath as I ask the question that's been keeping me up for the past week.

"Who is Tais?"

She stiffens when I mention that name and becomes defensive.

"I don't know what you're talking about.." she mutters as she tries to climb down the tree. "I just remembered... I have something important to do-"

I grab her wrist and look her in the eyes, begging her to stay. I need answers.

"Don't lie to me, mom. I know Aurora and Celina are tio Mateo's daughters. I know what they are..." I whisper. "I just need you to be honest."

"Celina?" She asks, her eyes glossing over with unshed tears. "Where did you hear that name?"

"Celina is at the River Moon territory with Aurora right now. They've completed their shift-"

Her face pales. "She found her..." she mutters, her voice full of panic. "She found her! Oh Goddess she found her! This- this can't be happening! No! No!" Mom climbs off the tree to escape but I jump and quickly catch up to her, pinning her to ground.

"Why are you running?" I growl. "What are you hiding?"

She starts sobbing uncontrollably, shaking her head back and forth. "They're watching. They're going to watch us burn!"

"Who is?"

“We’re doomed. Oh Goddess. Mercy! Please, Mercy!”

A realization hits me and my heart shatters.

“What did you do, Mami?” I tremble.

But Mom can’t hear me. She’s stuck in her head, muttering nonsense to herself as she struggles against me.

“She’s going to kill you! The guardians... They’re no match! Help me! Emiliano ayudame! Emiliano!”

My eyes fill with tears as I watch her unravel beneath me, fear and insanity in her eyes.

“Mami, what did you do?” I whimper. “Please!”

“Emiliano!”

That’s it! I’ve had enough! I need the truth!

I cup her face harshly, desperate to get my answers. “Answer me! Did you call those witches? Huh? Did you do this to us?” I growl.

She snaps out of her delusion and slaps me with unbelievable strength, knocking me back on my a*s. “I did nothing that wouldn’t have already happened,” she finally admits.

My heart sinks to the pit of my stomach and I feel every fiber in my body light up with pain and fury. “How could you-“

“Tu padre esta muerto {You father is dead} because of what she is! They would have found us and killed him even if I didn’t call them. Because of her! Aurora killed him!” She snarls.

She did it... She called the witch...

“You killed him!” I scream, wrapping my fingers around her throat. “Aurora wasn’t even thirteen. She was a child! She was your daughter! How could you-“

“Aurora no es mi hija! {She’s not my daughter!},” She spits back, clawing at my arms. “I took care of her all these years ... but I knew she would be our

downfall!" I loosen my grip and her face softens. "I loved her... but I loved you more. I had to protect you and Mia..."

"You let her take the blame all these years ..." I cry, my heart full of guilt. "I hurt her... You hurt her!"

"She was what they were after. It was her fault!"

My face darkens. "You're sick. You're so full of hatred for a girl who did nothing -"

I receive another slap from my mother and I stare back at her, stunned.

"Have you ever seen 5,000 dead bodies before, Chava?" She spews with hatred. "Have you ever watched your entire family get slaughtered right in front of you and been powerless to save them? Have you ever had to flee your country to save your life? That little girl you defend, as innocent as she may seem, is responsible for the greatest war in werewolf history. 5,000 werewolves lost their lives defending her. I couldn't let you get killed because of her too."

I can't stop the tears from falling . My mother is a monster... and so am I.

"I didn't ask for any this!" She screeches, pulling at her hair furiously. "I tried so hard to love her! I really tried. And at some point, maybe I did." She pauses to wipe her tears and her face hardens. "But then I couldn't stand how much your father loved her, how much he favored her over you and Mia. Just how he used to favor Sofia over me..." she says, her voice full of bitterness.

Sofia? What did aunt Sofia have to do with this? Why did dad favor her over mom?

She ignores my confused expression and continues rambling. "Aurora is an exact replica of that woman! I was done. I couldn't take it anymore. I couldn't. So I called those witches to be done with this farce. I wanted peace... I wanted to live my life free of Sofia and Tais and Ira and this stupid war. I got you and Mia immunity so they wouldn't hurt you when it happened. But then... they killed him. They killed him instead of her!"

Her eyes fill with tears again and she gets on knees before me, begging me to understand. And on some level, I do. I spent years blaming Aurora for Dad's death... I let my anger consume me while I tortured her. But it was not enough

for me to forgive what she did. Anger was my friend, my companion and right now, anger was all I felt.

Seething with rage, I raise my hand, ready to bestow my anger unto my mother who sobs at my feet when a hand grabs my wrist.

“Don’t do it mijo,” Dad whispers. “Es tu madre {she’s your mother}.”

Dad’s distorted voice only angers me more. Even in death, Dad turns the other cheek. I hated it.

Mom whimpers at the sight and reaches out to touch the projection, her lips trembling. I push her away however, knocking her to ground. Real or not, she did not deserve to touch him. She cries and tries again but I refuse to let her near him. My annoyance peaks and I evaporate the projection, causing Mom to scream at me to bring him back.

“Listen to me very carefully, Karina,” I spit through gritted teeth. “You are the purest form of evil to ever walk this earth and it disgusts me to call you mom. From here on out, forget you have a son. He died the night you killed my father. Goddess forgive you, because I sure as hell don’t.”

“Chava!” She screams, reaching for my hand but I slap her away. “Por favor entiendeme {please understand me}. I just wanted him to love me...”

I push her away again and she continues to crawl towards me.

“Vete al infierno!{Go to hell!},” I screech.

I turn on my heel and storm off, hearing her wails growing quieter as I walk away. When I reach the cemetery, I collapse onto my knees before my father’s grave, emotionally exhausted

“Papi?” I sniffle, holding onto my father’s tombstone as my sobs shake my entire body. “Why did she have to take you?”

The Ivory Queen Chapter 87

Oliver’s POV

I wake up to the sound of the door opening and I groan in pain. My wrists and ankles are raw from me tugging at the silver chains all night and my body

hurts from sleeping on the concrete floor. While I was out cold, someone had washed me and put in me in clean clothes.

I shiver at the possibility of Adeline bathing me, caressing my body without my consent and a low growl rumbles through my throat.

My body belonged to Aurora and no one else.

At the thought of Aurora's tiny hands exploring the curves of my chest, a small smile creeps up on my face. I miss my nena.

The sound of footsteps coming closer brings me back to reality and I shove my hatred for Adeline away, making room for the traitor now kneeling before me. Infuriated, I avoid their eyes and stare at the ground.

"Oliver, please look at me," David whispers.

I refuse, keeping my gaze on a tiny crack on the floor. David reaches out a hand to grab my chin and I fight to pull away, but his grip is too strong. A growl ripples through my chest and I bare my teeth at him.

"Son, listen. I know this doesn't make any sense but-"

I spit in his face and glare at him. "I am not your son, you lying piece of s**t!"

David wipes the blob of spit off his face slaps me across the face, the blow knocking me to the ground. I land on my side, but I'm too tired to get up and remain on the ground. There's a bit of blood in my mouth and I spit it out.

"That's more like it," I sneer. "It's about time you stopped pretending to be my father and show me who you really are!"

"You don't understand! I had to do this! I'm trying to protect you!" He explains.

I roll over on my side so I no longer have to face him. "Get out," I mutter.

"You will listen to me, whether you like it or not, Oliver. You have nowhere else to go so for once just LISTEN!"

I don't respond and close my eyes to visualize Aurora's beautiful face to calm down, but his stupid voice keeps interrupting my thoughts.

"I need you to understand that I don't have anything against Aurora and that I meant what I said. I am grateful to her-"

"Liar!" I snap, rolling over again and groaning as the silver digs into my wrists. "She saved you. She defended you and for what? For a pathetic low life such as yourself? You betrayed her!" I laugh bitterly. "I should've known you were in on this. You never apologize... You're too proud for that, you power hungry son of a-"

He slaps me again but I don't care anymore. My father is dead to me.

"It's funny, I almost forgave you...but once a snake always a snake," I laugh hysterically. "Is Simone in on this too? Are you two working together?"

"Simone has nothing to do with this! We put her to sleep before we took you. She didn't even know I was in the house." His face darkens. "And you will respect me and your mother, Oliver. I am still your father-

"Respect is earned! You do not get to ask for it! You've only proven time and time again that you are the last person I could ever respect, the last person I could ever bow down to!"

"LISTEN TO ME!" He snaps. "They want need her and her only weakness is you. I'm here to make sure they don't touch you. To make sure that when the dust settles, you're still alive."

"Oh, my f*****g hero! You've probably rejoiced at the idea of getting rid of Aurora!"

"You don't understand!" He cries. "That day I came to apologize was real! I meant every word I said to you and Aurora. But then those witches showed up at our house and made a threat I knew they would keep if I did not act quickly. I had to make a decision and I do not regret it if it means you get to live a full life ... You can always get a new mate but I cannot get a new son, understand? Moon Goddess can grant you a second chance mate, someone to start over with-"

"It's always about you isn't it?" I scoff in disbelief. "Well, what about me? Huh? What about what I want?" I can't stop the angry tears from spilling over and it infuriates me even more to cry in front of this man but I was at my wits end. He had meddled in my life for far too long and I was tired of it. "I was going to

asked her to marry me! Why can't you just leave me be! For once in your life, just LEAVE ME ALONE!"

"I will not lose another son!" He snarls back.

It feels like I've been punched in the stomach and the wind is knocked out my lungs, stunning me into silence.

Another son?

"W-What...?"

"You are not my first child, Oliver, nor is your mother my first mate," he sighs, pinching the bridge of his nose and closing his eyes.

I'm too shocked to speak. Too angry. What the f**k does he mean?

I stare at him, and for the first time in my life, David is overtaken by despair. It fills his eyes and spills onto his cheeks, leaving behind glistening trails of anguish on his face. My father was a man of stone. He walked through life mechanically, calculating every aspect of his life to avoid emotions. He did not cry.

"I was 18 when I met Clara..." he mumbles quietly, his voice soft and vulnerable. "She was my best friend..." he smiles. "And she was my first mate. Within a few months of being together, we got pregnant with my eldest son, Winston," he says, a few more tears tugging at his eyes. He pauses, blinking hard to tuck away his emotions. "You remind me of him sometimes."

There is a stillness in the room as he finds the strength to continue his story. At a loss for words, I remain silent.

"Clara was so excited to be Luna," he says with deep sadness, "but she never got the chance. I was away on business in France when it happened..." He stares at the crack on the floor, clenching his fists at his sides. Several minutes go by in absolute silence, neither of us knowing what to say. "There was an attack," he finally adds, breaking the suffocating quiet. "I was too far away to protect them. I got the call..." his voice breaks. "But I had already felt her slip away."

He goes quiet again, his agony once again poking through. He looks so fragile, so ready to break with just the slightest gust of wind.

His voice trembles as he continues. "Winston was only two..." his bottom lip quivers and he bites down on it to hold back an unmistakable sob. "My little boy was only two when a rogue ripped his throat out..." he whimpers.

Several emotions run through me as I watch my broken father explain his darkest secret. How had he kept this from me?

"You never told me you had another family," I whisper, suddenly understanding my father's cold demeanor towards me all these years. I was a reminder of what he lost. "How come no one ever said anything?"

"No one is allowed to speak their names anymore. I made sure of it... I didn't want to be reminded and I didn't want you or Rosalie to find out. It's better this way."

I shake my head in disbelief. How could he forget them so easily?

Noticing my growing anger, he tries to explain. "I couldn't even be at River Moon anymore after they died, let alone bear to hear someone speak their names. I stayed in France for another year to finish my work and avoid the pain. That's when I met Simone. It took a lot of work on her part but slowly, your mother healed my wounds. She gave me a second chance to live."

"This doesn't excuse what you're doing to me!" I snarl, once again remembering our current situation. "I am not Winston and you do not get to decide how I live my life. Let me go, David. If you have an ounce of humanity left, let me be with my mate! Let me try to save her! Please!"

"They are going to kill her Oliver. What they plan on doing... she won't survive," he says, shaking his head and wiping his eyes.

"If they so much as touch her, I'll-"

"You'll what? Kill them?" He scoffs. "You're nothing in their world, Oliver. They're in a completely different league of their own. Aurora is an Ivory twin and those witches hold incredible power of their own. You're nothing but an Alpha. You'll never win." He crouches down to my level and his eyes soften. "I am truly sorry for this son, I really am. But there is nothing you and I can do to save her from what's about to happen."

My heart starts pounding at the seriousness in his eyes. I shake in fear, afraid of his message. "Let me out, David. I mean it. LET ME OUT!"

He stands upright and walks towards the door as I continue to scream.

“She’s leading a search for you,” he sighs. “I’ve joined in, making sure she doesn’t ruin your chances of survival. She loves you so much and I would give anything to not have to take her away from you, son,” he turns to look at me and for once, he seems sincere. “But I will take her away if I have to, Oliver. I know it will hurt but I will not lose you too,” he whispers before opening the door and leaving.

My breaths come in short and it feels like my world is crashing down on me. I can’t breathe.

I tug at my chains, pulling with all my might, desperate to find Aurora and keep her safe. But no matter how hard I pull, I’m too weak to free myself. Blood stains my wrists as the silver cuts into my tender flesh and I look around in search of tools to help me escape, but the only things available are my food tray and a plastic cup for water.

An idea pops into my head and I formulate a plan.

The Ivory Queen Chapter 88

Aurora’s POV

“I met with Tais last night.”

Evan is on his feet in a split second, sending his chair crashing against the wall and splitting it to pieces. A quick glance around the room tells me everyone shares his sentiments. Celina is practically shaking with anger and the vein on Carter’s forehead looks like it might burst.

“YOU DID WHAT?” Carter growls as his brown eyes shift to his wolf’s forest green with blue rings around the irises.

My eyes fall on the envelope and I work quickly to pull it out of the box.

“W-we didn’t meet in person, so to speak. She sent a messenger...” I say, my voice shrinking with every word. “She gave me this letter with instructions on how to get Oliver back.” I push the envelope forward but no one seems in a rush to read its contents and they all glare at me instead. “She said to meet alone-“

“And you went without back up? Without out letting us know? Do- Do you even realize how stupid you were to go by yourself?” Celina snaps, her eyes narrowing to slits at me. “Did you even think about all the things that could have gone wrong?”

Angered, I grab the envelope and pull out the photos of Oliver chained up and slam them on the table.

“I followed her instructions but I’m not an i****! I kept my guard up, I was prepared to fight. I took a calculated risk and now not only do I know he’s alive, I know what she wants, when she wants it and who her sister is. It doesn’t matter how I got it, I did what I had to do!” I could feel the anger build up inside me while my palms grow hotter by the second. I shift my anger onto Carter. “If it were Rosalie, you’d move heaven and earth to find her, wouldn’t you? So why can’t I do the same for my mate?” I have to take a few deep breathes to calm my venomous rage and keep the flames on my palms at bay. “I took the oath to protect River Moon, but I cannot do that locked away in here, Carter!”

Carter’s jaw clenches as he thinks over my words. He rests his elbows on the tables and runs his fingers through his hair before finally looking up and wiping his tired face. “Promise me that from now on, you will not keep anything from us again,” he growls. “You can lead the search IF you make this promise.”

“Okay, I promise,” I sigh, annoyed that this was even a topic of discussion. I wouldn’t have lied if they let me search for him in the first place!

“Stubborn brat,” Evan mutters under his breath and I glare at him.

Carter leans back in his chair, seemingly satisfied with my response. Rosalie, on the other hand, trembles anxiously and reaches for the photographs. When she sees the images of her brother chained up, she covers her mouth as a sob escapes her lips. Carter wraps an arm around her and she buries her face in his chest. Celina pulls the letter out and translates it aloud for everyone.

“They want us to wait a week for Oliver to return? They’re out of their f*****g minds!” Evan snaps.

“We have no choice. They unfortunately have the upper hand in this situation. Tais and Ira made sure to hide Oliver somewhere even Celina and I can’t

reach. I won't risk losing Oliver. We'll have to play by their rules until we figure something out," I say.

"This all seems too easy. A bit of blood is too simple a request for them to have taken Oliver. There must be a catch," Celina thinks aloud. "'Think Long and hard...' It's a hint and a warning. Whatever they're planning, they know we'll figure it out and when we do, Oliver's life will be the bargaining chip."

"You're right.... and it scares me that I might not be able to choose Oliver," I whisper, hugging myself to keep the thought away.

Evan walks over to me and wraps me up in a hug from behind, resting his chin on my head. His maple and rain scent soothes me a bit and I lean into him.

"Don't think that way..." he murmurs. "It's going to be alright."

I take a deep breath and exhale slowly to calm my nerves. "I spent all last night researching the significance of the Winter Solstice to see if I could figure out their interest in our blood. From what I gathered, some legends claim the Winter Solstice is the night the Sun was born. On this night, people celebrate the coming return of light." I groan. "I don't see how blood relates to this."

"What if the blood is a distraction. Perhaps they're not really seeking blood at all, just creating a reason for us to go to them," Celina says solemnly. "This could all be a lie."

"Then Oliver is doomed," Rosalie whimpers. "He's not coming back!" She sobs.

Carter tries to calm her down but she gets up from her chair and runs off to her room. Carter chases after her, leaving us all to our thoughts.

"I'm not giving up on Oliver. I only have a week but I will bring him home," I say with determination. "Tais and Ira will not take from me again."

—

An hour later, the Allies arrive and I give them the information regarding Oliver's kidnapping and the blood request. After yet another good scolding, we settle down to discuss the contents.

“The legends of the Winter Solstice are of great interest to me... I have a feeling it reveals something about the witches themselves,” Patrick says. “Perhaps they draw their energy from the sun.”

“But it’s also the longest night. Who’s to say they’re not drawing power from the moon?” Wesley argues.

“I, for one, believe the most telling part of the letter is the mention that your powers will be greatest on the night of the Winter Solstice,” Jonathan says. “If you’ll be at your most powerful and they’ll require your physical presence for the blood deposit, it’s likely they have a plan to pacify you, perhaps a potion or a spell to block out your powers. If that’s the case, this entire exchange is likely a trap.”

It takes everything I have to not scream in frustration. How on earth do I get my mate back?

“Well I have some good news then,” Patrick says, interrupting my thoughts. “I’ve been searching for a witch I know ever since we first found out about the poisoned bites and it seems my scouts have finally managed to locate her whereabouts. She could perhaps help identify the significance of the winter solstice and the potential plan Ira and Tais might be hatching,” Patrick sighs, rubbing his temples. “It’s been years since I’ve last seen her but she owes me a favor. She’ll arrive tomorrow or the day after and I’ll send her immediately to you, Luna Aurora.”

I don’t know if I trust a witch to help us with Tais and Ira.

“How do you know a witch?” Wesley asks.

“Long story,” he chuckles. “She’s a trickster, but harmless. I promise,” he adds looking at me reassuringly. “As for Luna Aurora and Celina, I suggest you two research the records of your kind and figure out if your blood possesses any special properties the witches might be after or better yet, find out your weaknesses.”

As the meeting draws to a close, Javier and Mia arrive. Beside me, Evan and Celina visibly tense up. They’ve been civil throughout this entire ordeal but I know they’re burning up inside. Jonathan and Patrick haven’t said anything about Javier and Mia’s presence, perhaps out of respect for the kidnapping we were dealing with but I’m sure they had questions.

Oliver isn't here to help me, but this issue needs to be brought up. I owe it to the allies.

"Since you're all here, Alphas, I think this is the best time to bring up an issue Oliver and I planned to discuss with you at the official Alpha meeting with Maple Moon and Desert Sky," I say, offering Javier and Mia a seat at the table. "As you well know, Javier is set to take over Lluvia Blanca tomorrow and you may have even heard of an upcoming agreement between Lluvia Blanca and Amethyst Lake.

Well after careful consideration, River Moon thinks it's time to make amends with Lluvia Blanca and put the past behind us. We would like to formally ask the Allies to reinstate Lluvia Blanca into the Alliance."

Evan and Celina gasp, a hint of anger in their eyes. I had forgotten this decision was made by just Javier and Oliver and I. Even Mia seems surprised but I could see her lips curve into a slight smile at the possibility. Patrick and Jonathan look like they're about to protest so I try to keep the discussion focused and ask that they simply listen for now.

"Lluvia Blanca has almost 700 pack members, 200 of which are children under 13 who are extremely vulnerable to a witch attack. They also have 2 silver wolves and will most likely experience their own attacks from Tais and Ira.

Oliver and I have spoken with Javier extensively and given the circumstances, think it would be in our best interests to reunite the five packs. 50 years ago, the region faced a similar situation with witches and it was through unity that all five packs survived.

I also urge you to remember that Javier is not Miguel and should not be punished for the actions of his predecessor. They are two different leaders and while Miguel refused to put his pack before his own ego, Javier has already swallowed his pride and accepted responsibility for his actions.

Should you vote against the union of our packs, Oliver and I will understand. Leaving an alliance is not without consequences and we can't expect everyone to trust Lluvia Blanca once again. But to be fair, Javier has already agreed to accept any conditions you put on their reinstatement."

Patrick and Jonathan exchange glances and think over my words carefully, but I'm surprised Wesley has said nothing. Did he already know?

Besides me, Javier is quiet as well. I try to read his emotions, but I'm not Celina and his face gives nothing away.

"Luna Aurora, you are willing to forgive the pack that caused you so much harm these past few years?" Jonathan asks.

"Yes," I reply without hesitation. I reach for Mia's hand and a few tears well up in her eyes as her gaze settles on me. "It's time to move on. We've all been punished enough."

Evan is on his feet and excuses himself from the table. He's angry with me.

I turn to Mia and see her face fall for a split second before she too turns to stone. Does she know they are mates?

Before I can say anything, Patrick hits me with a question I was not prepared for.

"Do you trust Javier?"

The Ivory Queen Chapter 89

Aurora's POV

Time seems to slow down as I glance over at Javier and I put my mental shield up to guard my feelings from Celina's cold stare, not wanting her to give away my inner turmoil. To forgive does not mean to forget and I could never forget my nights in that closet no matter how hard I tried. I wanted to trust him again for he had once been my best friend, but trust was not an easy thing to give to someone who had hurt you in the worst way possible. I look down at my hands in my lap, biting my lower lip to keep it from trembling.

As I'm about to answer, Javier speaks for me.

"No, she doesn't," Javier says quietly. "And that's my fault. I betrayed our friendship years ago. I stopped being her friend the moment Emiliano died...." He sighs. "There is nothing I can say to make you all trust me. I'll have to earn that right, but I would like the opportunity to redeem Lluvia Blanca. Unlike my father, I don't think a treaty with Amethyst Lake is the right path for Lluvia Blanca and have decided I will not sign it. I will bear the consequences of that decision with or without your help."

It's Wesley who speaks next and he keeps his gaze on Patrick and Jonathan. "I've trained for years with Javier. I know what he is capable of and I know Lluvia Blanca is in good hands with him as Alpha. Much like him, at one point I did not care for Aurora either. I came to my senses eventually and I believe Javier has too." He pauses for a second before letting out a breath of air. "Cerulean Sea votes yes on Lluvia Blanca's reinstatement."

I feel a bit of relief but the fear of Jonathan and Patrick rejecting the proposal is pushing me further and further off a cliff into a sea of anxiety. I desperately wish for Oliver's comforting hug to calm me down. Evan is too busy having his own emotional breakdown to help relieve my angst and Celina is currently refusing to look at me. So, I do what I do best and plaster a smile on my face to thank Wesley.

"I admire your bravery in forgiving your former pack but Lluvia Blanca broke an agreement and that is not an easy fix. To be a part of this alliance is to accept the decisions we make as allies, even if we don't agree on some issues. Lluvia Blanca did not honor our decision and left. I cannot overlook that," Jonathan says.

"W-we can address that," I say, not wanting to give up on the possibility of Lluvia Blanca coming back to the alliance. "What if we revoke Lluvia Blanca's voting rights for the next 6 months as -as a sort of.... punishment for breaking the alliance in the first place? Any decisions would be made without their input but they would still reap the benefits of the alliance. Does that seem fair?"

"How about this?" Patrick asks, leaning forward. "Lluvia Blanca can return once Javier takes over under the condition that for the next year, they be on a probation. They will have no voting rights and should we believe they are not fulfilling the requirements of the treaty, they must leave the alliance once and for all. No more second chances. Do you accept, Javier?"

Without hesitation, Javier answers. "Yes. Lluvia Blanca accepts these conditions. "

Patrick sighs. "Then it's a yes from Blood Moon ... for now."

I turn to Jonathan with hope filled eyes and he goes quiet for a moment before releasing a sigh.

"It seems I am outnumbered.... Very well, Jade Crescent votes yes on Lluvia Blanca's reinstatement. Good luck, Javier. Don't screw it up."

“Thank you for this opportunity,” Javier beams with hope.

“We’ll have the treaty drafted by the time of your ceremony. If that is all Luna Aurora, I think we can adjourn this meeting. I’ll be in contact soon once the witch arrives. I bid you well on your search and I will keep Oliver in my prayers.”

I thank the Allies for their help as they leave. Celina follows suit, going for a run with a few guards to check the perimeter, although I’m sure it’s just a ploy to be away from Javier. He and Mia remain in the dining room with me. Shortly after, Valentina, Danny and their pack members arrive, ready with their things for their flights home.

“Aurora if I may, I would like to stay. I don’t like the idea of you dealing with Oliver’s disappearance on your own,” Valentina pleads. “Perhaps I can help in some way.”

I shake my head. “I’m not alone. I have friends and allies helping me. But if you want, I would love for you to stay.”

“Well then I guess I’d like to formally ask to stay in River Moon as well,” Diego says. “Permanently.” I stare at him in confusion and he chuckles. “I found my mate.”

My eyes widen like saucers. “WHO?”

He grins as a few guards come in and tilts his head forward. “Him.”

Wait did he say ‘Him’?

I turn around to see Eric blushing back at me.

My eyes shift between the two men. “You’re...”

Diego’s grin widens and he shrugs. “Yup.”

“Why didn’t you tell me you found your mate!” Valentina squeals, pulling her son into a hug. “Ay! Que lindo!” she beams, gesturing towards Eric. “Come here mijo, let me get a good look at you!”

Eric timidly steps forward before being engulfed in bear hug by Valentina.

I'm so happy for Diego. We needed some good news in the midst of all this chaos. I steal a glance at Danny who is desperately trying to contain his emotions, but I see the faint smile on his face.

"So can I stay, Luna?" Diego asks, holding Eric's hand and kissing it.

"Of course you can," I reply, bouncing on my toes excitedly. "I wouldn't have it any other way." I turn to Valentina and Danny. "Well then let's get you all settled in the house," I say. "I'd much rather keep you close than in the guest house all by yourselves."

"Vale, go get settled. I have something to take care of. Be right back," Danny calls out as he runs towards the door and leaves.

We all stare at the door, confused but decide to let it slide. I ask a few omegas to help Valentina and Diego get settled on the second floor. Turning my attention to Mia and Javier, I ask what they're doing here.

Mia smiles. "We just came to help in whatever shape we can."

"And to make sure you're okay," Javier adds. "You must be going through a lot right now. I'm sure you could use the company."

"Thank you," I say, giving them a small smile. "How's Chava doing? Are things okay at Lluvia Blanca?"

They both exchange glances and I know things must be tense at home.

"Chava is not important right now," Mia says quietly.

So Chava still doesn't believe me, huh?

I'm slightly disappointed but not at all surprised. I had held on to the hope we could move forward but I guess his heart is too angry for that. Perhaps it was better for us to go our separate ways. I can't keep expecting him to somehow understand that I was not lying after all these years and I deserve to move on without feeling guilty about it.

"I see," I say, swallowing the lump in my throat. "Well that's..... Ahem.. Never mind. Anyways, I have this letter that confirms the witches have Oliver and right now the only thing left to do is figure out their next move."

Mia perks up. "I can do that! I'm pretty good with researching."

“Perfect. Oliver’s office is upstairs and I have a book with some Ivory twin history that we can use.”

“What can I do?” Javier asks.

“Please check on Celina for me,” I say, grabbing Mia and dragging her upstairs. “Don’t bug her or talk to her. Just watch. Make sure she doesn’t get into any trouble while we work,” I call out before disappearing around the corner.

Mia’s POV

In Oliver’s office, Aurora and I are hard at work searching for possible clues on the properties of their blood. After about an hour of research though, I notice Aurora struggle to stay focused on the task, staring off into the distance.

“Are you thinking about him?” I ask, tentatively putting the book down.

When she doesn’t respond, I wave my hand in front of her eyes, snapping her out of her daze.

“Hmm,” she replies, shaking her head and wiping her tired eyes. “Did you say something?”

“You okay?” I ask.

“Yeah,” she lies. “I’m just-“

She’s interrupted mid sentence by a yawn.

“Tired?” I chuckle. “How much sleep did you get last night?”

She shakes her head. “I’m not tired.”

“No, you’re clearly exhausted. You should get some sleep.”

“Ugh, not you too! Look I can take care of myself. I don’t need you or anyone else telling me what to do!” She snaps, slamming her fists on the table.

I slump back in my chair and shake my head. “I know you don’t need my help. I just think it’s not a crime to take a break and take care of yourself too,” I sigh, closing the black book.

She lowers her head and apologizes. "I can't sleep."

"You are clearly sleep deprived-"

"No, I mean I can't sleep..... I'm afraid too..." she finally admits. "Oliver kept all the nightmares away." She wraps her arms around herself and closes her eyes. "Even when I did have them, Oliver would hold me close so I could feel safe again. He'd coax me back to sleep with a lullaby and run circles on my back or play with my hair. Just his scent brought me a sense of peace. The bed feels so empty without him. I can't sleep," she whimpers quietly into her sleeve. "I just can't."

My heart shatters as she explains her turmoil. She forgave me for the pain I inflicted but that could not erase the damage I caused. I spent years taking advantage of her vulnerabilities and I did not think about the lasting effects of the torture. How long would she struggle with this pain and more importantly, was there anything I could do to fix it?

"The dream I gave you.... Did it help?" I ask.

"It was beautiful," she smiles, opening her eyes to look at me.

"Well what if I gave you another dream. You could go to sleep right now and I could make sure you don't have any nightmares... only good dre-"

"No!" She says, shaking her head furiously.

I stare back at her, stunned by the fear in her eyes. She softens her face and tinged red.

"I mean, no thank you," She starts shivering and pulls her knees to her chest. "It was a lovely dream... but done against my will nonetheless."

"I understand," I sigh, picking up the book again. "I was just trying to help you that night and give you some relief."

She nods her head. "Thank you. That was kind but Mia? I have one request to make from you..."

My face lights up instantly. She wants something from me!

“Please don’t ever use you gift on me... ever again. Even if you think it will help me. I don’t want you in my head without my permission.” She looks up at me, holding back tears. “It’s the one thing I ask of you. Please.”

My face falls but I quickly force a smile and nod.

“Of course, anything for you.”

She frowns and her face fills with shame. “I’m sorry, I’m trying to trust you, it’s just-“

“You don’t have to explain,” I say. “I hurt you and you lost faith in me. It’s up to me to earn your trust back. You have nothing to apologize for.”

She offers as weak smile and nods. “Thanks...”

We sit awkwardly for a while, unsure how to move on.

“So Evan?” She asks nervously.

I stare at her. “How did you-“

“He told me....”

“Well that’s not ... it’s not going to happen,” I shrug. “He hates me.”

“No, he’s angry, but can you blame him?” she sighs and I swallow hard. “Evan is confused. He thinks he has to give you because of what you did to me, but I would love nothing more than for you two to be together. It’s going to take some time for him to figure things out, thought. Just give him a chance.”

“Doesn’t matter. I don’t want a mate who doesn’t know what he wants.”

“Hey!” She frowns. “Evan is one of the best people I know. Give him a chance to figure it out. I promise, he’s worth it. He has a heart of gold. You’re lucky to have him.”

I roll my eyes but decide not to argue with her anymore. Another awkward silence engulfs us before her yawn sparks a yawning fest between the two of us, making us both break into laughter.

When the laughter dies down, she smiles sheepishly. “Mia?”

“Yeah?”

She gulps loudly and I notice her trembling. “You can’t earn my trust if I don’t give you a chance, right?”

I stare at her like an i***t as I dissect her every word. She continues to shiver in her seat and her fists are balled up at her side, her knuckles turning white.

She’s afraid to let me in so why is she forcing herself to do this?

Because she loves you more than she fears you, Inez whispers.

“Aurora, you don’t have to let me in,” I urge. “You don’t have to do this to prove anything to me. I know you forgive me and I can earn your trust some other way. I promise I’ll work hard-“

“N-no,” she trembles. “I ha-have to do this. If I want to trust you, I need to lose fear of you... So I’ll let you in.” She gets up from her seat, still shaking and grabs my hand. “Come on.”

She leads me to her bedroom and sits on the edge of her bed to remove her boots before curling up under the covers. She closes her eyes and hugs a pillow, clinging to it for dear life. Aurora inhales deeply, releasing the air slowly and relaxing her shoulders. When she speaks, her voice is so small and shaky.

“I-I’m ready,” she nods, keeping her eyes closed.

“Are you sure?”

She nods again. “I-I trust you.”

“What do you want to dream?” I ask, suddenly nervous with my task.

She remains silent for a moment, lost in thought, before she starts giggling. “C-can I have a snowball fight with Oliver? I never got the chance to have a snowball fight with him.”

I smile. Such a simple request and yet by far the most important to me.

I will give you a winter wonderland.

“One snowball fight coming up,” I say as I activate my powers. I take a deep breath before conjuring up a beautiful snow covered forest with a castle in the distance for her and Oliver to explore.

She snuggles up with her pillow. “Wow,” she sighs.

I take a seat on the edge of the bed and watch her breathing start to slow while her muscles begin to relax. A small smile tugs on the corners of her lips as she slowly drifts off into a peaceful sleep.

“Good night, sister,” I smile as I stroke her hair gently. I watch her sleep for a while, content that for this brief moment I can give her some peace when I suddenly hear the door open. A menacing growl breaks the peaceful quiet.

“What do you think you’re doing?”

The Ivory Queen Chapter 90

*** Javier’s POV***

I follow Aurora’s instructions and keep my distance from Celina, hiding amongst the brush and moving quietly between the foliage to avoid detection. I decide to stay in my human form as it’s easier to move and hide my body this way.

Several wolves run beside Celina as they guard the borders and keep an eye out for intruders and rogues.

When they complete their patrol, some of the guards nip playfully at Celina’s ears, seemingly wanting to play or see her powers. One particular dark grey wolf with black paws, however, is getting too close for my liking.

He better back off if he knows what’s good for him, Adan snarls.

The wolf licks her face but even more infuriating is the fact that she lets him. Without thinking, a growl escapes my lips, giving away my position. Celina and the wolf snap their neck towards my general location and I step behind a tree.

f**k, that was close!

My heart pounds in my chest and I take a few deep breaths. After a few seconds, I peak around the tree to see if the coast is clear but find Celina and the grey wolf gone.

I hear a growl behind me and brace myself for her fury.

"I was just making sure you were safe," I sigh as I turn to face her. "Aurora sent—"

Celina's wolf growls at me and I decide there's no point in arguing with her. She'll be pissed regardless. The other wolf is nowhere to be seen but I still feel the jealous rage building up inside me.

"Who was he?" I blurt out and Celina tilts her head to the side in amusement, a smirk dancing on her lips.

She shifts into her human form, placing her hands on her hips and tapping her bare feet on the earth. Not wanting to disrespect her, I cast my eyes to the ground and turn around. I remove my shirt and extend it out to her.

"Here," I mutter, but she doesn't take the shirt.

"Why don't you run back to Aurora and tell her I'm fine," she snarls. "Since you two are such good friends now."

"What?" I ask, utterly confused.

"That's why you're here, right? Because Aurora sent you?" She growls.

I turn to face her and my breath hitches at the sight of her bare body. She is absolutely beautiful, her flawless brown skin tempting me to taste her. Adan purrs at the sight and I fight to tuck him away and cast my eyes back to the ground.

"I'm here to help her as her friend.."

She scoffs and rolls her eyes. "Some friend you are."

I clench my jaw at the jab but I know I have no right to contradict her. She's right. I was a terrible friend.

"I'm sorry for intruding on your... activities," I say through gritted teeth. "But I am a simple alpha and there is very little I can do for Aurora right now in terms

of helping against these witches. So I will help her in the only way I can and that's by making sure you don't get into trouble."

She stares coldly at me, crossing her arms across her chest.

"Do I look like I need your services? I'm not some defenseless girl," she hisses at me while pointing in the direction of the River Moon pack house. "So why don't you run along to your friend and leave me the f**k alone!"

I wince at her cold words.

"Actually, you know what? Do me a favor and mind your business. Just because Aurora wants to fix your pack relations, doesn't mean you and I are going to work out. So stop looking out for me. I didn't ask for it and I definitely don't need you in my life."

I swallow hard and am about to tell her I accept her rejection when Adam snarls frantically at me.

Oh no you f*****g don't. I will not be punished for your bullshit! Adan growls before taking control.

I hear Celina chuckle coldly as my eyes switch to baby blue and Adan surfaces.

"What? Don't like how pathetic your human is so you decide to come out to play? Think maybe I'll fall for you instead?" She smirks, walking confidently towards me.

My mind goes blank as I watch her golden body move with all the grace of a princess. I resist the urge to bury my fingers in her silky white hair and run my hands along her naked curves, exploring every inch of her beauty.

"You're just as disgusting as your human, wolf. All those years and you couldn't stop your human from hurting the purest soul on this planet!" She snarls, snapping me out of my fantasies.

Her eyes fill with rage but Adan seems unfazed by her fury.

"Wolves can only do so much," Adan replies coolly. "After all, you humans dominate most of our existence. I'm sure your wolf is equally upset about the

turn of events and much like me, she is powerless to stop you from making decisions for her. You reject me, but does your wolf agree?"

Celina falls silent and now Adan smirks at her.

"You think you're so high and mighty but you are no different from my human. You neglect the needs of your wolves and we are always punished for your misdeeds," he says before closing the gap between Celina and I. "We are loyal creatures though, and no matter how much you hurt us, we always come when you need us."

Her face is full of shock as Adan towers over her. I can see her desperately trying to keep from trembling, clenching her fists at her sides until her knuckles turn white. Her heart races a mile a minute in her chest. Adan leans forward so that our lips are mere centimeters apart and takes in her intoxicating scent of blueberries and lilies. She swallows hard as she struggles to keep her emotions in check.

A part of me loves knowing that at least I have an effect on this strong-willed girl hell bent on hating me. No matter how hard she tries to hide it, she feels our bond just as strongly as I do.

"I will always love you, Celina. No matter how much you push me away, I will always come back to you. Don't punish me for the wrongdoings of Javier. You don't trust him and that's fine, but I've never done anything that merits your rejection. I am not guilty."

My lips just barely brush up against hers, sending sparks to ripple across my face and she whimpers. For a brief moment, we both remain still, allowing the sparks to linger just a bit longer. I open my mouth to kiss her again but she pushes me back with surprising strength.

"Please leave me alone.... I-I can't do this.... I can't... I'm sorry."

Adan takes a step back and hurt laces his words. "Can I at least meet my mate before you take her away from me?"

In an instant, Her eyes switch to their incredible purple and pink hues and Adan gets on his knees in front her.

"I am Adan, your highness... and I am honored to finally meet you," he says, looking up at her gorgeous eyes.

Tears roll down her cheeks. "I'm Sarai," she whimpers.

The sadness in her voice tears at my heart.

"You have a beautiful name."

She blushes and gets down on her knees. "My goddess, I'm so happy to finally meet you!"

Adan grabs her by the waist and presses her body against mine.

"I'm so sorry..." she cries.

"I know you are," Adan replies, wiping away her tears.

"She won't listen!" Sarai whines. "I've tried so hard but she just won't. It hurts so much sometimes, I can't breathe! I can't! I can't!" she sobs.

"And I wish I could take it all away," Adan whimpers, cupping her cheeks. "I wish I could love you freely every day from now on. I love you, Sarai. I love you so much."

Sarai buries her head in my chest and weeps her sorrows. Adan holds her protectively as he slips my t-shirt over her bare body.

They share a sweet kiss, one with gentle passion and the sparks that ignite within my being are the most incredible feeling to ever flow throughout my body. When they part, the despair in Sarai's eyes shatters my soul.

This was all my doing. And my wolf was unfairly paying the price.

"Goodbye Sarai," Adan says as Celina and I once again take over.

Celina trembles uncontrollably but when I try to comfort her, she flinches and backs away.

"I need to be alone now."

I wipe away the tears on my cheeks and harden my face.

"You have met with Moon Goddess...and you are amongst those she favors. I'm sure she'll find you a better mate. One who is not so cruel and unjust to

the most vulnerable of her creations. I am sorry for the pain I have caused us. And I hope you find true love again," I sigh as I turn away from her.

Adan starts whining and I cut him off.

"My heart will always belong to you, but I will give you what you want. I accept your rejection."