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When the emerald-eyed vampire came closer into view, the lycans and werewolves noticed that there were copper-colored streaks in her blonde hair. Five streaks, to be exact.

Lucianne took a deep breath. This was her first encounter with the species that the lycans and werewolves declared truce with more than two centuries ago. In fact, this was everyone's first encounter with them. The oldest among them was Chief Dalloway, and even he had never met a vampire. Territorial lines are strictly drawn between their species not only for the purpose of preserving peace. It was also an open secret that it was a way to practice avoidance from a species that could very well drain them of their blood and their lives with it.

Lucianne felt the tension in the atmosphere. The people by her side were as anxious as she was herself, despite everyone's brave front. Xandar reached for Lucianne's hand, and the king and queen led their people forward, approaching the middle of the field. The cold gust of wind felt like needles poking at their cheeks but no one flinched. Their anxiety increased with each step taken towards the species dressed in dark colors.

As they got closer to the middle of the field, Lucianne felt her anxiety diminished little by little, which was confusing for her and her lycan. Still, she continued walking. What she didn't realize was that the emerald-eyed vampire felt a sudden change of mood as well when she neared Lucianne.

The vampire stopped a meter away from Lucianne and Xandar. They offered each other slight bows, both sides wondering if

they did it right since they don't recall the last vampire and lycan or werewolf offering each other this kind of gesture.

"Your Imperial Majesty," Xandar greeted, and for once was grateful that he liked history enough to know this basic formality. This emerald-eyed vampire was definitely the empress, Pellethia Gangnes. Her aura speaks for her position, and the pixie-haired brunette by her side looked particularly protective of her.

To everyone's surprise, Pellethia didn't respond to Xandar's greeting, and chose to study Lucianne instead. Lucianne would assume that she was just curious about what the newly-crowned Lycan Queen looked like BUT she was feeling an unexplained pull towards the empress, and she saw from Pellethia's inquisitive eyes that she felt it, too.

Pellethia touched the pixie-haired woman's arm gently before carefully approaching Lucianne. Those around Lucianne were getting ready to charge at the first sign of the vampire attacking their queen. Toby's hands were hidden behind his back, and his claws were slowly protruding. Xandar's arm instinctively reached out to shield his wife, but Lucianne gently placed her hand over his arm and muttered, "It's okay, Xandar."

Her voice made Pellethia's brows furrow. She found it... familiar. But that wasn't possible. She doubted she met Lucianne in her life. The empress found the queen's facial features foreign but the energy she felt was so...familiar. After some more quiet, awkward moments, Pellethia's eyes widened in recognition before her eyes glistened in happiness and a huge smile graced her features when she whispered in a soft, hopeful voice, "Aunt Rosie?"

Oddly enough, Lucianne found Pellethia's voice familiar. Despite her ongoing perplexity, she said, "I'm sorry, Your Imperial Majesty. You must be mistaking me for someone else. I'm Lucianne but everyone calls me Lucy."

Lucianne thrust a hand out of a handshaking habit, and her instinctive gesture was immediately met with snarls from the vampires, making her retract her hand in haste. Xandar's arm came forward to push his wife behind him. Toby and the others stood closer to the king, ready to defend their queen at all cost.

Pellethia's emerald eyes turned angry as she glowered at her own people and yelled with protruded fangs, "Shut up, all of you! We are NOT at war! Watch your behavior before the king and queen!"

Toby blinked, and exchanged a surprised glance with his best friend that was properly-hidden behind her mate. Lucianne didn't know how to react either. One minute the empress was cold and distant, then she looked warm and welcoming, now she was telling her own people off for snarling in her defence?

Xandar was getting bewildered as well, and cracked his head on an instance in history where a vampire ruler told off his or her own people for another species. Despite being well-versed in history, the king could think of no such circumstance.

The vampires offered slight bows in unison at the lycans and werewolves as a sign of apology. The lycans and werewolves continued exchanging baffled looks. Should they return the gesture or do nothing? No one knew.

Pellethia retracted her fangs and offered a bow as well before regaining her standing position and uttered an embarrassed

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apology, "Please accept my most heartfelt apologies for that, Your Highnesses. I can assure you..." her head turned to the side and her stern voice projected in her people's direction when she continued, "...that if it happens again on my watch, I'll personally push my hand down their throats, extract their voice boxes before breaking their kneecaps to make them kneel until they beg to be killed."

A few vampires shuddered, from the empress's warning or from the cold wind...or both. Pellethia's demeanor turned warm and soft again as she looked at Lucianne, who stepped out from behind her husband but his tight grip still refused to let her come forward. Pellethia's hand cautiously stretched out like she was waiting for something to be put into her pale palm before she asked in a sweet voice, "May I, Lucy?"

Xandar was hesitant. Toby and Phelton were defensive. They wondered if this was a trick. Christian's mind went blank from whatever he just witnessed. But Lucianne felt an unexplainable sureness that Pellethia wasn't going to hurt her. She gently moved her mate's arm away for the second time that night before reaching for Pellethia's palm.

Xandar's hand was on Lucianne's abdomen, ready to push her to the side if things went sideways. He prayed to the Moon Goddess that this was not going to be a mistake. He would never forgive himself if Lucianne got hurt from this.

When Lucianne's hand made contact with Pellethia's cold one, the empress placed her thumb on Lucianne's wrist to feel her pulse. She closed her eyes and concentrated on the rhythm of Lucianne's blood flow.

When she was done, her eyes glistened again, and she let out

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a soft chuckle before her lips curled up into a smile, the type of smile one has when they see a loved one they haven't been in touched with for a long time; when one is reunited with a close friend after years or decades of separation; when one replays happy memories made with loved ones who have now passed on. It was the type of smile that screamed 'I missed you...so much.'

