

Chapter 70 - The Date

"Happiness is not something ready made. It comes from your own actions." — Dalai Lama XIV

Kiya

I was going to regret going on this date, wasn't I?

It shouldn't be considered a 'date' because we weren't in a relationship. We were going as friends. Nothing more, nothing less. 1

Odessa, unfortunately, got a whiff of the news. She lurked from the wall when I spoke about it with my friends. Lorelai, an angel, offered to take me shopping for a 'date' outfit, despite telling her it was not a romantic date, only to find the outfit destroyed after dinner.

She covered it in blue ink, deeming it unwearable. I was sure she did this! My dumb ass forgot to lock my door again, granting Odessa full access for her destruction. Her scent remained long after she left. I was hurt because Lorelai spent her money on it, and it went to waste.

So, what did I do?

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Nothing. I couldn't prove it was Odessa who did this, despite my gut telling me otherwise. I had the idea of throwing the destroyed outfit back at her face, but I didn't want to stoop to her level. Causing trouble with her wasn't worth it in the end. With a heavy sigh, I mourned the outfit for a minute longer before tossing it in the trash. This high school bullshit was getting on my last nerve. ¹

I couldn't bear to tell Lorelai the truth, not without solid evidence. She worked so hard to pick out an outfit for me and I don't know if I could handle her disappointment. But there wasn't much I could do, and this is the first date I've ever been on. I needed her fashion advice. Eventually, I sucked it up and told her what had happened.

"Oh..." Both disappointment and suspicion swam across her youthful face before breaking out into a small smile. "No worries, hun. It is too late to head to the mall, so let us look in your closet for an emergency outfit."

"You think I have something date appropriate in there?" I asked, quirked an eyebrow.

Lorelai chuckled and nodded. "We can make it work. We just need to tweak and add a few things and it'll be perfect!"

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We spent the next hour going through all the clothes in my closet before she tossed a couple of her chosen pieces on the bed. Lorelai also worked on matching my jewelry with the outfit and offered me one of her flat irons to use, commenting that I needed more gold. Despite it being a time for her to help me, I was more than happy to spend more time with the Gamma Female. There was something about her energy and aura that made me comfortable enough to trust her, even when we went to the mall last week.

Ah, I love her already!

Nightfall fell over the territory and the stars twinkled to their silent tune around the silvery moon. An unexpected visitor flew into my room, wings fluttering as she walked around on my vanity, narrowly avoiding my bracelet stands and makeup palettes. I smiled and petted Diana on the head as she explored. I stood in front of my vanity mirror with my hair completely straightened to my mid-back. I wore blue ripped skinny jeans, an off-shoulder long-sleeved black-and-white striped crop top, and ankle-high black boots. My selenite bracelet jingled on my wrist. I left my necklace for tonight. Diana hobbled over with one of my tied headbands in her beak.

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“Oh! Thank you, love.” I took it from her beak and tie my hair. A sense of completion washed over me while I stared at my finished look. I look good and feel good! “Thanks for your help, Diana.”

“*Hoo!*” She nuzzled her head into my palm and departed through the window. I stuffed a pocketknife in my pant pocket in case someone tried something with me tonight. A woman must be prepared for anything. I grabbed my off-shoulder purse from the hook and walked to the common room where I saw my friends and their mates chilling in the common room. Odessa shot me a dirty look, which Darien was oblivious to. I shook my head, not wanting to start a scene, so I turned to the others.

“So, how do I look?” I asked the group. All pondered in silence for a moment before I saw Jackie’s face twist into amusement. Oh, Goddess.

“Badonkers.” She gestured to her breasts. Both Abigail and I hit her with pillows while laughing. “What? They look amazing in that top!”

“You look lovely, Miss Kiya.” Mikhail, Galen’s mate, grinned. “Where is Alpha Neron taking you?”

“Odyssey Park.”

“The amusement park?” Sapphire’s eyes lit up. “Oh,

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you're going to have so much fun!"

It had been a while since I've been to an amusement park. Memories of sweet, greasy food and excited screaming echoed in my mind and ears. Ashley and Steven took Raina and I to Odyssey Park when I was six and she was eight. We road in bumper cars, carousals, and filled our stomachs up with funnel cake until we got sick. We'd always complain about not being able to ride the roller coasters because we were too young and short for it. Afraid of heights? Not us. Yet, I always wanted to go on the Ferris Wheel and look down at the world from high above. A small smile rested on my face as the memories faded like smoke in the wind, but the nostalgia remained. It was a good time.

I wondered why Neron picked this spot for our date. Better than a fancy dinner—Selene knew how awkward I was at formal events. Plus, what was the harm in acting like a kid for a little while? I admit I like the idea.

No pressure, just fun!

"Holy shit."

I whipped around in surprise to see Neron standing directly behind me, dressed in dark blue jeans with a

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grey buttoned-up shirt with the first two buttons open. He adorned a silver-chain necklace with a triangle pendant. His long, black tresses rested on his shoulders with some strands brushing up against his stubble. My eyes maneuvered down to see black Varese shoes. His eyes continued to gaze, like a hawk to its prey.

“What?” I asked, ignoring the rising heat on my cheeks.

“You’re beautiful.” His hand gently takes a lock of my hair. “How long did it take you to do this?”

“Uh... let’s see. Between shampooing, conditioning, deep conditioning, the blowout, heat protectant, and the flat-iron...it took about four hours.” His eyes widened in shock as I burst out laughing. “Coily hair requires care on an entirely different level.”

Isaiah, Abigail, and Jacqueline snapped in agreement.

“Well.” Neron smiled, “You didn’t need to do all of that for our date. Curly or straight, you’re still the same Kiya I adore. I got you something.”

“Neron, please. No gifts.”

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"No, take it, I insist. And before you say anything, I can't return it because I got it engraved." From behind him, he gave me a small velvet box. I raised an eyebrow, opened it, and rested inside a full-moon phase necklace. I was born under a full moon. The silver chain glittered and next to the pendant was a gold star charm with the letter 'K'. Engraved behind the pendant was my birthdate, October 1st.

"Neron..." I whispered, tears pricking my eyes. "This is...really thoughtful."

"Allow me." With a childish grin, he carefully took the necklace out. Turning around, I lifted my hair so he could hook it on me. It was cool on my chest, but Neron's gentle fingers sent fire rushing through my veins. After he was finished, I turned back around, and I swear his smile got impossibly bigger. "It matches your outfit beautifully. Now, your look is complete."

I look away for a moment, praying my cheeks weren't red. "Aww, she's blushing!" Galen teased. "How cute!"

"Quiet!" I turn back to Neron, patting my cheeks. "When are we leaving?"

"Right now!" Excitement had a scent; it was extremely sweet. Neron's natural woody scent got

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sweeter and I couldn't help but laugh. He was like a little kid. He dragged me to the door as I bid farewell to my friends, promising to text them if anything came up. Odessa scowled with her fists balled up in her lap as her eyes narrowed in on Neron's hand on my arm. Murder was on her mind, and I was her intended victim.

If she had the chance, I was sure Odessa would've attacked. Neron always had his hand on her arm, and now, it was on mine. I have, unwillingly, stolen what was once hers. My eyes glanced at the oblivious Darien, his hand on his mate's arm. How can Odessa not see it? This petty feud she has with me isn't worth it, especially when the battleground is Darien's heart. With a silent sigh and a head shake, I ignored the woman's pointed glares and allowed Neron to take me out of the pack house.

'Don't cause trouble'. I tell myself, feeling the night air comb through my hair. 'It isn't worth it. Just enjoy the night and forget about her.'

Neron and I hopped into his Ford Mustang, wasting no time rolling out of the territory into the sunset. Never have I thought I'd be going on a date with someone I once detested so much. Neron's presence has become tolerable. The music from the radio didn't drown out my thoughts as I spared glances at the driver.

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Something was going to happen on this date, and I was not sure if it was good or bad.

The moment we walked into the park, Neron went from a tough Alpha to a wondrous child, it was adorable to see. The smell of greasy food and people were pungent, but after a while, I got used to it. It officially got dark and the sellers with light-up items came out. Neron got both of us glow-in-the-dark loops sticks we wore as necklaces.

“Want to go on the Wave Swinger?” He pointed to the ride with multiple seats attached by chains. When lifted, everyone spun around in the air like they were on a giant swing. I raised an eyebrow as I looked between Neron and the ride.

“Have you ever been on it?”

“Nope. I was wondering if we could go on it...but if you don't want to, I understand.” His hand went to the back of his head, his eyes avoiding my gaze. He looked afraid that I'd say no. Under past circumstances, I would have. It wasn't that I was afraid of heights, but more so being close to Neron.

It was time for me to shed my tough exterior and enjoy the night. My inner child begged to come out

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and play, to be goofy and innocent. The children running around while dragging their parents was a testament to innocence, and besides, I wanted to ride that thing.

Pulling out my scrunchie, I tied my hair in a high ponytail, so it wouldn't get in my face. "Let's do it."

Of course, the seats were made for two people. I underestimated Neron's size and mine because when we sat together, our thighs and arms touched. The hairs on our arms hugged one other. Powerful heat and explosions of fated sparks from our bond bathed me, acting as a blanket against the cool breeze. I was sure Neron felt it too because I could see his cheeks pinking from my peripherals.

The ride was glorious. There was something about being suspended off the ground and spun in the air that was so freeing. At that moment, I wasn't an avatar. I wasn't a Delta. I was just me; I was Kiya. A woman that valued freedom. I felt like a bird taking flight for the first time. It was beautiful!

Our laughter echoed through the air as we spun. His laughter was deep and full of cheerfulness. Neron looked free, he wasn't weighed down by pack responsibilities, or expectations, he was just himself. He looked as free as I was. His blue eyes glittered, and his smile was breathtaking.

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I remembered Neron as a child. We didn't hang out often, but I remembered him as a free-spirited child. He had a passion that never faded: the world was at his fingertips and he was the explorer of the universe. It had been a long time since I saw that Neron, but tonight, that's who I saw before my eyes.

My heart swelled with happiness at the glimpses of his inner child. He looked beautiful.

Absolutely beautiful.

Resisting the urge to touch his face proved a formidable task. I wanted to see more. I wanted to see more of Neron's smiles and happiness before the darkness took away his light. Before it took away my light.

And I couldn't help but wonder if Luna Celeste and Nuria hadn't died, what would our lives have been?

After the ride, we got ice cream. I got strawberry while Neron got mint chocolate. We spent the next few minutes arguing over what flavor we considered top-tier and low-tier. We're going to have problems because there was just no way vanilla should be considered top tier!

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We passed by a couple of booths until I stopped at one. I spot an enormous teddy bear that matched my childhood toy. Instantly, I called for Neron. "We have to play this game!"

He arched an eyebrow as he approached. "Hit the balloons with darts and earn a prize. I didn't know you were into this sort of thing."

"I'm not. I want that!" I point to the teddy bear hanging from the highest hook. "It's like the bear I had when I was a kid, and I won't stop until I get it!" Flames of determination burned through me when I slammed a \$20 bill down and got five darts.

"You need not rely on a game of chance. I can buy you one on the way home."

I shook my head. "No! You already spent enough money on me, Neron. I want to earn this by my skill and pay with my money." I never backed down from a challenge, and I was not starting now. Neron held his hands up in surrender as he watched me fling the darts at the balloons.

I failed each time. All these years of training wasted!

With each un-popped balloon, I grew more and more frustrated. I was even taking up space from the other amusement park goers who wanted to give the game

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a try. I just...I wanted that bear!

Sensing my frustration, Neron leaped in like a caped hero. Like Superman. Despite my protests, he paid for his set of darts and won me the bear. His hits were so smooth and clean, like an expert archer. As the worker handed him the big teddy bear, Neron gave me a smirk before pushing it to me.

"This is for you, my lady." He bowed at the waist and handing me the bear. I couldn't hold it in. My happiness burst forward, and I hugged Neron tight. My head pressed against his chest and I locked my arms around his torso, ignoring the tantalizing sparks.

"Thank you!" I smiled up at him. "You have no idea how much this means to me!"

"Anything to see that smile on your face." He chuckled, his thumb gently caressing my cheek. I hugged the bear, burying my face in the soft cotton pelt as we moved from the booth. If anyone was looking at us, I must have looked like a giddy child.

I didn't care. I got a piece of my childhood back!

We devoured some jelly-filled churros while walking. Neron tried to steal two of mine and in retaliation, I

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took some of his. We laughed at ourselves and our childish antics, ignoring the eyes all around us.

“Hey. Can we go on the Ferris wheel?”

“Aren’t those rides slow?” He asked, crossing his arms. “It’s not as exhilarating as the Wave Swinger or the Arcade.”

“It is relaxing. I see nothing wrong with it.” I smile up at him. “We also ate a lot of churros and you had that one turkey leg earlier...”

“Good point.” Neron laughed. “Let’s go.”

I’m sure nothing would happen between us on the Ferris Wheel...

Right?

Chapter Comments

POST COMMENT

Tammie Gooding

that's the problem, you need to match that bitches energy!

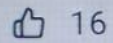



Visitor

You shouldn't go at all. Period.



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"One thing you can't hide - is when you're crippled inside." — John Lennon

Kiya

At least the Ferris Wheel didn't stop like in those cheesy movies. The slow and tranquil ride relaxed both Neron and me. We both sat together in our cabin, gradually ascending towards the indigo sky. The near-full moon bathed me in its scintillating light, smiling down on me as I reciprocated one back.

My connection to the moon had strengthened since the awakening. Before, it was an ally, a helper to me. Now it was maternal. I felt Selene's protection as the moon shone down on us and I wished I could see her again. Even though I couldn't, I knew she was always there watching over me, watching over us all.

Even Neron was watching me. I felt his eyes on me as I watched the sky.

"I like the view," I was never good at initiating conversation. "The last time I had been this high up was on a plane to Europe."

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"You traveled?" Neron asked, intrigued.

"Yes. My parents took me to Paris one day on their spontaneous trips before I started college. It was the first time I ever traveled outside of my home, let alone the country. I was so scared, but they reassured me that everything would be okay."

Memories of my trip played in my head like an old movie, bringing warmth to my chest. "Vacationing in Paris ended up being one of the best moments of my life. I hope to go back someday." I turn to him. "Have you ever traveled out of Nevada?"

"Here and there. No place near as exciting as Paris though, that's for sure." Neron chuckled. "I've traveled to other states to speak with other Alphas, form alliances, and talk business. I wouldn't call it a vacation, but it felt good to breathe in different air."

"Favorite place?"

"Hmm. Miami. Very nice with fantastic beaches. I did business with the Alpha of the Sunstone Pack, but there was something about Miami that called to me. I wish I could spend more time there when I had the opportunity." His warm smile did things to my heart because it began picking up speed. "You said Paris was one of your best moments. What was the best?"

I bit my lip. My answer would mercilessly murder

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the mood. But he asked. I shouldn't withhold the truth. What happened was for the best because it freed me from hurt and tyranny. "When I broke my bond with Zircon."

And like that, the mood died. Neron's smile vanished into a forlorn frown, his eyes losing their shine. "Oh. I..."

"You asked."

"Kiya, how did you survive the fall?" Neron shifted in his seat, fully facing me. Our knees brushed each other lightly. "There's...no one could've survived a drop like that, human or werewolf."

"I *didn't* survive, Neron." His eyes widened in shock as I continued. "I died that night. I drowned. Correction, *Halima* drowned."

"But...you're still her."

"Neron, there are reasons I wanted to separate myself from my past. I'm not her and never would be again."

"I apologize." He whispered. "How are you here now?"

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"Selene was merciful," I brush my fingers through my teddy bear's sandy pelt. "I died before my time. After some conversation, she sent me back to Earth for another life. She said I have a purpose to fulfill." I laughed. "I guess she meant this avatar stuff, huh?"

"Goodness..." Neron buried his face in his hands, shielding his eyes. As if he didn't want me to see his physical shame. "Kiya, I want to know. I want to know what happened after you survived."

"Why?"

"So, I could truly understand how my actions fucked up your life, and how your pack gave you the life you deserved." He suddenly looked at me, his eyes brimming with intense emotion. "Tell me how much I and my pack failed you."

"Everything?"

"Everything."

Neron got what he asked, albeit with some hesitation. From my grueling recovery to mental health counseling to getting back in school to where I am today, I told all. Neron listened in silence until I finished but failed to keep a neutral expression. Emotions were easy to read on his face, I could read him like an open book.

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I saw sadness. Shock. Frustration. Anger. Guilt. Substantial guilt like a dark storm cloud. It rained on him and added more weight to his shoulders. Neron looked as if someone shot him in the chest and the pain hasn't registered in him yet. I spared no detail. I wanted him to imagine how hard my life was. How hard my recovery was and still is. Many times, in the past five years I wanted to give up and end it all, but it was only with the support of my friends and family that I was alive today.

He had to know that. I could go on and on about how Zircon Moon destroyed me. But that's not the focus. At least talking about it would help Neron reflect on his past actions. Maybe he feels like he hasn't done enough? I don't know.

In a flash, I was pulled into a hug. A tight one. Neron's trembling body swallowed me whole, jerking with every silent sob. Hot tears rained like acid rain on my bare shoulder, blistering and powerful. He buries his large head in the crook of my neck with the atmosphere of the cabin thick with intensity.

It was overwhelming. I didn't know what to do, it even conflicted Artemis whether to comfort Onyx, who was also howling deep in shame. I couldn't hug Neron back, mostly because my arms were trapped in his hold like a boa constrictor.

"You went through so much, and I did that to you.

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You shouldn't have gone through it. I'm sorry. I'm deeply, incredibly sorry, Kiya. I'm sorry for hurting you. For forcing you to choose to end your life. I'm happy that you found your place and have people that love you deeply. They did the job that I and my pack should have done. Goddess..."

"Neron, I'm scared," I confessed to his shoulder. He releases me, pulling me back cautiously.

"Of what?"

"Of this...whatever the hell this is." I motioned to the space between us. "I can't afford any of this happening."

"I'm not sure I follow."

"You can feel the bond and so can I," I explained, running a hand through my hair. "That's the most irritating thing right now. You're apologizing and doing so much for me, and I hate it. Over this past month, it's becoming harder to hate you. I am terrified of opening my heart out further because I'm afraid you're going to turn around and crush it. I'm afraid this is all some trick. Many have taken advantage of my heart and I'll protect it, always."

"Your second chance mate deserves your heart, Kiya.

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They are out there and—!”

“They aren’t,” I whisper. “I asked Selene not to give me one.”

Neron looked at me, aghast. “Why the hell would you do that? You deserve a mate, Kiya, one who hasn’t hurt you as I did!”

“Because you never know what would happen with second chances! How do I know they won’t hurt me? That they’ll uphold their promises of love and security? It was too much of a fucking risk and I’m sick and tired of being hurt! I rather have natural love, not the love of a stupid bond!”

“You’re afraid of love.”

“No, I’m afraid of falling into that same dark hole I fought tooth and nail to get out!”

Neron sighed, the vein in his neck throbbing in frustration. An internal battle rages on within him, opposing forces shaking his limbs. “You deserve someone. Someone better than me. I love you. We both know that. I’m slowly realizing that you’ll never love me back. How could I? I ruined your chances of having a healthy relationship with someone else.”

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"It's not that!" I shout, standing away from him. "I'm never going to get a fucking relationship because who the hell wants me? You don't understand what I see when I look in the mirror. I see this damaged doll everyone threw away. Under this tough exterior, I'm still terrified! I always think everyone is out to hurt me because of what you and your pack did to me. You ruined me, Neron!"

"Then reject me!"

Silence. Suffocating silence. D-Did he...

"W-what?"

"Reject me. Cut our bond. I'll accept it." Neron looked broken, but he was also calm like he accepted his fate without a struggle, "If rejecting me means freeing you from the pain, then do it. You shouldn't be tied down to me by force. You can find love with someone worthy of your heart. I'm not and never would be. I don't know why Selene paired us together, but that means nothing if you're in pain being with me."

"Neron, I can't reject you." I shake my head.

"Rejection is a pain I wouldn't wish on anyone, not even you."

"Why are you hesitating, Kiya?" Neron's fists balled

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up as he fought back Onyx's objections, eyes shifting from blue to gold, back to blue, "Do it! End our bond and free yourself from me!"

"No! I can't!"

"You must!"

"No!"

"You're damning yourself for not rejecting me, Kiya," Neron barked, running a hand through his unruly hair. "I can't reject you. Not again. I don't deserve you and I'll take the pain. Give it to me. Please, I want you to be happy."

Say the forbidden words, and it'll all be over. I'll never have to feel anything for him again. But the words. They refuse to come out. Why couldn't I grant myself this favor? I don't love Neron, right? And the pain of rejection is so mind-numbing that I killed myself soon after. Only a few were strong enough to withstand the pain, and Neron will.

So, why? Why couldn't I do it? An eye for an eye! It'll be the ultimate revenge! He could suffer like I wanted him to. He'll fall and writhe as I did. The deep-seated pain would eat him up and I'll have the last laugh.

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It was my chance. My only chance.

...and I didn't want to take it.

"I won't Neron..." Hot tears began to pool in my eyes from the emotional turmoil, "I won't reject you."

In the end, I'll always be a weakling. Odessa was right. No matter how much pain I've been through, there was not a bone in my body that would wish that pain on someone else. Even someone like Neron.

Neron stared at me, unmoving. We're slowly descending on the Ferris wheel, the ride ignoring our conflict. The two of us stood watching each other for the slightest waver. Who would falter first?

"Goddamnit, woman. You're driving me crazy."

It happened. No warning, no preparations—nothing. Neron's lips engulfed mine in a deep, hungry kiss, taking my breath away. His arms locked around my waist, pulling me against his hard body.

This was wrong.

This was sinful.

Yet, I didn't want it to end.

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I locked my arms around his neck and kissed back, eager to be closer to him. I felt his tongue lick my bottom lip for entrance and when I parted my lips, his tongue and mine battled for dominance, our growling echoing between us. Time around us stopped, we descended deep into the simmering heat of our bond. We were bound for hell, and we didn't care.

We kissed heavily until the end of the ride, silently venting out our frustrations and emotions through our lips.

Unknown

"Lucien. It's time."

My servant gave me a look of fearful astonishments. Deep chuckles erupted from my throat to see my normally composed servant falter. Swirling the red liquid in my glass, I arch an eyebrow, prompting him to say what he wanted to say.

"Are you sure, my Lord?" He asked hesitantly. "I think it's much too early to send the hunter."

"I think it's a perfect time to send the hunter."
Insulted by his insinuation, I growl. "The longer My

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Moon is out there, the more valuable time I waste. My plans must go on and she needs to be here for it.”

“And of the other avatars?”

“Get them along the way. The more we have, the better the outcome. But my Moon is strictly for me.”

Lucien sighed, battling with his next actions. He knew that he should exercise caution when speaking to me, one wrong word and I’ll snuff out his life. The yells of protests from outside did nothing to irk me, for their submission was inevitable. I cannot afford rebellious puppets within my midst, not when the key to my victory was within my grasp.

“Yes, my Lord.”

“It is time to unleash Cerberus.”