

His Blue Moon Princess Chapter 36 - Tips

Elena looks at me, waiting for my reaction.

“...You mean, like a Blue Moon Clan?”

Elena nods.

...What? But I’ve never heard of a Blue Moon Clan! Of all the Clans of Silver City, I’m pretty sure I’ve never heard of that one... I turn to Bobo to see if he knows something about such a name, but he is not reacting, looking just as confused as I am.

“There is no Blue Moon Clan in Silver City,” he says.

Elena nods. “To be exact, there is no Blue Moon Clan at all. Not anymore. But from what I know, there used to be one, far up in the North. I don’t know why or how, but they were all... k!lled. The full pack. About eighteen years ago.”

That’s when I was born...

What happened then? Who could have decimated a full Clan of werewolves? Usually, it’s settled with a fight between Alphas, or the pack warriors, but there are always survivors who would become rogues or submit to join other clans to ensure their survival. But for a full pack to be k!lled... Unless they were attacked by humans or witches? Or vampires?

“Killed? An entire Clan? But... how?” I ask.

“I still don’t know yet. But you and I are proof that some people from this Clan survived...”

“Wait, you are... I mean, you think you are from this Blue Moon Clan, too? Did you grow up in this Clan then?”

“No, no, I’m barely older than you, Nora. Someone saved me when I was an infant, and brought me to a childless couple of the Opal Clan here, in Silver City.”

Now that I look at her from closer, it does seem like Elena is most likely in her early twenties, maybe younger... But I never imagined she might be an

orphan. So, I guess she doesn't have any memories of living with that Clan or knows who are her birth parents either.

"The woman who saved me told that a Royal's family had been killed, and that she had found me alone in the middle of the... slaughter."

I gasp, stunned. A Royal Family? I've heard of it, but...

Among werewolves, Royals are the purest! Descendants from the very first werewolves, blessed by Moon Goddess. They have kept their bloodline so pure, staying away from humans and other species, that they are all born Alphas and deeply respected by other werewolves. Some even said they have abilities granted by the Moon Goddess herself... But I didn't think there were still families of Royals alive! They are the royalty for any werewolves' pack, but there is no known family like that anywhere near our area.

"Royals? Are you sure?" Asks Bobo.

"For now, I am sure of nothing! I have no memories of surviving a massacre either. I just gathered bits of information from my adopted parents and older wolves of our pack... But I've seen Nora's wolf, and you did, too."

I frown. What does she mean with that? How is my wolf shape related to this Clan...? Both Elena and Bobo stare at me for a while, with complex expressions I can't decipher. I don't get it!

"What do you mean?" I ask Elena.

"You are a pure wolf, Nora. Dark blue eyes and a perfectly white fur. Do you have any idea how rare is that combination among werewolves? It's almost legendary! And you even have a Clan's name as your given name!"

"No, no, you said yourself, it is probably only the Clan's name. Even if I am from the Blue Moon Clan, it could just have been mistaken as..."

"Royal Families do take give and take their Clan's Names, Nora," says Bobo. "They carry it for generations until there is no more descendant, and usually a new Alpha from a dominant but non-Royal family takes over. Any Clan's name can be really old or newly made up, but only the Royals are entitled to carry it. And your father definitely knew who your mother was. Why would he have told you this was your last name otherwise?"

“One does not give a Clan’s name to their child!” Adds Elena.

I look at both of them, stunned. No, I can’t be a Royal’s child! That makes no sense...

“Then why wouldn’t that make you a Royal’s child too? Aren’t we related?” I ask Elena.

She laughs softly and shakes her head.

“We are related indeed, but I highly doubt I am the child of a Royal. Not directly, at least. I have gold eyes, and my fur isn’t completely white like yours. One of my parents probably wasn’t a pure werewolf.”

But she is an Alpha, isn’t she? My wolf can smell that she could be a serious opponent. I shake my head, lost by too much information.

“So you think my birth mother was...?”

“A Royal, yes.”

But my dad was most definitely not... And until now, I thought there weren’t any Royals left! Centuries have passed since the very first werewolves. How could we keep the bl00d so pure until now? I know that there was still some of them a few generations ago. Among Clans, it is known that Royals were treated like treasures because of their pure bl00d and abilities, and ruled any Clan they were in. By nature, they had to lead and rule; they cannot be submitted. But me, how many times did I give up while facing Alec or Vince?

Bobo gently pats my shoulder.

“You’re probably mixed, Nora. He might not have been an Alpha, but your father’s bl00d was most likely pure enough for you to keep some of the characteristics.”

“But not all of them. I can’t heal properly, and my shape-shifting isn’t ideal either.”

“Wait a minute... You can’t heal fast?” Asks Elena, surprised.

I shake my head. “No... I still heal faster than a human, but my healing ability is not as good as regular werewolves.”

She looks very shocked for a while, before pointing to herself. “Nora, I have the same issue! As far as I recall, I never healed properly!”

“Really?”

“Yes! So far, I thought it was just me being weaker than other werewolves, but now...”

She’s right. If we are right about being related, and both experience the same problem with our healing capacity, that means it must be an issue with our blood. If we are indeed related to Royals, shouldn’t our abilities actually be stronger than our peers? Why are we slow-healers? Is it because we are mixed, then?

“Did you experience anything else that’s different?” I ask.

“Mind-linking. I’m much better at that than anyone I know, including my own Alpha. No matter the distance, I have no problem communicating with my pack members. I can even communicate with other packs’ Alphas.”

“Wait, aren’t you an Alpha?”

She frowns. “No, I’m not. And I don’t want to be.”

But she definitely has Alpha potential, like me! I was certain she was her own Pack leader and can’t imagine her in any other position. I want to ask her, but she clearly was annoyed by the subject, so I decide to give up on this one for now.

“What about you?” She then asks.

“What about you?” She then asks.

“I can’t, for now. I don’t belong to any Clan at the moment, so...”

“You should try. With your Alpha mate.”

“I don’t really get how it works yet...”

“Nora, you’re mind-linking. Like, right now.”

I look at her, surprised, and at Bobo. Gosh, she’s right! I did it without realizing because she started talking to me that way, and her voice sounded so clear in

my head that I couldn't tell the difference. Elena smiles at me, amused by my reaction.

"Don't use it too much on others, though. If you're like me, people might... not really like it."

"Why do you mean?" I ask, intrigued.

"You'll see."

She checks the time from the clock on the wall and frowns. Bobo nods and takes a look at the entrance. "You should go, Elena. Our pack will have noticed your presence by now."

"What? Wait! We are not done talking!" I protest.

I still have so many questions! Elena is the only person so far who knows anything about my origins, and we even figured some of our issues!

But she shakes her head and puts her cap back on. "Sorry Nora, Bobo is right. I really wish I could, but I already stayed longer than I had planned to. But don't worry, I will keep searching for more information about the Blue Moon Clan."

"When can we meet again?"

She winks at me. "I will find you, don't worry. For now, don't tell anyone about what we discussed today, okay? No one but Bobo must know, Nora, it is really important."

But what about Damian? I don't want to have to lie to him! Not when we are starting to trust each other! Elena seems to read my thoughts and answers right away.

Not your mate, Nora.

But...

If makes you feel better, you are not the only one with secrets. I wouldn't trust him so easily if I were you.

What do you mean?

You'll see.

She steps back and turns around to head to the exit, ready to leave. But just when she's about to go out, Nathaniel suddenly appears at the entrance of the salon. When he sees Elena, several expressions I've never seen him wear before follow one after another. Surprise, incomprehension, doubt... Elena clearly didn't expect to run into him either.

They stare at each other for a few seconds. He seems confused, but she's very calm while facing Nathaniel.

"Elena... What are you doing here?"

"I came to see Bobo."

"Bobo?"

He looks in our direction, and Bobo immediately nods. Nathaniel stares at me, too, but I act innocent, like I don't know Elena. I don't know if he buys it, but his eyes go back to the pretty blonde, and this time he puts on an angry expression.

"You're not supposed to be here."

"Are you going to kill me then?"

Her forthright question clearly destabilizes him, and he drops the angry act. I'm amazed by how composed Elena is, compared to Nathaniel. They stare at each other for a while, and their eyes seem to express so much that I feel like I'm eavesdropping on a private exchange. They might be mind-linking, but I can't tell. But after a while, Nathaniel silently steps aside, letting her leave without another word. He watches her figure as she steps away, and I can't help but wonder once again what's between those two...

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Once she's out of sight, Nathaniel turns to us, frowning. This is the first time I've seen him looking annoyed.

"Bobo, what was that?" He asks in a cold tone.

"Just as she said."

I feel bad for letting Bobo handle Nathaniel alone, but his attitude is clearly telling me to stay out of it, and I remember Elena's words. Nathaniel and Bobo stare at each other for a few seconds, and I wonder if the Alpha will interrogate him again... But against my expectations, he doesn't ask anything else. Instead, he breathes in, regaining his composure, and turns towards me.

"Sorry about that, princess. Anyway, you look really pretty, and I hope you have a great date tonight with my brother. Enjoy your birthday."

His words sound a bit empty, and I can't help but think that his mind is somewhere else. I almost had forgotten about the salon's staff around us after all my talk with Elena, but they quietly and swiftly resume working once Nathaniel exits. I remain silent and wait for a while before I turn to Bobo.

"That scared me..."

"Don't worry. I doubt he would do anything to Elena. But let's be more careful next time. It might not be Nathaniel that shows up."

I nod. It usually doesn't end well for a werewolf trespassing on another Clan's territory. Elena did seem pretty confident, but I still wouldn't bet she was totally out of danger by coming here. The lady behind me clicks her tongue when I turn my head to talk to Bobo, but I ignore her.

"Is the Opal Moon territory far from here?"

Bobo shakes his head and scratches between his dreadlocks while thinking.

"Not really... They are mostly located on the Art District and around the University grounds. But they are affiliated with the White Moon Clan, which is even bigger actually, so they can walk freely on most of North End. They have lots of good bars and restaurants with live music. They are usually tolerated on the Blood Moon turf though, as long as they don't push it."

Of course. If the other packs' members weren't tolerated on the Blood and Velvet Moon turfs, a third of the inhabitants wouldn't be able to take a step in the city. Usually, everyone tries to stay on their own land, but for several reasons, an estranged wolf can walk freely on another pack's turf, as long as they have a good reason for it. Most of the time it's for work or the young ones who go to school in the city. What could raise suspicions is if a wolf adventured too far alone and unannounced on another territory like Elena did today. Basically, once on another pack's turf, any wolf is at the mercy of that

pack. They don't need a reason to attack; they make their own rules on their domain.

Which makes me wonder how Elena will be able to meet me again...

I get lost in my thoughts while another lady comes to do my makeup. As my preparation goes on, Bobo asks if I want a cup of tea, but I politely refuse. I know he is just trying to help me ease my mind, but I still have a hard time processing everything I learned just today.

The child of a Royal? How could that be...? I look at my reflection in the large mirror facing me. Is it even possible? Until now, I didn't even know Royals still existed in this day and age. Now Elena comes in and states that I am related to such a legend. As a mixed child. Did my father know? If so, why did he take me from my mother? Was she killed along with that family?

Somehow, I feel a hole in my heart whenever I think of my birth mother. Is it because I never really got along with the one who raised me? I wonder if she looked like me. She was probably the one with blue eyes. I want to know more about her, but where to start? Elena seems to have more information, but I have nothing...

And what about Damian? Elena advised to not tell him a thing, but why? If I really am the child of a Royal, I wish I could tell him. I want to ask Bobo, but there are too many ears around us for now, so I hold it in. Anyway, this is all too sudden. I need to think about it.

I get lost in my thoughts and forget about the time. When my makeover is finally done, Tonia comes back just in time to witness it.

I'm standing in the middle of the salon wearing the very pretty winter dress she gave me as my birthday present this morning, with Nathaniel's shoes. To be quite honest, I love what I see in the mirror, though I can barely recognize myself. With the heels, I don't look so petite anymore, and the dress fits me perfectly, making me more feminine than ever. It is sea-blue, with a silver ribbon and pearls around the waist, and stops at my knees. My hair was very nicely done as well, giving my dark curls an elegant but natural look. The makeup is light, too, with a bit of blush here and there, a touch of mascara, and camellia-pink lips.

This girl facing me is really pretty, and I feel a bit embarrassed staring at myself. But behind me, the siblings are both smiling.

“Very pretty.”

“Pretty? She is stunning!” Claims Tonia.

I don’t know what to say, so I just whisper some shy thanks.

Now I’m starting to feel anxious. Seeing myself all ready and dressed up reminds me that I am about to have a date with Damian. My very first date! I’m both excited and nervous... And I have no idea what he has in store for me. I feel like I barely know him already; how could I guess what plans he made for tonight?

As I suspected, Tonia is driving me to the rendezvous. In the car, I’m as anxious as one can be, and no one speaks. The girls from the Jade Moon Clan always argued about romantic moonlight strolls, going to the movies, or candlelit dinners. It’s a bit hard to imagine Damian doing any of these...

Tonia puts some music on the radio, and I try to relax.

About half an hour later, it’s already dark outside when we stop in a location I can’t recognize. It is pretty quiet, actually, except for the sounds of the seashore.

Why are we at the waterfront? Last time I came close to the sea didn’t end well... But the atmosphere is quite different this time. Tonia covers me up with a large white fur coat, and we walk a couple of steps to face a large boat.

It’s actually a superb white yacht with its lights on and elegant wooden floors. Pushing me gently, Bobo helps me get onboard while I’m still in awe. I have never been on a boat before! And it is a private yacht to boot! I take shy steps inside, but the siblings don’t follow behind me, staying on the dock. I want to ask them why, but they just gesture me to go on without them. Oh, well...

My wolf detects five... No, six people inside while I slowly walk in, though I don’t see anyone. But that doesn’t really matter, because my heart is already thumping loudly. My wolf feels his presence, and that’s all she can focus on for now. A romantic song is floating in the air, coming from the deck, so I head that way. This is so intriguing...

Once I finally reach the deck, I’m left completely speechless.

As if in a dream-like setting, the deck is decorated with small pastel-colored flowers and fairy lights all over. On the floor, there is a thin layer of snow, perfectly even and white. In the middle of it, a wooden table was set for two, with white napkins, crystal glasses, and silverware, with a centerpiece composed of candles, sand, and seashells. All of it is arranged in an elegant, but intimate, and unbelievably romantic setting.

Everything is absolutely perfect.

And in the frame of this incredible sight, stands Damian.

I find him more handsome than ever. As always, he is wearing only dark clothes, but this time it is a jet-black costume, with a silver tie matching his glowing eyes. He appears effortlessly handsome standing there, and I find myself falling for him once again. His muscular figure, the marble-chiseled traits, his thin lips... He even got a fresh haircut and a clean, short stubble beard.

...How can one be so handsome?

I'm tearing up when I walk up to him.

He catches my hand, entangling his fingers with mine as our faces come close. Our eyes meet, and I feel happier than ever. My heart is so warm and loud I feel like it will explode any time now. Damian's eyes, lock onto mine, sheening love on me. How can such an icy gaze make one burn with feelings at the same time?

Before we say a word, his lips find mine, and we lose ourselves in a long, tender, and passionate kiss.

He is passionate but gentle. I follow his rhythm, answering his kiss with more confidence than before. This taste on my lips is addicting, and I don't want to stop. Ever. I kiss him back, putting my free hand on his chest. I don't need air. I just want this man's breath against mine.

I feel Damian's hand sliding into my hair, his fingers playing with my curls like he loves to. He grasps and holds it, keeping me close enough to melt under his embrace. Winter means nothing. I feel myself burning from this man's delightful kiss, almost like I could get drunk on it.

When our k!ss finally comes to an end, Damian holds me close against him, and his !lips slowly slide all the way to my ear to whisper.

“Happy Birthday, Nora.”

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I can't act scared or even shocked by Damian's words. With what the brothers went through, they might have been the ones to die if things had gone differently. Also, I realize that what Damian did was also his way of protecting his brothers. How could he endure seeing his younger siblings hurt for so many years while holding his hatred in? Back when Alec beat me, I had no one to hold dear, no one to protect. But for them, things were different. Liam knows his older brothers shielded him from their father's madness, yet he still couldn't escape it.

“His Beta knew what we were planning, but he didn't say a thing to our father. He had come to hate him, too, yet he had to obey. Our father even beat up his son once, to punish him. How could he not despise him? That's when I understood I had more allies than I thought.”

A faint smirk appears at the corner of his !lips, for a split second. He helps himself with a glass of wine, while I'm having water. The dishes between us are getting cold, but neither of us cares. I'm too immersed in his story to think about my plate.

“So Nate and I got ready, taking our time. We allied with rogues like the Mura siblings.”

“Bobo's family?”

“Yes. Our father was so harsh, he never wanted to take in new wolves in the pack, even some desperate families that stood at our borders. So Nathaniel came up with the idea of starting his own Pack, the Velvet Moon Clan. That way, he could rally more wolves, and our father had no idea. It was almost too easy. When they saw how strong Nate and I were getting, and our Alpha potential, they submitted without a fight. They didn't ask for anything as long as I wasn't like my father. The pack got so big so quickly, we couldn't believe it. Until then, we had thought we would have to wait for years until we could take my father head on!”

“Why? Wasn’t it only about dueling him for the Alpha position? What does it have to do with the size of the Velvet Moon pack?”

Damian stays silent for a while, and I wonder what he is so reluctant to say. Eventually, he sighs and looks at me straight in the eye. “Because we wanted to be sure that, no matter the outcome, my father wouldn’t be able to survive.”

“...What do you mean?”

“I wasn’t sure to win, Nora. And if I died during the fight, Nate and I wanted to be sure someone would finish the job. And if someone did, we had to be sure my father’s wolves wouldn’t take him out.”

It takes me a few seconds to realize.

“...It was about Liam. You wanted to be sure that even if you died, Liam could k!ll your father and take his place.”

Damian nods. “I knew I could hurt him badly enough, but I wasn’t sure I could win. So Nate came up with that idea. That even if I died, we would make sure Liam k!lled him. But we also had to make sure no one would k!ll our little brother before he could get to our father, and that people would support him afterward.”

“Hence the Velvet Moon Clan. It wasn’t just a b.ranch Clan; you wanted it to be able to take on the Blood Moon Clan.”

Damian chuckles. The waiter comes back to take away our empty plates. My mate grabs my hand once again, intertwining my fingers with his.

“Back then, it was still called the Black Moon Clan, but yes, that was the idea. However, it didn’t even come to a real fight between the two groups. When I turned nineteen, I defied my father while we were alone. He didn’t take me seriously and attacked me. We started fighting in his office. We made so much noise that a lot of people came. Nate, Liam, the Betas, and about twenty people each from the Black Moon and Velvet Moon Clans. But it turns out, half of the people from his pack were actually cheering for me.”

They once again underestimated how despised their father was. Or maybe people felt Damian already had what it took to be a better Alpha. In any case, I’m not even surprised.

“Most of those who were for my dad held onto the fact that he was the one that had chased all the vampires and witches away. I can’t really blame them for that, though. He was an insane and violent man, but as an Alpha, he was still the strongest wolf around.”

“But you did beat him,” I said.

“Not easily, trust me. People were shocked by how adamant I was about finishing him off. Most of them had no idea about what he had done to us all those years. But if anyone tried to intervene, Nate, Neal, or Seamus killed them on the spot.”

“...Seamus?”

“My father’s Beta, Seamus Graves. I told you, he had our back. He couldn’t attack our father directly, but he did kill anyone from the Black Moon pack who opposed us. Lots of people were shocked, but Seamus had made up his mind years ago. When I finally won, I wasn’t in good shape, but he killed two wolves who tried to attack me. He was seen as a traitor, but he was the one who helped us the most take over the Black Moon Clan.”

“What happened to him?”

Damian shakes his head. “He left the territory. He said he should have died with his Alpha, but he still had his sons, and he didn’t want to do that to them. So he asked me to banish him. We don’t know about his whereabouts. Maybe he joined another pack or is still alone.”

I feel a bit sorry about the man. If we look at the bigger picture, he helped the Black Brothers in so many ways, for the sake of protecting his own. Yet it cost him so much: betraying his Alpha and leaving his family. Now that I think about it, Bobo did say one of his sons was now Nathaniel’s Beta. Isaac Graves, was it? I suppose the Beta genes runs in their family...

“Anyway, after the fight, many other packs that were fed up with our father’s Clan tried to attack us. It was chaotic for a few days.”

I remember that. The word that the “Mad Black King” had fallen spread quickly, and many packs got crazy, hungry for power. The head Alpha had overshadowed so many people for years, and as soon as he was gone, many thought their time had come.

However, the Black Brothers quickly made it known that the Blood Moon Clan could take anyone and was not to be underestimated. The former pack had become bigger and even stronger. People were shocked that it had grown enough to actually have a secondary Clan, the Velvet Moon. And all of that had been done secretly, to boot. Clans that had tried to fight were wiped out, and opposing werewolves were submitted in no time. Just like that, the previous territory established by their father got even bigger in only a few weeks' time.

"I can't believe this all happened when you guys were still teens..." I whisper.

"Our mother passing away accelerated things. Things got way worse in a few weeks' time, and if we didn't act, I was afraid he was going to kill us first."

I nod. If he had no problem hitting his children when they were young, who knows what would it have been like once they reach adulthood... It's a miracle they survived that far.

Once again, I find myself thinking about their mother. I can't even imagine what she went through, being unable to help her children. If it was as bad as Damian said, and I don't doubt it was, how could she never notice? Her sons, enduring her husband's insanity. I imagine young Damian, Nathaniel, and Liam living each day in fear while their powerless mother was on a hospital bed. And yet all they did was protect each other and love her.

I silently make the promise to myself to never be as helpless as she was. Not only do I want to stand by Damian's side even more, but I also feel like I should do what their mother couldn't. I want to be that Luna, the one that can protect her pack and her children. I feel my wolf growling fiercely inside, and she's more than up for that challenge.

While I'm thinking, so is Damian. He is frowning, and his silver eyes are fixated on his meat, though it's obvious that he doesn't see it. And I feel his thoughts echoing mine all too clearly. I can guess what's on his mind right away.

"You are not going to be like your father, Damian," I say softly to him.

He raises his head, surprised, and this time I'm the one putting my hand on his and doing the talking.

"I know you are afraid of being like he was, because you are both strong Alphas, and I understand. But you two are different. You can control yourself. All you wanted was to protect Nathaniel and Liam. Even now, you are always trying to protect me. And you listen to your brothers, to your Beta. Your father didn't care about anyone but himself. You are a fighter, but that doesn't make you an evil person. Just a strong Alpha."

He stays silent for a while, making me wonder if my words had any effect on him. But after a while, he finally smiles. Then, he brings my hand to his lips, kissing it while looking me into the eyes with a resolute look. "I will protect you, Nora, I swear to the Moon Goddess Mother. I'm not letting what happened to my mother happen to you; I won't lose you. You have no idea how much I need you. I need you to keep me sane, to remind me what's right and what isn't. I can fight anyone, but I will do whatever it takes to protect you."

I smile, but why do I feel like his words have a deeper meaning than what I hear...?

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Before I can get any further into my interrogations, the waiter comes back. I blush a little, as Damian is still holding my hand and actually keeps kissing it shamelessly. He sends me playful looks, amused by my reactions. I feel embarrassed, but the waiter doesn't say a word and takes away our empty plates.

Once he is gone, I click my tongue and try to take my hand away. Of course, he won't let go so easily.

"Stop it..." I mumble shyly.

But Damian ignores me, and instead gets up, leading me to do the same. He puts a hand on my waist, and puts my hand he was holding onto his chest. I smile and wrap my fingers around his neck, brushing the baseline of his hair. He slowly starts dancing, small steps that I can easily follow.

For a while, we don't say a word. I let him lead our little dance, and rest my head on his chest while listening to the music. It's like we are alone in the world, and for now, I love it. Surrounded by the sea, fairy lights, and Damian's arms. I feel his fingers gently brushing my skin, and the shivers I get have

nothing to do with the cold. Can't we pause this moment forever? My eighteenth birthday is a dream I couldn't have dreamt myself.

Two songs pass, and we can't separate from each other. I feel safe in those arms. Far from all the worries, the mysteries, the secrets...

And I find myself thinking about Elena's words. What did she mean? Why shouldn't I trust Damian? Moon Goddess wants us together, so why is it that I can't trust my fated mate completely? It's not just Elena's words. Something tells me I've only scratched the surface. Getting him to talk about his past was already a big step, yet I still want more. Much more. He is constantly keeping me away from the real world. It's like being trapped in a golden prison. I can't go out as I wish, and I have no idea what's going on outside. Why do I need to be so protected? It can't just be related to our bond...

Just for tonight, I close my eyes and I forget all about my questions. That can wait until tomorrow, can't it? I don't want to ruin this, my first date with Damian. He is gentle, loving, and just for tonight, he is all for me.

I feel him leaning slowly towards the side, and his lips gently land on my neck. Soft kisses, running with a small fire on my skin. Anything he touches burns, and it's addicting. I blush again and close my eyes. Suddenly, I feel his hands leaving me, and I frown. What is he doing? Then, I see him put something around my neck, and I gasp. A necklace! He puts the thin silver chain around my neck and helps me put my hair back around it. Oh, Moon Goddess...

"You didn't think I wouldn't give you a present, did you?"

I smile and grab the little pendant with my fingers to look at it. It's a magnificent crescent moon, made of a myriad of little white diamonds. The design is so elegant and pure, I love it.... Though the moon is not too big, it shines like a treasure against my pale skin. I can't take my eyes off it for a few seconds, making Damian smile.

"You like it?"

"Damian, I love it!"

I jump to kiss him, standing on tiptoe and putting my arms around his neck. My gosh, why does he have to be so tall! But it does not matter, as I feel him smile against my lips and bend over to kiss me some more. I play with his hair under my fingers, and he suddenly grabs my waist and hoists me up, before

putting his arms under my thighs to carry me while I face him. Our playful kiss goes on, with the two of us chuckling from time to time, trying to take over the other's lips. It's funny to stand a little higher than him for once, and I like the way he looks up to meet my eyes.

But all of sudden, I hear the waiter coming back, and I'm red again as he sees me straddling Damian. I try to break free, but of course, the man won't let me go and keeps holding me against him. I hide my face into his neck, too ashamed to face the young waiter. Can't he be a bit more decent sometimes?!

"Nora, look."

I frown against his shirt collar. What does he want now? Is the waiter gone at least?

But when I finally turn my head, another surprise is waiting for me. A cake! A small cake is now on the table, with two lit 18-shaped candles on it. Damian puts me down so I can approach it. I can't believe it! He really got me an Opera Cake!

I smile subconsciously, happy to see my favorite dessert. Someone even wrote down a "Happy Birthday" in white chocolate on top of the cake, and drew flowers with the icing and spread some gold powder, too. I bite my lip, not knowing what to say. My first birthday cake in forever, and it's so perfect!

I finally turn to Damian, smiling from ear to ear. "You really got me that cake!"

"You can thank Nate for that, actually. I had to ask for his help. So, this Opera Cake you wanted so badly was just a chocolate cake?"

I laugh and shake my head. "Not just a chocolate cake! It's actually layers of almond sponge cake, soaked in coffee syrup, with layers of ganache and coffee buttercream, and it is covered in the chocolate glaze," I recite with assurance.

Damian looks at me, surprised. "Sounds like you could do it on your own."

"Maybe I'll try sometime. I read the recipe long ago and I always wanted to try it."

"What, so this is your first time eating one?" He asks.

I nod and head back to my seat. I really want to have a taste of it now! Damian chuckles and joins me, putting his chair next to mine. The waiter comes back quickly to serve us some champagne once more. I take a new sip, feeling fine. I'm just a little bit light-headed, nothing wrong with that, and it might even not be to blame on the alcohol...

I lean toward the candles, and close my eyes, trying to think of a wish to come up with. I feel like I can't ask for anything more than all that is given to me now... In the end, I just silently ask Moon Goddess Mother to watch over me and the people I love for this new year. I blow out the two candles quickly, and Damien puts a quick kiss on my head, wishing me a happy birthday once again.

Damian puts his arm around my chair while I grab the little forks. I decide to ignore the plates the waiter gave us and eat directly from the cake. Gosh, this is so good. I take another bite, a bit greedy. We are still facing Silver City, and I'm having an Opera Cake on a boat, with pretty clothes and a birthday present from my fated mate around my neck... If someone had told me that three months ago, I wouldn't have believed any of it.

"Are you going to eat all that Opera Cake on your own, or do you intend to let me have some of it, too?"

I laugh at him with my mouth still full. I was so absorbed into my tasting that I even forgot to hand him his fork... Instead of giving it back to him, I take some of the cake with it and actually feed it to him.

He makes a frown as soon as he tries it. "Too sugary...."

"You don't like sweet stuff, anyway! Why did you want it then?" I ask, amused by his grimace.

"I was curious about what that cake you wanted so much tasted like..." He grabs his glass and drinks some champagne, probably to take off the taste. Well, seems like this cake is all mine then!

I keep eating happily, and Damian just drinks, watching me stuff myself with a smile. I know he still thinks I'm too skinny. They all do, though I'm pretty sure I'm not underweight anymore.

After a while, I finally stop eating, too full to have any more of it. I lean back and rest my head on Damian's shoulder. "You didn't smoke all night."

“How do you know I usually smoke?”

“The smell. I’ve never seen you with a cigarette, but you always have this faint tobacco smell on you. How come you never smoke in front of me?”

“I couldn’t smoke at the hospital, and the Mura siblings hate it, so... I don’t need it that much, anyway.”

“Do your brothers smoke, too?”

“I don’t think so. Maybe Liam, but he knows we don’t want him to. Nate is more of a drinker, but he hates the smell of tobacco.”

I nod. I got that impression, too. And he works around kitchens all day, so I guess he would try to stay away from it.

I feel Damian’s eyes slowly shift to my forearm, and I quickly cover it with the blanket. I know he is thinking about the small scars of cigarette burns I have there, but now is not the time. I don’t want him to think about that kind of things. Is that the real reason he never smokes in front of me?

Another half-truth...

When I’m about to ask him something else, I suddenly feel him tense up. He stays completely immobile for a minute, his eyes fixated on the horizon. I try to see what he is seeing, too. Isn’t there too much agitation at the north end of the harbor?

“Damian...?”

But he suddenly gets up, and runs to the back of the boat, yelling orders to go back to the bay. What’s going on?

Elena!

Nora? Where are you?

On the sea with Damian. What’s going on? There’s too much agitation at—
North End, I know! I’m headed there now, we’re under attack!

Rogues?

No, damn vampires!