

The Ivory Queen Chapter 116

Aurora's POV

I feel Evan lift me into his arms and carry up to my bedroom, gently tucking me under the covers and kissing my forehead.

"I'm so sorry," he whimpers. "I'm so so sorry."

I feel a few of his tears spill onto my cheeks before he pulls away.

"I'll stay with her," Celina murmurs. "I'll make sure she's okay."

"I'll stay too," Mia offers. "I'll keep the nightmares away while she rests."

I hear the door click shut and wait a few seconds, going through the plan in my head before sitting up and grabbing my shoes.

"Aurora?" Celina asks wide eyed. "You passed out-"

I raise a hand to stop her and peer at Mia who nods furiously.

Without a word, I open a portal to Oliver's office, leaving it open for Mia and Celina to follow me through it. Inside the office, Chava and Carter are waiting for me.

Chava pulls out two glass vials with black liquid from his pocket. He runs his hand through his hair nervously. "Are you sure about this?"

"Well it's too late now for second thoughts."

Carter rushes to me, kissing my hands in gratitude. "Thank you, Luna. Thank you for not giving on her. On them."

"I would never forgive myself if I didn't at least try to bring them back-"

"Can someone please tell me what the hell is going on?" Celina snaps, looking around in confusion. "What you guys talking about?"

I take the vials from Chava's hand and turn to face my sister, prepared to explain the events that unfolded the previous day.

"It all happened after the Alpha meeting."

FLASH BACK to yesterday morning

“You didn’t fail me,” I whisper as I hug Gwen.

I hold onto her for a while, the decision made by the Alphas slowly sinking into my bones. Gwen leans into my ear, her words echoing in my head.

“Top drawer on the left,” she whispers.

Not fully understanding, I continue to hug her, hoping to hear more when Celina’s voice interrupts us

“Come on, Aurora. Let’s get you dried off,” Celina says as Wesley drapes his coat over my shoulder.

I make a run for the woods, easily evading them all as they chase after me. Opening a portal, I disappear from sight, making sure no one knows where to find me. I keep running on the other side until my lungs burn and it hurts to breathe, until I no longer hear my thoughts call after me. I run and don’t stop until I reach the western border where the old oak tree between River Moon and Lluvia Blanca stands.

Sitting beneath its branches with my back against the trunk, I finally let myself cry, burying my face on my knees.

Why couldn’t I just be happy?

Suddenly, I hear a tiny hoot in the distance, my head shooting up instantly to look around the perimeter. In a tree just a few feet away, the black owl sits patiently upon one of its branches, its gold eyes peering at me curiously. I scramble to my feet, anger boiling in every cell of my body. Its eyes glow crimson and it grins.

“Poor little wolf,” the owl snickers. “All alone looking for her mate.”

I charge up a lightning bolt in my hand, no longer caring about their threats. They had taken all that mattered to me. What more could they take?

“So what’s it going to be Aurora?” The owl smirks.

I aim the lightning bolt at it, but miss as it jumps out of the way in time to avoid being destroyed.

“If you think it ends with just Rosalie and Oliver, you’d be wrong, mutt,” the owl sneers, the glow in its eyes brightening. “It’ll never stop. We’ll take everyone from you. Every single person you love will meet their end because of you.”

I feel tears well up in my eyes. Why me?

“The choice is so clear, my dear,” The owl smiles. “You don’t have one.”

If looks could kill, that owl would be dead a 1000 times over as I glare at it. I’ve had enough of their nonsense. I was an Ivory Twin for goddess’ sakes and I was going to make them pay for every moment of pain they’ve inflicted.

“Fine!” I snap. “You win! I’ll give you what you want. But you leave my pack and my allies alone and out of your plans. That’s my condition.”

The owl grins. “You’re in no position to bargain but I will grant you this little request. Wouldn’t want you to think I’m cruel.” The owl spreads out its wings. “At midnight, take the chalk I gave you and write NO on any surface. That should throw your allies off our tail. I’ll take care of the rest. Just make sure you get outside at 11 pm. I’ll have something prepared for you to trick your allies. Meet me at the fort just after 11:30 pm tomorrow with your sister and the medallions. And remember, no escorts. You come alone or we kill them all. Understood?”

I purse my lips together and nod before it takes flight. I sit against the tree once more, memorizing the owls instructions and carefully planning out my next moves. I would need to trick my allies and my sister if I wanted this deal to play out in my favor, but I knew I could not I do it alone. As I think, Gwen’s words replay in my head.

Top drawer on the left... what could the mean?

That’s when it clicks. Oliver’s office! She had been working in Oliver’s office!

Eager to get to figure out her littler clue, I start to open a portal when the landscape morphs into a sunflower meadow.

Mia...

“Mia let me out,” I shriek, looking aimlessly around at the field of tall flowers. “I thought I was clear, I don’t like you messing with my head!”

The world returns to normal and I find Mia and Chava standing in front of me.

“Sorry,” Mia apologizes. “I just didn’t want you to escape.”

“Aurora, we want you to know that we’re here to help. Whatever you need, we’re here. I promise,” Chava says.

Can I really trust them? I think to myself.

Goddess, who cares? Reyna snaps. They want to help. Let them!

Desperate, I wave them over and open a portal to Oliver’s office, letting them follow me in. We find Carter sitting on the floor, downing a bottle of vodka. Rushing to him, I take the bottle from his hand and he growls at me.

“Give it back, Aurora.”

“No, ” I snap, handing the bottle to Chava. Grabbing the sides of his head, I begin to heal his drunken stupor against his will.

He looks at me with pain in his eyes. “I’m going to lose them both,” he whimpers.

“No you won’t, not if I can help it. I made the deal. I’m getting her back.”

Straightening up, I run to Oliver’s desk, pulling out the top drawer. My eyes fill with tears when I find a small black velvet box, two vials of black liquid and a small note sitting inside. I open the box to find a diamond ring, the magic question gleaming on its surface.

I have to get him back so he can ask. I have to.

I quickly stuff the box back on the drawer and focus instead on the note.

“25 minutes to fully absorb. Not a perfect antidote, but it will do the trick. Do what you need to do.”

Goddess, I love that witch!

“What’s that for?” Chava asks as I clasp the vials to my chest.

“I’m getting Oliver and Rosalie back,” I say with determination. “And you three are going to help me do it. I’ve got an idea.”

***END FLASHBACK ***

“Gwen figured out how to protect us from whatever serum those witches try to use on us during the meeting ,” I announce, unscrewing the lid off one of the vials. “This will take 25 minutes to fully absorb into our bodies, so during that time, the witches will think we’re powerless.”

“Aurora, Oliver is dead. What do you need this for?” She asks pointing to the vials.

“Oliver’s not dead. I would have felt it through our bond. That was just an illusion Tais and Ira made to make you and the Alphas believe the deal was off. Mia also messed with your heads a little and made you think Simone and David showed up when they did. I needed to get outside so Tais could get the USB drive to me and it seemed like a perfect solution. You sure thought it was real. Now that everyone thinks that Oliver’s gone and I’m emotionally unstable,” I say, “I can move on to phase two of my plan.”

“What? How could you – are you f*****g kidding me?” She screams. “You actually want to give them your blood?”

“No,” I snarl. “I want theirs.”

“And how exactly do you plan on doing that?” She argues. “They’ve managed to outsmart us all!”

“By whatever means necessary”

Celina’s face fills with concern. “Aurora. You can’t be serious.”

“They’ve taken everything from me!” I snap. “And they’ll never stop taking!” I take a moment to collect myself. “I’m not losing anyone else. I’m not.”

She places a hand on my shoulder for comfort.

“I need to try Celina. Even if it’s the last thing I do, I can’t give up,” I murmur. “Please help me.”

She stares at me for a moment and I let down my walls for her see me, the real me. Tears spill onto her cheeks as she takes in all the pain I had carefully tucked away from the rest of the world, afraid it would consume me if I let any of it poke through.

“Ok,” she nods, taking one of the vials from my hand. “Let’s do this.”

She removes the top from her vial and drinks it in one go, scrunching up her nose and gagging in disgust.

“That’s f*****g disgusting,” she whines.

I swing mine back too, it’s bitter and pungent taste activating my gag reflex. That was nasty.

“You’re going to need this,” Chava says, cupping something in his hands.

A tiny black fruit fly sits in the center of his hands, flicking its wings and gazing around the room.

“Umm care to explain that part of the plan?” Celina chuckles as the fly lands on her finger.

“Those witches said to come alone,” Chava smirks, pointing at the fly. “So they’ll never see this little guy is following you around to lead us to you when they take you. No matter what happens, I’ll have eyes on you.”

I glance out the window, the stars lighting up the sky. It was time to go. I open a portal to the path leading up to the fort. If this was a trap, I wanted to be ready.

“Ready?” Celina asks, swallowing hard.

I stare into the wooded path. “I’m coming for you, Olivier.”

Hand in hand, we walk through the portal, taking deep breathes to calm our racing hearts. This was it. I would finally be coming face to face with my parent’s killers, with the monsters hell bent on destroying everything I loved.

With careful steps, we march forward, eyeing our surroundings in case of an ambush, the fly buzzing just behind us. As we approach the fort, we hear child like singing in the distance.

I recognize the voice instantly, my heart filling with dread. Tugging on Celina’s hand, I drag her into the clearing, finding little Taylor by the swing pushing Mrs. Cotton. Behind her, Emma sits with her back against the trunk, watching her daughter play with her toy.

“Luna!” Taylor squeals excitedly as she grabs Mrs. Cotton and races to me.

I get on my knees, spreading my arms out wide for the child.

“Taylor, Emma. What are you guys doing here?” I ask, looking around the empty clearing for any sign of the witches.

“Taylor wanted some fresh air. With everything going on, William has been very strict,” She chuckles sheepishly. “We’ve been holed up and I was going a little crazy. I know this is the Alpha’s place, but I didn’t think we would bother anyone,” she adds. “We can leave, though if you want-“

Celina and I look around some more, no longer paying attention to Emma and the child in my arms.

“Luna?” Emma asks, looking curiously at me. “Is something wrong?”

Snapping back to my senses, I look over at Emma. “Sorry, but you guys shouldn’t be here. You have to go now-“

We hear the crunching of leaves in the woods to our left, drawing all of our attention. Suddenly a large black wolf with flaming red eyes emerges from the trees, displaying its canines. The air fills with the sweet scent of honey and green apples, causing my heart rate to skyrocket.

“Michael...”

Moving at the speed of sound, Michael lunges at Emma, pinning her to the ground and sinking his canines into her neck.

“Mommy!” Taylor cries wriggling in my arms to free herself.

Oh goddess.

I squeeze Taylor harder, holding her head against my neck to shield her from the gory scene. Celina springs into action, stepping on her hind leg before releasing a sonic scream.

The force of the sound sends Michael flying through the air and crashing against a tree. Celina rushes to Emma’s aid, placing both hands on her neck to stop the bleeding.

“Sit still, sweetie. I’ve got you,” she whispers as she begins her healing session.

While she works on Emma, I focus on the earth and grow a few vines, wrapping them around Michael’s paws to keep him locked in place.

“M-my baby,” Emma chokes out, reaching out a hand.

Celina attempts to soothe her. “Shh, hold sti-”

She gasps suddenly and I turn just in time to see Emma plunge a needle into Celina’s neck.

“Celina!” I scream.

That’s when I feel a prick on my own neck, accompanied by a tiny giggle in my ear.

“Surprise.”

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“Surprise,” Taylor giggles, her big blue eyes flashing red as she waves the syringe in her chubby little hand.

I drop the child in my arms, my hand pressing on my neck where she injected me. Taylor picks herself up and smiles innocently at me.

“What did you do…” I ask, feeling the energy drain from my body.

“Uh Oh. Luna, looks mad,” Taylor says in a childish voice, squeezing her stuffed bunny.

Enraged, I try throwing a fire ball at her, but I barely manage to make my palm smoke.

They’ve taken my powers. I still had twenty minutes before I would regain them thanks to Gwen’s serum.

Celina stumbles to her feet, desperately trying to put some distance between herself and Emma who slowly sits up, a cruel smile on her lips. Emma's wounds heal completely on their own, her blood no longer spilling out.

"Who are you?" I demand, my gaze shifting between Emma and Taylor.

Before my very eyes, the little blue eyed girl morphs into a brunette woman in her mid twenties with green eyes.

"Hi, I'm Taylor," she chirps in the same little girl voice I had once adored. "But you can call me Ira," she adds, her voice maturing to that of a woman's.

Emma gets up, also shifting into a another brunette with similar features as Ira.

Tais.

"I think you know who I am," Tais smiles.

I glare at her and she pouts.

"Oh don't be a bad sport," she giggles.

We hear footsteps approach from behind us and Karina emerges from the trees, Adeline and David trailing behind her.

"David?" I ask, the blood draining from my face.

This can't be possible! How could he do this to us? To his own son and daughter? He helped us look!

He looks at his feet in shame, saying nothing as I stare at him in shock. Beside him, Adeline is oddly quiet, her face expressionless. I was not at all surprised of her involvement, but my head was still reeling from all the information I was processing at once. A fourth person emerges from the woods and my heart sinks.

"Oh William!" Tais chirps, coaxing him over to her with a wicked finger.

He obeys like a puppy and walks over to her, planting kisses all over her face in a greeting.

“William....” I whisper, shaking my head in disbelief. He too had tried to comfort me when Oliver was taken and he had worked tirelessly to protect the border... Or so I thought. “H-how could you...?”

I stare at him in confusion, not understanding how any of this was possible when Tais bursts into laughter.

“He thinks I’m his mate,” She snickers as he plants more kisses on her cheeks lovingly. “Stupid wolf. Little does he know, Emma and Taylor never existed. And quite frankly, William doesn’t either anymore. He’s been under my spell for five years.” She strokes his face and he leans into her touch. “Don’t fret, Luna. Much like your mate, the poor fool has no idea what he’s doing.”

William...another victim of Tais and Ira’s crimes...

I think back to all the times I had let Emma and Taylor into my home and spent time with them. I had saved Taylor and still didn’t detect her magic. I had forgiven David and urged Oliver to let his father back into his life. I had even let Adeline pour Oliver a drink as an olive branch all those weeks ago. How could they all betray me? Nothing was making any sense! All of these people had been working right under my nose. How could I not see it?

Tais rolls her eyes as I mentally kick myself for being so naïve and stupid. “No time to waste on your self pity. We have work to do.”

She nods to her evil minions and I feel a burning sensation on my arms as Adeline and David place silver shackles on my wrists behind my back. I try to open my walls for Reyna to come through but I can’t seem to reach her. Whatever serum they used put my wolf to sleep. I was truly powerless. Sending mind-links was impossible and my only hope was the little fly I could no longer detect but knew was still there watching.

I glare at David. “How could you? It’s your son and daughter!”

“Shut up,” he growls, stuffing a rag in my mouth to silence me.

He finishes tying me up while Michael, who has freed himself from my vines, struts over and lowers himself. David lifts me up despite my protests and throws me onto Michael’s back. Karina and William shift, Celina placed on Karina’s back while the witches climb onto him.

“Let’s move.”

I hear a hoot in the distance and the owl descends from the dark sky, slicing its own portal into the fabric of reality. We walk through the portal and I quickly realize we were in unclaimed territory somewhere to the North of River Moon. We walk for a minute until we come across a large oak tree with a thick trunk. Tais pulls a few branches in a specific sequence and the earth directly in front of the tree gives way to a dark passage.

They're taking us underground. I don't like small dark spaces!

Panic stricken, I writhe against Michael's back as I try to scream. David holds me down, his hands gripping my arms.

"Don't make this hard, Aurora. I don't want to hurt you," he warns.

Is he f*****g kidding me?

I take several deep breaths but I can feel the fear building up in my chest. To my right Celina wriggles about on Karina's back, wanting to comfort me. The stupid gag makes it difficult to breathe and I start to choke on it.

"David, get a grip on that girl!" Tais growls as we continue walking down a series of torch-lit corridors.

David places his finger on the gag and takes a deep breathe.

"I know you're scared, but just breathe. It will be over soon," he says, gently stroking my hair as tears spill onto my cheeks.

I turn my head, refusing to be comforted by this man and his lies. Instead I focus on my surroundings, attempting to figure out where we were. Several cells line the halls, each one containing one or two rogues pacing back and forth, drool dripping from their snouts. From the rows of cells, I deduce that we're in a prison of some sort, but what prison? River Moon had the dungeons but this didn't appear to be them, so where else could we be?

We turn down the main corridor until we come upon what looks like a circular room, a mess hall perhaps, repurposed for some sort of ritual. Torches and candles light up the entire room. Herbs, mortars, spell books and pots of all shapes and sizes sit on a wooden table on the eastern side of the room and a large black stone table takes the up the majority of the space in the center. The Soul of Insanity stands upright on a sword stand in front of the table and as we come closer, I notice the table and the sword are carved with similar

runes. More rogue filled cells line the edges of the room and much to my horror, I see Rosalie curled up in one of the cells, holding her belly protectively.

I writhe some more, catching her attention and she starts to cry. Tais and Ira climb off William's back and he shifts back into his human form. David picks me up and places me on of the stone table, William doing the same with Celina.

David's works quickly, spreading my legs apart and tying them to the two ends of the table. Adeline comes over and helps hold me down while David unshackles me and ties my arms apart and over my head to the table so I look like the Vitruvian Man.

When David pulls out a switch blade and starts to rip through my shirt, tears fill my eyes, begging him to stop. He doesn't though, working through the fabric of my shirt to reveal my black bra. He averts his eyes as he cuts through my bra, exposing my bare chest. I scream against the rag in my mouth as he works down to my jeans and panties, cutting the fabric away.

"Hold still!" Adeline hisses as she holds down my writhing body.

The same process is repeated on Celina, although she gives them more of a fight and receives a few slaps to the face. Tais approaches me, wiping away my tears as I glare at her.

"I get the feeling that you're mad at me," she pouts, her fingers traveling down to my medallion. She lifts it up and removes the center jewel from it. "Would you feel better if I was Emma?" she smiles innocently.

Ira takes Celina's center jewel and both are fitted onto the hilt of the sword, completing its design. Karina shifts into her human form and takes the blade from its stand. Tais brings over a bowl of green fluid and removes the rag from my mouth.

"Drink this," she says, pinching my jaw open and pouring the liquid into my mouth.

When I spit it out at her, she digs her fingers into my hair and slams my head against the stone table, little black spots blurring my vision as pain surges from the back of my head.

“I won’t ask twice,” she hisses, pouring more into my mouth.

A little disoriented, I swallow the liquid and take a few deep breaths to calm my racing heart

“There, see? That wasn’t so hard was it?” She chuckles.

In the background, I hear William chain Michael to the wall, the latter willingly standing still as the silver shackles are put on him.

“Let him go,” I snap. “You wanted me. That was the deal. Let Oliver go.”

“And we will,” Ira giggles. “After we take all of your blood.”

What!?! That wasn’t the deal!

“You lying bitches-“

“Ah, ah, ah,” Ira scolds, waving a finger at me. “We didn’t lie. We just didn’t tell you how much we needed.” She claps her hands together in excitement. “But fear not, that little cocktail you drank is meant to help keep you alive. You’re still of use to us when this is all over.”

An alarm goes off, signaling the arrival of midnight and the solstice. “It’s time. Karina, you’re up,” Tais orders, everyone stepping back to give Karina space to work

Karina grabs the Soul of Insanity from its stand and walks slowly towards me, pressing the blade against my chest without drawing any blood. Her dark eyes fill with pure hatred. This was not the woman who raised me. She was long gone. This was a woman determined to see me cease to exist and it was terrifying to see.

“You look just like her,” she whispers, a few tears spilling onto her cheeks. “You were a constant reminder of what we lost because of her. Because of you.” She starts to laugh a little before her face hardens. “But no more,” she hisses, pressing the blade into my chest, making me hiss in a pain as a few drops of blood spill onto my chest.

She lifts the sword up to my arms and presses the blade against my wrists, her eyes never leaving mine. Time seems to slow down as Karina slices through my skin, blood spewing from my veins. Rosalie cries out, begging her

to stop hurting me but my own screams drown her out. I writhe in agony as Karina slowly makes her way down my body, cutting and slicing until my blood pools around me and my eyes grow heavy. Its suddenly freezing and my body refuses to stop trembling as more blood spills from my wounds and onto the table. Celina wriggles and protests but can do nothing to help me, crying out as I struggle to keep my eyes open.

Moving on to Celina, Karina makes the same incisions on her body until Celina too is covered in blood. I desperately try to stay awake but my exhaustion finally takes over and I lose consciousness.

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A sudden warmth envelops me and I wake up surrounded by a sea of sand. A bright light blinds my view and I raise a hand to shade my eyes as I hear a groan besides me, only to find Celina laying next me.

“Celina?” I tap her shoulder, jolting her wide awake.

She looks around in confusion. “Where are we?”

I shrug, taking in the view myself. We were in the middle of what appeared to be a sandy desert with a volcano sitting off in the distance. Despite the bright red sun dancing in the sky, the air is not arid or hot, but cool and refreshing. On the horizon, we see what looks to be a temple made of solid gold surrounded by plush green shrubs, fruitful trees, and a small stream. The sun shines brightly and if I look closely, I can see dragons flying across the sky.

Dragons?

Getting up, Celina and I decide to investigate this strange realm.

Hot coals line the path leading up to the temple and as we approach it, we notice beautiful fire carvings in its walls. The temple was a cubed structure with an arch on each wall and fire pit in the center. At the top of each corner of the temple, a torch was lit. I grab Celina’s hand as we climb the steps of the temple and stand before the fire pit, a burning flame currently blazing in the center.

“Where are we?” Celina asks again.

“You are in the Realm of the Sun,” a deep voice from behind us answers.

We spin around to find a tall man with golden locks of hair and sky blue eyes looking at us. He wore white robes with gold accents and gold jewels that complimented his tan skin. In his presence, I felt the urge to kneel and so I got on my knees, Celina doing the same.

“Who are you?” Celina asks.

“You are just as much my daughters and creations as you are the Moon’s. It was my light that gave you your powers. I am the Sun,” he responds.

“Sun God,” I murmur to myself, feeling dread settle in the pit of my stomach. “This is your kingdom..”

He chuckles softly, his laugh making my cheeks flush and I muster up the courage to look up at him.

“Indeed,” he says. “You may rise, child. I have something to show you. Both of you”

Without looking back, Sun God turns on his heel and starts walking down the coal lined path towards the stream. We rush to catch up, our short legs no match for his long graceful strides. When we reach the water, he simply points to the flowing stream before stepping aside so we could look.

We watch the water curiously but only see our reflections.

Confused, I look up at Sun God. “I don’t understand.”

“Patience, child,” is all he says.

I turn back to the water, looking a bit closer in case I missed something. The clear water suddenly ripples and in the waves, an image starts to form. Two little girls with dark brown hair and green eyes sit in a field of poppies, smiling and giggling. The picture begins to move like a movie, Celina and I entranced by the events unfolding.

The little girls play a game of tag when suddenly, an army of werewolves appear in the horizon lead by a gold wolf. Frightened, the girls race back to their small village, explaining what they saw to their family. In a hurry, the family pack their belongings when the door to their home comes crashing down, three wolves snarling furiously at them. An older woman, presumably

their mother, stands in front of the girls protectively as one of the wolves pounces on them.

The woman fights the wolf while the girls cower in fear under the table. Much to our horror, after a terrible fight, the woman suddenly stops moving. One of the other wolves towers over the table, ready to attack when a man enters the house and lunges himself on the wolf. Taking advantage of the situation, the girls scramble out from under the table and rush to a nearby window. The older girl throws her sister out into safety before climbing out herself as their savior takes their last breath.

Tears streaming down their faces, the two girls grab what little they could carry and race toward the woods. As they look back at their village, the gold wolf breathes fire from its snout, setting their houses ablaze while other soldiers drag woman and children out of their homes, killing them mercilessly. Frightened, alone, and grieving, the two little girls seek shelter in the trees.

The images slowly fade, our faces once again reflecting in the water.

“Hatred poisons the spirit,” Sun God sighs. “You will not win this war with hatred for it is the very thing that perpetuates it.”

“Then how?” Celina asks. “How do we stop them when they’ve always been ahead?”

“Tais and Ira have long forgotten what it means to let light into their soul and as such, have weakened themselves. Hatred does not feed your soul, it slowly consumes it,” he says, pointing to the water once more. “To defeat those witches, you will need to remember what it is you are fighting for.”

We turn to the water, a young girl with hair black as night dancing in a man’s arms, her belly swollen with life. The man spins her around and my breath hitches when I realize her face looks exactly like ours.

“Mom...” I whimper as I watch the couple kiss. “Dad...”

Our father showers our mother with kisses, holding onto her belly lovingly. They were so in love. He kneels in front of her, kissing her bump as she giggles.

Emiliano and Valentina burst into the room, the latter jumping onto my father's back and laughing hysterically. Emiliano lifts my mother in his arms and spins her around.

They were all so happy...

The images morph into series of scenes from Celina's life. Danny holds a one year old Celina upright, letting her hands go as she stumbles on her feet. Slowly, Celina takes a step, and then another before falling into Valentina's arms as she cheers for her little girl's first steps. Next, an older Celina and Diego roll around in snow together, laughing and smiling before engaging in a snow ball fight.

The scene changes again, this time showing parts of my life I cherished dearly. We watch a large oak tree form in the water, Emiliano and 4 year me sitting on its branches eating mangos and swinging our feet happily. The tree disappears, turning into an open field full of colorful butterflies Chava created. Mia and I race through it, a kaleidoscope of butterflies taking flight all at once. It was his Christmas gift to us many years ago. The three of us vanish, the water shifting one last time to my first kiss with Oliver all those months ago at the fort, our bodies fitting perfectly against each other.

My eyes fill with tears at these happy memories that slowly start to fade into the water. The realm slowly begins to crumble and I start to feel pain across my body.

"Don't let your hatred poison you. Seek light," Sun God's voice booming from the clouds. I turn to look at the place where he was once standing, realizing he had completely disappeared.

"Remember who you love," His omnipotent voice adds. "Remember who you are fighting for."

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I gasp for air, my eyes shooting open to find myself laying on a cot in a cell with my ankle chained to the wall. My wounds were no longer spilling blood and I watch in awe as they begin to heal themselves, a bit of light peeking through the cuts before the wounds closed themselves together, leaving no trace of the horror I experienced. Panting, I raise my head a little to see

Karina's back turned to me as William drags Rosalie out onto the stone table still drenched in my blood.

Rosalie pleads with William, begging him to let her go, but he was only following orders. Oliver, on the other hand, is no help, his wolf laying calmly on the cool stone ground, watching the events unfold before him.

Directly across from my cell, Celina's groans as she becomes alert, her grey eyes darting all about her cell to take in the information.

I no longer sense the little fly and only hope to the Moon and Sun it was bringing help and Chava hadn't betrayed me. It seemed to be a reoccurring theme lately.

Another scream draws my attention and I turn to see William and Adeline begin to tie Rosalie down, the sword in Karina's hands aching to take a life.

David stands off to the side, his hands clenched in fists and his face unreadable.

I try thinking of a portal but it seems my powers have yet to return. Ever so quietly, I roll off the cot and inch my way towards the cell door to get a better look.

The witches stare at Rosalie's bump, cruel grins dancing on their lips. Their mouths move quietly and I realize they're chanting under their breath. When they finish, Karina raises the sword above her, ready to end the small life that was only beginning.

Suddenly, a blur rushes at Karina before she can strike down her sword and knocks her to the ground.

"No!" David snaps, kicking the hilt of the sword out of the way and pinning Karina beneath him. "You will not hurt my daughter!"

He throws a punch at Karina and she retaliates with a knee to the groin, giving her the opportunity to strike back. They struggle for power, the witches watching in amusement. After a minute however, their patience wanes and Tais's eyes begin to glow red. David's body abruptly stiffens, the veins on his neck bulging as he struggles to breath. He drops on all fours, gasping for air. Karina gets to her feet and staggers to the sword. With it firmly in her hand, she stalks back to David, panting as she catches her breath.

Rosalie screams as Karina raises the sword once more and plunges it through his back, the blade slicing clean through his body so that it sticks out from his chest. He sucks in a breath, his eyes following the length of the blade before looking up at his whimpering daughter.

"I'm sorry," he whispers, the last of his strength leaving him as he slumps over to the side.

"Oh goddess!" Adeline cries, rushing to his side. "Oh goddess what did you do!"

"He shouldn't have done that," Karina mutters before pulling out the blade for his chest.

Blood quickly pools around him onto the stone floor, a bit of it seeping from his mouth. He coughs a little, choking on his blood.

"Oh David, David, David," Tais sighs, strolling over to her two minions. "Look at what you did!" she says, pointing to the blood staining the floor. "Look at this mess!"

His body trembles as he struggles to take short, ragged breaths. Tais crouches down on her haunches to look him in the eyes.

"All you had to do was cooperate," she sighs again. "Such a waste."

"f**k you," he snarls, spitting blood on her face.

She smirks, wiping the blood with the back of her hand before reaching for his neck and choking him.

"I'm going to enjoy making her suffer," she hisses in his ear, squeezing even harder. "Too bad there's nothing you can do to save her."

Black veins start bulging from David's neck, blood dripping from his nose. His eyes fill with fear as he takes one last breath before his head hangs, Tais tossing him to the side like a rag doll. She smooths her shirt a little and smiles at Karina.

"Proceed," she chirps.

Karina returns her smile and walks over to the stone table, Rosalie writhing against her chains and screaming at the top of her lungs.

“No!” She screams. “No! No! Let me go!”

I tug on my own chains, ignoring the burning sensation on my palms as I pull at the chains.

Come on Reyna! Wake up!

Karina once again raises the blade over her head, taking a deep breath as if savoring the moment.

1, 2...

I'm here! Reyna announces, making me sigh in relief.

Without a second to lose, I bring my fists together and pound them to the ground, making the stone floor tremble and creating a crack that splits the prison in two. Karina staggers back a little as the earth screeches while the witches grab onto each other for balance. Vines burst through the crater on the floor and wrap around Karina's leg, lifting her up in the air and holding her upside down by her ankle.

Celina's cell fills with ice as she freezes her chains and breaks free from them before teleporting out of the cell and out onto the middle of the mess hall. Taking her cue, my palms burst into a fire so hot, I melt through the silver and break free. Opening a portal out of the cell, I reappear beside Rosalie, getting to work on setting her free.

“Aurora!” She cries in relief. “I knew you would save me.”

“I wouldn't count your victory just yet,” Ira snickers.

I look up to see her snap her fingers, opening the doors to every cell in the room. The rogue captives pour out of their silver enclosures, eager to carry out their orders. We quickly find ourselves surrounded by sickly wolves with piercing red eyes, each ready to attack.

I work quickly to melt through Rosalie's chains as Celina takes a protective stance in front of us. A few rogues charge at us and Celina quite literally blows them all away with a powerful gust of wind. The prison walls tremble as the force of the air rushes through, parts of the ceiling threatening to crumble on top of us.

“No more wind,” I snap, growing some vines along the walls to keep the ceiling from caving in.

Celina nods and turns back to the rogues who once again begin to charge. “Ice it is then,” she mutters.

Cool mist forms at the palm her hands as she flings ice crystals at the rogues, sharp icicles piercing their throats and ending their lives. I finish freeing Rosalie from her chains and pull her to my chest.

“Did they hurt you?” I ask looking for wounds and she shakes her head at me before her eyes widen.

“Look out!”

From the corner of my eye, I see Karina rush towards me with sword of insanity in her hands. She must have cut herself free from my vines. I create a force field around us, narrowly avoiding being decapitated by Karina as she swings the sword down on us.

She glares at me in anger as she swings the sword again in hopes of breaking my shield but it’s useless. I imagine a hand on her neck and she begins to gasp for air as I choke her telepathically. Dropping my force field, I concentrate on her neck and squeeze harder until Karina turns reds.

“No más, Karina,” I growl. “No más {No more}”

Celina suddenly screams as a wolf manages to jump on top of her, snapping its nasty teeth at her face while she desperately pushes her arms against him. I drop Karina and turn to my sister, aiming bolts of lightening at the rogues racing towards her. A large icicle forms from Celina’s stomach and impales the rogue through its chest, ending its cruel life instantly.

Completely immersed in my task dealing with the endless stream of rogues, I almost don’t sense Karina rush up behind me. Almost.

I spin on my heel and create a portal beneath her feet, causing her to fall through it. A separate portal opens on the ceiling and she comes tumbling down to the ground, crashing with a thud.

“Oh Luuuunaaaa,” Tais sings, her voice sending chills down my spine.

Tais and Ira cackle behind me, the blood draining from my face as they release Michael from his chains. He leans on his haunches before charging towards Rosalie, canines ready to tear into her. Rosalie freezes in fear, staring at her brother as he races towards her.

“Michael, no!” I cry out, forcing my legs to move. I feel a jolt of energy burst through me and I move at the speed of light. Within the blink of an eye, I have my arms wrapped around Michael’s neck as I pull him back into chokehold.

“Come on baby, stay with me,” I pant, using every ounce of strength I had to keep him from escaping my arms. “Snap out of it, please!”

He responds with a snarl, struggling to break free from my arms. I squeeze a little harder, but he only squirms more violently, making it harder for me to try to heal the spell out of him. His head slams against my own, causing little black spots to blur my vision. My grip on him loosens slightly as I fight to stay awake when Michael twists his neck around and buries his teeth in my side.

The pain is almost instant, my veins feeling as though they’ve been set on fire. I try my best to fight through the pain but it becomes overwhelming and I finally let go of Michael.

Tais giggles excitedly to her sister. “Get the baby. I’ll handle the little Queen.”

Ira grins, reaching over to Rosalie and yanking her up by the hair. Rosalie struggles against her but is no match for Ira’s strength as she drags her back to the stone table.

I desperately try to calm my breaths and glare at the witch as she stares at back at me. Lifting her hands, a red mist forms around her fingers and I feel myself being lifted up in the air.

I struggle against her force as she walks towards me, pulling a silver dagger from her sleeve and pressing it against my bare chest. She inhales my scent and sighs, as if committing this moment to memory.

“So much power,” she whispers. “And it’s wasted on you.”

Close my eyes, concentrating on my energy and willing my strength to work through the pain.

Her cold fingers squeeze my jaw. "Look at me," she snarls, lifting my face towards hers. "I want to watch the life drain from your eyes as I watched it drain from your father's."

My eyes burst open in shock, much to her pleasure,

"You f*****g b***h!"

"Oh, did that sting?" She asks, tapping the dagger on my cheek. "Oh well. But before I kill you, I think I'd like your powers."

"What-?"

"Your gifts are tied to your soul," she laughs. "All I have to do is take it."

Before I can respond, she drags the blade across my chest, a little blood spilling from the wound. Her eyes turn jet black as she slices her own palm and begins her chant.

"The Moon is your heart, the Sun your spirit,

Your vessel of earth, the Air your breath.

Soul leave this body, bring it its death,

Make it scream 'till we no longer hear it

for I am the Witch seeking your might.

Give me your strength to conquer this night.

And I shall bring darkness over the light."

Tais raises her palm and I watch in horror as the blood from my wound is sucked into the slice on her hand. It feels as though the life is being drained from my body, my entire entity weakening.

"Aurora!" Celina cries as a couple of rogues pin her to the ground.

Rosalie howls in pain as Karina makes the first incision at the top of her belly.

Goddess ... please help me...

The burning intensifies, forcing my eyes closed. I struggle to get air into my lungs when I hear an intense ringing in my ears followed by an all too familiar voice echo from behind Tais.

“Remember who you are fighting for...”

I force my eyes open, his chocolate brown eyes looking back at me.

“Remember who you are fighting for,” Emiliano repeats. “You are the light of the rising sun, Aurora. You are stronger than they are. You always have been so fight!” he urges. “Fight mija. You must fight!”

“Papa...” I whimper to the spirit. “Papa no me dejes. {Don’t leave me}”

“I never left you,” he smiles, his apparition disappearing. “I’m always with you,” his voice echoes. “Always.”

The ringing in my ears ceases and I gasp for air as Tais continues to drain my body. Closing my eyes, I focus on my breathing.

I am the Daughter of the Moon and Sun

Tais laughs in the background, her plan finally being realized.

I am a Reyes and a Altamirano wolf.

I open my eyes, a warmth filling my body.

I am Light.

The warmth grows stronger until my skin begins to glow violet. Tais’s eyes widen in shock and she steps back a few paces, a bit frightened by my glowing appearance. A sudden light bursts from my wound while my blood turns white as it seeps into her palm. Her face contorts in pain and she screams.

“What is this?” she cries as she releases me from her red mist, stopping my blood from going into her. She stares at her now glowing hands as the purple light courses through her arms towards her chest.

I am Queen.

I stumble onto my feet, wiping the sweat that had gathered on my forehead. Pushing through the pain I feel lingering in my body from the poison, I raise my arms to her and aim a ray of light to her chest.

“I am the Ivory Queen!” I snarl.

She screams again, clawing at her chest while the light fills every cell in her body. A burst of light explodes from a pile of rogues and Celina emerges, her skin glowing too. Now on her feet, Celina raises her hands, a pink ray racing towards Tais. When she is completely engulfed in it, Tais levitates off the ground, throwing her head back as pink and purple light spills from her gaping mouth and eyes. From the corner of my eye, I can see Ira and Karina stop what they are doing and look up at the witch floating in mid air.

Her skins begins to crack, light peaking through as she wails in agony.

“NO!” she moans, the light overtaking her body. “NO!”

An explosion of energy radiates from her center, pulsating across the room and sending us all crashing through the air. I collide into a wall, my ears ringing as I try to gather my bearings. Ash begins to fall from the place Tais once existed.

She’s gone, Reyna pants with joy. She’s finally gone!

“TAIS!!” Ira screams, looking around frantically before narrowing her eyes at me. “What did you do?”

She takes the sword from Karina’s hands and points it at me, rage in every breath she heaves. Every cell in my body aches as the witch’s poison from Oliver’s bite courses through my veins and my wounds continue to bleed. I was exhausted, unsure if I had any energy left to fight, but I could not give up. Not yet anyways.

Using the wall as leverage, I push myself on my feet, preparing to fight when we hear an army of foot steps come racing down the corridor. Mia, Chava, Carter, Evan and Javier emerge from the hall and I almost cry with joy as I see Gwen and Valentina arrive close behind them.

They immediately jump into action, taking down the rogues that rush to attack them. Michael races towards Rosalie, Carter leaping to her rescue. He stands in front of his alpha, ready to defend his mate and unborn child from her own

brother. Carter is the first to attack and they roll around, struggling for dominance. Evan joins in on the fight, ramming into Oliver's side and tackling him. Together Carter and Evan pin him to the ground while Gwen rushes to evaluate his wolf.

Meanwhile, Karina and Valentina face off once more in their wolf forms, eager to tear into each other. William, finally free from Tais' spell, looks around in confusion, holding his head between his hands.

"Goddess, what happened?" He asks no one in particular.

Mia rushes to him, leading him to a cell to calm him down.

I focus my attention back on Ira who screams in frustration as she watches her plan crumble to pieces.

"It's over, Ira," I pant, covering the wound on my chest. "You lose."

"No," she laughs, stomping her foot hard against the stone floor. "No, I'm not finished with you."

She charges at me with the sword and despite my brain screaming at me to move, my legs wobble helplessly, struggling to keep my weight up. When she's a few feet away from me, she stops suddenly, her arms spreading out wide and her head falling back as she gasps in pain. From behind her, I realize Celina is keeping her trapped in place, finally able to activate her telekinetic powers. The sword in Ira's falls to the ground with a crash and roar of agony ripples through her chest, making the stone walls quake and shiver.

I concentrate on the sword and watch it flies towards me. Its hilt is cool against my bloody hand and I slowly limp towards Ira.

Pressing the blade to her neck, I think about the revelation Tais made several weeks ago.

"The honor of killing your mother goes to my sister. Queen Sofia went quick, though, don't worry. She didn't suffer too much. Decapitation is a very efficient way to kill."

"You killed my mother," I whimper. "You took her from me."

She struggles through her pain and forces a laugh. "Your mother was weak-"

I strike her on face as tears flood my eyes and grab at her throat. "My mother was stronger than you'll ever be," I whisper in her ear.

"You think this is over?" she chokes as I tighten my grip on her windpipe. "Oh sweetie, your nightmare has only just begun. Killing me won't stop what's coming for you. You'll never have peace. Even in death, I'll keep tak-"

Without hesitation, I bury the sword in her abdomen, her eyes widening in shock and her breath hitching.

"You took my mother. You helped take my father. You took my dad... and you took my mate," I growl, digging the blade deeper into her tender flesh so that a river of blood pours out of her wound. "But you are done taking from me."

"This isn't over!" She chuckles as I pull the blade from her body and raise it over my head

"It is for you," I whisper, swinging the blade down on her neck.

Her body hits the stone floor while her head rolls to the base of table, a wicked smile still stretched across her lips.

I stare at the bloody sword, disgusted by the wars it carried on its blade and toss it to the side. My body finally gives in to my exhaustion and I collapse on my knees, staring at the body in front on me.

"Ha," I chuckle as tears spill down my cheeks, finally able to breathe again.

I lean on my hands and laugh even harder.

It was over. It was finally over.

All around me, rogues cease their fighting, finally freed from whatever spell Tais and Ira's had cast on them. They look around in confusion, probably wondering where they were and how they got there.

Suddenly a commotion arises.

The Ivory Queen Chapter 119

*** Aurora***

“You b***h!” Karina sneers as she shifts back into her human form and pins Valentina down with her arms.

A clone materializes behind Karina and knocks her over the head, sending her crashing to the ground with a grunt and allowing the real Valentina to scramble to her feet. She tries to climb on top of Karina but Karina lifts her leg under Valentina and flips her onto her back, grabbing a piece of debris and raising it over her head.

Before Karina can delivery the deadly blow, someone throws a dagger at her, the blade nicking the side of her neck. Karina gags as a river of blood immediately gushes from the wound and tries to stop the bleeding with her hand, but the blood loss is too much for her to handle. I turn to see who threw the dagger and find Chava standing perfect still, tears streaming down his cheeks.

“Chava?” Karina gasps as she stumbles back on her butt.

She whimpers as Chava slowly walks up to her, helping her sit up against the stone table.

“Chava...” Karina cries, cupping her son’s cheek.

He removes her hand from his face, his eyes a flurry of emotions.

“It’s time for you to go, Karina,” he says quietly.

“I’m so sorry, Chava,” She cries, her face growing pale. “I’m so sorry.”

Chava closes his eyes, clenching his jaw and taking deep breaths to calm down.

“Chava, I’m cold,” Karina pants, her body shivering as her breaths grow ragged.

Mia returns from calming down William and kneels beside her mother. Karina lifts up a hand to stroke her daughter’s cheek but Mia winces, moving her head to dodge her mother’s touch.

Karina’s eyes fill sadness. “It’s so dark... I’m scared. I don’t want to die in the dark,” she whimpers, reaching for her daughter’s hands.

Mia looks down at the hand holding hers, tears welling up in her eyes as she struggles to decide what to do. Karina's breaths begin to slow down, the ending inevitably near.

"I I-love yo-"

Karina takes one last haggard breath before her eyes go still and her hand falls onto her lap. A small whimper escapes Chava's lips as he wipes his hand over her eyes, closing them for her.

"Goodbye Karina," he mutters, straightening up wiping his tears.

Dragging his feet, he collapses on his knees in front of me, despair lingering in his eyes as he stifles a sob with a his hand. Mia comes up behind him, tapping his shoulder and spreading her arms wide. She pulls us both into her arms and our emotions pour out like a stream on each other's shoulders. Our parents were gone... and we were all that was left of them.

I had loved Karina. She was the only mother I knew and for a while, she was the best I could have ever asked for. But the Karina I knew had died long ago and I was only now able to mourn her death.

As we hug, my eyes grow heavier and I lean on Mia for support.

"Oh goddess, Aurora! You're bleeding!" Mia shrieks.

I look down at the wound on my chest and the bite on my side, both injuries still leaking a bit of blood. Mia lays me on her lap and Valentina rushes to my side.

"It's okay, mija. You can rest now," she coos, stroking my hair.

I fight to keep my eyes open. "But Oliver-"

"Gwen is taking care of him," Valentina shushes me, placing her hands on my shoulders. "Just rest."

"I have to see him," I pant. "Please..."

Valentina stares at me before nodding in agreement. She sends an electric jolt of energy through my body, my wounds slowly starting to heal. The pain of the poison slowly evaporates and I let out a heavy sigh of content when she's finished.

Thanking her, I desperately look around the prison for my blue-eyed king. Mia chuckles, sensing my eagerness to see my mate once again. Chava projects a cloak for me and wraps me up before lifting me in his arms and carrying me over to a group of people gathered around Gwen and someone else.

When Chava and I approach, Gwen and the boys step aside, letting Chava carry me through to the beautifully disheveled man laying in the center of the group. His blue eyes look up at me, making the entire world stop.

“Aurora...” Oliver croaks, attempting to sit up.

Tears blur my vision as I stretch out my arms to him, desperate to hold him again. Chava sets me down on his lap and I immediately burst into tears.

“Olivier!” I sob, cupping his face to make sure he’s real and not some illusion I was imagining.

“I’m real,” he chuckles, grabbing my hand and kissing my fingers.

As if to prove his point, sparks tingle up and down my arms.

“I’m real. I’m right here and I’m not going anywhere,” he murmurs.

I dig my fingers in his hair, pulling him into a kiss. His stubbly chin tickles my own and I laugh through my tears. He was back, he was real, and he was all mine.

Every kiss fills me up inside with a joy I feared I’d never feel again and I savor every moment. When I pull back for a breath, I bury my face in his neck, inhaling the scent I would never grow tired of.

He pulls my head from his neck and wipes my tears with his thumbs. His blue orbs stare back at me with unadulterated love.

“Marry me,” he whispers. “Marry me, please. I don’t care about anything else right now. Just please say you’ll marry me.”

Fresh tears blur my eyes and the sob in my throat makes it hard to speak, so I just nod my response and pull him into another kiss.

“Is that a yes?” he laughs.

I nod again, my heart soaring from my high. I shower him with kisses, not caring about the several wolves present who were blushing as we showed our affection for each other. My mate had proposed to me and nothing else mattered but him.

Unfortunately for me, though, the joy doesn't last very long.

"Adeline is missing," Celina says, interrupting my kiss.

"What?" Oliver and I snap, both of us looking up at her.

I could feel my blood come to a boil. That b***h had tried to come between my mate and I and I was determined to make her pay for every single second she robbed me of being with him. Reyna comes to the surface and begins barking orders.

"Gather up a search party and search the entire perimeter for that b***h and bring her back alive," Reyna commands Evan. "No one touches her. She's MINE!"

"Yes, Luna," Evan replies before disappearing, leading Chava and Mia down the corridors to search.

My breathing starts to accelerate in anger at the thought of that b***h running free after all she had done to me.

"Down girl," Oliver smiles, stroking the side of my face. "We'll find her soon enough. She won't get far."

I take back control and lean into his hand, letting his touch calm me down. Carter carries Rosalie over, her wounds healed thanks to Valentina's handiwork. She reaches out her hand and grabs my own.

"Thank you," she weeps, putting my hand to her lips and kissing it in gratitude. "Thank you for saving us," she adds, rubbing her belly while Carter kisses her forehead tenderly.

I turn to David's body laying on the floor besides Karina's.

"He made his choice," Rosalie says. "And he paid the consequences."

"I know," I sigh.

Oliver leans into my ear, pulling my hand back from Rosalie's and interlocking our fingers

"Let's go home."

Simone's POV

It started in my chest. Small at first, but it grew and kept growing until it consumed me. My wolf, Ava, howled in pain. She howled and screamed, begging the Moon to return him to us. But we both knew he would never come back. He would never hold us again. Never tell us how much he loved us.

And it was all her fault.

David was gone... and I was all alone now.

When Oliver and Rosalie returned, the entire pack came out to celebrate, happy to have their Luna and Alpha reunited. But I could not share in their joy. Not so long as she reined beside him. Not as long as she poisoned his mind against me, his own mother.

As news spread about what David did, I knew River Moon would turn its back on me too. I had to go. I had to get out this hell hole before it destroyed me too.

Aurora was like a virus. Harmless at first, but within a matter of weeks, she infected not only River Moon, but also the Allies. It was only a matter of time before they officially crowned her their Queen and I would certainly not bow down to that b***h. Never again.

Grabbing my luggage and stuffing it with clothes, some photos, and my documents, I sneak out to my car and leave without so much as a second glance. Oliver and Rosalie didn't need me anymore. I had nothing left to hold me back. I had to go.

In the morning, I go to the bank and empty out my accounts before hitting the road again. I don't know where I'm going but I know one thing for sure: Aurora Altamirano was going to pay.

Aurora's POV – Christmas Day

The sword, having been created by a God, it was deemed indestructible. Our only choice was to keep it hidden, locked away in a block of silver that I buried in the center of the earth where it could never take another soul again.

Things were slowly starting to return to normal after the battle against the witches, but not everything was going as desired.

Despite scouring the entire territory and the underground prison system, Adeline was still missing and it put me on edge knowing that that lunatic was alive and free. Simone was gone too and while Rosalie and Oliver said nothing, I know their mother leaving hurt.

What's more, I still had the Amethyst lake wolves and the new freed rogues to deal with. They all needed homes and the pack hospital was quickly running out of rooms. I needed to get Amethyst Lake up and running again soon.

As if those problems weren't enough, things with the allies were a little rocky too. Jonathan and Patrick were still upset with me for tricking them. I feared they might not trust me enough to lead as their Queen.

As I think of all the problems we had yet to overcome, Oliver pulls me from my thoughts, wrapping a coat around me to keep me warm for our little family trip to Lluvia Blanca. The house still smells of champurrado (Mexican hot chocolate beverage) and bûche de Noël (French Christmas cakes), Christmas cheer lingering in the air.

"Stop worrying, nena" He murmurs, resting his chin on top of my head and pulling me close to his body. "They'll come around eventually. We just need to give them some time to cool off and think. Sooner or later, they'll realize you are more than fit to lead this Alliance."

When I say nothing, he kisses my cheek. "Come on, babe. Let's go celebrate. Are you ready?"

"Yes," I nod, looking down at the two gifts I wrapped carefully earlier in the day.

"We're ready too," Valentina says as she, Danny, Diego, Celina, Gwen, and Eric arrive.

"Where are Rosalie, Carter and Evan?" Oliver asks.

“Have no fear,” Evan announces as he bursts into the foyer dressed in a Santa Clause costume. “The sexiest Santa Clause is here!”

Oliver rolls his eyes and I burst in laughter at Evan’s silly antics. Oh Mia, you’ve got your hands full with this idiot.

Rosalie and Carter descend down the stairs and I open a portal to the Lluvia Blanca cemetery. Javier, Mia, and Chava are already waiting for us on the other side, all of them bearing gifts. I try my best to keep my emotions in check as we walk together to Emiliano’s grave.

Over five years after his death, I was finally granted my biggest wish: to visit my father’s grave. As we approach the headstone, I feel my legs begin to shake and tears threaten to spill onto my cheeks. Oliver pulls me close, kissing my forehead to calm me down.

“We’ll give you some space okay?” he says and I nod my head.

The group steps back while Valentina and I march forward to the grave for some alone time.

“Ay, Emi,” Valentina chuckles to herself when we reach the site. “It’s good to see you, brother.” Tears roll down her cheeks as she kneels down on the ground. “You were too good for this world, the best of us all.” She pauses as a small sob gets caught in her throat and her lip begins to quiver a little. “That’s why the Moon had to bring you home,” she adds, wiping at her eyes and forcing a smile. “But we’ll be okay. You rest now. I’ll take care of them.” She kisses her fingers and place her them on the stone. “Feliz Navidad, Emi. Te amo.”

Standing back up, she closes her eyes, listening to the wind blow through the trees in the distance. “I can still feel you,” she whispers with a smile. “I love you.”

Looking back at me, she places a hand on my shoulders. “Your turn, mija. He’s listening.”

I wipe at my eyes and kneel before the grave.

“Hi Daddy,” I murmur, my emotions threatening to spill onto my cheeks. “Merry Christmas.”

I place his gift in front of me and slowly unwrap it, revealing a beautiful stone carving I had made of a wolf and placing it in front of his headstone.

“I have so many things to say to you, I don’t even know where to begin, so I guess I’ll just ... say it. Thank you, Dad... Thank you for every memory we shared, for every ounce of love you gave me, and for never letting me feel alone... Thank you for giving me home...a-and a family,” I sob, covering my mouth to calm myself. “I miss you everyday... I miss you so much,” I add, wiping my tears. “And I am grateful, I am so grateful to have been your daughter.”

“And I want you to know that you can rest easy now. Mia, Chava and I... we’re going to be okay. So you rest, Dad,” I smile, patting his headstone. “I love you.”

Closing my eyes and feeling the earth, I grow some poinsettias around the grave for him and place a small ornament on the wolf’s ear. Oliver comes up behind me, wrapping his arms around my waist.

“I think it’s time you open your present,” he murmurs, handing me a small envelope.

I furrow my brows but take the envelope from him, opening it slowly to find two separate itineraries.

“You gave me a plan?”

“Read it,” Oliver insists, refusing to explain any further.

I study the pages and my heart almost bursts with joy.

Flight ——— San Francisco, California, US ———> Tampico, Tamaulipas, MX.

Hotel ——— Reyes Hotel

“Oliver...”

“I’m taking you to see your father’s cave,” he whispers, kissing my cheeks. “We’re going to the beach.” He turns me a round so I face him, taking the second itinerary from my hand. “But first, we’re going to the snow,” he says, waving the itinerary in my face. “We deserve snow.”

Flight ——— San Francisco, California, US ———> Roanoke, Virginia, US

Hotel ——— Hilton Hotel

I pull away from his arms and grab my gift for him. “I think I should give you mine too then.”

He rips through the wrapping paper, revealing a blank adventure book I made.

“We’ll fill it with all of our adventures together,” I say, pressing my lips against his. “Merry Christmas.”

The Ivory Queen Chapter 120

Oliver

“Oliver what are you doing? Stop this now! These are your men!” Carter yells.

But I only growl in response, a pure rage surging through me. There’s a wolf’s neck in my mouth and with one bite, I tear out his throat, his limp body hitting the ground.

—

I wake up with a start, my heart racing and beads of sweat covering my forehead. The sweet smell of cinnamon and rose lingers in the air and I look down to see my beautiful mate nestled gently in my arms, snoring lightly in oblivion. She looked so peaceful, so angelic, so perfect. I lay back in bed, burying my face in her neck to inhale her scent and calm my fears.

It seems the minutes drag by and I finally decide to climb out of bed, hoping a run might calm the anxiety I was feeling. Rio wakes up at the sound of me slipping on my shoes and I grab his leash for him to join me. I don’t exactly know where I’m going as I just jog down the main road, letting my legs carry me wherever they so pleased. Moments later, I find myself in the place I always come to think.

The fort stood in all its glory, light barely peaking through the leaves of the trees surrounding it. I remove Rio’s leash and let him run while I take a seat on the swing, closing eyes to bask in the coolness of the spring breeze.

I don’t know how long I spend just sitting with my eyes closed, letting the air kiss my skin when I suddenly hear footsteps approach me and an all too familiar scent floats to my nostrils.

“Can’t sleep?” Carter asks, stepping directly in front of me.

I open my eyes and nod my head.

He chuckles softly, kicking a stone with his foot. He turns to the deck and climbs up, expecting me to follow him. We settle down besides each other, swinging our feet in silence when the Great Goof himself approaches the Fort. Evan climbs up and the three of us watch the sun rise.

“You okay?” Evan asks, resting his head on the deck railing.

I shrug, keeping my eyes on the on the tree-line. “I’ve been better..”

“Well talk to us, man. What’s on your mind?” Carter asks.

“I...” I sigh, unsure how to explain my feelings. “I keep getting these nightmares... Visions, I guess... Of things I don’t remember doing.”

“I see,” Carter says. “You’re remembering all the things those witches made you do.”

“I did them,” I correct him. “It doesn’t matter that Tais and Ira put me under a spell. I killed my men. I hurt Aurora. Hell I almost killed you, Carter. And Rosalie...” I scoff. “I could have killed her and Emi-“

“But you didn’t,” Carter interrupts. “Look man, I’m not going to pretend I understand what you’re going through because I never will. But I won’t sit here and let you think you’re some monster for doing the things you were forced to do.”

His face softens and stares off into the trees. “I know you, Oliver. I would have never agreed to be your Beta if I didn’t absolutely trust you and Michael.”

Silence falls between us as we think back to the horror we survived.

“Come, on, man, Let’s go on run,” Evan suggests, jumping to his feet. “It’s been a while since the three of us went on a run together.”

“I don’t know...” I say hesitantly, feeling myself grow anxious at the thought of letting my wolf out.

“Come Oliver. You can’t hide Michael away for ever...” Carter says, pulling me up.

I take a deep breath as the three of us climb down and shift. I sit back and watch, giving Michael full control of my body but prepared to jump in at any second.

“Lead the way, Alpha,” Darren (Carter’s wolf) says.

Michael stares at his paws and Bodhi (Evan’s wolf) nudges him with his snout.

“You can do this,” he encourages.

Rio trots back happily, licking my paws and rolling over on his belly in submission. I lick him and he gets up, eager to play.

Do you trust us? Michael asks.

That was the question of the century, After everything that’s happened, could I trust myself again?

My beta and gamma look at me expectantly. There was no fear in their eyes. No judgement for what I had done. I was just their leader.

If they could trust us, then so could I...

I take a deep breath and lean on my hind legs, taking off at full speed with my beta and gamma close behind. The wind in my fur feels incredible. I had missed running. I had missed going on stupid adventures with these two idiots. It had been so long since we felt this free. We race across the territory, letting out howls and yelps to break the morning silence.

Before I even realize it, we find ourselves at the meadow, staring at the 14 graves of my fallen soldiers.

I stand before them, letting the guilty slowly fade away. They had died protecting their pack, even from me.

“Our warriors died with honor,” Darren says. “They protected the pack you left in their care during your absence. Be proud. You made them believe River Moon was worth dying for. You inspired them to put their pack before themselves. Not every leader can do that.”

They were true heroes, my soldiers, and I would not let them down. I howl their names, thanking them each for protecting my pack.

I was free, free at last from Tais and Ira.

....APRIL 24th Coronation Day....

AURORA

The sun has finally set, stars quickly filling up the night sky. A fresh breeze flows through the trees, the smell of spring flowers blowing in the air.

After hours of preparation, I'm finally given sometime to be alone with my thoughts. I could feel the excitement bubbling in my belly as the hour drew near.

I roll my father's ring between my fingers, admiring its beauty.

Things had finally settled down between the allies and tonight, not only would I marry the man I loved, I would also be taking my place as Queen. In just a few moments, the Allies would cease to exist, giving way to the Kingdom of the Ivory Phoenix, my Kingdom. My throne. My legacy.

Fear and excitement filled me to the brim. I had been Luna for some time now but managing seven packs was a tall order to ask of anyone. Would I measure up to the task?

This is what we were meant to do, Reyna says. There will be challenges and it will not be easy, but leading is in our blood. And besides we are not alone. Oliver and Michael will be by our sides.

I smile at the ring on my finger. I was finally getting my King and my happily ever after...

A small knock disrupts my thoughts, Evan poking his head in.

"We're ready for- woah," he beams before bowing.

A satin cathedral wedding dress hung off my shoulders, the veil almost as long as its train.

I lift up the skirt, giving him spin and he smiles. "How do I look?"

"Like a Queen," he says, pointing at my head. "If only you had a crown to match."

“Well, she’s get it soon enough,” a voice calls out.

I turn to find Chava standing by the door, looking dashing in a black tux and bow tie.

“You look beautiful,” he says, bowing slightly. “Your majesty.”

I offer a small smile in return. “Thank you.”

He wrings his hands nervously.

“Did you want to ask me something?” I inquire, getting nervous myself. “Did something happen?”

His face fills with panic as he shakes his head adamantly. “NO! No, nothing is wrong. I-It’s – I just–“

He sighs, wiping his hands over his face. “I was just wondering if I could walk you down the isle,” he blurts out.

Evan gives him a warning look. “I’ll be the one walking her down the isle. I’m her gamma.”

“And I’m her brother,” Chava replies coldly.

I stare at the two men, both equally important to me, both my brothers. “I would be honored to have you both walk me down.”

They exchange looks of contempt for each other but sigh in agreement.

Chava extends his elbow for me to take. “Ready?”

The ceremony was taking place at my garden, under the open sky as the Moon watched over us. I open a portal to the start of the stone path I created all those months ago, smiling wolves on either side. At the far end of the path stood an altar and the man who had taught me what love truly was. He had been patient when I was afraid to touch him. He had been kind when all I knew was cruelty. He had been gentle when all I felt was pain. He had loved me before I learned to love myself. He was never cruel and he treated me with respect. He made me laugh. He was my best friend, my mate, my partner, my home and my king. He was my Olivier.

Tears spill onto his cheeks when our eyes meet and Carter hands him a handkerchief to help him compose himself. Afraid I might burst into tears, I look around the crowd, grateful for every person who had come to celebrate. Valentina, Danny, Diego and Celina stood at the front, tears lingering in their eyes. Besides them, Oliver's uncle Adolphe, his wife Quila, and their three children, Lupe, Lou, and Lucy all stood proudly as well as the members of the Wild Forest Pack.

David had a rocky relationship with Adolphe, cutting off all ties ages ago, but I was glad Oliver had mended that relationship now that his father was gone. I know he needed family and after meeting Adolphe and his family in Virginia, I was happy to have them become part of our lives.

When I reach the end of the isle, Evan and Chava kiss my hands and bow before delivering me to Oliver. Sparks tingle from my finger tips up my arms as our hands meet and I try desperately to keep the tears from falling.

"I love you," Oliver whispers as Elder Auguste's voice booms over the crowd.

"Ladies and gentlemen, we are gathered here tonight"

Lost in Oliver's eyes, I forget everything around us, focusing only on my mate and memorizing his every feature. It's not until Oliver slips the ring on my finger that I finally come to.

"With this ring, I thee wed," I say as I slip the wedding band on his finger.

"I now pronounce you husband and wife," Elder Auguste says as the crowd cheers. "Alpha, you may kiss your bride."

Oliver's fingers rest on my chin, tilting my face up for the joining of our lips in a sweet and tender kiss. His arms wrap around my waist while my hands find his neck and hair, pulling him closer.

Reyna howls with joy and I can only imagine Michael was elated as well.

Elder Auguste produces a vial of my venom for the coronation and makes his way over to the altar where the River Moon pack tablet lay.

The Allies and their elders make their way to the altar, each bearing their own pack tablets and placing them on the altar. One by one, the elders inject my venom into the tablets, the last one being River Moon's.

When they're finished, Elder Auguste turns to me and takes me hand.

"Luna, with your kind unyielding heart, your strength, your bravery, and your courage, you have earned the trust of your fellow wolves. We all stand before you tonight not only as your pack, but as your humble subjects. You have endured great pain and many obstacles, but still your hope and your spirit have not waned. From the ashes you rose and will continue rising, overcoming new challenges with grace and intelligence. It is time, then, for you to take your place as Queen of the Kingdom of the Ivory Phoenix.

So Luna, I must ask:

Do you, Aurora Salome Altamirano-Artaud, solemnly swear to govern the wolves of River Moon, Cerulean Sea, Jade Crescent, Blood Moon, Lluvia Blanca, Desert Sky, and Maple Moon according to their respective laws and traditions? To preserve, to protect and to serve every member of the Kingdom of the Ivory Phoenix?"

I hold my head high and respond. "I solemnly swear so to do."

"Will you uphold the values of this kingdom and execute your judgement by way of the law and with justice. Will you lead with strength, grace, and mercy to the best of my abilities?"

"I will."

"Do you swear to guide your Alphas in times of hardship and in prosperity. Do you swear to never abandon your people and to lead intelligently from this day forward?"

"I solemnly swear so to do."

Elder Auguste turns to Oliver and has him kneel. "Alpha, please make your oath to her majesty, the Queen."

"I, Olivier Honoré Artaud, Alpha of the River Moon Pack, do solemnly swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty, Queen Aurora, her heirs and successors, according to laws which govern the Kingdom of the Ivory Phoenix. So help me Moon Goddess."

Elder Auguste takes his palm and makes a cut before placing it on the River Moon tablet. He then takes my hand and makes a similar slice across my

palm. Blood pools in its center and he guides my hand across the tablet so that my blood mixes with my venom in the little basin

I feel a gentle breeze wash over me and I bask in its coolness. One by one, the Alphas make the same oath and seal it blood until all seven Alphas kneel before me. At this time, Elder Amelie brings forth a velvet pillow, an ivory Crown sitting upon it. Ever so carefully, Elder Auguste places the crown on my head, my wolf howling with joy to finally bear her title.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” Elder Auguste announces. “From this day forward, you shall be known as the people of the Kingdom of the Ivory Phoenix.”

I can feel movement behind me.

“Your Majesty, please turn to face your loyal subjects,” Elder August instructs.

I do as I’m told, consumed by a flurry of emotions. My heart pounds against my ears and I hold back tears as I smile at my people kneeling before me. My Kingdom.

The sound of trumpets fill the night.

“Presenting Her Majesty, Aurora Salome Altamirano-Artaud, the Ivory Queen. May Moon Goddess bless her eternally!”