

The Ivory Queen Chapter 31

Aurora POV's

As I open my mouth to call for help, Laura pushes me inside the room, covering my mouth with her hand.

“Don’t scream, I’m not here to hurt you,” she says in hushed tones.

Removing her hand from my mouth, she goes back to close the door. I run behind the desk, grabbing my phone and dialing Oliver.

“No please don’t call Oliver! I’m really not here to hurt you!” she pleads taking a few steps towards me. I use the chair as a shield to keep our distance.

“W-What do you w-want?” I stammer, failing to sound confident.

“I came here to apologize for what I did to you yesterday,” she replies, hanging her head. “I’m really sorry for breaking your fingers and slapping you. I didn’t- I was just angry that I lost my family because of the alliance.”

I keep my distance, afraid this was just some ploy to hurt me again. I inch towards the window just in case I need to jump out at any given point.

“I’ve only been at River Moon for less than a week, just a couple days before Lluvia Blanca was attacked. My brother is-is one of their warriors and he was hurt during the attack. I wanted to visit yesterday but the borders were closed,” she pauses, tears spilling down her cheeks. “I know that’s not an excuse for treating you the way I did but I couldn’t help it. I was so just so angry and-and then I remembered all those rumors about you from back home. Then Erin told us how you killed her brother and I just- I just snapped.”

She falls to her knees, crying furiously. My heart breaks a little remembering how desperate I felt when I heard Mia was attacked.

“My sister was hurt during the attack too,” I say quietly. “I was able to help her.”

Laura looks at me with teary eyes. “Yeah, Oliver mentioned that last night. I didn’t know,” she sniffles, wiping her tears. “That’s why I came to apologize. I didn’t realize we were on the same boat.”

We are both quiet for a while unsure how to comfort each other.

"I uh, I wanted to thank you for protecting me from Oliver after what I did," she says with shame.

"I didn't do it for you," I correct her quickly. "I just don't want to live with hate in my heart. I've seen what it can do to people," I add solemnly, flinching at the memory of all the beatings I took from my family.

"I really am sorry," Laura says getting up on her feet. "I hope one day you can forgive me."

I stay quiet for a moment, measuring her words. She seems sincere. As Laura turns to leave, I grab her by the arm and pull her into a hug.

"I-I forgive you."

Laura bursts into fresh tears and returns the hug, gripping my shirt tightly as she lets her emotions run free. I run my hand in circles along her back to calm her down.

Rosalie bursts through the door abruptly, causing Laura and I to pull apart. She growls at Laura, clearly fighting to control her wolf.

"What is SHE doing here?" she snarls.

"Ro it's ok," I say stepping in front of Laura and holding my up my hands. "She just came to apologize."

Rosalie doesn't move, still not trusting Laura. I walk toward her slowly.

"Ro, I promise I'm fine. She apologized and I forgave her," I insist, grabbing hold of Rosalie's fists. "Please calm down."

After a couples seconds she finally relaxes. Laura quickly wipes her tears as Rosalie eyes her.

"I think I better go," Laura says sheepishly as she attempts to walk past Rosalie and I.

"I think you should," Rosalie replies, snarling at her as she walks by.

"I'll see you later," I call out as she leaves, glaring at Rosalie. She smiles innocently at me and I laugh.

"Ok Kehlani will be here any second! I'm so excited! I've been wanting to spend some quality time with you for so long!" she squeals, jumping up and down with excitement

"Where are you taking me?" I laugh, jumping with her.

"We are going to spoil ourselves silly. Oliver gave me his credit card and I plan on maxing it out," she grins wiggling her eyebrows. "And of course, we must get you a new outfit for your date on Friday."

I giggle as she mentions my date. "Do you know where he's planning on taking me?"

"Ha ha no, you won't get a peep out of me. Oliver made we swear I wouldn't tell. So my dear, my lips are sealed," she says sliding an invisible zipper across her mouth.

I groan. "Then how exactly am I supposed to know what I should wear if I don't know where we are going?"

"That's exactly why I'm the one taking you shopping," she laughs pushing me out of the office.

We make our way downstairs and are met by Kehlani and Cameron.

"Argh! I thought this was supposed to be a girl's day!" Rosalie whines.

"I know, but he's attached to my hip," moans Kehlani. "I'm equally annoyed. Wesley refuses to let me go anywhere without him!"

"You know I can hear you?" Cameron complains, letting out a an exasperated breath.

"Sorry Cameron, but I was really looking forward to just being with the girls," I say with a small frown.

"Hey I don't want to be intruding on your girly things either. I'm just following orders," he surrenders.

“Well, I’m definitely not putting up with this. I’m giving Wesley a piece of my mind,” Rosalie says storming off to the training grounds.

We rush after her to try and stop her, but Rosalie is as stubborn as they come.

The training grounds are a grizzly sight. Men and women are scattered throughout the grounds, participating in different training activities. Several groups are off exercising or taking laps around the tracks while others train in hand to hand combat or wolf combat. Many are covered in ugly bruises and bloody wounds from sparring matches. Several men stare as we cut through, making Cameron take a protective stance in front of us. We make our way to a large sparring circle at the center of the grounds where several shirtless men are watching an ongoing match. As we grow closer, I realize the fighters are none other than Wesley and Oliver. Those two idiots are covered in blood and bruises.

Rosalie runs up to the circle, ready to unleash her rampage. “Hey you two!” she yells snapping her fingers in an attempt to grab their attention. They ignore her. “Hello, meat heads? Over here!”

Carter is instantly at her side. “Rosie, what’s wrong?”

The warriors make way for Kehlani and I to walk to the edge of the circle. Smelling our scents, Oliver and Wesley immediately stop what they’re doing and snap their necks towards us. They’re furious.

“What the hell are you two doing here?” snaps Oliver. “This is no place for you!”

“Cameron, what the hell were you thinking bringing them here?” snarls Wesley as he walks towards us.

Rosalie clears her throat. “Yeah no, don’t care. He didn’t bring us here. I did. What’s the deal with the bodyguard? In case you haven’t notice, we’re three grown a*s women. We do not need a baby sitter!”

Carter tries to calm her down. “Rosie-“

“Rosalie, you do not dictate my decisions. Cameron is-“

“Cameron is my gamma,” Kehlani interrupts. “I decide whether he goes or not. And quite frankly we don’t need him. We can take of ourselves.”

“Kehlani, please. I would feel much more comfortable if you brought him along to watch over you guys,” Oliver chimes in. “In fact, I think Evan should go as well.”

“No!” I shout, shaking my head. “Absolutely not! This is supposed to be a girls day. I need one day without being surround by testosterone!”

“Exactly! You idiots are exhausting!” Rosalie cuts in. “We just want to hit the spa, shop and eat! Why is that so controversial?”

“You guys aren’t seeing the point-“

“The point is, Cameron is staying here. And that’s final,” Kehlani huffs as she extends her hand out to Cameron. “Keys. NOW.”

“Cameron, do not give her the keys,” Wesley commands.

Poor Cameron looks conflicted at his Luna and his Alpha, unsure who’s order to follow.

“We’ll take my car, then,” Rosalie grins wickedly.

“Rosalie!” Oliver calls out, but it’s too late. Rosalie is already walking away. He turns back to Carter. “Carter do something!”

“Carter you take one more step, I’ll key your car and no s*x for a week!” she threatens, making Carter freeze in place while Oliver and Evan gag.

Infuriated, Oliver looks at me. “Aurora don’t you dare get in that car without-“

“Goodbye,” I say, waving my fingers. I turn to leave, ignoring his protests. Kehlani takes me by the arm and we try to walk out of the circle.

“Stop them!” Oliver commands his soldiers.

They step in our way, blocking our exit. I’m furious. Who the hell does he think he is?

“Oliver if you don’t let us through, Friday is cancelled and you’re sleeping on the couch,” I snap, refusing to look back at him.

“Aurora!” he roars as he pulls me back by my arm.

“Let us through,” I say, glaring at him. We hold a stare off and it becomes clear that I’m winning when he looks away.

“Fine,” he snarls, releasing my arm. “Let them through.”

The soldiers move out of our way and we head back towards the house.

“Oh we’re definitely going to a strip club after the s**t they just pulled,” mumbles Rosalie, sending Kehlani and I into a fit of laughter.

After our little walk to the house, Rosalie pulls out her car and we head into the city.

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Rosalie takes us to a cute little Spa house in the heart of the city. As we walk in, I realize the spa is empty.

“I rented out the entire place,” Rosalie says nonchalantly. “We have this all to ourselves for the next three hours.”

After checking in, we walk towards the locker room. As Rosalie and Kehlani start stripping, I make the realization that we’ll be naked in front of each other. I feel panic settle in the pit of my stomach and I fidget with the hem of my shirt.

“Hey, what’s wrong?” Rosalie asks.

“I-I’m sorry,” I stutter, fighting back tears. “I-it’s just my body- I’m covered with scars-“

“Oh come here sweetie,” says Kehlani as she takes me by the arms. “We won’t pressure you. But please know you are in safe space with us. We would never judge you. Every girl has insecurities, sis. Yours are your scars. Rosalie over here thinks she has too much cellulite on her a*s and thighs and I have these stretch marks on my tummy left from my pregnancy,” she says stepping back and pointing at her belly. “That and my boobs are too far apart.”

“Shut up. Your t**s look fantastic,” Rosalie interrupts.

“Really? I feel they are just swimming under my armpits,” she laughs. “But I digress,” she says, turning serious. “The point is we all have insecurities, Aurora. But we can’t let our insecurities keep us from feeling beautiful

because guess what? We're gorgeous and don't you ever let anyone tell you otherwise."

"Aurora, your scars show the world just how strong you are. You have no idea what an inspiration you are. You were abused for so long," Rosalie's voice breaks. "And there's not an ounce of bitterness in you. You are so kind and so brave and so forgiving. Do you even realize how f*****g amazing you are?"

I try to hold back the small sob in my throat but fail miserably. For so long, I thought I was this useless waste of space, and my scars just an ugly reminder of how worthless I was. Never in my wildest dreams did I expect to hear that I was beautiful from the mouths of two of the most badass, gorgeous women I'd ever laid eyes on.

"Thank you," I say wiping my tears. "I never thought of it that way."

"Well it's still up to you if you want to strip down. I brought you bikini in case you weren't comfortable," Rosalie calls out as she rummages through her bag.

"It's ok," I say taking deep breaths. "I think I can do this."

My hands shake a little as I remove my clothes. Rosalie and Kehlani jump up and down excitedly as I slip off my bra, leaving me completely bare in front of them.

"Yes Queen, take it off!" Rosalie cries out. "Free those titties!"

"Oh sis, where have you been hiding your fine a*s? Look at those curves. Oliver is one lucky bastard," Kehlani chimes in.

I cannot describe how red I am as they continue to hype me up. When we're done undressing, Rosalie gives Kehlani and I a quick glance.

"Ladies, we are three smoking hot bitches."

We slip on our robes and make our way to the hot tub overlooking a beautiful garden. We slide in, letting the jets loosen up our muscles. An attendant brings us fresh towels and some tea to relax with. Over the course of the next three hours, we spend our time in the cold and hot tub, as well as the sauna before Kehlani and Rosalie decide to get a deep tissue massage. I opt out and stay in the sauna, uncomfortable with the idea of a stranger touching me.

When we leave, I can't help but feel just a little more confident in my own skin.

"I feel amazing!" I say as we hop back in the car.

"Babe, you are amazing," Rosalie smiles back. "Now it's time for some retail therapy!"

Rosalie drives us to the Mall and we begin our little shopping spree. Walking into a high end boutique, Rosalie leads us straight to the dresses. As we browse through, I notice an employee eyeing us from a distance.

"Why is she watching us," I whisper to Kehlani who's standing next to me.

"I have a feeling I know why but I hope I'm wrong. Just ignore her for now," she replies in hushed tones.

We continue minding our business, ignoring the side glances and stares from a few customers and employees. When we finish our selection, we head over to the dressing room to try on a few things. In our first round of dresses, Kehlani walks out in a stunning baby blue off the shoulder dress that hugs her curves just right and compliments her dark skin tone. Rosalie comes out in a little black dress with spaghetti straps and a thigh slit.

I sit in the dressing room, nervous as hell in a red dress that Rosalie picked out for me. It has a sweetheart neck line and long embroidered mesh sleeves and back. The white skirt is decorated with beautiful red lace and has a red hem. I'm staring at my scars in the mirror when I hear a knock at my dressing room door.

"Aurora? Come out, love. We want to see your dress," Kehlani calls out.

I take a few deep breaths. I am beautiful. I am beautiful, I tell myself.

I hear gasps as I step out and I feel blood rush to my cheeks. Rosalie and Kehlani are jumping up with excitement.

"You look amazing!"

"Red is definitely your color," Kehlani says, motioning for me to turn around. "Give us a spin!"

I do as I'm told and their excitement grows.

"I love it! You have to get it!" Rosalie insists. "Oliver is going to love you in that dress. I guarantee it!"

I blush at the thought of Oliver seeing me in this dress. It's showing more skin than I've ever shown him. A dark thought enters my mind. What if he doesn't like what he sees?

Seeing my solemn expression, Rosalie decides to knock some sense into me.

"Uh-uh. No frowning. My brother may be an i****t but he absolutely adores you. Trust me. As soon as he sees you in that, you'll have him drooling like a puppy. I promise you," she says giggling hysterically. "He loves you Aurora. He really does."

I smile and twirl around in the dress. I did love it. I felt pretty even with my scars. I look down at the tag hanging from my waist and my eyes nearly pop out of my head. \$1,925 for a little dress?

Rosalie laughs out loud and I blush. "Aurora," she laughs. "You do realize Oliver is halfway to becoming a billionaire, right? Don't worry about the price."

What? I knew he was rich but I didn't know he was that rich!

I decide there's no use arguing with her and go back into the dressing room to change. After trying out a few more dresses, I settle on the red dress. Rosalie goes to the checkout stand to pay for our dresses while I wait for Kehlani to try on a dress she saw last minute. After she's done, we walk out of the dressing room only to be stopped by a store clerk.

"Hello ladies, did you find everything you need?" she says with a polite smile.

We nod and try to walk around her but she interrupts us again.

"Sorry to bother you. But we are running random bag checks on customers who use the dressing rooms. We've recently experienced a peak in theft, so we're just taking precautions," she says keeping her voice smooth and calm. She points to our bags. "May I please check your bags?"

The smile on Kehlani's face falls, replaced by a cold glare. "Absolutely not. We are not thieves."

"Ma'am please. It's just a precaution. I never said you were thieves."

“But you implied it,” Kehlani snaps, growing angry. “You haven’t checked anyone else’s bag!”

“Ladies I think there’s been a misunderstanding here. I just-“

“No, I don’t think there was. You think we didn’t notice you following us around and watching our every move as soon as we walked into the store?” Kehlani snarls. “We’re leaving,” she says, handing over the dress to the clerk and pulling me away towards the exit.

Rosalie runs to catch up to us, holding our purchases. “What’s wrong?” she asks, seeing the anger in our eyes.

“We’re leaving,” I sigh. “Apparently we look like thieves.” I glance back at the store clerk, who is probably looking for security.

Rosalie scrunches up her nose and is about to give the clerk a piece of her mind when Kehlani stops her.

“She’s not worth it, hun. We already got the dresses. Let’s just go,” she says, walking out with her head held high.

Rosalie tries to protest but Kehlani gives her a look that says she’s not in the mood to argue over this. We walk to the food court in silence. To an outsider, Kehlani looks very strong and poised, but I can tell she’s hurt. I’ve had little experience in the city, but I’ve had my fair share of discrimination. Like every Hispanic community, colorism was an unspoken problem in Lluvia Blanca. High ranking pack members of the council and the Alpha family themselves were fair skinned while the lower ranks were often dark skinned. People often made jokes about my dark complexion, telling me to scrub harder when I bathed to get the rid of the ‘mugre’ {dirt} Others would hear my parent’s strong accent and make fun of them. While I did not share the same level of discrimination as Kehlani nor would I ever truly understand her experiences, I knew what it felt like to be judged based on the color of my skin.

Wanting to cheer her up, I run off to a little cupcake stand I saw nearby and buy three cupcakes in the shape of reindeer. When I come back and show her the cupcakes, Kehlani bursts out laughing.

“What is this!” she giggles hysterically. “They used pretzels for antlers!”

“So are we just going to ignore the fact that they’re f*****g crossed eyed?!”
Rosalie laughs, throwing her head back.

We burst into a another fit of laughter as we point out more imperfections on the reindeer.

“Thank you, Aurora,” Kehlani smiles at me. “I needed a good laugh.”

“No problem,” I smile. “It’s the least I could do for you. I don’t know how you stood up to that woman. It was very brave of you.”

“She shouldn’t have to be brave,” Rosalie sighs. “Neither of you should have to be brave to walk into a high end store. It’s infuriating to still see racism alive and well, I mean it’s 2020 for goddess’s sakes.”

“Oh Rosalie,” Kehlani smiles. “Unfortunately, the world is not so simple.”

We order some drinks to go with our cupcakes and sit down at some tables. As we’re enjoying ourselves, Rosalie visibly stiffens with anger.

“Oh Moon Goddess, I’m going to kill them,” Rosalie growls, her eyes fixated on something behind us.

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Aurora’s POV

Kehlani and I freeze.

“Guess which two idiots just walked in wearing the dumbest disguises?”
Rosalie says through gritted teeth.

I sigh. I knew exactly which two idiots. I sneak a quick glance behind me and lo and behold, Evan and Cameron were sitting a few tables behind us wearing large oversized hoodies and sunglasses, pretending to be interested in the menu. In any other circumstance, I would laugh, but I’m extremely annoyed.

I groan. Why couldn’t Oliver, Wesley, and Carter just trust that we would be fine without them?

“I don’t believe this!” Kehlani sighs. “What are they doing here? We made it so clear that we didn’t want bodyguards!”

“How long do you think they’ve been following us?” I ask, visibly annoyed

“Probably since we left the training grounds,” Rosalie sighs.

Kehlani smirks at us. “I’ve got an idea. Grab your drinks ladies and follow my lead.”

We grab our stuff and follow Kehlani towards the boys with our drinks in hand. As we get closer, Evan and Cameron shift in their chairs and try their best to hide their faces. Idiots.

Just as we walk beside them, Kehlani dumps her drink on Cameron. I follow her lead and dump mine on Evan while Rosalie finishes them off by smearing the remainder of our cupcakes on their heads. They look stunned as Kehlani pulls out her phone to snap pictures.

“Smile boys,” she laughs. “I’m sure the mighty Alphas will want an update from you guys!”

After a bit of laughter on our part and a few curses from them, Rosalie turns serious.

“Now if you’ll excuse us boys, we’d like to get on with our day, WITHOUT YOU! We see you again and we’re castrating you!” Rosalie snaps.

And with that, she turns on her heel and starts to leave, Kehlani and I following behind.

Kehlani sighs. “So where are we going next?”

“You’ll see.”

—

I grow excited as we pull up to an ice skating rink. I’ve never ice skated but have always wanted too. We grab our rental skates and hop on the ice. Kehlani’s never been skating before either so I hold her hand as we slowly make our way around the rink while holding onto the edge and laughing when ever one of us falls. Rosalie on the other hand has been skating since she was 4 and shows us her impressive skills, doing beautiful turns and jumps. She’s amazing.

Rosalie skates over and takes us one at a time around the rink, gently guiding us and showing us the simple movements. My clumsy self has a hard time grasping the concept of skating on a thin blade and I fall and trip multiple times. Despite this, I'm having a blast. It's been a long time since I've had this much fun with friends. Kehlani seems to be enjoying herself as well, falling over and laughing uncontrollably at my silly antics. After a while, we let Rosalie go off to skate on her own while Kehlani and I continue to stumble around the rink.

After a couple hours of skating happily (more like slipping and clumsily clinging onto the edge of the rink), a familiar smell fills my nostrils, making my stomach drop. I turn to look at the main entrance of the rink and am horrified to see my sister, Mia, and her friends glide in. Before I can look away, our eyes meet and the smile on her face slowly fades.

I unconsciously tighten my grip on Kehlani's hand as fear takes over and she flinches.

"Aurora what-"

A small whimper escapes my mouth, making her look in the direction I'm looking at.

"Who is that?"

"My sister, Mia," I say, barely above a whisper, my body now trembling.

Kehlani waves over Rosalie who quickly obliges and appears beside her.

"We have to go, now!" Kehlani hisses, grabbing Rosalie's arm for support.

Rosalie stares in confusion. "What? Why?"

Before Kehlani can answer, Mia skates in front of us, staring directly at me. There is a deep sadness in her eyes and I swear she looks like she's about to cry.

"A-Aurora, c-can I talk to you, please?" she pleads quietly.

I'm shaking so hard and try to step away from her but forget I'm on skates and lose my balance, landing flat on my a*s. Mia offers her hand to help me up but Rosalie slaps it away and growls at her.

“Don’t you f*****g dare touch her!” she snarls as she stands in front of me.

Kehlani helps me to my feet and leads me off the ice. A few tears fall down Mia’s face as she skates towards us.

“Aurora, no te vayas {Don’t go!}!” She calls out. I freeze. “Por favor escuchame! {Please hear me out!}”

“Aurora don’t listen to her, sweetie. Let’s just go,” Kehlani insists, not wanting to see me get hurt.

I know I should hate Mia for letting my mom and brother abuse me for the past 5 years and doing nothing to defend me, but I just can’t. There was a time when she and I were inseparable. We were best friends. I have so many fond memories of us playing together and messing with Chava. It’s those memories that got me through all the pain and suffering I endured.

“I will listen,” I sniffle, my back turned to her. “But don’t come any closer.”

“Can we talk alone? Please?” she begs, her voice cracking.

“No,” Rosalie snaps. “She is not leaving our sight!”

Mia nods in defeat.

Please note that the following conversation is being spoken in Spanish. Rosalie and Kehlani do not understand

“I wanted to thank you for saving my life,” Mia begins. “You didn’t have to do that, especially after how I’ve treated you all these years.”

“I know,” I say quietly, trying hard to keep my voice from shaking. “But what else was I supposed to do? Let you die?” I scoff. “You may have stopped being my sister, but I never stopped being yours.”

“I’m sorry,” she continues. “For everything I let happen to you.”

I roll my eyes, the fear I felt being replaced by annoyance. “Why? Because I saved you?”

“No that’s not-“

“Do you still think I did it? Do you still think I killed him?” I ask coldly.

She goes quiet, but her silence speaks volumes. I feel my heart shatter into a million pieces. She's not sorry, she just feels indebted to me.

"Then I think there's nothing left to say," I snap. "You don't need to thank me either. It's what sister's are supposed to do." As I take a step, her voice stops me in my tracks.

"I know you don't forgive me and I don't deserve it but I want you to know that I am sorry!"

"I don't believe you!"

"I can prove it!" she shouts, making me turn to look at her.

"How?" I ask.

"Tomorrow. Meet me at the border near the large Oak tree at noon," she begs. "Please just give me a chance. You can bring along someone if you want."

I'm quiet, thinking it over carefully in my head. Could this be a trap?

"You don't have to answer if you don't want to. But I'll be at the Oak tree tomorrow at noon. I hope you will be too," she says and with that, she skates away, leaving me to my thoughts.

End of Spanish conversation

"Aurora, are you ok? What did that b***h say?" Rosalie asks, pulling me into a hug.

"Nothing important," I mumble, still processing her words. "Let's just go."

—

We drive up to an a burger joint and order some burgers and milkshakes. I'm quiet during the meal.

"Do you want to talk about it?" Kehlani asks.

"I'm ruining the mood aren't I?" I chuckle, forcing a smile. "I'm fine, just a little annoyed with her is all."

"Want to know what always cheers me up?" Rosalie grins mischievously.

The next thing I know, were pulling up to a night club. A huge line wraps around the building but Rosalie walks right up to the bouncer.

“Ro baby, how you doin’?” He says, kissing her cheeks.

“Hey Peter!”

“Where’s Evan and Carter?” He asks, looking at us.

“At home throwing a hissy fit probably,” she smiles. “Let me introduce you to my girls, Kehlani and Aurora.”

“Welcome ladies,” he smirks, eyeing us up and down before pulling back the velvet rope. “Enjoy your night.”

As we walk in, I quickly grab hold of Rosalie’s hand.

“No offense, but your friend’s a creep,” Kehlani chuckles.

“Yea, I know. But Evan trusts him and he lets me in without carding me,” Rosalie shrugs. “Now who wants drinks?”

I shake my head. “I don’t do alcohol,” I gulp, remembering all of my mom’s cruel drunken episodes. At this point, I can’t even stomach the smell and the club is putting me edge. I try to act cool, however, not wanting to kill the mood.

“Club soda it is,” she smiles. “Kehlani?”

“Breast feeding, love. No alcohol for me,” Kehlani replies.

“Poo. I guess I won’t drink either. Ok, I’ll get the club sodas and meet y’all on the dance floor.”

“Alrighty,” Kehlani says, pulling me to the dance floor.

Kehlani begins to sway her hips to the beat of the music. She smiles encouragingly at me and I decide to let loose. Despite it being a Wednesday night, the dance floor is packed. Rosalie finds us relatively quickly and joins us.

Although the place reeks of alcohol, I manage to enjoy myself, focusing on the music and my friends. Rosalie grinds her butt against me and I grab her hips to steady her. Kehlani backs it up on Rosalie and we become a line of

carefree girls grinding and swaying. As the song changes, we regroup and move to the beat. It's not long before I'm covered in sweat from dancing so much.

I laugh and giggle, completely forgetting all my troubles as the music blares through the speakers. Rosalie was right, this did cheer me up. Suddenly a group of human guys make their way over to us and ask to join. Rosalie and Kehlani raise their left hands to show off their wedding rings and shake their heads.

"Come on, just a dance?" One of them insists.

"I don't see I ring on you," another says, grabbing my hips and swaying them against his groin. "Wanna dance?"

I pry myself away from him "N-no."

"She's taken. Sorry fellas. We're flying solo tonight," Kehlani explains, reaching for me and pulling me close to her. "Goodbye," she waves.

"Oh come on. We're just trying have a good time."

Rosalie walks over to the guy seductively and the smirk on his face widens. Rosalie wraps an arm around his neck and pulls him low. She leans into his ear. "We said No!" She slams her knee into his family jewels and he groans in pain, falling to his knees.

"You b***h!" he groans.

One of his friends tries to grab Rosalie but she quickly flips him over onto the ground, crushing his wrist in her grip. He cries out in pain and his friends look absolutely horrified.

She turns to back to the rest of the guys. "Anyone else?"

They boys shake their heads, grab their friends and scurry off. We go back to our dancing, playfully grinding our hips against each other and having a good time. A few more guys try to dance with us but Rosalie has no problem turning them all away.

It's after midnight when we make our way back to the house. As we pull up, five angry men stand at the door waiting for us.

“Uh oh, looks like the big bad wolves are mad at us,” Rosalie grins. “Oopsies.”

As soon as we come within 10 feet of the men, they lose their minds.

“You smell like Peter. Why the f**k do you smell like Peter?” Carter snarls.

“You took her to the night club? Rosalie what the f**k were you thinking?” Oliver snaps. He catches a whiff of me and he becomes angrier. “You danced with someone. I can smell him all over you. Who was it?”

Normally I would be terrified of him at this moment, but I’m beyond annoyed with him at the moment. The girls and I give him a bored look.

“This isn’t a f*****g game! Who was it?”

We don’t respond and walk to the living room with our things. They continue to bombard us with questions and we ignore them entirely.

“ARE YOU f*****g DEAF?” Oliver snaps.

“Where’s Rio?” I ask.

This infuriates him and I can tell he’s using every ounce of strength in him not to shout at me. It’s actually kind of funny and I laugh, irritating him even more.

“Rio!” I call out.

Kehlani and Rosalie join in and the men look like they’re about to lose their s**t. I hear the pitter patter of Rios paws run down the stairs and he jumps up to greet me. I pick him up and he licks my face.

“Who’s a good boy Rio? Huh Rio? Who listens to me and doesn’t go behind my back, disrespecting my decisions?” I coo at Rio, who happily wags his tail.

Oliver’s face darkens.

“Yea, who knows how to respect a lady’s wishes? You do Rio! Such good boy!” Rosalie kisses Rio’s head.

Carter glares at Rosalie.

“Aw if only all boys were as good as you Rio!” says Kehlani staring directly at the angry men.

Wesley narrows his eyes to slits at Kehlani.

“We sent Evan and Cameron to protect you! You had no right to dump your drinks on them and humiliate them as you did,” Oliver says bitterly.

“And you had no right sending them after us in the first place after we made it so clear we didn’t want bodyguards!” I retort.

“You are our mates, we had every right!” Wesley snarls back.

“Oh, so you get to make every decision for us and we just have to obey you?” growls Kehlani, crossing her arms over her chest.

“No but you can’t just go anywhere without telling us!” Oliver snaps, getting more and more frustrated.

“But we did tell you!” Rosalie argues. “We said Spa, Mall, food!”

“You never said anything about going to the night club.”

“That was punishment for sending these two after us!” Kehlani huffs, pointing at Cameron and Evan.

“You know what? This conversation is over. Grab your things, we’re going home,” Wesley snaps. He turns to Cameron and motions for him to grab Kehlani’s things.

Kehlani sighs. “I don’t believe this!” She turns to us and gives us a hug and kiss good bye before storming out, not waiting for Wesley or Cameron.

“Rosalie go to the room,” Carter orders.

“You can’t make m-“

“GO TO YOUR ROOM NOW!” Oliver commands in his Alpha voice.

She stares at him angrily but obeys his order. “I can’t believe you just did that!” She screams as she climbs the stairs. “f**k YOU, YOU STUPID ALPHA!”

We hear the door of her bedroom slam shut and Carter runs up to give her an earful. Oliver stares at me, his anger growing with every second. He orders Evan to leave. Evan gives me a scowl before heading up to his room.

"I'm going to bed," I say storming past Oliver.

"This conversation isn't over!" Oliver bellows as I continue to walk up to our room. "Who did you dance with?!"

"I didn't dance with anyone! He came up behind me and wanted to dance but Rosalie got rid of him and his friends."

"So there were more guys after you?"

"No! We were just dancing with each other. They asked us to dance and we turned them down. We handled it. We're not as helpless as you make us out to be!"

"You know what? I don't care. You are never to go to the night club again. In fact, you're never going anywhere with Rosalie and Kehlani ever again! You're done. From now on, Evan goes everywhere with you!"

"You can't do that!" I snap.

"Watch me!"

"No! That's not fair! I spend every day with you or Evan. And I'm not complaining, I love being with you, but you guys are boys. I can't talk to you about my girl things and this is the first time I actually have girls to talk too! So the one time, the ONE TIME I get to spend some alone time with my friends and check out the city," I fight my tears and try my best to calm my voice. "You go behind my back and send Evan after me! Do you not trust me?"

"I do trust you! I just wanted to--"

"TO WHAT?" I shout. "To control me? I'm not a child Oliver. You don't get to make decisions for me!"

"That's not the point!"

I'm at my wits end and all the anger I have piled up inside me spills out. "No, the point is that it seems that you are the only one who can make decisions around here and what I want doesn't matter. You don't want me to use my healing powers, you don't want me to go hang out with my friends, and you accept a challenge when I begged you not to!"

“So that’s what this is about, isn’t it? You’re acting out because I accepted the challenge? You don’t want me to fight for you?” Oliver asks. “Do you want me to give you up?”

“I don’t want you to lose your father!” I blurt out, angry tears staining my cheeks. My voice is so weak. “I don’t want you to lose your family like I lost mine.”

Oliver’s face softens and he pulls me into his arms as I sob, unable to hide my fears any longer. “I already told you, you are my family. You are my entire world. I love you so much Aurora and I am willing to die for you if I have to. I will not give you up without a fight and I certainly won’t settle for anyone that isn’t you. If my dad can’t accept that, what else can I do?” He asks quietly, lifting my chin and wiping my tears.

“I’m so scared,” I whimper. “I can’t lose you. I can’t.”

My heart starts pounding like crazy, the fear consuming me and I hyperventilate as a panic attack takes over. Oliver sits me down on the bed and grabs my face.

“Aurora breathe. Just breathe.”

“I can’t!” I pant.

“Look at me. Aurora just look at me. I’m right here, baby. I’m right here. Just breathe,” he says calmly, rubbing circles on my back.

I take deep breaths, gulping for air as tears stream down my face. Slowly, my breathing begins to regulate and I lean into Oliver’s shoulder and sob.

“You’re ok, nena. It’s going to be ok,” he murmurs, digging his fingers into my hair and kissing my head. I breathe in his scent and a calm washes over me. “I love you, Aurora. It’s going to be ok.”

“I love you too,” I reply, burying my head in his chest. “Please..... don’t die.”

He chuckles softly in my ear. “I promise I won’t.”

“Pinky swear?” I ask, pulling back from him and holding up my pinky.

He raises an eyebrow at me.

"I mean it, Oliver. Swear to me that if something happens and it looks like you're not going to win, you'll forfeit."

"No-"

"You have too!"

"No! I'm not doing this!"

"Promise me! Promise me you won't leave me alone. I've already lost a lot of people, I can't lose you too," I sob. "Please, promise me you'll forfeit."

He hesitates and I push him away from me so I can get up to leave. "I need to go," I say, wiping my tears and looking for my coat.

"Aurora stop-"

"Promise me!" I snap, holding out my pinky. "You have to pinky swear!"

He swallows hard and locks his pinky with mine. "I swear I'll forfeit if it doesn't go my way. I promise I won't leave you alone." He leans down to kiss our pinkies and wipes away my tears. "But I won't need to," he smiles.

"Thank you," I sigh and he presses his lips against mine, melting away my fears. No matter what happens at the challenge tomorrow, I will not lose him.

Oliver helps me remove the finger splints and we start getting ready for bed. I hop in the shower to rinse away the sweat and stench of that guy off my body.

As I brush my teeth, my mind drifts off to Oliver's challenge. I know Oliver is strong, but his strength alone doesn't guarantee his victory. David was one of the many who helped train him so he probably knows all of Oliver's tricks. He'll need to be smart during the challenge and move differently.

I send a few prayers to the Moon Goddess before I crawl into bed. I hold Oliver tightly, letting his scent lull me to sleep and praying this isn't my last night in his arms.

The Ivory Queen Chapter 33

Aurora's POV

I wake up to a lone flower and a note on Oliver's pillow.

Good morning Beautiful,

I went to go train with Wesley this morning. I'll be back around 2. I love you.

~Olivier

I tuck the note away and get up to shower and change. As I finish braiding my hair, I hear a knock at the door and Evan comes in ready to take me down for breakfast. He looks pissed.

I give him a sweet smile. "I'm sorry about yesterday."

He doesn't respond and stares coldly at me. I pinch his cheeks and tap on his chin.

"Awe, look at mister grumpy pants giving me the silent treatment," I tease.

A tiny smile creeps up on his face but he quickly frowns again. I smile knowing he's not really mad at me and decide to tease him some more. I continue to poke him until he grabs my wrist and snaps.

"That's enough!"

I take the opportunity and start crying, causing him to instantly panic.

"No, no, no, no. I'm sorry! Please don't cry. I'm not mad. See?" He contorts his face into a helpless smile and points at his face.

I burst into a fit of laughter while he stares at me, dumbfounded. He narrows his eyes accusingly.

"You little—"

"You should have seen the look on your face!" I gasp between laughter. "It was priceless!"

He storms out of the room and I follow him downstairs, still laughing.

—

After breakfast, we head back up to my room and watch Train to Busan on Netflix. As we're watching, my thoughts drift off to Mia. I glance at the clock and see that it's almost 11:30 am.

I shouldn't go. I have enough on my plate with Oliver's fight as it is. I don't need anymore drama. Besides it could be a trap after all.

But what if it's not? Reyna asks. What if she means it? Do you really want to risk losing her again?

I sigh. Its worth a shot.

I turn to Evan who is busy watching zombies devour the people on the train.

"Evan, can you take me somewhere?"

He pauses the movie and gives me a smile. "Sure, where are we going?"

"To the old oak tree at the border," I reply, hoping he won't ask questions. I've never been lucky, though.

"Why do you want to go to the border?" he asks, eyeing me suspiciously.

I fidget with my fingers and his impatience gets the best of him.

"Aurora, what is going on?"

"Just take me, please? I promise I'll answer your questions once we get there," I plead.

He watches me, hoping to get some kind of hint from me, but I don't give him any. He sighs.

"Fine, I'll go get the car."

"Actually I was hoping you would shift and carry me there," I mumble.

His face turns serious. "Why do you want me there in my wolf form. Aurora, what are you hiding?"

"Forget it, I'll just walk there myself." I say. I start to get up but Evan grabs my arm.

“No way you’re going anywhere on your own. I’ll take you. But I swear Aurora if I don’t like what’s happening, I’m taking you home,” he warns.

I thank him and we leave the house. Evan hides behind some bushes and shifts into a large chocolate wolf with green eyes. He’s smaller than Oliver, but still larger than the average wolf. He kneels and I hop on top of him.

It takes us almost 30 mins to reach the border. I make Evan put me down a few yards away from the oak tree and ask him to wait there for me. He growls and continues to walk alongside me, refusing to leave me alone. I give in, figuring it was probably best if I didn’t show up alone.

When we reach the tree, Evan immediately starts growling as we see Mia sitting alone at the top of the branches. She has a little wooden box on her lap. She gives me a shy smile and a quick wave.

“I’m so glad you came,” she says. “I was afraid you wouldn’t.”

Evan gives me an accusing look which I choose to ignore and start to climb the tree. He grabs my shirt with his teeth and pulls me back, making me fall on my a*s with a grunt.

I scowl at Evan as I get back on my feet and try to climb once more. He grabs my shirt again and pulls me to the ground, this time pinning me down with his paw.

“Would you cut it out, Satan? I need to speak with her,” I snap at him, to which he replies with a low growl and small grunt. “Evan!” I groan, pushing at his paw.

He rolls his eyes at me and gently swats at me with his paw, knocking me over.

I’m going to kill this boy!

Seeing that Evan won’t budge, Mia climbs down and he takes a protective stance in front of me, warning her to step back. She places the box on the ground and slides it over. Evan inspects the box then stares back at her in confusion. I crawl around Evan towards the box.

The little box has a large circular gold lock that seals it shut on the lid and has a large sun carved in the middle.

"Where did you get this?" I ask.

Mia sits down on the ground and grabs a few blades of grass with her hands.

"The night that Dad died, we found it among his things" she says quietly. "It was supposed to be your birthday present, I think."

My mind goes back to that dark night. Was this the thing that he was looking for while I waited outside?

"Why are you just giving this to me now?" I ask a little hurt the last gift my father wanted to give me was kept from me.

"Mom didn't think you deserved it after what happened," she replies, twisting the grass with her fingers. "She tried to burn it multiple times but it's enchanted. It won't- you can't destroy it."

I stare at the box, tears burning my eyes. How could my own mother try to take this away from me?

"I'm so sorry we kept this from you," she says with tears in her eyes. "I'm sorry I didn't believe you when you said you didn't kill Dad. I was just so angry that he was gone. I was so angry he wasn't there for my first shift. I was angry he couldn't help me with my powers. I was angry and jealous that you were always his favorite!" She weeps, wrapping her arms around herself.

Tears stain my cheeks as I watch her release her sorrows into her sleeve. I crawl towards her and pull her into my arms. She curls up on the ground, laying her head on my lap and pulling her knees to her chest. I run my fingers through her hair, soothing her. Sensing no threat from Mia, Evan finally decides to give us some privacy and walks away, leaving us alone.

We stay like this for a while, comforting each other with our presence. Several minutes pass by before Mia sits up and wipes her tears. She pulls the box close to us.

"Are you going to open it?" Mia asks, handing me the box.

I stare at the lock. Much like the black book, the lock has not keyholes or latches. There aren't any vines holding the lid shut either so I continue to inspect it.

You are the key, says Reyna. You already know what to do.

As if in a trance, I place my fingers on the lock and feel heat radiate from my fingers. The lock glows red. I turn the lock to the left and the lip pops open. Mia and I both gasp in surprise.

“How did you do that?” Miss asks. “You made it glow!”

“I don’t know,” I say, equally confused.

Inside, the box contains a white envelope and a gold medallion. My name is written on the envelope in cursive lettering and I know immediately it’s not Dad’s handwriting. I pull it out.

“Dad didn’t write this,” I say.

“That’s strange. I swear it was in Dad’s things,” Mia says.

We exchange confused glances and I proceed to open it. There’s a coat of arms engraved in gold at the bottom of the envelope with an Eagle and a Lion. I pull out the letter and stare at it for a bit. I begin to read it to myself. Mia gives me some privacy and scooches away from me.

Written in Spanish

My Dearest Aurora,

If you are reading this letter, it must mean that your father and I are no longer with you and that you have been living with your Uncle Emiliano and his family for the past 13 years in the United States. I know you must have so many questions but unfortunately I can only give you a few answers.

I swear my heart stops for a minute. Uncle Emiliano? You mean he’s not my dad? My whole life has been a lie?

Reyna tries to calm me down. You need to keep reading. This is important.

Mia turns to look at me. “What is it?” She asks, looking worried. “What does it say?”

I ignore her and continue reading.

Knowing your uncle, he probably told you very little about your ancestry (he never really liked titles) so this letter will have to do. I am Sofia Isabel Reyes, Queen of the Sol de Oro Kingdom and like all members of the Royal family, I am a gold wolf and have the gift of the fire element. Your father is Mateo Salvador Altamirano of the Altamirano clan, a noble family of silver wolves. He was gifted with telekinesis.

Queen? My mom is a queen?

Yes. We are royals.

And tio Mateo is actually my father?

Yes.

I loved your father very much and after a few years of ruling together, I became pregnant with you and your sister. I knew then that we were the fated gold and silver wolves meant to produce the Ivory twins. Word spread of your coming and the sightings of vile creatures increased significantly in our kingdom, followed by a long chain of assassination attempts. I survived them all thanks to your lovely uncle. I know he will protect you too.

Sister? Assassination attempts? Ivory Twins? This isn't making any sense.

It will soon, Reyna cuts in.

As I write this letter, you are only a few days old, and my goddess you are beautiful. I have no regrets, my little sun. I love you more than I'll ever love anything else in my life.

Please know, I did not intend to leave this world so quickly, but as the danger grows with every passing day, I know my days are numbered. Our enemies grow strong, but you and your sister will be stronger. This war has already claimed so many lives, including your father's, but it will not claim yours. I will make sure of that.

I know this all seems so scary, but don't be afraid. I will always be with you. Aurora, you are an Ivory twin, gifted with the fire and earth elements. Please understand that I did not want to give you away but life has gotten too dangerous for me to keep you and your sister with me. Your uncle loves you very much and I'm sure he will do his best to protect you wherever he decides to take you.

Today on your thirteenth birthday, you will meet your twin sister Celina Maite and you will complete your first shift together. I have instructed your uncle to give you your sun medallion as it was given to me upon your birth by the Moon Goddess herself. You must wear it at all times after your shift as it will mask your scent and hide you from our enemies. No one will be able to find you so long as you wear it.

I love you, Aurora Salome. I hope someday you will forgive me for separating you from your sister and from me, but I only ever sought to protect you two. Happy birthday, my little sun.

With all my Love,

Mami.

I'm in tears by the time I finish reading. My chest is heavy and I feel like passing out. Mia pulls me into a hug.

"What did the letter say?" She asks.

Don't tell her. You are still in danger.

"I can't tell you," I reply putting the letter back in its envelope and stuffing it in its box. I pick up the medallion and slide it over my head before locking the box shut. Mia's face falls as she watches me wipe my tears and get up to leave.

"I know I have a lot to make up for but I hope one day you can forgive me," she says quietly.

"I forgave you a long time ago," I respond, gathering the box from the floor.

Her face lights up as she tries to hug me again. I take a step back and the smile on her face fades.

"But that doesn't mean I want you in my life just yet," I add. "It's going to take a lot more than just a letter and a box to fix what you guys broke inside me."

She nods in agreement. "I'll do whatever it takes to get my sister back," she says with a weak smile.

I flinch when she says the word sister.

We say goodbye and I find Evan waiting patiently in the field, laying on the ground and enjoying the November sun. He studies me as I approach him. I lay beside him, petting his fur as he continues to stare at me with concern.

“Take me home, please,” I manage to mumble.

I climb on his back, holding on tightly. As he runs back to the house, my mind drifts off to the letter. My entire life is a lie and I have no idea who I am. Why would my father, or should I say my uncle, keep this from me? Where is my sister? Is she alive? Hundreds of questions fill my head and I fight every urge to scream.

Before I know it, we’re back at the house. I hop off Evan and make a run for the my bedroom, fighting back tears and trying to look calm. Once inside my room, I set the box on the night stand and throw myself on the bed. I grab a pillow and scream into it. My eyes and throat burn from how hard I scream and cry, but I don’t stop. I hear Evan enter my room and he sits quietly on the edge of the bed. After a few minutes, I crawl over to him and lay my head on his lap.

“Are you ok?” He asks, gently patting my hair.

I shake my head, holding back a fresh batch of tears.

“Do you want to talk about it?”

I shake my head again. I couldn’t even if I wanted to.

We sit in silence as he continues to stroke my hair, his scent helping to put me at ease. I turn over to the face him and study his features. His skin is only a few shades lighter than my own while his hazel eyes are a storm of mischief. Short black kinky curls sit atop his head, fading down on the sides. His sharp jawline is sure to make the ladies swoon over him. He truly is a handsome man.

“Evan?”

“Yes?” he says, looking down at me.

“Do you think we would have been friends had you not been my gamma?” I ask.

He raises an eyebrow at me and laughs but stops when he sees my serious expression. He sighs, "I am your gamma and your guardian, but I choose to be your friend and I think that would be the case regardless of our bond. You're funny, kind beyond belief, a little naïve but stronger than any one I've ever met. What's not to love?" he smiles, wiping the tears I didn't know had fallen. "I've never had siblings but I like to think Moon Goddess put you in my life to be my little sister."

I lay in his lap a little stunned before bursting into tears. He lifts me up into a bear hug. "Listen, I don't know what was in that box that made you so upset, but please know that you will always have me to lean on. You're not alone anymore."

He lifts me off his lap and carries me to my side of the bed. Evan then pulls the covers over me and tucks me in, telling me to get some rest until Oliver returns. I hear scratching at the door and Rio comes trotting in, curling up next to me. Evan plops himself down on the couch. Exhaustion sets in and I fall sleep.

The Ivory Queen Chapter 34

Oliver's POV

I received a text from Evan saying Aurora had gone to see her sister and was upset. I find Rosalie and Evan waiting for me in my office.

"What happened?" I snarl.

Evan takes the lead and speaks first.

"Aurora asked me to take her to the old oak tree at the border at noon. When we got there, her sister was waiting for us. I had no idea they were going to meet, otherwise I wouldn't have agreed. Anyways, Mia gave her a box that her father supposedly left for her as her 13th birthday present and she's been upset ever since she opened it. I got her to calm down and she's currently asleep, but I can only imagine what she's feeling right now."

I process this information and feel myself getting irritated with Aurora. Why does she always go running back to her family?

I turn to Rosalie, ready to hear what she has to say. She shifts uneasily on her feet and sighs heavily.

"Yesterday while we were at the rink, we ran into Mia. That's probably how they set up the meeting."

Evan and I both stare at her angrily.

"And you just decided to keep this information to yourself? You didn't think I needed to know that?" I snap.

"I didn't know they were going to meet, ok? They were speaking in Spanish!" She retorts. "How the f**k was I supposed to know?"

"Use your brain Ro! The next time she has an encounter with her family, you go directly to me!" I growl.

It's infuriating how these two always manage to screw up when it comes to Aurora's well-being. Rosalie looks at me uneasily.

"Well in that case, there's one more thing you should know," she mumbles.

"What?"

"I caught her and Laura talking yesterday here in your office," she blurts out quickly.

"What?!"

"I don't know what they said. I just caught them hugging and Laura was crying," she adds.

"She can't keep doing this! She can't keep keeping things to herself like this! She's putting herself in danger! Goddess knows this could all be a trap of some sort to get back at her or something."

"What do you want to do, Oliver?" Evan asks.

"I don't know," I sigh. "But this can't stay like this. I don't want to have to worry that someday someone is going to trick her or hurt her." I flinch at the thought of someone hurting her.

I excuse Rosalie and Evan and make my way to the bedroom. Aurora is laying peacefully in bed with Rio curled up at her side. I don't smell her scent.

Why can't I smell her?

As I get closer, I notice her eyes are slightly swollen from crying. I crouch by her side and run my fingers through her hair. She stirs and her eyes flutter open, revealing pools of amber and honey. A tiny smile creeps up on her face, making my heart skip a beat. All the anger I felt moments ago evaporates in an instant.

“Hi,” she whispers softly, her voice hoarse. She blinks her big beautiful eyes at me and reaches out a hand to touch my cheek. “Why are you frowning?” she barely manages to ask.

My frown deepens. “Why didn’t you tell me you were going to meet with Mia?”

Her smile falls. She shakes her head and hides her face in her pillow. I take a seat on the bed and wait for her to poke her head back out. I get worried when she doesn’t.

“Do you want to talk about it?” I ask her, hoping she’ll let me in.

She sits up, reaching her arms out towards me. “Just hold me,” she pleads, tears staining her cheeks. “Please.”

I crawl into bed with her, wrapping my arms around her. As she buries her head in my neck, I once again take notice that I can’t smell her. My wolf whimpers, missing her rose and cinnamon scent.

“I can’t smell you,” I blurt out.

Her body stiffens and she fidgets with something in her small hands. “It’s because of this,” she says, lifting a gold medallion to my face. “My dad gave it me. It’s supposed to keep me safe. I guess it hides my scent.”

I examine the medallion, running my fingers along the engraved sun.

It’s from Moon Goddess, says Michael. Our mate is special.

“It’s from the Moon Goddess,” I say repeating Michael’s words without realizing it.

Aurora furrow her brows. “How did you know?”

“I didn’t. My wolf told me,” I reply. “You must be really special to receive a gift from Her,” I smile. “Aren’t I just the luckiest wolf to have such a special mate?”

She turns bright red and I laugh. I love making her blush.

“H-how was y-your training?” She stutters, changing the subject. “A-Are you nervous?”

My jaw clenches as I think about the challenge. I would be fighting for my mate and my pack in a couple of hours. Worst of all, my challenger is my own father. I’m not nervous, I’m terrified. I, however, am not about to tell her that. I don’t want her worrying about me, so I muster up some courage and plaster a smile on my face.

“I’m fine. Wesley and Carter think I’m ready.” I can tell she doesn’t believe me so I lean forward and kiss her cheeks. “I promise, baby, I’m fine. Don’t worry about me,” I say with conviction.

“I’m sorry you have to do this,” she mumbles, her voice cracking from the hoarseness.

“Come on, nena. We need to get you some tea,” I say as I try to get up. She, however refuses to let me go. “Babe, I’ll carry you,” I chuckle as she continues to hold me back.

She whines before she lets go and sticks her arms out in the air. I wrap my arms around her back and thighs and lift her up bridal style. She holds onto my neck, placing light kisses on my exposed collar bone. I feel the sparks instantly and my thoughts go blank for a second before I’m able to concentrate again.

I clear my throat and she stops, looking up at me innocently. Goddess, she’s absolutely perfect.

“Sorry,” she murmurs. “I just missed you.”

I smile. I was only gone a few hours. “I missed you too, baby.”

I carry her down towards the kitchen and make her a cup of chamomile tea with honey and lemon. I have the cook prepare our lunch to go and I take Aurora to the fort.

After we finish our meal, Aurora curls up in a bean bag and I settle on the floor and watch her breathe.

“Oliver?” Aurora says, reaching for my hand.

“Mhmm?”

“Why do your parents hate me so much?”

I sit up straight look over at her as she twirls a strand of hair in her hands. There is sadness in her eyes.

“Why do you ask?”

“It’s just...I understand why Alpha Miguel and Luna Ximena hate me. Dad was like family to them and they were deeply hurt when he died,” she replies. “But your family...I just don’t understand their grudge against me.”

“There’s not much to understand,” I shrug. “My parents are all about wealth and prestige. They love Adeline because of her lineage. She comes from a strong line of Alphas back in France and Lune de Minuit is a very powerful pack in Europe,” I sigh, frustrated with the subject. “Your family is a family of immigrants,” I say, shaking my head in disbelief. “To them, you bring no prestige, even if your dad’s a silver wolf.”

Aurora holds back tears and tries her best to keep her composure. “Oh,” she says weakly.

I prop myself up on my elbow and look at her. “Hey,” She blinks at me. “My parents are idiots. Don’t mind their outdated beliefs. You’re not the only person they can’t seem to stand,” I mutter.

“What do you mean?”

I let out a heavy sigh and stare at the ceiling. “My parents hate Evan for the simple reason that he has no gamma lineage and his family is-” I can’t bring myself to finish that thought. Katherine, Evan’s mother, was a beautiful black woman while his father was white. My parents never openly admitted to their prejudice against the Gerard’s, but I always knew their intolerance towards Evan stemmed from his mixed background. It disgusted me. I felt nothing but love for Evan and his family.

“I see...” Aurora sighs, eyeing me. She crawls over to me and curls up into my arms. “But you’re not like that and neither are Rosalie or Carter. I’m glad their

ignorance could not taint your beautiful heart,” she smiles. She goes quiet for a moment, seemingly working out her thoughts. “Are you sure I’m-“

I pull her chin up, forcing her to look at me and kiss her forehead. “You are all I could ever want.”

—

With only half an hour until sunset, Aurora becomes restless.

“Let me give you a boost of energy with my healing powers,” she insists, placing her hands on my face and closing her eyes.

“Aurora no, that would be giving me an unfair advantage over my father. I don’t want to cheat. I want to earn my victory,” I plead, taking her hands off of me and holding them in my own.

“Oliver, I’m so scared,” she cries. “Don’t go. Please, it’s not too late to back out.”

“I have to do this, baby. You know I do.” I hear Carter, Rosalie and Evan arrive.

“Alpha, we’re ready!” Carter calls out.

I look Aurora in the eyes. “Go home with Evan. He’ll keep you safe until the challenge is over.”

“No, I’m coming. I want to be there for you.”

“Aurora, listen to me. Don’t make this more difficult than it needs to be.”

“No you listen! You can’t make me sit this out. It involves me. I want to be there. I need to be there!”

I hesitate. I know her. Seeing me get hurt would drive her crazy but being at home with all the doubt and worry would kill her. I sigh and decide to let her come. She kisses me softly in response before making her way down the tree house. I change into a pair of basketball shorts and join them at the bottom of the tree house.

The walk to the training grounds is silent. Aurora’s hand is shaking in mine. I try to give her a reassuring smile, but her mind is lost in thought; she’s a

thousand miles away. When we arrive, several warriors are gathered around the sparing circle, which is lit up by four torches to the North, West, East and South. I see my parents and Adeline waiting at the far end of the circle. As is tradition, a third party must officiate the challenge so I've asked Wesley and Kehlani to step in.

As we approach, Kehlani rushes to Aurora, pulling her into a hug and giving me a look of encouragement. She tries to drag Aurora away but she runs out of her arms and into mine.

"Remember your promise. Come back to me, Oliver. You better come back to me or I won't ever forgive you," she scolds through her tears.

This makes me chuckle. Even in the face of danger, this little woman decides to scold me.

"I promise I will," I reply, holding out my pinky to her.

She locks her pinky with mine and gives me the sweetest kiss. I savor her taste.

"Je t'aime," she croaks.

"Te amo," I smile, wiping away her tears and kissing the tip of her nose. "Go."

She walks back to the edge of the circle with Kehlani and Rosalie holding her hands. I take a deep breath and walk over to Wesley who is waiting in the center of the circle.

Wesley grabs me by the shoulders. "You ready?" He asks.

"As I'll ever be," I sigh.

He nods in Aurora's direction. "She's your strength, Oliver. So long as you remember that, you'll be fine," he says with confidence. "And keep your chest closed!" He laughs, trying to ease the tension.

He walks to the edge of the circle while my father steps inside.

"Alright we shall begin," Wesley announces. "We are gathered here today to witness the battle for the Alpha title of the River Moon pack between current Alpha, Olivier Honoré Artaud and former Alpha, David Artaud. So, here are the rules. Once the challenge begins, no one is to set foot inside the circle.

Should someone do so, the challenge is void and must be rescheduled. No weapons are allowed inside the sparring circle. The challengers have the chance to fight in both wolf or human form. And finally, this challenge is to the death. Once it begins, it is only completed when either one of the opponents forfeits or is killed. The victor will be named the official Alpha of the River Moon pack."

Wesley turns to me. "Oliver, are you ready?"

"Yes."

He turns to my father. "David, are you ready?"

"Yes," he grumbles.

"Then let this challenge begin!"

I put my fists up and eye my father who does the same. We walk around the circle, sizing each other up. These past two days, I've been working with Wesley on new techniques to throw my father off. David is a beast when it comes to hand to hand combat and I trained under him for years, so I know I'll have to tread carefully. I decide to charge at him, swinging right, then left, and right again. He dodges my punches and ducks beneath my final blow. I throw a few more right and left swings, but he dodges them all too.

f**k. He's too fast.

After my last swing, Dad steps back and strikes me in the face with his right arm, catching me off guard. I taste blood in my mouth. I try to retaliate and swing right, but he dodges it and punches me square in the stomach, knocking the wind out of me. Aurora whimpers in the distance as I drop my hands to my stomach and he takes advantage. He delivers another blow to my face and blood tickles down my nose. I'm disoriented and he laughs.

"And you're the Alpha?" He mocks me. "Pathetic. You and that poor excuse of a mate are not fit to lead this pack."

What are you doing Oliver? Michaels growls. Stop playing games!

Anger boils inside me when he insults Aurora. He throws a left roundhouse kick but before he can complete it, I catch his leg and ankle sweep him to the ground.

“Don’t you ever disrespect Aurora again!” I snarl.

He scrambles back to his feet and we once again square off. So far, David has had the upper hand. I need to catch him off guard. I lunge forward and kick him in the back of his right knee, causing him to jerk forward. I deliver a second kick to his left thigh to throw him off balance. Gathering up some strength, I swing my leg back for momentum and deliver a Thai style kick to his face. He stumbles back as blood stains his eyebrow and I take advantage to kick him in the stomach before charging again. I grab him in a chokehold and jam my knee into his stomach repeatedly. I feel him wrap his arms around my torso in an attempt to stabilize himself but my blows weaken his balance.

I shift my body under his, grabbing his arm with my right hand and wrapping my left arm around his leg. I lift him over me and flip him over onto his back. He crashes on the ground with a loud groan. I climb on top of him, pinning him beneath my body and throw punches, drawing blood from his nose and mouth. I start to lose control with all the adrenaline and anger pumping in my body fueling every blow I deliver to his face. My mother starts crying as I relentlessly unleash my inner demons onto my father.

Come on Oliver! Finish him off! Michael growls.

I stare down at the bloody man I used to admire as a kid, hesitation creeping in on me. A memory of him taking me for my first run flashes in my mind. He looked so proud that day.

He’s my father...

David takes advantage of my indecisiveness to kill him and throws a punch, the blow knocking me off of him and allowing him to get to his feet. I scramble to my feet and throw a roundhouse kick but he ducks just in time. He springs back up, using the momentum to swing right and then left. His punches land on the sides of my head. I throw a punch and snap kick him in the face, causing him to fall. Fresh blood trickles from his nose.

He trembles on the ground, snarling wickedly. “You’re about to regret that,” he laughs coldly.

s**t, he’s shifting!

He looks up at me, his eyes glowing silver. He leans back on his legs before jumping forward and shifting midair. I manage to dodge out of the way in time

and wrap my arms around his neck, squeezing tightly. He swings his head around and bites down on my lower calf. I cry out in pain, loosening my grip and falling to ground. Dad drags me by the leg before launching me into the air. I crash down, landing on my side.

I hear Aurora screams as blood oozes from the gash in my leg.

We need her, Oliver, Michael reminds me. You're fighting for her.

Dad's large black wolf lunges at me and I roll over to the side, narrowly evading his teeth. I roll back and punch him with all my force on the side of the face, knocking him onto his side.

I jump back to my feet, wincing as pain shoots up my leg and run towards the far end of the circle. Dad gets on his feet, baring his teeth at me. An idea pops into my head and Michael agrees.

You have to calculate it perfectly, he says.

My father once again charges at me and I sprint towards him and jump shift, landing in top of him and pinning him beneath my paws. I bite into his throat causing him to howl in pain. My mouth instantly fills with his blood. I hear Mom cry, calling out Dad's name as Adeline tries to comfort her. Dad tries to push me off with his paws, but his blood loss is weakening his strength.

"Dad please! Yield! I don't want to kill you," I mind-link him.

"No," He snarls at me.

I bite down harder, drawing more blood.

"Please Dad, yield!" Rosalie cries out. "Mom, tell him to yield!"

I tug on his flesh and he snarls in response.

"David yield!" Mom shrieks. "Please!"

His wolf whines at the sound of his distraught mate.

"I yield," He barely manages to mind-link me. "You win."

I release him immediately and limp back to the edge of the circle to shift. Carter throws me a pair of shorts and a t-shirt, which I quickly slip on.

“This challenge is over. Olivier Honoré Artaud remains Alpha of the River Moon Pack,” Wesley announces, beaming with pride.

Aurora runs into my arms, crying hysterically. I wrap my arms around her and pull her close.

“I told you I’d come back,” I manage to laugh despite my ragged breath.

She doesn’t reply, placing her hands on my body and closing her eyes. I felt a jolt of electricity flow through me. I take a deep breath as she works her magic on my injuries and sigh in relief when she’s done. She stumbles a little and I catch her in my arms to hold her up.

“You’re mine,” she whimpers before pressing her lips against mine. “Thank Moon Goddess you’re still mine.”

Suddenly, I hear a blood curdling shriek.

The Ivory Queen Chapter 35

Aurora’s POV

“David get up!” Simone cries, desperately shaking his body. “David!”

David lays motionless in the middle of the floor, still in his wolf form. His breathing is labored and a large pool of blood encircles him. Rosalie runs to his side, burying her face in his black fur.

“Daddy get up! Come on, Dad. Please!” She whimpers.

Simone gets up from her place and charges at Oliver and I. “You killed him! You killed your own father!” she screams.

Tears fill Oliver’s eyes. “No I-“ he voices cuts off as a sob escapes his throat. “I-I told him to yield!”

He releases me and tries to comfort his mother, but she isn’t having it. She slaps him across the face repeatedly, letting out all of her anger. Oliver grabs her wrists and pulls them down to her side. She falls into him, sobbing uncontrollably.

I remain frozen in place, the situation all too familiar to me. Simone's cries remind me of Karina's screams the night Emiliano died. She was inconsolable for days after his death. My hearts shatters as I turn my attention to Rosalie who is weeping on the ground beside her father. Carter tries to comfort her, but she continues crying.

"Aurora, don't look," Oliver calls out, having sensed my anxiety.

But it's too late. I have to hold back a sob as I stare at David's body pumping out blood from his neck. My hand flies to my mouth to keep me from screaming at the bloody scene as memories of the dreaded night come flooding back.

Rosalie's shrieks snap me out of my own trance. "Aurora please do something!" She pleads, reaching for me. "I know I have no right to ask for your help given how he's treated you, but he's my father! Please save him!"

I can't move. I can't even breathe and a few tears roll down my cheeks.

"Please!" She begs and gets on her knees. "Don't let him die."

Her pleas get me to react and my gaze shifts between Oliver, Rosalie and Simone. I've experienced their devastation first hand and I know they'll never recover as a family if I don't do something.

I couldn't save Emiliano and my family but I can give Oliver and Rosalie a fighting chance to have their father in their lives... even if he hates me.

Fueled with this new found determination, I quickly walk over to David's side and place a shaky hand on his fur before an angry shriek makes me pull back.

"Don't you dare touch him! This is all your fault!" screams Adeline.

Hearing this, Simone stops crying in Oliver's arm and lunges towards me. "Get away from him!" She yells.

Oliver grabs her by the arms and restrains her. She fights furiously against him, screaming obscenities at me and cursing at him to no avail but Oliver doesn't let go. Enraged, Adeline storms over to me. Evan charges at her, quickly shifting and pinning her down with his paws. He bares his teeth as a warning and she spits in his face, screaming to be released.

With Adeline and Simone both restrained, I begin my work on David. Carter lifts Rosalie into his arms, desperately trying to keep her calm.

I place my hands on David's shoulder, ignoring the vivid memories of Emiliano and focus on his shallow breaths. I let my energy flow into him and immediately sense the puncture wound in his carotid artery. His werewolf healing is currently the only thing keeping him alive.

You have to act quickly, Reyna urges.

The electricity shoots through my fingers tips and into his body, causing a small breath of air to escape his lips. Slowly but surely, his wounds begin to close and his breathing stabilizes. The last of his bleeding stops as the bite seals completely and he lets out a sigh.

My head is spinning when I'm done and I want nothing more than to sleep. I let go of David and lay my head in my hands, exhausted.

David gets up from the floor and shifts without so much as a kind word towards me. Oliver lets go of his mother who rushes to her mate and comes to my side, lifting me in his arms. I want to sleep so badly but Oliver's voice jolts me awake.

"Thank you, nena Thank you for saving him," he says with tears in his eyes.

I look at him and offer him a weak smile. Rosalie runs over and grabs hold of my hand, kissing my knuckles.

"Thank you," she whimpers. "Thank you so much!"

"You're thanking her? This is all her fault!" Simone snarls. "David wouldn't have needed healing if that monster knew her place and stayed away from our family!"

I'm infuriated and bury my head in Oliver's chest to keep from lashing out. I refuse to stoop down to her level, even if she deserves it.

"Leave! You are hereby banished from the River Moon pack! I never want to see you back on my territory again!" Oliver bellows with fury.

No! This wasn't supposed to happen. I gave them a second chance with their father so they can make things right!

That's not up to you, Reyna whispers. Sometimes a second chance is not enough to fix what's broken.

"Oliver don't do this! They're your parents!" I beg.

"He's right, Aurora." Rosalie says quietly.

I turn to look at her, stunned that she agrees with Oliver.

"Our parents have shown repeatedly that they cannot be reasoned with," she continues. "They have disowned their children, challenged their Alpha and disrespected their Luna on multiple occasions. I fear they will not stop until they get what they want and therefore pose a threat to our pack. They can no longer stay here."

Simone is fuming with anger and David still seems to be processing the events.

"So that's it? You're just going to banish your own mother and father?" Adeline butts in, looking at Oliver with disgust. "I would think twice if I were you," she threatens. "If you banish Simone and David, then I will personally end our partnership. Lune de Minuit will cease all transactions with River Moon and declare you enemies. Is that what you want? A war?" She smirks.

Who invited this b***h? Reyna snarls.

Oliver and Rosalie remain unfazed by her threats, but I, however, am terrified. Losing the partnership with Lluvia Blanca was difficult enough for River Moon. Adding Lune de Minuit to our growing list of enemies would only put the pack in jeopardy.

"David and Simone will stay in River Moon," I declare, trying my best to keep my voice steady. "There's no need for threats or banishment." Oliver glares at me but I ignore him and continue. "I hope one day you'll learn to see past all your hatred and we can all be a family. Until then, I pray the Moon Goddess watches over you."

Simone and David look at me, stunned by my words. Evan's jaw literally hangs wide open and I fight the urge to burst into laughter at his reaction. I look back at Oliver who is on the verge of exploding with anger, but he does not contradict my decision.

"I believe that decision is Oliver's to make," Adeline sneers. "Not yours."

"Aurora is my equal and her decisions hold the same weight as mine!" Oliver growls. "They stay."

Adeline smiles triumphantly, having guaranteed Simone and David's stay, and I've never wanted to punch someone so much in my life! Reyna is snarling furiously.

"We're done here," Oliver announces.

He turns to Wesley and Kehlani and thanks them for assisting before dismissing his warriors. They all cheer their congratulations as they disperse. With me still in his arms, Oliver starts walking home.

Oliver sets me down gently in the room and heads straight for the shower. I change into some long silk pajamas and scramble to bed with Rio. I open the wooden box and pull out the letter, reading it over and over again. I savor every word my mother wrote, wishing with all my might I could meet her and my sister.

My sister...

I still can't get over the fact that I have a twin whom I've never met before. I have so many questions.

Where has she been? What's she like? Does she know we're the Ivory Twins?

I'm so lost in my thoughts, I don't notice Oliver standing right next to me, watching me closely. I nearly have a heart attack when I finally realize he's there.

"Aurora, why are you staring at a blank page?" He asks, sitting down on the bed next to me.

Can I tell him about my secret? I ask Reyna.

Not yet. You can only tell him the page is enchanted.

I sigh in frustration and hand the page over to Oliver who eyes me suspiciously as he flips the page over and over again.

"It's enchanted. Normal wolves can't see it," I reply, a little bummed I have to keep my real identity a secret.

"What does it say?"

"It's a secret," I blurt out. I instantly regret my words as Oliver's face turns serious.

"I thought we had no secrets," he says, clearly hurt.

"I-"

"Aurora, are you- are you hiding something from me?"

I can't bring myself to lie to him, so I don't respond. This, of course, only infuriates him even more.

"What are you keeping from me?"

"N-Nothing," I stammer. "I-it's nothing serious."

"Then why can't you tell me?" He snaps back. "Aurora, I almost killed my father today! The least you can do is be honest with me!"

That is a very valid point. Why can't I just tell him?!

I said no! Reyna snarls before cutting our connection.

I'm on the verge of a panic attack when I finally come up with an excuse. "Oliver this is the last letter I received from my father and I would really like to keep the contents of this letter between him and I. I'm sorry, but it's private. Please respect that," I say, hating myself for lying.

He's quiet for a moment before his face softens and he sighs in defeat. "I'm sorry," he mumbles. "You have every right to keep that letter to yourself. Those words are meant for you anyways. Please forgive me. I guess I'm still on edge from the challenge."

I'm filled with guilt as he hands me back the letter. I quickly put it back in its envelope and stuff it in the box.

I'm going to have to be more careful with this Ivory twin crap.

My stomach growls so Oliver has dinner brought up to our room. As we're enjoying our tacos, my mind drifts off to my family and all their secrets.

Reyna, how come Dad – err, uncle Emiliano, never told me about my real family?

Reyna hesitates. He was just trying to protect you.

Secrets don't protect you. They just hurt you.

"A penny for your thoughts?" Oliver asks, interrupting my internal conversation.

I block Reyna out and look up at Oliver, who's watching me. I come up with an lie in seconds. "I'm thinking about our date tomorrow," I lie. "Where are you taking me?"

He smiles, shaking his head. "It's a secret."

"I thought we had no secrets," I tease.

"Well it won't be a secret for long," he chuckles as he takes another bite of his taco. "So I've been thinking about the Luna ceremony..... How does this Saturday sound to you?" he blurts out. "I already have all the preparations done and everything for you big day."

I stare at him in shock.

So soon?

His face falls when he sees my reaction. "Do you not want to do the ceremony?" He asks.

"No- I mean yes I want to, but it just seems a bit ... soon?"

"We been mates for over a month though," he argues, letting out a sigh. "I want you to be Luna. I want you to lead this pack with me."

I blush a little thinking about me taking the oath and being by his side for the rest of my life. A Luna ceremony is practically a wedding for us. I'll be bound to my pack and my Alpha for life.

“Ok,” I smile back at him. “This Saturday, I’ll become your Luna.”

Oliver looks overjoyed. He jumps up and lifts me into his arms, howling in excitement.

“I love you! I love you so much, baby. I just know you’re going to be a great Luna,” he smiles, showering me with kisses. “Goddess, I can’t wait to meet your wolf at the pack run!”

I freeze. I haven’t had my first shift yet...

We can’t shift without Celina. We can’t reveal ourselves yet, sweetie.

“Hey, what’s wrong? Are you nervous about the pack run?” he asks, putting me down gently. “Don’t be! Everyone is really excited to see your wolf.”

“I-I... Oliver I can’t do the pack run,” I say, bracing myself for his inevitable anger.

“What do you- why not?” he asks, deflated by my lack of enthusiasm.

I panic. I can’t just tell Oliver I have a long lost sister I need to find before I complete my first shift or I’ll die.

What do I tell him?

I-

“Aurora? Why don’t you want to do the pack run?” He asks again, a little irritation in his voice.

“Because it’s my first shift and I’d rather it be in private,” I blurt out.

He laughs. “Well you can have your first shift tomorrow with me in private and then do the pack run on Saturday. There, problem solved,” he says reaching out for me.

I step back, however, avoiding his touch. His face falls and his eyes flash with hurt. “Oliver you don’t understand. I can’t shift tomorrow or Saturday or anytime soon for that matter...”

“Why not?”

“Because I-I just can’t! Ok? I can’t!”

Why can’t he just stop asking?

“That’s not a good enough answer.”

“Well I don’t know what to tell you. My wolf doesn’t want to!”

His face fills with concern. “Baby, if you’re having problems with your wolf, we can fix it. We can go to the elders and ask them to help you shift.”

I’m on the verge of tears.

Why can’t I just tell him? I’ll make him promise not to tell anyone!

Aurora, you’ll put our sister in danger if he knows. We can’t reveal ourselves until we meet Celina and shift!

“Oliver please, please understand. I can’t shift yet and I can’t explain why. My wolf just says she won’t shift until the time is right.”

Oliver looks furious and his eyes shift between their deep blue and silver as he fights for control of his body.

“Fine!” He snaps, refusing to meet my eyes. “We won’t do a pack run at your ceremony.”

I walk towards him to give him a hug. “Thank y-“

“No!” He snaps as he backs away from me. “I don’t like lies, Aurora. You’re hiding something from me and I-I can’t even look at you right now. I need some air.”

“Oliver wait-“

He storms out before I can finish my sentence.

I lay in bed crying. It’s past midnight and Oliver hasn’t come back since he stormed out. Rio lays next to me, licking away my tears. I pull him close, my body shaking as I sob.

Around 2 am, I hear him stumble in. He reeks of alcohol, causing several bad memories to come flooding back to me.

He's not Mom, I remind myself.

I wipe away my tears and get up to help him into bed, but he just pushes me away.

"Oliver, please let me help you," I plead.

"I don't need your help!" He snaps as he continues to stumble into the room.

He manages to make his way across the room towards the couches. He starts to remove his shirt, struggling to get it over his head. I rush over to help him.

"I said I don't need your help!" He slurs.

As he struggles with his shirt, his elbow rams into my face, making me lose my balance and crash into the floor. I taste blood in my mouth and am instantly taken back to the times when my mom used to beat me during her drunken episodes. I back off immediately, caressing my cheek and fighting back tears.

... Maldita perra, he's dead because of you ...

My hearts starts racing as fear slowly begins to consume me. I start counting down in my head until I calm down. He doesn't seem to notice what he's done and continues to fight with his shirt. After about 15 tries, he finally manages to pull it over his head and starts to fumble with the waist band of his shorts before he finally pulls them down. He's now completely naked. I look away and run to the closet to grab him a pair of pj bottoms. When I make it back, however, he's already on the couch, snoring into oblivion.

I struggle to slip his pjs on him, furiously wiping away my tears until I manage to get them on. I grab a pillow and blanket from our bed and gently tuck him in.

I head to bed and cry myself to sleep.

***WARNING:** The following dream depicts torture and violence.*

I'm sitting alone in my basement, trying my best to stay quiet. Karina has been drinking again, which is usually very bad news for me.

My body trembles as I hear her drunken footsteps come closer. I start to count in my head.

1, 2 , 3 , 4

Suddenly the door bursts open and the smell of booze fills the room. I continue counting.

5, 6 , 7, 8

I feel someone pull me by my hair.

9, 10.

I'm thrown against the cold wall. The wind is knocked out of me and I gasp for air. Mami breaks the empty bottle of tequila she's carrying in her hand against the floor, holding the jagged edges towards me. I try to get up but she jams her elbow against my face, instantly breaking my nose and making me crash once again onto the floor.

"Maldita perra! He's dead because of you! It should have been you!"

Mami lifts my shirt up, exposing my bruised back. I feel her climb on top of me, pinning me face down with her full weight on my back. She then rakes the sharp glass against my bare flesh, tearing into my skin. I scream out in pain, begging for mercy. The drops of alcohol clinging to the bottle add to the stinging sensation on my back.

"Mamá, no por favor!" I cry out.

I jerk my head towards the door and see Salvador standing there watching. I call out to him.

"Auxilio! {help!}"

But he just walks away.

When Karina is done, she gets up and stumbles to my cot, throwing herself on it. As I lay on the floor crying, I hear her begin to snore.

After several painful minutes, I peel myself off the ground, stifling my screams with my arms as every movement I make sets my back on fire. I tear off my shirt and wrap it tightly around myself to stop the bleeding.

I look over at my mom and see half her body hanging off my cot. Very carefully, I lift her legs up and shift her body so she's laying comfortably across the cot. I grit my teeth as the action sends waves of pain down my back. I take off her shoes and wipe off her makeup with a wet cloth. As I work, I dread the coming morning. She'll be irritable with her hangover and I'll most likely be beaten again. When I'm finished, I pull my tattered blanket over her and limp to the farthest corner of basement before I finally pass out.