

## The Ivory Queen Chapter 46

\*\*\*Aurora's POV\*\*\*

I know a storm is coming when Oliver gives in too quickly to Carter's suggestion.

We're in trouble, Reyna whispers.

Yup.

Carter squeezes my hand as he takes his place outside the door, leaving me alone with Mia. My eyes wander to the envelope in her hands.

Another gift hidden from me perhaps?

"So what did you want to say to me about Dad," I ask quietly.

Mia clears her throat. "Well, it's really about both Mom and Dad," she says, her voice shaking a little. "You see, after I met with you, Mom and I got into an argument. She was furious I gave you the box. Later on, she got drunk and started saying weird things about you."

My heart begins to race. "What did she say?"

She picks up speed and starts talking really fast. "She started yelling that you weren't her real daughter and that she and Dad adopted you."

Oh Moon Goddess.

"That's crazy," I scoff, trying to laugh it off even though I was panicking inside.

"I know! That was my initial reaction, I mean she was drunk after all. But, I don't know, the way she said it just seemed too real to ignore. So I went up to the attic and dug up some of Dad's old things and found a photo album. I didn't find much at first, just some pictures of us when we were younger."

"Great, so Mom was just drunk," I laugh, desperately trying to hide my panic. "What's the big deal?"

"I found something Aurora... There was a hidden page in the back and this popped out."

She opens the envelope and hands me a photograph. It's a picture of Emiliano, Karina, and another couple at a beach. I recognize the other man as Mateo, my father. Emiliano used to carry a photograph of him in his wallet and sometimes I would just stare at it. I never understood why I was so drawn to it until I got that letter. I guess something inside me always knew I was looking at my real father.

"It's tío Mateo and Dad," I croak, trying hard not to cry.

I run my fingers along the picture. I hadn't seen a picture of Emiliano since he died. Karina took all the photos I had of him. She said I didn't deserve to even look at him. I had forgotten how handsome he was.

I stare at the woman beside my father. I looked exactly like her. She was small, had long straight black hair and deep olive skin. Our eyes were the same, gold like honey. She looked like a Queen, strong, determined, regal, beautiful. Everything I was not.

"Look at the date," Mia says, interrupting me from my thoughts. "It's from April of 2002, two months before you were born. And look at Mom. She's not pregnant. Now look at the girl next to Tío. She's pregnant. She even looks exactly like you, Aurora."

"T-That doesn't prove anything," I stammer.

"That's not the only thing I found," she argues, pulling out a letter from the envelope and handing it to me. "Here. Read it."

Just like Mom's letter, the page is enchanted and has the coat of arms at the bottom. It's addressed to Emiliano from Mateo.

\*Written in Spanish\*

Dear Brother,

Sofia is almost to term and as this war wages on, I have the growing feeling that I will not meet my two princesses. Brother, I am afraid I will not be able to protect them. So I have a favor to ask of you. Should I pass before Sofia gives birth, promise me you will protect my daughters. Care for them as if they were your own and do not tell a soul about what they are until they are ready to shift and take on their role as Queen and Princess.

I pray the Moon Goddess lets me see them again, but if not, tell Aurora and Celina that I love them more than life itself. They are my moon and my sun. Take care, brother, and may Moon Goddess always be with you.

Your Brother,

Mateo

I fight back my tears as I read the last few lines. I send a silent thank you to Emiliano for fulfilling my father's final wish.

"Aurora, I know this is a lot to take in-"

"Who else knows about this?" I cut her off.

"No one. I haven't told anyone about-"

"Good, lets keep it that way. As far as anyone is concerned, Emiliano is my father."

"Aurora this isn't some trick. That letter claims that you are a Royal and one of the heirs to the Sol de Oro Throne. I did some research on the coat of arms at the bottom right there," she points to the bottom of the page. "And I'm pretty sure the Sofia mentioned in the letter was Queen Sofia Isabel of Sol de Oro and Tio Mateo was her King." She stops when she notices my stone cold expression. "How are you so calm?"

"I already knew," I sigh, tapping the surface of the table.

"How did you-"

"The letter in the box you gave me explained everything to me. That's probably why mom was so worked up about you giving it to me."

"Well I can help you track down your sister. I'm sure there's gotta be some records I can-"

"I already found her," I snap. "I don't need your help!"

She looks hurt by my harshness. "Aurora, I'm just trying to do the right thing here. Don't shut me out, please."

I take a few deep breaths to calm down. "I'm sorry for yelling. That was uncalled for," I sigh in frustration. My face softens when I see Mia's genuine hurt. "You can help by keeping this a secret from everyone including Mom. Don't tell her that you know and don't go snooping around. You might draw attention to yourself and end up in trouble." I pull out my phone and hand it to her. "Here, put your number in and if I need your help, I'll call you."

She types in her number and hands it back to me.

"I know we're not sisters, but I want you to know that I still see you as one, even if I didn't show it all these years," she says. "I'm sorry."

"I already told you, I forgave you a long time ago. I just- I'm working on trusting you again."

She nods and gives me a hug. We stand in awkward silence for a bit. It's been years since we've had a proper conversation, not counting our last encounter and figure it might be worth a shot to try and chat with her.

"Umm, so h-how's Salvador?" I stutter, trying to make casual conversation.

She frowns. "He's fine. He's been training a lot ever since the rogues attacked me. I think it really scared him, almost losing me."

"I was scared too," I whisper.

"I know. Thank you for saving me," she says. "I didn't deserve it, but-"

"No you didn't..." I chuckle. "But I'd do it again if I had to," I add quietly.

She looks at me like she wants to say something else and she almost does. "Aurora I- uh never mind. I should go. Evan told me you have a lot of guests waiting to see you and I have to get back before anyone finds out I was here."

I lead her to the door where Carter is waiting. "Drive her to the border so she can get home."

"Yes Luna," he answers and walks Mia out.

Sol de Oro. That's my kingdom, I sigh. Another piece of the puzzle.

I grab the letter and the photograph and take them to the bedroom before locking them in my box. Walking to the room tires me out. I didn't realize I was

still pretty weak from yesterday and regret sending Carter away. I slowly attempt to descend the stairs but after a few steps, my legs feel like giving out and I'm exhausted. I take a break to catch my breath when I see Cameron running up to me.

"Let me help you, Luna."

"Thank you."

"It's I who should be thanking you. You saved my best friend yesterday," he smiles.

He lifts me in his arms and carries me down to the dining room and sets me down in my wheel chair. Oliver comes running in and snarls at Cameron for being so close. I glare at him, warning him to calm down and Cameron excuses himself.

"Are you going to tell me what you two talked about?" He asks solemnly.

I know he's talking about Mia.

I'm so tired of lying to him, Reyna. I can't do this anymore! Carter and Mia know! Why should I keep this from my mate?

She sighs but doesn't say a word.

"Yes, but not now. We have guests," I say, fixing his tie. "Can you wait a few hours?"

His eyes light up as he leans down to kiss me. "Of course I can. I'm just glad you're not pushing me away."

"I never meant to," I sigh. "I promise to tell you what she said."

"Pinky swear?" he grins, holding out his pinky to me.

I lock our pinkies together and nod. "I swear it."

I'm wheeled out to the yard where I'm stunned to see over a hundred wolves eating and drinking together. From the corner of my eye, I see Isaiah run to my side carrying a little white box.

“Rora!” He cries jumping into my lap. “You’re here!” His little display causes everyone to turn their heads towards us and I blush. “Rora, what’s wrong with your legs? Did the bad wolves hurt you?” He whimpers, his eyes filling up with tears.

“No, don’t cry. My legs are fine. They’re just umm, they’re asleep! I’m waiting for them to wake up!” I say, poking my thigh to show him.

He giggles and pokes my leg in an attempt to wake it up. “Silly legs,” he laughs.

Two wolves whom I presume are his parents come over as well.

“H-Hello, Luna Aurora. I’m Zoe, Isaiah’s mother and this is his father, Ezra. W-we wanted to thank you for everything you did for my son. I-,” her voices breaks and a few tears roll down her cheeks. “I don’t know what I would have done if you hadn’t been there.”

“Thank you for protecting my son,” Ezra adds. “Isaiah told us about the Rogues that attacked you guys in the hospital. I-I have no words to tell you how grateful I am.”

I smile and caress Isaiah’s little cheek. “You have a very handsome and brave little boy. I’m just glad he’s doing well.”

Isaiah blushes at the compliment and kisses my cheek. “This is my girlfriend, mommy. Isn’t she pretty? She’s the prettiest girl in the whole world!” He giggles, extending his arms wide to demonstrate just how pretty I was to him.

I laugh and glance over at Oliver who’s jaw is hanging wide open. Zoe looks mortified and Ezra tries hard to stifle his chuckle.

“Isaiah!” His mother scolds.

“It’s alright,” I chuckle and set Isaiah down. “Isaiah, I’m sorry, but I already have a mate,” I say pointing at Oliver, who seems to have collected himself and waves back.

Isaiah’s little smile fades so I try to my best to cheer him up.

“But between you and me, you’re definitely more handsome,” I whisper and Isaiah grins from ear to ear. “You are also the bravest boy I’ve ever met, even

braver than Oliver,” I say, earning me a glare from Oliver. “I’m so happy you came to see me,” I add. I point to the little white box “What’s that?”

He hands me the box. “It’s for you! Open it! Open it!”

I take the white box and slip off the cover. Inside, two beautiful earrings sit neatly in a bed of cotton. Each earring contains a large blue sea glass bead engraved with a wolf in the middle.

“These are beautiful!” I gasp, hugging Isaiah. “Thank you so much. I love them!”

“I made them. Isaiah picked out the beads,” Zoe says with a shy smile.

“Thank you, they’re stunning,” I say, slipping the earrings on and handing Oliver the empty box. “What do you think?” I ask him.

“Beautiful,” Oliver smiles.

Rio barks and Isaiah slides off my lap and runs after him. Zoe and Ezra excuse themselves to go after him and I thank them again for the gift and invite them to visit as often as they want.

Before I know it, several wolves come up to thank me for saving their loved ones, including Scarlet and Russell.

“You look well, Russell,” I smile as he, Scarlet and his wife, Grace, greet me.

“Yeah, it looks like this old dog still has a few years left in him,” he chuckles, earning him a glare from both Scarlet and Grace.

“Oh you hush now, Russ. This is exactly why you should retire!” Grace huffs. “You’re not the young wolf you once were!”

Russell just laughs before pacifying his wife with a gentle kiss on her cheek.

Grace turns to me and reaches for my hand. “My Russell is as stubborn as they come,” she chuckles. “But he came home because of you. And for that I am eternally grateful.”

“Your husband told me about you. He wanted me to catch my breath before I healed him and the thought of you eased his pain a little. You have nothing to thank me for,” I smile. “It was an honor.” I look to Scarlet. “Your father wouldn’t

stop talking about you either, or how excited he was to meet his newest granddaughter. How far along are you?"

"I'm ready to pop any minute now," she giggles. "These past four months flew by so quickly. Jonathan didn't want me to come but I couldn't pass up the chance to meet the Luna who saved my mother of unspeakable pain. Thank you."

Evan's parents also pay a visit, Katherine smothering me with motherly affection. Sam and Evan have to pry her off of me before she could suffocate me with so much love.

"You know I was so worried when Oliver elected Evan as gamma, especially when he was with that intolerable girl, Adeline," She huffs. "Ugh, I'm so glad you came into our lives. You are infinitely more fit to lead us than she ever will be."

"I couldn't agree more," Oliver says as he leans down to kiss my cheeks and I burst into laughter as his lips tickle me. "I was given the perfect Luna."

"And it goes without saying Luna, that if you ever need to lean on us for anything, we're just a few doors down," Sam adds. "We already consider you family and our door is always open to you."

My heart almost bursts with happiness. It's been so long since I had a family.

By the end of the day, there's a huge pile of gifts beside me. As people prepare to go, Kehlani and Wesley come over to visit me, bringing a little sleepy Matthew.

I extend my hands out excitedly to hold him in my arms.

"Hello, Matthew! You look so good!" I coo and Matthew smiles at me.

"All thanks to you," Kehlani smiles.

"He's beautiful. Absolutely perfect."

"Well, Thank you. I did put in a lot of effort into making him," Wesley chuckles before getting a smack from Kehlani.

I steal a glance at Oliver and catch him staring at me.

“You look good with kids,” he mumbles quietly.

My cheeks heat up at the thought of having his pups.

“Oh, are we expecting a new alpha of River Moon any time soon?” Kehlani teases.

I blush furiously, shaking my head and Kehlani laughs at my embarrassment. Wesley steps away for a bit while Kehlani and I gush over little Matthew. He returns with a large velvet box moments later.

“This is for you,” he says. “Oliver tells us your Luna ceremony is coming up soon so we got you something for the occasion.”

I stare at him dumbfounded before handing Matthew over to Kehlani and taking the box from him. I carefully pull the ribbon and lift the top off. After digging through a few layers of tissue paper, I discover a midnight blue off the shoulder ball gown with a plunging neck line, a large full skirt and thigh slit. Lace covers the bodice and short sleeves, stopping at the satin skirt.

“You will be a great Luna,” Kehlani says. “And you’ll look good too.”

“This is...” I’m rendered speechless as tears roll down my cheeks. “I can’t accept this,” I say shaking my head.

“You can and you will,” Wesley says. “I’m not taking no for an answer.”

“I- “ I take a deep breath and wipe my tears. “T-thank you, it absolutely gorgeous. Will you be attending the ceremony?”

“All of the alphas are. Everyone is excited to see you finally take your title,” Oliver smiles, leaning down to kiss my cheeks. “You are the most beloved Luna in all the packs,” he whispers in my ear.

I thank them again and after a few minutes of chatter, we say our goodbyes and Wesley and Kehlani go home. Oliver and I make our way back to our bedroom. He sets me down on the bed and takes a seat on the edge.

“So,” Oliver says. “What’s the big secret you’ve been hiding from me?”

## **The Ivory Queen Chapter 47**

\*\*\*Aurora's POV\*\*\*

His question makes me nervous as I remember the last time we fought over a secret. He notices and softens his face.

"Babe, whatever it is, I promise I won't be mad. I won't hurt you."

He grabs my hand, kissing the knuckles lovingly and I feel at ease.

Don't worry I won't tell him I'm an Ivory Twin just yet, I tell Reyna.

I don't get a response from Reyna which bothers me but not as much as keeping this from Oliver.

"Oliver, my wolf has made it very clear that she doesn't want you to know everything just yet, but I hate lying to you," I start, grabbing the box from my night stand and placing it in my lap. "What I have to say isn't bad or anything, it's just a little ... shocking."

Oliver nods and scoots closer to me. I place my fingers on the edge of the box. My fingers trace the design on the lock of the box while I think.

"Aurora, don't be afraid."

"I'm not, I just- I don't know how to say this," I take a deep breath and exhale slowly. "My real name is Aurora Salome Altamirano-Reyes. I am the daughter of Sofia Isabel, Luna Queen of the Sol de Oro kingdom and Mateo Salvador Altamirano, Alpha King of Sol de Oro."

Oliver stares at me in shock, so I decide to push through.

"There was a war and my birth parents instructed Emiliano, my uncle, to bring me here to the U.S. to protect me."

I concentrate my energy on the box, making the lock glow red and popping it open. I take out the photograph and hand it to Oliver.

"These are my parents," I say, pointing to Mateo and Sofia. "They're gone now." I add quietly.

"Aurora this is..." he pauses to grab my hand and gives it a squeeze. "Emiliano is not your father?"

I shake my head. "I found out on the day of your challenge. That's what was on the enchanted page. I couldn't tell you because my wolf said it wasn't safe."

"Why wouldn't it be safe?"

"Oliver, you have to understand that a war was waging on and I... I'm a member of the royal family. I was a target. My family hid this from me for years for good reason. My wolf was just trying to protect me."

He's quiet for a second, letting the information sink in.

"So you're a royal? A Princess or-or a Queen, I mean?"

"I guess so. I mean I'm technically the oldest but I haven't given much thought to-

"Oldest? So you have siblings? Is Mia-

"Mia, Sal, and I are just cousins," I cut in. "I have a twin sister. Her name is Celina and she's younger, I suppose. I haven't really gotten all the details yet. I've only met her twice-

"Wait, wait, wait. You've met her?"

I sigh. "Not in person, she lives pretty far, but we share a connection since we're twins and I can visit her in my dreams."

He goes quiet again, the gears in his head turning a mile a minute. "So you and your sister are in hiding?"

I nod. "I don't know much about the war and Uncle Emiliano never told me about our family. All I knew was that he had a brother, I just couldn't imagine that his brother was my father."

Oliver interlocks our finger before looking back up at me. "Were you angry at him for keeping this from you?"

"I was at first," I sigh, staring down at the box containing the letters. "I was angry that he lied to me, but after reading the letters from my parents, I realized he was only doing what was asked of him. Besides, Celina can probably answer some of my questions. She was raised my aunt Valentina and she knows quite a bit more about our lineage than I do."

"I'm sorry about your family. That must have been quite a shock to learn about via a letter."

"It was. From what I gathered, my father never got to meet me. He died before I was born and mother only had me a few days before she gave my sister and I away. It's hard thinking about all the beautiful memories I was robbed from because of the war."

"Do you know the cause of it? Is the war still ongoing? Can you go back?"

I shrug. "I don't know. I only just found out what Kingdom my family came from. Mia did some research and that's what she came to tell me today."

"So Mia knows about you..... Who else knows?"

I hesitate. Carter only knows because he caught me using my powers and I have omitted that bit about myself. Based on how easily Oliver backed down when Carter offered to stand guard, I can only assume he knows Carter is involved.

"Carter," I sigh, conjuring up a quick lie. "It was kind of by accident. His grandfather was an elder and when he saw the coat of arms, he pieced everything together very quickly. He's too smart for his own good," I try to laugh, but it comes out a bit awkward. "He's been helping me find out more about myself."

"I see," he clenches his jaw. "You trusted him more than me..."

"No! I told you...it was an accident. I didn't want to tell anyone. Please don't get mad-"

"I'm not angry, I'm just... hurt," he pouts. "I'm your mate Aurora. I'm the one your supposed to ask for help."

"I know. I'm sorry," I sigh.

He lays down on his back and stares at the ceiling. I tuck the photograph away and put the box on the nightstand before laying down next to him. He turns to look at me, pulling my body towards his and kissing my forehead.

"I love you, Aurora and I want to help you," he murmurs. "Will you let me?"

"Ok," I say, snuggling up to him and listening to his heart beat.

We get ready for bed and curl up next to each other with Rio at our feet. Oliver toys with medallion, reminding me of our agreement.

"I missed your scent all day," he argues.

"I know but the medallion is also really useful for helping me reach my sister. Every time I've fallen asleep with it, I've dreamt with her and I have a few questions I'd like to ask."

He frowns, staring at the sun on my neck disdainfully.

"I hate that stupid thing," he mutters under his breath and I can't help but chuckle.

"You can take it off after I've fallen asleep," I compromise. "That way, I get to see my sister and you can smell me all you want afterwards."

He rolls his eyes but agrees. Curled up safely in his arms, it's not long before I fall into a blissful sleep.

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I wake up by the stream, the purple orb floating just above my head. I look around and see Celina weaving a flower crown on the other side of the stream. Her pink orb floats beside her.

"Celina!" I shout.

She looks up and smiles, gesturing for me to cross over. I do as she asks and sit down beside her.

"Told you you'd find your way back. And this time, you manifested closer!" She laughs placing her completed flower crown on my head and adjusting my hair.

"I guess I did," I smile. "How are you?"

"Good. It was a pretty uneventful day for me. I read, took a walk, ate, watched movies all day, ignored my homework," she shrugs. "You?"

Boy did I have a day. I catch her up on my alpha meeting and the little get together we threw in my honor, as well as my conversation with Mia and Oliver.

“So Mia and Oliver know about our lineage?” She asks.

“Yeah. They don’t have any clue about us being Ivory twins though,” I say.

She laughs and starts weaving another flower crown. I watch her work in silence while I figure out how to ask my questions. I decide to start off with some very basic ones.

“Celina?”

“Mmhmm?” She answers, still focused on her crown.

I point to the floating pink and purple orbs that seem to follow us.

“What are these orb thingies and why do they follow us around?”

She looks up and smiles. “They’re our locked elements and powers,” she says. “Right now, I’m assuming you have some control over the Earth element and I can control the air at will. But since we haven’t shifted, our fire and water elements remained locked away inside us. Here,” she says pointing at the orbs.

“That actually makes sense,” I chuckle.

I decide to ask about our appearance next.

“Celina, in the outside world, I’m covered head to toe with scars and my hair is jet black. But here, I-“ I point to my flawless skin and white hair.

“I don’t actually know why our hair is white here,” she shrugs. “I’m sure it’s because our wolves are white, but I can’t explain the scars. I have a few of my own that also disappear when I’m here,” she chuckles. “Haha, that rhymed!”

I laugh with her before turning serious again. “And when exactly are we shifting? I know we have to shift together, so when and how can we make that possible?”

“Moon Goddess, I’ve been waiting for you to ask!” She says, plopping her finished flower crown on her head. “Ok so the next full Moon is on the -“

“The 30th in the early morning .”

“Right” she snaps her fingers. “Giving us a week before we need to meet.”

“Our beta, Carter, told me we need to meet somewhere secluded and to keep the location a secret.”

“He is very right. We will be at our most vulnerable right before we shift and that unfortunately means our enemies have a chance to hurt us.”

“What enemies?” I ask.

“The same ones who killed Mom and Dad,” she says solemnly. “Witches, vampires, demons... any other evil creature you can think of. We are the protectors of Silver and Gold wolves. Without us, those fuckers would have a field day with our kind.”

I’m starting to understand everything now. “Are we the cause of the war?”

She nods. “Those creatures started attacking our family once they found out was pregnant with the ‘legendary Ivory twins’,” she says, rolling her eyes and speaking in a mocking tone. “They tried hurting us before we were even born but Mom and Dad protected us,” she says. “Once we shift and master our powers, we will be virtually unstoppable.”

So the witches want us dead so they can have free reign over werewolves...

“So we need to find a place to meet,” I say, getting us back on track.

“I was thinking somewhere in between us. You live in California and I’m in Colorado, so how does Nevada or Utah sound?”

I think for a minute. My passport and ID are back at Lluvia Blanca. I never went back to get my stuff after I woke up from the coma. Plus it would be difficult for me to get out of the state without telling Oliver. And to top things off, my Luna Ceremony was the very same night of our shift and lots of wolves were coming to see me, including our Allies. I groan with frustration.

“What’s wrong?” She asks and I explain my situation to her.

We both think for a few minutes, trying to come up with solutions.

“I think I can ask Mia to sneak me my documents so I can travel and I’m sure Carter can help me book a flight and sneak me out without Oliver noticing...at least long enough for me to get away anyways,” I say. “But there’s still the

Luna Ceremony. I know I can get out, I just wouldn't be able to return in time for my ceremony."

"How about you convince Oliver to move your ceremony to that Friday instead, after your shift?" She suggests. "You could say it would be more convenient for your pack members since the 30th falls on a Monday. And he knows about me now so you can tell him that I want to be there. I'm technically supposed to be in class on Monday so you can tell him I don't have class on Friday and can fly in then."

"Would you actually be able to come?" I ask, liking the idea of her being there for my ceremony.

"Well, I haven't received an invitation.." she grins.

I hug her, squealing with excitement. "Please come to my ceremony! It would mean the world to me if you came!"

"Let's just hope Oliver isn't too upset with us for Monday's adventure," she laughs.

She's right, Oliver will be furious when he finds out I've disappeared for a day. Let's just hope he finds it in his heart to forgive me for leaving unannounced.

I push these thoughts out of my head and focus on our task at hand.

"I like Idaho," I blurt out and Celina laughs at my random suggestion.

"Why Idaho?" She chuckles.

"I don't know, it's just a random place," I say playfully and she raises an eye brow at me. "Ok miss smarty pants, where were we supposed to meet the first time?"

"We flew to Maine, of all places," she says nonchalantly.

"See? Totally random. No rhyme or reason to it. That's what we have to do," I urge.

She nods slowly. "Okay. Idaho. Where? I don't know a thing about Idaho."

"Oh no, I didn't actually have a place in mind. I was just saying."

She sighs. "We are also forgetting to consider a really important aspect of our meeting."

I c\*\*k my head to the side and stare at her curiously.

"We need to meet in a pack free zone. We could get into some serious trouble if we wander onto some else's territory without permission."

Crap. I hadn't even thought about other packs.

"And how exactly are we supposed to know which regions are pack territory?"

She grins from ear to ear. "That's where being a Luna comes in handy," she giggles. "Alphas have maps of territories across the country for this particular reason. I'm sure your mate has access to this information."

"I guess I'll have to do some digging when I wake up," I mumble.

"Well at least we've picked a state and a date. We need to head to Idaho on the 29th so we can have time to rest and get settled before our shift in the early morning. I also think I should book the flights that way Oliver doesn't find out and I can coordinate our flights around the same time."

I'm nervous but excited as our plan starts to unfold.

"Aurora, one more thing. The last time we were supposed to meet, we lost someone near and dear to us. I think we should meet alone. I don't think I can live with myself knowing someone else got hurt trying to protect us for the shift."

I nod. "So you don't want tia Valentina to come?"

She shakes her head. "I think we should be able to handle ourselves just fine. What's the special gift you've manifested already besides your Element?"

I shrug. "I'm a healer."

She smiles. "Like me..."

"Well between your Earth element, our Healing powers and my Air element, I think we'll be safe on our own. We don't need to put anyone else at risk and if we play our cards right, I don't think we'll face any danger either."

"Ok. Give me your phone number so I can contact you, that way I don't have to wait until I fall asleep to talk to you," I say with eagerness.

She shakes her head. "No, that's too dangerous. Someone might be able to track us down or hack into our phones."

"Then how else am I supposed to contact you. Waiting for these dreams isn't exactly ideal," I argue.

She laughs at me and I ask her what's so funny.

"You forget we are the mighty Ivory twins and we have quite a bit of power. Our medallions are meant for more than just hiding our scent and bringing us here. They unite us. Until we shift, our medallions can help us communicate with each other."

"And how do we do that?" I ask..

"Well you see, right now we are accessing this realm in our dreams through our subconscious. You just need to reach this place consciously. Lower your walls and call out to me. I should be able to hear you. I've tried several times before but you never heard me since you didn't have the medallion. But now that you have it, I think it should work."

"Ok. I can try," I shrug.

I pull a few blades of grass from the floor and start to twirl them around my fingers.

"You have more questions, don't you?" She asks, picking more flowers for a bracelet.

"What's going to happen after we shift?"

"What do you mean?"

I shift my legs, pulling my knees to my chest. "I mean are we expected to go back and rule our kingdom? Is there even a kingdom left to rule? Is it even safe to go back? Those creatures could still be there!"

She frowns. "We are Sol de Oro's rightful rulers and once we shift we should go back. We owe it to our family and the people who died for us."

“Celina, I already have a life here,” I sigh, shaking my head. “I am going to be a Luna soon and Oliver is an Alpha. We can’t just up and leave our pack.”

“I know,” she replies, her voice quiet.

Clouds emerge on the horizon. It’s time for me to wake up. I frown and Celina tries to cheer me up with a hug.

“We’ll be together soon enough. I know there’s a lot we don’t know, but we’ll figure it out together.”

I nod as the clouds grow darker and the realm begins to fade.

## **The Ivory Queen Chapter 48**

\*\*\*Aurora’s POV\*\*\*

I wake up curled up next to Rio. Sensing I’m awake, he jumps to his feet and happily licks the entirety of my face. I burst into a giggly fit and sit up. Oliver walks into the room, a towel draped across his waist.

“Good morning, Beautiful,” he says, walking over to the bed and kissing my forehead. “How are you feeling?”

“Better,” I yawn.

“Did you talk to your sister?”

I nod. “Yeah, it was nice. I like being with her,” I yawn again and glance at the clock. “Olivier it’s 6 am. Why are you up so early?”

“I told you, I have an important meeting today. I unfortunately can’t get out of it, otherwise I’d stay here with you all day.”

He kisses me and runs off to the closet to change.

“Will Adeline be there?” I call out, a hint of jealousy in my voice.

I hear him chuckle as he rummages through the closet. “Yeah!”

I groan and lay back in bed where Rio continues to assault me with love. After a few stretches and kisses from Rio, I finally get up and hop in the shower. I

get dressed in a loose fitting grey turtleneck, black jeans and combat boots. I comb my hair quickly and walk in on Oliver having trouble deciding which tie to wear.

“The blue one,” I say, feeling my face heat up as I stare at him.

He looks incredible in his tailored silver suit. He ties his tie and walks over to me, wrapping his arms around my waist and pulling me in for a very deep passionate kiss. He bites my lower lip, slipping his tongue in my mouth when I gasp.

“I can’t wait for our date tonight,” he says breathlessly.

He kisses me again, turning my brain to mush.

“Me too,” I murmur.

I remember the plan I hatched up with Celina and decide to bring it up now.

“Oliver, can I talk to you about the ceremony?”

He gives me a concerned look. “You’re not thinking of backing out now are you?”

“No, I just want to change the date. I mean I’ll still do my shift on the 30th but....I told Celina about the ceremony and she wants to come!”

Now he just looks confused so I continue.

“Celina will be in school on the 30th. It’s a Monday and she has class... but she’s completely free on Friday’s and could make the trip over and maybe even stay the weekend! Oliver I really want her to be here for my ceremony. It would mean more than you possibly imagine for her to be here when I pledge myself to River Moon.”

He kisses my forehead and smiles at me. “Ok baby, you win. We’ll have your ceremony on Friday so you and your sister can be together. I’ll let everyone know the change of date.”

I squeal and hug him tightly. Lie as it might be, I was excited to have Celina come.

We head downstairs for breakfast and as we finish our food, Evan informs us that several warriors have arrived.

“Our allies sent us 30 warriors specifically for Aurora’s protection,” says Evan. “All of them volunteered immediately when they heard Aurora was a possible target of the Rogues.”

Great, how am I supposed to sneak out of here with 30 personal body guards?

“Isn’t this a bit much?” I ask.

“Not when it comes to your safety,” Oliver argues.

Oliver has several Omegas show them to the guest house while placing Evan in charge of them. He kisses me good bye and heads off to his meeting with Carter.

“Well I’m going to be in Oliver’s office doing some reading,” I lie, making a dash for the stairs.

“Wait, I’ll come with you,” Evan calls out.

Annoyed, I inform him that there are 30 wolves guarding the house and that I’m perfectly safe in Oliver’s office. I know he’s still traumatized about the hospital incident so I agree to let him check in on me in an hour. I run up to the office and start rummaging through Oliver’s desk for the map Celina mentioned. After about 10 minutes of searching to no avail, I text Carter for help.

[Carter: Desktop. Password: 062002. File: US\_Territory. Good luck!]

[Aurora: Thanks!]

I type in the information and within seconds have access to an interactive map of all the pack territories in the U.S. I type in Idaho and see quite a few expansive territories in the state. I zoom in on Boise and note a very large pack residing there. In my quest, however, I notice a small town just east of Boise with no marked territory and surrounded by a heavily wooded area.

It’s perfect! We can fly to Boise and drive to this little town for the shift!

I zoom out and delete all evidence of my usage of the map so no one figures out where we are going to meet. I turn off the computer and sit back in the chair, remembering Celina's instructions for our link.

I rub my medallion between my thumb and forefinger and concentrate my thoughts on Celina. My walls come down and I call out to her. I feel like an idiot at first when I receive no response.

Relax, Reyna urges. Don't give up yet!

I take a deep breath and try again. Suddenly, I feel a pinch at my temples before a voice comes through.

"Aurora?"

"Oh my goodness, I did it!"

She giggles with excitement. "So what's up?"

"I found a place for us to meet!"

"Wow you are quick!" She chuckles.

"I'm just excited! Anyways, we're flying to Boise, Idaho. There's a small town about an hour east that's outside of werewolf territories and is perfect for our shift."

"Awesome!" She exclaims and she starts searching for flights.

I proceed to give her my information and email for the tickets. Looks like I'll be arriving first at 2:45 while she'll arrive at 3pm.

"I'll have the tickets emailed to you Sunday morning so you can print them out. Remember to delete the email as soon as you print it out. Got it?"

"Got it!"

I cut the link and jump excitedly around the room, when I suddenly remember I need to get my passport from Mia. I pull out my phone and text her.

[Aurora: I need ur help!]

[Mia: ofc what's up?"]

[Aurora: Need Passport and I.D.]

[Mia: Umm sure... where r u going?]

Don't tell here what we're doing... Reyna warms.

[Aurora: Vacation to France with Oliver. Visiting with his family for the holidays]

[Mia: ok. When do u need it by?]

[Aurora: Thursday would be great]

[Mia: okie dokie!]

Goddess I'm getting good at these lies and I don't know if I like it...

\*\*\*Unknown #2 POV\*\*\*

I watched them bring Aurora home Saturday night. Several wolves came to see her yesterday, bringing gifts.

Pathetic. Worshipping that b\*\*\*h as if she actually deserved it.

Earlier today, I came across Aurora's secret garden of Eden.

Looks she managed to gain control of her earth element just fine.

Master was very displeased to see her use it against the wolves sent after her during the attack. Even without shifting, Aurora is already very powerful. If she shifts before we find her sister, it'll be very difficult to deliver her to Master.

I head back to the house to check on the b\*\*\*h when I see several warriors arrive at the house.

You've got to be kidding me.

I pull out my phone.

"Master?"

"I thought I made it very clear I do not want you to contact me unless it was important!"

“My apologies... Its just that ...Master, 30 warriors just arrived at the house. They must have figured out we’re after the girl.”

“Your problems are of no concern to me. Figure something out, you useless mutt.”

“Yes, Master.”

“Have you figured out if she’s made contact with her sister?”

“No, master but I’ve heard several wolves speaking of her upcoming Luna ceremony on the 30th. It’s tradition to do a pack run during these-.”

“I do not care about your traditions. If the ceremony is on 30th, then there’s a chance she’s contacted her sister...” Master mutters. “Get me all the details of this ceremony immediately. I want you and that other mutt to get started on planning the next attack.”

“Yes, master.”

I cut the link and start hatching up my plans.

You’re time is running out, Aurora.

## **The Ivory Queen Chapter 49**

\*\*\*Evan’s POV\*\*\*

I haven’t stopped thinking of Mia and the tingling I felt when I touched her. I can’t believe I’m mated with her, an insufferable, annoying, entitled little brat who messed with my Luna. Her attitude alone pissed me off. She was 5 feet and four inches of evil and to top it off, she was hot. She was going to drive me insane.

Hehe...You like her... Bodhi teases. You like our mate.

No, I don’t! I can’t stand the sight of her. I snap. I will not accept her.

You forget you are not alone, you stupid human! Bodhi growls. What about me? Don’t I get a say in this? She’s my mate too!

Infuriated by my wolf, I run upstairs to the office to find Aurora and Rio curled up in Oliver's chair with a book in her lap. I let my anger go instantly when I see her and hold back my laughter. Aurora is the tiniest adult I know and the large desk and chair make her look like a child messing around in her father's stuff. She even looks up guiltily from her spot at me and clumsily shoves the book into one of Oliver's drawers. She gives me a grin to hide her mischief.

"Is that a porn magazine you're looking at?" I smirk, knowing the suggestion would rile her up.

Her face flushes with embarrassment and she furrows her brows at me. "N-no, you pervert!"

I walk up to her and shove my hand in the desk while she groans. I pull out the book she was looking at and realize it's a photo album. I smile creeps up on my face. "Snooping now, are we?" I chuckle.

"N-no. I was looking for s-something to read and I found it on the shelf," she says defensively.

"Calm down, kiddo," I laugh. "Let's see what we have here."

I open the first page to see a picture of one year old Oliver cuddling with a new born Rosalie in his arms, both fast asleep.

"Ah, the Artaud siblings," I chuckle, turning the page.

We look at little Oliver pulling around Rosalie in a wagon. The next photo is of them at the beach, buried up to their necks in sand. I flip through the remainder of the book, finding more pictures of Oliver and Rosalie together, with occasional photos of Carter.

"Evan... how come there's no photos of you?" Aurora asks timidly.

I laugh dryly. "That's because this is David's photo album..." I shrug. "He and Simone ... didn't like me very much growing up.... They still don't."

She grabs my hand and gives it comforting squeeze. "I'm sorry."

I ruffle up her hair and shrug. "Don't be. Oliver and I have been best buds since he was in kindergarten... David and Simone could never tear us apart and besides... My mom has more than plenty of photos of Carter, Oliver and I

for us to reminisce of over should we ever please. I'm not bothered to not be featured in this album, it's not an accurate representation of Oliver's life anyways." I turn towards the door, remembering the reason I came up here in the first place. "Do you think you'll be okay alone while I go to the training grounds for a little while?"

She rolls her eyes at me. "You don't have to ask, of course you can! Shoo! Go! I can take care of myself," she huffs.

I let out a hearty laugh and ruffle her hair again. "Okay kiddo,"

"I'm not a kid," she says, pushing my arm away. "You're only four years older than I am."

"I know middle schoolers taller than you. You're a kid," I tease.

I hear her curse under her breath as I leave. My smile fades the second I leave her, anger once again growing inside me. I change into my training gear and head off to the grounds. The boxing rings appeal to me and I go ham on the punching bags.

No matter how hard you punch this bag, it still doesn't change the fact that Mia is-

Shut up, I snap as I deliver a powerful punch to the bag, tearing it off its chain.

You will not reject her! I won't let you! Bodhi snarls.

Annoyed, I kick the punching bag and send it flying across the boxing area. Several wolves turn to look at me and I grab another bag and set it up.

"Damn, that's a lot of rage Ev," Eric whistles, grabbing the punching bag and steadying it for me to punch. "Wanna talk about it?"

I deliver a few quick blows and I shake my head.

He watches me. "Spar with me."

I stop punching and look at him.

"Whatever you're working out, this punching bag won't help you through it," he says, taking a few steps back to grab his gloves. "So let me knock some sense into you," he grins.

\*\*\*Oliver's POV\*\*\*

My meeting doesn't actually start until 10 but I needed time to finalize the details for my date with Aurora. After hearing her secret last night, I knew of the perfect place to take her. I make phone calls all morning and by 9:45, everything is set for our date tonight.

Adeline is waiting for us outside the boardroom with her reports for the month in her hands.

She smiles at me. "Hey Oli-"

"It's Mr. Artaud to you, Ms. Perrault," I correct her.

Carter stifles a chuckle and starts coughing to cover it up. She glares at him.

"Sorry. I got a tickle in my throat," he says, pounding on his chest and taking a deep breath. "I'm good now."

Adeline ignores him and reaches for my arm. "Oliver, about the challenge-"

"Right now, we have a board meeting, Ms. Perrault, so I suggest you start thinking less about the challenge and more about the business we have to attend," I say through gritted, shoving her fingers off my arms.

I storm into the board room, taking my seat at the head of the table with Carter by my side. Wesley arrives promptly and I introduce him as the new business partner to the board. As expected, many are not thrilled to lose Miguel and Lluvia Blanca as partners, but after a grueling 4 hour meeting, I am able to convince them that our profits will only increase with Cerulean Sea. Adeline is surprisingly quiet throughout the meeting.

After the meeting, Wesley, Carter and I decide to grab lunch at a Mediterranean restaurant nearby. As I return to my office to grab my coat, I hear a knock at the door.

"Come in," I call out as I put away my files.

"Hello Oliver."

I freeze.

Dad?

I turn around and face the man I loathed for so long. He looks like he hasn't slept much.

"What can I do for you, David?" I ask coldly.

"There's no need for the theatrics, Oliver. I just want to talk."

"Can't. I have lunch with my new business partner and my beta."

He looks disappointed and I almost feel bad for blowing him off. Almost.

"Well, how about dinner? We could go to your favorite restaurant--"

"I already have plans," I cut him off. "With my mate."

"H-how is she?" He asks tentatively and I feel my blood boil.

"Why? Hoping she'll drop dead so Adeline can take her place?" I snarl. "Sorry to disappoint, but my mate is stronger than ever."

"Oliver, I just came to apologize!" He growls.

I start to laugh. "You? Apologize? Please, you don't apologize to anyone. Don't kid yourself, you're not fooling anyone."

"Believe it or not, I do care about you," he snaps.

I scoff at him. "Really now? So much so that you challenged me, your own son, all because I didn't follow the path you wanted? Tsk, you would have killed me without a second thought and you know it."

He trembles with anger. "No, I wouldn't have! All I've ever wanted was what was best for the pack! For you!"

"Best for me?" I laugh bitterly, shaking my head in disbelief. "No, you just couldn't stand the fact that you were losing control over me. Because that's exactly what you do. You control people. It's what you've always done."

He glares back at me and shakes his head. "I was looking out for you and securing your future. You think all your power and fortune came out of nowhere? I worked my a\*s off to make sure your life would be easier," He sighs. "I wanted you with Adeline not only to solidify our relationship with Lune

de Minuit but to offer you someone who could lead beside you and be worthy of the title.”

“Aurora is worthy of being my Luna!” I snarl. “But of course you’ll never see past her skin to know just how truly incredible she is.”

“I’ve changed Oliver! I’ve thought things over and realized I was wrong,” he growls. “That’s why I came to apologize and thank her!”

“Tell me, then, would you have accepted Aurora as my mate and future Luna were it not for her gift and the fact that she saved you?” He falls silent and I know I’ve got him. “No, right? Her silver wolf lineage is the only thing of value she holds in your eyes. You’ve probably already entertained the idea of the silver wolf heir she’ll give me, haven’t you? The potential power and prestige that will come with having a silver wolf Alpha lead River Moon is the only reason you would even think to tolerate Aurora as my mate.” His face hardens. “You disgust me.” I scoff. “Get out of my office!”

He stares silently at me before slowly backing away towards the door. “I came here to make peace with you. But I see now that that was a mistake.” He turns the door knob and pauses. “Please thank Aurora for saving me.”

He finally leaves. My anger gets the best of me and I knock the framed photograph of my family off my desk, shattering it. Carter comes running in

“Hey man. I just saw your dad in the hallway. What’s he doing here?”

“Doesn’t matter,” I say, shaking my head. “I don’t care what he has to say.”

“You ok?” He asks.

“Yeah, I’m fine. Let’s go, Wesley is waiting for us in the lobby.”

“Hey man, if you want to talk, I’m here for you. He’s your dad after all.”

“Thanks, but I’m good.”

“Ok,” he nods, clearly unconvinced.

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After lunch, I try to throw myself into my work but my mind drifts off to my father's visit. I pull out my phone and dial the only person I know who could bring me back my peace.

"Hello?" Aurora's sweet voice comes through and my heart skips a beat.

"Hey, baby," I say, relieved to hear her voice.

"What's wrong?" she asks quietly. "You sound upset."

"N-nothing. I just needed to hear your voice," I murmur.

"You're a terrible liar," She mumbles.

I sigh. I can't bring myself to lie to her.

"My dad. He came to see me..."

"What did he say?"

"He came to apologize, I guess. I don't really know. Things didn't end well."

"Did you forgive him?" she asks, her voice filled with hope.

I both admire and fear her kind, forgiving heart. It's wonderful to see her hold no resentment towards the cruel world but I'm terrified someone might take advantage and hurt her.

"No, I didn't and I won't," I say, trying to restrain my anger.

"That's okay," she replies with tenderness in her voice. "You're not ready. I hope one day you will be, though."

How is she so forgiving? After everything my parents have done... how can she wish them well?

"Ahem, yeah. Um, so...." I stutter, desperate to change the subject. "I'll pick you up at five?"

"Are you going to tell me where we are going?" She asks. I can practically hear the smile in her voice.

"Nope!" I say, popping the p.

She groans and I laugh at her.

“Ok...”

“Te amo,” I whisper.

“Je t’aime, Olivier,” she giggles.

I smile. That name belongs to her now and only she can use it. I hang up the phone and glance at the clock.

Only two more hours ’til five....

\*\*\*Aurora’s POV\*\*\*

After my call with Oliver, Rosalie bursts into the office, giddy with excitement.

“Time to get you ready!” she squeals, grabbing my wrists and dragging me to the bedroom.

She starts off by curling my long black hair, pinning each curl to my head while they cool down. She then skillfully color corrects my slightly bruised cheek with a red concealer. Next, she applies a light layer of foundation and uses a little concealer to highlight the high points of my face and sets it all with face powder. Blush, highlight, and bronzer liven up my face before Rosalie works on my eyes. She adds beautiful shades of browns and oranges to my crease and finishes off my lids with rose gold glitter and eyeliner. My eyebrows are pretty thick and require no additional attention so she completes my makeup with mascara and a pink lipstick.

The pins are taken out of my hair and Rosalie brushes through my curls to loosen them up. She braids two sections from the front of my hair, leaving a few strands to frame my face and pins them to the back of my head.

I sit in front of the mirror in my robe, completely shocked by Rosalie’s work. She runs off to her room and returns with a large white box in her hands.

“This is for you,” she says handing me the box.

I slid the lid off and peel back the tissue paper to reveal lacy red fabric. I pull it out completely and blush when I realize it’s the lingerie set Rosalie and I had seen at the Victoria Secret during our first outing together.

"It's not what you think," she says defensively. "I didn't get this for you to have a steamy night with Oliver. This is for you. I know the red dress is already a huge step for you and I'm so proud of you for finding the courage to wear it today. I love that you are getting more confident with your body and I want to help you take the next step. You are so beautiful but I want you to know what it's like to feel pretty and sexy without Oliver or anyone else telling you you are. Slip this on when you're feeling most vulnerable and find your own beauty Aurora. Don't rely on anyone else to give you your confidence."

I'm speechless. I remember being horrified of ever wearing lingerie, ashamed of showing my scars. While I am still struggling to find beauty in them, I am in a much better place than I was back then. I'm not so afraid anymore. I touch the fabric, admiring its delicate designs and imagining myself in it. I will not let my scars hold me back any longer.

"Thank you," I say, pulling her into a hug. "You have no idea how grateful I am to have you."

"That's what sisters are for!" She cries, wiping tears away. "I will always have your back!"

I tuck away the lingerie in my drawers and Rosalie helps me slip into my dress. I grab a pair of red wedges and clip the ankle straps on. I take out the blue sea glass earrings Isaiah gave me, storing them away safely and replace them with some gold earrings instead.

Rosalie bounces on her toes with excitement. "You look amazing!"

I stare at my reflection. My long black hair flows past my waist, looking healthy and voluminous. The dress accentuates my petite hour glass figure, clinging tightly to my waist and flaring out near my hips. The deep red of the fabric sits beautifully against my dark olive skin. My scars are slightly hidden by the embroidery but a few scars on my legs are still visible. For once, however, I don't mind them so much.

My phone dings, letting me know Oliver is home. Rosalie rushes me out of the room. As I descend the stair case, Oliver walks into the foyer holding a dozen sunflowers in his hands.

"Woah," he gasps, his cheeks turning bright red. "You... wow... you look ..."

Blood rushes to my face as he struggles to form a coherent sentence. Rosalie bursts into laughter but he ignores her completely, his eyes glued to me.

“Oh my goodness, your coat! You need a coat!” Rosalie cries out before running back up the stairs.

I eye Oliver up and down. He looks incredible in a deep red turtle neck, a grey blazer with a matching vest and pants, topped with a long black coat.

“These are for you,” he finally manages to say, handing me the flowers.

I take the flowers from his hand and inhale their scent.

“They’re beautiful,” I murmur.

“Yes you are.”

A storm of butterflies flutter in my belly and I turn wine red.

“I’ll take those!” Rosalie says, exchanging my coat for the flowers. “Now run along kiddos.” She turns to Oliver. “Have her back by midnight!” She teases.

He rolls her eyes at her and takes me by my hand.

“You look so beautiful Aurora,” he murmurs as he leads me to the car.

“You don’t look so bad yourself,” I blush, trying my best to control my racing heart.

He opens the car door for me before pressing his sweet lips against mine.

## **The Ivory Queen Chapter 50**

\*\*\*Aurora’s POV\*\*\*

We’ve been on the road for almost an hour and with every passing minute I make new discoveries about Oliver. For one thing, he is an impatient driver. Within the first 10 minutes of the drive, he cussed out and honked at 3 other drivers. I couldn’t stop laughing as he cussed out an elderly woman for slowing down at a yellow light.

“Oh come on! You could have made that light, grandma!” He groans.

“I’m not licensed but I believe yellow means slow down, not speed up,” I laugh.

He rolls his eyes but I see the smile hanging on his lips.

He also likes to speed and I have to scold him multiple times to slow down. I even smack him a few times when he decides to go even faster just to irritate me.

Additionally, Oliver has a very diverse and colorful music taste. He plays everything from hip hop to rock to country and in multiple languages. Jolene by Dolly Parton is a special favorite of his, which I found so interesting. He also loves Reggaetón and we both go ballistic when Daddy Yankee’s ‘Gasolina’ comes on.

There’s a smirk on his lips as he watches me move my hips to the beat of the music and we both start to scream the lyrics.

“A ella le gusta la gasolina, dame mas gasolina

“Como le encanta la gasolina, dame mas gasolina!”

He plays a couple more reggaetón songs to dance to before switching gears completely and playing John Legend’s ‘All of me’ instead. He reaches for my hand and kisses it slowly as if to commit every inch of it to memory. He starts to sing along and I’m left in awe. His voice is so beautiful.

“...Cause all of me loves all of you. Love your curves and all your edges, all your perfect imperfections...”

He looks back at me with so much love in his eyes, interlocking our fingers before placing our hands on my lap. He lets go of my hand and slightly lifts the skirt of my dress, exposing my scarred flesh. He gently brushes the scars on my thighs while continuing to sing to me. I let him caress my uneven skin, sparks igniting beneath his touch.

Reyna purrs with excitement and dirty thoughts flood my head. I start to blush furiously and I hear Oliver chuckle. He lets go of my thigh and grabs my hand again.

“We’re here, my love,” he whispers.

I look up to see us drive through a pair of iron gates. A paved road lined with trimmed thin trees cuts through a gorgeous vineyard. We drive for about five minutes before I see the most incredible sight: a castle sitting regally at the end of the road overlooking the Napa Valley and the surrounding hills.

"This is incredible..." I mumble, staring at the beautiful stone structure.

"Every Queen deserves a castle," he replies, kissing my hand.

He informs me that he rented the entire castle out just for us to enjoy. He helps me out of the car and walks me across the draw bridge to the inside. The Italian style medieval castle is complete with Italian iron work, handcrafted doors and statues, and exquisite murals and paintings. We walk up a series of stairs to one of the watch towers and gaze out onto the incredible view of the valley.

I'm virtually speechless as we watch the sun set in the horizon, casting a beautiful red hue over the sky.

"Oliver, how did you find this place?" I ask.

He chuckles. "Well, my original plan was to take you on a Hot air balloon ride over the valley but then you told me your secret so I just had to find a castle for my Queen. I pulled a few strings and..." he gestures around the castle. He sighs. "Of course, I feel bad for the bride and groom who were supposed to get married here today, but decisions had to be made," he says nonchalantly.

I stare at him with a look of horror.

He did what?

"No, Ol-"

The biggest smirk creeps up on his face and I know he's lying.

"Babe, it's Monday. Who would get married on a Monday?"

Oliver bursts into a fit of laughter as I go to smack his chest. He catches my wrists and pulls me into a kiss, making me instantly forget that I was mad at him for joking like that. He releases my wrists and I hook them around his neck, pulling him closer. I stand on my tippy toes as he wraps his arms around my waist.

I'm at the mercy of his lips, falling deeper and deeper into oblivion as my brain turns to mush. His kiss is passionate, hungry, and full of desire. He greedily tastes every inch of my mouth with his tongue. I shiver against his body, Reyna purring contently.

When we finally pull away, our lips are red and swollen. I get lip stick on his lips and try to wipe it away with my thumbs but he grabs my wrist and kisses my fingers instead. I stand there completely mesmerized as he kisses each finger before pulling me into another kiss, this one soft and sweet.

He smiles against my lips. "Te amo, mi nena. Te amo con todo mi corazon {I love you baby. I love you with all my heart}" he murmurs.

I will never grow tired of hearing him speak Spanish. I need to learn French for him.

"Je t'aime, Olivier," is all I can manage for now.

He leans his forehead against mine as we catch our breaths before we head down to the Tuscan courtyard.

Pretty fairy lights hang over the courtyard, lighting it up in the growing darkness while decorative flower vines are draped across the many arches along the sides. A little well sits on the far end and iron fire pits are scattered across the yard.

Oliver takes me to a little table near the center and helps me remove my coat since the fire pit is more than enough to keep me warm. A waiter promptly brings us a bottle and glasses. I tense up at the sight of the bottle and glue my eyes on the fairy lights.

"It's grape juice," Oliver says, reading me like a book. He reaches over and caresses my cheek. "No alcohol," he whispers with guilt. "Never again."

I gaze back at him, kissing his hand in hopes of washing away his shame. The waiter serves our drinks before running off and returning with our Italian dinner.

As we eat, I can't help but feel grateful I never managed to escape the city. I've gotten the chance to feel love again and I'm even learning how to love myself. I have a new family now and people who make me feel safe. I've found my home at River Moon alongside my mate and I couldn't be happier.

“Penny for your thoughts?” Oliver asks, seeing me lost in thought.

I smile at my plate. “I was just thinking that I’m so glad I never made it out of the city the night I tried to escape... And I wanted to thank you for bringing me home.”

“I wouldn’t have stopped searching you even if you did manage to leave. I would have gone to the ends of the earth just for the chance to hold you,” he says quietly. He takes a drink from his glass and c\*\*\*s his head to the side. “I am curious though. Where were you going?”

I chuckle as I set down my fork. “I didn’t really have a plan, but I somehow wanted to go to the beach.”

He raises an eyebrow and looks amused. “The beach?”

I nod, smiling at the memory. “When I was younger, Emiliano used to tell me about going to the beach with my dad all the time. There was this secret cave on the beach that they’d swim in. He’d say the water was so clear, you could see straight to the bottom. I’ve always wanted to see it for myself. Emiliano and I made a promise to go together when I was older but... we never got the chance. He kept so many secrets ... he never told where it was.”

“Do you know what part of Mexico he was talking about?”

I shake my head. “My family never really liked to talk about Mexico, just a few stories here and there. Until I met Celina, I didn’t even know Dad and Emiliano had a sister named Valentina. Karina was no different. She would always change the subject when we asked about her past. I guess I just assumed it was too painful for them to talk about so I stopped asking.”

He reaches across the table and holds my hand, running his thumb across my knuckles. “Don’t worry, Aurora. I’ll help you find the cave. I’ll take you home.”

I smile at him and shake my head. “I’m already home.”

Suddenly the waiter comes back and takes our plates, but Oliver eyes never leave me. He interlocks our fingers and pulls me forward a little. I give him a confused look.

“Come here,” he says.

I get up and walk to him, taking a seat on his lap with my back to his chest. He wraps his arms around me and plants soft kisses on my cheek. I feel the sparks instantly, making butterflies dance in my belly. He moves his lips across my cheek bone and down my jaw before stopping. I unconsciously whimper as his lips leave my skin, missing his touch and he chuckles into my ear. He tucks a lock of hair behind my ear and sweeps my hair out of the way, exposing my neck. His lips return to my jaw and start moving lower again. I tilt my head to the side, closing my eyes as I enjoy the sensation of his lips. He starts to gently suck on my neck, sending Reyna into a purring frenzy.

Oliver pulls away and I turn my head to look at him. Our noses touch and I lean forward to kiss him. My hand goes to his cheek while his find its way to my thigh. We are exploring each other's mouths when I hear the waiter come back. I push Oliver away and try to get out of his lap but he has a firm grip on me and holds me back.

I'm burning with embarrassment as the waiter returns with dessert so I fidget with the hem of my dress to avoid his eyes. Oliver laughs and buries his face in my neck, continuing to kiss me shamelessly. The waiter places two plates of ice cream on the table and excuses himself. As he leaves I proceed to smack Oliver on the shoulder for embarrassing me, making him laugh even harder.

"Wait until you see your neck..." he murmurs.

"What-what did you do?" I ask, my hand flying instinctively to my neck.

"Nothing..." he says, grinning from ear to ear.

He gave me a hickey, didn't he?

I turn red as I realize the waiter probably saw it.

"I couldn't help it. You taste so good," he murmurs, pecking my cheek. "Now time for dessert."

I sigh, shaking my head. What am I going to do with this boy?

I turn back to the ice cream in front of us and gasp. I can hear my heart beat against my ears as I stare at the bowl of Thrifty's chocolate malted crunch ice cream in front of me.

“How did you.... You couldn’t have known...” I stammer, my voice trembling.

A few stray tears fall down my cheeks and I quickly wipe them away, careful not to ruin Rosalie’s work. This is my favorite ice cream. Emiliano would always bring me a tub for my birthday and we’d scarf it down together. I haven’t had it in years.

“I wanted this night to be perfect,” he says, laying his chin on my shoulder and hugging me tightly. “So I got a hold of Mia’s number and asked her for some ... advice.”

“You spoke to Mia?” I ask with shock. “You hate Mia.”

“This is true,” he replies with a shrug. “But I would do anything to make you happy. Even reaching out to an enemy for you.”

I lean into him, my hand going up to caress his cheek. “Thank you, this is perfect,” I smile. “Have you ever had this ice cream before?” I ask.

“Nope,” he says, shaking his head.

I grab a spoon and try to feed him some but he shakes his head in refusal.

“Ladies first,” he chuckles.

I oblige and pop the spoon in my mouth, moaning a little as the incredible taste fills my mouth. He chuckles, giving me a peck on my cheek.

“What else did Mia tell you?” I ask, feeding him some ice cream.

He chuckles. “A lot, actually. She spilled all of your secrets. I can’t believe you don’t like strawberries! Who doesn’t like strawberries?”

“Ok I don’t like the actual berries but I like strawberry flavored things,” I say defensively.

“That doesn’t make any sense,” he says, shaking his head.

“Well it makes sense to me!” I laugh.

He showers me with kisses. “Let’s see what else? You prefer sunflowers over roses... Umm oh, I thought this was cute. When you were five, you were afraid to go to the hair dresser so you cut your own hair with safety scissors!”

he chuckles. "You gave yourself lopsided bangs and there was no way to fix it so for whole a year, your mom had to clip back your bangs until they grew out!"

Leave it to Mia to embarrass me.

"Ok stop, enough!" I giggle.

"Nope, I'm just getting started... so you love horror movies but you're afraid of the dark?"

"I'm not afraid of the dark... I'm afraid of what's in the dark."

"We're werewolves. You literally have night vision."

"Fears are irrational by nature, Mister Smarty Pants. People are afraid of spiders and they're only this big!" I say pinching my fingers and frowning at him. "Enough about me. Tell me about you."

"What do you want to know?"

"Everything. I want to know your likes and dislikes. Oh, tell me some of your childhood memories. What was little Olivier like?"

His face darkens and he looks he's a little uncomfortable. My heart breaks a little when I realize I've just reminded him of his family. I shift my weight around and kiss his cheek lightly before laying my head against his chest. I pull his hands and lay them on my lap.

"It's ok if you don't want to talk about them. I understand."

He lifts my chin, forcing me to look at him. "No, it's ok. I want to share my life with you. I want to tell you how I grew up."

I lay my head back on his chest and listen.

"I was very close with my mom as a kid. I was practically attached to her hip! Everywhere she went, I had to go or I'd throw a fit. When she dropped me off for my first day of kindergarten..." he chuckles, "no one could console me when she left. I cried so hard, the teacher called my mom back and had her take me home. My mom was more than happy to do so, though. She had apparently cried the whole walk home."

“That’s so sweet. So you were a momma’s boy?” I giggle.

“Yeah, I guess I was,” he says, blushing slightly. “My dad wasn’t home much. He was always working or taking care of his duties, so I just spent a lot of time with my mom. I rarely saw him when I was kid. I’m not even sure he liked me all that much since he always managed to find excuses to not be around.”

“I’m sure that’s not true,” I protest.

He smiles and kisses the top of my head. “Always looking for the good in everybody, aren’t you?”

I frown. “No. I’m just sad your relationship with your parents is all messed up because of me.”

“Hey, there were problems with my family before I met you.”

“Like what?” I ask, doubting him.

He sighs. “My mom became distant the older I got at my father’s request. He thought she was turning me soft and wanted to toughen me up a bit. That’s the type of father he was. Stern, cold, distant. He’s always been very controlling. He likes controlling all aspects of my life and for a long time, I let him. He decided who my friends were, how I spent my time and-

“And who your mate was...” I finish for him.

He nods solemnly. “When he found out Alpha Jacque had a daughter, Dad practically offered me to her, like I was an appeasement gift to the might Lune de Minuit pack. I wasn’t allowed to look at another girl or have female friends because my father thought it would jeopardize my relationship with Adeline.”

A small growl escapes my lips at the mention of him even thinking of looking at another girl and Oliver looks amused. I want to wipe the little smirk off his face but he continues talking.

“My dad made me learn Spanish and French so I could reinforce our relationship with Lluvia Blanca and Lune de Minuit. He wanted me to stop hanging around Carter and Evan so I could spend more time with Wesley and Javier because they were alphas and ‘at my level’,” he says, rolling his eyes. “I don’t even know what that means! It didn’t help that my dad also hated Evan with a passion for reasons I’d rather not mention.”

My heart sinks a little. It's 2020, how could people still think like that?

"He also thought Evan was a bad influence because... well, you know him. He's a goof and back then he never took anything seriously. He was a little rebel when we were younger. And to make things worse, he and Adeline never got along. When she showed up at River Moon, he did everything in his power to annoy her."

"I didn't think I could love Evan more," I chuckle.

He growls and now it's my turn to be amused. I kiss his cheek and he rolls his eyes.

"Anyways, the summer before senior year my relationship with my dad took a nose dive. I decided that I wanted Evan as my gamma instead of my dad's choice."

"Who was his choice?" I ask, a sinking feeling settling in the pit of my stomach.

He shakes his head. "It doesn't matter. Point is, my father was furious with me, so he sent me away to teach me a lesson. I spent my entire senior year in a boarding school in France. Afterschool I would train at Lune de Minuit, which is notoriously known for its brutal warrior training program. I was also not allowed to return to the U.S. until I completed school, so I spent my holidays and breaks at the boarding school, alone. He wanted to make me think twice about going against him."

The thought of Oliver being pushed away by his own father saddens me and I unconsciously shed a tear. Oliver reaches down to wipe it away.

"Don't be sad, baby. I came back."

"You still chose Evan as your gamma..." I say, forcing a smile. "He couldn't break you."

He nods. "I'm an Alpha after all. We don't do well with taking orders from anyone else and I had already decided who I wanted to lead with. Carter was beta material from the start. He's smart, patient, and focused. I knew I could count on him to help me run the pack company. Evan, on the other hand, is loyal beyond reason and the best fighter besides me. I knew I wanted Evan to protect my Luna. It didn't matter that David sent me away. I was done giving

into his every whim. David and I got into a lot of arguments when I came back, especially when I broke things off with Adeline after we discovered we weren't mates." He kisses the top of my head. "So you see? My problems with my father have nothing to do with you."

"What about your mom?"

"I love my mom, but .... but she broke my heart when she did nothing to stop my dad from sending me away. She always defended my father, saying it was for my own good."

I sigh, sad to learn of the broken relationship he has with his parents.

"Stop it," he says, knowing me too well. "I have you now to make me happy."

I smile. He makes me happy too.

"Let's go for a walk," he says patting my thighs.

I hop off his lap and grab my coat to stay warm. He leads us into the vineyard for a stroll. The moon light shines down on us and we walk side by side in comfortable silence. A gentle breeze blows past us, rustling the leafless vines. I stick my arm out to touch the bare vines as we walk by.

This place must be even more beautiful in the summer ...

Reyna pops into my head, extremely excited. Ask him, please! She begs me.

After about five minutes of begging, I sigh and give in. Oliver turns to look at me with amusement.

"What's going on in that beautiful mind?" He sings, teasing me.

"It's my wolf," I whisper. "She wants to meet your wolf. We'd... like to meet him."