

## The Ivory Queen Chapter 81

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

"Calm down, baby. She's clearly hurting. You may not have loved her but she did and she's in pain," Aurora soothes.

I calm down and interlock our fingers to keep from lunging at Adeline.

"I know we haven't always gotten along, but I am happy for you two," she slurs, putting a bottle of Veuve Clicquot champagne on the table before sloppily pouring out three glasses. It's hard to watch as she hands Aurora and I a glass before she lifts the final glass to her lips. "Cheers to the Luna of River Moon," she giggles before chugging the drink, spilling some onto her dress.

She bursts into laughter at the mess she's made and my mother comes rushing over. "Adeline, this is not like you!" She snaps. "Come on, we're getting you a black coffee to sober you up!"

I watch as my mom literally carries Adeline back towards the house to rest and turn to Aurora. She lifts her glass up and eyes me.

"Here," she smiles and hands me the glass.

"Are you trying to get me drunk?" I chuckle, taking the glass from her.

"Maybe..." she grins and grabs a glass of water.

"To you," I smile.

"To us."

I drink both glasses and she giggles as I try to steal a kiss from her.

The DJ starts playing Hispanic music and Aurora starts tapping her foot to the beat. She's itching to dance. I check my watch. Her surprise is almost here but until then, I can keep her occupied. I pull her onto the dance floor as a cumbia blasts through the speakers. Since our date, I've been practicing the steps she taught me and feel pretty confident she'll be pleased to see I can keep up with her.

As we step to the rhythm, Aurora's smile grows wider. "Who have you been practicing with?" She yells over the music as I spin her around.

"There's this very cute broom stick in the janitor's closet down the hall from my office," I reply, making her laugh.

Several of the Valle de la Luna wolves join us on the dance floor. The champagne and tequila start to kick in and I feel myself loosen up bit. After about 20 minutes of dancing, I get word that Aurora's surprise is at the front door and give the order to send them in.

I ask the DJ to stop the music and suddenly the sound of the sousaphone, drums, trumpets, clarinets, and trombones fill the night. Tears well up in Aurora's eyes as people make way for the Banda on the dance floor.

"Oh goddess!" She squeals. "I can't believe you got a Banda!"

"Will you do me the honor of dancing this first song with me?" I ask, extending a hand out to her.

I pull her to the middle of the dance floor and press her up against my body. She hooks an arm around my neck and rests the other on my shoulder while I wrap my arms around her waist. While I'm significantly taller than her, Aurora's heels are certainly helpful tonight and she's just the right height for me. She lets me lead and we begin our dance, moving forwards, backwards and spinning occasionally. For a moment, I forget the pack is watching and just focus on Aurora resting her head on my chest. I'm still a bit clumsy with my steps but Aurora doesn't mind, caressing my cheek and showering me with kisses.

The dance floor fills up with drunk and happy wolves and I see Javier and Mia dancing together from the corner of my eye. After about 13 songs, I start to grow tired but Aurora has the energy of a puppy, dancing like she's not wearing 6 inch heels.

"Babe, is it alright if we take a water break?" I ask, leading our dance towards the edge of the floor.

"Sorry, I got carried away," she giggles. "I'm just so happy right now! This is the best night of my life! Thank you so much!"

I love seeing her so happy. We grab some water bottles and I replenish my thirst, but I'm still exhausted. We head back to the table to rest for a few minutes, my energy still low.

"Sorry baby, I'm too tired to dance anymore," I apologize, knowing she would much rather be on the dance floor.

"Oliver it's fine. I had a wonderful time with you. Thank you," she replies, leaning over to plant a kiss on my cheek.

Suddenly, two squealing toddlers run over and tug at Aurora's dress.

"Rora! You look so pretty!" Isaiah blushes as he reaches for Aurora's hands.

The little boy is quite smitten with Aurora and much to my annoyance, Aurora enjoys his attention.

"Why thank you," Aurora giggles, pinching his chubby cheeks. "You look very handsome too!"

"Luna! Luna! Dance with me!" Taylor squeals, tugging at her dress.

"Go dance," I say, nudging her up. "I know you want too," I tease.

She gives me a lingering kiss and I chuckle as Isaiah and Taylor scream 'eww cooties!' at us. Aurora scolds the kids before grabbing their hands and taking them to the dance floor. I watch as she twirls them around and lifts up her dress to show them how to move their feet as the Banda continues to play.

Eventually, I get up to get more water when Javier walks up to me.

"I know you don't like me for several reasons," he sighs, grabbing a bottle of water. "And I know Aurora has her reasons for inviting me here tonight..."

"Spit it out already," I growl, too tired to be going in circles with him right now.

"I was wondering if I could dance with Aurora..." he asks quickly, completely catching me off guard. Seeing my cold expression, he tries to explain. "I-it's not what you think. I'm not trying to steal her from you."

Not that you could, Michael snarls.

He sighs. "I-It's just.. I want the chance to prove that I'm not a monster to her and Celina. And I know it would mean a lot-"

"Let me clarify something for you because you seem confused...Aurora forgave you. I didn't. The only reason you are still breathing right now is because my future wife would be furious and her only sister is your mate. I respect Aurora and Celina too much to ever hurt you, but don't think for a second I've forgotten what you and the rest of her so called family did to her all these years. I know you're only sorry because Celina is your mate, not because you actually mean it. So save your 'sincere apology' for some other poor bastard because I don't believe any of the s\*\*t that comes out of your mouth."

"That's not true! I am sorry-"

"Bullshit!" I snap. "If you really cared, where the f\*\*k were you when she was in the hospital all those months fighting for her life? Huh? You knew she was dying but none of you, not a single person from Lluvia Blanca asked to see her or asked how she was doing. Do you have any idea how hard we had to work to get Aurora to trust us after what you did to her? How long it took for her to accept that we wouldn't hurt her like you guys did? S-she still gets nightmares. I still wake up in the middle of the night to the sounds of her whimpering or feel her squeeze my arm in fear."

I have to take a deep breath to keep from strangling him. "I explained everything to you that day I called you in but you didn't give a s\*\*t. You would have walked out my office without so much as an ounce of guilt had Celina not walked in. You, Mia, Salvador, and Karina are all monsters and nothing you ever say and or do will change that!" I glare at him. "So no... you do not have permission to ask for a dance. You barely have permission to speak to her. Now get out my sight before I lose whatever patience I have left."

Javier remains glued to his spot and looks me directly in the eyes. "You're wrong, Oliver. Yes, Celina being my mate made me rethink everything, but that does not make my apology any less sincere. I do feel guilty and I do understand that I was wrong for hurting Aurora as I did. You can keep believing I'm a monster for all I care, it's not you I want to apologize to, it's her. You can't keep me from trying to make up for what I did to her. That's her decision, not yours."

"What's my decision?"

I turn to see Aurora standing behind me, arms crossed over her chest and a little grin on her perfect lips.

“Care to explain what you two were talking about?” She asks.

“I wanted to dance with you,” Javier says, offering her a smile. “Just like we used to do.”

I feel my blood boil as he asks so coyly and Aurora reaches for my hand, soothing my fury with her touch.

“Thank you for the offer, Javi, but I don’t think I’m ready for that yet. I forgave you, but it’ll take some time before I trust you again,” she says. “I not ready to let things go back to the way they used to be between us.”

Javier’s smile falters much to my satisfaction but he stands tall and sighs. “I understand... I look forward to earning your trust again. Believe it or not, I’ve missed your friendship,” he says with a little sadness in his eyes. “Con permiso (Excuse me).”

We both watch as he walks away towards the dance floor and grabs a girl to dance with.

“Are you okay?” Aurora asks, kissing my hand. “I can tell he pissed you off,” she chuckles. “I’m sorry for inviting him. I just wanted- “

I stop her with a kiss. “Don’t apologize for being yourself and trying to make this work. My feelings are irrelevant.”

“That’s not true. They matter to me,” she murmurs.

I sigh. “It’s going to take a while for me to forgive him and to be honest, I don’t think I ever will. I’m sorry.”

“It’s okay, take your time,” She smiles. “There’s no rush. I have to learn to trust him too. We can do this together, but if you find that can’t forgive him, then I only ask that you try to be respectful.”

She leans forward, her lips just grazing mine and I feel my anger melt away. I was exhausted but I would never get tired of kissing her.

Our little moment is interrupted when Diego clears his throat and bows. “Umm... sorry for interrupting. Celina isn’t much of a dancer but I’m told you are,

Aurora. If you wouldn't mind, Oliver, could I have this dance with my cousin?" he asks shyly.

Aurora looks at me and I nod. "Go, have fun," I say as I kiss her cheeks.

I watch as they step on the dance floor and let the Banda influence their movements. I know I shouldn't be jealous considering they're related but I feel my blood boil as he presses her body against his, wrapping an arm around her waist while the other holds up her dress to keep her from tripping over it. Even more infuriating is the fact that he's actually a good dancer, moving expertly in sync with her as they dip, spin and skip around the dance floor. At one point, he even lifts her off her feet in short movements to beat of the trumpets and she giggles excitedly. I wish with all my might I had the energy to dance with her right now, but I'm drained.

I feel someone tap on my shoulder and I turn to see Celina laughing at me.

"I can hear your growling from my seat and your aura reeks of jealousy," she laughs. "You do realize they're cousins. right?" She asks, throwing her head back and stumbling a little. "Anyways, I figured you could use some company."

She's had a lot to drink and I can tell she's hanging on by a thread. I hook my arm under hers to keep her steady and she gives me a toothy grin.

"Thanks," I mutter, turning my attention back to Aurora dancing. "How are you holding up with Javier being here? I'm sure he's managed to piss you off as well."

"It's not easy... my wolf wants him...it makes it hard for me not want to take him back," she admits solemnly.

"You want him?" I snap.

"I don't know what I want! Every time he's near me, all I want to do is be with him... I mean, how sick is that? After everything he's done, I still want him!" She fights back tears. "And to make matters worse, I'm jealous of my own sister for having had his attention at one point. My mind explodes when I think of all the possible secrets they have together and all the memories they share," she groans, folding her arms across her chest. "I mean he asked Aurora to dance. He hasn't even asked me to dance! Why isn't he looking my way right now? I mean who is that skank he's dancing with anyways?"

I roll my eyes. "If you want to dance with him then go f\*\*\*\*\*g ask!"

"No! I hate dancing."

Drunk Celina is getting on my nerves...

"Then what's the problem?" I groan.

"He could have at least asked!" She takes a minute to calm herself down. "A girl likes to be asked," she whispers, a little teary eyed.

"There's no need to be jealous," we hear a voice say from behind us.

We turn to see Mia staring back at us. I tense up in her presence. Another monster.

"I won't lie, Aurora and Javier did have a connection. They were really close and I know they had feelings for each other. Dad used to joke that Aurora would be Lluvia Blanca's next Luna," she chuckles softly as Celina and I both growl at her. "But that's obviously not the case anymore," she says, raising her arms in surrender. "They stopped feeling that way for each other a long time ago when Javier kissed her. It just didn't feel right for either them and they agreed to just be friends. That's what they were before my father died and that's all Javier wants to be with Aurora now. Just friends."

Celina and I eye her suspiciously and she groans.

"Look, I know in your eyes Javier is evil but that's not true."

"Why would we trust your opinion? You couldn't even be honest with how you hurt Aurora!" I snap.

She falls silent, looking at the ground. My words must have stung.

Good. She deserves to feel bad.

"It's hard to lose one parent, but watching the other drink herself to death is even harder," she says quietly before lifting her dress sleeve and revealing fresh bruises. "Aurora wasn't the only one mother abused," she pauses to wipe a few tears from her eyes. "Javier is not a monster. He protected us when Mom was...too far gone to know what she was doing," Mia sighs, looking up at the night sky. "He saved us all. Trust me, Aurora wouldn't be

alive if it weren't for him. There's a lot that went on in the pack house that she doesn't know about."

I'm honestly shocked at the news Karina beat Salvador and Mia too. I knew Karina was messed up, but to take your anger out on your own kids? f\*\*k! It's just too much.

"Does Aurora know Karina hurts you and Salvador too?" I ask and she shakes her head.

"No and I don't want her to find out. Knowing Aurora, she'd probably blame herself for not knowing. I'm only telling you this so you can give Javier a chance. He's no saint but he really is trying. He does care about Aurora and he is in love with you, Celina. The only reason he's not all over you right now is because you asked him to stay away."

"Whatever," Celina mumbles. "I don't care what he does."

We all turn to the dance floor and watch Diego and Aurora spin in circles, completely oblivious to Mia's revelation. Aurora suddenly looks up at me and blows a kiss at me. I subsequently blush, making Celina and Mia burst into giggles.

"I love you my little French snob," she says.

"I love you too, baby."

I feel exhaustion once again creeping up on me and the flashing lights on the dance floor make me dizzy.

"I'm gonna go get Aurora her flats. I'm sure her feet hurt," I sigh, afraid my knees might give out if I stayed there any longer.

As I walk, my vision starts to blur and I know something is wrong. I stumble into the house and crash against the couch, feeling weak and panting to catch my breath.

Michael what's going on?

My eyelids grow heavier by the second and I hear footsteps come up behind me. I suddenly feel a prick in my neck, the injection spewing cold liquid into my veins.



I look up at the perpetrator and freeze when I realize who the traitors are.

“Y-you?” I manage to mumble before my vision goes black.

## **The Ivory Queen Chapter 82**

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

As I dance with Diego, I can't help but think of Oliver. I miss his clumsy steps. I look out in search of him but he's nowhere to be found.

From the the corner of my eye, I catch a glimpse of an owl flying overhead and get a sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach.

Something is wrong.

“Oliver?” I mind link him.

No response.

I try a few more times but I can't seem to get through to him.

“Hey what's wrong?” Diego asks, looking at me with concern.

“I can't find Oliver,” I reply, still searching for Oliver in the sea of faces. “Sorry, but I need to find him.”

“No worries, I'll help you look.”

We walk off the dance floor and towards my table but find it empty. I mind-link Evan.

“Have you seen Oliver?” I ask. I get a slurred response and I know Evan is too drunk to know where he is. I ask Rosalie and Carter but it seems they're just as clueless.

I start to panic.

“Aurora, relax. I'm sure he probably wondered off to bed,” Javier tries to comfort me as he walks up to my table. “We'll find him.”

Celina stumbles over and wraps her arms around me. “Hey, what's wrong? I can sense your worry.”

She reeks of alcohol and her face looks flushed. I place my hands on her face and quickly heal her drunken stupor before explaining my concern. Now sober, she gives me a ray of hope.

“He went back to the house to get you some flats. He thought you’d want a break from your heels,” she replies, completely ignoring Javier’s presence.

Relief washes over me and I run into the house, calling his name. Much to my dismay, I get no response. I search our room and his office and come up empty. I’m on the verge of tears as I run down stairs to the entertainment room when I crash full force into Adeline.

“Hey!” She groans as she spills her coffee onto her dress, still pretty drunk. “I was drinking that!”

“Have you seen Oliver?” I ask, looking around the room and finding it empty.

She bows half-heartedly before answering. “He was with you, wasn’t he?” She scoffs and I glare at her. “No I haven’t seen him. Simone has been taking caring of me all night...” Her voice goes quiet and she stares at her shoes, clenching her jaw and sighing.

I take a good look at her and evaluate her state. Her hair is disheveled and her mascara is running down her cheeks. She looks crushed and I pity her. She’s devastated at losing Oliver and the title to me.

“Are you alright?” I ask her and she rolls her eyes and scoffs.

“I don’t need your pity. I’ll be fine,” she slurs, forcing a smile and picking up her cup from the floor before turning on her heel and plopping herself down on a couch.

Just then, Simone walks in carrying a glass of water and aspirin. Sensing my presence, Simone bows.

“Have you seen Oliver?” I ask timidly as she approaches.

“No, Luna I haven’t. I’ve been too busy taking care of Adeline,” she replies coldly.

I excuse myself and run out to kitchen, dining room, and home theater. He’s no where to be found.

I open a vortex to the treehouse and search it. He's not there. I open another vortex to the garden and find it empty. When I return to the house, I'm in full panic mode.

"Has anyone seen Oliver?" I mind-link the party.

I get several responses but no one seems to know where Oliver is. It's like the earth swallowed him, leaving now trace of his existence.

Where is my mate?

I decide to hold an emergency meeting, calling my command line, Celina, Mia and Javier, as well as the Allies to the living room.

"We'll find him, Luna," Carter reassures.

"I want a list of everyone who came here from the outside, guests, workers etc. No one leaves until everyone is accounted for," I demand and Carter begins barking orders. "And where is Evan?"

"Found him!" William calls out as he drags Evan into the living room. "He's had a lot to drink, though," he groans.

Oh Evan... I sigh. I knew there was something bothering you but damn it. You have the worst timing!

"If it's not too much trouble, could you please take him to his room?"

He nods and carries Evan upstairs. I feel like throwing up, the uneasiness building up in my stomach.

"The gate guards have reported that no one has come in or out in the past hour and the border guards report no suspicious activity," Rosalie sighs. "So he could still be on River Moon territory."

"Who was he last with?" Patrick asks.

"Us," Celina responds, pointing to her and Mia. "We were watching the dance floor and he said he was going to get Aurora some flats. That's the last I saw him."

"Was anyone in the house who could have seen what happened?" Jonathan asks.

"We were in here," Simone storms in. "I was taking care of Adeline but she and I saw nothing. We didn't even hear him come in. Are you sure they aren't lying?" She accuses Celina and Mia, making them growl in response. Simone turns to me, fuming with anger. "And you! I told you to take care of my son! What happened? Where the hell were you that you lost him?" She snaps, her voice trembling near the end. Her eyes fog over as she mind-links someone.

Enraged by her accusations, Reyna takes control.

"On your knees, Simone," Reyna commands.

Simone stiffens but obeys the command, a look of shock on her face.

"Who am I?" Reyna asks in a thundering voice, causing Simone to cast her gaze down to my feet.

"You are my Luna," Simone squeaks.

"And who are you?"

A few angry tears spill down her cheeks as she trembles in rage. "I am a member of this pack," she spits through gritted teeth.

"Then remember your place and never speak to me like that again," Reyna snaps before giving me back control.

Simone scrambles to her feet and wipes her tears.

Words could it describe how shitty I feel right now. I did not enjoy doing that.

Did you have to humiliate her? I ask Reyna.

Lesson number one of being a Royal. You do not let people disrespect you or your family, Reyna responds coolly. You are kind and gentle by nature which is good for keeping your subjects loyal to you. But kindness is not enough to lead. You must be firm and let everyone know where you stand. You cannot let someone disrespect you in any way or it gives people the idea that you are not worthy to respect and lead. I did not humiliate her. She humiliated herself by speaking to us that way.

A few more tears tug at Simone's eyes, reminding me of the gravity of the situation. David bursts through the door and runs to his mates side, wrapping

her up in hug. She pushes away from him and looks furiously at me, pain and hatred in her gaze before she storms out of the room.

“What’s going on?” David asks, staring at the alphas in the room.

“Oliver is missing,” Wesley informs him. “He came inside to get some shoes but no one has seen him since.”

He face darkens and he turns to look at me, pain lingering in his eyes. “My son....” he mutters.

“I’m sorry,” I mumble, my voice laced with guilt. “I should have-“

“Don’t play that game, Aurora. You won’t win,” Wesley warns.

“We need to figure out what happened right before he disappeared. Was he acting strange before he vanished?” Jonathan asks.

I shake my head. “He was a little drunk and he said he was tired, but nothing out of the ordinary,” I sigh.

Carter returns with the list of guests and workers Oliver hired for the party. After about an hour of work, everyone at the party is accounted for.

“Oliver was thorough when he hired the workers for the party. Everyone had to pass a background check and wear a badge to be on the property. Only certain workers were allowed in or out of the house,” Carter explains.

“I want the workers with access to the house brought in immediately,” I order and he collects them all in the kitchen.

One by one, all 15 workers are questioned by myself and Carter but we come up empty. Everyone was doing their job and the guards corroborate their stories. It seems Oliver disappeared into thin air without a trace.

Back in the living room, the Alphas organize a search party to find him.

“We’re going to increase security and send a search party out for him,” Carter says, attempting to soothe me as we settle back in the living room. “I promise, I will do everything in my power to bring him back to you, Luna.”

“I want to join the search party,” I reply, getting up from my seat. “I can’t sit here idly while my mate is goddess knows where.”

"You will do no such thing," Celina says, pulling me back. "You need to rest, I know you are trying to be strong but you need to give yourself some time to process everything. You'll burn yourself out."

Lesson Two, Reyna snarls. We don't take orders from anyone. We give them.

"If it were me, Oliver would be on the front lines searching for me. You can't ask me stay here and just wait for news!" I snap, yanking myself free from her grasp.

Before anyone can try to stop me, I bolt out of the house at the speed of light and shift. I walk towards the search team gathering outside and they bow before me. Carter and the allies come out to stop me but no one dares to question me in my wolf form and I begin handing out orders

"We'll divide up the territory into four teams with Team A searching the Northern border. Pay special attention to the river. Carter and David will lead you. Team B, I want you to search the Western Borders along Lluvia Blanca and Maple Moon. You will be led by Javier and Mia. To the East, Alpha Wesley will lead Team C in the search. I will lead Team D to the south near the Desert Sky borders. Each team will also search the tunnel system in their respective areas. Is everyone clear on what we are doing?" I ask.

"Yes Luna," my pack responds and off the soldiers go.

I take my team down south, sprinting at full speed until I reach my destination. We search every crevice, tree, rock formation and tunnel in our vicinity and my heart shatters when my team reports back with nothing. I have not shed a single tear, trying to stay strong for my pack, but with every passing minute, it's becoming harder to hold back my emotions.

I muster up the last bit of energy I have left and give our section one last run through at the speed of light. Nothing.

I return to my men, my legs shaking from the use of power. It feels like my knees are about to give out and I lean up against a tree to catch my breath. For a few minutes, I say nothing, trying to collect some courage to face my team as they wait for orders. I close my eyes and listen to the sound of my heart pounding in my chest.

"Luna, do you want us to search again?" William asks after several minutes of my silence. I offer a simple nod and William sends half the team to search

again while the remaining wolves stay with me. "Luna, w-would you like us to take you home?" he asks. I don't respond. "Luna?"

I can't respond. I might break down if I say a word, so I just look up at the moon, desperately trying to hold back my unshed tears.

"You can cry if you want..." He whispers. "You can scream, you can shout... you don't have to hold it in..."

I turn to face him and he and the others lower their gaze in respect.

"We're here for you, Luna. Whatever you need," he says.

I knew I could not cry, for if I did, I would never stop. So I do the only thing I knew I could do. I begin to howl. A howl so powerful and full of pain, my own wolves whimper and cry at its sorrowful tune. I howl in hopes that Oliver hears my song and somehow knows that I'm searching for him. I will not give up until I find him.

We return to the pack house in the early hours of the morning, exhausted and defeated at having found nothing, not one single clue as to Oliver's whereabouts. I thank Patrick, Wesley and Jonathan for their help, sending them home. My wolves are eager to keep searching but I send them home as well to get some well-deserved rest.

"We'll continue the search later in the morning," Carter announces. "Right now, you just need to get some rest," he says ushering me to my room.

"I'm not tired," I mumble. "I think I'm going to keep searching. Maybe we missed a clue and it's best if I search-"

"Aurora, that's enough! You need to rest. Oliver wouldn't want this for you. He'd want you to rest."

I'm about to protest when I feel Celina's fingers wrap around my temples from behind me. "I'm sorry, Aurora, but you need to take a break," she whispers as she begins to use her powers to soothe my fears.

"No..." I whimper as the calm settles in my mind and I begin to grow tired.

Mia stands in front of me, her eyes glowing gold. "Don't worry, Aurora. You're going to have a beautiful dream tonight. I will make sure of it. Just go to

sleep,” she whisper as I feel myself drift off, the house turning into a warm sunny beach.

As I look around, I see a cave sitting in the distance. Oliver is standing there waiting for me to explore it with him.

I don’t know how long I have in this dream world but I decide to cherish every second of it. Hand in hand, Oliver and I explore the cave. On our expedition, we collect seashells and sea glass, make sandcastles, swim into each other’s arms, and steal kisses under the sun. He sings to me with his beautiful husky voice while I dance on the shore and he pulls me close when the waves get too big. I am so happy.

## **The Ivory Queen Chapter 83**

\*\*\*Aurora’s POV\*\*\* Ten days later...

It’s been over a week since Oliver disappeared and River Moon has somehow managed to keep this information under wraps, with the exception of our Allies. Goddess knows if other packs like Amethyst Lake knew, we would be under attack for control of River Moon.

I’ve spent every waking moment searching for him. I haven’t gotten much sleep, sneaking off in the middle of the night to conduct my own searches since Carter and Celina are hell bent on keeping me locked up in the house for my protection.

To add insult to injury, I went into heat shortly after the ceremony and had to endure the 3 days of sinful agony on my own. This house is starting to drive me crazy and the pain is more torturous with every passing day.

I try to fall asleep, but the nightmares are unbearable without him. Moreover, even when I get some sleep, I have to face the torture of waking up without him. Every morning, I wake up curled up in bed with Rio in my arms. I roll over and stretch, expecting to see Oliver beside me but always find his side empty .I sit and call out to him, eager to see his blue eyes. Sooner or later, the memories of my ceremony come flooding back to me and my heart shatters daily. Oliver is gone. Everyday, I pull my knees to my chest and stare at the emptiness of my bed, holding back my tears.

Where are you, Olivier?



I try to mind-link him but no matter how hard I try, I can never reach him. Today is no different and I lay back in bed, unable to move.

After several painful minutes in silence, I muster up the strength to get up and shower. As I rummage through the closet, I feel myself go numb and it scares me. I'm empty without him. I grab one of his t-shirts and hoodies, inhaling his scent to feel just a hint of the sparks, but I'm always disappointed.

I slip my medallion on and crash back into bed, completely drained. Rio tugs at the hoodie and it takes all my strength to sit up and pet him. As I stroke his short fur and kiss his puppy paws, I hear a knock at the door.

For a split second, my heart fills with hope that it might be Oliver but I quickly dismantle that thought as I call for the person to come in.

Evan pokes his head in and sighs before walking over and climbing onto the bed with me.

He doesn't speak, he never does, and just wraps me up in his arms and pulls me to his chest. Our bond is significantly stronger now that I'm an official Luna and I'm grateful to have him. He makes me feel as though I'm not alone.

"We're going to find him," he finally murmurs as he rubs circles on my back. "I'm sorry I was too drunk to help that night," he sighs.

I pull away for a moment and look up at him briefly. "You have your own demons to deal with. I can't expect you to be there just for me," I smile and he gives me confused look. "I know there's something bothering you..." I say while I stroke Rio's fur. "You don't have to tell me if you don't want too, but I hope you're okay."

We sit for a while in silence before he finally tells me the truth.

"Mia is my mate..." he mutters, running his fingers through his hair. "My wolf can sense our bond even though she's only 17."

"Oh," I sigh, knowing this is not happy news for him. "You're going to reject her, aren't you?" It's more of a statement than a question.

"I can't-" his voice breaks and I wrap him up in my arms. "She hurt you."

"I have forgiven her but I understand if you cannot... that's your choice. Forgiveness is a beautiful thing, but it must be born organically. It just saddens me that yet another person I love will not be happily mated," I lament. "Mia is a special girl and despite everything she did, I know there is a lot of good inside her heart. I hope one day you'll see it too. I also hope you don't use me as an excuse to push her away. I would love nothing more than for you two to be together."

He says nothing, so I just hold him for a bit until we both feel better. Hand in hand, we head downstairs for breakfast and find Carter, David, Javier, Wesley and several soldiers in the dining room bent over a map of some sort.

Javier and Wesley have been over almost every day helping with the search and I will forever be grateful for their help.

"There's a chance who ever took him might have taken him to one of these tunnels. They've been sealed up and abandoned for years since they've either collapsed or are on the verge of collapsing."

"How to do we get our men safely through?" William asks.

"I can do it," I interrupt their meeting. "I can clear the tunnels or keep them from caving in while you search."

Everyone turns to greet me, a bit of pity in their eyes.

"Maybe you should stay home, Aurora," Evan suggests. "I know you want to help but you're a Luna now. Your pack needs you here, safe."

I'm about to protest when Celina and Diego walk in.

"I'll go. I can keep the tunnels open long enough for your men to search. Aurora, you can stay here in case anything comes up. Please, just stay home," Celina pleads.

"I can go too," Diego offers. "My power might be useful in this scenario."

"You're a silver wolf? What's your gift?" Javier asks.

Celina rolls her eyes at the sound of his voice and offers Evan a hug, much to Javier's annoyance.

Oh Celina, you're helpless.

“Watch.”

Diego sprints full speed towards a wall and runs right through it. He returns through another wall and smiles at us. “It’s called phase shift. I can go through any substance or it can go through me.”

“So is every wolf in your family a silver wolf?” David asks, his eyes shifting between Celina, Diego, and I.

“There are wolves of all types in our family. Only those carrying the Altamirano blood line are silver wolves though,” Celina sighs, annoyed by his question. “And only those carrying the Reyes blood line are gold wolves.”

David senses Celina’s hostility and presses his lips together, giving her a nod and turning back to the map.

“Okay, so it’s settled. Diego and Celina will come while Aurora stays back,” Carter says, grabbing the map and walking towards me. “River Moon can’t lose both its Alpha and Luna, Aurora. I know you hate me for keeping you here but I’d rather that than something happening to you too.”

I look around at everyone watching me as if I might fall apart any second. I can’t stand it any longer and storm out of the dining room, Evan at my heels.

“Aurora, wait!” Evan calls out as I run up the stairs. He manages to catch up and grabs my wrist.

“It’s not fair, he’s my mate!” I snap, desperately trying to contain my anger. “I can’t stay here locked up in our room... staring at that lonely bed... surrounded by all his things... I’m losing my mind...” I whimper.

Evan pulls me to his chest and rubs my head as I fight back my tears.

“Okay,” he sighs. “We can go to your garden with Kehlani and Rosalie. I’m sure Ro could use some fresh air too. We’ll take some guards as a precaution.”

Rosalie! I had completely forgotten how she might be feeling losing her brother like this. Would she be angry with me?

We walk up to the Rosalie’s room and find her and Kehlani playing with Matthew.

“Hey,” I force a smile as I walk in and Rosalie runs towards me, embracing me in a hug. “How are you?”

“Hanging on by a thread,” she admits before tears spill over and run down her cheeks. “He and I have always been close... I just hope he’s not in any pain.”

“Me too,” I say, rubbing her back before transferring some soothing energy to her and she sighs. “I’m on house arrest but Evan has agreed to let me go the garden for some fresh air. Would you guys like to come?” I ask.

—

Evan orders 15 guards to patrol the perimeter of the garden and Cameron accompanies us, slinging baby Matthew’s diaper bag over his shoulder. Rio joins us as well, trotting along happily at my side.

I construct a fire pit, lifting tree branches into a hole I formed and lighting them on fire to keep us warm. I then create chairs from thick vines for the girls to sit on and open a vortex to grab some pillows and blankets from my room.

“You sure know how to host,” Kehlani laughs, playing with her son in her lap.

I scan my guards and even without Celina’s emotional powers, I can tell they miss their Alpha and fear his absence. Alphas are more than just the leaders of the pack. They are the role models for the younger wolves, the fiercest soldiers willing to die for their fellow wolves, the older brothers everyone turns to when in need, the peace keepers and protectors. Oliver was all of this to his pack members. They need him.... And so did I.

I open a portal to the kitchen in front of me and the girls watch in awe as I pull a caldron, a molinillo (wooden whisk), milk, a crap ton of mugs and my favorite chocolate blend, Chocolate Abuelita, from it. I grow a thick vine over the fire and hang the caldron over it. I pour the milk and chocolate bars into the caldron and begin to grind and whisk the chocolate until it froths and boils. The aroma of the hot chocolate fills the cold December air.

I pour some hot chocolate for the girls and the gammas before calling a few guards over.

“Yes Luna?” one of them asks and I hand them some mugs of hot chocolate. “Luna?”

“When I was a child, my father used to make me hot chocolate whenever I was upset about something,” I sigh. “I’m not Oliver... and I don’t know how to comfort you but please accept this small gesture as a token of my appreciation for you being here with me. I’m sorry he’s not here.”

They stare at the mugs in their hands before kneeling before me. “Thank you for thinking of us,” one of them whispers. “We are honored to have you as Luna.”

They promptly get up and walk back to their posts while I call over another small batch of guards until all 15 have a mug of hot chocolate in their hands.

We drink and chatter about nothing in particular when, from the corner of my eye, I see a large black owl perched in a tree in the distance. I realize it’s the same owl I saw fly over me the night of the party before Oliver disappeared. It’s gold eyes turn red and it stares at me.

Tais.

Suddenly, it opens its beak, uttering a few words it seems only I hear.

“Media nocte. Hic. Solus,” it says before taking flight and disappearing into the woods.

## **The Ivory Queen Chapter 84**

\*\*\*Oliver’s POV\*\*\*

I’ve woken up for the past several days completely alone in a dark room, devoid of windows or air vents. It’s hot as s\*\*t and I’m sticky with sweat. To make the situation worse, I feel a constant burning sensation on my ankles and wrists due to silver shackles keeping me locked in here.

I’ve lost count of how long I’ve been here, the hours dragging on aimlessly.

“Hey!” I call out for the millionth time, pulling at my chains and hissing in pain as the silver burns into my flesh. “Where the f\*\*k am I? Show your faces you cowards.”

After a few minutes of shouting, I become exhausted. Why am I so weak?

I catch my breath and a dark realization hits me. It's been days since I've felt my wolf. What did they do to me?

Suddenly the door bursts open and light spills into the room. I see the silhouettes of two figures walk in and the blood drains from my face when I realize who the witches truly are.

This can't be possible!

Before my eyes, the witches shape shift into their true forms and now two women who appear to be in their early 20's stare back at me with grins hanging from their lips.

"Surprised?" one of them laughs. "Allow me to formally introduce myself. My name is Tais and this is my dear sister, Ira. Pleased to make your acquaintance... Alpha."

After weeks of fearing for Aurora's safety, I am now face to face with her parent's killers and they had been hiding in plain sight this whole time.

"You lying bitches!"

"Awe, Oliver don't be such a bad sport. We tricked you fair and square," Tais, laughs.

"I let you into my home," I snarl. "I trusted you. Aurora still trusts you. She adores you! Both of you!"

"That was your mistake, not ours."

I growl at them but they seem unfazed by my anger. "Aurora will figure this out," I snap, tugging at my chains. "And when she does-

"It'll be too late," Ira snickers. "Now smile. We have to send a little proof that you're still alive and well for the trade to work."

"Trade?"

"Why of course. We're not stupid. Aurora would never agree to give us her blood if she knew what we were planning and it would be suicide to even try to take it by force now that she's shifted. The only option is to trade. Your life for her and Celina's blood."

“What do you need their blood for? What are you planning?”

They ignore my questions and set up a camera. Suddenly, Adeline and the other traitor walk in. Adeline’s involvement didn’t come as too much of shock. She always hated Aurora. But it was the other traitor whom I did not expect. Was there anyone left to trust at this point or had they all lied to me?

The traitor leans into Ira’s ear and whispers something before bowing to her and taking off. Without my wolf ears, I catch nothing of what was said.

“Adeline, darling. Gag him,” Ira orders

My mind goes back to the night of the ceremony. Adeline had spiked the champagne glass she gave me. She faked her own drunkenness so I wouldn’t see it coming. But it was not she who injected me with that strange liquid in my neck. It was the other traitor. That filthy, lying traitor!

“Yes master,” Adeline says, smiling wickedly and stepping towards me. I growl at her and she pouts, getting on her knees.

“Oh Oli, I know you’re upset, but I’m doing this for us!” She speaks sincerely and it disgusting.

“You’re delusional if you think you and I will ever be together,” I snarl.

She grabs my head and crashes her lips against mine. I fight against her grip and bite down on her lip, drawing blood. She screams and slaps me across the face.

“You were mine before she showed up and you will be mine when this is over,” she snarls before taping my mouth shut.

The camera flashes and I glare at the three monsters grinning back at me. After the pictures are taken, the two witches leave and Adeline places a plate of food near me, urging me to eat. She then removes the tape and steps out of range of my teeth as I try to bite her.

She giggles and it infuriates me.

“f\*\*k you,” I growl, kicking the food away and she pouts.

“You need to eat Oli. You’ll need your strength back for when this is over.”

I spit at her feet. Annoyed with her presence, I decide to ask about my wolf.

"I haven't heard from or felt my wolf since I've been here. What the f\*\*k did you guys do to me?" I snarl.

She smiles. "That little concoction we injected you with was meant to suppress your wolf for a few days," she shrugs, getting down to my eye level. "It's made with wolfsbane and is formulated specifically to weaken your strength and interfere with your wolf connection. Of course, we have something else in store for Aurora and Celina."

She pulls out a vial containing clear liquid with a pink hue to it. "This will ensure they won't be able to use their powers when the time comes."

I growl at her and she giggles once more.

"Don't worry about Michael, my love. You were only given a small dosage of the wolfsbane and the effects aren't permanent. You won't feel your wolf for another day or two. We'll give you a new dosage soon."

She strokes the side of my face and I snarl at her. "It was just you and I before she came. Why did you have to fall for her? What's wrong with me? Wasn't I more than enough?"

"I don't love you, Adeline. I never have. Get that through your thick skull. You and I were forced to be together," I snap.

"Liar! You cared about me! I know you did!"

"Caring for you and loving you are two different things!" I argue. "Of course I cared for you, otherwise I wouldn't have gone along with that charade for so long, but Addie, you need to let me go. I-"

"You called me Addie..." she smiles, a few tears welling up in her eyes. "You haven't called me that in years."

I see an opportunity to appeal to her soft side and take it. "Addie I-"

"See? All I had to do was get you away from her and you already love me again!" She chirps.

My heart sinks as her delusion peaks through again. Goddess, she's crazy!



“No, Adeline, I have a mate who I love. Please, you have to let me go!” I plead as she starts getting up to leave. “I know you think you love me but I promise you, you don’t. You’ll find your mate and he’ll love-“

She ignores me and walks toward the door. “I let you go once and she came and took you. I will not make the same mistake again, Oli. I love you more than Aurora ever will and when this is all over, it’ll just be us again. How it was meant to be.”

And with that, she slams the door shut behind her as she leaves.

“No! Let me go! Let me go!”

I scream into the abyss, struggling against my chains until blood drips from my wrists. After goddess knows how long, I slump against the wall, completely drained. My mind drifts off to Aurora. I’m so afraid of something happening to her, especially knowing the enemy has been hiding in plain sight this entire time. I send a silent prayer to Moon Goddess to watch over her before my fatigue finally takes over.

## **The Ivory Queen Chapter 85**

Aurora’s POV

For the remainder of the day, the owls words replay in my head. Midnight. Here. Alone.

Tais has Oliver and now the only question that remained was what did she want in exchange for his safe return home? At this point, it didn’t matter. I just want him back. I consider informing my sister and the pack of Tais’s message but given how they’ve already kept me from searching for Oliver, I decide I’ll just have to do this on my own.

Much to my disappointment, Carter and Celina return empty handed from the morning’s search, having found no clues as to Oliver’s whereabouts and its concluded that Oliver could not be on River Moon territory. Tomorrow, Carter and several soldiers would be going on an expedition past the northern border into unclaimed territory in hopes of finding him.

I’ve locked myself in Oliver’s office, unable to rest peacefully in our bedroom. Rio curls up in my lap, although he is far too big for it. I refuse to push him off, though. His little presence brings me some comfort.

When I don't come down for dinner, Evan comes up to find me.

He knocks on the door and calls out to me. "Please come eat," he begs. "You haven't had any real food today. I'm getting worried. Don't make me break down this door."

I muster up some strength and let him in. Together, we walk downstairs to the dining room where I find everyone waiting for me. I glance at Oliver's empty spot and take a moment to collect myself before sitting in my seat. Dinner is silent and I can't bring myself to eat, picking at my food with my fork. Since Oliver's disappearance, I've had very little appetite.

"Tienes que comer, hija," Valentina urges. "If not for you, do it for me."

I feel everyone's eyes settle on me and I pierce my fork through a bit of my steak and lift it to my mouth. My bottom lip quivers as I chew and a few tears threaten to fall from my eyes.

I can't do this.

I spit out the food into a napkin and push away the plate of food. "I-I'm not hungry," I mumble. "I think I'd like to just go to bed. Good night."

I rush off to the bedroom and wash my face in the bathroom sink to calm myself down. I change into another one of Oliver's t-shirts and some sweats before crawling into the sofa and curling up with a blanket.

I hear a knock at the door and Celina pokes her head in. She walks timidly to the couch and sits down beside me.

"You okay?" she asks, reaching out her hand to me but I refuse to let her touch me. "You're angry with me..."

Of course I'm angry!

"You won't let me look for him!" I snap. "He is my mate, Celina. You had no right to put me to sleep like you did or keep me away from the search parties. How could you? How could you try to keep me locked up here when my mate could be anywhere?"

"I'm not going to apologize for looking out for you, Aurora. You can be angry with me all you want but I was only trying to help you," She scolds me. "I put

you to sleep because you spent hours in the woods and you needed to rest. The soldiers told me you used up all your energy that night to find him and you didn't even let yourself cry for him. We've talked about this, Aurora. You can't keep your feelings bottled up inside. And I kept you from the search party this morning because if, Moon Goddess forbid, we found his body, I did not want your last memory of him to be of his corpse!" She wipes angry tears from her eyes. "I hope to Moon Goddess we find him and I can bring him home to you but you best believe I will do everything in my power to protect you first. So be angry at me. I don't care!"

I glare at her but no matter how much I want to, I can't be mad at her. She's only trying to help me, after all. After a few moments, I sigh and lay my head in her lap. She strokes my hair silently and we sit together for a while, lost in our own thoughts.

"I didn't ask you to look out for me," I murmur as I sit back up.

"I'm your sister. You don't have to ask." She shrugs. "I'll always be here for you."

"Me too," I sigh. "So how was the search with Javier?" I ask, eager to change the subject for my own sanity.

She groans. "Ugh let's not talk about it.."

"Now who's holding in their feelings?"

"I do not have feelings for Javier! My wolf does. It's different!"

I roll my eyes and shake my head. Whatever...

We chat for a while about tomorrow's search and I feel my appetite return. Evan brings me a small bowl of soup and I slurp down it's warmth, my body feeling much better than before. Evan and Celina tuck me into bed and leave me to my thoughts.

Just before the clock strikes midnight, I climb out of bed and put on my shoes. I grab onto the steel door handle and let my skin morph into a metal suit of armor before opening a vortex to my garden where the owl instructed me to meet it. As I step into the portal, I activate my force field around me to protect me from any potential attacks.

I walk to my patch of grass when I see the owl fly overhead and perch itself on the wooden bench. Despite the evil I know lurks inside it, the owl is absolutely gorgeous. Its jet black feathers glisten in the moon light and its round face and cartoonish large eyes make it seem harmless, cute even. It carries a small envelope with a red seal in its beak and gently sets it down on the bench for me.

Its gold eyes glow red and it speaks in Latin. "I believe a congratulations are in order, my dear," the bird says in a sultry female voice. "It was a lovely ceremony."

"Where is Oliver?" I snap.

"Tsk, Tsk, Tsk. In a hurry are we?" it says, tilting its round head to the side. "No worries, dear. I won't take up too much of your time. In the envelope, you will find instructions on what it is you need to do in order to get Oliver back. And don't bother looking for him. I've put him somewhere you'll never find him. Even your powers won't help you locate him."

"How do I know you'll keep your word? How do I even know Oliver is still alive? I can't even sense his wolf," I snarl.

"If it's him you're worried about, don't be. I have provided proof that he lives and I will continue to provide it for you until the day of our meeting. I give you my word, no harm will come to your precious mate so long as you do what I say."

The owl extends its wings out before giving me one final glance. "I look forward to meeting you in person, darling."

It takes off into the night at incredible speed and I quickly lose sight of it. I rush to the benches and collect the envelope before opening a portal back to my room. My hands tremble as I reach inside to pull out a letter written in Latin and a stick of white chalk.

Dearest Ivory twins,

Congratulations on your shifts! You look absolutely stunning, just as the legends described you. Such a shame we missed it, but alas, it was not meant to be.

We have much to discuss. As you know, the Winter Solstice is almost among us and thus your powers will be strongest on this special night, as will all the creations of Moon Goddess.

We currently have Oliver in our custody and have one very simple request in exchange for his safe return. All we are seeking is a bit of blood from each of you. Simple.

Should you choose to not cooperate with this simple request, we will have no choice but to eliminate the young Alpha. But make the right decision and Oliver will be returned unharmed on the night of the 21st and be free to live out the rest of his days in peace and harmony.

Of course, this request must be dealt with carefully and there are some rules we must establish. The blood must be delivered in person. We'll send a messenger to collect you and you'll be brought to us for the extraction of your blood. You must come alone, of course, no escorts allowed. This means your little gamma, Evan, is not invited. You must also agree to hand over your medallions upon meeting us. These are the rules and conditions.

We expect your answer on the night of the 20th. No sooner, no later. Think long and hard, your majesties. In the envelope you'll find a piece of chalk. Simply write Yes or No on any surface with this chalk and we'll know your answer. Whatever happens next, is completely up to you.

As for the Alpha, you'll find some photographs of him in the envelope to prove he still carries life. As a gesture of good faith, Luna Aurora, you will receive daily images of him up until the 20th.

Until we meet,

Tais and Ira

Ira? Ira! That must be Tais's sister!

My heart is pounding in my chest. All this for a bit of blood? Could it be so simple?

I shove my hand back in the envelope and tears fill my eyes when I see the images of Oliver chained in a dark room. He's shirtless and covered in sweat, his hair stuck to his forehead. His once clean shaven chin is lined with dark stubble. His eyes are full of fire, angry with whomever took the photographs.

But it doesn't matter. He's alive.

I know I won't be getting any sleep tonight with so much going on in my head and I decide to go over every bit of information that I have. The more I think, however, the more I realize I still have so many questions.

Tais and Ira have wanted me dead for so long, having kept watch all these years. Who are their allies providing them with every bit of information about my life? They knew about the ceremony and even knew Evan by name which leads me to believe we must have a traitor or traitors among us.

The thought of having the enemy nearby sends shivers down my spine. I'll have to be very careful with who I speak too from now on.

I switch my mind back to the witches and their motives.

They hate silver and gold wolves because they wield power, but so do many creatures. Why do they hate silver and gold wolves so much? There has to be a reason they've specifically targeted the gifted children of the moon and sun all these years.

Even more confusing is their request? What could they want with my blood? What will happen if I give it to them? What's their plan?

I lock away the envelope and run to the office to investigate the significance of the winter solstice. I also take the time to research Tais and Ira but unfortunately, that search only results in me spending two hours reading witch blogs. I find nothing on the witches I wanted. Tais once told me she had many names which unfortunately means I truly know nothing about her and probably never will.

As the sun peaks over the horizon, I grow frustrated with my search and head back to my room to shower. The mirror reveals some serious bags under my eyes and my skin is pale and dull. I don't even bother putting on some make up and instead change into one of Oliver's sweatshirts, some leggings and my combat boots. Grabbing my box, I return to the office to resume my work. At about 8:30 am, Evan mind-links me.

"Where are you, Luna?" he asks frantically.

"The office," I reply.

Seconds later, Evan bursts through the door and lets out a sigh of relief when he sees me. He takes a few deep breathes and runs his fingers through his hair before speaking to me.

“Sorry, I panicked for a second when I couldn’t find you in your room,” he says, looking up the ceiling to wipe his eyes. “I thought someone took you and I-” he stops as he gets a good look at me. “How long have you been awake?”

I stare at the box on the desk and fidget with the lock. “I never went to bed,” I say quietly. “I can’t sleep.”

Upset, he comes rushing towards me and lifts me up in his arms. “You are going to bed right now,” he growls.

“Put me down!” I demand.

He tries to fight the command but fails and puts me down gently. Grabbing the box containing the letter from the witches, I open my mind-link up to Carter, Rosalie and Evan.

“We need to talk downstairs. Carter, I need you to contact the Allies as well. They’ll want to hear about this,” I order. I send a similar message to Celina before turning back to Evan, who scowls at me.

“You make it so difficult to take care of you!” he snaps. “It’s infuriating.”

“Believe it or not, I am very aware of that fact,” I joke, trying to ease the tension. He doesn’t find it very amusing and glares daggers at me as I walk past him towards the door. “Come on. We have a lot to discuss.”

Evan and I wait for everyone to arrive in the dining room and I mentally prepare myself for a scolding of lifetime. My stomach growls and I have bowl of cereal for breakfast, but after a few bites, my appetite vanishes. When Celina walks in, she’s furious to see the lack of sleep clear on my face.

“Aurora-“

I hold a finger up to silence her. “Before you say anything, you wouldn’t have slept either if you were in my position,” I sigh. “Besides we have more important things to discuss before the Allies get here.”

“What is it you have to share with us?” Carter asks.

I take a deep breath and unlock the box.

“I met with Tais last night.