

The Ivory Queen Chapter 96

Salvador's POV

My heart is pounding in my chest as I watch Aurora pet the little hummingbird's head and open the note. When I first developed my powers, I gifted her the bird as a Christmas present. She's always been very shy and had trouble making friends in middle school. I wanted her to have a friend when Mia, Javi or I weren't around so Santos, the hummingbird, quickly became her greatest companion. Everywhere she went, you'd see the colorful bird perched on her shoulder or head. It was quite an adorable sight.

When Dad died, however, I took the bird from her, crushing it to dust in front of her eyes. She cried for weeks. The bird was never alive but it hurt her nonetheless to watch it be destroyed.

I know giving her back the little hummingbird would not fix all that I broke inside her but it was a start. I was determined to make it up to her, piece by piece.

I continue to watch her play with the hummingbird, letting it sit on her shoulder and whispering something to it. Celina and the i***t gamma that she has look at her with bewilderment at how she interacts with the bird. Their bewilderment turns to rage when she seemingly explains her relation to the bird and they frantically look around the forest.

Guess that's my cue to leave.

I shift, knowing I have a better chance of not getting caught in my wolf form and sprint through the trees. I managed to sneak onto the territory with great difficulty but now with them on high alert for me, I fear I won't make it back to Lluvia Blanca safely. My fear appears to come true when I hear snarling behind me and a howl.

Crap!

I sprint faster through the trees as I hear the forest come alive with howling and footsteps. Panicking, I make the wrong turn and find myself trapped by a cliff overlooking a rocky stream. Before I know it, I'm surrounded by at least 10 River Moon guards, all eager to attack me.

My mind races as I desperately try to figure out a way out of this mess. The guards suddenly step to the side and bow as a beautiful white wolf steps into view, the little hummingbird sitting atop her head.

I lower my head in a bow. Unable to bring myself to look at Aurora in the eye, I wait for her response. I hear more wolves come running to the scene and I catch Evan's scent as he growls at me. After a few painful minutes, I allow my gaze to shift up to find Aurora standing in front of me in her human form, a cloak tightly wrapped around her.

She takes a few steps towards me and Evan's wolf snarls at her, warning her to stop.

"It's okay Ev," she mutters, once again stepping closer to me.

I shift my gaze down to her feet, afraid to move. I flinch when I feel her stroke my snout but lean into her hand as she gently caresses my face.

"Thank you for retuning Santos to me," she says quietly, reaching over her shoulder and letting the bird perch on her fingers. "But I think you need him more than I do," she adds, placing the bird on my head.

I lift my gaze to look at her and watch her face grow serious as she turns back to her pack. "William, please take a few guards and escort him back to the Lluvia Blanca border. Make sure he gets home safe."

No, please wait-

She turns to look at me. "Mia needs you right now. I'll be okay without you."

I remain still.

"Go, now."

I'm sorry, Aurora.

She stiffens for a split second and I swear she heard me. My belief confirmed by her next words.

"I'm not ready yet, Chava," she sighs.

No, Please wait!

Her face reddens slightly at my disobedience. "That's enough, Chava. You're on my territory now. I won't repeat myself."

The guards move forward, one of them snarling at me to move. I give Aurora one pleading look but she's already turned her back to me and walks towards her gamma.

I'm so sorry.

"I know you are," she replies quietly before walking away, Evan at her heels.

I evaporate the bird and return safely to the Lluvia Blanca pack house to find it in chaos as omegas are hard at work making the preparations for today's ceremony.

"Chava, where have you been?" Maira calls out to me as I walk through the door. "You missed your final fitting for your tux this morning! Ximena was going crazy trying to reach you!"

Mia comes running down the stairs. "Chava we need to talk," she says, tugging at my wrist.

I follow her upstairs to Mom's room and freeze outside the door.

"I'm not going in there," I snap. "I'm never speaking to that woman again."

"Well that should be pretty easy considering she left!"

Mia pushes the door open, revealing Mom's room in disarray and hands me a letter addressed to her and I.

Queridos hijos,

I know you know the truth about what happened the night your father died. And as much as you hate me, you must understand, I did it all for you. I thought I was protecting you from the evils I fled from. I thought I was giving you the chance to grow up free from war. It's a terrible thing to watch your world fall apart.

Unfortunately, it seems our world came crashing down on us regardless of my efforts and for that I am truly sorry. I am sorry for hurting you all these years. I am sorry I was the not the mother you needed. I am sorry for what I became.

I cannot change the past but I can try to make things a little easier for you. I am leaving you in hopes that it might help you heal. I hope you might one day forgive me and we can be together again. Until we meet,

Mamá.

I remain emotionless as I read Karina's note and toss it back to Mia.

"So she's really gone?" I finally ask.

"Yes and I'm worried-"

"Why?"

"Because mom hasn't taken care of herself in years. What if-"

"Who cares?" I snap, pushing past her and walking towards my room. "The woman that left us was not our mother, Mia. She is a shell of a woman we once loved but she is not our mom. She beat you. She hurt us. As far as I'm concerned, Mom died the same night Dad died. So quit worrying. We have one less problem to deal with."

"Aren't you the least bit concerned?"

I pinch the bridge of my nose and inhale deeply. Letting the air out slowly, I face my little sister and pull her into hug.

"You are a good kid, you know that?" I ask, kissing her head and rubbing her shoulders. "Dad would be so proud of you for looking after Karina all these years... but your job is done now. Karina chose her path and we have to let her walk it, let her deal with the consequences. Focus on yourself now. You're free. No more beatings, no more pain, no more fear. Just life. Live it. Find your mate and get away from this hell hole."

She chuckles. "You sound just like him, sometimes," she says, hugging me back tightly.

I scoff. "I will never be like him... No one will."

“Well you’re one step closer...” She says pulling back and spreading her hands apart in front of her. “Mr. Salvador Altamirano, Gamma of the Lluvia Blanca pack .”

I shake my head and sigh. “I don’t think that will be happening now that Javier’s mate is Celina and she quite literally hates my guts....”

“There’s no need to worry,” Javier’s voice interrupts us.

Mia and I both turn to look at him and he shrugs.

“She’s not going to forgive me and I’m going to have to accept the fact that I may never get a true mate again. Second chance mates are rare and Celina has made it clear she doesn’t want me. So... I see no problem with you taking the gamma position if you still want it.”

I shift my gaze between Mia and Javier. I’ve wanted to be a gamma like my dad my whole life. But with Celina in the picture, I don’t know if that would be possible. Gammas and Lunas share a bond, a connection that is very strong. Celina did not trust me. How could I protect someone who hated me with every fiber in their body? Javier says she doesn’t want him, but what if that changes?

No, Javier is my friend. I will not jeopardize his mate bond for my own selfish reasons.

“I’m honored, Javi, but I cannot accept the position. A gamma is a honorable man who protects his Luna. I am not that man. Dad would have wanted me to protect Aurora and I couldn’t even do that when she was my responsibility. I’m not worthy.”

Javier nods but I see the disappointment in his eyes. “I disagree wholeheartedly, but it’s your choice, Chava. I won’t push you...” he sighs. “Now if you’ll excuse me. I have to go inform my father of the change of plans.”

Aurora’s POV

Several guards come racing towards us as we pull up in the drive way and help unload the several trees we selected for the foyer, the living room and my bedroom.

As we walk Into the house, my thoughts keep drifting off to the Chava.

I was shocked when I heard his thoughts drift into my mind and even more shocked that he now believes me. It felt good to no longer see the hatred in his eyes but last night's nightmare reminded me all too well of all the things he put me through. Chava will always be my brother, but I was still healing from the pain he caused and I could not forgive him just yet.

Evan was quiet pleased with how I handled him. He drapes his arm across my shoulder and pulls me to his side.

"You did good kid. You didn't show him an ounce of weakness," he smiles at me. "For a second there, you had me thinking you would forgive him for everything he did."

"One day I will," I sigh. "But I'm just not ready to move on so quickly with him. He did a lot of things to me but I am glad to see he knows he made a mistake."

Evan rolls his eyes. "A little late don't you think?"

Just then, Laura and some omegas come racing towards us carrying boxes in their arms.

"Luna, can we help decorate?" Laura asks.

I offer them a smile. With Oliver gone, the entire pack has been in pain and I was glad that such a simple gesture could make them smile again.

"Of course, please help yourselves. This pack house is too big for Ro and I to decorate on our own and I want it to be ready for when Oliver returns."

Sadness fills everyone's eyes. I clear my throat and give them a confident smile.

"I think we should start with the foyer. It's the first part of the house that everyone sees."

They nod and we get to work decorating the two staircases with ribbons, bows, lights, ornaments and garlands. We plaster beautiful wreaths everywhere. As a River Moon tradition, every member of the pack house must make their own ornament and place it on a the tree as a sign of unity. Ro and

the rest of the pack house members each carefully unwrap their ornaments and place them accordingly on the tree.

Laura and I watch as the tree fills up with the beautiful handmade ornaments, each representative of its creator.

I stare at Oliver's ornament, wrapped up neatly in its box. His ornament resembled a snow globe. It was made of glass and filled with loose glitter, little fake trees and a majestic black wolf sitting in the middle. His name is written in gold paint across the top.

Rosalie chuckles lightly as she looks at it.

"His ornament has a meaning, you know?" She says, gently touching it. "You shake it like this and the whole world inside the ornament fills with glittery chaos. But when the glitter settles, the Alpha remains in the center, unfazed, solid... ready to lead his pack."

"It's beautiful," I whisper, fighting back tears.

She lifts it out of its case to hang it near the top of the tree but I stop her.

"This is the Alpha's ornament. When he returns, he will be the one to hang it up," I say, my voice quiet but strong.

She smiles with hope and places the ornament back in its case.

"You, Laura and Diego need to make one," she says. "I'll go get you some supplies. Meet me in the entertainment room." She turns to look at Celina. "Would you like to make one too? You're part of our River Moon family."

Celina shakes her head.

"Thanks but I'm not really an artsy person and this seems like a very special pack tradition. I wouldn't want to impose," Celina says politely.

"You're not imposing," Ro chirps. "Besides, you really think Carter and Evan are artsy people?" she laughs. "Look at them! They wouldn't know art if it slapped them in the face!"

"I beg your pardon but my f*****g ornament is a masterpiece," Evan scoffs, holding up his ornament.

The ornament was made of gold painted popsicle sticks and macaroni noodles glued together to make a little sled. A plastic brown wolf sits on top with a bow wrapped around its neck.

“Please, you made yours with macaroni noodles!” Carter laughs before holding up his. “Now this baby right here should be in an art gallery.

His ornament was simply a pine cone with a gold ribbon on top.

“Very minimalistic,” I chuckle. “I can see your tortured soul really pondered over this piece.”

“Thank you,” he laughs. “I call it ‘Simple man’.”

“Love it.”

“Come on Celi...” Diego chuckles, scratching his head. “Just make an ornament with us.”

“Ugh! Fine! I guess I’ll do it,” Celina groans, causing Rosalie to squeal with excitement as she runs off to get some art supplies.

“Well, have fun. I have to go get ready for that stupid board meeting,” Carter sighs.

“Do you want me to come with you?” I ask, wanting to be useful in the pack business.

He shakes his head. “Nice try but you know you can’t leave the territory with Tais and Ira in the city. Besides, I need you here holding down the fort while I’m gone, Luna.”

I’m too tired to argue and decide to just focus on the Christmas decorations. For the next 20 minutes, Laura, Diego, Celina and I are deeply focused on crafting our ornaments. Rio sits happily beside me and I decide he needs an ornament too. I grab a small wooden block and paint it red before dipping Rio’s little paw in gold paint. Pressing his toe pads onto the wood, his ornament is complete.

The girls and I giggle at his cute little paw print and he receives the best praise for his creation.

For my own ornament, I take a small white wolf and paint purple and pink eyes on it before stuffing it inside a glass ornament. I cover the outer part in a thick layer of gold glitter, leaving a small window for the white wolf to show. On top, I glue some garlands and pine cones and white flowers. As I write my name at the top, I hear the door burst open.

“So this is what you’ve been up to this entire time?”

The Ivory Queen Chapter 97

Aurora’s POV

“So this is what you’ve been up to this entire time?” Simone’s voice booms over the entire room. “My son is missing and you’re making Christmas decorations?” She laughs bitterly.

No, I’m tired... please not now.

I remain in my place as the room erupts in growls and I count to three. This woman was really getting on my nerves.

“Sit down and be quiet,” I command, finishing up the final touches on my ornament.

Was that too harsh?

“Please,” I add.

Without looking up, I hear her sit on the floor and cross her legs. When I finally turn to look at her, she has a furious frown on her face.

“What is she feeling?” I mind-link Celina.

She frowns at me but turns to examine Simone.

“Anger but her despair... its awful.”

I sigh. Simone was a pack member after all and it was my job to take care of all my pack members, regardless of how much they loathed me.

I crawl over to her and sit directly across from her, the whole room watching in curiosity at how I would treat their former Luna. She flinches when I reach for her hand but I take it anyway in a firm grip and she snarls at me.

“I would cut that out if I were you, Simone,” I snap, desperately trying to keep my anger in check and she stops. “You do not like me and that’s fine but do not for a second question my love for your son... If I could switch places with him, I would do it in a heartbeat!”

She glares at me. “Then why are you not out there searching-“

“I was not finished,” I cut her off. “You would be mistaken to assume I have not done my part to find him. I already know who has him and what they want in exchange for his safe return. I am actively working with our allies and have a witch on her way to help us ensure we do everything right to bring him back. There is nothing I wouldn’t do for him. Nothing. But you must remember I have to take care of my pack too. They need me and decorating the house seemed like a good way to take our minds off the situation. So forgive me for trying to be a good Luna!”

She cowers back when my voice fills with anger. Unable to hold my gaze, she turns her face and huffs.

“Let go of my hand,” she says through gritted teeth, pulling at it but I refuse to let her go

“No.”

I focus my energy on her and she gasps when she feels the jolt of electricity flow through her. She sighs after a few minutes, finally at ease.

“What did you do to me?” She asks, wrapping her arms around herself.

“I helped you feel less anxious,” I murmur. “You are a member of my pack and you were distressed. As a former Luna, you should understand that it is part of my job to take care of all of my pack members... even those who don’t deserve it.”

She sheepishly stares at me whilst tucking a strand of hair behind her ears.

“I-I don’t understand-“

"There's nothing to understand, Simone," I sigh. "I am going to care for every member of my pack. Because like it or not, this is my pack now."

She nods, pressing her lips firmly together. I get up and am surprised she lets me help her to her feet. She dusts herself off and eyes the pack members in the room. If I didn't know any better, I could have sworn that was a glint of embarrassment in her eyes.

Her gaze suddenly turns to ice when her brown eyes settle on Evan. I follow her stare and my heart shatters when I see Evan cast his eyes down to his feet as he shifts his weight nervously.

Evan never cowers... never.

Anger simmers just below my surface at the thought of the humiliation this woman must have put him through during her reign as Luna for him to be this anxious around her.

Evan, my gamma, my brother, my best friend, was a an outgoing, bubbly goof ball. He cracked jokes and teased me relentlessly. He was not shy and he was not afraid of anyone.

"I suggest you wipe that look off your face," I warn Simone. "Remember your place in this pack. You are no longer Luna and you have no power over anyone anymore. Learn to respect your pack members, regardless of their race or ethnicity. That includes my gamma."

She shifts her gaze back to me and scoffs. "You've got to be joking-"

I lose my patience and do something I never thought I'd do. I slap her across the face, her cheek turning red with the blow and she gives me a bewildered look. The room fills with gasps and nobody moves a muscle, not an inch.

I square my shoulders and hold her stunned gaze. "Enough!" My voice echoes off the walls. "I will not tolerate your nonsense any longer. I am your Luna and you will respect me and my command line no matter what you think and that's final!" I growl, stepping into her personal space. "And if you ever look at Evan that way again, a slap to the face will be nothing compared to what I'll do to you. Do I make myself clear?"

She nods her head furiously, her hand caressing her burning cheek.

“Good,” I reply quietly, tucking away my fury and turning to Laura. “Laura, please take her to the kitchen to get some ice for her cheek.”

“Yes Luna,” Laura replies quickly and gently ushers Simone towards the kitchen. “This way Mrs. Artaud.”

Simone silently follows her out of the room, still shocked at the turn of the events and I let out a breath the second she leaves.

You did good, Reyna says. You defended Evan and yourself.

Yeah, I mumble back unenthusiastically.

I take a deep breath. “Everyone out. I need to be alone now,” I order. “Please.”

For a few seconds everyone remains still. Celina is the first to move and she gently places a hand on my shoulder.

“Can I just say you handled that pretty well?” Celina says, giving my shoulder a squeeze as she passes by me. “I know you probably hated that, but I’m proud of you for putting her in her place.”

I respond with a smile and watch as everyone quietly slips out of the room. When Evan tries to leave, I reach out and grab his wrist, stopping him in his tracks.

“Not you,” I murmur and he silently nods.

When everyone clears the room, Evan speaks.

“You okay, kiddo?” He asks, the worry in his face clear as day.

“Don’t you ever do that again,” I say sternly, lifting my gaze up to his.

He frowns at me. “Do what?”

I reach up to cup his face. “Feel less than what you are,” I murmur. “I saw it in your eyes when she looked at you and I hated her for doing that to you all these years. Because, Evan, you have more worth in your pinky than she has in her entire body. You have your father’s crooked smile and your mother’s kinky curls, the perfect blend of two gentle souls who truly love each other. There is nothing wrong with that, do you hear me? Goddess, Ev, you are such

a beautiful person and I'm so lucky to have you as my gamma. You're the sweetest fool I've ever met and your parents raised you to be a good man with good heart. That's all that should matter to anyone, not your skin color or anything else for that matter," I say, fighting back tears. "No one has the right to treat you like you're nothing." My voice turns serious. "So you will not cower in front of her again. Ever."

Tears glaze over his eyes and he quickly closes them before pulling me into his arms.

"Yes, Luna," he replies, his voice trembling slightly. "And thank you..."

I bury my face in his chest, desperately trying to keep my emotions in check.

Goddess...I'm so tired...

Evan pulls back, placing a gentle kiss on my forehead before grabbing my ornament.

"Come on. Let's go put this on the tree."

Before I can answer, Carter bursts in through the door.

"The witch is here."

Oliver's POV

I've waited for hours for the perfect moment to strike. The little plastic shards of my cup litter the floor and I quickly stash them into the stone walls or whatever crevices I can find. I hide the biggest and sharpest shard within one of my silver shackles. As the day drags on, I send a few prayers to Moon Goddess and it seems she's answers them because the next thing I know, Adeline walks in.

"Bath time my love," she chirps as two guards come marching in as well.

Only two guards... this might be my chance..

"We'll have you nice and refreshed in no time handsome," she adds, pulling out a small syringe and tapping out the bubbles.

I panic. I can't be put under. That would ruin the plan.

“What do you need that for?” I ask, desperately trying to hide my panic. “I already can’t feel my wolf.”

“Ah baby, you need a new dosage to make sure it stays that way,” she coos, reaching out to caress my cheek. “I know you miss Michael, but this will all be over soon, Oli. You’ll get your wolf back.”

I take note of the guards positioning themselves behind me and make my calculations. This has to be perfect.

I lean into her hand and she smiles, letting her guard down. With her distracted, I grab hold her wrist just before she pushes the needle into me and with a quick motion, bend her wrist back and inject the dose into her. At the same time, I take the shard hidden in my shackle with my free hand and drive into one of the guard’s thighs, effectively getting him on his knees. The guard hisses in pain and I take advantage to push up on the balls of my feet and wrap my silver chain around his neck. He cries out as the silver burns his throat. The second guard lunges at me but having already anticipated his attack, I jerk the guard in my arms forward to take the blow. With no time to lose, I snap the guard’s neck using all my strength and drop him onto the floor.

The only guard left gets back on his feet and like the i***t he is, tries to kick me. I lift my arms up in an X to block the blow and tangle his ankle in my chains. His eyes fill with dread when he realizes his mistake but its too late for him. I yank his leg towards me, sending him crashing to the ground, and stomp on the back of his thigh. A sickly crunch echoes off the walls and he screams. I deliver a hard kick to his head and he’s out like a light. Not taking any chances, I untangle his leg from my shackles, bend down to his head and snap his neck.

Two snakes down, one to go.

A soft whimper rings in my ears and I turn to see Adeline crawling away.

Oh no you don’t bitch.

I quickly run as far as I can and manage to grab one of her ankles. She screams as I drag her towards me, wrapping her up in a choke hold.

Wolf or no wolf, I am a warrior and this b***h is going to pay.

"You have two options," I hiss in her ear. "Get me out of here or you end up like both of them," I snarl, nodding towards the two dead guards. "You pick."

She whimpers quietly. "I -I don't have the key," she stutters pathetically. "I can't-"

I tighten my arm around her neck and she starts gasping for air. "Well then you better pray Moon Goddess is more forgiving than I am," I growl, quickly losing my patience.

"L-left ...L-eft po-cket..." She wheezes as I continue to squeeze her.

I smirk, loosening my grip ever so slightly. "Good choice. Get it out now."

She fumbles with her hands and produces a small key. I order her to unlock my shackles, still keeping her in my arms and she haphazardly inserts the key in my right wrist shackle.

I almost sigh in relief as the constant burning comes to a halt on my wrist. Unfortunately, my wrists and ankles will be permanently scarred due to the silver and will serve as a constant reminder of this hell hole. I shove that thought to the side, however, focusing on escaping back to Aurora. I have Adeline unlock the rest of the shackles and within a span of a minute, I'm free.

"Please Oli," she whimpers. "Please don't kill me. I just wanted us -"

"Shut up!" I snap, yanking her by the hair. "Now listen very carefully. The only reason you are still breathing right now is because I have no idea where I am. Be very f*****g careful. One wrong move and I will snap your neck. Got it?"

She nods her head furiously.

"Alright, now hold still," I warn as I reach for both of her wrists and hold them in death grip behind her back. She winces at my harshness and I push her forward. "Get me out of here," I snarl. "Tu ferais mieux de ne pas demander d'aide parce que je jure que je vais t'arracher la langue! {You better not call for help because I swear I'll pull your tongue out.}" I sneer.

We slowly make our way out of the room and down a dark corridor. I sniff the air but unfortunately my wolf senses have yet to return. From what I can see though, the room they kept me in was underground. The corridor soon becomes a tunnel dug into the earth, its dirt walls covered in little grass roots.

As we make our way through a series of tunnels, I grow suspicious that we have not come across a single guard.

Where the f**k were the witches and their minions?

Finally, we reach the end of the tunnel that leads to an opening near the side of a hill. I take in my surroundings, not recognizing where I am when I suddenly feel an elbow jab me in the groin with incredible force. My knees buckle as the pain pulsates across my pelvis and down my thighs.

Taking advantage of my weakness, Adeline bolts for the trees in the distance, quickly disappearing from my view.

F**k! I groan.

Wincing in pain, I stumble towards the trees as well, afraid I might be easy to target out in the open. I hide behind some brush, taking deep breaths to numb the pain between my legs. When the stinging passes, I listen in silence for any noise.

I don't know where I am, I sigh, holding up my pinky to my lips. But I promise, nena. I'm coming home to you. I pinky swear.

The Ivory Queen Chapter 98

*** Javier's POV***

I let out a heavy sigh as I reach my father's- I mean- my office to deliver the news and find Dad on the phone, seemingly excited with whatever news he just received.

"Yes of course... Trust me, Javier and his command line are more than capable... Excellent. We'll see you in an hour to sort out the deals... Thank you." Dad ends the call with a content sigh. "Oh, Javi. I just received the best news."

I smile at him. "Yeah, what about?"

He struggles to contain his joy. "Alpha Oliver is missing."

My heart starts racing. Oh f**k. This can't be happening! Aurora was so careful to keep his disappearance a secret amongst the Allies.

“Can you believe it?” Dad squeals like a school girl. “That f*****g Alpha finally got what he deserved for humiliating me! Oh to see the look on that stupid girl’s face when she realized her mate was taken! Ha, Moon Goddess tested me, ” he laughs. “But she came through and things are starting to look up for us!”

“How is this great news?” I ask, hiding my fear and anxiety.

“Because son,” Dad says, getting up from his seat and stalking over to me. He places his hands on my shoulder and grins. “We can take down River Moon and those Allies once and for all.”

“What do you-“

“Alpha Nikolai will be here in an hour to discuss the best tactics to employ for an attack. Tonight, after you take your oath, Lluvia Blanca and Amethyst Lake will attack River Moon and take it.”

I feel the blood drain from my face. He can’t be serious! Attack River Moon?

My heart rate increases with my panic and Dad gives me a confused look.

“Why aren’t you as excited as I am?” He asks. “This is incredible news! River Moon humiliated us and now we have the opportunity of a lifetime to pay them back with a bigger blow! You should be happy that you, Javier Salazar, the youngest Alpha in the region will take on the biggest pack in California. And with River Moon down,” he adds, “the allies will follow. They’ll have no choice but to follow you too and Lluvia Blanca will be the powerhouse of the West. You’ll be an legendary Alpha.”

“Dad are you crazy?” I snap. “The Allies are too strong for us to take on! You know that. If we even attempt an attack, Cerulean Sea will be the first to respond. You know their warriors are by far the fiercest. Besides, River Moon outnumber us!”

“But we’ll have the element of surprise. We’ll take River Moon before Cerulean Sea even gets the alert. Besides, we have two silver wolves at our disposal! What are a couple of warriors compared to Mia and Salvador? You know those two are incredibly gifted warriors.”

I need to warn Aurora of his plan...

Sensing my hesitation Dad adds, "Javier, this is an opportunity of a lifetime and we need to act now while the enemy is weak. We won't get a chance like this again. River Moon and its allies disrespected this pack and our loyalty by siding with that murderer and we must show them that we are not to be trifled with. If you let one pack disrespect us, then we as Alphas lose our credibility to lead. We cannot show weakness. Lluvia Blanca must show River Moon who its dealing with and you must show our strength."

He straightens his shoulders. "Get Chava and Pablo here immediately. You and your command line must prepare for the war meeting we'll be having with Amethyst lake. They'll be here soon."

"About Chava, Dad. I have something to tell you," I say.

"No time right now. Whatever it is, it can wait."

"No, Dad listen. Chava does not want the gamma position anymore. He forfeits."

"What?"

"Salvador will not be my gamma," I reply coolly.

"Why not?"

"It doesn't matter. It's his choice and I will not force someone to do a job they do not want."

Dad thinks for a moment and sighs. "Then you'll just have to convince him to take the position. A silver wolf in your command line is a power move. Do whatever you have to do to make him take the position. For the time being, I still want him at the meeting and have Mia join as well. Their powers will be critical for our attack."

"Dad-"

"You have not taken the oath yet," he growls. "So until you do, you will do as I say. Now get the silver wolves and meet me here in an hour. We have work to do."

I clench my jaw and glare at him. Lluvia Blanca will not attack River Moon. I will make sure of it.

As I step out of the office, I call Mia and Chava to my new room, the Alpha's room.

"So how did your dad take it?" Chava asks, looking guilty for backing out of the position.

"We have a problem. My father knows that Oliver is missing and he wants to attack River Moon tonight after the ceremony."

"Is he crazy? With Celina and Aurora together, Lluvia Blanca doesn't stand a chance," Mia snaps. "We have to warn Aurora!" Mia replies, taking out her phone and dialing. She holds the phone to her ear but it appears she goes straight to voice mail and she frowns. "Damn it, she's not picking up."

I rack my brain for a possible solution before it clicks.

"Wesley!" I cry out, pulling out my phone. "He and Aurora are bringing the treaty. He can warn Aurora and she can prep her pack for the attack!"

Mia and Chava nod excitedly when Pablo walks in.

"Hey, your Dad wants to speak to us. He says its urgent."

I turn to Mia and Salvador.

"You guys go on ahead, I need to poop," I call out heading to the bathroom.

"Way to much information," Chava chuckles, winking at me. "Let's go before the whole place smells like a*s," he laughs, gently ushering Mia and Pablo out of my room.

I dial Wesley's number and he answers immediately.

"You getting pre-Alpha jitters?" Wesley chuckles into the phone.

"Wes, we have a problem. My father knows Oliver is missing and he plans on launching an attack-"

I hear a knock at the door and Dad's voice calls out my name.

"Javier! Get your a*s to the office now!" he calls out.

“Yes father,” I reply before lowering my voice and hissing into the phone. “Tell Aurora to prepare for war. My father wants to attack River Moon tonight.”

Before Wesley can reply, I end the call and run off to the office.

“It’s about time you f*****g showed up,” Dad snarls. “Now let’s get down to business.”

For the next 30 minutes, Dad instructs Mia, Chava and Pablo (my future Beta) on how to behave at the meeting with Alpha Nikolai and his men and gives them a brief overview on the attack plan.

When Alpha Nikolai’s and his men arrive, it feels like my heart might jump out of my throat. Alpha Nikolai was the notorious alpha of the Amethyst Lake, known for ruling his pack with an iron fist. Any slight betrayal or sign of disobedience was paid for in blood. Amethyst lake was not as large as River Moon or Lluvia Blanca but no one messed with Nikolai and his pack. He was also mateless which meant he had no one to help control his temper and his rumored sadistic tendencies. He was a 26 year old man standing at 6 ft 5 with platinum blonde hair and eyes of ice, but it was his dark aura that sent shivers down my spine. He would not submit to anyone which is why I doubted this alliance to begin with.

“So this is your new Alpha,” he smirks at me, sizing me up. “He looks like a pup.”

“I assure you, Javier is no child. He will lead this pack to greatness,” My father beams at me.

“Excellent,” Nikolai smiles. “I do not care much for weak alphas. If this alliance is to work, I need to know I am working only with the best,” he says, a hint of a threat in his every word. “So, Javier. Are you the best?”

I glare at him. “I will do what is necessary to protect my pack. And I don’t like when my loyalties are questioned.”

Nikolai nods approvingly and shifts his gaze to Mia and Chava. “Are these the mighty silver wolves you spoke of?” he asks my father.

“This is Mia and Salvador, the children of my former gamma, Emiliano.”

Nikolai stands in front of Mia and crouches down to her eye level before reaching a hand to grab her chin.

"I'd keep my hands to myself, Alpha. I'm not as cute as I look when provoked," Mia warns.

Chava and I can't help but smirk at Mia's fierceness. She was indeed a very sweet looking girl, but that was always a ploy. Mia was feisty and had quite a mouth on her when aggravated.

Nikolai grins. "Oh she's got a mouth... I can fix that."

Mia's eyes glow gold and I grab her wrist and shake my head. Better to not provoke this psychopath.

"Hmm, such an intriguing creature, " Nikolai hums. "Tell me, what is your gift?"

"Would you like a demonstration?" My father asks gingerly. "Mia, Salvador. Show them what you can do."

Mia and Chava exchange glances before looking at me for approval. I give them a small nod and they both get on their feet. Mia's eyes glow gold and she narrows in on Nikolai. Within seconds, he gasps, staring blankly around the room and smiling.

"Incredible," he murmurs.

Mia releases him from her spell and her eyes return to their warm brown color.

Chava is up next and he closes his eyes to concentrate. Suddenly, two black mambas materialize on the floor and slither up his leg and wrap around his arms. They stop around his shoulders before hissing at the Alpha and his men who stare back in amazement. He then projects a small dagger in his hand and aims it at one of the wolves, missing him by mere centimeters. The wolf snarls at him and Chava responds with a smirk and a shrug.

"Indeed, two very powerful wolves," Nikolai smiles with satisfaction. "But I hear the Luna is gifted as well."

"Yes, the little brat is a healer," Dad mutters. "But she has no training and only recently discovered her powers. Unlike Mia and Salvador, that girl does not yet have full control of her gift. She is utterly useless."

I want to burst into laughter. You have no idea just how powerful she is.

Nikolai presses his lips firmly together, thinking something over.

“So let’s get down to business,” he says. “You were once an ally. Tell me, what should we expect from River Moon?”

For the next hour, Nikolai and my father carefully discuss the details of River Moon, from the guard shift changes to the guard leaders of each quadrant. By the time we’re finished, Amethyst lake and my father have every minute, every second calculated for the attack and it makes me sick to my stomach.

“No one touches the Luna,” Nikolai grins. “She must be quite a catch if your allies so willingly turned their backs on you. I have some plans of my own with her and I’ll take my sweet time before I dispose of her.”

One glance at Chava lets me know he’s fuming at the disrespect with which this disgusting alpha spoke of Aurora and it makes me happy he is once again protective of her.

By the time the meeting is over, only two hours remain before the ceremony. When Amethyst Lake leaves, the smile on my father’s face fades, replaced by a look of disappointment.

“Tell me, son, are you trying to sabotage this alliance? You embarrassed me,” he snarls, his eyes darkening. “You were negative the entire meeting, looking for flaws in every plan. Is that what you wanted? To make me look bad?”

I’m on my feet in an instant. “I was just pointing out how stupid this attack is!” I retort. “We are in way over our heads and I’m trying to protect my pack. That’s what an Alpha is supposed to do!”

“No! An alpha finds a solution and you offered none!” Dad growls. “It’s almost as if you were dead set on destroying this alliance.”

“How can you trust them?” I argue. “There is a reason no one has allied themselves with Amethyst Lake. They are power hungry and the second we turn our backs, they will not hesitate to finish us off!”

“This alliance isn’t based on trust, it’s based on our mutual hatred for River moon.”

“An ally you can’t trust is not an ally at all!” I snap. “Amethyst lake-“

“Will be our allies and that’s final!” Dad roars, his face red with anger. “You will sign the treaty or you can forget about being Alpha.”

“You can’t take it from me!”

“I am Alpha and I choose who I give the title too. Just because you’re my son doesn’t mean you automatically get the title. You must earn it,” he snarls.

“Amethyst lake will help us get what we want and there is no turning back from this agreement. You better get your act together within the next two hours if you want the title.”

Dads face turn serious and he looks over at Chava.

“And you, Salvador, I don’t know what’s gotten into you lately but I’m disappointed that you won’t be taking the oath along with Pablo and Javier. At least for now, it won’t be a problem. Javier hasn’t found his Luna so there is no rush to have a gamma but listen very carefully. We have invested many resources on you and your family. You don’t get to back out so easily.

Remember, you, your mother and your sister have lived here under my protection since Emiliano died. Nothing is free in this world so when an Alpha asks something of you, you step up and do it, especially when said alpha has been exceptionally generous with your family.”

Mia’s face pales and she looks nervously at her hands. Chava has a blank look on his face and grabs Mia’s hand to comfort her.

He can’t seriously be threatening to throw out Chava and Mia right now?

“Dad, you are way out of line after everything Emiliano did for us!” I snap, disgusted with my father’s threat.

“It’s okay,” Chava says, his face unreadable. “I’ll take the oath.”

“Chava-“

“I said I’ll take the oath,” he says getting up from his seat and storming out of the office.

“Well then, now that that’s settled, I’ll see you in two hours for the ceremony,” Dad smiles triumphantly before heading out as well.

This doesn't sit well with me. Chava has for too long had to care for his family. He was just a kid when his father died and he had to care for his drunken mother and broken sister while also grieving himself. It's not wonder he held so much resentment for Aurora. Now that he's finally coming to terms with his anger and working to get Aurora's trust back, my father decides to place another burden on him.

"This isn't right," I mutter. "Chava shouldn't be forced to be gamma."

"Calm down, Javier," Mia soothes, forcing a smile on her face. "We are really grateful to your family for caring for us all these years and it's no trouble to pay it back."

Her eyes are full of pain and hurt despite the smile on her face.

"No, Mia. You don't owe us anything. Not after all that you have done for our pack. My father is wrong and you know it."

She shrugs. "Well there's no use in fighting it. You need to be Alpha for the pack's sake," she says, careful not to reveal our plans in front of Pablo. "We need you, Alpha."

I give her a small nod and leave the office to prepare for the ceremony. As I enter my room, I glance at my phone to find 20 missed calls from Wesley and I dial back.

"What the f**k, Javier? You don't just get drop a bombshell like that and then not answer your phone!" Wesley growls.

"Look, I'm sorry. I was in a war meeting. So let me explain everything quickly--"

A knock at the door sends me into a panic.

"Hang on," I hiss into the phone. "Who is it?" I call out.

"It's your mother!" My mom sings. "Open up, the tailors, stylists and Elder Juan are here to help you get ready!"

f**k, are you kidding me?

"Wes, I gotta go. Just warn Aurora of an attack and make sure River Moon is ready for a fight," I whisper before hanging up the phone.

I open the door and people come rushing in to help me get ready.

As is tradition, Elder Juan collects two vials of my werewolf venom for historical and ceremonial purposes. One would be locked away in the alpha archives while the other vial would be injected into the pack tablet to transfer power to me for the ceremony.

Venom extraction is an uncomfortable procedure. Elder Juan has to open my mouth wide with tongs while my canines protrude out onto a glass jar. He then squeezes the base of my jaw while I bite down on the jar. It's like milking a venomous snake. I have to produce enough venom for two vials so it takes around 20 minutes of squeezing before I'm finally allowed to retract my canines and close my mouth.

I sigh with relief and massage my sore jaw when Elder Juan is finished and he chuckles at me.

"50 years doing this and every time, the Alpha is always happy to get rid of me," he laughs, putting away the vials.

My mother grins excitedly and she and Juan exit my room for the stylists to help me.

I can feel my nerves building up as the hour draws near and I send a silent prayer that Wesley warns Aurora in time.

The Ivory Queen Chapter 99

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

The witch looks no older than I am and she's incredibly beautiful with creamy pale skin and blazing red hair, her tight ringlets flowing freely down her back. Her eyes are a vibrant greenish blue with fiery gold rings around the irises.

She smiles politely at me and I smile back, although I keep my guard up. She is a witch after all and I have a terrible track record with them.

"You have a lovely home, your majesty," she says, her eyes darting all around the living room.

I'm surprised to hear she has an English accent. She shifts nervously under the gaze of all the wolves present. Carter went off to his meeting while Rosalie

went to go deal with Simone. To my left, I have Celina and her family and to my right, Evan sits on the edge of the couch. I can hear the uneasiness in his heart. A few guards and a couple pack house members are also present, curiously watching the witch.

“Thank you. Umm, you can call me Aurora. There’s no need for the-uh-title,” I mutter, fidgeting with my hands. She nods. “So what should call you? W-What’s your name, I mean?”

“Guinevere. You can call me Gwen,” She shrugs, patting her knees. “So what can I do for ya? Pat tells me you have a witch problem of sorts.”,

Pat? They must be really close if she calls him that...

“Right, a witch problem,” Celina says dryly, glaring at Gwen.

“Would you stop looking at her like that?” I hiss.

“She’s a f*****g witch! How can you even trust her right now?”

“Alpha Patrick sent her! If he trusts her then she must be on our side.”

“Witches are never on our side. They only look out for themselves!” Celina protests.

“I see you don’t trust me,” the witch interrupts us, looking at Celina accusingly.

I sigh. “I’m sorry. It’s just... we’ve been through a lot because of your kind-“

“As have we witches and yet here I came willingly to help a friend,” Gwen retorts, a hint of irritation in her voice.

Evan is quick to my defense and snarls menacingly at her. The witch doesn’t even flinch, remaining perfectly still as Evan growls at her.

“Evan,” I warn and he sits back, rolling his eyes at me.

Gwen gives Evan a bored, crossing her arms over her chest and leaning back in her seat.

“So your witch problem...” she mutters, letting out a tired sigh. “What kind of witches are we dealing with here?”

"That's the problem. We don't know," I say sheepishly. "All we have are their names and their demands."

I proceed to explain the situation, the witch listening patiently to my every detail. Her face grows grim when I tell her of their letter and the blood they seek.

"Let me see the letter," she says.

I quickly produce it for her and she reads it carefully.

"This is not good," she says after a while, shaking her head nervously. "There are very few witches who can even handle using blood in their magic. It's quite dangerous and the spells are never good."

"So do you know what type of witches Tais and Ira are?" I ask.

"I have an inkling but give me a moment."

Gwen closes her eyes and places her palm flat over the page. She chants a few strange words to herself and I watch uneasily as her palm glows with forest green light.

"House of Animus," she mutters, her eyes flickering with slight fear. "Oh Gods."

"House of Animus?" I ask.

"Yes. There are five houses of witches in existence: the House of Ignis, the House of Unda, the House of Terra, the House of Caelum and the House of Animus. Apart from the House of Animus, each house specializes in one of the four elements and trust me, you do not want to mess with a witch from the House of Animus."

"Why not?" I ask, my heart sinking to the pit of my stomach.

She thinks for a second, seemingly trying to find a good explanation. "Well, they are rare and possess incredible strength and power. Unlike the other houses, a witch from the house of Animus has a strong connection with Spirit. Spirit is a very difficult element to control but it can wield infinite power. Every living thing has a spirit so as a spirit witch, you can draw energy from virtually any source."

“So what do a couple of spirit witches want with our blood,” Celina asks.

“I can’t say for sure. I don’t know much about blood spells. Like I said, only a few witches can handle that kind of magic and I don’t mess with dark magic. I can look into it though. I have a few tricks up my sleeve.”

“So which house do you belong to?” I ask, curious to know what kind of witch I’m dealing with.

“House of terra. I’m an earth witch. Most of the spells I work with involve herbs and plants.”

My ears perk up at this.

“I need everyone out. Celina can stay,” I order.

Valentina, who up until this point had remained silent, protests.

“Mija, I can’t leave you two alone with this... witch!” she glares at Gwen with disgust. “Not after everything that’s happened-“

“I can assure you, I mean the twins no harm,” Gwen declares, her voice strong but calm. “As I said before, I came as a favor to a friend and I would never harm one of Pat’s allies.”

Curiosity gets the best of me. “How do you know the Alpha?”

A tiny smile spreads across her lips and she closes her emerald eyes, as if reminiscing a beautiful memory.

“I was a very young and stubborn witch back then,” she chuckles. “And I got myself into a bit of a mess with a clan of vampires. Patrick and I happened to cross paths and he saved my life. I’ll never forget that. I was a witch and yet he still helped me. Not many werewolves in his shoes would have done the same,” she says, eyeing Celina and her family.

“No I suppose not,” I mumble, looking at my sister who gives me an unapologetic smile.

“There haven’t been any vampires in the area in almost 30 years,” Evan argues, making Gwen laugh. “How is that even possible. You look like a teenager.”

“At my age, that’s a compliment,” the witch chirps.

“How old are you?” Celina asks, bewilderment in her eyes as she stares back at the witch.

Gwen shakes her head, the smile never leaving her lips. “A lady never tells,” she giggles. “Besides... I’m immortal. Age is honestly just a number at this point for me.”

Celina frowns and rolls her eyes in annoyance. As I glance around the room, I realize no one is willing to leave us alone with the witch. I trusted everyone here but Tais and Iras words were engraved in my brain. They knew very thing about me. Every little detail and with painful accuracy, which could only mean one thing: someone was betraying me. No matter how hard I thought about it, I could not decipher who the traitor was.

I let out a heavy sigh. I guess there’s only one thing left to do.

For a few moments, I remain quiet and empty my mind except for my task at hand. Concentrating on everyone around me, except for the witch and Celina, I slowly tone down everyone’s ability to hear. Within seconds, everyone is completely deaf and much to my dismay, terribly frightened.

Evan looks around furiously, trying to find a hint of a sound but finds none.

“I’m sorry,” I say and his eyes widen in shock.

“Aurora cut it out, please,” he begs.

“You have silenced their world,” Gwen says, staring curiously at my panicked wolves. “Interesting.”

“Aurora what did you do?” Celina snaps, eyeing her mom who is cupping her ears frantically.

“I temporarily made them deaf. Tais and Ira know everything about us which means someone close to us must be informing them,” I finally admit. “What I want to talk about, the witches can’t know about.”

Celina looks at her mom. “It’s going to be okay, Mami.”

Valentina calms down and urges Diego and Danny to do the same. I turn back to Evan and the guards who are still frightened by the loss of their hearing.

“Breathe,” I whisper, taking a deep breath to show them what I mean and they seem to understand. They each take a breath and settle down. Turning back to the witch, I think over my words carefully.

“As you know, we all have our weaknesses, a werewolf’s kryptonite being-“

“Silver and wolfsbane,” the witch finishes for me.

“Right ... and a witch’s weakness is bronze,” I add, shifting my hands in my lap.

“Where are you going with this?” Celina mind links.

“I found out our weakness.”

Time stands still and Celina turns to look at me.

“Explain,” she demands and I proceed to give her the details I discovered about the flame lily and queen of the night flower.

Her face hardens. “And you want to tell the witch our weakness?”

You can’t tell the witch! Reyna snarls.

“No, but I want to know if Tais and Ira could possibly know it. If there is perhaps some way they could break the enchantment spell on our records. If they can read it, we need to find an antidote. An earth witch seems suitable for the job.”

She groans but ultimately agrees to let me ask. She speeds up time again and I begin my questioning.

“Celina and I are not your average werewolves.”

“Yeah, no kidding,” Gwen laughs.

Celina rolls her eyes and I resist the urge to smack her.

“Keep rolling your eyes and they might roll out of your head!” I hiss.

She pouts but sits still.

“Anyways,” I sigh. “The secrets of our kind are kept hidden in enchanted books and sources. Could a witch somehow bypass these enchantments and read them for themselves?”

Gwen shakes her head. “No, most enchantments on such records were created by faes. A witch can’t undo that type of magic and its unlikely a fae would ever willingly help a witch. We are ancient enemies afterall.”

I heave a sigh of relief but am cut short immediately by Gwen’s next words.

“That doesn’t mean another wolf couldn’t read it to them,” she adds quietly.

Oliver’s POV

My wolf has yet to return and these woods seem endless. I have no idea where I am and I know I’m running in circles. I’ve passed the same large boulder seated next to a patch of dandelions three times now and I’m getting nervous. In the distance, I see an old tree sitting alone in an empty patch of grass and decide to take a break from running to catch my breath and gather my bearings. Settling down at the base of the tree, I listen to my heart come to a steady pace when I notice a black owl with sickly red eyes watching me, spinning its head in curiosity. It almost looks like it’s laughing at me.

It flies off its branch and lands directly in front of me, its red eyes boring into the my soul.

“Hello Oliver,” it says smugly, hopping a few inches closer to me.

I flinch at the sound of its voice and back up against the tree trunk.

Tais?

“Lost?” the owl chuckles, spreading out its wings and shaking them slightly.

I must be going crazy! I think to myself, blinking hard at the bird.

“I underestimated you, Alpha,” Tais says with amusement. “You are quite the warrior...” she adds, scratching her face with her talons. “It’s alright, though. I won’t make the same mistake twice.”

“What-“

“You want your wolf back so badly,” She sneers, prepping herself for flight.
“Well, careful what you wish for!”

The sound of rustling leaves in the distance catches my attention and I turn to see none other than Karina approaching. I’m on my feet in an instant, ignoring the protests from my body.

“What the hell are you doing here?” I snarl as she stops a few feet away from me. I hear Tais perch up on the tree again to watch.

“Following orders,” she says before lunging at me.

I barely manage to dodge her attack but she recuperates quickly and manages to get a few quick blows to the backs of my thighs. I stagger forward and somehow manage to regain my footing. She’s incredibly fast, however, and as I defend myself against her, I realize she’s a talented fighter. She dodges all of my punches with ease, seemingly anticipating my every move. I have yet to land a punch.

Where did she learn to fight like this?

I press on, however, determined to make it back to my mate. A kick to the face sends me crashing to the ground and before I make it back up, I feel the pinch of a syringe on my thigh. The blood drains from my face.

No, not again!

Karina steps back, tossing the now used syringe off to the side and looking for approval from the owl. I feel a burning sensation race through my veins and I cry out in pain as it intensifies.

“What did you do to me?” I scream in agony, my body writhing, hoping for relief.

“Giving you your wolf back,” Tais snickers before turning to Karina. “You know what to do now.”

Karina nods. “Yes master.”

The pain starts to subside, the feeling replaced with intense anger. In fact, it’s all I feel, rage filling every cell in my body. That’s when my claws start coming out, tufts of fur sprouting all over my body.

Michael? I call out

I get a snarl in response and I'm shoved to the back of my mind as he takes over and shifts into his wolf.

Michael, what the f**k? I snap, fighting to gain control back.

His presence is overbearing, his anger quickly consuming every thought in my mind and I lose the battle. It's as if a veil of rage covers my eyes and all I see is red.

Let me out! I cry.

But Michael is in complete control now and he towers over Karina, snarling and baring his teeth at her. She gives him a bored look, crossing her arms over her chest and tapping her foot impatiently.

"Stand down," she orders and much to my surprise, Michael obeys. She turns her back to me, gesturing me to follow her with an index finger. "Come on. We have work to do."

Michael gets up and follows.

No! Michael!

That's the last thing I scream before the fury consumes me and I lose consciousness.

The Ivory Queen Chapter 100

Aurora's POV

My heart sinks and I feel my frustration growing. My wolf refuses to talk about the flame lily and Queen of the night flowers so I have not more questions for the time being and release my wolves from their deafness. I slump back in my seat, fighting the urge to burst into tears. Evan wraps his arm around my shoulder and pulls me to his chest while I stare blankly into space.

The witch watches me silently. "I'm sorry I can't be of much help."

"No, thank you," I sigh, closing my eyes and sitting up straight. "You've given us plenty. We know what they are no-" I let out a big yawn and cup my face in hands. "Sorry," I mutter, rubbing my throbbing temples.

"That's it. You're going to bed. Right f*****g now," Evan snaps, getting up from the couch and towering over me.

I shake my head. "I'm not that tired. Besides, we have a guest," I protest, gesturing towards Gwen.

"You are having trouble sleeping," Gwen asks, although it's more of an observation than a question. She softens her face and smiles sympathetically. "You must be in a great deal of pain."

I wipe my tired eyes and smile. "I'm okay," I shrug. "A sleeping pill should do the trick."

The witch contorts her face in disgust. "You want to stuff yourself with pills? Ugh! No. I have something better. Do you have a garden? I can whip something up for you-"

"There's no way in hell I'm trusting a witch to give my sister a sleeping potion," Celina snarls at the witch. "You must be out of your damn mind." She turns to me and frowns. "I will heal you. You don't need anyone else to help you. I'm right here."

She wraps her finger around my wrist and feel of jolt of energy course through ever cell, awakening me. I feel better than I have these past few days.

If only sleep were the problem...

"Thank you, Celina, but I hope you realize you've been nothing but rude to Gwen all day and she's done nothing to deserve it. Please apologize."

"I can't believe this," she mutters before storming out of the living room and up to her room.

Diego and Valentina run after her and the room fills with awkward silence.

I sigh. And I thought I was stubborn.

"Please excuse my sister. She's -uh- been through a lot these past few days," I say, trying my best to be polite.

"It's alright. I'm quite used to werewolf hostility," Gwen chuckles. "But I really can help with the sleeping issue."

"It's not falling asleep that's the problem," I admit, my voice just above a whisper. "It's the staying asleep that's the issue."

Gwen and Evan look confused and I fidget with my fingers to avoid their stares.

"I have nightmares... t-they keep me up at night," I say, taking a deep breath to stop the tears that flood my eyes from falling. "Oliver used to keep them away or hold me when they came. And he's not here," I shrug, biting my lip keep it from trembling.

"Why didn't you say anything, kid?" Evan says pulling me into his arms.

"Everyone is dealing with so much, a few nightmares seemed so unimportant. I didn't want to be a burden."

"You're not burden. You're just annoying sometimes," Evan grumbles, ruffling up my hair.

I push his arms away and fix my hair.

"Nightmares, huh? I have a few remedies for that," the witch thinks out loud, taping her chin. "Yes, yes. I'll need some supplies of course. Let's see here..."

She lists off several herbs and other items she needs when Rio comes trotting, covered in mud.

I'm about to scold him when Gwen starts hissing at him. The whites of her eyes turn jet black while the irises darken into a deeper green. Rio snarls at her .

"That dog..." Gwen mutters. "Where did you get it?"

I run over to him and she hisses, causing the guards to take defensive stances.

"Get away from it," Gwen snaps. "There's dark magic around it!"

I freeze

“What?” Evan snaps.

“There is dark magic surrounding that creature! It’s been watching you!”

My heart races and I turn to look at Rio, who continues to snarl at the witch.

Gwen starts chanting something under her breath and Rio becomes more aggressive, barking erratically and practically trembling with rage. Gwen’s chants grow louder, her voice filling the room and Rio’s body stiffens. He suddenly rolls over onto his side and howls, kicking his little legs in agony.

I can’t move. I can’t even breath. I’m frozen in place.

Gwen keeps chanting until Rio’s body goes limp. We all watch in horror as a red mist lifts from his ears and eyes, evaporating into thin air.

I stare at Rio’s lying motionless on the ground, time moving at a snail’s pace. After a few seconds, I snap out of my trance and try to walk towards my puppy when Evan grabs me by the wrists and pulls me in back, snarling at the still body on the floor. I have no strength to fight, my heart shattered into a million pieces that my little friend was nothing more than a means for the witches to know my secrets.

Much to my surprise, Rio suddenly gets up from the floor, shaking his little head and wagging his tail happily. He sprints towards Gwen who kneels down and welcomes him in her arms. He gives her sloppy kisses before trotting over to me and jumping up my leg, begging for my affection.

Evan snarls at him and the puppy whimpers, rolling over on his stomach in surrender. I stare blankly at him and Gwen chuckles.

“He’s okay now. I promise. I broke the mirror spell that was cast on him,” she says.

“H-how long has he been under that spell?” I ask, watching Rio from the corner of my eye.

How long had I been watched?

“I can’t say for sure. Where did you get him?” Gwen asks.

“I found him on the side of the road along with several other pups,” Eric steps forward. “I’m sorry Luna.”

“Well then it’s likely he’s been watching you from the beginning, Aurora,” the witch sighs, getting on her knees and calling out to Rio.

Rio gives me a longing look before trotting over to the witch and licking her fingers.

“I’m not surprised you didn’t notice. The spell on this puppy was quite advanced. I almost didn’t notice if it weren’t for the fact that I’ve used this spell before myself,” the witch says. She looks up at me and frowns. “Werewolves can’t sense our witch magic. Don’t blame yourself for not knowing.” She sighs and stops petting Rio. “I’m afraid that Rio isn’t the only one under a spell.”

My fists clench at my sides and I close my eyes to keep from lashing out.

Will I ever get a moment of peace? I can’t even sit in my own home without my every move being watched!

“I sense traces of witch magic throughout the territory and even a little in this house.”

My eyes nearly pop out my head. “They’ve been in my house?”

Gwen nods. “I can feel their presence. I’m sorry, but these witches aren’t as distant as you think.”

I harden my face. How can I protect my pack when these witches have free reign over my territory and I have no way of stopping them?

“I can do a cleansing of the house and make sure there are no more mirror spells,” she offers, her eyes darting across the room. “I could also cast a barrier spell on the house. Those witches won’t be able to come in without me knowing and it would ensure everyone’s safety here. Unfortunately my magic isn’t strong enough for me to protect the entire territory. It’s far too big for me to take on on my own.”

“Thank you. That’s alright. It’s my job to protect the rest of my pack. I can handle that,” I reply, still eyeing Rio suspiciously.

Sensing my hesitation, Gwen picks up Rio in her arms. “He’s free Aurora. He won’t hurt you.”

She walks over to me, offering me my puppy. I stare at him for a moment, debating whether or not to trust him again and he whines. I reach out a hand to stroke his soft head and he leans into my touch, wanting me to love him again. I can't resist him any more and hold out my arms for him. He squirms excitedly in Gwen's arms and I take him from her.

Rio covers me in mud I giggle at his love.

"What supplies do you need for your spells?" I ask the witch.

I take Gwen to my garden and grow her special herbs and plants for her to work with. As the evening settles, I grab a quick dinner and head up to my room to get ready for Javier's ceremony.

I was returning to Lluvia Blanca for the first time since I saved Mia but I was not the same weak little girl anymore. I was a Luna and a future Queen ready to build her kingdom and I was going to look the part.

Rosalie and Laura help me with my hair and makeup. I decide to go with a simple eye look and have Rosalie style my hair in a low romantic bun with a few tendrils of hair to frame my face. For my gown, I select a long white dress with long sleeves that flare out at the ends. Gold leaf designs decorate the shoulders, neckline and sleeve ends and a cape hangs off my shoulders down to the floor.

I slip on my medallion when Celina's voice interrupts me.

"You don't need that. Take it off," she says calmly, peering at me through the mirror.

I rub the medallion between my fingers. "Why?" I ask.

"You are a Queen, your majesty," Celina says, her voice soft but firm. "So why hide it from them?"

"A Queen with no King and no kingdom," I mutter.

"But a Queen none the less. Show them you're not that scared little girl anymore. You will build your kingdom and when you do, they will bow to you."

I purse my lips and hum quietly to myself. I did not want to be bowed to, I just wanted to be respected. Silently, I remove the medallion and tuck it away in its box. The girls all bow to me and I shift uncomfortably on my feet. I notice Celina is dressed in a gorgeous long satin green dress with spaghetti straps and thigh slit. She pairs the dress with a diamond studded choker and some strappy silver heels. Her hair is parted down the middle and flows freely down her back. She wears her medallion wrapped around her wrist.

“Why do you get to wear your medallion?” I ask.

“Because I am a Princess, not a Queen and this is not my fairytale,” she replies with a shrug. “I have nothing to prove to that pack, but you do.”

I disagree. I had nothing to prove to Lluvia Blanca. I was already Luna of River Moon and I was no longer associated with Lluvia Blanca. But I decide not to argue.

“Where do you think you’re going?” I ask, pointing to her dress.

“You’re crazy if you think you’re going to Lluvia Blanca on your own to sign that treaty,” she says, adjusting her dress.

“You sure you’re not using this as an excuse to go see your mate on his big day?” I tease her and she rolls her eyes at me.

Evan walks in, announcing Wesley’s arrival. He’s dressed in a dashing silver tux and black shoes.

“You look very handsome,” I chirp. “Is this all for Mia?”

“Shut up,” he grumbles but I see his blush.

These two want to deny their love for their mates so much, it’s amusing.

“How is Gwen handling the spells?”

“She finished the cleansing and she’s almost done with the barrier spell. She said she should be done by the time we leave” Evan mutters.

“Okay, well I want to increase security while we’re at the ceremony. The house will be on lockdown until we return. No one leaves and no one enters this house without my permission.”

“Yes Luna,” Evan answers and begins mind linking orders to the guards.

We head downstairs and I’m shocked to see Wesley and an army of men.

“Wesley, we are just going to sign the treaty. We don’t need this many body guards.”

“We have a problem,” he mutters. “Javier called. Amethyst Lake and Lluvia Blanca plan to launch an attack on River Moon.”