

A long, cold breeze swept by, throwing Cer's hair into the air as Frost shared the same sights as her. Her sisters were already far along the bridge leading to the one island that was different from the rest. Not many stones or flowers grew there. It was as vacant as the rest where only a single oak tree grew in the center.

"Back then I stole when I was hungry. Fought when I was angry. Swore at people so much that the whole village wished they could chop off my tongue. The human settlements we traded with often threw me into the river when I caused trouble."

She smiled fondly at the painful memories.

"I was never a good person. I'm more selfish than you think. But when it comes to family..." Cer then looked up at Frost with glistening eyes as she grinned from the bottom of her heart. "... then I can make an exception. I'm starving for attention. You knew that from a long time ago. I do what I do because I want someone to look at me."

She reached up into the moonless night, but before she could grasp the emptiness, Frost caught her hand.

"You have plenty of people that can look at who you really are now. You don't have to keep making a fool of yourself anymore."

"That's what I think too. But it's all part of the phase of the moon. That's why when I'm alone with you – with family – I can shut it all down and just..." Cer trailed off, taking in a deep breath before she suddenly plopped her head onto Frost's side. "... I don't know to describe it. It feels like I've been doing something for so long but all along it didn't matter. It's not a bad feeling. I can call it relinquishing even. A catharsis of just wanting to let go. It's tiring, you know? Keeping this act."

"It's ok if you stop. Everyone will be happy to see this side of you. The real you."

"But what is the real me? It's been so long. I have so many phases that it's all murky. At the end of the day, I want to be up there. A Moon."

"Is this about Raoul?"

"It is. Raoul was the only other family I had. But he became cold ever since they came to slaughter us. I'm sure he has his own regrets. He probably blames himself for a lot of things. But it's frustrating that even though I've climbed so high – so far and even became the Fang of *you*..." Cer clutched onto Frost's shirt, her tiny hands trembling lightly. "... He not once came to see us. Are we just a nuisance? Maybe this whole act is just a bother. I think that sometimes. But I do it to see who'll stick with me. The last people that did were the twins."

What Cer felt was still difficult to understand. But at the core of it was her yearning for Raoul to come back. Frost wondered if she could arrange something but until then –

"Cer." Frost called her, drawing her eyes towards her golden ones.

– She wanted to assure her that he wasn't the only star in her sky.

“You have so many more people now. Haven’t you realized it? So many people that’ll cry in your absence. That will ask where you are if you’re missing. That will look for you to see if you’re ok. Raoul isn’t the only person that’s your family now. But I know that it must hurt for someone you were so close to drift away.”

Frost clasped onto her face, brushing her thumb across Cer’s cheek where a single tear collapsed.

“I want you to remember that. If something were to happen to you then I want you to remember that we are also looking at you. Being a Moon isn’t easy. Maybe for you, it’ll help if you didn’t need to revolve your identity around it.” Frost then stroked her head, causing the Cer’s eyes to linger on hers as if in disbelief.

“I like this part of you a lot. But I also like the Cer that shouts and jokes at the worst possible time. I hope you realize that every phase of your moon isn’t a segmented personality. It’s really all just you.”

“That’s a tall order. Telling me to forget Raoul. I’m kidding.” Cer joked, reaching up to gently hold Frost’s hand as she nuzzled herself against it. “Raoul is my family. Of course I’m going to want to see him. But you’re my family too. And... I guess everyone is at this point. I want to keep it up until I reach my own resolution. It’s not something you can mess with because Raoul is my problem. But everything else has been solved thanks to you. Maybe it is a problem with identity. Maybe I’m trying to become something more than I already am. Or maybe we all just have attachment issues At the end of the day... It’s all off my chest and in your hands.”

Cer’s tail wagged uncontrollably, her hands slowly sliding behind Frost’s back as she dug her face into her chest.

“... I never had anyone I could talk to like this. Not even my sisters. Interpret that how you like. Hell... forget it. You can see where I’m going with it.”

“It’s ok. At this point it’s inevitable.” Frost motherly hummed, knowing well that Cer saw her equally as a friend as a parental figure. “Cer. I know you’re not the kind of person to cry, but if it comes to it, then you’re welcome to come to me at any time just like this.”

“I hate humans. I hated you from the start, you know? Shit...” Cer did not cry, but Frost could tell by the tremors that ran through her body that she was on the verge of it. “Frost, don’t... treat me any differently because of this. I’m not a child despite how I look. But even so, I still want to grow up on my own. I want independence.”

“That’s fine. You’re still the Cer I always knew. Just a bit cuter this time. Listen. Growing up doesn’t mean independence. Because there have been times when I wish and have fallen into the shoulders of others. You had it right at the start. What you need is family. Friends. People that can catch you when you fall.”

“... Yeah. That’s true as well. I’m not used to heartfelt moments. It makes me sick. But I guess it’s because I’ve never had moments like these in the past. The fact that it comes so naturally to you means that you were probably loved growing up.”

“Thank you. You have no idea how much that means to me.” Frost was elated to hear this. It felt like another passage of her past was uncovered by Cer’s assessment. “Cer. Let’s make a promise.”

“A promise?”

“Let’s not let the past drag us down. I want you to focus on moving forward. Please don’t end up like your sisters. Don’t end up like me when I became the Crowned.”

“... Another tall order. But you don’t have to worry about a thing. Because this time, I’ve offloaded everything onto you. It’s like I said –” Cer broke from the hug, her eyes damp as she knocked on Frost’s stomach. “– All of it is in your hands now. Nothing’s a secret anymore. The details I won’t go into because you probably don’t want to hear how many times I was thrown into the rivers, beaten like the dog they thought I was. That’s where I realized my own value.”

She said, taking a few steps back before turning towards her sisters in the distance.

“I’m the kind of wolf that defies expectations.”

She concluded, her tail inviting Frost to join her.

“And I wouldn’t have it any other way.” Frost whispered before they both began resumed their journey towards the lonely island. “By the way, you never told me why we’re here.”

“Once a year we come to visit family.” Cer said as Frost realized that the stones that littered the islands were in fact tombstones. “The flowers... what do you think... ‘Mom’ will like.”

Looking around, Frost spotted the chrysanthemums, roses, daisies, dahlias, and all manners of flowers appropriate for the occasion. But there was one that stood out from the others.

What she plucked was a purple lisianthus.

“A flower of gratitude. To say thanks to your mother. Even if she wasn’t the best mother you had, you still can’t imagine a world where she wasn’t yours.”

Cer gracefully took the delicate flower into her hands. She held it to her nose, inhaling its beautiful scent before she looked up at Frost longingly.

“To set the past aside and to look to the future. That’s what this flower means in Elysia. To give this to the dead is unheard of you know? Who gives this as a token of valediction?”

Cer chuckled. She did not hate the idea.

“I’m kidding. It’s perfect. My last thanks before... We can all collectively move on.” Her voice trailed off as she watched the tall backs of her sisters with nothing but love. “... One day I’ll grow and start thinking about what I want to do when all of this ends. What do you want to do after this, Frost?”

“I guess... I really haven’t thought about it. Maybe settle down with Jury?”

“Neither. No one has that kind of luxury in this world. But I envy those that can. It’s a long way away till this world gets any better. It’s only going to get worse as well. But so long as people like you exist, then I’m willing to believe in that kind of future.”

Frost looked up at the skies, her eyes brimming with light as the only star in the early night.

“You’re part of the group too. Don’t forget that.”

“I guess I am, huh. Do you know how hard I tried to keep those people alive when the Fractured Nilhim attacked? Praise me already!”

“Yeah, yeah. You did a good job, Cer.” Frost chuckled.

“Tch. I’ll forgive you for not putting your heart in it just this once.” Cer cheekily grinned.