

Chapter 1 Let the Games Begin

Faster. Her legs burned as she pushed herself to go faster, each stride propelling her further and further through the tangled brush. The thorns ripped at her esh, drawing blood in angry red welts, but she barely felt it. Her eyes were xed straight ahead as she heard the deafening thud of footsteps closing in behind her. The world around her became a dizzying blur as her heart hammered frantically in her chest.

She wasn't going to be able to outrun them. She could hear the heavy pants of her pursuers, and it spurred her to push even harder, until her body screamed in protest. As she ran, she glimpsed a icker of movement out of the corner of her eye and knew that she was running out of time. She put everything she had left into one nal burst of speed, propelling herself through the brush.

"You can't get away from me!" The condent voice thundered. She refused to look back, refused to acknowledge the pursuer's words. She knew that any distraction would mean the end for her.

"Elena." The arrogant voice seemed to mock her name.

"Laney." Another smug voice called out. The rustle of his footsteps matched with her own.

Finally! She caught a glimpse of red ribbon apping in the breeze. Nora, I found it!

Perfect, bring me to you. Her twin sister's voice rang in her mind. It was an odd sensation, but one they were both familiar with. The two had always been able to teleport to one another as long as they both willed it. With a warm utter, her sister's light leapt from her body. A blinding brightness lled the area, giving Elena the cover she needed to reach the ribbon.

She felt the soft silk in her hand and pulled it into her chest. "You lost again." She grinned as her sister Lenore reached up to give her a high ve.

"Laaaame. Lenore cheated. She hid your ag in the light." Ashton shook his head as he pinned his blue eyes on the two women. "Colton, why didn't you draw your sword?"

"Dad said I am not allowed to draw it this close to the village because of what happened last time." Colton ran his hand through his brown locks. A sheepish smile spread across his face.

Colton, Elena and Lenore's cousin, is the oldest son of Justice and Nita. They had six children together, but the other ve were staying in Elysium while their parents were away. Last time they played capture the ag, Colton destroyed two barns and a whole crop when he sneezed while wielding his sword. After that, their parents had put rules on their game play. Even though Justice was the descendant of a werebear, and Nita was a werebear, none of their children could shift. Instead, they all had powerful swords that manifested at their will.

Ashton was also their cousin, the youngest son to Jasper and Terra. He and his brother, Joel, were vampire/demon hybrids. Despite not being pure blooded, they were loved in the vampire community, and becoming quite the lady's men.

"Even if you guys would have used your powers, we still would have won. We won the last three times." Lenore smiled sweetly before sticking her tongue out at them.

Lenore was the sweetheart of the vampire kingdom. Both sisters were fairy and vampire princesses. Their grandparents on their mother's side were the Alpha King and Queen of the werewolves. So in a way, they were important to the werewolves too, but not like they were to the vampires and fairies. The girls were special hybrids that still retained the vampire's pure bloodline. They both could do spells at a certain level too. This came from their grandmother, Freya. Neither Lenore nor Elena had shifted yet, but they did have wolves, Yin and Yang, the blessed wolves of balance. The two wolves' mental presence drifted between the two women, but they had not yet chosen their master. Their fate hung with their wolves. Yin is the wolf destined to remain on the earth when destruction comes, and Yang is meant to be sealed in Elysium. They will belong to the immortal women and will be vital to one day restoring the two worlds together.

Lenore and Elena were fairy princesses, but neither one was THE fairy princess. That honor went to their cousin, Kendra. She was the key between the two girls. She had the power of black and white lightning, and was the most powerful fairy princess to ever exist. The three of them had to bear the weight of a power they didn't understand. They just knew that when the time came, the three of them would have to pull the worlds together. If they failed, Elysium would be cut off from the world forever.

Lenore and Elena were the vampire's direct royalty. One of them would become their crowned princess, the one meant to rule over the vampires. This was a different process for this species, though. Vampires didn't hand the right to rule over quickly. They were immortal, and this was something they could choose to do or never do. As such, their parents, Derek and Lucy, were still next in line for the throne. Their grandparents, Alaric and Willa, continued to rule with no inclination to hand over the throne any time soon.

Just like Alaric and his brother, Jester, only one of the twins would be crowned princess. The vampires wanted it to be Lenore. She was beautiful, with her bright blonde hair and pale green eyes. She was also very kind, and was a rare lightbender. She could manipulate light and energy. When the world fell into destruction, she would likely be the one who would live in Elysium. It would make sense for Yang to choose her.

Elena was beautiful as well. She had black hair and rich brown eyes. She was what they called a darkbender. She was able to manipulate the darkness, and the shadows whispered to her. She was opinionated, and once lost control of her shadows. It was when her guardian, Aba, was insulted. A guardian is someone that was chosen by fairy magic to protect the fairy princess. Traditionally, the guardian was a werebear shifter, though that wasn't always the case. Aba could shift into a werebear, but he had the heart of a demon. He was a monstrous bear, the second largest guardian bear that had ever existed. The only one larger was Micah, the primordial werebear. Aba's color was very unique. He was half black and half white. Not like a panda bear, though. It was like half of his body was a polar bear, and the other half a black grizzly. He was terrifying but beautiful.

No one was allowed to say anything negative about Aba. Elena wouldn't tolerate it. Not only was he her guardian, but she secretly had a crush on him. Well, it wasn't a complete secret, since Lenore knew.

Ever since she lost control, and she choked another vampire with her shadows, she became the black sheep of the kingdom. Unless she was around Lenore, the others avoided her. Even her grandparents heavily favored Lenore, though her parents never showed favoritism. Neither did her werewolf grandparents, who she missed a lot. Her grandmother, Freya, never thought she was dark and moody.

Aba was the personication of dark and moody, but he was kind and protective of the twins. He moved to Elysium shortly after the twins were born. He had horrible outbursts and nightmares. His past life haunted him, and it became a heavy burden on him. He planned to stay in Elysium until he had it all under control, but when Elena was sixteen, she injured a noble vampire with her shadows for insulting Aba. After that, she cried for him to move back to the kingdom with them. She insisted she needed him to help her control herself. So he moved back, but he still visited Elysium often. Rumors sparked as to the reason behind this, a reason Elena couldn't listen to because it hurt.

"With your parents gone, you two will have to hold a presence at the banquet tonight." Ashton smirked, listening to them moan in protest.

Lucy and Derek, the prince and princess of the vampires and the fairies, had gone on a vacation of sorts. It was a time of peace, and some of their family decided to embrace it. They had gathered together to explore the world. One day, the world would be doomed for darkness and destruction, and before that happened, they all wanted to see it. That was where Justice and Nita were, too.

"Will Aba be back by then?" Colton asked, listening to Ashton chuckle.

"Aba is busy covering Beryl, if you know what I'm sayin'."

"Don't say that." Lenore glanced over at Elena before clicking her tongue. "Those are just rumors. We don't know that to be fact—"

Colton let out an airy laugh. "Well, according to my brothers and sisters, Aba spends most of his time there alone with her. You tell me what that means."

"It means Beryl and Aba are good friends." Lenore snorted, as a tiny creature appeared on her shoulder. It was a fairy bear named Misha. Misha is Lenore's pally, or familiar. Lenore did not get a guardian like Elena did. Instead, she got Misha. She was a creature who could go undetected, completely invisible. However, even though she was little, she was extremely powerful and could enhance Lenore's powers.

She had sheer fairy wings with light blue fur, tiny paws and a pink bear nose. But her mouth wasn't like a bear snout, and she could talk when she wanted to. Misha was often quiet around others. She talked more when they were alone, though sometimes her inappropriate self would come out. But she was loyal and never left Lenore's side. Fairy magic had a life and will of its own. Misha was proof of this will, though no one quite knew what it meant.

"Speaking of friends, what happened to Champagne girl?" Elena said, changing the topic off of Aba. She was beginning to feel anxious over the idea. What if there was truth to it? Aba was her guardian. He belonged to her, and she didn't want to share him with anyone else. She knew it was wrong to feel that way. But if he ended up with Beryl, she wasn't sure she could take seeing them together. It wasn't that she didn't like Beryl. She did. They all did. Beryl was her great aunt's adopted child. She was given another chance at life, and her soul was placed into an infant. In her past life, she was cruel and evil. She made the twins' parents' lives a living hell.

While Beryl did have memories of her past, she didn't talk about them. Instead, she did her best to t into their family. She was an exquisite beauty, with dark hair and rich, copper-toned skin. She couldn't blame anyone for wanting Beryl attractive. She was gorgeous, and Elena loved her, but that didn't mean she needed to share Aba with her.

"Champagne girl wasn't interested in me. She wanted Joel. Of course, Joel turned her down at because she mocked our mixed blood years ago. Now that we became these walking pheromone stud muns, they all want a bite." Ashton winked, making Elena and Lenore roll their eyes. "You know how it is."

"You mean Lenore knows how it is. I hardly know how it is. Everyone is afraid I'm going to attack them with my killer shadows. Who is the next one to be choked?"

"Someone out there has a fetish that only you can satisfy. You just need to meet that man who says, 'choke me as you bounce on me.'" Colton laughed as Elena playfully shoved him. "I bet Bernard could go for that."

Bernard was a kelpie who loved Elena. He was a true friend to her, though he wanted more than she was willing to give. Her heart was set on Aba. She felt like her focus had been on Aba for most of her twenty-two years on the earth. He either didn't notice or refused to acknowledge it. Bernard became a constant in her life. A good friend and shoulder to cry on. The dark fairies embraced her, while the vampires did not.

"Bernie is just a good friend." Elena watched as Ashton shrugged.

"Friends can have benets. Even Lenore has had some of those—" Colton jumped out of the way of Lenore's hand.

"Hey! Stay out of my private life. It's not like you have kept yourself all wholesome for your mate." Lenore watched as a cheesy grin spread across his face.

"Touché."

Unlike everyone else, Elena was too hung up on Aba to have intimate friends. Though, if she ever did, it would have to be with one of the dark fairies. Even being vampire royalty, there wasn't a vampire who would sleep with her. The only ones who were kind to her were family. Among vampires, it wasn't unheard of for relatives to mate with each other. It was a way to keep pure blood strong. However, that was a big 'hell no' as far as she was concerned.

"Elena, should I tie the red ribbon in my hair tonight?" Lenore grinned as she grabbed the ribbon, they were using as a ag.

"Oh." Colton raised his hand up to his chest and opened his mouth in disgust. "Now you are just being cruel. Well, I can be cruel too. Just wait until I show everyone the video I took of you snoring."

"Of course, then we have to tell everyone about that weird fungus you have that won't go away." Elena looked at Lenore, who smirked.

"I don't have a weird fungus!"

"Maybe not, but I bet no one will go near you tonight after hearing such a rumor." Lenore smiled, biting her lower lip.

"You two are evil." Ashton laughed, shaking his head. "I'm the one who has demon blood in him, but you two are way more vindictive than me."

"Hey, my grandma is a demon, and there isn't an evil bone in her body. Unless you're stealing her chocolate." Colton laughed. "It's the same with my Uncle Harley and cousins. Those of us with demon blood aren't as scary as these two princesses right here."

"You know, I think the fairies are actually the ones who are evil. They are spreading rumors about demons to get the heat off of them." Ashton grinned, winking at Elena and Lenore.

"You know Lena, it's their loss," Lenore said, circling back to what she said about everyone being afraid. Elena tried to act like it didn't bother her, but she knew it did. It made her feel lonely. The truth is that Elena had a better heart than she did. She loved her family and was loyal to a fault. What happened with her shadows was in defense of Aba, because she was a true friend and never fake.

"Who needs them?"

Lenore grabbed her sister's hand as they walked back towards their home. She wished she was more like Elena. Unlike her sister, Lenore pretended to love everyone. But she didn't. She couldn't. Even the men she played around and experimented with meant nothing to her. None of them ever could because of how they viewed her sister. She played her part and that was it. No one came before Elena.

The bond between the two sisters was strong, just like it needed to be. A bond that would transcend parallel worlds. Neither of them talked about it, but knowing they would be separated was killing them both. It wasn't like being apart for a few years. They wouldn't see one another for over a hundred years. Would they be able to communicate? They didn't know. No one did. How were they going to live without seeing each other all the time?

What was asked of them was unfair. Yes, they had a choice. They could refuse to separate, thus dooming the world while they lived their lives in paradise. But it was a decision neither one of them could ever make. Regardless of how much they wanted to be selsh, they couldn't do it.

Lenore and Elena walked in silence, their hands tightly clasped together.

"Guess it's time to put on the fake faces," Lenore said, bumping into Elena's side.

"You guys put on the fake faces. I'll stuff mine with food." Colton beamed as he turned around, walking backwards.

"So who won?"

They looked up to see Joel walking up to them with a crooked smile resting on his face. He watched as Lenore waved the red ribbon and he chuckled, shaking his head. "Aren't you two getting tired of losing?"

"We are only losers if we give up. Eventually, they'll refuse to play, and that will make us the winners!" Ashton stretched his arms above his head.

"I guess we see how he gets his dates. He is so persistent that they eventually give in." Joel looked his brother in his arm, rubbing his head.

"Get off me, you punk!" Ashton shoved Joel as he eyed him.

"You didn't go with Aba this time?" Ashton asked, running his hand through his hair to tame it down.

"Nope. Because of this banquet thing, I had to stay here."

"So are you ever going to tell us?" Colton asked as Joel arched his brows up at him. "Come on, you have some sugar over there, don't you? You sweet on someone?"

"What year is this? No wonder you don't have a girlfriend."

"Deecting! I'm going to ignore your cruel words on account that you are avoiding the question!" Colton looked over at Ashton. "You agree, right?"

"I've been suspicious about it."

"Who cares. Really? When he's ready to tell you, he will. Until then, quit being jealous." Misha's sweet, tiny voice chirped out. She didn't talk often around others, but when she did, it was on point.

"Quiet, tiny tot. I've icked boogers bigger than you." Colten snorted.

"Flicked? You mean eaten," Misha snapped back.

"That wasn't beary nice." Colton beamed, proud of his lame joke.

"Yeah, don't make us squisha the Misha." Ashton added as the two men laughed.

"That's why I visit Elysium so often." Joel looked at Elena and Lenore as he shook his head.

"Jewel here thinks he is too good for us." Colton cracked his knuckles looking at him.

A dark chuckle escaped from Joel's lips as he glared at Colton. "Is that a challenge?"

"One that can wait until tomorrow," Elena said, grabbing onto Colton's arm.

"Right, because you are only going to get us in trouble." Lenore said, grabbing Joel's hand.

Suddenly, a pale banshee appeared in front of them, her hair tossing wildly in the breeze. She was Mira the banshee, who was a loyal, bound servant to the vampire royalty. The King and Queen request for you to get ready immediately. There are visitors coming for today's banquet."

"Thank you, Mira. We are on our way," Lenore replied politely as she shot Elena a side glance.

"Guests—" Elena hissed out, not hiding her annoyance. "Looks like they are trying really hard to nd us mates."

"We can manage to play the part for one evening." Lenore gave her sister a weak smile.

"Just link me if you need to escape. I'll run interference." Colton offered bravely. Unlike Ashton and Joel, he didn't have to worry abouttribution from the Vampire King and Queen. He wasn't related to them. As far as he was concerned, his job was protecting Elena and Lenore, even from potential anocs.

"Thanks, Colt." Elena squeezed his arm gently. "Most likely they have already heard rumors about me, so it will be Lenore that will need the protection. Sorry, sis."

You will pay me back later, when we sneak into the catacombs. Lenore smirked at her sister, who glared back at her.

And they think I am the bad influence. If they get caught exploring forbidden zones, they will instantly blame Elena. It would be worse now, without their parents there to defend them. However, they were both intrigued and curious. Why were the catacombs off-limits? What exactly was down there? Their mother was always one step ahead of them, but since she wasn't here, this would be the perfect time to explore.