

## Chapter 23 Game of the Gods

Everett stood motionless as a pulsating purple light emanated from his star, casting an otherworldly glow around him. Three of the dragons cowered in fear, taking a cautionary step back as they sensed the immense power emanating from him. But the golden dragon refused to back down, snarling at Everett with unbridled defiance. Until suddenly, a beacon of purple light shot down from the sky, engulfing him and unleashing a devastating force that made the ground tremble.

Elena watched from the tree line, her heart pounding against her chest. She watched as the golden dragon writhed in agony, its powerful form succumbing to the overwhelming force of the purple light. At last, the majestic dragon lowered his head in surrender and the violet onslaught ceased instantly.

"You are welcome to stay in this place, but remember who the ruler is here."

The golden dragon straightened up, his amber eyes focused on Everett. Then what he did next shocked her. He spoke! She thought they had lost

their ability to speak.

"Our deity has forsaken us. We will live here, under your rule." The golden dragon growled before flapping his magnificent wings. Large gusts of wind raced through the meadow as the four dragons took to the skies.

"Glad that's over," Uno whispered as he hovered above Elena. He quietly followed her as she moved from the trees.

Elena walked out of the forest, heading towards Everett. "Is he talking about Uncle Levi?"

"The dragon deity is now the fairy king of Elysium. They're just oversensitive about it. They felt like they should have been given Alexis, but instead, she's next in line to take the fairy throne. And now they want Kendra—"

"For someone who is stuck here, you sure know a lot about my family." Elena looked at him curiously. How did he know about all of them? He turned his head to her and flashed her a brilliant smile.

"I know all of you. I know your stories and I know your family history better than you do." His smile soon faded as he looked up at the sky. "But none of you know me. Though a few know of me... it

isn't the same."

Elena understood the blank look on his face. A guarded expression that was meant to hide the pain he really felt.

"Can you really not leave this place?" Elena asked quietly.

"If I leave this place for too long, the magic will cease to exist. Someone has to protect this place and the creatures who live here."

"I thought you were a protector, but I heard you say, 'Don't forget who the ruler is here.'" Elena watched his stone expression. "You are the ruler here. If this place is like Elysium, then are you Niaden's king... a fairy king?" In Elysium, the queen was the one with all the power. Was this the reversal, with the king holding the power? But he mentioned the the fairy queen wasn't stronger than him. So what was he? The power he showed against the dragons was impressive, and he didn't even break a sweat. He was stronger than the fairy queens, maybe even stronger than Alexis. Though Kendra could give him a run for his money. So what was he, a demigod?

"I—I think it is best not to tell you more about me."

"Are you the only person here?" she asked,

watching his face light up in amusement.

"Are you trying to get me to accidentally spill something about myself?" He chuckled. "I'm the only one here that takes a human form. Well, besides you for this brief moment."

"Could I decide to stay here if I wanted?"

His eyes narrowed on her for a second before he started to walk away. "But you don't," he replied quietly. "And you can't, because this isn't part of your destiny."

"Is it Kendra's?"

"I don't know if anyone else is meant to live here. Yes, someone could stay here, even you. But you wouldn't see your family again. You couldn't leave unless you planned to never return."

"This is another realm. Sort of what will happen with Elysium. If we are able to connect Elysium to the world again, then maybe we can connect with Niaden too."

"Those are a lot of maybes and ifs. Something that is dangerous to think about. An unattainable hope can be dangerous to cling to. It's best, especially for me, to stick with what I know, and that is that this place is it for me. I'm going to

remain here and alone for eternity."

Elena walked behind him, feeling the weight of his words. She couldn't stay there with him. She had to get back to her family. They needed her. Yet, her heart ached for him. He was essentially trapped here, and there was no way to find him again. She had come to this world by a stroke of luck, and he probably rarely saw others. And no one stayed there with him.

"I won't forget about you, Everett. I'm going to learn about this place. I want the answers you won't give me, and I'm going to find a way to connect to this realm."

"Some places are not meant to be connected to others. It's how it's kept safe. It's okay, Elena. I appreciate your compassion, but I'll be okay. In any case, it was nice to actually meet you." He gave her a warm smile, pausing near the bushes.

"I wish I could stay longer and really visit. My family is in trouble and I have to save them."

Everett stared at her before looking to the side. "That is not your grandfather."

"What?"

"That is the old vampire king of the past, Vladimir.

Your grandfather's soul has been removed from his body. It's being stored inside of a crystal. Vladimir wants to use you and your sister for—breeding purposes.”

“No, wait a minute. When? How? He was trying to get me to take a vampire as a mate.” She shook her head as her mind raced over the past events. “And even if what you’re saying is true, he’s my relative!”

“It was all a coverup, Elena, so that he could use you without others knowing the truth. He doesn’t care that he’s related to you and your sister. He just wants to create a super species, no matter what. I’m only telling you this so that you proceed with caution. If he gets a hold of you—you might want to think about getting some help with this one.”

“I need to get to my sister first. I have to find Aba and Bernard—” She watched as he avoided eye contact with her.

“They are okay right?”

“I think you already know the answer to this question, don’t you? I’m sorry. I could see it happening, but I couldn’t stop it. It’s like watching a movie in a sense. Your guardian did everything he could—”

"Bernie is dead... Aba—" Elena whimpered as the tears trickled down her cheeks.

"He's okay and looking for you now. I'm sorry about your friend. His death is not your fault."

Elena felt his large hand come to rest on the top of her head. His eyes softened as he looked at her. "We need someone to blame and take our frustration out on. Often we do this to ourselves or the closest person next to us. But that isn't where the blame lies."

"But if I wouldn't have asked him to—"

"You can't, Elena. This isn't helpful. I know it hurts, but right now you don't have time to grieve, do you? You have something else you need to focus on... like your family that's trapped under the royal bedroom." He leaned up and cleared his throat. "I never told you that, though." He gave her a small wink. It would be difficult for them to find their relatives, especially in a location that no one knew existed. It was a small bit of information, but helpful nonetheless.

Elena stood tall, her body trembling with a mix of grief and rage. She fiercely wiped away tears with the back of her hand, her knuckles turning white from the force. The news that her family was imprisoned ignited a blazing inferno inside of her,

overpowering any trace of sadness. With determined fury, she pushed forward, knowing she would mourn for her friend later, after she had rescued her family.

She reached out and grasped Everett's hand, a gentle handshake as she stared into his plum-colored eyes.

"I will see you again. This isn't goodbye."

Everett smiled and nodded his head. "Maybe... I guess we'll see. Go through those bushes. It leads back to earth." He looked down at Uno. "Take care of her, little one."

"Of course!" Uno fluttered his wings and lifted in the air, landing on Elena's shoulder.

Everett watched as Elena stepped towards the bushes. She turned her head, smiling at him before she vanished. He slowly took in a deep breath before he walked back to the lake. This is how it always was. No one ever stayed.

He reached the cool waters of the lake and leaned over to look at the water. The reflection of the sky began to ripple, until now it showed Elena moving through heavy brush. Next, the image shifted to Lucy, who was still trapped under the royal chambers. The group had regained their ability to

walk and stand, but it would still be some time before they could reach full strength.

"Everett." A baritone voice called from behind him. "You chose to stay again?"

"I will protect this place. I won't abandon it." Everett's voice turned cold as he turned to look at Endymion.

"Will you leave if this place is given a new protector? Or will you stay and protect this place with them?"

"Maybe it's my job to protect another from this fate," Everett said quietly as the image on the lake shifted to a beautiful, young, blonde woman. "She shouldn't be trapped here. She belongs with her family."

"Hmm, I'm not sure about that. I think she belongs here more than you do. And, as a descendent of the dragon deity, she can command all of the creatures here. Unlike you, who has to assert his dominance."

"I'm doing just fine. It's better this way. I can endure it," Everett whispered as he watched the woman laughing with her family. She shouldn't live in a place like this. One where she would be trapped away from those she loved.

"It will be interesting," Endymion said slyly as he moved closer to the lake.

"What will?"

"To see how they decide to move forward. To see what Kendra will decide. After all, it is her decision. This place... her destiny."

"You plan to use her." Everett turned his dark, plum eyes on Endymion, who lifted his hands up in innocence.

"I'm not using anyone."

"What has Selene seen?"

Endymion smiled, turning his attention back to the vision on the lake. "A lot. She has seen... a lot." He sighed and then stepped away. "Just like I don't make you stay here, I also won't make anyone else. The decision has always been yours."

"I won't let this become someone else's burden. Endymion, this is my world."

"Well, good. I am glad that's settled." He hummed with a strange smile on his face.

"What's settled?"

"That you'll be staying here, with Kendra."

"Now wait a minute—"

"After the war, Niaden will connect with the earth again through the power of the key. There will be two fairy kingdoms. These are the steps we have been preparing for a long time. The best way to balance the dark is to add more light. And with Lenore mated to the demon prince, the world will be put into checkmate. We just have to wait a bit longer. Once Marcus is destroyed, everything will take its rightful place."

"Then just go! Destroy him then!" Everett growled. "Instead, you play these damn games with everyone's lives. And don't give me this balance s\*\*t. You gods have created a sick game of your own. It's what you do with eternity. This whole black hole is the gods' doing. The whole balance game is the gods' game. It's how you all keep yourselves amused. You created this game and the rules. Now you try to manipulate it without breaking them. But Marcus is onto your game—"

"You know, Everett, you need to work on your communication skills." Endymion clicked his tongue. "The way you speak makes it seem like you're accusing me of something disgusting, and I know you wouldn't be stupid enough to make such a grotesque accusation. Let's hope you don't treat the princess this way when she arrives. After all,

she is strong enough to fight as your equal." He winked at Everett before he vanished from his sight.

Everett curled his lips angrily as he gritted his teeth. These damn gods. Everything was a game to them. They were playing a role-playing game, but with people's lives, using their made-up rules and laws to guide them. He turned back to the lake and looked at Kendra.

He had to protect her from the game she didn't realize she was in. If she found Niaden, he would make sure she left. He didn't want her to live the same fate that he had. No one deserved that.



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