

# Design of Fate

## Chapter 4

### JACKSON

The men's heads snapped towards me, so she took that opportunity to slice the guy that was right next to her and move backwards further away from them all.

Her eyes met mine and widened. Then they turned back to the three bastards around her, focusing on the immediate threat.

We quickly slid down the slope. I shot forward the moment that my feet hit the ground. Adrenaline pumped through my veins, propelling me towards the bastard who dared to utter a single word to my mate.

His attention was solely on me, which was good because I would make sure that he learned the painful consequences that anyone who tried to hurt her would learn. It did not matter that I did not even know her name. It did not matter that I had not even gotten a good look at her yet. The moment that I realized she was mine was the moment that I had vowed to protect her as such.

He was faster than me because of his vampire abilities, but that did not mean he was superior. If Brynn had taught me anything then it was that everyone had a weakness or disadvantage. Acknowledging that was the first step. The second was figuring out how to counter it to create a balance. My weapon was the counter, and I was very thankful that she had brought it with us.

The bastard's body propelled forward. His arm was thrown at me, fist aiming for my face. I ducked underneath it just in time for it to miss me and used my current position to bring my staff against his leg. The blade sliced into him like cutting through softened butter.

'Ouch. Sounded like that hurt him if his prepubescent girly scream was any indication,' Zeus said snorting.

I would have to agree with my wolf on that one for certain.

My body jumped backwards, giving me enough room to get my staff into proper rotation. The reason that I chose this as my weapon to specialize in was because of its versatility. It did not matter which end hit your opponent because both would do equal damage. Once you got it into rotation, it became a spinning wheel of doom. If you wanted two weapons, then you could unfasten them, giving you dual blades.

He tried to evade the blades, but he had not been paying attention to the tree that was getting closer behind him. The blade cut across his cheek, causing him to jump backwards to put greater space between us, but his back hit the tree.

“You probably should have left while you were still ahead,” I taunted him. “Don’t worry because the place where you’re going won’t require you to breathe,” I said with a sinister smile on my lips.

Before he could even comprehend what was going to happen, my arm swiped the blade clean through his neck. I watched as his head hit the ground seconds before his body joined it.

“That’s for trying to hurt my mate,” I said, spitting on his corpse.

I heard a pained cry from a female. It did not sound like ours, so it had to be my mystery mate. I turned towards the fight and saw Brynn’s aura holding one in place while Theo ripped his heart out of his body.

Dustin and Maya were both attacking the other with relentless precision.

Two of our warriors were applying pressure to their wounds. Another warrior was standing guard over my mate who was laying on the ground. I told the warrior to aid Dustin and Maya, wanting to destroy the bastard as quickly as possible.

I rushed over to my mate and knelt down beside her. Goddess, she was beautiful. I would definitely take more notice of that fact later because I needed to figure out where she was wounded. I could smell blood on her. The back of her head felt wet, so that was where the blood was coming from.

Brynn knelt down next to me and opened her backpack. She pulled out a rolled-up blanket to put under my mate’s head. Then she pulled out blood bags.

“You knew she was a vampire?” I asked her curiously.

“No. Mira was the one who told me that I needed to bring blood with me. So, I put two and two together.”

Gotta’ love my niece. The girl had powerful insight. For her to have such a strong gift so early in life was a testament to how strong she would become. This was the base that she would only rise from.

I ripped the valve open and placed it against her lips. She did not immediately respond. It took about ten seconds for her eyes to shoot open. There was so much confusion and fear in her hazel eyes that it tugged at me.

“You’re safe now. Drink so that you can heal easier,” I encouraged her.

Those eyes were the same ones that I had seen in my dream on the drive earlier. Goddess, they were incredibly gorgeous. I did not want her to fear me, but I could understand how she must be feeling right now. She just fought for her life, incredibly mind you, and now she was surrounded by strangers. I would be afraid too under those circumstances.

Hesitantly, she began pulling from the bag. Her eyes never left mine, so mine did not move either.

Did I ever imagine having a mate that was not a shifter? Not once in my entire life.

Did I care that she was a vampire? Nope. Not at all. Valis' coven showed us the truth about vampires. They, just like any species, were neither good nor bad by default. Circumstances, choices, and consequences factored into the type of person that they became.

She was the one that the Goddess chose for us, and that made her perfect. Dante and Byron never once wished for anyone other than Ziyah.

'Do you think that she'll mind that we're not a vampire?' Zeus asked softly, worried about the answer to that.

'I can't say for sure. I just pray that she'll give us a chance.'

I saw some color coming back to her as she fed. It highlighted the splattering of freckles underneath her eyes and over the bridge of her nose. Her chocolate brown hair was mussed up from the fight, but it looked like its texture was wavy.

She licked her lips once she finished the blood bag. My eyes tracked that movement, and my dick throbbed, but I pushed my desire aside. This was definitely not the time nor place for those thoughts.

"Would you like another?" I asked her.

Her bottom lip was wedged between her teeth as she contemplated that answer. It was almost as if she was worried about saying yes, so I grabbed another and offered it to her.

Pink blossomed on her cheeks as she thanked me. Goddess, her blush highlighted her beauty that much more.

My mate took the blood bag and sat up, touching the back of her head, and wincing. It must have been a nasty hit. Her head somehow managed to land directly onto a large rock. Yup. That would do it.

I pulled one leg up and rested my arm on its knee, getting more comfortable. Every cell in my body felt energized right now.

Her eyes shifted from person to person. She looked equal parts curious and wary. So, I decided to hopefully put her at ease.

"My name's Jackson," I told her. "And we mean you no harm. I swear that you're safe with us. My sister-in-law," I said, pointing to Brynn, "can explain how we came to be here because she had kept us all in the dark."

Brynn just flipped me off, which made my mate smirk a little before she started drinking. It was enticing to watch her throat swallow it down, bringing to mind what else she could be swallowing.

‘Wow. Already a horny fucker, and you don’t even know her name,’ Zeus chided me.

‘Tell me that you weren’t having similar thoughts, and I’ll know that you’re lying your ass off.’

He just chuckled because he definitely was. Could you blame us though? Now, I fully understood why Theo would always get so distracted with Brynn. The mate-bond was a powerful force once it snapped into place. It was something that you really could not fully comprehend until you experienced it. Unmated shifters always felt that it was a copout that people said, but I completely understood that now.

“I had a vision of you a couple of weeks back, but I didn’t see anything that I could identify. About three this morning, I had another one that placed you here at this time. I saw snippets of the fight. We left immediately and drove seven hours to get here. Thankfully, we arrived just in time,” she explained.

Brynn had a vision about my mate weeks ago but did not say anything. Did she know that this was my mate during that vision? The apology in her eyes told me the answer.

‘I’m sorry. I knew that if I told you about your mate, without having any way to identify where she was, that you would be running yourself into the ground,’ she apologized.

I could understand her reasoning, and she was definitely right. It would have killed Zeus and I with worry.

‘It’s okay. No hard feelings,’ I promised her.

A yipping sound caught our attention, and a beautiful grey wolf pup bounded over towards my mate. By wolf pup, I meant literal wolf pup instead of shifter wolf pup. She jumped onto my mate’s lap and yipped at her, making her smile. Goddess almighty. Her smile was gorgeous.

“Where did you find this little one?” I asked.

“She actually found me yesterday in the middle of the night. Isn’t that right, Sadi?” A little yip came in response. “I was sleeping in a cave and woke up to her licking my face. She had been injured, so I healed her. I didn’t see her pack when we left, so I decided to keep her with me because it would be too dangerous for her to be alone,” she explained softly, smiling down at the pup.

Sleeping in a cave.

She was sleeping in a cave.

It seemed like my entire mind was so focused on that because I was unable to figure out the why to that. However, I did not want to be rude or insensitive. She could open up if she wanted to, but that would be in her own time and her own decision.

“Sadi is a brave little pup,” I said instead. “Does Sadi’s companion have a name?” I asked with a teasing smile.

Her eyes swept my face, taking in my features. I would be honest and say that it felt pretty damn good to see her hazel eyes darkening from what she saw.

She cleared her throat and moved her gaze from my lips to the safe zone of my eyes.

“Imeela.”

Imeela. I had never met anyone with that name. It sounded like a prayer. Her name was just as beautiful as her.

I heard Theo telling everyone to help collect the bodies so that we could burn them but to check for any personal items.

Thankfully, everyone left us alone. I saw her let out a small sigh of relief. Right there with you, mate. It was still surreal to be sitting next to the person who was created for me, had the other half of my soul, and the one that the Goddess was gracious enough to fate to me.

“Imeela, do you know what I am to you?” I asked, unsure how the bonding worked within her species.

She sat cross-legged and nodded her head. Her hand was petting Sadi, and I could tell that it was her way of staying in control right now. It was something that Brynn had been teaching me when it came to the work that she did with the trauma victims that she worked with.

“We are bonded. I can tell that you’re not a vampire but a wolf shifter. Vampires have mates just like with many supernatural species. They are either fated or chosen, but the result is the same. They become beloveds. My parents were also fated to one another. I honestly didn’t know it was possible to be fated to someone outside of one’s species,” she said, blushing, and looking away from me.

At least she was not running for the hills. That was progress that I would gladly accept.

I liked the term ‘beloved’ because it seemed much more intimate than ‘mate’ did.

“I have a good friend who is a shifter and was fated to Light Fae. I also know quite a few humans who have been fated to shifters. One thing that we believe is that there is always a purpose to the pairing, that they are mated for a reason.”

Her eyes found mine once again, and there was curiosity in them. Her head tilted to the side as she thought about that information. I had never heard of a vampire and shifter, but I was certain that it had to have happened before. Even if we were the first pairing, it was that way for a reason.

“I don’t know much about shifters, but I do know that you have a wolf spirit inside of you, a second consciousness. He wouldn’t have anyone. That’s hardly fair. Why would the hands of fate do that?” she asked, shaking her head.

Zeus pushed forward, his blue shimmers signifying his presence. He was excited to be able to see her and talk to her now. This experience was just as surreal to him as it was to me.

“I’m Zeus, Jackson’s wolf.” He smiled at her, which she shyly returned. “I would have someone. I would have you. We’ve known many people who are fated to someone without a wolf. They all had to find what worked best for their mateship, but I promise you that we would figure something out. I don’t care that you don’t have a wolf. I wouldn’t want you any other way than the way that you are.”

She bit her lip as she tried to force her blush away, but there was no stopping it. Zeus’ words brought a deep blush to her face. It was very noticeable against her beige skin tone.

Who knew that Zeus was so smooth talking? A regular Cassanova wolf. He snorted at the description.

“We should probably head out. The mouthy bastard that you killed had sent a confirmation message about finding the trail,” Brynn said to me.

Imeela’s body tensed up with Brynn’s words. Did she think that we would leave her, or was she worried about the message? Or did she not want to come with us? Fuck. I hoped it was one of the former two options instead of the latter.

Now that I had met her, I would not be able to walk away. If she decided to leave instead of returning to the pack with us, I would just have to find a way to convince her.

“Our pack, the Dark Moon pack, is a safe place. Please say that you’ll come with us.” My voice might have held a note of pleading, but I did not fucking care.

She seemed taken aback by my request as if she truly thought we would just leave her to fend for herself. Granted, she seemed to be very adept at doing so, but I did not want her to be in a situation like she had been in today.

Anyone could see the internal struggle that was going on inside of her. I had no idea what her life was like or if she was truly alone in the world except for Sadi. Hell, she mentioned that she slept in a cave last night. Just imagining that made my heart clench.

I grew up with a loving family, a roof over my head, and all the food I could ever need. I had so many opportunities that I always had places to go and things to do.

Struggling – what was that? Had I ever truly struggled in my life?

Goddess, now that I was thinking about it, I realized how blessed my life had truly been. We had always helped those who needed it because that was the right thing to do, but I never lived the lives that those who needed help were forced to endure.

Here was my mate who obviously knew what a hard life was like. It did not matter if it was recent or long-term. The truth remained the same. It would be difficult.

“Our pack is like a family. I swear to you that you’ll be safe there with us. Just come and see what Dark Moon is all about. It would be our honor if you’d come back with us. You’re in control, and nobody will push you to do something that you’re not comfortable with. What do you say? Will you at least give it a chance?” Brynn asked her calmly, giving her that smile that could melt an iceberg.

Brynn had a calmness about her. She always had it, even when she was younger.

I remembered when she started working alongside my mother. She was around twelve at the time and asked my mother what she could do within the pack to help it. That simple question brought pride into my mother’s heart because there was this pup that did not even have her wolf yet but wanted to help our pack flourish. That was when my mother took her underneath her wing and helped her find ways in which she could help and support our pack. Eventually, she touched nearly every sector of the pack.

The calmness right now, and the mention that Imeela was in control, seemed to have been the right words to use.

She looked around at everyone, her eyes lingered on mine the longest, before agreeing to come.

Zeus was prancing around in my head, metaphorically pumping his paw in the air. I had never seen my wolf more excited than he was right now. I could not blame him one bit because I was too. I felt like I could finally breathe, knowing that she would come back with us.

“I believe that it’s safest for us to stay at a hotel two towns over and head out tomorrow just in case anyone came to find these idiots. It’ll give us additional security,” Theo proposed.

Brynn looked at Imeela and asked if that was okay with her. It was easy to see that she was not used to either being around people or being able to make choices and give input. She just nodded.

I stood up and offered her a hand. She hesitantly grabbed it and gasped at the feeling of sparks where our skin touched.

Every shifter learned about the fated sparks between mates, but knowing about it did not equate to knowing how blissful it would feel. Only fated mates felt the sparks. That was why the sparks were considered the connection between our souls. No wonder mates were always making skin-to-skin contact one way or another.

“Thank you for your trust, Imeela,” I told her honestly.

I would love nothing more than to embrace her and feel her body against mine, but I did not want to push her or rush her. It would be in her own time, and I would be as patient as she needed.

“Thank you for coming today,” she said with a soft smile.

She walked over to where she had put her bag and slid her knife back into the little holster there. Then she put it on her back and picked up Sadi who had followed her.

I was glad that she had Sadi. You would have thought they had been together the entire life of the pup because that was how solid their connection was. It was amazing to see that this pup had befriended a vampire. It would take a very brave little one.

“I have a niece named Mira, and I wouldn’t be surprised if she immediately fell in love with Sadi. Also, that she will make her plenty of toys. She loves doing that for the animals that we have in the pack.”

I was attempting to set her mind at ease as much as possible by humanizing the pack. That way she would have that simple association when thinking about it rather than an intimidating shifter pack.

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