

Design of Fate

Chapter 6

JACKSON

Imeela. The name sounded like a prayer whether it was thought or uttered from my lips.

Imeela was the mate that I met two days ago when she was being attacked by a group of vampires. She had held her own very well until the time came when we were permitted to interfere.

Brynn had gotten me out of bed for a road trip but would not tell me where we were going. Luckily, she had the forethought to bring warriors with us. Then I came to find out that she had been having visions of my mate but did not tell me because she knew how hard it would be for me to hear about her but did not know where she was or if she was okay. And she had been right, so I would give her a pass on that.

Goddess, Imeela fought them like a lethal assassin. You could tell that she was an experienced fighter. Not only was she deadly, but she was fucking gorgeous too. The most intense hazel eyes, high cheekbones, and full lips. She was underweight from not getting enough food for whatever reason. I did not know why she was on the run, but I would let her open up to me in her own time about it.

Brynn had worked her charm and convinced her to come back here to Dark Moon and giving it a chance. I was thankful for her being able to convince Imeela to do so, but I was also worried about this not being what she wanted in life. I just needed to ensure that I supported whatever she needed. As much as I would love her to stay here, it was not something that I would ever force upon her. That did not mean I would sit idly by though. No. I would show her the type of mate I would be for her. The patient and supportive one who also valued her independence.

I gave her the choice to either use the extra bedroom in my suite or a guest room. Thankfully, she chose my suite. Well, our suite. However, she was extremely reserved, but I could not blame her. It was easy to see that her life had not been rainbows and sunshine.

She had woken up screaming from a nightmare this morning, and now she had been pacing in her room for the past two hours. I had no idea what she was going through, but that nightmare must have really unsettled her. The past two hours had been spent with me wracking my brain with how I might be able to help.

Finally, her door opened, and I could see that she had been crying. All I wanted to do was soothe and comfort her, but I also did not want to overstep any boundaries.

“Hey, Imeela,” I said, giving her a smile.

“Hey,” she said before her bottom lip was wedged between her teeth.

I did not need the bond to know that she was still in pain from earlier. Zeus was pacing back and forth, trying to think of a way to make her feel better without frightening her. He was considering just shifting and laying down so that she could hold him like she held Sadi. It was not a horrible idea, but I figured we could attempt other things first.

“What’s on your mind?” I asked her, hoping that she would open up.

She was quiet for a moment, trying to decide what to say. I might be her mate, but I was still a stranger. There was no telling what her life had been like, so I would give her all the time that she needed to speak comfortably. It was the least I could do for her.

“I...I can’t stay here,” she said quietly, lowering her eyes.

I felt my heart drop with those words. Just the thought of losing her after finding her, my one and only, my soulmate, was enough to make me want to cry. I did not cry easily, but this was something powerful enough to cause it.

“What do you mean exactly? Do you mean that you can’t stay in this suite or this pack?” I asked as calmly as possible.

I walked forward until I was directly in front of her and used a single finger to tilt her chin up so that I could look into those gorgeous eyes of hers. They were filled with conflict, pain, and tears.

“This pack. It’s too dangerous for your pack for me to be here. The vampires that you saved me from weren’t the first ones nor would they be the last to come after me. I can’t risk that,” she whispered, the pain evident in her voice.

My thumbs wiped away the tears that were falling. It was clear that she did not want to leave, but she thought that there was no choice except to go. I might not know her yet, but I could see her heart in that one sentiment. To protect a pack that she did not even know, she would return to life on the run. My selfless mate.

‘Jacksy, Elle had Caiathus bring Valis over to you. He’ll be knocking in just a moment. She wouldn’t tell me the reason, but I assume that it has to do with your mate,’ Brynn’s voice filtered through my mind.

There was a knock on the door not even two seconds after she finished speaking. I gave my mate a reassuring look and went to open the door.

Valis bowed his head to me and stepped into the suite. His expression froze in shock when he saw Imeela. I had interacted with him countless times, and I had never seen him look shocked before.

I looked over at her and saw nothing but complete and utter panic. It was not just seeing a stranger but seeing a vampire.

She ran into her room faster than even Theo could run before returning with a blade in her hand. That was the knife that she had used on the vampires that were attacking her. The one that did quick work killing them.

“Sadira?” he asked, voice riddled with confusion.

Imeela flinched when he said that name, and her eyes became like hazel glaciers.

“Wait...Imeela. Is that really you? How is this possible?” he asked, looking at me before turning his gaze back to her.

I was lost as fuck about what was going on right now. If Elle had sent him, and he knew who she was, there would be a connection here. What was that connection though? It did not seem that she was over the moon with whatever was going on because she simply looked murderous.

“Who are you? Did they send you? You’d have to kill me before I left with you. Just keep in mind that this blade is lethal to any vampire that isn’t me,” she said coldly.

Valis’ eyes widened as his hands raised up in the air, showing that he was not a threat.

She had said that those vampires had not been the first but would not be the last. How many vampires had come after her? How many did she have to fight and kill in order to survive? I was certainly beginning to understand her a little bit more now. Goddess, what all had she been through?

“Imeela, I mean you absolutely no harm. Sadira was my sister. I do not know if you remember me, but my name is Valis. We thought that you had died when the coven was attacked. If I had known that you survived, then I would have searched the entire earth for you. Word spread that the entire Precoza line was no more. Please believe me,” he pleaded with her.

She searched his face for any hint of deceit, but there was none. Slowly, she walked over to the counter and set the knife down.

Sadi bounded out of her bedroom and yipped at her. Imeela smiled softly and picked her up, cradling the pup in her arms. Her name made sense now. Sadi – Sadira.

Who was Sadira though? She had to have been someone very important for her to wince just by hearing the name.

“How did you escape? You were only ten at the time,” he said.

She was ten years old when she went on the run. Then she spent ten years running, hiding, and surviving until we found her. Fucking hell.

She was a fierce fucking warrior to have survived a decade under those circumstances. It made sense how she had been able to slice and dice those bastards.

“It’s a long story…” She looked towards me, debating with herself, and flicked her chin towards the living room. “Let’s take a seat,” she said with a sigh.

She sat down in the oversized chair, tucking her legs underneath her, and making sure that Sadi was comfortable. Valis and I sat down on the couch across from her.

This was not going to be an easy conversation to have for any of us. Of that, I was absolutely certain. However, I would listen to every detail because it was her story.

“The attack happened on my tenth birthday. They knew that it was the easiest way to infiltrate the palace where the Precozas and the coven would be. Dad forced my bodyguard, Emilio, to flee with me and ensured that Emilio understood that his responsibility was to keep me alive and that nobody ever found me.”

She paused and cleared her throat. I got up to grab some waters for us, giving her a second to gather her thoughts.

Fucking hell. This was just the beginning, and I could not even imagine how much pain my mate must have dealt with.

‘Did she say palace?’ Zeus asked me, cocking his head to the side.

‘Mhm. Not sure the context though, but I’m sure we’ll find out.’

She thanked me for the bottle of water. I did tell her that we also had alcohol if she ended up wanting any. I had no idea how alcohol affected vampires, but I assumed it was similar to shifters.

“Emilio was a good kid. His father left our coven when your mother did as her bodyguard. Estaban was an honorable man. He was just like another brother to Sadira,” Valis said with a warm smile.

Imeela nodded and returned his smile. Sadira was her mother, making Valis her uncle. I was now seeing the connection alright. I never would have imagined this turnout, but I understood why Elle sent him over here now.

“Luckily for us, I had begun training ever since I learned to walk. So, by the time that the massacre happened, I was able to assist Emilio as much as possible. We stayed hidden and kept moving, never remaining anywhere too long. The first bounty hunter found us a couple of months later. You know, Emilio never once complained about his duty. He practically had to raise me in very unfavorable circumstances, but he always smiled and told me that it was the highest honor to be chosen to protect me. We fought side by side for six years until he sacrificed himself for me. He took the blade that was meant for me. Luckily, I was able to kill the bastard who took him away. Then for the next four years, I was on my own. I steered clear of larger towns, always traveling in the sunlight, and left as little evidence of me as possible.”

She tried to hold the tears back, but some trickled down her cheeks.

I hopped up and grabbed a box of Kleenex and handed it to her. She looked embarrassed for crying, but there was nothing at all to be embarrassed about.

My head was spinning while it tried to wrap itself around what type of life my mate had been subjected to. When we found her, I had thought about the fact that I did not know what true suffering was. I had been absolutely fucking right about that because Imeela went through hell, and I could guarantee that this was not even the tip of the iceberg.

“I cannot even begin to imagine how difficult that was for both of you. You said the first bounty hunter. How many more came for you? Did you figure out what they wanted?” Valis asked her.

Her head cocked to the side, as she was in thought about his questions. She was gnawing on her lip for a minute before she looked at us both and sighed.

“I don’t know how many. Definitely upwards of a hundred over the years. We had always assumed that they were tasked with killing me so that there was no heir to the throne. However, I hid from one and overheard him on the phone saying that he had my trail and would find me to bring back to his boss. Luckily, Jackson ended up killing him when they intervened a group that was after me,” she explained, giving me an appreciative look.

Ah, so the bastard who lost his head was the one who wanted to abduct her. It was a damn good thing that he was nothing but ash right now. If he had succeeded in his mission then I never would have found her.

I could not imagine what life had been like for her all these years. Running, hiding, and fighting for her life.

“Oh, habibti,” Valis said softly. His eyes were filled with compassion as he looked at his niece.

She smiled at the Arabic term of endearment. That certainly explained his slight accent and the fact that her mother’s name was Sadira.

“Do you know how they were tracking you? I notice that you are hiding your aura, so I assume that you have been hiding it normally.”

I looked at her closely and immediately realized what he was talking about. There really was no aura. Vampire auras were based on age and rank. It was a good thing that she was able to conceal it because that definitely would be a calling card for anyone who was searching for her.

Imeela lifted an amulet over her head and handed it to Valis.

We both gasped with how strong her aura was. It was not her age that made it so potent, so it had to be her rank.

My mate looked sheepish when she saw me trying to work through it all. I did not really understand much about vampire ranks.

“My parents were Desmond and Sadira Precoza. The coven ruled over our kind. They were technically King and Queen, but they were very humble about it and taught their children to be the same way. I have to hide my aura because it denotes the fact that I’m an heir,” she explained sheepishly, as she put the amulet back on. “To answer your question, I’m not certain.”

I was at a loss for words. She was a Princess, the remaining heir of their royal coven.

I was a Beta, but that did not even compare one damn bit. The Goddess was selective in her pairings for a reason, but I was not certain what I could bring to this mateship.

‘That’s a load of bullshit if I ever heard one,’ Zeus huffed at me. ‘We have plenty to bring. Mates who will do everything to protect and provide for her. Supporting her and making sure that she is happy and loved. It’s an honor that the Goddess chose us out of everyone for this.’

My wolf had always been a voice of reason, so I was glad that he put it that way. He was right.

‘I love it when you acknowledge that I’m right,’ he said cockily.

“Our kind flourished underneath their leadership. Feeding rooms were outlawed, countless interspecies alliances were in place, and there was a community of growth. A lot of our coven’s practices were similar to theirs. Sadira was actually the one to promote blood donations. It had always been willing humans, but my sister helped them set up a massive program. As I am certain that you can guess, many vampires did not agree with the restrictions. They believed that our kind were above everyone else,” Valis explained with a frown.

Yes. I could definitely imagine that. It sucked that monsters destroyed something so pure and plentiful just so that they could bathe in their debauchery and live however they wanted.

I had heard how rough feeding rooms were. Nightshade and Shadow Falls had both infiltrated them to save the innocents. It was truly sick how they were treated, as if their life had no more value than to be their meal.

“I tried my best to always uphold the values that they taught me,” Imeela said, pressing her hands together. “I would sometimes compel someone to get me a couple of blood bags if I ever came across the donation areas. If I absolutely needed to, I would have to compel someone to provide me just enough to survive, but I never took more than absolutely necessary. I truly hated doing that though. The rest of the time, I would supplement it with whatever food I could get my hands on or go hunting. Animal blood tastes like ass, but it was the best alternative.”

Valis and I were both taken aback by the lengths that she went through in order to abide by her coven’s ideals.

I did not know another person who would have that type of commitment to do that for ten years.
That was the willpower of steel.

Shana Allen

Uncle Valis. She's not alone any longer. Is it too good to last?

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