

Game of Destiny - Chapter 2 Chapter 2

Chapter 2

“Armeria,” James said. He said it in a low, wistful voice.

“James,” I answered. I hardly noticed how everyone around us cleared the space, giving us a clear view of each other. It was important to give a newly mated pair space as the protectiveness was at an all time high until they had claimed each other. I faintly heard my father and the Alpha laughing as they congratulated each other. I saw a shadow pass over James’ face and I knew him well enough that my heart and stomach sank.

“Amie,” James said, using the nickname the pack used. His voice was sad and I tried to brace for what I knew was coming. He took a few steps towards me, but I couldn’t move, I couldn’t look away from his eyes. They told me what he was going to say before he let the words fly. “I’m sorry, Amie, but I can’t. You know I can’t,” he said. I knew it was coming, but still, each word felt like a physical punch. The pack had gone deadly silent, everyone was listening and for a moment, I wished James’ words had been physical punches. Then I would have a chance to pass out, or die. Anything but stand in the middle of the pack being rejected by the one person who should love me above all others. “I will become Alpha one day, I need a strong Luna,” James continued, as if he didn’t know he was tearing my heart from my body. “Amie, you don’t have a wolf, even if you get one, we all know it will be weak. I love you, you know I do. But my duty is to the pack, and this pack deserves a strong Luna,” he finished. There was only silence for a long while. I tried to find my words. My first instinct was to plead, to tell James I could be anything he wanted me to be. I could change. But the part of me that made my mother sigh in despair and complain about how stubborn her daughter was, held me back.

“Son,” the Alpha gently said. “You don’t need to do this now.”

“It would be cruel to give her hope. I won’t do that to her,” James said.

“You need to think this through, son. This is not the place or the time.” There was a warning in the Alpha’s voice.

“I won’t change my mind,” James insisted. I felt my father and mother walk up to flank me. My mother put her arm around my waist.

“James, think about what you are doing, you are mates. The gods have decided you complete each other,” my father said.

“I’m sorry,” was all James said.

“You won’t be able to join the games.” My father’s voice was cold and a murmur in the pack followed his words. The games were how the packs determined influence and the

amount of votes they would get at the yearly pack summit. The games were held every tenth year, and each pack sent the five most promising pack members and a support staff to enter. It was not just physical challenges they would face. Everything was tested, from strength to endurance to intelligence and cunning. My pack always ended up in the top ten, the last fifty years we had been in the top five. To be one of the five pack members sent to the games, you had to be over eighteen and in full physical and mental health. What my father had pointed out was that the break of a mate bond was considered to be a mental wound. The council would demand at least three months to heal from it before they deemed someone to be in full health. The games were in a month's time. James looked like he reconsidered his decision, and my hope flared. I knew how much he and my brother had been looking forward to entering the games. We had all trained hard, even me, and the Alpha would be announcing the selected representatives any day.

"So be it, I will sit this year's games out and join the next ones," he then said, the determination clear on his face. The last ember of hope was extinguished in my chest. I vaguely heard Luna Joy saying something, but I had stopped listening. My hands had been clenched by my sides until now. But I reached for my mother and took a hold of her arm.

'I can't be here anymore,' I mindlinked her. I heard the soft whimper that came from her as she pulled me into a hug, placing herself between me and James and leading me away. The pack gave us way as we walked towards our house. I was numb from the pain that radiated in me. I saw the looks the other pack members were giving me, but I tried not to register them. It was bad enough to be pitied for not having a wolf. Now they would pity me for being rejected by the future Alpha as well. Some of them reached out and gently ran their hands over my arms as we passed. It was a sign of comfort and support. But it didn't help. I remembered the promise uncle Jonas had given only hours before. That he and his friends would beat any male that thought me weak. I guess that didn't apply when the male was your best friend's son and the future Alpha. I felt the bitterness of my own thoughts and it was what made the first broken sob escape me. To my relief, my mother and I were almost at our home and we had long since left the pack behind us. My mother tightened her hold on me and made soft cooing sounds that reminded me of my childhood, when I used to fall and bruise my knees.

"Let's sit on the couch for a while," my mother suggested. I just shook my head. I wanted to crawl into my bed and never get out of it again. "Okay, sweetie," she agreed without me having to say a word. She just took me upstairs, helped me out of my clothes and into my sleep shirt before tucking me into bed. I curled into a ball, my knees tight to my chest and my arms hugging them. My back was to my mother as she sat down on the bed and stroked my hair and gently hummed the old lullabies she used to sing for me and Elder. My tears finally came and once the first one rolled down my cheek, the rest followed. I was quietly crying while my body trembled from the power of the raw emotions rolling through me. I heard the door open and close downstairs and I felt the scent of my father. I may not have a wolf, but my smell, eyesight and hearing was still better than a human's. But nowhere near a werewolf's. My father walked into

my room and sat down next to my mother on my bed. No one spoke, but I felt his heavy hand on my leg. I don't know how long we stayed like that. It could have been hours, or minutes. Somewhere along the way, I stopped crying and my body settled down. The pain still remained, no less than before. My mind started to move again even though I suspected my parents thought I was asleep. I noticed the absence of my brother. It hurt almost as much as my mate's rejection. He had chosen James over me. I had a hard time believing it. It was true he was best friends with the future Alpha. But he and I had always been close, at least I had thought so. There was a knock on the front door and my father left. Being raised werewolf meant learning not to eavesdrop on conversations despite being able to. But I felt like I had a right to listen in now, it most likely was something regarding me anyway.

"How is she doing?" It was the Alpha, it seemed my father had taken him into his study, as far away as they could go from my bedroom.

"How do you think she is doing?" I was shocked by the anger and disrespect in my father's voice. I had never heard him talk to anyone like that, especially not his best friend and Alpha. "She hasn't spoken, not after what James did to her."

"I'm sorry, Ron." The Alpha sounded honest.

"His mind is made up?" my father asked.

"It is."

"What will you do?"

"What do you mean, Ron?" the Alpha asked.

"Do you expect my daughter to live in the same pack as the male that ripped her heart out and stomped on it in front of the entire pack? You know as well as I do what our rules are if someone breaks the mate bond without a good reason." My father's voice was low, full of tension.

"Ron! You can't think I would ever make James, my only son, go live in another pack. Banish him from the pack he was born to lead?"

"Why not? No one is above the law. The law is in place to protect the innocent victim. Amie is the victim here," my father insisted.

"What James did, he didn't handle it correctly. But Ron, he had a good reason to do what he did." I almost drew in a sharp breath, but caught myself in time. I didn't want my mother knowing I was listening to the conversation.

"What the fuck are you saying?" my father spit out.

“She will have a weak wolf, if she gets a wolf at all. James had a good reason to reject her,” the Alpha said.

“That is my baby girl you are talking about,” my father growled.

“You know I love her like a daughter, but we can’t hide from the truth.”

“The truth being that her wolf will come when it’s ready, and she is perfect just the way she is. Because that is what you have been telling her for the past two years, Mark,” my father told his friend.

“Precisely. That doesn’t mean she is suitable to be Luna. You know the kind of responsibilities that come with that position.” I didn’t hear my father’s reply as there was a knock on my bedroom door.

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