

Chapter 27

Damon

I stare at my brother as he smirks at me. I'm going to knock that smirk right off his face.

No wonder I couldn't find Conrad Stone. I should have known my brother was involved in keeping the traitor hidden. I don't doubt for one minute that he was behind Ember's first attempted abduction as well.

Conrad Stone wouldn't have had the balls to attempt anything like that without promises of support from a powerful ally. It was a perfect excuse for Marcus to take me out of his twisted equation once and for all.

If it hadn't been for Ember, he would have succeeded.

I curl my lip.

He was never satisfied. It did not satisfy him to wait until our father chose a successor; instead, he killed our father with underhanded means and claimed the crown. And even after he killed him, I was always the thorn in Marcus's side.

Marcus feared that it was only a matter of time before I challenged him for the crown. I could have told him I had no interest in such a coup, though. Why would I want a crown that was tarnished by the current wearer's actions?

But out of fear of my challenge, Marcus has always wanted to take me down. Although I have no outright proof, I'm pretty sure he manipulated Alessia into her attempted murder with the offer of making her queen.

I suspect she would have made an appropriately ruthless queen, if she had succeeded in killing me.

Silver and wolfsbane have always been Marcus's weapons of choice. It's how he killed our father, and how Alessia attempted to kill me.

The attack on my pack, the attempted abduction of Ember...it's all beginning to make sense. Of course, the deadly arrows that almost killed me were from my brother's arsenal.

Well, I'm not about to fall for that one again. The clothes that both myself and Ember are wearing will give us protection from any hidden archers wielding deadly silver weapons.

That's not to say Marcus or Conrad don't have any weapons stashed away themselves. The armor is only useful for ranged attacks. If Conrad or my brother try to stab us in close quarters, we'll probably be fucked.

I have no idea if Ember has any special powers. All I know is that I don't intend to let my brother anywhere near her.

If what Ember says is true, any pups she bears won't be gifted, unless the gods pay her a visit. But my brother doesn't know that. Hell, no one does.

Stupid myths have passed down through the generations, and now anyone blessed by the gods has to live their life in fear of being stolen away and used for breeding stock.

Well, that stops here and now.

I was always the stronger fighter when Marcus and I were young. That's one of the reasons that my brother always resorted to underhanded tactics; he couldn't beat me in a fair fight, so he would sabotage my gear or try to distract me.

Before that final battle, Marcus laced Father's breakfast with wolfsbane. Just enough to slow his healing and make his shift from skin into fur that much slower.

Father didn't even realize until Marcus challenged him, but he couldn't deny the challenge without looking weak. I didn't realize either, until I had a chance to investigate in the kitchens and force Marcus's allies to talk. By then it was too late.

As far as anyone outside the family knows, Marcus bested Father in a fair fight and claimed the crown, as was his right.

The crown would have gone to Marcus anyway, being the eldest—unless our father decreed it otherwise.

Perhaps that was the real reason why Marcus took matters into his own hands. He didn't trust that our father saw him as a worthy future king.

Time to show this piece of shit how a real king behaves.

I take a step forward and begin the words of challenge. "I, Damon Scopus..."

My name barely leaves my lips before I feel Ember's hand on my arm. I look at her, and she shakes her head before stepping forward to stand beside me.

She doesn't know my brother as I do. The last thing I want is for her to put herself in danger, but since meeting Ember, I've come to realize it isn't all about what I want.

She smiles at me and shakes her head before looking my brother dead in the eyes. "You want me, then try to take me."

My brother stares at my petite mate and scoffs. "I know all about you, Ember James, thanks to my friend here." He casts a glance at Conrad Stone.

"I know you can't heal yourself, only others. I know you can barely control your wolf. The only thing stopping me from taking you is my useless brother, and when he's dead, there will be no one to stop me from putting as many pups in your belly as I want."

He smirks. "You'll raise me an army of conduits, and I'll be unstoppable."

Marcus has a wild look in his eye. The look of a power-crazed madman. I want to laugh at his outburst, but I don't.

He still believes that Ember is powerless. He doesn't know that Zeus's curse has been lifted. He doesn't know what power she holds—but then, neither do I.

Ember just smirks at him. I realize suddenly: she must have figured out what power she holds. I don't know when, I don't know how, but she stands there with a new confidence.

“Go ahead, Marcus...” She spits out his name with disdain. “Do your worst. Damon won’t stop you.”

I frown, but I trust my mate, so I nod and take a step backward.

EMBER

Since I woke up and shifted back to my human form, I’ve felt the power inside me building, filling me with a confidence I’ve never felt before.

I don’t doubt that Damon can best his brother, or even kill him, but that’s a dark road to take. I don’t want Damon to have to do that for my sake.

Damon’s brother murdered his father for power. Everyone knows that story—of the prince challenging his father because he didn’t want to wait for the crown. I knew too that the prince had a younger brother, though I knew little else about him till now.

With Marcus out of the picture, the power of the throne will fall to Damon, but it’s better for everyone if Damon doesn’t kill him. It’s better for werewolf law to decide the current Alpha King’s fate.

Meanwhile, Marcus wants to use me, no doubt as he has used everyone else in his life. I’m not about to let that happen.

I take a step forward. Time to wipe the smirk off his face—and off the face of Alpha Conrad Stone too. Stone did me a favor by sending me here, but that doesn’t alter the fact that he killed my mother, and wanted to use me in exactly the same way.

I narrow my eyes as I balled my hands into fists. It takes barely any effort before the sky turns dark and a bolt of lightning pierces the black clouds. This time, instead of hitting a nearby tree, it strikes its target.

Conrad Stone screams as the lightning strikes him. He falls to the ground as wisps of dark smoke arise from his body. Then he starts to convulse.

His skin is marred with strange, fern-like tendrils that spread across his body where the lightning has burned him. As I watch him writhe in agony on the ground, I realize that my curse is well and truly lifted.

Before, even the slightest slap to another person would leave me with marks and bruises. But now, watching my former alpha in such pain, I feel nothing but satisfaction.

I turn my attention to the king, who is staring at Conrad Stone in horror. “What are you?” he hisses at me.

I narrow my eyes and sneer. “Your worst fucking nightmare,” I hiss.

I expect him to run, or attack, but he does neither of those things. Instead, he takes a step backward and smirks.

“Kneel, wolf. Kneel before your king,” he growls. The air ripples with the power of his royal alpha command.

Damon, who is standing behind me, gasps. “No...” I hear a thud, and with one glance behind me, I see Damon on his knees. I feel nothing, though. I remain standing easily, and turn back to look Marcus in the eyes.

Damon might be of royal blood, but not even he can resist the power of a royal alpha command. So how can I?

“Because the power of the gods runs through your veins.”

I recognize the voice that I hear in my head. Not my wolf’s, and not my mate’s. It’s not even the voice of the Moon Goddess.

No, I recognize this voice from the vision that the Moon Goddess gave me. It’s the voice of my grandfather. The voice of Zeus.

The king’s alpha command doesn’t affect me, but I can feel my wolf whimpering in the back of my mind. She wants to submit, but she doesn’t have control over my body right now.

Clearly, the power of the gods is a human trait, but today isn’t the day for wolf-on-wolf combat anyway.

Today, I am the daughter of Ares and the granddaughter of Zeus.

Marcus glares at me when I don’t fall to my knees. I just smirk at him. “Is that all you’ve got?” I mock.

I half-expect him to flee, but he doesn’t. Instead, he narrows his eyes and raises his hand in the air. I raise my own in response.

This time, there is no lightning. Instead, I hear men’s screams coming from the woods.

Marcus glances behind him before looking back at me. “What the fuck did you do?”

I hear the fear in his voice, and take a step toward him, glaring. Then I point a finger at him. “Fear,” I hiss. “It is the most powerful weapon there is.”

I couldn't describe exactly what I did to summon the lightning, and I can't describe exactly what I'm doing now. It's instinctual, probably a bit like how an alpha summons the power of command. This is a simple, silent command. *Fear me.*

Marcus drops to his knees, whimpering, barely able to look at me.

“My father's gift,” I state, looking at the cowed, trembling king. Then I glance at the shouldering remains of Alpha Stone. “And that is my grandfather's gift.”