

CHAPTER 48

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48 Ava: No Great Destiny 48 Ava: No Great Destiny Selene's warm, furry body is a balm to my soul as we cuddle in on the sofa, a random show playing in the background. My eyes drift to the new phone sitting on the nightstand. Is it safe to use? Could Clayton or someone else have hacked into it, using it as a way to track my every move? A shiver runs down my spine at the thought. Selene stirs beside me, her head lifting as she blinks in the dimness. Her piercing blue eyes find mine, and I feel the gentle brush of her consciousness against my own. You're being paranoid again, she murmurs, her mental voice a soft caress against my frazzled thoughts. "Can you blame me?" My voice comes out in a whisper "After everything that's happened, I don't want to take any risks that could turn my life upside down again. I just don't know how far I can trust Clayton." I know, pup. Selene nuzzles my cheek with affection. But driving yourself mad with worry isn't the answer either. We'll be cautious, but we can't live in fear. 15:00 1/8 48 Ava: No Great Destiny I swallow hard, wishing I could just turn off the constant stream of anxious thoughts whirring through my brain. "I just finally felt like I had a handle on things. And now..." Now everything has been ripped away from me once more. It isn't over, Selene points out, ever the voice of reason. Hugging her as she crawls into my lap, I sigh. "I feel like something's going to happen," I admit, reaching up to touch the necklace that's once again around my neck. Selene nudges it with her nose. Everything will be okay. Don't be so quick to assume the worst of that alpha. Rubbing her ears helps calm down the anxiety fluttering in my belly, and Selene rolls over in bliss at the attention. We've missed each other terribly this past week. "It just worries me. All this stuff, the care he's taking—it makes me feel like he's decided I'm his mate, and he's just waiting for me to accept it and follow along like a good little she-wolf." Her fur is soft against my cheek as I rub my head against hers. "I don't want that 15:00 2/8 48 Ava: No Great Destiny kind of life." I know. The weight of the world is on my shoulders, it feels. Sighing, I snuggle even closer to Selene's warmth, taking what comfort I can get. "What about my heat. Am I going to go through that again?" If Clayton's around, it wouldn't be so bad—though, another week in bed with him might give him even more ideas about our relationship. But if I'm not anywhere near him, and some other strong wolf is nearby... The thought of experiencing another heat with a stranger sends a shudder down my spine. Selene hesitates, her mental voice tinged with a seriousness that immediately puts me on edge. It should be taken care of, with the ring and the necklace, is her eventual answer. My fingers touch the crystal pendant again, its comforting weight reassuring me of its presence. "So, how exactly do these help?" Selene shifts in my lap, stretching out her lean body before resettling against me. The necklace acts as a 15:00 3/8 49 Ava: No Great Destiny dampener. As long as you're wearing it, you should maintain control over yourself during your cycles, among other things. I frown, rolling the information over in my mind. "Why did I go into heat as soon as I didn't have it on?" Your heat was forcefully suppressed. It burst out as soon as it had a chance. The ring acts as a shield for your power. Others can't sense it, and it will keep you safe. Power? The magic that I'm not supposed to use? Yes. My fingers trace the simple silver band on my other hand, marveling at the magic it seems to contain. So much about my life has become intertwined with these strange artifacts and their mysteries. "And if I don't wear them?" I ask cautiously, almost afraid of the answer. Selene's response is somber. Then your heat will occur every month, each one stronger than the last, until you find someone strong enough to claim you. And your power will eventually consume you. 15:00 4/8 48 Ava: No Great Destiny That's morbid enough to freak me out. Clayton is strong. I've heard his name bWWw.NóVèlworm.C(ó)©

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efore; he's well-regarded in the Northwestern Territories. "If Clayton isn't strong enough to claim me, then who...?" That, I have no answer for. "Lucas?" I don't know. He is your fated, but that doesn't mean the claiming will succeed. The scars on my neck prickle, and I have to fight the urge to touch them. "I won't take them off again," I vow, my voice trembling. "I can't go through that kind of hell ever again." I know, pup. Selene licks my cheek.comfortingly. We'll figure this out together, one step at a time. You're not alone in this. Fiddling the ring, I try to think through everything I've learned. Our history as wolf shifters is a lie. We're all cursed, and wolf shifters actually have two souls in our bodies, stealing the souls of Lycans. 15:00 48 Ava: No Great Destiny I'm somehow... different? Side-eyeing Selene, I say, "I still don't understand how or why I'm different." She tilts her head. You are born, and therefore you are. Okay. So, I'm different, with a giant question mark on why. I have the power of ancient magicians, but if I use it I'll probably die. Selene's a Lycan, who chose me—why? "Why did you choose me, again?" She huffs a bit. Your soul is pure. Her cryptic answers will probably never stop. "Selene, do I have some sort of higher purpose, or a quest, or a prophecy, or something I need to know about?" What do you mean? "I mean—if you look at movies, and TV, and books, stuff like this only happens to the hero, who has some sort of special power and uses it for the greater good, or to save the world." No, it's nothing like that. Sweet relief takes a large weight off my shoulders. "So 15:00 6 68 48 Ava: No Great Destiny I don't have to return all the Lycans back to this place between our world and wherever the gods left us for?" Of course not. That's impossible. "I don't have to change society, or marry some Lycan King, or make some special Lycan babies with a strong alpha?" You have to live, Ava. That is all. I twiddle her ears. "Seriously? No catch? Just, hey, I'm special, but it's fine, live my life however I want?" Her eyes drift close. Indeed. But trouble will come to find you, so it's best to be prepared. "Why is trouble going to find me? As long as I don't go into heat, it should be fine, right?" Wolves can sense power, Ava. Your power is too great to be hidden from those who seek it. "You just said the ring shields my power from detection." Under normal circumstances, yes. But she doesn't clarify further. 15.00

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