

Design of Fate

Chapter 2

IMEELA

I dove into the water and quickly moved underneath a rock outcropping. It was perfect to shield me from the bounty hunter that was on my trail.

He would not be able to follow my scent because of my ability to mask it. Would it not be great if it could last all day and night? Sadly, that was not the case. It only worked for about twenty minutes at a time. Imagine that there was a meter showing how much ability was left. Once it reached empty, it had to be refueled. That took about two hours, so this was an ability that I tried to reserve for emergencies. Case in point, right now.

He let out a frustrated growl when he was standing on the outcropping ledge. I pushed away my amusement of the fact that he apparently hated me for losing my trail. He was not the first vampire that I had evaded and would not be the last.

“I’ll not be back tonight,” a deep voice said from above. “No, everything is not okay. I lost her trail, and you know what that means. I’m going to head back to town because that’s where she’d been staying. She’s bound to return at some point, and I’ll be waiting to deliver her to Boss. Don’t tell a soul though.”

I listened to his retreating steps but did not move a muscle and would not until I knew for a fact that he was gone.

It had been a long ten years that I had been running, hiding, and trying to survive.

My coven had been massacred when I was ten years old. My bodyguard, Emilio, had escaped with me before we succumbed to the same fate as everyone else. He was by my side for six years until he sacrificed himself in order to save me, taking the blade that had been meant for me. Luckily, I was able to kill his murderer and flee before anyone else found me.

The Precoza coven had been the royal coven of the vampire world. My parents, Desmond and Sadira, were amazing leaders. They were technically the King and Queen but were very humble about it. They never let the titles go to their heads. Our kind flourished underneath their reign. They prohibited acts such as slavery, feeding rooms, and unprovoked attacks against other covens and species. Obviously, there were many vampires who believed that they were superior to every other species and had the right to do whatever they pleased with those that they felt were lesser than them.

On my birthday, of all times, the coven was decimated with the exception of Emilio and myself.

We had always assumed that the multitude of bounty hunters were tasked with killing me since I was the rightful heir to the throne and could reclaim it at any point in time, which many people did not want. Why then would this one mention that he was going to be taking me to his boss?

Confused was my general state of being at this moment in time, but I knew that I needed to shake it off and keep my head in the game.

I waited another fifteen minutes before I quickly climbed out of the water, looking all around me to ensure that there was nobody in hiding.

My senses were sharper than many vampires because of my heritage as well as spending a decade on the run. Royals typically had stronger senses and abilities compared to the rest, which was something that I was extremely thankful for.

After an hour of walking, I happened across a cave. I needed a place to regroup, eat, and rest. Luckily, there were not any animals that I had to evict from their home. I had nearly lost a hand in the first cave that I found after Emilio died. The bear only got as far as it did because I had just lost Emilio the day before. However, that bear became dinner.

Animal blood was absolutely disgusting, but it would work in a pinch when there was no other option. Sometimes I would come across a blood donation trailer and would compel a worker to acquire a few bags for me. If that was not an option then I would have to lure a human in but would only take just enough to keep going. I absolutely abhorred the idea of doing that, but desperate times called for desperate measures.

My parents had instilled in me the belief that we should only feed from willing humans. That was precisely why they had a very popular blood donation program put in place. Sadly, all of that seemed to have gone out of the window for the most part.

I pulled out my map and my last granola bar. Luckily, vampires could supplement their diet with regular food instead of it strictly requiring blood. Although it had been a very long time since I had enough of either, it was better than being dead. Small miracles. I would need to either hunt, find more regular food, or find blood soon.

A long sigh escaped my lips. Instead of thinking about what I did not have, I focused on my next course of action.

I was currently outside of Purdy, Virginia. My next stop was Emporia, which was nearly a five-hour walk, but I knew that there were plenty of places there to get things that I needed. Emilio had prepared me in every possible way that he could, which included knowing the best places to gather supplies from. It also helped that there was not a known vampire presence in Emporia. That was precisely why I stuck to small towns and avoided cities at all costs.

There were some benefits to being a royal for vampires. Our senses were stronger, as were our abilities, and we had a higher tolerance for certain things such as being in the sun, harmful poisons such as vervain, and we healed quicker.

The majority of humans, and a good portion of supernaturals, did not have a firm understanding of vampires. There were two types – born and made.

Born vampires had a heartbeat, blood that ran through our veins, we aged, slept, and could reproduce. We could go out in the sunlight, but the effects of it ranged from person to person. Said effects were minimized based on the vampire's age and rank. I was young, but my rank was technically a Princess – I tried not to scoff at that thought, but I failed – so, the sun had very little effect on me. That was precisely why I preferred to travel during the daytime. It minimized my risk of discovery.

Made vampires were those who were bitten. They were essentially frozen in time from the moment that they finished their transformation. There was no heartbeat and could not reproduce. They also could not endure the sunlight.

There were many legends surrounding the origins of our species, but for every truth there were hundreds of alternatives. That was what made the truth difficult to pinpoint. My father once told me that our archives held the truth, so he shared with me what that was. Three very powerful witches had banded together to create a powerful type of creature that would be able to help protect those who needed protection.

Our kind was originally intended to be bodyguards, but somewhere along the line, our purpose was tainted by those seeking even more power. A born vampire ended up turning a human, and it created the first made vampire. Others saw this and got the idea that they would be able to claim power if they had an army behind them. Luckily, some of those creating the army realized the damage that they were doing, the chaos that they were causing, and decided to fight against the very beings that they had helped create.

I sighed and unpacked my hiking bag, rolling out my small sleeping bag. Luckily, it was still warm enough during the night so that I would not end up freezing my ass off. Always loathed winter on the run. It was easier when Emilio was here because we could absorb body heat from each other.

Emilio was an amazing man. He had been twenty-one when we had escaped. My father had been the one who told him to take me and keep me alive. Emilio never once blamed me for the fact that he had to essentially parent me and had to live the way we did. Not him. He saw the honor in it as well as the pride.

With a small shake of my head, I got inside the sleeping bag and rested my head on the pack. My special knife was right beside me. It was made of copper and mercury with pieces of silver imbedded in the blade. This knife was dangerous to other vampires, but I had immunity to it because it was created and blessed by a powerful witch. It would not hurt anyone who was descended from the Precoza line.

That night I dreamed of the family I had lost long ago. Time did not heal those wounds, but it did make their memories more cherished. I never truly knew what I had until it was gone in the blink

of an eye. Every fond memory reminded me that I never showed my family how much I loved them. It was the same way that every pain I felt reminded me that they were gone.

I was startled from sleep when something wet and warm touched my face. My eyes snapped open, immediately ready for a fight, but I was highly surprised with what it was that had decided to lick my face.

The most adorable gray wolf pup was sitting next to my head. I had never seen one up close like this. Its eyes were an odd, but beautiful, shade of green. This was a brave little pup because it did not even show an ounce of hesitation around an apex predator. Many animals were naturally wary of vampires, but not this little one.

“Hey there, little one. What are you doing in here?” I asked softly, not wanting to startle it.

It had been four long years since I had any type of companionship, so this was a nice change of pace.

The wolf walked closer and curled its body into mine. There was some blood on his fur, a deep gash that was created by some type of predator. I rolled it a little so that I could see the wound better. This little female pup had multiple gashes, making me extremely curious about what happened.

The good news was that vampire blood had healing properties that could be used on both supernatural and natural species alike. So, I bit my finger and put it near her mouth. She sniffed it and curiously licked the blood. It would not take much to heal her, so I was happy when I saw the gashes close up.

She looked down at her side where she had been hurt before tilting her head and cuddling with me again. Wolves were generally very intelligent creatures, and I could see that she had that quality as well.

“What shall I name you, little one?” I asked her softly while petting her head. “What about Sadi? Mom’s name was Sadira. Mom always had a habit of coming to me when I needed her most. I think that she knew that I needed you and sent you to me. What do you think of the name, Sadi?”

She yipped at me, so I took that to mean that she approved.

It was still dark out, so I had a little while before I was good to head out. If we saw her pack then I would bring her back to them, but if I did not then I would take her with me because it would be too dangerous for her to survive out here on her own.

“Let’s get a little bit more sleep, Sadi,” I said, covering her up as best I could.