

Chapter 2

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When I was born, my father planted the seeds of war.

It was a different time then. The rogue situation had become too intense. Wolves were dying. It was an altogether unsafe time for packs.

My father, King Armand, exiled all rogues to the harsh arctic beyond the northern border. All criminals went there to be punished in eternal winter. It was a controversial decision, but as I was taught in my history lessons, the world was a far different place then that it was now.

Back then, it was said that rogues lurked outside of packs, scaring wolves into paranoia. My father had put a stop to that. The northern border was heavily fortified and patrolled, and my father placed his most powerful Alpha to govern and guard the territory.

When I was growing up, the conflict between us and the rogues beyond the northern border only grew. It wasn't sudden at all—it was slow, almost unmoving, but as a prince, I sensed the movement.

War was coming, and I was raised for its purpose.

My father drilled into me the proper sense of honor and duty. In my opinion, never has there been more of an honorable and dutiful ruler than my father. He taught me to put the safety and wellbeing of my people above all else. He trained and molded me to be strong so that I could lead the warriors to victory, and eventually, lead the people as King.

As a result, I began to have a one-track mind.

Duty and obligation are everything to me. Everything else is just distraction.

My parents often told me how proud they were of me, how good of an example I was to my younger brother Patrick, and how perfect of a prince I was.

I could not believe them, at least, not yet when I haven't fulfilled my purpose.

Their praises fell into deaf ears as I buried myself in work. I strengthened alliances, trained warriors, and gathered intelligence. Yet each time that I felt my work was gaining us an advantage, I would hear whispers. These whispers would sing of a Rogue King—a King who could defeat us.

The seeds of war continued to grow, and soon it would become a tree. When that time comes, I have to be holding the bigger axe.

I could see it in my father's eyes, however, that he regretted pushing me too far. I think he saw my ruthlessness when I underwent The Evaluation. The panel all too easily gave me Gold Rank a mere two minutes. Perhaps my mother admonished him, told him that he was working me too hard. She's always telling me not to be too serious, to smile more often, and to enjoy life more. But I could not heed the Queen's advice. What was there to enjoy when our way of life was being threatened?

Thankfully, my parents never broached the issue of mating. My mother tried once when I was 20 and I had still not joined The Claiming ceremony. I told her that I did not feel right having a mate when the world was still unsafe.

Everyone thought I was exaggerating, that the threat wasn't as bad as I said. If only they knew what kind of intelligence I've gathered. There is absolute horror awaiting us beyond the northern border.

I knew I was going to have to mate eventually, but I would rather wait until the war was over and the environment was suitable to mate and have pups. Yes, I did think about mating during the rare times when my mind wandered.

Every move I make is precise, and every step carefully planned. I am the opposite of reckless. I never do anything without thinking of every possible outcome first. And when I think of the possible outcomes of mating before the war is over, well, having a mate that I loved and cared about could be used against me. I can't have a weakness.

I was raised for war. War is my destiny.

Today, I will be heading to the Eastern Claw pack to discuss strategy with their Alpha. The Eastern packs were situated near mountain ranges that could be vital for terrain-based attacks. I would also be there in time for their Claiming Ceremony.

Sometimes, I envy the regular wolves who did not have the fate of the werewolf race upon my shoulders. They were free to claim mates, have children, and raise families whenever they wanted. If they chose, they could live a life free of consequences.

I did not wish for them to have my life. I was not that cruel.

I also did not wish to have their life. It was an honor to serve my people—a gift from the Moon Goddess.

So I will go to the Eastern Claw pack, map out the strongest parts of our terrain, and strengthen our alliance—as is my duty.

And perhaps, during The Claiming ceremony, I could glimpse a life much different than my own.

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