



## Chapter 2

River

I rolled out of bed this morning dreading going to training. I just wanted to sleep a little bit longer. It's the summer, and my last one to boot. Slacking off for a few weeks should be a given. I roll my eyes at myself because, even if there was time for me to slack off, I know that I would never take advantage of it. I do as I am asked and keep a smile on my face. Things have never come as easy for me as they do for the rest of my family. I'm not as fast or strong, so I have to train harder. In school I've never been one to stand out or just get good grades, because of who I am, I have to study harder. My looks? My mother is this beautiful goddess of a woman without even trying. I have to put extra work into my appearance just to blend in at school. Its super frustrating most of the time.

Once I had on my training gear and my hair thrown up, I made my way down to the kitchen to grab something light to eat before hand. Walking into the kitchen, I spotted my mother standing at the sink cleaning up some dishes. She must have sensed me walking into the room because she instantly turned around to greet me, telling me I looked adorable, like she does every morning. All of a sudden, I heard Greyson shout that he was leaving and gave mother a quick 'love you' before the door shut behind him. I shook my head in the direction of the door.

"You know River, I wish you two would just talk more and hangout. He is the only sibling you have." I literally cringed at her words. My mother was always pressuring me to try to make friends with Greyson. Sure, when I was younger I always had this dream that we would become best friends and hangout all the time. That's all it was, it was a dream. We are absolutely nothing alike. Our interests are completely different. He has this big extravagant life ahead of him. While I am just waiting to see who I am mated to, to decide my future.

"Mom, you know that will never happen. Greyson and I are nothing alike. Our interests, our friends, and our styles couldn't be any different if we tried." I repeated the same words I had been telling her now for several years. I just keep hoping one day they will sink in to her. I peeled my banana and started to eat it, while I grabbed my water bottle to ll it up.

"Here, let me get that so you can nish eating." She walked up and grabbed my bottle from me and returned to the fridge to ll it up. "I know you tell me the same thing every time River, I just don't think either of you have actually put in a good effort to try to form a relationship with each other. This is your last summer...." She trailed off and seemed to be thinking of something. "Actually, I think I have an idea.... I know you secretly hate training and all the duties your father insists you partake in. I offered Greyson the next couple weeks off to enjoy the summer before he takes over as king. With a few conditions, of course. How about I offer you the same?" She grinned.

I c\*\*\*\*d an eyebrow at her for not falling into her trap so fast. I leaned my elbows on the counter across from her. "What's the catch?"

She smiled even more now, "I keep my offer to Greyson, I also give you the same offer, AS LONG AS you BOTH agree to try and spend more time with each other during those weeks. You can have your friends join you if you want, but you will both have many weeks off and no responsibilities as long as you have some bonding time." I thought about it for a second, it really didn't sound too terrible. If we could have our friends attend "the bonding", then we really can just still avoid each other. I just don't know if Greyson would go for it.

I straightened myself up, got off the counter and grabbed my bottle. "I will think about it. I don't think it's a terrible idea. I would really like some time off this summer. I just don't really think Greyson will go for it. If he agrees, then I will also. I am not the one talking with him though." and I made sure to give her a stern look.

Mom clapped her hands and was practically jumping for joy. "I will take that as a win! I will discuss things with your father this afternoon and we can discuss them all over dinner tonight!"

Great. I forgot we had family dinner tonight. I keep a smile on my face, but mentally I am stomping my feet like a child not wanting to attend dinner. Dinners were always so awkward for all of us. I remember a time it wasn't. When we were little, me and Greyson would play with our food and tell our parents about our exciting days. As we got older, things started to fade. We don't talk or communicate with each other, and only engage in conversation when our parents ask us questions. I guess maybe that is why mom is nding it so important for us to hangout this summer. "Alright mom, you talk to dad and we will see what the decision is tonight. I am heading out for training so I will see you at dinner. Love you."

"I love you sweetie! Kick butt out there!" She yelled at me as I walked out the door.

I started to head to training when I heard someone yelling my name behind me. "RIVER!!" I turned around to see short purple hair bouncing my way. I stopped walking and smiled, waiting for Ava to catch up with me. She was my best friend. Ava has short dark purple hair. Well, these months anyway. She has pretty green eyes and stands just a few inches shorter than me, at 5'4. She's a wild card for sure. She loves being the center of attention, blending in is where I would rather be. She is always changing her hair color to wild crazy colors and is just naturally herself all the time. If anything, I love her more for it. I wish I could be more like her honestly. She bounced up to my side and interlocked her arm with mine while we made our way to the eld. "Do you hate being here as much as me?" She asked.

I groaned. "You already know the answer to that."

"Well, at least we can train together today. It doesn't seem like we are doing circuit training."

"Thank goddess for that.. come on and let's get this over with, father is giving me the stink eye for running late today." We both took off running to our positions and trained hard with each other for about an hour and half before everyone was dismissed.

We were grabbing our bottles to head back home. "So do you have any plans for your birthday in two days?" Ava quipped.

I shook my head no, and shrugged my shoulders, "Not really, I have a dinner tonight that decides if I have to hang out with Greyson for the summer or not. I also have the mating ball that we have to attend in 4 days. So other than those things, I'm not really sure what I will be doing. Besides, whatever I do, you are going to be with me the entire time. Mother said our friends could hang out with Greyson and I to make things less awkward for both of us." I rolled my eyes for the 100th time today. I looked beside me and Ava was gone. I turned around and she was stopped in her tracks about 6 paces behind me with her mouth dropped open.

"Did you just say your mom is making you spend the summer with your brother....?" She asked.

"Yeah, she is making me spend my summer with GREYSON. Don't call him my brother, he is anything but that. I would hardly even consider him an acquaintance." Maybe that was a little harsh, but it's true. We hardly even know each other. "I guess on the bright side if he agrees to it. I will have the summer off with you. We might be stuck with him and his friends, but that doesn't mean we have to actually interact with them." I bumped her shoulder, smiling.

"Okay ne, we can just make our own fun out of it! I'll catch up with you later. I'm going to go home and get around, then help mom in the hospital for a little while! I'll see ya!" Her mother was our pack doctor. She was the sweetest lady ever. I watched as she skipped off and I ran inside to my room to shower and take a nap before this dreadful dinner tonight.