

Elemental Standings

DESTINY SCORNS

ELEMENTAL STANDINGS

By

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PROLOGUE

“The Astrakhans have declared war on us,” King Nathan declared as he entered his fellow king’s office. An office which seemed like it was an extension of the library. It was a well-known fact that the King Gorham was a bookworm. Gorham had just come back from his diplomatic mission from the Kingdom of Adenjar.

“How did that happen on your watch, Nathan?” King Gorham growled at Nathan looking up from the appointment book to plan his next day.

“It was bound to happen sooner or later...”

“I would have rather had it at later. I go away for a few days and here we are at the center of a war.”

“Alice cannot be controlled.”

“She wasn’t supposed to hold the position in the first place but given that she was given it against all my advice you had to deal with it like I did,” Gorham pointed out to Nathan.

“I was wrong.”

“It’s too late to be wrong Nathan. Now we have to deal with this.” Gorham sighed then stood up.

Nathan continued to pace back and forth. Finally he stopped and turned to Gorham, “We need a new queen.”

“We have Alice.”

“No we don’t. She ran away two days ago.”

“She what?” Gorham almost roared. His mind had already started working on a solution which only hinged at Alice being there and making her apologies to the Astrakhans however humiliating that would be.

“She ran away with Joel when it was rather obvious that war was imminent.”

“Diane always said Alice was a coward.”

“I know the mistake I made backing up the proposal to make Alice queen but at this moment we need a new queen.”

“And what do you suggest I do about that?” he asked cynically

“Not you. Sidney. She has the power to summon Wendy back.”

“How in the world could you possibly know that?” Gorham asked raising his eyebrow in curiosity.

“I just know.” And at the incredulous look Gorham gave him, he added, “I do read at times.”

“And you think Wendy would come?”

“No one can avoid a summons if it is done right.”

“I won’t ask why you are sure about that but still, she won’t be easy to convince given that she hasn’t ever tried to regain her throne. She won’t just go there and sit on her throne with all the hostility that would come from the council.”

“The council agrees with me on this. It is a time of war, we need a warrior queen, a powerful queen and we all agreed that should Wendy come back and take up her throne then we will stand behind her.”

“So the only part I have in this is to convince Sidney to summon Wendy and convince the latter to be queen whether she likes it or not.” Nathan just stared. Gorham frowned, “What are you not telling me?”

“The army needs a leader, our people need a queen. Just in case you should not succeed, the council will be forced to appoint someone else who does not have the support of the people nor the army and we cannot remain without a queen or we will be considered weak. But everything has a price, even good actions. Have a goodnight Gorham and pass my greetings to Sidney and the children.”

Gorham stayed in the silent office thinking of what to do next when Sidney walked in. Looking at her made his anger slide away to be replaced by peace. She never smiled as much as she used to before she got her powers back but what they felt for each other was still the same, maybe even stronger. She locked her eyes with his and asked, “What did he want?”

CHAPTER ONE

“I may not have the powerful connection to her as you all think I do.”

“But you told me that Victor left her in your care.” Gorham stated. His eyes were fixed only on Sidney. He didn’t look around the room and the people who were seated there. The room was huge and circular with a high ceiling. It was designed in such a way that the walls near the top let in light and even though it should have been slightly dark, it was as light as being outside. The door was a large thick wooden one which wouldn’t let in or out sounds. Hence chances of eavesdropping were almost nil.

“He left her in my care but as long as she would feel that she still loves him. Without the connection to him, there is no connection to me.”

“But you are connected to Henry Clay, are you not?” Amon asked. He was the new head of the council. Chosen a year ago when things seemed peaceful. He had the experience to lead such a council. With the war looming over their heads, Gorham didn’t think he had what it took to make the difficult choices.

“Yes, I do.”

“Then summon him.”

“Are you out of your mind?” Sidney wondered if the Council leader even heard himself. To think that those who did not know about wizards and wizard powers offering her advice, she shook her head in disbelief at their audacity to even dare do that. “I would surely die trying to summon someone as old as he is and even if it were possible, he would kill me himself once he got here.”

“You have to try to summon Wendy, Sidney. We need her here.” Gorham pleaded.

Sidney sighed. “Summoning is against wizard laws...”

“Wizards have laws?” Amon asked.

“Any community has its laws however few they may be.”

“Who makes these laws?”

“I don’t think any laws have been made recently but that is the councils job I suppose.”

“Council?” Nathan asked.

“Yes, a wizard council. It’s almost just like this except when they meet then it would be to discuss the destruction of someone who poses a threat to our kind. I digress. It stands to reason that in these past two years she has formed a bond with her father. Now, should I summon her the right way, without killing either of us, then Henry will be aware and hence the council. Wendy will be obligated to come and hence Henry will send at least two wizards to protect her should the need arise and the wizard council will send at least two of its elite guards to come and investigate why I summoned her and apprehend me if necessary.”

“So there will be at least four wizards coming with her?” Amon asked.

“Yes.”

“What would they do to you?”

“Banishment is usually the most likely punishment but there are not many places that I can be banished to. I am comfortable in either world so the most likely punishment would be not to have contact with my family.”

“They wouldn’t dare take away our children?” Gorham snarled.

“They are part wizard, honey, and therefore have to abide by the laws that the wizard council provides.”

“What about Henry? What’s his position in the wizard community?” Nathan asked for the first time.

“He doesn’t hold any position in the council, not exactly, if that was what you were asking. But, he is a descendant of a well-known bloodline, he has certain privileges and hence his opinion is considered valuable. His ancestors have always put the wizard community first and that is why whatever happens to Wendy is a concern to the wizard community.”

“Would he defend you to the council if you are ever taken to a hearing?”

Sidney looked across the room at Nathan wondering what he was up to pushing on the angle of Henry. “I don’t know what you consider Henry to be but he has no ties to me. He may have saved my life once upon a time but that was because Victor pledged him his loyalty.”

“But you can also do the same.”

“No!” Her eyes were wide with shock.

“Why not?”

“I’m legally married, Nathan. He would tell that I’m lying.”

“Why?”

Gorham sighed then looked at Nathan. “Because she can only be loyal to me.” The room erupted in murmurs as Sidney looked down at her trembling hands. Gorham’s hand covered her own and stilled them. She looked up at him and saw the desperation in his eyes. He would be a leader first before being a husband and thus she would have to do whatever it took to please him.

She turned away from him but kept her hands in his. She started in almost a whisper, “If I must summon her, I will need to start the ritual tonight. Bring me Martin. I

may not have a connection to her but he does. It will make the spell stronger.” She pulled her hands away from Gorham’s and walked away from the council chambers.

Amon addressed Gorham. “This will now be your decision. She is your wife and should anything happen, you would be the one that has to bear most of it.”

“We will do the summoning.” He also stood up and left.

*

Henry had intended that Wendy would heal within the month that he had allowed her to stay with her adoptive parents but that just went to show him that he knew nothing about his own daughter. It was a big blow to his ego when he was informed that it would take time and it would take even more time if she didn’t step out and start dating again. Of course Henry had taken it literally and arranged a rebound when they got back to his world. He had looked thoroughly through the list of potential rebounds for Wendy but none of them had what it took.

In Henry’s mind the man would have to care just enough not to make promises to her and not put her heart on the line for a second time. He had to be powerful in his own right. Independent of him and most of all did not care that Henry was her father or was just not interested in the current affairs to know that Wendy was Henry’s daughter.

He had only known one person who satisfied all those qualifications; Ethan Quint. Granted he did not know if it would work or if they would be attracted to one another. Ethan had been around for quite a while and did not age. He was the best person to be called an immortal. Henry had known Ethan for quite a while and yet he still looked the same. Considering how slow Henry himself and his kind aged, that was saying something about the other. The two were barely acquaintances and that was pretty much because Ethan had made Henry swear not to look any farther into who he was. The latter had covered all the loopholes in the deal and in return he owed Henry only one favor. A favor he was to call in at any time.

Henry had questioned what he was doing because this was his daughter. He opted to simply put the two of them in a room together and see what happens. He would not call in the favor and he reasoned that this was more like a blind date. The two hit it off immediately. They had a steamy affair for about two weeks then Henry decided to stop it. If the two spent any more time together, they would fall in love and that beat the whole purpose. It was hard to stop Ethan from seeing Wendy ever again. He may not have known what Ethan was but he knew he would keep his word especially after Henry called in his favor.

It was a surprise therefore when his secretary told him that Mr. Quint was waiting to talk to him. Henry waited patiently as Ethan finished flirting with the secretary before he walked in.

“Henry!” he said as he walked in smiling.

“I didn’t expect to see you again until the time you’d have wanted to kill me.”

The smile dropped from Ethan’s face. “I overreacted.” He went and sat down without shaking Henry’s hand.

“You don’t seem like your gloomy self.”

“I was on vacation.”

“Where?”

“In jail.”

“You were in jail?” Henry asked surprised. Personally he had never thought of jail or ever been to one unless he wanted something from someone who was convicted there. He could never allow himself to be constrained within a compound acting within another person’s schedule. It was strange to think that someone as powerful, not just in supernatural abilities but also financially powerful, as Ethan could condone that. “Why were you in jail?”

“Got convicted of being drunk and disorderly, driving under the influence and grand theft auto shortly after you left me. Of course I explained to the judge that I was suffering from a heart break...”

“A heart break?”

“Yes, but they didn’t think that was a good way to defend myself. So I was convicted and went through psychological counseling to deal with my heart break.”

“When did you have a heart break?”

“When you forbid me to see Wendy ever again.”

“You had an affair for two weeks!”

“Two weeks which were the best I have ever had in a long time. You took that away from me.”

“It was not going to work out.”

“How would you know?” Ethan countered glaring at Henry.

Henry sighed, “You were not the one destined for her.”

“Destinies change all the time.” Ethan said in a hard voice. Back to the person Henry was more used to dealing with. “Because you had us meet could have changed destiny and now I would have been the one better suited for her. Perhaps you think I’m not powerful enough to further your own interests in your pursuit for world domination?”

Henry’s mouth twitched in humor. “You finally figured it out.”

“I did tell you I was in jail under psychological care. It was during one of my sessions when the psychologist was humoring my ‘delusion’. He asked me why you had forbidden me from seeing Wendy ever again. Of course I did not know why you forbid

me but the psychologist insisted I knew the reason since it was my delusion anyway. So I put myself in your shoes. I don't think you are capable of falling in love."

"Really?"

"Really. I can sense who you are under the illusion you portray out to the world the same way I know you sense mine. We are of a kindred spirit."

"So you could not have possibly fallen in love with Wendy."

"Not yet. When you have eternity before you, you realize that when once in a while you open your heart and allow yourself to love, life becomes quite interesting again. It's like being reborn."

"What are you saying?"

"That unlike you, I was ready to open my heart and that was what hurt me. I realized you were not forbidding me from seeing her because you were in love with her. And why else would Henry be interested in this young, beautiful woman with sad eyes and a beautiful voice?"

"She could have been working for me?"

"A woman as beautiful as her and you hadn't slept with her?" Henry opened his mouth to defend himself but Ethan cut him off. "I know because she talked about the only man she had loved being dead. And a woman as pure as her would not sleep with anyone who her heart hadn't chosen for her. How did you even manage that?"

"What?" Henry asked genuinely puzzled.

"To have a daughter like her. Pure."

"She's not pure."

“On the contrary, compared to you and me, she is pure. She may be able to kill but she is not a psychopath like you,” Ethan said with a smile.

“Why are you here Ethan?” Henry asked raising his right eyebrow barely stopping himself from rolling his eyes at the other.

“Well,” he started nervously while twirling his thumbs. Really this change of moods was disconcerting for Henry to witness. One minute he was behaving like a nervous teenager and another minute he was the cold calculating man the Henry has known him as. “In my sessions I was told to face my obstacles and tackle them head on.”

“Okay...”

“But you see that my main obstacle is this favor that I had promised you...”

“You want to renege on it?”

“No, no. On the contrary, I think that I have served it. It’s been two years and I want your blessing.”

“For what?”

“Courting your daughter.”

“Are you feeling well? You are behaving strangely.”

“Of course I am behaving strangely. I want to see her again and court her and make her fall in love with me.” Ethan glanced at Henry to see if he was making progress. Nope. Henry’s face was impassive as ever. “Come on. You want someone powerful for her. You want someone who will love her and be faithful to her. You want someone who will always protect her and live with her to an old age.”

“Yes, I want all that for her but I also want this to be her choice.”

“Her choice?” Ethan scoffed. “You set us up in the first place.”

“I know and I don’t want her to ever find out about that.”

“What if I tell her?”

“Then you risk losing her before you even have her.” There was a long pause before he continued, “Contrary to what you believe, I love my daughter. Maybe a few of my actions have been a bit selfish but in the long run I want only the best for both of us.”

“As unthinkable as it may seem, I believe that and that was why I came here to ask for the chance to try and make her happy. It may not be now,” his eyes caught Henry’s. “I have time to wait however long it may be.” He stood up and took out his wallet. “And when that time comes, give her this.” He handed over his card with a number and his name. “She will get through to me wherever I am.”

“You are trusting me with this?”

“Yes.”

“It’s like you are not the same person anymore.”

Ethan smiled, “You should try to open your heart at least once. Protect her.” Then he left.

Henry stared at the door for quite awhile feeling the card in his hand. It was quite possible that Ethan was right and having the two meet changed the future that was meant to be. He opened his drawer and put the card in. Just as he was shutting it, his heart constricted painfully. His first thought was that Ethan had overcome his defenses and done something to him. This was before he realized that the pain had transformed into a dull ache. He pushed himself up and felt through the several links that he had made with his people and realized where something was wrong. Wendy.

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Wendy woke up late. Her first thought was that she had to have breakfast. She loved breakfast. As much as people were always concerned of what they had to take, she loved the fact that she could eat whatever she wanted. And the fact that she could make warm anything in minutes thrilled her. Okay, everything in this world thrilled her. Especially the miracle of the internet. She didn't know how she even got the hang of it but within months she was an expert. She could do virtually anything through the internet.

Right now she had enrolled in classes online and was taking a course on history and another in business management. Of course Henry had suggested one on peace and conflict management but she hadn't been interested. She knew what Henry had always wanted and that was that she go back and rule. She had no problem with ruling. It wasn't a secret that she had always wanted to be queen but at the moment she wanted to know if she was capable of doing some other things first. She wanted to know who she was. In her world the future was set with people not having a lot of choices. In this world, the opportunities were vast as the oceans.

She had tried her hand in painting but that didn't work out quite as well. It was fun while it lasted and she met the most interesting group of people. She tried design but the fashion changed so fast she was always left behind. Buying clothes was much simpler. She had tried cooking classes. She was average in that. She realized what she was good at eventually. Singing. When she realized this, she had tried various songs and one day as Amber was guarding her and listening as she sang, the latter noticed an aspect of her voice that she had never realized before.

Her voice or her power or whichever it was, was manipulating the air around them subtly to the point that it was affecting the people who were listening to her. Amber being more loyal to Henry than her reported this to him. He came by wanting to witness what was happening and it was amazing to see the shock in his face. This was something he had never thought about and decided it was a project she should start focusing on. Of

course she had to do it with only the people Henry trusted so performing in public was out of the question.

So, now she had to get up from the bed, take breakfast and then go practice her singing then after that, she could go on the vacation to palm island she had always planned on since the first month that she had been there and met Ethan. He never called her back but that was okay since they both knew he was her rebound but every time she thought about him she smiled. Maybe he knew that she was slowly falling in love with him. If they had met any other time, it would have worked out but then, she didn't even know what she wanted and most likely she would have messed it up because of that.

She pushed herself out of bed and jumped in the shower. Then she was dressing and going to the kitchen where Greta and Charles were waiting. They were the test subjects. "Morning?" she said chirpily.

"Morning Wendy," they both replied, then Greta continued, "What are you having for breakfast today?"

"Fried eggs, bacon, banana, muffin and milked coffee."

"It's a wonder you haven't gained any weight."

"Why?" Wendy asked as she sat down and picked an apple.

"If the rest of us eat like that, we would not be able to walk out on our own."

"Her wizard genes are starting to kick in," Amber said as she walked in and took a seat next to Wendy.

"Yeah right."

"In everything you do, especially your powers, you use energy like everything else in your life. Your genes enable you to store as much energy as possible in a way that is

easy to channel that energy. Turning it into fat is not the best way as the process of gaining it again to use it is hard and requires several things such as water and air.”

“So wizards store energy differently than humans?” Wendy asked.

“Precisely. For every Wizard it is different but most, the energy is centralized in the palm of their hands and that is why they don’t touch humans.”

“So if I manage to bind your hands will I be binding your powers?”

“No. the hands are simply a way of channeling my powers. If you were to bind them to a point I can’t move my hands at all, you will be having mass destruction in your hands. It is one of the laws of Wizards.”

“Thou shall not bind thy neighbor’s hands!” Wendy said as she chuckled.

“Exactly. It is worse than actually killing thy neighbor,” Ken said as he walked in and winked at Wendy and kissed Amber’s cheek. “For the first crime, you earn instant death if you are found. The second one, you have to be brought to the council for judgment. You have a chance to survive that.”

“Wizards are weird.”

After some time as everyone kept silent waiting for the others to finish their breakfast, Wendy stood up and went to the back door. All of them knew the ritual. She would go out. The humans would follow while the wizards stayed behind and watched through the window from the soundproof room they had constructed just for the purposes of the study. Everything went according to plan except for the change in the weather. Suddenly the day turned dull and dark clouds rolled in from nowhere. Wendy didn’t notice. She was so focused solely on the song she was singing and from the looks of Greta and Charles, she was doing a good job holding their attention through everything that was going on around them.

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