

Chapter 0296

She begins humming and then chanting under her breath. It's a language I don't understand, but the flame in the pit goes from a warm yellow orange to a deep green.

"Tonight, we initiate these two into our Elite Warrior brotherhood and sisterhood. To mark their devotion, we shall bestow upon them the symbol of the Royal Elite." She begins humming again and the flames change to blue. As she continues to hum she places a long metal pole into the fire, this must be the branding iron.

"Are you willing to pledge your loyalty and power to the Elite Warriors, regardless of the consequences?" She asks.

We both respond without hesitation. "Yes."

"Are you willing to put the Kingdom's needs above your own and do all in your power to protect its vast members?"

"Yes." We reply no breaking eye contact with each other.

The air in the room begins to thicken with the smoke from the candles and the fire pit, but also the tingling of whatever magic she is wielding.

"Will you uphold the integrity of the Alpha King and Luna Queen?"

"Yes."

"Will you lay your life on the line to protect those who are weaker than you?"

"Yes."

The flames turn purple this time.

"You are being granted a great honor and hold the power to help the Royal Pack grow and thrive. Do you swear, on your life, to uphold that honor while you wear your brand?"

"Yes."

"Kneel then raise your right arm, inside of your wrist up." We both follow her instructions.

She kneels between us and grabs the handle of the brand and lifts it from the purple flame. She moves to Mina first, chanting low under her breath, gently holding the back of Mina's hand and pressing the branding iron to the inside of her wrist. I can hear the skin sizzle and see the smoke lift from her skin. Other than a sharp intake of breath, Mina doesn't move or say anything. Her arm is visibly shaking from the pain, I'm sure, she feels and tears run from her eyes, but she doesn't move to wipe them away.

The branding iron is pulled away and placed back into the fire pit, turning the flames a bright white. The witch reaches for vials of herbs sitting next to her and she begins chanting again, in more of a melody while she sprinkles little bits of things on Mina's burnt flesh.

Mina's tears subside, by the time the witch is done with her and she just stares at me, but it feels more like she's not seeing me. She's lost in her mind somewhere and it takes everything that I have to not go to her and comfort her after all of that. I thought I might fall into a panic memory like the first time we got to see the mission camp when I smelt her burning flesh. The panic fought to take over. I had to keep reminding myself that this is not Kaley's torture, but something that will make me stronger, I have survived worse and Mina and Nickolas are here with me. I'm not going through it alone.

I take a deep breath and look at the witch who seems to just be waiting for me to go through my own panic and be ready for her. I blink and nod. She grabs the branding iron from the still white flames and begins chanting and repeating the ceremony she just completed with Mina.

This time the searing pain and the smell of burning flesh pull me into my memory, but I am still conscious enough to keep my body still, but the struggle is real. I hear her soothing voice chanting next to me, but I also hear a voice in my head that isn't my wolf.

You are very strong and important. Remember that Little One. All of those you come into contact with and help will benefit, but be wary of those who seek you out for favors. You still have trials in your future that must be navigated through. Keep pushing forward, you are stronger than

anyone knows. This ritual is different for all who go through it, even though the physical branding appears to be the same. No one speaks of their experience or what is revealed to them through the process. Each must make their own journey without bias or influence. Remember that when you speak of your ritual.

I slowly blink and come back to the present. Mina and I are still kneeling in front of the fire pit, but it is cold and all the candles have been blown out. The room isn't completely dark though. Small rays of light are coming through the window in the kitchen. Have we been here all night?

"Oh, man. I feel like I got hit by a truck." Mina mumbles like she just woke up.

"Yeah. I guess I understand why it takes days." I blink like I'm trying to get sleep out of my eyes.

We both look down at our brands. It is a simple crescent moon shape with the opening facing towards our elbows. That is the only similarity though. Mina's crescent is delicate, made from thin intertwining lines like vines dancing up a lattice. Mine is more sharp and angular like a tribal print.

"This is so weird. I know she used the same brand for both of us." I exclaim looking closer at the details on my brand. It looks like there are words training around some of the shapes making up the crescent, but they are too small to make out.

"I don't remember much, do you?" Mina asks me.

"Probably more than you since you went first. We ended up in a kind of trance or sleep or something. I don't remember anything after the brand touched me other than a voice in my head giving me instructions." I shrug.

"I don't feel any different, do you?"


"No, but I'm also afraid to move right now. My body feels really heavy, like when I woke up in the hospital with Doc Ganon. What were the herbs and thinks she sealed the brand with, do you think? [1](#)

"Not sure, but they must be part of what gives us the special link and shift control. Maybe it's the way the spell is linked to us for tracking. Ugh, my brain hurts thinking about it. I need water and sleep. Where did she go? And Nickolas, have you seen him?"

"No, but she said the brand takes time and we would be vulnerable, maybe this is what she was talking about. We are weak, and my brain feels off like my thoughts are running through sand to process."

"Yeah, let's get water and head up to bed. I have to trust them right now, since I don't think I could put up a fight with a paper towel." She giggles and we both get up slowly, leaning on each other for support.


Once we both down a full glass of water each and refill to

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take to our room, we both head up. I crawl to my bed and she crawls to hers.


"Well, I am glad that I didn't have to go through that alone, that was a little scary and hurt like a b*tch."

I laugh a little. "Me too, see you whenever these after effects wear off." I close my eyes and roll over, falling asleep immediately.

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