

Owned by the Alphas | The Oath

The Oath

I sat by the fire, staring at the flames dancing in the ash as I drank the punch.

It was starting to have an effect; my tongue was numb, but my mind wasn't. It heard every screech and scream as the three alphas came out, grabbing another three girls, then another three, until it was only me and two others.

I was next. I wasn't ready.

My heart raced as the screams finally quieted and I took another sip, hoping it would numb my mind even more. My body felt relaxed, my muscles not tense at all, but my head was pounding.

I leaned back, resting my head against the big cushions on the couch, my eyes fluttering closed.

I had avoided *his* eyes burning into me every time he had come through that damn door, and the idea that I was going to be the next one he came to get had my jaw clenching.

I didn't want to be the next one screaming like the others that had gone through.

I'd kill for a coffee. Or a nap. I took the second option, slowly drifting while I waited.

The red eyes were in my dream.

I gasped awake and Nikolai was there, bending down, his eyes meeting mine.

"Your turn," he said, holding his hand out. I looked between it and the door.

"Did you at least change the sheets?" I grumbled, letting him pull me up.

He smirked and led me through the door. Braxton and Derik grabbed the last girls from their group and followed us through.

I don't know what I was expecting, but it wasn't the room that greeted us. There was no bed, no lanterns. Only the moon shining down on us through the opening in the ceiling, casting its red glare.

The three alphas stood next to three concrete stands, each holding a golden goblet carved with the three symbols of Wolf Territory: a wave, a tree, and my own village's symbol, a vine with flower buds, because the Grasslands area had meadows stretching over every part of it that wasn't used for crops and animal farming.

The alphas all wore the same mischievous smirk, the shadows playing on their faces, making them look even bigger, even more intimidating.

Like they needed it. I was already nervous, and I was sure the others were too. I was just as curious though. Surely they didn't expect us to fuck on the floor, so what the hell were we doing in the room with the goblets?

Nikolai stepped into the red rays of the moon.

His claw grew from the pointing finger on his hand, his eyes glowing red before he pierced his wrist with it.

We all gasped.

One of the girls whimpered, drawing the alphas' attention. They glared at her as she shrunk back, her chin wobbling.

Nikolai held his wrist over the first goblet, his blood dripping into it. He moved to the next goblet, then the final one.

His eyes never left mine, and I wanted to be disgusted by what he was doing because I knew what it meant, but I wasn't. I was even more intrigued.

He stepped forward, and the shadows moved down his face, dancing across his abs, his tattoo.

My mouth ran dry as I took him in. Strong, powerful muscle that had something stirring in me. Not entirely uncomfortable, but it was foreign.

I wanted to explore it further and when a smirk tugged at his lips, I wondered whether he could tell what I was thinking. What his body did to mine.

Derik and Braxton moved behind him, cutting into their own flesh with their claws, long, thick talon things, dripping their blood into the goblets as Nikolai finally spoke.

“Here you take an oath. A blood oath of loyalty to the Werewolf Territory. You become part of us,” he said in that deep, gravelly voice that had my stomach tightening.

I shivered, crossing my arms across myself, the cold of the room trying to seep in past the feelings Nikolai pushed through me.

“What oath?” I asked, wanting more specifics before I decided whether to take it or not.

“Patience, Spitfire.” Braxton winked from behind Nikolai. I clenched my jaw and tried to wait.

“An oath that forbids revealing what happens tonight. An oath that holds your tongues to the traditions we expect of you tonight. An oath that makes you a part of our promise to protect you as a race within our territory,” Nikolai explained, and I raised a brow.

So that’s why my mom had been so vague. It wasn’t comforting; the unknown was terrifying. I shivered, not able to stop my next question falling from my lips.

“And if we don’t take the oath?”

Braxton blew out a breath as Derik stepped forward.

“Try it, beautiful,” he said with a smile, but his voice was a threat, cold and hard.

“Please...” One of the girls shivered, a Forest girl. “Please...don’t punish us for her cursed tongue. She’s winter born.”

I rolled my eyes, of course. How could I forget my ghastly curse? Sometimes, in moments like these, it was hard for resentment not to creep in. My parents knew what would happen to me and my brother for having children in winter.

They swore we were due in spring but came eight weeks early. We almost died and because we didn't, we have the devil in us, or some stupid shit like that. I'd seen no proof of that.

The red eyes from my dream flashed in my mind, and I shuddered at the lie I told myself. I shook it off and waited for the alphas to get annoyed and punish me for a birth I had no choice in.

But they didn't.

"Tonight is about sacrifice. About warmth and pleasure. There will be no punishments," he said, before reaching back for a goblet.

I almost snickered. Pleasure. I bet I wouldn't even get an orgasm out of the wolf bastard. Pity, it'd probably be the best orgasm of my life.

My blood roared to life at the thought, and the alphas' eyes snapped to mine. I lifted my chin defiantly, but that had their smirks growing knowingly.

Nikolai handed a goblet to me, his hands brushing mine as the other offerings were given theirs by their own alphas. Mine lingered.

He leaned in, his warm hands cupping mine on the gold.

"I can smell you," he breathed, my hair brushing my face as I tensed. He nuzzled his face in my neck, sniffing as his hands clasped on mine, tighter, warmer.

A tight heat prickled in my lower stomach, my pussy betraying me, growing slick at the scent of him, the radiating heat, the tension. My nipples hardened against my silk.

He noticed.

He growled against my neck, my head involuntarily rolling to the side. My breaths came short and sharp through my tight chest as I fidgeted beneath his overwhelming body.

His hand moved to my waist, the touch searing through my defenses, breaking them down easily as my thighs grew damper.

"Kai," Derik said, a warning tone in his voice.

Nikolai ignored them, his hand latching around me, yanking me forward, flush against his body. I yelped, the goblet falling from my hand.

Braxton caught it. He tugged Nikolai back, his eyes bright red. "Nikolai," he said in a deeper voice.

Nikolai stepped back, his glowing red eyes catching mine, the intensity so fierce I sucked in a breath.

Braxton handed my goblet back, warning me with his eyes before pushing Nikolai back, who resisted for a second before stepping back to the concrete half pillars, the shadows covering his face.

He was still watching. I shuddered, swallowing hard.

"Soon, brother." Derik held his shoulder, his claws out, resting there, and I had a feeling Kai was still on the edge of not listening to his other alphas.

"The oath," Nikolai rasped. "Then drink the blood."

The other girls gasped, but I had seen it coming.

"It connects you to us," Braxton said, his shirtless body doing just as much damage to my libido. Did wolves not own shirts? He caught me staring and grinned. I quickly looked away.

"Come forward, girls," Derik said with an impatient huff.

We did, each stepping in front of our pillar, in front of our alpha.

"Read the oath," Kai pressed.

I looked down at the old script carved into the concrete and read with the other girls.

I pledge myself to my alphas.

I pledge myself to Werewolf Territory.

I offer my purity as a token of my loyalty.

I accept their protection.

I accept their bodies in mine.

I will protect the secrets and traditions of the blood moon with my life.

I will tell no one of this ceremony.

I will accept the blood of my alpha in my body.

I will accept the brand of my alpha on my body.”

I stepped back at the end of the oath, my eyes widening.

Brand?

“Drink,” Nikolai ordered, his voice less hoarse, his eyes back to green.

I hesitated as the other girls followed their orders. I looked at the swirling drops of blood, then the oath I had just spoken.

“What brand?”

“Drink and we’ll tell you,” Derik said, nodding to the goblet.

“If you don’t drink, we can’t answer your questions, Spitfire. You’re not sworn to secrecy until our blood is in you,” Braxton offered.

I sighed. I had to commit to an oath without knowing the details? Seemed like a setup to me, but I had no choice.

I drank the blood.

It was metallic and bitter. And then it was cold. I frowned, the room spinning as the liquid slid from my throat.

Wherever it landed, my body didn’t like it. It stung like a bad sunburn as I screwed my face up, holding my stomach as the goblet fell from my hands. I swallowed hard as Nikolai frowned.

“Is it meant to feel so shit?” I gasped as a weakness spread through me, a heavy, icy feeling taking over as I stumbled.

“Brax,” Nikolai snapped, holding me up.

Why were the other girls not feeling it?

Braxton's eyes rolled back in his head, that same white swirling from before, coating them. He growled, then sucked in a breath. His eyes snapped back to me, and I looked from hooded lids that tried to close.

"Winter born," he breathed, walking forward, holding my face.

My eyes fluttered closed as he did the eye thing again.

"What's wrong, Brax?" Derik snapped.

"The winter is fighting the blood." He smirked. "Her shadows don't like us in her body with them." His eyes went back to normal, and he stepped back.

I shivered at the way he said "shadows." I didn't want them anywhere near me.

"We've never had a winter-born offering. There hasn't been one in over a millennium. Will this be a problem?" Nikolai demanded.

I almost hoped he'd say yes and let me go, but he smirked and shook his head.

"No, our blood is stronger. She'll be fine. But she will be the most powerful offering we've ever had." His mouth went wide across his face, and I blew out a breath.

The coldness subsided, the heavy ache being flushed out with a warmth that I knew was their blood. I pushed back from Nikolai and glared.

"I have no shadows," I snapped, feeling somehow violated, but the alphas ignored me.

Derik looked up at the moon and cursed. "We're running late. We need to finalize the branding," he warned, clearly the more serious alpha of the three.

I flinched at the idea of branding. I'd had to brand the cows at the last calving for the year, and the burned flesh smell had made me vomit.

I wasn't cut out for farming. I stuck to the wineries, squishing the grapes, taste testing, bottling. There was something therapeutic about it, but I didn't have time to think about that now. I had to prepare for a brand I didn't want.

Nikolai nodded, and his fangs dropped. I gasped as the other girls took steps back. The other two dropped their fangs. Two elongated canines on the top, two on the bottom, their other teeth looking sharper.

Their eyes went red, and I realized what they were doing. "You're going to bite us?" I shuddered.

Nikolai nodded. "The bite of your alpha," he said, walking forward as the others claimed their offerings.

The girls' screams made me jump, piercing the room, echoing, bouncing off the walls, and I knew that's what I had heard through the door.

I glanced over at them, Braxton and Derik tearing through their clothes to get to their hip. Derik sank his fangs in first. Then Brax. The girls sobbed, screaming, and I backed up from Nikolai. I hated pain.

"No point in running, Lori."

"I can't help it. I don't want it to hurt," I admitted, not ashamed of my aversion to pain.

He hesitated, then a smirk crept across his face. "It doesn't have to hurt," he offered, and I raised a brow.

"I have a feeling I am going to regret this, but what do you mean?"

He backed me up against the wall, his finger running up my thigh, slipping under my silk nightie, brushing my hipbone.

"We put the bite here so it is not visible to others, keeps the secret, and can be easily covered. But there are other places to put it that aren't so painful," he breathed, leaning closer as I swallowed a stuck breath.

"Like where?" I asked, sucking in a breath when he lowered himself down my body, his face in front of my pussy.

He lifted the silk, revealing my damp lace panties. He gave a growl of approval before leaning in.

I gasped as his warm breath teased me, his lips brushing along my thigh before pressing them against the hot skin on the inner of it. I almost moaned at the feeling.

I clutched the pillar of the wall I leaned against. His fingertips brushed along my outer thigh as he kissed the inner again, his fangs scraping lightly. He tapped the spot he had kissed, then looked up at me.

“If I bite you here, your husband might not appreciate it when he chooses you tomorrow, but it will feel like I just sucked your clit.”

He grinned, and my eyes fluttered closed. I didn’t care about my ceremony tomorrow, it was tomorrow’s problem. I wanted less pain tonight, so I nodded, meeting his eyes.

“Do it,” I breathed, and he grinned, kissing the flesh under my pussy with tender lips before he opened his mouth and latched on to the skin.

I cried out as his fangs pierced the skin, sinking into flesh. But holy fuck, I almost came. My knees shook to hold me up as blinding pleasure tore through me.

I moaned as his fingers teased me through my panties, the lace scratching my folds as his tongue caressed the skin of my thigh. I whimpered as my body demanded more, but he pulled away.

I looked down at him as he licked over the wound, sealing it enough to stop the bleeding, before kissing the red marks that were left, the ones that were going to scar.

I shuddered against him. I didn’t care, that was worth it. If my future husband cared then he could go fuck himself, I’d still choose the same fate.

Nikolai stood up, his eyes hooded with lust, and something twisted inside me. Like I could feel his body with mine, his lust was mine, his desire was mine. It was too much.

I stepped into him as he growled and gripped the back of my head, fisting my hair before yanking me to his mouth. He almost made it too when Derik roared.

“Nikolai!”

Nikolai froze as Braxton and Derik pulled him away. Nikolai fought them as I stepped toward him. It took both of them to stop his feral need that I felt in me.

Derik spun Kai to him as Braxton stood between me and him. I frowned as I felt fear flicker in me. Not mine. It was Brax's and Derik's.

"We've got to follow the rules, Kai." Derik tried to break through to the alpha as Braxton's eyes snapped to mine.

I stepped back as he came forward, his eyes wide. He sniffed all around me, lifting strands of my hair as I smacked his hand away. He stepped back, his eyes still wide as he turned to his brothers.

"We've got a problem, boys," he warned, and I hated the way he looked at me. Like it was my fault.

Nikolai and Derik frowned, glancing between me and Brax. I held my arms around me again as the other girls huddled, tears sticky on their faces as they held their brands.

"What now?" Derik snapped.

"Her shadows are whispering to her," he said, his eyes going back in his head. "She's channeling us," he said as if it meant anything to me.

"I'm not doing anything."

Braxton nodded. "Yes, you are, Spitfire, you just haven't learned how to harness those shadows yet."

"What shadows?"

"The winter shadows inside you. They're part of you, and yours are fiercely loyal to you. Lucky for you."

"How the hell is that lucky?" I snapped.

"Because if they weren't, they would try to destroy all the good parts of you, and then we'd have to kill you before you destroyed us all."

"But that's enough storytelling tonight, Spitfire. We have a ritual to complete before the sun comes up, and Nikolai is going to ruin ancient traditions and take you on the dinner table if we don't hurry the fuck up. So, shall we eat?" he asked, as if he hadn't just told me I was haunted in some weird fucked up way.

What were the shadows? What did that mean? Could they control me?

“Depends, do you have normal food?” I asked, and he chuckled, leading me past the other alphas and through the next door.

My jaw dropped at the next room I was led into. It wasn’t cold, or dark. It was warm and vibrant with a feast laid out for all the offerings, who were laughing and eating.

Fireplaces filled the room with warmth as soft music played in the background. Like it was a true ceremony. One to celebrate.

I still wasn’t sure what part I was meant to be celebrating, but I was starving, so I ignored my reservations and let Nikolai stride into the room, grab my hand, and lead me to the seat next to his.