

Chapter 0510

"I think you're right. There are still a lot of pieces missing from our puzzle. But we can focus on the pentagram and the elements that are powering it. We need to know how to blow out the flame and get rid of the plants making the pentagram and I'm sure it's not as easy as throwing some dirt on the fire to snuff it out and dig up the plants."

"You're probably right. Let's see if Mateo and Jena have surfaced and then fill everyone in. Someone might have an idea of what to do before we bother Gentry." Sierra says, and I feel a little better having some knowledge even if we don't have anything to put into action yet. We talk a little more about the plants and what they look like so everyone in the room is aware and on the lookout for them, because Sierra is convinced there are probably protection spells around the patches of plants to keep people from accidentally destroying them and harming the spell when Lil walks in.

"Hey, I heard there's a team meeting. What did you find out?"

"Who told you there was a team meeting?" Nathaniel asked, laughing. "The three of us are here, Wyatt is running, and Jena is practicing procreation." The three of us laugh at his joke. He doesn't talk a lot and jokes really aren't his thing, but when he does it's usually hilarious and at the expense of

one of us and he will never let us live it down. Everyone else in the room looks at us like we are stupid, but we don't care. We passed a lot of boring, uncomfortable nights like this.

"If you must know, Lenny told me Sierra came into the school raving like a banshee, and it was important."

I let Nathaniel fill her in on the Cliff's notes version of the details.

"Instead of killing the flame and all of that stuff, which sound like a sh*t ton of work to me. Can we repurpose the thing into something that could protect the pack? Has anyone asked Elena or Gentry about that?"

We all just stare at her. It didn't even cross my mind to make the thing work in our favor. That was one of the first things Elena taught me. Magic isn't good or bad, it's the caster and the intention behind the magic that is good or bad.

"You are brilliant! I could kiss you! We absolutely read something about harnessing power used against us for our own purposes, but it looked complicated as hell." Oliver looks from me to her with his full blown, panty dropping smile and eyes brighter than I have ever seen them before.

"Well, if I get the same reaction Sky did, I'm all in, cause we can't feel a thing. Bring it on 'Big Guy.'" She uses my nickname for him, sticks her arms out and puckers up. I

don't find that it makes me jealous though, like I have been when other girls throw themselves at him. I am actually comforted that all of my friends seem to be really getting along and gelling together. ¹

He scoops her into a hug and they are both laughing as he gives her a kiss on the cheek. "We have to talk to Elena tonight. She is going to be the make or break if we can do any of this." He says setting her down.

"Problem is, I don't know if we will get a chance to talk about it tonight. Mom wants to see us all and we really need to be there for her. I don't know how she is dealing with losing her mate, she hasn't really spoken to anyone but Brett and Lenny." Dakota sighs.

My stomach drops, I have to tell the twins that it was me. They need to know what happened to their dad and that he chose to go his own way. Then I feel irritated with myself because I still care how they feel. If I am being honest I never stopped. Even if they were under a spell, they didn't or couldn't fight hard enough to just choose me when their backs were against the wall and this is what hurts the most. Oliver will always choose me, I never have any doubts. Even Sam was able to side with me at that moment. If they are supposed to be my mates, like their parents think, shouldn't that connection or pull or whatever be enough to override anything? Shouldn't I have zero doubts in them? Ugh! I really don't like all of these emotions. ⁶

"Well, we celebrate the passing of the Alpha tomorrow, then we celebrate my ascension into adulthood the next day." Sam beats his chest and just like that my negative thoughts vanish into other problems for other days.

We all contribute thoughts to a notebook that Nathaniel has, with every question we could all come up with for Elena and hopefully Gentry, whenever we get the chance to ask. Once we are done we decide we need to have as much information as we can for the witches to work with. We divided up the task of documenting the plants that make up the pentagram tips making sure to note anything unusual along the way. As we are leaving, Mateo and Jena walk down the stairs. I can't read her face, but my brother's tells me I have a new sister and I could not be more excited.

I run up to her and wrap her in a hug. We don't need words right now. I know that she is scared out of her mind and is so unsure of the future that she doesn't want to risk anyone else's. But she is making my brother so happy and I know he will do everything in his power to erase the memory of her time with Mike. I hope she feels that in my arms. She is home, for good.

"I'm so excited to have a sister." I whisper to her. Then I let her go and move to hug my brother.

"Congrats, big brother. You are one lucky man."

"Don't congratulate me yet. I still have to convince her to let

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me make it permanent, but for now she isn't rejecting me, so it's a start." He smiles at me.

"What fun would it be if she didn't make you work for it?" I wink at him and move back to my friend. "We have been busy while you have been...well, busy." I fill her in on the day's events and what we are up to now.

Jena doesn't disappoint. She jumps right in. Like me she likes to have something productive to do to take her mind off of the hard, emotional stuff for a little while. It helps to process if we can step away for a bit. She volunteers to help us with the documentation, and it makes me ecstatic when she chooses my brother as her partner. Lil grabs Oliver, who is reluctant to leave me until both twins tell him to pull his head out of his ass and they are actually capable of watching over me. To which he replies it only takes one of him. Sam and Sierra take the fourth point and Nathaniel sends coordinates for the fifth point to Wyatt and tells him what we are up to and then heads back to his surveillance center acting as go between for all of us. 3

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We collect samples of each plant very carefully, take pictures and measurements of the crop that is growing and the area surrounding it. I don't know what information Elena will need and I don't want to be delayed because we missed anything.

The twins and I decided to take the wolfsbane plant. I don't want anyone else to have to come into contact with it and I know that I can heal from it quickly. I can't willingly put them in harm's way. And I know all of these plants are poisonous, but wolfsbane is the worst.

As we move to the area Nathaniel directed us to, I notice magic traces in the air and slow down. We had shifted to get out here quickly, but I forced my wolf to shift back to protect her from anything still lingering in the air that might harm her.

"What is that?" Cam shifts and asks me. I look at him and then slam my eyes shut, he is completely naked and I don't know how I feel about the sight of him right now.

"You still afraid of a naked man, Tiny?" Dakota is right behind me. 1

"Afraid? No. Do I go around checking out naked people? Also, no. Most of us have learned to shift and keep our clothes in tact, so it's not something I'm used to." My eyes

are still squeezed tight. It's been a really long time since I have been in the middle of a twin sandwich like this. I don't count sleeping, because I could lay next to any of them and sleep like the dead.

"Why does that thought actually make me happy?" Cam rumbles way too close.

"Nope, we are not doing this. You do not get to flirt with me like this, like one of your rando girls to give you your s*x fix." I step away from them, eyes still slammed shut. I am so grateful For my enhanced senses. I don't need to see to move away from them.

"Our s*x fix? Is that what you think you are, Smalls?"

"I don't know? All I know is that you all had a hard time keeping it in your pants before I left for training. I can't imagine it has gotten any better since then. You even slept with Kaley, the one person who hates me the most and has done the most to hurt me."

"We haven't been with anyone since you left. Don't believe all of the rumors you hear."

"That's hard to believe when I could smell her on you. Not on your clothes, on you, your skin. Your scents were mixed with hers."

"Just because she tried, often, doesn't mean we slept with her. Why won't you believe that?"

I whipped around, my temper flaring. I don't care that they are absolutely gorgeous specimens and completely naked showing off every cut line and curve of muscle that they have earned from serious training. They both take a step back from my glare. Good they should be afraid right now. My wolf is going feral in my head, trying to break free to teach them a lesson.

"Falsely accuse anyone of betraying their pack recently? Why would I trust the people who would CHOOSE my enemy over me? Who were so blinded that they couldn't see the truth staring them in the face. YOU CHOSE HER! According to everyone else, including both your parents, I should be your everything, your only choice, but they are all wrong. The people who should choose me, like my dad and my brother, always put the job first. Unless the choice is between Sierra and I, Sam chooses me. Oliver chooses me every time, no question. Even knowing I was the enemy that Mike wanted, Robbie chose to save me, risking his own life." They both are breathing heavily, jealousy and anger radiating heavily off of both of them. I have never really talked about how my placement in my friends priorities makes me feel

I can feel the tears starting to fall and I turn quickly to hide them. They don't get to see the pain they caused. I can't let them see my weakness. Because they are my weakness, they always have been. I love them and not even my warrior brand can stop the feeling like I wish it could right now. I take a shuddering breath and move forward, distracting my

thoughts by looking for magic and heading straight for the wolfsbane. We have a job to do and I think that was enough emotional dumping for one day.

The twins shifted into their wolves and came up to walk beside me. Their wolves are an interesting combination of mirror images and inverted colors. Cameron is dark gray with a light gray triangular patch on his chest and at the tip of his tail and ears. Dakota is light gray with the dark gray triangle and tips of his ears and tail. They are both so massive that their shoulders are almost the same height as mine on all fours. They walk so close to me that I am brushing their sides with my whole arm as we walk. I hate that it is calming. I don't want them to comfort me when I just want to be mad at them. They don't talk to me through the mindlink though. There isn't anything that they can say to me. It's a point they can't fight. 1

It is late afternoon by the time we get all that we need and talk to the other groups, making notes of what we found that is similar and different from each site. We all meet in the backyard of the packhouse and just stare at the fire pit that is still burning. The flame is small and inconspicuous so no one would really notice or question it if they walked by the kitchen and looked out the window. And no one really sits out here during the day. The idea was brilliant. Place the heart of the spell right under their noses and keep everyone busy with other tasks and projects and the Omegas who would normally handle it, were probably Alpha commanded to leave it alone and let it burn.

“Now that I’m standing here and really paying attention, I can feel the power flow off of it in waves, like a heartbeat. Can anyone else feel it?” I ask the group. The twins have still not shifted back or talked to me since I told them off. They are just sitting next to me, their wolf’s faces showing no expression.

“I can feel the magic, but not the pulse.” Oliver says and Dakota’s chest rumbles.

“Jealous?” I ask and get no response from him.

“Hey! Ava!” Sierra says looking over my shoulder. I spin around to see the former Luna. She seems so small and frail, but there is color in her cheeks. She’s trying to hold on.

She looks at me, tilts her head and tries for a weak smile. I walk into her embrace, letting the tears fall again. “My sweet girl. I’m so sorry I left you alone with this. I didn’t think it would be this hard. We talked and planned and did everything we could to make the pain as minimal as possible. How are you doing? That was far too much to ask, but there was no other way.” She whispers into my hair. 2