

Scars by Jessica Bailey Chapter 18

Chapter 18

Amelie

I get up to my room and sit on the bed. I just stare at the box for a while. I work up the nerve to open it. I find the key attached to the ribbon bookmark connected to the book's spine. I turn the key and open the box. There it is, the tools of the horrible ritual I would have to perform. There is a small wooden bowl; it's already stained red for years of countless others who felt the same as me. This was the only way out. There are two small daggers. One is steel, and the other is silver.

"We need to see what the book says." Inari does not even want to look at the knife. I am curious about this book my father gave to me. It's old with a leather cover and binding. I open the front cover and see the title page; it's handwritten, The complete research on Marks by Raphael Bois de Frene year 1795.

"That name sounds familiar like I should know it." I stared at the name, puzzled. It was so familiar, but I could not put my finger on it.

"Keep reading. Maybe something will trigger your memory," Inari was eager to read on. This book wasn't just about the ritual. It was about all marks.

I was just as intrigued as she was. We just accepted that we had marks and what they mean, but I never really dug deeper. I kept reading some of the handwriting in parts, it was hard to read, and the simple illustrations were well-drawn. It was honestly fascinating. Pack Marks were blessed marks from the moon goddess and could only be granted if she approved of the Alpha. Most Alpha families were ancient, and even in the US, Pack Alphas were from those old families, either native or abroad. When an Alpha was gifted with two sons, that meant the goddess wanted the Pack to split, "Wow, so it looks like if we went to Europe, we could see a similar tree, Pack Mark. Kind of like a sister pack! I guess I never realized all the Alpha's I know only have one son and one or two daughters."

I kept reading. "Next is the Alpha, Luna, and Heir Marks. We saw the Heir Mark on James during his ceremony." I was utterly nerding out at this point. It said the Alpha mark is a full moon not only because it represents the moon goddess but because on the night of a full moon, it's the brightest, and the Alpha should always be the light in the dark to his Pack. "Wow, that's beautiful, poetic almost."

"It proves the divine right to lead. It's amazing. Keep reading." Inari was hooked the same as me. I nodded my head and kept reading. The uniting marks are blessed to the Alpha and Luna to show they fully encompass the Pack's responsibility and continue the family line. Next was about the Luna mark the crescent moon. The Luna is a phase of the Alpha, a part of the whole. Her role is mother to the whole Pack. She should nurture

and love her Pack teach them how to survive. Only the Fated Mate to the Alpha can receive the Luna mark and the uniting blessing marks.

“I didn’t know that! So, chosen mates of the Alpha cannot be Luna’s, or they just don’t receive the blessing? Hmm, I might have to ask Dad on that one. Oh, look, the next part is about the Heir Mark.” During the Heir Ceremony, the Heir selected receives the mark of a total lunar eclipse or a blood moon. They receive a blood mark and blood from three Alpha’s, including the Alpha they will one day replace. The blood moon shows the strength of the blood shared with the young wolf and the blessing from the moon goddess.

“It looks like family marks are next. Maybe we can find out why yours is still so strong with your parents.” Inari was right. It was a mystery, and maybe this book had some answers. Family Marks represent how the moon goddess sees each wolf. They hold their meaning; most mothers know their pups’ names and marks before birth. It’s only after birth that the bond can be completed with a drop of blood. This is showing the acceptance of the responsibility of raising the child. Stepparents can also carry a child’s mark, but they must be a fated mate to the parent. The blood parent of the child must also share a drop of blood. This allows for second chance mates to raise their mates’ children. “Well, my situation is a little different, but I guess back in the 1700’s stepparents were more common as Rouge attacks happened more often. I don’t see anything about Family bonds not fading after receiving a Mate Mark.”

“Life, in general, was harder. It makes sense second chance mates were more commonplace. Keep reading. Maybe it’s in the next few pages,” It was comforting to know there were many with stepparents throughout the years. Maybe not the same circumstances, but I felt a little more normal. I still didn’t know why my family bond was so strong.

I take a deep breath as I read the heading on the next page. “Well, we are finally here. The Mate Mark chapter.” I brace myself and keep reading. Each mate mark represents the mated pair in the Pack. The Alpha, Luna, and ranked wolves all had more elaborate marks to show the mated pairs’ responsibility to the Pack. It is also the only mark not given by exchanging blood but the bit of passion of a bonded fated pair. A tear rolled down my cheek. It was honestly a beautiful description, and I had always longed for that strong bond.

“Am, I know it’s hard, but we have to keep going.” I blink away my tears, take a deep breath and continue. The moon goddess does not make mistakes with fated mates. Wolves, as with humans, had the will of choice. If the heart of a wolf changed and it harmed their mate, their bond would weaken.

I gasp, “OK, well, that explains why we couldn’t mind link long distances, and I started feeling repulsed by him.” I read on. The Mate Mark is the only mark that can be rejected. All Marks can be taken away by the goddess. The rejection ritual is to be done on a new moon; the new moon represents a new life, a re-birth. To illustrate this re-

birth, the ritual must be done in a cave, and the one performing the right must be naked. "Well, this already sounds terrible, and we haven't gotten to the worst part."

"Stop stalling, keep reading," Inari was anxious. She was holding out hope. I read on holding out the same hope. Take a bowl made of dogwood and fill it with your blood. You have to overwrite the mate bond with your blood. Next, you will ask the moon goddess to bless your blood to protect you from any more heartache. You will ask her to bless you with a new beginning. Then dip the silver blade into your blood, and you will make an X through the mark. Dip the knife in blood again and reject your mate using their full name, then make a cross through the mark. If the wolf is not part of a pack, it will not survive the ritual. The rejector's wolf will be sealed. It is unknown if a rejected mate can become a second chance mate or if their wolf can be unsealed.

"Well, that's the worst ending of all time!" I close the book and pull my knees to my chest and lean my head forward, trying to comfort myself.

"It's what we expected." Inari is trying to be brave, but I know she is sad. She doesn't want to be sealed, and neither do I.

I feel responsible, "I should have rejected Tate before he marked me. I didn't see this coming. I'm sorry, Inari." I let the tears quietly roll down my face.

I can feel Inari's sadness as well, "Who knows, maybe we can reverse the seal. Your dad has a ton of old books we will have time to research."

I snap my head up and wipe away my tears, "Your right. We always push forward."

"Amelie, come join me for dinner. I heard you didn't eat lunch. Don't make me eat alone." Dad's mind links me.

"Sure, Dad, be right down." I look at my watch it's 6:30 PM. I had completely lost track of time. I needed to take a break, and a lighthearted meal with just dad and me would be a welcome change. I make my way down to the kitchen and focus on what I do have, not what I will lose.