

The Lightning Wolf Chronicles Novel

Souls Bound By Promise — Timothy Nelson 3

Chapter 3: We Can Do It

Evelyn's POV

I shut my eyes and focused on breathing. In through my nose, filling my lungs completely, then slow exhale. Delta Griffin had drilled this into me – pain was just a feeling you could push through with enough willpower.

When I opened my eyes, Nadia was staring at me.

“What?” I asked, shifting uncomfortably.

“Your face is still red.” She frowned. “You sure you just walked into a door?”

“I’m fine.” I looked away and headed for the pull-up bar.

The second I jumped up and grabbed the bar, fire shot across my back. I clenched my teeth and forced myself to keep going. One, two, three... every pull-up was agony, but I couldn't let it show.

Pain makes you stronger, my wolf whispered. We've survived worse.

Yeah, we had. Last winter Acacia locked me in the equipment room overnight with silver powder scattered everywhere. When Delta Griffin found me the next morning, I was already unconscious. It took Luna Isabella a full week to heal those burns.

But I never reported Acacia. The next day, I got a photo of some young Omega kid with a message – if I told anyone what happened, he'd be next.

“Fifteen? No, sixteen... seventeen...” Nadia was counting beside me, surprise in her voice.

I stopped at twenty and dropped down. My arms ached, my back was on fire, but I'd finished the standard routine.

As warm-up ended, more people filled the training field. The upperclassmen were showing up now, including that group of future leaders everyone worshipped.

Elliot stood center field with his friends, radiating the confidence that came with knowing you were destined for greatness. He looked exactly like Dad when he was young – tall, handsome, copper-gold hair, those sharp smoky blue eyes. He was talking to Orion, completely ignoring my existence in the corner.

Not that I expected anything different.

I remembered seventh grade when Acacia shoved me in the hallway and I spilled my drink everywhere. Elliot walked by and our eyes met for maybe two seconds. The look on his face wasn't concern – it was annoyance and embarrassment. He just shook his head at his friends like "that's how she is" and kept walking.

Last time I ever thought he might help me.

"Fall in!" Delta Griffin's voice cut through my memories.

Everyone quickly formed rows in the center field. I automatically went for my usual spot at the back edge, but Nadia grabbed my arm and pulled me forward.

"Stop hiding in the back all the time," she said quietly.

Delta Griffin stood in front of us, scanning the group. His eyes found me and lingered – he'd noticed the mark on my face.

"Today we're doing endurance and agility training," he announced. "I'm pairing you up. This isn't about fighting – it's about working together. You'll complete a series of challenges as teams."

My heart sank. Group exercises meant getting picked last or not at all. Last time I ended up partnered with Delta Griffin's assistant because nobody wanted me.

"Evelyn and Nadia, you're partners," Delta Griffin said directly, not giving anyone time to object.

I blinked in shock. Around me, I heard the usual mutters.

"Why pair with that waste..."

"New girl doesn't know better yet..."

"This'll be good..."

Nadia ignored every word and grinned at me. "Cool, we're partners."

Training started with weighted runs – each team took turns carrying their partner for 400 meters.

"I'll carry you first," Nadia offered.

“No, I should – ”

“Don’t argue.” She cut me off. “We’ll take turns. Besides, your back’s hurt.”

I froze. How did she know?

“Don’t even try denying it,” she lowered her voice. “I saw your face during those pull-ups. Let me go first, give you time to recover.”

This was so foreign – someone actually caring – that I didn’t know how to respond. I climbed onto her back, trying not to put my full weight on her.

When it was my turn to carry her, the silver burns screamed with every step. I bit down hard and kept running, adjusting my breathing like Delta Griffin taught me.

You’re stronger than they think, my wolf encouraged me.

I had to be. Nobody else was coming to save me.

The next obstacle course was pure torture. Every jump and climb pulled at the fresh wounds, but I couldn’t show it. Had to prove that even “waste” could finish the training.

“You’re incredible!” Nadia said when we completed a particularly tough cooperative move.

“Thanks,” I muttered, warmth spreading through my chest.

When was the last time anyone said something positive about me? Maybe never.

At the rope net obstacle, I noticed Elliot’s group nearby. He and Orion moved together perfectly, earning praise from everyone watching.

Seeing their flawless teamwork brought back that familiar ache. We used to be like that. In those first few years after Mom died, he was the only one who’d stay with me. But as we got older, Dad’s attitude poisoned him too. Now we lived in the same house like strangers.

“Evie?” Nadia’s voice pulled me back. “Our turn.”

We started climbing. Halfway up, I caught familiar voices.

“Look at that waste,” Zoey was saying. “Acting like she’s some kind of warrior.”

“We’ll teach her during sparring,” another voice answered.

My hand shook and I almost lost my grip.

“Ignore them,” Nadia said firmly, reaching out to steady me. “Focus on what we’re doing.”

“We can do this,” she looked me in the eyes. “Right?”

“Yeah,” I nodded, surprised at my own certainty. “We can.”

Those words caught me off guard. When had I started making promises to people?

Maybe because she’s worth it, my wolf said softly. Everyone else treats you like garbage, but she didn’t run.

We made it over the net. Not the fastest team, but we did it. Together.

For the first time in forever, I felt like I might actually belong somewhere.

“Great work, everyone!” Delta Griffin’s voice echoed across the field. “Now for the final segment – combat sparring.”

Excited chatter broke out. Sparring was everyone’s favorite part, and also when skill differences showed the most. My stomach dropped – this was Acacia’s crew’s best chance to “legally” hurt me.

“Same rules as always,” Delta Griffin continued. “Touch victories only, no excessive force. Same partnerships – you’ll spar with each other.”

Nadia and I looked at each other. At least my opponent wasn’t Acacia this time.

“Don’t worry, I’ll go easy on you,” Nadia joked.

“Same here,” I replied, though I was already calculating how much skill to show.

Years of experience had taught me the delicate balance. Too weak earned contempt, too strong invited trouble. I had to perform just slightly worse than my opponent – let them win without making it obvious, but not lose too badly either.

It was pathetic, but it kept me alive.

We walked to our designated sparring area. Other groups around us were already fighting, including Elliot and Orion.

“Ready?” Nadia asked, taking a standard fighting stance.