



197 THE BRIDGE OF DEATH

Erik stepped on the rickety wooden bridge and felt it shake under his feet. **1**

He did not want to look down but because he needed to weigh the balance of how strong the wood was he was forced to. **2**

He looked down and he saw the rocks beneath and then looked back up.

He climbed one after the other and felt his heart racing.

If you fell it was instant death.

He stepped on the wooden bridge with force to be sure it would be able to hold the horses one at a time. They were still firm.

After about three minutes of going on the bridge he was able to cross on the other side.

Then he looked over at them heavy with a sigh of relief.

"You can begin crossing." He ushered.

But they did not seem so convinced.

"Bring the horses over Owen. One after the other." He said.

The horses tended to be more attentive to

Owen. 1

No one knew why but yet they were.

So it made sense that he would be the one to guide them back and forth.

Owen was not so pleased because that meant he had to be going back and forth the horses. 1

"Are you certain that there is no other way?" Owen asked.

"There isn't." Xaden replied. "And we need to keep moving. Time is not on our side."

Owen reluctantly began to take the horses over the bridge. 1

The first time had been extremely difficult for him, but by the time he was on the fifth journey back, he was used to it.

He helped each other horses until they were all across.

Then he waved for the others to follow.

The men went in a single file, it being their

First time they did not want to attempt to look downward.

Rowan was fidgeting because he was scared of heights.

But he kept on going on ahead.



When he reached only two paces away from the cliff, he tripped and then hit the wood.

Then he tried to hold his grip but the rope slid out of his hand.

He screamed and then Xaden grabbed his arm.

He kept on breathing hard as he held fervently to Xaden.

Due to the impact of his almost fall, the rope that had cut extended to where Xaden stood and then he too fell.

But Xaden held the other end of the rope whilst still holding unto Rowan.

"We are bringing a rope that would hoist you up!" Erik called out as the men watched on top in horror.

"My lord." Rowan said breathing hard.

"Do not let go Rowan." Xaden said.

But Rowan was breathing so hard and then his grip was slippery.

"My lord Xaden." Rowan said as he held unto him.

Xaden tightened his hold and then the rope that Xaden held unto dragged down threatening to be cut.

Rowan gasped in shock as he felt himself drop lower.



But Xaden gripped the far end of the rope.

Rowan looked down and saw the cliffs.

"Do not look down Rowan!" Xaden managed.

Rowan held unto him but then it was obvious that Rowan was weighing Xaden down.

The rope dragged down whilst the men hurried on to create the rope from vines.

Rowan looked up at Xaden and Xaden knew what was going to happen next.

He saw it in his eyes.

"I shall not be the one who will cause the death of my alpha." Rowan said.

"No Rowan hold on!" Xaden yelled as he strengthened his grip and then the rope dragged further.

It began to pull at the ends.

If he held unto him they would both fall he knew.

And together they would die.

There was no point.

"It was an honor serving with you my lord. Alpha Xaden of the Crescent pack. Tell my wife I love her." Rowan said.

And then Rowan let his hands go and Xaden screamed.



"ROWAN NO!" Xaden screamed down.

But it was too late.

Rowan fell down but not before turning to his wolf form.

To the wolves it was a great disrespect to their souls to die in human form. 2

They preferred to be turned into a wolf and die a wolf.

They were born a wolf and they would go as one .

No one saw Rowan land to the bottom of the high cliff but they knew he was dead once a wolf howl he had yelped became faint. 4

Xaden closed his eyes in pain as he acknowledged the death of one of his men.

He howled and then all the other wolves howled, honoring his death.

The vine was finally strong enough to lift him up and then it was tossed down.

Xaden caught ut and climbed up the cliff his men helped him up. 1

Their faces were solemn with regret and pain. 1

It was also evident with grief.

Didi who had been very close with Rowan had



his face ashen with pain.

"Rowan was a good wolf," Xaden said. "We shall honor him!"

And they made stones at the edge of the cliff from where he had fallen and stood before it.

They all turned to their true wolf forms and then howled again and again.

And soon they were all howling in harmony.

Then after the small ceremony was over they turned back to their human forms and went to their horses.

By now it was almost dark.

"How far do we ride?" Xaden asked Erik.

"A bit more far ahead," Erik responded. "We have not quite gotten into the dark forest. This is just the territory after it."

Then Silas looked at the bridge.

"We have to find another way when we return." He said. "That bridge is gone."

They all now turned to look at the bridge that had probably been there for centuries now empty. 3

"If we return." Someone said what was in everyone else's mind.

And the hard truth hit them.



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They could all die and never return.

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