



FREYA'S BOWER PRESENTS

# THE OATH

BOOK ONE:

# Bound



# ADRIANNE BRENNAN

The Oath  
Book One: Bound  
by  
Adrianne Brennan



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To all who would follow their bliss, no matter where it takes  
them. Enjoy the ride!

The Oath  
Book One: Bound

## Bound

Seated in a hard chair, her head and face covered with black cloth, hands bound around the back of her chair, Lila lost track of time. Her vision obscured by the dark material, the sole thing she deduced about the room she sat in was that it was boiling hot due to the summer heat. Draped in nothing but a heavy black robe, sweat poured down her back and legs.

*The things I do for the sake of knowledge and enlightenment. It just boggles the mind.*

Her arms cramped, and she wished she had something to drink. Lila licked her lips. What she wouldn't give for a cool beverage right now.

The creak of the door opening made her sit upright. Had they come for her at last?

Strong hands grabbed her shoulders and helped her to stand. Lila shuffled her feet one in front of the other, taking great care not to slip even with the firm hold on her arm keeping her steady while she walked.

A gentle tug, and the person walking beside her stopped. The unexpected sound of knocking jolted her.

"Bring in the *prima materia* to be transformed," a voice said from on the other side. A powerful sounding man's voice. She swallowed.

*They must mean me.* With a bit more force than she felt was necessary, someone half dragged, half pushed her into the room, her hands still bound behind her back.

"Kneel," the man said. The person who aided her walk to the room—another man, she guessed from the size and feel of his hands—helped her get onto the floor.

A gentle pressure pushed against her head.

"Last chance to change your mind," he murmured, his voice low and sexy as he continued to clasp her shoulder. Despite herself, she shivered but shook her head. On behalf of her god Dionysus, she had already committed to undergo the oath and initiation. No turning back now. When it was over she would truly be changed from *prima materia*, or base material, into gold.

For what seemed like hours she was made to repeat words and phrases that made up the oath. Lila could not reveal anything that transpired within these walls to any non-initiate, nor reveal the identity of any of its members. She would not even learn the true name of the group she was joining and would only know them as "The Order".

Shaking a bit, Lila received assistance from the man beside her, who guided her back up to her feet. The ropes that bound her hands were untied. She blinked, still blinded by the cloth.

Was that it? Was she done?

Someone lifted her arms in the air, and the heavy, black robe that had clung to her body due to her sweat was removed. The cool air from the room hit her, and she couldn't suppress the gasp that came forth from her mouth. The black cloth on her head stayed, the sole bit of clothing that remained on her body. She stood in the room—stark naked with at least two men.

The Oath  
Book One: Bound

Roughly, one of them led her to another area within the ritual space and once again bound her—this time to a raised structure. Parts of it touched her arms and legs, and she guessed it to be made of wood. Spread-eagled, with arms outstretched, she could only wonder what would happen to her next. She felt vulnerable, exposed. What in the world was she doing here? Were these men planning on torturing her?

As if to emphasize her thoughts, a sharp pinch tweaked her right nipple. Lila let out a small yelp, but it surprised her to find that liquid began to run between her legs.

Then the black head covering came off, and despite the few wisps of strawberry-blonde hair that hung in her face, a dazzling array of colors met her vision. Wild-eyed, she glanced around at the seven-walled room, each side painted in a different color with a matching planetary symbol painted in its opposite color. In direct contrast to the color scheme were three men standing around her, attired only in black leather pants with matching masks. From each of their necks hung colored pendants, a special color for each of them. The guy whose hand remained on her arm as if to steady her wore a white pendant. She remembered his touch from the moment she was led out of the room.

*He must be the initiation's psychopompos, guiding my soul in a symbolic context. Interesting.*

A second man tightened the ropes around her wrists and ankles to the wooden contraption, his a black gem. Something about his ice-blue eyes, the sole part of his face visible with the mask, made her look away fast.

Then there was the man standing before her. His arms crossed over his chest, but he somehow managed to not cover the red pendant that hung from his neck. A commanding air about him assured Lila that he was the one in charge of the initiation. She would answer to him.

Lila studied him with care. All she saw, with the black painted mask upon his face, were his intense, dark eyes that bored into her skull.

Nervous, she swallowed hard. *No turning back.*

The gentleman with the white gem grabbed her hair and yanked her head back. Lila sucked in her breath, unable to control the thrill that ran through her body at the rough gesture. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw the black-gemmed male take hold of a rather elaborate flogger. From it hung numerous, long strands of thin black leather. With a sharp crack, it struck her side, and she winced. The sound reverberated in the small room. Lightheadedness filled her, and she surveyed her situation. Three men surrounded her and had her tied to what appeared to be two wooden planks in the form of a huge X, and this for the purpose of attaining self-knowledge?

*I must be crazy.*

The flogger hit her again, this time catching her by surprise. Lila cried aloud, but telltale fluids oozed out of her aching pussy.

"Here are the rules," the red-gemmed man spoke. His authoritative voice seized her attention. She blinked and forced herself to look at him through the haze of mingled pain and pleasure which stung her body with equal force.

"Number one, you will not speak until spoken to directly and with permission."

The Oath  
Book One: Bound

Her hair still clasped in the white-gemmed man's hand, she could only nod a bit in acknowledgement. A gentle caress stroked her backside; it came from the man with the white gem around his neck. The gesture calmed but aroused her. A mixture of emotions ran through her, all brilliant and dark. She didn't know what to expect from this initiation and she wasn't sure if she would make it through intact.

"Number two, you will not come without my permission."

Oh, this one would be tough. She was already soaking wet and throbbing; what more could they possibly want from her?

"Number three, you will learn self-control."

And how would he determine that? Self-control? She was all tied up to some sticks of wood, for the love of the gods! She stared at him, unable to discern what he meant. Would they order her to perform tasks? Come, not come? Come twenty times or only three and a half?

Then the thought hit her: maybe she could fake it. Perhaps if she laid back and acted as calm and as docile as possible, she would make it through the initiation.

"Are you prepared to obey these rules?"

She tried to nod, but couldn't.

"Please answer aloud."

"Yes," Lila croaked. She cleared her throat and swallowed. How bad could this be? She was a devotee of Dionysus, had attended many play parties—this would be easy, right?

From a small table, he produced a single stemmed red rose, an intricate ritual dagger, and something small which she could not make out. When her initiator came closer, she saw that it was a small, thin needle—a lancet.

He held the blade to her throat and looked deep into her eyes. *Gods, his eyes....* Lila fought down the sudden panic that threatened to rise from her gut.

"With your blood, you will be bound to this Order."

*Ohmygods, ohmygods, ohmygods...is he going to kill me?* But with his other hand he produced the lancet and slit a small incision along her left collarbone. The gesture swift and expert, she did not feel more than a slight sting afterwards. Lila exhaled and realized she had been holding her breath.

"Knives are hard to keep clean," he explained. A smile eddied in the tone of his voice. "But this will do." He held up the rose, and through effort she determined drops of her blood upon it.

*Okay, my blood on a rose. Poetic, I guess.*

With his finger, he swabbed at the remaining blood on her chest. Still holding the lancet, he pricked his finger. The red-gemmed man slipped both fingers behind his mask.

The guard with the white gem yanked Lila's head forward, thrusting her face closer to her initiator's. He slipped off enough of his mask to reveal his lips, but before she could study them, they were upon hers. Oceans roared in her head as his tongue did amazing things to the inside of her mouth. She tasted the metallic sweetness of the blood and moaned against his lips.

Fingers grazed the back of her neck—and not the white-gemmed one's, either. With great deliberateness, she felt the tracings of lines, circles....

The Oath  
Book One: Bound

Then the world behind her eyelids went bright white, and heartbeats echoed in her head.

*YOU ARE LINKED TO ME AND TO THE ORDER AS WELL.* His lips were still pressed against hers, but Lila perceived his voice all the same. How?

*Oh gods, blood magick.* He'd created a psychic link to her through the sharing of his blood and hers. *This isn't just symbolic stuff. This is the real deal. This is true magick.*

*THIS IS ONLY ONE LEVEL OF BONDING. THE REST WILL COME LATER.*

Later? This was just one level? She resisted the feelings of dread that sprang at his remark and fought her mind to focus on one thing: fulfilling her obligation to her god.

His lips left hers, and the hand that had collected both her blood and his slipped out of view. The white-gemmed guard who remained by her side further pulled her head back by her hair. The exquisite sensation of her innermost lips being parted with his fingers and meeting her own fluids almost made her groan in frustration. Lila bit her lip. The initiator inserted one finger, then another. The wetness between her legs increased.

"Remember," he said, his tone almost teasing. "Self-control."

Smack. The flogger whacked her on the side again, this time with far greater force than it had before. Lila clenched her teeth. The initiator's fingers wiggled inside of her with small, careful movements. Maddening.

The slap of the flogger hit her again, followed up by the sharp sting of a single-tail. *Oh my gods, a flogger and a whip.* His talent impressed her—how was this possible? Out of the corner her eye, she saw the black-gemmed man gripping the tool with one hand while his left hand clasped the whip.

*Oh my, he uses both hands. He can use both hands.*

*IMPRESSIVE, ISN'T HE?*

Shit. He could read her mind. How? Lila was no novice to magick; her own father had taught her the basics of manipulating energy and shielding since she was a mere girl.

*THE MAGICK OF THE BLOOD LINK. JUST RELAX.* He angled his fingers, and she knew what he was going for.

*Oh fuck.*

A chuckle, then: *OH, I FOUND IT.*

The initiator located her g-spot, and delirious, agonizing bliss to the point of piercing pain flooded her senses.

THUD. The flogger hit her again followed up by two rips of the whip, challenging her pain threshold to its limits. But the digits of his hand, still flexing inside her slick, inner walls did delicious things to her senses. She wanted more. The two sensations collided and enhanced one another, and Lila rode them both into what she called "white-space", where she cruised on the endorphins. Allowing the extreme and differing sensations at war in her body to cooperate, she soon found herself drifting to another world, far away from this one. The cracks of the whip echoed in her mind, and she reveled in getting closer to climax.

"Remember rule number three." His fingers withdrew. Lila ached, her pussy sore. It hurt worse than the whip.



The Oath  
Book One: Bound

Shit, was she ever going to be able to come? The white-gemmed guy's hand stroked her head and hair, producing in her an odd mixture of annoyance and comfort.

"One hundred and twenty."

*Say...what?* Lila looked at him, confused.

"That is the number of times you will be whipped. You will count each one, aloud."

Lila's eyes widened.

"Once you've reached the one hundred and twentieth time, then you will be allowed to come."

*Oh...wow.* She began to feel faint. Her tolerance for the sting of the whip was far less than that of the flogger. With the flogger, it was a slap, a thud. The whip made the pain more concentrated, more intense...more unbearable. She opened her mouth to protest, but remembered the rules and kept quiet.

His eyes searched her face, and she caught a spark in them. "But I am merciful, and you have done well. You will be flogged instead, and not whipped."

To her surprise, the initiator knelt down on one knee before her. With one hand clenching her buttocks and the other on her lower belly, he slipped between her legs. Lila sucked in her breath; his tongue penetrating her slick entrance proved to be pure delight.

*REMEMBER TO COUNT.* His hand slid down, and his thumb massaged her clit. His lips and tongue sucked away at her pussy with the elegance of an erotic god.

*Oh gods.*

Whack.

She licked her lips. Her side throbbed, and she knew she would be well-marked when this was all over. *No one ever said initiation was easy....* "One."

A second wallop of the flogger struck just as his thumb increased its tempo. "Two," she gasped out.

Another. Lila managed to choke out the count as the initiator's tongue continued to work its magick. Somehow she sensed that through the magickal link, he knew just how to place his lips, the right way to work his tongue....

Over and over again she counted, and she did not know what would make her either die or pass out first—the ache from the flogger, or the sweet torture from the mouth of the red-gemmed man. The room became bright, and her skin hummed. Such immense pleasure, yet the brutality of the flogger mingled with the sensations.

Thorns on the rose.

At long last, she whispered, "One hundred...and twenty."

*YOU MAY COME.*

Lila did, the orgasm slamming into her body with the impact of a freight train. A loud, piercing noise met her ears. The soreness of her throat indicated her own scream.

*CONGRATULATIONS,* the initiator told her, his voice silk-smooth in her mind, *YOU PASSED THE FIRST TEST. AND AS A REWARD....*

Lila felt him dive into her mind, his fingers sliding into her dripping pussy as he made her come again and again. The pleasure intensified to the point of madness, and the bliss became as pain. Sinking back into the wooden structure

The Oath  
Book One: Bound

behind her, panting and sore, her sole thought through the haze of anguish was of the delight that she almost would've preferred the whip.

"She's done...for now," she heard, the bright lights in her eyes and ringing in her ears overwhelming her. The ropes felt tight, and in that moment, she knew what it meant to be bound.

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“So? If you’re the one who kills me, then I don’t think I’d mind. I would have no other desire but to please you. If my death makes you happy, then do it.” His hands closed around mine. “If you want to strangle me, then do it. I’m not going to stop you.”

This was a first for me. By this time, men would be running for the door. Where did he get his courage from?

“Aren’t you afraid of me?” I asked, genuinely curious. I couldn’t remember a time when I’d actually had to ask something so...stupid.

Eyes closed, he leaned toward me, the scent of snow-covered evergreens wrapping around me like a mantle. “No. Should I be?”

“I could kill you. But you make it sound like it’s a reward.” Not only was I completely puzzled, but I had to admit, I was actually a bit curious as well. “What if I really did kill you?”

His fingers pressed around my hands, the hands still around *his* neck. He laid his cheek against mine, warm breath on my ear, eliciting goose bumps to run along my skin.

“You won’t.” He laughed a bit, and just that slight sound was enough to make me want to lay my body against his, one more time.

“I know you, Tanith. I’ve known you for a very long time.”

Before I could react to that incredibly unsettling statement, he moved his hands away, only to clamp them around my waist, pulling me down to the bed with a strength that a human man should not have possessed. My hands fell away and into the sheets as he flipped me over and covered my body with his.

I struggled. Fought against his hold, but ended up getting more and more wrapped up in the covers that had covered him only a minute ago. I couldn’t think of a time when I’d felt so weak, so defenseless. I did not like it. I’d spent so much of my un-natural life as the dominant, and now, so suddenly thrust into the role of sub, I felt completely powerless.

He grinned down at me, his eyes glowing with a feral light that completely rendered me motionless. His eyes weren’t blue anymore. They were amber, almost cat-like. His hands wrapped around my wrists, keeping me immobile, and the lower part of his body pinned me down. I couldn’t move anything except for my head, and a lot of good that would do for me. Somewhere, in a tiny part of my brain that wasn’t screaming, I had a feeling that head-butting would not get me out of this situation.

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