How a Kiss Becomes Blasphemy

General Setting: Earth 2046, post covert war (unknown in first novel to any main characters) post-apocalyptic conditions globally

US blight epicenters: Southern California, New York, Miami, Washington DC, Portland, Las Vegas

Humankind conditions:

Unvaxxed: subjected to environmental disruptions which caused psionic anomalies that can be further developed.

Low-tier: limited psionic communication (multiple types are available), darkvision, foresight dreams (uncommon), light sensitivities, headaches,

Touch memories (very rare) \*\*most are not able to be developed further

Mid-tier: elemental manipulation, mindlink (limited range), 6th sense ability, enhanced darkvision, precognition glimpses, touch echoes

High-tier: elemental affinity, mindlink (extended range), enhanced darkvision, precognition, touch echoes, elemental familiars can be called by the most skilled of this tier

EX-tier: elemental fusion, shapeshift in some, pitchblack vision, psionic shockwaves, touch memories, telekinesis in some, telepathic communication across great distances, heightened senses

Vaxxed in low exposure areas: group name: corrupted (RNA became dominant genetic structure, which depleted DNA strands in hosts. Corrosive effect on bodies and minds, destabilizing the host)

Vaxxed in blight epicenters: group name: shades

Other Factions (Paranormals)

Archangels: Immortals tasked with knowledge preservation, cultural archiving

Angels: Immortals tasked with guarding marked humans

Fallen Angels: Formerly either an Archangel or Angel that has been cast out and dishonored for actions that go against regulations

Demons: Foot soldiers of the Hells

Scourge: Former fallen angels that have embraced evil and choose to act against mortals

Vampires: Small immortal group, isolated from all others. In the first age, they carried a curse for drinking mortal blood. Current age, the curse has been absolved through science.

Shifters: Mortals born with an inner symbiotic wolf (immortal)

Arisen Wolves: The immortal wolf that remains when a shifter dies

Fodder

But we're more than a pack; we're a family that’s been built on trust, on the willingness to believe in each other. We protect each other with tooth and claw, with strategy and strength. And that all comes from the bonds we nurture daily, from sharing the mundane tasks, like kitchen duties, and the more rigorous jobs like rebuilding infrastructures or battle training. I’ve just learned how to recognize the strengths of those around me and how to guide their progress."

"Doesn't it ever weigh on you? Being responsible for all of us?" Rayne asked, the morning light casting an ethereal glow on her fiery hair.

"Every single day," Lena admitted, her voice carrying the burden of her truth. "But I'd shoulder that weight a thousand times over to ensure our survival.”

That includes making sure you realize your potential."

Rayne stopped in her tracks, the intensity in Lena’s eyes pinning her in place. “My potential?” she echoed.

“Yes.” Lena nodded firmly. “I know I haven’t told you much about what happened the night Jasper found you. Nor have I confided what I’ve been noticing since you settled in and chose to make our pack your home.” She sighed; her lips pursed together as though she was weighing her choices. ”I think it’s time,” she said softly. “It might help you understand yourself better.” She gestured toward the trail, inviting Rayne to continue onward with her.

You're not just any member of this pack. There’s a power within you, Rayne. You’ve felt it, haven’t you?”

A flicker of memory sparked within Rayne—a flash of heat from her palms during an intense moment of danger. “Sometimes... when I'm in danger, things happen. Things I can't explain.”

"Like calling fire without a spark, or bending the will of objects without a touch," Lena said, reading Rayne's thoughts with eerie accuracy.

"Exactly," Rayne whispered, a mixture of awe and fear lacing her words. "How is it possible? Am I like... the others?"

"Your powers are unique," Lena confirmed, "and they’re growing. You have abilities that even some paranormals spend lifetimes trying to master. It’s rare, Rayne. And it’s why you're both precious and vulnerable."

"Great," Rayne deadpanned, rolling her bright green eyes. "No pressure then, right?"

"Pressure makes diamonds, or so I've heard," Lena quipped, lips quirking up in amusement. "And in this case, it might just make a savior."

Rayne let out a reluctant chuckle, the tension easing from her shoulders. “I’ll settle for being able to light a campfire without matches for now.”

"Small steps lead to great journeys," Lena replied, placing a reassuring hand on Rayne's shoulder. "And I'll be with you every step of the way."

With a nod, Rayne squared her shoulders, the resolve in her chest burning brighter than any flame. She was part of something greater here, something worth fighting for. And with Lena by her side, she felt the stirrings of hope that she could become the force of change their broken world desperately needed.