

Swearing in of Ranveer, Jasveen, and Samuel, Book 2, Scene 66

Christmas Eve and Oath Day: the house was in turmoil with the preparations. Gavin laid out his ceremonial attire, and for most of the time, tried to stay out of everyone's way. The ceremony was scheduled for high noon. Gray reported that all three would take The Myrmidon; no one was backing out, although they were apprehensive. Gavin would have been more worried had they not been. Gray also reported the Sandhus would down the toast; they said it being ceremonial, it wasn't precisely the sort of consumption of alcohol their faith normally prohibited. Gray was only going to give them a tiny bit in any case.

The morning passed swiftly, and all was in readiness. Gavin dressed in his kilt with his sash of knighthood and the Victoria Cross. He retrieved Myrmidon from its place of honor in a case in the foyer, then he went to the ballroom to his station. The staff arranged themselves in ranks. Gray stood off to one side; Captain MacDougal stood in front of the ranked staff. The three new members of the House would be escorted by Athena and Minerva, who would wear the original white robes Sarah and Abbie had made. The large clock in the foyer struck 12, and as the last tone faded, Athena and Minerva stepped through the doorway, followed by Ranveer, Jasveen, and Samuel. As they did, MacDougal commanded, "House! Ah - ten - shun!" The staff all came to attention as Corporal Scott had instructed them. Athena and Minerva led the three to their places in front of Gavin, then took station on either side of him.

Gavin intoned, "We are here today to bring into our House three new members. Ranveer Singh Sandhu, Jasveen Kaur Sandhu, Samuel Martin—are you prepared to take The Myrmidon Oath?"

“We are.”

“Then kneel and so swear.”

The three took one knee, and as one recited the oath of fealty they had memorized. Gavin then recited his part and held out Myrmidon. All three grasped the hilt near Gavin’s hand, and all four finished, “I so swear.”

“Rise now,” said Gavin. “Bring forth the blades!”

Athena and Minerva went to Mr. Gray, and then each carried over a sheathed K-Bar knife and presented it to one of the three new Householders, then returned to their posts. As one, three black blades with gleaming edges whispered from their leather sheaths and were touched to Myrmidon. “May our blades be as one!” came from four throats.

“Bring forth the glasses!” Mr. Gray commanded. From the rear came James and Paul with silver trays, each with rows of glasses containing Craignish whisky; two of them only had a thimble full. Each person took a glass; Ranveer and Jasveen took the last two.

“To the newest members of House Craignish! Three new Myrmidons!” Gavin cried as he held his glass high. “So say we all!”

“So say we all!” crashed the response, and all the glasses were emptied. Cheers arose, Ranveer’s and Jasveen’s eyes watered some, but they bore it well. The parchments were signed, and the three new members of the House were congratulated by the others.

“I chose the whisky which was bottled this year to mark the occasion,” said Gavin. “I know you two do not normally drink alcohol, and I appreciate your sufferance by participating in the symbolic gesture.”

“Quite all right, sir,” said Singh. “The prohibition is not absolute after all. We would not drink it as you do, for enjoyment, but this does not break our faith.”

“It *is* a bit fiery,” said Jasveen.

“Ha!” exclaimed Minerva. “You should have been here the day Athena and I swore in. They gave us a full glass. I almost died!”

“Yes, that was amusing,” said Gavin. “Say, Singh, maybe you could try that as a beard-trimming mechanism. Be less dangerous than a flame. Though I would not suggest you try both together, hate to lose a member of the House so spectacularly!”

Singh chuckled. “Umm, I don’t think so, Your Grace. Once was quite enough.”

“What about you, Samuel? What do you think of the Craignish?” asked Gavin.

“Oh, sir, I be wondering if I might have another taste, it being my Oath Day and all.”

“Now, Samuel,” said Gray, wagging his finger. “No more today. ‘Tis his Grace’s whisky, special occasions only. Though Hogmanay comes soon enough.”

“Aye, Mr. Gray. I were only making a jest. But ‘twere the best whisky I’ve ever had, methinks. And I’d be careful the Marines don’t find out about it, liable to storm the castle, they are!”