

## Chapter 44

Cullen considered that. "Maybe not gas masks, but I think that figuring out what was in those bonfires just became top priority." Keith nodded, impressed at Aislinn's thought process. Cullen figured that there were only two ways to figure out the herbs Rafe had used. Involve the feds, which he desperately didn't want to do, or find the druids. He looked at Keith. "Do you have any more word on the Senachs?"

Keith shook his head. "They've all disappeared. Every address we've found is abandoned."

Aislinn looked at them uncertainly. "Senach?"

"Yeah, that's the name of all the people who were involved with the book shops and such from your vision," Cullen said and pulled the report out of the pile on his desk. He looked at her with interest. "Mean something to you?" He half wondered about suggesting she touch it again, but she pulled back from it when he showed it to her so he set it back down.

"That was my grandmother's maiden name. Brinah Mong Senach," she said uneasily. "Do you think I could use your phone?"

Keith sat forward in his chair and cocked his head at Cullen with a look as if to say, 'see she's trouble'. Cullen ignored Keith and reached across his desk, picked up his phone and handed it to Aislinn. She stared at it a moment, the old familiar number from her childhood running through her head. She hadn't spoken to any of her family in so long. "When you say they've all disappeared. Do you mean in a bad way," she asked with fear tinting her voice.

"We don't know," Keith said suddenly sympathetic. "Some are dead," he said slowly and Aislinn winced at the phone. "But most are just gone. No trace. They could have left on their own."

Aislinn nodded and dialed the number. With each ring her heart sank a bit. As the fifth ring cut off and an elderly female voice said "Hello?" Aislinn was so relieved she almost jumped for joy. "Grandma?"

"Who is this," Brinah asked not wanting to hope.

"Grandma this Aislinn," she said softly. "How are you?"

There was dead silence on the other end of the line for a moment and Aislinn could hear a soft sob. "How am I? Child how...where are you?"

"Grandma, a lot has happened. Uh, I don't think that the whole story should be said over the phone. But I have to ask you something strange," she paused and tried to think of what exactly to say. "Do you know anything about a Circle?"

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There was dead silence. "Aislinn," she said seriously with the authoritative tone that can only come from a person's grandparent. "If someone has approached you saying things about that then you need to get away from them. Do you understand me?"

"Grandma I wish that I could. I'm not with them but I guess a lot of people with the last name Senach have been disappearing and I was worried about you. Has anyone been bothering you?"

There was some more silence as Brinah tried to figure out what to say to her granddaughter. "All these years and now this. Sweetheart are you in trouble? Have you been in trouble? Is someone making you call me?"

"Yes and no. I'm okay grandma."

There was a heavy sigh. "I left all of that a long time ago. I don't use the name and I didn't think that I can be tracked down easily. When Fearguis called and warned me that we were being hunted I didn't take it seriously. You tell whoever is bothering you that if they let you go I'll not fight them."wŴw.nðŴelwɔrM.çom

"Grandma I don't really know exactly what you mean. I'm okay. I'm safe. I'm not with them or the people hunting them."

Brinah sighed with relief. "Then where are you child and how do you know about this?"

"I'm sorry about everything grandma. I wish I could explain."

"Just tell me that you aren't involved with the Senach."

"I'm not." She could see Cullen and Keith staring at her. She knew they needed information. From the way her grandmother was talking Aislinn knew that her grandmother could give them information that they needed. "But one of them is after me. I'm safe. Don't worry. I'm with some people now who are protecting me. But I can't come home. I just called to see if you were safe and because maybe you could tell me something about what's going on."

Brinah was getting nervous. "I don't know what I can tell you child. I haven't associated with them a long time. I left when I married your grandfather."

"So tell me what you can. I mean anything might help. The man who's after me. He does strange things. I need to know if there's a way to stop him from doing them."

"That depends on what he's doing Aislinn. You're scaring me. It doesn't sound as though you're safe. Who is this man who's after you."

"His name is Rafe."

Brinah nearly dropped the phone. But she caught herself and tried to stay calm. She knew that she needed to get to Aislinn as quickly as possible now. "Okay, I can tell you that he is not someone to play games with. If he completed the training that he had been chosen for then he's an alchemist."

"I don't understand what that is. Alchemy went out in the dark ages. Isn't that turning lead to gold and nonsense like that?"

Brinah smiled into the phone. She had always been very proud of her granddaughter. She was impressed that Brinah knew even that much. "There's a great deal more to it than that. Wasn't your thesis on the fact behind myths child?"

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Brinah thought about that a minute. "Okay, so what kind of alchemy makes someone able to control someone else's mind?" She said it before thinking. She was getting caught up in learning something new. Her brain had been hungry for learning for so long now. It was part of why the pack wasn't bothering her. She felt like she was back in school again and absorbing new information. But the kind of thing her grandmother was now suggesting fascinated her even more than pack dynamic.