

## Chapter 19

Violet

I stood patiently, waiting for my turn at the same information desk where Nate had brought me on my first day at the academy.

Today was my first day off—and I was planning to make good use of it.

Adelaide was still a question I did not have all the answers to, and I had to know more about her.

Who was she, what was she doing with those witches—and what was her connection to Mom?

“Next!” The same woman from last time barked out, her face uninterested.

“Yes, hi,” I stepped forward, placing my hands on the desk. I offered her a polite smile, one she didn’t return.

“How can I help you?” she said, her voice flat.

“This question might come off as really nosy—”

“Keep it rolling,” the woman waved her hand impatiently. “I don’t have all day. There are people waiting.”

I scoffed, caught off guard by her rudeness. “My mom used to go to this school. Her name was Claire Hastings. She had this friend, Adelaide—and I was wondering if you have some information on her, or perhaps still have a file...maybe.”

The woman rolled her eyes. “I can’t give away private information. Next!”

“Please?” I leaned forward slightly, hoping to soften her up. “I promise I won’t tell—Or do you maybe know where I can find something—”

“Not here—next!”

I drew in a breath, looking at the long line of students with displeased faces—all waiting. This wasn’t going anywhere.

Defeated, I stepped aside. I knew I couldn’t just walk up to a desk and ask for private information. I wasn’t that stupid—but I thought I’d at least try.

There had to be another way to get this information. I was lost in thought when I felt a tap on my shoulder.

I spun and came face to face with an older man who I recognized as one of the professors. He shot me a kind smile. “I’m sorry, I couldn’t help but overhear the last part,” he spoke. “But—if you’re looking for information on alumni, you should try the library. They’re full of biographies and records about former students.”

The library?

Of course. How could I not have thought about that.

My face lit up with hope. “Thank you, Sir!” I beamed. He gave me a calm wave and walked away, leaving me with my new lead.

I immediately made my way to the library, tucked away beneath the main building. As I stepped in, I was met with the smell of musty, old books.

The library was massive, filled with shelves that reached the ceilings.

I hadn’t expected anything else from an academy which had been standing for over hundred years, but I knew it would make my task a lot more difficult.

Where would I even start?

I walked up to the desk, hoping this woman would be a lot friendlier than that thing they put in the main building. Luckily, she greeted me with a wide smile.

“Excuse me,” I whispered, not wanting to disturb anyone. “Do you know where I can find any information on alumni?”

“Yes, sweetheart. Just find any yearbook with the major and graduation year of the person you want to find in Section 3A.” she said, pointing down the stairs. “To your left.”

“Thank you.”

I followed her directions, and walked down the stairs. It was completely different from the first floor, for starters—it was much darker. The books on the shelves appeared to be much older as well.

The floors creaked with each step I took, and as I got closer to the shelves, I noticed another stairway leading down. It was completely dark, and the door had been covered by a wooden board.

“No Entry—Restricted Area,” I read out loud. That place gave me the serious creeps.

The chill that ran through my body was enough to make me turn away, and I focused on looking for section 3A.

Once I arrived, I went straight to Mom’s graduation year and searched for the healing majors.

The Moon Goddess must’ve been with me because it didn’t take long before I had found the book I had been looking for. It was a huge, heavy book that clearly hadn’t been touched in years.

I struggled to carry it to the nearest table, and when I finally set it down—I was surrounded by a cloud of dust.

The combination of the dust and my bad condition made me cough loudly. Maybe Kylan was right, and I did had to work on my cardio.

Urgh, Kylan.

I pulled a disgusted face.

He was the last person I should be thinking about right now.

I opened the book and began flipping through the pages. Once again, it didn’t take long before I found what I had been looking for—but it wasn’t Adelaide.

No, my fingers immediately searched for Claire Hastings.

“Mom,” I whispered, smiling at her picture that stared right back at me. She looked just like I remembered her.

Beautiful, bright. Her blonde curls framed her face perfectly, and her blue eyes seemed to sparkle with life.

I ran my fingers over the picture, feeling bittersweet. She had lost her life way too soon, and so did Dad.

They said it was a rogue attack, and that’s all I was ever allowed to know.

I wished I could’ve seen Dad’s picture too, but he graduated as a Combat Strategy and Leadership major, and I wasn’t about to grab another heavy book—and join them in the afterlife. Maybe next time.

Underneath Mom’s name was a short biography.

~ Claire Hastings, a healer from the Bloodrose pack, daughter of alumni, Alpha Stewart. She is a top student of the Healer’s Division, and known for her dedication to her craft.

Claire is a proud member of the first elite team this school has ever put together with, James Rochwall (C), Claire Hastings, Greg Loren, Jane East, Elyx Lythoria——~

I squinted my eyes, trying to read the two remaining names—but they were crossed out. That was strange.

James Rochwall, my commander, had been in the same Elite Team with Mom, and I had no idea.

Below, I found a long list of Mom’s achievements—too many to count. She had been at the top of her class, and was everything I aspired to be.

There was another page with a poem, but the note grabbed my attention first.

‘This one is for the best captain and friend a girl could ever wish for. I love you, James!’

I paused. James? I let out a laugh, realizing it was Rochwall. I had no idea those two were that close.

Taking a deep breath, I looked at her picture one last time. It was nice reading all those things about her, but she wasn’t the one I came to find.

Desperately, I flipped back to the ‘A’ hoping to find something on Adelaide.

I flipped through the pages over and over, but there wasn’t a single mention of Adelaide. Even stranger, it looked like a few pages had been torn out.

I blinked in confusion. Why would someone remove a page from a graduation record?

An uneasy feeling settled in my stomach. Something wasn’t right.

I grabbed my phone and typed Adelaide’s name and the school into the search bar, but nothing came up. No pictures, no history, no records, no mentions—it was like she had never existed.

All of this scared the crap out of me.

“Hey!”

I yelped at the voice startling me from behind, almost jumping out of my chair. My heart raced, and I held my chest seeing it was just Rochwall.

“Relax,” he chuckled, sitting on the table. “Didn’t mean to scare you.”

“Of course not,” I planted a smile on my lips.

“So what are you doing at the library?” He raised a brow. “Is this how you spend your free day?”

No, what was he doing at the library?

“Yes,” I simply answered, watching how his eyes wandered to the book on the table.

“Alright, then I’ll leave you to it,” he spoke. “I only came to find you to confirm your attendance for tonight’s team dinner.”

“Team dinner?”

“Yes, the one I texted you about in the morning?”

“Seriously?” I grabbed my phone and checked for my messages, seeing he had indeed texted me. I was too busy with other stuff, I must’ve completely overlooked it.

‘Team dinner at eight at the Grand Hall. Reservation under James Rochwall. Please confirm and bring a plus one!’

“I’m so sorry, of course I’ll be there.”

Did I want to go? No.

Did I want to be that person that wouldn’t go? No.

“Great,” Rochwall got up to leave. “I’m counting on you, Violet.”

“Wait, Sir!” I blurted before he could go. He was on the Elite Team with my mom, which meant he might’ve known a bit more about the bond she shared with Adelaide.

He gave me a curious look.

“You were on the Elite Team with my mom, Claire?”

Rochwall closed his eyes for a second, then chuckled as he sat back down. “So, you’ve figured it out?” he said, bobbing his head. “Is that what you’ve been doing here?”

“Kind of?” I tilted my head, unsure of my own answer. I wanted to ask him about Mom, but I knew I had to take a careful approach.

“Were you close to my mom?”

My mind raced with questions. I knew the two were close, which meant maybe—just maybe—he knew something about Adelaide as well.

Rochwall hummed, going into deep thought. “We barely spoke. I wish I could tell you more about her, but all I can say is that she was a good healer.”

Liar.

Mom wrote a whole dedication to this man, there was no way those two weren’t close. He was lying to my face in broad daylight.

I was tempted between confronting him or playing along with his game. Sensing he didn’t want to talk about it for some reason, I went with the latter.

Something about this whole situation was off, including those names which had been crossed out.

What if one of them was...hers?

“And Adelaide?” I looked at him with a sharp gaze. “She was also on the Elite Team, wasn’t she? Did you know her?”