

Chapter 484

Violet

The sight in front of me left me completely speechless.

I had carried so many expectations about what waited on the other side, along with a quiet fear of what I might find, because the last time I had seen it, it had been nearly destroyed.

Only moments ago, my thoughts had been so consumed by my parents that I hadn't truly let myself realize how much this place would mean to me.

Bloodstone Haven...

Just like in the flashbacks, it felt as though an entirely different part of the woods had been hidden behind that door.

It was late, but the village was still alive. Maybe it was the lanterns. People were walking everywhere, children were playing and everyone seemed happy. A small gasp slipped out of me. It was a single soft breath I didn't even mean to release.

My eyes didn't know where to look. So I scanned, searched and compared with whatever I could remember.

The cabins were bigger now, and there were a lot more of them. I could tell from one simple glance that whatever had been destroyed had not only been rebuilt, but also improved. They had all worked very hard.

Bloodstone Haven looked different, but not so different that I couldn't recognize it.

"Welcome," Aelius said, his voice lacking enthusiasm.



This was really where I had come from...

Where Mom and Dad had been the happiest, and where they had loved me when I was way too small to know what it even meant.

The others hadn't moved either. Trinity, Nate, Dylan and Kylan. They were just standing in the doorway behind me. Everyone was breathless, taking it all in. No one made a sound.

"You may enter." Aelius stepped to the side and let the five of us pass through. The door shut loudly behind him, and that's when the village went silent.

Every voice cut off at the same time, and the children who were playing between the cabins froze. Then turned and ran back to their parents.

Every pair of eyes turned to where we stood, but it didn't feel tense or unwelcoming. It was just curiosity.

Kylan's arm slid around my waist, drawing me tightly against his side. A sound caught my attention, and I looked toward the woman it had come from just as her hand flew to her mouth. Her shoulders began to shake. The man beside her rested a steadying hand against her back, though he never once took his eyes off me.

"Well...turns out that little kid wasn't kidding about not having a bedtime," Nate muttered, earning himself a chuckle from Trinity.

"Why are they all staring at us?" I wondered.

Dylan let out a sigh. "They're not staring at us, Violet," he said. "They're looking at you."

"M-Me?"



I looked again, taking in every face around me. They were all staring at me. Some even had tears slipping down their cheeks, and I couldn't understand why.

Had I read them wrong?

Did they not want me here after all?

"They must have really missed you," Kylan said softly into my hair. He pressed a kiss against my temple.

Aelius cleared his throat softly. He started walking, and we all followed. As we moved into the clearing, some who had still been standing in the center parted around us without being asked.

I didn't know how to feel about a whole village having waited this long for someone they had only known as a baby. They had built a memory of me. They had carried me in their heads for many years, believing I would be like Adelaide.

But I didn't know if I could ever live up to Mom, and it made me feel small. It made me feel like I was disappointing them.

Surely they couldn't believe I was enough to stop Kian...could they?

"Where are you taking us?" Kylan asked Aelius.

"Temple."

As we walked past the cabins, my eyes fell on one that was set a little apart from the rest. It was the one I had seen through Adelaide. It still looked old, and had not been restored. The wooden door had faded with age.

Around the cabin lay endless flowers. Dried, fresh, in small wreaths and



all colors. A small candle was at the door. It had clearly been kept that way for a long, long time.

Something caught in my throat, and joy filled my chest.

I stared at Aelius's back, searching for some kind of confirmation. When he glanced at me over his shoulder and the corner of his mouth tipped into a faint smile, I knew my suspicions had been right.

This was Mom and Dad's place.

Our home...

"Kylan!"

"Yes?"

"That was our place." My voice came out shaky. "I was born there!" I said, pointing at it excitedly.

Kylan's brows drew together in surprise. Another memory hit me. It was one of Sweet Angela on her knees in front of Mom, guiding her to push. That was the day I was born.

A sad smile curled on my lips, thinking about the woman. I never knew her, but seeing the cruel way her life came to an end had impacted me. Jason having to grow up without a mother, and the grandfather I had never met being responsible for it, had impacted me.

Where was Jason anyway?

"You've been there too, you know!" I turned to Kylan. "Inside that cabin?"

"Really?"

"Yes," I nodded. "It's when you came to see me when I was a baby. You smelled my feet and was disgusted."

He let out a soft laugh, shaking his head. I continued speaking. "And then Kayden..."

The name slipped past my lips before I could stop it, and Kylan's expression changed. His jaw twitched through the forced smile on his face. He pretended not to be bothered by it, but he was.

He had been smiling just now at the idea of his younger self complaining about my feet, and now he wasn't.

We kept walking, neither of us saying anything. Why did I have to mention him?

"Anyway, you've always been a bully." I let out an awkward chuckle, leaning my head against his shoulder.

As we followed Aelius down the rest of the path, the villagers behind us disappeared and so did the cabins. We walked onto a separate path, and after a while the familiar temples came into sight. There were several of them, spaced out across the area and made of stone.

They looked beautiful...

Bloodstone Haven was even bigger than I had thought. It was incredible.

My eyes wandered as we walked. It was too bad we had come here this late, and weren't able to catch a glimpse of the other Soothsayers.

Why was I happy about all of this?

A knot formed in my stomach. How could I possibly treat this as sightseeing and point out cabins and temples while my parents were

somewhere with Kian and Gloria?

I wasn't supposed to be enjoying any of this.

"Master Aelius," Nate called out. I looked up at him as he admired the temples. "Are all of these for the Moon Goddess? To worship her?"

Aelius chuckled.

"What?" Nate's brows shot up. "Did I say something wrong?"

We made our way up the steps. "Here in Bloodstone Haven, we do not follow the Moon Goddess," Aelius explained calmly. "We acknowledge her, but we do not worship her."

Nate hummed. "I see."

"How did you get your eyes then?" Trinity asked.

Dylan answered before anyone else could.

"A dying Seer, some say an Oracle, battled the devil and used the last of his powers to give its eyes to a group of orphaned sorcerers," he said. "They won, managed to keep the peace and harmony, and became the first Children of Blood."

Kylan tilted his head, eyes narrowing on Aelius. He looked at him as if he had just figured something out.

"So this Seer, or...Oracle," Kylan began. "You all worship him in the temple?"

"Yes," Aelius said. "They were the bridge between the Moon Goddess and the first Children of Blood. That is why we do acknowledge her."

Commented [Ma1]:



"I didn't know that part," I muttered to myself.

"And this Oracle of yours," Kylan kept going. "Does it have descendants?"

Aelius glanced back at him over his shoulder. He smiled. His teeth were rotten and yellowed as I remembered them. I hadn't even noticed we had stopped in front of one of the temples until he had stopped walking. So had we.

"Who knows."

He faced forward and entered. We all followed.

The inside of the temple was small. It was one open room with stone walls and a domed ceiling.

The walls had been carved with symbols I didn't recognize, and a few small lanterns hung from them. Near the center was a big woven mat in deep red.

It was simple, yet beautiful.

"Sit," Aelius demanded.

"No," Dylan scoffed. "With respect, I would really like to know what we are doing here, Master Aelius," he said. "Because we've been here for a while now, and you haven't exactly said something—"

"You are worse than the prince," Aelius cut in. "Sit!"

His voice echoed through the temple, and the patience he'd had before was completely gone. We all lowered ourselves onto the mat and sat, fast. Even Dylan and Kylan.

Aelius sat across from us. It was silent for a moment as his gaze shifted to all of us, one by one. Then he spoke.

"I have brought you here to prepare you," he said. "To teach you and train you and give you the knowledge you will need to lead what is coming."

"Why us?" Trinity asked.

"You five will carry forward the teachings we entrust to you, along with the friends who will soon join you, and when the time comes, you will pass them on to others."

Lian, Sora? Maybe even Kaelis?

And what teachings?

That must be about Baelor.

"That is the first reason."

Aelius's eyes found mine. "Because most of all," he said, "I have called upon you because it is time."

I held my breath, realizing what was coming. "Time for what?" I breathed.

"Time for Adelaide and Alaric to come home, Child of Blood." His eyes softened. "If anyone is needed in this battle, it is those two."

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