Chapter 588

Violet

We walked the tunnels of Bloodstone Haven. I figured someone must've heard us coming and opened the caves ahead of time. Aelius, Jason or perhaps one of the villagers keeping watch.

Not much had been said since I had told them another piece of who I was. The worst part was that they were already confused enough, and I still had more to go. They just didn't know it yet...

Kylan walked beside me, leading the group while Rochwall and Jorn walked in the back. Nate, Trinity and Dylan were somewhere in the middle while the rest of the team filled in the space between.

It was so quiet, I could hear their footsteps echo off the stone as they were still processing everything. The deeper we went, the less I could see, and it had always been like that.

There was barely any light in here, just a faint glow coming from the back, fading with every step we took.

This was the point where I would usually let my eyes glow, and seeing no other option, I turned around to face them. The footsteps behind me stopped all at once as the group came to a halt, though I couldn't really see them anymore.

I cleared my throat, just to make sure they knew where I was. "Before we go any further," I said, "I need you all to try and keep an open mind... Please."

Murmurs rippled through the group. "Why?" Cassian's voice cut through the rest. "What exactly are we walking into?"

I drew a breath, then closed my eyes. "I'll show you." And when I opened them again, I revealed the glow. It rose the way Aelius had taught me. Less intense, but still strong enough to light up the whole tunnel.

And with it came a dozen shocked faces staring back at me. Mainly those who hadn't seen me do it yet.

Mouths parted, eyes went wide and it felt like everything had stopped for a while. They were staring at me like they were seeing me for the first time.

"That's why," I mumbled. Not waiting for any further response, I turned back around and kept walking, the glow guiding us through the dark.

My eyes flicked to Kylan out of habit, needing his reassurance. But when he squinted and looked away from my glowing eyes, I figured it might be too much.

"Sorry!"

"It's okay." He let out a chuckle, his hand brushing mine as we kept walking.

"I suppose this is what happens when you have separate training from the others," I mumbled, feeling him nudge my shoulder.

That was what the others had been doing. Getting used to looking into the villagers' glowing eyes, so they wouldn't be startled by them one day.

When we reached the door, I looked back at the team one more time. This would be the part where they would either fully accept me or just turn around and not bother anymore, and I had finally come to the realization that either would be fine.

They all waited while covering their eyes from the glow. "Welcome to Bloodstone Haven," I breathed, then let the glow fade from my eyes.

As soon as I pushed the door open, bright light spilled in, and behind me I heard the gasps go up all at once. They were all surprised by the village hiding behind the door just like I had been both times. When I had seen it through Mom's eyes, but especially my own.

Suddenly, the gasps died, and as fast as they had come, the whole group fell silent. They all tensed up, and it took me a second to realize they were all staring at the same point.

With a confused smile, I turned my head, and it didn't take long to see what had startled them.

Aelius...

And he was standing right in front of us.

The team must have been seriously freaked out, because none of them had made another sound.

I suppose it was that look on his face. That slight smile Grandpa did when he was trying very hard to seem calm and approachable. Unfortunately, it never quite worked. Not even on us.

"Uh," I said, gesturing awkwardly. "This is my grandpa."

Still...not a sound. Aelius standing as stiff as a board didn't exactly help the situation. Kylan chuckled beside me. "He's scaring us," he whispered mockingly, referring to him and the team. That got a slight laugh out of me.

"He's warmer than he looks. I promise," I broke the silence. That was

not true, of course.

Aelius's lips curled into a forced little smile that somehow made the whole thing worse. "I have been waiting," he said, "for all of you."

The team still looked thoroughly unsettled, and even Cassian, who always had something to say, had gone completely quiet. It was Kaelis and Sora who had pushed their way to the front, Nate and Lian right behind them as they planted themselves before Aelius.

"So you're Violet's grandpa," Sora spoke with that same curiosity which had traveled with her all the way from Lyperia.

"Did you know we were coming?" Kaelis asked, tilting her head.

"I know everything, princess," Aelius said. His glowing eyes settled on her. "I also know everything about you, green eyes." He told Sora.

The two were perfectly in sync as now both tilted their heads further and smiled, delighted rather than disturbed. Aelius looked past them so he could see the rest.

"And about you," he called out. "Cassian, Roan, Rhys..." He gave a small nod to each. "Sienna, Imara—"

"Okay, Grandpa." I laughed, cutting him off before he could name the whole team one by one. "I think they get it."

Aelius hummed, his gaze drifting further back, past all of them until it landed on someone near the end. "Jane," he said quietly.

I turned to look. Jane stood close to Rochwall's side, holding onto him. A regretful smile rested on her lips, and I was certain she had a lot of emotions running through her too. Memories of the past, and thoughts

of all the things she could've done differently.

Because the last time she had stood in this village, she had betrayed Mom and Dad. She had seen the anger in Mom's eyes right before she had made her forget.

"You remember me?" she asked, her voice careful.

Aelius let out a slow breath, followed by a single nod. "What I remember of you is not what matters. It is what you choose to do now, to set it right," he said. "That will leave its mark."

His eyes shifted a bit further. "The same goes for James."

Jorn stood by with a smug expression, possibly in a good mood he wasn't part of any of this.

"You already know each other," Wes concluded, his voice just loud enough for us to hear. This was the part where they would be asking real questions, and I just wanted to get it over with.

The past, my parents, Gloria, Kian, the war—all of it.

"Grandpa?" I began. "Is there somewhere we can go? I still have a lot to tell them." My eyes widened. "Like a lot."

Aelius nodded, already turning away, his stick tapping against the stone. "Follow me," he said.