

The bloom after the storm - Chapter 1 Prologue

The applause was thunderous in the auditorium as Aurora Hayes walked to the podium. She held her Young Businesswoman of the Year award in one hand. It was like she could not believe the words were hers. Cameras flashed, and reporters were calling her name in the press section. But Aurora was almost unaware. Her eyes found the back of the auditorium. Her parents were there with all the others. Her parents were looking at her. She found herself unable to comprehend them. She hadn't seen them in several years. She looked tired, old, and tired of life. Her mother looked like she was accepting the fact that there was no way she was not getting her way. Her father was standing behind her, and he was so unemotional, she could have sworn he didn't know who she was. Aurora looked at her father, then tightened her grip on her trophy.

"Are you going to make a speech?" the moderator inquired and passed her the microphone.

She paused. Aurora nodded and walked over to the microphone. "Thank you. It means a lot to me."

Silence was falling over the auditorium. She looked at the ground, then back up. "When I was young I felt that there was nothing in me."

There was a low murmur in the crowd.

"I had a family once, one I loved more than my own life. And yet, they did too. I wasn't left with a choice to live without it. It was left to me that they stopped loving me." Her mother stirred as she sat in the chair, her eyes following her.

She continued, "They never left any indication that this was happening. I was told nothing about why my parents stopped caring about me or anything at all. It just stopped. Slowly at first. But soon it was just gone." Her eyes lifted again and landed on her parents. "I spent years, trying to find out why they wouldn't love me. Eventually, I found that if they weren't loving you, you can't make them. And it can become impossible to try. Sometimes you have to understand you want different from someone." Her mother drew in her breath slowly.

"That storm, it doesn't pass forever. Sometimes people get caught up in it and they drown. But sometimes people don't let that rain wash away." Slowly, the crowd began to clap.

Aurora wasn't looking at the crowd, but the people in the front row. The audience of the auditorium. The first time in years she did not care about their love. The storm was over and it was time to move on.

Five years previously...

