

Chapter 7

Violet

“Amazing,” Esther said, making me look up to meet her eyes. “This is a junior-level skill. We don’t expect freshmen to heal more than ten.”

Unsure of how to answer, I managed to give her an appreciative smile. From the corner of my eye, I caught Chrystal’s eyes shooting daggers in my direction.

If it wasn’t for Esther urging everyone to take a seat again, I had no idea what she might’ve done to me.

“Violet,” the woman spoke as everyone sat back down. “Please come visit me after class. There’s something I’d like to discuss with you.”

The rest of the class was mostly theory, and after an hour the bell rang. Students began to gather their things, but I waited, just as Esther had told me to.

Chrystal who had been glaring at me for well over an hour, now stood at my table with her minions. Knowing I wouldn’t be able to stop whatever she had planned for me, I looked up to meet her gaze.

“Yes?” I asked.

Chrystal chuckled, rolling her eyes. “I wasn’t even talking to her,” she said to the other girls. “But I guess some people just need to be the center of attention—don’t they?”

I knew better than to respond. Speaking back would only invite trouble, so I diverted my gaze, keeping my mouth shut, and waited patiently until she left the classroom.

Once everyone was gone, I made my way over to Esther’s desk.

“Sit,” she said warmly, gesturing to the chair, and I sat down.

Esther studied me for a moment, tucking her gray hair behind her ear. Her gaze was observing and sharp as if she was trying to read me.

“Your mom was…Claire Hastings from the Bloodrose Pack, correct?” she asked after a moment of silence.

I nodded, unsure where this was going.

“She was one of my best students,” Esther acknowledged. “I also knew your dad, Greg. He was such a strong fighter, they were always together, always eager to learn. Your Dad Fergus too, of course…or Uncle?”

“Dad is alright,” I corrected her, a smile tugging at my lips.

Back home people rarely spoke about my parents, they treated them like literal ghosts. It was nice to hear about them for once.

“She was so good,” Esther continued, “And I’m going to give you the same opportunity I gave to her.”

I blinked, confused. “What do you mean?”

“Have you heard of the Elite Team?”

I furrowed my brow, the name familiar. “Yes, my cousin—” I hesitated, correcting myself, “my brother, Dylan, is on that team.”

Esther nodded. “Indeed, he is, and so were your parents.”

The Elite Team was a special group within the academy, made up of the best students from all years. They were the face of the school, the protectors of the school and followed a separate program.

“I want you to take trial classes with the Elite Team,” Esther said, as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

My heart skipped a beat. “W-Why?” I stuttered.

“Because,” she sighed, “a freshman who can heal thirty fish in one go has a bright future ahead of her.”

Her words hit me harder than I expected. I knew I had a talent, but no one ever told me I had a bright future. Not the teachers back home, not even the healer, no one.

I was used to being told what I needed to work on, or what I wasn’t doing good enough. Those were the things that made me push myself harder.

I wasn’t used to compliments, and hearing that I was good enough for something meant more to me than she could have ever imagined.

“The Elite Team is not something out of the ordinary for a Bloodrose,” Esther added, noticing my lack of reaction.

I hesitated, suddenly feeling the pressure that came with it. Protector of the school?

What I lacked in many other things, I made up for in healing—but I wasn’t some extraordinary student.

“I don’t know…”

Esther’s expression softened. “You’re strong, Violet—too strong. You need to challenge yourself before you get bored.”

I breathed, “This was only the first class—”

“And I only need a few seconds to see whether someone is good enough for the Elite Team,” Esther finished.

Her eyes were full of determination—she trusted me, believed in me—and I didn’t want to let her down. Maybe there really was something. Who knew?

“Okay,” I said. “I’ll do it.”

“Good,” Esther smiled, relieved. “I’ll send you an email with the details.”

As I got up to leave, it suddenly occurred to me that something was bothering me—something only she could help with. “By the way,” I said. “When we first met, you called me Adelaide?”

The smile faded from Esther’s face. “Did I?” she cleared her throat.

“Yes, you did,” I reminded her. “I saw a picture of Mom…with that girl, Adelaide, in the hall?”

“They were close friends,” Esther replied quickly.

“Close friends or best friends?” I wondered.

“Best friends. I meant to call you Claire. I got it all mixed up. My bad.”

“I see,” I chuckled, finally making sense of the situation. “Do you maybe have her number or anything, so I can get in contact with her and—”

“No, she passed away many years ago.”

“She passed away?” I raised a brow.

“Yes… the things depression can do to a person.”

“Was she depressed?”

Esther didn’t answer, and grabbed a pen and a piece of paper from her desk. “I’ll write you a note. You should head to your next class.”

Other students were already beginning to fill the room for the next period. Esther scribbled something onto a piece of paper and handed it to me. “Here you go.”

The same woman who had been so warm just seconds ago was now cold and distant. By her tone, I could tell the conversation was over, but there were so many questions I still wanted to ask.

About Adelaide, and the bond she shared with Mom. Maybe it wasn’t important, but there was something about the way they hugged in that picture that pulled me in. I felt drawn to Adelaide, and I wanted to know more about her.

I took the note, deciding to let it drop before heading to my next class.

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After two more classes, history and emotional healing—it was time for my lunch break.

With my tray in my hand, I looked across the crowded cafeteria. It was an unorganized mess. Everywhere I looked, students were talking, laughing, eating…kissing. I felt out of place, as usual.

I spotted Nate, sitting with a group of his friends at a table near the center. Kylan wasn’t there. Nate caught my eye and waved at me to come over.

I quickly turned my head, pretending I hadn’t seen him. I knew he meant well, but I had no business sitting at a table full of Lycans.

We might go to school together, have classes together—but we were not the same.

They disliked us, and we disliked them. It had always been like that.

I settled for a table all the way in the corner, hoping nobody would bother me, then my thoughts drifted back to the Elite Team.

How was I going to be part of a team when I could barely count to ten in public? I was socially awkward, not good at making friends—and now Esther expected me to be part of a team?

Was I really ready for something like that?

I pulled out my phone, hesitating a moment before dialing Dad, thinking telling him the good news would cheer me up. Maybe he would be proud of me for once or at least acknowledge what I had accomplished on my first day.

As always, the call went straight to voicemail, but I decided not to let it get to me. He was the Alpha—perhaps he was just busy.

I left him a voicemail instead. “Hey Dad, it’s me, Violet. I haven’t heard from you in a while, but I just wanted to tell you that I’m still alive. I…I miss you, and I love you. Bye.”

The voicemail ended with a beep. The love I had for him was one-sided. That man had never been warm, affectionate or caring for a single day in his life—but I still loved him. He had taken me in, took care of me when he didn’t have to. Regardless of everything, I was still grateful.

I sighed, playing around with the food on my tray.

Dad didn’t care.

My mate didn’t care.

My brother didn’t care.

None of those students cared.

Final conclusion? My life sucked and so did Starlight Academy. The only one keeping me sane was Trinity who was not here at the moment.

Suddenly, a loud tray slammed onto the table, making me flinch. My eyes widened as I looked straight ahead, coming face to face with someone familiar.

“Since you were ignoring me, I figured I’d invite myself over.”

It was Nate.