

I don't know what to think about the whole situation but looking at Josh lit up by the moonlight I can't help smiling.

"What," he asks, smiling too.

"What are we doing out here?" I ask.

"Just come with me," he leads me over to one of the trees and sits down, pulling me down with him. I flinch at the pull and let go of his hand, folding it into myself and hating that my father made me like this.

"Oh sorry...I didn't mean to hurt you," he says, moving away.

"No stop, it's fine," I ignore the nervous feeling in my stomach and sit down to move closer to him. 'I'm just programmed to flinch at sudden movements or when people touch me'

I try to laugh to lighten the mood, but Josh's look stops me.

"Lily-Anne, that's not ok."

I sigh. "I know, but I don't want to talk about it. What did you want to show me?"

"Lily-Anne what does he do..."

"Josh please," I interrupt "I said I don't want to talk about it so don't make me."

He looks unsure but he drops the subject. I don't want any of them to know about my childhood, now that I could finally leave a part of it behind.

"Look up at the sky," he says.

I do and my eyes widen. Thousands of stars blinked down at me, twinkling in my vision. Some shone brighter than others but they were all just as beautiful.

“Which one did you see first?” Josh asks and I can sense him watching me.

I point at the largest and brightest one just next to the half-moon. “That one.”

“Make a wish.”

I know what I would have wished for if this had happened a few months ago, but now, I don't need any more wishes. Everything that I had ever wished for was sitting right next to me now.

I smile at Josh. “What would you wish for?”

“I’ve already made mine.”

“And?”

“And I can’t tell you, it won’t come true if someone else knows, especially if you know.”

I share my blanket with him and rest my head on his shoulder, tiredness taking over. “Why me Josh? You’ve known Sarah-Jane and Anna-Belle longer so why some girl you only met recently.”

He takes a deep breath and I can feel his heart racing but I’m not sure if it’s because of the question or because we’re sitting so close together. I’m hoping it’s the second one.

“Anna-Belle will always just be a friend to me and Sarah-Jane...I don’t know what we have. There has always been something there but it’s stronger in her than it is in me, and then you came.”

“So why me?” I ask.

“Why you? You’re not just some girl Lily-Anne. There’s something inside of you that’s hiding. Your father has locked up the person that you are meant to be, and I want to be there when you find the key. I want to see the moment when you unlock the real Lily-Anne. Forget Parker, that is your fathers name. I want you to become just Lily-Anne, the person that you are supposed to live this life with.”

“I want you to be there too,” I whisper and he wraps an arm around me. I close my eyes and lean into him, the stars and moon above providing all the comfort that we needed.

I wake up still under the tree, the bright morning sun nearly blinding me. I blink a few times to adjust my eyes to the light and then look around. The others were sitting around in a circle, eating breakfast and I throw the blanket off me, standing up and yawning.

Josh turns around. “Morning sleepyhead.”

I go over to him and sit down next to him. “Oh, be quiet.”

He grins. “What did I do?”

I push him in the shoulder and roll my eyes, oblivious to the stares that we’re getting from the other three.

Sarah-Jane stands up and clears her throat. “Come on, if we go now, we might have some chance of getting there before the end of the day.”

Zack nods, also standing up. “Good idea, let’s go.”

Josh hands me a piece of bread to eat on the way and we climb back onto our horses to continue the journey.

The closer we get to my old house the more flashbacks I keep getting to the life I had lived there. It had only been a month but it felt like a lifetime ago and now it was a distant memory that I was going back to relive.

A gust of wind comes in my direction carrying the smells of the world around us and I stop my horse suddenly. The others slow down, glancing back at me.

“Don’t tell me you are having second thoughts,” Sarah-Jane jokes.

I shake my head. “Do you smell that?”

Sarah-Jane sniffs the air. “No...”

My eyes widen and I nearly shout the word “Salt.”

“Salt?” Josh asks, confused.

“Salt,” I repeat, excitement in my voice. “Salt water, that means the sea, which means the beach, right?”

All four were staring at me. “The beach is just down that way,” Anna-Belle says, pointing to the left. None of them seemed excited and they had no reason to be. They’ve probably all been to the beach hundreds of times but I obviously hadn’t.

The beach. Salt, sand, sea, seaweed and shells. I can’t stop myself. Without even thinking I turn my horse to the left to go towards the beach, the smell of the salty sea getting stronger as it leads the way. I hear the others behind me, but I don’t turn around, I can’t miss my very first view of the sea.

And there it was.

As I turn the corner and go down a little slope, the grass turns into sand and my horse slows to a stop. I jump off and fall to my knees, gathering up handfuls of sand and throwing it in the air. I was lucky that the wind was going in the opposite direction, or I would have been blinded. I laugh, feeling the texture of the sand, how soft but yet grainy it was and laugh even more as tears run down my face in pure happiness. Large rocky cliffs surrounded the small beach with caves that stopped only a few metres in and rocks that were perfect for climbing took up the end part of the beach, but I was drawn to the sea. The bright blue mixed with the sparkles from the sun, created a calming effect despite the waves crashing against the rocks at the far end. Bits of seaweed were spread out just where the sea met the sand and I pick one up smelling the fresh salt from the sea from it.

I take a deep breath and close my eyes, listening to the sound of the strong wind and the lapping of the waves, inhaling the fresh, crisp, salty air and feeling the sand beneath my fingertips. When I open my eyes, I turn around to face the other four and laugh again.

“I have never been to a beach before,” I say, through happy tears.

Zack smiles at me. “We guessed.”