

## Chapter 7



The next morning you are already well on your way to your next destination. After studying the map, you both decided it was best to head to Morph and get someone there to sail you towards the x on the map. The morning was tough for you. You didn't want to say goodbye to your grandmother and your cats again, but the fate of the Christmas celebrations for everyone is in your hands. It was tempting to just forget about the whole thing. Why should you have to leave it all behind just to satisfy everyone else? But you have already told several people of your mission, and you had dragged Mira with you, so it will be awkward if you return with a "sorry, I wanted to stay at home instead."

After a while of walking, you start to see a town in the distance, hidden behind sturdy, high walls. You frown. This isn't what you thought morph would look like. You ask Mira for the map, which you for some reason had given to her to navigate. As you study the map, you realise you were right. This isn't what morph should look like. It is, however, what Bird's Tail would look like according to the map. "Mira," you sigh. She looks at you and gives a "what?"

"When were you going to realise we took the wrong turn?" you show her the map and she studies it.

"Oh... oops," she chuckles sheepishly.

"You could have told me when I gave you the map that you have no sense of direction?" She just shrugs and gives an innocent smile. "Well, since we're here, we might as well rest for a bit," you say and head off towards the fortified town.

“If they’ll let us in, that is,” Mira comments on the walls probably meant to keep people out.

As you approach the wall, you notice to your surprise that the gates are actually open. Inside, people seem distressed and panicked. You hear murmurs of something about Death Valley. Some are saying there’s been an explosion, others are saying there’s been an attack. You approach a man looking especially distressed but also like he knows exactly what happened and is not surprised that it happened. He’s got short hair, and despite his distressed stance, he looks well put together. “Excuse me, what’s going on?” you ask carefully. The man startles as you speak to him, as if he was lost in his own thoughts. He’s got two fingers pinching the bridge of his nose.

“There’s been a big incident up at Death Valley. My wife, always thinking of ways to improve things, wanted to test out an idea she had to make coal mining more efficient. It did not work,” he sounds like he knew this would happen. “I told her this was a possibility, but she’s too stubborn.”

“Is she okay? Is she still up there?” you ask, worry etched on your face.

“She’s still up there. Someone came running and told us what happened. I think some people might be hurt.”

You look at Mira. She knows exactly what you’re thinking and gives you a “do we have to?” look. You ignore her and set off immediately. Mira seems to consider staying behind, but she follows. You knew she would.

Heading up towards the mountain range, you eventually reach a mining entrance at the base of the mountains. When you get there, you are greeted by rubble everywhere, the entrance completely blocked by large boulders. People are trying their best to aid the injured, but they don’t seem to have any ounce of control over the situation. Overlooking it all is a blonde woman, standing with her hands on her hips. She doesn’t seem injured; she’s only got some soot in her face. You approach her and ask what happened.

She turns to you with a smile. “Oh hello! I had an idea that I could help the mining process by using explosives to more effectively mine bigger areas. It’s a work in progress.”

“That’s putting it mildly,” Mira comments. You get to work using your healing abilities on the injured. You heal some bleeding wounds here, some broken bones there. Most of them look sceptical at first, some outright refusing your aid. After you’ve healed them, their scepticisms turned to gratitude. At least the ones that allowed you to heal them. “Is anyone trapped inside?” You ask one of the aiders, a young man not much older than you. He shakes his head, “No, everyone has been accounted for.”

“Impressive,” you startle at the blonde woman suddenly standing next to you. She reaches out a hand. “I’m Lezli. I’m in charge of the social problems and people’s happiness around here. And everything else I can be in charge of really.” You take her hand and introduce yourself, leaving out the princess part.

Around you, people are far from happy. Though they are grateful for your aid, they are also angry at Lezli. You hear murmurs about “getting in the way”, and “should have just stayed at the office.” Lezli seems unfazed though, and she will probably try again with a slightly different method at another time. She seems like a woman who won’t give up until she’s got it right. She turns to you. “Why don’t you two girls join me back at Bird’s Tail? Benji will cook us some food and we can have a nice chat.”

“I’m guessing Benji is your husband? We met him before we came here,” you say politely.

“Ah good, then you’re acquainted! Come, let’s go!” You don’t know if Lezli is this excited to go because she wants to get away from her mistakes or because she genuinely want to share a meal and chat. Either way, you head back to Bird’s Tail.

