

BLOOM IN TIME

written by

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EXT. RURAL TOWN - DAY

Rows of large lush fields are being harvested in the morning sunlight.

Workers gather vegetables onto carts which are then pulled down a dirt road by hand towards a village with a sign labelled 'Hofton' in the foreground.

The main street appears battered, yet shows signs of renewal. New houses are being built in the background and some individuals paint over burn marks on wood. A large sign on one building along the street states 'POTIONS HERE'.

INT. HOUSE - INTERIOR - BEDROOM - DAY

The interior of a modest cottage is dimly lit by thin rays of sun breaking through closed window curtains.

A woman in her late 20s, ELARA, in a simple peasant gown, stands over a bed tending to THORNE, a late 20s male.

Elara removes a damp cloth from Thorne's forehead before shifting to lift up his shirt, revealing a healing bite mark near the bottom left side of his rib cage. Dark-branching veins are spread across Thorne's skin.

She smiles, masking any signs of concern.

ELARA

It's only a day's travel, you shall scarcely notice my absence.

Elara turns and steps towards a table. She pauses after pulling the last few dried flowers out of a container, and adds them to a mortar and pestle.

Thorne coughs and frowns, opening his eyes which are shown to have an odd milky-blue hue.

THORNE

N-no. Elara, you must not go alone... That is much too close to the rift.

Elara splashes water into the mortar and pestle, mixes it, then moves toward Thorne, reaching to apply the mixture to his wound.

ELARA

Aldervale existed long before the rift appeared. If it, and our town, still stands, then so shall I.

Thorne winces at her touching his skin but quickly seems to find relief.

THORNE

Please, at least wait until your uncle returns so he can escort you.

Elara sets the mortar aside and sits beside Throne, grasping his hand. They both wear simple, matching wedding bands.

ELARA

I had a suspicion you'd act this way... So, I have already arranged to have Ludis carefully escort and guard me along the way. Does that please you, my love?

Thorne relaxes, leaning into Elara's touch.

THORNE

Oh, Rin's husband. At least he is a kind fellow. And strong! He could fight off any rift-being that crosses your path, I'm sure.

Elara, pleased, squeezes his hand.

ELARA

There haven't been any sightings in weeks. It will be uneventful, I promise- though I'll probably return in need of a bath.

THORNE

You shouldn't have to do all of this...

ELARA

The moment I get what we need, I will head straight back. Don't worry.

Elara stirs, moving to sit up.

THORNE

Hold on. I made you something to take with you.

ELARA

Oh?

Thorne shakily pulls a handcrafted necklace out from behind his pillow, holding it out to Elara with a genuine, yet weak, smile.

Surprised, Elara nods, unable to refuse him. Thorne gently places the necklace around her neck.

Holding the wooden pendant in her fingers, Elara traces her thumb over a symbol of a heart poorly etched into it.

ELARA (CONT'D)

It's beautiful, Thorne. Thank you.

THORNE

To remind you who's waiting back at home, so you'll return to me quickly.

ELARA

I will run as fast as I can.

Thorne wiggles closer to Elara, and they lay with their foreheads touching.

THORNE

Let's stay like this a little longer... together here, in this moment.

EXT. HOUSE - EXTERIOR DOOR

Elara steps out, a packed bag slung over her shoulder. She pauses at the door, hand on the handle before she fully shuts it and strides away with purpose.

EXT. RURAL TOWN - DAY

Elara moves briskly down the main road of Hofton, not seeing a pregnant woman, in her late 20s, wearing a large gown, who is crossing the street. The woman, RIN, struggles to catch up with Elara and waves frantically while calling out to her.

RIN

Excuse me! Elara! Hello!

Elara turns her head, stopping to look back at Rin.

ELARA

Oh! Rin, what're you doing?

RIN

I could ask you the same!

ELARA

Shouldn't you be resting for the wee babe?

RIN
 (flustered)
 This babe is not 'wee', my stomach
 feels as though it's about to
 burst!

The two share a glance and both laugh. Elara strolls forward,
 forcing Rin to walk and match her pace.

RIN (CONT'D)
 And no. I cannot rest since my lug
 of a man told me you'd asked him
 about the route to the Duskwald
 Forest.

RIN (CONT'D)
 Ludis said it seemed harmless
 enough, yet he is overly trusting.
 I, however, have known you long
 enough to see when you're up to
 something.

Rin, out of breath, leans against a fencepost, causing Elara
 to stop and face her.

ELARA
 Listen, I am merely going down the
 road to Aldervale to replenish our
 supply of dried Crilletta, I don-

Rin cuts Elara off.

RIN
 That is a lie. I spoke to Grol at
 Portent Potions and he says that he
 told you that flower's sold out
 just about everywhere this season.

Now caught, Elara drops her façade.

ELARA
 (flustered)
 I-I only need to find a few of
 them. They cannot be so difficult
 to locate, it shall not take me
 long.

RIN
 What of the creatures? The rift?
 The last attack was months ago, and
 I've heard they're predicting
 another surge of em'.

ELARA

I won't be going in deep enough. I know what I'm doing.

RIN

Do you? Are you are even certain a few more petals will break the fever from a veilbane's bite? 'Tis a curse, not a mere ailment.

ELARA

The traveling healer I spoke to a fortnight back said it was the only way to stave it off.

RIN

Stave it off? So it cannot even be cured?

Rin gently takes Elara's hand.

RIN (CONT'D)

Elara, you know Thorne wouldn't want this. He.. seems to have made peace with things. If he were to lose you too, at a time like this?

ELARA

Stop.

RIN

Just listen to reason-

ELARA

You mean just let him die.

An uncomfortable moment hangs between them as the softness drains out of Rin's face.

ELARA (CONT'D)

I will not stand idly by when there is something, anything, I can do to aid him.

Elara shifts her bags and starts to leave.

ELARA (CONT'D)

Do you think Ludis would react fondly if he found out the truth about who's really filled your belly?

RIN

How dare you!

ELARA

Just because you're willing to risk
losing your husband, does not mean
I would do the same.

Elara turns on her heel as Rin remains standing, bitterly watching her leave.

EXT. RURAL FARM ROAD - AFTERNOON

Elara walks alone down a long rural road. A few farmers work in the distant fields who don't seem to notice her.

Pulling a bandana out of her bag, Elara ties it around her hair in an attempt to find reprieve from the sun.

EXT. RURAL FARM ROAD - EVENING

Elara reaches a fork in the road, where a wooden sign stands. One arrow points right and says 'ALDERVALE'. The other points left and says: 'DUSKWALD'.

Setting her bags down to grab a flask of water, Elara notices a man in his late 20s with a worn-out look, pulling a small wagon. He sways as he approaches from the 'ALDERVALE' direction.

Elara forces a polite smile, nodding at the man who has stopped a few feet away. She reaches down for her bags, ready to move on.

UNKNOWN MAN

Well, hello there miss. Whats'a pretty lil rose such as yourself doing 'round here?

ELARA

Oh, just making my way to town...

The UNKNOWN MAN puts on a crooked smile.

UNKNOWN MAN

Aldervale? A place like that aint got people like ya... believe me.

He scans her from head to foot, hungrily.

UNKNOWN MAN (CONT'D)

Why don't I walk ya there? Can't leave a lonely thing like you without company.

Uncomfortable, Elara shakes her head, looking down at her feet while starting to move towards the direction marked 'DUSKWALD'.

ELARA

No, no, I'm fine. But I appreciate your concern-

The man lets go of his wagon and steps towards Elara to grab her wrist.

UNKNOWN MAN

Where ya going? That's the wrong way, love.

Elara whips her head around, attempting to pull away from his grasp.

ELARA

Let go! Stay away from me!

The two struggle for a moment before Elara kicks him in the crotch, causing him to let her go and lean forward in pain.

UNKNOWN MAN

(strained)

Looks like the lil rose has some thorns, eh?

Elara darts into the field before flattening herself to the ground to hide as the man can be heard calling in the distance.

UNKNOWN MAN (CONT'D)

Hey! Where'd ya go? Come on out, I don't bite.

UNKNOWN MAN (CONT'D)

Fucking cunt! Either I'll find ya or one of 'em creatures will. Can't hide forever!

After a minute, Elara nervously pokes her head over the crops to see where the man is.

Seeing he's facing away from her, Elara moves in a crouch through the plant cover in the same direction the 'DUSKWALD' sign is pointing.

The man kicks at the dirt, disappointed and enraged.

EXT. DUSKWALD FOREST - NIGHT

Exhausted, Elara cautiously approaches the edge of a heavily wooded area where a dim, blue, luminescent glow can be seen.

She pulls out a small lantern from her bag, after lighting it she presses into the trees.

In the distance, eerie creaks, moans, and strange animal calls cause Elara to jump and glance around in all directions.

Refocusing, Elara returns to looking at the ground, moving leaves and debris around with her foot. Her search continues deeper into the night, and she grows more and more frantic.

Suddenly, Elara notices a speckle of something white and blue up ahead that looks like a flower. Filled with excitement, she rushes towards it and drops to her knees, causing the lantern to fall on its side and flicker.

Brushing dirt off of the flower-looking thing she spotted, Elara realizes it's just a few pieces of lost or forgotten fabric.

Pulling it apart in her hands, she screams out in frustration.

ELARA
(desperate)
No, no, no.

SILLENNAN (V.O.)
Such a pitiful display. Dreadful
really.

Surprised, Elara scampers up to her feet, turning towards the voice. Frantically scanning, she sees nothing but the forest.

ELARA
W-who's there?

She snatches her bag, abandoning the dying lantern, and flees.

SILLENNAN (V.O.)
Isn't the better question not who's
there, but who *isn't*?

As Elara runs past trees, a cloaked figure starts to magically appear behind every one of them, as if teleporting.

ELARA
Help! Anybody! Help!

Eventually the cloaked figure steps out, blocking her path quickly. Elara yelps and jumps backwards out of instinct, blocking her face and screaming in terror.

SILLENNAN

Oh, my sweet. Let's not indulge
in... this peculiar little display,
shall we?

The figure pulls down their cloaks hood, revealing an androgynous, other-worldly, face in the moonlight. SILLENNAN does an odd curtsy to Elara.

SILLENNAN (CONT'D)

Rest easy, darling. It's not
everyday one is permitted to feast
their eyes on such eminence. I
beguile you to soak it in for a
moment.

Sillennan stands for a second as if posing, while Elara remains frozen in place.

ELARA

What is it you want?

Sillennan rolls their eyes, breaking their pose in disappointment.

SILLENNAN

Wants are endless... but needs?
Those are rare. Sacred.

Elara watches as Sillennan moves around them in a circle.

SILLENNAN (CONT'D)

Truth be told, dear? You reek of
desperation. The scent of it exudes
from you...

Sillennan steps in closer behind Elara to lift a lock of her hair towards their nose, breathing in deeply.

SILLENNAN (CONT'D)

It's utterly... intoxicating.

Dropping the lock of Elara's hair, Sillennan returns to face her directly.

SILLENNAN (CONT'D)

Now, do tell, what ignites such
divine restlessness within you?

ELARA

My husband... He's been bitten by a veilbane. I need ingredients to help ease the spread of the curse.

SILLENNAN

You fancy yourself a hero? How charming. I have never had such a compulsion, myself.

SILLENNAN (CONT'D)

Though, how do you plan to rescue your beloved, if I may be so bold?

ELARA

With a few Crilletta flowers. I've been searching for them everywhere... they're white with touches of blue and-

As Elara is speaking, Silennan acts as though they have a realization, reaching behind them with a hand only to reveal a handful of Crilletta flowers with a sweet smile.

SILLENNAN

Oh! Do you mean these boring old things?

Silennan plucks at one of the flowers, pulling off a petal and letting it fall.

SILLENNAN (CONT'D)

These are weeds where I reside, yet they seem to be struggling to survive here outside the rift.

Elara erupts in excitement, stepping forward to take the flowers.

ELARA

Yes, those are them! Thank you!

Silennan pulls them away in a graceful, dance-like, evasive maneuver.

SILLENNAN

Ah, ah, ah. Patience, my sweet—no need to rush.

ELARA

But-

SILLENNAN

Aren't you aware? Within these woods, an offering requires sacrifice.

Sillennan's words hang in the air as Elara's eye grow wide.

ELARA

Please! I mustn't die, not before I can return to him.

SILLENNAN

Who spoke of death? I only ask for a gift of something precious.

SILLENNAN (CONT'D)

More precisely, something we all require, yet never have quite enough. Especially a corporal being, such as yourself. Time.

ELARA

Time?

SILLENNAN

Yes, darling. By the looks of it, you have quite a long existence to look forward to.

Sillennan slowly gets closer to Elara in the dim light.

SILLENNAN (CONT'D)

You'd scarcely notice the difference of a a few lost seasons when you're ripe and nearly expired, now, would you?

ELARA

What is it exactly that you'll do with it?

SILLENNAN

Unfortunately, I am not at liberty to answer that. Strict orders, you see, above my pay grade. Believe me, some things are better left a mystery.

ELARA

So, all you wish for in exchange is to take some time off of my life?

Sillennan sneers in frustration.

SILLENNAN

You're still asking the wrong questions!

SILLENNAN (CONT'D)

What I wish for is irrelevant. The thing that truly matters is... what are you willing to lose?

ELARA

I... I am not sure.

Withdrawing at her uncertainty, Sillessnan raises their hands while putting more distance between them.

SILLENNAN

Ah, I understand, darling. Asking your kind to make such a decision was perhaps too presumptuous of me.

Sillessnan turns to leave. Elara's hand seems to instinctually reach for the necklace Thorne had given her, and she caresses it.

ELARA

Wait!

Sillessnan twists back towards Elara with an inquisitive grin.

ELARA (CONT'D)

I'll give it to you. I accept.

SILLENNAN

Ahh! Such conviction! It will only take but a moment, you shall barely notice.

Sillessnan unveils their free hand and approaches. A glow builds between their fingers. Elara stares hesitantly, forcing herself not to move away.

ELARA

Will this hurt?

SILLENNAN

As long as you do not resist... You should only feel a pinch!

Sillessnan's finger touches Elara's forehead. A pulse of blinding light flows through her eyes and mouth as she screams out in pain and blacks out.

EXT. DUSKWALD FOREST - SUNRISE

Elara wakes up on the forest floor, sunlight filtering through the tree canopies. An animal calls out in the distance, causing her to look to the side where she notices the bundle of Crilletta flowers deliberately placed.

Running at fully speed, carefully cradling the bundle of flowers, Elara breaks through the edge of the forest.

EXT. RURAL FARM ROAD - MORNING

Heading back towards Hofton, Elara speeds by the signpost and fork in the road with the 'ALDERVALE' and 'DUSKWALD' sign. She fails to notice that is now broken, a piece of it swaying in the wind.

EXT. RURAL TOWN - DAY

The familiar, once lush, fields are in view. Now, portions of them appear recently razed and burned at the edges.

Seeing Hofton from afar, Elara presses forward despite her exhaustion. Reaching the main street of the village, she speeds past the buildings where the sign that once read 'POTIONS HERE' now says 'FRESH SUPPLIES'.

There are indications of an attack on the town. A number of the new buildings are partially boarded up, while others that had been freshly painted now look more faded and damaged.

Elara runs down the road, ignoring glances from the people she passes, solely focused on returning home.

EXT. HOUSE - EXTERIOR DOOR

Elara approaches the exterior door to her house and quickly opens it.

She immediately sees a woman and a man inside the house, who are eating food at a table, startled by her intrusion.

RURAL WOMAN 1

Can we help you, miss?

ELARA

What are you doing in my home?

RURAL MAN 1

Your home?

Feeling the flowers in her hands, she glances around at the unfamiliar décor of the dwelling. Elara's eyes dart toward the bedroom and she moves towards it.

ELARA
Thorne! Thorne?

The woman and man share a look.

RURAL WOMAN 1
What in heavens is she doing?
Stanley, do something!

INT. HOUSE - INTERIOR - BEDROOM

Entering the bedroom, Elara quickly moves towards where Thorne had been and freezes in place.

ELARA
Thorne?

Nobody else is there, and different clothing and items surround her.

RURAL MAN 1
Hey! What is this? Are you trying
to steal our things?

Following in behind her, the man reaches out to grab Elara's shoulder. Elara erupts at his touch, thrashing around in a confused panic.

ELARA
Where is he? What did you do with
my husband?!

EXT. HOUSE - EXTERIOR DOOR

Dragging Elara out of the house while kicking and screaming, the man throws her onto the street. A small crowd of people are drawn to the commotion.

Elara hits the ground, causing the Crilletta flowers in her hands scatter. She scrambles on her hands and knees attempting to gather them all.

ELARA
I need to find him...I need find
him! Please...

As she clutches onto the last of the flowers something small and hard hits the ground in front of her, tossed by a figure who had approached closer.

Glancing down at the item, Elara recognizes it as Thorne's wedding band. She quickly lifts her head upward towards whoever threw it.

The closer figure is Rin, who stands next to a toddler (roughly a year or two years old) while visibly no longer pregnant.

Elara's face immediately contorts, coming to realize the time she had traded the Crilletta flowers for had been taken from her life immediately instead of the end of her life, as she had assumed.

Elara goes to stand and move towards her friend, but her hand snags on Thorne's necklace, causing it to snap off. It hits the ground and lands next to the wedding band, causing the heart symbol to stare up at Elara.

As the townsfolk lose interest, Rin and her child hold hands and walk away together as Elara collapses onto the ground sobbing, and alone.

END