

Chapter 3: The Perfect Gift

Liam is looking for the perfect gift for his girlfriend/matched mate.

Liam sees Redley and her friend, Gwen, at the trader's depot and is enchanted by her.

Ryder reminds him, as his little brother, that he has a mate, one that he's shopping for. Raven is living for the drama and egging Liam up to "make a move."

They manage to move closer to Redley and Gwen and overhear them talking about the ingredients they have and the ingredients they're missing.

Redley notices Liam but the audience doesn't know this. They are making their way around the trader's depot, purchasing and bartering for items on Granny's list.

The girls are trying to negotiate a better deal on some bread.

"Are you sure?" Gwendolyn held the bread up and started to examine it before it was yanked from her hands by the vendor.

"No touch unless you buy!" The vendor spit. The girls looked at each other.

"It's just harder than I know bread to feel like. It's okay if it's a day past but —" Gwendolyn started again but the woman cut her off.

"It's Fresh!! Made yesterday!!" The woman spit again. Clearly unbothered and willing to die on the hill. With her hard bread in tow, claiming it's freshness.

Redley spoke up, tired of the back and forth. "Listen here, you can keep your stupid old and hard loaf of bread. It's obviously not as fresh as you say because it's not even forming in your hands. If you want to hang onto your stupid bread fine, we'll find someone else to buy from."

"No other bread here! All gone!" The vendor slammed the bread on the table and glared at the girls. Her one good tooth hanging through her lip as she tried to scowl.

"I'm sure there's someone else here that's be so glad to sell their loaf bread. Someone who actually wants money." Redley let a wide grin come across her face, showing all of her teeth, (this leads into a thread that she's got wolf blood in her somewhere).

The woman reluctantly sells the bread.

"Now, the last thing we have on the list is the poppies." Gwendolyn said, reading from the list.

"I think the flower stands are back this way." Redley turns around to point but is distracted by the boy with dark brown hair and green eyes that's standing off to the left. He's with friends(?) and quickly looks away. Another very tall boy with hair dark as night and eyes to match, stood there with him. A small boy, with dirty blond hair and grey eyes.

"Okay, well lets grab them so we can head back home. I don't like being away from the village too long."

Redley was captivated by the boy. He nervously messed with his shirt as he talked to the boys around him.

"Hello? Did you hear me?" Gwendolyn snapped her fingers in front of Redley's face.

"Yeah, yeah. I heard you. I was just — " Redley looks again to the boys. Captivated? Gwendolyn turned to look.

"Of course you'd get distracted by boys. You're so boy-crazy." Gwendolyn rolls her eyes and pulls redley by the arm. "That's why Granny sent me with you. You'd never make it back." Redley allows herself to be pulled by Gwendolyn in the opposite direction, still looking over at the boys. The one boy made eye contact with her again.

Redley pulls her baskets closer to her, overfilled with bread and things that were on the list. Gwendolyn talks to the vendors.

"Hi, we need some poppies of Lore." Gwendolyn asks the vendor in the booth. He scoffs and goes back to clearing his table off. "So you don't know where the booth is for them?" He continues to wipe down the counter.

"Let's try over here," Redley says and cuts through the ally, pulling Gwendolyn's hand. "I think I see some flowers here." They push through the crowd and cut behind some booths, a small church, and land in the flower lane. "Here we go."

The girls walk up to the booth surrounded by flowers of all kinds. It had so much color that Redley wasn't used to seeing in flowers; purple, yellow, blue. She couldn't stop herself from reaching up and touching the petals. She was mesmerized by them. Gwendolyn finds the booth keeper.

"Excuse me," She asks quietly. It doesn't appear there's anyone there but a small woman comes to the counter with the biggest smile.

"Hello my darling," She exclaims enthusiastically. Her dress flowed around her, a white one with lace and flowers attached to it as if magically. With each move she made, they moved with her. "How can I help you?"

"We're just needing a few poppies of Lore."

"Oh. I don't..." She looks around at her booth nervously. It seems the question takes her back a little. "I don't carry those here ladies." The booth keeper looks at Gwendolyn for a moment before breaking eye contact and making eye contact with Redley. Then her demeanor changes completely.

"I don't carry those here. I'm sorry." She steps back.

"That's okay," Redley steps up closer to the booth window. "Do you think you could point us in the direction where we could buy them? We're really low on them."

"Oh, dear," the booth keeper is uncomfortable now. "I don't."

The girls sigh and depart, to bump right into the boys.

"I can help you get some poppies," Liam says. The booth keeper is gone from the window and out of sight now. "There's a place not too far from here."

Gwendolyn is unsure at first. But Redley, Redley was ready.

"We'd love that." She jumped at the opportunity to go with this boy. His skin was tan and his dark hair fell right above his eyes. His eyes swam and twinkled water from the ocean that was outside Redley's bedroom that she longed to fall in every day and night.

"Uh, I don't know," Gwendolyn quickly chimed in, "We really have to be getting back."

"Granny's gonna flip if we don't have the poppies though," Redley said without breaking eye contact with the boy who almost towered before her. She didn't fear him, she felt like she knew him. "I'd rather not come home empty-handed."

"I know the feeling." Liam said. They stood there. Eyes connected. Searching. Wondering.

"I think Granny would have a bigger problem with going off with strangers." Gwendolyn interjected, standing between them now.

"I'm Ryder!" Ryder jumped in and jumped up to get the attention on him.

"Hi, Ryder," Redley smiled, showing all of her teeth, bending down to make eye contact with him. "I'm Redley. It's so nice to meet you."

"I'm Raven," Raven tried to introduce himself to Gwendolyn but she just looked back at Redley, uncomfortable.

"Raven. What a nice name," Redley said, extending her hand to him to shake. He towered over her too. His sleek, jet black hair barely met his shoulders.

"We really should get going, Redley." Gwendolyn urged. Pulling her basket closer to her.

"It's not far." Liam says, pulling eye contact back to him.

"Yeah?" Redley smiled. Excited for an adventure, something new. Turning to Gwendolyn, "see, not far. No harm."

"I can think of lots of harm that could be done." Gwendolyn said through gritted teeth.