

## BLUE MAGIC

Once the carriage that I sat in slowed to a halt, I stepped out into the bright sunlight. A large obsidian castle, glittering with sapphire embellishments, loomed in front of me. My mother and father stepped out of the carriage behind me, my father putting his hand on my shoulder.

I was nervous to meet the king and queen, and not only because of my betrothal to the prince—my seventeenth birthday was coming, so I knew it was only a matter of time before I became queen—but because of their being Bluebloods. Only a few noble families were blessed with the Blue Magic—the ability to manipulate forces like nature, light, and magnetism. I'd heard from some of my friends in the town I lived in that Bluebloods were so corrupted with their Blue Magic that they were a danger to the people of Wayland. I was curious to see if those claims were true or not.

“Is this really where you come for those week-long nobles' councils?” I asked in disbelief, marveling at the shining crystal windows. My mind flashed to Evanth Manor, my home, which was dwarfed by the elegance of Wayland's palace.

My father chuckled. “Yes, Aviva, although the rooms are not nearly as entertaining as the quarrels that break out between Lord Aaric and Lord Latimer.”

As we walked up the smooth marble steps, the large front doors were pulled open by a pair of castle guards.

“Lord Evanth,” they nodded.

My father nodded back to them. When we arrived in front of the doors that led to the ballroom, my mother smiled. The doors were pulled open by another pair of castle guards, and we stepped into the room on the other side.

“Lord and Lady Evanth!” a voice boomed—my family bowed low. “Cadoc, it has been *too long!*” A man wearing a dark blue coat with gold accents hurried forward to embrace my father. “I would have arranged another council, but Lord Silas...” He trailed off. “Well, you know old Silas—stubborn to say the least.” King Prewitt chuckled.

The queen, wearing a long periwinkle dress, appeared at King Prewitt's shoulder.

“Hello, Arwen!” Queen Mara said, addressing my mother. “It feels like ages since I last saw you!” She turned to me. “Hello, Aviva. I remember you, but it has been quite a long time since I last saw you.”

I curtsied again. “Mother said I was two years old.” I remembered the obnoxious claims that my friends back home had made about the Bluebloods—they were obviously wrong.

A strand of Queen Mara's brown hair fell into her face, and she brushed it away. “Well, you've grown much since I last saw you. My son, Percival, should be here soon. Oh, here he is!”

A boy around my age with brown hair and storm-gray eyes ran into the room in a dirt-covered white tunic, oblivious to the flustered servant following him, who was frantically waving a coat similar to King Prewitt's. The boy stopped beside his mother. Relieved that the prince had stopped running,

the flustered servant quickly shoved the coat onto Percival and brushed away some of the twigs and leaves entangled in his hair.

“Sorry, mother, I was in the garden and got distracted,” he said.

“It looks like you got in a fight with a bush!” King Prewitt said.

Percival turned to me, and still talking to his parents, said, “I had to crawl through the hedges to get here faster.” He held his hand out to me. “Percival.”

I shook his hand, surprised that the heir to the throne was fine with the leaves and twigs that were tangled in his hair. “Aviva.”

“A walk, Aviva?” he asked me.

“Sure,” I said, blushing.

We walked out through the door that he had entered through a moment earlier, and into a garden filled with flowers of all different shades of blue. The blue magic was so strong here, being in the castle, in the garden, with the Blueblooded prince—I couldn’t explain how I knew. I just kind of...*felt* the magic, as if it were tingling under my skin.

As we walked by the flowerbeds and toward one of the marble benches, Percival touched a few of the smaller sprouts, and the blue flowers grew noticeably taller. We sat down on the marble bench and my fingers absentmindedly grazed some of the flowers’ petals.

“So,” Percival began, and I looked up at him, but then he paused, squinting at me. “You’ve got something on you.”

I looked down at my simple dress, confused, but then saw something creeping up my arm and jumped to my feet, all of the blood draining out of my face. A paper-thin green vine with tiny blue flowers was growing out of the ground by the bench and up my arm. For a moment I wondered if Father Time himself was hastening their growth?

“What’s going on?” I asked in a panic.

Percival stood too, and was silent for a moment, then whispered, “You’re a Blueblood.”

It took a moment for that to sink in—the feeling I felt, the tingling...

The silence between us was broken only by Percival’s flustered servant, Zev, entering the garden. “King Prewitt requests both of your presence in the ballroom,” he said before he ran out.

Percival glanced back at me with concern in his eyes. I smiled to show him I was okay. Then he followed Zev into the ballroom.

I stood still again, staring at the vines crawling up my arm. Then I took a deep breath and followed Percival out of the blue garden.

And as I walked out, I was fully aware that the tingling under my skin was *my* Blue Magic.