

Kaia's body jolted awake as she sat up swiftly, lighting her small candle beside her bed. Outside it was still cold and quiet, just as it had been the night before. Kaia looked at the frost bitten windows and felt herself shiver. Her cat, Blossom, meowed loudly at Kaia, demanding food. Kaia, tired from the previous night after she'd stayed up knitting, looked out the window again, then back at Blossom before petting her on the head. Kaia sluggishly walked towards the kitchen and rummaged through her pantry on a quest for the tea packets. After some time, she'd finally reached towards the back of the shelves and had found what she'd been looking for. A tea packet. More specifically, *one that had lost its prime over 12 storms ago*, she thought to herself as she pulled it out of its' box.

The kettle was whistling by then, and Kaia rushed to turn it off, the irritating sound ringing throughout her home. As she poured the hot water into a small mug and plopped the ancient teabag into the water, she watched the tea staining the water like blood on white cloth, slowly seeping into the water. Blossom meowed again, this time her meow more demanding than before. Kaia, still staring into the water, mumbled to herself as she got up to feed Blossom. Blossom

followed Kaia towards the room where her food was kept, her bushy tail swishing happily behind her as Kaia grabbed the cat food and bowl. She set the food down on the floor by the windowsill and walked away to get ready to go to the trade center.

Kaia grabbed her bag and tied her long brown hair up as she made her way out the door. Following close behind her was Blossom, eyes alert, as if she had realized something no one else had. The wind swirled coolly on that crisp autumn morning, but all the animals that had usually greeted the town were nowhere to be seen. *Strange...* thought Kaia, but she'd decided to dismiss her creeping premonition that something was **terribly, terribly** wrong.

As Kaia neared the trading center, she began to hear bits of loud, cheerful music and little children squealing happily as they ran around. Suddenly, Kaia came to an abrupt stop. In front of her was the corpse of the old man who'd sold her yarn the week before. That old man had been like her father for the past 40 moon years, and now, suddenly, he was just... Gone...

Rage built up inside Kaia as she looked closer at the old man. He had marks on his neck that looked like scratch marks, deep gashes running down his spine. Kaia dropped to the ground on her knees and knelt beside him, feeling deeply responsible for the crimes of whoever had murdered her best friend. All that she'd known was that the old man had no grudges, no enemies, no argument in over 300 moon years.

Whoever did this, she thought to herself, must not be from this town... she frowned as her face twisted into an expression of rage and regret, for not being there to save him, for not knowing who had done this. She had felt useless. Disgusted even, but alas, the man was gone. Screams erupted around Kaia as a group of people stepped out of the trading center. Their eyes were on her, kneeling down next to the deceased old man. There was no other thing that one would have immediately thought after seeing the scene. For, Kaia was the only one there, apart from the old man, and the old man was stone dead.

The screams of terror echoed through the air as a citizen leaped onto her, crushing her vulnerable state. Kaia managed to throw him off, but not before her arm scraped against the rocky ground. She knew she had

to go. Now. The crowd was growing larger, several guards trying to control the outlash. Kaia caught one of the guard's eyes before jumping up and sprinting in the direction of her home, Blossom following close behind.

Kaia ran until she had finally made it inside her house, collapsing in front of the door. She closed her eyes, trying to process the whirl of events that she'd just encountered. The screams still echoed in her mind as she squeezed her eyes shut and tried to think about what the old man could have done to anyone to deserve such a terrible fate. *No one would do this... Not unless...*- Kaia's thought was suddenly cut off by a knock at the door. Jumping up, she wiped her eyes and looked outside the door. Her hair had fallen loose by then, and she'd looked different. She'd decided to use that to her advantage. Then came another knock. Kaia squinted through the window to find two guards with grave expressions. Kaia gestured at Blossom to step back before walking over to the door and unlocking it. Kaia greeted the guards, hands still shaking from before. One of the guards asked "Are you Kaia? As in, Kaia Bellamy?" Kaia responded "Oh! Um, yes, I'm Kaia. Would you like to-" she was cut off,

only to be knocked to the ground, and her world went black.

THE END :DDDDDDDD