

If the woman picks up on what I'm saying, she ignores it. "Drink up, both of you. I'll go out and see about that rabbit."

She picks up a worn black satchel from the table as she leaves, and takes a gun from the wall beside the fireplace. A hunter's wall – full of guns and knives. Weaponry.

"It's an air rifle?" I ask, unable to take my eyes off the gun. Watching her as she snaps it right open and takes a silver bullet from a bowl on the table. She places the little pellet in the centre of the rifle and then snaps it back straight.

The woman nods. "It'll do for a rabbit. You both look like you could do with some feeding up." She smiles at me again. "It can't have been easy. You've done well to get this far."

Tears prick at my eyes, and Violet winks at me and pockets a handful of the silver pellets. "I'll put the catch on the door so you don't lose the boy again. Get some rest, Juniper Green. You look like you need it."

The door clicks behind her.

"Are you not talking to me, Bear?" I ask once Violet's gone. The cottage is all crackling flames and I lean back into the softness of the sofa.

Bear screws up his face and then unscrews it right away. "We need to get out of here."

"We need to eat, Bear!" I say, frustrated. "And get warm. She can help us."

"She won't help us, Ju."

"She's out now, isn't she? Getting food? A rabbit! It's more than we've managed!"

"Ju, we have to go before she gets back." Bear's pacing the rug, not stepping off it, but looking round at the dead animals on the table and that fly still banging against the pane. He points to the knives and guns. "She's bad, Ju."

I shrug. "They're just the things you need out here. We could learn from her. All those guns, surely she could