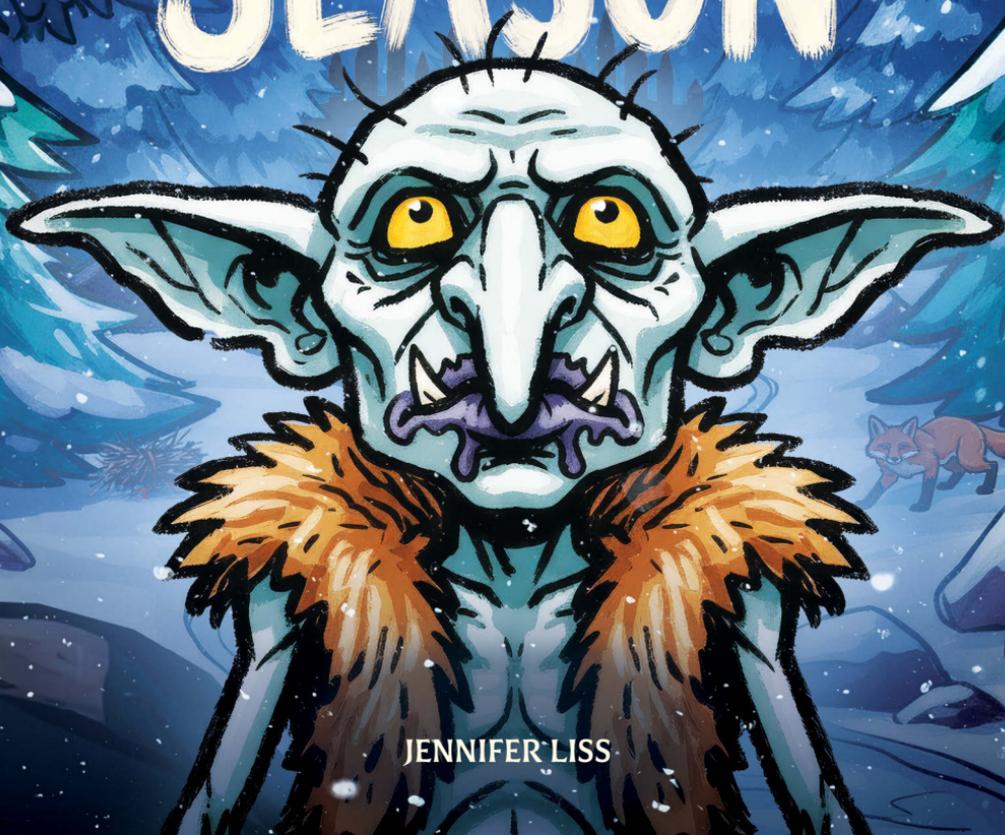


THE JOURNEY IS YOURS

BLUSHWOOD

# THE WINTER SEASON



JENNIFER LISS



## TO BEGIN YOUR JOURNEY...

In the kingdom of East Blushwood, not everything is as it seems. Sure, there's a queen. People work in the villages. The seasons change. Winter is cold. Flowers bloom in spring. There are caves, hills, and vast meadows. Birds fly. But here, dragons soar across the sky. Witches make deals with ghosts. Goblins beg for meat. In this extraordinary place, trees are guardians of secrets, and purple-winged owls speak half-truths.

You are the Soothsayer, or Truth-Teller of East Blushwood. Queen Rozala relies on you to keep the kingdom safe. She sends you on missions whenever there are threats. Your razor-sharp senses and powerful visions help you along the way. Your parents, who died a long time ago, also had special gifts.

In a small cottage in the woods, you were raised by your grandfather. He is old, but he still has the spirit of his youth. You two laugh often and share stories. But you keep quiet about your assignments from the queen.

On your missions, answers are not always easy to find. Tough decisions need to be made. The truth may be painful to face. But when you fail, you try again. When you get stuck, you look at things in a new way.

Ready to begin your journey? Go to page 3.

► **Your journey begins.**

---

Night has fallen. You are at home, nestled in the comfort of your bed. Your grandfather snores lightly in the next room.

Suddenly, a scream rips through your dream. You open your eyes. Another scream is followed by a wail.

You light a lantern and check on your grandfather. He is still asleep.

Where is the noise coming from? Another scream pierces the night. It's coming from a cottage nearby. The Abari family lives there.

You throw on your coat and slip on your boots. Outside, the cold air stings your face. There has been more snow than ever before this winter.

Neighbors gather. They huddle outside the Abaris' cottage.

A quilt is draped around Mr. Abari's shoulders.

He clutches a fistful of bloody straw. The man looks scared.

Everyone waits.

Mr. Abari explains. “I woke to strange sounds. Something was in our home. I lit a lantern. My wife and our children got up too. Then our youngest son realized that our rabbit, Jasper, was gone.”

Everyone knew that the Abaris considered Jasper a family member.

A neighbor gently places a hand on Mr. Abari’s trembling arm.

Mr. Abari shakes the bloody straw. “Something took Jasper. But I don’t know how. The doors were locked. And the windows were closed!”

“Strange things are happening,” another neighbor says.

“It’s true,” someone else mutters. “There has been

one attack after the next. Something is harming our animals. The queen must take action.”

Suddenly, you sense you are being watched. You hold up your lantern to the woods.

Queen Rozala’s red fox waits for you. Her name is Syfer. She sits quietly in the snow. The animal stares at you with its coal-colored eyes.

You must follow her. When the queen sends Syfer, the message is urgent.

The fox turns into the dark woods. Silently, you follow her to a clearing. There, Queen Rozala awaits. She and her horse are flanked by two soldiers.

The queen dismounts her horse, and you bow.

Syfer leaps into her arms.

“We must act quickly,” the queen says. “Something is terrorizing East Blushwood. There have only been animal attacks. But the community could be next.

Find out what it is, and what it truly wants. It must be stopped.”

The queen takes a step in your direction. “Do you understand your mission?”

You nod.

“Good luck,” she says.

Then she mounts her horse and rides off into the darkness. Her soldiers follow.

How should you begin? Two ideas come to you.

**6**

To search the Abaris’ cottage, go to page 45.

To visit the Recorder and learn about other attacks, go to page 9.



He's sitting at his desk, surrounded by stacks of paper. The man's fingers are covered in ink. There are ebony smudges on his cheeks. A crackling fire warms the room.

"I hear there was another attack last night," he says. "Queen Rozala must be very concerned. Her people are."

You simply nod. "May I see the records of the attacks this winter?"

The Recorder finds the papers you requested. He hands them to you.

You begin to read. There are reports of missing animals. Stories tell about traces of blood and piles of bones.

Then you look at the Recorder. "Has anyone seen what is killing and taking these animals?"

"Ms. Ana has," the Recorder replies. "But she doesn't always get her facts right."

Ms. Ana is one of the oldest people in East Blushwood.

The Recorder taps his papers. “No one else has seen it. But people have smelled it.”

You scrunch your brow.

“They’ve reported a very unusual scent,” the Recorder says.

“How do they describe it?” you ask.

“Some say that it is like living death. I’m not sure what that means,” the Recorder says softly. “It seems awful though.”

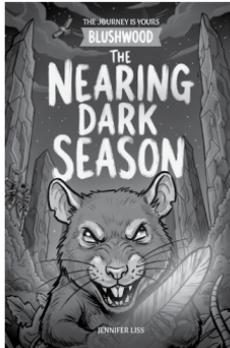
You have two ideas about what to do next. The Afterlife Witch could help. Speaking to Ms. Ana might give you some clues.

# THE JOURNEY IS YOURS

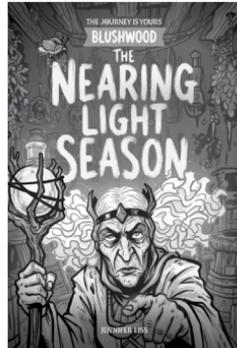
**BLUSHWOOD**



9781638897293



9781638897262



9781638897248



9781638897279



9781638897286



9781638897255

**MORE THE JOURNEY IS YOURS COMING SOON**

[www.sdlback.com/TJIY](http://www.sdlback.com/TJIY)



# THE JOURNEY IS YOURS

BLUSHWOOD



## THE WINTER SEASON

Mysterious deadly attacks in the kingdom of East Blushwood have put its inhabitants on edge. Queen Rozala sends you on a mission to uncover the reason behind these fatal encounters and to prevent them. On your journey, you seek the guidance of some peculiar experts. Will they be able to help in time, or will East Blushwood become the target of more violence?

LEXILE HL350L

ISBN: 978-1-63889-725-5



 **SADDLEBACK**  
EDUCATIONAL PUBLISHING  
[www.sdlback.com](http://www.sdlback.com)