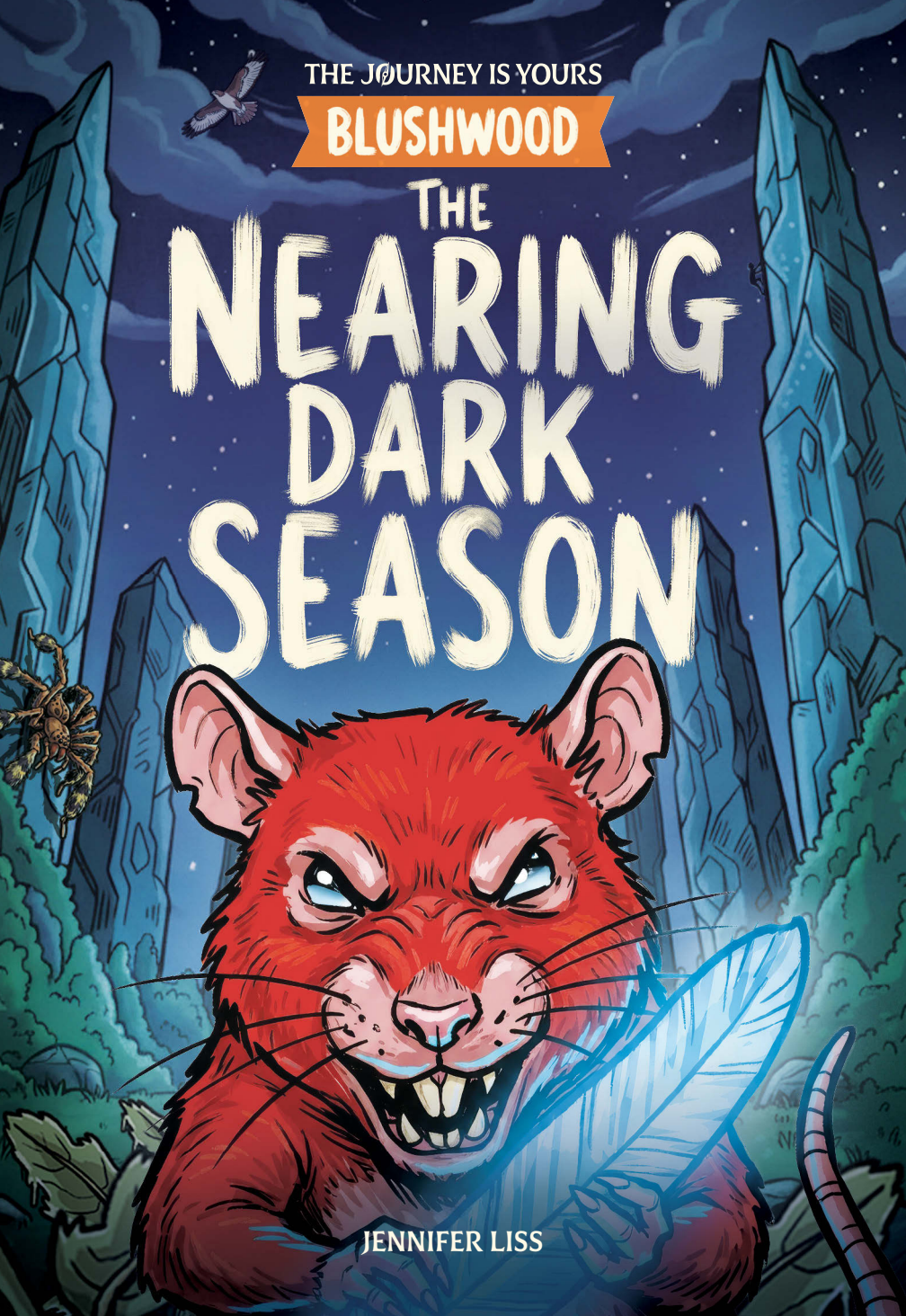

THE JOURNEY IS YOURS
BLUSHWOOD
THE
NEARING
DARK
SEASON
JENNIFER LISS



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.

The people of East Blushwood are gathered at Crane Lagoon. You and your grandfather stand near Queen Rozala and her fox Syfer.

You are surprised to see the Time Witch among the crowd. She is thought to be one of the oldest witches. But her skin is free of wrinkles, and her hair is as black as midnight. The Time Witch's ability to adjust time allows her to keep her youth.

It is the nearing dark season. Leaves have fallen, the days are shorter, and rain arrives intermittently. The year is almost over. Snow will come soon.

Winter preparations have begun. That is when a new year begins.

But first, the two cranes must dance. The birds are brothers who soar high, swoop low, and then glide across the lagoon. Their annual dance is a ritual

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believed to keep away bad luck in East Blushwood. It is the reason everyone has come to the lagoon.

Both cranes have bright yellow legs and thin, curved necks. Wen's feathers are as silver as the full moon. His brother Ari is the shade of a deep blue sky. They have danced through many seasons.

Wen flies low. He glides inches above the lagoon. Then he lands near the shore. The East Blushwood community steps forward. Dazzled, the people draw nearer to the water.

But Ari is nowhere to be found. The audience begins to whisper and mutter.

"Where is Ari?" your grandfather asks. "The brothers are always together."

You look over at Queen Rozala. Her face is calm. But you sense that she's alarmed. She holds her fox tightly.

Go to page 13 to find out what happened to Ari.

At the lagoon, you wait for Wen to share the news about his brother Ari.

Wen bows his head. His beak touches the water. The audience bows in return.

"I am deeply sorry," Wen says. "We cannot dance this nearing dark season."

The crowd gasps.

"This is terrible," your grandfather whispers to you. "The year will be cursed. Bad luck will come."

Wen sighs. "My brother is ill. I can only dance with him at my side."

Queen Rozala lowers her head. "We are sorry to hear about your brother. How can we help?"

Wen carries a blue feather. "This is my brother's. Bury it in cloud sand. It must be done by the rise of the full moon. Then he will be healed."

The queen takes the feather.

Go to the next page.



Wen bows again. Then he spreads his long wings and flies back across the lagoon.

Queen Rozala addresses the people of East Blushwood. "Please, do not worry. Ari will be healed. The crane brothers will dance."

Many in the audience nod. They trust their queen. Still, some are not reassured. A few whisper their doubts.

People begin to leave the lagoon.

Queen Rozala motions to you.

Your grandfather gives you a quick hug. "Go to her. Please, be safe."

You start toward the queen, but you are stopped by the Time Witch.

"Time is of the essence," she says. The witch pulls out her wand. "I can fast forward the hours. I'll place you at the end of your mission. Let me help."

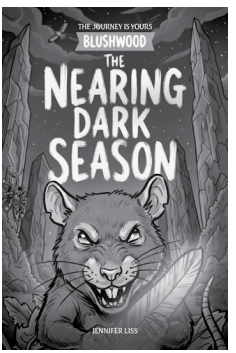
To get orders from Queen Rozala, go to page 10.
To let the Time Witch fast forward you to the end of your mission, go to page 59.

THE JOURNEY IS YOURS

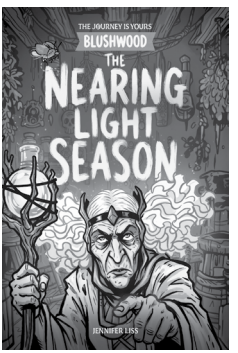
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THE JOURNEY IS YOURS

BLUSHWOOD

THE SPRING SEASON



JENNIFER LISS



TO BEGIN YOUR JOURNEY...

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Ready to begin your journey? Go to page 3.

Your journey begins.

Queen Rozala has requested that you, Soothsayer, take a walk with her. You meet on a path in a vast meadow.

She opens her arms wide. "This all belongs to East Blushwood. We are a fortunate people." The queen speaks with genuine awe.

It is the spring season. You gaze out at endless miles of flower fields. Rows of purple, yellow, and pink buds are in bloom. Their stems stretch upward, reaching for the sun. The air smells sweet. Bees buzz happily as they perform their essential duties. Birds call to each other. The meadow is alive and thriving. You feel honored to be here.

Aja flowers grow in a section of the field. These blue and white polka-dotted blossoms aren't just any flowers. They are used for medicine and magic.

"Soon we will harvest the fields," Queen Rozala says. "Our healers will use the ajas for medicine. Witches will use them for magic."

Go to the next page.



Syfer, the queen's fox, frolics along the path. Then she darts into the grass, chasing crickets. You smile when you see this.

Queen Rozala does too. "Everyone in East Blushwood knows that we need the flowers. Our good health depends on it." The queen's smile fades. "But the fields are not safe."

Perhaps sensing the queen's mood change, Syfer leaps into her arms.

"Sometimes, thieves come from far away," Queen Rozala says. "They want the aja flowers. Soldiers usually guard the fields. But this year, many of them are away."

You nod.

In the north, another kingdom needed help. The kingdom's officials had asked Queen Rozala for soldiers, and she sent many. Some soldiers stayed behind. But there are only enough to guard the castle.

"This year, you must watch over these fields and keep them safe," the queen explains. "East Blushwood

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depends on it." She hands you a tiny bell. "If you need the soldiers, use this. It's small, but the sound will travel far. The soldiers at the castle will hear it, and they will come."

You drop the bell in your pocket.

Queen Rozala points out a nearby camp, hidden on the edge of the flower fields. There's a tent and supplies.

"For now, you will stay here at the camp," she says. "That way, you'll be ready in case anything happens."

You have done many jobs for the queen, but never one like this. The fields are large. How will you guard them all?

The queen seems to answer your unasked question. "Do not worry. You won't be alone."

This is a surprise because you never work with anyone else. "I'll have a partner?"

"Come," Queen Rozala says. "You'll see."

Go to page 21 to learn more about your partner.

You accompany Queen Rozala through the fields to find out about your partner.

Syfer skips along beside the queen.

"For this mission, you'll need help," the queen reiterates.

You are still uncomfortable with that. "I like to work alone."

Queen Rozala nods. "I know. But not this time. You must have help."

"From whom?" you ask.

"A hatchling," the queen says.

You stop walking. This makes no sense to you. A baby? How could a baby help?

Queen Rozala continues. "The hatchling will be your protector. It will be loyal to you and work by your side." She weaves her way through the flowers.

Go to the next page.

Speechless, you follow. There's no way you want a protector or a baby.

Soon you and the queen reach a barn.

"The hatchling is in here," she says. "Let's talk to Art."

"Who is Art?" you ask.

"You'll see," Queen Rozala replies.

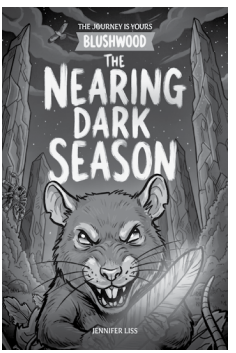
Go to page 24 to enter the barn and meet Art.

THE JOURNEY IS YOURS

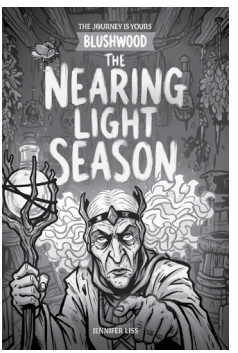
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THE JOURNEY IS YOURS

BLUSHWOOD



THE SPRING SEASON

Someone or something is putting East Blushwood's magical flowers in jeopardy. With their healing properties, these flowers are essential to the kingdom's well-being. Soothsayer, it is your mission to guard the flower fields and prevent further harm. Though you prefer to work alone, Queen Rozala insists you team up with a partner. Can you and your partner overcome differences with each other in time to save the flowers?

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