

Sophie Harper told herself: *Just keep running.*

The moon lit her way. The woods, the river, the dirt path that she'd fled down God knows how long ago: all black as ink, stinking, wet. Her boots were soaked, her feet screaming, her lungs blazing with fire. She could still hear them, calling after her, screaming for her to stop, but Sophie Harper ignored them. *Just keep running*, she told herself, *just keep running, just keep running, just keep—*

The ground slammed into her. Air smashed out of her lungs. She must have caught her foot on something, a root, or a stone. And behind her: them, his men, scouring the woods to find her. *Get up*, she told herself, tears pouring down her cheeks. *Get up, get up, get up get up get up—*

'Over there! She went over there!'

She swallowed, wiped her tears, clawed up through the mud. The voices closer now. Lights hovered in the darkness behind her – their torches. She tried counting them, but her mind wouldn't focus. Couldn't. Half a dozen? Maybe more? It didn't matter. Only one of them needed to catch her and take her back to Blood Eagle.

Back to him.

Her knees buckled as she tried standing. The rain, the mud, Lola, it was all too much. A part of her wanted to give up. To rest. It didn't matter that she'd be his prisoner, that he'd taken everything away from her, that the man she'd called a father had hurt her so much.

'You can't,' a voice said. Her own. For an agonising second, Sophie thought it might have even been Lola's. But it couldn't be. Lola was dead. They'd put a bullet in her stomach, a bullet that had pinned her down in the soaking grass beside the river.