

## Meeting the Connors

Eric wanted to laugh at his family's faces. Darrin, Harold, Jackson, Shana, Molly, and Jessica's mouths were practically on the floor. I saw where their gaze went. It was on Haley and my intertwined hands. They didn't expect to meet her tonight. Let alone me holding hands. Not to mention she was stunningly beautiful. She definitely had the allure of a fairy. I was going to have to put many in line around my mate.

I made introductions in the order they were standing, "Haley these are my brothers Darrin, and his mate, Shana. That is Jackson and his mate, Molly. Last, we have Harold and his mate, Jessica." I turned to my family, "Brothers, sisters," I winked at the girls, and continued speaking, "this is my mate, Haley Holloran, the princess of the fairies." Darrin managed to speak first. He sputtered, "I'm sorry... Did you just say your mate? I think I hallucinated." Haley laughed and offered "It's nice to meet you all." I put my arm around her waist. I proudly declared, "You heard correctly. No one is more surprised than I am that I've finally found my mate. She just so happens to also be my ancestor."

Darrin, Harold, and Jackson all looked at each other with dumbstruck looks on their faces. Shana, Molly, and Jessica squealed and surrounded Haley. They pulled her from my grasp. "OH!" Shana exclaimed, "Eric has been wanting to marry you for the last two years! I can't believe you're his mate! I'm so excited!!" Jessica joined in, "Don't scare her Shana! This is just the best! I can't believe how this all worked out." Molly laughed, "Yes Jessica, proceed to scare the poor girl after saying not to scare her. Welcome to the family, Princess Haley. We are so glad Eric finally found his mate. He is a good man who deserves happiness."

I smiled at my sisters in law. Jackson linked, "This is insane. You just can't make this stuff up." He wasn't wrong. I firmly grabbed Haley's waist and brought her back to my side. My brothers exchanged glances at my clear show of possessiveness. I didn't tend to be possessive with women. I'd only had one social girlfriend that was even serious, in my opinion. The girls all couldn't stop smiling at me. Molly turned to my brothers chiding, "You all best get your butts over here and welcome her right this instant." Darrin, Harold, and Jackson stepped forward. They simultaneously said, "Welcome Haley." Jackson added, "We are glad our brother has finally found his mate. We did not think he'd ever meet you."

Haley laughed then asked, "Did you all practice saying that together? This is all surreal, to be honest." Jackson cracked a smile, "I'll say. We just negotiated your marriage this afternoon. We most certainly didn't expect you to show up in our territory. Let alone be our brothers' mate. You are most welcome here Princess." Haley blushed, "I am sorry. I didn't mean to trespass on your land. I just fought with Aiden and Arion after seeing them after so long. I got so damn mad that I just got in my car and started driving. Ironically, I ended up here. All of you can call me Haley by the way."

I smiled at her, "It's quite alright, Angel. I am glad you ended up here." Darrin linked me and our brothers, "Did he just call her Angel?" Jackson replied, "Oh he did." I rolled my eyes at them. Jessica linked me, "I know you guys need to talk. I'll handle this." Out loud she said, "Eric, why don't we show Haley around the main house? You guys need to talk about this new development. Us girls want to get to know our soon to be sister-in-law! Do you want her in the guest room or yours? I agreed, "That is fine. She will be in my room." Haley's mouth dropped, "Umm... I... I don't have any of my clothes, and I..." She trailed off. I told her, "Don't worry we will round up something for you to wear tonight. I'm sure the girls will help you pack up your things after your classes tomorrow. If they can't help, you will be escorted by members of my pack if I have a meeting and can't come myself." My tone left no room for negotiation.

Haley nodded, "Ok. That's fine." Under breath she said, "I could try to conjure my stuff... that would freak my brothers the f\*\*k out and be fun." Everyone glanced sharply at me. I tapped her nose and said, "I'll do anything for you, my little mate, I will see you shortly."

The girls ushered her off immediately, giggling and talking all at once. I already missed her as soon as she was out of sight. Thor growled, "Go get her. I want her back." I ran a hand through my hair. I asked my brothers, "Do you miss them when they walk out of the room? I want to chase them down and bring her back." The brothers exchanged looks. Harold spoke first, "Yes, it will be stronger until you mate with her, but it's always there when they are gone. Marking her will help the most."

Thor purred at the thought of marking our mate. I sighed, "How the hell do you get anything done? I'm worried about her. I want her back here beside me, and I want to destroy everyone who has ever harmed her." Darrin interjected, "It will get better brother. Your mate is unharmed and safe with our mates. How bad was it for her Faerie?"

I growled menacingly. All the brothers shrank back at my intensity. I snarled, "We are going to visit Hexxus in the dungeons." Caleb came running into the room. He'd no doubt heard my growl. His tone was cautious, "Eric, what's wrong? Our scouts haven't reported the princess leaving. They said she was with you." I told him, "She is here. She is my mate, Caleb. Her mistreatment wasn't completely unexpected but hearing the truth of it pissed me the f\*\*k off. They openly beat her which I wasn't expecting, given how much the Queen is rumored to love her daughter. Her Uncle Fabian sexually assaulted her, frequently, starting when she was just six years old."

Growls filled the room at my words. Jackson stepped forward asking, "At six?! That bastard did that to her at six! I will tear him to pieces!" I knew he was thinking of his own daughter, my niece Saied. Our other brothers nodded in agreement. Caleb cleared his throat, "As Haley is here, we cannot at this time tear him to pieces. His time will come though." I hated that he was right. The agreement had not been breached, and I was man of my word. I could not kill him, now. Later was a different story. I begrudgingly said, "True, but we never said Hexxus would return unharmed."

Everyone followed behind me as we made our way to the dungeons. Harold decided to speak, "What else did you learn about your mate, brother?" I turned and stopped walking right outside the heavy door that led down to the dungeons. I told them, "When she left Faerie, her brother on her father's side found her and brought her to their father. Unlike we suspected, her father is not human. Because she said her father would come for her when she was sixteen. She was trying to wait in Faerie until he came to take her away."

All three of my brothers and Caleb gasped. Jackson yelled, "No f\*\*\*\*\*g way!" I smiled, "Yes, I think she's half Fae, half Hackura." The brothers stared at me. Darrin said, "So, to recap what's happening here so far. You are the most feared Alpha in the country. Our packs are nothing to turn your nose up at either. We've negotiated a contract for the fairy princess, who we now suspect is also Hackura. The deadliest assassins and protectors of all the realms; and she just so happens to be your mate." That did summarise quite a bit of the situation. I nodded.

Jackson joined in the conversation, "Why is it just a suspicion? Why didn't you ask her if she was Hackura?" I sighed, "When I asked who her father was, she avoided the question. I am giving her time to trust me. She's only nineteen years old. I didn't get the impression they taught her about mates. Tonight, she's learned she's getting married, moving, and that she's my mate. I already told her she will tell me eventually, but I think it's best to let her have some space to open up to me. After what she went through, she cannot trust easily. You saw how quickly she backed down earlier. She wanted to say something about not staying in my room. She accepted my decision without arguing. She will tell me soon about her background."

Harold laughed, "Oh big brother of mine, I have been waiting for the day you met your mate and it's even better than I imagined. You, who demands answers and refuses to back down until you get them, didn't get the answers to the questions you asked right away. It's just too good. You're not even mad!"

I shot him an annoyed look. I added, "She also has Fae powers. She snapped and xed her makeup. She also cleaned off my chest since it was streaked with her mascara. You heard her mention conjuring her things. She was terrified I wouldn't want her after telling me what happened to her in Faerie. She had no idea there were other partial fairies in our realm. She thought she was the only one."

Jackson sputtered, "She... she has powers?! No partial fairies have powers." I smiled, gloating "My mate does. Now, let's go visit Hexxus." We walked down to see Hexxus chained in iron to the wall. Hexxus sighed, "Oh, for god's sake. To what do I owe the honor?" Unable to control myself after hearing what was done to Haley, I grabbed Hexxus by the neck and squeezed. His eyes widened in panic.

I asked him, "Do you know what werewolves do to scum who prey upon children and beat them?" Hexxus started to turn purple. Harold laid a hand on my arm. I let him go only because I wanted Hexxus to suffer more. He did not deserve a quick death. Hexxus gasped, drawing air into his lungs. Once he was able to speak, he asked, "What... what are you talking about?" Jackson replied, "You're thirty-five years old, Hexxus. Princess Haley was six years old when you started beating her. That means you were twenty-two years old beating on a child. Did it make you feel like a man? To be able to best a child? If you aren't a coward, then fight me. Here and now." Hexxus laughed, "I told you she was an abomination. Those partial fairies should be eradicated. I'm not going to fight you, wolf."

I grabbed Hexxus' elbow and pulled until it snapped. Hexxus screamed in pain, "WHAT THE F\*\*K MAN?" I spoke in a bored tone, "You broke her elbow, so I broke yours." Hexxus' eyes clouded with pain. He was barely able to speak, "How... How do you know I broke her elbow?" I answered, "Because she is here, and she told me." I heard someone gasp. I turned and saw a female fairy with wide eyes. She whispered, "Haley is here?" I ignored her and turned back to my prey. Hexxus eyes snapped up. He triumphantly declared, "Then... then I am free! My cousins brought her to you."

Darrin laughed, "Oh no, Hexxus. They did not bring her. She came by herself, and my brother brought her here. Your family had no part in the Princess being here. The terms of peace have not yet been finalized. So, you are not free until after the wedding." Darrin leaned forward and punched Hexxus in the face. He hissed, "With such a sick and twisted father, did anyone not expect you to turn into the trash you are? I'm outraged on Haley's behalf. You are not a man. You're disgusting." Hexxus snapped, "So what if my father beat her? She's an abomination!"

Thor snarled. I wrapped my hands around Hexxus' neck again. Thor took over my body and thundered, "NEVER INSULT HER AGAIN! He didn't just beat her! He raped her starting when she turned six f\*\*\*\*\*g years old!" Thor threw Hexxus into the wall. Hexxus gasped for several minutes trying to catch his breath.

He finally managed to say "My... my father...he's... different... He's a visionary! You just don't understand him." Jackson scoffed, interrupting Hexxus "You fairies seem to forget everyone knows you can evade like a mother fucker, but you cannot lie. She cannot lie, and you know it." Hexxus paled, "He... She... she doesn't know the Fae cannot lie." Darrin scoffed, "Oh Hexxus, I think you would be surprised at what she knows. Besides, it doesn't matter if she knows she couldn't lie. She still can't lie. I bet you don't know she has fairy powers."

Hexxus coughed, "No... No, that's not possible." I took back over from my wolf and backhanded Hexxus. I hissed at him, "And yet Hexxus, I saw her use her powers tonight. You will never harm her again. Your father, should he ever set foot in this realm, will be brought to me to be executed on sight. I do not have a forgiving heart like your Queen." Hexxus paled, "If we have a treaty, you cannot kill my father. The war would begin again."

I gave Hexxus a look that had him cowering. I informed him, "I will include it in the treaty. Even if I didn't include it; in case you didn't notice we are beating the fairies in this war. I would drive you into extinction if that's what the Princess wanted. No one who harmed her will ever come into my territory and be safe." I knew Hexxus believed me. He could see it in his eyes.

Hexxus asked, "She... she came here to save me?" Hexxus was absolutely stunned. I scoffed "According to my trackers, she didn't care much when her brothers informed her your life was on the line. She was terrified they already gave me their word. She knew they couldn't back out and live. She came for Aiden and Arion's lives, not yours." I decided to let him think about that, and left Hexxus in the dungeons. Hexxus called to us as they got to the top of the stairs, "I... can I see her? I want to see my cousin... NOW!" I saw red and turned. I roared, "YOU DO NOT MAKE DEMANDS OF ME! I AM ALPHA ERIC CONNERS. If you see her, it will be her wish. Someone remind our prisoner, he's a goddamn prisoner not a guest." A warrior appeared beside me. I told him, "Give him no food for three days. If he slips and injures himself... he has harmed your future Luna. Accidents happen."

With that I walked through the dungeon door and slammed it shut. We walked back to the war room. Jackson asked, "Brother, are you alright?" I threw a chair into the wall, breaking it into multiple pieces. I took several deep breaths, admitting, "No, I want to tear him limb from limb. Then I want to go to Faerie to rip Fabian apart one piece at a time." Darrin grabbed my arm, "Go to her brother. Hold her. It will settle you."

I left before Darrin could finish his sentence, seeking out my mate. I could still hear my brothers talking. Harold spoke, "I never thought I'd see the day our older brother was so into a woman." Jackson laughed, "It's his mate, Harold. You were much worse. You growled at anyone who looked at Jessica for three weeks after you found her. You never even let her out of your sight for two months." Darrin laughed, "Oh you're really to talk, Jackson. You still growl when anyone looks at Molly. I am so excited Eric once found her. To think he had been making moves to marry her since the Fairy War started." Harold scoffed, "To think she is probably half Hackura and the Princess of the Fae. That should more than make up for how long he's waited for her. The Moon Goddess has rewarded him, and our packs, greatly. No one will dare come against us now."

Jackson sighed, "People will always dare, brother. Many may try to take her from him once they find out her background. It would be enough that he finally has a mate, there are those who would love nothing more than to see our brother in pain." Darrin turned to them, "Heaven help anyone who tries to take her from him. You saw him when the girls took her out of his grasp. He allowed it for less than twenty seconds before he took her back. He wouldn't have left her side if the girls hadn't pointed out we needed to talk. I don't know about you guys, but for the happiness I've seen in our brother in those few moments we saw them together, I will fight to keep her here with my life to see him that happy." Harold and Jackson agreed with him.

They weren't wrong. No one wanted to see me without her. I had her. I pushed all those thoughts aside and followed Haley's scent. She was in my room. I couldn't stop my smile. It was our room now. My mate was in our room waiting for me. I needed to hold her to feel settled. Then I would make everyone who hurt her pay dearly for what they'd done. They didn't know it yet, but I was coming for them.