

Friend Zone

Haley popped to the Hackura realm. I didn't know where the safe room was back in our territory and I knew that I'd be safe here. I could have popped to the safe room, but this was home. I really needed to take a tour around the damn pack. My mom, Miley, and Uncle Zader stared at me in surprise. I noticed mom was looking past me on the floor. I turned and saw Marcus and Blade had come with me.

I quickly bent down to pick up EJ who was still crying. My poor baby. I spoke to him softly, "Shh, baby. Mommy has you. You did so good EJ. It's alright." He put his hand on my chest. I immediately sat down and opened up my dress. He latched onto me and began to calm down. I rocked back and forth with him.

The next time I looked up the room had cleared. Now it was just my mom, Marcus, and Blade in the room. Blade had his hand on the hilt of his sword ready to attack. I asked, "Can someone pick up Cassie and Alexander?" Marcus immediately picked up Cassie and snuggled her. My mom picked up Alexander. Both babies conjured binky's. Tears streamed down my face. I looked at my children. I cried, "I'm so sorry, EJ. Mommy is so sorry. You did so good baby." I kissed his forehead. EJ reached his hand up to touch my cheek while he ate.

Marcus cleared his throat. He asked, "Haley, little one... what happened?" I said nothing and just stared into EJ's eyes. Finally, I said, "I failed them already, brother. They are everything perfect in this world. I had to have EJ use his shield. He had to keep it up so damn long, and he started to cry from the stress. He's a pusher and so is Alexander. Cassie is a truth seeker like me and I couldn't..." I broke down sobbing. I kept rocking EJ until he stopped feeding. I gathered myself to burp him.

Marcus spoke gently, "You didn't fail them. You protected them." He cut a look at Blade and hissed, "Alone. Care to explain that?" Blade frowned, "Was tricked. Perimeter check. Left babies guard with princess. They came out. Said to help. Was stupid. Blade not need help." I sighed, "It's not his fault Marcus. I told you Arion is..." "I choked out a sob, "Was wily. He was a goddamn fairy through and through."

I took out my phone and called Aiden. He answered immediately, "Hello, little sister." I choked out, "Arion is dead brother. He attacked me with fairy forces. He wanted me and the children." Aiden sighed. I heard the emotion in his voice when he replied, "They won't torture him then? That is... that is good... I couldn't bear that. Wait... they would've kept him alive... your wolf... oh little sister. I am so sorry." I started to cry harder.

Marcus' eyes went wide. He looked to Blade. Aiden spoke, "My poor sister, you shouldn't have had to do that. I'm... I'm sorry. I was having him watched, but I thought this was years out. I was hoping that I could take him off this path." I had tears streaming down my face. I whispered, "Mother helped him Aiden. Masium lit the fuse, I... This is my fault. If I wasn't so fucking weak and messed up from SIMS that day... I could've called on you to take Arion home instead. Masium would've died. Arion would be alive. I tried.... I tried to heal him, but he did something and it wouldn't work." Marcus frowned.

Aiden spoke, "This was not your fault. Our brother made his own choices. Any fairy can refuse healing. I did not realize he was hurting so badly that he wanted it all to end. I am sorry he used you to do that. You spared him from being tortured for... honestly with how mad your family and husband were, years is a kind estimate. I mourn his loss sister, but I mourn his treason as well. He should've been my most trusted advisor. He betrayed you in a deep way, but he betrayed me as well. I will speak with mother. She could've taken him off this path. She had to know what would happen. This isn't your fault. I really can't say that enough. I speak as a brother and a father. I would never allow harm to come to my Aiylee."

He paused then said, "Speaking of my daughter. You gave her to me, didn't you? You healed Lucinda." I sighed, "I just wanted to take her pain away, it wasn't intentional; had I known I could heal I would've done it sooner to make you both happy." Aiden sniffled, "You give so much of yourself, little sister. I will handle this." I sighed, "I think there was a big ass fight, Aiden. Eric was called away somewhere. I couldn't reach my Hackura family."

Marcus spoke loudly, "There was a trap laid for us and the wolves. It involved fairies and rouges. We thought Alpha Lucas Lyons was in danger." Blade spoke, "Was battle. Many fairies died." Aiden groaned, "Fabulous. I need to take care of this. Haley, you shouldn't have had to do this. I am truly sorry you did. I love you." Without waiting for a reply, he hung up.

Marcus spoke first, "You killed Arion?" I nodded. He said, "Haley..." I cut him off, "The triplets need to get to bed. It's way past their bedtime, so we will stay the night here. Marcus, can you tell Bjourn we are here? He can bring Eric when the shit show there ends." Marcus sighed but took out his phone. He looked up from his phone and added, "At least heal yourself, little one." I shook my head, "I need to feed Cassie and Alexander first. Then I will heal myself."

The three of them followed me upstairs. My mom pointed to a room. My breath caught when I walked in. My mom had done a nursery in my wing for us. I told her, "It's really pretty mom, thank you." She nodded and shot me a smile. I put EJ down in his crib and turned to take Cassie from Marcus. I fed and burped her then put her in her crib. I did the same for Alexander. My mom handed me the monitor

and we walked out of the room. I couldn't leave though once I was outside the room. I needed to be close to them.

I sat down and tears formed in my eyes again. I'd killed my own brother. I could feel Arion's blood on me even though I'd snapped it away. Marcus sat beside me. He nudged my shoulder and said, "Let's get you something to eat." I healed myself and shook my head. The very idea of food made me sick to my stomach. I told him, "I can't eat, Marcus." He sighed, "You did what you had to do." I could barely breathe. I whispered, "I killed my brother. I didn't even hesitate. Arion saw EJ's damn shield slipping, and I took the moments he was distracted to kill him."

Marcus frowned, "You didn't want to kill him. He forced your hand and you protected your children." I nodded weakly. That was true, I did it to protect them and I'd do it again. What if Eric didn't want me anymore? I killed my own brother. Eric would never harm his. I grew up with Arion. He was never the brother I wanted him to be, but that didn't change the fact that he was still my brother. My mind was at war with itself; part of me knew I'd done what I had to do, but the other part was full of self-loathing and hatred. Why would Arion refusing my healing? I needed Eric to tell me everything was going to be ok.

My mom spoke, "Sweetheart, I will stay with the babies. Go talk with Marcus. I'll never let anyone by me to get to them. They are safe here." I cried, "They should be safe in their home. They are so damn powerful; more people are going to try to take them. Eric and Jackson sensed their wolves, and their fairy powers are so strong. What kind of life have I given them? Everyone will want to kidnap them and use them. I'm a terrible mother!"

My mom picked me up and gathered me in her arms. She patted my hair and told me, "Now that's the post birth hormones talking. You need to get an appointment with that psychiatrist in the pack. I believe you said her name in Lindsey. Talk to her about these feelings. You are a great mother. You have done nothing wrong. You will give them a life with lots of love from both their parents. Not to mention the love they will receive from your family and his. We WILL protect them; Titus will make it so. As will your husband. We will come up with a system because I SWEAR TO GOD you will never be without a Connors or Cambridge if someone has to leave your territory. I'm done with this fairy fuckery, but that is beside the point. You are a fabulous mother. Your children are safe because of you. You stood your ground until help got there. Until your guard arrived. You are strong Haley Melody Cambridge Connors." I sighed.

My mom had a point. I did need to talk to Lindsey. I told her, "I made EJ put up his shield. His cries broke my heart. He strained so hard to keep it up. I just didn't want to kill Arion." Marcus grabbed me and gave me a hug. He said, "Mom, go sit with the triplets. I've got Hales; she's coming with me." My mom nodded. Marcus

led me back to the main room. My heart was screaming at me to go back to the triplets. Logically, I knew they were safe with my mom. It was just hard.

I sat beside Marcus. He opened his arms and I dove into them. My tears wouldn't end. I cried for myself, for my children, and for Arion. Marcus rubbed my back, "I am so sorry, little one. We should've been there. The rogue attack didn't even sound false." I sighed, "It's not your fault, Marcus. Fairies are devious assholes. Arion learned from the best. Maybe if his father had lived, instead of his role model being Fabian, we wouldn't be here. Or if I had been strong enough to call on Aiden's protection that day to say Arion instead of Masium, or..."

Marcus cut me off, "This was not your fault! They scrambled your mind. They shot you full of iron. They kidnapped you from your home! They tortured you. They let those fangers feed off you and nearly drain you. They were taking too much blood you know; Sir Arthur was giving you transfusions for your health. If not for the goddess protection you received there is no way Cassie, EJ, and Alexander would have survived to be with us today. Arion made his choices and they caused his death. You may have been the instrument in which he received justice, but you gave him the kindest death he would've gotten had any of us got to him first. Rest assured Masium," he spat out his name like it was acid on his tongue then continued, "Will not receive the same kindness."

I started rambling, "Arion used to play with me when I was little. He gave me my favorite stuffed animal. It was a rabbit I named Mr. Whiskers. I took him everywhere until Hexxus ripped its head off when I was five years old. I found a new one on my bed the next day. I kept it hidden so Hexxus couldn't find it. I know Arion wasn't the brother I wanted, but he had his moments where he was kind. I know he gave me the damn replacement rabbit. I know he wronged me by taking me from Eric. He was a devious little asshole, but he was my brother. He saved me from Fabian. Arion stopped him from raping me again at Damon's. He stayed with me so they couldn't hurt me anymore."

Marcus pushed me back. He tilted my chin and looked me in the eyes, "Arion may have had moments where he was kind to you, but if Zader had put his hands on you; any of us would've killed him. We never would've traded you so our mate could be treated as a better pet for vampires. I know that you are going to feel bad about this, and I can't stop that. I wish I could because you did nothing wrong. Don't let Arion's actions, and his bad decisions fall on you. It's ok to remember the good things he did for you. Just don't forget that you didn't plot out his murder. You didn't seek him out. He came to take you from your home. AGAIN. He wanted to use and abuse your children's powers. He thought only of himself. He did not consider your feelings, just as he gave you up the first time." I wasn't positive about that. Something seemed off with Arion when we fought. He wasn't himself exactly. It was like he wanted to die not use anyone.

I sighed and admitted, “I told Arion something similar in Damon’s home. I pointed out that if anyone wanted Aiden, he would’ve done anything to save him. Arion just did what was easiest for his damn self where I was concerned.” I paused then whispered, “Maybe if I had answered the damn phone and talked to him... maybe I could’ve stopped this.” Marcus shook his head firmly. He said, “You may have delayed it, but this was coming. You know that deep down. Would it really be better if your children were older? What if EJ, Alexander, or even little Cassie had been forced to kill their uncle? To save each other and you before they possess the capacity to do that.” I shook my head violently.

I didn’t want that for my babies, “No, I want them to know how to protect themselves, but no. I don’t want that on their conscience. Not killing their own damn uncle.” Marcus smiled, “I can already tell all of them will be fierce little things. They are not that old, and they did what they could to protect you.” I smiled. I told him proudly, “Cassie shot Arion with her sunlight hands when she heard me cry in pain from the damn fire bolt he hit me with. They are all protective of our little family.” Marcus’ eyes blazed. He hissed, “He hit you with a fire bolt?” I nodded, “He was very well trained on how to fight. Unlike me, he was allowed to train from the time was little. He was fucking fierce. I’m honestly not sure I should’ve been able to beat him. It’s like he let me.” Marcus disagreed, “You didn’t want to kill him. Look me in the eye and tell me you couldn’t have made the fight shorter.”

I thought about it really hard. I told him, “Maybe. He was being a little sloppy. I’ve seen him fight. He didn’t put his best effort forth. When I saw his eyes when EJ cried though; I knew I couldn’t save him. He looked almost lost to himself, Marcus. It was fucking weird. I knew that he would keep coming after them.” Marcus snorted, “Your wolf or any of us would’ve tortured him here in this realm for months, possibly for years for what he did.” I nodded, “I know you would’ve. I didn’t want that for him either. I just wanted him to be safe, living his damn life being happy in Faerie by Aiden’s side.” Marcus nodded, “Had he let this go, he might have had that for a few years. Maybe even a decade. His decisions and motivations were his own. They aren’t on you.” I snorted, “No his motivations were Masium’s. You may not believe it, but Arion was a good man. He was easily swayed but he was good. He had such potential to do great things, just as Aiden is doing.” Marcus shrugged, “There we will agree to disagree, little one.” I rolled my eyes and he pulled me in for a hug.

I sighed and stood up. I needed to move. I told Marcus, “I’m going to go get that blanket mom made for me. It always made me feel safe here. I’ll cut it up into three pieces for EJ, Cassie, and Alexander. I want them to feel safe, like I did.” Marcus smiled, “That’s a good idea. Mom will love that, and it will make you feel better.” I nodded and left him in the main room.

I made my way back to my wing. I was almost there when movement caught my eye. I stopped. I whispered, "Eric? When did you get here?" He was standing in the shadows but stepped out when I noticed him. He glared at me and said, "I've been here all along. You just refused to see me." I stared at him in confusion. He couldn't have been here the whole damn time. He would've been with me and our children. I frowned "No, I saw you fighting. I always fucking see you, Eric. You know that." I felt for him in our bond to push my love at him. I panicked and told him, "Eric, our bond... What the fuck happened? You feel like you shouldn't be this close to me."

He laughed cruelly and told me, "Do you think you're the only one who can control the bond we share?" I asked, "What are you talking about?" He stepped closer. The look on his face held so much anger that I took a step back. I stopped because I was too close to the small step leading towards my wing.

He angrily asked me, "Why could you never see me? I've loved you for so long, and you couldn't even let me in." I was getting mad. I shouted, "What the fuck are you talking about? I've loved you since we met. You know that! I've let you in. You know every damn part of me. How could you say that to me?"

When he shoved me backwards, I wasn't prepared for it. Mostly because Eric had never been remotely physical like this with me, ever. I slipped on the step and tried to catch myself, but I was distracted. When he touched me I didn't feel any tingles caused me to pause long enough that by the time I tried to right myself my ankle was at a funny angle. It rolled underneath me. The pain sprang up instantly. I crashed into a wall hitting my head.

Eric spoke in fealish, "Kekkel still Zecka Fren Yuit earth Den Yevce" (be still child of the earth and sky). When did he learn fealish? What the fuck was going on? The room was spinning and my mind was reeling. This didn't make sense. Eric didn't know fealish and when he touched me, I'd felt nothing. What he was saying to me made no damn sense. No matter what was going on in our lives when Eric touched me, I always feel like my skin is on fire with little tingles. This couldn't be Eric. Did he have an evil fucking twin I didn't know about?

Fake Eric kept talking, "You never loved me." The pain was pounding in my head. I tried to move my hands, but nothing was working. I was confused. I told him, "Eric, you know I love you. You are my mate, my husband, my whole life. You are the father of my children. How can you say I never loved you? Stop this please. I need help Eric; I can't fucking move. My head is throbbing."

He grabbed my arms and roughly pulled me to a sitting position. He hissed at me, "It's always about him. Never about me! Tell me why?" I cried, "What are you talking about? Who's him? Eric, you know damn well I've only wanted you!" He slapped me hard across the face. It stung. I knew beyond a doubt this was not my

Eric. I knew his hands. Those were not them, and more importantly my Eric would NEVER hit me.

Fake Eric staggered back. I stared at him in shock. He stuttered, "I'm... I'm sorry... I... I didn't mean to hurt you... I love you." Tears streamed down my face. I looked for a ripple. I must not have made it out. I knew my Eric would not ever physically hurt me. Did the fairies get my children too? Was I in a SIM? Where were my children? Where was my Eric? I decided not to talk anymore. I linked my Eric. I didn't want to be in another SIM with fake Eric's who said and did things to hurt me. I just wanted my family, Eric, and my babies.

I could feel Eric here in our bond now. Where was I? I was fucking sick and tired of fake fucking Eric's. I just want the real Eric. I'm so sick of this shit! Fake Eric's could suck a dick. Fake Eric spoke, "You need to stop getting hurt. You keep getting hurt by vampires, fairies, and wolves. Just stop it! I want you to be ok." I snorted, "Not to point out the fucking obvious or anything, but you just hurt me fake Eric." He just smirked, "Now you're going to lie there and take what I have to give you. That I've longed to give you for years." I laughed at him. I told him, "Well that shows what you fucking know. Eric and I haven't known each other for years."

I taunted him, "What is it exactly you want to give me? Another slap? Go ahead, fake Eric. The real Eric fucking punches people by the way." He slapped me again. Harder than the last time. My head recoiled when I hit a decorative stand beside me. Fake Eric pulled my hair and bit my neck on my mark. I screamed as the pain burned my entire body. It felt like a fire consuming me from the inside out.

I was even more confused than before. SIMS wouldn't be able to cause me pain like this. What the fuck was this? I just wanted this to stop. I wanted the non-evil twin Eric; God Damn it I wanted my Eric. I didn't understand how he could look exactly like him. I wanted to be able to kick his DAMN ass for touching me or use my powers, but I couldn't fucking move. Fake Eric was ripped off of me by what looked like my very pissed off Eric. Oh good. There's two of them. Oddly, nothing but relief flooded me when the new Eric ripped evil Eric off me.

The new Eric's eyes were changing from blue to black. He tried to take care of me, but the fake Eric started to fight him. It hurt my heart to see Eric in pain; or hurt in any way. My heart burned in pain. I studied the new Eric. Instinctually, I knew that was my Eric I could feel it. My head was spinning. It was hard to differentiate the two. I knew one of them was the real Eric though. I just really needed to stop getting hit in the head.

Marcus knelt in front of me, but I still couldn't move. Bjourn touched my arm, "Little one? Why aren't you moving?" I was back in control of my body the second my brother's hand contacted mine. My hand instantly went to my head, like

I had been trying to do the whole time. I tried to explain to my brothers. I was beginning to think in a past life I was a damn serial killer. What did I do to deserve this shit constantly happening to me? I needed to get to my babies. I needed to see them. To make sure they were ok. What if some fake Eric tried to take them?

I watched as Jackson and Darrin grabbed the other evil twin Eric. Harold was here ready to assist them. Bjourn followed them outside, his eyes blazing. Out of the corner of my eye I saw movement to touch me. My mind flashed to the slap and I flinched, involuntarily. The pain in Eric's eyes hurt me. I scolded myself internally as I saw the pain on his face. Good fucking job. He's never fucking hurt us, and I acted like he would.

I hadn't meant to hurt him. I wasn't afraid of the real Eric. I just needed to know it was him. They seemed to believe the other man was Cason. I'm sorry... Cason? Cason wouldn't hurt me. Would he? That guy didn't look like Cason, he looked like Eric. I forced myself to remain still as Eric wrapped his arms around me. Tingles erupted on my skin and a rush of endorphins hit my system. I leaned into him and drew in his scent, breathing him in, calming myself and trying to explain what happened.

I wasn't explaining it right. I knew who Cason was. The other guy was obviously Eric's evil twin. Evil Eric was not in for a fun time. All my brothers, my dad, a heavily pregnant Miley, which meant Jim would get involved, along with my mom were going to beat the shit out of his evil twin ass.

I needed to focus. I quickly healed my head because my thoughts were scattered from the pain. I needed to see the triplets. Seeing a fake Eric was pushing me back to real not real in my mind. I need to see them with my own eyes. To make sure another fake Eric wasn't walking around, tricking my mom, and taking my kids.

I saw my mom and she had her phone out when we rounded the corner. Someone had warned her and she was pissed. I tried to will my ankle not to cause me pain. It didn't work. It was too painful not to limp a little. I felt Eric's surprise with a touch of anger; damn it. They all noticed. I felt at ease now that I'd seen my babies. I had to smile a little bit because the old me without kids would've healed my ankle. I probably would've woken up in a few hours... or maybe not. I was getting better and faster at healing. I actually wondered why sometimes. I shrugged. Now, instead of just being fully healed, I couldn't bring myself to do it. My children could need me in those hours I was unconscious. I should've eaten when Marcus told me to. Damn it.

Eric picked me back up the second I was in arms reach. I was relieved but quickly I clamped that feeling down. He'd carry me all the damn time when I was injured if he knew how relieved I was. My children's guard showed up. I was really annoyed with them. Ghiza stayed behind. He was an excellent warrior, one of our

best actually, aside from my brothers. Something told me he was Cassie's head guard. I couldn't help but smirk. My dad had done the same with me. It's why Javi and Blade were part of my guard. Blade should be the head of someone else's guard. He was good and so was Javi. Ghiza apologized and explained the situation. I was confused. I seriously doubted Masium's shitty plan included hacking the guards phones. He wouldn't even have known which guards to fucking text. I filed that away for later. When Ghiza walked away, I think he and I both felt better.

Once Eric and I were alone, I summarized and heavily evaded and edited leaving the bulk of what happened out. It was probably going to bite me in the ass later. Eric's face when I flinched away from his touch was still in the forefront of my mind. I had every damn right to protect my mate just like he did me. I felt his anger like an erupting volcano after my explanation. What did I say? I left a lot out. I had no idea what in the version I'd given him would cause him to be this angry.

Eric was frustrated and feeling jealous. If that just wasn't a twist and a half. I was unwanted my whole fucking life. Particularly by men. He said something about Lucas' Beta. Dylan? He meant Dylan? That guy thought I was crazy. A little funny, but definitely fucking crazy. There is absofuckinglutely no way he didn't think I'm crazy. I was crazy without Eric... I was very pregnant and pissed the fuck off. No wolf would challenge Eric for me. That was just silly. Plus, Jim and Nick told me Lucas and Dylan had been friends with Eric and his brothers since they were little. My poor mate, I wanted to laugh because he was wrong. No one wanted me but him.

I changed the topic. I needed him and he needed me. It would help us both. I needed to know he still wanted me. Everyone else in the world could despise me for what I've done. I just needed him to still love me. We were naked shortly after that. I was in a pleasure haze. Eric kept making me say I was his. Ridiculous man. This man owned me mind, body, and soul. He was the father of our beautiful children; I would never be with anyone else. I never wanted anyone else even before I met him and no one had ever wanted me until him. I was going to have to heal my voice when I woke up tomorrow. Eric's need to claim me lasted hours.

By the time we got out, I was practically asleep as soon as my head hit the pillow. I woke a little before dawn and reached for Eric. I sighed when I realized he wasn't there. I snapped myself some clothes and walked out of my room. Blade greeted me with a smile. I smiled back. I told him, "Go see your family and mate, Blade. I'm going for a ride." Blade frowned, "Princess needs guard." I laughed, "Not here, I don't. I'll be with Pirate. Go have some fun. That's an order." He frowned but said, "Fine. Blade goes."

I stopped to check on the babies who were still sleeping. Blade had waited for me, and we walked out of the castle together. I headed off towards the barn waving at him. I snapped Pirate ready for our ride. Treasure was in the stall next to him. He

stomped his foot. I laughed and conjured each of them a sugar cube. I told Treasure, "I'll have Eric take you out soon, Treasure. Don't worry." I took Pirate and headed outside.

I quickly got on and headed towards the path that would eventually end with us on the beach. I felt free when Pirate ran with me on his back. He galloped quickly along the path. I slowed us to a walk when we reached the beach. I took a deep breath taking in the sounds and the smell. I snapped my shoes off and popped beside Pirate. I stood in the sand curling my toes around it.

I spoke to Arion. "Ioul Za'm sorry Den Za loved Zu. Za hope Zu tyu Zen Sechen. Za can't blame myself Den wallow in grief Za Wer Eqsad ones crotj. Za promise Zu if megan Uy tegnant with Uyla Zecka, Za'll take care Fren them. Za'll sar Br Den aiden Den Za will tell Yim or Br Fren Zu Ioul. Za mucha saigal arion. Denten" (Brother I'm sorry and I loved you. I hope you are at peace. I can't blame myself and wallow in grief. I have little ones now. I promise you if Megan is pregnant with your child, I'll take care of them. I'll help her. Aiden and I will tell him or her of you, brother. I love you Arion. Goodbye).

I felt the breeze kick up around me gently. I smiled, feeling Arion in the wind. Pirate nudged me. I sighed and snapped my feet clear of sand. I popped onto Pirate's back before snapping my shoes on. I took back off for the trail. I was halfway back when Pirate stopped. His ears were shifting back and forth, "What is it boy?" He was tense. Suddenly, I heard another horse thundering towards us. Phillip and Kace appeared. I smiled and patted Pirate. I told him, "It's alright boy, it's just Phillip and Kace."

Pirate huffed. He'd never liked either of them for some reason. Phillip motioned for me to tie Pirate to the post near me so we could talk. I looked at my watch. I had some time before the triplets woke. I nodded and quickly tied Pirate up. I turned and said, "Hey guys! How are you?" Phillip looked me over from head to toe. He admitted, "We heard about Cason. Are you alright?" I nodded, "I'm fine. Eric got to me on time." Both their expressions darkened.

I asked, "Do you not like Eric?" Kace snorted, "He's not good enough for you, princess." I frowned, "I'm sorry you feel that way, but I disfuckingagree. I love him." Both looked pained. Now I was confused. Phillip yelled, "DON'T say that!" I asked, "Don't say what?" Phillip spoke again, "That you love him." I looked at him incredulously, "Exfuckingcuse me? Why not? He's my mate, my husband, and the father of my children. He's one of your prince's. What the fuck is going on with you guys?" Kace hissed, "He's not a true prince. He's an accepted prince by marriage." I frowned, "So you won't accept Torvi or Astrid or any of my brother's other fucking mates as Princesses?" Phillip sighed, "That's different. They are Hackura."

Anger surged up in me like a powder keg that exploded. I was pretty sure it wasn't all mine. Eric was mad as well somewhere about something. Great. I told the men in front of me, "Prejudice is a feeling I understand all too well. I just didn't think that among the Hackura it was a fucking problem. How very fairy of you both." Kace sighed, "Not you. You are our princess. He's a fucking wolf." I hissed, "And my children are part wolf, part fairy, part Hackura. So, the fuck what?"

Kace's eye blazed gold. He yelled, "He doesn't even deserve you! He didn't even listen to your side of things with that Claudia bitch! We always believed you about her! Your beloved Marcus didn't even believe you and took her side AGAIN! Eric said you were being a jealous teenager! YOU of all people being jealous or acting like a teenager. Then his family cut you out! They think you're a bad person, and you're the best person I know. They don't deserve your healing powers or you! You are too good for them." My jaw hit the floor; he couldn't know that. My family wouldn't tell anyone about that.

It hit me. Kace bugged my phone. Kace was the one who sent the children's guard out of the room with a text. He was one of the best techs in this realm. Harper's boytoy lover was the best, but Kace was in the top five. The fairies couldn't have done that, Kace, Cason, and Phillip were working with the fairies. Betrayal and pain hit me. How could they do this? They are my people. They helped train me. I linked Eric, "Eric, I need help." He said nothing.

I looked down as a dart pierced my skin. I blew out an annoyed breath as I felt the iron flood into my system. Pain hit at me. I gritted my teeth and hissed, "MOTHER FUCKER! You just attacked your princess! Are you FUCKING kidding me?! What's the plan? Turn me over to fairies? I'm so sick of getting hit with fucking iron darts!"

Phillip lowered the dart gun. He told me, "We would never give you to fairies, princess. You are coming with us though; we will get you somewhere safe. Then you can pick between Kace and me. We are better matches for you. Your father will accept your choice." I rolled my eyes. They were delusional.

I felt Eric coming my way. I asked, "It was you Kace, wasn't it? You tricked my children's guard and left us open for attack. I had to KILL MY FUCKING BROTHER because you sent them away!" My eyes were so gold they hurt. I linked, "ERIC FUCKING CONNERS!" He still didn't answer me. I yelled in annoyance, "And how the FUCK are you stopping me from linking Eric?" Kace shrugged when he said, "The fairies gave us some enchanted stones. I am sorry about your brother. I didn't mean for you to kill Arion. Phillip was waiting to make sure we got you instead. He was going to take you from them. We made a deal with Masium for you."

I laughed, “You fucking idiots. Masium wouldn’t have given me you to you. He wanted me as a broodmare and you offered me up on a FUCKING PLATTER! I am going to commission a vat made of iron, fill it with lemonade and drop Masium’s fat ass into it! You probably weren’t specific in this deal. Fairies live for loopholes. What about my babies? What did you think would happen to them?” I was practically willing the iron pain to subside. Oddly, it seemed to be working.

I noticed Pirate was going crazy. I should’ve listened to my damn horse. Phillip explained, “Well, the fairies wanted the babies... we wanted you.” Now I was a level of angry that I didn’t know existed. I screamed, “YOU WERE GOING TO LET THEM TAKE MY FUCKING CHILDREN? YOUR DUKE’S AND DUCHESS? I am going to FUCKING KILL you! Why did you want me?” Phillip said, “We love you. We always have.” I snorted, “Fucking liars! fine, don’t tell me why you wanted me.”

Kace frowned, “You have no weapons princess. Just come with us quietly.” I hissed at him, “People keep saying that to me. I love Eric. I love my children. I will NOT leave them while there is still breath in my body. I was trained by Marcus and Bjourn, I ALWAYS have a fucking weapon.” I pulled a knife out of my shoe. I desperately wished I could call my swords to me, but I could still take both of them with my damn knife.

I was about to advance when a roar shook the air. I smiled. Thor was coming. Both Phillip and Kace’s eyes widened. Kace frowned as he whispered, “No, he can’t know. You can’t link him.” I smiled, “You’d be surprised what my husband can do. I imagine you will soon find out.” Phillip ran at me. I was about to fight him when Thor jumped over my head. He ripped Phillip’s head off in stride and threw the head at Kace, who screamed.

I shrugged and sat down. I put my knife back in my shoe. Eric shifted back and started to throw punches. He was angrily screaming that I was his. I tilted my head, well that was true. Treasure thundered into the clearing to my complete and utter shock. I looked around but I didn’t see Eric’s brothers or mine. What was going on today? Treasure ran over to Eric who took cable ties from his saddle bag. Ok, I didn’t feel the iron in my system anymore, but it’s clearly messing with my brain. I was beginning to think Eric somehow spoke to Treasure.

Eric tied Kace down and said something to him. I was too far away to hear him. Eric turned to me. I smiled at him. I said, “Hey Thor. I have no idea what’s going on today, but people are being fucking crazy.”

He said nothing. He stalked over to me and crashed his mouth to mine. He pulled back and growled, “MINE!” Before I could answer his lips were fiercely on mine again. He was attacking my lips, practically fucking my mouth with his tongue. He

pulled my body flush against his. He yanked my pants off, and his other hand went under my shirt, playing with my nipple.

I felt his fingers enter me. I moaned into his mouth. He pulled me down onto my knees. I was moaning with desire. He growled and put me on my back. He yelled, "YOU ARE MINE! SAY IT!" The intensity of his tone was one I hadn't heard before. This was an intense and desperate need to claim me. I touched his face gently and told him, "I'm yours, Eric. Only yours." He entered me quickly. He grabbed one of my hands intertwining our fingers as he thrust into me.

He yelled, "MINE! MINE! MINE! MY MATE! MY WIFE!" I put my free hand on his back running my hand up and down him. I assured him, "Yours, Eric. I am yours." His eyes were still black telling me Thor was in control. I had come multiple times and he wasn't slowing down. I bared my neck to him. I told him, "Your mark is right here, I'm yours." He growled and bit my neck. I exploded seeing stars. I bit him back. He howled and came right after me.

We were both breathing heavily. He put his full weight down on me. I traced circles on his back and up his side. He put his head in the crook of my neck, breathing in my scent. I whispered, "I'm ok Eric. I had it all under control." I felt his smile on my neck. He answered, "Of course you did, Angel." When he pulled back and I saw his eyes were back to blue. I told him, "It was nice not to have to do anything in a fight though. Thanks for coming after me." Eric kissed me, "I'll always come for you, Angel."

Eric pulled out of me. I pulled my pants back up. I could hear Kace was, god knows why. Maybe he had realized just what he was in for now. Eric growled, "Why can't I link my brothers to come?" I sighed, "Fairy fuckery. They gave those fucking idiots enchanted stones. If you go over by the tree line I'd bet you can link them. Where are your brothers? Where are mine?" Eric smiled and told me, "They are waiting for word from me. We figured some things out, and I took off to find you. I told my brothers to wait for my signal to join us with your family." I nodded, "Sure, where does Treasure come into your plan?" Eric shrugged.

He snorted, "Evidently Thor told him to come." I stared at him for several moments. I asked, "Thor can fucking communicate with Treasure?" Eric smiled and nodded. My mouth hung open. That was crazy and cool. Eric took my hand and walked over to the tree line. After several seconds he told me, "It's working, they are coming."

A few moments later three black wolves burst into view. They shifted back. Darrin asked, "Hey little sister in law can you do your thing with the clothes?" I sighed, "I would but I was shot with fucking iron. So, I doubt it will work. I can try though." I snapped my fingers. I wasn't surprised when nothing happened. Eric growled,

“THEY SHOT YOU WITH IRON?” I shrugged, “You ripped off his damn head so... fair is fair? It only hurt for a bit. My powers will be back in a few hours tops.”

I looked at my watch. I said, “The triplets will be up in an hour. Let’s move this along.” Marcus, Drake, Bjourn, Logan, and my dad ran into the area. Logan and Drake smirked at me after sniffing the air. I rolled my eyes at them. Perverts.

Jackson hauled Kace to his feet. Bjourn punched him back down to the ground. Marcus lifted him back up. He hissed, “You will tell us why you betrayed us and attacked your princess! NOW!” I sighed and was about to explain when Kace answered, “She fucking friend zones us, and accepts the wolf! The very one Bjourn came back saying she should fucking marry! We were going to approach the king and ask for her hand. Then Bjourn gets a crush on the fucking wolf for her. Then the next thing we know, he’s her mate! He doesn’t deserve her! He doubted her, and I would never.”

I hissed, “Apparently, they fucking ‘love’ me” I used air quotes and continued, “He bugged my fucking phone like a psycho stalker. YOU do NOT decide who deserves me! What the FUCK is a friend zone? I didn’t even know we were friends! I am absofuckinglutely positive that means I didn’t fucking friend zone you.”

I turned to see Jim in the clearing. I pointed at him and said, “He’s my friend. He said so and he doesn’t stalk me, like a weirdo! I have HAD IT with this shit! I need someone to tell me when I became attractive to the opposite sex, because last time I checked no one in this realm was even remotely interested in me that has a penis! Torvi and Miley told me that men are straightforward and women are cunning and manipulative. If you fucking claim to love me Kace, then they were wrong! PLENTY of women in this realm have straight up told me they wanted to have sex with me. Not a single man until I met Eric looked at me with remote interest. What the hell is wrong with you?” Everyone was laughing. Why the fuck were they laughing?!

Kace sighed and told me, “You didn’t want any of us to touch you. We respected your wishes. Unlike the fucking wolf.” I stomped my foot like a child and yelled, “HIS NAME IS PRINCE ALPHA ERIC CONNERS! Not the wolf! Do you think I don’t want him to touch me? We barely keep our fucking hands off each other! I love him, you asshole.”

I turned to my family. I commanded, “Brothers, do terrible fucking things to him. I am FUCKING done with this.” I walked over to Pirate. I swung myself into the saddle and looked over as Eric did the same with Treasure. I kicked my heels into Pirates' sides. We took off together on our horses. I noticed Eric’s brothers were running in wolf form beside us. I fumed the entire ride home about the idiocy that started my day with this fucking mess. There was a stable worker waiting for us. I

dismounted Pirate and kissed his face. I told him, “I’ll bring you an apple later boy.”

I stalked into the castle with all the Connors men and Jim behind me. My eyes narrowed my eyes when I saw Harper, Evin, and Histeck sitting there. I told them. “ONE of you please order me a new fucking phone with a new number. The ONLY FUCKING tech that gets said new number is Harper’s boytoy lover because he’s gay and even if he decides to have children, he’d NEVER want me. Because as much as I try to ignore people who talk about all of you in bed, I’m FULLY aware Harper’s boy toy lover thinks he’s a god and wants to be his and Cali’s lover always. So, Harper don’t you FUCKING dare talk about my husband’s magic dick to said boytoy lover. Or I will kick your fucking ass. Because then he’d probably sell my information to some fairy who would try to take me for a shot at my husband’s MAGIC FUCKING DICK. FOR THE LOVE OF GOD WILL SOMEONE TELL ME WHAT THE FUCKING FRIEND ZONE IS?!”

Miley came into the room with my mom. Both of their eyes were as wide as saucers. Everyone behind me tried to cover their laughs with coughs. I whirled and hissed, “This is not funny. It’s not even remotely funny that the world has turned upside fucking down. It’s also DEEPLY insulting that no one wanted me until I found someone who treats me like I’m a queen. I found someone who loves me, and they keep trying to fucking take me from him. It’s not fair!”

I rounded and looked to Miley. I pointed at her and asked, “What is the friend zone? And how the FUCK did I put three guys who aren’t my fucking friends into it?” Miley was biting her lip. My mom was laughing silently behind her.

I threw my hands into the air, “FUCK it all to hell and back. This isn’t funny! I’m going back to my room to wait for the triplets to wake up. Eric have fun with Kace and Cason if he’s still alive. I know you’re going to torture them. We can stay the night here again, and when we go back to our home it will be morning. We have to be back by then because I’m throwing Bex’s fucking baby shower and I need to set it up. Which won’t take long unless someone else shoots me with fucking IRON!!”

I turned to my brother stating, “Evin, I need a vat made of iron and a gallon of lemonade.” I stormed off. I heard a huff behind me. Miley was out of breath. She said, “Wait, bitch! I’m a fucking beached whale. You’re going too fast. I’ll explain the friend zone to you, and then you can tell me what the hell happened.” I sighed and waited for her.

I felt Eric behind me before his hands wrapped around my waist. He whispered in my ear, “We weren’t laughing at you my Angel, but because you have a way with words. This wasn’t your fault, and I will handle it. Later, we are going to discuss you giving me the heavily evasive version of what happened last night with Cason.”

I smiled, "For once I agree. It wasn't my fault and I'm obviously fucking hilarious. You did handle it. I didn't have to raise a hand, remember? Do we REALLY have to discuss Cason?" He smiled and kissed me hard. When he pulled back he simply said, "Yes." He turned to leave with his brothers and the three of mine that were with him. Harper glanced at me curiously. Miley sighed and said, "So the friend zone..." Yes, I must learn about whatever the fuck the friend zone was.