

# Thawing

Eric woke up feeling Haley's fright in their bond. I couldn't help but think Marcus was right. We shouldn't have let her go back to Faerie. Not now anyway, she needed more time. More time to know Fabian was really dead. More time to work through her demons. Fuck Aiden declaring her a traitor. He could've gotten around it. I listened for her heartbeat slowly return to its normal rate. It was pounding in her chest like she'd just run a marathon.

Once it did calm, we talked. I was stunned by her comments about Masium. He fucking beat her with an iron bat and hooked her up to a car battery. Among the other horrible shit, he did to her; how the fuck could she owe him? If I lived on thousand years, I would never understand the heart of my mate. She was too pure. Those tapes I saw, the things he did to her as a child; no matter what he did to help her he could never make her owe him a goddamn thing. Fucking fairies and the way they raised their damn children was shitty.

The moon goddess really had given me the best mate, my perfect match. It would've hurt me deeply to deny her if she asked me to let Masium off easy. Because I couldn't give her that. I wasn't capable of that after seeing those tapes. Not after knowing what he'd done to her even before I saw them. Using Arion's weak mind against him to betray her again. The pain he caused my mate was unforgivable. He was going to take her and my children from me and breed my mate for power. Nothing could've saved him from me, not even her.

We changed the topic as our need for each other overtook us. Once we were done, Jackson linked me, "Are we running today?" I answered, "Yup." I knew Jackson would be happy about that. We needed to get back into a routine. Haley explained she was going to see Molly for training. I couldn't help my smile. Haley was already thawing with Molly. It was a step. Training was important in our pack. I knew it was also important to Haley as a Hackura princess. To offer to help train Molly was a big deal and I had to wonder if Haley even realized that.

My mate was handling me by offering to train with Molly during the same time I ran with my brothers. She was too cute. Normally, I'd be pissed to realize someone was handling me, but the way she did it made me smile. That she was trying to have a better relationship with any of my brothers' mates already meant the world to me. I knew Molly had to be brimming with excitement. It also explained why Jackson linked me about our run. He wanted to talk about it too.

She snapped us ready. She did things to my self-control. I needed her again and we were on the clock. I'd be damned if I couldn't make my mate and myself come in fifteen minutes. I accomplished that. I had to sprint outside to meet my brothers.

I ran out and saw Jackson and Darrin waiting. They inhaled. Darrin asked, “Seriously? Your mate wakes up in enough time for you to bang her and then come run with us?” I laughed, “Twice. We woke up in enough time to fuck twice, little brother.” He growled at me. Jackson linked me, “Haley is training with Molly this morning.” I answered, “So she just told me. I almost fell over.” He smiled.

Harold joined us last. We shifted and we ran our usual morning route. Darrin linked us all, “So Molly and Haley are training. Shana is hopeful that can be a starting point for them all to have a friendship realm with Haley.” I told him honestly, “I was surprised when she told me they were going to train, but it’s something.” Jackson informed the group, “Molly is so excited about it. Not only to be trained by her, but that she offered without prompting. Molly was really surprised. We all told them it would take a while for Haley to thaw. I got enthusiastic sex out of Molly from the deal. I’m a fan.”

I snorted, “Not commenting on the sex part. I also thought it would take time. I think it’s because Molly jumped on Masium when he advanced on her and the triplets before we arrived that day. That action on Molly’s part seems to have led to a breakthrough with them.” Darrin laughed, “Well, I’ll have to tell Shana and Jessica that tidbit, you know; since we get attacked by fairies quite frequently now.” Harold snorted, “Don’t you dare tell my mate that.” Darrin laughed, “I don’t have to. I’ll tell mine who will tell yours.” Harold huffed, “YOU ASSHOLE! Why aren’t you worried about Shana getting hurt?” Darrin laughed, “Our mates are badass’ brother. Eric’s mate is like the uber badass princess. Haley wouldn’t let them get hurt. Molly was healed before we even showed up. Haley wouldn’t have let Masium do any damage.”

Harold growled at him. He sniped in our link, “If you so much as HINT to your mate that I don’t think mine can handle herself in a fight; I will make sure Shana makes the list to get your first editions back even longer.” I laughed; I had forgotten he still didn’t have them back. Darrin growled. He told me, “Big brother, I need the universe to stop conspiring against us so that your mate can have a normal ass day and I can approach her about my books.”

I snorted, “Yes, well if you can talk to the universe about that’d be great. I’ll settle for the drama of the day being about your precious fucking books.” Darrin huffed, “You’re telling me. Before I couldn’t say anything when she came home because her brain was all broken. Then she gives birth and kills her brother. We went to the Hackura realm and dealt with her fan club there.” I growled at the reminder.

Darrin continued, “Haley had to be told what the friend zone is. She didn’t agree she friend zoned her fan club. Honestly, brother, she’s so naive it’s cute. You need to work on that. I’d have thought with those screams we hear constantly that you were doing a better job at corrupting her. Then to cap off our crazy lives, we come

back to our realm and her freaking mother dies. Can't a guy catch a break for his first editions?"

We all laughed at him. I didn't tell him I'd already seen them when we were dealing with the fallout from Claudia and our mother situation. They were all just sitting in Haley's treehouse. I wouldn't spoil her or Shana's fun. I said, "Maybe she died." Harold linked, "MAYBE?!" Jackson snorted, "I'll catch them up." I let him do that.

We paused our run as we had reached the area where we could see Molly and Haley fighting in the gym. Haley was coaching her on how to spot when a fairy was going to use a power. Jackson linked us, "Well damn, we all need that training." He looked damn proud watching Molly as she adjusted fighting to when Haley was about to use a power. I told them, "We need to inform our warriors the signs. That's going to come in handy." My brothers nodded.

When we turned around, we saw Jessica and Shana sitting a few yards back with their babies watching Molly and Haley. We shifted back to talk to them. Jessica smiled, "She really is good, Eric. We already knew Molly was good." Jackson nodded his agreement.

Darrin and Harold went to their mates and held them. Shana asked, "This is good, right? It's progress?" I nodded, "I think so." Jessica spoke, "We were all surprised. We didn't expect a step like this so soon." I agreed, "We all are, but Haley is Haley. She does things her own way. It's a long road back to where we all were together, but at least we are moving along the road." They nodded.

We headed inside with Jessica. Shana told Darrin she was going to take the girls on a walk. I held back a laugh as he ordered warriors from his pack to accompany them. Shana glared at him. Darrin shrugged and gave her a kiss on the cheek as she walked away.

My brothers and I walked into the war room. Caleb was waiting with files. He informed us, "We have the pack disputes and paperwork for the day." I nodded. We quickly got to work. After an hour Jackson cleared his throat, "The triplets should be back soon, and we are starving." I raised an eyebrow and told my brother, "I'm not your warden or your mother. You can eat whenever you want. Let's go see if my pups are back." They smiled at me as we headed towards the kitchen.

Harold quipped, "I'm glad to hear you talking about pups, and they are yours. I know we all wondered if we'd ever see your pups, Eric. I'm so damn happy for you." Before I could answer we heard Haley squealing. I smiled as I rounded the corner and took Alexander from Veronica. I kissed little Cassie on the forehead before walking completely into the kitchen.

I wasn't surprised when I noticed all of Haley brothers except Logan here. I knew he'd make an appearance at some point today. I had no doubt that every fairy they had in their realm suffered for what we saw on those ports. I didn't have it in me to feel bad for whatever had happened to them if they were on Haley's list.

I looked at my mate. Anyone who physically hurt her would die. No matter if that was the past or present. It was amusing that despite what happened to Haley she was innocent and naive of certain things. She was smart as a whip. She had her insecurities, but we all do. She was fucking perfect and she was mine. My blood started to run hot thinking of what Masium had done to her. Thor wanted to be let loose to kill Masium for trying to destroy her spirit. He could've taken her from me before I'd ever met her. Her little heart could've given out from the damn car battery. She could've had internal bleeding from the bat that hit her. Thor roared angrily in my mind. Rage was seeping into my very being.

Jackson linked me, "Brother, are you alright?" I nodded but said nothing in return. I pushed that aside to spend time with my pups and mate. It amazed me at how quickly my pups and their mother became the center of my world. I glanced at my mate. She had been so numb while we were gone, but here she was full of love and happiness. I never wanted to feel her numbness again. I was addicted to her emotions now that I knew what her protecting herself felt like. It was even worse than when she pulled back some of her emotions from me. At least then I could still feel her. I shivered remembering what I felt from her the second we stepped through that portal.

I walked away from Haley then heard her pop away. She was probably going to her fairy training session. I let the rage I'd felt earlier seep back to full throttle and stalked into the main room. I was ready to tear Masium to pieces.

Everyone was already there, waiting for me. Jackson noticed the rage in my eyes. He wisely said nothing as we walked down to the dungeon. Masium looked up as we came towards him. Someone had already strapped him down to the table. Caleb asked, "What the fuck? You look like your normal self. How the fuck did that happen?"

Masium smiled and looked right at me. He taunted, "My cousin, you know, his mate... she fixed me up." I knew he was trying to upset me. I stared at him, "So she told me." Everyone looked at me in surprise. The light in Masium's eyes dimmed a little. He sighed, "I didn't think she would've told you." I snarked at him, "You underestimate my wife and our relationship then." He snorted, "She said the same."

Bjourn asked, "Why did my sister help you?" Masium smiled, "She didn't want me to die when she owed me." Bjourn surged forward and punched him. He yelled, "OWED YOU? HOW in the FUCK would she owe you? We saw those tapes! You

hooked her up to a fucking car battery! You beat and abused her! That's just what's on the tapes. I know you did more."

Masium looked away. He muttered, "You'll never understand. It's a fairy thing." Bjourn grabbed him by the hair. He hissed, "You'll explain it to me, right now." Masium sighed, "I helped her at Damon's. We don't really keep score of the wrongs we do to one another. But the favors? If I help you and you don't help me; then you owe me. It's how fairies work."

Jackson spoke, disgust evident in his voice, "So, it doesn't matter that you led her brother to slaughter? Or the pain you've caused her past and present? You helped her a few times, and she hadn't helped you back? What kind up fucked up society do you live in, in Faerie?" Masium mocked him, "Oh, but this is the one fairy way you should be happy about. See we heard that your mates hurt my cousins' feelings. If they help her, she will be obliged to return the favor."

I cut in, "You are underestimating my wife again, Masium. It's quite surprising since you should know she craves friendship and relationships; given she was denied them for thirteen years. She will look for any small sliver of something to build those relationships back because you starved her of real meaningful relationships. She doesn't want to fight with them. She doesn't want to not trust them. It's because of you fairies and your bullshit that she doesn't want to live that way. It's the stupid fairies fault that what occurred between them wasn't some small, insignificant little tiff. Because of you morons we have to deal with the trust that collapsed."

Masium snorted, "God, you believe that don't you? Mommy dearest has you snowed." I had no idea what he was talking about. I nodded to Jackson who got the car battery. Masium started talking. Mostly to himself, "I loved Arion. Who knew she had it in her to kill him? I know she loved him too. It will destroy her. Knowing she is the reason he is dead. You fell into our trap so easily. All of you failed her, after swearing not to. I find it quite interesting. I know all of you love my cousin, but I'm not the only one who underestimates her."

I growled at him, "If you MUST know, I have been guilty of underestimating her in the past; in that moment I wanted to respect her wishes to stay with the triplets. She had just become a new mother. She asked her father for time with them. We all wanted to give her that. She deserves that. I hate that you forced her hand with her brother. I also hate that I didn't take that burden from her." I turned around.

Masium laughed, "Do you not see that you are why she killed him? She killed him to spare him from this. Me, she let live to be tortured by you all. She loved Arion, though. She killed him to spare him from all of you, and he wanted her to."

The truth of that statement hit me. I'd already known that was part of the reason why. I told him, "That's part of it, but another part that you seem to want to ignore is he betrayed her AGAIN. He tried to take our children, and that contributed to why she killed him. The mother in her couldn't ignore that. You brought Arion, because alone... she'd have killed you. Bring Arion though, and with him beside you; she might've been tempted to let you both flee if your attempt failed. You failed to realize Haley couldn't let Arion live and be a threat to our children."

Masium sighed, "You are right, but she did try to heal him. He just refused." Jackson handed me the pliers. I mercilessly stuck them onto Masium's chest. His screams echoed in the dungeon. I pulled back and he gasped for breath. I grabbed a bucket and threw lemonade at his stomach. He tried to scream through his gasps, but he couldn't. I put the cables back on his chest and watched his body convulsing. I could barely hear him above my heart pounding in my ears. Thinking of how Haley had to handle so much shit because of them. Because I didn't stay ahead of them.

They made her feel alone in our home. I was done letting her think that was true. When I stopped Masium was heaving deep breaths.

Evin broke the silence, "Now, it's my turn, Masium. See my sister recently went on one of her rants. You probably wouldn't know about a Haley rant because we all felt how she did when she went home this time. It was very unlike her. You tried to make my sister a shell, and you missed the fuck out on how great she is. That's on you. My point though Masium, is she brilliantly came up with a torture device." Bjourn and Marcus rolled in the vat made of iron and began to fill it with lemonade.

Masium stiffened asking, "What the fuck is that?" Evin smiled, "It's a vat made of iron that we are filling with lemonade. I'm going to drop your fat ass into it. How long I leave you there is determined by the answer to the question I'm about to ask you." Masium went pale. He asked, "What question, assassin?" Evin punched him, "It's Prince Evin Cambridge, fairy. Did you EVER rape my sister?" Masium revolted, "No, I'd never rape anyone. Plus, she's my cousin. In our realm most of us don't fuck our relatives. My father and brother could not say that, but I can."

Titus casually asked Masium, "Did you ever want children?" Masium looked away, but I not before I saw pain in his eyes. Masium admitted, "I did. I tried with several fairy females who wanted the same thing I did. It never took." Titus smiled sinisterly. I knew he was going to drop the baby bomb. Titus asked, "Would you ever want your child treated the way you treated my daughter?" Masium snapped his head back. He hissed, "My child would have been a full blooded fairy. They would never be treated the way Haley was as a partial fairy."

Titus clucked his tongue, “Oh but Masium, you do have children. At least fifteen of them. Several of them are girls. I’m sure your cousin Aiden has found them by now. See Marcus stumbled on some files of your fathers in Alania’s homes. Your father had done a study on fairy fertility. Except, in true fashion, he took it farther. He found a way to birth children from his research. Both you and Hexxus have children. So, while my sons torture you, let me tell you what I want you to think about. I saw the file already; my son Marcus made a copy before Haley gave it to Aiden. She doesn’t know that, of course. Now, your daughters are safe because we aren’t monsters. Your sons though, that’s a different story. I want you to think about what I am capable of and what I can do to them.”

Masium interrupted him, “NO! No, you’re lying.” Titus smiled and pulled out a file and shoved it in Masium’s face. Masium paled and cried out, “No father. No, not this.” He started to cry. Eventually, he looked up to Titus. He begged him, “They are innocent, please. Do not hurt them.” Titus’ eyes blazed as he yelled, “As my Haley was innocent? She’s a beautiful and sweet little girl who deserved the world! She did not deserve to be beaten, starved, abused, and raped!”

Masium cried, “I’m sorry!” Titus laughed at him, “You should’ve known the sins of the father often fall to the children. It’s why my children were so well trained. You should’ve been more of a man and left my child alone to be her innocent sweet little self.” Titus went and stood in the corner saying nothing else.

Evin threw a screaming Masium into the vat. He could avoid the sides and the bottom when he became numb to the lemonade. I offhandedly reminded Evin, “You need a barrel.” His head whipped to me, “You’re right! A barrel he would be unable to escape. I ordered some vats for you and your people. They are in the corner of the dungeon. We have a lot of vats now in our realm, but now we need barrels. That’s genius!” His eyes gleamed. Marcus and Bjourn fished Masium out of the vat.

Caleb cleared his throat, “We really should get to some of our work today, Eric.” I nodded, “I’ve done what I wanted. My wife’s brothers can have their fun. I assume this ends with his blood eagle in the Hackura realm. At least, that’s what I gathered from our call yesterday.” Titus nodded.

My brothers, Caleb, and I left the dungeons. I was surprised Titus followed. Once we reached the war room. He sat and mused, “There was a time, I’d have killed all his children.” I looked at him, “You’re not going to though now, are you?” Titus shook his head, “No. I’ll leave them alone as my princess should’ve been.” Then his eyes went hard, “But I’ll watch them. If they so much as harm a fucking fly they will be mine, along with Hexxus’ children.” I nodded, “That seems fair enough to me.”

My brothers and I worked for several hours. Caleb had handled the last of the paperwork when Tucker walked in. I smiled, "Tucker." Tucker smiled, "It's nice to hear my name again and not a number. Lucas sent over the paperwork to give my pack back. We've worked out a timeline, so the pack isn't too unsettled by my re-appearance in their lives." I nodded, "That's smart. Going slow will ease the transition." Tucker nodded, "I came to get you because that lady with the roller pin whapped me a good one when I said no to coming to get you guys for food."

I laughed. We all stood to leave. Titus turned around at the door and offered over his shoulder, "Eric, I could've never parted with my princess for anyone less than someone of your character. I would've killed Haley's mate if he was unworthy because she deserves the world. You've made my princess so happy, and I am in your debt for it." I was stunned. Thor took over and offered, "Thank you, Sir." Titus nodded and left.

Tucker exclaimed, "Holy shit, he meant that." I nodded, "Yes, he did. Haley's been through a lot in her life. I understand what he means. Had they not approved of me though, I wouldn't have lied down and let them kill me." Tucker smiled, "It would've been a hell of a fight." Jackson said, "Thank god we won't have one." I agree and we walked in the kitchen.

A moment later Tucker started sniffing the air. He asked, "What is that? Roses?" I heard voices in the hall one of whom was Haley's, the other was likely a partial fairy from Haley's practice. I linked Jackson, "No fucking way. His second chance mate is about to walk in the room." Jackson looked at me incredulously replying, "A partial fairy at that." I nodded and watched the scene unfold.

Tucker's family was stunned as they watched the two together. I saw the war happening on his mother's face. His last mate betrayed him. I whispered, "She's not going to betray him. Claudia was obsessed with me. The moon goddess wouldn't give him another mate who'd betray him." His mother sucked in a breath and nodded her agreement. Then her excitement took over.

I pieced it together before I was told. This woman was Maribella. I was happy for Tucker. This was someone who could understand him and help him get back on his feet. They left the kitchen together. It didn't take a genius to know what was going to follow.

Haley popped away and came back to the triplets. I nodded to Titus as I left the room. I heard my mom ask Haley if they could watch the triplets. I could feel Haley wanted to say no, I felt her hesitation then surprisingly heard her agree. Jackson linked me, "She's trying. That's all everyone can ask for." I agreed.

We handled disputes for the rest of the day. I resisted the urge to link Haley when I felt her feel sadness, anger, devastation, and love. The love stopped me only



because I remembered Titus asked to speak to her. I couldn't imagine how he felt, and I didn't want to. If I'd seen Cassie go through what Haley did; my heart constricted and my brain rejected the thought itself. I would never let anything remotely like that happen to Cassie. She was here with me. No wolf left their pups until they were sixteen if they knew about them.

Things were different for Titus. He is a King and he made the choice to uphold their laws and set an example. I would protect my little girl always. Just as Titus would've done if he'd known what was happening to Haley. Hell, no one in the supernatural community knew what was happening. We'd been hearing rumors of her for years. We suspected things, but nothing ever led us to believe it was anything like what we knew now.

If I'd heard a fraction of what I know to be true now, I would've tried to save Haley before knowing she was my mate. I prided myself on the fact that I was honorable. I also looked for information about Haley since we'd heard she was born. I never knew why hearing news of her made me happy, but now I did. She was mine all along.

Jackson stiffened linking me, "There's a warlock here, I'm getting a bad vibe. Dave, our warrior, linked us about it. I think we should check it out." I sighed, "Oh good. A warlock who will do something dumb, and my mate will kill him. We will have another coven to deal with." Jackson smirked replying, "To be fair, the last two times your mate killed a witch they acted against us first." I conceded that point.

We got up to meet Dave at the border with my brothers. When we walked up the warlock grinned broadly. Jackson linked me, "I do not like this." Darrin and Harold echoed his sentiments in our link. Darrin said, "Something is definitely up." I agreed.

Out loud I asked, "Can we help you?" The warlock taunted "You already have." I sighed asking, "How did I do that?" He smiled, "By coming here to see me." He started to chant. Before he could finish I had him by the throat. His eyes widened in shock, looking at my brothers.

He gasped for air and asked, "Why aren't they attacking you?" I told him bluntly throwing the words my mate once said to me in his face, "Fae magic is a powerful thing." His face contorted in rage. He sneered, "Good thing the others are going to use darker magic then." I growled and squeezed his neck tighter. I asked, "What are you talking about?" He coughed, "Do you think your little fairy mate can take on everyone?" I growled, "My mate is also a Hackura. She can handle anything." The warlock growled, "Her uncle crossed us, and we can't find him nor his sons. So, she will pay."

I rolled my eyes. I asked him, “You do know that she hates her uncle and he hated her, right?” He was turning purple. He sputtered, “A debt is a debt.” We heard fighting breaking out behind us. I crushed the warlock's throat killing him instantly. We all shifted and ran back towards the house.

Shock coursed through me when I came over the hill. Molly and Haley fighting back to back, many pack members were on the ground fighting spells being cast on them. I knew Haley's magic was how they were fighting. What shocked me was Haley was fighting someone's Hackura guard. Not her guard though. Tears were streaming down her face. She was speaking rapidly in Latin.

I didn't have to wonder long where her guard was. I saw Blade and Sasha convulsing on the ground. Haley felt my presence. She linked me, “Don't try to kill them Eric, please.” I saw Bjourn and Marcus writhing on the ground fighting the compulsion trying to overtake them. Haley continued “I can't leave Molly behind to deal with this shit. I'll kill the witches doing this if you can get to us and hold them off with Molly. This is going to upset them; they aren't doing this on their own.”

I asked, “Where is your dad?” She winced then answered, “Inside on the floor in the hall trying to take the pain from my brothers. The warlocks and witch bitches don't seem to know he's here.” Thank god for small graces. My brothers and I joined the fight.

I begrudgingly linked them, “Don't kill the Hackura.” Jackson snarled at me. The second we reached Molly; Haley took off heading right for a witch and warlock team. A scream halted her path. It was a war cry that made my blood run cold. I looked over and saw it was Haley's brother, Ubbe. Jackson linked, “Oh shit.” I watched in horror as he came at Haley. Marcus and Bjourn screamed at him simultaneously, “NO! UBBE STOP!” He didn't though. Evin came stumbling behind him trying to grab him. Ubbe shook him off and raised his sword to fight Haley. Haley effortlessly avoided it.

She started trying to calm Ubbe down. She kept telling him how much she loved him, and that this wasn't his fault. I linked my brothers, “They will pay for this! God damn it.” Darrin linked me, “These guys can really fight, Eric.” I answered, “I know. They are trained from the time they can walk; they are the protectors of the realms! Hold them off. I'm going for the witches.”

I linked Haley, “I can help you.” She linked back, “Go kill those witch fucking bitches. I will handle Ubbe.” I growled explaining, “I could knock him out.” Haley replied, “This is between me and my brother. You wouldn't want me to step in with yours either.” I growled and went at the first witch, ripping her head off.

A warlock whirled around to face me. He put his hands up to explain, "This isn't about you, wolf. This is about Fabian." I shifted, "Haley hates Fabian more than anyone." He smiled, "We know. He stopped paying us well before he was taken to die. He thought he could cross us and he was wrong." Red seeped into my vision. I hissed, "You were part of the group he used to hurt my mate." It wasn't a question.

The warlock's eyes went wide. He asked, "The princess is your mate?" I growled, "WHAT FUCKING ROCK have you been living under? Why do you think she is here?" He shrugged, "We just heard a rumor this is where she was staying after the vampire kings' home. We didn't know she was your mate."

His eyes went wide in astonishment. I followed his gaze. Haley was speaking fealish. She dropped one of her swords and blocked Ubbe's kill shot. She gently placed her hand on his chest. He went to his knees. She gently laid him down onto the ground kissing his forehead. Her eyes snapped up. They were blazing gold. I heard all her brothers sighs of relief. Until Marcus said, "Oh Shit." Haley's rage hit our bond so hard I roared in anger. She spoke in fealish again and popped next to me.

The warlock whispered, "It's not possible! You are not this powerful." Haley yelled, "I am sick to FUCKING death of people telling me what or who I am. You attacked my family! MY FAMILY! Do you want to know why you had a hard time with that? Why your fucking plan to get Eric and his brothers to fight each other didn't work? ME! YOU FUCKING ASSHOLE! I am that powerful. The only reason your evil, dark casting, stupid fucking spells worked on Ubbe is because multiple warlocks and witches aimed their attack at him! WHY? Why did they do that to my brother?!"

The warlock shrugged, "Because he's the one who's been kidnapping those involved in Fabian's ring. The witches must have been his responsibility from whatever list they found." Haley hissed, "YOU? You are the leader? The witches were following you?" He smiled, "Very good, princess."

Her hands gripped her sword. I felt recognition and dread in our bond. I discreetly glanced at her. Did she know this man? He laughed taunting her, "You can't take me, little girl. I know many spells." She hissed, "You'd better know something. Let's take him the fuck down, Eric." I smiled and shifted.

We began to attack him. He fought back and started chanting spells. Haley countered everything he did with a charm. The magic going back and forth between them was thick in the air. I turned to see my brothers and Haley's had subdued the other witches and warlocks who were helping this warlock attack us. They were frowning.

The warlock we were fighting spoke, pointing to me, "I'll make him attack you if you don't stop this, girl." I growled; I would never hurt her. Everyone paused when Haley laughed. She asked him, "Seriously? Do you think you can do that? Do you think my mate would ever attack me? That he or his wolf would hurt me?" The man taunted her, "Your own brother did." She snorted, "That was fucking different and you fucking know it, you son of bitch! You cannot make Eric or Thor attack me. Try to prove me wrong, I fucking dare you, Axel." He froze then asked, "You remember me?" Haley rolled her eyes, "It took me a minute. The last time we saw each other I was barely fucking conscious. I forgot all about you, but now I remember."

His grin faded. He muttered, "You couldn't possibly after what they..." Haley cut him off, "Blah, blah, blah. I do fucking remember. Are you going to keep reminiscing about how I couldn't possibly remember when I do? Or are you going to try to make my mate hurt me?"

I growled and linked Haley, "What are you doing? Why don't you want him to say how you know him?" Haley answered, "I'll explain later. Axel can't make you attack me, BUT we can trick him into thinking it's working. Then you can kill his ass. So, growl menacingly and come at me."

I took a deep breath and asked, "What if it works? I'll die if I hurt you." Haley smiled at me as Axel began to chant. Haley spoke gently in our link, "Eric, even if we weren't twice light bound and just mates; you'd fight any compulsion to hurt me. From what I've learned of werewolf bonds that wouldn't let you hurt me. My light in you wouldn't let you even if you wanted to. Thor wouldn't let you either."

Thor was banging on our connection agreeing with her. I asked him, "What do you want, Thor?" He growled, "Should your human side feel the compulsion to hurt her; I'll take over. The warlock cannot control me. I'm an animal." I agreed, "That's helpful. Do that." I felt magic around me. I could feel it fighting to take hold of me. It never even got close.

I linked Haley, "This is being twice light bound?" Haley answered, "This is us being soulmates, Eric. Through any thread in the ribbon in any other damn reality. You are mine and I am yours. Nothing and no one can fucking break us. Especially not some witch bitches and warlocks."

Haley continued, "Now pretend it's working and kill this fuckwad." I snorted, "Fine. I still want you to tell me how you know him later." She huffed, "Fine. Bjourn's going to kick my ass for forgetting him on the list in the first place." I growled, "A list I never heard about." She cringed, "Ok, to be fair I didn't keep it from you. We've just had a lot going on since we met." I growled and took a step towards her.

I saw Axel smile out of the corner of my eye. Jackson linked me alarmed, “Brother, do NOT hurt her! I’ll take you down myself. You’ll never be able to live with yourself, and I can’t have that.” He started to move forward. I linked him, “I appreciate the thought, but we are playing him. He’s on the kill list, not Haley.” He sat back relieved.

My dad’s wolf charged forward. I linked him, “I’m in control. It’s a trap.” He relaxed, pausing beside Haley. It made me happy he was going to defend her. Axel laughed, “He’s even using Alpha commands to make sure no one can save you. Oh, how sweet it is.” Haley said nothing.

I linked her when I was even with him, “Now, Angel.” Haley finally smiled. She taunted Axel, “You know what they say about assuming.” He nodded, “Yes, that you make an ass out of you and me.” Haley frowned and yelled, “WHAT? How would that make me an ass? WHAT IS WRONG WITH THIS REALM?” Her brothers tried to keep their laughter at bay. I was glad Thor was in control, or I’d have started laughing. Jackson linked me, “She is a true treasure, brother.” I linked back, “That she is. I need someone to ask her what she thought the saying was.”

Of all people to ask, it was fucking Axel, “What the hell did you think the saying was?” Haley rolled her eyes then explained, “You know what they say about assuming, it gets your ass killed faster. That’s a better damn saying. I would not be an ass because you assumed something. That’s preposterous.” Before he could respond I was on him. I saw his surprise as I landed on him. Haley offhandedly told him, “You can’t make him attack me. We are mates, twice light bound AND eternal soulmates you dipshit.” I ripped off his head and threw it at the witches that remained.

I shifted back as they screamed. I kissed Haley hard and linked, “Pop us away, now.” She popped us to her treehouse. I told her, “I know you want to check on your family, but I need you right now. The triplets?” She snapped herself naked and explained, “Their guards were unaffected and your mom, Shana, Jessica, and several pack warriors are with them.”

I had more questions, but they could wait. I tackled her onto the bed, kissing her hard. I broke away from her lips to lick her neck where her mark was. She shivered underneath me. I took that moment to enter her, in one swift move and gave her enough time to adjust to my size. Then started slamming into her as she moaned my name.

I roared, “MINE!” She wrapped her legs around me and looked at me. She pulled me flush against her and repeated, “Mine!” Then she bit my mark. I exploded inside her, biting her mark in return. She screamed my name as she orgasmed. We

both sat breathing heavily. I kissed her again. I pulled away letting her know, "If we don't go back, I'll never let you out of here. I barely managed this morning. I want to check on our pups." She told me, "I linked your dad. They are fine." I was glad. I told her, "Still. I want to see them myself." She nodded and popped us back to the main room.

Her family was surrounding Ubbe, who was still unconscious. Haley walked over to him and used her healing light. Ten minutes later, Ubbe's eyes snapped open. He looked around and asked, "What... what happened?" Everyone looked away except my mate. I knew one hell of an evasion was coming from my Angel.

Haley explained, "We were attacked by witches and warlocks because of my insanely sadistic uncle. You were the focal point of several of the witch bitches because you were the one rounding up the witches from my damn list. Have no fear, my dear brother, because I saved you from the madness they surrounded your mind with. I'm just good fucking like that." She winked at him.

Ubbe rubbed his head and asked, "What did I do?" Haley told him, "Nothing really. You missed Evin stumbling like a drunk girl in a bar running after you. To be fair, he was having your damn six." Evin stared at her open mouthed. All of her family was. Caleb linked me, "I've never seen her evade like a fairy. It's actually impressive. It's also mildly concerning she considers his attempts to kill her nothing." I linked back, "That's all very true."

Ubbe looked around at his brothers and us. He pointed around the room and told Haley, "They seem to think it was more than nothing." Haley sighed, "They make a big fucking deal out of everything that involves me. You know this, big brother." Haley's eyes cut to the corner and I felt her surprise. What now?

I turned to see a smiling Aiden standing against the far wall. Haley greeted him, "Hello, brother." Aiden greeted her back smirking, "Hello, little sister." Ubbe spoke again, "So, what exactly did I do?" Haley laughed, "You laid on the ground in immense pain for a while. It was damn impressive. You fought the pain and fought the compulsion from three pretty powerful witch bitches and two powerful warlocks. It took five of them to get the compulsion to finally take over. Then you swung your sword around for a bit. Then your badass fairy sister came to the rescue. Admittedly, I couldn't remember how to combat the compulsion for a moment, but it came to me. Then everyone was fucking saved."

Haley paused then added, "Oh and Eric killed the leader of their group by ripping his head off... or Thor did... they are the same person though so... yeah. Now, I have witch bitches to deal with." Ubbe frowned, "I want them too."

She crossed her arms disagreeing, “No. They are mine this time, big brother. My hatred of witch bitches runs deep. Plus, you have oh so many back at home.” He frowned but nodded. Titus hugged him. He whispered, “I tried to take your pain, but you were all attacked except Logan and Haley.” Ubbe clapped his father on the back, “No harm no foul, old man.”

Aiden spoke, “I’d like to speak to you, little sister.” I growled and he added, “With your wolf of course.” My brothers glared at him. Haley’s brothers laughed. Haley shrugged, “Sure,” She led the way to my war room. I needed to show her where her own office was. She could redecorate it anyway she liked or use the war room. Either was fine, but she did have an office.

Bjourn, Marcus, and Evin followed after giving meaningful looks to their other brothers who had seen Ubbe and Haley fight. It was a clear warning. No one was going to tell Ubbe anything until they spoke to Haley. Titus probably suspected something was going on, but he hadn’t seen it.

We walked into the war room. Aiden grinned, exclaiming, “I’ve never seen you evade, little sister, but it was marvelous.” Marcus hissed, “Shut up fairy king.” Haley rolled her eyes. She asked her brother, “What are you doing here, Aiden? How are you?” Aiden’s eyes softened, “I wanted to thank you. We found the children. I have Hexxus, Arion, and Masium’s children right now. Lucinda says we can hire help to raise them all with us.”

Haley flat out told him, “I don’t want to raise any of them if that’s why you’re here, Aiden.” Aiden smiled broadly, “No, it’s not. I came to tell you Faerie is in your debt. You could’ve kept it a secret, but you didn’t. I also came to tell you your nephew’s name is Fenilton Arion Holloran.” Haley smiled, “It’s a good name, brother.”

He nodded and kissed her cheek. He told her, “I don’t know what happened with your brother and the witch compulsion, but it does make me proud to see your fairy traits come through. You evaded like the fairy princess you are. It appears only those who knew the truth knew you did it. It was impressive. I’m intrigued you took your brother’s memories away. You’ll have to tell me why sometime.” With that he popped away.

Bjourn spoke first, “Why did you lie, little one? Why did you take Ubbe’s memories?” Haley sighed, “I didn’t lie. I can’t, you know that. Hell, yes I took his damn memories. Do you know how insanely mopey and obnoxious he would be if he remembered what happened? Ubbe fought for us to have a relationship when I came to you guys. I’m fighting for it now.” Marcus hissed, “The HELL you didn’t

lie. You told him that he did nothing.” Haley shrugged, “Because he didn’t.” Marcus stared at her angrily.

Bjourn harshly bit out, “Trying to kill you is not nothing.” Haley rolled her eyes. Jackson linked, “Oh god. Did she just roll her eyes? At Bjourn? God save us all.” Haley sighed, “Bjourn Rollo Cambridge, Ubbe did NOT try to kill me. If you weren’t writhing on the damn ground fighting a compulsion; you’d know that. I’ve fought Ubbe before, and I’ve seen him fight in battle. He didn’t come at me with even half of his strength. Even when he was under a compulsion, he left many openings for me to end the fight.”

I disagreed, “He went for a kill shot.” Haley glared at me, “That I was already going to block. He fucking telegraphed his move the whole way. Ubbe was trained by Bjourn, and the commander of our armies, Aaron. He doesn’t telegraph his moves. Even when he’s training the younger Hackura children. He didn’t want to hurt me, let alone KILL me. You ALL know if he had he could’ve. The ONLY fucking way I could’ve stopped him if he wanted to hurt me would be by popping away. All of you are more skilled at fighting than I am. None of you will tell him because he’d never forgive himself or listen to me explain the truth of the damn matter. Do you two understand that?” She looked at her brothers.

Bjourn and Marcus stared at each other for a long time. Bjourn eventually answered, “Fine. I hate it when you’re all logical and right. For the record, someone trying to kill you is NOT nothing.” Haley looked them both in the eye, “For the record, he didn’t try to kill me. I’d honestly say it to any of you if tried to hurt me I’d tell you it was nothing and mean it.” Bjourn cursed.

Marcus said, “Your life is not nothing.” Haley told him, “I owe all of you my life. You especially, brother. I could be dead if not for you.” Bjourn sighed and looked at me. He stood, “We have to talk to our other brothers to explain this. We are having a sibling meeting later, Hales.” Haley smiled, “I already fucking planned on that. We need to talk.” They nodded and walked out of the room.

The second they left I said, “I have so many things to say. First, who was Axel? Second, your death is not nothing to me or our children. I must say it pisses me off to no end to hear you say it’s nothing.” Haley adamantly said, “Ubbe didn’t try to kill me. It’s a simple fact that I’d be dead or a vampire snack working my way towards dead without them, Eric.” I growled and pulled her into me.

I repeated, “Who was Axel?” Haley hesitated before she answered, “He was the warlock leader who worked with Fabian. I completely forgot about him. T be fair, the one time we met I was barely conscious. I had just been beaten, raped, and experimented on. He got his damn turn with me. Honestly, I didn’t remember his



face until he called me princess. Then I remembered him with clarity. He used the same tone after he raped me.”

I growled, “And you didn’t mind link that to me so I could torture him longer because?” Haley tiredly replied, “I’m done with that chapter of my life. The ghosts of my pasts already haunt my dreams. I just want them all to be dead and gone. I want to move the fuck on.” I sighed, “That’s... I can understand that. Why aren’t you going to let Ubbe see the witches?” Haley logically stated, “Because they would tell him what he did. They will be dead shortly because I won’t let them tell him. He’d find a way to see them if they were alive. So, I’m off to behead people, afuckingain.” She left and I followed.

She turned and raised an eyebrow. I told her, “Where you go, I’m going. We do things together, Angel.” She smiled, “As you wish.” We both smiled. I grabbed her hand as we walked down to the dungeon to face her past again.