



Halloween Special -

Memories of a Friend (Part 1)

"Oh, I hope you can hear me, 'cause I remember it clearly. The day you slipped away. Was the day I found it won't be the same." - 'Slipped Away' by Avril Lavigne

Kiya

"Come on, Hali! We're going to be late for the party!"

"I'm coming, I'm coming! It's not my fault this wing is crooked!"

One swig and my throat burn from the crimson liquid. Housed in a black bottle, the pungent taste of alcohol overrode the sweetness of the wine. Port wine. The only alcohol I drank as a loser slumped against one of the many redwood trees in the forest.

"Your wing looks fine! As long as you don't move it too much, it'll be okay!"

"Easy for you to say. Your wings look perfect."

Goddess, why am I doing this? Werewolves have a high alcohol tolerance that makes them unable to get drunk easily. We burn it off faster than humans.

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It takes a lot to get our kind intoxicated; probably twice or three times as much as a normal human. Either way, this supposed highlight of our abilities is proven to be a curse to me.

"Me, as the Sun Fairy, always has to look perfect! It's in our nature."

"I'm the Moon Fairy and I can't look like a mess! What would the other kids think?"

Ah, the Moon Fairy. The being I've dressed as for this accursed holiday called Halloween. Dressed in a white and blue sleeveless dress with shredded hems, the shimmering sequins danced to their silent tune under the moonlight. A full moon on Halloween is rare, so I've heard. Legend says that on Halloween, it weakens the veils to the worlds beyond mortals. It gives a chance for other-world creatures to pass through and mingle in the world of mortality for a night before retreating.

Amusing.

"The other kids would think we look amazing! Like twins!"

"At least they can tell us apart."

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Another swig. Two. Three. I hate remembering what used to be. The better days of my life before it turned into a dumpster fire my old pack willfully created. Days of happiness, freedom, warmth, and friendship. Days where I felt invincible; none of the world's ills could touch me.

Oh, how was I wrong. So fucking wrong.

Waiting for the alcoholic buzz is a killer. The desperation for the effects of alcohol shows as I continuously bring the bottle rim to my lips every thirty seconds. This sinful liquid is supposed to be a depressant, so why isn't it depressing? Depress these emotions and these fucking memories.

"Of course! Do you remember your line?"

"Yeah, because we've rehearsed it a thousand times!"

Stupid brain! Stop it!

"I, Nuria the Golden Sun Fairy, is here to shine the light of hope!"

"I, Halima the Silver Moon Fairy, is here to shine the light of magic!"

Stop it!

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"And we're here to stop the evil in the world together!"

Fuck!

Hot tears swam down my cheeks as the night breeze ignored the pain stuffed inside them. My head pressed against the thick tree bark as my chest heaved in sobs. I thought I was strong enough to get through this night; to celebrate it with my friends. After the two Halloweens I skipped, I thought this one would be different.

I thought wrong. I wasn't ready. I was never ready.

Now look at me: pathetically getting drunk alone in the woods in a frantic attempt to stop the memories of a dead child from flooding into my mind.

Memories of Nuria that I can't ever forget, no matter how hard I try. Her body is buried miles away from me, but it's as if her presence is that much closer to me tonight.

And I hate it. I hate it so much.

Furious, I grabbed an empty bottle and hurdled it towards an innocent tree, glass shattering into millions of stray pieces some feet away. Breaking things is supposedly therapeutic, but I only felt worse. It's always something. Something that triggers a faraway memory and ruining my night.

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Goddess, I'm more fucked up than I originally thought. No wonder I need therapy.

I took more swigs of my wine before the bottle had nothing left to give. Luckily, I had another one. My fourth one, to be exact. Sniffing, I ripped the cap open and continued chugging. Why wine? There are stronger options in the kitchen; options that could get a werewolf sufficiently drunk.

It's not tequila or whisky or vodka for werewolves. It's a special beer sought by my kind. It's also the kind that triggers a barrage of traumatic memories from a single whiff. The smell mixed with hot breath throws me right back into that putrid, dingy hellhole my former Alpha loved to beat me in.

Never will I touch a single bottle of that. It hits too close to home. So, I'm left with the strongest wine available. It's sweet and I like it. I like sweet things.

Before I could enjoy more of its sweetness, however, the bottle was snatched out of my hand. Pissed, I look up to be met with the angry hazel eyes of my brother dressed in a pirate captain's costume. Adorned in brown, blue, and red with a sword attached to his hip, Anthony glared at me with the force of a thousand suns. I know he's angry at what I'm doing, but I didn't care.

I need that bottle to block out my traitorous brain!

Flanking on his right is Alesia in her first mate's costume with a noticeably pregnant belly. My heart softened at the growth of my niece inside the womb. I can't wait to meet the bundle of joy in November. But my love for the baby quickly dissipated as the want of alcohol bombarded me like bullets.

"Give it back!" I shouted, my hands reaching up.
"That's mine!"

"Really? I recall that this belongs to the pack kitchen cabinets. Mom was wondering why several bottles of wine were missing. Lead Omega Cleo was worried about a potential thief." Anthony scoffed. "And if I recall correctly, fairies don't steal."

Like a child, I whined as I stood and tried to reach the bottle of drunken haze, but my brother held it high above his head, using his insane height as his advantage. Fucking tall people. "No, Kiya. You had enough."

"Says you!" I barked back. "I need it! You wouldn't understand!"

"Kiya, even I agree that you had enough," Alesia said next to my ear, bringing my hands down to my sides. "There's no such thing as a need for alcohol. What

do you mean 'we won't understand'?"

"Forget it." I slumped back on top of the uncomfortable roots of my tree and drew my knees to my chest. "Go back to the party. I want to be alone."

"Finding my little sister alone in the woods with empty wine bottles is no basis for me to leave her alone." Anthony retorted with an arched eyebrow. "And you sound like you've been crying. You look like it too."

Why the hell are Alphas are so perceptive? Groaning, I bury my head in my knees, hoping the couple would take a hint. I know I'm acting brattish—it's out of my nature. It's stupid and ridiculous. I can do better than this, but the overwhelming sensations I feel from all corners of my body are too much for me to handle. All because I'm remembering Halloween nights with Nuria.

I miss her so much. Eleven years after her death, the pain is as fresh as if she died yesterday.

Beside me, a strong arm wrapped around my waist. Perking my head up from the sanctity of my knees, I see Alesia shooting me a warm smile. It did things to my heart. "What's wrong, baby girl? It's obvious that

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something's bothering you."

Kicking away the empty bottles of wine, Anthony took his seat beside me. It's a little funny to see my pirate brother up close with his dorky hat. A small smile surfaced at the thought. His large hand gently guided my head to rest on his shoulder as his arm, wrapped around my shoulders, provided me an extra layer of warmth. "It's your first Halloween with us, despite living on this land for the past two years. What made you don a costume and join the fun?"

"I thought I was okay enough to do this," I whisper hoarsely. There's no way I couldn't remain closed up to my Alpha and Luna. They're in charge of the well-being of the Garnet Moon Pack. They're tough, formidable, and feared by enemies. But they're different tonight. Now, they aren't my superiors. They're just my brother and sister-in-law, and I don't want them in any other way. "I thought I was fine, but I'm not."

"What is it about tonight that turned you into..." Alesia gestured around me. "This. Humans drink excessively to avoid feeling, and it's the same for weres as well. Alcohol is the go-to drug that sends you to another world and lowers your inhibitions. But you never touched a bottle of alcohol before tonight."

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She's right. I've never drunk any before tonight. There were a few swigs here and there with the Beta twins, but those don't count. It was just me being curious about something I never had before. Tonight set off a chain reaction that I couldn't cope with and I, foolishly, thought strong wine could stop it.

I didn't want to feel. Feeling what I'm feeling is like lighting a match on my flesh. And I'm doused in gasoline. Sensations of pain flared in random parts of my heart and damaged my heartstrings, the flames eating at them like a dog to a bone. I just wanted it to stop. That's all I wanted.

It's better to not feel anything at all. I wish my body came with an on/off switch so I can switch off sensations and emotions for the time being. Because I hated being seen as weak.

But I am weak, and it showed with the tears falling down my face once more, creating dark spots in Anthony's pirate breeches. All I do is cry. Crying is renowned for being therapeutic; an individual could unleash the agony their body holds prisoner through tears. Each droplet drains a burden weighing heavily on the soul and tosses it out into the outside world, never to harm them again. Afterward, the weight is lifted, and the person feels as light as air.

Not me, however. Because there's too much for tears to remove.

"I miss her," I revealed. "I miss Nuria so much. We used to celebrate Halloween together ever since we could walk."

"Nuria?" Alesia asked me. "As in the girl..."

"Yes." Nodding, I sighed. "That Nuria. We'd always dress as fairies every Halloween. She went as the Sun Fairy and I went as the Moon Fairy. We hated any other costumes our parents picked out for us for the kids' party. But when we saw the Tinkerbell movies, we knew we wanted to be fairies. Our Lead Omega tailored our costumes to fit us, and we helped her with the designs and everything. We never went as anything different. We were always the Twin Fairies. Always."

I can hear her harmonious laughter ringing through my head, her soothing warmth in my palms, her dark tresses dancing with the playful breeze, and her sapphires shining brighter than diamonds. Everything about her I remember. There's not a day that goes by where I don't think of Nuria. Her memory burns bright in my mind.

But even the flame has the power to hurt.