

# CHANGE A CHANGELING - COMMUNION OF ALL CHANGELINGS ORIGINS - PART 1

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**Author Note:** Please check out my main site at [www.cpbunnyart.com](http://www.cpbunnyart.com) for downloads of more samples of my stories. **Coming soon are:** character profiles and original hand-drawn artwork to 3D models of the characters. (Hoping to find talented people to help make this story into a comic or manga and/or an animated feature.) Enjoy!

**CHANGE A CHANGELING (CAC) FANTASY SERIES ::** This saga is of three generations of troubled forbidden lovers and their offspring's hardships against hateful prejudice and injustice. The main story is about a young hybrid Fay warrior prince named Alayer (Alastar's grandson & King Sovereign's third son) discovering a dire painful secret about himself that was hidden from him most of his life.

Follow along on his journey to witness how he becomes to be in fierce loyalty to the White Fire and suffers painful hardships while searching for the cure from his mortality. Witness his fevered hunt for the precious truth in worlds where the truth is smothered underneath mountains of lies and ludicrous deception proudly parading as the new "truth" that all must either accept or be destroyed.

The powerful Neverborns are the self-appointed rulers in the world where Alayer must find the Source of the White Fire power lent to him during his time of great need. His own world is barren of the truth of that source and the next one he searches is nearly a wasteland for what he seeks and desperately needs to become a real Immortal.

However, the truth of where to find the Source is there, yet dangerous dark forces of the Neverborn are ready to do anything to stop Alayer and anyone else searching for the Source at all costs. Will Alayer find this mysterious Source of the White Fire and never have to fear death again? Read to find out.

{Just when you thought you could go on living forever, you discover that you are destined to die.}

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(There is also a pretty disabled unicorn filly, iridescent of mane and tail, that Alayer saves from hungry Troles (gnome/troll hybrids). He nearly loses his life for helping her and both are saved by Leporidae, the enormous rabbit/hare doe warrior, whose husband was eaten by the Troles years ago. Alayer sees this unicorn, named Nabi, as his best friend and he deeply cares for her, the sweetie mute filly that speaks volumes through her sparkling green eyes.

Alayer's human friends, Ann and her cousins, Stefan and his little sister, Sarah, try to help Al with his quest against the curse. Although, jealous Stefan turns out to be more an enemy than a friend.)

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **– SEARCHING FOR THE TRUTH –**

Alayer heaved a gusty sigh of great disappointment as he headed towards his room. Just moments ago, his older brother Orion, a 6<sup>th</sup> class Fay warrior, had beaten him again in their special sparring match with the king and queen in audience.

The queen's closest friends also came to watch. Poor Alayer was embarrassed more than ever since he had practiced for weeks to prepare, only to get utterly beaten and laughed at by the queen's heartless friends, who seemed to dislike him as much as she did.

It wouldn't be so bad if the king and queen weren't his parents, but they were. He let them down, and once again, Orion would get promoted and Alayer's rank would remain pitiful. Fine, he knew how poorly he was doing, but why did the queen and her mean friends have to be so insulting to that degree? It made no sense to him for a mother to act that way.

King Sovereign and Queen Gehenna were the rulers of their dark dreary little kingdom in the Glacial Fay's domain, though it seemed that Queen Gehenna was the only one running the show with the servants filled with great fear of her.

She was short-tempered, rude, arrogant, and cold-heartedly cruel while possessing a frigid beauty all around her. With her long pure white locks cascading down her perfect frame, she made no effort to hide her beauty. It was well-known that she was the most beautiful Fay in the kingdom and she let no one forget it. Or challenge it.

In fact, she expected to be worshipped for it. With her sharp stunning features, many suitors had flocked to her, but none were what she desired to control. Only King Sovereign caught her evil magenta-colored eyes and she made sure that he was hers, whether he was in agreement or not.

It was obvious that she was a Glacial witch indeed, with her skin being a deadly pale blue hue and her lips a bright bloody red with her sharp fangs always peeking out, waiting to bite and drain the life force of any gullible victim.

Being born into royalty only aided in inflating her ego to impossible heights of mindless illusions. Her talents in the dark arts of sorcery and black science were disturbing and dangerous. Many dared not to mess with her for good reason.

King Sovereign was kind and strong, but subdued in terrible sorrow for some reason. Alayer wondered why this was, but never got a chance to question him. Queen Gehenna seemed to always be there to block him from ever having a real conversation alone with his father.

She had to be there listening to what they might say and Alayer's father refused to say much about anything then. He would just leave the room with the queen being quite pleased and Alayer baffled.

Being so strong-minded, Alayer was not the type to give up at all. Blockades only made his desire to find out the truth that much more powerful. The fiery desire within his heart matched his long reddish-brown hair and bright crimson red eyes.

Alayer thought that maybe Orion knew what was making their father so incredibly sad and unable to speak his mind, but Orion pretended not to know. Alayer suspected that Orion did indeed know, but wouldn't tell him, like he too was not allowed to say what he wanted because of his disturbingly wicked mother Queen Gehenna.

Even when Alayer was positive that they were alone to talk freely, Orion still would not voice what he was hiding in his mind for fear of his mother. The youngest prince despised how the queen ran things in her large icy castle made of frozen semi-precious stones and never-melting ice blocks.

Most certainly, she was a tyrant and in the heat of anger whenever Alayer told her that she was such, she simply would say that he wasn't being oppressed at all or that he needed to repetitively prove the truth to make it be the truth. It was clear that she was not interested in what was the truth, nor logical, obviously.

Frustrated, the teenager resigned himself to hardly talking to the queen, knowing how fruitless it was to convince her of anything real outside of her close-minded thoughts. She refused the simple fact that the truth was the truth no matter what anyone said, did, or thought. Truth was never a matter of opinions, but her opinions and way of thinking was what ruled them all in her horrid, frigid castle.

For a mother, she was beyond cold-hearted and treated Alayer as if he was a lowly outsider and so beneath her that it caused her great irritation to even interact with him in any way, shape, or form.

He wasn't a fool. He knew Queen Gehenna hated him extremely so with all her dark charcoal heart. It was not at all difficult to figure that out when he heard her talking behind his back to her nasty visiting friends, the always-nodding servants, and even to his crestfallen father.

Once again, Gehenna proved her animosity loud and clear as a dejected Alayer was passing down the cold hallway on his way to his quarters. He had to pass the throne room to get there and due to her blaring, haughty voice, he heard her easily, even with the doors closed.

“That Alayer is a pathetic, worthless peon! That’s what he is! Absolute trash that can’t even fight! Year after year, he improves naught! What a waste he is!” the queen spewed out her hatred like a raw sewage pipe.

The young teenager seethed in hurt and rage. How could she talk about him as if he wasn’t her son, as though he was instead a lowly slave from the dungeons? She shouldn’t even talk like that about anyone for that matter. However, Alayer felt warm comfort when he heard his father quickly retort angrily to those terrible insults.

“Do *not* talk about my son like that!” King Sovereign shouted, his booming voice echoing off the icy stone walls, baring his fangs at her.

“You have absolutely *no* right to say such filthy lies about him!”

The king growled deep in his throat, warning the witch to tame her wicked, forked tongue, but Queen Gehenna showed no shame for her horrid words which she believed to be true with all her dark heart.

“You better watch *your* tone with me, my love!” Gehenna shifted her weight in her throne nonchalantly, but her voice was sharp and threatening. She flicked several thick strands of her long shiny white mane over her bare shoulder in a haughty manner.

“Or I’ll order Blake’s men to hunt down your human pet and your other brat immediately,” she continued boldly, knowing this was one of his greatest fears and his strongest weakness.

Frustrated, the king set his jaw tightly and restrained himself. If anything happened to Gehenna, her spies would alert Blake and give him the remote whereabouts of Sovereign’s family in order to destroy them. The Sun Fay general was ruthless and he would stop at nothing to annihilate his enemies.

Despite all Sovereign’s raging Fay magic and physical strength, he was helpless against the wicked queen due to her deadly connections and so, she ruled over him as if he were her slave. And he was, unfortunately.

Painful sorrow and misery was all he felt while the years passed by slowly, as he numbly tried to locate his parents. Year after year, he searched for them as he distantly watched his sons grow into fine warriors.

Due to Queen Gehenna’s control, Sovereign could not be himself whatsoever. Being oppressed by a crazed tyrant filled him with overwhelming depression. He also felt so much anger that he lost his temper too many times with his children when they were much younger, making them very fearful of him.

The king decided it was best that Sanbow, a servant of Gehenna’s, who was actually trustworthy and truly kind, raise them instead while the king looked for his parents. And that was how it was ever since. It was a horrible limbo of monotonous madness and suppression. No one could

express themselves as they really were, without reprimand and punishment, except for the queen herself.

Nasty Gehenna snapped Sovereign from his thoughts as she suddenly grabbed his bearded chin and pinched hard, pulling on the hairs as he jerked his face away from her cold claws. He gave her a vicious, enraged glare that only slightly worried her, but she knew that her threat would make him obey as she wanted. It always had all these years.

He was powerless to stop her from having her way and she was going to use it completely to her advantage. He had escaped once before, but she got him back when he was on the run from General Blake and his men, who wanted to kill him for being an Eclipse Fay, and he had no place safe to hide.

She ‘rescued’ him and his then infant son, Alayer, giving them both ‘sanctuary’ in her prison fortress of ice. Gehenna knew that Sovereign would not leave again, in fear of what she would definitely do if he did flee from her once more.

“You know they only live because I send those stupid Sun Fay soldiers on ‘wild goose chases’, as the idiotic humans say. So, be a good little fool of a king and go back to being my handsome ornament and *be silent* when I speak!” she ordered, like the dictator that she was.

Sovereign glowered at Gehenna, but said nothing. He stood up from his throne and left the room entirely. How he loathed that horrid witch to the extremes. The first time she captured him was during the time that General Blake had attempted to behead Sovereign, who was the first of the legendary Eclipse Fay.

The demon Ronge tricked Sovereign into going where he thought his father, Alastar, was being held. Instead, it was a trap, where General Blake was waiting for him and the Eclipse Fay prince was captured. When Blake’s guards cruelly shoved him face-up to meet the guillotine’s blade, Gehenna arrived to ‘save’ Sovereign.

Grateful at first, Sovereign remained at Gehenna’s castle for a short while and then, he desired to go back to his home in the human world, where his wife and child waited for him. This was unacceptable to the Glacial Witch and she demanded that he must stay forever. Sovereign fought to leave, but she held him in place with her icy powers and drugged him with a powerful spell that made him into a mindless puppet.

In wicked delight, she had her way with him at last, while he had no memories during that time. A sympathetic servant named Sanbow gave Sovereign the antidote while Gehenna was sleeping and aided the Eclipse Fay in his escape.

Sovereign returned to the human world and he lived there in peace for over a year, then General Blake’s men found his home, burning it down while his infant son, Alayer, was still inside. Rescuing his son, Sovereign was blocked from leaving the burning building by Blake’s guards, who forced him to go with them, along with baby Alayer. He saw the well-used guillotine of Blake’s once more and he viciously fought to escape the tyrant’s mansion.

Battle-damaged, the Eclipse Fay prince fled through the Gray Forest with his son while General Blake's men pursued them relentlessly. When he was nearly captured again, Gehenna showed up, killing the guards and saving the prince and his young child. She then offered the sanctuary and protection that Sovereign and his infant son needed badly.

Desperate and bleeding profusely, Sovereign accepted begrudgingly and fourteen years later, here they were, living in confusion, misery, and hatred with Alayer not knowing the painful history that his father had suffered.

Even Orion wasn't that aware of it, since the king could never have a conversation alone with any of his sons, due to Gehenna and her spies always listening in.

'My poor sons,' Sovereign thought to himself. 'How I wish I could tell them my past...'

In a mind-numbed state, the king went outside and climbed an oak tree growing apart from the Dark Forest surrounding the castle. He often would sit on the lowest branch to stare out into the horizon, but this time he chose to sit upon the highest branch that would support his weight.

The sunset was beautiful and romantic, but without his wife, Junchee, there to enjoy it, the soft pastel hues of pinks, oranges, and yellows with the lovely night sky melting into them only added to his sorrow.

Clouds formed quickly above the castle as Sovereign's chest rose and fell in sadness as tears filled his eyes. He felt so lost here. He knew that his sons feared him when he longed for them to love him. How he wished he could make things right with them, but that seemed to be impossible with Queen Gehenna lurking about.

Soft rain fell as the king's tears slid down his cheeks, while more clouds took over the sky, distorting the pretty sunset with a hazy sheet of humid sky water. A heavier downpour followed, making it difficult to view the horizon at that point.

Sovereign wept hard, his powerful sobs wracking his body so much that he could barely breathe. He squeezed his eyes shut as his tears mixed with the rain that was drenching him. He felt like such a failure when he was supposed to be the first legendary Eclipse Fay, fated to smite the wicked and bring order to the chaos of this world.

Yet, he was trapped as a slave to a tyrannical Glacial Fay witch, who controlled not only his every move, but his children as well. The king opened his ruby-red eyes and stared despondently into the cascading rain, longing for Junchee terribly.

His mind played a sweet memory of her comforting him those many years ago when he was sitting in the apple tree near their home. He was saddened that his mother wasn't pleased with Junchee's pregnancy for she was a human and Rosa disliked humans due to the oppression she and Sovereign received from their kind.

But his wife was cheerful regardless and with a bag of marshmallows, she had successfully coaxed him out of the tree. She had ignored the cold rain his gloomy emotions were creating during that chilly autumn day to make him come down.

Marshmallows were his absolute favorite treat to eat, so he couldn't refuse a whole bag of them. He had flown down to her on his wings and she had placed her arms around him. The long passionate kiss she had given him then, warmed his heart so much that he had forgotten about his problems instantly.

"Junchee...How I miss you so..." he said softly, bowing his head dejectedly. Finally, he left the tree and flew down to return to the castle and retire to his room. Besides looking for his parents, sleeping was the only other escape he had from this accursed place. How he wished there was a safe way to flee from this rotten place once and for all.

## CHAPTER 2

### – TWO HOPEFUL SONS –

Day after day, Sovereign went out to search for his father, Alastar, the dark prince of the Bloodless Fangs, and his mother, Rosa, a Sun Maiden from the Light Fay clan. From what the king knew, General Blake had kidnapped them both and he was holding them somewhere, but Sovereign had yet to find the location.

So, he searched for them tirelessly. Gehenna allowed it as long as Sovereign was escorted with at least a few of her most loyal guards, who doubled as spies.

On the day after his sparring match with his brother, Alayer attempted to converse with his father, approaching him as he was leaving for his search. He hurried over to him, hoping for the best.

He didn't have many happy memories of him in the past, yet, Alayer still wished to be close to his father just the same. He really wanted to know him and be closer to him.

“Father! Father, please, wait!” the young prince cried excitedly. Sovereign paused and turned, giving him a sullen cheerless expression. Just seeing his child reminded him how he felt unworthy to be a father, since he had to distance himself from his children for both their sakes.

“Can we talk? Please?” the teenager asked hopefully, looking up at his parent, who was so tall and grand in his stature. He could see that his father longed to tell him something and he was about to speak. Suddenly, that cesspool of a witch, Gehenna, appeared and she spoke instead.

“Leave your father alone, Alayer! I think you've done enough by shaming him, don't you agree? I mean, losing all the time like you have at every single match is simply deplorable! Get out of my sight!” she yelled nastily, not wanting him to be close to the king.

That relationship was reserved only for Orion and she was going to make it happen. When she saw Sovereign's murderous glare then, she quickly changed her tone, only to make herself look better.

“Er, I mean, our sights. Heh-heh, our sights, yes. Now run along and trouble us no more.”

Alayer left quickly, stifling his hurting rage the best he could. Sovereign stared at Gehenna angrily. The scantily-dressed queen seemed to enjoy spewing forth filth from the foulest cesspit whenever she spoke of the king's youngest son.

“Why must you put him down constantly? You have *no* right!” he hissed at her, with narrowed eyes.

“I have every right to tell that pathetic son of yours what a loser he is,” retorted the witch, smoothing her pure white long locks over her curvy body, dressed in nearly transparent attire.



“No, you don’t and he is not the lies you say about him!” Sovereign growled, sneering at her. In every possible way, he was repulsed by Gehenna’s selfish wickedness and her poor taste in clothing. She would never be able to tempt him, since he didn’t love her whatsoever. He detested her with every fiber of his being.

The wicked queen ignored what he had said and she reached out to touch him in a lustful manner. Instantly, he jerked away from her, glaring hatefully. She scowled, disgusted. How she desired to take him to bed with her, yet he always refused her.

“Why do you always reject me?” she asked in a pitiful sobbing voice, faking sadness when she felt rage inside. “I am your wife!”

“You are *not* my wife!” Sovereign shouted rancorously, practically spitting venom. “You are *nothing* to me, except the tormentor who keeps me here against my will! I will always reject you, because I do not love you! And I *never* will!”

Unbeknownst to them, their son Orion listened to their argument in secret. He hid himself behind a marble pillar, blinking back hurt tears as he bit his lower lip in sorrow. This was not the first time he had heard his parents fighting like this with his father being so hateful of his mother.

Orion was certain that Sovereign wasn’t fond of him. He hardly showed him much kindness since he first met him when he was a toddler. After the king had Sanbow take charge of his upbringing, his father barely talked to him. Although, he did the same to his younger sibling Alayer, so maybe their father didn’t care for either of them.

All Sovereign did was go out constantly trying to find his own parents, whoever they were. They seemed a lot more important to the king than his own sons. That assumption always hurt the seventeen-year-old prince very much, yet he never had the courage to tell his father how he felt. He didn’t think he would care anyway, so he didn’t see much sense in saying anything about it.

On the other hand, trying to be close to his mother was no easy feat since she was so preoccupied with how she believed others had wronged her. On and on she would go about the injustice being done to her and expected her son to comfort her, when he needed her to comfort him.

She never did though and so, Orion’s heart was lonely and starved for affection. The warrior prince brushed his white wispy bangs out of his pale face while wiping away the wetness from his scarlet red eyes and continued to eavesdrop.

“What of our son? Has he no place in your hardened heart?” Gehenna asked, faking out more convincing sobs. “Admit it! You hate him, don’t you?!”

Sovereign sighed loudly, pressing his finger tips to his forehead in frustration. He wasn’t sure how he really felt about Orion, even after all these years. Gehenna had Sovereign under a mind control spell when she had their child with him and so he never knew about his second son until years later.

He feared that Orion was the same as his mother, though with all his outings in trying to locate his parents, he barely made any real attempt to know either of his sons, believing it was fruitless to do so. He could not be his real self with Gehenna watching their every move and he felt so miserable that he could not find peace.

Being away from Gehenna when he went out hunting for the whereabouts of his parents, helped Sovereign stay sane within this icy cold castle of madness. The queen took his disgusted sigh as the answer and she lost her temper as usual, her phony sadness vanishing instantly.

“I know you hate him, just as you hate me!” she snapped, flipping her well-manicured claws in the air in a threatening manner. “You are a fool to disregard your best son! He will be the next king in time and your other worthless sons will be bowing to *my* son when he rules this kingdom!”

“He is my son as well,” Sovereign said, taking great offense from her insults towards his other children. “I never said I hated him either...”

“Do you think of me as a fool?! It’s obvious you hate him!” Gehenna shrieked, reaching out to grab his face and clasp her right claw over his mouth, digging her nails into his flesh. He tore away and hissed at her viciously, baring his fangs.

“I do *not* hate him!” Sovereign shouted, surprising Orion. He felt a twinge of hope in his heart, daring to believe that maybe his father did love him after all.

“If that is true, I expect you to shower him with affection and shun Alayer,” Gehenna replied, creating an evil idea in her mind. “I want to see you do this or I will claim your words as false.”

“I cannot do that. I will show them both equally how I feel. I have no favorite son,” the king told her, doubting she would comprehend something decent like that.

Gehenna snarled, but said nothing, and flounced away in a rush. She passed right by Orion without even seeing him hiding beside the marble pillar. Sovereign started to leave in the opposite direction to go on his search.

Orion watched his father walking off and he felt that this might be a chance to talk to him, to really converse with him. Maybe he would have a better chance than Alayer did, now that his mother had gone away. He hesitated as strong uncertainty befell him then. He trembled with emotion as he forced his suddenly heavy legs to chase after the king.

Sovereign’s keen ears heard someone coming up behind him and he turned to see Orion approaching him in trepidation. He wondered if he had heard the argument he just had with his unbearable mother. Most likely he did. The embarrassment the king felt was mighty.

“Father, wait!” Orion called out, hating how weakly he spoke. Sovereign waited for his child to catch up to him, deciding that he would talk with Orion. Although, a nagging doubt plagued him, making him wary.

Surely, Gehenna must have had Orion trained to be on her side and she must have filled his head with a grandiose entitlement to the throne. Perhaps, she had him prepped to have a desire to kill Sovereign, so he could be king sooner.

Then, no one would rescue his parents and Alayer probably would be butchered off since he couldn't defend himself against Gehenna and her thugs. He didn't want to think this way, but with how Gehenna was, it appeared to be the kind of plot she would have masterminded.

"May I go with you on your search? Please...?" the warrior prince asked, summoning the courage to look into his father's ruby-red eyes. Staring back at him was a strong miserable depression that shocked Orion since he didn't believe anyone could be more filled with sorrow than he was.

"I don't think that's a good idea," Sovereign said, not wanting his child to get hurt. General Blake would not hesitate to kill Orion, especially if he knew that he was Sovereign's son. Blake wanted Sovereign dead since he was the first of the Eclipse Fay and his children would never be safe from that insane dictator.

"Why, Father? I would really like to go and... talk with you..." Orion said, nervously. He was very much in awe of his powerful father, even if they weren't close. The king was strong enough to keep his wings out, unlike most Fay who kept theirs hidden to conserve energy.

Orion had seen his robust parent's tremendous power in action times before when the hideous, monstrous trolms came to attack the castle occasionally. Sovereign's electrified rage repelled them like a massive thunderstorm!

In fact, he could partly control the weather with his emotions and he could do so in either of the worlds of the Fay or the humans. Though here in the world of the Fay, King Sovereign's powers were earth-shattering and beyond devastating, since his Arc powers were charged by both the Fay Sun and the Fay Moon. Even the militant demon scientist Ronge avoided conflict with the king due to his explosive powers.

"It's too dangerous. A Sun Fay general named Blake wants me dead and his men are always hunting for me. I don't want them to know that you exist, otherwise you'll be in danger too," Sovereign explained.

Immediately, Orion disregarded the threat that his father was so concerned about. "Father, I'm a 6<sup>th</sup> class warrior now. I can handle a pathetic Sun Fay army in my sleep. I-" Orion's naive proud boasting was cut off when Sovereign spoke over top of him then.

"My rank is miles above yours and they captured me, twice! I escaped by the skin of my fangs and the horrible nightmares never leave me!" Sovereign boomed, causing Orion to drop his perky long ears downward dejectedly.

"You have no idea how desperate Blake is! Nor how utterly insane he is! That monster will not rest until he has my head... And yours and Alayer's!"

“I-I... I see... I am sorry, Father...” Orion said softly, unable to look at him since he felt so foolish. How ignorant he must have sounded to him! For shame...

Sovereign sighed tiredly and pressed his fingers to his forehead, closing his eyes and shaking his head a little. He didn't mean to yell at him like that. It was just that he had suffered so much ever since Blake had taken Alastar away, leaving him fatherless for so long and then, his mother was taken too.

He just had to find them, now that he knew they were both alive. Ronge constantly said they were. While he didn't want to trust anything that demon said after he betrayed him all those years ago, Gehenna's spies did report seeing the couple alive several times. However, it was rumored that they were probably being moved around constantly, making it difficult to rescue them.

“Forgive me, my son. I didn't mean to shout at you. Now, please, stay here in the castle and watch over Alayer. Promise me that you will protect him for me whenever I'm gone,” Sovereign said, hoping he could trust Orion to do that task.

He had seen how close his sons were to each other over the years, though his distrust for Orion made him worry that all that brotherly love might be an act. Yet, he had no one else to give this deed to. Sanbow was not strong enough to protect Alayer like Orion could.

The old caretaker was not of the Fay, but a human swapped at birth to be Gehenna's servant until he eventually expired. Despite the anti-aging spells placed upon him, time was preparing to take him soon. A mortal could only last so long regardless.

Sovereign didn't know what to do once Sanbow would pass away. He was the only other human besides his wife whom he could trust. The king looked at his second child, sadly grimacing, hoping desperately that he truly wasn't like his mother.

“Of course, Father,” Orion promised, swallowing his fear and briefly looking into his eyes to show that he was serious and in full agreement.

“I shall never let harm befall my little brother. You needn't worry.”

Sovereign noted his son's nervousness and recalled something his own father, Alastar, had told him. Not once could he recall that King Adrian, Alastar's father, had ever hugged him. Sovereign couldn't remember the last time that he had hugged Orion or even Alayer for that matter.

He was so absorbed with finding his own parents that he was neglecting to be a father to his own children. He had stood back and let Sanbow raise them, but still he was their father nevertheless, though not much of one at this point.

Guilty and ashamed, Sovereign went closer to his son and put his arms around him, gathering him up tightly. Shocked, Orion stood there frozen in place as his father gave him a strong loving embrace for a few moments, then he let him go, turning away to leave.

Orion felt a surge of great joy go through him shortly afterwards. His father did love him like he had yearned for so desperately. He must, since there was no other reason for him to hug him so emotionally like that.

The warrior prince went to see his little brother then. He surmised that Alayer was most likely in his room after Gehenna had chased him away from their father earlier. It was the only place where he felt 'safe' after all. Orion wanted to cheer him up and thought maybe if he threw their future fights, then his mother, Gehenna, couldn't insult Alayer anymore.

If he talked with him briefly, perhaps his mother would never know. This was how he conversed with Alayer lately, in secret. Yet, he was careful with what he said, just in case the royal spies were listening in.

Orion gently knocked on Alayer's bedroom door and entered, seeing his sibling at his black and red desk reading his burgundy-colored journal. Quickly, the youngest prince closed the diary and looked at his older brother dejectedly.

He was so very perplexed as to why and how his older brother, Orion, could do so many things that he wasn't able to, like fight so perfectly and raise his ranks effortlessly, while Alayer floundered for years on end.

He had been reading about his latest failure and the confusion he felt from it all, which was the entry he had written from the day before. He had trained so hard in vain. What could be the matter with him? Why couldn't he ever win? And why was his older brother here in his room now? He gave him a tired, sad expression, turning away.

"What do you want, Orion?" Alayer asked, leaning over his desk with his arms folded and hiding his face within them. The warrior prince got to the point right away.

"Listen, Alayer, maybe... Maybe I can throw our sparring matches so you can win instead and have your rank raised. Then, Mother won't be able to criticize you negatively anymore. I-" he said, but his brother cut him off angrily.

"If you dare do anything like that, I'll never forgive you!" Alayer snapped, looking at him with a deep frown upon his face. "I've come to terms that I may never beat you. But I will *not* accept false victories... Ever!"

Orion set his jaw tensely, knowing he had hit a nerve with him. His little brother was on edge due to his failure in raising his rank and so, he got upset very easily. He figured it was best to change the subject then.

“I talked with Father,” he said, brushing his white long bangs from his pale face. Alayer gawked at him.

“How’d you manage that?” the youngest prince cried, utterly shocked. “What did you talk about? What did he say? Tell me!”

“I tried to ask him if I could go with his search party for our grandparents,” Orion said, watching the eager expression on his sibling’s face. He paused, remembering how Sovereign had yelled at him for foolishly thinking that he could take on a Sun Fay army.

“And?” Alayer wished his brother would go on. Orion sighed, shaking his head.

“He wouldn’t let me. He said I wasn’t strong enough to face the dangers out there concerning the Sun Fay,” Orion admitted, discontented to be told such a thing by anyone. He thought he was the strongest fighter in the kingdom, other than their father, of course.

“You? Not strong enough? Father said that?” Alayer was shocked yet again. Just then, they heard Gehenna calling for Orion with her loud commanding voice. She was looking for him to do some annoying task. Not wanting his mother to find him talking with Alayer, he had to leave immediately.

“Yes, he said that. I have to go,” Orion went out the door and shut it quietly behind him.

Alayer followed, but stopped at the closed door and leaned his forehead against it, heaving a gusty sigh. He pounded his fist against the black wooden door, gritting his teeth. How he hated living here!

The prince went to his desk again, this time to write in his journal about his brother’s lucky chance talking with the king. He thought of what Orion had said about his brief conversation with their father.

How could Orion not have the strength to hold his own against the Sun Fay? Yes, they were known to have large armies, but the Glacial Fay were more powerful than they were.

Mixed with the legendary Eclipse Fay, Orion was absolutely the best warrior breed out there in the world of the Fay. His fangs could deliver an icy poison that would freeze his victims’ outer flesh into unbreakable ice, causing them to succumb to a painful, unavoidable death. No other Fay could do that, not even his parents.

Ever since Alayer could remember, Orion was beyond impressive and an amazing warrior. With his dark blue royal uniform with gold and red trim, the warrior prince carried himself with great poise and elegant refinement. He had a sophistication about him that made aristocrats seem like vagabonds.

The color of his soft feathery hair was pure white like the sparkling winter snow. Upon his long pale face were chilling handsome features that rivaled Gehenna’s icy beauty, yet Orion was not

conceited like his arrogant mother. He disliked the natural scarlet red hue of his eyes and many times, he willed them to be a cold blue color, which matched his light complexion and white hair.

Alayer always looked up to Orion as the awesome, perfect, older brother that he was. How he strived to be like him, but pitifully, his Fay powers seemed to be a joke and a fluke within this castle of frigidity.

Having the same power as the Sun Fay, Alayer had tried to practice his fire magic within the castle, but Gehenna forbade it. She hated anything to do with heat. So, the youngest prince was forced to hone his skills in the Dark Fay forest, a massive jungle that surrounded Queen Gehenna's castle for miles and miles in all directions.

It was a cursed place with all kinds of untold dangers lurking under the vast canopy of lush green leaves of the ancient trees. It made for an effective 'moat' around the castle, being infested with vile aggressive monstrosities.

The vicious beasts that skulked within the forest were supposed to pay their respects to the Dark Fay princes, though Alayer soon learned they only respected his older brother Orion and not him.

Due to his miserable reputation as a fighter, the other Fay creatures disrespected Alayer immensely, failing to see the fiery spirit burning within him. The prince closed his diary and tucked it away in a secret drawer that was hidden in one of the regular drawers.

He stretched his well-toned body handsomely, yawning. All day, Sanbow had him do strenuous exercises to help prepare him for the next upcoming sparring match. But the young Fay didn't see the point in training anymore. Great disappointment weighed heavily upon him, making him lose much of his confidence.

After a tiring day such as this, Alayer wanted to sleep so he could forget his troubles and the emotional pain he felt from his inadequacy.

He removed his seven earrings from his left ear, placed them into a special onyx box and closed the lid. Then, he took off his clothing and went to his black and red satin mattress to sleep. He clutched one of his many satin pillows to his body and buried his head into the small pile of satin clouds. He moved his auburn bangs out his eyes as they filled with frustrated tears. He bit his lip, struggling not to let sorrow take him again.

But he failed as he squeezed his eyes shut as he stiffly shook with sobs, feeling so depressed. How he wished he could escape from this icy castle and be free of wretched Queen Gehenna. But how? He had no strength to aid him and he didn't know where he could go. Also, he didn't want to leave Orion behind.

What of his father? In his misery, Alayer felt a twinge of disgust for him, thinking that Sovereign didn't care about him, due to his lack of interacting with him, except in his youth when his father

was most frightening with his temper. There hadn't been many times when he had afforded him much fondness. All he cared about was finding his own parents, was what the teenager assumed.

'I mean *nothing* to him,' the prince thought, wiping away the tears sliding down his face angrily. Fresh ones cascaded down then as he came to a painful conclusion. 'Because, I *am* nothing...'

Alayer cried himself to sleep and in his dreams, horrid images tormented him. Everyone in the castle was verbally attacking him, even Orion and his father. They were calling him a loser and that he was nothing and he would never amount to anything.

The scene changed from hateful jeering faces to the prince viewing himself in the third person. Feeling completely worthless, he watched himself pick up his sword. Before he could stop it, the sword sank into his gut, impaling him as it came out of his back.

"*Nooo!!!*" he screamed, waking up in a cold sweat, jolting up into a sitting position. He gasped for breath as he struggled to calm his thundering heart, holding his right hand over it. Several moments passed before he covered his face with his shaking hands, losing his composure.

That nightmare of the young prince taking his own life fiercely terrified him. He would never do such a thing for real since he dreaded death immensely. Dying in battle was one thing, but committing suicide? Never for Alayer. He'd rather live, even miserably, than face the empty blackness of death.

Going back to sleep was a feat on its own. Thankfully, it was a dreamless sleep and when the morning came, Alayer could tell it was going to be a warm sunny day. He dressed in his royal attire boasting the hues of fresh blood and a moonless night, which were his favorite colors.

He strapped a dagger to his right ankle, but left his sword standing in the corner, feeling uneasy about it due to his nightmare. He did his best to hide himself when he ate breakfast since Gehenna always made him feel ashamed for having to eat.

She would point out how the Fay didn't need to eat or drink to survive, yet Alayer would get sick if he didn't and what a burden he was upon her kingdom since they *had* to get food for him all the time. It made Alayer feel awful and he wondered why he needed sustenance, unlike the other Fay. It was so troubling and beyond puzzling to him.

In disheartened confusion, the young prince wandered the Dark Fay forest after his brief breakfast. As the young Fay teenager walked through the wicked forest, half-heartedly practicing his fire magic, he thought he had heard something and listened intently, waiting.

Again, his long-pointed ears heard a shrill scream off in the distance. He ran towards the sound, hearing it louder and louder as he headed deeper into the hazardous cursed forest.

Finally, he came to a pathway and not far off, he could now clearly hear the distressed cries of a creature in peril. He hurried over to the source of the noise and discovered a distraught unicorn



filly in a dreaded trap made by the troles, which were half gnome, half troll giants created with black science.

The beastly hybrids never existed until recently when Queen Gehenna allowed the sneaky demon scientist, named Ronge, to set up a laboratory within the bowels of her castle. He claimed that he had nothing to do with those powerful wicked hybrids, but Alayer felt that he was lying as usual.

The young prince cautiously approached in front of the frantic unicorn as she struggled to free herself from the heavy thorny vines wrapped around her sore bleeding neck and muzzle. The filly shrieked in fright at the sight of the Fay teenager, with his sharp claws, fangs, and bright red eyes.

“No, no, *shhh!*” he said gently, reaching out at her muzzle. She violently jerked her head to get away, but she could not, due to her being held down by the vines. She breathed and snorted heavily, still tugging from time to time against her bonds, whinnying in short squeaks.

“Calm down, *shhh...*” Alayer whispered, laying his hand upon her long face carefully.

The filly’s short off-white lavender shaded fur was silky soft, yet smeared with her blood from the thorns in the vines. He crinkled his features in great pity for her, biting his lower lip with sadness.

The troles loved to eat the most beautiful Fay creatures and today, they had caught a young unicorn filly. It just wasn’t fair nor right to devour a beast this perfectly wonderful. He had to save this poor creature, even if it meant that he might get killed himself. He simply could not leave a glorious unicorn to die a horrible death.

He petted the filly kindly, giving her time to calm down enough so he could start cutting the vines. She let out a short neighing squeak, pushing her muzzle against his gentle hands. Her sparkling emerald green eyes showed him that she now realized that he wasn’t going to harm her.

He smiled while he sawed at the vines with his claws, hoping maybe that he could cut them through on his own. He was worried if he used his dagger, the unicorn would get the wrong idea and she would spook all over again. It was difficult enough to get her to be calm in the first place.

“There... See? It’ll be alright. I’m going to help you, unicorn,” Alayer told her as he carefully dug his sharp nails into the vines. Besides the thorns, the thick vines had thin hair-like needles jutting out in all directions, and so his fingers became sore and scraped in no time as he attempted to remove the vines.

After much time, sawing and picking at the vines, Alayer managed to loosen the wicked thorny bridle some. His hands were bleeding by now, but he didn’t care. He had to save this filly, no matter what the cost. He kept at it despite the stinging cutting pain and finally, he broke through a crucial part of the knotted vines that held it together.

The thorny bridle did not fall off like Alayer expected it to and then, he saw why. The terrible thing was embedded in the unicorn's face. He asked the poor creature to forgive him for what he had to do next and he started to remove the horrible vine bridle gingerly.

She shrieked from the pain Alayer had to cause her in order to take the vines off, sending her into a wild tantrum as she jerked her muzzle away, tearing the bridle from her face in a brutal bloody manner. That was something the young Fay was trying to avoid, but it was too late now.

Maybe he could try to heal her, but he wasn't very good at doing that. Even his own fire magic, which was his Arc element, proved somewhat difficult to bring out correctly. He decided to try anyway for the unicorn's sake, when heavy thrashing was heard not too far off in the underbrush.

Three gray-green skinned troles, who were all about seven and half feet in height and wearing filthy loincloths, lumbered into the scene, returning for their unicorn supper. They stopped and gaped at the Fay prince's efforts to free the young filly when Troy, the leader of the small gang, spoke, sputtering due to his rage.

"W-w-what are you doing?!" he boomed, pointing his mace at Alayer, who glared back defiantly.

"He's trying to steal our supper, that's what he's doing!" cried the second trole named Fume, unable to believe the cheekiness of this young Eclipse Fay.

"Hey, boy! Don't they feed you enough at the castle? Or teach you any manners? This here's our banquet, so shove off!" the third trole named Fester shouted, shaking his club menacingly.

"No one will be supping on this beautiful creature! Not now, not ever!" Alayer yelled back, willing his claws to extend into razor sharp weapons. At least, he could do that, though many Fay could make their hands into even deadlier armaments than they already were.

"Oh ho! This little skunk wants to fight us!" Fester laughed, using such a term to insult the pleasant-smelling Fay boy, then scoffed. "You won't survive this experience, because we have just added you to the menu!"

"Ooo, how delicious! The Fay are such tasty delights to crunch on with a gallon of tea," Fume said, daintily holding up his pinky fingers. "Especially, a legendary breed like this one here..."

"Yes, let's eat him first in front of the unicorn," Troy agreed, "Fright always tenderizes the meat best. We'll have to beat this brat to soften his meat since he's too stupid to be afraid."

Alayer had heard enough. His building rage had reached past its boiling point and he dove into action, racing forward and slicing through Fester's left leg, surprising the monster as he screamed in agony.

The other two barely had time to react when the young prince whipped around and ripped his claws through Fume's Achilles' heel, causing him to squeal out a high-pitched shriek, then he

raked his long sharp claws across Troy's back, creating deep wide ragged welts as the monster howled in distress.

Cutting through all that rough thick hide was difficult, but the prince managed it well enough to show those brutes that he wasn't a pushover like they had thought. He ran to the unicorn then to slice the vines around her neck in order to free her, but Troy thundered over and snatched Alayer by his skull and flung him backwards into a gnarled tree.

White sparks flashed in the young Fay prince's vision as he slammed into the trunk of a birch. He dropped down to the grassy forest floor face first, not moving. Troy chuckled, believing he had killed the young Fay, and proudly sauntered heavily towards auburn-haired morsel.

"And that's how you tenderize a royal Fay brat," he said, bending down to pick up his body.

Suddenly, Alayer rolled away just in time and thrust his claws at the monster's face, shooting forth a fiery blast as he aimed for the eyes. Troy shrieked in discomfort while his companions stomped over to attack the prince, who growled at them menacingly.

He dodged their fast blows from their weapons, moving like a jackrabbit with much grace and skill. The young prince kept slicing at their bulky hides with his claws and he even managed to partially blind one of them, when he used his dagger to cut out Troy's right eye.

The troles were getting very sick of this quick moving Fay meal and they realized that attacking him in turns wasn't working. When Troy lost his eye, he commanded his friends to get serious.

The small unicorn filly squealed in fright as she tugged at her bonds around her neck, wishing to flee from the carnage playing out before her. Her rescuer appeared to be holding his own against the three troles for the time.

But eventually, they gained the upper hand and savagely beat him into the trees like a rag doll then slammed him into the hard-earthly trail, stepping on his back and crushing him.

"You little skunk! Think you can get away taking my eye, eh?!" Troy shouted as he repeatedly stomped on Alayer's back as if he was crushing an insignificant insect. Besides the bone-crushing agony, the stench of rotting sewage from the trole's offending foot penetrated the prince's nose, nauseating him.

The monsters seemed to take great delight hearing the poor Fay prince screaming at the top of his lungs and laughed evilly at his suffering. They went back to taking turns kicking him around like a football into hard unforgiving surfaces such as jagged rocks and twisted trees with scratchy bark.

Alayer's heartbreaking screams of excruciating pain caused the one horned filly to spook terribly. She wildly yanked on the spiky vines, causing the thorns to dig deeper into her neck. Blood stained her lovely lavender tinted white fur and her beautiful iridescent mane was matted and tangled in filth, while she kicked and tugged crazily.

She slipped and fell hard, hurting herself badly. She could no longer stand and remained sprawled out in pain, breathing hard with her sides billowing in and out rapidly.

After being brutally kicked in the gut yet again and sent flying face first into another hard rock that gashed his forehead open, the Fay prince looked through his blurred vision and struggled to see what became of the unicorn. He squinted and shook his head as best he could in his beaten state.

Finally, he understood what his eyes were telling him. The terrified filly was no longer standing and she was making squeaking distress sounds while Fester went over to her, raising his club to strike her dead. Before he could react, Troy grabbed Alayer by his hair and flung him over to the unicorn.

More shooting pain exploded all over the prince's body as he collided with the filly. She shrieked out in surprise and fright. Alayer cried out pitifully, his lungs so sore from all his screaming.

"Let 'em die together, then we can enjoy our meal," Troy said, holding his beefy hand to his face, covering the empty, bloody socket where his right eye used to be.

"But make sure he suffers the most. I want you to beat that stupid unicorn dead, Fester! Beat it so he hears everything. Then, we can rip his limbs off, one by one. That way he'll feel more pain..."

Alayer wished that he had the strength to save the unicorn and himself, but he could hardly move anymore. His body was broken and with the amount of blood he had lost, it looked like he had been already butchered. It was amazing that he was still conscious.

The beating he received from Cassandra's thugs weeks before was nothing compared to this agony. Through half-lidded eyes and fading vision, his ears rang as he shakily watched Fester raise his weapon to strike the filly once again.

Out of the blue, Fester was kicked across the small clearing they were in and when his body was rammed into an oak, the tree cracked and fell from the force. He was knocked out cold and bleeding profusely. Fume squealed out in a high-pitched shriek as Troy gawked with his one eye at Fester's attacker.

"Leave these poor children alone!" shouted an angry, powerful, female voice.

Alayer stiffly shifted his failing sight to whomever had spoken and instantly, he was shocked. He almost didn't believe his eyes at first. There stood a towering Ancient Elemental, an enormous powerful lagomorph warrior. Her shiny chocolate brown fur glistened in the sunlight, making her appear perfectly polished as her dark brown eyes narrowed at the trolmes.

“Oh, *no!* It is Leporidae! She has come for revenge!” Fume shouted, grabbing Troy by the shoulders and shaking him in great fear. Troy shoved him away and glowered at the snarling Elemental.

She had her ears back and lowered her body to the ground with her rear end raised and her tail standing straight up, a sure sign that she was about to charge and fight. She displayed her buck teeth, and uttered a short, gruff growl.

The Elemental’s massive claws, which were as sharp as razors, could rip through the troles’ three-inch-thick hide better than any other weapon. And her enemies knew it. Fume was right to be afraid.

While she was not hunting for the brutes at the time, she had heard all the loud screaming and smelled spilt blood and so, she investigated.

She thought maybe the troles were harassing new victims as usual and she was correct. She wasted no time kicking one of those monsters down the trail and into a tree. This particular gang had killed her husband, Lagomorpe, not more than a year ago. The troles had drugged the sacred beast with tranquilizing darts and when he had fallen asleep, they had cooked him for their dinner.

And just like that, after thousands of years of marriage, she was a widow and left with three younglings at home. She never forgot this tragedy and desired their end badly.

“Did you come to join your husband, Leporidae? I bet you’re as tasty as he was!” Troy mocked, being foolish to do so.

“Troy, she’ll kill us!” Fume fretted, yanking on his arm like a little kid in protest while Troy again shook him off, glaring.

“Oh, I will destroy you someday,” Leporidae promised, her eyes ablaze and gritting her teeth.

“But today you will know the meaning of pure agony... You will pay over and over again for what you have done to my husband, you disgusting, ugly brutes!”

And with that remark, she took off with lightening speed, kicking and biting the wicked troles, cutting them up like ribbons. The half-dead Fay prince shakily pushed himself up and used his hands to crawl around the unicorn to get at her thorny bonds.

Grunting and gasping in agony, he clawed at the spiky vines with his sliced-up hands, desperately trying to free her. The filly looked at him in fright, squeaking and bobbing her head. He was covered in blood and smelled like death itself, but yet, even in her terror she understood that he was still trying to save her.

Alayer frantically sawed at the vines with his nails, but he lacked the strength to cut them like he had in the beginning. Scowling, he grit his teeth as heavy tears flooded down his battered face,

while he expressed his distressed frustrations as he tugged the vines fruitlessly. He couldn't fail her, he just couldn't!

The unicorn watched him in pity and she wished to heal him, even if it would drain the energy she needed to flee. She wasn't a large, strong unicorn after all, being born disabled with a hind leg shorter than the other. She wasn't able to run swiftly like the rest of her blessing. That was how she was captured in the first place by the troles, since she couldn't escape quick enough from them.

The filly's horn glowed, turning into clear crystal and he noticed it immediately. The very sight of it gave him hope and warmth as she lowered her head so he could touch it. But before he could, Troy realized what the unicorn was attempting to do and cruelly kicked the poor creature in her side, creating distance between her and the Fay prince.

She shrieked and floundered upon the dirt and grass, her horn returning to its original state. Then she was still, as if she had suffered a heart attack and died.

"No!!!" Alayer verbalized his rage well, but he could not do much else since Troy stomped on his spine. Immediately, the prince arched his back, screaming in anguish. The entire assault took less than several seconds for the trole leader to complete.

Leporidae had been busy fighting with Fume at the time and when she heard the Fay boy's torment, she finished what she was doing. She fell backwards on her curved spine and recoiled, kicking Fume with all her might. She sent him into the woods, which was getting deforested at this point.

Once the horrid trole had come to a crashing stop, he fled into the forest, screaming as he ran. Hearing him well, Troy scowled at his pathetic younger brother as he continued to ram his hideous smelly foot upon Alayer, who was no longer moving nor screaming.

The Elemental warrior raced to where the Fay boy and the unicorn were suffering, which happened to be several yards away. Troy was taking an advantage of this and kept embedding Alayer's broken body into the hard, unforgiving earth, snickering evilly.

Leporidae swiped her claws up into the trole's face, sending him stumbling backwards as he shrieked, clutching his ugly, damaged face. She then charged, knocking him over and biting savagely. Troy struggled to get the giant rabbit off of him, since she would not let go when she had his shoulder clenched in her teeth.

Finally, he ripped her off and started to believe that maybe retreating would be a good idea at this point. No unicorn supper was worth this much trouble, not even with a side of Fay prince.

Troy used a broken oak trunk to whack Leporidae with, fending her off. He went to fetch his other brother, Fester, so he could retreat.

The Elemental warrior was simply too powerful for the trome to keep on fighting like this. She kept coming at him, relentlessly biting and clawing. Again, he slugged her with the oak trunk and rushed over to where Fester had fallen.

When he got to his other younger sibling, he discovered that Fester had bled to death while the battle was going on. He was completely lifeless and flies were already gathering about his carcass.

Angrily, Troy kicked the dead body away, roaring out in a rage. The disgusting corpse hit a tree and slumped over grossly. Leporidae came back, her fur matted with filth and blood, flexing her claws. The trome leader scowled at her, knowing he was beaten and began to flee, but he promised a terrible revenge.

“Don’t think you won the war, Leporidae! I will be back with my brother and we will bring an army of our fellow trolls to aid us next time! Just you wait and see! These trees will be painted in your blood and his!” Troy shouted, pointing at the motionless Fay prince and stomped away, cursing endlessly.

Leporidae growled a short, gruff snort before she went to Alayer, expecting him to be dead. But to her surprise, he was merely unconscious and breathing weakly, his heartbeat slowing. The unicorn filly was breathing as well, but in very poor condition. She made haste to save their lives.

## CHAPTER 3

### – A PAINFUL SECRET REVEALED –

The Ancient warrior gathered up the two upon her large furry shoulders and took them a quite distance away to her sacred hidden burrow deep within the Fay earth. There was only one entrance and exit, devoid of the wicked vines that plagued the area, which were the very same vines that the troles had used to bind the disabled unicorn.

Leporidae wiggled her nose aplenty as she prepared to care for her new charges. The filly was not in as much danger of dying compared to the Fay youngling. So, she set the unicorn down on a bed of soft hay and let her rest in comfort.

Next, she placed the prince on a bed of fresh grasses as his blood dripped from him, creating red pools at his sides. Leporidae put her right massive single paw upon his chest, murmuring words indiscernibly for a while, sealing his inner bleeding.

Then, she cleaned his wounds with sweet smelling water from a divine spring that went through her home. Mashing some plant matter to make a paste, she covered his open cuts with it.

The larger cuts needed to be sewn up so she got her needle and plant threads to close them. She was glad that he was not awake for this, for it would only add to his agony.

She had no clothing to replace his tattered outfit since her kind had no need for garments, due to them being so furry. Instead, she covered him with a blanket of woven grasses mixed with her fur. There, he should pull through, or at least, she hoped that he would.

Leporidae then went to work caring for the unicorn and did a similar procedure on the filly as she did on the prince. She removed the blood and filth from the unicorn's coat, washing her kindly. Next, she brewed special herbs to make a healing tea for all, filling a hollowed-out pumpkin dish and leaving it for the unicorn to drink from.

The Elemental looked at the pretty beast and asked her various questions on how did she get captured so easily by the troles and where was her blessing, but it was apparent that the poor creature could not speak. Only her green eyes could tell her anything.

Staring into her eyes, Leporidae's soul could decipher what the filly was trying to say. Only the purest, most honest souls were able to read from the eyes of a unicorn. She nodded her shiny brown furry head, understanding.

“Ah, yes, I see. You cannot run as fast as the rest of your blessing, due to your left weakened hind leg. That is how the dreaded troles captured you,” Leporidae said out loud.

The filly nodded her head vigorously, confirming that was what she was saying. She stopped bobbing her head, so the warrior could gaze into her large eyes again for more conversation.



“Your name is Nabi, correct?” Leporidae asked and the unicorn nodded happily.

“I am pleased to meet you, Nabi.” The filly neighed in her special squeaky squealing way, then snorted, tossing her iridescent mane.

The warrior smiled, twitching her nose and hopped off to get a carrot from her storage chamber. She offered it to Nabi, who crunched away in joy, devouring the vegetable quickly. She talked to her again through her eyes, requesting more.

“I understand perfectly. You are hungry,” Leporidae said, patting the petite beast’s neck. “Enjoy this hay while I prepare you a proper meal.”

Nabi grunted and nodded, pawing the ground with her cloven hoof. Soon, the warrior had a fine feast before the unicorn, who practically inhaled the food since she had been starving since yesterday.

The troles had her tied up that long to get the fighting spirit out of her when she was first captured. She might be disabled, but she wasn’t a weakling, no unicorn was. It was what the nasty troles did to all their catches before they ate them alive.

Time passed and when the Fay Moon hung in the middle of the heavens, the Fay prince awoke to aching, searing torment. He cried out, writhing in discomfort, tears welling up in his eyes.

Leporidae had been waiting for this. She had her healing tea ready, steaming, though not too hot and gingerly helped the fourteen-year-old upward so he could drink the brew.

It was pure torture doing just that since his ribs were cracked and some of them broken, not to mention the rest of him felt utterly smashed.

She made him drink as much as he could stand in that position, and then let him lay back on the grass bed with a woven pillow made out of fur she had shed weeks before, so it was very soft. A shrill squeal deeper in the burrows made Leporidae leave him to tend to her children.

There was not much she could do for him at this point besides. Alayer kept crying out since every movement caused him more suffering. Even breathing sent shockwaves of more pain throughout him.

The prince clenched his fists and chattered his teeth in torment; the pain was that unbearable. His skin was screaming in agony with the grass threads pinching his wounds closed, especially his right side where he had a deep laceration given to him by Troy. Many of his bones were smashed and broken, making him wish he could pass out again to escape it all.

He sucked in air rapidly, taking in shallow hissing breaths as he squeezed his eyes shut with his brow furrowed deeply. He was suffocating in such horrible agony that Nabi squeaked in sadness for him.

She remembered how he had tried so hard to save her when he could have ignored her peril and not be suffering now. Nabi hobbled over to him, bobbing her head. She stood close to him, blinking her eyes prettily.

The Fay prince was in too much agony to even notice her at first. He continued to groan and moan in great misery. The filly's golden horn glowed then, turning into white sparkling crystal. He sensed powerful magic and opened his eyes as the unicorn touched her horn tip to the middle of his bare chest.

Instantly, the agonizing pain left him and he could hardly believe how miraculous it was to have sudden soothing relief. He gawked at her, sitting up in the nest of grass and fur. Nabi had healed his damaged body to its peak, to thank him for saving her life.

Although he didn't directly save her as he had hoped, the unicorn filly knew if he did not come to try and help, she would have been eaten by now. Leporidae might have never come, if it weren't for Alayer fighting with the troles in the first place.

To Nabi, he was her hero and she was eternally grateful to him. The least she could do was heal his body completely. The Fay prince reached out to touch her and she stepped closer, pushing her face into his chest, making him lose balance and fall back a little.

Alayer laughed and stood up, throwing his arms around her neck, hugging her tightly. With happy tears in his eyes, he was overcome with deep sentiment while she nibbled on his long auburn hair that hung past his shoulders and down the middle of his back.

"Thank you so much for healing me, unicorn," he whispered, stroking her long soft neck. She nickered in response as he pulled away. She nudged her nose against his chest, hoping he would communicate with her through their eyes and their souls.

When he looked into her long equine face, he noticed how pretty her sparkling green eyes were, becoming enchanted by them. He felt an unknown sensation within him as he stared into those glassy globes of mystery. In moments, his soul received the words that Nabi conveyed to him, all through the beauty of her eyes.

"...Nabi..." he whispered, understanding that was her name. "Is...is that you're called? Nabi?"

She nodded enthusiastically, making happy, shuddering sounds. He smiled ear to ear. Speaking to her by this method was very enjoyable. It was something beyond wonderful.

"My name is Alayer," he said, unable to stop grinning. "Do you want to be friends with me?"

Nabi came close to his face and flipped her lips at the left side of his face and ear, licking. He cried out, amused and put his hands up to push her off.

"Hey now! You're going to eat my earrings, if you're not careful, Nabi!" he laughed, feeling so jovial, an emotion that he lost ever since Cassandra betrayed him on his birthday.

He had grown fond of Cassandra, a Glacial Fay girl, two years ago and like a love-sick puppy, he did whatever she asked of him, from doing her tedious chores to bringing her rare trinkets that required plenty of danger to obtain.

Then, on his fourteenth birthday, she brought her real boyfriend, Kradean, and his gaggle of friends to savagely beat on poor Alayer. She told Kradean that the young teenager had forced himself upon her when he never did.

What he really had done was refusing to rob the royal treasury for her and so she had punished him by lying to Kradean, ordering him to attack the innocent teenager.

In her wicked cruelty, she stayed behind to deride the Fay prince, saying she never cared for him as she had tricked him into believing and that he was nothing, but a worthless fool, just like how Queen Gehenna had told the whole kingdom. Bitterly he wept, hardening his heart ever since.

Not wanting to think of that devastating moment, Alayer kept his mind focused on his new wonderful friend, the lovely unicorn, Nabi.

The filly neighed loudly in her squeaky, squealing way and hobbled off to her place in the hay. The Fay prince was confused about why the creature didn't heal herself and asked her, gazing into her lovely eyes.

"Ohh..." he murmured, as his features crinkled in sorrow when she answered.

A curse had been cast upon her by a Neverborn that limited her amazing powers. She had the ability to heal others completely, but never herself. And she could not teleport, which was the tradeoff for having such uncanny healing powers.

"I'm sorry to know that," he said softly, hugging her neck when she hung it close to him as he sat in his nest bed. She squeaked sadly and felt him running his hands through her silky iridescent coloring-changing mane.

"I feel like I'm cursed too," he admitted to her, wanting to confide in her.

"No matter what I do, no matter how hard I train, I can never win against my older brother, Orion, in our sparring matches. I try so hard only to fail again and again," he said, in hurt confusion.

"Tell me why this is, Nabi? How can I get beaten this badly constantly when I'm one of the Fay?" he asked her, knowing that the Eclipse Fay are, in fact, untouchable immortals to those lowly disgusting troles.

"I just don't understand it..." He shook his head, hating the sting of fresh tears in his eyes. Before he could get a response through Nabi's eyes, Leporidae returned and spoke, startling him.

"Dear child, do you truly not know the truth?" Her deep brown eyes showed much pity for him.

“The truth about what?” he asked, turning to her. Leporidae sighed loudly, as she proceeded to expose the facts about his cursed lineage.

“You are not of the Fay as a whole,” she began, her words giving him intense dread, “but only in part. Your Fay side is hindered by your human half. That is why you are unable to conquer those who are truly Fay, such as your brother, Orion.”

Her explanation caused Alayer to stumble backwards onto the nest bed and sit upon it in a horrible daze. He started to breathe heavily in a nauseated manner, swiping his right hand through his hair as he absorbed this appalling news.

“No... No, no, *no!* This can't be! It just *can't!* I'm part...*human...*?” he choked out, feeling incredibly sick. How could he be one of those loathsome, pathetic creatures? All of the Fay mocked humans for being so pitifully wretched and feeble.

Feeble... That was how he fought, weakly, compared to the Fay. No wonder Gehenna hated him and insulted him so much. He was half-human and it really showed. How could he have had never known? Why didn't anyone else tell him before Leporidae did?!

He realized that this truth about his breed might have been the secret something Orion and his father never wanted to tell him. He could see why, since he was taking this new information in badly. He felt like he was dying inside and unfortunately, it was really happening, slowly.

“I'm...a lowly mortal...?” he whispered, losing the battle against his tears as they slid down his cheeks one by one. He was never a real Fay immortal, like he always believed most of his life. And worst of all, he was doomed to eventually die from old age, unlike the Fay, who were immune to the powers of time. It was an inevitable fate. A deadly curse...

Leporidae was about to leave to allow him to grieve when he blurted out, “There has to be a way to undo this curse of mortality!”

She debated if she should tell him, for he might not understand the answer. Her torn expression told him that she knew something that might help him.

“You know what it is!” he cried, going to her and throwing himself onto his knees with his hands clasped together. “I beg you, please tell me! I'll do anything for you, if you'll grace me with the cure!”

“There is only one cure for the mortality curse and no other. It is easy, yet difficult to obtain. There are countless pretenders for this single true cure, so be wary and always on your guard. Never lose your vigilance, nor listen to the imitations or you will lose sight of what you need.”

Alayer had not expected a riddle, but it was better than no cure at all. At least, he had hope.

“What does it look like?” he asked carefully, figuring he might get another riddle to digest.

“It comes in the form of the divine White Fire,” she said, her ears twitching back and forth. Her children were not staying in their nests like she had told them to. She could tell they were eavesdropping nearby.

“But my power *is* fire,” Alayer said, wishing his power was all he needed to be free of mortality, but he had a feeling the fire she meant wasn’t the kind he already possessed.

“Not Fay fire, young one. This White Fire is beyond celestial, ruling over all. The Blue Phoenix bows to it,” she explained, shocking the young prince. The legendary Blue Phoenix had a master? He found that to be utterly unbelievable, but he dared not say this Elemental warrior was lying.

“How do I summon this White Fire?” he asked, displaying his ignorance then. She shook her furry head, twitching her nose faster.

“You cannot summon this great being like you do with your Arc power. You must seek it out and know it. Once you do, then you will be a true immortal and given indestructible protection. You will live on forever. Death will be impossible for you.”

Alayer liked that part of it being impossible for him to die once he knew this White Fire, whatever it was. He had to undo the deadly curse of mortality at all costs and this White Fire cure was what he wanted to find as soon as possible.

“Where do I seek it? What must I do?” the Fay prince inquired, desiring to get started on his hunt immediately.

“The cure for your curse is within the written pages of history,” she said, causing him to feel bleak. The Elemental couldn’t direct him any better than for him to simply read the correct book and of course, understand that book, whichever one it was supposed to be. There were countless tomes out there; how could he find the right one in time?

Suddenly, Leporidae’s three adorable young children hopped out from their hiding places and rushed at Alayer. They jumped upon him, knocking him down on the nest bed while they bombarded him with all kinds of questions.

They were the largest baby bunnies he had ever seen, but they would be, since they were Elementals. The cute furry fluffs were about the size of medium-sized dogs and they were very strong for kits.

“Is your Arc power *really* fire?” inquired Angelic, a pure white boy rabbit that was the eldest of his siblings.

“Yes,” Alayer replied when the next bunny demanded his question to be answered immediately.

“Did you kill those hideous troles? Did’ya or not?” Monchi demanded, a black and white spotted boy bunny that had quite a fearless attitude.

“Well, no, I-”

“I sure would have!” he exclaimed, hopping from the nest bed to zooming all over the floor and back again on the nest in a few seconds. “I’d show them what for! I’d kill them all dead!”

“Are you a really an Eclipse Fay prince?” asked Sweetie, a miniature clone of her mother with her shiny brown coat and dark chocolate eyes. She appeared to be in great awe of him.

“Yes, I am...” he replied, not knowing what to expect next as the large adolescent Elemental bunny wiggled her nose madly.

She got very close to his face and then, she quickly licked his right cheek, giggling in joy. Her brothers scrunched up their furry faces, very disgusted by their little sister’s display of affection.

“Ugh, Sweetie!” Monchi gagged. “Why do you always have to be like that? It’s so gross!”

“It’s so embarrassing! Utterly deplorable,” Angelic commented, scratching his ear with his hind foot. Leporidae shooed her children away, scolding them on their poor manners and sent them back to their nest.

“I am truly sorry about that,” she apologized. “Ever since they lost their father, they have been increasingly difficult to handle. My husband was the only one who could keep them in line.”

“It’s alright. They were cute,” Alayer replied, chuckling, then he realized how much time had passed and how concerned his father may be, if he was back from his hunt, that is.

“It’s very late. My brother will be worried about me; I’ve been gone all day.” He got off the bed and headed towards the nearest hole, when he stopped. He didn’t know the way out of the burrow for there were many holes everywhere.

“Which way do I go to get back to the surface?” he asked, looking at her.

She smiled and walked beside the prince as she put a paw to his back to guide him to the only hole without the thorny vines. The other holes had vines, but they were difficult to view, thus all the openings appeared the same to someone without the knowledge to see the truth.

“Always choose the de-vined way, that what we Elementals always say,” Leporidae said, patting his back lightly, being mindful with her sharp claws. Nabi let out a loud squealing whinny and they looked towards her. She hobbled over, wanting to go with him, pushing her nose against his chest.

“Oh, Nabi,” Alayer said, taking her muzzle into his hands and laying the left side of his face to hers. “I can’t take you with me. It’s too dangerous where I live. Please understand...”

The unicorn squeaked sadly, but nodded her head, pawing her right hoof at the hay-littered earth. The teenager kissed the filly’s velvety nose, then turned to Leporidae.

“You will care for her, won’t you?” he asked, not wanting to leave precious Nabi behind, but he had no choice. With how unstable and wicked Queen Gehenna was, it would be a mistake to take the unicorn with him. Ronge would probably eat her, just like the troles tried to do.

“Of course, young prince,” the warrior promised, smiling. “Now, hurry home and do not lose faith. You will find what you seek as long as you keep striving for it. Never give up and you will succeed. Always hunt the clean scent to go home. Farewell, perhaps we will meet again.”

Alayer nodded after saying his goodbyes to her and Nabi. He walked through the de-ined hole for a while, then it turned sharply upwards, so he climbed it to the top. When he emerged, he found himself within a heavy thicket.

Once he came out of that, he was inside a cavern and even though he could see perfectly fine in the pitch blackness, he had no idea which way to go next. He tried to remember what Leporidae had said before he left her burrow. Something about not losing faith and never giving up and what else? Clean fresh air blew from the right side of the cave, attracting him.

Clean scent! The fresh air was what she meant! Joyfully, he followed the clean fragrance of air through the maze of tunnels in the cavern, which took some time, but at last, he came outside and discovered he was many, many miles away from home.

He was near the Light Fay territory on the edge of the Gray Forest. If any of the Sun Fay found him, they would attack and never ask questions later. Sovereign warned his sons to never go near here, but Alayer couldn’t help it, since Leporidae brought him there to her burrow to help save his life. How could he explain all that without getting into trouble?

The young prince could not use the Fay Moon to recharge, because it was too low in the sky and the rising of the Fay Sun was hours away, being no help to him now. It was not like his fire powers would be much protection against the Sun Fay, who had the same magic as he did. His ice powers were next to nonexistent and he had no third power like his father did.

In fact, no other Fay had a third power like King Sovereign did and within all the realms, he was feared immensely. Being as silent as the shadows, Alayer traveled along the path that ran beside the Gray Forest. He wouldn’t be trespassing, if he used that trail. He recalled hearing that his father and Gehenna’s guards had used this cobblestoned lane without issue many times, so it should be safe enough to traverse to go back home.

After several minutes, he heard the stretching sound of a bow string and a voice behind him telling him to stop where he was. Alayer obeyed, not wanting to get an arrow in his skull and held his hands up.

A young Sun Fay soldier, named Jet, walked cautiously to the front of the Eclipse Fay prince, keeping his arrow trained on him at all times. Alayer scowled at the archer, who seemed to be the same age as he was. He was wearing a dark blue Sun Fay uniform trimmed in pale yellow and his waist-length hair was blond with bright magenta strips going throughout it.

The vampiric prince was worried that he might not get out of this unscathed, but he displayed no fear and neither did the other Fay teenager.

“State your name and your business,” Jet demanded, the night breeze blowing his bangs about his handsome face as he continued to glare with his sharp, blue eyes.

“I am Alayer, prince of the Eclipse Fay, and I’m trying to get back home,” the crimson-eyed teenager said, disliking the disrespect he was receiving from this lowly Sun Fay guard.

Yes, his royal outfit was in a filthy, shredded state, but still, a prince was a prince no matter his clothing. Jet widened his eyes in shock, then narrowed them again.

“Is your father King Sovereign?” he asked, keeping the aim of his nocked arrow at the space between the prince’s eyes.

“Yes, he’s my father. Why?” Alayer questioned irritably, carefully looking around the archer for an opening to disarm him. The Sun Fay teenager seemed to be talking to himself then, trying to figure out something.

“How can he have *three* sons now? There was only supposed to be two...” he murmured in a confused, hushed tone, then he set his cold blue eyes on his captive again.

“It doesn’t matter, because you’re going to die here tonight for trespassing...” Before he finished his sentence, Jet pulled back the bowstring even further and let his arrow fly. Alayer managed to move away in time, though some of his left ear got hit in the process.

Immediately, the azure-eyed youth dropped his bow and began reaching for the dagger strapped to his waist. The prince ignored the terrible pain from his bleeding ear and wasted no time tackling the archer to the ground. They wrestled for control of Jet’s dagger, fighting for their lives.

“Fool! I *wasn’t* trespassing! I was just trying to get home! I wasn’t doing you any harm!” Alayer shouted, his anger rising quickly. How dare this idiotic Sun Fay accuse him falsely like that?!

“Dark Fay filth! You *were* trespassing! This trail is reserved for *my* people! It’s *never* to be used by the likes of you!” the archer growled, struggling to get the vampire’s hand off the handle of his dagger.

He attempted to blast the Dark Fay with his fire, but his adversary instantly attacked him back with his own fire. Jet was so shocked by this, allowing Alayer to gain control of the dagger finally. He held its razor edge up to the other teenager’s throat threateningly.

“Fire is not going to help you! There is no flame that can burn me,” he growled, breathing hard from their struggle. “Just let me leave in peace or *you’re* the one who’s going to die tonight!”



“H-how can *you* possess fire magic?! Only the Sun Fay can control it! It’s not possible for the darkness to wield the light!” he cried, disturbed by what he thought was a sacrilegious absurdity.

“I am of both the Light and the Darkness, fool!” Alayer hissed, baring his fangs and wondering if he should try and drink this Sun Fay. Maybe he would gain enough strength to beat Orion in a few of their sparring matches if he did.

Or he might just become intoxicated instead and be unable to get home safely. He might be spotted by another Sun Fay soldier and be easily destroyed. He decided not to take the chance in draining this archer.

“You Eclipse monsters are true abominations! Vile fiends, you only know cruelty and wickedness! Kill me and steal my blood, like the demon you are!” Jet cried hatefully, hyperventilating from his growing fright. Tears leaked from the corners of his eyes since he believed that he was going to be murdered soon.

Enraged by his insults, Alayer was about to plunge the blade into the soldier’s neck when he paused, realizing that this Sun Fay was just a teenager, like he was. Killing him would only make his statements about the Eclipse Fay true.

He pulled the dagger away from his neck and put it back in its sheath at Jet’s waist. The prince got off of him and stood, scowling, but then, he softened his expression.

“I’m not like how you believe my people to be. We are not cruel, demonic monsters,” Alayer said quietly. “I hope my sparing your life convinces you of that...”

Baffled, Jet slowly got to his feet and straightened his uniform, dusting it off as the royal Fay walked away, holding his severely damaged ear in pain. Blood had poured down in heavy streams, staining his neck and shoulder, droplets trailing down his left arm.

“Wait, please!” The archer went after him and Alayer stopped, turning to him. “Let me escort you home on my steed. It’s the least I can do for allowing me to live.”

Truly he was curious about how a Dark Fay could be the Light and Darkness at once. He never really hated the new race of Fay that had come into their world, but his general certainly did. General Blake trained all his troops, young and old to kill any Dark Fay on sight, no matter what.

But this Sun Fay teenager could no longer do such a horrible deed after the mercy he was given by the Eclipse prince. He wished to know more about him, since this Alayer was not at all like how Blake made everyone in his camp believe.

“Very well,” Alayer said, not completely sure that he should be trusting him, but riding home would be a lot better than walking for miles on end with a painful injury. He couldn’t even fly home since he lacked the energy for that.

And in Sun Fay territory, flying would be suicide. They would have shot him down immediately since the Sun Fay weren't allowed to have wings and the ones that did, were the Dark Moon Fay, their hated enemies.

But why did they have to be enemies? Why, Alayer's grandfather, Alastar, dark prince of the Bloodless Fangs, married one of the Sun Maidens from General Blake's own camp, so it was possible for them to be friends.

The prince decided that he would try and befriend this Sun Fay, hoping to end the senseless hatred between their clans. His grandfather started it and Alayer was suddenly determined to complete it. Perhaps, the kidnapping and executions would lessen, even cease, if the Eclipse prince succeeded in spreading his newfound message of mercy and peace.

The archer whistled for his white horse, Glorious Dawn, to come and carry Alayer home. The horse was hesitant to let a vampiric Fay upon his back, but his master commanded it to be done, so he complied, snorting worryingly.

While it was illegal for the Light Fay to even own a horse, this Sun Fay teenager could not pass up keeping this Andalusian stallion, a creature his uncle had given to him in secret years ago before he mysteriously disappeared from camp.

He kept the beautiful animal safe and hidden while he did his duties, which were to patrol the Gray Forest's outer perimeters endlessly. Thankfully, Blake was too busy to check in on Jet thoroughly, expecting his spies to do that for him.

But the teenager was very close friends with Blakes's best lead spy's granddaughter, Wisty and she made sure that her reports mentioned nothing about Jet's horse. He was very smitten with her and planned to have a serious relationship with her, as soon as he could work up the nerve to ask her about such things.

The cavalier began to lead his horse with the auburn-haired royal vampire in the saddle when he looked behind him briefly, noticing how he was holding his disfigured bloody ear, grimacing. Feeling badly about that, he asked him about it.

"How's your ear?" he inquired awkwardly.

"I think it's stopped bleeding now," Alayer said, not mentioning that it hurt terribly. The top had been ripped off, leaving a ragged torn edge, plus he was missing a stud earring. He wasn't eager to look in the mirror anytime soon. He didn't make a fuss about it since this pain was nothing compared to the torture he had suffered from the troles' attack earlier that day.

"I can heal it for you," Jet offered, halting his horse and motioned for him to lean over so he could reach his ear.

He murmured a few incomprehensible words, while his hand glowed a whitish-golden color. It took some time, but eventually, he was able to restore the prince's ear back to its handsome pointy self.

Alayer sat back in the saddle normally as the other teenager went back to leading his horse down the trail again. He touched his ear gingerly, inspecting it with both of his hands. It was as good as new and the pain had stopped.

"Thank you," he said gratefully. He would have to get a new piercing for the restored part, but he didn't mind. At least, his appearance wouldn't be hindered by a ruined ear now. Plus, he didn't need to explain himself to his father about it either.

"Don't mention it," the archer said, then he added, "My name is Jet, by the way."

"Well, I'm pleased to meet you, Jet," Alayer said kindly, meaning it. "As you already know, I'm Alayer. Perhaps, we'll be good friends."

"Perhaps," Jet replied, chuckling a bit to himself. He never thought he'd be friendly with a Dark Moon Fay, let alone the Eclipsed variety, but he certainly was curious as to how the prince could summon both fire and ice.

Such was unheard of really in most Fay; it simply wasn't normal. But the prophecy never said that the Eclipse Fay were anything of the norm. It was nearly dawn when they approached the outskirts of the Dark Fay forest. The Andalusian stallion nickered unhappily, sensing the wickedness, as he was lead closer to that accursed forest.

In time, the Fay Sun's rays shone upon the two teenagers, recharging them both, as they headed south in the direction towards Queen Gehenna's castle. Even with the Fay Sun shining down on him, Alayer didn't feel well, due to his intense growing thirst and hunger.

And after being beaten nearly to death and getting part of his ear torn off, the prince was stressed out, both in mind and body. Feeling very fatigued, he hung his head while slumping his body forward in the saddle as he held onto the horn, breathing tiredly.

The long journey home left his mouth extremely dry. How he wished for just a sip of water then. It would make a world of difference to him, truly it would. While they were a short distance in the Dark Fay forest, Jet announced that this was as far as he would go. He then saw how terribly weary Alayer was, and so, he helped him dismount the horse. He leaned against Jet, his breaths ragged and labored.

"Are you alright?" Jet asked, concerned. He hoped he was, not wishing to be responsible for any possible wars from King Sovereign over this.

"...Water..." the Eclipse prince whispered, barely lifting his head. "Please...I need...water..."

Jet quickly went to the saddlebags his horse was carrying and got out his water canteen, unscrewing the cap off. He gave it to Alayer, who took it in a rush. He pressed the canteen's spout to his mouth and tilted his head back, swallowing the water in huge, loud gulps while some of it streamed down past his lips and down his neck.

The other teenager watched him for a moment, then scanned the forest stretching for miles on both sides of the wide, rocky, weed-infested trail. He listened with his ears as well and so far, no dangers, yet. He noticed a large, flat rock several yards away and decided to take the prince there to rest.

"Th-thank you...so much..." Alayer said breathily, handing the nearly empty canteen back to Jet. He put it back into his pack and aided the teenager to the huge rock.

"Yesterday...I had battled three troles to save a young unicorn's life... I think it's all catching...up to me now..." he explained, feeling wasted since he was still so hungry.

"Three troles?!" Jet exclaimed, thoroughly shocked. "How are you still alive?"

"They nearly killed me, but the...Elemental Leporidae appeared and she...helped save my life. The unicorn...she saved me also...for my body was broken even...after Leporidae cared for me..."

Jet could barely believe his pointy ears. This Eclipse Fay couldn't possibly be telling the truth, could he? It was extremely rare to escape from troles, let alone fight them and live. And having an Elemental come and rescue him in the nick of time? That was just too much to swallow.

"That tale is larger than the sacred Elemental, whom you claim had fought for you," Jet said, showing that he just couldn't believe such a tall tale.

Immediately, Alayer took offense and despite his exhaustion, he growled angrily and retorted in a upset, irked tone, "Do you think I'm *lying*?! I wish I was! I *did* fight those monsters! Ask Leporidae herself should you believe I speak falsehoods!"

Jet was taken aback by his strong temper and said nothing. He continued to take him to the flat rock, which they were steadily approaching. The young prince glowered at the Sun Fay teenager, disgusted that he would think he'd make up such a story.

Perhaps, the archer thought that Alayer was trying to make himself appear more grand than he was. Still, he spoke the truth. Granted, he didn't really know him, so it would be natural for him to doubt what he said. They had only become acquaintances for a few short hours, after all. Once they made it to the giant rock, Jet helped Alayer sit on it, who murmured a word of thanks, and then, he headed back to his horse.

"Should we meet again on the trail by the Gray Forest, I will grant you safe passage. I will not forget how you spared my life," Jet said, turning back to look at him. Alayer tried to force away his annoyance, sighing irritably.

“On friendlier terms I wish us to be, so long as you deem me not a deceiver...” he said, hating to be falsely accused. It was Jet’s turn to sigh then, desiring to leave more so. While this Eclipse prince was fair and honorable, he was also very quick-tempered.

“Forgive me for not believing you,” Jet began, choosing his words carefully. “I have never heard of someone surviving one trome, let alone three. Except for your father, of course. If you truly did as you say, then so be it. You are King Sovereign’s son after all.”

Heavy rustling in the bushes not far off caught their notice. Sensing great evil, the Sun Fay teenager looked at Alayer, expecting him to race off into the trees to hide, but he just continued to sit there.

“Something excessively wicked is coming,” Jet warned urgently. “Aren’t you going to flee?”

“I know who it is...” Alayer replied, not afraid of the approaching danger. “Just go. I’ll be fine.”

“Very well then. Until we meet again,” Jet said in a rush, running off. He hurried back to his horse, feeling very spooked.

How Alayer wasn’t alarmed from the approaching evil confused Jet, but he figured since Eclipse Fay were also part of the Darkness, then other sinister beings wouldn’t put them into a panic. The Light Fay archer mounted Glorious Dawn, who was very anxious to leave just as much as his master was, and they rode out of the forest quickly.

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## CHAPTER 4

### – THE REAL ENEMY –

Moments later, Ronge appeared through the thick foliage and stepped out onto the trail, glaring at where Jet had left. He was certain that he had smelled a Light Fay on a horse. He was about to hunt the tasty morsels down when he also smelled Alayer nearby.

He turned to see the pretty youth sitting on a flat rock by the unkempt pathway. With his attention caught, the demon smirked deviously at the prince. Ronge's wavy, blond locks swayed about his handsome face and his broad shoulders as he sauntered up towards him, his long black and gold trimmed robe blowing in a strong breeze.

Alayer frowned irritably at the Neverborn, fully aware that it was him crashing through the forest earlier. While Ronge was hardly around the castle as is, the teenager knew never to trust him ever since he was a child. The prince had witnessed him lie blatantly to practically everyone there, while instigating problems constantly. He could turn the fellowship the servants had into feuding hatred easily by creating blaming situations that turned close friends against one another.

Also, he was unspeakably cruel to the humans captured by Gehenna's soldiers to be either slaves or food. Often the mad scientist took some of those unfortunate humans to his laboratory to be experimented upon. They usually were never seen again and the rumors that circulated about the castle were that Ronge ate the humans alive, once he was done extracting what he wanted from their bodies. Knowing now that he was half-human himself, Alayer was even more cautious than ever.

Not once had he seen Ronge treat anyone, no matter who or what they were, with compassion or respect. The teenager didn't really fear him, but he was definitely wary of the insane monster. The prince disliked the odd favoritism the Neverborn afforded him, pretending to be kind and sweet to him when Alayer knew better. The watchful prince was certain that the demon was planning to eat him someday, just like the unfortunate humans he devoured down in the bowels of the castle where his lab resided. He just was playing the old cat and mouse game with him.

“So, there you are, Alayer. Where have you been since yesterday?” Ronge asked, his golden eyes looking into the adolescent's crimson-red eyes. Alayer glared back in defiance, not backing down from his condescending stare.

The only remotely positive thing about the Neverborn was that whenever the Eclipse prince was around him, the youth gained strength quickly. Somehow, his dark influence could recharge him faster than the Fay Sun and the Fay Moon could combined. It was like a week's worth of energy almost all at once. The hunger pangs had lessened considerably and he felt a lot stronger then.

“I was out here saving a poor young creature from being eaten by a gang of your filthy troles, that's where I was yesterday,” Alayer replied disgustedly.

“Dear boy, what makes you think those horrid beasts are mine?” Ronge asked, smiling sneakily. He chuckled strangely, his golden-brown eyes gleaming.

“I’m not a fool. Ever since you came around, those blasted monsters appeared!” Alayer narrowed his eyes even more so. “I was nearly killed by them!”

“You look perfectly fine to me,” Ronge commented, not believing that this weak Fay hybrid could take on multiple troles. He had to be lying, but he could care less really. This was a perfect opportunity for him to inspect this lovely Fay prince while they were alone.

“Still, let me have a look at you...” the Neverborn said, bending down and getting very close to him. He reached out to his bare left shoulder, which was covered in dried blood, and pretended to inspect him for injuries.

Alayer knew better and moved away quickly. He stood up and created some distance between them. The demon intently watched the young Fay walk briskly towards the castle with his tattered royal clothing barely hanging onto him, revealing much of his smooth skin and budding muscles. Ronge followed him, closing the gap between them.

“Come now, if you were truly attacked by troles, I insist that I check you for injuries,” the scientist said, catching up with him effortlessly. Alayer felt very disturbed by his request and he began to run then.

“I don’t need you to check anything,” he replied, distrusting his intentions. That monster could pretend to be checking his arm and then, take a big bite out of it. He wasn’t about to give him that chance. Ever.

“You had better slow down or I will lose sight of you! And then who will protect you from the beasts that lurk within these woods?” Ronge shouted, running after him. “Did you hear me?! I said, stop running! Come back here, you fool!!”

The Neverborn was fairly concerned that a rogue trole or wandering Red Cap might attack his prey before he could stop them, leaving him with less to savor himself. He wanted to keep the prince mostly intact, while he waited for him to ripen some more.

As if on cue, a trole came crashing through the forest and snatched up Alayer, like a doll. The monster immediately began crushing him like an insect as the teenager screamed in torment.

“I got you now, you little skunk!” Troy roared, shaking Alayer roughly and went back to squeezing him.

Immediately, Ronge leapt up, morphed his hands into long, razor-sharp claws and sliced open the trole’s right wrist without mercy. The demon’s speed was beyond astonishing as he was already on the ground, catching the falling prince. Troy was about to pound Ronge until he realized who he was and instead, began to plead with him.

“M-Master! Please, allow me to kill him! He took my eye! I must have revenge!” Troy protested. But the golden-haired Neverborn wasn’t going to hear any of it.

“*Silence!* I will take your worthless life should you *ever* touch him again! He’s *mine* and mine *alone!*” Ronge shouted, his voice intertwined with other sounds, such as low growling and high-pitched shrieks.

Alayer cried out from the demon’s loud, evil voice. He clasped his hands over his long ears and pushed him away while struggling to get out of his arms. He succeeded and fell to the trail, collapsing in pain from his new injuries.

Just then, massive ice boulders slammed about the trome, prompting Ronge to snatch Alayer up and get him out of the way of the falling frozen projectiles. Icy, razor-sharp daggers penetrated Troy’s chest as he shrieked in agony while Orion continued his unforgiving onslaught on the monster.

The trome ripped the ice daggers out from his bleeding chest and chucked them at the white-haired prince, but he was too swift to be hit by any of them. The Fay warrior leapt onto a nearby oak and scaled it quickly until he had gained enough height.

Shouting out his signature battle cry, Orion aimed his sword at the monster’s skull as he jumped down upon the giant. The ugly trome swiped his left arm out only to have the warrior prince slash it open instead. With blinding speed, the white-haired prince kept on whipping his blade at the trome as if he were using a scythe to chop down wheat. Blood sprayed in various directions, splattering messily. Troy managed to knock Orion down once with a lucky hit, causing Alayer to cry in protest, reaching out to him, but Ronge held him back.

“*Don’t* be a fool!” he hissed, while Alayer struggled against him. “You’ll be killed! Stay *here!*” The young prince gave up, though not because of what Ronge had said, even though it was mostly true. His new injuries were not something he could ignore after all.

Being knocked down insulted Orion’s pride and enraged him to explosive levels. He roared out his fury, as waves of frigid energy radiated off of him, sending out tremors so strong that Troy nearly lost his footing, grabbing a tree to keep himself from falling. Ronge stood firm despite the powerful, yet brief earthquake, while Alayer fell to his knees, watching his sibling in awe and shock.

Racing to the monster’s rear, the warrior prince charged at the trome and leapt upon his back, stabbing savagely over and over. Unable to reach around to get him off, Troy stomped about, screaming and cursing. He finally got the idea to fall onto his back and roll around, but that was a mistake, since Orion had already moved to the front of the beast. He jammed his blade in the middle of his face and twisted it roughly.

The one-eyed trome leader was forced to retreat, fleeing into the forest as the warrior prince pursued him for a short while, until he was satisfied that the threat had been neutralized. He



returned to his little brother and found Ronge forcefully trying to place his hands on him while Alayer struggled to get away.

“Be *still!* I am merely trying to heal you!” the Neverborn snarled, disliking how the prince was resisting him.

“If that’s true, then why did you wait to do it now, while my brother has gone away, after that beast?! I know what you truly want! Keep away from me!” Alayer cursed at him in the foulest language imaginable, from which Ronge took great offense. The demon had to stifle the strong urge to strangle the life out of him then.

“Get your *filthy* claws *off* of him!” Orion shouted, throwing out an ice dagger at the blond scientist, hitting him in the shoulder. Ronge howled out in discomfort, his cry animalistic and deep. He had been too preoccupied with getting his hands on Alayer, that he neglected to dodge in time.

“*Fool!* I just *saved* his life!” he snarled, clutching his bleeding shoulder which had been sliced open badly. “Is that how you say your ‘thanks’?! Ungrateful *scum!*”

“You saved him for yourself, not for his own good! You deserve absolutely no gratitude for your deceitful actions!” Orion yelled, seething with anger and disgust.

He remembered how Ronge had attempted to grab him in the castle hallways from time to time, so the white-haired prince despised him immensely. He was well aware of how much that demon liked to devour anyone that he could, since that beast was addicted to the sight, taste, and smell of blood.

Why his mother kept that demon around their home was beyond him. There was no good reason whatsoever to keep a monster like him anywhere, except in the Abyss, where he should be. The only thing Orion could surmise was that Ronge’s dark influence recharged the Fay immensely well and very quickly. That had to be the reason why Gehenna kept Ronge in her castle. But he wasn’t aware of the other reason she had him around.

“Also, my brother doesn’t want *you* to heal him. Go back to the castle and leave him to me,” Orion snapped. The demon hissed hatefully, displaying his shark-like teeth.

“I do *not* take orders from lesser creatures than myself...” he said darkly, narrowing his honey-colored eyes into thin slits.

“If you wish to continue using my mother’s gold to fund your laboratory experiments, you’ll do as I say! Now be gone!” Orion commanded, hissing back and baring his fangs.

Ronge glowered at the two princes, but eventually, he teleported away. In a blink of an eye, the horrid monster had left. Orion assumed that he was probably returning to the castle to complain to his mother, Gehenna, as he often did whenever the seventeen-year-old fought back against him.

The warrior prince looked to his little brother sitting on the trail and heaved a heavy sigh of relief. At least he was still alive, though his clothes were torn to shreds and heavily stained with blood. What could have happened to him?

Narrowing his eyes, the warrior prince frowned at his baby brother disapprovingly and helped him back on his feet. He put Alayer's right arm around his neck to support him as they walked back to the castle. Orion was on high alert, just in case. He might still need to do battle should more threats come their way.

He dared not fly him back since there were plenty of blood-thirsty fiends within the forest waiting to knock down anyone in the sky for the fun of it. Well, anyone, except for King Sovereign, for attacking him would be a big mistake. The one corner of Orion's mouth curled upward. No one could mess with their father for he happened to be the strongest Fay in recorded history. Even demons feared him and that made the warrior prince proud.

After a few short steps, they stumbled on the cluttered collection of jagged rocks upon the trail, which jostled Alayer. He grimaced and grunted in pain, holding a hand to his cracked ribs.

"Where have you *been* all this time? Father has search parties looking everywhere for you since last night! I've never seen him so angry," Orion said, gloomily remembering how he was severely scolded when the king's anger exploded as soon as he discovered that his youngest child was nowhere to be found.

Why did his brother have to disappear like that, right after he made that promise to keep him safe for their father? Now he'll never trust him nor think him worthy to rely on with important matters.

"I was trying to save a young unicorn in this forest when three troles attacked me yesterday. They nearly killed me, but then, Leporidae came to save me," Alayer explained, shocking his older brother thoroughly.

At first, the white-haired warrior was struck with skepticism, but he knew his sibling to never lie, not even to save himself from getting into trouble. So, what he was saying had to be true, no matter how tall the tale seemed.

"So, the legendary Elemental herself came to rescue you? That is amazingly good fortune," Orion said without a hint of disbelief in his voice. Alayer nodded, pleased to see that his brother believed him.

"Yes, she took me back to her burrow to heal my wounds and let me recover. But when I awoke, my body was still broken and I was in terrible agony. I couldn't stand it. That pain was unbearable," the younger brother said, not wanting to remember the suffering he had to experience.

"Then, the unicorn completely healed me with her crystal horn. She was such a pretty filly too, with such radiant iridescent mane and her beautiful, sparkling green eyes..." Alayer felt great

comfort just thinking about the majestic creature, even though his body ached from the latest trome attack.

“Her innocence is linked with yours,” Orion said solemnly. “You’ve been consecrated by her, now and forever. It is a true blessing to be touched by a unicorn’s horn.”

“Yes, I know. I felt so pure and clean inside after she healed me...” Alayer noticed that now he had lost most of that lovely feeling of wholesomeness when Ronge was near him. It had been covered with that same grungy, dark, empty feeling he had most of his life.

Before he never knew of anything else, except that heavy depression, but now he could tell the stark differences from that bleak misery and the unicorn’s cleansing truth of a better way of living. He wished to know more and how to keep that blessed feeling inside of him.

“When I left Leporidae’s home, I was near the Gray Forest. I spent last night traveling back home,” he continued on, when his brother had to interrupt.

“You *walked* home the entire way?” Orion raised a white eyebrow, knowing that it would take much more time than one night to get back from there.

“Well...I rode back on horseback. An archer allowed me to ride his steed,” Alayer admitted, hoping Orion wouldn’t expect more details. Unfortunately, he did.

“Was that archer a Sun Fay?”

“Yes...”

“Why didn’t you kill him, like you’re supposed to?” Orion asked, frowning. While his baby brother wasn’t the best fighter, he should be more than capable of taking out a single Sun Fay soldier, especially a lowly archer.

Alayer’s face held the expression of pity as he recalled the look of terror and sorrow on Jet’s face when he really was about to push his dagger into his neck.

Most of the Fay wouldn’t think twice about ending their enemies, but the auburn-haired teenager couldn’t bring himself to kill that Sun Fay archer. He was another teenager like himself. Plus, he wanted to prove to him that the Eclipse Fay were not cruel, blood-thirsty monsters.

“I almost did, but then, I spared his life...” he said softly.

“Why?” Orion behaved as if sparing an enemy’s life was ludicrous. You never spare their lives; it’s destroy or be destroyed. It was the code that all Fay lived and died by. Surely, his brother already knew such.

“Because if I did, then the misconceptions about our clan would be made true!” Alayer told him, frowning.

“Do you want everyone believing that we are heartless, atrocious demons? Similar to Ronge??”

The white-haired warrior contorted his expression. Fine, he did have a valid point there. He did not wish for their legendary clan to be known in such a negative light. Nothing was worse than the wicked Neverborn immortals, including their dreaded spawn, the Nephilim.

“No, of course not,” Orion replied, blowing his wispy bangs out of his blue eyes. Even though it was slow going traveling back to the castle through the Dark Forest’s only vague trail, he enjoyed being able to talk somewhat freely to his little brother.

“Besides that, I couldn’t kill another one so young, much like me,” Alayer said seriously. “He was moved by my mercy and we became friends. He allowed me to ride his horse back to the entrance of the forest. I find it rather beneficial to make friends instead of more enemies... Don’t you agree?”

“Yes, I do see it wise to have more allies. But there’s no guarantee that he’ll stay your companion as time passes, especially in the heat of battle amongst his kin,” Orion warned, hoping his brother will heed him. Sometimes, he neglected to take notice of his sensible counsel.

“They will expect him to do as he was trained and if he fails at that, they will label him as a traitor,” he continued.

“His life will be forfeit and so will yours, if you speak of this alliance to anyone other than me. Trust is important, sacred even. Remember, you only have that with me.”

“I already understand all that,” Alayer replied a bit testily. “I’m not a naive fool... Not anymore, at least. I’ve learned to not be so trusting... Especially after what Cassandra did to me...”

“Good.”

As soon as he had known, Orion had dealt with that horrid Cassandra accordingly, including Kradean and his friends. He wasted no time in hunting them all down that very same day when he witnessed the heavy tears of betrayal cascading down his sibling’s face.

Breaking his innocent little brother’s heart was a crime punishable only by slow, painful death. And that was exactly what he gave them, hanging their disemboweled carcasses strewn about in the trees in the same area where they had hurt Alayer. He would gladly do it all over again too.

Just then, they heard the sounds of hooves approaching. Looking ahead, there was the Friesian war horse, Shadow Strife, cantering towards them along with their father. The king stopped his steed and jumped off the animal’s back as soon as he saw Alayer in his ruined, bloody clothing.

Sovereign’s fatherly instincts overtook him as he fell to his knees and threw his arms around his youngest child, embracing him tightly. He had been going out of his mind with worry until he had, at last, seen Alayer there with Orion.

The teenager cried out, since his father's strong hug was hurting his cracked ribs. Orion explained what had happened concerning Ronge and the trome attack, which left the king enraged. He would send out orders to have Troy destroyed as soon as possible once they returned to the castle.

And Ronge... Sovereign couldn't wait to 'discuss' some things with that wretched Neverborn. He did his best to calm himself before he lost his temper again. He had to heal his child immediately, so he concentrated on doing the task, remembering the many lessons his mother had taught him.

The king placed his hands on Alayer's chest while Orion supported him from behind, even though he didn't need that much coddling. The young prince felt the pain leaving his body and he changed his stance to a prouder one.

"Thank you, Father," he said gratefully. This kindness, and the fact that he had search parties looking for him, proved to Alayer that his parent truly did care for him after all. His desire to deeply converse with him hit the teenager hard. Gehenna couldn't be around here now, so this was a perfect opportunity to speak with his parent.

"Let's return to the castle so you can rest," Sovereign said warmly, smiling. Then, he set his ruby-red eyes on his other son and said in gentle tone, "I'll inform Sanbow to resume your studies." He turned to go to his horse when Alayer grabbed his hand quickly to stop him.

"Father, no! I want us to talk!" he begged, his eyes desperate. "Please..."

Sovereign looked at his youngest son, then to his other child, feeling unsure. While he loved both of his sons equally, he was uncertain that he should trust Orion, who could be pretending to be a loving brother and decent son.

"Yes, Father," Orion chimed in, appearing just as eager as his sibling for conversation. "I wish for us to talk as well. For once, Mother isn't listening in to what we have to say." They stood at each of his sides, peering upwards at their tall, regal parent.

Suddenly, Sovereign had an idea that would ensure that Gehenna nor her spies could listen in to their discussions. He would take his sons to a secret, silent area that his mother spoke of. It was something like a soundproof realm where outside ears could not eavesdrop on them.

He hadn't thought of that place before due to the constant stress and misery Gehenna had put him through. He was too depressed to think clearly. But now, he had a chance to be away from that horrid castle longer than a day's worth and the fog which had clouded his mind dissipated to some degree such that he could concentrate on something other than his despair. He was sure that he could find this special place and if not, at least he could get to know his sons while trying to locate it.

“My dear sons,” Sovereign began, putting his hands on each of their shoulders. “I shall show you a place that your grandmother told me about when I was growing up. It’s called the ‘Silent Sanctuary’. We can talk freely there once we find it.”

“You don’t know where it is?” Alayer asked, a little confused as to why he would take them to a place while being unsure of its location. Still, he could feel the excitement surging through him just the same. This would be an adventure, nevertheless.

“I have an idea where it is,” Sovereign replied, taking his youngest by his shoulders and steering him to the left side of his horse. “Rest while riding on Shadow Strife, my son. I’ll lead him for you.”

Then, he set his eyes on Orion, telling him, “I need you to stay a few feet in front of us, in case of any dangers. We need to be on high guard in this wretched forest until we are out of it.”

“Yes, Father,” the warrior prince agreed instantly, hoping to make him proud by keeping them all safe as they made their way through the beastly, evil forest. To his sons’ happiness, Sovereign began to talk about his life when he was a teenager growing up with his mother, Rosa, in the human world.

He felt that it would be safe enough to tell his children these tales, since Gehenna’s spies wouldn’t be following him in this particular forest. They only went into this dreaded place if he was beside them as protection, but he could not see them trailing him here by themselves.

Sovereign told his sons of how General Blake’s men had come and burned down the house their grandfather, Alastar, had built. They trampled the fragrant flower garden his parents had grown together in love and set fire to the poor plants as well.

They did all this while the other soldiers were binding Alastar in silver and iron chains. They demonstrated how utterly ruthless they were by wrapping the dark prince’s head with those dreadful chains, especially around his eyes, permanently blinding him.

Sovereign bit his lip when he felt tears stinging in his eyes then, remembering that horrible moment and how he had felt so completely helpless as they dragged his screaming father away. His mother had tried to save him, but like Alastar, Rosa had been in the human world too long without her magic being recharged. She could not bring forth her fire magic, which happened to be fairly strong for a female Light Fay, when she was fully charged, that is.

The soldiers of General Blake weren’t through, as they were sent there not only to capture the dark prince, Alastar, but their orders included abducting Rosa and slaughtering Sovereign. When Rosa realized this, she had used her adrenaline to create a flash bomb of blinding light, so she could, at least, save her only son.

They managed to flee and for months on end, they traveled from one human village to the next, meeting with prejudiced animosity again and again. In one of the towns, there was a common

vampire named Jael, who tried to take Alastar's place as Rosa's new husband and wished to be Sovereign's stepfather.

At first, Rosa thought it might be best to have a father figure in Sovereign's young life and nearly entertained that idea. She and her son believed that Alastar was dead, most likely killed by the awful, beefy hands of General Blake.

Sovereign wasn't sure if he wanted Jael to be his stepfather, but he was so kind and friendly in the beginning, helping them graciously by giving them all that they needed to not just survive, but thrive like royalty.

Since Alastar's kingdom was made into ruins by Blake and the dictator's men stole most of the gold in the royal treasury, the dark prince had little money to offer, but Rosa could care less about such matters. She didn't need expensive, materialistic things in her life; she needed her husband, Alastar.

Then, his mother had a dream that her beloved spouse was still alive, somehow, but where, she didn't know nor did she possess the strength to free him, even if she did know. All she knew was that he was indeed alive and someday, she vowed that they would be reunited.

Since then, Rosa had refused Jael completely and that was when things turned horribly sour fast. The common vampire couldn't accept that the lovely Light Fay wanted nothing more to do with him.

And so, he had gotten revenge by placing the blame of his bloody crimes throughout the town upon Sovereign, who at the time was pale like his father. He appeared like a vampire while Jael did not, being a master of disguises. He could hide his fangs by retracting them and his flesh tone was not very pale to begin with, so no one in the village suspected him.

But they suspected Sovereign to be the hungry vampire tormenting their poverty-stricken settlement, draining their townsfolk and kidnapping their children to suck the marrow from their bones.

"That is so horrible..." Alayer commented on top of the Friesian. Orion looked behind him to show his disgusted expression.

"Humans are such pathetic fools, always fearing what they do not understand... It's utterly appalling," he spat, meaning every word. He knew very well that his little brother was half-human, but he never felt that he was partially human regardless. He was a purebred Fay in his eyes and in his heart, he treated him as such, with respect and honor.

Sovereign hid his frown when his older son spewed forth his hatred for the human race. As much as he loathed them in general, he had fallen in love with a human just the same. He decided that he would tell the tale of Alayer's mother without Orion there some other time, since he believed that his youngest didn't know the truth yet of his lineage. He would tell it to him at the silent realm during a second visit, if they found it this time around, that is.

The Eclipse Fay king went back to telling his life story about how he was nearly killed then along with his mother, Rosa. They were captured and both were tied to wooden stakes while the villagers tried to burn them alive, but couldn't since they were immune to the heat of the flames.

Deathly afraid, the villagers were confused, not knowing how to get rid of them. Jael suggested that they must use silver against Sovereign for he was a true vampire. He didn't mention iron, knowing it would harm Rosa, whom he wanted to keep as his mate, willing or not.

Renewed with determination, the townspeople hurried to load their pistols with silver bullets. Unable to hold back his fury, Sovereign fought back and the massacre began. He had never killed before until that chaotic night, tasting human blood for the first time and gaining great strength, the likes of which he never had before.

Jael fled when Sovereign overpowered him during their fight when he went to free Rosa from the common vampire's claws. He had taken his mother away from that village on his wings, flying to a safer place many miles away. He worked hard building a new house for themselves near a lake and there they lived in relative peace for years.

While he wasn't overly certain, Orion's sharp ears picked up the faintest sounds of something following them. At times, it sounded like many approaching, surrounding them. A horrific stench entered his nose, but it disappeared quickly. He narrowed his eyes and spied his surroundings. Sovereign noticed and questioned him, sensing something ominous.

"Orion, what is it?" his father asked, halting Shadow Strife. The impressive Friesian tossed his head to the right in disconcertment, stepping back bit, grunting unhappily. The white-haired prince's body stiffened as his ears twitched a little.

"Can't you hear that, Father? It's...like scratching...yet not..." Orion's blue eyes moved to the right, then to the left as he continued to observe the area intently. "I've never heard such a sound before..."

The Eclipse Fay king listened carefully, his expression becoming very grim. Surely, they would be attacked, but by what?

"Have your sword ready, my son," Sovereign said, unsheathing his own blade quickly. He urged his steed forward, not wanting to stay in one place. But the destrier was backing up, tossing his head in an upset manner when his master pulled on his reins.

"Shadow Strife, we can't stand still in this forest," the king said, feeling unnerved. Alone, he wouldn't be concerned and his war horse was an army in himself, but he had his two children with him. He couldn't bear to have anything happen to them, especially his weak, youngest son.

Alayer set his eyes past the horse's mighty neck and was immediately sickened by what his vision perceived. He pointed and cried out, "Father, look!"



A short distance up the unkempt trail was a mass of indistinguishable moving bodies, that seemed like a sea of black worms. Upon further inspection, the Eclipse Fay finally discerned that the dark mass was a legion of mutant squirrels with scorpion features.

Their bushy, black tails had stingers hidden at the ends and their faces had pincher claws jutting from their jaws. Some of them weren't formed well and were stuck together, with their eyes and mouths in all the wrong places everywhere. Those were the most disgusting as they rolled about amongst the others.

The beasts chattered excessively, preparing to attack. Shadow Strife snorted and grunted in agitation, pawing the rocky ground with his front left hoof, knowing a battle was coming. Orion held his sword steady and hissed at the ugly mass of evil.

Sovereign wasted no time in protecting his brood by electrifying the little beasts with a ball of lightning which fried most of them. But the ones that had survived were put into a frenzy by that attack and rushed them, snapping their jaws and pinchers while stabbing with their bushy tails.

They climbed all over them, while the Eclipse Fay worked hard to keep them at bay by using their swords, magic, and claws. Unfortunately, cutting the monsters, whether in half or not, spawned new ones as their black blood oozed forth fast-growing clones. It wasn't long before the squirpions were swarming over the ground in fresh masses, climbing up their bodies. Shadow Strife shrieked out angry whinnies and roars as the monsters scaled his muscular legs, biting and jabbing with their tails.

The destrier kicked wildly, accidentally bucking Alayer off. The teenager fought to get back on his feet as he fell onto the squirming squirpions while the Friesian stamped on them, aiding him well. Sovereign's rage was past the boiling point with these evil things, especially with how they were jabbing his sons, his horse, and himself with their poisonous tails.

The Eclipse Fay king let loose an immensely powerful spray of electricity, frying many of the monsters, but some of them still survived regardless, multiplying like mad. Alayer attempted burning them with his fire, yet they kept coming, cloning fresh ones to replace the dead. There seemed to be an unending supply of them no matter what they did to be rid of them.

Sovereign shot out a few more electric waves to clear off the new vermin from himself and his children. Then, he unfurled his bat-like wings and snatched up both of his sons into his arms, taking to the skies while the venomous, crazed squirpions leapt up, snapping and stinging, in attempts to get them still.

"Shadow Strife, follow me!" he called down to his horse as he headed towards the exit of the Dark Forest. The stallion galloped after his master, looking to the sky for him. The squirpions gave chase, but then a wave of black energy swept over them. The beasts convulsed madly, then expired where they stood, dropping dead almost instantly. They seemed to disintegrate then, melting into the rocky ground like black oil.

Far back along the trail, Ronge watched with his lips set in a tight line. His perfect, handsome face held great disappointment, due to his failed experiment. He was so dismayed that he destroyed the hellish squirpions himself.

He really had hoped for much more pain and suffering there. The squirpions' poison wasn't strong enough to cause much damage, since they were too small and they didn't multiply nearly as much as he had calculated. Well, he could correct those issues later in the lab, but he had some humans that he wanted to work on first.

Especially, a pretty girl named Sasha that he had been dating in the human world for several months. He knew that she loved him something fierce and he loved the idea of experimenting on her in his lab. A random red fox wandered out to the dead squirpions and sniffed the remains, hoping for a snack. Ronge teleported to the fox and snatched it up by the neck, causing it to cry out.

"Come, my little friend," he said, grinning wickedly as the critter squirmed in his clenched hand. "Your fate awaits..."

## CHAPTER 5

### – THE SILENT SANCTUARY –

After fleeing from the horrific squirpions, Sovereign flew high enough into the sky to avoid any projectiles below. While his might was well-known throughout the realm and it would be more than foolish for anyone to challenge him, the Eclipse Fay wasn't taking any chances by flying low, especially while carrying his two sons.

Shadow Strife had vision beyond his eyes so he could locate his master, even if he couldn't always see him. The king wasn't worried for his horse, since that destrier could hold his own just fine. He knew the way back to his stall in the royal stables, never needing anyone to lead him home. If he needed to, he could out run those evil, twisted beasts on the trail to return to the castle.

Sovereign took his brood close to where Rosa had said the Silent Sanctuary would be, upon a high, lonely mountain some distance away. But neither he nor Orion could find it, except for Alayer. The youngest prince informed them of a strange, buzzing energy that only he could sense and it was coming from a cliff with nothing around it, except a deadly drop-off.

Orion inspected the cliff, bringing out his wings and flew around, over, and under it. Still, he could not detect a doorway of any kind. Alayer knelt on his knees and felt the edge of the cliff and discovered that beyond there it was still solid, yet invisible. Knowing that his little brother would never lie, Orion stood next to him and tapped his foot on the transparent hidden bridge.

It was indeed solid and so, the white-haired teenager walked onto it and promptly disappeared. In shock, Sovereign and Alayer rushed after him, entering right into the Silent Sanctuary.

They marveled at the mysterious, massive dimension, lush with jungle vegetation. The powerful roar of a waterfall nearby sounded in their ears while beautiful flowers growing in the brush filled their noses with sweet, fragrant scents, making them feel at peace. A flock of colorful, strange birds flew into the air quickly from their perches, startled by their sudden presence.

The skies were clear and blue. There were various, fresh fruits hanging from the trees and the sounds of wildlife chattered about them. The realm was bursting with so much life and beauty that they were nearly overwhelmed by it all. At last, they had made it to this amazing place where they could finally talk freely without being monitored.

"I can't believe how incredible this is..." Alayer said in a hushed voice as Sovereign walked past him, seemingly in awe, and flew up to one of the fruit trees, pulling off what seemed to be a ripe, yellow pear. He bit into it slowly, the sweet juices flowing into his dry mouth.

"Is it any good, Father?" Orion asked, flying up beside him. Sovereign nodded, finishing the pear swiftly. Seeing him savoring it so, the warrior prince took one for himself and soon realized why his father was devouring another one in a rush. It was beyond delicious, soothing him from the inside, something like an affectionate embrace from a loved one.

“Conserve your energy, Orion, and tuck your wings away,” the Eclipse Fay king told him, handing him a few pears from the collection he was holding in his arms. “Give some to your brother to enjoy.”

Soon, the three were eating their fill of the amazing fruit and marveling over the tranquility of the realm. Then, Orion began talking about the good times he and Alayer had with Sanbow growing up. Sovereign was pleased to hear that they had somewhat pleasant childhoods, but he was saddened that he couldn't have been a part of them.

“My sons, please forgive my behavior when you two were mere boys... I was under so much stress and mental anguish that I often took my anger out on you...” the king confessed, as a lump in his throat grew. He forced back his tears. “I never meant for you two to be so fearful of me... I wish for us to start over.”

It would mean the world to him if his children would forgive him and adore him as he did with his own father, Alastar. He longed for that very much. Orion and Alayer looked to one another before they came to an agreement.

“We can start over, Father,” Orion said, while his little brother nodded.

“We want to get to know you and be close to you,” Alayer added, making Sovereign smile weakly as his tears leaked from the corners of his eyes. With deep loving emotion, he hugged them in turn, shaking with joyful relief.

“Thank you, my sons,” the king told them. “You don't know how much this means to me.”

“I think we have an idea how much,” Alayer said, smiling. Then, they resumed their talk.

Sovereign didn't think he could be this happy again, conversing so deeply with his children and getting to know them better. Orion and Alayer were equally as joyful, discovering how loving and fun their father was. He embraced them many times while they were there. He felt as if his love for them had been suppressed while he resided in Gehenna's castle and now, it was being released all at once in this wonderful place.

Both Orion and Alayer reveled in their father's loving hugs, noticing how misty-eyed their parent was. He truly was emotional and full of affection for them. Before they had believed him to be cold and stony with an explosive temper, but here, they knew the truth about him and they steadily felt closer to him.

For hours, they talked, laughed, and even sparred with each other in great contentment. It was like they had stepped into Heaven and they wished that they didn't have to leave, but they had no choice. They couldn't forget about Sovereign's parents, who were still prisoners of war, and loyal Sanbow, who would be worried sick about them.

“We must back here soon,” Sovereign said, as they reluctantly headed back to the dimension's exit point, which was also the entrance. “I thoroughly enjoyed my time here with you, my sons.”

“We had a wonderful time too, Father,” Orion said graciously, as Alayer nodded, smiling. Sovereign’s handsome face was graced by a proud grin while he ruffled their heads playfully. They cried out in protest, but they weren’t upset. Far from it. They beamed up at him, their eyes shining with adoration.

“Truly, I am blessed to have you two as my sons. Orion. Alayer. My heart swells for you both. Know that I will always love you eternally,” Sovereign said, opening his arms wide, accepting them both. He kissed the tops of their heads and released them.

“We must return for I’m unsure how time passes here compared to our own,” he said, hoping that not too much time had passed while they were in this dimension. When they sadly stepped back into the Fay realm, it was night, alarming the king. What if Gehenna believed he had fled from her again and sent out troops to kill his wife, Junchee and his eldest son, Sheer?

“We must make haste back to the castle, lest your mother be upset with me,” Sovereign said, looking to Orion, who shook his head.

“I will speak with her and try calm her for you, Father,” he said, wanting to help badly. Alayer wished that they could just get rid of Gehenna somehow, though he didn’t want to hurt Orion. The auburn-haired teenager knew now that the queen wasn’t his mother after all and due to all her constant verbal abuse, he loathed her deeply. It all made sense as to why she was so cold to him, but still, she had no right to belittle him in such a manner.

While in the Silent Sanctuary, Alayer didn’t tell his father and Orion that he knew that he was half-human, concerned that they might argue over it. He would wait for a better time to inform them. Sovereign spread his large, dark, bat-like wings and waited for his children to do the same, since they had their wings hidden to save energy. They brought them out, each son having similar fairy-like wings, an upper set and a lower set. Their colors were in gradients on each set from top to bottom: blue to black for Orion and black to red for Alayer.

The family took off into the night sky, flying at a safe height from the many forests below, which were buzzing and chirping with life from various creatures. As they neared the castle, they saw Ronge flying to them on his enormous, feathered wings.

“Oh no,” Alayer said under his breath, hating to see that monster again so soon. But apparently, it wasn’t soon to the Neverborn, who haughtily crossed his muscular arms in front of his proud chest as he flapped in their way.

“What great timing you have, Sovereign,” Ronge said disrespectfully. He was wearing his usual attire, which consisted of a black robe trimmed in gold with the right sleeve missing.

“In the next hour, Gehenna is going to send out her guards to kill your family in the human world.” He paused to smirk. “She thinks you ran off again.”

“She knows I was searching for my son and I haven’t been gone for even half a day!” the Eclipse Fay king cried, thoroughly agitated.

“Have you been possessed by my kin to forget the time so completely?” Ronge questioned, raising a blond eyebrow. “You and your brood have been gone for over three days!” He gave them each a stare, charily.

“Where have you Eclipse Fay been all this time?” he asked, suspiciously.

“That’s none of your concern. My sons and I are heading back to the castle now. Trouble us no more!” Sovereign retorted, flying past him with his children trailing close behind.

Ronge resisted the strong urge to grab at the Fay teenagers as they went by him. How he ached to sink his teeth into their tasty, young flesh while defiling them both. His golden-brown eyes intently spied Alayer, causing the demon to shiver with hungry delight.

That one was most special to the Neverborn for he could sense a deep, raging power within the auburn-haired teenager, but it was hindered by his human side and completely unknown to him. Once Ronge devoured him, he would have that awesome strength for himself. That power would be even more impressive, if he allowed the youth to grow into his prime. Then, Ronge’s harvest would be that much more abundant and rewarding. Several years of waiting was like a few days for an immortal like him. He was willing to be patient, for now.

‘I shall wait for you to ripen some more, my little tidbit...’ the demon thought, grinning evilly. ‘Until then, grow and develop your powers well...for they will someday be *mine!*’

Ronge teleported in mid-air back into his laboratory to check on Sasha, who was still unconscious in her cell. Her fur had come in nicely, which covered most of her body now. She wasn’t as hideous to look at as before, as she had been in her transitional stages.

He morphed his feathery wings away and flexed his back handsomely, rubbing and massaging his neck as he worked out some tension. He had taken some new humans to their holding cells that morning and a brave, yet foolish few had put up a decent fight against him.

Grabbing his journal, he wrote down some notes on Sasha’s progress in his original ancient language, then he inspected another human, whom he had tried improving by injecting the poor man with several different animal serums he came up with during a meeting with his supervisor.

A twisted, hairy, scaly mass of flesh pulsed within the man’s cell and as soon as Ronge stood before the mutant, it lunged at him, gurgling out a vicious growl. Disgusted by the cheekiness of the beast, the demon snarled back ferociously and his next actions proved that he was the real monster there.

Cruelly, he reached into the cell and grabbed the chimera by the throat, making it cry out pitifully. He savored the creature’s suffering as he increased his hand’s pressure until he broke through the neck entirely, ending the chimera’s life quickly. He withdrew his hand and licked the blood off of it in a salacious manner, his lovely face smirking sinisterly.

This experiment was a success, but Ronge could not tolerate any insolence whatsoever. As he usually did after a kill, Ronge cut up the body with his hands, which were morphed into claws for the task, and stowed the choice remains in a storage room that was made of thick slabs of ice. He could always clone the beast easily enough, and now, he had plenty to snack on in the meantime.

After he finished cleaning up, he changed out of his blood-stained robes into a white robe trimmed in gold that had two full sleeves with a revealing, open front. Then, Ronge smelled and heard Sovereign coming down the stone stairway to his laboratory. Simplicity was the method to know when an Eclipse Fay was near, for they always smelled so pleasant and delicious.

Before any words were exchanged, Sovereign immediately slammed Ronge against one of his tables where some flasks and test tubes were, the force rattling the glass loudly. The Fay king had the demon by his shoulders and roughly shook him a few times as he straightened some issues out with him.

“*Don’t you ever touch my sons again! Do you hear me?!*” Sovereign snarled, digging his claws through the Neverborn’s pretty, white robe and into his fair flesh, his blood seeping into the satin fabric. Ronge grimaced momentarily in discomfort, then smiled sweetly at him.

“Touch your sons? Now, why would *I* do such a thing as that?” he said, unable to hold back a sneaky chuckle then.

The king shook him even harder, the force sending several of the scientist’s test tubes and flasks crashing to the stone floor. The shaking caused the demon’s golden, wavy bangs to flow over his honey-colored eyes and he tossed his head back prettily to move his hair from his vision, disgusting Sovereign immensely.

How he despised this wretch! Ronge made a complete fool out of him when he tried to locate his father, Alastar, years ago. Instead of helping him as he had promised, the Neverborn sent him into General Blake’s hands and under his guillotine blade. Sovereign never forgot that and never trusted him again since that horrible night.

“You *filthy* liar!” the king hissed, moving his dominant left hand to underneath the Neverborn’s jaw, forcing his head back at a painful angle.

“I’m warning you to stay *away* from *all* of my children! Do you understand me?!”

Ronge clutched Sovereign’s left wrist and forced his offending grip off of him, shoving him away with some difficulty. The Eclipse Fay king took a step back and they glared at one another while the demon rubbed his neck irritably.

“If it weren’t for your accursed electrical powers, I would have devoured you years ago,” he said in a low, hateful voice. It was the king’s awesome Arc magic that kept the Neverborn at bay. He wasn’t strong enough to overcome Sovereign, but he was working on changing that someday.

“And I have every right to, for your dear mother promised me your flesh before you were even conceived...” the demon informed his prey, healing his bleeding wounds.

He looked to his shoulders, disliking how the white robe he had just put on was ruined with holes and stained with his precious blood. He gave the king a testy stare.

“She *begged* me to take you as payment to save her own life,” he added.

Sovereign widened his eyes, then narrowed them angrily. He had never heard anything like this from either of his parents. They surely would have told him something, if it were so.

“You *lie*! My mother *never* would have had made such a bargain with you, monster!” he retorted, showing no fear when Ronge shrieked out a strange, short, growling roar that had other screams mixed in.

“Did she tell you differently? Ignorant Fay! Your mother *did* strike a bargain with me, otherwise she would be long dead for I had planned to sup on her flesh, including her friends and your inane father! Inquire them about it, should you ever find them, that is...”

The king scowled, then pointed his left hand at him in an aggressive manner, saying, “Whether it’s true or not, you will *never* dine on my children nor me! I may not be able to kill you, but you’ll wish that I could, in order to escape my wrath!”

Ronge wasn’t intimidated by his threat, though he did have to be somewhat careful. Sovereign certainly had the power to cause him pain and suffering, much to his annoyance. While his intelligence was nearly unsurpassed, save for a select few amongst his massive brethren, his rank happened not to be all that impressive. He wasn’t at the bottom, yet he wasn’t at mid-level either.

“Is there anything else you’d like to spew forth upon me or are you done? Because I have a lot of work to do here and you’re only wasting my time,” the demon told him, running his fingers through his golden tresses with his eyes closed. Sovereign gave him one last vicious glare before he finally left.

Ronge opened his eyes and watched the Fay king depart, licking his lips salaciously. He had no plans on leaving him nor his brood alone and fantasized what they would taste like when he finally got to rip into their succulent flesh. The notion raised his desires to the point that he couldn’t stand it and went searching for Queen Gehenna for relief.



## CHAPTER 6

### – THE WHITE FIRE –

Gehenna's order to kill Sovereign's family in the human world had been halted when Sovereign and Orion told her a story that they had gone to the vampiric country looking for Alayer and that was why it took so long for them to get back. Ronge showed up not long after the king and his son began their plea to convince the Queen to stop her order.

He stood very close beside her, gently stroking and playing with her long hair, causing Orion to grit his teeth, repulsed. He hated how that beast was always trying to touch almost everyone in such a despicable manner. Whether or not the Glacial witch believed the tale didn't matter, since she stopped the execution just the same.

The Eclipse Fay king irritably had to admit that Ronge's verbal support seemed to help quell Gehenna's wrath. Maybe he had placed a lulling spell upon her as well. Sovereign cared not since his family back in the human world was still safe.

Two weeks had passed. Orion and Alayer could feel themselves slipping back into the same, old routine of being careful of what they said and feeling plain miserable. Sovereign's demeanor was subdued once more as the dark heaviness of the Gehenna's castle seeped back into his soul. Having Ronge around made things even worse. Sanbow's usually cheerful, kind nature was being curdled by all the evilness, which hung in the air like thick smoke clouds that sought out to suffocate anything decent and good.

A constant negative influence oppressed them all, a wickedness that always wafted off of the Neverborn, no matter where he happened to be located in the castle. Alayer wished that he, Orion, and their father could return to the Silent Sanctuary again, but this time take Sanbow with them. He decided to talk to his father when the next opportunity arose.

With Ronge giving Gehenna the wicked attention that she craved, Sovereign and his sons were afforded more chances to converse freely. When Alayer was talking briefly in secret to Sovereign about going back to the Silent Sanctuary with Sanbow, his father said that would be unwise, since he didn't find his parents yet. He couldn't abandon them and with a heavy heart, Alayer understood and agreed with him.

He did want to meet and get to know his grandparents and he hoped that his father would locate them soon, then they could at last leave that horrid castle once and for all. After tasting a little bit of real freedom, he despised living in the castle even more so. Sometimes he felt that he was going to go insane, constantly making sure he didn't say or do the wrong things. The only joys he had were the secret talks he had with his brother and father.

Unfortunately, as time passed, Sanbow wasn't as fun to be around anymore, often pushing the auburn-haired teenager too hard in his training. Before Sanbow would make the young prince's shortcomings seem like no big deal and give him words of encouragement. But now, he only had

nasty criticism for him, belittling his efforts as if he was not trying hard enough, when he was. The teenager started to dread going to practice.

One day, Alayer gloomily walked down the hallway which went by the open courtyard in the middle of the castle to possibly have a chance to talk with Orion, when wild screaming and sobbing caught his attention. He looked up and saw Ronge coming toward him, wearing his usual black robe with the golden trim and right sleeve missing.

The Neverborn was cruelly dragging a furry fox-like creature by her arm, while she stumbled and fell, trying to get free of his grasp. But it was no use, he refused to let go and continued to pull her along against her will, ignoring her pleas for mercy.

The Eclipse Fay prince's heart broke hearing how pitifully she sobbed and begged. As they passed a pillar, she managed to grab a jutting stone from it and held on. Finally, Ronge paid her some mind. He turned around and viewed her holding onto the pillar desperately. He deemed that as insolence immediately. Sneering, he roughly yanked her to himself and slapped her with his free hand, causing her to shriek in terrible pain. Instantly, anger struck Alayer like a lightning bolt, enraging him.

“Shut your accursed mouth, human-trash! Be silent or I'll kill you right here, right now!” Ronge shouted out his threats, his voice booming off the stone icy walls. She wept bitterly, her face wet with lamentation.

“H-how c-could you do this to m-me?!” she cried, shaking with sobs. “I-I loved you! I *loved* you!” Sasha couldn't believe what a nightmare she was in.

Months before, Ronge had come to her during a time in her life when she was very vulnerable and running away from home. Her mother, Cadence, had an abusive boyfriend, named Horace, who sexually abused her whenever her mother wasn't around. Cadence didn't believe her daughter when Sasha told her about what was happening. Horace abused her even more and so, Sasha ran away from home.

Ronge found her on the bus and befriended her quickly, telling her that his name was Ron. He was hard to resist being incredibly charming and so interested in her troubles. He made her feel better about herself and he offered for her to stay with him, providing for her needs and desires. It wasn't long until she fell in love with him, not realizing what he truly was nor what he had planned for her. He had promised to make her life different and he certainly did, but not for the better as he lead her to believe.

“Love has nothing to do with what I care about now,” Ronge said coldly, proceeding to drag her to his chambers where he planned to do as he pleased with her. Alayer defiantly stood in his way, causing the demon to stop and narrow his eyes. He was not in the mood to deal with this Eclipse Fay prince. He needed relief and he was going to get some out of Sasha in his private chambers.

“Let. Her. Go...” Alayer stated menacingly, his voice stiff with building ire. While he couldn’t save the other humans Ronge had trapped in his laboratory the times before, he wasn’t going to stand by and let him defile this poor girl.

The demon scowled, his handsome features twisted in powerful hatred. Then, Ronge scoffed at him, not taking him seriously and roughly pushed past him as if he were nothing. Frantically, Sasha begged for the Fay prince to save her as she was pulled past him.

Alayer reached out and grabbed Ronge’s right hand in an attempt to squeeze it open to make him let go of the fox girl. The monster glanced down at the teenager’s hand clawing his and glared back up at him, infuriated.

“I said, let her go...” the young prince repeated slowly through clenched teeth, emphasizing his words while glowering. The demon wasn’t frightened in the least, but he was beyond agitated. No one was to get in the way of his quest for pleasure.

“As if you could make me,” was Ronge’s rebuttal.

While still holding onto Sasha with his right hand, he got into the teenager’s face and said, “You’re not Sovereign. Now, mind your own business. I’ll get to you soon enough...”

With a slight smirk, the demon used his left hand to trail the back of his fingers against the prince’s right cheek for a second until he recoiled in disgust, then Ronge chuckled as he went on his way to have his fun with Sasha.

Seething in rage, Alayer tackled Ronge, surprising him into finally letting Sasha go, since he didn’t think he would dare to be this foolhardy and attack him. With his hands morphed into claws, the youth slashed them at the demon, cutting him about his arms and chest. He even managed to slice four jagged, deep wounds into his right cheek. Sasha watched, frozen with fright.

Highly insulted that Alayer had damaged his perfect face, the Neverborn threw the Eclipse Fay prince into the courtyard, sending him through one of the stained-glass windows, shattering the glass. Sasha screamed in shock as she witnessed all this. Wasting no time, Ronge leapt in after Alayer, whose arms were lacerated. The fox girl raced off in search of help.

With one savage kick, the demon sent the poor teenager across the courtyard and into a marble decoration that broke upon impact. The prince hit the stone wall on the other side, crying out in blinding pain. In an instant, Ronge was there and continued to kick Alayer into the wall over and over, savoring his screams and his choking coughs as he rammed his metal boot into his gut and face. He watched the youth curl up into a tight ball, trembling in agony and knelt beside him, smirking.

Then, he reached down with his left hand to grab a handful of his hair and twisted his bloody face upward to his, displaying a false look of endearment as Alayer coughed pitifully, his eyes squeezed shut in pain.

“You insignificant fool. You know you can’t overpower me, so why did you even try?” he asked calmly, taking his right index finger to the prince’s split lower lip and smearing his blood about the young vampire’s mouth while he traced its outline. He brought his face close to his, relishing his suffering with intense, dark joy.

Angrily, Alayer opened his eyes and spat as forcefully as he could, spraying the monster’s face well. Yelling, Ronge backed away, since some of the bloody spittle went into his eyes. Disgustedly, the Neverborn wiped his face with his left sleeve and snarled at him, growling deeply. The teenager glared back at him, breathing heavily in distress, but he showed him no fear.

“You *stupid* twit! I was going to kill you quickly, but now I shall prolong your suffering! You brought this upon yourself, half-breed!” he roared in several different demonic voices at once.

While he proved his savagery to his prey by wrapping his hands around his throat, Sasha had located some aid by accidentally running into Sanbow and she hysterically told him about how Ronge was beating up Alayer.

After he finally understood her, Sanbow immediately went to inform Orion and the warrior prince rushed off to the courtyard with Sanbow and Sasha following close behind. When they arrived there, it was clear no one was going to get into the courtyard, due to the wall of black energy surrounding it.

Orion frantically attacked the force field with all of his might, but still he could not break through, sending him into a furious frenzy, beating on it with both of his fists as he hollered his little brother’s name over and over. With his head turned towards his barrier, Ronge heard Orion’s screams outside and snickered. Looking back at Alayer, he allowed him to breathe again, right before he passed out.

The Neverborn really enjoyed choking him repeatedly like this, watching him struggle for breath and then letting him have some, only to take it away from him. The torture was so thrilling to the demon that he kept on strangling the poor teenager over and over. He then increased his grip even more so, chuckling deeply with a wicked, wide smile upon his handsome face.

The young prince grit his teeth as Ronge held him up against the wall by his throat, tears leaking out from the corners of his eyes as his feet dangled off the grassy earth. He felt himself beginning to slip away again from the lack of oxygen, but the Neverborn didn’t release the pressure on his neck, like he had done before. He painfully looked down into those evilly-insane eyes and realized that he was going to kill him for real this time.

‘*Please, someone...help me!*’ Alayer begged in his mind as heavy tears flowed from his eyes and down his cheeks. Ronge licked his lips seductively as he waited for the prince to expire when suddenly a flash of blinding, white light engulfed the youth that shot the demon across the courtyard and into the opposite wall, embedding him deeply within the stone.

Gasping for breath, Alayer felt a sensation which he had never known before as the light swallowed him. It was an intense burning throughout his body, like the illumination was dissolving his dark side. Whatever this light was, it moved like fire, waving about in a powerful fury that frightened and seared him. The intensity was too much for him to bear, so he screamed at the top of his lungs in anguish, as he floated within the flames while the ground began to quake.

Meanwhile, Ronge shook his head, trying to register what just happened as blood poured from fresh, multiple wounds on his body and face. He felt great dread running through him as he sensed a power which he knew all too well. Slowly, he gazed up at the white blaze across the courtyard.

Immeasurable fear struck him hard as the reflection of the bright flames were seen in his widened, horrified golden-brown eyes. He trembled in extreme terror, frenetically thinking of a way to escape punishment.

“Mercy, I beg of you! I meant the youth no real harm! I-”

Before he could spew out more lies, another wave of the White Fire’s power slammed into him, pushing him deeper into the stone wall, burning his evilness so immensely that he screamed and writhed in agony.

When the white burning light had first arrived, Ronge’s black energy force field had been destroyed and Orion attempted to get in, but backed away, being unable to stand the awesome strength of the small fraction the White Fire had lent to the auburn-haired prince. The white-haired teenager stumbled backwards without grace, struggling to flee. He couldn’t get far and fell to the floor, squirming about, screaming in torment as his darkness was burned as well.

The ground shook even harder, rattling the castle to the point where it was breaking apart nearest to the courtyard with most of the support pillars splitting and some collapsing, while deep fissures opened the floors and the walls developed various cracks from heavy wide ones to spider web styled ones. The ceiling in the hallways began to cave in. Sanbow pushed Sasha out of the way in time when part of the roof came crashing down where they had been standing.

Sovereign had been riding Shadow Strife through the castle’s gates, after another fruitless search for his parents, when the massively powerful earthquake happened. The king’s horse reared up in fright, causing him to fall off his steed. He tried to calm the Friesian, but the beast was too spooked to reason with and ran off.

The Eclipse Fay king looked to the castle and witnessed it trembling like mad, breaking apart in some sections. He sensed a tremendous power that was emanating from the courtyard and rushed over there. Getting there was most difficult for the ground would not stop shaking and the king kept losing his balance, forced into walls and pillars when he tried to make his way past them.

Finally, he arrived at the courtyard and he fell to his knees from the astonishing power the White Fire was. He saw both of his sons suffering in agony, contorting their bodies in great discomfort

while they screamed their lungs out. Strangely enough, Sanbow and Sasha were not overly affected by the white energy and they were trying to console Orion, who begged for someone to make the burning stop. Sovereign had never heard his sons cry like that before.

“Sanbow, what is happening?!” the king asked disturbed, while struggling to stay strong despite his own searing pain. Sanbow shook his head as he held onto Orion’s shoulder to let him know that he was with him.

“I don’t know, my lord! This girl here told me that Ronge was attacking Alayer and when we got Orion to help, we couldn’t get in because of a black energy barrier! Then, this white blaze appeared, taking Alayer, and they began to scream! This is all I know!” the elderly man explained, his chubby, gray-bearded face full of trepidation.

Sick with worry, Sovereign wished he knew what to do. He was being scorched within as well and stifled his urges to scream himself, although he felt himself losing the battle.

“Alayer!” he yelled, taking several steps closer to the courtyard, but having to back up due to the overwhelming, increasing pain. Hearing his children screaming and crying tore him up inside for he didn’t know how to make their anguish stop.

Suddenly, the white flames left Alayer and his eyes rolled up into his head as he fell face first into the grassy lawn of the courtyard. Sovereign ignored the lingering pain within him as he raced over to his youngest son, nearly tripping over his own feet. In a panic, he snatched him up into his arms, thoroughly alarmed.

“Alayer, my son! Are you alright?”

When he didn’t respond, he shook him and shouted his name frantically. With Sanbow aiding him, Orion slowly got to his feet. The warrior prince was dismayed at how utterly helpless he was moments ago. He went over to his father and little brother, sorrow filling him as he listened to the king yelling like that, with his voice hoarse and cracking.

“Wake up, Alayer! Wake up!! You *must* wake up!” Sovereign shouted, then he bowed over him with his tears dripping down onto his child’s bloody face.

“Please, please...wake up... *Please...*”

- **CONTINUED IN "CAC : Origins - Part 1" -**

Will Alayer survive his first encounter with the White Fire and find the cure for his morality? Will Sovereign, Orion, and Alayer ever escape from Gehenna's icy grip? What will the dastardly evil Neverborn do next? What of Nabi, the disabled unicorn and the Elementals?

The answers to these questions and *a lot* more will be in Part One of "Change a Changeling: Origins", to be published in late 2018!

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