

Chapter 2

Tarron placed Rose at the edge of the forest so she could safely return. He lovingly kissed her on the top of her head.

“I will find a way to be with you, Rose, but for now, this is what I have to do.”

The magic would wear off and she would go back to her normal life soon enough. Although it pained him, he knew that was best for her. She would think it was all a dream but more likely she would have no memory of their time whatsoever. He would find a way to restore the memory of their time together and be with her.

He knew he shouldn't have spent even a moment with her, but he was so drawn to her. It didn't feel like he had a choice. He had been drawn to her the first day she arrived at the little cottage. He had watched her fix up the cottage, and although he had never met her, he felt like a lovesick pup the whole time. He wanted to be with her.

He wanted to take her back with him, make her his wife, but that would not be allowed. Fairies and humans were not meant to interact because of the usual negative implications. The magic realm of the fairies could only be accessed by those with Fae blood. Humans pulled into the realm could be punished to death or kept as hostage until their human life was over, even if they had been taken to the realm against their will. How could he sentence Rose to such a fate? Although she could see him, his kind would never accept her as Fae.

He knew he couldn't go out into the human world in his true form. He could use his magic to cloak himself with invisibility or take on the identity of an animal. How could he go to her in any of those forms? Bile soured his stomach and rose in his throat.

He needed to figure something out.

Tarron turned into the forest but was stopped almost instantly. The dark fairy elder, Cara, stood there staring at him with a look of resignation and...sadness. She was old, even by Fae standards. She looked like a human grandmother. She wasn't his grandmother, but she was related to him. Tarron didn't know her exact age, but he assumed she was at least a thousand years old or so. He wondered why she hadn't retired to Albios.

Tarron knew he was in deep shit.

She stared at him saying, "Young Tarron, the girl you brought to our realm is with child, *your* child."

Although everyone in the realm, himself included, knew she had the gift of sight, he said, "I literally just placed her back at the edge of the wood. How do you know she is with child already?"

"She is, or rather, will be. A girl."

"I just left her there a minute ago."

"She will be the counterpart to the king's eldest, Sloane. Not only will she possess our dark fairy blood, once joined with the prince, she will possess the power of the light forest fairies as well."

Tarron's mind reeled with confusion. Light and dark fairies were never bonded. They were sometimes enemies, at best, distant strangers occupying the same land.

"So I'm going to be a father to a half-human girl?"

“Most Fae aren’t stupid enough to make love and impregnate a human without killing or imprisoning them.”

“That’s harsh. I would never harm Rose.”

“Well, not intentionally.”

“The light fairies already hate us. They will hate her, too. She won’t even be full Fae. The odds are against her already. Add the human part and the whole realm will be against her.”

“I know, but she will be special. We are all *sidhe*, whether dark or light, and so will she be.”

“Half. And most fairies aren’t even fated to have a counterpart. Why my daughter?”

“I don’t know the answer to that.”

“I’ll go to Rose and convince her to come here with us. She can have the baby here. Then we can be together.”

“How many half Fae children do you see running around, Tarron?”

“None that I’ve ever seen.”

Tarron realized the mistake he had made. Impregnating her hadn’t even crossed his mind.

“I didn’t even realize it was possible. We were lost in the throws of passion. Can I please go to her now?”

“No, the veil will be blocked until she is of age. This is to protect her.”

“From me?”

“The realm.”

“What if we don’t tell anyone? We can at least visit.”

“Unfortunately, you can’t. Your daughter must be raised by her human mother. If she came to the realm now, she would be seen as a threat. One side of the realm, or the other, will see her as an enemy. Being half human is even worse. She will have a constant target on her back.”

“I will protect them both! I will kill anyone who tries to harm my child!” he cried.

“I’m sorry, Tarron. I truly am. She will feel the draw to the forest on her own. She will find her own way to us, trust that. She is fated to be Sloane’s counterpart and queen to the realm...”

“And what else?” he asked through gritted teeth.

“If she doesn’t agree to marry him within one year of her twenty-first birthday, the veil will be sealed from the human realm.”

“So my daughter gets the impossible task of being fated to someone we are frequently at odds with, who isn’t even in the same realm? Are you expecting her to fail? Are you punishing me for loving a human?”

“The prophecy is in the first grimoire. It’s more of a riddle than an exact outline of what is to come, but it states that a savior will come, born from both the human and Fae realms. Now, our realm is divided and we need someone to make peace and create a bridge.”

“But she will only be a half-blood,” cried Tarron.

“Yes, and a transient. If she marries her counterpart, she will have the ability to go between both worlds. She will have knowledge of the human world, but on her twenty-first birthday, the forest veil will be lifted to her.”

“And then what? What if they don’t fall in love and get married?”

“The thinly veiled areas of the forest will no longer exist.”

“Then how will we access the human realm?”

“We won’t.”

“Is there anything else you can do?”

“It’s not in my power, but I will help in any way I can. As for Rose, I can’t allow her to hold memories of you or this realm.”

“I already wiped her memory of our time together, but I’m hoping to restore them as soon as I can.”

“You can’t do that.”

“So what will she think? That she was drugged, raped, and impregnated? That’s not fair to her.”

“She holds the warm fuzzy feelings of your time together. She doesn’t know how it happened or what you are, just that it was consensual.”

Tarron answered angrily, “So I am just a pawn of fate. Rose is a pawn of fate. My daughter is a pawn of fate, a necessary pawn to help a world she doesn’t know exists, and I can’t even tell her who or what she is? I won’t be able to reach out to my own child?”

“What you don’t understand is that when a pair is fated, it is usually for a great purpose. A great deal of energy goes into such a partnership. Special gifts and powers are bestowed upon them.”

“So, you get some great gifts, but only to fulfill a task? And, maybe you love your counterpart if you’re lucky? My daughter will not have freewill to choose as she likes.”

“Sometimes things that are fated to be aren’t necessarily fair. You are young, you brought a human girl to a place where she doesn’t belong. A half-blood child would be a target. Her life would be in danger. Nobody could know of her importance, or her magic and connection

to us would be gone forever. They will smell her human blood. We are doing this to protect your child, Tarron. It is the only way to ensure her safety and fulfill the prophecy.”

Tarron cried, “ I am going to have this heartbreak everyday for the next twenty-one years or so. Even then, I will only get to see my daughter if she falls in love and agrees to marry a stranger, and that’s after she finds out she isn’t even human. What a foolproof plan!”

“Love would be nice but she only needs to agree to marry him.”

“You will have the ability to watch your child grow. You may use the invisibility cloak to observe her. You may also shapeshift into one of the forest animals, so that she may see you, but not as her father, the high member of a dark fairy family.”

“She’ll hate me.”

“Hopefully she’ll understand once the time comes.”

“How will she live normally amongst humans? She won’t be like them.”

“They’ll just think she’s special, gifted, but nothing more than that. We are a thing of legend to them. Even if the proof is in front of them, they still won’t see it.”

Tarron fell to his knees and cried into his hands, “It’s not fair!”

Cara gently touched his shoulder. “The girl is also of my blood, as are you, so I will help as much as fate will allow. You may tell no one, absolutely no one, that I plan to help you. I will plant visions of Amaryllis in the prince’s mind. He will always search for her, even if only in his subconscious.”

“But I…”

Tarron looked up but Cara was already gone. He didn’t move, surrounded by trees but completely alone in his grief. He would be without his new love and now without their child.

Rose would wonder why he didn't come back to her. He pictured her, confused, heartbroken, and alone, all while being pregnant. His stomach heaved and he vomited on the forest floor.

He contemplated running straight through the woods to the cottage. Doing so would cut his daughter off from ever knowing him, the realm, and her own fate.

Why me? Why her? he thought.

He was drawn to her. The first day he saw her pull up at Ms. McKinley's cottage, it was over for him. He walked those woods everyday hoping to catch a glimpse of her. Now his heart was fully broken.

All Tarron had left was hope for a future. Until then, his life would be on hold.