

"I can't- *breathe*," she stammered through gasps, feeling her corset lace tight.

"Sorry, Miss Walker," her lady's maid sighed sympathetically. Your fiance requested this dress for the afternoon."

"Juliette, how many times do I have to tell you to call me Evangeline?" she said breathlessly, her lungs crushed by the corset.

"My apologies Miss Evangeline," Juliette's French accent became apparent as she said her name. She secured the laces and dressed her in her crinoline and petticoat, then her tea dress, bright yellow silk, covered in white flowers, matching those braided into her dark hair. Evangeline gently pulled a pair of white silk gloves over her hands and carefully picked up the white and yellow fan off her vanity. She glanced at herself in the mirror, her gloved hand subconsciously drifting to the freckles that dotted her cheeks. She turned to Juliette.

"How do I look?" she asked softly, bringing her hand back down. She silently hoped to stall her meeting with Alen, her betrothed, a little longer. Juliette looked at her longingly, her brown eyes scanning over her.

"Gorgeous as ever, miss," the maid then handed her the white and yellow parasol leaning against the wall and led her out of her room.

The sun shone brightly against the courtyard grass. Evangeline opened her parasol and strolled down the cobblestone path to the white-painted table where both families sat, chatting quietly. She noticed Alen first, sitting between his parents. He had a mop of straight brown hair and a blue coat and dress trousers. She hated Alen, and she hated this business deal of an arrangement.

She sat quietly beside her parents, folding her hands neatly in her lap as she gazed silently at the others, fighting to keep her face pleasant and not trusting herself to speak.

"Nice of you to join us, Miss Walker," Alen's mother greeted politely, though a sharpness was added to the edge of her voice.

"The pleasure is mine, Mrs. Lawson," she said coolly. She gently lifted her teacup and brought it to her lips, sipping the warm, sweet liquid, silently praying it would take the spite off her tongue. Her family wouldn't be pleased if she embarrassed them with her words.

"Evangeline," Alen addressed her familiarly, much to her distaste, "we're just discussing our wedding. When'd you say the dressmaker would arrive?"

"She'll be here tomorrow to take measurements and design the dress," she said flatly. Alen nodded, annoyance in his eyes.

"Wonderful day today, isn't it?" Evangeline's mother said in an attempt to defuse the tension.

"Yes, quite," added Mr. Lawson.

"Perhaps I'll go for a walk after tea," Evangeline stated.

"The weather's favorable for it," said her father.

"I'd gladly walk with her," offered Alen.

"I appreciate your offer, Mr. Lawson, but I can walk on my own," she snatched her fan and parasol, standing from the table. She faintly heard her mother apologizing for her unladylike behavior. Evangeline sighed, corset pinching her ribs, but more than happy to be leaving.

She was glad she lived outside London. Air was clearer, and the sun shone on her face. Her feet glided seamlessly across the woodland path, sunlight dazzling across every surface. But, through the swaying trees, Evangeline could feel someone's gaze on her back. *Did Alen follow me?* She turned, but saw nothing. A twig snapped and she wiped back around. A figure stood on the trail, his face obscured by shadow. Beneath the fabric of his hood, a broadsword strapped to his hip. Evangeline took a startled step back. She turned her head away from him and tried to ignore him. He didn't seem to understand the gesture.

"Come with me," He spoke in an accent Evangeline didn't recognize.

"I beg your pardon," she retorted, still looking away. "I shall do no such thing,"

"Shall you?" he sounded almost amused. She wiped back towards him.

"I shall," she snapped, "My father could have you arrested for this. Do you not know who I am?"

"No, Although, I believe it may benefit me," she glared at him.

"I am Evangeline Grace Walker and-" she broke off, noticing the point of his ears as the wind blew off his hood. A pair of horns were revealed, along with violet eyes that shimmered evilly. A smirk spread across his face.

"You may call me Felice, child of the Fae," He was still smirking maliciously, "and you *shall* come with me," She tried to run away, but her legs were rendered useless. Felice turned and began walking deeper into the forest yanking Evangeline unwillingly after him.

"I'll have you know," she started, being dragged through the brush, "they will find me, and they will hurt you-"

"Oh please, will you *shut up?*" Evangeline's mouth forced closed. The briars tore her dress as her feet stepped forcefully across the woodland terrain. Her ribs hurt; she could hardly breathe. She wished she hadn't gone out alone

She glared at Felice, who was seemingly unaffected, cloak swaying peacefully with each step.

They came across a fallen log and stopped for a moment. Felice knelt and traced along the wood patterns with his elvish fingers. The wood began to transform. What lay there now was a dark-haired girl with freckles, wearing a torn-up yellow dress. Her skin was ghost-white and her eyes were closed. Evangeline opened her mouth, but couldn't speak.

"A changeling," He answered her unspoken question, "it will die in hours. If your family finds it..." He trailed off, looking up to see her expression. She tried to hide her horror, but

could tell she was failing. Evangeline wanted to say something smart to him, but couldn't. Felice grabbed the parasol and fan from her hands, setting them gently next to the changeling. He then kept walking.

It felt like hours before Felice arrived in front of two maple trees, branches weaved together, creating what looked like a giant doorway. He grabbed her arm, and pulled her through the branches, making the world the changling.