

Curse of the Fey

MORGANA
TRILOGY

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CHAPTER 1

I strut up the grassy hill, biting on my lower lip like I can't wait to sink my teeth into a frosted chocolate cake, tall and confident in a way I've never felt, long hair swaying in tandem with my hips. And there Arthur lies, looking beautiful in his sleep, peaceful, his long lashes casting shadows on his stubbly cheeks. Completely unaware of my presence.

Worry flashing in my violet eyes, I look around the moonlit field. But all around is quiet, undisturbed by my sudden presence. I am a shadow within a dream. If only a strange dream.

I kneel beside the sleeping form in a rustle of clothes. My fingers brush against his temple, lightly trace the line of his jaw.

I frown. I wouldn't dare something like that, would I? Even though...

I lean down, brush my mouth against Arthur's, hands slipping in his hair. I smile wickedly as he instinctively turns his head towards me, enjoying the effect I have on him, even in his sleep. I graze his shirt hesitantly, as if afraid to touch him.

Or afraid to touch his knight's uniform, a small voice says inside me.

Arthur's eyes fly open, ghostly grey in the moon's silvery light. I pause briefly as his face registers surprise. Then my smile grows warmer, lips parting slightly.

"What—" Arthur starts, but I lean down again, cutting his question off with a second kiss.

His arms are suddenly around my waist, wrapping me into a tight hug.

A wave of cold fear washes through me. This should definitely *not* be happening!

With a satisfied laugh, I press his hands back down, practically pinning him beneath me. I bite playfully on my lower lip, then motion for him to take his shirt off. Arthur tries to kiss me again, but with a predatory grin I push him back down. Even in the moonlight I can tell his cheeks are flushed. My tongue darts over my lips, showing a glimpse of fangs.

"No, Arthur, it's a trap!"

But Arthur can't hear my silent warning. I hear his quick intake of breath, heart beating wildly at the jugular. Despite my fear for him, I can't help but feel absolutely disgusted by him. How could he even think for a moment that I would—

With a low grunt, Arthur kicks his leg out, pulling me down at the same time, then rolls us over until he's the one straddling me, a vicious-looking dagger at my pale neck.

"Who are you?" he growls.

The creature snarls, its jaws unhinged as a pair of saber-toothed incisors push through from behind the first row of teeth. Then, quick as a snake, the Fey wrestles itself free, and strikes.

CHAPTER 2

I wake up with a start, my warning cry still echoing in my head. It takes me a moment to realize I'm not on the grassy hill anymore, but inside a dark and narrow cave, the rocky floor hot against my back. My home.

"Sounds like you had an interesting dream," Keva's sardonic voice says across from me.

With a grimace, I push myself into a sitting position, my fraying dress clinging to my sweaty body like seaweed.

"Did you dream of Arthur again?" she asks.

"None of your business," I mutter.

"That means yes."

My gaze slides outside to the wide desert that separates us from an uninterrupted line of rolling hills. All grey. All seemingly empty.

But Keva and I both know better.

"What was it this time that it got you moaning and rolling on the floor like a demented woman?" Keva asks.

"Any signs of the portal being used?" I ask instead, despite knowing the answer already. We wouldn't be talking here right now if there had been.

"I asked you first. What did you dream about? What did Arthur do to you? Or what did you do to him?"

I feel myself blush, and the stones that litter the ground between us burst into thousands of pellets.

"Morgan!" Keva shrieks, diving for cover.

"I'm sorry," I say, mortified. I force my thoughts to calm down, willing the rocks to keep still. "I didn't mean..."

Keva grunts. "You never do, do you?"

"You know I can't control my powers since—"

"Stop using that excuse all the time," Keva says, sitting back up. "It's getting real old."

I wince at the sight of the tiny cuts bleeding down the left side of her face. "Well, it's all I've got," I say. "Besides, this is your fault."

Keva's jaw drops. "My fault?"

"You're the one who keeps...keeps making all these unladylike innuendos."

"Well, it's not like there's anything better to do around here," she says, prodding her face, and turning white as her fingers come back bloody. "You've completely disfigured me!" she shrieks.

I cringe, wishing the cavern's walls could swallow me whole. Keva's here because of me. And if it weren't for her, I'd have languished down here, alone for all eternity, feeling...empty. "I said I was sorry," I say lamely.

Keva breathes forcefully through her nose. "It's OK," she says with great effort. "I'm willing to forgive you this time. *If* you tell me what I want to know."

I repress a defeated sigh. "What does it matter if I dreamed of him or not? It's not like it's going to change anything."

Not after what I've done to him. Not when he could be—

"I knew it!" Keva exclaims, sounding like a fan who's just obtained her idol's favorite boxers. "What did you dream you guys were doing together, then?"

"It wasn't me," I mumble.

"What do you mean it wasn't you?"

"Exactly that," I say. And, because I know she's not going to drop the subject until I've told her everything, I blurt out, "It looked like me, but it wasn't. It moved differently, talked differently, even her kiss was different, and so—"

"Wait, hold on. The one that was you—"

"But *wasn't*," I emphasize, annoyed.

"—was kissing Arthur?" Even in the cave's dimness I can see Keva's eyes sparkle. "But it wasn't like yours, so that means..." She gasps. "You guys have kissed before! When? How? And why did you never tell me?"

I look away, wishing we'd never broached the topic, and grow suddenly still. My eyes narrow on a dark pinprick smudging the dirty-white sky above the distant hills. Surely it can't be a flying demon? In all our time down in Hell, neither Keva nor I have ever seen one. Then again, we haven't dared explore very far, either. Blinking owlishly, I lean slightly forward, but in the span of a breath, whatever it was disappears.

"How could you have done this to me?" Keva continues, her rant building up steam. "You know how I've been rooting for you two from the very start, or at least since I found out you weren't *actually* related. And here you are—"

"Shhh," I tell her, all senses alert. If it was a demon, and it somehow spots us, it'll take it no time to fly over to our lonely mountain spire. And our tiny cave won't give us any protection then.

"Don't you shush me!" Keva explodes, voice bouncing off the stone walls like gunshots.

At this point, there's no reasoning with her anymore.

"I didn't tell you anything because it didn't mean anything," I say in a harsh whisper. "We were out past curfew with a stolen pickup, and there was a cop. We needed a distraction, so he kissed me. That's all there is to it."

And all I want to say, I silently add, rubbing at the tight knot in my chest that appears whenever I think about Arthur.

"That's all there is to it, huh?" Keva repeats, oozing sarcasm. "Funny. It took you over twenty words to explain that to me, which, in your case, means you were rambling. And *that*, Morgan, implies that the kiss *did* mean something. At least to you."

"Drop it!" I say sharply, and immediately regret my tone of voice at the hurt that flashes on Keva's face.

I lean back against the wall, feeling suddenly tired. At this rate, we're going to drive each other completely crazy. We need to do something. *I* need to do something.

I stare at Keva's smudged face, pale beneath the grime. She's sacrificed her life in the human world to save me from myself, and now I need to return the favor. Even if it's not in the way she imagines. Whatever it was that I saw in the sky may have been a false alarm, but it may not always be so.

I take a deep breath, my mind made up. "The Gates haven't opened since you've joined me here—"

"Joined?" Keva snorts. "You mean forced, contrived, threatened, coer—"

"—and whoever carved those journal entries on the steles outside hasn't returned," I continue. "Which leaves us at an impasse."

My fists clench and unclench on my lap as my gaze slides over to the large rock that stands halfway to the edge of the cliff. It is one of ten such carved boulders we've discovered, telling of someone's investigations into the human abductions which I know my brother Mordred is involved with. I had hoped that whoever authored these accounts would know why Carman decided to open the Gates to the underworld. But he or she hasn't shown up since we decided to squat this cozy little piece of Hell.

Keva snaps her fingers together, drawing my attention back to her. "You're scheming on your own again," she says accusingly. "Tell me what kind of insane plan you're hatching, so I can tell you how crazy you are, before you do anything stupid."

I nod slightly. "I was thinking that we can't keep wasting our time waiting here," I say. "Not while Carman's out plotting to do...whatever it is she wants to do."

The witch may have imprisoned me down here, but that doesn't mean I'm totally hopeless.

“So, if our Sherlock, for some reason, doesn’t want to come to us,” I say, “I’m going to find Sherlock instead.”

“The fact that Carman thinks you beaten could play in our favor,” Keva says thoughtfully after a long silence. “She won’t expect us to be going around, looking for trouble. Especially not trouble for her.”

“You mean...you’d come with?” I ask, surprised.

Keva snorts. “Have you not been listening to me all this time? I am bored out of my mind in here. Any excuse so I don’t have to stare another second at these walls is good enough for me.”

Her eyes go round in shock, and she points outside. Fear coils in my stomach. The flying demon’s back! But when I follow her shaking finger, I find myself staring instead at a column of smoke that stretches up into the distant sky like a dark scar.

“Definitely not a good sign,” Keva says, betraying a hint of fear and excitement, “but a sign nonetheless. And I bet my panties that it’s the one we’ve been waiting for.”