

# Away with the Faeries



MADELEINE COOK



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# Prologue

They were the Wise Ones. Through the hazy light of dawn, eleven pairs of angry eyes stared into one. They stood in their pale gowns, all matching except for the different coloured bands tied loosely around their waists. Above them a dark ochre sky was warped and twisting in on itself, drawing them upwards. Eleven of the Wise Ones now encircled one, their feet no longer touching the ground.

Bælor's wings wavered, and he released a defeated sigh.

'Armænon, you have disgraced us.'

The subject, his dark eyes glowing with the reflection of a scorching sun, said nothing. He kept his hands clasped together, holding Bælor's gaze.

Even Zian, the other culprit in this matter, remained silent and selfish while Armænon received what should have been a shared punishment. Hæthena, her voice soft, was the one to ask.

'Where is the necklace?'

Their wings beat together in unison, fanning out a fine dust from the ground. The Wise Ones, also named the Elana, were protected within an invisible shell that would soon be raising them into a new world, created with the help of a precious emerald stone. It was a stone more powerful than any other on earth, for the Elana's magic had been infused deep into its core.

'Where is the necklace?' Hæthena repeated.

'I cannot say,' said Armænon, unclasping his clammy hands to flex his fingers. Anger pulsed through him. He was being isolated, shunted from his family for wanting a power they were each entitled to. Zian hovered between Raole and Hæthena,

unable to meet Armænon's eye.

Kreed's expression was dark and threatening. 'We have the Emerald,' he said. 'Do you realise what you have done? It is no longer whole and a shard of the stone is now lost.' Sensing his rising temper, Raole cut in.

'May we come to a decision, Bælor?'

'You have jeopardised our future!' Kreed raged.

Bælor silenced him with a glare before turning slowly to address Armænon.

'You are banished. You will not be joining us in the other world, and will therefore suffer in these lands of the Human for as long as you can endure. Now, we are leaving.'

There was nothing left to say. The Elana continued their ascent and Armænon watched as the distance between him and them grew and grew. Then there was a flash of iridescent green light and he felt the moment when the Elana departed, taking a part of his soul with them – taking his magic. His hands crushed against his chest and he fell, scraping his knees on the hard ground. After a while Armænon gathered himself and rose, lifting his face to a now still, dark sky.

He wandered towards the horizon, his wings fluttering slowly to the rhythm of a nervous heart, the anger having dispelled from him like dust. He needed to find the necklace.

Kreed's words resounded in his mind:

'Do you realise what you have done?'

# Chapter One

**S**he waited impatiently outside the house. Curling her numb fingers into a loose fist, Sky knocked again and started to count the seconds, watching her breath appear like ice clouds before they evaporated in the cold January air. She'd counted to eight before hearing the stampede of footsteps as her friends raced down the stairs. Sky braced herself. The door was opened by Fran, flanked by Cassie and Hannah.

'Sorry about that,' said Fran, pulling Sky in by her arm. 'I think we had the music too loud. Were you out there long?'

Sky shrugged out of her coat, shrugging off any bad feelings. As the warmth of central heating enveloped her, she felt her muscles relax.

'Oh don't worry,' she said, smiling, for tonight was Simon Milton's party and she couldn't wait to get ready and go. Hannah and Cassie were already trampling up the stairs, talking and laughing.

'What are you wearing tonight?' asked Fran eagerly, and with her bag over one shoulder Sky followed her up the stairs.

'Well I've got a choice of three outfits.' It had been difficult choosing, so what else could she do but ask a friend's opinion? Fran's purple painted bedroom was cluttered with all sorts; text books and make up, hair appliances, they were spread across every surface. Fran closed the door and Hannah turned the volume up on the hi-fi.

Sky was applying some kohl eyeliner when the tip snapped off. She stared at it for a long moment before releasing a sigh, flopping back in the chair. Typical.

‘Does anyone have a black kohl pencil? Mine’s decided to break.’

Hannah’s response was mumbled, and Sky turned to see her attaching false eyelashes. Fran was cross-legged on the bed, fumbling through her make up bag.

‘I’ve only got brown.’

Sky groaned. ‘What about Cass?’

Fran looked at her and shrugged. ‘She’s just popped into the bathroom.’

Sky made her way across the hallway and saw that the door was ajar. Before entering she paused, unsure as to whether or not she could hear her friend crying. It took only a second more to determine that Cassie was definitely crying. Biting her lip Sky nudged forward so she could poke her head around the door, her heart weighing heavy in her chest.

Cassie sat on the edge of the bath, dabbing her eyes with a tissue stained with blotches of mascara. She took a shaky breath and looked up, her eyes red-rimmed and puffy.

Sky wanted to cry too. She stepped in and shut the door, forgetting about the eyeliner, fixing her concerns on something far more important.

‘Do you want to...talk about it, Cass?’

Cassie pursed her lips together, resting her elbow on the sink. ‘There isn’t much I can think of to say,’ she said. ‘I just seem to start thinking about it and then I can’t stop. Talking about it only makes it more real.’

Sky closed the lid on the toilet and sat down onto it, feeling the buzz of excitement ebb away. For a while she sat quiet. It was tricky finding words to console her friend whose mum had been diagnosed with the ‘big C’. It was dreadful. Sky’s palms were clammy when she rubbed them together. ‘She’s having... treatment?’

Cassie nodded. ‘She will be.’

‘I’m sure it will be f-’ Sky stopped herself before finishing the sentence. ‘Fine’ was a totally over used word, a filler for emotions. ‘Technology and treatments these days are amazing, Cassie,’ she said instead.

## *Chapter One*

‘I know, but I’m still scared. I shouldn’t be worrying tonight. She told me to have fun and everything, but I feel bad.’ She leaned forward and covered her face. ‘This sucks.’

Sky moved next to her friend and put an arm around her hunched shoulders, contemplating what she personally would want to hear.

‘Don’t cut yourself up about this. It’s the weekend of Simon’s party. It might even be a good distraction.’

‘A welcome distraction,’ mumbled Cassie, sitting straight. ‘Thank you.’ She wiped her eyes with the soggy tissue and chucked it in the bin. ‘I should probably redo my make up.’

Sky knew her friend was inspecting her half-made face.

‘You know you only have eyeliner on one eye?’ Cassie said a few seconds later.

‘Totally, and if you’ve got a black kohl pencil I can finish the other eye.’



A glimmer of pale sunlight shone through the windows of the east wing, highlighting particles of dust that floated through the air.

Sky could hear the murmurs as she drew nearer to room 5E. Bursting in, the door swung shut behind her and, naturally, everybody turned to stare at The Late One.

She walked forward, clutching her bag while scanning the room for a place to sit. Cassie patted the empty seat next to her and Sky hurried over and sat down, unravelling her scarf. She placed her small bag on the table, dreading “the look” Mr Elmsbury would undoubtedly throw at her.

‘You’re late, Miss Francis,’ he said sharply, taking off his glasses. He was known for disliking students with bad punctuality. It was just typical that her first lesson had to be English, and she had to be late.

‘I’m sorry,’ Sky mumbled, reluctantly meeting her teacher’s stern gaze that somehow made her feel like the only one in the room, and not in a good way. She knew the class had their eyes on her too.

She needed to say something, but struggled to think under the pressure of Mr Elmsbury's gaze. The silence filled her ears. 'I missed my alarm!' she blurted out, regretting the words the moment they fell from her mouth.

'Maybe you should set the volume a little louder,' Mr Elmsbury quipped. He put his glasses on and turned back to the board, pen in hand.

'As I was saying, you have the choice of persuasive or descriptive...' he went on, scribbling the key words onto the whiteboard. Sky combed through her black hair and glanced across the room, only to catch sight of Alex and Louis smirking at her. She rolled her eyes.

'Still recovering?' Louis mouthed.

Sky narrowed her eyes at him and mouthed back 'you too?' She couldn't have been the only one still suffering.

The boys looked at each other, and then nodded slowly. Mr Elmsbury huffed.

'What do you think about that?' he enquired, focusing on Sky.

She swallowed hard and stared back without a clue. Of all things, she noticed the flecks of grey at his temples that hadn't been there when she'd started in year 7. Was his hairline receding?

Mr Elmsbury approached her desk and leaned forward – one of his interrogation techniques. Sky stared into dark blue eyes that seemed to engulf her like an ocean.

'Perhaps you would tell me,' he said coolly, but his jaw was set and his left eyebrow twitched. 'No?'

Sky's mind was blank. 'Sorry sir, I don't know,' she admitted, keeping her chin up. In the same way Mr Elmsbury disliked bad punctuality, Sky disliked interrogations. She picked at the lid of her pen, holding her teacher's gaze.

'Pay attention,' he said before walking away. Sky flipped open the text book in front of her, longing for the day to end even though it had barely started.

During morning break, Sky sat with her friends in their usual spot beneath an old tree on the outer school grounds. All the trees were naked; their crooked branches reaching out for leaves that were once attached. Sky gazed out through the fence, at red

## *Chapter One*

brick houses of the neighbourhood, and past them to the plots where people grew their fruit and veg. Cows wandered about on the hillsides minding their own, ignoring the dense charcoal sky that overshadowed them.

‘I think the hangover only really hit me today,’ Alex said. ‘My parents aren’t too happy.’

Louis reached forward, yanking Cassie’s pink woolly bobble hat from her head.

‘Cass, you’re still recovering too aren’t you?’ he teased and Cassie grimaced, sliding a gloved hand down her face.

‘Mum told me to have a good time so I did, but maybe I had too much fun. Dad got really annoyed at me. I don’t think I’ll be allowed to do it again...or at least for a while. Maybe after the mock exams.’ She sorted out her hair and gave Louis a threatening look. ‘Can I have my hat back please?’

Louis ignored her request, pulling it onto his own head of brown hair. With an exasperated sigh, Cassie stuck out her arm. ‘Give.’

‘Pink really doesn’t suit you,’ Sky told him.

‘Don’t be lame!’ Louis exclaimed when she ripped it off of his head.

Sky shrugged, giving him a what-do-you-expect sort of look before returning the hat to its rightful owner.

The group lapsed into a calm silence. Sky sat back and watched the cows, a few mooing at each other, some sitting down. Minutes later, thunder echoed across the hills.

‘Wonderful,’ she said to herself as the heavens opened above them. Closing her eyes, she felt the first cool drops of winter rain.



Sky walked home beneath dark clouds, the cold air nipping at her nose and cheeks.

She turned left into Margrove Avenue – the final stretch. It wasn’t a pleasant place in winter; spindly trees hung over the path, their branches teasing those who walked along it. The odd streetlamp offered a comforting glow to pedestrians and despite

the fact it gave Sky the creeps, she'd be damned if she let it show. She walked with firm footsteps and kept her bag close.

Her stomach grumbled, signifying the first real hunger she'd felt since Saturday. There was a newsagent not far from here, but to get there would mean turning and going back. It didn't take long to decide. Sky stopped, rolling her bag off of her shoulder. A moment later she'd retrieved her purse and taken out a handful of change, only then tuning in to the hasty "clip-clip" of heels on concrete.

A collision caused Sky to stumble back, and a shower of coins flew into the air. They tinkled onto the path, scattering. She stared at the iceberg she had hit: tall, dressed in a suit, a head of long brown hair. The lady seemed puzzled and gazed at Sky with questioning eyes.

Sky, her right shoulder throbbing, was unsure how to react. She took a deep breath ready to speak, flinching when the woman blurted out, 'You need to watch where you're going!'

She continued like a wind-up toy and Sky could only stand there stunned.

'My arm is almost out of its socket!' Sky could have laughed at that. 'You must always watch where you're going otherwise things like this happen.'

She had her hands on her hips, and a face contorted with contempt.

'Excuse me!' Sky retorted. 'It works both ways,' she pointed at the woman, then to the ground. 'You weren't watching where *you* were going. I wasn't even moving,' she finished indignantly. This stranger had a nerve.

The woman glanced down. 'You're r-right,' she stuttered, the colour draining from her face. She clutched her chest. Sky was not amused by this performance.

'Care to help me pick up my change, seeing as you made me drop it all?'

The woman looked up with fear in her eyes, her mouth half open as if she'd witnessed something terrible.

Sky went through a few possibilities. Perhaps she was on her way back from a funeral, or having problems at work. She breathed in

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the cold air and it helped clear her mind.

‘I’m sorry to have caught you in a rush,’ she said, rubbing her shoulder while waiting for a response. Preferably an apology.

But the woman rushed off without a word, keeping her head down. Sky shook her head in disbelief and watched her hurry away and out of sight.

In a fit of pique she knelt down to pick up her change. Spotting a pound coin she reached for it, and in doing so something sharp dug into her knee.

‘What now?’ she groaned.

A necklace of all things. A delicate gold chain with a dazzling green gemstone. Sky picked it up, captivated by the brilliance of it. It must have belonged to the iceberg.

Some strange notion was telling her to take it.

‘It’s too late to give it back anyway,’ Sky muttered, and slipping it into her jacket pocket picked up her remaining coins from the gritty pavement.

Hooking her bag over her shoulder she set off once more, eager to get home.

# Chapter Two

Christian walked beneath an azure sky. Coin jingled in the pouch he carried, and the cobble stone beneath his feet was pleasantly warm from the sun. Færies acknowledged him with a wave or bow which he had hoped would make him feel more integrated. Instead it left him feeling more isolated, and the difference between him and all other færies was clear to see. Christian smiled back regardless as he continued alone through the crowd of people – his people.

He couldn't help but wonder who would become the future queen of Krazonia. What did she look like? How would they meet? He recalled various conversations he'd overheard between his mother and many others, about a possible marriage. Hæthen, a place of snow-covered mountains and icy rivers, was home to Princess Faye. They said she was a beauty, with wings like that of a butterfly. She was intelligent and gracious, with hair the shade of ripe cherries and rich, olive skin.

Perhaps she would be the one.

Eventually he saw the large, brown flag waving at him in the breeze. The market place was teeming. Voices were raised, færies were shouting and laughing; the strong smell of fruit picked fresh from the vine and vegetables from the ground lingered in the air. Many Krazonians made way for the prince so he could get the best each stall had to offer. His protests went unheard. He offered the payment in coin – four lunes to be exact – but it was declined.

'Please!' Christian exclaimed, thrusting the bronze coin into the stall owner's hands. This often happened, much to his frustration. 'I'm just the same as you!' he wanted to shout.

## *Chapter Two*

‘No sir. Take them at no cost, for it is the least we can do,’ the faerie said kindly, offering the lunes back to him.

Christian exhaled in exasperation, feeling the nudges of other faires who only wanted what was best for him. Voices got louder, and all eyes were on him as he refused to take back the money.

‘No, I insist,’ he replied with a forced smile, before darting away with the bag of fruit and vegetables. The town square was a hive of activity. Taking flight to get away from the crowds, he noticed then his mother settling a dispute.

Of course, Krazonians loved it. They would gather in the square to hear the queen’s verdict on various matters. He remembered passing her this morning, hunched over piles of paper in the drawing room, ink pen in hand. She had mentioned a disagreement between two crop owners that needed to be addressed. So that was the cause for so many excited faires.

A while later Christian was in his room when his mother, Anya, appeared in the doorway looking anxious. The long sleeves of her dress were rolled up, always a bad sign.

‘I want you to help your sister. She thinks I’m punishing her and will not stop complaining. I’ve asked her to welcome a new family and help them set up their new home in Morel village,’ she said. Her wings were taut.

‘She seems unable to grasp the importance of good conduct. I only want her to learn how to deal with these things so she will know in future.’ Christian could see Anya was not amused, and it often happened that she was embarrassed by her daughter’s erratic behaviour. Rhia was helpful when it suited her.

‘If anything I’ll make things worse. You know how stubborn she is.’

‘I know,’ his mother replied, her gaze expectant. ‘This family is from Gloryn.’

Christian sighed. ‘Morel village?’

‘Yes.’

‘Okay, I’ll go,’ he said, following his mother down the corridor. When she went up the staircase he went down, meeting two guards Dill and Rhys at the main doors.

‘Good day,’ said Dill. Rhys nodded once and stood aside,

allowing Christian to pass.

‘I’ve been given orders to help my sister,’ he muttered, but laughed a little when he caught Dill’s smirk.

‘Best of luck,’ the guard said, moving forward to push the door open wide. A gust of warm air met Christian and the sunlight streamed in, glinting off of the guards’ metallic armour.

‘Thank you,’ he said, wings unfurling. ‘I don’t think she will ever learn.’

‘She will, just perhaps not yet.’

‘We’ll see.’



When Christian reached the village it wasn’t difficult to spot her. He slowed down to make a careful landing and made it just in time, as he had to leap forward and catch the planks of wood that fell from his sister’s grip.

‘Have you not got any rope?’

Rhia scowled at him and resumed her struggle with the four planks of wood. She could hardly hold one. Christian placed a hand on her arm.

‘Allow me,’ he offered.

‘I’m guessing mother told you that I need help. I don’t. I can manage,’ Rhia said icily, wandering a few steps away to pick up a tangled rope. ‘And yes, I have rope.’ She looked at him, her grey eyes like flint. Something else was bothering her, but with Rhia in this mood it wasn’t even worth asking.

‘Presumably you’ve refused the help of other færies?’ Christian asked, watching Rhia awkwardly bind the rope around the wood. The brown waves of her hair blew about in the breeze, disguising her face, but it was apparent that she was not happy. Letting out a huff she threw the frayed rope down.

‘You tie it!’ she barked, folding her arms.

Birds sang in the large oaks of Morel village, and a færie was playing a flute.

‘Cheer up Rhia. Help me with this,’ Christian said, tying the knot and bundling the planks into his arms. ‘Where are we going?’

The princess shielded her eyes with one hand and pointed with the other. Following the direction in which his sister was pointing, Christian caught sight of the family who were having the tree house built. Two children sat beneath a tree, laughing together in the shade with their small fragile wings flickering at each funny face they made at each other. Christian's smile faded when he looked back at his sister.

'Is this punishment to you?'

Rhia straightened up. 'I never said it was punishment.' She glanced down and scuffed the ground with her heel. 'But you know what happened the last time I tried to help someone.'

Christian's arms were beginning to tremble and ache. He shifted the wood with his knee.

'I know,' he said quietly, remembering the chaos all too well. The memory was like a poison dart in his chest, spreading a dull pain. 'Look, the sooner we get this done...'

'Yes, I understand. Mother wants a good example to be set,' said Rhia dryly. She led Christian down the hillside to the family.

The parents were Simya and Gray from the lands of Gloryn, Krazonia's ally over in the western region of the kingdom. With the help of Gray and another Krazonian, Christian began work on the tree house while Rhia flew about handing him this and that. Every now and then he'd catch her eye and she would immediately look away, her expression hardening so that no emotion could escape through her eyes.

It took the remainder of the day to complete.

As the sun began to set, one by one the torches were lit around the villages; markets closed and faires were settling down for the night. Christian flew to the ground and ignoring the twinge of a splinter in his finger, admired the work done. The two young ones, who Rhia had mumbled were called Willa and Byron, were flying around the tree, chasing each other in circles while their mother stood below watching them. For a while she conversed quietly with Rhia and Christian could hear her speaking in joyful tones. His sister didn't sound so joyful. To Rhia this would only ever be a duty, not something to be enjoyed.

The sun had nearly vanished, leaving remnants of rose-

coloured cloud across a dark blue sky.

Christian's expression was thoughtful as he gazed across at the landscape. Beyond Krazonia's villages, the Ever-Growing Forest, Bluewater Glen and over the hills of plush green grass the scenery began to change: ground grew rough; soft grasses and cobble stolen by the arid earth of Zania. Christian felt that familiar prick of hatred, like a thorn, dig into his heart. Zania was no ally. Tæ was a hard-hearted, cruel færie, and in her desperation to get hold of the Emerald had driven any chances of reconciliation with Krazonia into the ground. Krazonia had always been one step ahead, until the tragedy four years ago. Somewhere something went wrong and Tæ had almost won.

Although Krazonia had retrieved the Emerald, Christian's father had died for it.

'That stone is a curse,' he said quietly.

Christian was drawn out of these thoughts by sudden movement at the edge of his vision and he turned to see Rhia with her arms raised, both hands clutching either side of her head. Her eyes were half shut as if she were in pain. The new family had already withdrawn to their new tree house, so now it was just the two siblings facing each other.

'Rhia, what is it?' Christian asked urgently.

'It's nothing – nothing,' she snapped, screwing her eyes shut.

'How bad is it? What are you seeing?'

'It's...'

Biting his lip, Christian waited. At times like this there was nothing else he could do. The air around them was gradually cooling, the sun now lost behind the distant mountains of the Hæye region. Night had set in. Rhia relaxed her shoulders. She glanced at her brother, eyes shiny in the torchlights' glow.

In one swift movement her wings were open. 'It was nothing. I'm going home.'

'Rhia wait!' But she was up and gone. Christian shook his head, watching her go.

He bid the new family goodnight and ambled up the hillside, deciding to make his way home on foot tonight.

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# Away with the Færies

Feisty teenager Sky Francis finds herself the reluctant owner of a mystical emerald necklace, which takes her into another world: a Færie Kingdom, and a battle between good and evil.

Alongside Christian Meldin, Prince of Krazonia, Sky sets out on a perilous journey to save the Kingdom before it falls under the influence of an embittered and vengeful queen.

But no challenge comes without risk. Relationships are tested, disturbing truths revealed. Sky must find within her the strength to succeed, and Christian, the strength to forgive.

