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THE

MIRROR

OF

INFINITE

ENDINGS

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Once Upon Another Time



Long ago, when the Magnificent North was just the north, and fae still lived in the heart of the woods, it was believed that the wind was the spirit of a fairy queen who refused to leave the mortal plane after her death.

Some say that this fairy queen stayed for love, unable to say goodbye to her living consort. Others claim it was a curse that kept the queen trapped in the North. But the ones who were there, the ones who still remember the Age of Fae, say that the queen had always been far more enamored with humans than the other fairies had, and it made a strange, uncanny sort of





sense that instead of moving on, she would simply shift into a different form. That she would turn into the wind.

Before, the wind blew in only one direction, from east to west, moving like the sun. And for the most part it still does. But beware if you feel a shift in the wind: Change is on its way.

Long ago, every family knew the signs and sayings:

If the wind moves north to south, the change will most likely be favorable. *A northern wind brings many good things.*

But woe if it moves west to east. *A reverse wind brings mean tidings, wrongness, backward shifts, an upheaval of what should be.*

And if you feel it whirl and twirl, stirring up leaves and flowers and dust and making a great fuss, then anything might happen. *A twisting wind brings what it will . . . magic, madness, or the unmaking of what has been.*

These superstitions were carved around windows or sewn into drapes. But over time, all stories of fairies faded, the way that stories always do, and the truth of the wind turned from myth to superstition and finally to beliefs forgotten by time.

But just because things are forgotten does not mean they are untrue.

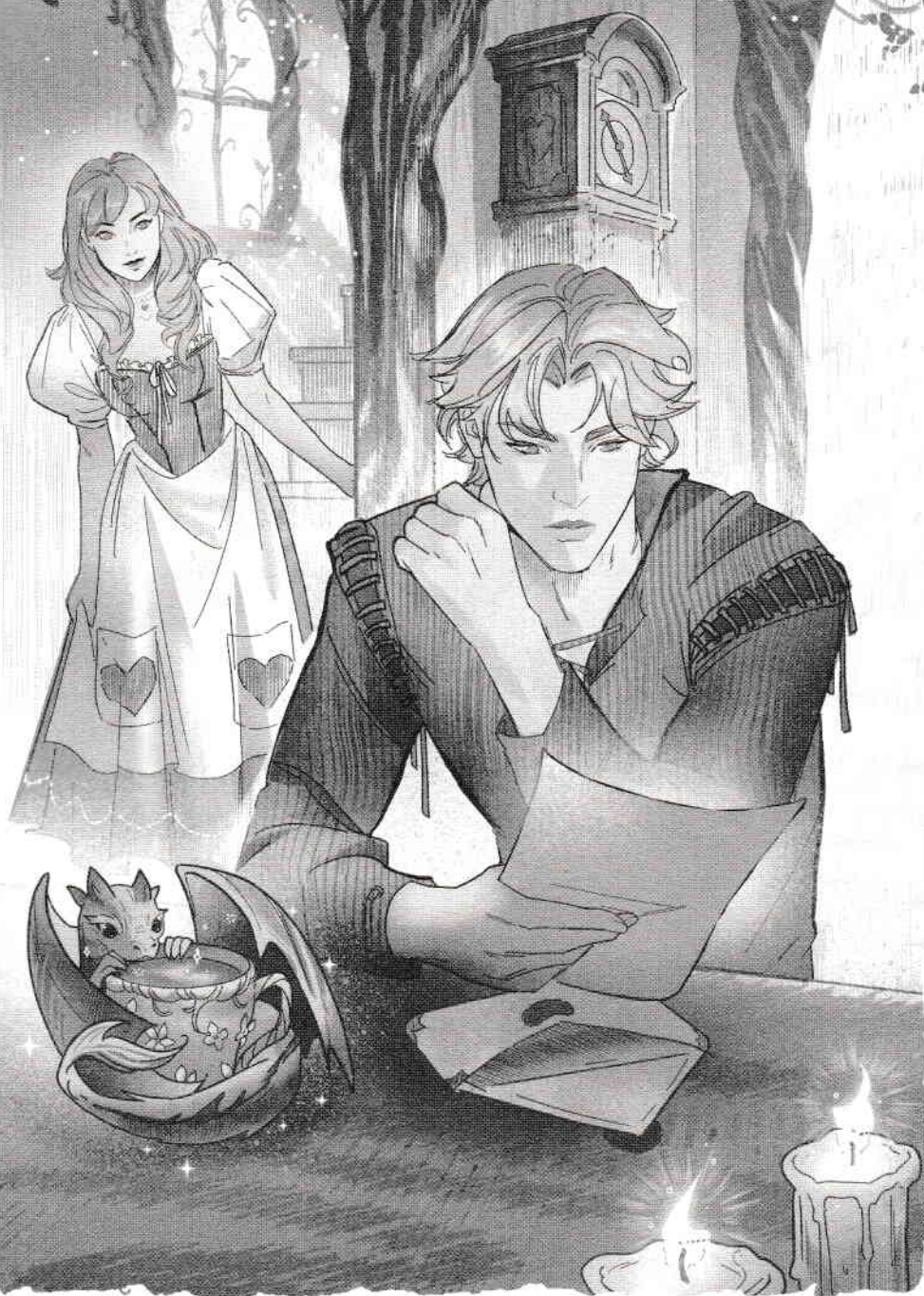
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Evangeline



Evangeline tiptoed down the Hollow's stairs with a whispered "Please don't creak."

She took another careful step, feet barely touching the floor.

It was rather difficult to sneak up on Jacks. As a Fate, he possessed preternatural senses, and the heart-shaped scar on Evangeline's wrist made him ever-aware of where she was. But, on the rare occasion when she was very careful and he just happened to be deep in thought or concentration, she was able to catch him

unawares. It was usually only for a second, maybe two, but she loved those stolen moments when he thought he was alone and he was just Jacks. *Her Jacks.*

The Jacks who'd rewritten history for her, who'd stolen her heart and saved her life and turned her world into a fairytale.

She liked to think he looked a little more human than when they had first met. Not that she would ever tell him. If she said that he seemed softer now, Jacks would take it as an insult. Although, even in his softest moments, there was still an inhuman quality about him. It was in the liquid way he moved, the way his unnaturally blue eyes could suddenly change color.

On this particular morning, she found him sitting inside the Hollow's tavern. He looked as ridiculously handsome and careless as always, dressed in a slightly wrinkled linen shirt and a pair of dark brown trousers with frayed hems. Evangeline paused at the doorway with a pinprick of something that might have been nostalgia, if it was possible to feel nostalgia for something that hadn't yet passed.

The tavern was one of her favorite rooms. She thought of it as the heart of the Hollow, with lots of wood and candles and one wall of windows that looked out on a lake. At night, the lake seemed to be full of stars instead of water, and during the day, it reflected the clouds and the warm, buttery light of the sun.

Food appeared like clockwork whenever the clock in the hall struck a meal or a drink. Things like *Dumplings & Meat, Fish Stew,*



Mystery Stew, Toast and Tea, Porridge, Ale, Beer, Mead, Wine, Cider, Honey Pie, Brambleberry Crisp, and Forest Cakes.

Sometimes the clock possessed more items than there were hours in the day; on other occasions it contained fewer, as if the clock were somehow able to borrow time from the future but then always had to pay it back. Evangeline wasn't entirely sure how the clock worked, but she knew she loved it.

This morning, the tavern smelled like cinnamon-spiced tea and warm, gooey baked toast topped with sweetened strawberries. Because even when the Hollow made tea and toast, it was never just tea and toast. Nothing was ever *just* anything in the Hollow. Everything was a little extra, a little more, or a little other.

It would be easy to say the Hollow was the place where Evangeline and Jacks fell in love, but that would not be entirely true. Jacks had first brought Evangeline here on a cold starlit night when she was covered in blood. He had carried her in his arms with the fortitude of a soldier who would have held her forever if needed.

Everything that night had been torture for Evangeline, but Jacks had been there with her, steady as a compass pointing north. He had brought her to a place that he'd never intentionally brought a girl to before. But this was not when she had fallen for him. The Hollow was the place where Evangeline had stopped falling and was just in it: in love with him.

No more falling. Her feelings were here to stay.



Some loves, once found, are never lost. It's an incredible gift to possess a love like this. A feeling so deep and unwavering that no amount of time, no act of nature or man can destroy it. The love remains, even when the person is gone. Which makes this gift so beautiful and so treacherous. Love like this cannot be lost, but sometimes people can be.

Luckily for Evangeline Fox, the great love of her life was not a person. Jacks was a Fate. She didn't have to worry about him dying. He would never grow old. She would. But Evangeline did a good job of not thinking about that.

Quietly, she watched him a little longer, wanting to take just one more bite out of this perfect moment before moving on to the next and worrying about everything she needed to do before the sun went down that night.

Jacks sat on a stool at the bar, ignoring his delicious breakfast and reading something that looked like a letter, while one of the little baby dragons—which he was also ignoring—heated up his mug of tea with its sparks. Not that Jacks was paying any attention to the mug of tea, either.

He was reading carefully, his blue eyes ocean-bright and sickle-sharp, no softness in them today. Her gaze dropped to his mouth, looking for a hint of a smile or a scowl, but his lips remained perfectly flat. Evangeline could not tell what kind of news Jacks had received.



She wondered who the letter was from. Perhaps Chaos? He was Jacks's closest and oldest friend, but because of the whole vampire situation, Jacks didn't really like him to be near Evangeline. Letters made sense as a form of communication, but Evangeline couldn't really picture Chaos writing letters. He seemed far more likely to step out of dark shadows and offer a cryptic message, which he had actually done to her on occasion.

Curious as to who else the message might be from, Evangeline watched Jacks stare at the letter until she knew that she'd wasted enough time, she'd dallied in this moment a little too long, and finally she called, "Good morning, love!"

Jacks looked up from the letter, mouth tilting into a smile at last. It was small, just a tiny quirk of his mouth, but it grew wider as he looked her over. His blue eyes skimmed her pale blue-and-violet dress, slowly gliding over her hips and the apron tied tight around her waist, and lit up when they reached her face.

"Are you ready for your big day tomorrow?" he asked, tossing the letter aside as if it were nothing. It fell on top of the little dragon who'd been heating up Jacks's tea and—*poof!* In an instant, the note was in flames.

"Oh no! Bruce!" Evangeline cried, for that was the name of the little dragon.

You can't have a pet dragon, Jacks said nearly every day. She was fairly certain he only said it because Jacks didn't like any of