

CHAPTER ONE



Wicked Reform School, Trial Area

Monday 26th April

LORD SPRING

This morning, I either reformed and graduated or remained wicked and died.

At the Wicked Reform School, once you'd reached the end of your sentence, it was the only choice.

Yet I was Lord Quincey Spring, the leader of the despised *Rebel* Dark Fae tribe from the English forests, who'd walked in the shadow of death my entire life. After a decade exiled and locked up in this American prison of a reform school because my tribe had been sentenced for rebelling against the Unseelie Queen, I wasn't a model student.

This term alone, I'd had to sit a special lesson invented just for me: The Problem Prankster. How to think beyond *What Would Loki Do?*

Let's just say that I hadn't planned a graduation party.

My golden wings fluttered, and I wrinkled my nose at the scent of tangy blood that stained the wooden floor. I edged my foot away from the patch of scarlet (I'd spent ages polishing my boots), and glanced out over the Trial Area that'd been adapted into a stage for the graduation ceremony.

The fae were ranked like an army on parade, if that army were dressed in steam punk military uniforms with slashes in the sweeping coats for their burnished wings. Their emerald eyes were fixed forward, and their pale faces were as emotionless as we'd been taught to be.

Almost like they weren't here to be executed.

My heart clenched at the thought of what was about happen to *my* people.

Why hadn't I been able to save them?

If my older brothers had been here...if they hadn't been killed or exiled...maybe together we'd have led them to freedom. But what did I know about being a leader?

Please, even though I'd die today, let the rest of the fae survive.

When my wings drooped and my shoulders slumped, Radley (or Lord Brooke as I never bothered to call him...okay, as I sometimes *mockingly* called him...more like *Rads* for short), grabbed me by the scruff of the neck and pulled me straighter again.

Radley had a thing for manhandling me but then he had the muscles for it.

I peeked at Radley, as he adjusted my golden scimitar that was slung at my waist and then the swan clips in my hair, which had been digging into my scalp.

Somehow, he always knew what was hurting me.

Radley was my best mate. In fact, since I was a kid, he'd been like family. The type who were overprotective with a hint of psychopath mixed in. Like me, Radley wore our uniform, which was a long coat with glowing runes on the lapel that stopped us from flying without permission and the swan crest of the House of Fae. The same crest was emblazoned on the belt of our khaki pants, and could be spelled with either restrictions or rewards.

You knew that you were screwed when even your pants could punish you.

Radley was taller than me, and his gleaming emerald eyes were bright against the dark of his ebony skin. His sweeping wings arched over me like he could protect me, despite everything. I'd braided his hair this morning into a warrior style because this was a battle, even if it ended in our deaths.

The other paranormals in the reform school called this day *the culling*, but we fae knew it as the *Day of the Wicked*.

When you reached twenty-five in the reform school, there were only two options: *reform or die*.

The spring sun shone hot across my translucent skin; my eyelashes fluttered against the light. Clouds flew across the cornflower sky like swans. My heart ached at the phoenixes calling to each other, as the bird-like creatures swooped overhead, in haunting melodies.

I wondered if the phoenixes had ever tried to escape through the high invisible barrier, which trapped us in the school. There were rumors that a dragon once had, only to crash. There were always whispers in a prison like this. It was judging between the truth and lies that was hard.

"Brothers in wings," a soft voice said from my other side, as a wing brushed against mine.

I shivered.

Oh yeah, wicked.

"Brothers in wings," Radley and I muttered in response like answering a prayer.

I turned to Felix (or Lord River as I sometimes called him...*Lix* for short), and cold gripped me at the way that he forced himself to smile, pushing his tumble of hair out of his light green eyes. His caramel skin glowed in the heat. He was gorgeous but he was always too buried in books and intent on proving that a Forest Fae could be as bright as a Court Fae to realize it.

There were many tribes of fae, but only one Court ruled by a Queen, and she was a despot. The Court Fae were tyrannical and cruel, believing that you mated for life. If tribes rebelled against Court rules, then they were punished.

Like my Forest Fae.

Felix was as close a friend to me as Radley because the three of us had been sacrificed to the Court Fae as kids. At least we'd always had each other to love.

I scanned the Trial Area. The main campus with its modern buildings was behind, and the school's vast gates in front. Yet the gates were warded and guarded.

There was no escape from this.

"You know," I glanced at Felix, "I'm starting to seriously doubt the claim that you're as magically *lucky* as your name."

Felix grinned. "Hey, Felix does mean *fortunate*, and Fortune Magic is powerful."

Radley grunted. "It also means *fertile*. Is there anything that you want to tell us?"

Felix blushed, and I loved the way that it spread down his chest. He circled around us. "Let's stick with lucky..."

When Felix stumbled, Radley caught his arm and pulled him to his chest.

The other Houses were right to fear the Fae Lords: *we were fierce*.

Felix gave a quiet laugh, scratching the back of his head, which was his tell for when he was nervous. He'd been trying to hide it for my sake like he always did, but I knew him like a brother. We'd spent our childhoods sharing a tiny room that hadn't been much more than a cell.

The Queen had made a mistake when she'd sentenced us to this reform school, which was meant to be for the wickedest paranormals of the supernatural world. How had she thought that it could break us, when we'd already suffered in a prison for most of our lives? Just because that prison had been called the Dark Fae Court, rather than a reform school didn't change the truth.

They'd made us too strong to be *reformed*.

Really, well done on the irony.

I swallowed, steeling myself to look out at the crowds. Staff and students had gathered to watch the ceremony. I avoided looking at the staff members, especially the stern-faced demon, the Dean of Discipline. Vampires, wolf shifters, and witches crowded the stage. I winced at the excited betting on who'd survive and how the execution would take place, which was led by huge shaggy-haired beserkers, (my odds to survive were currently 200:1, and the most hoped-for execution appeared to be flaying...*bastards*).

Well, this was what we got for making ourselves feared by the other Houses in order to survive. As the only all-male and English House, we'd always been the outsiders.

It took a serious crime to be sentenced here. Most of the other students, whether bear shifters or warlocks, were brutal and deadly. I'd learned to act like I was twice my size, just to stop myself from being torn in half every time that I stood in line for lunch.

A vampire pure blood with his chin tilted up arrogantly, even though he was swathed in dark robes to protect his delicate skin from the sun, sneered at me. His fangs glistened.

I snarled at him because I was having one of those savage moments that broke **Court Dictate 203: No snarling or growling**. I took a deep breath and then growled for good measure.

The Court Fae had taken Radley, Felix, and me as Hostage Lords as kids. We'd been the youngest (okay, *dispensable*), sons in our tribe. The Court had demanded that we be handed over and raised away from the forest, fostered at Court, and kept as a guarantee that the Rebel tribe would never raise up against the Queen's Court.

If they did, then we'd be executed.

Of course, my tribe had *still* rebelled in what came to be known as the *Love Rebellion*. Yet the Court Fae had fostered us Forest Lords for so long that they couldn't bring themselves to kill us. Instead, they'd sent us to the Wicked Reform School along with all the other male Forest Fae who weren't yet twenty-five.

But they'd made certain to traumatize us first by slaughtering our brothers in front of us.

I bit my lip hard, struggling to breathe.

In and out, in and out...

My lungs burned with their familiar illness, as I fought for breath. Next to me, Radley stiffened, and Felix swept in front of me to shield me from the view of the ghoulish crowd.

"You're okay," Felix whispered. "We've survived because you're strong. This doesn't make you weak."

Felix never let others see my sickness, which had grown in me since I was a kid. It weighed me down, settling on my chest and stopping me from transforming into my fae form. Something was wrong with my own magic, which attacked itself.

I truly was the worthless youngest son.

Radley pressed his hand gently to my chest, and at the same time, an unfamiliar scent like hot ginger warmed through me. My eyelids fluttered, and I sighed. The pain and tightness eased, and the attack ended.

Yet why did my magic feel more powerful and dangerous, rather than weaker after every attack?

My nose wrinkled. *Where was the aroma of ginger coming from?*

Felix gripped my hand. "We've still got about ten seconds before we're called up to *graduate*, Quince. We can think of some way to escape, right?"

I raised my eyebrow. "It's not as if we're guarded by armed ogres, on a stage surrounded with bloodthirsty witches, shifters, and dwarfs (the dicks), in a warded reform school, so I'm sure that we can make a break for it..."

"Lord of the Sarcasm, you're not cute." Radley gripped me by the neck.

"Yeah, I am." I leaned closer.

"Do you need a spanking?"

"Does anyone ever *need* a spanking...? Plus, who's the boss here, Rads?" I raised one elegant finger.

Radley's grip on my neck tightened. "Certainly not you, short wings. Has that pulling rank crap ever worked since we were kids?"

I cocked my head. "*Ehm*, nope. But hope springs eternal."

"We could pray to Belenus..." Felix said, thoughtfully.

Belenus, The Shining God, was our Celtic God. He was sacred to the Forest Fae, and hated by the Court.

Would he even recognize a Hostage Lord with my illness as one of his people?

"Never pray to a god for help." I crossed my arms. Quinn had taught me the cautionary stories late at night of the gods who were glorious but terrifying. "They're not there to do what we ask them, and what if we don't like their answer?"

This was our last time together. *Our last chance.*

My breath caught. I wouldn't...*couldn't*...say it. *But we all knew it.* "Whatever happens is the will of the forest. I'm honored that you've stood by my wing. I wish that I alone could die for you."

"Don't you dare say that." Radley's voice was suddenly rough with tears. "I'd burn the world to ash for you."

"I don't doubt it," I said, softly.

Radley smelled of wood and rich leather, as I pressed my lips to his. My heart clenched, as he wrenched away his head.

"I won't say goodbye," he whispered.

My eyes smarted with tears. "I rather thought that I was attempting to say it with my lips instead."

Radley huffed, but Felix snatched my arm, pulling me into a hug.

"I'll find you after death," he murmured against my neck. "They can't part brothers in wings."

I nodded, stroking across his shaking back.

All of a sudden, the ranks of fae began to beat their wings together like a drum roll. My heartbeat sped up — *thud — thud — thud* — to match its rhythm.

It's here now... any moment Wells, the Head of the House, will call my name...

"The Marquess of Spring, Lord Quincey Spring, step forward. It's time to judge the wicked," announced Wells with a haughty flourish.

I pushed away from Felix, fixing on my Patented Sneer (see, *fearsome fae*), and staring across at the Head of the House, the Duke of Wells.

Wells was a Court Fae, who I'd feared taking my lessons from as a kid because of his dreaded pop quizzes on etiquette, manners, and other things that'd made me want to blow a raspberry in his face just to see his stunned expression. He'd spent the last decade in this school, attempting to reform me.

As usual, Wells appeared as unruffled and elegant as if he was taking tea with the Queen, rather than waiting to find out if today was an execution, rather than a graduation. He was old enough to be our father, and acted like he was merely guiding us out of kindness. His smart military outfit gleamed in all black; his scimitar was neatly at his side. He was tall, pale, and as snootily perfect as a swan.

Was it messed-up that I wanted to wreck his composure, break that cool mask of his, and prove that I was still a Forest Fae?

Around the stage, the school was as elegant and neat as Wells. Fountains *tinkled* between manicured lawns and trees, as if this was an academy, rather than a prison.

Yet it didn't matter how beautiful the setting, if the reality was your ugly death.

An execution could take place in a palace, as much as in a ditch.

I shuddered, desperate to smell the sweet scent of the wild forest just once more before I died, even though my memory of it had faded after so long away.

I missed the trees and my home like I'd been hollowed out.

If I was going to die today, then it'd be as a Forest Fae, and not a Court one.

I grinned. "You know, I'm not crazy about being labeled."

The fae broke off their drumbeat in shock. Wells' smugness wavered, and the crowd fell silent.

Okay, that wasn't good.

All of a sudden, the spicy ginger scent wrapped around me again, and I stumbled towards it like I was mesmerized. When I looked up, I met the ruby gaze of a succubus.

Who was she?

The succubus was beautiful with golden hair that coiled like snakes, and a white satin dress, which fluttered around her as if she was licked by wisps of frozen flame. But I should've recoiled from her because she also wore the swan badge of both the House of Fae and the Queen's Court. It meant that she was a new staff member, and I *hated* the professors who oppressed and controlled us.

Yet Professor Succubus wasn't watching this spectacle with excitement or dark enjoyment like the other staff. She shook with both rage and grief like it hurt her to witness it. When she offered me a sad smile, the burning inside me flared.

I smiled back, longing to march off the stage and instead, drag Professor Succubus into my arms. My dick twitched, hardening in my pants.

If I was going to die, I needed to hold her at least once. Yet I didn't even understand where those feelings came from, after all, I'd been kept *pure* and *untouched* by female fae for the sake of my future bonded. Except, I *did* know because it was her *smile* that made her truly beautiful. No one had smiled at any of us fae like that since we'd arrived in the Wicked Reform School. We were rebels, and we didn't deserve smiles that spoke of warmth and understanding.

Emotion was a weakness, and we had to mask it.

Bonding to a female was nothing but slavery: I'd soon been taught that at the Fae Court. Brotherhood was the only thing that I could trust.

Yet Professor Succubus' smile was like *hope* in the midst of the despair of this Day of the Wicked. I drew it close into the place that burned inside me.

Then I took a deep breath. My eyes glittered with a malevolence that blazed through me.

Wells had battled to *tame* me. But I was a Dark and wild Fae. I'd prove that I was free even at the end.

When I drew my scimitar, the ogres snarled and circled closer, but Wells waved them back. His cold gaze met mine.

Then I closed my eyes, humming "Don't Fear the Reaper."

*How many times would I have to dance to this song and mean it?
Although honestly, reapers were dicks.*

I raised my scimitar, spinning across the stage and losing myself in the dance of my people. My skin prickled, and I was flushed with warmth. In front of the captive audience, I leapt and pirouetted, slicing my sword through the air in the age-old Forest Dance that Wells despised because it was the tradition of my tribe.

My heart swelled at the grins on the fae's once blank faces, as their feet stomped now in time to my own. I grinned too.

You could take the fae out of the forest, but not the forest out of the fae.

It felt like I was being burned alive from the inside; my legs were like jello. I knew that I was pushing myself too hard but when I was being killed in about...*hey, a minute now...*what did it matter?

Then my knees buckled, and I collapsed at Wells' feet.

Brilliant, I was just where he loved me to be.

I struggled onto my knees.

The fae fell silent.

My ragged breathing was loud, as I gasped after oxygen like a predator chasing prey.

You can do it...just one more breath...in...out...in...come on...

White lights danced in front of my eyes, and I slumped forward. My vision grayed.

Then Felix and Radley were kneeling either side of me, and their wings cradled me. Radley's large hand circled over my chest, as Felix massaged my back, and the pressure eased. When my breathing steadied, I raised my head.

"He only called *my* name," I rasped.

Radley shrugged.

Felix snuggled closer. "When weren't we wing by wing? Sorry, we'll just have to...you know...together."

He meant die together.

I bit my lip to hold back my tears because I wouldn't allow Wells or the other students to see them.

I could act like a Marquess...sometimes.

When Professor Succubus caught my eye again, her jaw clenched. I expected her to look away, rejecting me after my dance. But instead, she

determinedly held my gaze like she was saying that she too was with me *wing by wing*, even though she was pale like she was about to hurl.

The staff loved these public punishments. *Why was she different?*

“Now you have your moment of rebellion out of your system,” Wells drawled, flicking imaginary fluff off his sleeve, “shall we get on with the ceremony?”

I inclined my head. “Your Grace, the most Noble Duke of Wells.” Time for the *pious face*; he loved that one. “I await the will of the House of Fae and our most acclaimed Queen with bated breath.” Now *holy face* (another one of Wells’ favorites).

Wells scrunched up his nose. “Don’t hold it too long, we don’t want you passing out on us just yet, *hmm?* Can I be assured that you’re not about to burst into a jazz improvisation, rock ballad, or exotic dance? Perhaps, you wish to entertain us with a Shakespearean tragedy before you graduate?”

“Give me another horse! Bind up my wounds! Have mercy,” Felix deadpanned. “Shakespeare’s kind of *my* thing.”

Wells sighed. *It was brilliant to have shattered his perfect mask.*

He rubbed the bridge of his nose. “Lord River, enough of your tribe’s savagery. I know that you were taught better at Court. I’ve spent years breaking you of such wickedness.”

Felix frowned. “S-shakespeare’s *c-civilised*.”

I stiffened. When Felix stuttered, I knew that he *was* close to breaking. Lock us in solitary, whip our wings, or threaten to kill us, but *never* insult Felix’s Shakespeare.

“It’s from the non-magical human world, and you learning it goes against at least five of the Court Dictates,” Wells snapped. “When you graduate from here, you’ll become Court Fae. What would the Queen think if she heard you spouting nonsense? The fae who choose to bond to you will be much harsher than I, if you can’t at least *pretend* to be reformed.”

When Wells’ cool gaze met mine, I knew what he was pleading for: he knew that I wasn’t reformed enough to be married into the Court. Wells had been one of the fae who’d begged the Queen not to execute us after the rebellion and he didn’t want to murder us now.

Instead, he was desperate for us to hide our true emotions and act like perfect dolls. If he ever experienced anything as messy as the feeling of being *desperate*.

Why did it matter so much that he save us?

I'd tried Wells' approach as a kid, and I'd still always fallen short. I couldn't manage it for the rest of my bonded life. I didn't have a clue what bonded love was...or if it even existed...but it *couldn't* be that, right?

"On my feathers, I'm just excited about bonding now. The ladies of the Court sound like *keepers*," I gritted out.

Wells stared at me. "Excellent. The Bonding List for the one hundred fae graduating today has already been vetted and decided. There's equal excitement at the Court to welcome you all to your new home...or in your case *home*."

He never had understood my sense of humor.

"It was never our home," Radley growled; his sharp teeth glistened.

Wells ignored him. "Let's just get your graduation officially over with, and then your new life can begin."

I battled to keep myself still.

I was the youngest son of a Duke. I knew that the rest of the tribe didn't respect, know, or want me (*wow, that still smarted*), because I'd grown up away from them at Court. But I was still their leader.

If this was a war, then I'd lead them into battle. *But how could I lead them to their deaths, rather than a new life?*

If I'd known that becoming a grown fae meant decisions like this one, between condemning my tribe to death or forced bonds without love to cruel Court Fae, then I'd never have envied my older brother so much. I shook because to free them, I'd have to become the disappointment that they'd always thought me.

"That's all fascinating, Your Grace, but I won't make a choice for the rest of the House of Fae." I steeled myself, before I hollered across at the golden ranks words, which I knew would shame me forever, "I relinquish my Claim of Lordship over you. You're free to choose yourselves, whether you wish to graduate or are executed. I'm sorry, I wish more than anything that I could save you but instead, I grant you freedom of choice."

Silence.

Sweat dripped down the back of my neck and between my shoulder blades.

"What are you doing?" Radley hissed.

"You'll be an outcast." Felix shuffled closer; his light eyes were wide with worry and shock.

Amid the sea of disapproving faces in the crowd, however, Professor Succubus' expression flickered for a moment with admiration, before she

schooled it to blankness. I blinked. No one but Radley and Felix had *ever* looked at me like that. When Wells wrenched back my head by the hair, agonizingly digging in the clasps, my moment of connection with her gave me the strength to meet his furious gaze.

“Your brother, Quinn, Duke of Spring, was one of the *best* fae that I’ve ever known. For his sake, I’ve tried to help you. Do you not see, wicked boy, how disappointed he’d be that you’ve abandoned your people?” Wells demanded.

I wet my dry lips. “I’m freeing them.” Wells’ fingers tightened in my hair, and I winced. “If you love my brother so much, why’d you let the Queen try to force him into a bond?”

Wells stiffened. “The Queen believed that your brother would be a perfect bond, just as you’d be for the Countess Pond.”

Where was the Countess? I thanked Belenus that at least she wasn’t standing next to Wells like I’d expected.

“Brilliant decision.” My eyes narrowed. “Absolute *genius*. If you hadn’t tried to force love on him...and me...then the Forest Fae wouldn’t have rebelled. You know that we don’t believe in a single partner for life, right? We love many fae in different ways. But what does it matter what savage fae like us think? You *forced* my tribe into rebelling. It’s your fault that my brothers died, and we’re locked up.” My pulse was too loud in my ears; and my eyes blurred with tears. “And my fault too,” I added in a whisper.

I remembered the night that Quinn and my other brothers had broken into the Court to free me.

Radley, Felix, and I had already been huddled in the corner of our room, as sounds of battle had raged outside.

“W-what’s h-happening? Who’d dare attack the Q-queen and Court?” Felix’s hand had stolen into mine.

I’d clasped it to my chest, pulling him onto my lap. “They’re stupid, Lix, whoever they are. She’ll rip off their wings.”

We’d all flinched.

“*I’ll* rip off their wings first, if they try and hurt you.” Radley had prowled to his feet, standing guard over me.

When the door had banged open, blasted off its hinges by magic, we’d jumped. Then an imperious Forest Fae had swept into our room; his scimitar had glowed in the gloom.

Radley had growled, and his fists had clenched.

Yet to my shock, the Forest Fae had grinned, dashing towards us and holding out his wing in familiar greeting. "I've found you!" *Why was he thrumming with joy? Why did his eyes gleam with tears?* "Come on, we have to go now."

And just for a moment, I'd hesitated. As Radley had refused to budge, I'd recoiled.

The Forest Fae's eyes had widened with a hurt that he couldn't mask, before they'd filled with a compassion that was even harder to take because I'd recognized him then like slowly rising from sleep.

How hadn't I recognized my own brother, Quinn?

I'd never even known our parents, but Quinn had raised me like *he'd* been my dad, until I'd been abandoned at Court. *And I'd hesitated to take his wing...*

"More apologies have wept through me than trees in our forest that I couldn't save you before. But are we not now brothers?" Quinn's sadness had shaken my own tears down my cheeks.

When he'd held out his wing to me again, this time I'd reached for it.

Only, now the soldiers of the Court Fae had been rushing into the room, overpowering Quinn and beating him to the floor. He hadn't taken his gaze from mine, however, like he'd never wanted to forget what I looked like and knew how precious those last moments between us would be.

I'd fought to reach my older brother again, but Wells had pinned me against the wall. Later, Wells had forced me onto my knees to watch as my three older brothers were executed and Quinn was exiled to a land of gods and monsters, so far away that I'd never see him again.

Today, I was on my knees in front of Wells once more, awaiting my own execution.

I slipped my scimitar onto the floor in front of me, caressing my hand across it. It was the only thing that I owned, which had belonged to my dad. In a fit of sentimentality, Wells had allowed Quinn to pass on dad's sword to me. I'd always seen it as a consolation prize for being sent away.

A fae was never parted from their weapon, except by death.

I bowed my head, and next to me, so did my best mates. I should've known that they would've kept their promise to never let go of my wings.

Dizzy, my heartbeat raced. Cold flooded me, as I sensed the green-skinned ogres circling closer with their swords raised. The largest guard caught me looking and winked.

Sadistic bastard.

The ogres' stench of mud and rotting flesh hit me, and I gagged.

Wells pulled out a graduation scroll from his pocket. "You're my flock of hundred wicked boys. I've spent a decade proving to the Court that there are more effective methods to control and curb rebellious impulses of youth than brutality. On the name of the Queen, reform now and graduate. Return as perfect bonded partners and proud members of the Court. Your Forest Fae heritage has been washed clean. You need no longer even remember—"

Radley touched the scroll, and his magic burned it to ash. It disintegrated in Wells' hand.

The crowd snickered.

"Well said," Felix muttered.

"I forgot once who I was," my voice was steadier than I expected, when all I could see was the memory of Quinn's hurt expression at the moment that I hadn't taken his wing, "and I won't again. I'm a Forest Fae, and I'll die as one."

"Then you'll die," Wells said, icily.

The ogre booted me in the back, holding me down, as he pressed his sword against my neck. I hissed, as its cold iron pressed against my skin.

Iron burned fae. *Didn't they think that decapitation was enough of a punishment?* Tears prickled my eyes at the smarting agony. But then, this was what they'd done to my brothers.

Wells truly was sick to choose this as his method of killing me.

Clack — clack — clack.

Wells' polished boots stepped around me. I hated that his boots would be the last thing that I saw.

"It tires me that you could even ruin my attempt to scare you into behaving. I'm not going to kill you." *Wait...what in Belenus' name did he mean?* When the sword eased at my neck, why did that scare me more than anything so far? "This was just the mock run of your graduation."

I sat up too fast in my outrage, and Radley caught me, before I toppled over.

"Like a mock exam...?" I growled. "Wonderful. Really, I didn't need the practice."

Wells clasped his hands smartly behind his back, and his smile was so malicious that it made me shiver. "Oh, but *I* did. Now I know that you Lords will sacrifice yourself as long as you're *free*, and your tribe have

choice. This is your last week in the Wicked Reform School. It's my final chance to break you, and luckily for me, I have some interesting new methods." I groaned: *brilliant*. "Saturday is the first of May, the start of summer, and your *true* Day of the Wicked. You may have given up your Claim of Lordship, but if you're not reformed, then your entire tribe will be judged wicked. Just like you did with your brothers, you'll watch as they're executed. Only after they all lie slaughtered, will you get the chance to die as well."

"Wait, you *can't*." I staggered to stand, but Wells shoved me back onto my knees with a *crack*.

"I'm Head of your House: *I can*. How do you like being pranked for once?" *Did he truly just claim that staging our deaths was karmic prank revenge...?* Wells' lips twitched as he glanced at Felix. "Are you certain that you're not in fact jinxed?"

When Felix launched himself at Wells, Wells stumbled back. Radley caught Felix, pulling him into a tight embrace. I curled my wings around myself.

How had I allowed myself to be tricked?

Court Dictate 307: *Emotions are your curse, and a blessing to your enemy.*

I'd shown Wells just how he could hurt me. He'd tried to teach me for years to mask my true self.

Well, didn't I feel the idiot.

But still, at least a Forest idiot, rather than a Court idiot.

Yet now, I only had a week before the true graduation ceremony, where I'd no longer be merely sacrificing my own life, but risking every Forest Fae's execution.

DISCOVER WHAT HAPPENS NEXT TO QUINCEY AND WHO SURVIVES THE HOUSE OF FAE...