# Chapter 1: A Fake Love Note

“Emerys!” Angel shouted, stomping through the halls of the Elven palace. “If you don’t quit hiding and come out right now, then, so help me, I’m going to kill you!”

“Angel? What’s the problem?”

Startled, she whirled around to face Evariste.

“*Emerys* is the problem! I can’t *believe* him. We came to him for help breaking your seal, and he thinks *now* is the time for pranks?”

“Wait. What exactly did he do?”

“*This*!” She shoved a paper at him. “Did he *seriously* think I would fall for this? It’s obvious that *he’s* the one who wrote it, not you.”

Evariste glanced down at the paper.

*How* dare *he! I told Emerys about the condition on the seal so he could help me find a way to break it* without *using the built-in condition. Instead he forges a love note to Angel from me?!*

Evariste clenched his jaw. “I’ll take care of this.”

Angel frowned. “I’m the one he pranked. I don’t need you to handle it for me.”

“Oh I know you can handle Emerys. But, I think I know why he did this and it’s not what you’re probably thinking.”

“You know why he pulled this stupid prank, *now*, of all times? Why?”

Evariste hesitated and shifted his weight. “There are some things I haven’t told you yet, about myself and about the seal,” he hedged. “I promise I’ll tell you eventually, but for now, can you please just let me handle this situation with Emerys?”

She frowned. “Is everything alright?”

“It’s fine. But now really isn’t the right time to talk about it. Can you please trust me on that?”

She paused. “Alright. But you’d better make sure Emerys knows not to pull something like this again. We don’t have time for distractions right now.”

“Oh don’t worry, he’s going to be *very* sorry.”

As Evariste walked away, Angel’s thoughts drifted back to the fake love note. Loathe as she was to admit it, it had rattled her. She *had* fallen for it, if only for a brief moment, before she recognized Emerys’ handwriting. Those words, which she had momentarily thought were Evariste’s -- that declaration that he was *in love* with her -- they’d brought out feelings she didn’t want to think about, things she hadn’t felt since the almost-kiss.

She had once questioned if perhaps his time trapped in the mirror had affected his mind and that *that* was why he’d almost kissed her. But now he’d been out of the mirror for months and it was clear his captivity hadn’t affected his sanity. So then *why* would he have tried to kiss her? And…why was she *disappointed* that the declaration of love hadn’t truly been from him?

*Get ahold of yourself, Angel!,* she scolded. *You said it yourself -- there’s no time for distractions right now. We’re in the middle of a war with the chosen and the most important thing right now is finding a way to break Evariste’s seal. Now is* not *the time to wonder about these feelings. If Evariste is going to go deal with Emerys’ strange behavior, I should go find Alastryn and see what she knows about magical seals.*

And yet, as she walked off to find Alastryn, relieved to have a specific task to focus on, a part of her was still stuck on that almost-kiss. Now that Emerys’ stupid prank had brought those confusing feelings back to the surface, try as she might, she could no longer seem to just ignore the obvious conclusion -- *Is it actually possible…did Evariste try to kiss me because…he has romantic feelings for me? No, that…that can’t be it. It just…*can’t*.*