

The Voice

The Voice

By N.B. Martens

Copyright © 2025: N.B. Martens

Author: N.B. Martens

Illustrator: N.B. Martens

Fantasy novel

ISBN: 9789403828114

All rights reserved. Nothing in this edition may be reproduced, stored in an automated database, or made public in any form or by any means, whether electronic, mechanical, by photocopies, recordings, or any other means, without the prior written permission of the rightholder

The beginning of it all_____	8
The childhood best friend_____	13
The concussion_____	20
The flashback to the past_____	28
The fighting best friends_____	36
The bully_____	42
The argument_____	47
The adoption_____	53
The homework_____	61
The love confession_____	69
The disappearance_____	76
The brothers_____	83
The hooded figure returns_____	90
The kiss_____	97
The boyfriend_____	105
The dinner_____	113
The confusion_____	122
The old friend_____	130
The broken heart_____	137
The memories_____	144
The reuniting friends_____	151
The birthday boys_____	159
The soulmate_____	168
The reveal_____	176
The forgotten goodbye_____	184
The crush_____	192
The hug_____	201
The library_____	210
The meeting_____	218

The project_____	226
The sick teacher_____	234
The surprise_____	243
The blast from the past_____	251
The conversation_____	260
The unfolding_____	269
The meetings_____	277
The changing voice_____	285
The powers_____	292
The attack_____	300
The Hepantoondor_____	308
The last name_____	317
The flower_____	324
The seats_____	332
The dealbreaker_____	340
The father_____	348
The tutor_____	357
The unknowing brother_____	365
The confirmation_____	373
The moon_____	381
The prom announcement_____	390
The shopping_____	398
The day they told their parents_____	407
The prom_____	415
The turning point_____	424
Characters_____	433

The beginning of it all

There once was a girl named Layla, who went to bed, excited to see her friends the next morning.

When she woke up, she put her clothes on and went to her friends Nicky and Lola, who were hanging out in the backyard, and suddenly Layla heard a voice.

'What was that?' she asked. But the rest didn't hear the voice, so she thought she had just imagined it and didn't think about it again.

A few hours later, she went home to go eat dinner because she had eaten lunch at her friend's house.

When she went to bed, she thought about the voice again.

What if it was a warning of some sort? she thought. *Well, if it was that important, I would have remembered it,* she made herself believe. So, she went to sleep, not knowing it would come back.

In the middle of the night, she woke up, hearing the voice again.

'Come to me.'

Come to whom and why? she thought.

Her mind was swirling with thoughts, but eventually she was able to fall back asleep.

The next morning she was woken by the sound of her mom's voice.

'Honey, breakfast's ready!' she heard her mom say. So she went downstairs to eat breakfast, but when she got downstairs, she thought she saw a light flash behind her. She turned around to look, but didn't see anything.

And as she went to the kitchen she was in some sort of trance, while thinking about the light.

Her father caught her staring.

'What are you looking at?'

'Noth- nothing,' she said, a little flustered.

When Layla went back to her room, she saw a glowing ball levitating in the air and as she went closer to it, it began to glow even more and more, up to the point where she had to squint her eyes.

She got close enough and she hesitated for a split second, but then she touched it with just one finger. Immediately she was teleported to a different world; it was bright and the colors were vibrant, like a mystical creature had turned it into something breathtaking. Immediately she started to explore the place, but then she saw a boy that looked like an elf, but didn't have any wings.

'What are you doing here?' he asked, a smile creeping onto his face. 'I haven't seen you here yet.'

So, she told him the whole story of how she got there.

'Well, that must have been fun,' he said, a hint of sarcasm in his voice. 'Can you tell me something about yourself?'

'Sure, my name is Layla. I'm fifteen years old and I'm at the top of my class. How about you?'

'I am also fifteen years old, my name is Fagoring and I am *one of* the smartest of my class,' Fagoring said.

'That's an interesting name, no offense, but do all people here have those weird names?' she asked, trying not to insult him.

'Yes, do all of your people have those short boring names?' he asked, kind of annoyed.

'Well, yeah, but I live in a very different world,' she said, trying to defend herself.

'Whatever,' he said.

After that they parted ways and Layla started to search for different people, ones that would actually like her.

She came across what she thought looked like a school. So she went inside, to check if there would be people inside and there were, but they all looked like that guy that she had met earlier. They all had those pointy ears.

She went to the secretary to see if she could get herself enrolled at the school for the time she'd be there, she had always been one who loved learning.

While walking, there were a lot of weird and interested looks on her, but eventually she got enrolled and got her books and a backpack.

She barely made it to her first class, and when she walked in, Fagoring was sitting next to the only empty seat, so she sat next to him the whole period, without talking, only focusing on the lesson.

After her second period it was already time for recess and a lot of people started asking how she got here and why she looked so different. Every time she answered with the same words and was getting tired, eventually a girl from her class showed up and told the people to knock it off and go away. Her name was Reavespera and she was actually very nice, they became friends instantly.

They walked together to class and when they got there Fagoring was already sitting in his spot, looking more annoyed than ever seeing them walk in the classroom together. She sat down next to him again, because you have to sit next to the same person in every class. But this time he found himself trying to talk to her, but she ignored him.

When class was over, she went back to Reavespera, she told her what had happened.

'Well, that might have been because he's my boyfriend and wanted to find out how we met,' she explained.

'That makes sense. But why is he your boyfriend? He's so infuriating and it doesn't take long to get him mad.'

'How would you know that? You only sat beside him in class and haven't even spoken to him,' she said. 'Besides, I like him and nothing is wrong with him, he's definitely not the guy you're talking about. You're probably just mistaking him for someone else.'

'Oh he *is* the person I'm talking about, trust me. I met him when I came to this world for the first time, and he was acting like a total jerk. I'm happy that you have someone to be in love with, but as long as he doesn't change his attitude I am *not* talking to him,' she said.

Eventually Reavespera gave up on defending her boyfriend and changed the subject to something they both agreed on: that they would still be friends no matter what happened. But little did they know, one of them would find out soon she didn't agree with it.

After school they met up at the park a few blocks away from school. But what she didn't know was that Fagoring was going to be there too, because Reavespera wanted to make them get along.

So when she got to the park she was stunned to see him there.

'And what is *he* doing here?' Layla asked.

'He's just here to apologize, right Fagoring?'

'I'm not going to apologize, I have said that a hundred times. It's not my fault she called my name weird, she should be the one apologizing,' he said.

Reavespera looked like she had seen a ghost.

'Why didn't you tell me this earlier? I didn't know she called your name weird.'

'I can explain, I just hadn't heard a name like that earlier because it's my first time here and he was the first person I ran into and besides I said no offense.'

'Well, there's something you don't know about him yet,' Reavespera said, glancing at him, as if to make sure she could tell Layla.

'What?'

'He used to be bullied for his name, they kept comparing him to Friganoira's, since his name starts with an f too, which isn't

very common out here. Friganoira's are creatures that roam this planet, killing everyone in their way.'

'Oh, I didn't know that,' she said, her expression full of guilt.

'No wonder you got defensive. Can you forgive me?'

'Alright, I'll forgive you for your dumb mistake,' he said, a smirk reaching from ear to ear. 'But you have to answer me when I try to talk to you, with the truth.'

'Deal!'

So they went on and talked for a while and eventually Layla stayed at Reavespera's house because she had nowhere else to go. It turned into a sleepover, because her parents weren't home. So they had pillow fights, painted each other's nails and played against each other on their phones. When it was time to go to sleep she heard that voice again, but this time it said: "You're very close to me, but you'll have to come closer."

'Are you okay?' she asked, after watching Layla staring into a blank wall for four minutes. 'You look like you could use some sleep, Layla. Goodnight.' And she dimmed the lights.

They both went to sleep, but both were thinking about something entirely different. Layla was thinking about what the voice said and wondered if she would hear it every day from now on. But Reavespera was thinking about what could have happened to her friend who was lying right next to her.

Why would she stare at that wall like that? She looked... possessed.

The childhood best friend

When they woke up, they brushed their teeth, put their clothes on, went to the kitchen to eat breakfast, packed their bags and went to school.

Of course, Fagoring was there waiting to go to class with them.

Days passed by and everything seemed to go perfectly fine. Until one day, they entered the class and could see the teacher's tense face

As soon as everyone was seated the teacher had something to announce: 'Now that you're all here, I have to tell you something. The school is closing because there is a person in here who is speaking in another person's head, making them appear like they are possessed and stare constantly. We heard it can only be in one person's head, we also speculate that it can be passed on to someone, the chances are very small, but still, we don't know if it can be passed on, so just to make sure, keep everyone at a safe distance. The person that gave the hint is not going to be named, so do *not* try to convince people to tell you. That's all class dismissed.'

'Wow, that was a lot to take in at once wasn't it, Layla?'

Fagoring asked her. However she didn't say anything back.

'Hello, do you remember our deal?'

'Wha- what? I couldn't hear you, what did you say?' she asked.

'That it was a lot to take in, why couldn't you hear me?' he asked, concern etched on his face.

'I just zoned out a little bit, it's nothing to worry about.'

But Reavespera was watching from a distance, suspicious about Layla zoning out again. It made her start thinking again.

What if she's the one who has the person speaking in her head?

So she kept her distance from her, but didn't tell Fagoring what she thought, just so he wouldn't become scared to sit next to her every day, or was she only looking out for herself? Fagoring and Layla had become very close over the past couple days and she became a bit jealous about their bond, so she decided to talk to him about it to confirm that they were just friends. After the school day they walked together to the park and she started to ask the questions: 'Why are you suddenly so close to her?'

Which he responded to by saying: 'We sit next to each other, what do you expect? We can't just ignore each other like we used to do. Besides, you wanted us to get along, right? Why is it a problem now?'

'Because you're talking to her too much now, and you should also talk to me,' she answered, her face serious.

'You're the one ignoring *me*, you barely look at me, not to mention, you don't even talk to me when she's around.'

'That's because she is the one with the person speaking in her head!' Reavespera blurted out and immediately regretted it.

'Wait, what? You don't really think *she* is? It couldn't be possible, I mean she only zoned out once this whole time, and didn't look possessed at all.'

'I'm telling you,' Reavespera said. 'She's too dangerous. You can't hang out with her anymore. Who knows what she'll do to you.'

'You don't have proof.'

So she told him what happened that night, but he didn't believe it and broke up with her, because he thought that she was just jealous about Layla and him, and couldn't live in a toxic relationship anymore.

That night, Reavespera told her she couldn't stay there anymore, so she went to his house, where she could stay for as long as she wanted. But then she heard the voice while he

was sleeping and this time it said: 'You're so close to me now the only thing you need to do is follow your gut feeling and you'll find out who I am.'

So she thought about who it could be, but then realized it could be anyone. Then she heard a noise that sounded like crying, and it came from right next to her, it was Fagoring. So she asked him what had happened, and he told her about everything that happened except what Reavespera said about her being the person that had an elf speaking in her head and switched it with that she was telling lies about her.

Then she asked: 'But, why would she do that? I haven't done anything to make her mad. I know it will be hard, I'll be by your side through thick and thin to make sure you're okay. You can tell me anything.'

And a month later, they got an email from school that the person with the voice in their head had turned themselves in, and they could go back to school.

When they went back to school they heard someone shouting Fagoring's name and coming towards them. It was a boy she'd never seen before.

When he came closer he gave Fagoring a hug, they almost cried.

'Layla, this is Mithrandar, my childhood best friend, he was out of town for a while and now after a few months he's back,' he said, an excited smile spreading across his face.

'So, how's it going with the girlfriend?' Mithrandar asked.

'Well, I broke up with her, she was telling lies about Layla, so that I wouldn't talk to her anymore. So, that's over.'

She started noticing that Mithrandar was staring at her the whole time and it made her a little bit uncomfortable.

Eventually she found out that Mithrandar was supposed to sit next to Fagoring, but since Reavespera wasn't there he would sit in her place.

'Have you heard anything from her?' Fagorings asked, in a concerned voice.

'Not since that night she kicked me out.'

But then the teacher came in and started talking to them: 'I think everyone knows why Reavespera isn't here, but if there are people who haven't heard, she is the one with the voice in her head, she told us via email and she won't come back anymore.'

They were both utterly shocked to hear those words, especially Layla because she was the one with the voice in her head.

How can this be true? I would have never expected her to be the one with the voice in her head. He thought.

But the teacher already went on with the lesson, so he couldn't think much about it.

When they had had their break they didn't talk about what the teacher had said, but Layla was pretty annoyed with Mithrandar while he was talking about all the trips he had made, and eventually Fagoring could make him shut up and talk about something else.

Mithrandar has still been eyeing her, but surprisingly, she didn't mind this time.

The bell rang and they had to go back to class.

While it was the first time for the others who didn't understand anything the teacher said, Layla on the other hand, already knew this.

Eventually it was time for lunch break.

While eating, the trio was talking to each other, but this time it was looking like Mithrandar was flirting with Layla, but she didn't notice, she thought he was just being nice. So Fagoring took her aside.

'You know he's flirting with you, right?'

'No. What do you mean? I thought he was just being friendly.'

'Oh he was definitely being friendly, maybe a little too much. Didn't you see he tried to hold your hand?'

'I thought it was a joke. I mean, I like him as a friend and I don't know if I would ever like him as something else,' she said.

'If you ever like him in that way I can tell him if you want,' he said, in a reassuring voice.

So they went back to him and this time he looked a bit jealous, because they were gone for so long, but eventually he joined the conversation. A few minutes later, they got back to class which went very well, like usual.

At the end of the day they said goodbye to Mithrandar and went back to Fagoring's house, where they ate and talked in his bedroom: 'I think I'm actually starting to fall for him. I don't know how in such a short time, but I think I like him.'

'Maybe you shouldn't rush into it and sleep over it, maybe you'll feel different about it in the morning, but if you still like him I'll see if he likes you back,' he said.

'And if he likes me back will you tell him I like him too?' she asked, with a voice to match her puppy eyes.

'Of course I will,' he said, with a smile on his face.

So after that conversation they went to sleep, but Fagoring couldn't sleep because of what Layla had said. *If she still likes him in the morning, how will I ask him if he likes her? Maybe I should just say: 'Let's play truth or dare' and ask him who his crush is and I will find out.*

And he fell asleep thinking he had the perfect plan.

Next him was Layla thinking about if she actually likes Mithrandar or just thought she did because Fagoring said he was flirting, but she would know the truth if she still liked him in the morning.

And a few hours later, it was morning and Layla still liked him, so she went to wake Fagoring up, but he even slept through his alarm clock.

Eventually, she managed to wake him, and told him she still liked Mithrandar.

'Oh, alright, I will keep my promise and see if he likes you back,' he said in a very sleepy voice.

So they went to school and when they saw him Fagoring asked: 'How about we play truth or dare?'

'Sure,' he said.

'Mithrandar, truth or dare?'

'I really have to go to the toilet, you guys keep playing, I'll be back in a minute,' she said, while running off to the toilet.

'Truth, I guess,' Mithrandar said, still confused.

'Who's your crush?' he asked, waiting for the answer.

So that's why.

'Do you really want to know?'

'Yes, now say it.'

There was some tension in his words, but then he said:

'Layla, oke, but please don't tell her, I don't think she likes me back.'

'I already had a feeling you liked her, but alright, I won't tell her,' he said.

Right after Layla came running back.

'What did I miss?' she asked.

Fagoring and Mithrandar looked at each other for a second, then Fagoring said: 'I asked what his favorite color is and it was green.'

Shouldn't best friends know that?

She looked at them, a little skeptical, but shrugged her shoulders, and decided to let it go.

'Alright, Mithrandar, your turn.'

'Layla, truth or dare?' he asked.

'I'll pick,' she said, thinking about her answer, 'truth.'

'How many exes do you have?'

'That's easy, one,' she said. 'My turn. I will ask, Fagoring. Truth or dare?'

'Truth.'

'Who's your crush, now that you already had a month to process the break-up?' Layla asked, secretly trying to find out if it still bothered him.

'I think I don't have one at the moment. I'll let you know when I do,' he said, a nervous touch added to his words.

Then the bell rang and they went to class. And in class Layla whispered to Fagoring: 'Why were you so nervous answering my question?'

'Because I had to think if I had one.'

I hope she believed me.

The concussion

So after class, the school day was done and they were talking about Reavespera in Fagorings house, because they didn't know what to say about it yesterday.

'After thinking about it, it actually makes sense, she kicked me out because she knew that I would find out, and probably needed alone time to think about whether she would tell the school or not,' Layla said, trying to make sure nobody suspected she was the one with the voice in her head. So everybody talked about it, and when Mithrandar wasn't looking Layla looked in his eyes, although she never got caught.

It was getting late, and his parents didn't mind, so Mithrandar stayed for the night, but there were only two beds: 'So, you two have to sleep together, or someone has to sleep on the floor,' Layla said, when they were discussing the sleeping arrangements, but the boys didn't look very happy about her answer.

'Who said you don't have to sleep with one of us?' Fagoring asked, confident about his answer.

'Because I'm a girl and you're both boys, that's going to get weird. You know what? I'll do it, if either one of you even wants to sleep next to me.'

Then the whole room became silent, but then he said: 'If you are okay with it we are, right Mithrandar.'

'Yeah, but the question is *who* will sleep next to you, and because you are the one who is sleeping next to one of us you get to choose.'

'I am *not* going to choose,' she said. 'You guys can do rock paper scissors and the person who loses after three battles will sleep next to me as punishment.'

The first time, Mithrandar won with scissors, then the second time, it was a tie because they both picked rock.

'If Fagoring wins, or if it's a tie you'll have to do a tiebreaker, but if Mithrandar wins, Fagoring will sleep next to me.'

And then Fagoring won with paper.

But Mithrandar won the last one.

'Alright, that's settled. He will be sleeping alone and you will be sleeping next to me.'

While Fagoring was looking sorry for Mithrandar they were getting settled in their place. But because he and Layla were in a one person bed they touched each other the whole time and Mithrandar looked a bit jealous about it, however he then realized they were just friends and that it wasn't that bad.

When he was going to brush his teeth she was talking to Fagoring about what Mithrandar had answered to his truth or dare question.

'So, what was your actual question for him?' she asked, hoping he liked her back.

'I asked him who his crush was, but he didn't want to tell me,' he said, knowing what his real answer had been, but he just wanted her to find it out from Mithrandar, not from himself, or did he not *want* her to find out?

'Okay, I guess I'll eventually find out if he likes me back,' she said, a hint of sadness spreading across her expression.

After Mithrandar had brushed his teeth and joined them they talked for a few minutes before going to bed.

Little did they know, one of them was feeling sad, being so close, yet so far away from their crush.

When it was the next morning, they all were up at the same time, had breakfast and got ready for school.

When they were there, Fagoring had to go to the teacher, because he had to discuss some things with her.

It seemed like the perfect moment for Mithrandar to tell Layla he liked her, so he told her he had to say something: 'I have

been wanting to say this for the past few days, so here I go, I-' but then someone came and spilled something on Layla's shirt.

'I'm so sorry, I didn't mean to,' the elf who said it was a girl, who she had seen laughing at her the first day she had been there. 'I had hoped we could be friends. I just made fun of you because the rest also did, and I just wanted to seem cool. I hope you can forgive me.'

'Of course I can, and I would love to be your friend,' she said, which made him fall for her even more. 'So, what were you going to say?'

'That I think you're a good friend,' he said, though that wasn't what he actually wanted to say.

It was time for class, but because it was the last day before summer vacation, they only played games and it was half a day.

After school they all went to the park where they met with the girl that had bumped into Layla.

They started talking and they found out her name was Serenity.

When they finished talking, Layla was going to spend the night at Serenity's house, where she saw her brother and immediately fell for him. There was something about him that had caught her interest. Mithrandar was out of the picture now and she only had eyes for Serenity's brother, but not for the reason she thought.

She bumped into him when she went to the bathroom later that night.

She got back to Serenity and she asked her the question that had been on her mind the whole day.

'What do you think about my friends? Do you think you can be friends with them?' she asked, just to find out if she actually liked her friends.

'I think I can, but I didn't know you and Mithrandar are just friends. I thought you were a couple, because he was looking at you so much.'

'He's been doing that since I met him, and I did like him at one point, but I don't anymore,' she said, while thinking about how Fagoring would react if she told him she didn't like Mithrandar anymore.

They talked for a while and then went to bed.

And then Layla had a thought.

I haven't heard that voice in a while, maybe it was just a temporary thing.

They woke up in the morning, and went shopping for clothing, because Layla didn't have more clothes than she was wearing at the moment.

She saw a blue dress that she loved and tried it on, it fit perfectly.

And when she was trying on dresses, shorts and shirts, she found twenty pieces she liked.

They bought them and it wasn't expensive at all, to her surprise.

Layla immediately put her favorite dress on for the day and she looked stunning, at least that's what Mithrandar thought when he saw her.

When she got a moment alone with Fagoring, she told him she didn't like Mithrandar anymore.

'Why? Is there someone else?' he asked, with the slightest nervous tone in his voice.

'It's just that I realized I had spoken too quickly and that I think of him as just a friend,' she said, hoping he would believe it.

'Alright then.'

When they came back they saw that Serenity's brother had joined them and he seemed to fit in really well.

'Why are you and Layla always talking in private?' Mithrandar asked Fagoring, his voice barely above a whisper.

'She just wanted to tell me something. It's not a big deal, you know I only see her as a friend, right?'

He brushed it off and started talking to Zephyrin again. While they were talking he noticed that he was looking a lot at Layla and asked about it when no one could hear.

'So dude, you like her, right?' Zephyrin asked.

'And why would I tell you that? We just met,' he said, a blush creeping on his face.

'So you do like her. Have you told her yet?'

'No, but I'm planning to. I don't think she likes me back though.'

'Do you want me to find out, she's staying at our house, you know?' he asked.

'Yes! A thousand times yes! I mean if you want to,' Mithrandar said, the excitement visible on his face.

So they discussed the plan and agreed on him asking stuff to Layla if they met again and his sister wasn't around.

Later that night they did meet again because they both couldn't sleep and Zephyrin put the plan into work.

'So now we're here again, I wanted to ask you some questions.'

'Ask away,' she said, not knowing what he would ask.

'First of all do you have any siblings?' he asked, trying not to be suspicious.

'I do, I have one brother.'

'The next one is, do you have a crush?' Zephyrin asked, hoping she would tell him.

Layla didn't know if she should answer that one truthfully, but eventually went with: 'No, I used to though.'

I hope he believed it.

'Not even Mithrandar? I think you two would be a great couple,' he said, hoping she would change her mind.

'Well, I did a few days ago, but not anymore,' she answered, while thinking back to those moments.

‘Okay I guess. Goodnight.’

‘Goodnight,’ she said.

But all he was thinking about that night was how devastated Mithrandar would be if he heard she did have a crush on him, but not anymore.

The next day he went to tell him the bad news, but before he could leave the house to tell him, he saw Layla running up to him: ‘Where are you going?’

‘That’s none of your business,’ he replied. ‘Why do you care anyway?’

‘Because I think you’re going to-,’ but then she stopped because once again after a few days she heard the voice again: ‘I hope you’re happy now,’ it said.

‘To where?’

The sound of his voice made her snap out of her trance and she looked back up at him.

‘Doesn’t matter anymore, just go,’ she said. She felt confused and frustrated.

Zephyrin went on to tell the news to him.

‘What? I didn’t know she used to like,’ he said, the sadness visible in his expression.

‘Well, it’s probably for the best, if you already told her a few days ago and you became a couple, it would have hurt even more that she doesn’t like you,’ Zephyrin said, in a reassuring voice.

Then he saw Mithrandar tearing up and comforted him, but then Mithrandar fell and hit his head. Zephyrin saw that he had trouble breathing, and realized he needed to go to the hospital immediately.

When they got there he had passed out and was brought to a room immediately where the doctor examined him.

‘His blood pressure is low and he seems to have a concussion,’ the doctor said in his most calming voice.

'Do you think the concussion will go away?' his mother Aemma asked, worriedly.

'It should go away, but there could be some memory loss,' the doctor answered.

There were some concerned looks on their faces and then it hit Zephyrin he had to call his sister, so she could tell the others what had happened.

And just minutes later, everyone arrived.

'Is he okay? Did he wake up yet?' Fagoring asked, worriedly.

'He isn't awake yet, but he will wake up any moment now,' Aemma said while hugging the boy. 'It's so good to see you again, Fagoring.'

'Good to see you too, Aemma.'

Then, Mithrandar started slowly stirring awake.

'Mom, Fagoring, where am I?' he asked, his voice was tired and his eyes were barely open.

'You're in the hospital because you hit your head and got a concussion. Do you remember anyone else here?' Fagoring asked, hoping he would.

'No, I don't. Who are they?'

'This is Layla, she's our friend who came here a few days ago, and this is Serenity, our other friend and her brother Zephyrin.'

'Okay nice to meet you all, again. What happened after I got back? Because that's the last thing I remember.'

'You met Layla and me and went to school, me and Reavespera had broken up and a few days later, you met Zephyrin and Serenity.'

His mom had left, so they could talk with the five of them.

'Do you feel okay?' Layla asked, concerned.

'I feel fine,' he said.

And the conversation went on and they had to go, but then when they were leaving Mithrandar asked: 'Layla, can you wait for a bit longer? I want to ask a few things.'

'Sure,' she said, and told the rest to wait for her outside. 'What do you want to ask?'

'Well, I just wanted to know if you were my girlfriend. Not that I think you were, it's just that I felt a connection between us.'

'Well, we weren't, we're just really good friends, who get along very well.'

'Oh, okay, thanks for letting me know. I also wondered if you could tell me more about yourself?' he asked.

'Sure I am fifteen, my name is Layla and my favorite food is pizza,' she said, a smile present on her face.

'I mean like if you have a crush or something.'

'Oh, well, I'll only tell you if you won't tell anybody, not even Fagoring or your mother. Okay?'

He quickly nodded.

'Alright, I have a crush on-', but then the door opened and they had to go. So Mithrandar didn't find out who her crush was.

The flashback to the past

At the park they played truth or dare, and Serenity began:

'Fagoring, truth or dare?'

'Truth.'

'What's your biggest red flag?' she asked, curious about his answer.

'My biggest red flag is when someone lies,' he said, his gaze falling down to the ground for a moment, before looking back up again. 'My turn, Zephyrin, truth or dare?'

'Dare,' he said, trying to spice it up.

'Read the last text you send out loud.'

'Okay, let's see. In my last text, I said "love you, bye",' he answered, wondering how they would react.

It seemed like the gears were turning in their heads, trying to figure out who Zephyrin could've sent that too. Then Layla spoke up.

'Who did you send that to?'

'I won't answer that, because it's my turn to ask now. Layla, truth or dare?'

'Truth.'

'What's the last thing you googled?'

'Oh, that's "is Camauley Mulkin gay" and he's not. My turn, Serenity truth or dare?'

'Dare.'

'Post a photo of your hand with an engagement ring on Instagram.'

'Sure, but where do I get the ring?' she asked.

'Just take my ring,' Layla said, while giving her the ring. So, Serenity posted the picture.

'Alright, my turn, Zephyrin, truth or dare?'

'Truth,' he said, waiting for his question.

'What's your hidden talent?'

'Oh, I can do this,' he said. He then proceeded to move his eyes, but instead of a normal speed, they moved rapidly. Everyone looked at his eyes at that moment, some of them even trying to do it themselves, but no one else could do it.

'So, Fagoring, truth or dare?'

'I'll do dare this time.'

'Text your crush you like them,' he said, wondering if it would be someone that was there.

'Alright,' he said, nervously.

When he sent the text they heard Layla's phone buzz.

'What! You like Layla?' Zephyrin asked, stunned.

Fagoring's face turned pale, his body becoming tense, he didn't know what to say. He looked embarrassed, but also slightly confused.

'It's just my teacher, Zephyrin. He doesn't have a crush on me. Besides, he doesn't even have my number.'

'Oh, sorry Fagoring. I didn't mean to make a false assumption.'

Fagoring's shoulders relaxed and he had a more relieved expression across his face.

'No worries, Layla, truth or dare?' he asked.

'I'll pick truth,' she said.

'Who is going to be your best friend?' he asked, silently hoping she'd pick him.

'I'll have to think about that,' she said, pausing for a second.

'Maybe you, Fagoring. If you don't mind of course.'

'I actually don't.'

'Well, I think I'm going to go home,' Zephyrin said, standing up.

'I think I'll go too,' Serenity said. 'Care to join, Layla?'

'You can go, I'll meet you there in an hour or two.'

'See you later then.'

So now only Layla and Fagoring were there.

'What do you want to do? Since it'll maybe take two hours.'

'I hoped you could take me back to where we first met, so that I can see how my family is doing,' Layla said, hoping he remembered where it was.

'Oh, sure, it's only a few minutes away though, so we'll have more than enough time to walk back.'

They started walking, in silence, but it wasn't awkward. Not at all. Soon they got back to the floating ball.

Layla recognized it immediately.

'Thank you so much for bringing me here, you don't know how much it means for me to see my family again.'

'No problem,' he said, a smile reaching from ear to ear visible on his face.

Layla started walking up to the ball again, but this time it wasn't lit up. It was showing her parent's house and they weren't looking for her, there was another girl there who looked almost identical to her. It seemed like they didn't miss her at all, apparently she was removed from Earth and replaced.

They replaced me? What did I do to deserve this?

Layla could feel tears welling up in her eyes, the people she had been so close to her entire life, didn't even know her anymore. Then she felt a hand on her shoulder, it was Fagoring's.

'I'm so sorry Layla,' he said, while watching what was happening inside the ball. 'You deserve so much more than this.'

She couldn't hold back her tears anymore and started crying. Fagoring noticed this immediately, his heart shattered at the sight of her tears. He wrapped his arms around her, firmly, wanting to protect her from anything or anyone else that could hurt her. His hand stroked her hair softly, as a sign of comfort.

'It'll be okay, you'll get through this,' he whispered softly, making sure she wouldn't get startled by his voice.

He knew he couldn't change anything, but he was determined to make it at least a little more bearable for her.

Eventually he brought her back to Serenity's house, and before she rang the doorbell, he spoke up.

'If you ever need to talk, I'm here for you,' he said, a reassuring smile present on his face.

'Thanks,' she replied, smiling back at him.

Fagoring watched her as she rang the doorbell and was let in afterwards. He walked back home, his mind filled with thoughts about what he had just witnessed.

When he got home he quickly made a birthday card for Mithrandar, before going to sleep.

The next morning, Layla woke up and went downstairs, to see everyone already dressed and ready to go, while she was still in her pajamas.

'I think you might want to change, but if you want to go to a hospital looking like that, I won't stop you,' Fagoring said, a smirk forming on his face.

'Why would we go to the hospital?' Layla asked, confused.

'Maybe because it's Mithrandar's birthday?'

'Oh. Okay, maybe I *should* change then, I'll be ready in a few minutes.'

A few minutes later, she came downstairs, with her clothes on and ready to go.

They arrived at the hospital and saw Aemma waiting for them outside Mithrandar's room.

'You guys made it. I'm sure he'll be happy to see all of you,' she smiled warmly and let them in.

Mithrandar immediately perked up at the sight of his friends.

'I can't wait to get to know you all better again,' he said, while smiling. 'I got a little of my memory back yesterday after you guys left. I remember coming back after my trip and walking to school, nothing more, but it's progress.'

'Just "progress"? It's amazing!' Serenity said, excitedly.

'Yeah, it really is amazing,' Zephyrin said.

Everyone in the room had an unwavering smile on their face. They talked a bit about their memories together, to try and make Mithrandar remember things and it did work, although he couldn't remember everything, it still made all of them happy.

Then suddenly Layla heard the voice again after a long time, but this time it was different. It hurt in her head: 'You'll never know what'll happen next.'

'Are you okay?' Fagoring asked her, his voice soft, so only she could hear him.

'Yeah, it's just a headache. Don't worry about me, I'm fine.'

"Just a headache"? That can't be it. She probably wants to keep it to herself though, so I guess I shouldn't pry further.

After a while of talking they left the room and said goodbye to Aemma on their way out

A few weeks passed and Mithrandar got out of the hospital, so Layla went to his house to check on him.

She knocked on the door and he opened up, a little surprised to see her alone.

'Oh, hey. Come in,' he said, letting her into his house. 'So, what are you doing here?'

'Can't a girl check on her friend who just got out of a hospital?' she asked, teasing him.

'It's just that normally you all come and I haven't had a single visit before. That's all,' he explained.

'Well, I hoped you could tell me what you can remember now.'

'I can pretty much remember everything now. There are a few little things I can't remember, but that's about it.'

She looked pretty happy to hear that news, but there was something else she came to ask.

'That's great. But I have one more question. Do you remember anything that might have caused the concussion?'

'I do remember falling on my head, but I can't recall why I fell. So I guess that's when it went wrong,' he said, not telling her the truth, because he didn't want her to know he knew she used to like him.

'Can you try remembering who was there with you?'

'Sure I'll try,' he tried to remember if someone was there with him and then: 'I do remember being with someone, but I can't recall who it was.'

There was a moment of silence before he spoke up again.

'I actually have a question for you though.'

'Okay, what is it then?' she asked, interested.

'Well, I wondered if you could give me your number? Just because we're friends,' he added quickly.

'Oh, yeah, sure, if you want it,' she said, while getting her phone out of her pocket.

'Thanks,' Mithrandar said.

As she passed him her phone, he put his number in it, and realized he was the first one to be in her contacts.

'Sorry for asking, but why am I the only one in your contacts?'

'Oh, I guess I just haven't ask for anyone's number since I've gotten here,' Layla said looking down at her phone noticing her mom's and dad's number weren't in it either.

So I just have nothing left of them.

'I better go, I have to pack my bag for tomorrow,' she said.

'What do you mean for tomorrow?'

School starts tomorrow,' she said.

'Oh, yeah.'

He waved her goodbye and then went back into the house.

I can't believe it was that easy to get her number.

Layla walked back to Serenity's house and went to her room to get some rest, and before she knew it she had slept the whole day and heard her alarm buzz. It was the first day of school, so she rushed to put some clothes on and brush her

teeth, just to find Serenity and Zephyrin waiting for her at the door to go to school.

'You must have had a good night's sleep,' he said, a teasing hint in voice.

'I just went to take a nap, and I accidentally fell asleep for a longer time than I wished to,' she said, trying to explain herself.

On the way there they talked a lot and when they got to school saw Fagoring and Mithrandar.

'Oh, yeah, before I forget, can I get all of your numbers?' Layla asked.

'Sure, why though?' Fagoring asked, teasingly.

'We're friends, right, friends have each other's numbers.'

But Fagoring noticed Mithrandar didn't need to give his number to Layla, because she already had it.

So they all exchanged numbers and went to class.

This time Layla got a different seat with a different boy and said goodbye to Fagoring.

She sat in her seat, to later find out that the boy wouldn't say anything to her during the lesson to her relief. He even seemed to never change his expression, so she got a bit creeped out by the guy, and after class she told Fagoring about it.

'And the worst part of all was that he *never* looked at the teacher or the board, he always seemed to look somewhere else with the same expression, the *whole* class long.'

'I guess he just doesn't change his expression then. My new seatmate talks too much, so you're lucky yours doesn't talk at all.'

'Yeah, but I hoped to get a more normal one. I do have one question for you that I have been afraid to ask.'

'Shoot it.'

'Well, I saw that all the older people have wings, why don't the kids?' she asked, hoping it didn't sound rude.

'That's just because they start to grow when you're eighteen,' he explained like it was basic knowledge.

'Thanks for telling me.'

'No worries. If there are other questions you have you can always text me now.'

Then they heard the principal speaking: 'Layla Coleman, please come to the principal's office immediately.'

'What have you done now?'

'I don't know. I haven't done anything. Wish me luck.'

The fighting best friends

Layla went to the principal's office to find out what she had done to get called there.

'I see you heard me call you,' the principal said.

'Yeah, I did. But why do I need to come here? I haven't done anything to upset you, right?' she asked, concerned.

'No you haven't. I called you here because last year, even though you had only been here for a few days, we saw you were always the most intelligent in the classroom, so we wondered if you would start tutoring kids that aren't doing well, if you know what I mean.'

'Sure, I'd love to,' she said, relieved that it wasn't anything bad.

'We've already selected a student, who you will work with this year. We'll make sure you know which day you'll start and after that, you can start planning on your own, or you can ask us to make a program for you.'

'I'll make one for my own sir. Thank you so much for this opportunity.'

'We'll keep in contact for the starting date. And for now you can go.'

So she went back to Fagoring to tell him the news.

'Wow, I didn't expect that. Good for you,' he said, a hint of pride in his voice.

'I know, right?' she asked, happiness radiating from her eyes.

Mithrandar then came up to them.

'What didn't you expect?' Mithrandar asked, wondering what had happened.

Layla, who hadn't seen him, told him the good news.

'I get to start tutoring someone already.'

'Why are you happy about that though? Isn't that just more work?'

'It's an honor, because if you didn't remember, I have only been at this school for a few days before it was summer break.'

'Oh, yeah, I forgot about that,' he said.

'Well, we better get to class before we're late,' she said.

'Yeah, we'll catch up to you in a few minutes,' Fagoring said, hoping she wouldn't question it.

'Sure, see you later.'

'So, why do you want to talk to me?' Mithrandar asked.

'I just wanted to know why your number was already in Layla's phone,' he explained.

'Well, I just asked for it yesterday and she said yes, it's no big deal.'

'I didn't say it was,' he said, getting frustrated and raising his voice.

'You don't have to raise your voice, bro,' he said, also getting frustrated. 'Besides she has all of our numbers now, so it doesn't matter who's she got first. I have to go now. I have classes to attend.'

So he left for class, leaving in the middle of an argument.

They both were a few minutes late, but didn't get detention because the lesson hadn't started yet.

Layla saw him coming in, looking a little angry, but she couldn't figure out why. Her seatmate still didn't talk to her or look at the teacher, instead he just made notes in his notebook and glanced at her a few times, which she found a bit weird, but just shook it off.

After class the principal called her in his office again with more news: 'You will meet the student in the library tomorrow after school, you will have to tutor math, so bring your book, and if you want to you can ask the librarian to put some math books aside for you,' he said, while giving her a card. 'Here is your own library card, we don't normally give them to students for free, so keep it somewhere you can't lose it.'

'Thank you sir. I'll keep it somewhere safe,' she said, while taking the card from him. 'Do I need to give progress on the tutoring?'

'No, you don't, we'll see from the student's grades if it's working. You may go now.'

And since it was break time, she went to the playground to see Fagoring and Mithrandar arguing.

'Why don't you just shut up about it? Why are you even bringing this up again? I thought it was already settled when I left.'

Fagoring was about to say something when he heard footsteps approaching. He turned and saw Layla, his eyes softening as she got closer to them.

'Hey, what's going on? Why are you guys arguing?' she asked, confused.

'Why don't you ask him? He's the one who started it,' Mithrandar said.

'Alright, Fagoring, why are you arguing with each other?' she asked him, getting impatient.

'Why do you even want to know?'

'Because I need to know why my friends are arguing now, say why, or else,' she said. Her expression was different from usual, she didn't have those soft, happy eyes anymore, instead, her gaze hardened, a cold expression on her face.

'Okay, okay, no need to get dramatic. We were just arguing about that he had your number before anyone else,' he explained.

'Oh, so now *I'm* being dramatic? You're the one arguing over who got my number first. Why did you even want to know?'

'I just thought it was weird, I was just curious,' he said, trying to explain himself.

'You were "just curious"? Then why'd you make such a big deal out of it?'

'Because I care about you,' he said, his eyes had a hint of vulnerability mixed with his earlier frustration.

She paused, looking at him for a second. Her expression had softened again.

Without warning she started crying. It began with just one tear, but soon enough her eyes were filled with them. She ran off, not wanting anybody to see her like that.

Fagoring was a bit startled about what had just happened. He thought he had handled the situation pretty well.

'Nice job, bro,' Mithrandar said, sarcastically.

'Just shut up,' he responded angrily and walked away.

Layla was crying in the library when suddenly she felt a hand on her shoulder, it was from a hooded figure.

'I don't want to talk right now,' she said.

'Alright, just know you're worth it,' the hooded figure said, while helping her up.

'Thank you,' she said, but the hooded figure was already gone.

After wiping her tears she went back to class and avoided Fagoring's concerned look while walking to her seat in class.

Class was pretty boring, but she still decided to pay attention in contrast to her seatmate, who still didn't pay attention to anything except the room.

After school was over, she immediately went to Serenity's house and waited for her to tell everything that happened.

'And then I just walked back to your house.'

'Wow, that's a lot, I just had a few boring classes, but nothing like that happened to me,' she said, in disbelief.

'I guess even my first day had to go wrong. I still wonder who the hooded figure was.'

'Maybe just some kid that saw you crying and decided to comfort you, you never know,' Serenity said.

'Yeah, maybe you're right,' she said. 'Let's just let it lie.'

So they talked a lot and Zephyrin had also gotten home when the doorbell rang: 'I'll get it,' he said. 'It's for you Layla, it's Fagoring,' Zephyrin shouted.

'Just tell him I don't want to talk to him,' she shouted back.

'Just give me one chance to explain,' Fagoring shouted when he heard what she had said.

So she went to the door to let him explain: 'So what did you want to say?'

'I didn't mean to call you dramatic. I just blurted it out. I really didn't mean it,' Fagoring said explaining.

'And what about the arguing with Mithrandar?'

'I just care about you, you're my friend and after all, he could start liking you again, and I didn't want him to bother you because I know you don't like him,' he said, trying to mend their bond.

'That's very thoughtful of you, but you need to know that I can handle that myself. And if all of that is true, why did you start arguing again when you guys already settled it?'

'Because we didn't. He just left in the middle of the argument.'

'Oh, I see, I hope it's settled now,' she said.

'It is, but can you forgive me? I don't know what I'd do without you,' he said, his voice having a hint of vulnerability in it again.

'Of course I forgive you. Now, come here,' she said, while pulling him in for a hug.

He wrapped his arms tightly around her, savoring the moment while it lasted. He felt safe in her embrace, even though she was much smaller than him.

'Thank you for forgiving me,' he finally said after a long hug. 'It means the world to me.'

'No problem,' she said, a smile covering her face. 'That's what best friends are for, right?'

'I guess so, yeah,' he said, smiling back at her. 'But I really have to go, sorry. I'll see you at school.'

'See you at school, Fagoring,' she said, waving him out.

She walked back to Serenity, who immediately asked: 'When were you going to tell me Mithrandar had a crush on you? Not that I was secretly listening to every word you said,' she put on an innocent smile.

'I just didn't have the right time to tell you. Besides, I don't even know for sure if he liked me.'

'Well, if Fagoring said it, who is *literally* his best friend, he must have had a crush on you. Just too bad you don't like him anymore, you two would be a cute couple,' she said.

'It doesn't matter anymore, aside from that, he might not like me anymore. He had a concussion, remember?' Layla said.

'Yeah, but who knows? Everything can happen.'

Then all of a sudden Zephyrin joined in.

'Maybe he didn't even like you before his concussion, maybe he just liked to stare at you,' he said, jokingly.

'Ha ha ha, very funny Zephyrin,' she said.

The bully

The doorbell rang again, but this time Serenity opened it, and a girl ran through the door and hugged Zephyrin.

'Your girlfriend's back from her trip, Zephyrin,' she said, when the girl had already hugged him.

'Thanks for letting me know,' he said, sarcastically

'And whose is this, babe?' the girl asked.

'I could ask you the same thing,' Layla said, while looking at Zephyrin.

'Layla, this is my girlfriend, Yumanea. Babe, this is my friend, Layla.'

Then there was an awkward silence until Yumanea said: 'But babe, why are you friends with her? You normally only have guy friends. And she doesn't look very normal.'

'She started off as Serenity's friend, but now she's also my friend. And for the other part, that's because she's from another planet, planet Earth.'

'Wow, I've never heard about that one before. But how did you get here?'

'I got here through some kind of portal,' Layla replied, when she suddenly got a phone call: it was from Mithrandar. 'I've got to take this one.'

She went to a different room to answer the call.

'Why are you calling right now? It's not a good time, we've got visitors.'

'I just needed to know if you're mad at me too,' he said, hoping to get a good answer.

'Why would I be mad at you?'

'Because of the fight earlier today,' he said, as if it was the most obvious thing in the world.

'But you did nothing, Fagoring was the one that began the fight,' she explained to him.

'I know, but I thought you might be mad at me because I didn't follow you when you ran away.'

'I'm not mad at you because of that, besides I ran away because I needed alone time.'

He let out a sigh of relief.

'Thank you for not being mad. But what will you do with Fagoring tomorrow?'

'We kind of already made up. He came here and wouldn't leave until I gave him a chance to talk to me. He explained why and I forgave him. Aside from that, he's my best friend. I can't be mad at him, not even if I wanted to.'

'Since when is he your best friend? I never got that news,' Mithrandars said, a bit jealous.

'Oh, I guess we forgot to tell you. It started after the first time we visited you. While we were playing truth or dare he asked me who my best friend would be, and I picked him.'

'Did you have to think about it, or did you just say it right after?'

'Why do you want to know? You're not sad because I chose him over you, right? He's just the first person I met here, so he's the one I've known the longest. That's why I chose him, right after I thought about it.'

'Okay, and no worries, I'm not sad about it, I'm just curious,' he said, hoping he didn't give off jealous vibes.

'I have just one more question before you hang up.'

'Sure what is it?'

'Do you still like me?'

'That's bold, I-' he said, but he was falling apart because the internet wasn't strong enough.

'What did you say? I couldn't hear you, the interne-' she said, but the phone call had already ended.

Well, that was weird, she thought.

So after the call had ended she went back to see Zephyrin and Yumanea were kissing each other, so she decided to go back to her room, to think about her living situation.

I can't just keep living with other people, they deserve some privacy too.

So she started packing her stuff, thinking about where she could go, but couldn't think of any, until she heard the voice again.

'Be patient and everything will unfold.'

What could that mean, she thought.

But then Serenity came in and asked her what she was doing.

'I'm packing my things, I can't just stay here my whole life, I have to find somewhere else to live.'

'But you can, you're not a burden here, you can stay,' she said, hoping to convince her otherwise.

'I just think this isn't the place for me. I know it's weird, but my gut says I have to stay somewhere else,' she explained, hoping Serenity would understand.

'If that's what you want then you can, but just wait until you have somewhere to go, okay?'

'Okay.'

So they went to bed and the next morning, Layla had already woken up, made breakfast and made herself ready for school before the rest was even out of bed.

Layla left a note on the counter, saying that she had gone to the library to study for her tutor lesson, and left.

When she found her principal at the library, he asked her why she was there and she told him why, but she also told him everything else that had happened.

'Wow that's a lot.'

'I'm sorry that I told you all that, I just needed to tell someone, but if you have somewhere I can stay it would be appreciated,' she told him.