

CHAPTER THREE - AMONG THE ROSES

A THICK cloud of purple smoke snakes along the grass, twisting through a grove of ancient Coraira trees. It curls around the base of a towering weeping willow and dissipates, revealing a tall blonde woman in a slim fitting black gown. Elora stands with her back against the tree, her heart racing, hands resting on the rough bark. She is hidden beneath the tree's countless branches of pink leaves that droop to the ground like fine feathery fingers.

After the girl threatened her with that palm-sized soul-stealing thing, she'd escaped to the human realm. But she quickly learned that somehow, over the centuries, humans had all obtained these powerful devices. *They are all completely engrossed in those colourful things—even the children—presumably plotting how to use them against those wielding great powers, like myself.*

No, she couldn't risk staying there, so she'd come back here to Coraira in an attempt to strengthen her power, and hoped she would not encounter Teagan again.

I must hide, she tells herself. But where?

As she begins to formulate a plan, her thoughts are stirred by the vision of a man. A man she knows, but has not seen in centuries. She closes her eyes and allows the vision to strengthen.

"Elora," he says. "The plan we discussed long ago is coming together quickly. The twins are here. We will come for you."

"Which plan?" she asks, searching her memory.

"The Order."

A smile forces the corners of her lips. "Where are they?"

“They are in your past and my present,” he says. “I see you have your opal. That is good. Do you still have the grimoire?”

“Yes,” she says, reaching for her pocket.

“Hide there, among the roses, and I will come for you.”

As quickly as the vision came, it is gone.

Elora opens her eyes. She steps out from beneath the trees and her eyes land upon the thick stand of rose bushes between her and the sea. She snaps her fingers and disappears again into smoke. This time, the smoke twists around the stem of a red rose, turning it black. Here she will wait for him to come.

Excerpted from *Second Twin* by Jaime Lee Mann.
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