



## The Iron Legends: Winter's Passage Summer's Crossing Iron's Prophecy (The Iron Fey)

By Julie Kagawa

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#### *Winter's Passage*

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#### *Summer's Crossing*

What can turn enemies into reluctant allies? A call from the Exile Queen, Leanansidhe, ties legendary prankster Puck to his archenemy, Prince Ash, on a journey that may end in betrayal and will set them both on an irreversible path.

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*Three Iron Fey novellas for the first time in print!*

**Don't miss the first book in Julie Kagawa's highly anticipated new series, TALON, AVAILABLE OCTOBER 28, 2014**

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### Editorial Review

#### About the Author

Born in Sacramento, CA, Julie Kagawa moved to Hawaii at the age of nine. There she learned many things; how to bodyboard, that teachers scream when you put centipedes in their desks, and that writing stories in math class is a great way to kill time. Her teachers were glad to see her graduate.

Julie now lives in Louisville, KY with her husband and furkids. She is the international and NYT bestselling author of *The Iron Fey* series. Visit her at [juliekagawa.com](http://juliekagawa.com).

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In the shadows of the cave, I watched the Hunter approach. Silhouetted black against the snow, it stalked closer, eyes a yellow flame in the shadows, breath coiling around it like wraiths. Ice-blue light glinted off wet teeth and a thick shaggy pelt, darker than midnight. Ash stood between the Hunter and me, sword unsheathed, his eyes never leaving the massive creature that had tracked us for days, and now, had finally caught up.

"Meghan Chase." Its voice was a growl, deeper than thunder, more primitive than the wildest forests. The ancient golden eyes were fixed solely on me. "I've finally found you."

My name is Meghan Chase.

If there are three things I've learned in my time among the fey, they are this: don't eat anything you're offered in Faery-land, don't go swimming in quiet little ponds and never, ever, make a bargain with anyone.

Okay, sometimes, you have no choice. Sometimes, you've been backed into a corner and you have to make a deal. Like when your little brother has been kidnapped, and you have to convince a prince of the Unseelie Court to help you rescue him instead of dragging you back to his queen. Or, you're lost, and you have to bribe a smart-mouthed, talking cat to guide you through the forest. Or you need to get through a certain door, but the gatekeeper won't let you through without a price. The fey love their bargains, and you have to listen to the terms *very* carefully, or you're going to get screwed. If you do end up in a contract with a faery, remember this: there's no way you can back out, not without disastrous consequences. And faeries *always* come to collect.

Which is how, forty-eight hours ago, I found myself walking across my front yard in the middle of the night, my house growing smaller and smaller in the background. I didn't look back. If I looked back, I might lose my nerve. At the edge of the woods, a dark prince and a pair of glowing, blue-eyed steeds waited for me.

Prince Ash, third son of the Winter Court, regarded me gravely as I approached, his silver eyes reflecting the light of the moon. Tall and pale, with raven-black hair and the unattainable elegance of the fey, he looked

both beautiful and dangerous, and my heart beat faster in anticipation or fear, I couldn't tell. As I stepped into the shadows of the trees, Ash held out a pale, long-fingered hand, and I placed my own in his.

His fingers curled over mine, and he drew me close, hands resting lightly on my waist. I lay my head against his chest and closed my eyes, listening to his beating heart, breathing in the frosty scent of him.

"You have to do this, don't you?" I whispered, my fingers clutched in the fabric of his white shirt. Ash made a soft noise that might've been a sigh.

"Yes." His voice, low and deep, was barely above a murmur. I pulled back to look at him, seeing myself reflected in those silver eyes. When I'd first met him, those eyes were blank and cold, like the face of a mirror. Ash had been the enemy, once. He was the youngest son of Mab, queen of Winter and the ancient rival of my father, Oberon, the king of the Summer Court. That's right. I'm half-fey—a faery princess, no less—and I didn't even know it until recently, when my human brother was kidnapped by faeries and taken into the Nevernever. When I found out, I convinced my best friend, Robbie Goodfellow—who turned out to be Oberon's servant, Puck—to take me into Faeryland to get him back. But being a faery princess in the Nevernever proved to be extremely dangerous. For one, the Winter Queen sent Ash to capture me, to use me as leverage against Oberon.

That's when I made the bargain with the Winter prince that would change my life: help me rescue Ethan, and I'll go with you to the Winter Court.

So, here I was. Ethan was home safe. Ash had kept his side of the bargain. It was my turn to uphold my end and travel with him to the court of my father's ancient enemies. There was only one problem.

Summer and Winter were not supposed to fall in love.

I bit my lip and held his gaze, watching his expression. Though I had once viewed it as frozen solid, his demeanor had thawed somewhat during our time in the Nevernever. Now, looking at him, I imagined a glassy lake: still and calm, but only on the surface.

"How long will I have to stay there?" I asked.

He shook his head slowly, and I could feel his reluctance. "I don't know, Meghan. The queen doesn't disclose her plans to me. I didn't dare ask why she wanted you." He reached up and caught a strand of my pale blond hair, running it through his fingers. "I was only supposed to bring you back," he murmured, and his voice dropped even lower. "I swore I would bring you back."

I nodded. Once a faery promises something, he's obligated to carry it through, which is why making a deal is so tricky. Ash couldn't break his vow even if he wanted to.

I understood that, but... "I want to do something before we go," I said, watching for his reaction. Ash raised an eyebrow, but otherwise his expression stayed the same. I took a deep breath. "I want to see Puck."

The Winter prince sighed. "I suppose you would," he muttered, releasing me and stepping back, his expression thoughtful. "And, truth be told, I'm curious myself. I wouldn't want Goodfellow dying before we ever resolved our duel. That would be unfortunate."

I winced. Puck and Ash were ancient enemies, and had already engaged each other in several savage, life-

threatening duels before I was even in the picture. Ash had sworn to kill Puck, and Puck took great pleasure in goading the dangerous ice prince whenever he had the chance. It was only because I insisted they cooperate that they had agreed to an extremely shaky truce. One that wouldn't last long, no matter how much I intervened.

One of the horses snorted and pawed the ground, and Ash turned to put a hand on its neck. "All right, we'll check on him," he said without turning around. "But, after that *I have* to take you to Tir Na Nog. No more delays, understand? The queen won't be happy with me for taking this long."

I nodded. "Yes. Thank y— I mean...I appreciate it, Ash."

He smiled faintly and offered a hand again, this time to help me into the saddle. I gingerly picked up the reins and envied Ash, who swung easily aboard the second horse like he'd done it a thousand times.

"All right," he said in a faintly resigned voice, staring up at the moon. "First things first. We have to find a trod to New Orleans."

Trods are faery paths between the real world and the Never-never, gateways straight into Faeryland. They can be anywhere, any doorway: an old bathroom stall, the gate to a cemetery, a child's closet door. You can go anywhere in the world if you know the right trod, but getting through them is another matter, as sometimes they're guarded by nasty creatures the fey leave behind to discourage unwanted guests.

Nothing guarded the enormous rotting barn that sat in the middle of the swampy bayou, so covered in moss it looked like a shaggy green carpet was draped over the roof. Mushrooms grew from the walls in bulbous clumps, huge spotted things that, if you looked closely enough, sheltered several tiny winged figures beneath them. They blinked at us as we went by, huge multifaceted eyes peering out from under the mushroom caps, and took to the air in a flurry of iridescent wings. I jumped, but Ash and the horses ignored them as we stepped beneath the sagging frame and everything went white.

I blinked and looked around as the world came into focus again.

An eerie gray forest surrounded us, mist creeping over the ground like a living thing, coiling around the horses' legs. The trees were massive, soaring to mind-boggling heights, interlocking branches blocking out the sky. Everything was dark and faded, like all color had been washed out, a forest trapped in perpetual twilight.

"The wyldwood," I muttered, and turned to Ash. "Why are we here? I thought we were going to New Orleans."

"We are." Ash pulled his horse around to look at me. "The trod we want is about a day's ride north. It's the quickest way to New Orleans from here." He blinked and gave me an almost smile. "Or were you planning to hitchhike?"

Before I could reply, my horse suddenly let out a terrifying whinny and reared, slashing the air with its forelegs. I grabbed for the mane, but it slipped through my fingers, and I tumbled backward out of the saddle, hitting the ground behind the horse, snapping bushes underneath. Snorting in terror, the fey steed charged off toward the trees, leaped over a fallen branch and vanished into the mist.

Groaning, I sat up, testing my body for pain. My shoulder throbbed where I'd landed on it, and I was

shaking, but nothing seemed broken.

Ash's mount was also throwing a fit, squealing and tossing its head, but the Winter prince was able to keep his seat and bring it back under control. Swinging out of the saddle, he tied the horse's reins to an overhead branch and knelt beside me.

"Are you all right?" His fingers probed my arm, surprisingly gentle. "Anything broken?"

"I don't think so," I muttered, rubbing my bruised shoulder. "That lovely patch of bramble broke my fall." Now that the adrenaline had worn off, dozens of stinging scratches began to make themselves known. Scowling, I glared in the direction my mount had disappeared. "You know, that's the second time I've been thrown off a faery horse. And another time one tried to eat me. I don't think horses like me very much."

"No." Abruptly serious, Ash stood, offering a hand to pull me to my feet. "It wasn't you. Something spooked them." He gazed around slowly, hand dropping to the sword at his waist. Around us, the wyldwood was still and dark, as if the inhabitants were afraid to move.

I looked behind us, where the trunks of two trees had grown into each other, forming an archway between. The space between the trunks, where the trod lay, was cloaked in shadow, and it seemed to me that the shadows were creeping closer. A cold wind hissed through the trunks, rattling branches and tossing leaves, and I shivered.

With a frantic rushing sound a flock of tiny winged fey burst from the trod, swirling around us in panic and spiraling into the mist. I yelped, shielding my face, and Ash's horse screamed again, the sound piercing the ominous quiet. Ash took my hand and pulled me away from the trod, hurrying back to his mount. Lifting me to sit just behind the saddle, he grabbed the reins and climbed up in front.

"Hold on tight," he warned, and a thrill shot through me as I slipped my arms around his waist, feeling the hard muscles through his shirt. Ash dug in his heels with a shout, and the horse shot forward, snapping my head back. I squeezed Ash tightly and buried my face in his back as the faery horse streaked through the wyldwood, leaving the trod far behind.

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Rachel Robbins:**

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**Antonette Schneider:**

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