

# DAUGHTER OF LORE by Eileen Dreyer

## EXCERPT

It was an impulse he couldn't seem to control. It wasn't a mountain. Not a bell tower from whose ramparts entire vistas could be viewed. Hell, it wasn't even a good steep climb. It was just a big pile of loose rocks allegedly collected by the fairies. Even so, Zeke seemed to be suddenly afflicted by the age-old impulse to be King of the Hill. He wanted to stand on top.

There was mist against his face. Salt in the air that crept in from the ocean. Zeke climbed carefully, knowing that although the whole structure was solid, each rock was loose and an invitation to fall butt-first back to the ground.

He was holding his breath. How odd. It was as if, even with the sounds and smells and tastes around him, the world was holding absolutely still. Had stopped spinning on its daily axis just to watch Zeke Kendall climb a fairy hill.

He reached the top just after the sun set. The western sky was a gaudy red that faded to the purple of fuchsia closer to the sea.

Suddenly he caught sight of her. A flash of color, a waterfall of laughter, a scent of cloves and gorse. Not even thinking where he was, only that he had to catch her this time, Zeke spun on his heel. He saw her skip into the deep shadow. He yelled out to her.

He thought she called back. "No!" was what he thought he heard. But that couldn't be right. So he called to her again.

He didn't realize that from below him, his cries sounded like those of a man falling. His attention caught by a flash of peacock green in the shadows, Zeke lost his balance and went off the side of the cairn headfirst. He bounced forty feet straight down.

For a moment there was the startled cry of disturbed birds, the crash and rumble of a body falling. The sudden, stricken silence that inevitably followed.

But Zeke didn't know. He didn't know, because he was looking up into the most beautiful green eyes he'd ever seen.

He couldn't take his gaze away from those grass-sweet eyes. "Don't I know you?"

"You must get up, Zeke," she said, leaning over him, her eyes anxious and her hands silken-soft as she patted at his cheek. "You have to get away before the queen sees you. It's your only chance."

“The queen?” he asked, smiling. Not feeling anything at all but the brush of her satiny fingers against his face.

She reached under his shoulders, trying to push him up. “The queen of fairies.”

“Sounds fun.”

Odd, how she shifted, her colors darkening, her eyes growing almost wild. “No!” she begged, pushing him, harrying him. “You don’t know what you ask. She’ll destroy you.”

But Zeke couldn’t move. “I’d rather sleep, I think. And oh, I should probably tell you...” Already his eyes were closing against the gentle pressure of those wonderful fingers. “I don’t believe in fairies.”

Her voice was so soft it was like a thought in his head. A thought so suddenly dark, he shivered, even lying in her silken arms. “It doesn’t matter,” came her voice, sounding suddenly sad. “They believe in you.”