

RUALYN

A novel that will never finish

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Preface.

Something was wrong.

Something was awfully wrong.

An ominous aura crept over the smooth surface, glacing the already perfectly clear marble. Instinctively she crouched against the dark material, hunching her shoulders together to make herself smaller and thus invisible to a threat her instincts told her was coming.

Without making any more noise than a lithe mouse would, she extended her unbroken left hand and let it wander searchingly over the polished pillar. She could feel no dents nor any damages left by the course of time under her probing fingertips, but there was a determined rush to her hand that said she knew she was going to find *something*. A few feet away from her it came to a halt, and she budged her tender fingers slightly.

Nothing happened.

She pushed again, this time applying more pressure than she thought necessary. But to her radiating fear and frustration, the only difference she could tell was her own blood roaming with increased speed in her feeble veins.

It felt wrong. Just too awfully wrong. She shouldn't have to find it, not until all hopes were forcefully ripped away from her and she no longer was in any power to keep her promise.

No, she frowned. Not a promise, an oath.

She was only warned by a wheezing sound accelerating at an alarming speed towards her before something at the size of a little child rammed into her and knocked the breath out of her. Unable to catch her breath and react in time, she was sent crashing into the next marble pillar with a thundering sound.

The pillar shattered into the floor in huge pieces, the cascading sound of the falling rocks echoing powerfully in the room.

Before she could think of a counter-attack, great silver light erupted from the ruins of the pillar she lay sprawled in.

She lifted her injured arm feebly and let the silver touch her mark.

Did I make it?

Chapter 1

"Lady Rualyn, why exactly do I have to do this again?" String strained, the elven boy took aim at the mark that had been etched onto a tree twenty yards away from him. His yew bow was beautifully ornate with elegant carvings of vines, fit for the noble heritage that he was of. The way he had carried his question was still of the perfectly polite arrangement that all elves conversed in, not quite the obnoxious human way that Rualyn had so enthusiastically demanded.

The young boy's cheeks were delicately flushed from concentrating on the spell he was to perform while shooting his target, making him look all the more like a human.

"You don't want any mortals to ambush you," Rualyn chuckled.

The arrow whistled towards its target and struck.

"A human would never be able to sneak upon me without my consent," the boy replied confidently, all efforts of dropping the polite language his instructor had requested, ceased.

Shanks. He never learns, does he? Lacking the usual gracefulness that all elves possessed, Rualyn moved towards the boy. Compared to the mortal humans, she would still be more elegant than the very best of human dancers, but to her own kind she was different.

The uncovered swirly birthmark she bore on her right forearm glowed slightly. For just a split second, the air enveloping the boy seemed to dense and simmer.

"Don't take mortal beings lightly, Centrius. Someday they might bite off your tongue just because you were reckless enough to decide not to put up a Peering Wall. " She broke the spell.

Startled by her non-elf like choice of words, Centrius flushed a deeper red. With a determined expression flitting briefly across his pretty face, his own mark on his left earlobe glowed with a bright golden light, and the air surrounding him densed once more for a brief moment.

"Forgive me, Lady Rualyn. It was not my intention to be boastful."

"Centrius, it will do you no good apologizing if you don't keep in mind that though we might be superior to mortals, we're not invincible. Remember what I taught you, ignorance is an ugly beast." She poked him playfully on his chest. "Now, put away that polite speech of yours and let's call it a day, shall we?"

With a flick of her free hand, Rualyn summoned Centrius' arrow to the boy's great delight and handed it over to him. He stroke the perfectly shaped feathers on the arrow lovingly, and tucked it carefully back into his quiver before setting off.

Both apprentice and mentor had spent the whole day on the practicing field behind the waterfalls as usual. It was a huge open cave solution, the huge field splattered all over with bare, sandy floors and tall flecks with vivid green grass covering the spots where elf feet did not dwindle too much.

It was perfectly round, and walled with tall rock sides as far as dim human eyes could see. Being a magical elf herself, her sharp eyes did not squint and blink at the sharp sunlight that poured through the open cave ceiling above them like rich, golden liquid.

She let her fingers run along the smooth wall as she crossed the clearing, amazed by the sleek feel of the rock.

"Lysino," she whispered, and a faint trail of light emerged on the rock where her fingers had touched. Looking backwards, she admired the glowing streaks her fingers had left on the wall. She whispered another almost inaudible word, and the luminescence disappeared.

Rualyn had made Centrius work constantly all day with only a few brief pauses, but the boy's pale and graceful body never revealed any hint of strain. With nimble feet he had leapt across the field, pausing only at the edge to find his instructor suddenly several yards past him into the wide tunnel leading off to the village.

Startled, he hurried after her.

Not even a bead of sweat, Rualyn noted.

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"Got him talkin' today, did ye?"

The voice came from a bulky figure across the bar, covered in a roughly woven tunic and a dirty apron that was well past its glory days. He put a mug with a frothy beverage in front of her. "On the house."

Rualyn accepted her drink with a nod. "Not really, he's a figure elf child."