

## Reecah's Legacy



**Breathtaking.** There was no other word to explain the wonder gripping Reecah Windwalker as she gazed through a gap in the clouds at the edge of a great lake. Nestled amongst a circular chain of mountains, the lake funneled between two of the taller peaks to plummet thousands of feet to the mainland below—a great bank of mist shrouding its bottom.

The silent serenity of the moment warmed her heart despite the frigid winds blowing from windswept snow ridges above. Escaping the chaotic scene at Headwater Castle, she relished the brief luxury of peace, surrounded by her eclectic group of friends.

Junior Waverunner's hand at her waist filled a spot in her soul she had no idea existed. His chiseled profile caught the setting sun, illuminating scant facial hair in golden relief as his blonde locks whipped around in unison with the bitter gusts swirling the snow beneath their feet.

A stone-faced elf, clad in thick fur and boiled leather, and a melancholy dwarf beneath an open-faced, flat-topped helm, followed her gaze to the grandeur of Splendor Falls. Reecah couldn't imagine a more calming place in the world.

If not for the pressing need of dragonkind, she envisioned living out her life in a place like this. Raising a family and enjoying the simple pleasures that comprise life's greatest treasures. Thinking about what was to happen if she wished to have a child, she hoped the others attributed her red cheeks to the cold.

Devius Misenthorpe, the high king's wizard, had planted in her mind the need to produce an heir if the dragons were to survive the rapidly changing world. A world where mankind's whims manifested an unbalance in nature to suit their desires.

Bearing a child meant coupling with another person—allowing someone else access to her most intimate self, both physically and mentally. Reecah wasn't sure she was able to give that to another human being. She shivered.

The thought of Devius instilled in her a need to know whether he had survived his injury and escaped the high king's wrath. She made a promise to herself that she would someday investigate what had happened to her mentor.

Reaching up, she patted the scaly cheek of the one creature she *did* feel comfortable enough with to share her inner self.

Lurker, the green dragonling, nuzzled her palm. She couldn't believe how much he had grown since she first met him several months ago. Nor could she get over how much her life had changed as a result.

A shriek echoed off the peaks of the Muse. Far over the lake, Scarletclaws and Silence winged across the rolling waves in search of food.

A distant speck materialized out of the clouds, dropping like a stone in front of them to skim the treetops that clung to the steep mountainside. Swoop, the brown dragon, turned her wings at the last moment and brushed the lake's surface—creating a plume of moisture in her wake.

Reecah's cheeks lifted in a broad smile as Junior regarded her with concern in his vibrant green eyes.

"It's only a matter of time before that crazy dragon does that with me on her back."

Reecah laughed. "You'd best be hanging on tight."

"That's what scares me. With my luck, I'll choke her unconscious and she won't be able to make the adjustment in time."

"Aren't you a good swimmer?"

The appalled look on Junior's face made her laugh louder. She put her arm around his waist and pulled him in close, snuggling into his shoulder—his chainmail cold against her skin. "I'm sure she wouldn't do that with you on her back."

Junior returned her squeeze but didn't comment further; his gaze following the flight of his dragon.

Lurker's head appeared over Junior's far shoulder. *"I suggest we get you humans off the mountain before you freeze to death."*

Tamra and Aramyss shot Lurker a contemptuous scowl. Neither elf, nor dwarf, appreciated being lumped in with mankind.

Aramyss waddled around Tamra, his unlit pipe in hand, and stopped beside Reecah, staring at her from his three-and-a-half-foot frame clad in chainmail and plate. "Have ye decided yer course? Remember the high wizard's words."

Reecah sighed. She knew in her heart what she wanted to do, but Devius had been adamant. She was to journey to the Wilds and seek out the dragon queen. His deep voice permeated her thoughts, warning her not to do otherwise. *"Now that you've exposed your true identity, nowhere else is safe. You must make haste, and do not stray. It's vital you go straight there. Do you hear me?"*

The old conjurer had scared her more than anything else she had experienced in her life when he performed the unbinding

ritual. She thought her life had come to an end. Surviving the ceremony had awakened a new consciousness, providing her with an entirely fresh perspective. Not only on the plight of the dragons, but on life in general. If Devius claimed she must report to the Draakvuur Colony, she would be foolish not to.

She smiled at her new friend. “Do you know where the queen’s colony is? The world’s a big place. I’m afraid we might wander forever and never find it.”

Raver appeared from the steep drop in front of them and stumbled to a stop in the snow at their feet. “Find it! Find it!”

Giving the maimed raven a shake of his head, Aramys shrugged, his thick lips pursed amongst the unruly growth of his long, brown beard.

They hadn’t been speaking loudly, despite the whistling wind, but Tamra’s keen ears must have picked up on their conversation. She turned her half-shaved head in their direction and indicated with a subtle shake that she didn’t either.

Appreciating the captivating beauty of Lurker’s emerald eyes, Reecah asked, “I don’t suppose any of you happen to know where the queen’s colony lies?”

Lurker hung his head. *“Unfortunately, we don’t.”*

“Right. You said as much on the flight here.” Reecah stared at the brink of the majestic cataract, marvelling at Swoop’s ability to adjust her flight so quickly. The brown dragon skimmed the lake at tremendous speed, approaching the point where the water fell from sight. She disappeared below the brink just as abruptly.

Junior tensed. He had seen it too.

Though Reecah had no problem deciding what she thought was best for herself, she struggled to make a decision that would affect the rest of her party. Being a Windwalker apparently came with heady responsibility. One she didn’t care to acknowledge.

Following Devius’ instructions made the most sense—the only sense—and yet, she wrestled with a demon she had felt

the need to exorcize since the day Grimelda's Clutch had burned to the ground.

Grimelda's memory warmed her cheeks and left her feeling empty at the same time. She had feared the witch and everything she represented for most of her life, but in the end, her last living relative had opened her mind to a new reality. One she wished she had been privy to while growing up.

The old crone's words came back to her, as if she and Grimelda were still standing beside the counter along the back wall in her aunt's bizarre shop, *'Locate the earth's schism to claim your heritage. Remove the Dragon's Eye from the Watcher and bring it back here... Promise Grimelda that no matter what happens tonight, you will return with the Dragon's Eye.'*

*'...no matter what happens tonight...'*

She smiled, despite her misgivings. Looking at Aramyss, she shook her head. She had a promise to keep with a dead witch.