Of Fire and Sunlight

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First submission, so any comments are welcome. Basically the first part of a story I've wanted to write for a long time. It involves the journey of Lyle and a yet nameless girl, and their attempt to find the source of the misfortune and monsters that have been plaguing the kingdom they live in.

Published on
Booksie

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He looked on hopelessly as his village burned. There was nothing he could do for anyone now. He closed his ears to the screams of those around him. He wanted to help, he really did. He spent so long pretending to be a hero, so why did he feel so useless? Through the burning fires and shrieking people, he did the only thing he could. The only thing he could think of doing. He ran. He ran until he crossed into the forest. And lost in this forest, he met a girl, his age, with blue hair and red eyes.

The town glowed with a certain haze that came with the afternoon. Children whom were playing in front of the nearly demolished inn dropped the ball they had held and ran inside at the sight of the visitor. He stepped inside of the remains of the inn. Another town suffering the fate of his own. He was pleased to see they had fared better, and maybe his search will end. The innkeeper was speaking to a customer. She was a portly woman with curly black hair kept up in a bun. She looked up from her conversation and her once happy expression hardened. One look at this visitor and she could tell he was here for the same thing his kind always came for. Information. He walked to the bar and looked her in the eye. The innkeeper sighed knowingly. The innkeeper looked and said the same thing she always said, without him even asking, â Iâ ll tell yah Hun, I donâ t know what youâ re expecting, but you won't get it. Iâ ll tell yah were to look, but nobodyâ s ever been successful.â The stranger nodded, but implored her to tell.

The sky was a hazy red through the leaves of the tree. A girl lay on one of the thicker branches, gently blowing a leaf into the air and letting it land on her face. The swamp below swarmed with the demons that had appeared a mere three years ago. They had grown used to her presence, and now lulled about in the sticky waters. She lived in solitude, mostly staying in her tree for lack of anything more to do. And she was happy. As she was about to puff the leaf back into the air, she watched as instead of landing on her face, it fell softly to the ground. The sound of footsteps sloshing in the distance, followed by the sound of a blade, obviously held by a novice, cutting through the hordes of demons that, too, heard the footsteps and were not very pleased to have *another* nuisance in their territory. She unwillingly sat up on the branch with her legs dangling. Her piercing blue eyes traced the figure in the distance.

He stopped a few yards short of a large tree. His boots sunk into the soft mud with a squelching sound. He kept walking closer. He felt as though he was being watched, but chalked it up to the seemingly endless number of beasts. He looked at the tree and his stomach sank. â I couldnâ t have followed another false lead, could I?â he muttered to himself. He glanced around one more time. The sun burned red and threatened to disappear completely. No houses, or anywhere someone could live, in sight. Disappointed, he slumped underneath the large tree. He picked up a small leaf. â Greatâ , he said aloud to nobody but himself, â At least itâ s warm here. I can't remember the last time I enjoyed a sunset. So I suppose its not all badâ ¦â He was coming to terms that his journey had to continue when a voice out of nowhere startled him.

She determined he was merely a lost traveler, and not a threat. She silently dropped down to a branch that hung just above his head. She nearly giggled when she heard him talking to himself. Finally she decided to speak to this guest. â Are you planning on staying there all night?â He was obviously startled and looked around. She dropped down to the ground behind him. He whipped around and upon seeing her, he fell backwards, shocked. She laughed as he stood up. â Whatâ s wrong, never met a girl in a swamp before?â â Well, no. But you donâ t look at ALL like I thought you would.â The girl raised an eyebrow,â Excuse me?â â Well, you are theâ ¦. Never mind. Whatâ s your name?â â How rude, asking for my name when YOUâ RE the one whoâ s not supposed to be here.â â Wha? Iâ m sorry? Lets start over.â He held out his hand. â My name is Lyle. Whoâ re you?â â Thatâ s not important. Why are you here?â , asked the unknown girl, suddenly getting defensive. Lyle was caught off

guard, but replied â Iâ m â uh- looking for someoneâ ¦..â Lyle hoped that she had any information on the person he had been searching for. â Looking for who?â she retorted. Lyle could tell her suspicion was rising, and lying at this moment may not end well. â Well, I heard that there was a very strong light magician- or a bishop, if you call em that...-who lived in a swamp near here and I â uhhh- I needed to find them.â He watched as her face got frightening, but suddenly softened. She laughed ,â Well, I donâ t know anyone like that. Especially not around here.â He looked dismal for a second, and seeing this she became very sympathetic. â Donâ t be too sad. Itâ s not the end of the world. Here, let me show you the way to town and- ohâ ¦.â As she said this, she noticed it had become extremely dark. Lyle looked around, having not noticed either. She offered him a branch on her tree, and Lyle accepted. He thought there was no way she was dangerous, she was too.... there's a word for it.... airheaded? He also figured sleeping in a tree would be better than in a puddle of mud.

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