

A
FATE
OF
WRATH
&
FLAME

K.A. TUCKER

INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLING AUTHOR

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About the Author

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Ten Tiny Breaths

One Tiny Lie

Four Seconds to Lose

Five Ways to Fall

In Her Wake

Burying Water

Becoming Rain

Chasing River

Surviving Ice

He Will Be My Ruin

Until It Fades

Keep Her Safe

The Simple Wild

Be the Girl

Say You Still Love Me

Wild at Heart

Forever Wild

This book is a work of fiction. Any references to historical events, real people, or real places are used fictitiously. Other names, characters, places, and events are products of the author's imagination, and any resemblance to actual events or places or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

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To Paul, for taking care of “what’s for dinner?” every night these past three months.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

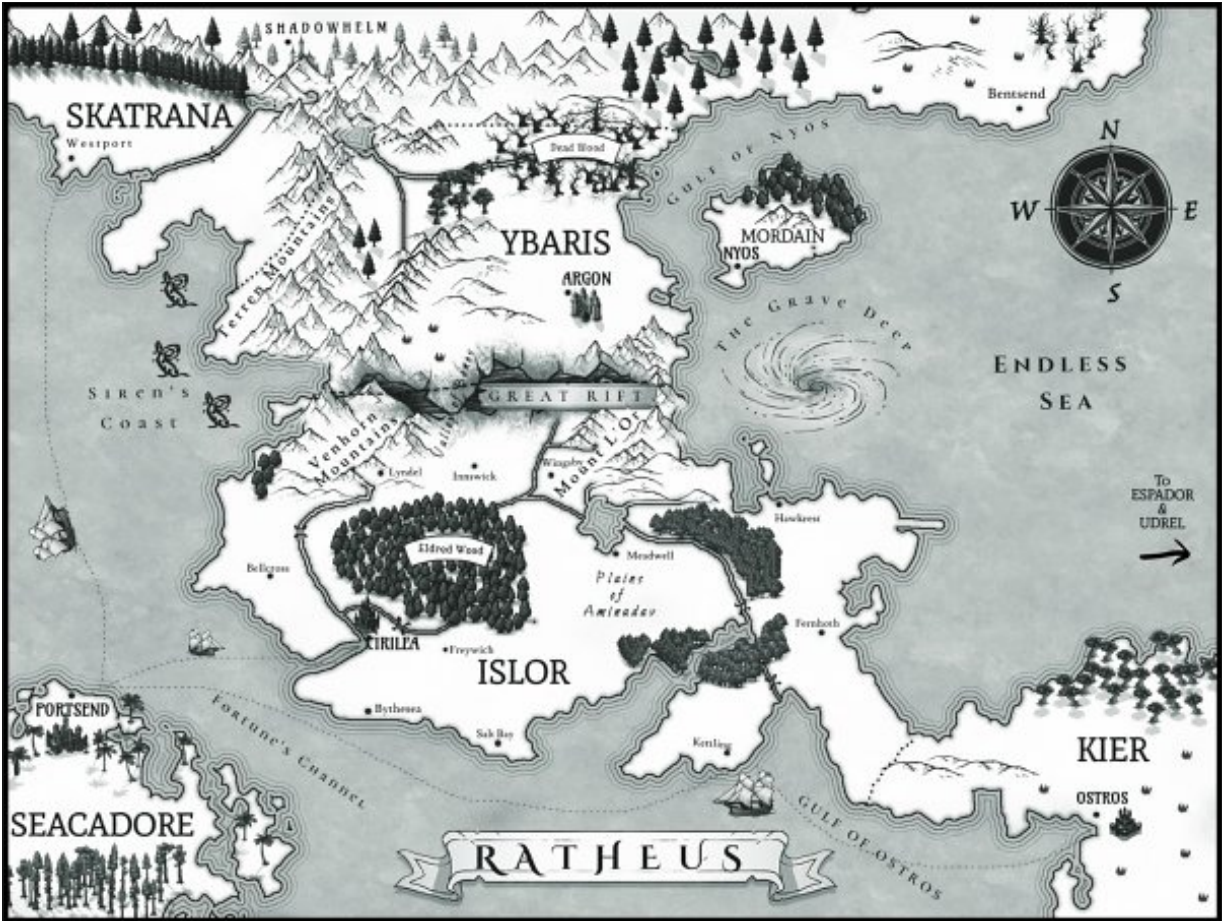
I published my first book ten years ago, in May 2011. It was a young adult fantasy called *Anathema*, the first in a series. A few years later, I switched to writing contemporary romance and suspense (two genres I love), but in the back of my mind, I've always known I would dive back into a fantasy world.

In 2015 I began plotting a new fantasy story. Every year, I opened that file, added more, and wondered if that would be the year I actually wrote it. But it was never the right time.

Then 2020 happened, and it rolled into 2021, and this book became my escape from it all when we weren't allowed to go anywhere. For those who read *Anathema*, you will notice a few things plucked from that story—a lot of the magic and world-building, the fates, the non-humans, even some of the names. The first scene has some literal copy-and-paste sections. I wanted to take concepts that I loved from that world and see where I could go with them. That is where the similarities end, though.

This story goes down an *entirely* different path. For those who haven't read *Anathema*, I've removed that series from the marketplaces. My writing skill has grown tremendously since those early days.

I cannot think of a better way to celebrate a decade of publishing novels than by releasing *A Fate of Wrath & Flame*. It is an adult (not YA, though I don't think there's anything *too* scandalous) passion project, and a wild escape for me, and I hope you enjoy reading it as much as I enjoyed writing it.



[Click here to see color map](#)

Pronunciations:

Romeria—Row-mair-E-a

Romy—Row-mE

Sofie—So-fee

Elijah—Uh-lie-jah

Zander—Zan-der

Wendeline—Wen-de-line

Annika—An-i-ka

Corrin—KOR-in

Elisaf—El-i-saf

Boaz—Bow-az

Dagny—Dag-knee

Bexley—Bex-lee

Saoirse—Sur-sha

Kaders—Kay-ders

Malachi—Ma-la-kai

Aoife—EE-fuh

Aminadav—Ami-na-dav

Vin'nyla—Vin-ny-la

Ratheus—Ra-tay-us

Islor—I-lor

Ybaris—Yi-bar-is

Cirilea—Sir-il-E-a

Seacadore—See-ka-dor

Skatrana—Ska-tran-a

Kier—KEY-er

Mordain—Mor-day-n

Azo'dem—Az-O-dem

Za'hala—Za-ha-la

Caster—Kas-ter

daaknar—day-knar

caco claws—kay-ko claws

PROLOGUE

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1

“It is time for me to die.” Sofie’s delicate hands slid up Elijah’s chest to slip behind his neck.

“And if you are wrong ...” Unable to finish the sentence, his voice trailed off.

“I am *not* wrong!” she snapped. The copper-haired spitfire was always quick to temper.

He pulled away and moved to stand at a nearby window, to gaze upon the bustling nightlife beyond the castle walls. Rarely did he envy the commoners. Tonight, though, as he watched horse-drawn carriages roll

along cobblestone streets, shuttling passengers home from frivolous celebrations and too much ale so they could hump their partners with reckless abandon, his jaw tightened with resentment. Why couldn't his problems be so trivial?

Briefly, Elijah allowed his attention to stray to the square where the pyres beneath the charred remains of three women still smoldered. It had been the largest culling in the region yet, the flames stoked by the bishop in his fervent quest to save humanity from witchcraft. This time, the church cited the plague of vole that ravaged the year's harvest as evidence of these women's guilt. Next time, they would find proof of Satan's wicked hand in a contagion that stole children, or a flood that drowned crops.

There was more truth to it than the portly bishop realized. But Elijah knew the church was motivated not by rooting out the cause of evil as much as its bid to maintain power in a time when a new house of worship was rising.

And this lunacy was spreading.

As Count of Montegarde, Elijah's influence over the church was limited. Still, he could have stopped today's massacre. He could have slipped into the yawning shadows of the bishop's residence and snapped the neck of that sanctimonious prick leading the charge. But his untimely death would only stir inquiry and embolden the masses. Another would quickly ascend into his place, more women would perish atop a bed of flames, and soon attention would turn to these stone walls and the peculiar nobility who arrived overnight, staking claim.

From there, the whispers of heresy and evil would grow legs and teeth. It would be only a matter of time before a frenzied mob congregated outside the gates with pitchforks and swords, and Elijah and Sofie were forced to flee like rodents, to start anew elsewhere.

He knew this pattern well. He had lived it in one form or another many times over.

And so Elijah sat idly by within his comfortable castle and listened to the shrieks of the women as they burned.

Sofie glided over to his side and lifted a finger to push a stray lock of hair off his forehead. "I cannot exist like this anymore, hiding in the shadows and waiting for certain doom."

"Do not worry about those zealots, my love."

"Adele did not worry, and look what happened to her," she reminded him somberly of her dearest friend who relocated to London, whose charred corpse Sofie wept beside last spring. He needed no reminding, though. That night, alight with raw fury, Sofie had razed the abbey responsible for Adele's death, including its occupants, with nothing more than a flick of her wrist. In all his years on this earth, Elijah had never seen such power. It was both awe-inspiring and terrifying.

He had quickly ferried her sapped body away before too many witnesses could place her at the slaughter. Still, the last messages received from abroad were worrisome. The Casters' Guild knew Sofie was behind the massacre and sought severe penance for her sedition. Meanwhile, the humans hunted for a witch with hair the color of the devil's flame. Already, four victims matching her description had perished for her crime.

He could not fault Sofie for avenging Adele's death. The two shared a childhood of dashing along Paris's narrow passageways between lessons, and later, youthful nights dancing through the streets, enchanting suitors as much with their alluring beauty as their mettle. Sofie's heart was ardent and her loyalty eternal. Unfortunately, when wounded, her emotions engulfed her need for self-preservation.

Elijah sighed. "Adele was not careful. Besides, I would never allow any harm to come to you."

"And what of time? Will you stop that too?" Sofie knew where to aim her words to inflict the sharpest ache. "The madness calls to me even now, at this very moment. I do not know how much longer I can deny answering it."

He flinched, dropping his gaze to the majestic oak in the courtyard garden, dressed for autumn, a scant breeze rustling its golden leaves. Winter's bite hinted in the air. It would arrive within a fortnight, stripping the tree's beauty and imposing rest upon the earth. Sofie despised that long, dreary period, but Elijah found comfort in the visible passage of time.

Beneath that leafy canopy was to be Sofie's burial spot, if their fortunes did not change, though his preference was the crypt under the chapel where he could better guard her remains.

Would she even survive long enough to see the first snowfall?

It was unfathomable to him that this woman, not three decades old, with the glowing complexion of youth and childish wildness flowing through her veins, would soon slip from his grasp. But he knew this madness she spoke of was true. He had seen it take hold of another like her, many years ago, leaving nothing but a mumbling shell of the impressive elemental she once was, her hair chalk-white and sparse, her eyes worthless, her powers impotent. She passed her days as a prisoner of the guild, reciting nonsensical musings that the scribes recorded as prophecy.

Though he didn't want to admit it, Elijah had begun to see worrisome signs in Sofie—listless stares, volatile mood swings, unintentional incantations that escaped her tongue. He could not bear to see Sofie become a husk of the vibrant woman he adored.

Of course, she had no plan to allow that to happen.

A man stumbled out of a tavern and fell to the ground in a drunken heap, directly in the path of two draft horses. Elijah's eyes widened, the idea of witnessing someone trampled to death lifting his spirits. At least that human's problem might rival his own tonight. He gripped the stone ledge in anticipation, watching the beasts' hooves plodding toward the man's limp body, seconds away from squashing his head as if it were a ripe melon. At the last moment, two men grabbed him by the heels and dragged him to safety. The horses cantered on into the night. *Damn those good Samaritans.*

Elijah scanned the streets for another person in a predicament worse than his own, knowing the chances were slim. His attention landed on a young couple in the midst of a lovers' quarrel, one that quickly escalated from shouts and hand gestures to a swift knee to the man's groin. The growing crowd of spectators erupted in laughter as the young man crumpled, writhing in pain. Despite his bitter mood, Elijah chuckled.

Sofie was not to be deterred, though. "Malachi has answered me, and we *must* act in haste. You have delayed this long enough."

“When the guild finds out, they will kill us on principle,” he warned, as he had many times before. They had forbidden such perilous summons for good reason—an accord that had brought about peace after centuries of war between the casters and the immortals.

“What is done is done.” Her face was a mask of grim certainty. “*If* they find out, they may punish me. But if we don’t do this, I am dead either way.”

“And I shortly thereafter.” His eyes flickered to the ground beneath the oak tree once again. If she was wrong, the gravedigger would be burrowing two holes in that soil by the morn, for without Sofie, there was no point for Elijah to continue.

But he was not ready to say farewell yet. “One more sunset.” Surely, this madness that loomed behind those emerald eyes would allow for that?

Sofie didn’t respond immediately. When she did, it was with the sharpness of a well-honed blade. “Very well.” The silk layers of her evening gown rustled noisily as she stalked toward the door.

Before she reached it, Elijah was across the room, his hand barring her exit. “You cannot ask it of anyone else.” She knew it, and yet the way she stared back at him, her eyes blazing in defiance, he feared she would act foolishly.

She set her chin with determination. “Then you must trust me.”

“It is not *you* I don’t trust.” He could not shake this terrible sense of foreboding. “When has Malachi ever granted anyone what they wanted without demanding *everything* in return?” Of all the fates, the Fate of Fire especially was not known for his compassion, but for his ruthlessness and pride. It had always been this way.

And yet Sofie had decided *he* was the one to beseech.

Elijah was furious when she first revealed that she had bound herself in servitude to him. It could never be undone.

“But I am a chosen one. Malachi’s flame runs through *my* veins.”

He sighed with forced patience. Sofie was young and arrogant, her faith in those who had given her immense power unwavering. She had not yet felt their wrath.

Her fingertips traced the outline of his jaw, beckoning him to meet her stare. “If we do nothing, then I am soon gone. I would rather die tonight than lose my hold on this world tomorrow. But I *will not* die. *You* will not die. Malachi has assured me of that much,” she insisted, smiling up at him. “And we will handle whatever repercussions should arise. *Together.*”

She exuded such confidence. He desperately wanted to believe her. There was a reason she was both revered and reviled within the guild. Her powers were unparalleled in this world.

And while those powers would slip away from her eventually, she was willing to sacrifice them *all* this night for an eternity with him, a truth not lost on Elijah.

“You are insufferable, woman.” There was no hint of anger in his tone.

“Yes, but I will be *your* insufferable woman, for always.”

He collected her hand in his, bringing it to his mouth to press his lips against the smooth white stone of her wedding ring. He ended the gesture with another sigh, and they both recognized it for what it was—surrender. Elijah would not delay this any longer.

Pulling away from him, Sofie glided to the expansive bed, where they had spent many nights tangled within each other’s limbs. A single candle burned on a nearby table, the only source of light in the chamber but one that glowed bright and permeated the air with the sweet aroma of honey.

He watched with growing arousal as she shed her gown and undergarments until only a canvas of bare skin remained. With a mischievous smile, she mounted the bed and knelt provocatively, her ample breasts heaving with each breath. He could sense her pounding heart, the headiness of her exhilaration. She had implored the fate—drawing on her powers until she’d drained every ounce—and he had heeded her call as the foreboding hour chimed.

“Perhaps these humans are right about their Christian beliefs and *you* are their devil, here to tempt them,” he teased as he approached her. A nude and eager Sofie was impossible to resist, no matter how dire the circumstance—a fact she well knew.

“Then surely they should never cross me.” She reached for his breeches.