

Chapter 2

Rome is a town where houses are literally one above the other. Streets do not fit large cars. That's the way Mike likes it. Mike is the Sheriff of Rome, who was hired after his rehabilitation from being injured at war. He makes a cozy home in Rome. Mike looks for any troublemakers, so he can kick them off the cit. But there is a myth about an old lady called Aurora that lives above ground in the enchanted tree like an owl over all Rome. The myth says that she looks very scary with her hair the color of amber and her fiery brown eyes she monitors everything and everyone. She protects the enchanted tree with her power, the power she has been given by supreme old man. The tree uses Aurora's power to control all living things. Aurora watches everyone from up high, as Mike keeps things in order from down low. They have been taking these precautions ever since the fire in Rome.

One day, Rome received some visitors on black speedy horses –men all dressed in black, not revealing their faces, just their eyes. One guy named Adam mysteriously appeared in Rome on a boat he took down Stealy River to find Rome looking for peace. The people of Rome welcomed the outsiders unlike what they used to do. The Sheriff took them on a tour around Rome. As Mike showed them around, Aurora observed closely as the visitors did not sit comfortable to her. The outsiders got to see the beautiful land, the treasures, and the enchanted tree, the flawless river that runs through the town, the busy shops and the cozy homes. Aurora let her guard down and decided to give the outsiders who dressed in black a place to stay. As the citizens of Rome slept, a fire erupted. The smoke from the fire rose so high in the air that Caleb from Blackville could feel the heat of this huge fire that was heating all over Rome.

Aurora woke up with alarm as she felt the heat. As everyone began to evacuate their homes, Sheriff Mike kept everything under control, trying to keep the people from worrying and show the people how to tame the fire. Aurora ran to the fire as long as her long legs could stretch. She spotted the outsiders a few miles away from Rome with prize possessions of the people of Rome. Aurora tried to restore the stolen goods, but one of the guys tried fighting her off. Mike saw the hassle this creature he had only heard of but never seen was going through with the thief. He pulls out his gun and went to pull the trigger but his hand began to freeze. He has flashbacks of

Afghanistan—it had been years since Mike had shot anyone as he had forgotten how it made him feel. Thinking back to his injury he grabbed his leg— Boom! —flashback to the landmine, feeling himself hit the solid earth beneath his body as he breaks down. He fires a shot into the air scaring the other outsiders off into the forest. One man that tussled with Aurora cut her to make her release him and he proceeded into the forest as well. She helped Mike to his feet and ran back to Rome to officially put the fire to rest and protect the tree, the people used their water pails but the fire was so hot, people couldn't get any where closer to it. The beautiful city of Rome was mostly burned, but the buildings still remained and the people of Rome restored of their land what they could.

As of today, Rome does not receive many visitors. Aurora has a cut above her left eye. Everyday her cut is a reminder of the bad decision she made befriending outsiders. She lingers in the tree above; watching over the people of Rome as her skin, camouflages with the texture of the tree bark completing putting her out of sight. Mike strolls through the town, keeping his hand glued to his hip, hand allows over his gun waiting of a chance to pull it out again. He monitors the forest as it has been told some rumors about some people that have disappeared wandering around there. He guards the forest making sure no one comes in, he especially makes sure his children never go there as well as the women and old men. The joy of flickering up and down in the football field diminishes the danger of visiting the forest. They do not know if it is those strange men that came to town that day snatching people or if the forest has magic that traps people within its depths.

Outsiders are not welcomed with open arms anymore. People may come into town but never in large groups. The citizens of Rome despise of them, so outsiders who come do not stay for long, except for Adam (which rumors say he has a connection of what is going on in the forest). It's just the natives of the land. Some of the natives relocated to a new land after the fire (contributing to the population of Rome not being that large). The land lacked its luxurious green grass, strong trees, extraordinary colors, peace, and rich soil. The Stealy River did not flow the same as it once did through the town of Rome. Instead, it started to dry.

Some wonder why the citizens of Rome kept to themselves. Well at least Caleb from Blackville did, the one guy on the outside constantly looking it. It is because the people of Rome trust no one since the fire—not even the people they have known for years. Rome is now this intimate,

abandoned-looking town full of rumors and myths. Maybe when things were lost in the fire, parts of some people were lost too. For some odd reason, when Rome was torched, everything around the tree got burned but not the tree. Even the grass was gone!