



The Dragon Nest



September 2026

Happy Fall! I've had a ton of new subscribers in the past month, so I just wanted to give you all a big welcome with a surprise! Here is my unpublished prologue to Wisp's Awakening! I ultimately decided not to keep this in the book, as the events in it are more elegantly woven in through the dialogue and first chapters. But I thought it would be a nice perk to all of you wonderful people who have been following my journey. Hope you enjoy it!

A scream shattered the silence of the brisk spring day. The girl looked up from the hole in her dress, which she had been meticulously widening in the hopes it would make the dress unwearable and she would be able to wear trousers instead. But the scream halted that plan.

The girl leapt off the rock she had been perched upon and ran as fast as she could to see what was wrong, tripping over her linen dress, making the hole even bigger, and soaking her shoes with the morning dew. The castle wall towered to her right, a gray monstrosity made of rough hewn stone. But she barely glanced at it as she sprinted because the scream came again.

When she finally cleared the corner, she saw a young boy sprawled on the ground just outside the tree line of The Wilds. A giant wolf stalked out of the unnerving trees toward the boy. A low growl escaped the wolf's mouth as it bared its yellowing teeth. The girl had never seen a wolf so large. Its back could have cleared her shoulder. It had gray fur, tipped with brown, as if it had fallen in the mud. The fur on its back stood on end, its ears plastered against its head.

The girl ran toward the wolf, hoping her power would manifest itself on its own, but it didn't. As the wolf crept ever closer to the boy, she sprinted up to them, throwing herself between the boy and the wolf. Her power still hadn't come.

The wolf swiped at the girl and she flew to the side, sliding on the slick grass with the force of the blow. The wolf went back to bearing down on the boy. Where was her power? If there was ever a time she needed it, it was now.

The girl stood up, trying to figure out what she could do. She spotted a large stick lying nearby, but she knew she wouldn't be able to swing it hard enough to make a difference. She pulled at her hair in frustration and stared back at the wolf, which was now no more than a few paces from the boy. She squeezed her eyes shut, begging her power to listen to her, just this once.

There it was - the tingling. The girl opened her eyes and looked at her skin. It glowed. She stalked over to the wolf with slow, purposeful steps. He stopped growling at the boy and turned his stare on the girl. As she approached him, his growl faded into a whimper and his ears rose above his head once more, cocking toward the front in curiosity.

Once in front of him the girl stood up straight and reached out her hand. Her arms trembled with fear, but the wolf came up to her outstretched hand, gently sniffed and gave her fingers a quick lick. Then it turned and trotted back into the forest. She turned to the boy.

"Are you ok?" the girl asked. That's when she realized he wasn't just any boy. The slightly unruly mop of curly black hair was unmistakable. It was the young son of the lord.

He stared at the girl as if she were something terrifying that had come out of the The Wilds herself. That's when she realized she was still glowing. He backed away from her, scrambling like a crab, kicking with his feet until he made it into a standing position. His eyes left hers and traipsed up and down her body.

"It's alright," the girl said, frantically waving her hands. She squeezed her eyes shut, trying to will away her glowing skin, but it wouldn't leave. They stared at each other, terror in both of their eyes for very different reasons. Then he turned and sprinted back toward the castle.

"No, wait," the girl yelled, but he didn't turn back to her. Someone had seen her power, and not just anyone whom she could try to dismiss as being mistaken, but the lord's son. Anxiety built in her stomach and crawled up her throat. She retched a couple times then ran to the stables. She didn't know

where she was going. She just knew she had to get away and there was only one way to accomplish that.

She practically slid to the stall of her favorite horse, heaving large clouds of dust into the air. There was no time for a saddle, so she turned over the water bucket to use as a step. But she didn't need it. As if she knew exactly what the girl wanted, the horse knelt down so the girl could mount her. The girl gaped for a few seconds before climbing onto the horse's back.

She gave the horse a solid squeeze, lacing her fingers into the horse's cream-colored mane, while the horse launched into a run. The girl's body slid wildly, but the horse didn't let her fall. The girl squeezed her eyes shut, blocking out the sights of passing farms and fields until a branch smacked her in the face. They were in the forest now and the horse didn't slow down.

As they entered a clearing the horse reared up on her hind legs and threw the girl to the ground. She coughed and forced her eyes open to see a massive tree standing over her. It grew in the middle of a large meadow filled with thick, soft grass and little wildflowers of pale blue and yellow. The forest itself surrounded it on all sides in a perfect circle. She sat up, stumbled to her feet and approached the tree.

The girl grazed the bark with her fingertips, but a rustling in the forest snared her attention. She whipped her head around, but no one was there. The only thing she saw was a white wolf with sapphire blue eyes staring at her from amongst the trees.

What I've Been Reading

I just finished *The Knight and the Moth* by Rachel Gillig and it was fantastic! Gillig has a talent for extremely unique worlds and beautifully-written prose. I'm diving right into the sequel, *The Knave and the Moon*. I'll also be seeing her speak next week! I'm so excited!

What's Coming Next Month

I honestly don't quite know what's coming next month, but be sure to follow me on social media for more frequent updates and the reveal of my cover in the next couple of weeks! That's all for now. Happy reading!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "N. T. Lane". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large "N" and "T" and a more relaxed "Lane".

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