

## Daughter of War origin story!

I graduated in 2018 with an English degree. I knew there were a lot more doors open for me with this than people realized. One professor encouraged me to pursue a law degree after reading my persuasive essays. My parents were both teachers so that was an obvious option. I loved publishing and considered studying the process to become an agent, copyeditor, or editor. There were a lot of options that interested me, but instead I kept working at the restaurant I'd been with for the past year. I renewed my lease in Laramie. I felt like I didn't have the money or motivation to go back to school yet.

I sat down at my computer after every shift and did the one thing that really got me excited about the future. I wrote and wrote and wrote.

I finished a manuscript I started in high school. It was so hard to finally write those last chapters. Finishing a book is the hardest part for me to this day, even when I read if I DNF a book it's when I'm about 70% through. But I finished that dystopian novel I started in the heat of the Hunger Games and Divergent fever. I realized I was capable of writing a book and I was hooked.

Then I finally broke up my boyfriend. Our relationship wasn't great and it left me with a low opinion of myself I work on to this day. All I wanted was a story where love was uncomplicated. I wanted to see a love interest make the main character laugh and support them when they needed it but also step back when the protagonist was capable. I wanted to make a love story that was safe and constant and not the roller coaster I just experienced. I love an enemies to lovers story with passion and ups and downs as much as the next person, but I didn't want to see it at that point in my life. Oken was born and I will always turn to him for comfort.

So I knew the love story I wanted on the page and knew that meant I wasn't writing a romance. I didn't want an "all is lost" point for love. I want to rely on grand gestures and figuring out if that made whatever the offense was forgivable. I read *Red Queen* by Victoria Aveyard and the battle of magic and technology hooked me. What did it mean when some people had powers and others didn't? Would that always lead to war? What kind of technology would people create if that was the case? How did people navigate the different communities if that war was raging? How many people had something to hide in this environment?

Then I read *Carve the Mark* by Veronica Roth and I loved the setting. Intense cold, like I've known living in Wyoming for so long, could be used to hide so much. This was when I saw Finley for the first time. A girl using her winter layers to hide her heritage. That was it. I saw her walking down the street with a hat and scarf, hiding her face from the people around her who might kill her if they knew the truth.

The story poured out of me from there. So much so that when I was finished, I had a 135,000 word document that I split into two stories. While my dystopian novel still sits there, it's not my first book to me. *Daughter of War* went through edits. I wrote it with intention. I had practiced with my dystopian, but I labored over this book. From 2018 to 2022 I reread it more times than I can count. In the end, it may just be my practice with publishing like the dystopian was learning I could finish a book, but I'm so happy it's finally out there. I queried it and got it critiqued and did everything I could think of, but in the end this was my story to share and traditional publishing will have to wait. I cared so much about Finley that I brought her into the world with my savings and frustration and more determination than I've shown for anything else and for that I'll always be proud.

Thank you for reading this and caring about Finley's story! From this point on, *Daughter of War* is all yours.