

# CHAPTER 4



# HEATH

# FICTION

## Rawly Rawls

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Illustrations by Eronautics

Written by RawlyRawls

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Unseen arrows whistled in the dark. Rachel banked them left. Fortunately, Urdess had created a winged contraption with intuitive controls. The direction of the wind changed, and the vehicle shook. Rachel clenched her jaw – and some other body parts – and turned them with the wind. “Are we hit? Can you see if an arrow pierced the wings?”

“I don’t think so.” Philip squinted at the branches and leaves that held them aloft. It was tough to see in starlight. “No hits ... I think ... but ...” He had to speak up to be heard over the wind rushing past their ears. Several leaves fell away from the wing and disappeared into the gloom behind them. “... maybe there is damage. Leaves are falling.”

“That would make sense.” Rachel’s jaw set even tighter. This was the only way. She would fly them as far as possible, and then they would walk their way out of the heath. “Use the everlasting spell to help Doctor Urdess’s magic.”

“I’ll try.” Philip closed his eyes and concentrated, muttering the memorized lines.

Rachel joined her magic with her son’s. His magic was always tentative and weak, but every little bit counted now. “It looks like it’s still holding together well enough. We’ll fly on.” No more arrows whistled past them. They were past the elven forces.



With his eyes closed, horrific images passed through his mind. “Gods ... Mother ... everyone in the castle.” His spell faded. He let it go. Pressed tightly to his mother’s backside, Philip looked over his shoulder. Due to the fires, he could still see their castle. It looked small. Almost everyone he’d ever known had died, or were dying, there. And soon, it would be a pinprick on the horizon.

“They would all want you to live, Philip.” She wished she could reassure him more, but her hands were busy at the controls, and her mind was occupied with the everlasting spell. “Let us focus on honoring their love for you by escaping. Turn forward and keep an eye on the wings. Let me know when they start to look precarious. Try your spell again.”

“Yes, Mother.” Philip did as instructed. Slowly, light grew in the East. That made his observations easier. It also revealed the purple of baladeen blossoms below them. Their flying machine wasn’t as high as he’d imagined. “Mother, there’s an outcrop of rocks ahead. Should we turn?”

“We’re going with the wind, sweetness. No turning. We’re high enough.” Although, as they grew closer to the outcrop, she felt more and more doubt about their course. Eventually, they passed over the outcrop with toes dangling mere feet above stone.



As the sun crested the horizon, a branch snapped from the wing and whistled off behind them. And then another. "Mother ... her magic is at an end." Philip watched a puff of leaves fall, leaving the latticework of the wing partially uncovered. He could feel his mother's everlasting spell fragmenting. His own spell had diminished some time before.

"Truth!" Rachel gripped the controls tightly as the vehicle pitched to the left. "We're going to land. Hold on."

Philip did just that, reaching around her and grabbing hip, breast, whatever was available. He watched in horror as the heath drew closer and closer to them. More of the wings fell away. "We're coming in too fast!"

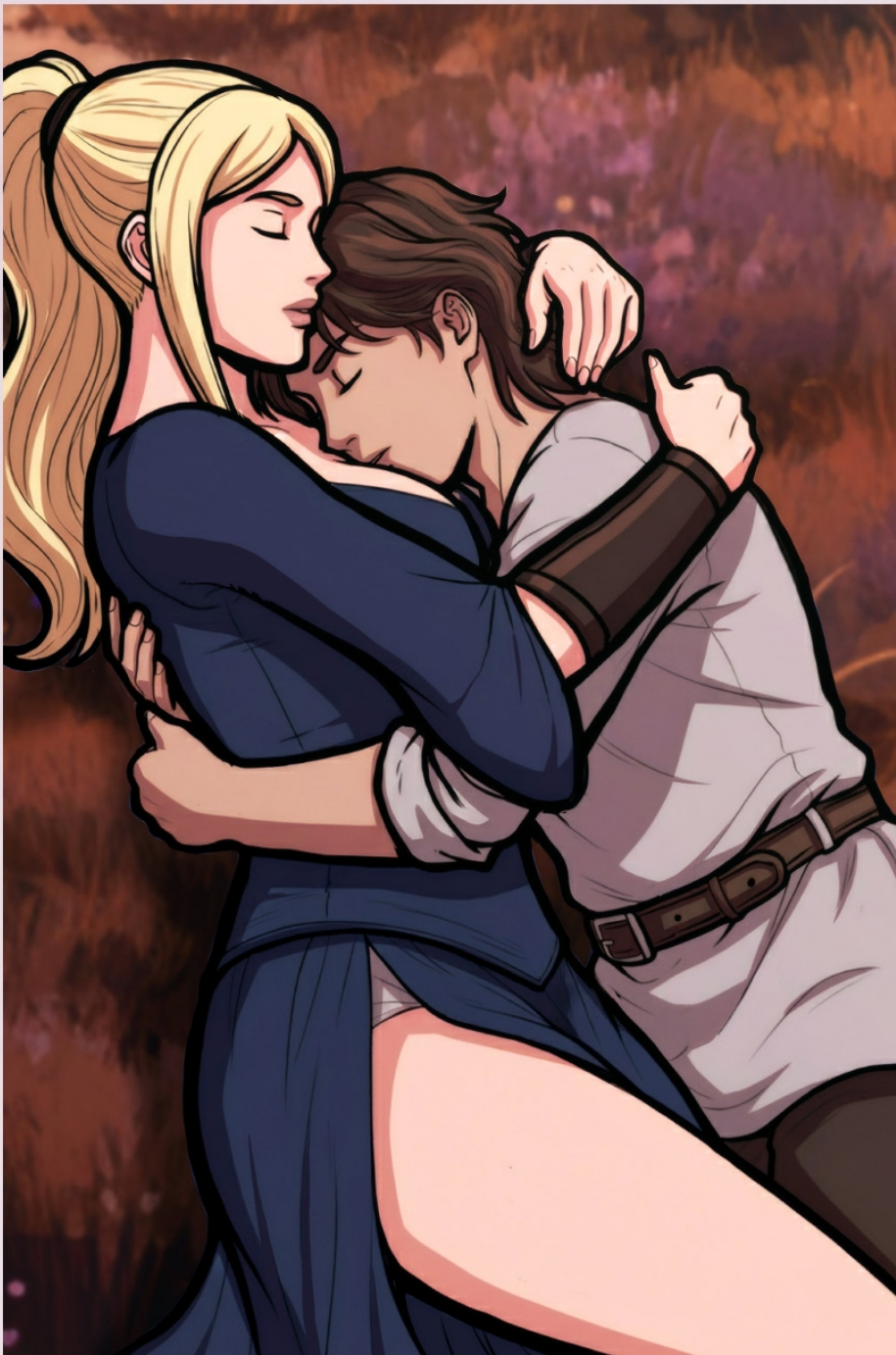
"Truth!" Intuitive as the controls were, Rachel wasn't sure how to slow them down. "This is going to hurt."

Philip ran his hands along his mother's arms until his fingers could play with the controls, too. "We need to turn the wings more vertical. Here." He turned a smooth, wooden lever, and the wings indeed swiveled, cupping the air. Immediately, they slowed. The vehicle settled to the ground among the sparse vegetation and purple flowers. Moments later, it completely fell to pieces, leaves blowing away on the chill morning breeze. Mother and son fell to the earth and hugged each other tightly.

"Gods ... gods ... gods ..."  
Philip repeated.

Rachel quieted her body. She inhaled deeply, and then on the exhale she said, "We must be strong."





Philip stopped talking, and his trembling died down.

They embraced for a long while as sunlight grew around them. Eventually, they parted and stood.

“Mother, there’s a package.” Philip bent down to pick up something that had fallen from their craft upon its destruction. He lifted the bag, finding that it had a shoulder strap. Inside, there were two wooden canteens, a camouflaged tent, camouflaged cloaks, and two wooden daggers. “She made these for us.” He showed her the bag’s contents.

“Indeed. And they look like they’ll last a good while longer than our air machine.” Rachel nodded. “Are the canteens full?” She listened to them slosh when he shook the bag. “Well done, Doctor Urdess. I misjudged you.” Rachel’s smile was bittersweet. “Do me the honor of carrying the bag, Philip.”

“Which way do we travel?” Philip slid the strap over his shoulder and scanned the horizon. He could no longer see the castle.

“We could cut east, head to our allies.” Rachel took one of the cloaks and put it on. She flipped up the hood.

“We’ve been going north with the wind. We should continue.” Philip rubbed his chin. “That would put more distance between us and the castle.” His mind rebelled at the horror that was contained in the castle that had briefly been his home.

“Yes, I agree. North, then.” Rachel marched off, her son threw on his cloak and fell in right behind her. They wended their way through the baladeen, heath, and other scrubby plants, heading farther and farther from tragedy.

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"The bees here are unusual." It was midday, and Philip's hood kept the sun off his face. "I hear their buzzing, but every time I try to spy on one, it seems to ... elude my vision. Like it's flying just beyond the periphery of my vision."

"Well, we are keeping up a brisk pace, My Prince." Rachel didn't look back at him. Her hood made it difficult to turn and glance at her son. But she could hear his feet treading the sandy soil. "And bees are small creatures. You can study them when we rest."

"Will we rest?" He was impressed with his mother's endurance. After the fight, the horror, and their stressful landing, they had marched all morning. Of course, it helped that they had no food and thus no reason to stop and eat.

"At dark, we can rest. I don't want elves catching up with us." Rachel held out her hand to the side, palm up. "Drink?"

"Yes, Mother." Philip reached for a canteen and handed it to his mother. He watched her sip it on the move and pass it back to him. He drank and put it away. "But I won't be able to observe the bees in twilight."



"The bees aren't important." Rachel's sharp tone nearly bit off the words. She hated snapping at her son. She took a deep breath and concentrated on the cadence of her shoes.

"I apologize." Philip had a pit in his stomach. The image of Gwendolen's fall haunted his mind. He tried to think of other things, but his brain moved from his father, to Gorm, to Urdess. All of them dead or captured. Dead was probably better. He couldn't imagine what sort of torture the elves would devise.

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“Aaaaaahhhhhhhhh!” Count Breddex writhed. He was bound to a plank in a dank, windowless room. Above him floated an orb with several protruding needles. The nightmarish thing would swoop down at random, stick him, and fiery pain would fork through his nerves. “Aaaahhhhhhhh ... you’re not even ... asking ... any questions.”

“Your people are all dead. The castle is ours. What questions should we ask?” Lady Rezzle stood near the doorway, an elf sorceress sat to her left, controlling the torture device. Lady Rezzle ignored her, focusing all her attention on the captive. “We only need one thing from you now. To suffer.”

“Aaaahhhhhh!” Breddex hated to give these evil creatures what they wanted. But at the moment, he couldn’t deny them. So, he screamed.

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“Why do the items in the package sustain, while the air machine fell apart?” Philip and his mother were setting up the tent. It was well-made and blended perfectly into the purple-blossomed surroundings. He marveled that Urdess had created it in her last, terrifying moments.

“She spent her magic sustaining these things because she knew we needed them. The machine was big and complex, but I suspect she put more of her energy into the contents of the sack you carried today. Magic that lasts isn’t easy. She was powerful.” Rachel stepped back and studied the finished tent. “That should do.” Her belly rumbled.

“I see berries on some of these plants. The books say they are edible.” Philip crouched next to a baladeen plant.

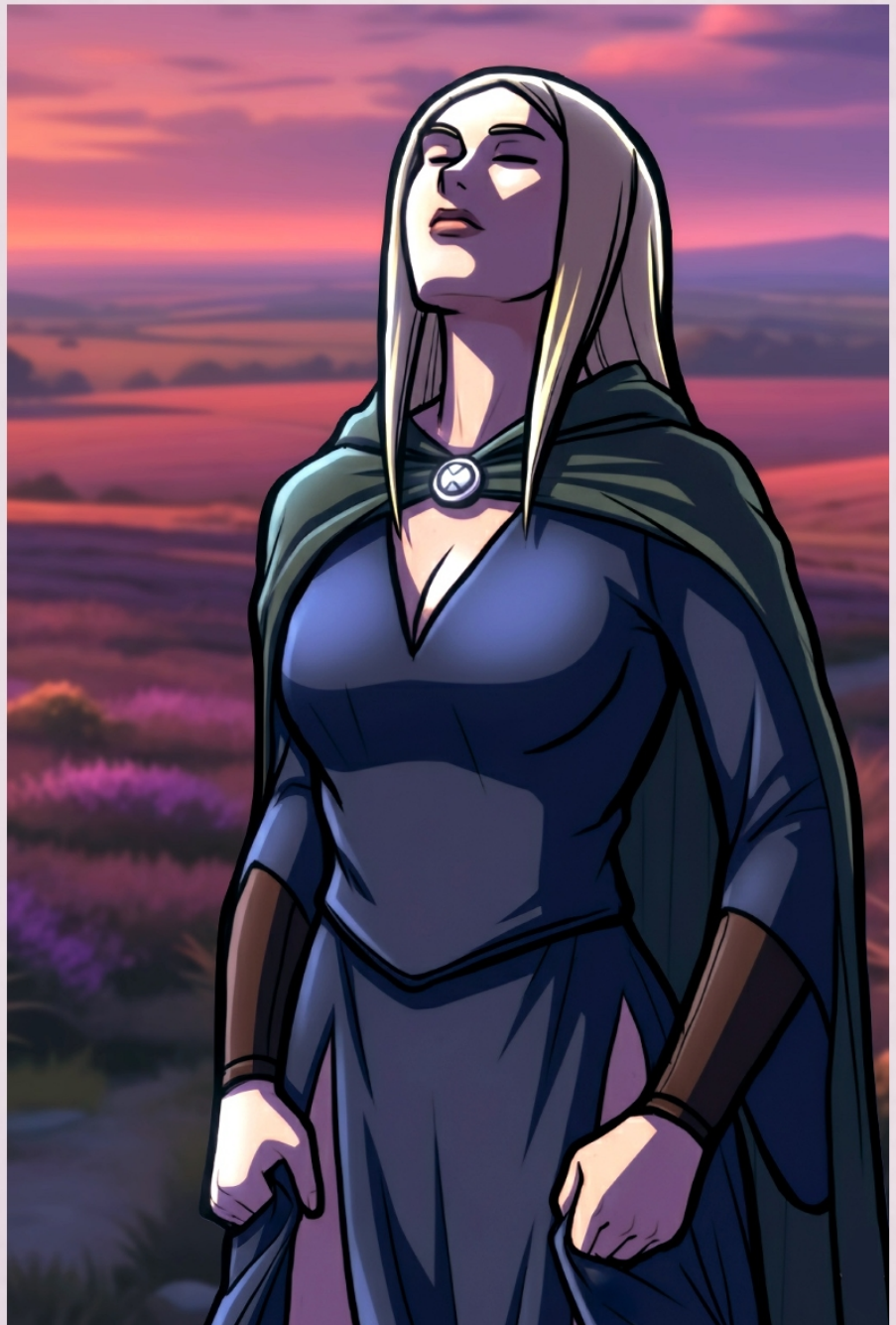
“Our men didn’t harvest the honey from these flowers, so they ripened. Your father was having issues with production. If we miss the honey and the plants create fruit, we’re not supposed to touch them.” Rachel shook her head.

“Why?” Philip turned to his mother. The temperature was dropping, and he hugged himself, rubbing his arms.

“The rhaveneen. Men who harvest the fruit are subject to mayhem.” Rachel looked up. The first stars were coming up. She was exhausted. She closed her eyes, and the image of her husband’s face came to her. She gripped her dress with white knuckles, tormented by what had happened to him and all their people. *His people.*

“My books said that rhaveneen are fictional. No one has ever caught one.” Philip shivered. “No one has ever seen one.”

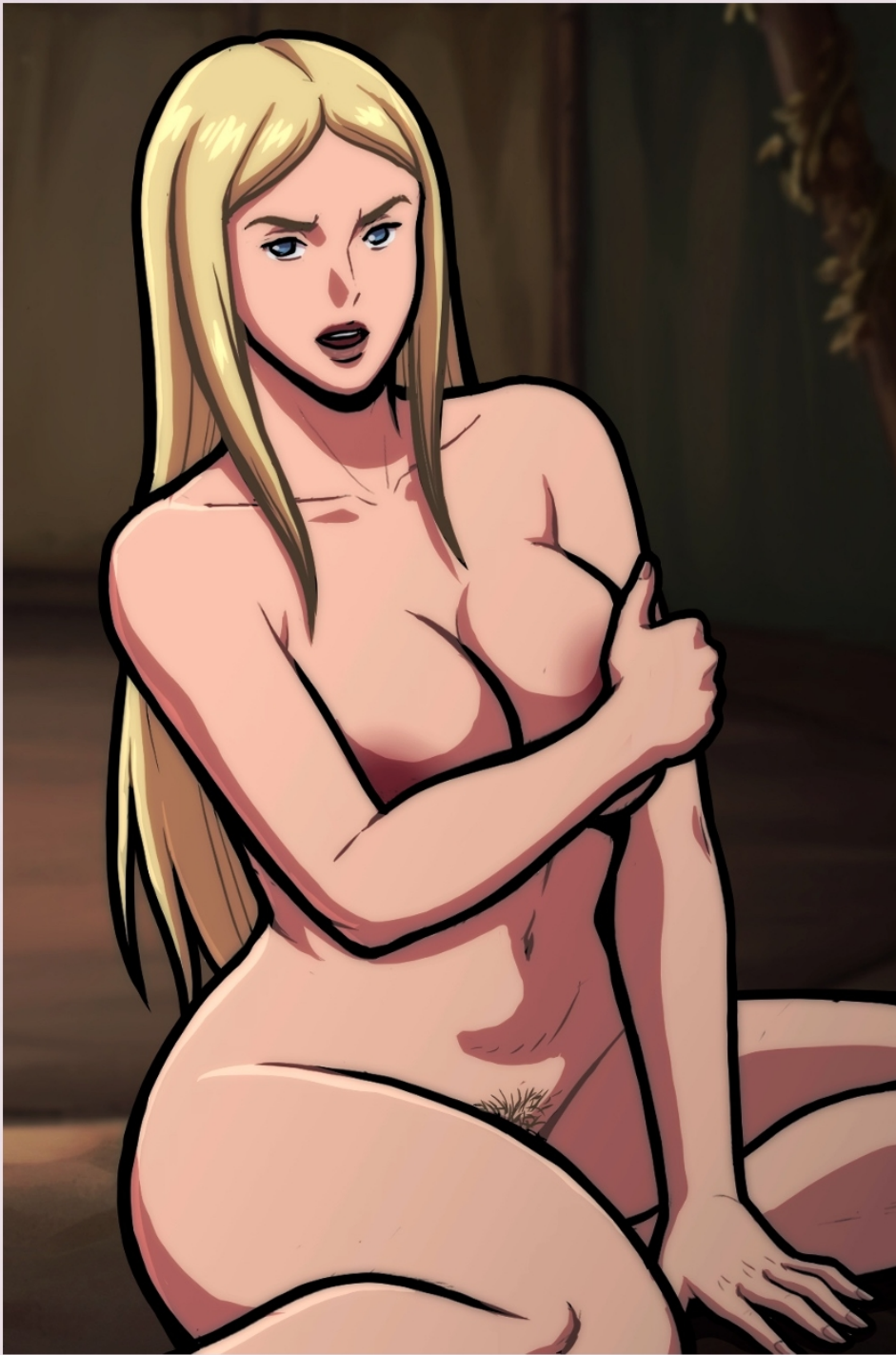
“No one has ever seen one *and lived to tell.* We’ll only eat the fruit if we have no energy left.” Rachel unbuttoned her dress. “Undress and come to bed.” She turned her back to him and slipped out of her clothing. Hearing the rustling of his clothes, she looked over her shoulder. In the faint glow of the setting sun, she could see his soft penis dangling between his legs. *He’s bigger than his father. I can see why Gwendolen adores him. Adored.* Pride in her son and the sorrow of loss made an unsettling duet in her mind. “Bring everything into the tent with us.”



“Yes, Mother.” He watched his mother’s naked butt bend over. He gazed at her breasts, swinging under her as she crawled into the tent. She was beautiful, and he hadn’t seen her naked in years. Strange feelings turned over in his belly. He was grateful that the travails of the past day kept his penis somnolent. He didn’t want *that* shame on top of everything else. *I’m not interested in her. She’s my mother. I’m merely enchanted by vivacious beauty after all the death that has befallen us.* Those thoughts didn’t calm his belly. He collected his things and crawled into the tent. He found that his mother was already asleep under her cloak, her head resting on her rolled-up dress. Philip followed her example, and soon both mother and son slept.



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“Wake up, Philip.” Rachel shook her son awake, leaning over him inside the tent. “It’s time to rise.” When his eyes shot open and fixed on her dangling breasts, she covered them with an arm. *He’s at that age. But he should be better-mannered.* “Remember what I told you about staring at a lady’s ...”

“Yes, Mother.” Dutifully, he looked away. His stomach rumbled.

“Do you have the energy to march today?” She turned her back to him and pulled on her dress, having to contort in the confines of the tent.

“I can match you step by step, Mother.” Philip dressed himself, watching the mesmerizing curve of his mother’s spine disappear behind her undergarments. He was glad her back was turned, because his morning wood was particularly hard and swollen. He had to stuff it underneath his belt to get the thing under control. When he was ready, he followed his mother out of the tent.

They folded up their nightly habitat, sparingly drank water, and readied themselves for their trek.

Philip closed his eyes, trying to banish the nightmarish images

that flashed, showing him his family and friends. He found that as quickly as he pushed one away, another sorrowful display made its home in his mind. Eventually, his spinning wheel of thoughts landed on the way his mother had looked, climbing naked into the tent. Finally, the grisly images were kept away. He took a deep breath. “North again?”

“It looks like you’re fighting the memories ... of what happened.” Rachel studied her son’s face in the early morning light. His eyes were closed, and lines were drawn unnaturally deep on his eighteen-year-old face. “We will have time to talk about what happened. But first, we have to find safety.” She watched his face relax, the lines fading. *He’s responding to my mothering, thank gods.* “I will keep you safe, sweetness, I promise.”

“And I will keep you safe, Mother.” Philip opened his eyes. His cheeks flushed. He prayed she would never find out what he was using to keep the nightmares in his head at bay. “Ready when you are.”

“Ready.” She nodded and set off marching toward the north.

