

# Trust

*By Sarah Prior*

I leapt through the trees, bare feet sure and steady on the ancient pine branches, my brown hair gliding behind me in the human-tainted pine wind. Falling to the ground, I rolled to soften the impact on the pine-needle and twig covered forest floor, mud getting on my short cotton dress and my leather satchel's binder almost coming undone.

I had to get there before they did. They couldn't know the lengths I'd gone to heal my father. In and out, I promised myself. Gone in a flash. No one will know.

I ran out into the clearing and saw Lucy in her black cloak waiting, blending in perfectly with the night.

"Alex! There you are. I have the tea leaves you asked for, and hurry. They're coming, and fast," she whisper-yelled as I got close, holding out a small pouch. I ran past her, nodding thanks as I grabbed it. I then jumped into the earth as my elven ancestors before me had done to escape the humans. Except one small difference. I was running from my kind, having just accepted a human's help.

Some hundred acres away, I rose from the ground, shivering. I opened the door in the tree to my father's death bed, and hurriedly brewed some tea with the leaves. Fifteen minutes later, I poured the warm tea into my father's gaping mouth and watched as the human magic did its wonders to Dad's sickness. I gasped in relief as his eyes finally opened after five months of them being glued shut with sticky yellow mucus.

"Lex? What... how did you find the cure, Pinetree?" he gaped at me in childish wonder, leaning forward to hug me and glowing in perfect health.

I accepted his hug, smiled, and said, "Don't you worry about that, Dad. All that matters is that you're alive."

"I guess you're right. Thank you, my little Pinetree."

Far away from Alex and her father, the Earth elves' Elders surrounded two bodies, solemn and in mourning. One was a young female elf, stabbed in the stomach multiple times before a remnant arrow pierced her heart - an invention created by the humans to keep one's soul from reaching the afterlife. The same type of arrow was in the other body, a middle-aged male elf. They looked to be related.

"We are gathered here today to mourn the death and soul bonding of Alex and Felix Leaf, who sadly cannot reach the afterlife because of the remnant arrow's soul bonding to this plane of existence. Who here wishes to speak a few words for this cursed father and daughter?" asked the oldest Elder.

Rolai, Alex's mother, stood and walked to the front, tears gathering in her eyes at the sight of her husband and daughter. She turned and said, "They were running from the humans they trusted with their lives. Even I trusted Lucy and her family, as they promised a cure for Felix's disease. But from this, we all know: never trust humans."

