



JALONICK RUSHER



Jalonick Rusher

The imperial family was abducted the day of the inaugural feast, one that took months of planning. Father was to assume control of the Kressari Empire, including the Imperial Holy Ground which was wholly a military operation. Emissaries from allied species had been invited to celebrate with the family, and the night was indeed a festive one characterized by the usual pomp that was characteristic of celebrations of this magnitude and size and that included a lot of diversion and music.

For many of the guests, traveling to the Kressari imperial palace took some time, in some cases days, and traveling in Kressari space was often not safe, especially for moneyed, high-profile dignitaries at the mercy of marauding ships. The palace was large enough to hold several families in its east wing, and so in the early hours of the morning, each guest who chose to stay overnight made their way to their accommodations. Just after the music stopped and the house was still, a small army of marauding mercenaries quietly crept along the wall that enclosed the palace. The three children slept peacefully in a bedroom abutting the emperor and empress, and four guards stood in the hall as was customary during a changing of leadership to prevent surprised attacks on the ruling family.

After an exhausting night of mingling with guests, the empress and her husband were nestled in the imperial bedroom getting ready for sleep while speaking of his imminent reign.

"I am so surprised that we were so easily elected," the empress said.

"Well, my brother left no heirs, and since my lineage was already established, the elders only needed vote for our ascendancy," the emperor said. He kissed his young wife on the cheek, "I told you if you stuck with me you would do well."

Empress Qelet was an exotically beautiful creature with white skin the color of alabaster and very cherry red lips. Her becoming an empress was only a natural progression to a life filled with high expectations and a few dashed hopes. Before his rule, her husband was one of the most powerful men in Kress, and again her marriage to him was just another in a long line of greater expectations. With her behind him, she would rule quietly using her wiles to get the thing she most desired—a guaranteed seat at the helm of the empire for her children.

The two joked around for a few moments and were so consumed with each other that they did not hear the sound of tree limbs rustling or the snap



of branches as the weight of the men proved too heavy for them outside their balcony. However, as limber as tree frogs, the men climbed the trees and gained access to the children's room. Some minutes later, the four men walked into the imperial bedroom, surprising both of its occupants.

The sight of her children bound shocked the empress—her white skin becoming a paler shade of white. She ran to comfort them only to be knocked to the ground and ordered to stay down by men far beneath her husband's social stature. In the chaos of the moment, the children whimpered, making the marauders angry, maybe even anxious. One of the men stepped outside to see four other men hogtying the guards.

In an instant, the eight intruders carried away with the newly installed imperial court. That was some 30 years ago, and it was rumored the family perished. Everyone did—except Jalonick Rusher.

At this moment, though, the Nixanti Capitol City market was a flurry of shoppers and vendors selling their wares. The Prophet walked through the crowd appearing as others but being different. Thadius Blume watched him for weeks, but the events of the last week forced him to make Rusher a priority.

The attack on Yomi Academy was seen as the worst act of aggression against the Nixanti and the entire Alliance. The Academy was not only a training facility, but it also held many of the Nixanti sacred books and military secrets.

Described as a campus, the Academy's training facility where cadets engaged in military exercises was destroyed, except for the quad, which was about a mile away and contained government offices that were untouched. Blume considered the attack simply a threat because the type of munitions used might have obliterated the whole Academy, but the attackers chose not to use excessive force, for some unknown reason.

The assault was led by a Kressari that went by the name of Rusher. However, while he belonged to them, he was telling everyone to be the reincarnation of Alarei, the mythic prophet from the legends. Nixanti men appeared in different shades from the brightest yellow to the darkest shade of blue, and the women had white skin, some decorating it with henna tattoos.

He first saw the suspect cavorting with a known group of Kressari terrorists months ago, and Blume would not have noticed anything, but for the exoskeleton common to Kressari people that peeked out from under Rusher's



attire and his dark red skin, a shade which was a common complexion. After a few inquiries, he learned the man was referred to as the Prophet.

The interesting about the man was Rusher never publicly spoke, disseminating most of his messages to the public through emissaries. However, the acts of violence of which he was accused were serious, serious enough for Blume to be hired by the government for the job. Blume was not an agent of the government nor did he work for law enforcement, but he was a mercenary bounty hunter.

Blume was a hunter with a mission that had three objectives. One was to make the connection between the Prophet and the Nixanti people. Two, if there was a clear link between the two, capture Rusher. Three, bring him to Earth for justice, and for this, Blume would be handsomely paid.

At this time of day, the weather was warm, and the market was filled with shoppers picking up their daily supplies. The sounds of merchants haggling with customers and exotic flies buzzing around filled the air. Rusher showed up in the market a few minutes later, and Blume followed him from far behind. Blume followed him through the open-air market, taking note of the places visited.

Blume planned to follow him but not too close, but Rusher's senses were so keen he saw Blume just as Rusher purchased a bag of persimmons. Rusher recognized him as the fellow he saw outside of his apartment a few weeks earlier, and only remembered him because his skin had a distinct shade of blue, something not seen in many other Nixanti resident. Today, he noticed the same man had been following him—and for quite some time.

Rusher picked up speed and Blume, sensing he was identified, walked quickly to catch up to him. Steadying himself for a chase, he dropped the beverage he sipped on and walked faster until the walk became a run. The crowded market soon became an obstacle course where simply thrown together pop-ups and shoppers were easily knocked over.

At some point in the chase, the two made it outside to a courtyard that led into a lush tropical forest. Blume looked at the guy and Rusher returned the look, almost as if the two had agreed they were officially engaged in the chase. Then, Rusher took off in the direction of the forest, and he was booking it.

Fortunately, it was the middle of the day, and Blume could see through the brush in front of him. The bright green foliage appeared beautiful in its pristine naturalness, but it was host to a cornucopia of hidden dangers.



Poisonous weeds and plants of various species made even brushing against them an opportunity to contract one of a million rashes, and if the plant life did not quietly attack, dangerous tropical creatures hissed and slithered or stung and bit those unfamiliar with the terrain.

Blume followed Rusher not considering the dangers of the forest. He stopped at the edge of the forest to see Rusher running parallel to a large river. He immediately ran after him, running limberly over the multitude of rocks, dirt, and forest debris that covered the floor.

Blume was right behind him, not quite close enough to touch but near enough to speak to if he wanted. Then, he tripped on a vine, landing hard on the floor of the forest. He picked himself up and could still see Rusher running. Rusher, hearing the thud, looked behind him to see the injured man trying to recover himself. If he could just get to the shallow part of the water, Rusher could easily escape.

Rusher ran for about another quarter of a mile before he stepped into the shallow part of the tepid river, which was a deep purple color. Blume, in the meantime, trying to gain on him, followed him only to be side-tracked by a serpent-like creature common to this forest. He froze in the water, with no knife and no other means to catch the creature, his only defense was to remain still.

Blume felt the creature's scales rub against him as it slithered along his leg, deciding whether it was lunchtime. The serpent stayed in the water some 15 minutes guarding its prey—if Blume made move—and standing guard for Rusher. Meanwhile, Blume watched as Rusher, who had by this time reached the other side and disappeared into the forest. Then, the serpent disappeared under the depths of the purple river, and Blume, frightened, waded quickly through water eventually returning to the embankment. With the afternoon sun taking on a dusky appearance and the sunset forming the skyline, he navigated his way out of the dense forest while trying to approach the capture from a different angle.

Yomi Alliance is available on Steam and Itch.io!