



Hope Rises

Ryan Souter

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Hope Rises is an intense thriller in which a headstrong woman discovers the truth about her seemingly idyllic home.

In Ryan Souter's dystopian novel *Hope Rises*, a woman with a disability strives to join an elite force.

In the near future, following a series of escalating disasters that left most of the population struggling, one city is self-sufficient and self-ruled. Prosperity Way erected barriers and devoted a large section of its city to agricultural production under the despotic rule of Paulix Kane. Now, the city thrives, but with a harsh cost: unrelenting martial law.

Here, Hope was born with one arm and was left for dead. At twenty-one, she pushes herself to her limits. She exists in singular pursuit of a lifelong dream: joining the Elite Front. Her disability does little to dampen her ambition, but she still fails to pass the admission test.

Then Hope's brother is killed during a border dispute, and Hope asserts herself at the killer's execution. She catches Kane's eye. She is allowed to join the Elite Front. From within it, she discovers that the city's prosperity has deep implications. Then, another execution goes awry, putting Hope in further danger.

It is in conversation that the characters reveal their trustworthiness (or lack thereof) best: this is most evident in Hope and Kane's speech patterns. Hope tries to adopt a cold, calculating tone, but she softens when she's talking to anyone unconnected to the Elite Front. In contrast, Kane always speaks in clipped sentences that are laced with anger. His barrages of rage are frequent. Secondary figures who speak more like Hope are the innocent members of society, while those who sound like Kane are more devious, setting up a clear good versus evil dichotomy.

As Hope's headstrong nature is revealed, she becomes more endearing. She bonds with a person with a developmental disability, struggles with her own disability, and works to keep her goals at the fore. When she's forced into actions that trouble her, a tonal shift occurs: despite her strength and fierce ambition, Hope realizes that she does not fit in among the ruthless, mindless soldiers who make up the Elite Front. There's a sense of a difference at her core, and the moment is pivotal to the novel's appeal.

The narrative works to push Prosperity Way from its deceptive "peace" toward violent upheaval, with Hope's evolution directing its development. This first series entry ends in a natural pause: Hope faces the consequences of her actions, but also learns a secret from her past. An overt cliffhanger ending generates interest in the continuation of her tale.

Hope Rises is an intense thriller in which a headstrong woman with a disability discovers the truth about a city that only seems idyllic.

JOHN M. MURRAY (May 6, 2022)

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