

Of Starlight and Midnight

Amy Kuivalainen

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A brooding, magic-wielding elf barges into a librarian's secrets as she investigates her mother's mysterious death in Amy Kuivalainen's novel *Of Starlight and Midnight*.

After a violent war, elvish brothers Søren and Aramis are busy hunting down scattered artifacts. While undercover and following a lead for a lost book, Søren's magic leads him to Asta, a petite librarian sharing a flat with her cousin, Tyra. Asta's mother was recently killed in a car crash; Asta retains a book with Norse runes that matches the one Søren seeks.

The story derives its intrigue from purposefully hidden true identities. Asta and Søren enter an addictive, banter-filled cat-and-mouse chase; she doesn't know that he is a powerful death judge whose attraction to her latent magic, her book, and her is irresistible. Meanwhile, Asta hides a stealthy childhood on the run with her mother, an ostensible stolen artifacts advocate whose hidden activities implicate her daughter. Also thrilling is the love-hate, opposites-attract intimacy that develops between Aramis and Tyra as they come to terms with their bloodshed-, betrayal-, and heartbreak-filled pasts.

These turbulent relationships and self-discoveries unfold against a rich tapestry of Norse mythology-inspired elvish geopolitical conflict; Norse terms including Ljósálfar and Dökkálfar (meaning light and dark elf) are included. Powerful factions and ongoing generational conflicts plague the book's main quartet; these backstories are intricate to an at first overwhelming degree, but they're pieced together through narrative hints, fragments, and conversations. Indeed, the gradual unveiling of the worldbuilding is rewarding and rich, complementing the book's complex emotional intimacies as dark magical forces close in upon the central four.

Elvish politics and family trees threaten a delicate peace in the magical novel *Of Starlight and Midnight*.

ISABELLA ZHOU (March / April 2024)

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