

MAVEN AND REEVE MYSTERIES

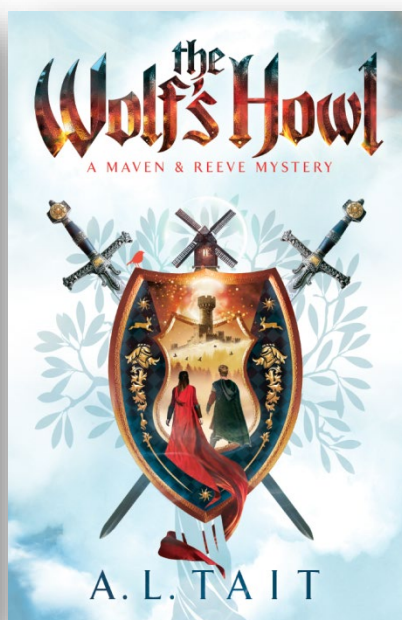
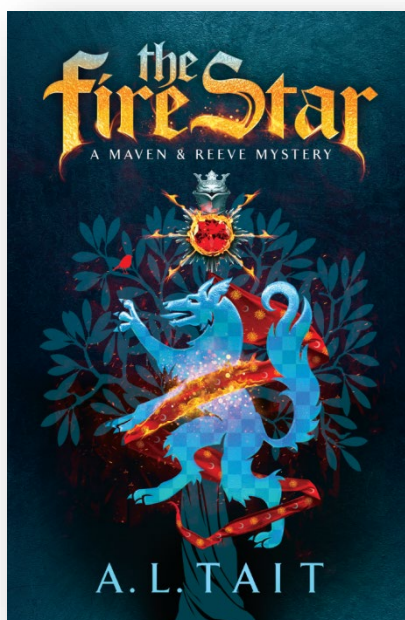
THE FIRE STAR * THE WOLF'S HOWL

A. L. Tait

Series Fiction | Ages 9+ | Paperback | 5 x 7 3/4 | 304 - 320 pp | \$6.99

Fire Star ISBN: 978-1-68464-437-7 LOC: 2021944817 | Wolf's Howl ISBN: 978-1-68464-438-4 LOC: 2021944886

Two unlikely allies must learn to work together in a medieval fantasy world of intrigue, mystery, and danger ... their futures – their lives – depend on it!



- Twisty, action-filled plot.
- Dual narrative from a pair of stereotype-defying heroes.
- Complex, colorful characters.
- Vivid sense of place.
- Themes relate to contemporary social issues.

CHAPTER TWO



“Are you ready?”

Reeve managed a tiny nod, not so much as glancing up as Lorimer, Steward of the Household, spoke. Reeve was pretty sure that the granite planes of Lorimer's face hadn't cracked a smile in decades.

“Don't forget what I told you,” sniffed Lorimer, before raising his pale, veined hand to knock briskly on the polished wooden door, once, twice, thrice.

Time seemed to slow down for Reeve as each thump on the door resounded the length and breadth of the stone hallway. His mind raced through the last-minute instructions that Lorimer had fired off in the minutes

since Reeve had clattered, late, into the great courtyard, almost falling off his horse in his haste.

Now, in the aching seconds between each knock, the memory of Lorimer's reedy voice went round and round in Reeve's mind. “Eyes down, don't speak unless spoken to, address Airl Buckthorn as ‘your excellency,’ Sir Garrick Sharp as ‘sire,’ approach only from the left, never the right...”

Reeve shook his head, trying to gather his scattered thoughts. He knew all of this. Hadn't Lady Rhoswen spent the last nine years teaching Reeve to know his laird from his lady? He'd done his time as a page – and then some.

“Enter,” came a deep, rich voice from behind the door, and Reeve took a moment to wipe his clammy palms on his tight-fitting black hose. He'd been so proud to don them just a few short hours ago, for they, and the black tunic emblazoned with the bright-blue fox he wore, marked him, finally, as being in the service of Sir Garrick Sharp, Knight Protector of Rennart Castle, as surely as if he'd had the man's name tattooed on his forehead.

As the foremost knight in the fief of Rennart – and, it was said, the fiercest fighter and firmest hand when it came to law and order in the whole kingdom of Cartreff – Sir Garrick's fearsome reputation strode before him, and now Reeve would follow behind. Assuming that Sir Garrick and Airl Buckthorn

that Anice has forgotten all about that message to her father.

Almost as though my thoughts have conjured her up, Anice's voice drifts out of the open door of a small parlor just outside the Great Hall.

“I expect that you will do the right thing,” she says, imperiously, as she sashays into the hall, all but bumping into Cassandra. Anice looks stunning, as always, in a kirtle of deep moss-green, her copper braid lying across her shoulder like a thick rope of contrasting color. Tiny red rosebuds are woven through the braid, and I think again of the Fire Star, which will one day adorn her ivory throat.

“Ah, cousin,” Anice says, pushing me aside as she slides her arm around Cassandra's waist. “Just in time to make our entrance together.”

Cassandra tosses me an apologetic look as Anice guides her forward, but I am happy to let them walk away, allowing me to linger outside the parlor and hopefully check on Reeve before he attends Sir Garrick at table.

“It seems that the Lady Anice wishes for Airl Buckthorn to recall Maven to Rennart Castle.” Sir Garrick's deep voice was measured, but Reeve noted that his

expression was carefully blank.

“I see,” said Reeve, his thoughts racing, as he stood in front of the roaring fire in the cozy parlor. Though the room was decorated in the ubiquitous shades of gray, the solid wood chairs were covered in deep-red cushions – as though someone had decided to use up fabric left over from making the cloaks the guards wore. Reeve wished he could sit on their padded comfort, but his bruises meant that standing was a better option for him today.

“And you have written the note for her?” Reeve asked Sir Garrick, wondering what to say to keep Maven with them without giving away all her secrets.

“I have,” Sir Garrick confirmed, holding up a small sheet of parchment. “She wishes to spend more quality time with her cousin and therefore sees little need for Lady Cassandra's companion to journey with us.”

Reeve winced, glad that Maven was not here to hear Anice's words, knowing they would both hurt Maven and rouse her fury. Reeve opened his mouth to speak again, but found he had nothing to say.

What reason could he possibly give to undermine the request of the Airl's daughter? Sir Garrick would send Maven away because Anice requested it, and Anice would do this to Maven just because she could.

Nothing Reeve said would change that.

“I think you know what to do with this, Reeve.” Sir



Kane Miller
EDC PUBLISHING

www.kanemiller.com