



In a Hopeless World

By: Vela Reynolds
Academy of the Canyons

Hope.

What an odd concept.

Believing against all evidence that things will turn out alright, because - well - you want them to.

It's been a while since I've felt that way.

What's there to hope for? This world is falling apart. The war has been going on for longer than anyone can remember. The king has long since gone mad. There are no heroes, no revolutionaries, no one brave enough to shout for change.

Having hope for change in this world is pointless. A death wish. The only thing to do is to tuck our heads down and keep on going. To survive, even when there isn't really anything worth living for.

(And if I did dare to hope, what could one person do? How could a single person change the world?)

Except, lately, there have been rumors. Whispers of something changing, soon. Whispers of a light at the end of a tunnel, except that we've all been in this tunnel longer than we've been alive, and none of us remember what light looks like.

It was easier to not pay attention, honestly. Easier to keep my head down and bite my lip, easier not to dare to hope for a better world.

(Peace? That was something I'd only dreamed about.)

(It sounded glorious.)

But the rumors persisted - and they turned into more than just rumors.

A notice. A pamphlet. A call to action.

I sharpened my sword and braced myself.

Speakers in the town square, shouting to the world what I had previously not even dared to think.

We want peace. We want change. We want a better world for ourselves.

We can win this, if we dare to fight.

We can.

We can.

When they spoke, for a moment, the future seemed tangible. A *brighter world*, they yelled, and I believed them for one perfect second, and my heart rose in my chest and I tasted hope in my heart and I knew there was no going back.

They rallied for support, and I joined them. Of course I did. I couldn't help it, really, swept up in the blaze of excitement and joy and hope, something so different from all I was used to. And even if I knew it was hopeless, in the back of my mind, I don't think I cared. Because I wanted to believe them. I wanted to believe that this bleak, hopeless world wasn't all there was.

So we rode out, hoping against hope that our strength in numbers would prevail.

And we fought, finding them to be unprepared and sloppy, complacent in our subservience.

And we won, easily, our desperation pushing us.

And they surrendered.

And we got what we wanted. Peace. Finally.

It turns out, I think, that one person can't do much. Even if they dare to hope. But when more people start hoping, when they start lobbying for change, that's when change happens. Alone, we can't do much. United in hope, we can do anything.