

Synopsis: Another Way to Hope

Leana has lost everything to monster attacks twice—her village, then the tribe that adopted her and her sister. In Pimary, one of humanity's last strongholds, the sisters have finally found safety and three new dear friends. She uses her forbidden wizard magic for harmless illusions to make a city of frightened refugees laugh. She tells herself the hunters who nearly eradicated wizards a century ago are ancient history, but their descendants are already watching her, waiting for one more spell to confirm their suspicions.

Her sister Wrenna has her own secret: an unwanted talent for the destructive side of nature, powers druids keep secret because of how wizards were persecuted. Patina, a noble-born paladin, is slowly realizing she needs a greater purpose. Char, a warrior whose tribe was massacred by orcs, anchors the group with defiant joy. Val is a guarded ranger haunted by her hometown's fall who keeps them alive with quiet competence born from years in the wilderness.

Leana pieces together clues that survived censorship to find an ancient wizard school. There, they find lost spells as well as censored histories revealing that a monster crisis like the current one has happened before, and that wizardry was essential to overcoming it.

Troubling signs emerge that the monsters are organizing to invade Pimary. Watching a beloved home fall to monsters—again—would be unbearable. Leana uses the recovered spells in an escalating campaign against the monster invasion. Their heroics make a huge difference, buying Pimary time, but also draw unwanted attention to Leana.

When Leana catches someone attempting to censor a pro-wizard history book, she learns he is Roland Chester, a paladin and leader of the wizard hunters. This culminates not in violence but in a tense moment of mutual recognition. Duke Quinlan issues a bold proclamation, making censorship a high crime. As her city pivots toward accepting wizardry, Leana realizes her time is up—the hunters will strike soon, while they still can.

Fleeing the hunters, the friends sail east seeking Senusha, a second wizard school on a remote island. Chester's ship catches up to them in Galerim, a city on the brink of collapse due to years of attacks by cholisks, huge crab-like monsters.

When Chester's ship is overrun by cholisks in Galerim harbor, Leana uses her magic to save the hunters. Wrenna joins in, publicly revealing the secret destructive side of druidic magic. Galerim's duchess forces Chester to acknowledge his debt of honor, bringing his paladin oath into conflict with his mission. Chester and Leana meet and talk. More importantly, they listen.

In Galerim, they discover the reason for the rising cholisk threat: versari have returned. These ancient, mind-controlling sea monsters have perfect memories, unlike humanity. And one is narrating this story. They've learned from how ancient wizards defeated them, banishing them from the world hundreds of years ago, and have returned to plot humanity's extinction.

But before she can begin to teach, she finds evidence that during the great wars, desperate wizards bred cholisks to help train battle mages. These monsters plaguing humanity for over a century were the wizards' own creation—yet another of the atrocities Chester fears will repeat if magic returns.

Leana's resolve crumbles. How can she trust others with this power when history proves that even well-intentioned wizards, facing existential threats, become monsters themselves? The answer comes from Patina. A code, an oath, a compact with rulers, peer accountability, a fair process for judging violations, and a mechanism for updating the code as new challenges arise. Leana recognizes something familiar: it's like a spell, but built from rules and people. A system crafted to alter social reality—to make history not have to repeat.

This moment transforms three women. It's the hope Leana has been desperately seeking, a true purpose for Patina, and a way for Wrenna to move past shame and fear. They will be the first Wayweavers, a new order that welcomes wizards, druids, and their protectors.