A Boat Song from West Havnor

Where my love is going

There will I go.

Where his boat is rowing

I will row.

We will laugh together,

Together we will cry.

If he lives I will live,

If he dies I die.

Where my love is going

There will I go.

Where his boat is rowing

I will row.

IN THE WEST OF HAVNOR, among hills forested with oak and chestnut, is the town of Glade. A while ago, the rich man of that town was a merchant called Golden. Golden owned the mill that cut the oak boards for the ships they built in Havnor South Port and Havnor Great Port; he owned the biggest chestnut groves; he owned the carts and hired the carters that carried the timber and the chestnuts over the hills to be sold. He did very well from trees, and when his son was born, the mother said, “We could call him Chestnut, or Oak, maybe?” But the father said, “Diamond,” diamond being in his estimation the one thing more precious than gold.

So little Diamond grew up in the finest house in Glade, a fat, bright-eyed baby, a ruddy, cheerful boy. He had a sweet singing voice, a true ear, and a love of music, so that his mother, Tuly, called him Songsparrow and Skylark, among other loving

names, for she never really did like “Diamond.” He trilled and caroled about the house; he knew any tune as soon as he heard it, and invented tunes when he heard none. His mother had the wise woman Tangle teach him The Creation of Éa and The Deed of the Young King, and at Sunreturn when he was eleven years old he sang The Winter Carol for the Lord of the Western Land, who was visiting his domain in the hills above Glade. The Lord and his Lady praised the boy’s singing and gave him a tiny gold box with a diamond set in the lid, which seemed a kind and pretty gift to Diamond and his mother. But Golden was a bit impatient with the singing and the trinkets. “There are more important things for you to do, son,” he said. “And greater prizes to be earned.”

Diamond thought his father meant the business—the loggers, the sawyers, the sawmill, the chestnut groves, the pickers, the carters, the carts—all that work and talk and planning, those complicated, adult matters. He never felt that it had much to do with him, so how was he to have as much to do with it as his father expected? Maybe he’d find out when he grew up.

But in fact Golden wasn’t thinking only about the business. He had observed something about his son that made him not exactly set his eyes higher than the business, but glance above it from time to time, and then shut his eyes.

At first he thought Diamond had a knack such as many children had and then lost, a stray spark of magery. When he was a little boy, Golden himself had been able to make his own shadow shine and sparkle. His family had praised him for the trick and made him show it off to visitors; and then when he was seven or eight he lost the hang of it and never could do it again.

When he saw Diamond come down the stairs without touching the stairs, he thought his eyes had deceived him; but a few days later, he saw the child float up the stairs, just a finger gliding along the oaken banister. “Can you do that coming down?” Golden asked, and Diamond said, “Oh, yes, like this,” and sailed back down smooth as a cloud on the south wind.

“How did you learn to do that?”

“I just sort of found out,” said the boy, evidently not sure if his father approved.

Golden did not praise the boy, not wanting to make him self-conscious or vain about what might be a passing, childish gift, like his sweet treble voice. There was too much fuss already made over that.

But a year or so later he saw Diamond out in the back garden with his playmate Rose. The children were squatting on their haunches, heads close together, laughing. Something intense or uncanny about them made him pause at the window on the stairs landing and watch them. A thing between them was leaping up and down, a

frog? a toad? a big cricket? He went out into the garden and came up near them, moving so quietly, though he was a big man, that they in their absorption did not hear him. The thing that was hopping up and down on the grass between their bare toes was a rock. When Diamond raised his hand the rock jumped up in the air, and when he shook his hand a little the rock hovered in the air, and when he flipped his fingers downward it fell to earth.

“Now you,” Diamond said to Rose, and she started to do what he had done, but the rock only twitched a little. “Oh,” she whispered, “there’s your dad.”

“That’s very clever,” Golden said.

“Di thought it up,” Rose said.

Golden did not like the child. She was both outspoken and defensive, both rash and timid. She was a girl, and a year younger than Diamond, and a witch’s daughter. He wished his son would play with boys his own age, his own sort, from the respectable families of Glade. Tuly insisted on calling the witch “the wise woman,” but a witch was a witch and her daughter was no fit companion for Diamond. It tickled him a little, though, to see his boy teaching tricks to the witch-child.

“What else can you do, Diamond?” he asked.

“Play the flute,” Diamond said promptly, and took out of his pocket the little fife his mother had given him for his twelfth birthday. He put it to his lips, his fingers danced, and he played a sweet, familiar tune from the western coast, “Where My Love Is Going.”

“Very nice,” said the father. “But anybody can play the fife, you know.”

Diamond glanced at Rose. The girl turned her head away, looking down.

“I learned it really quickly,” Diamond said.

Golden grunted, unimpressed.

“It can do it by itself,” Diamond said, and held out the fife away from his lips. His fingers danced on the stops, and the fife played a short jig. It hit several false notes and squealed on the last high note. “I haven’t got it right yet,” Diamond said, vexed and embarrassed.

“Pretty good, pretty good,” his father said. “Keep practicing.” And he went on. He was not sure what he ought to have said. He did not want to encourage the boy to spend any more time on music, or with this girl; he spent too much already, and neither of

them would help him get anywhere in life. But this gift, this undeniable gift—the rock hovering, the unblown fife—Well, it would be wrong to make too much of it, but probably it should not be discouraged.

In Golden's understanding, money was power, but not the only power. There were two others, one equal, one greater. There was birth. When the Lord of the Western Land came to his domain near Glade, Golden was glad to show him fealty. The Lord was born to govern and to keep the peace, as Golden was born to deal with commerce and wealth, each in his place; and each, noble or common, if he served well and honestly, deserved honor and respect. But there were also lesser lords whom Golden could buy and sell, lend to or let beg, men born noble who deserved neither fealty nor honor. Power of birth and power of money were contingent, and must be earned lest they be lost.

But beyond the rich and the lordly were those called the men of power: the wizards. Their power, though little exercised, was absolute. In their hands lay the fate of the long-kingless kingdom of the Archipelago.

If Diamond had been born to that kind of power, if that was his gift, then all Golden's dreams and plans of training him in the business, and having him help in expanding the carting route to a regular trade with South Port, and buying up the chestnut forests above Reche—all such plans dwindled into trifles. Might Diamond go (as his mother's uncle had gone) to the School of Wizards on Roke Island? Might he (as that uncle had done) gain glory for his family and dominion over lord and commoner, becoming a mage in the Court of the Lords Regent in the Great Port of Havnor? Golden all but floated up the stairs himself, borne on such visions.

But he said nothing to the boy and nothing to the boy's mother. He was a consciously close-mouthed man, distrustful of visions until they could be made acts; and she, though a dutiful, loving wife and mother and housekeeper, already made too much of Diamond's talents and accomplishments. Also, like all women, she was inclined to babble and gossip, and indiscriminate in her friendships. The girl Rose hung about with Diamond because Tuly encouraged Rose's mother, the witch Tangle, to visit, consulting her every time Diamond had a hangnail, and telling her more than she or anyone ought to know about Golden's household. His business was none of the witch's business. On the other hand, Tangle might be able to tell him if his son in fact showed promise, had a talent for magery . . . but he flinched away from the thought of asking her, asking a witch's opinion on anything, least of all a judgment on his son.

He resolved to wait and watch. Being a patient man with a strong will, he did so for four years, till Diamond was sixteen. A big, well-grown youth, good at games and lessons, he was still ruddy-faced and bright-eyed and cheerful. He had taken it hard when his voice changed, the sweet treble going all untuned and hoarse. Golden had hoped that that was the end of his singing, but the boy went on wandering about with

itinerant musicians, ballad singers and such, learning all their trash. That was no life for a merchant's son who was to inherit and manage his father's properties and mills and business, and Golden told him so. "Singing time is over, son," he said. "You must think about being a man."

Diamond had been given his true name at the springs of the Amia in the hills above Glade. The wizard Hemlock, who had known his great-uncle the mage, came up from South Port to name him. And Hemlock was invited to his nameday party the year after, a big party, beer and food for all, and new clothes, a shirt or skirt or shift for every child, which was an old custom in the West of Havnor, and dancing on the village green in the warm autumn evening. Diamond had many friends, all the boys his age in town and all the girls too. The young people danced, and some of them had a bit too much beer, but nobody misbehaved very badly, and it was a merry and memorable night. The next morning Golden told his son again that he must think about being a man.

"I have thought some about it," said the boy, in his husky voice.

"And?"

"Well, I—" said Diamond, and stuck.

"I'd always counted on your going into the family business," Golden said. His tone was neutral, and Diamond said nothing. "Have you had any ideas of what you want to do?"

"Sometimes."

"Did you talk at all to Master Hemlock?"

Diamond hesitated and said, "No." He looked a question at his father.

"I talked to him last night," Golden said. "He said to me that there are certain natural gifts which it's not only difficult but actually wrong, harmful, to suppress."

The light had come back into Diamond's dark eyes.

"The master said that such gifts or capacities, untrained, are not only wasted, but may be dangerous. The art must be learned, and practiced, he said."

Diamond's face shone.

"But, he said, it must be learned and practiced for its own sake."

Diamond nodded eagerly.

“If it’s a real gift, an unusual capacity, that’s even more true. A witch with her love potions can’t do much harm, but even a village sorcerer, he said, must take care, for if the art is used for base ends, it becomes weak and noxious . . . Of course, even a sorcerer gets paid. And wizards, as you know, live with lords, and have what they wish.”

Diamond was listening intently, frowning a little.

“So, to be blunt about it, if you have this gift, Diamond, it’s of no use, directly, to our business. It has to be cultivated on its own terms, and kept under control—learned and mastered. Only then, he said, can your teachers begin to tell you what to do with it, what good it will do you. Or others,” he added conscientiously.

There was a long pause.

“I told him,” Golden said, “that I had seen you, with a turn of your hand and a single word, change a wooden carving of a bird into a bird that flew up and sang. I’ve seen you make a light glow in thin air. You didn’t know I was watching. I’ve watched and said nothing for a long time. I didn’t want to make too much of mere childish play. But I believe you have a gift, perhaps a great gift. When I told Master Hemlock what I’d seen you do, he agreed with me. He said that you may go study with him in South Port for a year, or perhaps longer.”

“Study with Master Hemlock?” said Diamond, his voice up half an octave.

“If you wish.”

“I, I, I never thought about it. Can I think about it? For a while—a day?”

“Of course,” Golden said, pleased with his son’s caution. He had thought Diamond might leap at the offer, which would have been natural, perhaps, but painful to the father, the owl who had—perhaps—hatched out an eagle.

For Golden looked on the art magic with genuine humility as something quite beyond him—not a mere toy, such as music or tale telling, but a practical business of immense potential, which his business could never quite equal. And he was also, though he wouldn’t have put it that way, afraid of wizards. A bit contemptuous of sorcerers, with their sleights and illusions and gibble-gabble, but afraid of wizards.

“Does Mother know?” Diamond asked.

“She will when the time comes. She has no part to play in your decision, Diamond. Women know nothing of these matters and have nothing to do with them. You must

make your choice alone, as a man. Do you understand that?" Golden was earnest, seeing his chance to begin to wean the lad from his mother. She as a woman would cling, but he as a man must learn to let go. And Diamond nodded sturdily enough to satisfy his father, though he had a thoughtful look.

"Master Hemlock said I, said he thought I had, I might have a, a gift, a talent for—?"

Golden reassured him that the wizard had actually said so, though of course what kind of gift remained to be seen. The boy's modesty was a great relief to him. He had half-consciously dreaded that Diamond would triumph over him, asserting his power right away—that mysterious, dangerous, incalculable power against which Golden's wealth and mastery and dignity shrank to impotence.

"Thank you, Father," the boy said. Golden embraced him and left, well pleased with him.

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THEIR MEETING PLACE WAS IN the sallows, the willow thickets down by the Amia as it ran below the smithy. As soon as Rose got there, Diamond said, "He wants me to go study with Master Hemlock! What am I going to do?"

"Study with the wizard?"

"He thinks I have this huge great talent. For magic."

"Who does?"

"Father does. He saw some of the stuff we were practicing. But he says Hemlock says I should come study with him because it might be dangerous not to. Oh," and Diamond beat his head with his hands.

"But you do have a talent."

He groaned and scoured his scalp with his knuckles. He was sitting on the dirt in their old play place, a kind of bower deep in the willows, where they could hear the stream running over the stones nearby and the clang-clang of the smithy further off. The girl sat down facing him.

"Look at all the stuff you can do," she said. "You couldn't do any of it if you didn't have a gift."

"A little gift," Diamond said indistinctly. "Enough for tricks."

“How do you know that?”

Rose was very dark-skinned, with a cloud of crinkled hair, a thin mouth, an intent, serious face. Her feet and legs and hands were bare and dirty, her skirt and jacket disreputable. Her dirty toes and fingers were delicate and elegant, and a necklace of amethysts gleamed under the torn, buttonless jacket. Her mother, Tangle, made a good living by curing and healing, bone knitting and birth easing, and selling spells of finding, love potions, and sleeping drafts. She could afford to dress herself and her daughter in new clothes, buy shoes, and keep clean, but it didn’t occur to her to do so. Nor was housekeeping one of her interests. She and Rose lived mostly on boiled chicken and fried eggs, as she was often paid in poultry. The yard of their two-room house was a wilderness of cats and hens. She liked cats, toads, and jewels. The amethyst necklace had been payment for the safe delivery of a son to Golden’s head forester. Tangle herself wore armfuls of bracelets and bangles that flashed and crashed when she flicked out an impatient spell. At times she wore a kitten on her shoulder. She was not an attentive mother. Rose had demanded, at seven years old, “Why did you have me if you didn’t want me?”

“How can you deliver babies properly if you haven’t had one?” said her mother.

“So I was practice,” Rose snarled.

“Everything is practice,” Tangle said. She was never ill-natured. She seldom thought to do anything much for her daughter, but never hurt her, never scolded her, and gave her whatever she asked for, dinner, a toad of her own, the amethyst necklace, lessons in witchcraft. She would have provided new clothes if Rose had asked for them, but she never did. Rose had looked after herself from an early age; and this was one of the reasons Diamond loved her. With her, he knew what freedom was. Without her, he could attain it only when he was hearing and singing and playing music.

“I do have a gift,” he said now, rubbing his temples and pulling his hair.

“Stop destroying your head,” Rose told him.

“I know Tarry thinks I do.”

“Of course you do! What does it matter what Tarry thinks? You already play the harp about nine times better than he ever did.”

This was another of the reasons Diamond loved her.

“Are there any wizard musicians?” he asked, looking up.

She pondered. “I don’t know.”

“I don’t either. Morred and Elfarran sang to each other, and he was a mage. I think there’s a Master Chanter on Roke, that teaches the lays and the histories. But I never heard of a wizard being a musician.”

“I don’t see why one couldn’t be.” She never saw why something could not be. Another reason he loved her.

“It always seemed to me they’re sort of alike,” he said, “magic and music. Spells and tunes. For one thing, you have to get them just exactly right.”

“Practice,” Rose said, rather sourly. “I know.” She flicked a pebble at Diamond. It turned into a butterfly in midair. He flicked a butterfly back at her, and the two flitted and flickered a moment before they fell back to earth as pebbles. Diamond and Rose had worked out several such variations on the old stone-hopping trick.

“You ought to go, Di,” she said. “Just to find out.”

“I know.”

“What if you got to be a wizard! Oh! Think of the stuff you could teach me! Shape-changing—We could be anything. Horses! Bears!”

“Moles,” Diamond said. “Honestly, I feel like hiding underground. I always thought Father was going to make me learn his kind of stuff, after I got my name. But all this year he’s kept sort of holding off. I guess he had this in mind all along. But what if I go down there and I’m not any better at being a wizard than I am at bookkeeping? Why can’t I do what I know I can do?”

“Well, why can’t you do it all? The magic and the music, anyhow? You can always hire a bookkeeper.”

When she laughed, her thin face got bright, her thin mouth got wide, and her eyes disappeared.

“Oh, Darkrose,” Diamond said, “I love you.”

“Of course you do. You’d better. I’ll witch you if you don’t.”

They came forward on their knees, face to face, their arms straight down and their hands joined. They kissed each other all over their faces. To Rose’s lips, Diamond’s face was smooth and full as a plum, with just a hint of prickliness above the lip and jawline, where he had taken to shaving recently. To Diamond’s lips Rose’s face was soft as silk, with just a hint of grittiness on one cheek, which she had rubbed with a

dirty hand. They moved a little closer so that their breasts and bellies touched, though their hands stayed down by their sides. They went on kissing.

“Darkrose,” he breathed in her ear, his secret name for her.

She said nothing, but breathed very warm in his ear, and he moaned. His hands clenched hers. He drew back a little. She drew back.

They sat back on their ankles.

“Oh Di,” she said, “it will be awful when you go.”

“I won’t go,” he said. “Anywhere. Ever.”

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BUT OF COURSE HE WENT down to Havnor South Port, in one of his father’s carts driven by one of his father’s carters, along with Master Hemlock. As a rule, people do what wizards advise them to do. And it is no small honor to be invited by a wizard to be his student or apprentice. Hemlock, who had won his staff on Roke, was used to having boys come to him begging to be tested and, if they had the gift for it, taught. He was a little curious about this boy whose cheerful good manners hid some reluctance or self-doubt. It was the father’s idea, not the boy’s, that he was gifted. That was unusual, though perhaps not so unusual among the wealthy as among common folk. At any rate he came with a very good prenticing fee paid beforehand in gold and ivory. If he had the makings of a wizard Hemlock would train him, and if he had, as Hemlock suspected, a mere childish flair, then he’d be sent home with what remained of his fee. Hemlock was an honest, upright, humorless, scholarly wizard with little interest in feelings or ideas. His gift was for names. “The art begins and ends in naming,” he said, which indeed is true, although there may be a good deal between the beginning and the end.

So Diamond, instead of learning spells and illusions and transformations and all such gaudy tricks, as Hemlock called them, sat in a narrow room at the back of the wizard’s narrow house on a narrow back street of the old city, memorising long, long lists of words, words of power in the Language of the Making. Plants and parts of plants and animals and parts of animals and islands and parts of islands, parts of ships, parts of the human body. The words never made sense, never made sentences, only lists. Long, long lists.

His mind wandered. “Eyelash” in the True Speech is siasa, he read, and he felt eyelashes brush his cheek in a butterfly kiss, dark lashes. He looked up startled and did not know what had touched him. Later when he tried to repeat the word, he stood dumb.

“Memory, memory,” Hemlock said. “Talent’s no good without memory!” He was not harsh, but he was unyielding. Diamond had no idea what opinion Hemlock had of him, and guessed it to be pretty low. The wizard sometimes had him come with him to his work, mostly laying spells of safety on ships and houses, purifying wells, and sitting on the councils of the city, seldom speaking but always listening. Another wizard, not Roke-trained but with the healer’s gift, looked after the sick and dying of South Port. Hemlock was glad to let him do so. His own pleasure was in studying and, as far as Diamond could see, doing no magic at all. “Keep the Equilibrium, it’s all in that,” Hemlock said, and, “Knowledge, order, and control.” Those words he said so often that they made a tune in Diamond’s head and sang themselves over and over: knowledge, or-der, and contro——l . . .

When Diamond put the lists of names to tunes he made up, he learned them much faster; but then the tune would come as part of the name, and he would sing out so clearly—for his voice had re-established itself as a strong, dark tenor—that Hemlock winced. Hemlock’s was a very silent house.

Mostly the pupil was supposed to be with the master, or studying the lists of names in the room where the lore-books and word-books were, or asleep. Hemlock was a stickler for early abed and early afoot. But now and then Diamond had an hour or two free. He always went down to the docks and sat on a pier side or a water stair and thought about Darkrose. As soon as he was out of the house and away from Master Hemlock, he began to think about Darkrose, and went on thinking about her and very little else. It surprised him a little. He thought he ought to be homesick, to think about his mother. He did think about his mother quite often, and often was homesick, lying on his cot in his bare and narrow little room after a scanty supper of cold pea porridge—for this wizard, at least, did not live in such luxury as Golden had imagined. Diamond never thought about Darkrose, nights. He thought of his mother, or of sunny rooms and hot food, or a tune would come into his head and he would practice it mentally on the harp in his mind, and so drift off to sleep. Darkrose would come to his mind only when he was down at the docks, staring out at the water of the harbor, the piers, the fishing boats, only when he was outdoors and away from Hemlock and his house.

So he cherished his free hours as if they were actual meetings with her. He had always loved her, but had not understood that he loved her beyond anyone and anything. When he was with her, even when he was down on the docks thinking of her, he was alive. He never felt entirely alive in Master Hemlock’s house and presence. He felt a little dead. Not dead, but a little dead.

A few times, sitting on the water stairs, the dirty harbor water sloshing at the next step down, the yells of gulls and dock workers wreathing the air with a thin, ungainly music, he shut his eyes and saw his love so clear, so close, that he reached out his

hand to touch her. If he reached out his hand in his mind only, as when he played the mental harp, then indeed he touched her. He felt her hand in his, and her cheek, warm-cool, silken-gritty, lay against his mouth. In his mind he spoke to her, and in his mind she answered, her voice, her husky voice saying his name, “Diamond . . .”

But as he went back up the streets of South Port he lost her. He swore to keep her with him, to think of her, to think of her that night, but she faded away. By the time he opened the door of Master Hemlock’s house he was reciting lists of names, or wondering what would be for dinner, for he was hungry most of the time. Not till he could take an hour and run back down to the docks could he think of her.

So he came to feel that those hours were true meetings with her, and he lived for them, without knowing what he lived for until his feet were on the cobbles, and his eyes on the harbor and the far line of the sea. Then he remembered what was worth remembering.

The winter passed by, and the cold early spring, and with the warm late spring came a letter from his mother, brought by a carter. Diamond read it and took it to Master Hemlock, saying, “My mother wonders if I might spend a month at home this summer.”

“Probably not,” the wizard said, and then, appearing to notice Diamond, put down his pen and said, “Young man, I must ask you if you wish to continue studying with me.”

Diamond had no idea what to say. The idea of its being up to him had not occurred to him. “Do you think I ought to?” he asked at last.

“Probably not,” the wizard said.

Diamond expected to feel relieved, released, but found he felt rejected, ashamed.

“I’m sorry,” he said, with enough dignity that Hemlock glanced up at him.

“You could go to Roke,” the wizard said.

“To Roke?”

The boy’s drop-jawed stare irritated Hemlock, though he knew it shouldn’t. Wizards are used to overweening confidence in the young of their kind. They expect modesty to come later, if at all. “I said Roke.” Hemlock’s tone said he was unused to having to repeat himself. And then, because this boy, this soft-headed, spoiled, moony boy had endeared himself to Hemlock by his uncomplaining patience, he took pity on him and said, “You should either go to Roke or find a wizard to teach you what you need. Of course you need what I can teach you. You need the names. The art begins and ends in

naming. But that's not your gift. You have a poor memory for words. You must train it diligently. However, it's clear that you do have capacities, and that they need cultivation and discipline, which another man can give you better than I can." So does modesty breed modesty, sometimes, even in unlikely places. "If you were to go to Roke, I'd send a letter with you drawing you to the particular attention of the Master Summoner."

"Ah," said Diamond, floored. The Summoner's art is perhaps the most arcane and dangerous of all the arts of magic.

"Perhaps I am wrong," said Hemlock in his dry, flat voice. "Your gift may be for Pattern. Or perhaps it's an ordinary gift for shaping and transformation. I'm not certain."

"But you are—I do actually—"

"Oh yes. You are uncommonly slow, young man, to recognise your own capacities." It was spoken harshly, and Diamond stiffened up a bit.

"I thought my gift was for music," he said.

Hemlock dismissed that with a flick of his hand. "I am talking of the True Art," he said. "Now I will be frank with you. I advise you to write your parents—I shall write them too—informing them of your decision to go to the school on Roke, if that is what you decide; or to the Great Port, if the Mage Restive will take you on, as I think he will, with my recommendation. But I advise against visiting home. The entanglement of family, friends, and so on is precisely what you need to be free of. Now, and henceforth."

"Do wizards have no family?"

Hemlock was glad to see a bit of fire in the boy. "They are one another's family," he said.

"And no friends?"

"They may be friends. Did I say it was an easy life?" A pause. Hemlock looked directly at Diamond. "There was a girl," he said.

Diamond met his gaze for a moment, looked down, and said nothing.

"Your father told me. A witch's daughter, a childhood playmate. He believed that you had taught her spells."

“She taught me.”

Hemlock nodded. “That is quite understandable, among children. And quite impossible now. Do you understand that?”

“No,” Diamond said.

“Sit down,” said Hemlock. After a moment Diamond took the stiff, high-backed chair facing him.

“I can protect you here, and have done so. On Roke, of course, you’ll be perfectly safe. The very walls, there . . . But if you go home, you must be willing to protect yourself. It’s a difficult thing for a young man, very difficult—a test of a will that has not yet been steeled, a mind that has not yet seen its true goal. I very strongly advise that you not take that risk. Write your parents, and go to the Great Port, or to Roke. Half your year’s fee, which I’ll return to you, will see to your first expenses.”

Diamond sat upright and still. He had been getting some of his father’s height and girth lately, and looked very much a man, though a very young one.

“What did you mean, Master Hemlock, in saying that you had protected me here?”

“Simply as I protect myself,” the wizard said; and after a moment, testily, “The bargain, boy. The power we give for our power. The lesser state of being we forgo. Surely you know that every true man of power is celibate.”

There was a pause, and Diamond said, “So you saw to it . . . that I . . .”

“Of course. It was my responsibility as your teacher.”

Diamond nodded. He said, “Thank you.” Presently he stood up. “Excuse me, Master,” he said. “I have to think.”

“Where are you going?”

“Down to the waterfront.”

“Better stay here.”

“I can’t think, here.”

Hemlock might have known then what he was up against; but having told the boy he would not be his master any longer, he could not in conscience command him. “You have a true gift, Essiri,” he said, using the name he had given the boy in the springs of

the Amia, a word that in the Old Speech means Willow. “I don’t entirely understand it. I think you don’t understand it at all. Take care! To misuse a gift, or to refuse to use it, may cause great loss, great harm.”

Diamond nodded, suffering, contrite, unrebellious, unmovable.

“Go on,” the wizard said, and Diamond went.

Later Hemlock knew he should never have let the boy leave the house. He had underestimated Diamond’s willpower, or the strength of the spell the girl had laid on him. Their conversation was in the morning; Hemlock went back to the ancient cantrip he was annotating; it was not till supper time that he thought about his pupil, and not until he had eaten supper alone that he admitted that Diamond had run away.

Hemlock was loath to practice any of the lesser arts of magic. He did not put out a finding spell, as any sorcerer might have done. Nor did he call to Diamond in any way. He was angry; perhaps he was hurt. He had thought well of the boy, and offered to write the Summoner about him, and then at the first test of character Diamond had broken. “Glass,” the wizard muttered. At least this weakness proved he was not dangerous. Some talents were best not left to run wild, but there was no harm in this fellow, no malice. No ambition. “No spine,” said Hemlock to the silence of the house. “Let him crawl home to his mother.”

Still it rankled him that Diamond had let him down flat, without a word of thanks or apology. So much for good manners, he thought.

***

AS SHE BLEW OUT THE lamp and got into bed, the witch’s daughter heard an owl calling, the little, liquid hu-hu-hu-hu that made people call them laughing owls. She heard it with a mournful heart. That had been their signal, summer nights, when they sneaked out to meet in the willow grove down on the banks of the Amia, when everybody else was sleeping. She would not think of him at night. Back in the winter she had sent to him night after night. She had learned her mother’s spell of sending, and knew that it was a true spell. She had sent him her touch, her voice saying his name, again and again. She had met a wall of air and silence. She touched nothing. He had walled her out. He would not hear.

Several times, all of a sudden, in the daytime, there had been a moment when she had known him close in mind and could touch him if she reached out. But at night she knew only his blank absence, his refusal of her. She had stopped trying to reach him months ago, but her heart was still very sore.

“Hu-hu-hu,” said the owl, under her window, and then it said, “Darkrose!” Startled

from her misery, she leapt out of bed and opened the shutters.

“Come on out,” whispered Diamond, a shadow in the starlight.

“Mother’s not home. Come in!” She met him at the door.

They held each other tight, hard, silent for a long time. To Diamond it was as if he held his future, his own life, his whole life, in his arms.

At last she moved, and kissed his cheek, and whispered, “I missed you, I missed you, I missed you. How long can you stay?”

“As long as I like.”

She kept his hand and led him in. He was always a little reluctant to enter the witch’s house, a pungent, disorderly place thick with the mysteries of women and witchcraft, very different from his own clean comfortable home, even more different from the cold austerity of the wizard’s house. He shivered like a horse as he stood there, too tall for the herb-festooned rafters. He was very highly strung, and worn out, having walked forty miles in sixteen hours without food.

“Where’s your mother?” he asked in a whisper.

“Sitting with old Ferny. She died this afternoon, Mother will be there all night. But how did you get here?”

“Walked.”

“The wizard let you visit home?”

“I ran away.”

“Ran away! Why?”

“To keep you.”

He looked at her, that vivid, fierce, dark face in its rough cloud of hair. She wore only her shift, and he saw the infinitely delicate, tender rise of her breasts. He drew her to him again, but though she hugged him she drew away again, frowning.

“Keep me?” she repeated. “You didn’t seem to worry about losing me all winter. What made you come back now?”

“He wanted me to go to Roke.”

“To Roke?” She stared. “To Roke, Di? Then you really do have the gift—you could be a sorcerer?”

To find her on Hemlock’s side was a blow.

“Sorcerers are nothing to him. He means I could be a wizard. Do magery. Not just witchcraft.”

“Oh I see,” Rose said after a moment. “But I don’t see why you ran away.”

They had let go of each other’s hands.

“Don’t you understand?” he said, exasperated with her for not understanding, because he had not understood. “A wizard can’t have anything to do with women. With witches. With all that.”

“Oh, I know. It’s beneath them.”

“It’s not just beneath them—”

“Oh, but it is. I’ll bet you had to unlearn every spell I taught you. Didn’t you?”

“It isn’t the same kind of thing.”

“No. It isn’t the High Art. It isn’t the True Speech. A wizard mustn’t soil his lips with common words. ‘Weak as women’s magic, wicked as women’s magic,’ you think I don’t know what they say? So, why did you come back here?”

“To see you!”

“What for?”

“What do you think?”

“You never sent to me, you never let me send to you, all the time you were gone. I was just supposed to wait until you got tired of playing wizard. Well, I got tired of waiting.” Her voice was nearly inaudible, a rough whisper.

“Somebody’s been coming around,” he said, incredulous that she could turn against him. “Who’s been after you?”

“None of your business if there is! You go off, you turn your back on me. Wizards can’t have anything to do with what I do, what my mother does. Well, I don’t want anything

to do with what you do, either, ever. So go!”

Starving, frustrated, misunderstood, Diamond reached out to hold her again, to make her body understand his body, repeating that first, deep embrace that had held all the years of their lives in it. He found himself standing two feet back, his hands stinging and his ears ringing and his eyes dazzled. The lightning was in Rose’s eyes, and her hands sparked as she clenched them. “Never do that again,” she whispered.

“Never fear,” Diamond said, turned on his heel, and strode out. A string of dried sage caught on his head and trailed after him.

***

HE SPENT THE NIGHT IN their old place in the sallows. Maybe he hoped she would come, but she did not come, and he soon slept in sheer weariness. He woke in the first, cold light. He sat up and thought. He looked at life in that cold light. It was a different matter from what he had believed it. He went down to the stream in which he had been named. He drank, washed his hands and face, made himself look as decent as he could, and went up through the town to the fine house at the high end, his father’s house.

After the first outcries and embraces, the servants and his mother sat him right down to breakfast. So it was with warm food in his belly and a certain chill courage in his heart that he faced his father, who had been out before breakfast seeing off a string of timber carts to the Great Port.

“Well, son!” They touched cheeks. “So Master Hemlock gave you a vacation?”

“No, sir. I left.”

Golden stared, then filled his plate and sat down. “Left,” he said.

“Yes, sir. I decided that I don’t want to be a wizard.”

“Hmf,” said Golden, chewing. “Left of your own accord? Entirely? With the Master’s permission?”

“Of my own accord entirely, without his permission.”

Golden chewed very slowly, his eyes on the table. Diamond had seen his father look like this when a forester reported an infestation in the chestnut groves, and when he found a mule dealer had cheated him.

“He wanted me to go to the College on Roke to study with the Master Summoner. He

was going to send me there. I decided not to go."

After a while Golden asked, still looking at the table, "Why?"

"It isn't the life I want."

Another pause. Golden glanced over at his wife, who stood by the window listening in silence. Then he looked at his son. Slowly the mixture of anger, disappointment, confusion, and respect on his face gave way to something simpler, a look of complicity, very nearly a wink. "I see," he said. "And what did you decide you want?"

A pause. "This," Diamond said. His voice was level. He looked neither at his father nor his mother.

"Hah!" said Golden. "Well! I will say I'm glad of it, son." He ate a small pork pie in one mouthful. "Being a wizard, going to Roke, all that, it never seemed real, not exactly. And with you off there, I didn't know what all this was for, to tell you the truth. All my business. If you're here, it adds up, you see. It adds up. Well! But listen here, did you just run off from the wizard? Did he know you were going?"

"No. I'll write him," Diamond said, in his new, level voice.

"He won't be angry? They say wizards have short tempers. Full of pride."

"He's angry," Diamond said, "but he won't do anything."

So it proved. Indeed, to Golden's amazement, Master Hemlock sent back a scrupulous two-fifths of the prenticing fee. With the packet, which was delivered by one of Golden's carters who had taken a load of spars down to South Port, was a note for Diamond. It said, "True art requires a single heart." The direction on the outside was the Hardic rune for willow. The note was signed with Hemlock's rune, which had two meanings: the hemlock tree, and suffering.

Diamond sat in his own sunny room upstairs, on his comfortable bed, hearing his mother singing as she went about the house. He held the wizard's letter and reread the message and the two runes many times. The cold and sluggish mind that had been born in him that morning down in the sallows accepted the lesson. No magic. Never again. He had never given his heart to it. It had been a game to him, a game to play with Darkrose. Even the names of the True Speech that he had learned in the wizard's house, though he knew the beauty and the power that lay in them, he could let go, let slip, forget. That was not his language.

He could speak his language only with her. And he had lost her, let her go. The double heart has no true speech. From now on he could talk only the language of duty:

getting and spending, outlay and income, the profit and the loss.

And beyond that, nothing. There had been illusions, little spells, pebbles that turned to butterflies, wooden birds that flew on living wings for a minute or two. There had never been a choice, really. There was only one way for him to go.

***

GOLDEN WAS IMMENSELY HAPPY AND quite unconscious of it. “Old man’s got his jewel back,” said the carter to the forester. “Sweet as new butter, he is.” Golden, unaware of being sweet, thought only how sweet life was. He had bought the Reche grove, at a very stiff price to be sure, but at least old Lowbough of Easthill hadn’t got it, and now he and Diamond could develop it as it ought to be developed. In among the chestnuts there were a lot of pines, which could be felled and sold for masts and spars and small lumber, and replanted with chestnut seedlings. It would in time be a pure stand like the Big Grove, the heart of his chestnut kingdom. In time, of course. Oak and chestnut don’t shoot up overnight like alder and willow. But there was time. There was time, now. The boy was barely seventeen, and he himself just forty-five. In his prime. He had been feeling old, but that was nonsense. He was in his prime. The oldest trees, past bearing, ought to come out with the pines. Some good wood for furniture could be salvaged from them.

“Well, well, well,” he said to his wife, frequently, “all rosy again, eh? Got the apple of your eye back home, eh? No more moping, eh?”

And Tuly smiled and stroked his hand.

Once instead of smiling and agreeing, she said, “It’s lovely to have him back, but,” and Golden stopped hearing. Mothers were born to worry about their children, and women were born never to be content. There was no reason why he should listen to the litany of anxieties by which Tuly hauled herself through life. Of course she thought a merchant’s life wasn’t good enough for the boy. She’d have thought being King in Havnor wasn’t good enough for him.

“When he gets himself a girl,” Golden said, in answer to whatever it was she had been saying, “he’ll be all squared away. Living with the wizards, you know, the way they are, it set him back a bit. Don’t worry about Diamond. He’ll know what he wants when he sees it!”

“I hope so,” said Tuly.

“At least he’s not seeing the witch’s girl,” said Golden. “That’s done with.” Later on it occurred to him that neither was his wife seeing the witch any more. For years they’d been thick as thieves, against all his warnings, and now Tangle was never anywhere

near the house. Women's friendships never lasted. He teased her about it. Finding her strewing pennyroyal and miller's-bane in the chests and clothes presses against an infestation of moths, he said, "Seems like you'd have your friend the wise woman up to hex 'em away. Or aren't you friends any more?"

"No," his wife said in her soft, level voice, "we aren't."

"And a good thing too!" Golden said roundly. "What's become of that daughter of hers, then? Went off with a juggler, I heard?"

"A musician," Tuly said. "Last summer."

***

"A NAMEDAY PARTY," said Golden. "Time for a bit of play, a bit of music and dancing, boy. Nineteen years old. Celebrate it!"

"I'll be going to Easthill with Sul's mules."

"No, no, no. Sul can handle it. Stay home and have your party. You've been working hard. We'll hire a band. Who's the best in the country? Tarry and his lot?"

"Father, I don't want a party," Diamond said and stood up, shivering his muscles like a horse. He was bigger than Golden now, and when he moved abruptly it was startling. "I'll go to Easthill," he said, and left the room.

"What's that all about?" Golden said to his wife, a rhetorical question. She looked at him and said nothing, a non-rhetorical answer.

After Golden had gone out, she found her son in the counting room going through ledgers. She looked at the pages. Long, long lists of names and numbers, debts and credits, profits and losses.

"Di," she said, and he looked up. His face was still round and a bit peachy, though the bones were heavier and the eyes were melancholy.

"I didn't mean to hurt Father's feelings," he said.

"If he wants a party, he'll have it," she said. Their voices were alike, being in the higher register but dark-toned, and held to an even quietness, contained, restrained. She perched on a stool beside his at the high desk.

"I can't," he said, and stopped, and went on, "I really don't want to have any dancing."

“He’s matchmaking,” Tuly said, dry, fond.

“I don’t care about that.”

“I know you don’t.”

“The problem is . . .”

“The problem is the music,” his mother said at last.

He nodded.

“My son, there is no reason,” she said, suddenly passionate, “there is no reason why you should give up everything you love!”

He took her hand and kissed it as they sat side by side.

“Things don’t mix,” he said. “They ought to, but they don’t. I found that out. When I left the wizard. I thought I could be everything. You know—do magic, play music, be Father’s son, love Rose . . . It doesn’t work that way. Things don’t mix.”

“They do, they do,” Tuly said. “Everything is hooked together, tangled up!”

“Maybe things are, for women. But I . . . I can’t be double-hearted.”

“Double-hearted? You? You gave up wizardry because you knew that if you didn’t, you’d betray it.”

He took the word with a visible shock, but did not deny it.

“But why,” she demanded, “why did you give up music?”

“I have to have a single heart. I can’t play the harp while I’m bargaining with a mule breeder. I can’t make ballads while I’m figuring what we have to pay the pickers to keep ’em from hiring out to Lowbough!” His voice shook a little now, a vibrato, and his eyes were not sad, but angry.

“So you put a spell on yourself,” she said, “just as that wizard put one on you. A spell to keep you safe. To keep you with the mule breeders, and the nut pickers, and these.” She struck the ledger full of lists of names and figures, a flicking, dismissive tap. “A spell of silence,” she said.

After a long time the young man said, “What else can I do?”

“I don’t know, my dear. I do want you to be safe. I do love to see your father happy and proud of you. But I can’t bear to see you unhappy, without pride! I don’t know. Maybe you’re right. Maybe for a man it’s only one thing ever. But I miss hearing you sing.”

She was in tears. They hugged, and she stroked his thick, shining hair and apologised for being cruel, and he hugged her again and said she was the kindest mother in the world, and so she went off. But as she left she turned back a moment and said, “Let him have the party, Di. Let yourself have it.”

“I will,” he said, to comfort her.

***

GOLDEN ORDERED THE BEER AND food and fireworks, but Diamond saw to hiring the musicians.

“Of course I’ll bring my band,” Tarry said, “fat chance I’d miss it! You’ll have every tootler in the west of the world here for one of your dad’s parties.”

“You can tell ’em you’re the band that’s getting paid.”

“Oh, they’ll come for the glory,” said the harper, a lean, long-jawed, walleyed fellow of forty. “Maybe you’ll have a go with us yourself, then? You had a hand for it, before you took to making money. And the voice not bad, if you’d worked on it.”

“I doubt it,” Diamond said.

“That girl you liked, witch’s Rose, she’s running about with Labby, I hear. No doubt they’ll come by.”

“I’ll see you then,” said Diamond, looking big and handsome and indifferent, and walked off.

“Too high and mighty these days to stop and talk,” said Tarry, “though I taught him all he knows of harping. But what’s that to a rich man?”

***

TARRY’S MALICE HAD LEFT DIAMOND’S nerves raw, and the thought of the party weighed on him till he lost his appetite. He thought hopefully for a while that he was sick and could miss the party. But the day came, and he was there. Not so evidently, so eminently, so flamboyantly there as his father, but present, smiling, dancing. All his childhood friends were there too, half of them married by now to the other half, it seemed, but there was still plenty of flirting going on, and several pretty girls were

always near him. He drank a good deal of Gadge Brewer's excellent beer, and found he could endure the music if he was dancing to it and talking and laughing while he danced. So he danced with all the pretty girls in turn, and then again with whichever one turned up again, which all of them did.

It was Golden's grandest party yet, with a dancing floor built on the town green down the way from Golden's house, and a tent for the old folks to eat and drink and gossip in, and new clothes for the children, and jugglers and puppeteers, some of them hired and some of them coming by to pick up whatever they could in the way of coppers and free beer. Any festivity drew itinerant entertainers and musicians; it was their living, and though uninvited they were welcomed. A tale singer with a droning voice and a droning bagpipe was singing The Deed of the Dragonlord to a group of people under the big oak on the hilltop. When Tarry's band of harp, fife, viol, and drum took time off for a breather and a swig, a new group hopped up onto the dance floor. "Hey, there's Labby's band!" cried the pretty girl nearest Diamond. "Come on, they're the best!"

Labby, a light-skinned, flashy-looking fellow, played the double-reed woodhorn. With him were a violist, a tabor player, and Rose, who played fife. Their first tune was a stampy, fast and brilliant, too fast for some of the dancers. Diamond and his partner stayed in, and people cheered and clapped them when they finished the dance, sweating and panting. "Beer!" Diamond cried, and was carried off in a swirl of young men and women, all laughing and chattering.

He heard behind him the next tune start up, the viol alone, strong and sad as a tenor voice: "Where My Love Is Going."

He drank a mug of beer down in one draft, and the girls with him watched the muscles in his strong throat as he swallowed, and they laughed and chattered, and he shivered all over like a cart horse stung by flies. He said, "Oh! I can't—!" He bolted off into the dusk beyond the lanterns hanging around the brewer's booth. "Where's he going?" said one, and another, "He'll be back," and they laughed and chattered.

The tune ended. "Darkrose," he said, behind her in the dark. She turned her head and looked at him. Their heads were on a level, she sitting cross-legged up on the dance platform, he kneeling on the grass.

"Come to the sallows," he said.

She said nothing. Labby, glancing at her, set his woodhorn to his lips. The drummer struck a triple beat on his tabor, and they were off into a sailor's jig.

When she looked around again Diamond was gone.

Tarry came back with his band in an hour or so, ungrateful for the respite and much

the worse for beer. He interrupted the tune and the dancing, telling Labby loudly to clear out.

“Ah, pick your nose, harp picker,” Labby said, and Tarry took offense, and people took sides, and while the dispute was at its brief height, Rose put her fife in her pocket and slipped away.

Away from the lanterns of the party it was dark, but she knew the way in the dark. He was there. The willows had grown, these two years. There was only a little space to sit among the green shoots and the long, falling leaves.

The music started up, distant, blurred by wind and the murmur of the river running.

“What did you want, Diamond?”

“To talk.”

They were only voices and shadows to each other.

“So,” she said.

“I wanted to ask you to go away with me,” he said.

“When?”

“Then. When we quarreled. I said it all wrong. I thought . . .” A long pause. “I thought I could go on running away. With you. And play music. Make a living. Together. I meant to say that.”

“You didn’t say it.”

“I know. I said everything wrong. I did everything wrong. I betrayed everything. The magic. And the music. And you.”

“I’m all right,” she said.

“Are you?”

“I’m not really good on the fife, but I’m good enough. What you didn’t teach me, I can fill in with a spell, if I have to. And the band, they’re all right. Labby isn’t as bad as he looks. Nobody fools with me. We make a pretty good living. Winters, I go stay with Mother and help her out. So I’m all right. What about you, Di?”

“All wrong.”

She started to say something, and did not say it.

“I guess we were children,” he said. “Now . . .”

“What’s changed?”

“I made the wrong choice.”

“Once?” she said. “Or twice?”

“Twice.”

“Third time’s the charm.”

Neither spoke for a while. She could just make out the bulk of him in the leafy shadows. “You’re bigger than you were,” she said. “Can you still make a light, Di? I want to see you.”

He shook his head.

“That was the one thing you could do that I never could. And you never could teach me.”

“I didn’t know what I was doing,” he said. “Sometimes it worked, sometimes it didn’t.”

“And the wizard in South Port didn’t teach you how to make it work?”

“He only taught me names.”

“Why can’t you do it now?”

“I gave it up, Darkrose. I had to either do it and nothing else, or not do it. You have to have a single heart.”

“I don’t see why,” she said. “My mother can cure a fever and ease a childbirth and find a lost ring, maybe that’s nothing compared to what the wizards and the dragonlords can do, but it’s not nothing, all the same. And she didn’t give up anything for it. Having me didn’t stop her. She had me so that she could learn how to do it! Just because I learned how to play music from you, did I have to give up saying spells? I can bring a fever down now too. Why should you have to stop doing one thing so you can do the other?”

“My father,” he began, and stopped, and gave a kind of laugh. “They don’t go

together," he said. "The money and the music."

"The father and the witch-girl," said Darkrose.

Again there was silence between them. The leaves of the willows stirred.

"Would you come back to me?" he said. "Would you go with me, live with me, marry me, Darkrose?"

"Not in your father's house, Di."

"Anywhere. Run away."

"But you can't have me without the music."

"Or the music without you."

"I would," she said.

"Does Labby want a harper?"

She hesitated; she laughed. "If he wants a fife player," she said.

"I haven't practiced ever since I left, Darkrose," he said. "But the music was always in my head, and you . . ." She reached out her hands to him. They knelt facing, the willow leaves moving across their hair. They kissed each other, timidly at first.

***

IN THE YEARS AFTER DIAMOND left home, Golden made more money than he had ever done before. All his deals were profitable. It was as if good fortune stuck to him and he could not shake it off. He grew immensely wealthy.

He did not forgive his son. It would have made a happy ending, but he would not have it. To leave so, without a word, on his nameday night, to go off with the witch-girl, leaving all the honest work undone, to be a vagrant musician, a harper twanging and singing and grinning for pennies—there was nothing but shame and pain and anger in it for Golden. So he had his tragedy.

Tuly shared it with him for a long time, since she could see her son only by lying to her husband, which she found hard to do. She wept to think of Diamond hungry, sleeping hard. Cold nights of autumn were a misery to her. But as time went on and she heard him spoken of as Diamond the sweet singer of the West of Havnor, Diamond who had harped and sung to the great lords in the Tower of the Sword, her heart grew lighter.

And once, when Golden was down at South Port, she and Tangle took a donkey cart and drove over to Easthill, where they heard Diamond sing the Lay of the Lost Queen, while Rose sat with them, and Little Tuly sat on Tuly’s knee. And if not a happy ending, that was a true joy, which may be enough to ask for, after all.