I. Iria

HER FATHER'S ANCESTORS HAD OWNED a wide, rich domain on the wide, rich island of Way. Claiming no title or court privilege in the days of the kings, through all the dark years after Maharion fell they held their land and people with firm hands, putting their gains back into the land, upholding some sort of justice, and fighting off petty tyrants. As order and peace returned to the Archipelago under the sway of the wise men of Roke, for a while yet the family and their farms and villages prospered. That prosperity and the beauty of the meadows and upland pastures and oak-crowned hills made the domain a byword, so that people said "as fat as a cow of Iria," or "as lucky as an Irian." The masters and many tenants of the domain added its name to their own, calling themselves Irian. But though the farmers and shepherds went on from season to season and year to year and generation to generation as steady and regenerative as the oaks, the family that owned the land altered and declined with time and chance.

A quarrel between brothers over their inheritance divided them. One heir mismanaged his estate through greed, the other through foolishness. One had a daughter who married a merchant and tried to run her estate from the city, the other had a son whose sons quarreled again, redividing the divided land. By the time the girl called Dragonfly was born, the domain of Iria, though still one of the loveliest regions of hill and field and meadow in all Earthsea, was a battleground of feuds and litigations. Farmlands went to weeds, farmsteads went unroofed, milking sheds stood unused, and shepherds followed their flocks over the mountain to better pastures. The old house that had been the center of the domain was half in ruins on its hill among the oaks.

Its owner was one of four men who called themselves Master of Iria. The other three called him Master of Old Iria. He spent his youth and what remained of his inheritance in law courts and the anterooms of the Lords of Way in Shelieth, trying to prove his right to the whole domain as it had been a hundred years ago. He came back unsuccessful and embittered and spent his age drinking the hard red wine from his last vineyard and walking his boundaries with a troop of ill-treated, underfed dogs to keep interlopers off his land.

He had married while he was in Shelieth, a woman no one at Iria knew anything about, for she came from some other island, it was said, somewhere in the west; and she never came to Iria, for she died in childbirth there in the city.

When he came home he had a three-year-old daughter with him. He turned her over to the housekeeper and forgot about her. When he was drunk sometimes he remembered her. If he could find her, he made her stand by his chair or sit on his knees and listen to all the wrongs that had been done to him and to the house of Iria. He cursed and cried and drank and made her drink too, pledging to honor her inheritance and be true to Iria. She swallowed the mouthful of wine, but she hated the curses and pledges and tears, and the slobbered caresses that followed them. She would escape, as soon as she could, if she could, and go down to the dogs and horses and cattle. She swore to them that she would be loyal to her mother, whom nobody knew or honored or was true to, except herself.

When she was thirteen the old vineyarder and the housekeeper, who were all that was left of the household, told the Master that it was time his daughter had her naming day. They asked if they should send for the sorcerer over at Westpool, or would their own village witch do. The Master of Iria fell into a screaming rage. “A village witch? A hex-hag to give Irian’s daughter her true name? Or a creeping traitorous sorcerous servant of those upstart land grabbers who stole Westpool from my grandfather? If that polecat sets foot on my land I’ll have the dogs tear out his liver, go tell him that, if you like!” And so on. Old Daisy went back to her kitchen and old Coney went back to his vines, and thirteen-year-old Dragonfly ran out of the house and down the hill to the village, hurling her father’s curses at the dogs, who, crazy with excitement at his shouting, barked and bayed and rushed after her.

“Get back, you black-hearted bitch!” she yelled. “Home, you crawling traitor!” And the dogs fell silent and went sidling back to the house with their tails down.

Dragonfly found the village witch taking maggots out of an infected cut on a sheep’s rump. The witch’s use-name was Rose, like a great many women of Way and other islands of the Hardic Archipelago. People who have a secret name that holds their power the way a diamond holds light may well like their public name to be ordinary, common, like other people’s names.

Rose was muttering a rote spell, but it was her hands and her little short sharp knife that did most of the work. The ewe bore the digging knife patiently, her opaque, amber, slotted eyes gazing into silence; only she stamped her small left front foot now and then, and sighed.

Dragonfly peered close at Rose’s work. Rose brought out a maggot, dropped it, spat on it, and probed again. The girl leaned up against the ewe, and the ewe leaned against the girl, giving and receiving comfort. Rose extracted, dropped, and spat on the last maggot, and said, “Just hand me that bucket now.” She bathed the sore with salt water. The ewe sighed deeply and suddenly walked out of the yard, heading for home. She had had enough of medicine. “Bucky!” Rose shouted. A grubby child appeared from under a bush where he had been asleep and trailed after the ewe, of whom he

was nominally in charge although she was older, larger, better fed, and probably wiser than he was.

“They said you should give me my name,” said Dragonfly. “Father fell to raging. So that’s that.”

The witch said nothing. She knew the girl was right. Once the Master of Iria said he would or would not allow a thing, he never changed his mind, priding himself on his intransigence, since in his view only weak men said a thing and then unsaid it.

“Why can’t I give myself my own true name?” Dragonfly asked, while Rose washed the knife and her hands in the salt water.

“Can’t be done.”

“Why not? Why does it have to be a witch or a sorcerer? What do you do?”

“Well,” Rose said, and dumped out the salt water on the bare dirt of the small front yard of her house, which, like most witches’ houses, stood somewhat apart from the village. “Well,” she said, straightening up and looking about vaguely as if for an answer, or a ewe, or a towel. “You have to know something about the power, see,” she said at last, and looked at Dragonfly with one eye. Her other eye looked a little off to the side. Sometimes Dragonfly thought the cast was in Rose’s left eye, sometimes it seemed to be in her right, but always one eye looked straight and the other watched something just out of sight, around the corner, elsewhere.

“Which power?”

“The one,” Rose said. As suddenly as the ewe had walked off, she went into her house. Dragonfly followed her, but only to the door. Nobody entered a witch’s house uninvited.

“You said I had it,” the girl said into the reeking gloom of the one-roomed hut.

“I said you have a strength in you, a great one,” the witch said from the darkness. “And you know it too. What you are to do I don’t know, nor do you. That’s to find. But there’s no such power as to name yourself.”

“Why not? What’s more yourself than your own true name?”

A long silence.

The witch emerged with a soapstone drop spindle and a ball of greasy wool. She sat down on the bench beside her door and set the spindle turning. She had spun a yard of

grey-brown yarn before she answered.

“My name’s myself. True. But what’s a name, then? It’s what another calls me. If there was no other, only me, what would I want a name for?”

“But,” said Dragonfly and stopped, caught by the argument. After a while she said, “So a name has to be a gift?”

Rose nodded.

“Give me my name, Rose,” the girl said.

“Your dad says not.”

“I say to.”

“He’s the master here.”

“He can keep me poor and stupid and worthless, but he can’t keep me nameless!”

The witch sighed, like the ewe, uneasy and constrained.

“Tonight,” Dragonfly said. “At our spring, under Iria Hill. What he doesn’t know won’t hurt him.” Her voice was half coaxing, half savage.

“You ought to have your proper nameday, your feast and dancing, like any young ’un,” the witch said. “It’s at daybreak a name should be given. And then there ought to be music and feasting and all. A party. Not sneaking about at night and no one knowing . . .”

“I’ll know. How do you know what name to say, Rose? Does the water tell you?”

The witch shook her iron-grey head once. “I can’t tell you.” Her “can’t” did not mean “won’t.” Dragonfly waited. “It’s the power, like I said. It comes just so.” Rose stopped her spinning and looked up with one eye at a cloud in the west; the other looked a little northward of the sky. “You’re there in the water, together, you and the child. You take away the child-name. People may go on using that name for a use-name, but it’s not her name, nor ever was. So now she’s not a child, and she has no name. So then you wait. In the water there. You open your mind up, like. Like opening the doors of a house to the wind. So it comes. Your tongue speaks it, the name. Your breath makes it. You give it to that child, the breath, the name. You can’t think of it. You let it come to you. It must come through you and the water to her it belongs to. That’s the power, the way it works. It’s all like that. It’s not a thing you do. You have to know how to let it do. That’s all the mastery.”

“Mages can do more than that,” the girl said after a while.

“Nobody can do more than that,” said Rose.

Dragonfly rolled her head round on her neck, stretching till the vertebrae cracked, restlessly stretching out her long arms and legs. “Will you?” she said.

After some time, Rose nodded once.

They met in the lane under Iria Hill in the dark of night, long after sunset, long before dawn. Rose made a dim glow of werelight so that they could find their way through the marshy ground around the spring without falling in a sinkhole among the reeds. In the cold darkness under a few stars and the black curve of the hill, they stripped and waded into the shallow water, their feet sinking deep in velvet mud. The witch touched the girl’s hand, saying, “I take your name, child. You are no child. You have no name.”

It was utterly still.

In a whisper the witch said, “Woman, be named. You are Irian.”

For a moment longer they held still; then the night wind blew across their naked shoulders, and shivering, they waded out, dried themselves as well as they could, struggled barefoot and wretched through the sharp-edged reeds and tangling roots, and found their way back to the lane. And there Dragonfly spoke in a ragged, raging whisper: “How could you name me that!”

The witch said nothing.

“It isn’t right. It isn’t my true name! I thought my name would make me be me. But this makes it worse. You got it wrong. You’re only a witch. You did it wrong. It’s his name. He can have it. He’s so proud of it, his stupid domain, his stupid grandfather. I don’t want it. I won’t have it. It isn’t me. I still don’t know who I am. I’m not Irian!” She fell silent abruptly, having spoken the name.

The witch still said nothing. They walked along in the darkness side by side. At last, in a placating, frightened voice, Rose said, “It came so . . .”

“If you ever tell it to anyone I’ll kill you,” Dragonfly said.

At that, the witch stopped walking. She hissed in her throat like a cat. “Tell anyone?”

Dragonfly stopped too. She said after a moment, “I’m sorry. But I feel like—I feel like you betrayed me.”

“I spoke your true name. It’s not what I thought it would be. And I don’t feel easy about it. As if I’d left something unfinished. But it is your name. If it betrays you, then that’s the truth of it.” Rose hesitated and then spoke less angrily, more coldly: “If you want the power to betray me, Irian, I’ll give you that. My name is Etaudis.”

The wind had come up again. They were both shivering, their teeth chattering. They stood face to face in the black lane, hardly able to see where the other was. Dragonfly put out her groping hand and met the witch’s hand. They put their arms round each other in a fierce, long embrace. Then they hurried on, the witch to her hut near the village, the heiress of Iria up the hill to her ruinous house, where all the dogs, who had let her go without much fuss, received her back with a clamor and racket of barking that woke everybody for a half mile round except the master, sodden drunk by his cold hearth.

II. Ivory

THE MASTER OF IRIA OF Westpool, Birch, didn’t own the old house, but he did own the central and richest lands of the old domain. His father, more interested in vines and orchards than in quarrels with his relatives, had left Birch a thriving property. Birch hired men to manage the farms and wineries and cooperage and cartage and all, while he enjoyed his wealth. He married the timid daughter of the younger brother of the Lord of Wayfirth, and took infinite pleasure in thinking that his daughters were of noble blood.

The fashion of the time among the nobility was to have a wizard in their service, a genuine wizard with a staff and a grey cloak, trained on the Isle of the Wise; and so the Master of Iria of Westpool got himself a wizard from Roke. He was surprised how easy it was to get one, if you paid the price.

The young man, called Ivory, did not actually have his staff and cloak yet; he explained that he was to be made wizard when he went back to Roke. The Masters had sent him out in the world to gain experience, for all the classes in the school cannot give a man the experience he needs to be a wizard. Birch looked a little dubious at this, and Ivory reassured him that his training on Roke had equipped him with every kind of magic that could be needed in Iria of Westpool on Way. To prove it, he made it seem that a herd of deer ran through the dining hall, followed by a flight of swans, who marvelously soared in through the south wall and out through the north wall; and lastly a fountain in a silver basin sprang up in the center of the table, and when the master and his family cautiously imitated their wizard and filled their cups from it and tasted it, it was a sweet golden wine. “Wine of the Andrades,” said the young man with a modest, complacent smile. By then the wife and daughters were entirely won over. And Birch thought the young man was worth his fee, although his own silent preference was for the dry red Fanian of his own vineyards, which got you drunk if you

drank enough, while this yellow stuff was just honeywater.

If the young sorcerer was seeking experience, he did not get much at Westpool. Whenever Birch had guests from Kembermouth or from neighboring domains, the herd of deer, the swans, and the fountain of golden wine made their appearance. He also worked up some very pretty fireworks for warm spring evenings. But if the managers of the orchards and vineyards came to the master to ask if his wizard might put a spell of increase on the pears this year or maybe charm the black rot off the Fanian vines on the south hill, Birch said, “A wizard of Roke doesn’t lower himself to such stuff. Go tell the village sorcerer to earn his keep!” And when the youngest daughter came down with a wasting cough, Birch’s wife dared not trouble the wise young man about it, but sent humbly to Rose of Old Iria, asking her to come in by the back door and maybe make a poultice or sing a chant to bring the girl back to health.

Ivory never noticed that the girl was ailing, nor the pear trees, nor the vines. He kept himself to himself, as a man of craft and learning should. He spent his days riding about the countryside on the pretty black mare that his employer had given him for his use when he made it clear that he had not come from Roke to trudge about on foot in the mud and dust of country byways.

On his rides he sometimes passed an old house on a hill among great oaks. Once he turned off the village lane up the hill, but a pack of scrawny, evil-mouthed dogs came pelting and bellowing down at him. The mare was afraid of dogs and liable to buck and bolt, so after that he kept his distance. But he had an eye for beauty, and liked to look at the old house dreaming away in the dappled light of the early summer afternoons.

He asked Birch about the place. “That’s Iria,” Birch said—“Old Iria, I mean to say. I own that house by rights. But after a century of feuds and fights over it, my granddad let the place go to settle the quarrel. Though the master there would still be quarreling with me if he didn’t keep too drunk to talk. Haven’t seen the old man for years. He had a daughter, I think.”

“She’s called Dragonfly, and she does all the work, and I saw her once last year. She’s tall, and as beautiful as a flowering tree,” said the youngest daughter, Rose, who was busy crowding a lifetime of keen observation into the fourteen years that were all she was going to have for it. She broke off, coughing. Her mother shot an anguished, yearning glance at the wizard. Surely he would hear that cough, this time? He smiled at young Rose, and the mother’s heart lifted. Surely he wouldn’t smile so if Rose’s cough was anything serious?

“Nothing to do with us, that lot at the old place,” Birch said, displeased. The tactful Ivory asked no more. But he wanted to see the girl as beautiful as a flowering tree. He rode past Old Iria regularly. He tried stopping in the village at the foot of the hill to ask questions, but there was nowhere to stop and nobody would answer questions. A

walleyed witch took one look at him and scuttled into her hut. If he went up to the house he would have to face the pack of hellhounds and probably a drunk old man. But it was worth the chance, he thought; he was bored out of his wits with the dull life at Westpool, and was never slow to take a risk. He rode up the hill till the dogs were yelling around him in a frenzy snapping at the mare's legs. She plunged and lashed out her hoofs at them, and he kept her from bolting only by a staying spell and all the strength in his arms. The dogs were leaping and snapping at his own legs now, and he was about to let the mare have her head when somebody came among the dogs shouting curses and beating them back with a strap. When he got the lathered, gasping mare to stand still, he saw the girl as beautiful as a flowering tree. She was very tall, very sweaty, with big hands and feet and mouth and nose and eyes, and a head of wild dusty hair. She was yelling, "Down! Back to the house, you carrion, you vile sons of bitches!" to the whining, cowering dogs.

Ivory clapped his hand to his right leg. A dog's tooth had ripped his breeches at the calf, and a trickle of blood came through.

"Is she hurt?" the woman said. "Oh, the traitorous vermin!" She was stroking down the mare's right foreleg. Her hands came away covered with blood-streaked horse sweat. "There, there," she said. "The brave girl, the brave heart." The mare put her head down and shivered all over with relief. "What did you keep her standing there in the middle of the dogs for?" the woman demanded furiously. She was kneeling at the horse's leg, looking up at Ivory. He was looking down at her from horseback, yet he felt short; he felt small.

She did not wait for an answer. "I'll walk her up," she said, standing, and put out her hand for the reins. Ivory saw that he was supposed to dismount. He did so, asking, "Is it very bad?" and peering at the horse's leg, seeing only bright, bloody foam.

"Come on then, my love," the young woman said, not to him. The mare followed her trustfully. They set off up the rough path round the hillside to an old stone and brick stableyard, empty of horses, inhabited only by nesting swallows that swooped about over the roofs calling their quick gossip.

"Keep her quiet," said the young woman, and left him holding the mare's reins in this deserted place. She returned after some time lugging a heavy bucket, and set to sponging off the mare's leg. "Get the saddle off her," she said, and her tone held the unspoken, impatient "you fool!" Ivory obeyed, half annoyed by this crude giantess and half intrigued. She did not put him in mind of a flowering tree at all, but she was in fact beautiful, in a large, fierce way. The mare submitted to her absolutely. When she said, "Move your foot!" the mare moved her foot. The woman wiped her down all over, put the saddle blanket back on her, and made sure she was standing in the sun. "She'll be all right," she said. "There's a gash, but if you'll wash it with warm salt water four or five times a day, it'll heal clean. I'm sorry." She said the last honestly, though

grudgingly, as if she still wondered how he could have let his mare stand there to be assaulted, and she looked straight at him for the first time. Her eyes were clear orange-brown, like dark topaz or amber. They were strange eyes, right on a level with his own.

“I’m sorry too,” he said, trying to speak carelessly, lightly.

“She’s Irian of Westpool’s mare. You’re the wizard, then?”

He bowed. “Ivory, of Havnor Great Port, at your service. May I—”

She interrupted. “I thought you were from Roke.”

“I am,” he said, his composure regained.

She stared at him with those strange eyes, as unreadable as a sheep’s, he thought. Then she burst out: “You lived there? You studied there? Do you know the Archmage?”

“Yes,” he said with a smile. Then he winced and stooped to press his hand against his shin for a moment.

“Are you hurt too?”

“It’s nothing,” he said. In fact, rather to his annoyance, the cut had stopped bleeding.

The woman’s gaze returned to his face.

“What is it—what is it like—on Roke?”

Ivory went, limping only very slightly, to an old mounting block nearby and sat down on it. He stretched his leg, nursing the torn place, and looked up at the woman. “It would take a long time to tell you what Roke is like,” he said. “But it would be my pleasure.”

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“THE MAN’S A WIZARD, OR nearly,” said Rose the witch, “a Roke wizard! You must not ask him questions!” She was more than scandalized, she was frightened.

“He doesn’t mind,” Dragonfly reassured her. “Only he hardly ever really answers.”

“Of course not!”

“Why of course not?”

“Because he’s a wizard! Because you’re a woman, with no art, no knowledge, no learning!”

“You could have taught me! You never would!”

Rose dismissed all she had taught or could teach with a flick of the fingers.

“Well, so I have to learn from him,” said Dragonfly.

“Wizards don’t teach women. You’re besotted.”

“You and Broom trade spells.”

“Broom’s a village sorcerer. This man is a wise man. He learned the High Arts at the Great House on Roke!”

“He told me what it’s like,” Dragonfly said. “You walk up through the town, Thwil Town. There’s a door opening on the street, but it’s shut. It looks like an ordinary door.”

The witch listened, unable to resist the lure of secrets revealed and the contagion of passionate desire.

“And a man comes when you knock, an ordinary looking man. And he gives you a test. You have to say a certain word, a password, before he’ll let you in. If you don’t know it, you can never go in. But if he lets you in, then from inside you see that the door is entirely different—it’s made out of horn, with a tree carved on it, and the frame is made out of a tooth, one tooth of a dragon that lived long, long before Erreth-Akbe, before Morred, before there were people in Earthsea. There were only dragons, to begin with. They found the tooth on Mount Onn, in Havnor, at the center of the world. And the leaves of the tree are carved so thin that the light shines through them, but the door’s so strong that if the Doorkeeper shuts it no spell could ever open it. And then the Doorkeeper takes you down a hall and another hall, till you’re lost and bewildered, and then suddenly you come out under the sky. In the Court of the Fountain, in the very deepest inside of the Great House. And that’s where the Archmage would be, if he was there . . .”

“Go on,” the witch murmured.

“That’s all he really told me, yet,” said Dragonfly, coming back to the mild, overcast spring day and the infinite familiarity of the village lane, Rose’s front yard, her own seven milch ewes grazing on Iria Hill, the bronze crowns of the oaks. “He’s very careful how he talks about the Masters.”

Rose nodded.

“But he told me about some of the students.”

“No harm in that, I suppose.”

“I don’t know,” Dragonfly said. “To hear about the Great House is wonderful, but I thought the people there would be—I don’t know. Of course they’re mostly just boys when they go there. But I thought they’d be . . .” She gazed off at the sheep on the hill, her face troubled. “Some of them are really bad and stupid,” she said in a low voice. “They get into the school because they’re rich. And they study there just to get richer. Or to get power.”

“Well, of course they do,” said Rose, “that’s what they’re there for!”

“But power—like you told me about—that isn’t the same as making people do what you want, or pay you—”

“Isn’t it?”

“No!”

“If a word can heal, a word can wound,” the witch said. “If a hand can kill, a hand can cure. It’s a poor cart that goes only one direction.”

“But on Roke, they learn to use power well, not for harm, not for gain.”

“Everything’s for gain some way, I’d say. People have to live. But what do I know? I make my living doing what I know how to do. But I don’t meddle with the great arts, the perilous crafts, like summoning the dead,” and Rose made the hand sign to avert the danger spoken of.

“Everything’s perilous,” Dragonfly said, gazing now through the sheep, the hill, the trees, into still depths, a colorless, vast emptiness like the clear sky before sunrise.

Rose watched her. She knew she did not know who Irian was or what she might be. A big, strong, awkward, ignorant, innocent, angry woman, yes. But ever since Irian was a child Rose had seen something more in her, something beyond what she was. And when Irian looked away from the world like that, she seemed to enter that place or time or being beyond herself, utterly beyond Rose’s knowledge. Then Rose feared her, and feared for her.

“You take care,” the witch said, grim. “Everything’s perilous, right enough, and

meddling with wizards most of all.”

Through love, respect, and trust, Dragonfly would never disregard a warning from Rose; but she was unable to see Ivory as perilous. She didn’t understand him, but the idea of fearing him, him personally, was not one she could keep in mind. She tried to be respectful, but it was impossible. She thought he was clever and quite handsome, but she didn’t think much about him, except for what he could tell her. He knew what she wanted to know and little by little he told it to her, and then it was not really what she had wanted to know, but she wanted to know more. He was patient with her, and she was grateful to him for his patience, knowing he was much quicker than she. Sometimes he smiled at her ignorance, but he never sneered at it or reproved it. Like the witch, he liked to answer a question with a question; but the answers to Rose’s questions were always something she’d always known, while the answers to his questions were things she had never imagined and found startling, unwelcome, even painful, altering her beliefs.

Day by day, as they talked in the old stableyard of Iria, where they had fallen into the habit of meeting, she asked him and he told her more, though reluctantly, always partially; he shielded his Masters, she thought, trying to defend the bright image of Roke, until one day he gave in to her insistence and spoke freely at last.

“There are good men there,” he said. “Great and wise the Archmage certainly was. But he’s gone. And the Masters . . . Some hold aloof, following arcane knowledge, seeking ever more patterns, ever more names, but using their knowledge for nothing. Others hide their ambition under the grey cloak of wisdom. Roke is no longer where power is in Earthsea. That’s the Court in Havnor, now. Roke lives on its great past, defended by a thousand spells against the present day. And inside those spell-walls, what is there? Quarreling ambitions, fear of anything new, fear of young men who challenge the power of the old. And at the center, nothing. An empty courtyard. The Archmage will never return.”

“How do you know?” she whispered.

He looked stern. “The dragon bore him away.”

“You saw it? You saw that?” She clenched her hands, imagining that flight, not even hearing his reply.

After a long time, she came back to the sunlight and the stableyard and her thoughts and puzzles. “But even if he’s gone,” she said, “surely some of the Masters are truly wise?”

When he looked up and spoke it was with reluctance, with a hint of a melancholy smile. “All the mystery and wisdom of the Masters, when it’s out in the daylight,

doesn’t amount to so much, you know. Tricks of the trade—wonderful illusions. But people don’t want to know that. They want the illusions, the mysteries. Who can blame them? There’s so little in life that’s beautiful or worthy.”

As if to illustrate what he was saying, he had picked up a bit of brick from the broken pavement, and tossed it up in the air, and as he spoke it fluttered about their heads on delicate blue wings, a butterfly. He put out his finger and the butterfly lighted on it. He shook his finger and the butterfly fell to the ground, a fragment of brick.

“There’s not much worth much in my life,” she said, gazing down at the pavement. “All I know how to do is run the farm, and try to stand up and speak truth. But if I thought it was all tricks and lies even on Roke, I’d hate those men for fooling me, fooling us all. It can’t be lies. Not all of it. The Archmage did go into the labyrinth among the Hoary Men and come back with the Ring of Peace. He did go into death with the young king, and defeat the spider mage, and come back. We know that on the word of the King himself. Even here, the harpers came to sing that song, and a teller came to tell it.”

Ivory nodded. “But the Archmage lost all his power in the land of death. Maybe all magery was weakened then.”

“Rose’s spells work as well as ever,” she said stoutly.

Ivory smiled. He said nothing, but she saw how petty the doings of a village witch appeared to him, who had seen great deeds and powers. She sighed and spoke from her heart—“Oh, if only I wasn’t a woman!”

He smiled again. “You’re a beautiful woman,” he said, but plainly, not in the flattering way he had used with her at first, before she showed him she hated it. “Why would you be a man?”

“So I could go to Roke! And see, and learn! Why, why is it only men can go there?”

“So it was ordained by the first Archmage, centuries ago,” said Ivory. “But . . . I too have wondered.”

“You have?”

“Often. Seeing only boys and men, day after day, in the Great House and all the precincts of the school. Knowing that the townswomen are spell-bound from so much as setting foot on the fields about Roke Knoll. Once in years, perhaps, some great lady is allowed to come briefly into the outer courts . . . Why is it so? Are all women incapable of understanding? Or is it that the Masters fear them, fear to be corrupted—No, but fear that to admit women might change the rule they cling to—the purity of that rule—”

“Women can live chaste as well as men can,” Dragonfly said bluntly. She knew she was blunt and coarse where he was delicate and subtle, but she did not know any other way to be.

“Of course,” he said, his smile growing brilliant. “But witches aren’t always chaste, are they? . . . Maybe that’s what the Masters are afraid of. Maybe celibacy isn’t as necessary as the Rule of Roke teaches. Maybe it’s not a way of keeping the power pure, but of keeping the power to themselves. Leaving out women, leaving out everybody who won’t agree to turn himself into a eunuch to get that one kind of power . . . Who knows? A she-mage! Now that would change everything, all the rules!”

She could see his mind dance ahead of hers, taking up and playing with ideas, transforming them as he had transformed brick into butterfly. She could not dance with him, she could not play with him, but she watched him in wonder.

“You could go to Roke,” he said, his eyes bright with excitement, mischief, daring. Meeting her almost pleading, incredulous silence, he insisted—“You could. A woman you are, but there are ways to change your seeming. You have the heart, the courage, the will of a man. You could enter the Great House. I know it.”

“And what would I do there?”

“What all the students do. Live alone in a stone cell and learn to be wise! It might not be what you dream it to be, but that, too, you’d learn.”

“I couldn’t. They’d know. I couldn’t even get in. There’s the Doorkeeper, you said. I don’t know the word to say to him.”

“The password, yes. But I can teach it to you.”

“You can? Is it allowed?”

“I don’t care what’s ‘allowed,’” he said, with a frown she had never seen on his face. “The Archmage himself said, Rules are made to be broken. Injustice makes the rules, and courage breaks them. I have the courage, if you do!”

She looked at him. She could not speak. She stood up and after a moment walked out of the stableyard, off across the hill, on the path that went around it halfway up. One of the dogs, her favorite, a big, ugly, heavy-headed hound, followed her. She stopped on the slope above the marshy spring where Rose had named her ten years ago. She stood there. The dog sat down beside her and looked up at her face. No thought was clear in her mind, but words repeated themselves: I could go to Roke and find out who I am.

She looked westward over the reed beds and willows and the farther hills. The whole western sky was empty, clear. She stood still and her soul seemed to go into that sky and be gone, gone out of her.

There was a little noise, the soft clip-clop of the black mare's hoofs, coming along the lane. Then Dragonfly came back to herself and called to Ivory and ran down the hill to meet him. "I will go," she said.

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HE HAD NOT PLANNED OR intended any such adventure, but crazy as it was, it suited him better the more he thought about it. The prospect of spending the long grey winter at Westpool sank his spirits like a stone. There was nothing here for him except the girl Dragonfly, who had come to fill his thoughts. Her massive, innocent strength had defeated him absolutely so far, but he did what she pleased in order to have her do at last what he pleased, and the game, he thought, was worth playing. If she ran away with him, the game was as good as won. As for the joke of it, the notion of actually getting her into the school on Roke disguised as a man, there was little chance of pulling it off, but it pleased him as a gesture of disrespect to all the piety and pomposity of the Masters and their toadies. And if somehow it succeeded, if he could actually get a woman through that door, even for a moment, what a sweet revenge it would be!

Money was a problem. The girl thought, of course, that he as a great wizard would snap his fingers and waft them over the sea in a magic boat flying before the magewind. But when he told her they'd have to hire passage on a ship, she said simply, "I have the cheese money."

He treasured her rustic sayings of that kind. Sometimes she frightened him, and he resented it. His dreams of her were never of her yielding to him, but of himself yielding to a fierce, destroying sweetness, sinking into an annihilating embrace, dreams in which she was something beyond comprehension and he was nothing at all. He woke from those dreams shaken and shamed. In daylight, when he saw her big, dirty hands, when she talked like a yokel, a simpleton, he regained his superiority. He only wished there were someone to repeat her sayings to, one of his old friends in the Great Port who would find them amusing. "I have the cheese money," he repeated to himself, riding back to Westpool, and laughed. "I do indeed," he said aloud. The black mare flicked her ear.

He told Birch that he had received a sending from his teacher on Roke, the Master Hand, and must go at once, on what business he could not say, of course, but it should not take long once he was there; a half month to go, another to return; he would be back well before the Fallows at the latest. He must ask Master Birch to provide him an

advance on his salary to pay for ship passage and lodging, since a wizard of Roke should not take advantage of people's willingness to give him whatever he needed, but pay his way like an ordinary man. As Birch agreed with this, he had to give Ivory a purse for his journey, the first real money he had had in his pocket for years: ten ivory counters carved with the Otter of Shelieth on one side and the Rune of Peace on the other in honor of King Lebannen. "Hello, little namesakes," he told them when he was alone with them. "You and the cheese money will get along nicely."

He told Dragonfly very little of his plans, largely because he made few, trusting to chance and his own wits, which seldom let him down if he was given a fair chance to use them. The girl asked almost no questions. "Will I go as a man all the way?" was one.

"Yes," he said, "but only disguised. I won't put a semblance spell on you till we're on Roke Island."

"I thought it would be a spell of change," she said.

"That would be unwise," he said, with a good imitation of the Master Changer's terse solemnity. "If need be, I'll do it, of course. But you'll find wizards very sparing of the great spells. For good reason."

"The Equilibrium," she said, accepting all he said in its simplest sense, as always.

"And perhaps because such arts have not the power they once had," he said. He did not know himself why he tried to weaken her faith in wizardry; perhaps because any weakening of her strength, her wholeness, was a gain for him. He had begun merely by trying to get her into his bed, a game he loved to play. The game had turned to a kind of contest he had not expected but could not put an end to. He was determined now not to win her, but to defeat her. He could not let her defeat him. He must prove to her and himself that his dreams were meaningless.

Quite early on, impatient with wooing her massive physical indifference, he had worked up a charm, a sorcerer's seduction spell of which he was contemptuous even as he made it, though he knew it was effective. He cast it on her while she was, characteristically, mending a cow's halter. The result had not been the melting eagerness it had produced in girls he had used it on in Havnor and Thwil. Dragonfly had gradually become silent and sullen. She ceased asking her endless questions about Roke and did not answer when he spoke. When he very tentatively approached her, taking her hand, she struck him away with a blow to the head that left him dizzy. He saw her stand up and stride out of the stableyard without a word, the ugly hound she favored trotting after her. The hound looked back at him with a grin.

She took the path to the old house. When his ears stopped ringing he stole after her,

hoping the charm was working and that this was only her particularly uncouth way of leading him at last to her bed. Nearing the house, he heard crockery breaking. The father, the drunkard, came wobbling out looking scared and confused, followed by Dragonfly's loud, harsh voice—"Out of the house, you drunken, crawling traitor! You foul, shameless lecher!"

"She took my cup away," the Master of Iria said to the stranger, whining like a puppy, while his dogs yammered around him. "She broke it."

Ivory departed. He did not return for two days. On the third day he rode experimentally past Old Iria, and she came striding down to meet him. "I'm sorry, Ivory," she said, looking up at him with her smoky orange eyes. "I don't know what came over me the other day. I was angry. But not at you. I beg your pardon."

He forgave her gracefully. He did not try a love charm on her again.

Soon, he thought now, he would not need one. He would have real power over her. He had finally seen how to get it. She had given it into his hands. Her strength and her willpower were tremendous, but fortunately she was stupid, and he was not.

Birch was sending a carter down to Kembermouth with six barrels of ten-year-old Fanian ordered by the wine merchant there. He was glad to send his wizard along as bodyguard, for the wine was valuable, and though the young king was putting things to rights as fast as he could, there were still gangs of robbers on the roads. So Ivory left Westpool on the big wagon pulled by four big cart horses, jolting slowly along, his legs dangling. Down by Jackass Hill an uncouth figure rose up from the wayside and asked the carter for a lift. "I don't know you," the carter said, lifting his whip to warn the stranger off, but Ivory came round the wagon and said, "Let the lad ride, my good man. He'll do no harm while I'm with you."

"Keep an eye on him then, master," said the carter.

"I will," said Ivory, with a wink at Dragonfly. She, well disguised in dirt and a farmhand's old smock and leggings and a loathsome felt hat, did not wink back. She played her part even while they sat side by side dangling their legs over the tailgate, with six great halftuns of wine jolting between them and the drowsy carter, and the drowsy summer hills and fields slipping slowly, slowly past. Ivory tried to tease her, but she only shook her head. Maybe she was scared by this wild scheme, now she was embarked on it. There was no telling. She was solemnly, heavily silent. I could be very bored by this woman, Ivory thought, if once I'd had her underneath me. That thought stirred him almost unbearably, but when he looked back at her, his desire died away before her massive, actual presence.

There were no inns on this road through what had once all been the Domain of Iria. As

the sun neared the western plains, they stopped at a farmhouse that offered stabling for the horses, a shed for the cart, and straw in the stable loft for the carters. The loft was dark and stuffy and the straw musty. Ivory felt no lust at all, though Dragonfly lay not three feet from him. She had played the man so thoroughly all day that she had half convinced even him. Maybe she'll fool the old men after all! he thought. He grinned at the thought, and slept.

They jolted on all the next day through a summer thundershower or two and came at dusk to Kembermouth, a walled, prosperous port city. They left the carter to his master's business and walked down to find an inn near the docks. Dragonfly looked about at the sights of the city in a silence that might have been awe or disapproval or mere stolidity. "This is a nice little town," Ivory said, "but the only city in the world is Havnor."

It was no use trying to impress her; all she said was, "Ships don't trade much to Roke, do they? Will it take a long time to find one to take us, do you think?"

"Not if I carry a staff," he said.

She stopped looking about and strode along in thought for a while. She was beautiful in movement, bold and graceful, her head carried high.

"You mean they'll oblige a wizard? But you aren't a wizard."

"That's a formality. We senior sorcerers may carry a staff when we're on Roke's business. Which I am."

"Taking me there?"

"Bringing them a student—yes. A student of great gifts!"

She asked no more questions. She never argued; it was one of her virtues.

That night, over supper at the waterfront inn, she asked with unusual timidity in her voice, "Do I have great gifts?"

"In my judgment, you do," he said.

She pondered—conversation with her was often a slow business—and said, "Rose always said I had power, but she didn't know what kind. And I . . . I know I do, but I don't know what it is."

"You're going to Roke to find out," he said, raising his glass to her. After a moment she raised hers and smiled at him, a smile so tender and radiant that he said

spontaneously, “And may what you find be all you seek!”

“If I do, it will be thanks to you,” she said. In that moment he loved her for her true heart, and would have foresworn any thought of her but as his companion in a bold adventure, a gallant joke.

They had to share a room at the crowded inn with two other travelers, but Ivory’s thoughts were perfectly chaste, though he laughed at himself a little for it.

Next morning he picked a sprig of an herb from the kitchen garden of the inn and spelled it into the semblance of a fine staff, copper-shod and his own height exactly. “What is the wood?” Dragonfly asked, fascinated, when she saw it, and when he answered with a laugh, “Rosemary,” she laughed too.

They set off along the wharves, asking for a ship bound south that might take a wizard and his prentice to the Isle of the Wise, and soon enough they found a heavy trader bound for Wathort, whose master would carry the wizard for goodwill and the prentice for half price. Even half price was half the cheese money; but they would have the luxury of a cabin, for Sea Otter was a decked, two-masted ship.

As they were talking with her master a wagon drew up on the dock and began to unload six familiar halftun barrels. “That’s ours,” Ivory said, and the ship’s master said, “Bound for Hort Town,” and Dragonfly said softly, “From Iria.”

She glanced back at the land then. It was the only time he ever saw her look back.

The ship’s weatherworker came aboard just before they sailed, no Roke wizard but a weatherbeaten fellow in a worn sea cloak. Ivory flourished his staff a little in greeting him. The sorcerer looked him up and down and said, “One man works weather on this ship. If it’s not me, I’m off.”

“I’m a mere passenger, Master Bagman. I gladly leave the winds in your hands.”

The sorcerer looked at Dragonfly, who stood straight as a tree and said nothing.

“Good,” he said, and that was the last word he spoke to Ivory.

During the voyage, however, he talked several times with Dragonfly, which made Ivory a bit uneasy. Her ignorance and trustfulness could endanger her and therefore him. What did she and the bagman talk about? he asked, and she answered, “What is to become of us.”

He stared.

“Of all of us. Of Way and Felkway, and Havnor, and Wathort, and Roke. All the people of the islands. He says that when King Lebannen was to be crowned, last autumn, he sent to Gont for the old Archmage to come crown him, and he wouldn’t come. And there was no new Archmage. So the King put on his crown himself. And some say that’s wrong, and he doesn’t rightly hold the throne. But others say the King himself is the new Archmage. But he isn’t a wizard, only a king. So others say the dark years will come again, when there was no rule of justice, and wizardry was used for evil ends.”

After a pause Ivory said, “That old weatherworker says all this?”

“It’s common talk, I think,” said Dragonfly, with her grave simplicity.

The weatherworker knew his trade, at least. Sea Otter sped south; they met summer squalls and choppy seas, but never a storm or a troublesome wind. They put off and took on cargo at ports on the north shore of O, at Ilien, Leng, Kamery, and O Port, and then headed west to carry the passengers to Roke. And facing the west Ivory felt a little hollow at the pit of his stomach, for he knew all too well how Roke was guarded. He knew neither he nor the weatherworker could do anything at all to turn the Roke wind if it blew against them. And if it did, Dragonfly would ask why? why did it blow against them?

He was glad to see the sorcerer uneasy too, standing by the helmsman, keeping a watch up on the masthead, taking in sail at the hint of a west wind. But the wind held steady from the north. A thunder squall came pelting on that wind, and Ivory went down to the cabin, but Dragonfly stayed up on deck. She was afraid of the water, she had told him. She could not swim; she said, “Drowning must be a horrible thing—Not to breathe the air—” She had shuddered at the thought. It was the only fear she had ever shown of anything. But she disliked the low, cramped cabin, and had stayed on deck every day and slept there on the warm nights. Ivory had not tried to coax her into the cabin. He knew now that coaxing was no good. To have her he must master her; and that he would do, if only they could come to Roke.

He came up on deck again. It was clearing, and as the sun set, the clouds broke all across the west, showing a golden sky behind the high dark curve of a hill.

Ivory looked at that hill with a kind of longing hatred.

“That’s Roke Knoll, lad,” the weatherworker said to Dragonfly, who stood beside him at the rail. “We’re coming into Thwil Bay now. Where there’s no wind but the wind they want.”

By the time they were well into the bay and had let down the anchor it was dark, and Ivory said to the ship’s master, “I’ll go ashore in the morning.”

Down in their tiny cabin Dragonfly sat waiting for him, solemn as ever but her eyes blazing with excitement. “We’ll go ashore in the morning,” he repeated to her, and she nodded, acceptant.

She said, “Do I look all right?”

He sat down on his narrow bunk and looked at her sitting on her narrow bunk; they could not face each other directly, as there was no room for their knees. At O Port she had bought herself a decent shirt and breeches, at his suggestion, so as to look a more probable candidate for the school. Her face was windburnt and scrubbed clean. Her hair was braided and the braid clubbed, like Ivory’s. She had got her hands clean too, and they lay flat on her thighs, long strong hands, like a man’s.

“You don’t look like a man,” he said. Her face fell. “Not to me. You’ll never look like a man to me. But don’t worry. You will to them.”

She nodded, with an anxious face.

“The first test is the great test, Dragonfly,” he said. Every night as he lay alone in this cabin he had planned this conversation. “To enter the Great House. To go through that door.”

“I’ve been thinking about it,” she said, hurried and earnest. “Couldn’t I just tell them who I am? With you there to vouch for me—to say even if I am a woman, I have some gift—and I’d promise to take the vow and make the spell of celibacy, and live apart if they wanted me to—”

He was shaking his head all through her speech. “No, no, no, no. Hopeless. Useless. Fatal!”

“Even if you—”

“Even if I argued for you. They won’t listen. The Rule of Roke forbids women to be taught any high art, any word of the Language of the Making. It’s always been so. They will not listen. So they must be shown! And we’ll show them, you and I. We’ll teach them. You must have courage, Dragonfly. You must not weaken, and not think ‘Oh, if I just beg them to let me in, they can’t refuse me.’ They can, and will. And if you reveal yourself, they will punish you. And me.” He put a ponderous emphasis on the last word, and inwardly murmured, “Avert.”

She gazed at him from her unreadable eyes, and finally asked, “What must I do?”

“Do you trust me, Dragonfly?”

“Yes.”

“Will you trust me entirely, wholly—knowing that the risk I take for you is greater even than your risk in this venture?”

“Yes.”

“Then you must tell me the word you will speak to the Doorkeeper.”

She stared. “But I thought you’d tell it to me—the password.”

“The password he will ask you for is your true name.”

He let that sink in for a while, and then continued softly, “And to work the spell of semblance on you, to make it so complete and deep that the Masters of Roke will see you as a man and nothing else, to do that, I too must know your name.” He paused again. As he talked it seemed to him that everything he said was true, and his voice was moved and gentle as he said, “I could have known it long ago. But I chose not to use those arts. I wanted you to trust me enough to tell me your name yourself.”

She was looking down at her hands, clasped now on her knees. In the faint reddish glow of the cabin lantern her lashes cast very delicate, long shadows on her cheeks. She looked up, straight at him. “My name is Irian,” she said.

He smiled. She did not smile.

He said nothing. In fact he was at a loss. If he had known it would be this easy, he could have had her name and with it the power to make her do whatever he wanted, days ago, weeks ago, with a mere pretense at this crazy scheme—without giving up his salary and his precarious respectability, without this sea voyage, without having to go all the way to Roke for it! For he saw the whole plan now was folly. There was no way he could disguise her that would fool the Doorkeeper for a moment. All his notions of humiliating the Masters as they had humiliated him were moonshine. Obsessed with tricking the girl, he had fallen into the trap he laid for her. Bitterly he recognised that he was always believing his own lies, caught in nets he had elaborately woven. Having once made a fool of himself on Roke, he had come back to do it all over again. A great, desolate anger swelled up in him. There was no good, no good in anything.

“What’s wrong?” she asked. The gentleness of her deep, husky voice unmanned him, and he hid his face in his hands, fighting against the shame of tears.

She put her hand on his knee. It was the first time she had ever touched him. He endured it, the warmth and weight of her touch that he had wasted so much time wanting.

He wanted to hurt her, to shock her out of her terrible, ignorant kindness, but what he said when he finally spoke was “I only wanted to make love to you.”

“You did?”

“Did you think I was one of their eunuchs? That I’d castrate myself with spells so I could be holy? Why do you think I don’t have a staff? Why do you think I’m not at the school? Did you believe everything I said?”

“Yes,” she said. “I’m sorry.” Her hand was still on his knee. She said, “We can make love if you want.”

He sat up, sat still.

“What are you?” he said to her at last.

“I don’t know. It’s why I wanted to come to Roke. To find out.”

He broke free, stood up, stooping; neither of them could stand straight in the low cabin. Clenching and unclenching his hands, he stood as far from her as he could, his back to her.

“You won’t find out. It’s all lies, shams. Old men playing games with words. I wouldn’t play their games, so I left. Do you know what I did?” He turned, showing his teeth in a rictus of triumph. “I got a girl, a town girl, to come to my room. My cell. My little stone celibate cell. It had a window looking out on a back street. No spells—you can’t make spells with all their magic going on. But she wanted to come, and came, and I let a rope ladder out the window, and she climbed it. And we were at it when the old men came in! I showed ’em! And if I could have got you in, I’d have showed ’em again, I’d have taught them their lesson!”

“Well, I’ll try,” she said.

He stared.

“Not for the same reasons as you,” she said, “but I still want to. And we came all this way. And you know my name.”

It was true. He knew her name: Irian. It was like a coal of fire, a burning ember in his mind. His thought could not hold it. His knowledge could not use it. His tongue could not say it.

She looked up at him, her sharp, strong face softened by the shadowy lantern light. “If

it was only to make love you brought me here, Ivory," she said, "we can do that. If you still want to."

Wordless at first, he simply shook his head. After a while he was able to laugh. "I think we've gone on past . . . that possibility . . ."

She looked at him without regret, or reproach, or shame.

"Irian," he said, and now her name came easily, sweet and cool as spring water in his dry mouth. "Irian, here's what you must do to enter the Great House . . ."

III. Azver

HE LEFT HER AT THE corner of the street, a narrow, dull, somehow sly-looking street that slanted up between featureless walls to a wooden door in a higher wall. He had put his spell on her, and she looked like a man, though she did not feel like one. She and Ivory took each other in their arms, because after all they had been friends, companions, and he had done all this for her. "Courage!" he said, and let her go. She walked up the street and stood before the door. She looked back then, but he was gone.

She knocked.

After a while she heard the latch rattle. The door opened. A middle-aged man stood there. "What can I do for you?" he said. He did not smile, but his voice was pleasant.

"You can let me into the Great House, sir."

"Do you know the way in?" His almond-shaped eyes were attentive, yet seemed to look at her from miles or years away.

"This is the way in, sir."

"Do you know whose name you must tell me before I let you in?"

"My own, sir. It is Irian."

"Is it?" he said.

That gave her pause. She stood silent. "It's the name the witch Rose of my village on Way gave me, in the spring under Iria Hill," she said at last, standing up and speaking truth.

The Doorkeeper looked at her for what seemed a long time. "Then it is your name," he

said. “But maybe not all your name. I think you have another.”

“I don’t know it, sir.”

After another long time she said, “Maybe I can learn it here, sir.”

The Doorkeeper bowed his head a little. A very faint smile made crescent curves in his cheeks. He stood aside. “Come in, daughter,” he said.

She stepped across the threshold of the Great House.

Ivory’s spell of semblance dropped away like a cobweb. She was and looked herself.

She followed the Doorkeeper down a stone passageway. Only at the end of it did she think to turn back to see the light shine through the thousand leaves of the tree carved in the high door in its bone-white frame.

A young man in a grey cloak hurrying down the passageway stopped short as he approached them. He stared at Irian; then with a brief nod he went on. She looked back at him. He was looking back at her.

A globe of misty, greenish fire drifted swiftly down the corridor at eye level, apparently pursuing the young man. The Doorkeeper waved his hand at it, and it avoided him. Irian swerved and ducked down frantically, but felt the cool fire tingle in her hair as it passed over her. The Doorkeeper glanced round, and now his smile was wider. Though he said nothing, she felt he was aware of her, concerned for her. She stood up and followed him.

He stopped before an oak door. Instead of knocking he sketched a little sign or rune on it with the top of his staff, a light staff of some greyish wood. The door opened as a resonant voice behind it said, “Come in!”

“Wait here a little, if you please, Irian,” the Doorkeeper said, and went into the room, leaving the door wide open behind him. She could see bookshelves and books, a table piled with more books and ink pots and writings, two or three boys seated at the table, and the grey-haired, stocky man the Doorkeeper spoke to. She saw the man’s face change, saw his eyes shift to her in a brief, startled gaze, saw him question the Doorkeeper, low-voiced, intense.

They both came to her. “The Master Changer of Roke: Irian of Way,” said the Doorkeeper.

The Changer stared openly at her. He was not as tall as she was. He stared at the Doorkeeper, and then at her again.

“Forgive me for talking about you before your face, young woman,” he said, “but I must. Master Doorkeeper, you know I’d never question your judgment, but the Rule is clear. I have to ask what moved you to break it and let her come in.”

“She asked to,” said the Doorkeeper.

“But—” The Changer paused.

“When did a woman last ask to enter the school?”

“They know the Rule doesn’t allow them.”

“Did you know that, Irian?” the Doorkeeper asked her, and she said, “Yes, sir.”

“So what brought you here?” the Changer asked, stern, but not hiding his curiosity.

“Master Ivory said I could pass for a man. Though I thought I should say who I was. I will be as celibate as anyone, sir.”

Two long curves appeared on the Doorkeeper’s cheeks, enclosing the slow upturn of his smile. The Changer’s face remained stern, but he blinked, and after a little thought said, “I’m sure—yes—It was definitely the better plan to be honest. What Master did you speak of?”

“Ivory,” said the Doorkeeper. “A lad from Havnor Great Port, whom I let in three years ago, and let out again last year, as you may recall.”

“Ivory! That fellow that studied with the Hand?—Is he here?” the Changer demanded of Irian, wrathily. She stood straight and said nothing.

“Not in the school,” the Doorkeeper said, smiling.

“He fooled you, young woman. Made a fool of you by trying to make fools of us.”

“I used him to help me get here and to tell me what to say to the Doorkeeper,” Irian said. “I’m not here to fool anybody, but to learn what I need to know.”

“I’ve often wondered why I let that boy in,” said the Doorkeeper. “Now I begin to understand.”

At that the Changer looked at him, and after pondering said soberly, “Doorkeeper, what have you in mind?”

“I think Irian of Way may have come to us seeking not only what she needs to know, but also what we need to know.” The Doorkeeper’s tone was equally sober, and his smile was gone. “I think this may be a matter for talk among the nine of us.”

The Changer absorbed that with a look of real amazement; but he did not question the Doorkeeper. He said only, “But not among the students.”

The Doorkeeper shook his head, agreeing.

“She can lodge in the town,” the Changer said, with some relief.

“While we talk behind her back?”

“You won’t bring her into the Council Room?” the Changer said in disbelief.

“The Archmage brought the boy Arren there.”

“But—But Arren was King Lebannen—”

“And who is Irian?”

The Changer stood silent, and then he said quietly, with respect, “My friend, what is it you think to do, to learn? What is she, that you ask this for her?”

“Who are we,” said the Doorkeeper, “that we refuse her without knowing what she is?”

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“A WOMAN,” SAID THE MASTER Summoner.

Irian had waited some hours in the Doorkeeper’s chamber, a low, light, bare room with a window seat at a small-paned window looking out on the kitchen gardens of the Great House—handsome, well-kept gardens, long rows and beds of vegetables, greens, and herbs, with berry canes and fruit trees beyond. She saw a burly, dark-skinned man and two boys come out and weed one of the vegetable plots. It eased her mind to watch their careful work. She wished she could help them at it. The waiting and the strangeness were very difficult. Once the Doorkeeper came in, bringing her a mug of water and a plate with cold meat and bread and scallions, and she ate because he told her to eat, but chewing and swallowing were hard work. The gardeners went away and there was nothing to watch out the window but the cabbages growing and the sparrows hopping, and now and then a hawk far up in the sky, and the wind moving softly in the tops of tall trees, on beyond the gardens.

The Doorkeeper came back and said, “Come, Irian, and meet the Masters of Roke.”

Her heart began to go at a cart-horse gallop. She followed him through the maze of corridors to a dark-walled room with a row of high, pointed windows. A group of men stood there. Every one of them turned to look at her as she came into the room.

“Irian of Way, my lords,” said the Doorkeeper. They were all silent. He motioned her to come farther into the room. “The Master Changer you have met,” he said to her. He named all the others, but she could not take in their names and masteries, except that the Master Herbal was the one she had supposed to be a gardener, and the youngest of them, a tall man with a stern, beautiful face that seemed carved out of dark stone, was the Master Summoner. It was he who spoke when the Doorkeeper was done. “A woman,” he said.

The Doorkeeper nodded once, mild as ever.

“This is what you brought the Nine together for? This and no more?”

“This and no more,” said the Doorkeeper.

“Dragons have been seen flying above the Inmost Sea. Roke has no archmage, and the islands no true-crowned king. There is real work to do,” the Summoner said, and his voice too was like stone, cold and heavy. “When will we do it?”

There was an uncomfortable silence, as the Doorkeeper did not speak. At last a slight, bright-eyed man who wore a red tunic under his grey wizard’s cloak said, “Do you bring this woman into the House as a student, Master Doorkeeper?”

“If I did, it would be up to you all to approve or disapprove,” said he.

“Do you?” asked the man in the red tunic, smiling a little.

“Master Hand,” said the Doorkeeper, “she asked to enter as a student, and I saw no reason to deny her.”

“Every reason,” said the Summoner.

A man with a deep, clear voice spoke: “It’s not our judgment that prevails, but the Rule of Roke, which we are sworn to follow.”

“I doubt the Doorkeeper would defy it lightly,” said one whom Irian had not noticed till he spoke, though he was a big man, white-haired, rawboned, and crag-faced. Unlike the others, he looked at her as he spoke. “I am Kurremkarmerruk,” he said to her. “As the Master Namer here, I make free with names, my own included. Who named you, Irian?”

“The witch Rose of our village, lord,” she answered, standing straight, though her voice came out high-pitched and rough.

“Is she misnamed?” the Doorkeeper asked the Namer.

Kurremkarmerruk shook his head. “No. But . . .”

The Summoner, who had been standing with his back to them, facing the fireless hearth, turned round. “The names witches give each other are not our concern here,” he said. “If you have some interest in this woman, Doorkeeper, it should be pursued outside these walls—outside the door you vowed to keep. She has no place here nor ever will. She can bring only confusion, dissension, and further weakness among us. I will speak no longer and say nothing else in her presence. The only answer to conscious error is silence.”

“Silence is not enough, my lord,” said one who had not spoken before. To Irian’s eyes he was very strange-looking, having pale reddish skin, long pale hair, and narrow eyes the color of ice. His speech was also strange, stiff and somehow deformed. “Silence is the answer to everything, and to nothing,” he said.

The Summoner lifted his noble, dark face and looked across the room at the pale man, but did not speak. Without a word or gesture he turned away again and left the room. As he walked slowly past Irian, she shrank back from him. It was as if a grave had opened, a winter grave, cold, wet, dark. Her breath stuck in her throat. She gasped a little for air. When she recovered herself, she saw the Changer and the pale man both watching her intently.

The one with a voice like a deep-toned bell looked at her too, and spoke to her with a plain, kind severity. “As I see it, the man who brought you here meant to do harm, but you do not. Yet being here, Irian, you do us and yourself harm. Everything not in its own place does harm. A note sung, however well sung, wrecks the tune it isn’t part of. Women teach women. Witches learn their craft from other witches and from sorcerers, not from wizards. What we teach here is in a language not for women’s tongues. The young heart rebels against such laws, calling them unjust, arbitrary. But they are true laws, founded not on what we want, but on what is. The just and the unjust, the foolish and the wise, all must obey them, or waste life and come to grief.”

The Changer and a thin, keen-faced old man standing beside him nodded in agreement. The Master Hand said, “Irian, I am sorry. Ivory was my pupil. If I taught him badly, I did worse in sending him away. I thought him insignificant, and so harmless. But he lied to you and beguiled you. You must not feel shame. The fault was his and mine.”

“I am not ashamed,” Irian said. She looked at them all. She felt that she should thank

them for their courtesy but the words would not come. She nodded stiffly to them, turned round, and strode out of the room.

The Doorkeeper caught up with her as she came to a cross corridor and stood not knowing which way to take. “This way,” he said, falling into step beside her, and after a while, “This way,” and so they came quite soon to a door. It was not made of horn and ivory. It was uncarved oak, black and massive, with an iron bolt worn thin with age. “This is the garden door,” the mage said, unbolting it. “Medra’s Gate, they used to call it. I keep both doors.” He opened it. The brightness of the day dazzled Irian’s eyes. When she could see clearly she saw a path leading from the door through the gardens and the fields beyond them; on past the fields were the high trees, and the swell of Roke Knoll was off to the right. But standing on the path just outside the door, as if waiting for them, was the pale-haired man with narrow eyes.

“Patterner,” said the Doorkeeper, not at all surprised.

“Where do you send this lady?” said the Patterner in his strange speech.

“Nowhere,” said the Doorkeeper. “I let her out as I let her in, at her desire.”

“Will you come with me?” the Patterner said to Irian.

She looked at him and at the Doorkeeper and said nothing.

“I don’t live in this House. In any house,” the Patterner said. “I live there. The Grove.—Ah,” he said, turning suddenly. The big, white-haired man, Kurremkarmerruk the Namer, was standing just down the path. He had not been standing there until the other mage said “Ah.” Irian stared from one to the other in blank bewilderment.

“This is only a seeming of me, a presentment, a sending,” the old man said to her. “I don’t live here either. Miles off.” He gestured northward. “You might come there when you’re done with the Patterner here. I’d like to learn more about your name.” He nodded to the other two mages and was not there. A bumblebee buzzed heavily through the air where he had been.

Irian looked down at the ground. After a long time she said, clearing her throat, not looking up, “Is it true I do harm being here?”

“I don’t know,” said the Doorkeeper.

“In the Grove is no harm,” said the Patterner. “Come on. There is an old house, a hut. Old, dirty. You don’t care, eh? Stay a while. You can see.” And he set off down the path between the parsley and the bush beans. She looked at the Doorkeeper; he smiled a little. She followed the pale-haired man.

They walked a half mile or so. The round-topped knoll rose up full in the western sun on their right. Behind them the school sprawled grey and many-roofed on its lower hill. The grove of trees towered before them now. She saw oak and willow, chestnut and ash, and tall evergreens. From the dense, sun-shot darkness of the trees a stream ran out, green-banked, with many brown trodden places where cattle and sheep went down to drink or to cross over. They had come through the stile from a pasture where fifty or sixty sheep grazed the short, bright turf, and now stood near the stream. “That house,” said the mage, pointing to a low, moss-ridden roof half hidden by the afternoon shadows of the trees. “Stay tonight. You will?”

He asked her to stay, he did not tell her to. All she could do was nod.

“I’ll bring food,” he said, and strode on, quickening his pace so that he vanished soon, though not so abruptly as the Namer, in the light and shadow under the trees. Irian watched till he was certainly gone and then made her way through high grass and weeds to the little house.

It looked very old. It had been rebuilt and rebuilt again, but not for a long time. Nor had anyone lived in it for a long time, from the still, lonesome air of it. Yet it had a pleasant air, as if those who had slept there slept peacefully. As for decrepit walls, mice, dust, cobwebs, and scant furniture, all that was quite homelike to Irian. She found a bald broom and swept out the mouse droppings. She unrolled her blanket on the plank bed. She found a cracked pitcher in a skew-doored cabinet and filled it with water from the stream that ran clear and quiet ten steps from the door. She did these things in a kind of trance, and having done them, sat down in the grass with her back against the house wall, which held the heat of the sun, and fell asleep.

When she woke, the Master Patterner was sitting nearby, and a basket was on the grass between them.

“Hungry? Eat,” he said.

“I’ll eat later, sir. Thank you,” said Irian.

“I am hungry now,” said the mage. He took a hard-boiled egg from the basket, cracked, shelled, and ate it.

“They call this the Otter’s House,” he said. “Very old. As old as the Great House. Everything is old, here. We are old—the Masters.”

“You’re not very,” Irian said. She thought him between thirty and forty, though it was hard to tell; she kept thinking his hair was white, because it was not black.

“But I came far. Miles can be years. I am Kargish, from Karego. You know?”

“The Hoary Men!” said Irian, staring openly at him. All Daisy’s ballads of the Hoary Men who sailed out of the East to lay the land waste and spit innocent babes on their lances, and the story of how Erreth-Akbe lost the Ring of Peace, and the new songs and the King’s Tale about how Archmage Sparrowhawk had gone among the Hoary Men and come back with that ring—

“Hoary?” said the Patterner.

“Frosty. White,” she said, looking away, embarrassed.

“Ah.” Presently he said, “The Master Summoner is not old.” And she got a sidelong look from those narrow, ice-colored eyes.

She said nothing.

“I think you feared him.”

She nodded.

When she said nothing, and some time had passed, he said, “In the shadow of these trees is no harm. Only truth.”

“When he passed me,” she said in a low voice, “I saw a grave.”

“Ah,” said the Patterner.

He had made a little heap of bits of eggshell on the ground by his knee. He arranged the white fragments into a curve, then closed it into a circle. “Yes,” he said, studying his eggshells; then, scratching up the earth a bit, he neatly and delicately buried them. He dusted off his hands. Again his glance flicked to Irian and away.

“You have been a witch, Irian?”

“No.”

“But you have some knowledge.”

“No. I don’t. Rose wouldn’t teach me. She said she didn’t dare. Because I had power but she didn’t know what it was.”

“Your Rose is a wise flower,” said the mage, unsmiling.

“But I know I have something to do. Something to be. That’s why I wanted to come here. To find out. On the Isle of the Wise.”

She was getting used to his strange face now and was able to read it. She thought that he looked sad. His way of speaking was harsh, quick, dry, peaceable. “The men of the Isle are not always wise, eh?” he said. “Maybe the Doorkeeper.” He looked at her now, not glancing but squarely, his eyes catching and holding hers. “But there. In the wood. Under the trees. There is the old wisdom. Never old. I can’t teach you. I can take you into the Grove.” After a minute he stood up. “Yes?”

“Yes,” she said uncertainly.

“The house is all right?”

“Yes—”

“Tomorrow,” he said, and strode off.

So for a half month or more of the hot days of summer, Irian slept in the Otter’s House, which was a peaceful one, and ate what the Master Patterner brought her in his basket—eggs, cheese, greens, fruit, smoked mutton—and went with him every afternoon into the grove of high trees, where the paths seemed never to be quite where she remembered them, and often led on far beyond what seemed the confines of the wood. They walked there in silence, and spoke seldom when they rested. The mage was a quiet man. Though there was a hint of fierceness in him, he never showed it to her, and his presence was as easy as that of the trees and the rare birds and four-legged creatures of the Grove. As he had said, he did not try to teach her. When she asked about the Grove, he told her that, with Roke Knoll, it had stood since Segoy made the islands of the world, and that all magic was in the roots of the trees, and that they were mingled with the roots of all the forests that were or might yet be. “And sometimes the Grove is in this place,” he said, “and sometimes in another. But it is always.”

She had never seen where he lived. He slept wherever he chose to, she imagined, in these warm summer nights. She asked him where the food they ate came from. What the school did not supply for itself, he said, the farmers round about provided, considering themselves well recompensed by the protections the Masters set on their flocks and fields and orchards. That made sense to her. On Way, the phrase “a wizard without his porridge” meant something unprecedented, unheard-of. But she was no wizard, and so, wanting to earn her porridge, she did her best to repair the Otter’s House, borrowing tools from a farmer and buying nails and plaster in Thwil Town, for she still had half the cheese money.

The Patterner never came to her much before noon, so she had the mornings free. She

was used to solitude, but still she missed Rose and Daisy and Coney, and the chickens and the cows and ewes, and the rowdy, foolish dogs, and all the work she did at home trying to keep Old Iria together and put food on the table. So she worked away unhurriedly every morning till she saw the mage come out from the trees with his sunlight-colored hair shining in the sunlight.

Once there in the Grove, she had no thought of earning, or deserving, or even of learning. To be there was enough, was all.

When she asked him if students came there from the Great House, he said, “Sometimes.” Another time he said, “My words are nothing. Hear the leaves.” That was all he said that could be called teaching. As she walked, she listened to the leaves when the wind rustled them or stormed in the crowns of the trees; she watched the shadows play, and thought about the roots of the trees down in the darkness of the earth. She was utterly content to be there. Yet always, without discontent or ugency, she felt that she was waiting. And that silent expectancy was deepest and clearest when she came out of the shelter of the woods and saw the open sky.

Once, when they had gone a long way and the trees, dark evergreens she did not know, stood very high about them, she heard a call—a horn blowing, a cry?—remote, on the very edge of hearing. She stood still, listening towards the west. The mage walked on, turning only when he realised she had stopped.

“I heard—” she said, and could not say what she had heard.

He listened. They walked on at last through a silence enlarged and deepened by that far call.

She never went into the Grove without him, and it was many days before he left her alone within it. But one hot afternoon when they came to a glade among a stand of oaks, he said, “I will come back here, eh?” and walked off with his quick, silent step, lost almost at once in the dappled, shifting depths of the forest.

She had no wish to explore for herself. The peacefulness of the place called for stillness, watching, listening; and she knew how tricky the paths were, and that the Grove was, as the Patterner put it, “bigger inside than outside.” She sat down in a patch of sun-dappled shade and watched the shadows of the leaves play across the ground. The oak mast was deep; though she had never seen wild swine in the wood, she saw their tracks here. For a moment she caught the scent of a fox. Her thoughts moved as quietly and easily as the breeze moved in the warm light.

Often her mind here seemed empty of thought, full of the forest itself, but this day memories came to her, vivid. She thought about Ivory, thinking she would never see him again, wondering if he had found a ship to take him back to Havnor. He had told

her he'd never go back to Westpool; the only place for him was the Great Port, the King's City, and for all he cared the island of Way could sink in the sea as deep as Soléa. But she thought with love of the roads and fields of Way. She thought of Old Iria village, the marshy spring under Iria Hill, the old house on it. She thought about Daisy singing ballads in the kitchen, winter evenings, beating out the time with her wooden clogs; and old Coney in the vineyards with his razor-edge knife, showing her how to prune the vine "right down to the life in it;" and Rose, her Etaudis, whispering charms to ease the pain in a child's broken arm. I have known wise people, she thought. Her mind flinched away from remembering her father, but the motion of the leaves and shadows drew it on. She saw him drunk, shouting. She felt his prying, tremulous hands on her. She saw him weeping, sick, shamed; and grief rose up through her body and dissolved, like an ache that melts away in a long stretch of the arms. He was less to her than the mother she had not known.

She stretched, feeling the ease of her body in the warmth, and her mind drifted back to Ivory. She had had no one in her life to desire. When the young wizard first came riding by so slim and arrogant, she wished she could want him; but she didn't and couldn't, and so she had thought him spell-protected. Rose had explained to her how wizards' spells worked "so that it never enters your head nor theirs, see, because it would take from their power, they say." But Ivory, poor Ivory, had been all too unprotected. If anybody was under a spell of chastity it must have been herself, for charming and handsome as he was she had never been able to feel a thing for him but liking, and her only lust had been to learn what he could teach her.

She considered herself, sitting in the deep silence of the Grove. No bird sang; the breeze was down; the leaves hung still. Am I ensorcelled? Am I a sterile thing, not whole, not a woman? she asked herself, looking at her strong bare arms, the soft swell of her breasts in the shadow under the throat of her shirt.

She looked up and saw the Hoary Man come out of a dark aisle of great oaks and come towards her across the glade.

He stopped in front of her. She felt herself blush, her face and throat burning, dizzy, her ears ringing. She sought words, anything to say, to turn his attention away from her, and could find nothing at all. He sat down near her. She looked down, as if studying the skeleton of a last-year's leaf by her hand.

What do I want? she asked herself, and the answer came not in words but throughout her whole body and soul: the fire, a greater fire than that, the flight, the flight burning—

She came back into herself, into the still air under the trees. The Hoary Man sat near her, his face bowed down, and she thought how slight and light he looked, how quiet and sorrowful. There was nothing to fear. There was no harm.

He looked over at her.

“Irian,” he said, “do you hear the leaves?”

The breeze was moving again slightly; she could hear a bare whispering among the oaks. “A little,” she said.

“Do you hear the words?”

“No.”

She asked nothing and he said no more. Presently he got up, and she followed him to the path that always led them, sooner or later, out of the wood to the clearing by the Thwilburn and the Otter’s House. When they came there, it was late afternoon. He went down to the stream and knelt to drink from it where it left the wood, above all the crossings. She did the same. Then sitting in the cool, long grass of the bank, he began to speak.

“My people, the Kargs, they worship gods. Twin gods, brothers. And the king there is also a god. But before the gods and after, always, are the streams. Caves, stones, hills. Trees. The earth. The darkness of the earth.”

“The Old Powers,” Irian said.

He nodded. “There, women know the Old Powers. Here too, witches. And the knowledge is bad—eh?”

When he added that little questioning “eh?” or “neh?” to the end of what had seemed a statement it always took her by surprise. She said nothing.

“Dark is bad,” said the Patterner. “Eh?”

Irian drew a deep breath and looked at him eye to eye as they sat there. “Only in dark the light,” she said.

“Ah,” he said. He looked away so that she could not see his expression.

“I should go,” she said. “I can walk in the Grove, but not live there. It isn’t my—my place. And the Master Chanter said I did harm by being here.”

“We all do harm by being,” said the Patterner.

He did as he often did, made a little design out of whatever lay to hand: on the bit of

sand on the riverbank in front of him he set a leaf stem, a grass blade, and several pebbles. He studied them and rearranged them. “Now I must speak of harm,” he said.

After a long pause he went on. “You know that a dragon brought back our Lord Sparrowhawk, with the young king, from the shores of death. Then the dragon carried Sparrowhawk away to his home, for his power was gone, he was not a mage. So presently the Masters of Roke met to choose a new archmage, here, in the Grove, as always. But not as always.

“Before the dragon came, the Summoner too had returned from death, where he can go, where his art can take him. He had seen our lord and the young king there, in that country across the wall of stones. He said they would not come back. He said Lord Sparrowhawk had told him to come back to us, to life, to bear that word. So we grieved for our lord.

“But then came the dragon, Kalessin, bearing him living.

“The Summoner was among us when we stood on Roke Knoll and saw the Archmage kneel to King Lebannen. Then, as the dragon bore our friend away, the Summoner fell down.

“He lay as if dead, cold, his heart not beating, yet he breathed. The Herbal used all his art, but could not rouse him. ‘He is dead,’ he said. ‘The breath will not leave him, but he is dead.’ So we mourned him. Then, because there was dismay among us, and all my patterns spoke of change and danger, we met to choose a new warden of Roke, an archmage to guide us. And in our council we set the young king in the Summoner’s place. To us it seemed right that he should sit among us. Only the Changer spoke against it at first, and then agreed.

“But we met, we sat, and we could not choose. We said this and said that, but no name was spoken. And then I . . .” He paused a while. “There came on me what my people call the eduevanu, the other breath. Words came to me and I spoke them. I said, Hama Gondun!—And Kurremkarmerruk told them this in Hardic: ‘A woman on Gont.’ But when I came back to my own wits, I could not tell them what that meant. And so we parted with no archmage chosen.

“The king left soon after, and the Master Windkey went with him. Before the king was to be crowned, they went to Gont and sought our lord Sparrowhawk, to find what that meant, ‘a woman on Gont.’ Eh? But they did not see him, only my countrywoman Tenar of the Ring. She said she was not the woman they sought. And they found no one, nothing. So Lebannen judged it to be a prophecy yet to be fulfilled. And in Havnor he set his crown on his own head.

“The Herbal, and I too, judged the Summoner dead. We thought the breath he

breathed was left from some spell of his own art that we did not understand, like the spell snakes know that keeps their heart beating long after they are dead. Though it seemed terrible to bury a breathing body, yet he was cold, and his blood did not run, and no soul was in him. That was more terrible. So we made ready to bury him. And then, as he lay beside his grave, his eyes opened. He moved, and spoke. He said, 'I have summoned myself again into life, to do what must be done.'"

The Patterner's voice had grown rougher. He suddenly brushed the little design of pebbles apart with the palm of his hand.

"So when the Windkey returned from the king's crowning, we were nine again. But divided. For the Summoner said we must meet again and choose an archmage. The king had had no place among us, he said. And 'a woman on Gont,' whoever she may be, has no place among the men on Roke. Eh? The Windkey, the Chanter, the Changer, the Hand, say he is right. And as King Lebannen is a man returned from death, fulfilling that prophecy, they say so will the archmage be a man returned from death."

"But—" Irian said, and stopped.

After a while the Patterner said, "That art, summoning, you know, is terrible. It is always danger. Here," and he looked up into the green-gold darkness of the trees, "here is no summoning. No bringing back across the wall. No wall."

His face was a warrior's face, but when he looked into the trees it was softened, yearning.

"So," he said, "now he makes you his reason for our meeting. But I will not go to the Great House. I will not be summoned."

"He won't come here?"

"I think he will not walk in the Grove. Nor on Roke Knoll. On the Knoll, what is, is so."

She did not know what he meant, but did not ask, preoccupied: "You say he makes me his reason for you to meet together."

"Yes. To send away one woman, it takes nine mages." He very seldom smiled, and when he did it was quick and fierce. "We are to meet to uphold the Rule of Roke. And so to choose an archmage."

"If I went away—" She saw him shake his head. "I could go to the Namer—"

"You are safer here."

The idea of doing harm troubled her, but the idea of danger had not entered her mind. She found it inconceivable. “I’ll be all right,” she said. “So the Namer, and you—and the Doorkeeper?—”

“—do not wish Thorion to be archmage. Also the Master Herbal, though he digs and says little.”

He saw Irian staring at him in amazement. “Thorion the Summoner speaks his true name,” he said. “He died, eh?”

She knew that King Lebannen used his true name openly. He too had returned from death. Yet that the Summoner should do so continued to shock and disturb her as she thought about it.

“And the . . . the students?”

“Divided also.”

She thought about the school, where she had been so briefly. From here, under the eaves of the Grove, she saw it as stone walls enclosing one kind of being and keeping out all others, like a pen, a cage. How could any of them keep their balance in a place like that?

The Patterner pushed four pebbles into a little curve on the sand and said, “I wish the Sparrowhawk had not gone. I wish I could read what the shadows write. But all I can hear the leaves say is Change, change . . . Everything will change but them.” He looked up into the trees again with that yearning look. The sun was setting. He stood up, bade her goodnight gently, and walked away, entering under the trees.

She sat on a while by the Thwilburn. She was troubled by what he had told her and by her thoughts and feelings in the Grove, and troubled that any thought or feeling could have troubled her there. She went to the house, set out her supper of smoked meat and bread and summer lettuce, and ate it without tasting it. She roamed restlessly back down the stream bank to the water. It was very still and warm in the late dusk, only the largest stars burning through a milky overcast. She slipped off her sandals and put her feet in the water. It was cool, but veins of sun warmth ran through it. She slid out of her clothes, the man’s breeches and shirt that were all she had, and slipped naked into the water, feeling the push and stir of the current all along her body. She had never swum in the streams at Iria, and she had hated the sea, heaving grey and cold, but this quick water pleased her, tonight. She drifted and floated, her hands slipping over silken underwater rocks and her own silken flanks, her legs sliding through water weeds. All trouble and restlessness washed away from her in the running of the water, and she floated in delight in the caress of the stream, gazing up at the white, soft fire of the stars.

A chill ran through her. The water ran cold. Gathering herself together, her limbs still soft and loose, she looked up and saw on the bank above her the black figure of a man.

She stood straight up, naked, in the water.

“Get away!” she shouted. “Get away, you traitor, you foul lecher, or I’ll cut the liver out of you!” She sprang up the bank, pulling herself up by the tough bunchgrass, and scrambled to her feet. No one was there. She stood afire, shaking with rage. She leapt back down the bank, found her clothes, and pulled them on, still swearing aloud—“You coward wizard! You traitorous son of a bitch!”

“Irian?”

“He was here!” she cried. “That foul heart, that Thorion!” She strode to meet the Patterner as he came into the starlight by the house. “I was bathing in the stream, and he stood there watching me!”

“A sending—only a seeming of him. It could not hurt you, Irian.”

“A sending with eyes, a seeming with seeing! May he be—” She stopped, at a loss suddenly for the word. She felt sick. She shuddered, and swallowed the cold spittle that welled in her mouth.

The Patterner came forward and took her hands in his. His hands were warm, and she felt so mortally cold that she came close up against him for the warmth of his body. They stood so for a while, her face turned from him but their hands joined and their bodies pressed close. At last she broke free, straightening herself, pushing back her lank wet hair. “Thank you,” she said. “I was cold.”

“I know.”

“I’m never cold,” she said. “It was him.”

“I tell you, Irian, he cannot come here, he cannot harm you here.”

“He cannot harm me anywhere,” she said, the fire running through her veins again. “If he tries to, I’ll destroy him.”

“Ah,” said the Patterner.

She looked at him in the starlight, and said, “Tell me your name—Not your true name—Only a name I can call you. When I think of you.”

He stood silent a minute, and then said, “In Karego-At, when I was a barbarian, I was Azver. In Hardic, that is a banner of war.”

“Azver,” she said. “Thank you.”

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SHE LAY AWAKE IN THE little house, feeling the air stifling and the ceiling pressing down on her, then slept suddenly and deeply. She woke as suddenly when the east was just getting light. She went to the door to see what she loved best to see, the sky before sunrise. Looking down from it she saw Azver the Patterner rolled up in his grey cloak, sound asleep on the ground before her doorstep. She withdrew noiselessly into the house. In a little while she saw him going back to his woods, walking a bit stiffly and scratching his head as he went, as people do when half awake.

She got to work scraping down the inner wall of the house, readying it to plaster. Just as the first sunlight struck in the window, there was a knock at her open door. Outside was the man she had thought was a gardener, the Master Herbal, looking solid and stolid, like a brown ox, beside the gaunt, grim-faced old Namer.

She came to the door and muttered some kind of greeting. They daunted her, these Masters of Roke; and also their presence meant that the peaceful time was over, the days of walking in the silent summer forest with the Patterner. That had come to an end last night. She knew it, but she did not want to know it.

“The Patterner sent for us,” said the Master Herbal. He looked uncomfortable. Noticing a clump of weeds under the window, he said, “That’s velver. Somebody from Havnor planted it here. Didn’t know there was any on the island.” He examined it attentively, and put some seed pods into his pouch.

Irian was studying the Namer covertly but equally attentively, trying to see if she could tell if he was what he had called a sending or was there in flesh and blood. Nothing about him appeared insubstantial, but she thought he was not there, and when he stepped into the slanting sunlight and cast no shadow, she knew it.

“Is it a long way from where you live, sir?” she asked.

He nodded. “Left myself halfway,” he said. He looked up; the Patterner was coming towards them, wide awake now.

He greeted them and asked, “The Doorkeeper will come?”

“Said he thought he’d better keep the doors,” said the Herbal. He closed his many-pocketed pouch carefully and looked around at the others. “But I don’t know if

he can keep a lid on the ant hill."

"What's up?" said Kurremkarmerruk. "I've been reading about dragons. Not paying attention to ants. But all the boys I had studying at the Tower left."

"Summoned," said the Herbal, drily.

"So?" said the Namer, more drily.

"I can tell you only how it seems to me," the Herbal said, reluctant, uncomfortable.

"Do that," the old mage said.

The Herbal still hesitated. "This lady is not of our council," he said at last.

"She is of mine," said Azver.

"She came to this place at this time," the Namer said. "And to this place, at this time, no one comes by chance. All any of us knows is how it seems to us. There are names behind names, my Lord Healer."

The dark-eyed mage bowed his head at that, and said, "Very well," evidently with relief at accepting their judgment over his own. "Thorion has been much with the other Masters, and with the young men. Secret meetings, inner circles. Rumors, whispers. The younger students are frightened, and several have asked me or the Doorkeeper if they may go—leave Roke. And we'd let them go. But there's no ship in port, and none has come into Thwil Bay since the one that brought you, lady, and sailed again next day for Wathort. The Windkey keeps the Roke wind against all. If the king himself should come, he could not land on Roke."

"Until the wind changes, eh?" said the Patterner.

"Thorion says Lebannen is not truly king, since no archmage crowned him."

"Nonsense! Not history!" said the old Namer. "The first archmage came centuries after the last king. Roke ruled in the kings' stead."

"Ah," said the Patterner. "Hard for the housekeeper to give up the keys when the owner comes home. Eh?"

"The Ring of Peace is healed," said the Herbal, in his patient, troubled voice, "the prophecy is fulfilled, the son of Morred is crowned, and yet we have no peace. Where have we gone wrong? Why can we not find the balance?"

“What does Thorion intend?” asked the Namer.

“To bring Lebannen here,” said the Herbal. “The young men talk of ‘the true crown.’ A second coronation, here. By the Archmage Thorion.”

“Avert!” Irian blurted out, making the sign to prevent word from becoming deed. None of the men smiled, and the Herbal belatedly made the same gesture.

“How does he hold them all?” the Namer said. “Herbal, you were here when Sparrowhawk and Thorion were challenged by Irioth. His gift was as great as Thorion’s, I think. He used it to use men, to control them wholly. Is that what Thorion does?”

“I don’t know,” the Herbal said. “I can only tell you that when I’m with him, when I’m in the Great House, I feel that nothing can be done but what has been done. That nothing will change. Nothing will grow. That no matter what cures I use, the sickness will end in death.” He looked around at them all like a hurt ox. “And I think it is true. There is no way to regain the Equilibrium but by holding still. We have gone too far. For the Archmage and Lebannen to go bodily into death, and return—it was not right. They broke a law that must not be broken. It was to restore the law that Thorion returned.”

“What, to send them back into death?” the Namer said, and the Patterner, “Who is to say what is the law?”

“There is a wall,” the Herbal said.

“That wall is not as deep-rooted as my trees,” said the Patterner.

“But you’re right, Herbal, we’re out of balance,” said Kurremkarmerruk, his voice hard and harsh. “When and where did we begin to go too far? What have we forgotten, turned our back on, overlooked?”

Irian looked from one to the other.

“When the balance is wrong, holding still is not good. It must get more wrong,” said the Patterner. “Until—” He made a quick gesture of reversal with his open hands, down going up and up down.

“What’s more wrong than to summon oneself back from death?” said the Namer.

“Thorion was the best of us all—a brave heart, a noble mind.” The Herbal spoke almost in anger. “Sparrowhawk loved him. So did we all.”

“Conscience caught him,” said the Namer. “Conscience told him he alone could set things right. To do it, he denied his death. So he denies life.”

“And who shall stand against him?” said the Patterner. “I can only hide in my woods.”

“And I in my tower,” said the Namer. “And you, Herbal, and the Doorkeeper, are in the trap, in the Great House. The walls we built to keep all evil out. Or in, as the case may be.”

“We are four against him,” said the Patterner.

“They are five against us,” said the Herbal.

“Has it come to this,” the Namer said, “that we stand at the edge of the forest Segoy planted and talk of how to destroy one another?”

“Yes,” said the Patterner. “What goes too long unchanged destroys itself. The forest is forever because it dies and dies and so lives. I will not let this dead hand touch me. Or touch the king who brought us hope. A promise was made, made through me. I spoke it—‘A woman on Gont.’ I will not see that word forgotten.”

“Then should we go to Gont?” said the Herbal, caught in Azver’s passion. “Sparrowhawk is there.”

“Tenar of the Ring is there,” said Azver.

“Maybe our hope is there,” said the Namer.

They stood silent, uncertain, trying to cherish hope.

Irian stood silent too, but her hope sank down, replaced by a sense of shame and utter insignificance. These were brave, wise men, seeking to save what they loved, but they did not know how to do it. And she had no share in their wisdom, no part in their decisions. She drew away from them, and they did not notice. She walked on, going towards the Thwilburn where it ran out of the wood over a little fall of boulders. The water was bright in the morning sunlight and made a happy noise. She wanted to cry, but she had never been good at crying. She stood and watched the water, and her shame turned slowly into anger.

She came back towards the three men, and said, “Azver.”

He turned to her, startled, and came forward a little.

“Why did you break your Rule for me? Was it fair to me, who can never be what you

are?”

Azver frowned. “The Doorkeeper admitted you because you asked,” he said. “I brought you to the Grove because the leaves of the trees spoke your name to me before you ever came here. Irian, they said, Irian. Why you came I don’t know, but not by chance. The Summoner too knows that.”

“Maybe I came to destroy him.”

He looked at her and said nothing.

“Maybe I came to destroy Roke.”

His pale eyes blazed then. “Try!”

A long shudder went through her as she stood facing him. She felt herself larger than he was, larger than she was, enormously larger. She could reach out one finger and destroy him. He stood there in his small, brave, brief humanity, his mortality, defenseless. She drew a long, long breath. She stepped back from him.

The sense of huge strength was draining out of her. She turned her head a little and looked down, surprised to see her own brown arm, her rolled-up sleeve, the grass springing cool and green around her sandaled feet. She looked back at the Patterner and he still seemed a fragile being. She pitied and honored him. She wanted to warn him of the peril he was in. But no words came to her at all. She turned round and went back to the stream bank by the little falls. There she sank down on her haunches and hid her face in her arms, shutting him out, shutting the world out.

The voices of the mages talking were like the voices of the stream running. The stream said its words and they said theirs, but none of them were the right words.

IV. Irian

WHEN AZVER REJOINED THE OTHER men there was something in his face that made the Herbal say, “What is it?”

“I don’t know,” he answered. “Maybe we should not leave Roke.”

“Probably we can’t,” said the Herbal. “If the Windkey locks the winds against us . . .”

“I’m going back to where I am,” Kurremkarmerruk said abruptly. “I don’t like leaving myself about like an old shoe. I’ll be here with you this evening.” And he was gone.

“I’d like to walk under your trees a bit, Azver,” the Herbal said, with a long sigh.

“Go on, Deyala. I’ll stay here.” The Herbal went off. Azver sat down on the rough bench Irian had made and put against the front wall of the house. He looked upstream at her, crouching motionless on the bank. Sheep in the field between them and the Great House blatted softly. The morning sun was getting hot.

His father had named him Banner of War. He had come west, leaving all he knew behind him. He had learned his true name from the trees of the Immanent Grove, and become the Patterner of Roke. All this year the patterns of the shadows and the branches and the roots, all the silent language of his forest, had spoken of destruction, of transgression, of all things changed. Now it was upon them, he knew. It had come with her.

She was in his charge, in his care, he had known that when he saw her. Though she came to destroy Roke, as she had said, he must serve her. He did so willingly. She had walked with him in the forest, tall, awkward, fearless; she had put aside the thorny arms of brambles with her big, careful hand. Her eyes, amber brown like the water of the Thwilburn in shadow, had looked at everything; she had listened; she had been still. He wanted to protect her and knew he could not. He had given her a little warmth when she was cold. He had nothing else to give her. Where she must go she would go. She did not understand danger. She had no wisdom but her innocence, no armor but her anger. Who are you, Irian? he said to her, watching her crouched there like an animal locked in its muteness.

The Herbal came back from the woods and sat with him a while, not speaking. In the middle of the day he went back to the Great House, agreeing to return with the Doorkeeper in the morning. They would ask all the other Masters to meet with them in the Grove. “But he won’t come,” Deyala said, and Azver nodded.

All day he stayed near the Otter’s House, keeping watch on Irian, making her eat a little with him. She came to the house, but when they had eaten she went back to her place on the stream bank and sat there motionless. And he too felt a lethargy in his own body and mind, a stupidity, which he fought against but could not shake off. He thought of the Summoner’s eyes, and then it was he that felt cold, cold through, though he was sitting in the full heat of the summer’s day. We are ruled by the dead, he thought. The thought would not leave him.

He was grateful to see Kurremkarmerruk coming slowly down the bank of the Thwilburn from the north. The old man waded through the stream barefoot, holding his shoes in one hand and his tall staff in the other, snarling when he missed his footing on the rocks. He sat down on the near bank to dry his feet and put his shoes back on. “When I go back to the Tower,” he said, “I’ll ride. Hire a carter, buy a mule. I’m old, Azver.”

“Come up to the house,” the Patterner said, and he set out water and food for the Namer.

“Where’s the girl?”

“Asleep.” Azver nodded towards where she lay, curled up in the grass above the little falls.

The heat of the day was beginning to lessen and the shadows of the Grove lay across the grass, though the Otter’s House was still in sunlight. Kurremkarmerruk sat on the bench with his back against the house wall, and Azver on the doorstep.

“We’ve come to the end of it,” the old man said out of silence.

Azver nodded, in silence.

“What brought you here, Azver?” the Namer asked. “I’ve often thought of asking you. A long, long way to come. And you have no wizards in the Kargish lands.”

“No. But we have the things wizardry is made of. Water, stones, trees, words . . .”

“But not the words of the Making.”

“No. Nor dragons.”

“Never?”

“Only in old tales from the farthest east, from the desert of Hur-at-Hur. Before the gods were. Before men were. Before men were men, they were dragons.”

“Now that is interesting,” said the old scholar, sitting up straighter. “I told you I’ve been reading about dragons. You know these rumors of them flying over the Inmost Sea as far east as Gont. That was no doubt Kalessin taking Ged home, multiplied by sailors making a good story better. But a boy here swore to me that his whole village had seen dragons flying, this spring, west of Mount Onn. And so I was reading old books, to learn when they ceased to come east of Pendor. And in an old Pelnish scroll, I came on your story, or something like it. That men and dragons were all one kind, but they quarreled. Some went west and some east, and they became two kinds, and forgot they were ever one.”

“We went farthest east,” Azver said. “But do you know what the leader of an army is, in my tongue?”

“Edran,” said the Namer promptly, and laughed. “Drake. Dragon . . .”

After a while he said, “I could chase an etymology on the brink of doom . . . But I think, Azver, that that’s where we are. We won’t defeat him.”

“He has the advantage,” Azver said, very dry.

“He does. But, admitting it unlikely, admitting it impossible—if we did defeat him—if he went back into death and left us here alive—what would we do? What comes next?”

After a long time, Azver said, “I have no idea.”

“Your leaves and shadows tell you nothing?”

“Change, change,” said the Patterner. “Transformation.”

He looked up suddenly. The sheep, who had been grouped near the stile, were scurrying off, and someone was coming along the path from the Great House.

“A group of young men,” said the Herbal, breathless, as he came to them. “Thorion’s army. Coming here. To take the girl. To send her away.” He stood and drew breath. “The Doorkeeper was speaking with them when I left. I think—”

“Here he is,” said Azver, and the Doorkeeper was there, his smooth, yellow-brown face tranquil as ever.

“I told them,” he said, “that if they went out Medra’s Gate this day, they’d never go back through it into a house they knew. Some of them were for turning back, then. But the Windkey and the Chanter urged them on. They’ll be along soon.”

They could hear men’s voices in the fields east of the Grove.

Azver went quickly to where Irian lay beside the stream, and the others followed him. She roused up and got to her feet, looking dull and dazed. They were standing around her, a kind of guard, when the group of thirty or more men came past the little house and approached them. They were mostly older students; there were five or six wizard’s staffs among the crowd, and the Master Windkey led them. His thin, keen old face looked strained and weary, but he greeted the four mages courteously by their titles.

They greeted him, and Azver took the word—“Come into the Grove, Master Windkey,” he said, “and we will wait there for the others of the Nine.”

“First we must settle the matter that divides us,” said the Windkey.

“That is a stony matter,” said the Namer.

“The woman with you defies the Rule of Roke,” the Windkey said. “She must leave. A boat is waiting at the dock to take her, and the wind, I can tell you, will stand fair for Way.”

“I have no doubt of that, my lord,” said Azver, “but I doubt she will go.”

“My Lord Patterner, will you defy our Rule and our community, that has been one so long, upholding order against the forces of ruin? Will it be you, of all men, who break the pattern?”

“It is not glass, to break,” Azver said. “It is breath, it is fire.”

It cost him a great effort to speak.

“It does not know death,” he said, but he spoke in his own language, and they did not understand him. He drew closer to Irian. He felt the warmth of her body. She stood staring, in that animal silence, as if she did not understand any of them.

“Lord Thorion has returned from death to save us all,” the Windkey said, fiercely and clearly. “He will be Archmage. Under his rule Roke will be as it was. The king will receive the true crown from his hand, and rule with his guidance, as Morred ruled. No witches will defile sacred ground. No dragons will threaten the Inmost Sea. There will be order, safety, and peace.”

None of the four mages with Irian answered him. In the silence, the men with him murmured, and a voice among them said, “Let us have the witch.”

“No,” Azver said, but could say nothing else. He held his staff of willow, but it was only wood in his hand.

Of the four of them, only the Doorkeeper moved and spoke. He took a step forward, looking from one young man to the next and the next. He said, “You trusted me, giving me your names. Will you trust me now?”

“My lord,” said one of them with a fine, dark face and a wizard’s oaken staff, “we do trust you, and therefore ask you to let the witch go, and peace return.”

Irian stepped forward before the Doorkeeper could answer.

“I am not a witch,” she said. Her voice sounded high, metallic, after the men’s deep voices. “I have no art. No knowledge. I came to learn.”

“We do not teach women here,” said the Windkey. “You know that.”

“I know nothing,” Irian said. She took another step forward, facing the mage directly. “Tell me who I am.”

“Learn your place, woman,” the mage said with cold passion.

“My place,” she said, slowly, the words dragging—“my place is on the hill. Where things are what they are. Tell the dead man I will meet him there.”

The Windkey stood silent. The group of men muttered, angry, and some of them moved forward. Azver came between her and them, her words releasing him from the paralysis of mind and body that had held him. “Tell Thorion we will meet him on Roke Knoll,” he said. “When he comes, we will be there. Now come with me,” he said to Irian.

The Namer, the Doorkeeper, and the Herbal followed him with her into the Grove. There was a path for them. But when some of the young men started after them, there was no path.

“Come back,” the Windkey said to the young men.

They turned back, uncertain. The low sun was still bright on the fields and the roofs of the Great House, but inside the wood it was all shadows.

“Witchery,” they said, “sacrilege, defilement.”

“Best come away,” said the Master Windkey, his face set and somber, his keen eyes troubled. He set off back to the school, and they straggled after him, arguing and debating in frustration and anger.

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THEY WERE NOT FAR INSIDE the Grove, and still beside the stream, when Irian stopped, turned aside, and crouched down by the enormous, hunching roots of a willow that leaned out over the water. The four mages stood on the path.

“She spoke with the other breath,” Azver said.

The Namer nodded.

“So we must follow her?” the Herbal asked.

This time the Doorkeeper nodded. He smiled faintly and said, “So it would seem.”

“Very well,” said the Herbal, with his patient, troubled look; and he went aside a little, and knelt to look at some small plant or fungus on the forest floor.

Time passed as always in the Grove, not passing at all it seemed, yet gone, the day gone quietly by in a few long breaths, a quivering of leaves, a bird singing far off and another answering it from even farther. Irian stood up slowly. She did not speak, but looked down the path, and then walked down it. The four men followed her.

They came out into the calm, open evening air. The west still held some brightness as they crossed the Thwilburn and walked across the fields to Roke Knoll, which stood up before them in a high dark curve against the sky.

“They’re coming,” the Doorkeeper said. Men were coming through the gardens and up the path from the Great House, the five mages, many students. Leading them was Thorion the Summoner, tall in his grey cloak, carrying his tall staff of bone-white wood, about which a faint gleam of werelight hovered.

Where the two paths met and joined to wind up to the heights of the Knoll, Thorion stopped and stood waiting for them. Irian strode forward to face him.

“Irian of Way,” the Summoner said in his deep, clear voice, “that there may be peace and order, and for the sake of the balance of all things, I bid you now leave this island. We cannot give you what you ask, and for that we ask your forgiveness. But if you seek to stay here you forfeit forgiveness, and must learn what follows on transgression.”

She stood up, almost as tall as he, and as straight. She said nothing for a minute and then spoke out in a high, harsh voice. “Come up onto the hill, Thorion,” she said.

She left him standing at the waymeet, on level ground, and walked up the hill path for a little way, a few strides. She turned and looked back down at him. “What keeps you from the hill?” she said.

The air was darkening around them. The west was only a dull red line, the eastern sky was shadowy above the sea.

The Summoner looked up at Irian. Slowly he raised his arms and the white staff in the invocation of a spell, speaking in the tongue that all the wizards and mages of Roke had learned, the language of their art, the Language of the Making: “Irian, by your name I summon you and bind you to obey me!”

She hesitated, seeming for a moment to yield, to come to him, and then cried out, “I am not only Irian!”

At that the Summoner ran up towards her, reaching out, lunging at her as if to seize

and hold her. They were both on the hill now. She towered above him impossibly, fire breaking forth between them, a flare of red flame in the dusk air, a gleam of red-gold scales, of vast wings—then that was gone, and there was nothing there but the woman standing on the hill path and the tall man bowing down before her, bowing slowly down to earth, and lying on it.

Of them all it was the Herbal, the healer, who was the first to move. He went up the path and knelt down by Thorion. “My lord,” he said, “my friend.”

Under the huddle of the grey cloak his hands found only a huddle of clothes and dry bones and a broken staff.

“This is better, Thorion,” he said, but he was weeping.

The old Namer came forward and said to the woman on the hill, “Who are you?”

“I do not know my other name,” she said. She spoke as he had spoken, as she had spoken to the Summoner, in the Language of the Making, the tongue the dragons speak.

She turned away and began to walk on up the hill.

“Irian,” said Azver the Patterner, “will you come back to us?”

She halted and let him come up to her. “I will, if you call me,” she said.

She reached out and touched his hand. He drew his breath sharply.

“Where will you go?” he said.

“To those who will give me my name. In fire, not water. My people.”

“In the west,” he said.

She said, “Beyond the west.”

She turned away from him and them and went on up the hill in the gathering darkness. As she went farther from them they saw her, all of them, the great gold-mailed flanks, the spiked, coiling tail, the talons, the breath that was bright fire. On the crest of the knoll she paused a while, her long head turning to look slowly round the Isle of Roke, gazing longest at the Grove, only a blur of darkness in darkness now. Then with a rattle like the shaking of sheets of brass the wide, vaned wings opened and the dragon sprang up into the air, circled Roke Knoll once, and flew.

A curl of fire, a wisp of smoke drifted down through the dark air.

Azver the Patterner stood with his left hand holding his right hand, which her touch had burnt. He looked down at the men, who stood silent at the foot of the hill, staring after the dragon. “Well, my friends,” he said, “what now?”

Only the Doorkeeper answered. He said, “I think we should go to our house, and open its doors.”