

“Name of Love”

Book Three in the Namesake Tales

Author: D. Sanders

Chapter One - Fair

I am such as Bastard. I was named well even if my mentors think otherwise. Fate named me thus and so life turned me into one. My name is Catch-Colt, my father could have been a Noble or a manure farmer for all I know of him and my mother gave birth to me then dumped me on her old nanny goat of an aunt and left. The old bitch that raised me, reminded me every day what shame I brought to my mother. Like it's my fault the whore got herself knocked up? I didn't tell her to spread her legs for my father. Nevertheless, it was my thoughtlessness to be conceived and I paid for it every damn day of my life until I was sixteen.

I'd always known I was a bit different, ever since I was six I knew if I thought about something hard enough, I could make it happen. I used my mage gifts for years before I knew what they were or the potential they could be used for. I used them to spare my back and hands with the endless chores the old hag gave me to do. Every morning I fixed her breakfast then went out to tend the garden and then chop the wood before I could have my breakfast. Whatever she hadn't eaten off her plate, which was usually the toast crusts and the egg yolks stuck to the plate. If I dared make her a hearty breakfast in hopes she'd leave more behind that earned me a solid cuff to the head saying I wasted good food. I learned to cook no more than two eggs, two pieces of bacon and two pieces of toast only and pray she wasn't particularly hungry. I think once in my life she left me a whole egg to eat. The rest of the time I was licking her plate like a dog licks his bowl clean.

I didn't dare try to pilfer food out of the garden either, she checked and counted the rows daily. If a rabbit got in our garden, I was blamed for it and beaten with her walking cane. To this day I cannot see a cane without shivering.

After breakfast, I did the laundry, and not just ours, she did the laundry for the village too to earn extra money. I say "she did it", in actuality, I did it. She'd sit on her stool and glare at me while I scrubbed and wrung and then hung the lines. All the while listening to her criticize my laziness and work ethic.

Then I fixed her lunch and she was magnanimous enough to allow me to fix myself food too. Always the same, one vegetable from the garden, usually a turnip, and a piece of bread and water. I never ate meat unless she didn't finish hers.

After lunch I cleaned the house, washed the dishes and did whatever errands she had to do on a daily basis then come back, check the lines, fold the laundry and sort it for delivery and then make dinner. It was always stew and I could have one ladle to myself with a piece of bread. This was my largest meal of the day

and I was adept at getting that ladle as full as possible with as much meat in it as I could manage without her noticing. I tended to eat standing up so she couldn't see into my bowl. I'd soak my bread and eat with drinking a lot of water to make myself full.

Then I delivered the laundry and got reminders from everyone how grateful I should be that my poor old aunt out of the goodness of her heart took me in when my Jezibel of a mother spawned me and I ruined her good reputation. I was such an evil thing and they reminded me had they been my kin, they'd have let me die in the ditch I was dropped in.

Oh yes, my life was just wonderful. My aunt a saint for treating me like a slave. I'd take out my anger on the woodpile before I returned home and waited for Old man Badger to come and complain I'd did a poor job, which would get the cane on me while he said I deserved it and then I went to bed on the floor of the kitchen and started again the next day.

I detest people. Always two-faced and nasty and I trust no one to give a damn about me save for three people in the whole of the world. My Master Tigo who got me out of there and brought me to the Royal Academy and mentored me on how to work my magic with my Bond Dragon Frostbite. My Dragon Frostbite, he was always my support and I knew beyond doubt he cared for me, you could not lie in a bond. Lastly, Fair, a boy just under two years my junior in years. He was genuine, you could see it in his eyes. I don't think he knew how to lie, he was very open and honest and quiet. He didn't waste words, he got to the point and he was about as fucked up as I was.

He was a seer, one of those gifted in the sense where they dreamed about possible futures. He had one that made him afraid to sleep. I had learned that from Frostbite. He'd told me all about Fair not long after I arrived. I thought Fair just about the prettiest boy I'd ever seen. His face was like a girl's and his hands small like a girl's too. He wore his golden hair short, but it always looked like he was weeks overdue for a hair cut and he was forever blowing his bangs out of his eyes.

His eyes were a cornflower blue hue and large and deep like a doe's eyes. You could see for miles into his soul through them or he through yours if you held his gaze for long. He always had deep shadows from lack of sleep under his eyes and you could see he was tormented by his visions even if he gave everyone a pleasant smile.

Frostbite urged me constantly to talk with him and I finally relented and found he was a gentle ear to listen to me and vastly intelligent. He helped me learn to read and write and was my first friend my own age.

I was nineteen, I'd been at the Academy for three years and my Mentors were pleased with me and I got on well enough. I still found it difficult to actually warm up to people, I was cold, I didn't want to make friends, if I didn't open my soul to people I wouldn't get hurt. They couldn't betray my trust if I didn't give it to them in the first place.

I was walking the building site where the new school was going to be, it was coming along swiftly. I rounded the building that was going to be the adult student dorm apartments when I ran into Fair. He was huddled down, shivering. He'd been crying again. I hated when he cried, I knew he suffered in spirit and I thought him far too pretty to tarnish his looks with tears.

There were times I'd look at him and my body would betray me. I'd wanted to lay with him, he was never far from my thoughts when I masturbated alone at night. I wanted to see his naked flesh under me while I fucked him blind. I wondered often how it would feel to bend him over to my will. I was cold and my lust was fierce. Like father like son and my cock often had a mind of it's own in Fair's presence. I wanted to devour him, like a wolf takes down a deer.

I was predator and he was my prey in my dreams. He was also my friend and I was genuinely concerned about him, his dreams were getting more frequent and I offered him what paltry comfort I was capable of expressing.

It was usually just my ear to listen as he confided his fears to me. I'd never gotten the nerve up to actually offer him physical comfort. I didn't trust myself to touch him.

"It's freezing out here and you'll shiver yourself into a stupor if you sit out here in the snow." I said offering my hand down to Fair. He took it and allowed me to help him to rise.

"When I'm cold I think about being cold and not my dreams." He replied his hand still in mine. It was nice to hold his hand and I as in no hurry to let it go.

"You need warmer distractions." I said and Fair let out a depreciative laugh.

"I need to stop having a need for sleep." He replied and I frowned. He must have had a particularly bad dream the night before to be this depressed the next day.

::He wouldn't suffer so if you gave him your comfort Chosen. He lacks mage gifts that help him separate himself from his dreams. He gets lost in them without power to protect himself. You could give him that ability and you wish to. He would accept. He loves you very much Chosen. I am tired of you dragging your feet with him. He is good for you and you for him. Take what he willingly offers.::

::He does not love me.::

::Yes, he does and you'd know this if you looked in his eyes and see how he looks at you is far different than he looks at others. He is in much need, he will die soon if you don't protect him from his dreams and bond with him. His dreams are killing him. Rembie is worried sick over him, knowing he needs to bond to a mage to save his life. His soul mate is you. Why else are you obsessed with him in your own dreams? You love him too.::

Frostbite was a nag, but his words stopped me cold. I had not known Fair was dying.

::Because he will not force you to accept him, he knows your pain and reticence and defers to you at the cost of his own health. He would wait for you for eternity if he had that long left. Take him inside and warm him.::

"Let's go inside and look around, it's almost finished inside." I said, my stomach in knots as I debated if I should do what Frostbite was telling me to. I'd never actually had sex before but knew enough if I was a brute about it, I'd hurt him. Tigo had already given me that particular lesson unasked for.

Fair nodded and I kept hold of his hand as we went inside the almost completed structure and I led him to the apartment that I knew was designated as mine when the building was finished.

The apartment was bare, but the bed was built and had the mattress in place. I told Fair to wait and went out and found some broken lumber and brought it up to make a fire in the hearth to warm the room.

Fair was sitting on my future bed, his knees drawn up under his chin and he was still shivering looking pensive and exhausted. I had him stand and I took the mattress from the bed and laid it before the hearthstones then had him sit again wrapping him in my cloak.

"Warmer now?" I asked and he smiled tenderly up at me, the love naked in his eyes. How could I have not seen this? Easy, I was deliberately misinterpreting it because I was scared.

"Aye. Thank you Colt."

"You're welcome." I said setting my shoulder perch and belt pouch aside to join him by the fire.

I sat behind him, my arms loosely around him on the pretence of keeping him warm as we sat facing the fire. I made shapes dance in the flames, a deer running through the forest and leaping over a fallen log. Frostbite in flight. Fair loved my fire illusions. Easy simple magic only to entertain him.

“Want to tell me about it?” I asked and Fair sighed and leaned against my chest.

“It’s always the same Colt, it never changes. It’s always so vague. I just see large ships with black sails. I see large long bearded men worn in braids with bones in them. Beside them pale white tall beings in long black hooded cloaks. I never see their faces but I feel them. Like death. I see rivers of blood and then nothing. I wake up here. Something dreadfully evil is coming and that’s all I know. I know not where, not when and not how and that is what scares me most, I can’t even warn people to prepare for this plague that comes.” Fair was frustrated and frightened and he felt defeated.

“Maybe it’s supposed to happen and our changing it would be worse. If death is to come then make every day you do have important.” I tried to offer comfort and Fair laid his head back to look up at me.

“You’re almost pleasant today. Are you sure you’re Colt and not some change child this morning?” He teased and I shrugged.

“Maybe I’m starting to take my own advise for a change. There are things important to me too.”

“Care to share?” Fair still looked up at me and I met his eyes.

“If you haven’t realized you’re important to me by now I’ll have to try harder. It’s not easy for me to be close to anyone, you know that. You should also know I’m closer to you than to anyone. I may show it badly, but I do care about you and I worry about you. You’re dying aren’t you?” I asked and Fair’s eyes looked away pained and he went to bolt to leave and I grabbed him and held him so he could not escape.

“Answer me Fair. Tell me the truth.”

“Yes. Rembie thinks I have a few months left at this rate before I get lost in that vision and don’t come out again. I don’t have any other sense other than the dreaming, I can’t protect myself, I know how I just don’t have any power to do it. She’s surprised I’ve lived to adulthood at all. I... I don’t want anyone to know. I don’t want pity. Especially not yours.” Fair said and he was crying again and I pulled him tightly against me.

“I don’t pity you I want to help you. I won’t let you die.”

“There’s nothing you can do Colt.” Fair sobbed into my chest.

::He knows you can and he won’t ask it of you, he thinks he was wrong about you in his dreams. Set him free chosen!::

“Yes, there is much I can do and I should have done a long time ago. Can you forgive me for realizing almost too late that I love you?” With those three words Fair’s eyes shot up to meet mine and new torrent of tears began, those of joy and relief.

“Colt. I love you so much and for so long.” His voice caught and I lifted his chin so our eyes would meet again.

“What did you dream of me?” I asked him and Fair smiled through his tears.

“This, you, holding me.”

“Loving you?”

“Aye.” His voice trembled on his final admission that he’d been dreaming of me making love to him for years. It would no longer be just a dream. For either of us.

I bent over him and kissed him. Nothing in my life felt as right as that kiss.

I felt such a desperate longing wash over me, and it wasn’t mine, it was Fair’s. How long had he bottled up this overwhelming love for me? How could I have not felt this when it was so strong? To know someone loves you to the depths of their soul is an intoxicating pleasure. I have never been loved and never thought any one ever would. Not like this.

Every desire I’d ever harbored secretly for Fair, quadrupled in an instant. I felt positively jealously possessive. I’d do anything to keep this feeling, to protect it from dying, to keep it to feed my empty soul. I needed this love, craved it and wanted to lose myself and drown in it. To keep everyone and everything away from it so they could never take it from me, this was one thing that was mine alone and I’d selfishly hoard and guard this treasure.

I can’t remember whose knees gave way first, I only know we ended up back on the mattress, Fair beneath me and giving off pleasurable whimpers in the back of his throat as I kissed him without mercy.

My body was ignited and I was hot and confined in my own skin let alone my clothes and his were only in the way of what I wanted. I ground against him and could tell as he arched against me, he was as aroused as I was. My hands had a mind of their own and a willing lover beneath me and before long I was running my hands over the perfect planes of his naked body.

White Lady was he beautiful. Like Prince Beloved and Prince Peaceful were men with androgynous beauty, so was my Fair in a way. He was most assuredly male in that innocent boyish charm. Slender, willowy grace with a face that was losing

the last vestiges of youthful boyish cuteness and turning into just elegantly pretty. Big blue eyes, perfect white smile, long dark eyelashes and lips swollen from my kiss.

His body clean and long that made him seem taller than he actually was in truth. He was a sculptors idyllic male model for classical beauty. He had a rosy hue to his pale skin and even his chest was flushed with excitement as I dripped kisses across his collarbone and down the cleft of his pectoral muscles and flat belly to the dusty blond hair that crowned a reddened with arousal sex that arched against his belly.

When my lips tasted him, he moaned deliciously and arched into my touch. His hands gripping the mattress and his head thrown back exposing to the predator his throat. It was total submission. He was mine.

In the back of my mind I thanked Tigo for his unsolicited education. I at least knew what to do if I hadn't actually done it before. My instincts were to just take him, but Tigo's warnings in the back of my mind slowed me down. I'd hurt him if I didn't take my time and the last thing I wanted to do was hurt Fair.

I'm sure I was as nervous as he was, the first time is quite nerve-wracking. I groped blindly for my belt pouch as I undressed myself. Fair's eyes decidedly approving as they traveled down my body and he smiled at me invitingly. He was not as innocent as his face belied. His eyes were as hungry as mine.

I found the small pot of scale oil I always carried with me and what Tigo had instructed me to use for more intimate pursuits such as this and I probably used more than was needed but I wanted to make sure. I stroked Fair with a slick hand and the positive moans meant I was doing something right and then I steeled my resolve and crossed unspoken boundaries when I slid the first finger into him.

Now I knew I was doing it right by the way he responded and pushed against me, his legs spread wide for me and a small joyful sob gurgled forth. Every moan, every sigh and every receptive response from his body drove me crazy. My own erection was throbbing now, wanting desperately to take him. I denied myself a little longer, living in the moment and fascinated that he was giving me so very much of himself so very willingly.

I watched enthralled as my fingers mimicked what I intended and that small space began to loosen and open and invite me in, "Colt, now oh please now. I can't stand it." Fair cried out, his voice desperate.

I didn't need a second invitation, I buried myself in him hard and fast. Fair almost screamed and his hands gripped my shoulders and his legs clamped around my hips and he chanted "Yes! Yes! YES!" Over and over, driving me with his mantra

of encouragement and fueling my desire, I wanted to hear him scream my name, I wanted him crying out in pleasure. His voice was a drug.

I was pleased that my Fair was quite vocal in his appreciation it drove me out of my mind with pleasure. I wanted more. "You. Like. This?" I grunted, punctuating each word with a thrust.

"Yes! Oh Gods Colt Yes!"

"Harder?"

"YES!"

"Like this?"

"YES! YES!"

I had him trussed up like a turkey, his legs over my shoulders and bent in half as I relentlessly took him. His nails were digging into my forearms and he thrashed in pleasure beneath me.

"Colt! COLT! Oh gods I'm...!" He was screaming now, his voice ragged and raw and I felt him release, the warmth of his seed on my belly and then his muscles constricted and I was lost. Stars behind my eyelids as I exploded from the inside out and jerking uncontrollably as I emptied everything I had into him. My power erupted like a volcano and now I knew intimately what Tigo meant when he said Sexual magic was the most potent.

I emptied more than my semen, I emptied power, it had been building ever since we began and now rushed out of me as a gift to my lover. I felt Fair gasp, this was the power he needed to be able to block his visions from tormenting him. This was the magic he could not create on his own but that I, as his mage lover, could give him.

I felt needed, I felt a purpose, I felt indescribably loved. My whole life had been pain and loneliness and abuse and longing for an emotion I'd never felt. Love. Now I felt it, now I knew it and it was like the sun arising in the dawn with a promise of warmth and peace. I would chase that sunrise and hold it, I'd not lose this feeling, I'd not lose the one who gave it to me. "I love you." I whispered in the shell of his perfect ear as we lay exhausted on the mattress using my cloak as a blanket. His body perfectly nestled against my own.

"This is my dream. I never knew it would feel so wonderful in reality. I love you Colt, so very much." Fair shivered with emotion and curled against me.

“Sleep now Fair. You’ve needed it for far too long. I’ll give you all you need to keep you protected. I refuse to lose you or let you suffer. Let me protect you, always.”

“Always.” Fair sighed, kissing my chin before finally sleeping without fear for the first time in many years for him. I felt his grateful peace of soul settle in my chest and I smiled as I curled around him protectively.

::That is real. Protect your seer Colt, he will bring you what you’ve always needed and in turn you give him what he needs. This is a true bond, love him well he is a treasure.::

::Aye. He is.:: I replied as sleep claimed me too.

I didn’t get much sleep. A nagging voice in my head woke me.

::Colt? Where are you boy?:: Came Tigo’s mind call.

::Sleeping, bugger off.::

::I can tell you’re sleeping and missing lessons it’s not like you. Where are you?::

::If I told you that you’d come drag me out of my nice warm spot. I’ll be back later.::

::Mind explaining why you’re blowing off lessons today?::

::No.::

::Oh ho, tight lipped I see. Does it have anything to do perhaps with pretty young blonds?::

::Gods Balls can’t I have a private moment here? Yes, you nosey old nanny goat and he’s sleeping and I am not waking him up if I have to blow people up to keep them away so he can sleep. He was dying and I’m not going to let him suffer. I’m feeding him power so he can sleep and protect himself alright? Are you satisfied?::

::Very. He’s been needing you for a long time. We were all worried about him too. Take care of him and don’t hurt him or I’ll stick my foot up your ass boy. He’s a good lad. Don’t rush.::

::You already gave me the lecture and it was heeded I’m not stupid.::

::No you're not, thank the White Lady. You may be a surly broody ass at times but you at least always use the big head over the little one. Should I take the liberties of finding you two a shared room?::

::Please. I'm not letting him sleep alone anymore, I want to be here when he needs me. He's my bonded, it's my job to take care of him now.::

::Spoken like a possessive King if ever I heard one. Welcome to the club son. We all get bull-headed over-protective over our loved ones. I'll let you sleep now and I'll tell Rembie to stop panicking over where Fair has vanished to as well.::
Tigo cut our link and I went back to sleep myself.

I woke up again to the nicest feeling, Fair's lips against mine. "You're so handsome and you look so peaceful when you're sleeping. I couldn't resist." Fair grinned at me, his blond hair all mussed from sleep and sticking up in delightful angles.

"I missed most of that, care to give me an encore?" I asked and Fair smiled brightly and leaned over to kiss me again, White Lady but I loved him.

"Thank you Colt, for everything. I didn't dream at all."

"Good. I'm glad." I said sitting up to rake my hand through my tangled hair. It was long and during our play had come undone from the lace I used to contain it at the back of my neck. Fair ran his fingers through it and combed it for me then retied my lace.

"Make me a promise?" Fair asked and I looked back at him over my shoulder waiting.

"Don't ever take sheers to this, I'll cry. You have such beautiful hair and when you wear it down, with just your brow band you have no idea how dashing you look. I positively swoon." Fair said and I chuckled.

"I never knew that."

"You never looked in my lap. You'd have known what that does to me if it were not for tablecloths." Fair admitted and I laughed.

"One for One then since we're confessing. When you are sitting there reading, and you do that thing you do with your bangs. When you unconsciously blow them out of your eyes out of the corner of your mouth, I can't stand up either."

"What? This?" He stuck out his bottom lip and blew up his bangs.

“Yes, that. Stop it.” I said and Fair laughed.

“I think you’re the only man alive that thinks that is arousing.”

“You don’t see your face and your quirks are what I find interesting.”

“What other quirks of mine turn you on?” Fair asked straddling my lap to face me and wrapping his arms around my shoulders.

“There’s a list of things you do and if I tell you you’ll be self-conscious of them and I like that you’re not.” I said thinking of all the little things Fair did that got me hot under the collar.

The way he chewed his bottom lip when he was studying. The way he’d look at me over the rim of his teacup and through his eyelashes when he was amused. The way he didn’t just sit in a chair but how he curled up in one like a cat. The way he’d waltz with Peaceful’s daughters like an expert dancer when Cadence played in the evenings for us. The way a tune would get stuck in his head and he’d hum it to himself unconsciously as he read. I could not watch him eat a banana, or any phallic shaped food, that was an instant and painful reaction straight to my groin. It was the little things he did, his endearing quirky habits that I liked best about him.

“Fair enough I suppose. You have quirks too I love and you’re right if I told you about them, you’d notice them and it’s because you don’t notice them that they are endearing to me.” Fair said kissing the end of my nose as both our stomachs protested the lack of lunch.

“I’m starved.” Fair laughed and I smiled.

“Aye, me too, Let’s get back. First to eat, then to get you and I moved. I don’t intended on sleeping without you anymore.”

“Me either.” Fair said as we dressed again and headed out through the snow back to the Castle.

We had an embarrassing reception. Tigo had a big mouth and everyone knew by the time we got back that Fair and I were now bonded and if Cadence cracked one more lewd joke, I was going to hurt my mentor’s lover.

Fair took it in stride and just blushed and smiled and laughed at it all as we moved our belongings into a nice room that was cleared for our use. I moved out of one of Tigo’s spare rooms and Fair out of Rembie’s and had our own room together for privacy.

It was a good feeling to be as good as married. To know there would always be at least once person ever at my side and to catch me if I stumbled.

“Name of Love”

Book Three in the Namesake Tales

Author: D. Sanders

Chapter Two - Black Sails

By summer, the school was completed and Fair and I were sharing the apartment we'd first made love in and while it was small, it was cozy and very private. We only had seven adult age students living in a building made to house fifty.

The main dorms were also rather empty. One hundred students under the age of seventeen lived in the student dorms built to house four hundred. Right now the complex seemed overly large, but with the rate Tigo was finding students, I didn't think it would be much longer before we were full with students.

Both Fair and I had technically graduated, if you could call one day our mentors proclaiming we had just life experience left ahead of us graduating. On that day we were given a choice by King Justice, we were welcome to go out without obligation and live our own, or be considered Journeyman Tradesmen of our craft and remain at the school as student-mentors for the younger children and doing jobs the crown asked us to.

Both Fair and I decided to stay. Fair because his dreams were random and did no good for people if what they wanted was for him to be a fortune teller and well, I had no particular desire to leave either. I liked my life here, it was predictable and comfortable and I had regular meals and money and a place I felt I belonged for the first time in my life. I also had opportunity here, with enough practice and continual study and work, I'd gain my masters status and could be a teacher myself one day. A thought that appealed to both Fair and I. The chance to have one of the nice townhouses of our own, with no one batting an eye at our relationship.

Inside the school walls, there was no such thing as prejudice, outside was another matter entirely. Two men living as lovers was still viewed as wrong by society in general. Oh it was accepted, but people were quite vocal that they believed Fair and I were wrong and should be out making babies with women.

I had no particular desire to be a father or to be making bastards of my own which that same society encouraged with men and then the stigma and shame fell on the woman and child. No thank you, I'd lived that double standard and I was more than satisfied with my mate. He could make my toes curl in our bedroom and did so on a nightly basis.

Once we'd crossed that first initial hurdle, I learned I had one hell of a lover to contend with. Vocal, appreciative, creative and so very determined to please me. I had absolutely no complaints and quite a few things to be exceedingly grateful

for. I had a lover who was not only beautiful on the inside as much as on the outside, but he truly loved me, I felt our bond getting stronger every day. You couldn't buy that sort of feeling in the soul, and very few people ever found that perfect person to share their lives with.

Fair's mother, the widowed Lady Chastity, had written her youngest off as "fey and queer" since his early childhood when he'd begun having his visions. At twelve when he'd had the first one of me and he told his mother his future was with me, a man with black hair and violet eyes, she'd written him off entirely. She had four older sons to give her grandchildren so she accepted us as willingly as society allowed. Which meant she tolerated it but didn't condone it.

Fair's brothers had never taken note of him and Fair didn't expect them to start now. They were all much older than he was, he was the 'accident' child in that household. They had thought his mother going through the change of life when he came along instead. His eldest brother was already married with children of his own when he'd been born and the youngest brother was fifteen years Fair's senior. Much too large of a gap in ages to have any closeness with his brothers.

His father had died when he was only three and he had no living memory of him. Just his aging mother who was more a grandmother than a mother and relieved when Fair had taken himself to the Castle when he was fourteen.

They exchanged sterile pleasantries in letters and Fair had been allotted his inheritance from his father when he'd reached the age of seventeen, which wasn't a lot seeing as his mother and brothers had cheated him out of much of it. But he didn't care, it was money in which he could live quite comfortably if not lavishly. He called it "Peace of Mind for our old age". Urbane kept it for him and invested it for him.

Urbane's opinion was, have a little and make it grow. If Fair wanted any of his money all he had to do was go to Urbane and then Urbane would give it to him. The rest of it Urbane managed in Fair's interests. He'd already doubled Fair's money in the past few months and he kept an accounting for Fair so he would always know to the last copper how much money he had.

Fair had insisted that I too be given free access to those accounts. He said he didn't care if we couldn't stand before a Priestess of the White Lady and make union vows, he considered me his husband in the most important sense of the word and said categorically that what was his was mine.

I balked but made a compromise with him, I had my wages put into the same account and let Urbane work his magic with what I added and that satisfied Fair. He didn't know I asked Urbane to keep a separate tally of what my funds added to the account were and that I'd like a set allowance weekly to use and whatever extra was left would remain in the account for the future. I was used to nothing, I

could live quite content on an allowance. The only exceptions to my allowance would be on special occasions. Fair's birthday and Mid Winter celebration when I'd want extra money to buy him gifts. Urbane thought I was being too frugal but admired my simplicity and agreed.

I told him I had food and shelter as part of my wages. Beer was cheap when I wanted a night at the pub and the rest went for the occasional treat or trinket for Fair anyway. I didn't have much by way of materialistic needs or desires. I think the most extravagant item I'd ever purchased was a beautiful woven blanket for our bed. I had liked the bright colors and when Fair admired the craftsmanship, I'd bought it.

I was oiling the leather of Frostbite's shoulder perch and checking the buckles while my dragon snoozed on my bed. Fair had been asked to join Urbane and Beloved for a meeting and I was alone and enjoying the breeze that came through the window when my lover, healthy and happy again now that sleep was no longer deprived burst into the room.

"I have a new job!" He cheered and threw his arms around my neck and kissed my cheek.

"Do tell." I said setting my task aside and letting Fair plop himself on my lap joyously.

"I am officially a teacher! Everyone was in the meeting, and I was offered my masters based on the fact that well, I've had my whole life to master having a dream and how much more life experience did I need they said. They said I was perfect for the new position they wished to create. New Student Coordinator is what they called it. Basically all the new students come to me and I make sure they get assigned to their mentors, assess what basic education they've already had and then assign them schedules for rudimentary lessons if needed. Get them rooms and uniforms and keep records on them. It's basically counseling and making sure they transition easily without too much trauma and shock. Seers are rare and Rembie is young and will be around a long time to mentor any students like myself.

"They said since I was so good with the little ones anyway and already had university education it was best to utilize my talents there now rather than later. I'm to have an office right next to Urbane's in the main office complex and I'm to start next week, Tigo sent word he found a village up north that was teeming with sense. Everyone had it, right down to the babies in the crib. We've got practically an entire village picking up to come here. Twenty-three children from the ages of five to ten, seven between the ages of ten and fifteen and three over the age of fifteen. The rest are content to stay and have no interest in learning. I'm going to have my hands full which is why they created the position and offered it to me. Isn't it wonderful?"

“Congratulations Love!” I was happy for him, his excitement was palpable and he would be perfect for that kind of job. The children always adored him and were at ease in his presence. He did keep good notes and records and was always an easy ear to bend, I should know I bent it often enough. He’d had practice with broody unsociable students with me and if he could get me to trust, he could get anyone to trust him.

“Now, get your boots on, I have more. Come with me.” Fair said grinning and pulling my hand to follow him.

He led me across the complex to the row of lovely townhouses built for the teachers and up the steps of one of the still vacant residences. He pulled a key out of his pocket. “They gave me this lovely little key too. I wonder if it opens this door?” He grinned and dumbfounded I stood there as he opened the door.

“Welcome home beloved.” He said and we walked into a sparse but gorgeous residence.

“White Lady, this is massive for just two people.” I gasped as I gaped at the size of the place.

“I know, but all the teacher’s houses are identical. They don’t have any smaller ones. Frostbite can have his own room to keep all his treasures in!” Fair laughed, my dragon did have a bit of the magpie in him. He hoarded everything that caught his fancy. From rocks, to scraps of fabric, to coins or beads. My dragon liked what I considered clutter. If it was shiny or unique, he wanted it and took it. He was worse than Shirah’s ferrets.

::I want top room with a window. Get me bowls and a new perch. Bed would be nice too, I like yours.:: Came Frostbite’s mental words as he flew into the open door behind us and perched himself on the banister of the staircase. I laughed and told Fair and he just grinned and walked over to Frostbite and scratched his chin.

“Dearest, you can have whatever you want. I know who is King here.” Fair said and Frostbite chirped. Oh my dragon loved when Fair spoiled him and he ate up the attention like a King indeed. The egotistical little bastard. If females were vain, he was a narcissistic egomaniac. He was just like his sire Wintermoon. Both of them strutted worse than peacocks.

I was still in shock as I looked around our new home. It was like our apartment when we’d moved in. Furnished with the necessities but devoid of personal touches, no paintings or rugs, no knickknacks or other such brick-a-brack that one usually collected and that spoke of the occupant. I knew my Fair, we were headed to market, and we did, right after Frostbite picked out ‘his’ room on the

top floor. Which was the entire attic space. It was intended for storage, but since neither Fair or I had anything of note to store and the ceilings were so low that I had to stoop to walk in it, it was perfect for a two foot tall dragon. It had several windows that shuttered from the inside and Frostbite could easily open and close them himself. He was an adept a mage as I was, opening and closing shutters was a simple magic.

In winter, five or six personal braziers would be more than enough for him and again, he could work those himself too so long as we carried the fuel up for him.

I brought up from one of the spare bedrooms one of the mattresses and laid it in the center of the attic and was under orders to get Frostbite fur blankets and pillows. He really was a King holding court in his personal castle. He also gave me orders to build him an area for a sandbox. I shook my head, he was hopeless but I knew I'd make it for him.

Fair and I had our lists of things we needed to buy and set out to market. We bought linens and blankets, pillows for Frostbite, lumber so I could build him his sandbox and sand to put in it. We got dishes and cookware to supplement what we already had, a nice rug for our bedroom floor, and various other necessities we'd need. When we both came to an ugly realization, we'd now have to cook for ourselves and not pilfer out of the student dining hall. I was woefully out of practice and had never been very adept at anything other than stews and frying eggs. My aunt never deviated from her routine and I had gotten used to a nice variety to my meals. Fair had never learned to cook; growing up a Lord he'd had servants to cook his meals.

We decided to hire a live in servant like the others. Just somebody to cook for us and run a duster around occasionally and do our laundry for us one a week would be more than enough for just two young men. So once we finished our shopping, we went to Urbane and asked how we were to go about hiring help.

He chuckled and told us to go post a notice on the jobs board in the market and then see who applied. He gave us instructions on how to interview help and tips on what sorts of questions to ask. Then he told us to choose the one that we felt fit our needs best.

So we did and had three applicants coming to our door before dinner, I let Fair handle the questions, I just sat there listening.

One old women reminded me too much of my aunt and was too sterile and brusque for me. Fair agreed. The next was a twitter-minded girl who just giggled and made eyes at us. She was hoping to be sleeping her way into a lord's bed and life and when she realized Fair and I were married she became less coy and just droll. No marriage prospects for her here. The third who came was a very tall woman, she was easily my height and I was over six feet tall. She had the palest

skin I'd ever seen. Almost translucent white where you could see the blue of her veins making patterns under her flesh. Her hair was so blond it was white and worn shorn close to her head. Her eyes were pink. I'd heard of albinos but I had never seen one. She was quite comely and she had a warm smile that made her strangeness seem less noticeable. She spoke softly as she gave us her credentials and answered our questions. It was hard to tell how old she was, a guess anywhere between thirty or fifty might have been accurate. One never asked a woman's age after all, it was improper and she was so average but naturally youthful of face she could have easily been any age between those years. It didn't really matter.

She said her name was Lamia and I raised my eyebrows, that meant "witch" in a very old tongue. She laughed when I said as much saying she was not from Aegis and that the islands to the northwest from which she came from did not name their children that way. Lamia was just a name to her people and was in fact a flower that grew in her homeland. It was akin to naming a child "rose" or "violet". She found it interesting that what her people called a white flower was indeed something else entirely in our old language.

She told us a little of her homeland and apparently all of them quite tall like she was. She was in-fact considered quite average for her people. She said there were two large islands that her people lived on, she lived on the north island where all the people were albinos like she and the south island where all the people were much like us. She said her father was an adventurer and had brought her to Aegis as a youth then died of a fever. She'd been here ever since.

It was a unique tale for a unique woman. We hired her and she moved into one of the guest rooms on the second floor. No sense in giving her a servant's room on the third floor when it was only going to be the three of us.

She made us dinner as we moved our belongings over from the apartment and we settled in to eat after we finished moving. She was a wonderful cook indeed, and we ate well before turning in for an early night.

Our bed was large and soft and whether it was the excitement of the day or the fact that's we'd been too tired to make love that night, Fair's dreams came back to haunt him that night. I had to physically shake him to wake him from it and he just sobbed and clung to me in abject terror.

"Black sails, hundred of ships moving in fog. Mages and Warriors our ports under siege, all of them! I heard a voice. "Seer, we know you and we coming." Oh White Lady save us." Fair cried turning to heave his dinner into a chamber pot.

He had never been this terrified nor had anyone ever spoke in his dreams. He shook violently and I sent Frostbite to bring Beloved and Rembie.

Fair told them his vision and drank the nerve calming tea Beloved made for him as Fair's frustration nagged at him.

"If only I knew when! Just this vague portent! Why are they coming? What do they want?" He sobbed and Rembie stroked his back.

"What do wars ever start over? They want something we have, it's as simple as that." Rembie said and Fair scrubbed at his eyes angrily.

"But what? What do we have they want? It makes no sense. How could they possibly know me?" He said and just flopped back into the pillows dejected.

"Only time will reveal it dear. Only Time." Rembie said as Beloved sighed as Lamia came in holding a steaming mug.

"Pardon my intrusion and I could not help but hear Lord Fair is troubled. In my homeland when sleep is plagued we drink this, it is sweet for sweet dreams as we tell little ones. It is hot milk and chocolate with cinnamon. She said handing the cup to Beloved who passed it on to Fair.

"Thank you Lamia, I appreciate it. It is lovely and pleasant, thank you." He said tasting her brew and she nodded once, smiled and melted out of the door again.

"Tall lady. She's your new servant I hear." Beloved said as Fair sipped his chocolate.

"Aye, today. She's seems genuinely nice."

"She was unreadable. I felt no emotions from her at all. Strange woman indeed." Beloved said getting up.

"Try and sleep Fair, Colt, if you would just give him a sleep suggestion and hold his hand and feed him power he should be able to block a repeat." Beloved said and left us to try and find sleep again that night. I didn't sleep until I was sure Fair had finally drifted off, his empty mug sitting on the night stand.

The next few weeks nothing seemed amiss. After that one night of terror, Fair was back to his old self again, he'd still dream but was able to disconnect from them like he had before. The "Black Sail" dream had not returned and Fair had other matters more pressing to attend to, the arrival of the students.

Peaceful had liked the idea of official trade schools dressing their apprentices and students in uniforms that denoted their trade and had uniforms made up for our academy.

Beast Warrior students at apprentice level wore serviceable jerkins and leather pants in brown. Because they tended to get dirty and would also receive weapons training on top of the beast. The uniform was sturdy, hid dirt stains well and were durable. Beast Warriors of Journeyman level had a variation on that theme. Brown leather pants and boots. Beaded word belts in King Justice's Brown and Gold, brown leather vests and yellow undershirts cut in a very military style.

That was Beloved's suggestion and merely because he thought it made the warriors look formidable but also quite handsome. The cut of the vest and pants did show off healthy and fit men and women. Very flattering and very striking. The looks alone made it clear you were dealing with powerful Warriors.

For Healers, the apprentices wore short pale green robes over either leggings or harem cut pants. It was their choice and for Journeyman level healers, the green became a vibrant emerald in either long robes or short robes over pants. The actual cut of the garments didn't vary, only the color. Pale to Rich. Tender was already in emerald and looking lovely in her long emerald robe on the arm of Bold in his Brown and Yellow. They looked stunning together.

Seers wore blue. Pale blue jerkins over the same color pants and for Journeymen, a rich peacock blue over tan pants. Fair, being a master wore doe skin leggings with a vibrant peacock blue silk tunic, belted with a lovely beaded belt Beloved had made for him. A Patch sewn onto his breast, the school crest, denoted he was a teacher and master in the seeing arts.

Those who had nature gifts for tending the earth and plants wore dusty rose colors in hardy fabrics that washed easily with leather patches on knees and elbows for digging in the earth and once Journeymen, the rose became a crimson. Bright as the roses in a garden as were the people who had that sense. No garden was plain with these wonderful people to give it life and vitality.

Then came the mages and we had three classifications. Primary Mages were simple elemental workers. Fire, water, earth, and air. Hedge wizards and storm watchers and charm makers. We all had the option between the robes of a healer or the cut of the warriors garb. It was personal choice as to the cut of the clothes, the color however was gift based. Primary mages wore a light buttery squash color as apprentices and burnt amber as journeymen.

Master Mages, those with more power than primary mages and able to work higher magic, wore lilac as apprentices and deep purple as masters. Constant opted to mix his garb since he had both beast and master mage magic. He wore

the brown leathers and a deep purple shirt, his vest bearing the school crest denoting his mastery status as a teacher.

Adept Mages, like myself, could wear any accent color to our base black or white. Monochrome leathers in either white or black as journeymen or masters. The new apprentices would wear solid black or white depending on preference. As journeymen a colorful shirt to compliment was acceptable to give our garments color if we chose.

Neither Tigo or I did, he wore all white, the only color was the crest on his riding leather vest to show his rank as a teacher of the school, I wore all black and Fair told me I looked positively severe in my new uniform. Black boots, pants, vest in black leather and a black shirt beneath. My black hair adding to the void of color. Only my eyes had any color and those unusual themselves. I visually did not invite idle contact and that was the point.

In the south, uniforms weren't necessary because the tattoos people wore when they reached seventeen and was the clan way of denoting rank. Since most of us couldn't run around shirtless year round like you could in the south, partly do to weather and partly do to custom, we adopted clothing as a visual denoting of rank and talent.

We still earned tattoos too. My back was Frostbite in flight surrounded by the phases of the sun and the moon. Fair's back was gorgeous and mystical. An eye in clouds with the stars and moon was on his back, the mark of those that "see beyond the mists of dreams" a seer's mark.

Healers wore the white ink and bore the White Lady blooms on their backs. They were considering adding tints since Northern skin colors weren't dark enough for white ink to show up well. They were considering blue for when it came time to tattoo Tender so it would show up on her skin.

Beast Warriors wore their bond beasts on their backs. Those with plant gifts wore their favorite plant on theirs, primary mages, the symbols of the elements, Master Mages, those symbols in conjunction with the phases of the sun and the moon and in cases where they also had bond beasts, like Constant, their bond beasts too. The same for adepts, ours always a white King Dragon if we bonded. Some mages did not bond, but if they did it was always to a King Dragon. In cases where there wasn't a bonded beast, the adept mage bore a golden sun and white moon in the center of his back in addition to the markings a Master Mage wore.

It was symbolic and rank based and everyone gifted in the sense, male or female, received the back tattoos of their senses when they reached seventeen and became journeymen.

We wore the colors of the north and the tattoos of the south equally and would be recognized wherever we went, which was the point after all and it was working.

I couldn't go to the market or pub without everyone recognizing "Adept Colt". Did most people have an inkling of what I did? No, not really. Magic was magic and something they couldn't do. Therefore, I was as mysterious as I was scary to them. I had power they didn't.

White Lady forbid I was out without Fair, it seemed if he wasn't with me it was an open invitation for girls to flirt more blatantly than when he was around. Oh they still flirted in his presence but some were absolutely shameless if I were alone.

I know Fair didn't care and knew he had nothing to worry over, our bond spoke for itself and our love was strong. However, it pissed me off when women and some men thought it was okay to write off my lover as if he didn't exist. No one ever really flirted with Fair and I could never understand why.

He was the one full of personality and conversation, he had charm and looks and one day I was sharing a beer with Tigo at the pub and he put it best. "Because like Cadence, you can almost hear the swish in their walks. They are fey as the day is long, and women like men like that as catty gossip companions and secure best friends and not as lovers. Men are insecure beasts and feel threatened so avoid obviously fey men. They are afraid people might think just by association they too are fey. It makes it hard on men like Fair and Cadence and why you and I are the lucky bastards who get them" Tigo winked and I had to agree. I was a lucky bastard.

"So then answer me this. Why on earth do women, who know Fair is my lover, continue to shove their breasts in my face?"

"Wishful thinking lad. Women have a bad habit of thinking they can 'make men of us and change us' to suit them. Breasts can capture many a man usually and when they don't work just by showing cleavage. They make sure that cleavage is shoved under our noses to insure we notice. At least that's the conclusion I've come to over the years." Tigo said and it did make sense, even if it still annoyed me.

"I will never understand women."

"That is all men, fey or not. I don't think the White Lady intended any man to truly understand women unless they are healer born." Tigo laughed and we paid our tab and headed back home again.

When I got home, it was empty. I assumed Fair had been called away by one of the students or had not come home yet.

Lamia wasn't home either, there seemed a great oddity hanging in the air of my home. When Lamia had moved in, she had but one small bag of possessions so her room was as sparse as when she'd moved in really. Nothing truly seemed amiss yet, just strange.

When dinner came around and neither of them were back yet I started to become concerned and found Urbane.

"Fair left hours ago, he said he was going to market to look for you at the pub."

"He never got there and we didn't pass him and he knows the pub Tigo and I go to. Something is wrong. Lamia isn't home either." I said sending Frostbite out to look for him Lazuli joining him in an aerial search. Soon joined by Wintermoon and Sunfire while the rest of us retraced steps Fair would have taken.

I was down a seedier part of the town, when a man stepped from the shadows. "Yer lookin' fer that Lord Fair ain't ye?" The man held out his hand, information was never free in this part of town. I crossed his palm with several coppers and he grinned a toothless grin.

"Not right I tell ya. He didn't look right. Walking like he was asleep he was, head lolling like he was drunk. He was with some tall white woman. They met up with a big man, braids in his beard and another tall white man in a black hood, never saw his face. They put him in a cart and then he looked like he tried to resist but the tall man put a hand to his head and he crumpled like a leaf he did. They shoved him in the back and covered him in a tarp then they all done rode off like the hell god was on their heels. Looked mighty fishy to me it did." The man said and my stomach fell into my shoes.

"Which way did they go?"

"Down the south Road to Rockport Master Colt sir."

"Thank you." I said tossing the man more coins and pelting back to the campus to raise the alarm. Fair had been kidnapped and by what he feared most. The large men with braided beards and the tall men in black cloaks.

They weren't coming... they apparently were already here.

I mentally hailed Tigo and Constant and they were waiting for me, horses ready when I got back to the Academy. Beloved was rushing out with travel packs filled with rations and spare clothes for us. Urbane ran out with purses of money and the three of us were gone and racing after Fair within the hour. We hoped we

could over take a single cart, our dragons out flying ahead of us to track the road to see if they could locate the cart.

We rode all night until we came to the crossroads Inn. We stopped to inquire if a cart had come in with four people, and described Fair.

“Saw three you mentioned, not the Fair one. But they did take food to go and seemed in a hurry.” The Inn keeper said and I was rapidly losing all my patience.

“Which way did they head?” I growled and Tigo laid his hand on my arm.

“Son, losing control is what they wish you to do. It muddies your sense.” Tigo said softly and the man cleared his throat.

“I’m sorry Sir, I didn’t ask nor saw. We were busy with supper traffic and when they didn’t request a room, I just fed them and minded my business. However, only two ways they could have gone. The main road to Rockport or the Northeast Track that heads through the forest and up to Windy Port farther up the coast.” The keeper said and we got bowls of stew and discussed what we’d do.

“Rockport is a large port, if Fair’s dreams are true that would not be the first logical choice. Windy Port is small and takes in trade from the Western Isles. Mainly whaling trade from what I’ve seen. I say we split up. Constant can head into Rockport and check it out and we continue on to Windy Port. If he finds nothing in Rockport he can take the main road and it carries on up to Windy anyway. Just a round about way to get there from here.” Tigo said and Constant nodded.

“Aye, we can circle them this way and track them. Good plan.” Constant said and I just nodded, too twisted in knots and anxious to be back out looking for my missing husband.

Tigo laid a hand on my arm. “We’ll find him son, we’ll find him.” He said and I just nodded and finished my stew.

“Let’s go.” Was all I said and we split. Tigo and I headed Northwest and Constant Southwest down the main road. I had the terrible feeling we were making a wild goose chase.

What we didn’t expect to find was signs of a camp the following morning. Obvious signs that one of the party had been tied to a tree all night. What made me utterly sick was in the dirt, I recognized Fair’s handwriting in the dirt. It said four heartbreaking words. “Love, Danger. Don’t Follow.”

“Like hell I won’t Fair!” I grumbled and both Tigo and I were in foul sleepless moods as we pressed on, on the right track.

By Nightfall the second day, Frostbite and Wintermoon said they saw a campfire with four people, one of them bound. They both sensed strong magic and advised us to come in under heavy shield so we weren’t detected.

Both Tigo and I were functioning on no sleep and Wintermoon demanded we take a few hours sleep first. He didn’t want us fighting at a disadvantage. We were close enough to spare time for rest now, we had closed the distance and he assured us that he and Frostbite were at a good vantage point to observe and would rouse us if they started moving.

Frostbite was close enough to see Fair. He said he was tied to a tree by his ankles and seemed to be sleeping. He’d watch.

My heart wanted me to charge in and free my lover; my mind knew I’d like as not kill him going in as I was. I conceded to Wintermoon’s logic and Tigo and I made a paltry camp and ate our rations and tried to get some much needed sleep ourselves.

Tigo and I were up long before dawn, hoping to catch our prey in a false sense of security, Frostbite never took his eyes off Fair, he was dreaming and lost in his dreams. I saw through my dragon’s eyes as Lamia arose and went over to him, pulling back his eye lids and I heard her through Frostbite’s exceptional hearing.

“The Seer is walking. I find it hard to believe this weakling is what Larue wants. He can’t even escape his own visions without his mage making him a seed catcher! His mage has to power couple him, disgusting. Men laying together.” She spat and the other albino stirred and I saw him, as alike facially to Lamia as twins.

“That’s where you are wrong. It is common to assume him weak because he cannot block, quite the opposite. It is because his talent is so strong it overpowers his body. Larue wants him because he has already seen too much, we cannot afford him to see more where he can warn the right ears.”

“So just kill him and be done with it!” The third man grunted and both Lamia and the man snorted.

“One does not simply kill one with the sense. You are hired for your fighting skills not your brain South Islander. Leave the dealing of talents to your betters. Larue wants to know how much this seer knows and how he can force visions from him to our advantage. He is our mirror into their world. He has the potential to see all

waking or sleeping. Larue has ways to force the talent out of people like him. There will be little left of him by the time Larue has his information. The last seer specifically saw this one, named him by name she did before Larue spent her. We've been watching this one since he went out of our reach in the castle." The tall man said and I shivered, I had to get to Fair now.

"What of his Mage? Surely by now he is coming." The bearded man said and then the tall man looked right at Frostbite.

"He's been coming all night, his dragon sits in that tall conifer there for hours. Thinking he is hidden from me by a cloaking spell. Yes, I am sure his mage has heard everything and is close. Little adept, you are out of your league. Your little catamite is ours and if you continue, you walk into your own death. Ask the Dark Southerner of Viragos and see him blanche. You are coming upon two." The tall man said and I felt fear and sent a mental link to Tigo.

::ABORT! ABORT! We go no further we are too undermanned! ABORT OR DIE COLT!::

::I AM NOT LEAVING FAIR!::

::You'll leave him for now or else give him your corpse! We stop right here! White Lady grant us mercy! Viragos!:: Tigo literally tackled me and dragged me back and called the Dragons back.

"Stop Colt, we can't win right now. Heavenly Creator I didn't think Viragos still existed!" Tigo looked pale with fear and I'd never seen him look so frightened.

"What are they?"

"Demons lad. Pure Evil. The Dark God Virago, the God of the Dead. Viragos worship him, they are necromancers with unnaturally long lives and damn near impossible to kill. They thrive on death and pain. Two thousand years ago, we fought them. They came from the far south in black sailed ships, and attacked our lands and decimated us before they just continued North again. They left our Isles not by choice, just by divine intervention. We had nothing left to fight them with and only with the eruption of Mount Tor, that decimated their stronghold and took out their strongest leader did we prevail. White Lady, black sails, why on earth didn't we see the connection in Fair's visions?" Tigo sobbed.

"How many years has he told you about these black sails and NONE OF YOU could remember a story like that?!" I demanded furious.

"It was a legend! We thought them gone; hell most people think the story just a farce to frighten children with! It was two thousand years ago Colt!"

“Well obviously they are still fucking around and they have my husband and I’ll be damned if I let him be tortured by the Gods balls!”

“Viragos have no SOULS Colt! None. Their souls given to Virago in exchange for his demon powers. They feel nothing, not fear, not hate, not love, not anything but a desire for more power and longer lives. They feel emotion by dragging it out of their victims. They feed on our emotions like vultures to carrion, the stronger the emotion the more they feel. They make you and I look like senseless cattle to the slaughter. We will need every mage from the islands to assist us and even then we’re facing damn near insurmountable odds. Fair is lost Colt. Would we insult his sacrifice for letting the knowledge we have now go to waste to save as many as we can? Fair would beg you to go back. He wrote it in the dirt himself, now we know what he meant. Leave him!”

I felt gutted, my mentor was asking me to sever half my rotten soul and leave my husband less than a mile away alone to die. I couldn’t, I could not leave him like that. I went to bolt and Tigo tackled me.

“Don’t be a fool! Fair would never forgive you if you died like this! Let him go!”

::Chosen! Fair speaks! He tells me to go, and tells you not to come for him. He says he loves us and would not see us die this day. He cries, his heart I think most broken, He begs us go. The White Ones are laughing. Fair says stay away, Chosen we must obey the Seer.::

I sobbed Fair’s name, my soul shattered into a millions torn pieces. Half of me desperately needing to get him, to hold and protect him and the other half knowing it suicide and I needed to live on to protect others.

It was the single most difficult decision I ever had to make.

I left my beloved Fair to die.

A cold weight settled upon me, I was soul dead, I would never trust my heart again, this wound would never heal. I betrayed the one I promised to always protect, the one I promised to love and I abandoned him to his fate and turned like a coward back to Crown City.

“Name of Love”

Book Three in the Namesake Tales

Author: D. Sanders

Chapter Three - Gods and Goddesses

I was inconsolable, I hated everyone and everything, for years Fair had given us warnings and now he was at their mercy. I was going to get him back, someway, somehow.

I scoured the library in the Castle, every myth and every legend I could dig up concerning the God Virgo I read. I would learn a weakness and I'd exploit it.

There was precious little I could find. Most texts focused on the Holy Trinity. The White Lady, mother Goddess of life and of the earth. The Heavenly Creator, King of the Gods and ruler of the Heavens and afterlife, and The Soul Counter, the god who counted souls and sent you either onto the Creator or to the God of Hell.

That God was Virago, the Punisher. It seemed even blasphemous to even write his name. He was mainly called Guardian of Hell's gate, the Tormentor, or the Punisher.

The only text I could find on him was a dusty scroll so brittle I could barely unroll the damn thing. What I read there however scared me right down to my bones. It said that in the beginning, the four were mortal. Hespia, The White Lady was a healer mage, Her husband was Tor, King Dragon Mage, Their sons, Testor and Virago.

This scroll said these four had been the four that today we revered as the gods. This was indeed a blasphemous accounting and I was surprised this hadn't been burned eons ago. This was far older than even the founding of Aegis and I doubted anyone even knew this scroll had been buried in the archives.

It was written by a man calling himself just “Scribe Seer” and he stated he'd had visions that recounted history and foretold a far distant future.

In the beginning Testor, the wise scholarly brother and Virago his twin and the more adventurous of the two got along well. However, as they grew older, Testor was content to follow his parent's will and Virago chaffed at them. He was powerful and wanted to use his power and Tor, forbade it saying the sense was to be used to benefit all and not to be used for greed.

Tor was ascribed as being what was called a Creation Mage, so powerful he could actually create life, and it was he who had first created the Dragons, thus he then became called King Dragon Mage, the creator. He also apparently created many other beasts, the griffon, part lion part eagle and as intelligent as

Dragons. The Unicorn, a white magical horse with a single golden horn on its brow that could heal even the dead. The sphinx, part human and part lion, great oracles of supreme seeing ability. The list went on, winged horses and satyrs half man and half goat. Outrageous claims of beasts that no one had ever seen except for Dragons. Even then there were differences. In this scroll Dragons were massive creatures, able to fly with men on their backs and swallow a whole cow in one massive gulp.

Last I knew, my Dragon was just shy of two feet tall and I was the one who carried him more often than not.

Scribe Seer then described Hespia, the White Lady. Albino she was with such vast gifts of healing she could raise a man days dead if his soul had not been lost. She could make a barren woman fertile and he said where she walked white blooms sprang from her very footprints in the earth.

Both Testor and Virago had within them a mixing of their parent's gifts if not to the same extent. Scribe Seer claimed that Testor was gentle like his mother and cared for the beasts his father created and contented himself with easing the souls of the lost and helping them find peace and rest. Those who could not return to their dead bodies he showed them how to crossover into the afterlife. He was nicknamed Counter, because he kept a record of all the souls he touched.

Virago however wanted more and left home to venture far to the south. There Seer claimed he came upon a primitive people without sense and found a comely woman to bear him Albino children, he too was albino like his mother and all his children were born in his likeness and their children after them.

Virago, was of stern and long lived stock and soon outlived his mate and children and grew bored with his small island home. Again he hungered for more. He had sired an entire race of sense strong descendants who worshiped Virago as a God who had come to bless their lands with his power.

He cultivated his followers and bent them to his will. He created rights of passage that would cleave the soul and feed Virago youth and power by devouring emotions. Leaving his followers hollow shells, they in turn would cause harm and mayhem and strife to feed the emptiness in their own souls. A perpetual cycle of hatred, greed, malice and torment. The sins of the father became the sins of the sons and daughters.

They called themselves Viragos, the children of Virago. They built massive ships with black sails and set out to conquer other islands when their own became barren and decimated. When they could no longer feed on innocents they moved on.

Eventually they came back to the Isles of Virago's birth, teeming with life and harmony and rich in emotional wealth to plunder at their whim.

Tor, Hespia and Testor sacrificed their lives to protect the people of their Isles. Testor fell first and stood at the gateway of the afterlife, refusing to crossover himself to help ease the passage of his father's people. Hespia fell next, drained of her life while implanting her soul into the very earth, her blooms covered the land to give health and peace to her people for eternity thereafter.

Tor and His great dragon knew the only way to purge the land of the Viragos was to kill their leader, his own son. He bade Virago to meet him to call a truce, and they met upon the top of the old dormant volcano.

Once Virago came to meet his father, the trap was sprung, sacrificing his life and the great dragon's they called to life the volcano. Killing them all and most of the Virago's camped at the base of the great spewing mountain of death.

This tale was the actual accounting of what happened and over two thousand years it had been corrupted and Gods made of mortals. I felt ill, this was almost exactly like the tale Tigo had told me, only with more believable detailing.

Scribe seer said the remains of the people cast out the injured Virago who fled north on their great ships. The ash choked the sky for days and then settled again and the Islanders resumed their lives in morning of their great Elder Tor and the sacrifices of his family.

Tor simply became known as The Creator, Hespia, The White Lady, and Testor, The Counter of Souls. Virago, the Punisher, the Tormentor as anathema to speak of, the one who created Hell on Earth and was sent to Hell by the Creator.

The scroll did not account as to where the few Viragos went or if they survived but it did say this at the end that made me weep when I read it. It was a prophesy and one I knew my beloved had been seeing most of his life and he'd never seen this scroll. It read:

I have seen the visions of the past and I see a great wheel of time spinning in its circle. I see from the North, great ships with black sails will once again set forth. The few survivors over time have grown many. They have not forgotten and come seeking bitter vengeance. Still they sacrifice their souls to Virago and then take from others to fill their void. They will come and Torment us in His Name. They will seek one such as I, a great seer, an oracle mirror to be used against his own people and against his will. They will cleave his soul and open him wide and use him until he succumbs and perishes.

Unless... The great one comes, descended of Virago stock himself. Father Virago and mother of no import. Dark against Pale and of the same blood. He is

born blessed, a New Creator Mage will be born to fight again. He comes dressed in mourning black, a Dragon King Creator. If he fights, the people will be saved.

I have seen no more, only that he alone can call up again what was lost and stand firm against the plague that comes. The Seer and The Creator are the catalysts to a new age that will come when the Viragos return.

Whether we stand in darkness or Light depends on the Creator. His soul stands on the razor edge. If he chooses the darkness within him, he will fail. If he chooses the light, all will be set right. Even his eyes show the division of his soul. The red of Virago the Blue of Tor, violet eyes I see in his face, two halves of a torn soul.

I shook with great tremors and could not believe what I had just read. Frostbite sensed my distress and sent Tigo to find me. I could only hand him the scroll and he reacted much as I did.

“White Lady, this is... this is... too unbelievable not to be true.”

“That is not me.”

“Son, do you know anyone else with violet eyes that fits this accounting of a seers vision?”

“Do you think I could pull a griffon out of my ass?”

“No, but then you’ve never tried have you? I’ve told you a dozen times you have more power in your little finger than I ever had. You could be.”

“Right, I think I’ll just make me a unicorn to go riding around making virago shish-kabobs. I don’t think so Tigo. I am not a god.”

“No according to this you’re a creator mage. I’d start more reading if I were you and I am calling an emergency council to go over this. I want mages here yesterday.” Tigo said carrying off the scroll and leaving me to research all I could on Creator Mages, if I could even find anything in Aegis that even knew what a mage was.

::Never discount a seer Chosen of my Son. I will tell you more of Dragons. Once we were the giants as told. To survive in the dust of the Isles and the choking skies we became small. The griffons flew north, and the others scattered to the winds in boats for survival. There was little left of our isles, it was a time of great loss. Tor’s light is in you if you reach for it and do not let Virago’s shadow cast doubt. Your mate needs your light, he is lost in shadow and only you can hold the shadow at bay. You must restore Dragons, you must call them all to your aide. You can unlock the spells that bind us in these forms. Reach inside to what

you bury, open that door to your soul and set it free. Look to the memories of another life you carry, the seed is in you waiting to grow. Master Creator, Father King of all Dragons.:: Wintermoon spoke and then Frostbite.

::Come to me Chosen, it is time we work magic that has not been touched in too long an age. Together we will soar. Believe in yourself as I believe in you. As Fair believes in you.:: I followed Frostbite's call. I didn't know whether to laugh or cry or which way was up and which down.

I moved dazed and confused and soul weary to the center of the academy complex where Frostbite awaited me. Wintermoon and Sunfire beside him.

"What do you want me to do?" I asked as three dragons fixed me with their gazes. Then beside them, Lazuli came and Lapis, all the un-bonded and bonded dragons clustered like a flock of crows on the center fountain.

::What you were born to do Creator. Return balance, unlock the future, yours and ours. It has come full circle at last, the creator walks again among us as foretold to us long ago. Every dragon has memories back to the time of our creation and a promise once made to us by Tor that we would be restored must now be kept. Pure Magic bends to the Creator's will and to his heart. It will do your bidding if you but call to it. Make us whole again.:: Wintermoon demanded and I didn't believe what I was doing, I couldn't fathom the depths of this sort of power. I was surrounded by waiting dragons; expecting a feat from me that I thought impossible.

Yet, I had to try I'd already failed Fair, if I could do this, if I could reach into that well of power I could save him. I owed it to him to at least try, because he'd always believed in me, always loved me. "Fair..." I said as I closed my eyes and didn't think, didn't breathe, just reached for that light of power in my core and pulled.

I let it fill me, wash over me, and then spoke all I could think to say. "Restore them all as they once were."

I felt the power rush out of me like a tidal wave, it was jubilant to be free. I felt burned alive in it's brilliance.

I vaguely heard voices all around me.

"BLOODY HELL!"

"White Lady preserve me!"

"The Creator lives!"

Then I dropped like a fly, totally spent and dizzy and a large warm and hard muzzle nudged me and I opened my eyes to see Frostbite, a single eye as large as my chest.

“So the promise is Kept. Father of Dragons we fly together always. My life is yours, my soul bound to serve forever. I will carry you until I have no wing beats left in me. Love you my Colt, my brother, my King.” He spoke, not the mental mind speech we’d always shared, but he actually spoke in the voice of a young man, the voice I’d always heard in my head.

I very literally passed out and awoke several hours later with the worst raging headache I’d ever felt, Tigo beside me grinning like a fool and both Beloved and Peaceful holding my hands.

“He’s awake. How’s your head?”

“Painful.” I groaned and felt Beloved ease the pain with a hand to my brow.

“I’m not surprised. You lit up like lightening out there. I have never seen anyone generate such magic as that before. Any lesser man caught in that wave would have been incinerated.” Beloved said, sounding shocked and frightened.

“Sorry.”

“Don’t be lad. The dragons told us everything. It seems a long overdue promise was kept. Wintermoon has taken off back to the Isles, he carries apparently your promise back to them. He said your spell was one that encompassed them all, and all he has to do is repeat your words to unlock their spells too. He’ll bring back help. Bonded or Not, every dragon apparently is bonded to you in one way or another now. There isn’t one who won’t serve you. We have hope at last.” Tigo said looking as proud of me as if he were my own father.

I just groaned, my head on fire and Frostbite stuck his massive head through the window and opened his mouth in the grin I had become fond of. “I am thinking one sad thing chosen. I lose my nice warm attic now.” He said and I had to laugh which split my head in two.

“You told me to try, too late now to be having regrets love.” I answered and he just snorted.

“No regrets and get better soon Chosen. I want to fly with you.”

“Not until we make something for me to sit on, you have a rather sharp spine dearest. Spare my ass please.” I said and one great blue eye whirled in amusement.

“Lord Constant is already seeing to making harnesses for us. The Dragon Warriors will fly together again as of old. Sunfire is instructing him.” He said and Tigo chuckled.

“And no doubt making requests for a pretty one for her to wear I’ve no wonder.” Beloved said, a smile in his voice.

“You know my mother well. Yes, she wants very much hers in red she says.”

“I know that lady well I do.” Beloved said as Urbane came in.

“Lazuli is singing with Cadence. My word is she spectacular. No finer soprano I’ve ever heard. I’ll miss her trills, but that voice is amazing. What wonders today happened because of you lad. I think you bloody well earned this ten times over today.” Urbane said tossing me a master’s patch.

“Aye, he’s surpassed us all.” Tigo said, his voice warm with pride.

“He did things today I would have never thought possible. We’re going to have to hire a whole new crew of workers just to tend the herds of cattle and sheep we’re going to have to raise just to feed our newly gargantuan dragons. Not to mention turn the entire west forty into a dragon sanctuary. I don’t think perches in our rooms will suffice anymore.” Urbane said and Frostbite nodded.

“We can nest there fine. We no longer suffer cold, our magic will warm us, but sand would be nice. We will carry it ourselves when matters are less urgent. Chosen we have to fly soon, Fair needs us, we must get him soon.” Frostbite said and I nodded.

“Aye. Send out the others too, scan the coasts and look for those damn ships and fucking sink them before they reach shore. We cannot let them do to us what they did to the isles. Let’s not let history repeat itself.” I said and Tigo stood and bowed.

“You are precisely correct. However, let your power headache recede first. I’ll work up some ideas and then we’ll all go over them together tonight after dinner. Rest easy son, you bloody well earned it.” Tigo said leaving with Urbane.

Beloved and Peaceful had me drink a sedative and then a pain killer and let me sleep off my headache.

Everything shifted into a frenzy of work and preparation. We would not sit idly by and wait for the threat to come to us, not when we knew it was out there and just how very dangerous it was and how close it was to becoming more than just a threat.

Moreover, the nine dragons we had that were still un-bonded took flight the next day and went scouring the countryside for their chosen. That almost incited mass hysteria, great looming giants in the skies and landing in little villages and whisking away young men with latent beast magic, awakened by their dragon partners.

Apparently the same happened in the Isles, Wintermoon took my spell and restored the dragons and those who had not bonded yet, claimed their chosen immediately.

The skies were filled with jeweled dragons. One hundred dragons remained on the isle to defend their shores and because their soul chosen were in everyone's opinion much too young yet to fight. One hundred took wing to come to our aide.

We worked around the clock getting riding harnesses together, especially after seeing the bruising on the young southern clansmen and our northern men who had come riding bareback. Desperate times called for desperate measures.

My harness and saddle were completed first, and Frostbite and I were aloft. The saddle bags full of travel necessities and rations and we were off looking for black sailed ships and any sign of Fair up around Windy Port.

Dragons could devour ground in flight. What would have taken five days or more on horseback, took a few hours on Dragonback. I also learned how to stay in my seat, which was the hardest part, especially when Frostbite flew over a meadow full of deer and swooped to eat. The dive nearly unseated me and the landing was hard. One massive jaw bite and throwing his head back to swallow, the old doe was a meal.

Word traveled fast, even faster than dragon wings and Windy Port received me with great welcome. The Resident lord, worried for his own people came immediately to my side with information.

"The four you are looking for according to what information I could find out, passed through here four days ago. My gate guards noted the two tall albinos and service man with a braided beard in a cart. We can assume Lord Fair was hidden in the cart itself. From here, they boarded a ship heading up to the Ice Islands. Master Colt sir."

"Damn, according to what we've put together, that's where these demons settled. Triple your shore Watch my Lord, anything with a black sail is dangerous. Do not

permit them to port and do whatever is necessary to sink those ships. Be warned though, they have Viragos on board and they are powerful mages. Soulless necromancers of the worst sort. They'll devour your soul before you can lift your sword. If you can sink them from a distance, do so. We're getting all our Dragon Warriors outfitted and prepared and then we'll have them posted in all the port cities as fast as possible. I'm the vanguard warning, prepare for the worst." I said handing the lord King Justice's call to prepare for war. Then I was up on Frostbite again.

"You won't rest Master Colt?"

"I cannot, every day I loose is one day closer to war and one more day my Fair suffers. No, I must continue." I said taking wing and flying out to sea to see what I could view from above.

Here my blood ran cold, a huge fog bank about a hundred miles off coast stank of magic and hovered. This was their cloak, they were almost upon us and I wanted to know numbers. So I held open my arms and bad the fog to dissipate.

I felt resistance and then I saw through the spreading fog, forty massive bellied ships with black sails a fleet of floating death. I felt the air buckle and a shot of power came surging at us and Frostbite and I faced it and threw up a shield. It wracked us, but we held firm.

I was strong and so was my Dragon. I the creator and my adept King Dragon would and could face this. I issued a mental broadcast, knowing anyone with mage sense could hear me.

::I am the Creator and I will not allow you to harm the people of Aegis. Return the seer unharmed. I have restored the dragons and we fly to fight you. I am of the Blood of Tor of the Blood of Virago. You will not take a single soul here. We know you are coming and are prepared for you.::

::No you are not boy playing Creator. Tor could not stop us and neither will you. We know you, your lover's mind is ripe and he sobbed when we pulled from him the information about you. He's lost in despair, betraying you to us against his will. We know your power and we know you are just a boy. He was quite moldable to my will, and he cries so deliciously when I take him as you did. He is my vessel and my seer now. My own son's lover now serves the father.::

My blood ran hot, Fair, my Fair being raped and tortured and this bastard taunting me with his abuse. I would kill this man with my own hands. This had to be Larue. This man claiming to be my father, it was all designed to make me react foolishly. I heard Tigo's training in the back of my mind, stay calm it warned me.

::Taunt me all you like, I will not let you set foot in Aegis and I will take back what is mine.::

::Oh I think not.:: Another blast, more powerful than the last rocked me and Frostbite and I pulled back we could not engage them, I wasn't that stupid. I did want them worried, I wanted them to see Frostbite, I wanted them to know we were not going to go down without a fight.

::This is a warning Larue. Give back the seer and turn back to your islands and stay there. If you dare continue with your lust for power the Dragon Warriors will bring you all to your knees and finish you once and for all. You have forty-eight hours to return the Seer to Windy Port.::

I got now reply and I didn't expect one. Sadly I knew Fair was not going to be returned and it would come to a fight. We needed to get to them before they made port and sink them while still out to see and pray we could rescue Fair without making him a casualty too.

I didn't want to think about losing him, not yet. I didn't want to think of the pain he was enduring. I just wanted him safe in my arms again. That was my ultimate goal. I would have my husband returned to me. Even if it was just to bury his body in a place I could mourn him properly.

I flew back to Windy Port to wait and sent word back to Crown City that I had located our enemy and now it was time to surround and conquer with all haste.

“Name of Love”

Book Three in the Namesake Tales

Author: D. Sanders

Chapter Four - In the Name of Love

I was joined in Windy Port by the dawn of the second day by Tigo, Constant, Urbane and thirty other young warriors from the north and the south. Ten went to Guard Rockport, Ten to Sandy Rock further north along the coast. Port Royal and Sound Beach to the south also got ten each. Every port was watched and patrolled all along the western coastline and wrapping around the southern border. The Viragos would have a very difficult time making landfall with our Warriors guarding ports and flying coastal patrols continually.

What I didn't expect was a frantic dock worker coming to get me as the sun set telling me a black dinky, had come ashore a single occupant inside. It was Fair.

Tigo, Constant and Urbane were hot on my heels as I raced to my husband. What I found was a shell. He was alive, he looked physically unharmed, but you could tell by his eyes, Fair was gone. Nothing looked out of his eyes. He was hollow, his eyes though not blind saw nothing. He heard nothing, felt nothing. He was like a living ghost.

He just sat in the boat, his eyes looked right past me, there was no recognition, no joy, no love, just a void where my lover had been. His brilliance snuffed like a candle. “FAIR! Beloved!” I wept, clinging to him, shaking him, trying to get him to respond to anything. He just sat there, unmoving and unfeeling.

I kissed his face and stroked his hair and wept endearments and nothing. I didn't think my heart could break any further. Even death would have been better than this raping of his soul.

“Come lad, let's get him back to safety. Maybe Peaceful and Beloved can find him again.” Tigo said softly and I picked up my unresponsive lover and carried him back to our Inn with a heavy heart.

He just sat in his chair, staring at nothing. “Get his shirt off, I want to see if there's any physical damage.” Beloved said to Peaceful who bent and ran his fingers through Fair's hair.

“Fair love, can you hear me?” Peaceful asked quietly as he undid the buttons on Fair's shirt. Beloved stood behind the chair and as the shirt fell away the sound Beloved made was a sound I never wished to hear again. It was utter pain and pity.

“White Lady save us all. Cover him! Cover him!” Beloved shrieked and I dove to see what was wrong. The eye on Fair’s back was alive, a human eye looking out and blinking.

Tigo made a warning sigil with his hands and stepped back as if repelled. Peaceful pulled Fair’s shirt back on.

“WHAT IS THAT? WHAT HAVE THEY DONE TO HIM?” I demanded and Tigo shook his head.

“Outside, we talk outside right now.” Tigo said, leaving Beloved and Peaceful to sit with Fair.

“Son, that’s Virago’s eye. What it sees or can hear will report right to Larue. We must never talk of our plans around Fair. We must keep him secure and sealed. Until Larue is Dead, Fair is our unwilling enemy. That is the most vile, evil twisted spell. It’s forbidden in the Isles. Viragos used to plant third eyes on people and make them spies. This Larue did this just out of malicious cruelty. He would have known we’d find that, it’s just to hurt you personally Colt. Making Fair’s seer eye a servant of Virago, his poor soul must be in agony. Unless Larue dies, I’m afraid Fair is as good as dead. He’s a puppet for Virago’s to toy with. They control him totally. He would kill you if ordered to and lose even more of his soul. Because he is in there, trapped inside his own mind and aware of his actions but unable to control them. He must be kept secured. I’m sorry Colt.”

“Not as sorry as Larue will be when I crush that son of a whore without damnable magic. I’ll wring his neck with my own two fucking hands.” I swore then went back in and took Fair’s hands in mine.

“Love, I will free you. I know you are trapped in there and can hear me. I will not forsake you. Understand I must keep you bound for your own protection, not because I wish to. I love you and I do this because I love you and I know if you could answer me, you’d tell me to. I know your heart dearest. I will never give up on you. In the name of love, I vow to you I will free you or die with you.” I said and kissed Fair soundly, my resolve firm and my tears testament to my vows.

“Get him in a room, no windows. But make it comfortable. Be kind with the shackles give him plenty of freedom of movement and just his ankle so he can move freely around the room. The shackle is only to keep him from leaving the room against his will. I know my Fair would not leave when he know how important it is to keep him safe. I want guards on the room and I want him fed and clean. I’ll put mage locks on the door so only those we permit can pass.” I said giving my orders and they were instantly obeyed.

In the cellar was an old store room. A bed and washing table were brought in and comfortable blankets and pillows. Food and a long length of sturdy chain one end

we bolted to the floor with a mage seal so it would not break and the other end I personally put on Fair's ankle even though it killed me to do it.

"Beloved, if there were any other way to keep you safe, I would take it." I said sealing the shackle and spelling it to fit comfortably and not chafe his tender skin.

"Everyone, please leave me alone with him, just a moment please." I asked, needing a private moment.

Once everyone was outside the room I sat beside Fair and held him in my arms. It didn't matter he was limp against me and could not hold me back. I just stroked his hair and kissed his temples.

"Fair, you are the only person in this world who was able to free me from hell spiritually. You gave me my focus in life, gave me a goal to aspire to, kept me grounded when I was unbearable and gave me love when I thought no one could ever care for a bastard like me. No matter what it takes, no matter what I have to do, I do it for you. I love you, now and always." I said and Fair shivered once in my embrace and then ceased. I was sure he heard me and that was all he was capable of doing to let me know he had heard and understood.

It would have to be enough.

"Sleep in Peace dearest, have faith." I said laying him down and covering him before leaving him to sleep, a mage light to hold the darkness at bay. We couldn't trust him with fire or anything that could be used as a weapons. I refused to leave him in darkness. A soft glow would keep him company and he'd know as long as it burned, I lived and was trying to save him.

We limited our confidential talk to only those of our Dragon Warriors and Healers. We used other Beast warriors as our runners and message carriers. No one could be trusted outside our confidential circle. Anyone could be carrying the eye of Virago. Only Beast Warriors could be trusted, because their bond beasts would know. Beloved and Peaceful we likewise secured in the Inn which had become our headquarters. Neither of them left without either Constant or Urbane as escorts.

Urbane, always trying to keep a positive outlook as was his nature sighed one evening over dinner. "As much as I always said having Five girls under the age of Five was a chore for only the strongest of men to endure and how I wished I could have a vacation. I certainly didn't mean this. I take it all back, I'd give anything to be buried in my girls right at the moment." He said and Peaceful reached over and took his hand.

“You and I both Dearest. But they are doing alright. Grandmother sent word this morning. Affy and Ami sent drawings of Garnet and Lazuli. Chasity and Merry are just confused as to where we are but alright considering and well, Gay is too young to understand at all. She’s not even a year yet, right now she’s easily distracted. Just the same, I’d give anything to be trying to get them all to bed tonight myself.” Peaceful said and Beloved smiled a bittersweet smile.

“I still can’t believe you had the nerve to try for a boy that fifth time. What with Urbane’s track record and girls I’d have thought you two had learned.” Beloved tried to make light. The first four girls had been born less than a year apart from each other. It seemed Peaceful was highly fertile and so was Urbane. They’d had the twins and then two more spaced just ten months apart from each other. They waited until Merry was a year old before they even tried for that elusive boy and ended up with girl number five. They gave up, five children was more than enough. The twins were nearly five, Chastity had just turned four, Merry was three and Gay had just turned a year old recently. Peaceful was back in his natural male body to stay.

Not that either Urbane or Peaceful minded have five stunning daughters and each and every one of them had Urbane wrapped around dainty little fingers. Those girls worked their father like a minstrel worked a receptive crowd. He couldn’t resist, it was like moths to flame. He would dig a lake with his bare hands if they asked him to. It was Peaceful who kept the discipline in that house. Including keeping Urbane in check so he didn’t spoil his daughters rotten, it was heartwarming to watch them and I felt for them. I knew how badly they missed their children.

It was the same for Joy, Peaceful’s sister. She had two young boys and was now patrolling Rockport instead of playing with her sons. This was what war damaged most, families. It tore them apart as parents and siblings and lovers fought to keep the other safe.

My lover I had to imprison by my own hands to keep him and everyone else safe. War was a horrible thing indeed, but I would fight it, we all would. For the children and for our loved ones. We’d stand until we restored what was most precious to us. Our lives, our freedom and our family. It was also long past time I acknowledge a large part of mine. I turned to Tigo who sat beside me at the table and I laid my hand on his forearm.

“For what it’s worth, since we are all talking about family tonight. I never did say what I should have a long time ago. Larue claims he is my father, but there is only one man in this world I’d call that. I was never yours, but you treated me as if I was, and for that I should have thanked you long ago. If I’d have been given the ability to choose my own father, it would have been you. Thank you.” I said and Tigo shocked me by closing me in a fierce hug, his voice thick with emotion.

"I can't tell you how happy that makes me to hear. I never had a son either, but had I been able to choose, I've have chosen you too. You would honor me if you called me Father. I love you dearly, even when you're being a broody little snot." Tigo said and I had to chuckle.

"That's what Cadence calls me." I said and Tigo laughed.

"Well he's right occasionally. If I didn't stop him, he'd mother hen you to death. I'm not the only one here who thinks of you as a son."

"If I start calling him Mama, how long do you think that would last before he was firing arrows at me using his lute strings as a bow?" I asked and Tigo laughed.

"About five minutes and do let me be in the same room when you drop that one on him. I'd pay good money just to see his face. He's not easy to trip up, but when you can get him, he's priceless to watch sputter." Tigo said and Constant laughed.

"That he is, you can see the wheels in his brain just suddenly grind to a halt and then you'd just better run to get out of his firing range." Constant added and now I had at least one fun thing to look forward to, Cadence gave me a hard enough time in the teasing department, it was about time I got one back on the master.

Dinner was subdued but we all left with slightly higher spirits. Tigo and I went back to the room we were sharing with a definite change in your relationship that one could only feel. The unspoken had been said, we were no longer just Mentor and Student. I was a much his son as if he had been my actual sire. We were family in soul and heart, where it mattered most. The old saying was Blood was Thicker than Water. That's only true if there is no love to be found and only loyalty to kin on principle. Water would become solid as stone when love was the foundation over which it flowed. I was Tigo's son, just as Frostbite was Wintermoon's. This bond would not be broken unless we allowed it to be, and it would take more than Virago's to sever what had already been forged.

I went every day to see Fair and feed him and talk to him about how much I loved him. I gave Larue nothing he could use and hoped he saw in me a lovesick boy. I was, but I was also a very angry man and his days were drawing to a close.

The dawn of the fifth day after Fair's return, we coordinated our attack and the Dragon Warrior Riders flew in formation. Most riding double with extra mages at our side and we attacked them without warning and without mercy.

Dragon's dove and slashed at masts and sails, mages threw fiery bolts of lightning to set them a flame. I called the seas into a churning fury and bade a whirlpool to form in the midst of their ships.

Tor's folly was welcoming his son home, not knowing his true intent. Any father long separated from a son would believe the best of him. When Virago had left, he had not fallen as deeply into insanity as he had when he returned. Tor had learned too late the treacherous nature of his offspring.

I would not make Tor's mistake, I would sink this fleet before it ever touched shore. There would be no welcome for this blight to humanity.

I kept a wall of protection around our riders and bade it reflect whatever power the Viragos threw at us. They were not as nasty as we'd feared. They were weak, losing power with no one to take it from. Only Larue seemed to be any threat and even then I could tell he was trying to conserve.

This was why they were coming, I saw it so clearly it was almost enough to make me pity them. They had bled their land dry of victims. A people sucked dry like the sun bakes the moisture from the earth dry to brittle cracking in a summer drought.

Viragos were not natural mages, they could not create power from within themselves nor accept the natural magic the land and seas themselves gave freely to those with the sense. They had to steal it, they had to create emotional trauma and take that power and drink it like wine then use it to make magic. They would take their own children and bleed them spiritually and then the children would take their own in a sickening vicious cycle.

They had spent their own souls to gain a borrowed power and now they had nothing. They were desperate, the Ice Islands had not a person left alive who was not a Virago or a shell shocked puppet and victim. They needed Aegians to suckle from and not just the few that ventured to the Ice Islands, they wanted the source of that wellspring of life.

Larue hoarded what power he had, the few Aegians he had to drain were almost spent and our constant watch had kept him from gaining more. He was reduced, he was a consummate actor and gambler. He had spent most of his power in turning Fair into something that would weaken me, but instead he had driven me to fight harder. He'd gambled and lost. He could not beat me and he knew it. I had seen through his smoke and mirrors, stayed calm and rational when he'd wanted me crazed and making foolish mistakes.

The fish had not accepted the bait, he had an empty hook and an even emptier soul. If he could still feel fear he would have been terrified.

All I felt from him was emptiness and desperation to cling to his power. That was all the emotion he had left in his body. Greed and Lust for power and he was clinging to what he had left.

We had feared rightfully. Had they managed to take our port Larue would have marched over Aegis like Virago had the Southern Isles once before.

However, Fair's dreams had given us warning, my gifts had given us a means to fight them and all of us together would meet this force and turn it back from whence it came.

Ships splintered and men drowned in my tempest. There was one however I wanted to see his eyes. I wanted to see him die for all the cruelty he had inflicted on others. I sensed where he was, I knew what ship he was on and I would personally make him atone.

Frostbite flew me in close range and I caught the mast and swung myself into the crows nest. Larue was on the deck, surrounded by bodies. I saw Lamia and her Tall Twin dead, the large man with the braided beard dead. Dozens of men and women slaughtered to give him power, he turned and faced me and I looked into my own face.

It was like looking at an Albino version of myself. He looked only marginally older than I, but Viragos were a long lived race, power spent on youth.

"Yes, I am your father and you have succeeded in what I wished you to do. The prophecy said you would come. A son of a Virago and a Woman of no import. If you fought we would die. So we have, it ends at last. As it should have been long ago. Tor should have killed us all. But a father's broken heart left too many loose ends. I am old, I am tired, and I still have enough in me to hate what my father made of me. This empty existence, where I could not even love the woman who bore my son. A son I saw rise to greatness because he did have the ability to love." Larue spoke and stood facing me.

"I named you Lanue. It was what Virago called his father. It means Creator in the ancient tongue they used to speak. You had to know what life bereft of love felt like to appreciate it's worth now. You had to embrace life to understand it's beauty. You had to finish what Tor started. My son I would not see face the regrets I have lived. I remember youth, I remember a life before my soul was spent to give power to my own father. I would not do that to you." Larue sighed and he sat heavily.

"I knew Scribe Seer, he told me long ago I would father the end of my race. I was with him when he wrote the scroll I placed years ago in that archive to be found by you. Seer saw it all and so I have lived six hundred years waiting for you to end this curse Virago placed on his own descendants. I had to rise to power, I had to bring them all to the place where it ends. To weaken them and to drive you to kill us all for the love you hold for your own Seer.

I never touched him. I lied to you. Lamia put that on his back and sent him back to you. I killed her, Fair is free of her spell. Detestable woman wanted to watch you mate him, wanted to know what men did together. In one breath she cursed you for mating in ways that created no offspring but wanted to see together in carnal desire in the next breath. Two faced Lamia was, as all Viragos. I did not know until too late. I assure you, he came to no harm by my hands. I just wanted him here to drive you in seeking this end we now stand facing." My heart raced with Larue's unexpected confessions.

"Now it is done, I brought my own people to slaughter as foretold to me centuries ago. Now I can rest and may Testor see fit to send me to the creator. I betrayed Virago, his legacy dies with me once and for all. Live well Lanue, live happy. Restore what was lost and bring peace with you." Larue said and then plunged his own knife deep into his heart.

"FATHER!" The word ripped from my throat and my eyes misted and Larue just turned red eyes at me.

"Thank you, my son." Larue's eyes rolled back into his head and he was gone. I reached down and took the ring from his finger and put it in my pocket.

"I will remember you. Father. Larue... Ender." I too had learned the ancient tongue in my studies. How ironic our names or perhaps not. He'd walked his destiny and it was up to me to walk mine. To live up to the true name my father had given me.

I would look at this ring and remember true soul torment. Not mine, not Fair's, but Larue, my sire. Who had lived an age with a cleaved soul. He said he could not love, I think he did in his own way, the best he could. No man totally lost would have orchestrated what he had, would have sacrificed everything to end his own race and leave his son unmolested by true torment.

I wished I could have known him as he should have been. Before his life had become the mockery it had been.

I climbed the mast and Frostbite swept down and I caught his harness on the fly and heaved myself onto my saddle.

The battle was over and our biggest ally, had been their very leader.

When I told the others what had happened on the way back it made victory bittersweet because there were only victims and no victors this day.

An evil had been purged and the world could go forward, but the cost was paid by a man who had been soul cleaved as a child and died a broken husk. He

never had and never would know the peace he had purchased with what was left of his soul.

When I got back to the Inn I raced down the stairs and threw open the cellar door, Fair was laying there looking tired but cognizant and his smile of joy and love for me set my final fears at bay and I crushed him in my arms weeping.

"I'm alright Colt. Just drained from her, but unharmed." He reassured me as I cried my relief into his chest.

"It's so clear now, the fear, the terror, the blood in my dreams wasn't ours, it was theirs. I saw their deaths not ours. Larue told me everything. In his way, he loved you. He claimed he didn't know what love was, but I think he did, or at least he remembered what it was before he became what he was. He had enough of that left in him to set you down a better path than he walked. A father's dream for his son that his child has a better life. He did not like having to lie to you to push you and he tried to keep me safe." Fair told me as he held me and I held him.

"Lamia is a vile woman, Larue had left me in his cabin to talk with Lamiro, Lamia's twin. They set it up, Lamia came in and put that eye on my back and sent me back. I heard everything you said, felt everything, but I wasn't in control, it was like looking through a window at myself from a distance. There was no purpose to what she did to me, she just wanted to see you mate me. That's all. Not for spying, not for information. Just curiosity. She can't understand love, and even more cannot understand two men or two women in love with each other. She assumed it was for carnal pleasures only. She assumed the minute you had me back you'd have me bent over. She had no concept of your love and when you didn't throw me down and when you spoke to me of yours vows to me, you just made her angry." Fair sighed.

"She could not understand your devotion to someone who cannot give you children. She can't understand devotion at all. You confused her. It gave me the strength to stand firm against her. Every time you vowed your love to me, I shouted victory at her. It weakened her, she can't feed on love, only fear and sexual magic. The power love creates was too much and she couldn't absorb a clean magic. Dearest, I love you so much. You protected me better than anyone could have." Fair whispered and kissed my brow and I lifted my face and drank in his kiss like sweet liquor.

"Beloved, you taught me what love means. You had faith in me and believed in me first. You stood beside me when I struggled and pushed me to strive for more. You made me believe in myself. You made me see my own worth and proved to me a man makes himself what he is meant to be and that he does not have to accept a label society places on him. You made me a better man and I

would not lose you for the world. I love you, you're my very soul Fair. There is nothing in this world that means more to me than you."

"I know. As you mean to me Colt. As you will mean to the world. I have seen such a path before you my love. Such wonders and travels." Fair began and then looked ultimately sad.

"I see a fair haired woman giving you a son. I see her from behind, she's in a land far from here, you love her as you love me. She bears you a son. You look so happy. Older than you are now by a few years at the least. The look on your face unmistakable joy and happiness. When that time comes Colt, live it without regrets. I cannot give that to you and would never begrudge you a life with the mother of your child. I will step aside then without argument. You do not have to worry about me, I know this cannot be forever now and I will content myself with the time I have with you." Fair said and my heart stopped cold.

"I would never do that to you!"

"I have seen it Colt. You do not choose love, it chooses you and the love you have for her shines in your eyes. Never regret love never fight it dearest. You deserve that joy I see in your face." Fair tried fighting the tear that rolled down his cheek and I wiped it away.

"Fair, I love you. I would never betray you like that. Did you ever stop to think that woman might be you?" I asked and Fair's eyes widened.

"I'm not a healer, I cannot change like Beloved and Peaceful can. It's not me."

"I am a creator mage Fair. I can change you if you wanted me too. That is a simple magic."

Fair's eyes suddenly lost their sorrow. "You can do that? To me?"

I smiled. "Aye, I can. So look again at the woman in your dreams Fair. Who is she really?"

Fair closed his eyes and focused and took a closer look and then the smile on his face told me the answer before he spoke. "It's me." He breathed and I chuckled.

"I told you Fair. I would never betray you. So we will have a son someday?" I asked and Fair laughed and through his arms around my neck.

"AYE!" He laughed and I just held him close. It was nice to think that one day he and I would share something so precious together and I had to know...

"Does he look like you or me?" I asked and Fair chuckled.

“He’s all wrapped up in a blanket. However, he does have black hair. I don’t know the rest. You try telling who a newborn is going to look like. It takes a few weeks for the features to really start showing Mister Impatient. I’m a seer, I get glimpses of the future, not all the details.” Fair teased and I smiled.

“Then we’ll just have to wait and see then.” I grinned and we curled together on the bed and rested together secure that the future was opening before us brightly.

“Name of Love”

Book Three in the Namesake Tales

Author: D. Sanders

Chapter Five - Reunion and Restoration

The first time Fair saw Frostbite and the other dragons, after his initial shock he turned to me and laughed. “You used to grumble when he was little that oiling him was a chore. I don’t envy that task of yours now.” Fair said and I blanched.

Frostbite just chuckled in his draconic way. “Well he is a creator. We’ve been talking too how much we will all miss living with our chosen. In nice warm houses and soft beds and fresh cut meat. Colt, if you could give us the ability to change our size at our will, Urbane will cease having anxiety attacks on the cost of feeding us. There were not so many of us then when Tor created us. Now, food will be a problem.”

“That’s a good idea. Let’s try it with you first, I’m still new myself at this power. Having my will become reality is a bit daunting. I don’t want to play a God here. I don’t want to tamper too much. But this is a good solution if we can make it work.” I said and then formulated my desire into power and bade Frostbite to have the power to shift his size at will.

It worked even better than we had intended. They could become as small as mice or as large as their true natural size.

Urbane thanked me profusely, his worries about financial costs and room solved easily. In their smaller sizes we noticed that the chirping was a side effect. Because their vocal chords were compressed, their actual speech turned into just higher frequency issues. Cadence, our musical expert figured that out for us, by pointing out what, to him, was obvious.

They had been talking all the time, but because their vocal chords needed large resonators to sound properly, when their sinuses were smaller, their voices just raised in pitch to trilling chirps.

They needed to be at least the size of a horse to sound out words properly.

We had dragons of every size about the Campus and it was grand. When Lazuli wanted to spend time with Peaceful and the girls, she was about the size of a parakeet so she could perch on the twins shoulders and play with their curls. When with Urbane she was more her old size riding on her perch or her flight size using the modified two seat saddle to carry Peaceful and Urbane together.

Usually with one of the older twins in-between them strapped securely so they could enjoy a pleasure ride as a family.

I had a two seat saddle made for Frostbite so I could carry Fair on the occasional ride or bring back a student I found scouring Aegis for raw talent with Tigo.

Not long after we got home, Fair began having very specific dreams, usually of children or young adults with talent in obscure places for us to find. In-between his duties with the current new class of students, he'd make notes for Tigo and I to use to go and find our scattered gifted.

The most amazing thing that happened in the months after the Virago perished, when spring came, so did a delegation of Griffons. They had been living for years north of the kingdom of Rustgaard, our neighbor to the north and when their seers predicted the cleansing of the Viragos, they sent scouts to us to reestablish relations. It was a joyous meeting and two young griffons chose two of our youngsters as beast companions.

Even the air felt cleaner and fresher than it had, the world was heading into a new age, with many changes yet to come.

We still had records of beasts that were myth that the griffons assured us had been real at the time of the Volcanic cataclysm that had sent the beasts fleeing for survival.

The griffons had records of ships casting out in all directions carrying as many people and animals as they could to try and find other islands to live.

Frostbite was eager that we should go on a quest to try and discover them again. I had to admit that sounded like a grand adventure but it would mean being gone quite a substantial amount of time and I didn't want to leave Fair behind.

Frostbite quite adamantly assured me he too had no intention of leaving Fair either. "You scare people. You are not the best representative for Aegis, but Fair is, let him do the talking." Frostbite said and I laughed, agreed and then brought the subject up to the others.

We had our own grand ship and crew full of provisions and money and set sail by the end of spring. Hurd, the Griffon wing leader joined us to represent the griffons, Fair and I to represent Aegians, Frostbite the Dragons, Tender and Bold joined us as healer and warrior. Both very young, but needed and eager to experience the world. Even though Tender was blind, she was a consummate healer and had eyes with Bold to guide her. One did not take a journey like this without a healer.

We had other beast warriors with us from both North and south to round out our party, we had a good crew of sailors and a fabulous seasoned Captain named Forecast. He came from a long line of sea men and he had an uncanny ability to predict storms and steer clear of them, he had been named exceedingly well.

Our party consisted of twenty men and one Woman with our bond beasts, fifty crew and the captain and first mate and we left Aegis with great celebration and hoped we would come home with grand tales and even grander beasts.

Our voyage took us well passed the Southern Isles using maps that were both old and new and sometimes just on the wild fables we'd read. These were, for the most part Virgin Waters to us, we were sailing into the unknown with only maps, tales and Fair to guide us with visions.

It took us two months to reach the first island and here we found remains of what had probably been the birth place of the Virago. Some places of land were still so thick with evil miasma that plants refused to grow. However, time does heal all wounds and life was returning to this vast island our Captain charted with great glee. We found fresh water and restocked our supplies, there were signs of boar and deer so our men hunted and filled our larders again with meat. Frostbite found a large citrus grove ripe with oranges, tangerines and limes. Those were a welcome addition to our supplies citrus kept scurvy at bay in close quarters.

I found something shocking and was amazed that time had not completely destroyed it, it looked untouched and I wasn't about to touch it either. It was a statue, life sized of a man about my height. He was standing almost eerily as I stood and he was looking out with cold eyes at the land around him. His face was mine. The runes at the base of the statue were in a writing I could not read, but I didn't need them to know who this man was. Virago. Worshipped as a god among the natives who once lived here and because of one man's greed, he had warped them to his will and created an evil so foul and destructive I still shuddered in my sleep over what I had learned and what I had seen end.

Beside this statue was bare rock and I laid my hand upon it and bade new runes appear.

Let no man touch, let no man seek and let all men who venture here know the truth of the one called Virago, the Tormentor. Fear the evil contained in this statue and leave it alone to stand unmolested, lest it's evil taint the unwary. This warning signed and this statue sealed under my protection, this one-hundredth day of the year of two-thousand and ninety-seven by Aegis Reckoning. Creator Mage, Colt Lanue.

I placed a mage barrier around the statue just in-case those that came after me could not read my writing as I could not read the inscriptions on the statue. I would not set this evil free by destroying the effigy of Virago, I would contain it within the stone and hope the land's purification would be speedier and that with this final closure to what had begun here so long ago Virago could no longer reach into the hearts of men.

Fair documented my find in our travel diary that he would give the scribes when we returned so all men present and future would know of our journey. We were making history lessons that children in fifty years would probably hate us for because they'd have to read Fair's lengthy lessons and detailed observations.

We had a good laugh over that at least.

We continued south and fifty days later we found a huge continent. This was no mere island, but a vast land complete with ports and cities. It was like sailing into Aegis and we were met with as much wonder as we had for them.

The people were a rainbow of colors with skin like a mixture of Aegian White and Southern Isle Dark. Like tea mixed with a healthy portion of cream. Hair and Eyes in shades we had never seen and some we had. Blond, Brown, Black and Ginger were as common here as at home, but others bore blue, green, purple and shades of red as bright as a ripe apple skin. We thought at first it was dye, but noticing that eyebrows were the same color as ours were tended to indicate this were natural shades to these new people.

The language was a barrier at first until I found a willing volunteer and I gave him our language with a spell and I took from his mind the knowledge of their language and then passed it onto our men and crew.

They called their land Torland and themselves Torlanders. My reception was astonishing. When I was taken to their leader, Called not a King but the Law Keeper he went to one knee as did the priests that came to meet me. It was then I saw their first temple, the temple of Tor, The Creator and Savior. Once again I was looking at my own face in stone. If I had ever doubted my blood ties to Virago and Tor, I believed them now.

I looked so much like Tor my head swam with wonder. My uncountable times great grandfather was worshipped here as we worshipped him in Aegis.

The White Lady, Hespia had her own temples as did Testor the Soul Comforter.

We learned that these people had come from the Southern Isles long ago on Ships that Tor had created to carry his people to safety. He told them of this great land and bade them settle here in safety two thousand years earlier and with them the first Law Keeper to protect the refugees.

We shared histories and tales and I felt almost embarrassed at the absolute reverence they showed to me. Especially after one of my men let slip I had restored the dragons and finally ended the Viragos once and for all.

I had to backtrack and give them the actual accounting of the story and how very much it was mainly my father's orchestration and I had just been the catalyst to end it.

That didn't matter much to them. Knowing Viragos were purged and I was of the Blood of Tor and a creator mage like him put me on a very high pedestal I wasn't particularly fond of being on.

Attitudes here we very much like those still practiced in the Isles. No one batted an eye at my mate being male, and like the southerners, clothing was optional and women wore painted bellies when pregnant and magic was alive and well here.

So were the Satyrs, goat men and women with short horns on their heads and cloven hooves for feet. Centaurs half human and half horse, Sphinxes who liked living in the mountains and the Winged Horses and the Unicorns. They had traveled here with the others and thrived in the bountiful landscape and bonded to beast magic warriors like we did dragons.

It was a joyous reunion for them to see Dragons and Griffons again. The creator's creatures once again mingled together with humans. It was euphoric to experience.

We made so many new friends and made so many new discoveries it was staggering. The most was how similar our people had evolved. Even after so much time, life was still life and all babies cried, all children played, mothers and fathers still rejoicing in their offspring. Love was universal.

Winter was coming so we planned to stay a while and learn as much as we could. During this time, Fair and I dabbled a little in changing his body. Just to see if I could actually make love to him as a woman.

It was a rousing success, and we quickly stopped playing around not wishing to be having children yet so far away from home. We did not want him pregnant on the journey home. We knew Peaceful and Urbane's track-record and weren't about to take the chance ourselves. Seeing as Peaceful could get pregnant with just Urbane sneezing in the same room. I was a creator mage after all, we were both fairly positive I'd create a baby without much effort.

Come Spring, we headed back to Aegis with more in our party and a second ship. Torlanders abounded and every race and creature was represented in our journey back to Aegis.

The Torlanders coming with us would make a permanent embassy in Aegis and likewise we would send volunteers back to Torland to establish an embassy there as well.

It was a hard five month voyage between both continents, but workable and trade potential alone would have Urbane singing.

Best of all, we were a united world again and we all had so much to share with each other it would take generations to share it all.

This was the beginning of a New Age and we were forging new ground daily. It was a golden time to be alive and I was loving every minute of my life. I never had time to brood, I was far too happy. I was a changed man.

We were gone almost two years and our homecoming was a celebration so grand it lasted two weeks.

I took up my new responsibilities as Mage teacher and liaison to the Torlanders with great relish. Fair resumed his duties as New Student Coordinator and once we settled back into our house again, we had fun making it a home and preparing ourselves to be parents.

We waited until all the dust settled and we were into our daily routines before we decided it was time.

We had known each other now a total of eight years. Three spent with me learning how to trust and be human and then I had been nineteen and Fair was seventeen when we finally confessed to each other our feelings and five years later and after earth changing events and adventures we were ready to take that next step in our lives. From friends, to lovers, to parents.

Our son, Wise, was born five days before my Twenty-fifth birthday and ten days after my Frostbite and his queen, Shine, had taken their first mating flight. She had joined us when we'd stopped at the southern Isles just before coming home.

She was a beautiful lady and bonded to a young girl warrior Constant was teaching.

When the eggs hatched and there was a little white King, Snowstorm, among them and he immediately settled beside my two month old son in his bassinet, we knew at the very least we had a future little adept mage on our hands.

Whether he'd have all my gifts we wouldn't know for a few years yet, whatever the case, my son and his bonded baby dragon had many years of play together first ahead of them. They'd develop a wonderful and strong bond, being so young together.

They would grow together in a world that was more unified than ever. They would see the changes we wrought for them and never know a world bereft of the creatures Tor had created.

As for myself, did not wish to play a god. There was more than enough variety in the world without me adding more. I had no desire to create anything new, but restore and help build the vast wonders we already had aplenty. Truth be told, for a creator mage, I wasn't very creative. I attributed to Tor a personality of an artist perhaps and instead of paint and canvas, he sculpted life. I was artistically lacking. I couldn't draw or paint and thought to myself if I tried making a new creature it would probably look just as horrific as my attempts at drawing pictures with my son. His at a year old were more recognizable as to what they were supposed to be than mine. Fair deemed by artwork "barely fit for kindling", I tended to agree with him. I'll leave the finger-paints to my spouse and our son.

I was content, happy and alive. I had my Fair beside me, my wonderful son to smile at me with my own lopsided smile, my dragon and a wonderful home, family and friends.

I didn't need more. I was complete.

END