

“In the Eye of the Tempest”

A Wielder and Wellspring Story

Author: D. Sanders

Introduction - Of Wielders and Watchers

The world of Holst was a wild and untamed land full of dangers from the skies, the land and the seas. The only protection the people had were the ones called Wielders, those few men born with the talent to wield the magic of the land to protect and shelter. Wielders were always men, in the history of Holst, not a record existed of a woman being born a wielder. Wielders could use the energy in the land to shape magic and battle the beasts and natural dangers that threatened the land and its people. A Wielder could use any source of natural power to manipulate magic to protect the people of Holst. A Wielder was the most revered profession in the land and all Wielder's were highly respected and given rest, food and lodging in any village he chose to protect, even if they never stayed long and had wandering feet while young and unmated and looking for his perfect Wellspring of power.

A Wielder became even stronger when his Wellspring was found. A Wellspring could be either gender but was usually always a woman and they naturally and instinctually were born capable of drawing out energy from the land, collecting it like a pool within them from which their Wielder would drink. A Wielder and Wellspring pair would always be drawn to each other and more often than not, once they connected together as a pair, would never part from each other. Love was a foundation that made stronger bonds between a Wielder and his Wellspring.

It also was quite genetically common for a Wielder to be highly possessive of his Wellspring. Once he found, connected and mated to his match a Wielder was likely to kill a man over just looking at his Wellspring. It was a side effect of their deeper bonding of power. Once a Wielder supped from a matched Wellspring, he was a man possessed and would never lose the desire to drink of the power his match fed to him. It was more addictive than a drug and more potent than an aphrodisiac.

Male Wellsprings were rare and it was even rarer they bonded permanently to their Wielder. Male Wellsprings were often kept at hand just as an extra source of power in emergencies from which many Wielders could drink from simultaneously during battle. Male Wellsprings often died young, drained of power and used until the breaking point. It was accepted truth and it was the norm that a male wellspring was kept apart from others in his village, knowing that his duties were to the people and the land and not to himself. They did not socially interact; they were objects and tools and made no familial attachments. Knowing their fates were short lived and the fewer people to love him, the fewer would be hurt when he died.

After all, Wielders were always male and the Wellspring he was fated to partner with in life would be more than a source and bolster of his power, but a mate to bear his children and keep his bed warm at night. Very few Wielders would choose a male to be his Wellspring and certainly no children could be bred from such a pairing. It was imperative that Wielders and Wellsprings passed on their powers to their offspring; it was a hereditary trait that needed to be carried on for survival.

Male Wellsprings being the exception, they were not encouraged and in fact forbidden to mate. They were a genetic anomaly and it was not a desirable trait to be passed on to children. If a Wielder's son was born as a Wellspring and not a Wielder he was immediately given to the temple to be raised apart, severed from his family at birth. It was an insult to the Wielder's pride to have a son that did not have his gifts and rather than get attached to a child that would die before the parents, the parents gave him to the temple scholars to be raised and taught his duties to the people.

He was village and public property, he was less than a man, he was simply a village commodity, a source of power for wandering Wielder's to use at will and drain dry.

It was the way of Holst for centuries and not to be questioned but to be accepted...

“In the Eye of the Tempest”

A Wielder and Wellspring Story

Author: D. Sanders

Chapter I - Dune's Destiny

The winds were howling as Wielder Dune reached the villagers struggling to evacuate from the tempest blowing in off the sea. He'd been racing on foot as fast as his feet would carry him since he'd spotted the deadly storm clouds ahead. This was no ordinary storm, this was driven by sturdy winds and the waves were devouring chunks of beach as they crashed forward, sending floodwaters into the large fishing community. "Get these people to higher ground!" Dune shouted over the roar of the wind, taking control and appointing sturdy men to oversee the exodus.

Dune reached for a power source being unmated to a wellspring, he generally sought to tap into nature's fury which was always a good source of raw power. He needed to create a barrier to keep the flood tides back to allow the people enough time to evacuate the area. What he found when he reached for power nearly sent him to his spiritual knees.

An unmated wellspring was nearby and frantic with fear, the power surging forth was manic with panic and the moment Dune touched it his entire being shouted out with need to comfort and calm. This was no mere wellspring, this was HIS wellspring, and there was no denying the instant meshing of power. Dune embraced the power and sent a mental call to his mate. ::My Wellspring, do you feel me beloved?:: He asked.

::Run! Not safe Wielder, the sea is angry, the land in fear!:: The wellspring replied, a young tenor in Dune's mind. Dune had always known his wellspring would be male when he finally bonded to a wellspring and his heart danced for joy.

::I know dearest. Where are you?:: Dune asked needing to make sure his wellspring was safe with the other evacuees.

::In the temple master wielder. Oh please run!::

::In the TEMPLE? Get out! It's not safe in the village beloved!::

::I am forbidden to leave the temple Master. I am a male wellspring!:: The voice replied as the lightning flashed and Dune could feel the true terror gripping his wellspring.

::You are MY wellspring and I order you out of there now.::

::I cannot master. The water is already here, the doors are blocked I'm trapped. Please, please run I can feel worse coming!:: The voice was pleading and desperate. He truly feared for the wielder more than himself.

::Then I am coming Beloved. Go as high as you can dearest::

::NO! NO! Master No! Save yourself! Save the others!::

::Like Hell No. Lend me your power my love, I'll keep you safe until I can reach you:: Dune called back furious they had left his wellspring to die and made him stay in the temple during the evacuation. Dune tapped into the warmth that was his wellspring and he felt his power increase ten-fold. He threw up a sturdy levee to help act as a break water and then fought against the rising tide heading into the village.

"Master wielder! Stop! We're all out of the village!" One man called and Dune's eyes flashed as he turned.

"You left my wellspring in the temple! Tell the monks we will have words after this storm!" Dune shouted irate and the man blanched and turned and ran as Dune waded into the churning waters.

Parna huddled under a blanket shivering with cold. He was up in the loft where extra blankets and supplies were kept and the rafters were creaking under the fury of the storm raging outside. A section of the roof on the far side of the loft had been torn off and the wind swirled like a vortex in the vast space and even under several blankets the chill and the rain was frigid against his face.

When he had felt the wielder touch him Parna had felt for a moment all his fear fade and a warmth spread throughout his body like liquid fire. The wielder had such a gentle touch and so few wielders ever made the journey this far north to the sea. Those Parna had encountered barely paid him heed and took only what little power Parna had fed into the land, they usually used the sea as a power source.

This Wielder was different, this one not only touched him, but held on firm and Parna had he not been so afraid of the storm would have realized the portent of the connection they'd formed in that instant of touch. However, Parna was young and isolated. All his eighteen years he'd lived in the temple, His mother unwed and a liaison with a wandering wielder had brought forth the wellspring son and he'd been given to the temple without so much as the cord being cut from his abdomen.

Once in the temple Parna had been raised and taught to believe it was his duty to forsake his life in service to the people, to ignore his needs and desires and think only what good he could do for others. That he was selfish to think he deserved more than the food in his belly and the roof over his head as payment. He should be grateful for the fish on his plate and the blanket that kept him warm in the cellar cubicle he lived in day in and day out.

He was forbidden to come out of the temple, and forbidden coming into the residential section of the temple where the monks lived. He was already breaking the law but the water had come in so fast he had no choice but to climb higher to escape it. The water had awoken him from his sleep and he made it up the stairs to discover the temple abandoned and the storm raging outside.

He had been climbing the stairs as the wielder had touched him and he'd stumbled in shock and he clutched his throbbing ankle as he curled up under the blanket to try and keep warm and dry.

A Howl and snarl made him sit bolt upright and his eyes widened as he saw a were-wolf, wet and bedraggled come in the door from the stair case.

Parna's throat constricted and the scream he wanted to emit died in his throat as he sat there petrified with fear. He felt the Wielder against his senses, begging to know what was wrong and why he was suddenly so much more frightened and he couldn't answer as golden eyes locked with his own and he quaked internally as the beast stalked closer.

::DEAREST ANSWER ME! WHAT IS WRONG?:: Dune begged as he swam against the tide fighting to get to the temple.

::Stay away! WERE-WOLF!:: Came the terrified reply which seemed strained and frozen with overwhelming fear.

Dune focused his strength and erected a barrier around his wellspring in desperate need to protect him, his own fear now a bile in his throat as he clawed his way closer and heaved himself into a window and made a mad dash soaking wet up the stone stairs of the temple.

What met Dune's eyes was his worst nightmare. His wellspring was pinned in a corner, the were-wolf less than a foot away barking and yapping and the youth was screaming in panic, his voice being ripped away by the howl of the wind. His eyes round with sheer terror and he was insane with fright.

Dune pulled the power around him and glowed white hot with rage. "DIE BEAST!" Dune shouted, blasting at the beast that turned and dove for him as another blast of fiery power was pulled from Parna and blasted at the beast from Dune's hands. The beast howled in death throws as Dune literally roasted him

with lightening like bolts of energy. Once it stopped moving Dune turned and raced to the shaking youth in the corner and pulled him tightly against his chest.

“Are you hurt? Beloved are you injured?” Dune asked feeling limbs frantically.

Parna couldn't speak and could only nod dumbly once before his gaze turned to look into concerned blue eyes, and then nothing. Darkness descended as Parna fainted from shock.

Dune scooped him up, blankets and all and walked down one floor to the head friar's rooms and kicked open the door. Parna may have had qualms about going into forbidden places, but Dune didn't. He was livid and the monks were going to pay dearly for their crimes against his wellspring.

Dune gently laid Parna down in the soft bed and piled blankets on top of him before lighting a fire in the fireplace to warm the room.

He went to every window and made sure it was sealed tightly before he braved exploring the temple and salvaging what fresh water and food he could before heading back to the room. He piled his salvaged stores in a corner and then sealed the door. So long as the water didn't cover the chimney, they'd be safe until the storm blew itself out. They had enough food and water for a few days at the very least and then Dune knew he could improvise if he needed to, he could send word to the palace and King Dinar would send him aide, but for now they were safe enough and Dune's only concern at the moment was seeing to his wellspring.

Dune carefully removed sodden garments from his wellspring and hung them with his own by the fire. His wellspring was young, a good deal younger than he was. At nearly twenty-five Dune had despaired at ever bonding to a mate and he'd almost lost him tonight. Had he been any later in arriving, he'd have never bonded at all and this beautiful youth would have died either by the storm or the were-wolf. Dune shivered at the thought at how very close he'd come to losing his mate for all time.

“You will never suffer again dearest. I vow it to you. I promise to be a good husband and to protect you my wellspring.” Dune said softly, running his fingers through long dark auburn hair. He was amazed at how utterly spellbinding his wellspring was to look upon.

Thick waves of dark auburn hued hair fell almost to his waist and looked to have never been cut much. His frame was slender and delicate and finely boned, he was almost elegant of feature. His small chest rose and fell with the even breath of sleep and at last the fear was beginning to fade as he slept and Dune's dark tanned skinned hand stroked pale flesh.

Dune ran his fingers over arms and chest, tracing features and inducing relaxation in his wellspring. What the youth needed most was rest, he was emotionally distressed and the best way to cure the distress was to relax.

“Sleep beloved, you’re safe.” Dune kissed his wellspring’s temple as he crawled into bed beside him and wrapped around him so they could share not only warmth but physical closeness which their bond needed to help cement the new connection.

They were already bound together and would become irrevocably so the more time they spent in physical contact with each other and once consummated would never be torn asunder without great suffering for them both. Wielders and Wellsprings thrived on love and affection and once partnered would never willingly part from each other. In most cases they couldn’t part from each other without death being a consequence. Soul mates very rarely outlived each other.

Dune was exhausted and cradled his beloved against his chest as he yawned and got comfortable. His sleek athletic frame almost dwarfed his wellspring in bed and his tawny blond hair was a tangled mess from the storm and his blue eyes were tired as they shut in sleep. Dune mused as he drifted off that wellsprings whether male or female were always built very much alike.

They were all delicate creatures that outwardly seemed so fragile but contained such immense powers. He entertained the notion it was probably a trade off, size for power. Wielders only manipulated power, they couldn’t hold it or contain it and thus came in all shapes and sizes. However, wellsprings were always fey creatures that seemed so small in comparison to what they held within them and they were always so very warm.

Dune was basking in the warmth of power coming from his wellspring as sleep ceased all further thoughts and he was sleeping a dreamless sleep of sheer exhaustion.

Parna awoke slowly, his mind foggy with fatigue and a great sense of warmth and security wrapped around him like a blanket. He sighed and snuggled deeper into the warmth only to realize they were a pair of strong arms holding him tightly against a smooth chest that was rising and falling with a deep even breath of sleep. Parna slowly opened his eyes and would have crawled away from the stranger who was breaking the law holding him if he’d been able to move. The stranger was much larger and possessively wrapped around his body preventing escape.

Parna’s breath and heart quickened, as much as he cherished the brief contact and appreciated the warmth and comfort provided, this stranger was breaking the

laws of Holst. A Male wellspring was forbidden human contact, only his wielder had the right to touch him.

Then suddenly with that thought, memories of the storm came unbidden like a plague. The fear, the wielder touching his mind, the shockingly fiery connection that had arrested him when the wielder touched and drank from his power, the were-beast, a wolf that had been changed into a monster from rouge power, the stranger saving him.

Parna looked up at the face of the sleeping man beside him. Many turnings older than he was but still in the prime of his youth. Strong sturdy features of face and jaw, ruggedly handsome he would have been called. His skin tanned dark from many hours in the sunshine, his blond hair streaked white in places also from the harsh sun. Parna vaguely remembered blue eyes looking frantic with worry.

Was this the wielder? He had to be, no other would have survived the storm or would have been able to kill a were-beast with magic. If he was the wielder, Parna vaguely remembered him using words like 'beloved' and 'dearest' and wielder's only called their bonded wellsprings with those terms of endearment. Parna's heart raced he didn't dare hope it was true that he belonged to this man as mate and wellspring. Such things didn't happen to male wellsprings or so he'd been led to believe.

The thunder crashed and the whole temple shook with the force and Parna yelped in fright and strong arms tightened even further around him.

"Fear not the storm beloved. We are safe in here from it, I have a bubble of protection around us that will keep us safe until the storm blows itself out." Came a tired baritone and Parna shivered and crawled deeper into the embrace.

"Master, why would you save me? I don't understand." Parna asked afraid to hear the answer.

Instead a gentle hand ran down his hair in a caress and a gentle kiss was placed against Parna's brow.

"Do you feel our bond? If you do then you know the answer dearest. You will ever be the one I protect above all others. I almost lost the one most precious to me yesterday, had I been any later in coming I would have lost you beloved. It tears my soul to think how close I came to never knowing my wellspring. Please, what is your name dearest?" Dune asked and Parna began to cry, all his joy at those words manifesting in tears and it took a few moments before he could answer.

"Parna, master."

“Parna. Never call me master again, I am Dune and no more to you. I belong as much to you as you to me. Would you call your own husband Master?” Dune asked and Parna shook his head as Dune’s fingers wiped tears from his cheeks.

“I really am yours? I can hardly believe it.” Parna said and Dune chuckled where they lay cocooned in blankets in bed.

“In that I feel much the same as you. I despaired ever finding my wellspring at all. I am not like other wielders, I am what they call a non-breeder, women as much as I love them have never been a desire for me for as long as I can remember. I knew long ago my wellspring would be male too. I have only met one other male wellspring and he was already bonded to his wielder and they were much, much older. They gave me hope I might find you if I looked hard enough, and found you I have my Parna.” Dune said and he felt Parna sigh and nestle closer, his happiness radiating like heat and liquor and creating a fire in Dune’s belly he knew would ever be there for as long as they lived as a bonded pair.

Bondings were not accidents, if Parna had not been the one, their connection would have remained just a transfer of power source to conduit to manipulator. However, it was meant to be, ordained by higher powers neither man would ever understand fully. When Dune had touched Parna’s power there was a reaction that he had heard of from other bonded pairs but never experienced himself, an electricity that flowed between them in a link that could only be described as a meshing of souls like threads in a tapestry.

He could feel Parna’s pleasure as if it were his own, he could taste the joy like a confection on his senses. Dune smiled and just held the youth closer, feeling himself get drunk with power that was leaking out of every pore on Parna’s youthful body.

Another crash of thunder rocked the foundations of the temple and Dune sat up unwillingly. “I want to check this storm, I won’t be a moment beloved.” Dune said pressing Parna’s nose with his finger and a wink before he threw back the cover and watched Parna’s eyes grow wide with realization they had both been completely nude under the covers.

“Wet clothes and bedding mix poorly dearest. Not to mention I needed skin contact with you I was exhausted last night and I needed your power desperately dearest. You my love will just have to get used to a needy husband. Poor wielder’s weakness. Once we taste of our wellspring we are addicted like addicts are to opiates. I am sure you know that much.” Dune winked as he crossed the floor to rummage in a chest.

“I have heard so much, aye.” Parna said blushing shyly but smiling. Dune drank in that smile like wine, Parna was even prettier when he smiled.

Dune just smiled back and silently thanked the Gods for such a beautiful mate as he found what he was looking for, a small hand mirror which he brought over to the bed and sat cross legged in the middle and taking Parna's hand.

"I need just a little power to make this spell work. Watch the mirror and we'll see what's going on outside." Dune explained as his fingers entwined with Parna's and Parna felt just a small brush of sense and the mirror swirled and lightening flashed making Parna jump.

"Just images dearest. This is a nasty storm, rouge power is fueling it from well off shore. We're going to be holed up in here many days yet to come I think. The clouds are getting worse not better."

"Aye, I can feel the power, it's violent. Storms always make me sick to my stomach because they push too much power into me. I have been ill for days." Parna sighed and that was news to Dune who turned to look at him.

"I had no idea wellsprings could predict weather."

"I can. I react to weather and my well overflows. I have to stay an open link and let the excess purge or I am living in a privy purging in nasty ways."

"How do you feel right now?" Dune asked concerned and Parna shrugged.

"So long as you ask me not to eat, I will be okay. I can never eat during storms. Thinking of food makes me ill."

"I can feel that. But this storm will last days beloved, you must eat something."

"I don't have anything to eat anyway. I was so scared from the water I didn't think to try and find provisions."

"I did however. I grabbed everything still dry in the kitchen and moved it up here. Can you eat bread? That should sit easy on your stomach. I managed quite a few loaves before they got all soggy." Dune said with a wink and Parna smiled.

"I can only try I suppose. You are right I have to at least try to eat hungry or not." Parna said and Dune nodded standing again and going over to the crates and boxes stacked in the corner. He brought over a loaf of crusty bread and tore it in half and handed Parna half before he cracked open a keg of amber ale and poured them both glasses of the barley brew. The cheese was already coming to the end of its life and Dune had no qualms eating it himself, knowing dairy would most assuredly upset Parna's stomach.

Parna was tearing off tiny bites and eating slowly, almost forcing the food down his mouth and looking green in the process. The ale sat better, he was thirsty

and after a few moments he began soaking his bread in it so he could swallow without tasting. Dune wasn't going to argue or make comment, Parna was doing as best as he could and some food was better than no food at all. He'd been ill before and he knew power illnesses were a lot worse than mundane ills. The power was making Parna queasy and until the power settled in the area again, Parna was coping admirably considering.

After breaking their fast Dune returned to the chest and pulled out warm and dry monks robes, as much as he liked looking at Parna sitting modestly in blankets he was feeling in no shape for Dune's desires that were growing by leaps and bounds the longer he sat looking at that bare pink chest. His desires suddenly flaming to life as he lifted out robes and discovered more than he bargained for in that chest.

There in the bottom was decidedly un-monk like treasures. Dune chuckled to himself as he quickly shut the lid again, he always knew the monks were just a bunch of non-breeders that found other ways to pass the time when not being scholarly. This monk in particular had quite a nice stash that Dune was going to shameless borrow from later. Parna was a good deal away from playing with the toys in the bottom of the chest. Those would probably scar him for life if Dune pulled one of those out of the chest, but the aloe based lubrication was going to come in quite handy since Dune's pack of supplies had probably washed away by now and his stash was lost to the tide.

Parna was smiling as Dune turned. "What are you smiling at?"

"You, your face. You found something that amused you and I bet I can guess what you found." Parna said and Dune quirked an eyebrow.

"Probably not dearest."

"I bet I can. Father Dundis and Father Markem are lovers. This is Father Dundis' room and he and Father Markem often tryst in the cellar. Father Dundis is quite creative."

Dune just stared at Parna shocked. He'd not expected a sequestered wellspring to know anything at all about sexual encounters, let alone know so much. "You are full of surprises my love. Aye, I found exactly what you said. Since we're on the subject, how much do you know?"

"Enough to know what torture is from being denied the same. They told me it was wrong to want things, but I am human and I cannot help but want the same things as others occasionally. Especially when lovers are trysting where I can see them and hear them and cry for want of the same."

Dune's heart lurched at the sad look on Parna's face and he walked over and crushed Parna in a bear of a hug. "Not anymore dearest. Believe me, not only do I want to love you, I will all our days. Tell me your desires and I will give them if I am able." Dune said wrapping the robe around Parna's shoulders and carding his hand through soft auburn hair.

"You have already given me my desire. I can feel you love me, which is all I ever wanted most. The longer I am with you, the more I feel. I know you are more concerned about the storm than you are letting on, I know you are still hungry and ignoring it in favor of conserving our provisions. You're worried about fresh water and even more concerned about my health. You are a dear man Dune and I am finding it impossible not to love you in return." Parna said smiling and Dune leaned forward and rested his forehead against Parna's so their eyes were mere inches apart.

"If I doubted our bond, I would no longer be in doubt. A wielder can never lie to his wellspring. You all bloody know the truth before we do sometimes. Aye dearest, the storm concerns me, I am still hungry but it will fade, it's power use that makes me so, I am constantly maintaining a barrier so I am hungrier than normal. I've eaten enough to sustain me for now. Moreover, I am concerned over you too. I can feel you too and I can feel how queasy you are just as you can tell how hungry I am. I'm pretty sure I'm also failing to hide how much I want you."

"That too." Parna grinned and his eyes crinkled with mirth.

"Adorable you are. Stop it, it makes me want you more."

"You make me so happy Dune. There is no need to be so concerned over me. My stomach ache is just power sitting badly. I will be fine once the storm ebbs I am in no danger really. The bread is sitting well enough, I shant starve."

"Telling me not to worry is like telling a wolf bitch not to defend her young Parna. Easier said than done I'm afraid. I am a worry wart by nature, I take after my mother." Dune said smiling and kissing Parna's brow.

"I vow not to complain, I am fairly sure I will however remind you often not to be so over me. I am used to seeing to my own ills and woes I will have to get used to you fretting. No one other than Father Dundis and Father Markem has ever cared before." Parna said and Dune cupped his face in his hands.

"You will never face them alone again." Dune said closing the space and bestowing Parna his first real kiss.

Parna melted into the kiss like butter over flame and he was blissfully pliant in Dune's arms as the kiss had them both entwined together in the bed before long.

Dune's hands caressing soft skin that had Parna sighing into the kiss and their bond was ignited almost against their will.

There was no denying their bond even if they'd wished it so, Parna was humming with power and Dune was responding to the power that filled him with as much lust as it did energy. He felt singed with heat like he was kissing pure lightning.

Dune had to tear himself away from the kiss panting and he blindly stumbled to the chest and threw it open and grabbed the small corked bottle before stumbling back to bed on shaking legs and falling back in only to crush Parna again with kisses that had him gasping for breath.

When Parna pulled away and got on his knees Dune immediately responded like a feral were-beast in heat and the bottle's cork he removed with his teeth and he was coating himself liberally with one hand and using the other to hurriedly prepare Parna to accept him.

Parna was moaning and pressing into fingers just as lustfully needy, denied so long and seeing this act of carnal knowledge so many times he knew what he wanted and was desperate for Dune to give it to him.

Dune carefully set the bottle down on the floor so the precious liquid wouldn't spill and then buried himself in a body that was pleading to be taken with physical body language and a pull on their bond that demanded the wielder tap into the power physically.

Dune's name was screamed in pain and pleasure as Parna was entered and he pushed back needing to feel loved, to feel physical pleasure, to feel the most intimate of touches. His body was on fire and only Dune could quell the need.

"Parna!" Dune grunted as he felt Parna's body accept him and then thrust backwards driving Dune even deeper to the point he saw stars behind his eyelids from pleasure. Parna knew exactly what he wanted and Dune was going to give him every desire with pleasure as he began to thrust forcibly.

"Dune! DUNE!" Parna cried out, his hands gripping bed linens, his face contorted in pleasure where it rested in pillows. His chest flat against the mattress and his posterior high in the air in offering to his mate.

His own erection painfully bobbing to the force of Dune's penetrating thrusts. When Dune's hand reached around and gripped it firmly Parna's moan sent a shiver down Dune's spine.

A frenetic and exhausting pace was set as Parna's power erupted and blasted his wielder with intense light. Dune was lost in the blaze and was equally consumed as he emptied himself and collapsed bereft of breath and gasping for

air. A cool hand stroked Dune's chest and the all consuming power was drained away into nodes.

"Forgive me Dune, I didn't realize I was feeding you so much power." Parna's voice was concerned and Dune just grasped that hand on his chest and brought it to his lips.

"Beloved that was incredible. Feed me like that and I will not just be your wielder but your slave."

"I was burning you."

"But it felt so good. Now I can see why Wielder's are so possessive over their mates if mating is always like that. I will never have enough of that! They call it Destiny and I am now a believer." Dune laughed and Parna smiled and rested his chin on Dune's chest.

"As am I, that was wonderful. I purged much power my stomach ache is gone. It seems the cure to my power needs is you after all." Parna said and Dune smiled down at the lovely face resting on his chest.

"We are bonded for many reasons it seems beloved. I am glad to hear we can purge your excess in such fun ways."

"Aye." Parna smiled getting up on shaky legs to fetch a mug of ale which they shared together both being parched from panting and after slacking their thirst they curled up together and listened to the storm rage outside in silence, just holding each other and resting after such exhausting activity.

“In the Eye of the Tempest”

A Wielder and Wellspring Story

Author: D. Sanders

Chapter II - Parna’s Pleasure

Parna was still sleeping as Dune sat at the small table in his borrowed robe and wrote a letter to his King. Explaining the situation, the severity of the storm and that he expected to be trapped with his wellspring at least for a fortnight. Not only did the storm have to pass, the waters would have to recede before he dared trying to take Parna out of the temple.

Dune had grown up in a fishing village and had learned to swim and swim well before he was able to walk, he’d seen his fair share of floods and storms and was trained from a boy to handle almost instinctively water emergencies and his body reflected the conditioning. Strong, sturdy and athletic.

Parna on the other hand had spent his whole life in the temple, Dune didn’t need to ask to know Parna couldn’t swim seeing as he probably never saw more standing water in one place than in a bath tub even living right on the sea himself. Dune didn’t want to risk an undercurrent or worse.

The foulness of the water was also a concern, even Dune didn’t want to risk getting sick from going into tainted water. It was bad enough they were in the temple and mold would soon start forming everywhere. His barriers would keep out the spores, the water and filth, but eventually they’d have to come out of their sanctuary and Dune wanted the risks minimal.

He asked the King for supplies and for relief aide for the town that would need help rebuilding.

He laid his hand on the parchment and it vanished to the King’s desk, he had his reply in moments.

Dearest Dune,

You always manage to catch me at my desk, I still say you are part cat with that intuition of yours. First let me say congratulations on your bonding, I am thrilled to hear it at last. It’s nice to know my brother In heart is complete at last. I cannot wait to meet him, the way you describe him I can tell you love him very much. He sounds beautiful indeed. Your sister says to tell you she told you so, that she always knew you’d find him eventually. My dear wellspring is such a hopeless romantic, but then you know that already, she is your twin.

Duna is getting together your supplies now and I’ll send them as soon as she’s finished. I’ve sent out orders to be sent via the signal towers. Once word is out of the disaster I’ve instructed all Wielder’s within fifty miles to come aide and any

able bodied person who is able to come as well. So you should start seeing arrivals soon.

Stay safe brother, I've heard of foundations failing with so much water strain on them, make sure you seal the foundations with barriers so the temple doesn't collapse on you. Here I am giving advise to a sea man. I'm sure you already thought of that yourself. Duna is always calling me the landlubber after all, I should know better after ten years with her shouldn't I?

Take care of yourself, send word so we don't worry too much for you and again congratulations on the bonding. Do bring him to meet us soon before you wander off again brother restless feet. One day I'll convince you to move to the capital with us, you'll hardly recognize your nephew anymore and he's always asking after you, he loves you like we do.

I've guilt tripped you enough into a visit I daresay, Duna is back and your supplies should follow in a few minutes. Stand out of the way, you know my aim isn't as accurate as yours.

*Love,
Dinar*

Dune smiled as he set the letter down and a large bang erupted when the crate containing their supplies materialized about a foot off the floor and landed with a thud, knocking over a chair and upending a keg of ale.

"Dinar you have horrible aim indeed. One of these days I'm going to teach you how to focus on landings." Dune chuckled as Parna said bolt upright in bed in shock.

"What was that?!" Parna asked and Dune chuckled.

"My brother by bonding making a mess sending us supplies is what that was." Dune said turning the chair upright and moving the keg back to where it was.

"That crate has the King's seal on it!" Parna said and Dune nodded.

"Aye. My Twin sister Duna is bonded to King Dinar. Back then he was just the Prince and being naughty by running off to see the country on his own. He calls me Restless Feet, he has the most restless feet of them all." Dune said with a smile as he turned to see Parna sitting there stunned.

"I heard he was almost lost once." Parna said and Dune nodded.

"Aye, that's how we met. He was seventeen and stupid. He got himself in a bind and got himself trapped in a storm much like this one. He thought that cave on

the shore was a good shelter and he was soon trapped in it and almost drowned in the tide pool trying to get out again. He reached for power and tapped into Duna, we lived not far from the cave and she was frantic with fear, jabbering like an idiot until I tapped into the connection and discovered Dinar in her mind about to lose consciousness which set his wellspring off like a mad woman. Father and I got him out, got him back to the house and the rest is history. I was fifteen then, before mother would let me leave the house on my own.” Dune said with a wink as he pried open the crate of supplies.

“You must make a habit of rescuing fools.” Parna said and Dune smiled.

“HE was a fool going into places he had no experience in dealing with and being a rebellious youth. You had little choice dearest, this storm came in suddenly and no one bothered to get you out of the cellar with warning. I blame the monks who failed to protect you and foolish laws we all know were only created so that Butcher Fenderack could take out his competition for the throne. Good riddance to that butcher. I studied those early laws, it’s been two hundred years and I cannot believe they are still even in existence. Dinar has brought up the subject in council more than once and the lords balk every time he tries to get them rescinded. They say he has to have proof, I don’t know how much more they need. Non-breeder wielders need non-breeder wellsprings, it’s the law of nature at work here. However, since Non-breeders are in the minority we don’t get a lot of sympathy. They think we are abnormal not wanting to breed with women and pass on our powers to offspring. If I had my way I’d show them public proof that my wanker doesn’t get hard with women by having one lap dance on me in the town square and breeding is as impossible as me shitting out a litter of were-kittens. It’s an old fight they refuse to understand and we sadly won’t win in our lifetime dearest. Most lords are still like Fenderack in a lot of ways. They’d outlaw non-breeders outright if they could get away with it just because they think it’s unnatural.”

“The monks wouldn’t let them there. The gods made us all and the holy writ proclaims any man is free to choose the mate of his choice, it does not specify gender. Wielders above all bond by holy decree. It is why Male wellsprings cannot be killed outright we have to live just in case a wielder claims us as his. Even Fenderack bowed to the monks and Pernath only went into the temple. I read that too.” Parna said coming over to the crate Dune was unpacking.

“Precisely, which is why lords just make it difficult for non-breeders. They are afraid of upsetting the gods but not so afraid at upsetting fellow men. Enough of depressing talk, my sister sent us wine and cake, with a note we are to toast our bonding. Bless her, I adore my sister.” Dune said setting aside the wine and cake on the table and sorting through the rest of the contents.

Several loaves of bread, cold meats and cheeses were all packed carefully and Dune set aside the perishables in a separate container and then spelled it to

keep it cold so it would keep longer. Fresh fruit and vegetables followed and more treats followed the cakes. Duna knew her brother's quirks and he cheered as he pulled out a box of his favorite crisp soda water crackers and a jar of butter made from peanuts. It was his favorite snack to have after he used a lot of power and he was hunting for a knife immediately to use to spread his butter on his crackers. Parna watched amused as Dune was acting like he was opening a birthing day gift.

"What is that? It smells like peanuts." Parna asked as Dune opened the jar.

"It is peanuts. I love this, mom used to make it when I was a boy and it's my favorite. Here, try some." Dune said forgoing the knife and just dipping his finger in the jar and sticking it in Parna's mouth.

Which was a mistake, because just the action of Parna sucking the peanut butter off his finger made his groin twitch involuntarily.

"Damn, that's probably not a good idea love. You light my fire too easily." Dune chuckled taking his finger back.

"Dune, you will survive your overactive loins I suspect. That was lovely, sweeter than I expected."

"There's a lot of sugar in it aye. It's great for replacing burned up stores when you're hungry from power use. It's why mom made it for Father and I got a craving for it fairly early in life, she'd feed it to me for lunch on bread with fresh jam preserves. Heaven on Earth for a five year old pallet or a Twenty-five year old one considering. This travels beautifully and lasts forever practically in the jar. It never lasts long enough to go bad with me around however. I always have a jar of this in my travel pack." Dune said with a wink as he found a spreading knife in the crate and set about spreading the butter on the crackers for both he and Parna to eat together. Dune was glad he could share one of his joys with Parna who seemed to like it as much as he did.

"It sticks to the roof of your mouth!" Parna laughed chewing his cracker and Dune nodded, his own mouth full.

"Milk is best to wash it down with, but sadly no milk handy. Water is the next best choice, anything else really tastes foul mixed with peanut butter. Believe me, I once had nothing but ale and I went without drink after that first swig that made me sick." Dune said with a wink pouring them both glasses of cool fresh water out of the barrel that Duna sent. Plenty to drink and easy to get more if needed.

After their snack Parna helped Dune stack away their supplies neatly and securely as yet another sonic boom rocked the temple and the rush of water outside the door made them both jump out of their skins.

“Damn it, the roof went up there I think. It was already pretty damaged before. The roof here is stone thankfully and supported by my barrier. We’ll be okay for now from leaks and weather. It will get cold in here though, we can’t let the fire go out. We’ve enough wood for a few days and I’ll have Dinar send us more soon so we don’t have to go busting up furniture to burn. We’re in here for a while beloved. I’d guess a fortnight at least before it’s safe to leave again, I do hope our good monk has some cards in here or you and I will grow bored quickly.” Dune said and Parna smiled.

“We have many games to play beloved. Cards being but one of them I’m sure.” Parna replied and Dune smirked.

“Whose loins are overactive again? You’re as bad as I am Parna. Thank the Gods.” Dune chuckled planting a kiss behind Parna’s ear before they began exploring their purloined accommodations for entertainment beyond games that involved the bed.

The days passed slowly as they stayed safe inside from the eye of the tempest raging outside around them. When they weren’t loving each other to pass the time, they sat huddled in robes and under covers playing cards. They’d moved the bed closer to the fire to stay warm as temperatures dropped which helped and neither got out of the warm bed much beyond making trips to the attached bathing room facility or to grab food or water before rushing back to warmth again.

On the fifth day the storm outside ceased and Dune opened a window to assess the damage and stared jaw agape. Parna gasped as he came up beside Dune.

They were on the fourth floor and not ten feet below the window the waters had risen. “We could fish out the Window!” Parna gasped, the whole village was lost under water, they were well out to sea considering the level of the water.

Both men raced up the stairs to the loft, the whole roof was gone making the loft floor the new roof and as they stood there looking around, for miles and miles in every direction was water.

“I have never seen the sea rise so high. You and I beloved are going to need a boat to get out of here any time soon. By the Gods this is insane!” Dune gasped looking at a loss to describe the damage.

“I am surprised we survived this at all! The whole temple is buried in water except the upper two floors! We’ve had water under our feet for days!” Parna said

turning to see the corpse of the wolf that had almost attacked him still laying on the floor. He jumped and turned into Dune's arms.

"I thought I'd imagined that. You saved me from him too. Thank you my love."

"Dearest, you never need to thank me. I thank the gods I was in time to save you in the first place. Come on, it's cold out here, let's go back down for now before we catch cold. I just want to air out our room a little then I'm shutting the windows again." Dune said leading the way back downstairs.

Once the room was fresh again, Dune shut the windows and sent a letter to Dinar to convey the damages and ask for a row boat or at least someone to row out to them to collect them. There was no swimming this mess and it would take weeks for the waters to recede enough to wade through. It was pointless to wait that long, someone had to have a boat nearby.

Come the following morning there was a hail outside their window and Dune threw it open to see three men in a fishing boat. "Unbelievable you survived that tempest Dune!" One hailed and Dune laughed.

"I learned from the master Father! What on earth are you doing all the way out here?" Dune asked and Dumas Laughed.

"Your sister sent word. Your Mama and I are old hands at hurricanes lad, you know that, besides her baby boy was out here, like she'd let me rest until she knew you were safe? Hardly!" Dumas called back throwing up a rope ladder which Dune affixed to the ledge.

"Bring the boat in closer Father. Parna can't swim and I am not letting him get wet in this muck!" Dune called out as Parna came to the window.

"Is this the lad who finally caught my boy?" Dumas called up and Parna smiled.

"Aye father." Dune said proudly as he tossed out some of their purloined supplies that the men stacked away deftly as the boat was tied to the side of the wall about fifteen feet below the window.

"Well don't dally, send down the lovely so father can meet him properly." Dumas ordered and Dune helped hoist Parna out the window where he climbed down the ladder into strong arms that made sure he was secure in the boat before letting go.

"Such a lovely. I knew you were out there for him and it does my heart joy to welcome you to our family Parna." Dumas said touching Parna's cheek much like Dune did. Dune was a virtual copy of his father, it was undeniable who Dune's

sire was and easy to see what Dune would look like in another twenty years. Sturdy and strong like father like son.

“Thank you sir. I am so happy to be with Dune I love him very much.”

“As I’m sure my lout of a son loves you in return. He’s a lover like his mother, suffocate you with affection if you let him.” Dumas winked as he turned to offer his son a hand into the boat.

“I heard that Father. I take after you most you liar.” Dune said as he helped untie the boat and settled beside Parna as the men rowed them back to shore.

“Your mother is anxious to meet Parna. We’ve made camp in a good natural cave up the mountain there. Your brother and Tandy are with us too and if Dinar had his way he and Duna would be here too. It’s like camping when you kids were little again, your mother is in heaven.” Dumas chuckled as he talked and Parna nestled against Dune’s side. Feeling very welcome and at peace. Even if the fishermen in the boat seemed ill at ease in his presence Parna didn’t care. He was Dune’s wellspring and he at last had rights like other men.

Once they reached the new shoreline tow ropes were tossed out and Dune refused to let Parna get his feet wet and he carried him to shore before setting him down on dry earth.

His feet were barely on the ground when a petite woman rushed forward and threw her arms around him with a blanket. “It’s freezing out here, keep warm precious.” She said gently while hugging him tightly.

Parna was stunned, not knowing who this stranger was until she let him go and turned to Dune and slugged him, hard in the arm.

“What have I told you about staying in buildings during a hurricane?” She demanded and Dune rubbed his arm.

“Mama we had little choice. That bloody hurt damn it.” Dune replied scowling.

“Don’t you make that face at me, I’ll turn you over my knee! You’re still my son and you know better!”

“Mama, like I said it was safer there than trying to get back out again. The water was too high and too fast and Parna was trapped. By the time I got to him there was no getting out again and I was not about to take a non-swimmer out in a storm. Give me a little credit.” Dune shot right back and she just snorted.

“Alright, alright. Now come I’ve got warm stew on for you both and I want to get to know my handsome new son by bonding.” She said taking Parna’s arm in hers and leading them to the family camp.

Dune was greeted heartily by a youth not much older than Parna but was obviously Dune’s brother, they looked more like twins than Dune probably did to his actual twin and both of them identical to their sire.

Dune’s mother, Undine, had Parna covered in enough blankets to make him almost hot next to the fire as she kept filling his tea and stroking his cheek and just being motherly and wonderful. Parna already loved her dearly and it had been just a few minutes.

Tandy, Durk’s wellspring was eighteen like Parna and was happily sitting behind Parna with a brush in her hands and working out snarls from his hair and gushing how beautiful his hair was and how she envied the locks. She braided it tightly to keep it out of his face as Durk came over and greeted him with a slightly less violent version of the hug he’d bestowed on his big brother.

“I’m so happy for you both. We were all worried Dune wasn’t going to find you and now that he has I can say I’m not surprised. He always did fancy pretty redheads.” Durk said with a wink and got a slap in the back of his head from Dune.

“Enough out of you, Bastard.” Dune scolded good naturedly as he watched Tandy braid Parna’s hair and he smiled.

“I think Parna’s eyes are his best feature. So big and blue and those eyelashes, mercy me women would kill for those.” Undine remarked and Parna’s face grew hot with all the compliments.

Tandy just squeezed his shoulders from behind. “They take getting used to Parna. You bonded into the most wonderful family. They overwhelmed me too, but such love is a blessing and we are all lucky to have them in this world. Lucky to have you now too.” Tandy said and Parna couldn’t stop the tears of joy and sobbed happily in warm motherly arms that pulled him closer.

“Ah pet, no more tears love. No more pain for you sweetheart, you’re one of us now and Dune isn’t the only one in this family who will stand by you dearest. We are simple folk and family comes first. Now dry your eyes and drink your tea. You’re thin as a wisp and this area is in chaos and better to have you warm and healthy to fight off the ills that always follow storms likes these.” Undine said as Dune settled beside Parna and took his hand.

“Mama is right, the whole place is filthy now and when the mold starts people will be getting sick all over the place. We’ve come out of the frying pan into the fire

now. We'll be busy soon love with clean up and best to be rested well before hand. Our leisure is over sadly." Dune said and Parna smiled and wiped his eyes.

"I just hope I'm useful. You will have to teach me what to do to help." Parna said and Undine laughed.

"Darling, we're wellsprings. You'll always know what to do to help, it's second nature, we trail along behind our men and pick them up when they fall down." Undine said and from across the camp Dumas bellowed.

"I heard that woman! I don't fall down. Just stumble a lot." He shouted and Undine smiled.

"Two left feet you have!" Undine hollered right back and Parna chuckled.

"He thinks they're joking." Durk said turning to Dune.

"And you're acting like you and I aren't included in that statement. We take after father." Dune added turning to kiss Parna's cheek.

"I have a feeling I will be alright then." Parna said and Dune nodded.

"You'll be fine love." Dune reassured as Dumas joined the family for stew and was dandling Undine on his knee as he told Parna stories of Dune's embarrassing youth.

Parna was in heaven and was saying prayers of gratitude as he smiled and laughed until his face ached from mirth. He had a family at last and every last one of them he'd die to protect he loved them all so very much.

Especially the one who was holding him under the blanket and who's heartbeat matched his own. Dune had given Parna his every desire and Parna would make sure that Dune knew everyday just how much he was loved in return.

“In the Eye of the Tempest”

A Wielder and Wellspring Story

Author: D. Sanders

Chapter III - A Wielder’s Wrath

Work began immediately as relief efforts were organized. Seven wielders and their bonded wellsprings had managed to respond to the King’s summons and they were all organizing workers to help establish a temporary town as the waters began to recede.

There were teams to set up a galley style mess to feed everyone and the rest were all wearing covers over their noses and mouths as they shifted debris and tried cleaning up the area.

Parna trailed along behind Dune like a constant shadow, just like the other wellsprings were doing with their mates. Offering support and power, reminding their wielder’s to rest and not overwork and just be handy as an extra set of hands to fetch and carry and attend primarily to the wielders who always did the lions share of the work.

Mess bell rang and Dune was occupied in lashing together a shelter. “Go ahead without me Parna love. I’ll only be a few minutes dearest. Just grab me something to eat please.” Dune asked and Parna nodded and headed over to where the lines of people were forming to collect a rationed meal.

For the first time Parna noticed the looks and stares, he’d been so attentive to Dune he’d not noticed the others and how they were looking at him.

Like a freak, an anomaly and suddenly Parna felt very self conscious as he reached the head of the line.

The man serving didn’t even acknowledge him and skipped over him to the next in line to fill bowls with stew. Parna just stood there a moment as realization set in. They weren’t going to serve him and he sighed.

“Treat me as you will. My Wielder needs food.” Parna said quietly and a single bowl was shoved at him and Parna collected it and carried it over to where Dune was sitting and handed him the bowl.

“Parna? Where’s yours?” Dune asked and Parna just shrugged and sat down with his knees pulled up under his chin fighting tears that he knew would only make Dune angry.

“That’s not an answer Parna.”

“You will be angry, it’s nothing.”

"I'm already angry and it's not nothing. Where is your ration?"

"I'm a male wellspring Dune. My food only ever comes from the temple charity I do not eat other men's rations. It's all right, We've got a few crackers left I can eat."

"I don't think so!" Dune said slamming his bowl down angrily and walking up to the front of the line and he grabbed the server by the front of the shirt.

"Who refused rations to my wellspring?" Dune demanded and the head of the kitchen staff came over.

"What are you talking about Master Wielder?" She asked and Dune fumed.

"Don't play ignorant. Someone refused to serve my wellspring and I want to know who and why!"

"I did sir. Male Wellsprings should not be in public the abnormal beasts." The man said and it was the last thing he uttered when Dune's fist hammered home in the man's face sending him toppling backwards and drawing everyone's attention to the scene.

Undine and Dumas raced forward to the head of the crowd.

"Call my mate an abnormal beast again and I'll teach you respect at the end of my fist! Parna works as hard if not harder than the others aiding me and he has every right to walk free among you and has earned his meal along with the others! YOU WILL NOT REFUSE TO FEED HIM AGAIN IS THAT CLEAR?" Dune said grabbing a bowl and filling it with stew and walking off livid with fury.

Murmuring began in the crowd as Dune passed and Undine and Dumas flanked him as he walked back to where Parna was sitting looking dejected. "They didn't refuse him did they?" Undine asked and Dune only nodded.

"Aye. Here love, eat." Dune said handing the bowl to Parna who took it and just looked into the bowl sadly his appetite gone and replaced by a knot of anxiety.

"I am sorry to make you angry." Parna said quietly looking into his bowl and Dune sighed and rubbed the backs of his fingers against Parna's cheek affectionately.

"You are not the one who made me angry love. Prejudiced fools make me angry. Eat dearest." Dune said as Durk and Tandy walked over.

"The Old biddy running the mess is giving some idiot hell back there and hitting him with a ladle, quite amusing." Durk said and Dune scowled.

“It’s not. He deserves it.” Dune muttered into his bowl and Durk quirked an eyebrow.

“What did I miss?” He asked.

“The fool refused to give Parna his rations that’s what happened.” Undine snorted and Tandy looked shocked.

“They didn’t! That’s crazy! What on earth made them do such a thing?” Tandy asked and Parna shoved his stew around with his spoon.

“Male wellsprings live on temple charity Sister Tandy. We eat whatever the monks see fit to provide. We’re not allowed to take from hard working men and women and must be grateful to be given our daily bread. I have been hungry many times. Many feel I should not be out here among other good people being a burden.”

“HORSESHIT! It’s an excuse for people to be right bastards to another for the sick joy of it and nothing more. He knows damn good and well the law states you are a free man to live your life as you please now that you’re bonded and should have been free since your mama whelped you! You’re no bloody different than Tandy or Undine or any other wellspring for that matter! It’s asinine! Just cause you got tackle between your legs makes no difference, but a law made by a butcher king and people delight in torment! It makes me sick and always has! My own damn twin lived twenty-six years in a damned temple until they drained him dry and killed him during a storm like this. My mother and father were heartsick their whole lives having to give a son to the temple and the only way I could talk to my own damned brother was to tap into him so we could talk mind to mind. I only know what he looked like from looking in a mirror. It’s criminal!” Dumas spat and Parna jolted, he hadn’t known Dune’s father was also a twin and that he’d had an Uncle that had been a male wellspring.

It made sense though now to see why this family was so different than most, they had lost a loved one to a fate they had been powerless to circumvent.

“I am sorry.” Parna said and Dumas smiled at him and just patted his cheek, a habit Dune had picked up from his father as a gesture of affection.

“You have nothing to be sorry for son. You make it easier to bear the loss knowing one of you made it out whole and I can love you openly as my son at heart. Don’t you let them pick on you pet, refuse to take the abuse and call any one of us if you find trouble and we’ll come running. We won’t stand for it, they’ve got to accept and we’ll bloody shove the truth of the matter up stubborn asses if we have to.” Dumas said with a wink and Parna smiled.

"I am so wonderfully blessed. Thank you." Parna said kissing Dumas' cheek as he settled against Dune's side and ate his stew rations with a lighter heart. He could face anything knowing he had such loving support behind him.

The days passed long and slow, from sun up to sun down men and women were working fingers to the bone rebuilding a town and salvaging as much as they could to start over again.

Dune and Parna fell into a comfortable groove that had become instinctual, Dune never had to ask for any aid large or small. From a towel to wipe filthy hands on to help shifting boulders for the new levee by tapping into Parna's well of power.

Wellsprings being always rather petite never did any of the physically demanding labor but they were just as exhausted as the others by the end of the day because of the power they generated for their wielder's to use. They shifted more power than twenty men doing back breaking labor and Undine, Tandy and Parna always looked about ready to fall asleep in their dinner rations before three men ordered them to bed as soon as the last bites were taken.

It was the middle of the night when Parna awoke with the nagging and annoying urge to relieve himself. He was reluctant to move from his nice warm bed roll where Dune's lovely body heat was so nice to snuggle into. Parna tried to ignore nature and the more he tried the worse he had to go, so he carefully crawled out of Dune's arms and Dune only grunted in a half snore before he settled again.

Parna wrapped in a blanket to ward off the chill and tip-toed over Durk and Tandy also entwined for warmth by the fire. Parna could tell from the snores, Dumas was well asleep and Undine was lost under the mound of blankets covering their little sanctuary of their campsite near the rear of the cave.

A latrine facility had been dug further down the path and the night was crisp and the gravel crunched under Parna's feet as he hurried to do his business and return to Dune to get warm again.

Everything was quiet and still and Parna was still lacing his breeches up again after completing his task when a strong hand clamped over his mouth and foul breath that reeked of ale arrested his nostrils.

"Pretty freak fooling good wielders! What's an abomination like you do for the wielder huh? How do you take it like a woman so that he thinks you're bonded? Is mating you like that so good that it can fool even a wielder to think it's a real proper bonding? I'll admit that you are pretty enough for a lassie even for a freak. Show me how you fool the wielder!" The man from the mess who had refused to

serve him hissed and Parna panicked as the man's hands went for Parna's breeches.

Parna kicked backwards and tried to run, but the man had a firm grip and the next thing Parna knew, he was in pain as his palms scrapped on the ground as he fell and the weight of the man was on top of him and ripping at Parna's breeches.

Dune sat up bolt awake in bed. Something was dreadfully wrong, he could feel Parna's panic. "Parna? PARNA!" Dune called, waking the others in the process.

Dune was out of his mind frantic as he stumbled out of the cave, chasing the sense of fear in desperation. Dumas, Durk and the women chasing after him.

Parna was struggling, trying to get away when the man struck him in the side of the head with a rock and Parna's world grew hazy and dizzy. His mind reaching out to Dune in fear. Parna felt his breeches tugged down around his legs and then everything stopped.

Light flashed and Parna felt Dune tap into his well and the man who was a moment ago assaulting Parna was screaming in agony and Dune was there, holding the man's throat in a burning hand and crushing his larynx while electrifying the man with rage.

"DUMAS STOP HIM! HE'S MAD WITH BOND RAGE!" Undine called, rushing over to Parna's side and throwing a blanket around a shivering form while Tandy dabbed at the cut on his temple with shaking fingers.

"He won't stop shaking!" Tandy said and Undine nodded rocking Parna in her arms.

"He's in shock and Dune isn't helping by adding to the mix with bonding blood lust." Undine said as Durk, Dumas and two other wielders's awakened by the disturbance of power came rushing over with half the camp.

It took all four wielders to break Dune's grip on the now nearly dead man's throat. "Let go Dune! DUNE! Parna is safe look! Wake up man!" One of the men called, trying to break a wielder's wrath over a threat to his bonded wellspring was like trying to break a diamond by crushing it with bare hands.

Everyone knew never to threaten a wielder's wellspring, just for this very reason. You awakened a raging were-beast in human form with one single thought on his mind. Kill the threat, save the mate.

At the mention of Parna's name, Dune's head snapped around and his eyes fixed on Parna and he stumbled over blindly and crushed Parna in his arms, the worst

of the rage instantly changing into fear. Parna, once released from Dune's intense rage and grip on his well collapsed in a dead faint in Dune's arms.

"Get this bastard out of here, if Dune gets angry again he WILL die and we won't be able to stop him next time. Lock him up, he's under arrest for the attempted rape and assault on Wellspring Parna!" King's Own Wielder Jaxon said and several men, wide eyed dragged an unconscious and barely breathing man away.

Jaxon walked over and laid a hand on Dune's shaking shoulders, he was so intently wrapped and wound around Parna he jumped.

"Steady O' Man. Are you sane again?"

"Aye." Dune rasped and Jaxon nodded.

"Take him back to your camp, keep him warm and I'll send a healer over to tend to Parna." Jaxon said softly and Dune nodded scooping up Parna and carrying him back to camp.

It was moments later when Father Markem arrived with dressings and he tended Parna's injury to his temple. "He has a slight concussion and he's in shock. When did he pass out?"

"Right after Dune's bond-rage faded." Undine answered and Father Markem nodded.

"Backlash of power, he'll be alright, but he'll wake with a horrible headache. He's to stay in bed tomorrow and give him these powders for the pain in his skull in water. Do not let him stand up on his own, he will be dizzy and off balance a few days probably. That's a nasty hit to his temple and it could have killed him, that foul beast." Markem said as he gently cleaned and applied medicine to the cut on Parna's temple.

Markem laid a hand on Dune's. "For what it is worth, I am joyful over his bonding to you Master Dune. Parna was always a very sweet child and I would not have left him in the temple, but Dundis and I were away when the storm hit, we both prayed every night you'd both be spared. I have raised Parna since he was a babe, I love him very much." Markem said and Dune half smiled.

"He told me of you father. I believe the affection is returned. Thank you." Dune said moving to cradle Parna in his arms.

"I know it is and I know he is in good hands, rest well and I'll come tomorrow to check on him." Markem said as Father Dundis arrived carrying food and supplies.

“The boy eats in here and damn the rations.” Dundis said setting down the basket and kneeling beside Parna and Dune.

“Mark how is he?” Dundis asked taking Parna’s hand.

“He will be alright if you let him sleep Dundis. He’s not three anymore and you do not need to light candles in his room to help him sleep.” Markem said with a smile as Dundis held a small hand in his.

“He was always so little, I cannot help but see the babe I used to rock to sleep or sat up with all night when he was ill. Old habits die hard. Master Dune thank you for saving our Parna.”

Dune just nodded and watched Markem tug Dundis’ robe to lead him out of the cave campsite. Dune saw a very long love affair reflected in what was essentially Parna’s adoptive parents, they did raise him after all and had their hands tied in the doing as well. The love was there and it was sincere, even if before they were law bound and forced to hide how much they cared for Parna.

Now however they could freely love him too as Dune did. Nevertheless, those were cares for another day to be addressed, for now all Dune cared about was taking care of Parna.

Undine brought over more blankets and Dune wrapped around his beloved and returned to sleep himself, emotionally exhausted.

Parna was still sleeping deeply, Dune hovering possessively around him when Markem came back the following morning. Markem frowned and squatted beside the pair and gently nudged Parna. “Come on bright eyes, it is time you awake little bird.” Markem said quietly and Parna stirred.

“Father Markem?” Parna asked groggily and Markem smiled.

“Aye dove, wake up now.” He said with a smile as Parna came to wakefulness and groaned as he opened his eyes and quickly shut them again.

“My head hurts.” Parna said with a dry sounding throat.

“I’m not surprised, you got hit rather hard and then got caught in a power mesh rage from your wielder. I’d worry if your head didn’t hurt pigeon. Can you sit up to take my powders?”

“Do I have to take them? They taste vile Father.”

Markem laughed, Parna never did like taking medicine. "You always resist, ever since you were a wee chick. Aye, take them or that head will continue to pound you." Markem said moving to help Parna sit up into Dune's arms. He handed Parna a cup of water with the headache powder mixed in and Parna grimaced as he drained the cup in a single large gulp. Markem took the cup away and set it aside then looked deeply into tired eyes.

"Pupils are still dilated. I want you to stay in your bedroll today, do not try to stand you'll be dizzy and if you have to relieve yourself you will use a chamber pot or your Wielder here will carry you to the privy and no arguments Parna. I know you, and you'll try to do more than you are able too soon and make yourself worse. You always did." Markem said and Parna smiled weakly.

"I'm sorry." He said and Markem smiled and took Parna's hand.

"You son, have never had cause to apologize for anything. All your life you have apologized for others. Such a dear boy you are and it is I and the rest of us who are sorry you were hurt child. First the law makes us keep an innocent chained to a temple, then the other fathers left you behind when they should have taken care of you. Dundis' has already given them all quite a harsh reprimand and punishment for their actions. Then after all your woes, which you have always met with a smile, yet more treat you with such contempt and it breaks my heart. You are like a son to me I am most grateful for Dune. I know at last you will ever have someone to protect you." Markem said sincerely and leaned forward to embrace Parna who held him back in tears.

"No tears love, I think you have shed enough dearest." Dune said wrapping his arms around Parna as Markem released him from his embrace.

"Did you kill him?" Parna asked quietly and Dune sighed.

"I don't know Parna. If I didn't he probably wishes he was dead right now. You are my wellspring, and any threat to you will always put me in a rage I have no control over. I can't remember honestly what happened beyond seeing you then stumbling back here. The rest is a blank." Dune said and Markem pulled up a crate to sit on.

"He lives, but he is seriously hurt and in a very precarious position, I'll not lie. He is conscious and sober now and King's Own Jaxon has been questioning him this morning. His actions alone warrant at the minimum excommunication and at the maximum execution. Dune would have been in his rights to kill him last night for what he did and tried to do to you and vicariously what he would have done to Dune had he succeeded."

"He's right Parna. Had he hurt you, he would have hurt me too. My rage comes on not only because I love you, I am bonded to you on a much deeper level and

it is survival instinct that engages when you are in danger. There is a reason only one in a thousand or more Wielders outlive their wellsprings. My life is tied into your power and when that power fades so do I. It is also why I knew you were in danger immediately. I will always know when you need me most dearest.” Dune said and Parna nodded, knowing that himself from his studies and hoping he never gave cause for Dune to go into such a blind rage again. It had been a most frightening experience.

“I am sorry Dune. I will try to be more careful.” Parna said and Dune sighed along with Markem.

“There he goes again, that is a bad habit you have pet. You did nothing wrong.” Markem said and Dune nodded.

“He’s right again Parna. That bastard is at fault, not you love.”

“He accused me of deceiving you. Making you think we were bonded with trickery and mating. He said he wanted to see why I could fool you. I have never been so scared, not even the storm scared me so much.” Parna said softly and Dune’s eyes flashed angrily and Markem laid a hand on Dune’s arm.

“Save your anger Dune. I agree the intent was vile and whether the intended victim is male or female makes no difference here. Before I came to the temple to live, I had been the victim to my uncle. He started using me when I was still a child of seven and I ran away to the temple when I was fourteen. It took me many, many years to bear touch again, be thankful for your bond and that Parna escaped with your protection. You have saved him a very painful scar and for that I am more than grateful.”

Parna looked to Markem with tears in his eyes at the confession and Markem only smiled tenderly and held Parna’s hand. “Parna, it is long past and Dundis has removed the worst of my pain with his love for me. It is only a memory now that can only do harm if I allow it to. I have learned over the years I have been with Dundis that everything happens for good or for ill and we can either learn and grow from the experience and move on or dwell and be consumed by a past we cannot change. My advice to you is to step forward and move forward and you will be happy.”

At that moment Dundis marched in all smiles and leaned over and grinned at Parna. “Why the long face poppet? It is a lovely new day and we are all alive to see the Gods’ wonders.” He said cheerfully, his robes were askew and smudged with earth around his knees where he had been kneeling and his hair was always standing at strange angles and even more so today as he looked windswept and fresh from outside. He was nearing fifty years old, but still looked as spry and healthy as a man half is age.

Dundis has always been full of kindness and good intent and Parna remembered sitting on that large lap with strong arms around him rocking him when he had nightmares as a little boy. He remembered Dundis and Markem reading him stories at bedtime and Dundis teaching him to read when he was old enough.

These were his parents, the ones who buffered the hate from the world and taught him the laws but also taught him how much they disagreed with them in their own subtle ways. Looking at them through different eyes, he could see now all that they had tried to do for him, and how very much they had suffered too.

Parna burst into tears and Dundis' eyes went wide when Parna's arms circled his next like he had done as a boy. "There now pet. What's wrong?" Dundis said patting Parna's back as he cried.

"Nothing. I love you Father that's all." Parna sniffled into his chest and Dune could see Dundis' eyes melt into a look of sincere affection as strong arms enfolded Parna in a tight embrace.

"I love you too Parna. What brought all this on?" Dundis asked and Markem only smiled.

"Life." Was all Markem said leaning his chin on his hand and watching the scene.

"And all the better to live it to it's fullest. I say." Dundis said leaning back and pressing Parna's nose with a wink. "Haven't I always taught you that?"

"Aye, father." Parna said smiling and wiping his eyes and leaning back against Dune's chest.

"Good. Just checking you remember. Now then how do you feel first?" Dundis asked and Parna smiled.

"My head hurts but other than that okay."

"Good. Second, I have news. The King just sent word. We have an army regiment coming to help in the rebuilding and they are bringing a caravan of supplies with them. The fishermen report the waters are receding quickly now. The temple is no longer buried and I pray we can salvage some things there. Particularly my bed, I miss my bloody bed." Dundis said and Parna grinned.

"It is comfortable." Parna said and Dundis chuckled.

"I want to hear no more lad. I have a creative enough imagination and I changed your nappies! Spare me details." Dundis said and Dune smirked.

“By the way, I should thank you. You made life easier for us.” Dune said and Markem coughed trying to fight laughter at Dundis’ eyes.

“I said spare me details you rotten boy!” Dundis said glaring at Dune who chuckled.

“Is there any left?” Markem asked and Dune laughed as Dundis looked stunned.

“Nope, sorry.” Dune answered and Dundis buried his face in his hands and groaned.

“Evil to the core you both are,” Dundis said looking up at Parna.

“Except you Parna dear, The Gods preserve me in my old age.” Dundis said and Markem leaned over and took his hand.

“Old? Hardly. Lying does not become you Dun.” Markem said standing and pulling Dundis up with him. “We’ll leave you too for now, rest Parna and Dune I mean it, he does not stand up without help.” Markem said and Dune nodded.

“I promise, he’ll stay immobile today. Thank you both.” Dune said and Dundis and Markem only smiled and headed out of the cave and Dune kissed Parna’s cheek.

“Are you hungry love?”

“No, my head is making my stomach upset too. I just want to sleep if that’s okay.”

“Fine. I’ll make you broth then for later when you wake up dearest. That should sit easy, I’ve had a concussion before and I know how a headache can make you nauseous.” Dune said moving to allow Parna to lay back down and Dune covered him with the blankets tucking him in and leaning over to kiss his brow.

“Sleep well dearest. I love you.”

“I love you too Dune, so very much.”

“I know love, I know. Get some sleep.” Dune said smoothing Parna’s hair away from his face and leaving him to sleep.

Once Parna was asleep, Dune left Tandy in charge of watching over him while he went to go take care of business.

He met with Jaxon immediately and both men confronted the man who had assaulted Parna who was being held in a tent, his ankle shackled to the floor and his wrists in irons.

Dune faced him, livid with fury but contained now. "My wellspring has told me what you tried to do and what you accused him of, do you have anything to say in your defense?" Dune asked and the Man spat at Dune's feet.

"Bewitched you he has with a pretty face. I talk to no wielder tainted by evil!" He said and Jaxon stepped forward.

"Disrespectful cur. Mind your superiors or I will dispense justice on you here and now for your atrocities. Dune is offering you a chance to plead your innocence I would not be so kind in the offering had your crimes been against my wellspring. Do you forfeit the right to a defense?"

"Master Wielder are you blind too? He's bewitched, making himself look like a lass and a siren to men. I was just trying to prove he needs to be put back in the temple where he belongs! Unnatural for a man to make other men want him like a lass! It can't be a bonding, he breeds nothing but lust in men, he's evil!" The man said and Jaxon sighed.

"So we get to the crux of it, desire of the worst sort. Jealousy. The only one touched by evil here is you O Man. An Evil heart that lusts and finds excuses to act on behaviors unbecoming to men lies in you. Wellspring Parna may be male and indeed beautiful on the eyes but those never have been crimes and never shall be. A bonding cannot be mistaken and any wielder claiming a bond to a wellspring is to be believed without question. Any Wellspring claimed by a wielder has the same rights regardless of gender. By royal decree, any wellspring bonded belongs to his or her wielder and are subject only to the laws of the crown and the laws of their Wielder. Any orders issued by a wellspring on the behalf of their wielder are to be considered orders from the Wielder he or she is bonded to and are to be obeyed without question. The rank of Wellspring is only superceded by the rank of Wielder. Any actions against the person of the Wellspring are hitherto also actions against the person of the bonded wielder. So you stand accused of assault and battery and attempted rape against Wellspring Parna and subsequently Wielder Dune." Jaxon began and the man paled and sank to his knees.

"Furthermore, you were caught in the act of said transgressions and it is only by the Gods' Grace you were spared immediate sentence by the hand of Wielder Dune. Who, by his rights of bonding, was entitled to mete out the sentence of death without delay for the threat to his wellspring and the subsequent involuntary rage that is triggered by said threat to the bond he shares with his wellspring. By his good graces, he offered you an opportunity to explain yourself and in so doing confirmed the act was malicious with the intent to cause harm to Wellspring Parna with a motive born of nothing more than Jealousy, lust, prejudice and hatred. Therefore, by the power vested in me by Kind Dinar as King's Own Wielder, I do hereby sentence you to death, to be carried out at

sundown tonight. You will have a final meal of your choice and any and all peoples you wish to repent your crimes to and bid farewell to will be collected to share your final meal with you this evening. I will send the monks in to hear your confessions and obtain your list of loved ones you wish in attendance. Sentence is passed.” Jaxon said and both he and Dune turned and left and Father Dundis who had been waiting outside nodded and went inside to speak to the condemned and carry out his clerical duties before Jaxon returned at sundown to finalize his sentence and put the man to death peacefully and privately.

Dune sighed as he walked beside Jaxon. “I’m sorry old friend.”

“Don’t be Dune. He brought it on himself and you and I both have had to pass sentence on men like him before and sadly we will again. It is the nature of man, some are just born evil like him. How is Parna?”

“Alright. He’s got a nasty concussion and an even worse headache even I can feel through our bond but he is otherwise intact, thank the Gods I was in time.”

“Amen to that friend. You waited too long for him to appear and first you almost lose him to a storm and then to more mundane lust and hate. I do not envy you the trials you have faced on a new bond. Not at all.”

“After we leave here, I am taking him first to the capital to meet Duna and Dinar and then I am taking a much needed rest where we have nothing to worry over than what to have for breakfast.” Dune said and Jaxon smiled.

“Might I suggest the far south? The beaches down on the southern sea are wonderful and relaxing, the climate is warm all the time, the palm trees laden with coconuts, trees bear fruit all year long and the people run around half naked twenty four hours a day. Mrindi and I wore nothing but loin cloths, got great tans and the only beasties down there are the occasional were-cat. The south is wonderful to recharge when you’re needing a rest. The people down there are simple and the hardest dispute I had to mediate was who was the father of some woman’s babe.” Jaxon said and Dune smiled.

“You made one of your own down there if I recall.”

“Aye!” Jaxon said with a laugh.

“I did mention the loin cloths did I not? Mrindi’s got fabulous breasts, all brown from the sun it was hard NOT to make a babe down there. Luckily you have no consequences to making love on sandy beaches. The most you’ll get is sunburned backsides if you fall asleep in the sun.” Jaxon said and Dune smiled.

“Parna’s a redhead, burning is most definitely a concern with that fair skin of his. But aye, no worries of the diapering variety involved that’s true unless Parna spontaneously changes gender on me.”

“Which is as likely to happen as me growing a fishy tail and going to live in the sea. However you do miss the joys of fatherhood too.”

“Not necessarily. We have dangerous jobs my friend, how many orphaned wielder and wellspring children do you have that are not yours by blood?”

“Three now Mrindi and I adopted. Love them as I do my own. Will you be put on the register at the capital now?”

“Aye. I pray I never have to see it come to fruition, every child should have their own parents with them always, but if we lose another bonded pair, which sadly happens far too often I’ll have Parna and I on the register to adopt the children left behind. It will be the only way he and I will ever be parents after all.”

“Glad to hear it, there are never enough on the register who are capable of raising more than their own.” Jaxon said as he and Dune parted ways and Dune returned to his campsite to fix broth and wake Parna long enough for him to eat before he was asleep again.

“In the Eye of the Tempest”

A Wielder and Wellspring Story

Author: D. Sanders

Chapter IV - A Life Well Spent

It took a few days for the dizziness to abate, but soon enough Parna was back to his old self again and working alongside Dune in seamless concert.

With the silent execution of Parna's attacker it seemed a weight had been lifted from the community in general and Parna soon found the acceptance he had longed for his whole life. People talked with him freely, shared smiles and pleasantries and treated him no differently than the next man which boosted his self-confidence which in turn reflected in his work beside Dune.

When the army of workers arrived in conjunction with the tides returning to normal levels, work began in earnest and the temple and houses were rebuilt in time for winter's arrival and by spring the army was off back to capital and everyone was saying good-bye.

Undine and Dumas were heading back to their fishing village, Tandy and Durk were back on the road, still wanting to travel more until they settled somewhere they liked and began a family together. Dune packed Parna into a cart and made good on a promise to his twin to bring his wellspring for a visit and meeting.

It was a tearful farewell with Markem and Dundis and promises were made that Parna would come back occasionally for a visit with his father's and Dune had to swear under pain of curse he'd not keep Parna away too long.

Dune laughed and agreed and clicked his tongue and the sturdy Shire horse bobbed his head and began a leisurely pace down the main road.

The weather was beautiful and Dune and Parna often just curled up in the cart at night under the stars to sleep and enjoy other playful activities under the watchful moon.

Only twice on their journey were they interrupted by beasts that roamed the night looking for a meal. All easily dispatched by a strong bonded pair who were in total harmony with each other and who could almost work in their sleep together at this point in their working bond.

By the end of a fortnight Parna was gawking in the cart like a darling country bumpkin as the cart ambled along city streets toward the palace. Past taverns and warehouses, inns and marketplaces. The grand temple with its gilded god columns gleaming in the sun took his breath away and Dune remembered being just like Parna the first time he had come to the city.

The palace loomed ahead and the guards at the gate hailed Dune with a wave as he drove the cart through the palisade gates and into the courtyard and the Queen came rushing down large stairs squealing like a teenager and she threw herself into Dune's arms the moment he pulled the cart to a halt.

"Too long away my brother!" She cried as a boy of seven crashed into Dune's legs.

"Uncle Dune! Did you bring me a present?" He asked and Dune chuckled and squatted down to his nephew's eye level.

"Don't I always bring you presents?" Dune asked pulling out of his vest pocket a painted wooden flute in the shape of a dragon in flight. He'd picked it up on their journey south and the boy cheered and immediately began to play, badly, in shrill little toots.

"Parna was smiling from his seat as Duna turned and graced him with a smile he was intimately familiar with. Duna and Dune didn't share many facial characteristics. Duna looked more like Undine and they both shared Dumas' coloring and that crooked, endearing smile inherited from their sire.

"You are a sight for sore eyes my brother in heart." She said as Parna stepped down from the cart and was folded into warm arms lovingly.

"I am so happy to meet you at last. Dune has told me so much of you." Parna said loving her sweet perfume that smelled of honeysuckle and lilacs.

"He told you all my most embarrassing moments more likely. I know my brother." Duna said with a chuckle looping her arms in both of theirs and turning to lead them up the stairs.

"Dinar is stuck in a meeting at the moment and he said to get you both settled in and we're going to lunch in the garden. Gerdar, I know you love your new toy love, but you are giving Mummy a headache. Dune why did you buy a noise maker?"

"Because it irritates you sister mine." Dune said kissing her cheek as they trailed behind the crown prince who skipped along halls without a care in the world.

"Beast." Duna said as they reached a set of doors and Duna glided in and servants came to attention as the Queen entered. She just rolled her eyes, a simple girl still finding it hard to act the Queen and not skinny dip in the garden fountain when it pleased her to do so. One of the women coming over holding an infant and bowing as she handed the babe to Duna who smiled at a gawking Dune.

“Meet your new nephew, Grantham.” She said handing the babe to Dune who took him carefully and kissed round little newborn cheeks.

“When?”

“Three weeks ago. Surprise!” Duna said and Dune laughed and laid the babe on his shoulder lovingly as he found the nearest chair to inspect the child.

“Handsome brute. Another Dinar copy I see.” Dune said as he looked at the baby in his lap and Gerdar came over smiling.

“Mummy says when he gets older we can go play in the ocean with Grandma and Grandpa. Will you be there too Uncle Dune?” He asked and Parna watched Dune melt like butter in the sun. He adored children, especially these two.

“Wild were-beasts couldn’t keep me away Ger. I’ll teach you to board surf.” Dune said with a wink and Duna laughed.

“You’ll teach him to wipe out then. I beat you at board surfing.” She said and Dune grinned.

“Aye, your mummy was the best board surfer in our village.” Dune said to Gerdar who turned to his mother in awe.

“Really mummy?”

“Oh aye, it’s much fun and if we can convince your landlubber father for a vacation Mummy promises to get you your own board. Grandpa makes the best.” Duna said with a wink and Gerdar cheered.

“I volunteer to baby-sit on the beach then.” Parna said and Dune smiled.

“Love, I will teach you to swim this summer if it kills me and I’ll bet you’ll be out on those boards too with the kids.” Dune said with a wink as Parna was passed the baby to hold and it was Dune’s turn to smile at the sight. The way Parna cradled the child in his arms and rubbed their noses together with a smile.

Duna knew her brother and knew that look in his eyes, it was longing. First he held it for finding his mate and now he held it for children it seemed. “Dinar told me you petitioned to be added to the adoption registry.” Duna segued into the conversation and Dune nodded.

“Aye. We did. Parna and I talked about it, and we both want to raise a child together. We hope very much no child needs us, but if they do we will take him or her with open arms gladly.”

“You’d make a wonderful father Dune.” Duna said and Dune just smiled.

“We had ours as an example Duna. Parna here had two of the best as well, I think we’ll be okay if it comes to that.” Dune replied as the doors burst open and Dinar rushed in to repeat an enthusiastic greeting and they all adjourned to the gardens for lunch under a shade tree.

Parna was sitting with Grantham and Duna in the shade avoiding the sun on fair skin. He was enthralled with the baby and happily sat cooing at him most of the meal.

Dune was tossing a ball with Gerdar and Dinar over in the grassy knoll and Dune was teaching Gerdar how to hit the ball with a stick that Dinar was pitching at them. One broken pane of glass later they stuck to just throwing the ball around and laughing.

“Dune loves children.” Duna remarked sitting with Parna who smiled.

“As do I. They are joy I cannot do naught but smile looking at them.” Parna said indeed smiling at the baby in his lap holding his finger.

“Grantham seems to love his uncle, not a peep all afternoon.” Duna chuckled and Parna grinned.

“His uncle loves him too. I think he is perhaps the loveliest thing I have ever seen. I cannot get over how tiny he is, his fingers fascinate me.” Parna said looking at the tiny digits encircling his index finger.

“I felt the same way the first time I held Gerdar. Here was this tiny little person who needed me and was helpless and I fell in love immediately. Now look at him breaking windows.” Duna said and Parna laughed.

“I think you can blame Dune for that one. Gerdar was not swinging that hard on his own. Dune had the kids in my village playing this game too and he broke many fragile things there too.”

“That’s Dune for you, he’s always having fun and paying for it later. He and I got into so much trouble as kids, I’m no better.”

“So I have heard. What was the one that Dune mentioned about snorkel diving for oysters in jelly fish infested waters?” Parna winked and Duna laughed and hugged his shoulders.

“I adore you. Aye, you heard true. I still have a scar, I was not very bright as a child.”

“None of us are. I got into my fair share as a boy. Climbing archive bookshelves like a ladder playground is not wise. I almost killed myself falling and almost killed poor father Markem with fright when he came in and saw me fall. Once he healed me, I got a very severe scolding.”

“Remind me to lock the library doors. Gerdar is a climber.”

“I will.” Parna said with a smile as the ball playing trio called a break from the sun to join their wellsprings in the shade for a drink and rest.

The weeks passed quickly and by late summer Dune and Parna were once again loading the cart for a journey and Gerdar was glued to Parna’s side.

“Uncle Parna, don’t be gone long please. I like the stories you tell me. I’ll miss you.” Parna melted and squatted to embrace the tearful boy.

“We won’t be long sweetheart. Just for the winter and we’ll be back in spring I promise. Uncle Dune wants to go to the south for the winter and he said there are trees there that grow coconuts all year long. I promise to bring you back one and any good stories I hear too.” Parna said and Gerdar sniffled and hugged Parna tightly.

“There are Dragons in the south, if I can find an old nest I’ll bring you a scale if you’re a good boy for your mummy and daddy.” Dune added pressing his nose and Gerdar looked happy again.

“Are dragons big?”

“Oh aye, and wise and good creatures. Never ever hurt a dragon, they are good luck and help protect people from were-beasts and rouge power too. Dragons are all wielders and wellsprings too just like some of us are and they live hundreds of years. One day when you’re older I’ll take you south too so you can see them.” Dune said and Gerdar looked at Dune like he was a hero.

“Can you take mummy too?” Duna asked and Dune chuckled.

“Can he take me while he’s at it? I miss journeying.” Dinar sighed and Dune slapped his arm.

“One Vacation at a time. We’ll all go then one day together. They can’t begrudge you the occasional holiday.” Dune said and Dinar sighed.

“They sure do try though. Safe journey and send word if you need anything.” Dinar said hugging them all goodbye and taking his son’s hand.

“We will. See you in spring!” Dune said as he and Parna headed out once more.

Winter was never finer. They ended up in a tiny village in the middle of nowhere and spent long days and nights enjoying the beach living in a little grass hut right on the sand.

Parna was loving the warm surf and indeed perfected swimming with Dune’s tutelage and hands on teaching. They wore little more than colorful cloths around their middles and Dune was a dark golden tan come mid winter. Parna, once he initially burned, found a local cream made from aloe and coconut plants that helped prevent burns on fair skin and he covered himself liberally daily.

Dune remarked he loved Parna’s new fragrance as he perpetually walked around smelling like coconuts and cream. Parna just accused Dune of being perpetually in heat and Dune didn’t argue much, Parna was correct as always.

They had the most relaxing winter, watching the dragons soar overhead from their rocky cliff homes, listening to birds sing and the music of the sea on the shore at night. The warm sultry air, the constant aroma of exotic blooms in the sea air, the strange soft flesh fruits and coconut milk drunk right out of the shell by tapping holes in the hard casing.

Parna collected all sorts of trinkets to take back for Gerdar and the others. The dried out starfish he found accidentally by treading on it with bare feet, the huge conch shell he found half buried in sand. The coral jewelry the locals made. The petrified shark tooth which Parna was glad he found BEFORE he stepped on it and what Dune called ‘sand-coins’, perfectly round little creatures like starfish and strange fossils of fish in rocks and all manner of natural wonders went into a rapidly filling box of treasures.

Dune and Parna took a trek up into the mountain cliffs and came across a live dragon’s nest, complete with three young dragonlings only days old. The mother turned her jeweled eyes at them on the path and Dune just stood there transfixed, waiting. They both felt her ‘touch’ them with her senses and she deemed them safe enough and nodded once. Her intelligent eyes looking right through them and specifically at Parna.

::Like me you are. Rare that Male breed in tune with mother powers. You are the womb of life that gives to mate what he needs to protect.:: She said in Parna’s mind and he gasped, not knowing Dragon’s could mind speak.

Apparently Dune hadn't either when the female turned to look at him and he took gasped in shock as he she spoke. ::You have good soul human in touch with power. Your mate of rare being most gentle in spirit. I like what I feel, come touch me, let me feel good soul. I have itch cannot reach, please scratch." She said and Dune obeyed wide eyed as he scratched a spot on her neck she bared for him. The small dragons moving to circle Parna, butting him with their heads in playful greeting.

::My offspring feed off wellspring mother powers, grow happy with good aura. Your mate lacking womb, sad no offspring of own to bask in love one like me has to give.:: The golden female said lazily, her bright red eyes whirling as he laid her chin on Dune's shoulder where he stood beside the large creature.

"Very true wise one. But perhaps one day Parna and I will raise a child not of our own but of our hearts." Dune replied and he felt the beast purr in a throaty rumble.

::I see three turnings of the winter tides. I see in a far off place, cold and dark, too cold for dragons to venture, but you venture in good working. I see rouge power, burning, driving beasts into were-feral states. Many, many come. Many wielders come fight, to protect people trapped in cold mountains and starving. I see many good men die, I see sorrow but I also see rebirth. I see the lovely red one like me that you call Parna, he is heart weary and sad from such loss around him. I also see much love come to being, I see him holding small human girl child who too young to understand loss. From comfort grows love, grows family. Three turnings from now, girl child that will be yours not yet born.:: The dragon said and Dune turned to look at her with a look of awe on his face.

Not only could dragon's speak mind-to-mind, they seemed foreseers too.

"Wise one, I don't know what to say."

::Say you be good father to one who needs you and I not eat you.:: She replied and one jeweled eye whirled in amusement. Dune laughed, apparently they also had senses of humor too.

"Aye, I vow it to you my beautiful lady." Dune said and bowed and sat with the dragon as he watched Parna play with the babies in a game of stalk and pounce. Mother only scolding her little ones when they got a bit rambunctious with a human playmate and Parna got a rest when Dune took over as "prey" and Parna enjoyed a similar conversation with their new 'friend'.

She gave them several of her golden scales from her nest to take back to the young one that she said would be the greatest King Holst has ever known. That the daughter they would adopt and raise would be his bonded Queen. She told of how he would heal a great injustice long suffered by many and that Grantham's

son would be the catalyst to the healing. She told tales of things she saw in the future, she told of great histories long forgotten, she reminded them both that a life worth living was one that was built on love and honor. It was nearing dark before Dune and Parna left her enraptured and filled with wonder at their chance meeting with such a wonderful wise lady of the sky.

They spent many days making the journey up the mountain to visit her and come spring bid her and the babies fond farewells as they took her words back to Pernath and to Dinar and Duna who sat there gob smacked at the revelations told to them by a golden dragon.

“We don’t tell Gerdar any of this. It may affect his choices. Tell him that dragons can talk and that they are foreseeers, but not his future. Let him live it himself.” Dinar said and Dune nodded in total agreement.

“Aye, I agree. No man should know his destiny before he walks it. Nevertheless, to think of his destiny now gives me gooseflesh. That little squirt is going to do amazing things.” Dune said proudly watching Gerdar play outside in the sun with his shiny new dragon scales.

“I will sadly miss it, because for him to be king means we are gone. But to know he will be good after me, gives me Peace of Heart at the very least.” Dinar said joining Dune at the window.

“Stand by him as you stand by me Dune?” Dinar asked and Dune laid an arm over Dinar’s shoulders.

“Always. You know that my brother in heart.” Dune vowed as they watched Gerdar play unaware of what his future would hold and his childhood innocence and joy proving that a life well spent, would be a life that touched others with warmth and honor.

The night was frigid with cold and the winds howled through the tent flaps and Dune furiously tied them shut again and stoked the brazier that Parna was huddled over. The little girl, no more than two, finally asleep and wrapped tightly in blankets and nestled against Parna’s chest where he had rocked her to sleep.

“Here. Give her to me love, let’s get her in bed.” Dune said taking the child from Parna’s arms and taking her over to the fur pallet he’d made for her in the corner of their tent.

“She still wants her mama. It’s so hard to tell her she’s gone she doesn’t understand. Poor baby.” Parna said, his voice filled with sorrow.

"I know. That pack of wolves came out of nowhere. I'm just grateful you got out of there beloved."

"You saved me Dune. Amun and I didn't have time to react, your barrier saved me just like the last time. She thankfully did not suffer, the one who killed her, killed her quickly. I feel for Amandine, she'll never remember how wonderfully kind her mother was."

"Or her father. I saw Rundal fall, he went down like a candle going out in the wind, it's how I knew you were in danger. God I don't want to talk about it, I'll cry again." Dune sighed tucking the little girl in bed and smoothing her hair away from her face.

"Me too. I know we can't change the past and we can't stop them from moving here to live and raise a family. We can't change the fact that power node went rogue and we can't change the fact we've lost fifteen pairs so far to this area. We can only go forward and make sure she lives and is loved. Dinar was here earlier while you were seeing to Rundal. It seems our Dragon Lady was right and he's given consent to the adoption, she's our daughter now officially." Parna said coming over to kneel with Dune by her where she slept.

"As happy as I am to know she's ours, I agree I wish she wasn't."

"Aye. Do you think she'll be warm enough here? Should we have her sleep with us?" Parna asked.

"She seems warm enough, and I've spelled her furs to retain warmth she should be fine. We need rest, we're on duty again in four hours. Duna will come when she and Dinar get off shift to mind Amandine while we go out again. I really hope we get this node purged soon, I don't want to face anymore beasts gone were." Dune sighed flopping into their bed furs. Parna joined him and they huddled together for warmth and rest was not long enough before they were back out in the cold fighting nature and beasts alike.

"DADDY! LOOK AT ME!" Amandine said as she danced around the garden doing cartwheels and showing off. Five year old energy and she was the light of Dune's life.

Parna was sitting under the tree watching her smiling, daisy chains in his lap and around his head from where he and Amandine were making them moments before until Dune graced them with his presence and Amandine had to get his attention as always, which never proved to be difficult for her in the slightest. She had a very large man wrapped around a rather small little finger.

Dune applauded the performance and scooped her up on his shoulders and trotted across the yard over to where Parna was sitting.

They shared a small little house in the country just outside the city of Pernath. Close enough for visits but country enough to suit simple men who preferred wide open spaces to a bustling city life.

“I have stew on for dinner. Where have you been?” Parna asked and Dune smiled.

“Just over in the square, a simple squabble over a lad with light fingers and someone missing some apple pies. I didn’t need you for that dispute settlement. The lad is mucking out the stables now to pay for his theft and I brought home a pie as payment for services.” Dune winked and Amandine clapped.

“PIE!”

“Dinner first my lovely. Papa cooks good stew for us we have to eat first.” Dune said with a wink and Amandine flopped into Parna’s lap.

“But I can have some after supper Papa?”

“Of course. However, right now, dinner. Come on let’s go eat.” Parna said and both men took her hands and she skipped happily between them to supper.

It was a life well lived indeed, they had all they wanted in life. Love for each other, comfort in home and now Amandine who filled their lives with joy every day.

END