

“Shipwrecked in Stormy Eyes”

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...

That was what Gandes had known all his life. His parents had tried to hide him, even his Uncle the King had kept his birth a secret, until one night while still only a toddler the monks had come and carried him off to the temple.

For years his only joy was found in the almost nightly visits paid to him by his beloved elder brother. Who defied law and custom to comfort one he loved. He would sit and hold him when he was a terrified child, tell him of his visions of one he was destined to love above all others and just reassure Gandes that if it took his last breath, he'd find a way to free his beloved brother...

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ACT I - Trapped in Fear

“Goh, if they catch you in here you’ll get in trouble again.” Gandes said as he quickly shut the shutters of his tower room to hide the black clad figure who slipped in silently.

“I’d rather be in trouble dearest. Here, Mama sent you cookies. Sorry if they are a bit squashed. I sat on them coming over the wall.” Goh said with a grin as he dug a small parcel out of his back pocket and handed them to his almost fifteen year old brother.

“You also ripped your pants again.” Gandes said taking the contraband and hiding the small wrapped package under his pillow.

“What else is new?” Goh chuckled taking up his usual place at the foot of Gandes’ cot and holding out his arms, Gandes crawled into the embrace with a sigh.

“It’s been a week since I was able to come. I am sorry dearest.” Goh said stroking long and soft sable hued dark hair that fell well past Gandes’ waist in comfort.

“Don’t be Goh. I know you are busy now that Uncle has made you King’s Own. I remind you again a title you will lose if you keep coming to see me. You are not nine anymore, the monks no longer turn blind eyes to your transgressions.”

“It’s why I come over the wall now.” Goh winked and Gandes sighed.

“Will you be serious Goh? I’m worried about you getting caught. Grateful I am you come to see me, really I am. I just fear you’ll lose all you worked so hard for because of me. I’m just a wellspring Goh, I’m not important.”

“Horseshit. Only the law says you are nothing. Papa, Uncle Gerdar, everyone else thinks differently. I’ve told you before I’m not going to rest until you can walk out of this temple free.”

“Unless the lords suddenly rescind ancient laws or my wielder comes Goh I am here to stay. I have accepted this now, I wish you would. It pains me to see you fight so hard and get nowhere.”

“It pains me to see you used like a public privy and left discarded like wielder ass paper! So let us agree to disagree. I wish not to fight with you dearest. You know I love you.”

“As I love you my brother. Tell me, have you had more dreams?” Gandes asked changing the subject and Goh smiled.

“I always dream of him anymore. I see more of him now, I see him standing there on a temple roof dressed in little more than his night shirt. He’s so beautiful, it’s like I can reach out and touch him he seems so real in my dreams. I can feel his wellspring all around me but when I reach for him he fades.” Goh said and Gandes smiled.

“What does he look like again?”

“Blond hair like sand. Eyes like jade stones. Not bright like emeralds, but muted in color and serene. He has this little mole under his right eye like a beauty spot women paint on their faces only his is real. His face is beautiful and I ache to see it smile. However, he only has a look of resignation on his face, a sadness I long to break. I know he is mine Gandes, I can feel it in my bones.”

“So you bed anything that looks remotely like him. Goh you set yourself up for more heartbreak I think.”

“Gandes I go mad sometimes with want of him. I know he’s real, these dreams feel too real and come too regularly to be anything else. I know it is unfair to those in my bed, but I close my eyes and I see him and it makes the wait bearable.”

“I do pray it is so and he is real for you. I wonder if someone dreams of me. I like to think they do, it makes my wait bearable.” Gandes said and Goh squeezed his shoulders.

“I know he’s out there for you Gandes. Whether he dreams of you or not, he longs for you. That you can rest assured of. When he finds you, you will be loved beyond your wildest dreams. He will cherish you more than even I and I love you so very much little brother. More than Papa, more than Mama. He will love you with his very soul.”

“That is if he finds me Goh. They aren’t allowed in the temple dormitories and I not allowed out of them and the only way he’d find me is if he tapped into me by accident during a battle. I am not going to hope too hard, the chances are so very remote. However, it is a nice dream. I can pretend he’s there, standing in the courtyard right now, looking up at my window and making a wish to see me. I can pretend I feel his wish and I open my window and there he is, all big and strong like all the love poems say your lover should be like. I am silly.”

“No, you’re human Gandes. Those that think otherwise are fools. However, why is it I dream of small and delicate and you dream big and strong?”

Gandes laughed. "You are already big and strong. Have you ever read a tale of both being big or both being small? It's not very romantic is it?"

Goh chuckled. "No, it's not I suppose. But probably more often the case in reality."

"Probably, but this is a dream after all, about as far away from reality as me walking out of here in the morning."

"Sadly that too is true. I'm also hardly strong Gandes. I'm just bloody tall really. I'm just an average bloke otherwise."

"Nothing about you will ever be just average Goh. You don't know the meaning of the word average. You ever walk the path not taken."

"You know me well Gandes." Goh said grinning, just as the city sirens began to blare and Goh stood quickly and planted a solid kiss on Gandes' brow.

"Stay safe Goh!" Gandes said knowing the call of wielder's that the sirens indicated. Something big was heading in fast.

"You too dearest. Just open your well a little, don't let greedy bastards take too much." Goh said not wasting time to head back out the window and just racing down the hall and winking at monks as he passed. Let them yell at him for sneaking in again. He really didn't care.

Gandes headed up to the bell tower and settled comfortably in a corner, he could tell by the fury of the power in the land suddenly that his storm coming in would be a trial to endure.

He opened up his well and let the taint wash over him, trying to collect and purify the rouge power as he felt his father and mother brush him gently with their powers and link to him.

Goh was next and then Gerdar and Gavain. All of his loved ones always tapping in first, forming a shield around him to protect him from being abused. He felt their love for him and he returned it with his whole being. He didn't know what other wellsprings did like him. Those who didn't have family who defied law to comfort him.

Yes, he was lonely and sad, but he knew he was loved. There were others not so lucky as he was. Gandes thought as he closed his eyes and the first lightening strike flashed across the sky.

No one could have guessed or predicted the sheer magnitude of the storm as it washed over Pernath and gained strength from the powerful nodes under the city.

There was a chirping sound growing louder by the minute as the winds rushed through the tower. Gandes shivered and then shrieked as the first spore landed in the tower and it's tendrils seeking purchase.

Gandes grabbed a broom and nudged it out of his sanctuary. He had to be in the tower, it was the best place for people to tap into his strength. The open windows however letting in the storm in with a vengeance. He knew the spores were only mindless vegetation, but they certainly looked like large angry spiders and they gave him the shivers.

Three more Wielders touched his well, drinking in power and fighting along with the rest.

The chirping was growing louder.

Four more and all of them touching him with fear in their hearts. How bad was it down in the city? Gandes thought as the chirping grew steadily louder.

The winds were so very strong and Gandes' very long hair was being whipped around and blinding him as he crawled deeper into his corner, feeling Goh and his Father in particular trying to protect him and fight at the same time. Something was very wrong in the city, the panic was palpable and feeding negative energy into the nodes and fueling the storm.

The chirping now was deafening, the thunder rocking the very foundations and the vibrations setting the bells trembling. Gandes' ears rang with such noise, he felt a total of fifteen wielders around him, all over the city.

Then Gandes' whole world became centered in such fear it robbed him of breath. Fear from the people, fear from even the wielders and other wellsprings fighting.

::GANDES GET OUT OF THE TOWER!:: Came Goh's metal call, he was frantic and Gandes stood to obey when the thunder crashed and he stumbled and the chirping noises were identified as thousands of locusts the size of large cats came flying into the tower like a black cloud of death and destruction.

Gandes screamed in blood curdling fear, they were everywhere, blocking the door, crawling all over him and his well erupted in power as more wielders sought power to kill the locusts in from the wasteland.

::GANDES! GANDES!:: Goh called, feeling the fear and trying desperately to throw up shields, joined by Gavain and Grantham in frantic worry over him.

::He's not responding Goh! He's thrown himself wide open! They're all over the tower! I'm too far to get to him!:: Gavain mentally shouted and Goh was running, heading through thousands of locusts and blasting them with power.

::Goh! Get Gandes, I'm trapped over here, too many of them!:: Grantham sent.

::YES GOH GO! THE PALACE IS UNDER SEIGE WITH THEM! You're the only one close enough!:: Gerdar sent and Goh grunted as he tried herding people to safety while fighting the swarm.

::HOLD ON GANDES! I'M COMING!:: Goh sent, feeling Gandes' well of power burn white hot, fueled by fear and over taxation and gut wrenching terror.

::GOH! PAPA!:: Gandes called in agony and despair and then all was black, The power was still there, blazing, but awareness was gone.

::MY SHEILDS WON'T HOLD! GANDES! WAKE UP GANDES! STAY WITH PAPA GANDES PLEASE!:: Grantham said in equal despair and frustration.

::HURRY GOH! HE'S BURNING HIMSELF WIDE OPEN! TOO RAW HIS POWER TOO HOT AND GOING ROUGE!:: Gerdar sent again and Goh was already running, his breath burning in his chest.

Goh shot up the temple stairs and blasted the door open to the bell tower.

Hundreds of Locusts were covering Gandes. "GET OFF HIM YOU VERMIN!" Goh shouted, sending power over them, burning them to dust while kicking and clawing through them.

Gandes was limp in his arms as Goh pulled him out from under the pile of insects and blasted his way back out again, getting Gandes to a safer place. Shoving him into a monks hands as he came down the stairs.

"Get him to safety now! Take care of those wounds! They were eating him alive up there!" Goh ordered He couldn't take time to be frightened or worry about idiotic wellspring laws. The monks nodded and grabbed Gandes and carried him into their blocked off rooms and Goh headed back out into the city to fight.

Fifteen brutal hours the storm raged, three wielder and wellspring couples lost, everyone exhausted to the bone and men out with torches burning what was left of the locusts while people tried picking up shattered pieces.

Gerdar and Amandine lead the entire family into the temple. "I don't give a damn about the law! Where is my nephew?" Gerdar demanded and the monks led the king and his family to a back room.

"In here your Majesty." The monk said opening the door and Grantham and Fioretta raced across the room.

Gandes was bandaged from head to toe, only his face seemed free of bite marks as he lay still leaking raw power and sleeping like a corpse.

"Gandes." Fioretta sobbed, taking a small hand in hers. Her youngest son whom she hadn't seen in eleven years lay broken and shattered on the bed and her heart ached.

Goh was standing there, bloodied and beaten and his face hard with anger and rage and Gerdar laid a hand to his shoulder.

"He lives because of you Goh. You did what we couldn't." Gerdar comforted and Goh just snorted.

"Not enough Uncle. He's trapped in his mind, I can feel it. The fear is suffocating."

"I know. We can only hope he wakes and breaks this dream he's in at the moment. I can't get near him, he's too hot to touch."

"You didn't see it uncle. I swear to the gods they were everywhere and they had the god damned door locked from the outside. Even if he had gotten to the door, they had locked it to protect themselves from the storm. I had to break it down. If I find who locked him in the tower my boot will be so far up their ass my toes will knock out teeth." Goh spat furious and Gerdar frowned.

"You and me both Brother." Gavain said holding a very tired Candys' hand.

"All of you are making this worse I think. The air in here is too negative and Gandes is suffering enough at the moment." Amandine said moving to stroke Gandes' hair off his face. "I hope you can feel how much we love you Gandes. I pray that reaches you in your fear beloved." She added and Gandes' never stirred, his well charred open and the edges bleeding in soul.

"As much as I wish I could allow you all to stay Sire. I beg you, for the child's sake to leave him. You know the lords will make it harder for him if you stay. I vow to all the gods I will care for him I will. I will tell you all how he is doing, but please I dread they make me lock him away from all of you. I too love the child." The old head monk said coming in quietly.

“I want daily reports on my desk. I want you to pretend Goh does not exist when he comes to check on him and I know Grantham is hard to hide but Fioretta will be allowed in to see him is that clear?”

“Aye sire, I’ll make arrangements so visits are circumspect, but please before they know you came for his sake leave.” The old Monk begged and Fioretta had to tear herself away from her youngest and only Goh remained and he sank to his knees at last and sobbed. Kissing Gandes’ bandaged hands.

“I swear on my life Gandes. I’ll find away to save you. From your prison and your inner hell.” Goh whispered, kissing Gandes’ brow and leaving with a heavy heart.

Months passed and Gandes’ slept on. His well had long healed from where it had been blasted wide open with over use, he was no longer leaking raw power and he’d settled into a large beacon of power in the temple to wielders but nothing reached his mind and they all tried everything. Speaking to him mind to mind, singing to him, touching his skin in comfort and nothing. There was no reaction, just a constant state of fear that clung to him like a shroud.

What he was dreaming they could only guess, but no matter how hard they tried, the barrier around his mind remained firm and nothing was getting past the wall that encased his consciousness.

He lay in bed unmoving, unseeing and unresponsive. His wounds long healed and his ivory skin once more flawless but so pale. He looked a ghost as he lay without so much as a twitch of a finger. Just his chest rising and falling with breath and nothing more.

Goh was saddling his horse, getting ready to take a tour of duty for the King, he’d first head west to Riordan’s Hollow then double back to the main road and head northwest toward Garth. Stopping in all the villages along the way and settling disputes as part of his duties, he’d put them all off long enough. He could do nothing for Gandes here, perhaps on the road he’d find answers to his questions and find something, ANYTHING to help what seemed a desperate and unsolvable situation.

He was tying down the saddlebag when a newcomer came walking up the path with Gavain. He was a very tall fellow and exceptionally broad of chest and shoulder. He had a deep laugh and an engaging smile and looked a very friendly bloke. He had to be if he was laughing at Gavain’s jokes Goh mused as they approached.

“You off Goh?” Gavain asked pausing with the stranger.

“Aye. In about a quarter hour give or take.” Goh said turning to the stranger.

His face was young, much younger than he expected judging from the size from a distance. He either had a deceptive face or he was indeed young.

“Yidane, this is my brother Goh. Goh, Yidane. He’s just come in from the North West. Near Merchant’s Row.”

“Big port city, what brings you to Pernath?” Goh asked holding out his hand to shake and the youth had a very firm grip. His handsome face smiling and his short cropped dark brown hair windblown and almost comical as it stuck up in a myriad of directions.

“Wandering feet and tired of dirty port cities. Thought I’d try a little cleaner inland one that didn’t smell of fish.” Yidane replied, his northern accent a slow lazy drawl.

“Not much cleaner at the moment. We had a nasty storm blow in about seven months ago and it’s still getting cleaned up.” Goh said and Yidane nodded.

“So I’d heard. You had wasteland fallout with a rouge spore cloud picking up a swarm of locusts. I’m not surprised you’re still on clean up. We had a locust storm back when I was about ten up on Merchant’s Row. They ate everything down to the last grain of rice. Took us years to rebuild and we didn’t have the spores with them to contend with either. Not even were-beasts are as terrifying as those things. Even little crickets now give me shivers. I can relate.” Yidane said his hazel eyes clear and sincere and Goh nodded.

“Stuff of nightmares, aye.” Gavain said turning to Goh.

“Listen on your way out of town can you show Yidane your tavern you like? I told him we have a nice place for non-breeders in town who like a little less swill and a lot more class.”

“Aye. Not a problem. Not many Non-breeder wielders.” Goh said, he’d never in a million years have pegged Yidane as a non-breeder and he was pretty damn good at spotting fellows like himself. Yidane was pretty much, every woman’s fantasy dream of a solid, rugged, hearty specimen of male flesh at it’s finest. Had Goh liked the big boys, he’d have been all over Yidane like flies on shit. He however preferred the prettier boys.

“No, which is a good thing since we’re sort of needed around. We can’t all be this way or we’d die out. I’m not looking for bedding for much beyond just sleeping in at the moment. I’m too bloody tired from the road right now.”

“And too tired of the wellspring parade of lovelies?” Goh said, knowing a handsome youth like Yidane had probably been swarmed by girls wanting a piece of him and all his evident attributes. That wasn’t a money purse bulge in his trousers.

“That too. Every girl past her first moon shoved under my nose and me trying gracefully to tell them ‘no thank you’ gets tiring quickly. I just want to sit with a nice beer in my hand, look at few handsome lads and then sleep for a few days while I let my legs rest a bit.” Yidane said as Goh grabbed his horse’s reins and walked the beast forward.

“Then follow me Yidane. The Cock-n-Bull is nice. Good food, comfortable beds, better ale and not a breast in sight.”

“Thank goodness. Love women I do, but if I have one more breast shoved in my face I just might lose my mind.” Yidane said and Goh chuckled.

“I hear you. Give me a nice blond with green eyes and a pretty face and a firm ass any day.”

“You can keep blonds. Give me dark, cool and graceful any day of the week. I like mine fine and pretty like moonshine.” Goh smiled, apparently Yidane liked the pretty boys too. They had that in common at least.

“Then we shant be in competition over the lovelies.” Goh winked and Yidane laughed.

“Not with you leaving town, no.” Yidane added and Goh liked the youth already. He liked a man with a good sense of humor and a healthy and equal appreciation of rare breed beautiful men.

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ACT II - Nightmares and Dreaming

The Cock-n-Bull was a bustling place, but indeed higher class than most taverns. It was full of the upper class lords and merchants looking for companionable company of the same gender and not those seeking a cheap bedding. There were no prostitutes, the rooms were for lovers or travelers and not for those seeking a quick tumble with a stranger. It was a place for those seeking lovers to get a chance to meet and talk over a warm fire and meal and share a wonderful evening whether or not they ended up together in the rooms up the stairs.

The Tavern itself overlooked the huge temple a few streets away. The large bell tower could be seen from anywhere in the city, but if standing and looking out a room window of the Cock-n-Bull the Bell tower was framed and larger than life just a few streets away. The gilded golden gods and goddesses standing watch over the city like sentinels.

Yidane pulled back the clean white curtains and took a deep breath. He was tired and the large feather bed of the room was more than inviting. The sheets were crisp and clean, with lavender scented soap permeating the room and relieving the slight headache Yidane had been harboring since he set foot in the city.

The closer he got to the temple, the worse his head had seemed to throb that day. He was positive it was just road weariness, he had been up and traveling for over twenty-four hours and he was exhausted.

He shoved off his boots and kicked them into a corner before utilizing the washbasin in the room and giving himself a cursory wash as he changed out of his dirty clothes and into something fresher to sleep in.

A gentle knock came to the door and a lovely youth entered carrying a tray filled with a bowl of stew and a hearty tankard of ale. He was everything Yidane thought beautiful. Dark hair, clean and smooth skin, large doe-like brown eyes flecked with gold and a face that was neither wholly female nor male but a blending of the two. He was a credit to either sex. “Master Wielder. Your dinner sir. Lord Goh said you’ll be staying with us a while.”

“Aye. I’m just in from the Northwest and thought I’d see the city for a bit first. I always did want to see the famed golden temple of Pernath and the Palace.”

“Both are beautiful. So is the fountain of bonding over in the city square. They say if you toss a penny in, you’ll find your bonded partner within a moon. Many unmatched wielders and wellsprings feed charity coffers with copper.” The youth smiled and Yidane laughed.

“I’m not holding my breath. I’m here for a reason my friend. They don’t let me into temples and that’s just about the only place I’d find a bond for the likes of me. They keep our wellspring boys shameful prisoners.” Yidane said with a hint of sadness in his voice as the youth set down his dinner on the small table in the room and then walked over to the window.

“There is a boy in that temple. I hear such sad things from Goh when he’s too into his ale and in sad spirits. He tries to hide his pain, but he loves the wellspring they keep in there. It’s his younger brother.”

“Really?” Yidane asked and the youth nodded.

“Aye. Goh spends much time drinking away his sorrows here. The big spore storm we had with all the locusts was very bad. Goh’s brother was badly hurt. You see the tower there? He was in the tower when the storm hit and Goh won’t say what happened to him, he just gets lost in his drink and cries, but we can guess. Goh is not one to normally show his sadness to others, he has to be very drunk and have much on his mind to share his personal grief with others. He is more apt to smile and sing you a song to make you stop seeing his woes. Nevertheless, some days even Goh breaks a little. Goh did say he didn’t die, but suffers a fate worse than death. I hear others say he sleeps constantly and will not wake. His mind is gone to places no one can reach.”

“How horrible. I can see why Goh would not wish to talk about it much. I lost my little brother to a storm very much like the one you had when we were still children and even now I care not to talk about it lest I remember hell. For a wellspring already living in sequestered celibacy, the additional strain from such a terrifying event can shatter a mind. I pity his wielder, never to have him. So few male wellsprings survive beyond twenty, used they are to breaking points very much like that poor boy. How old was he?”

“I think fifteen, maybe sixteen now considering this was almost a year ago now. Females his age already bonding to their men.”

“Non-breeder Wielders rarely ever bond for just that reason. The laws make life very hard to bear at times. We are allowed to bond to them, but actually getting close enough to is almost impossible, if they survive at all. Such depressing talk too and my head is killing me at the moment.”

“We have headache powder downstairs, I can bring you some up if you’d like.”

“Please.” Yidane sighed sitting at the table and the youth just smiled at him.

“For what it’s worth Master Wielder, I do pray you find yours and you stay not alone long. I’ll bring up your powder and just ring that bell cord for a servant to

come at any hour day or night. If you want a bath tub brought in, food or drink. The Cock-n-Bull is your home as long as you require it. You protect our lives and we vow to see to all your comforts. I'll be back in a few minutes sir." The youth said and was indeed back with medicine that Yidane drank gratefully before thanking the youth named Tarri.

Had he been in better spirits, he would have wooed the lovely young man, but his words weighed heavily and his mind could not tear away from the thought of the wellspring in the temple.

He must be beautiful Yidane thought to himself as he crawled into bed and faced the window looking at the tower. He pictured Goh's coloring on a youth even more beautiful than fair Tarri. He could see long sable dark hair the same shade as Goh's resting on a willowy frame like all delicate wellsprings wore. However, most of all, he envisioned wide large eyes in that grayish blue shade that Goh and Gavain both had. Such a unique shade that resembled big storm clouds far out to sea. The first thing Yidane had noticed on both Goh and Gavain were their eyes. He'd never seen eyes so striking before. He was positive that on a wellspring that shade would be captivating. Wellsprings always had such kind and soul devouring eyes.

Yidane himself was only nineteen years old and newly turned said year a few days earlier. He was still quite young himself and a boy of sixteen would have been perfect. Yidane thought himself into a frightful heart wrenching longing the longer he stared at the bell tower. Oh how he wished that was his wellspring in that tower and like the ballad of Tarnack and Prince Perdain he'd sweep in and carry him off out of that life of hell on earth.

Sadly, however, if Tarri's words were true, he was already too late and would never know the truth. The youth was either dead or sleeping like death and had lost his mind to terror and whichever the case, Yidane would never know the truth. Unless he tried reaching out and brushing against the power, but he didn't dare. There was no reason for him to be seeking power in a temple and he might cause more harm than good if he tried tapping into a wellspring that was already suffering. He'd opt for caution and just content himself to dream wistfully of slender limbs laying beside him, warm breath tickling his ear as they slept and a gentle tenor laughing like the breeze through summer leaves.

Exhaustion finally claimed Yidane and then the dreams came. First of horrible winds and dreadful chirping sounds. Usually this dream came and Yidane was ten years old again, running from locusts and dragging his seven year old brother behind him. However, not this time, for the first time in a decade the scene was different.

Yidane was alone and no longer a child and the locusts had him buried in a bell tower. He struggled to fight them off, like he had done when he was ten.

However, this time the power did not answer his will when he called. He could feel power, it was burning him from the inside out, flowing in chaos. He stumbled and ran to a door, screaming for help as the locusts bit his flesh and tripped his legs. He needed to escape.

He reached the door and pulled but it was locked. He screamed again, his fear intensified with the realization he had no escape, no way out. So many needing his power to fight, so many frightened, a few frightened for him and calling out to him in their fear.

Yidane stumbled backwards, choking on spore dust and insects in his hair, on his legs, clinging to his arms. Biting, gnawing and then he fell and was buried again. He was blocking his face with his arms and they bit and chewed his forearms and Yidane knew he was dead, no one would get to him in time so he fled. Fled from the burning power inside, the pain he was in, the fear that consumed his soul and then darkness.

Yidane sat up in bed heaving for air and bathed in a cold sweat. Never before had that dream come like this. Never before had he been helpless. It had always just been a reliving a moment in his life that had been very real. This was surreal, a different landscape, a different storm and a different outcome.

In his reality, he had run with Yidore to one of the warehouses with hundreds of others. He had pushed Yidore to the back of the room and told him to hide and wait while he had run to the doors to throw up a shield to keep the locusts out and the people safe.

He had succeeded, but in blind panic, the people had pressed in on Yidore, and Yidore had obeyed Yidane and didn't move. He was crushed beneath them and his seven year old body suffocated. The storm had not killed Yidore like so many others, but people not mindful of a child had killed him.

Yidane had felt so bitterly angry that he had risked his life to save these people that had murdered his brother with nothing more than their negligence and fear. He vowed that day never to let fear blind him to others in need. He'd fight rage to stay calm and protect all of the people who needed him.

This dream however was not of that event in his life as it had always been. This one left him terror filled and gasping for air as he awoke. Was that what it had been like for the wellspring in the tower? Had he been that overwhelmed?

If it was the truth, he could see why Goh called it a fate worse than death. It was unmitigated terror that could break even the strongest of men under its weight. Being filled with power while ultimately vulnerable and trapped while others were still taking from your power would drive anyone to the brink of madness.

Yidane got up and washed his face, trying to calm down his nerves. His headache worse than before and he drank more headache powder as he curled up again and fought the shivers as he tried once more to sleep. His very soul ached, he prayed it was just his imagination and fatigue that caused such visions of horror in his mind as he fell back asleep again.

This time, weariness winning the battle and a dreamless, restless sleep encased him and there was nothing but a void of darkness around him as he slept.

For several weeks Yidane woke nightly with the same nightmare and his headache had gone from a mild nuisance to a constant ache in his skull. He'd gone to see the King and report his presence in the city and then had gone about his business, using his gifts to aid others when needed and then back to the Tavern.

Tarri was ever present and while the offer for more comfort was extended with no strings attached, Yidane couldn't find the energy to enjoy the offered affair. Tarri knew ultimately as everyone did, bedding an unmatched wielder was usually a fruitless liaison. They only fell truly in love with their wellsprings and a relationship beyond mutual comfort and simple affection would never be. Tarri liked the soft spoken northerner, but knew much more was plaguing this wielder than a simple headache. Therefore, he opted to just take care of him when asked and then leave him to rest when he disappeared into his room at night.

Yidane got little sleep, his eyes were constantly exhausted and he was drinking headache powder at every meal and still the pain did not fade and the dreams came nightly.

Yidane was nursing a cup of coffee over breakfast when a wielder burst in one morning. "Yidane, the King has called for you. Goh sent word about his bonding and apparently they want all non-breeder Wielders at the palace at once." The wielder said and Yidane nodded and followed.

What did Lord Goh's bonding news have to do with Non-breeders? Yidane was happy that Goh had bonded to his wellspring but he couldn't understand what that had to do with him. Nevertheless, when the King called, you obeyed so Yidane followed the wielder messenger.

The closer he got to the palace, the worse his headache grew and the King met him at the stairs and pulled him along corridors.

"Yidane, I'm sorry for pulling you so suddenly from your rest. My word son you look dreadful. But forgive me, we are trying to see if my nephew will bond, it may be the only thing that saves him." Gerdar explained rapidly as they walked.

“Goh’s positive that if Gandes bonds, that perhaps the bond connection will be deep enough to reach him. We don’t know, we’ve tried everything and please I hate to make it seem like we’re getting your hopes up, but we’re desperate.” Gerdar said not taking a breath as they walked and then paused at a set of doors.

“His name is Gandes. Just try Yidane to reach him, that’s all we ask.” Gerdar added as he pushed open the door and Yidane’s knees buckled the moment the power contained in the room washed over him. It had been shielded and the moan that fell out of Yidane’s mouth as the power touched him directly was one of infinite pain.

Grantham and Gavain were standing beside the bed with Fioretta and deftly raced over to help Yidane back up on his feet and help him stagger over to the bed.

Yidane was sobbing, the fear and the pain were so intense it was blinding. “Yidane?” Gavain asked concerned and Yidane just pushed away and collapsed on his knees beside the bed. Gripping a slender and pale white hand in his, kissing every fingertip, his own hands shaking.

“Out, get OUT!” Yidane hollered and shields were thrown up all around the room. “He’s so scared can’t you FEEL IT?” Yidane hollered shutting out everyone and literally crawling into bed to grasp Gandes in his arms and rock him gently.

“Gandes, beloved, the nightmare is over. Hear me, please.” Yidane whispered and everyone stood in shock.

They couldn’t get near the bed, the shields were so thick and filled with bond rage it was palpable. This was not only an instant bond, it was a bond that was also exceedingly threatened and even though new, the bond rage was well ignited, yet Yidane’s consciousness was controlled. His words soft and gentle as he muttered things only Gandes could hear.

“By the Gods! I have never seen a bond happen so fast!” Gavain gasped.

“Moreover have it immediately sent into rage. I think Yidane has felt the bond already and it’s just been magnified.” Grantham said as they stood back outside the thick shields.

“He’s been looking terrible. He said he’d been suffering bad headaches and nightmares. I had no idea of what though, he wouldn’t tell me. It may have been the bond itself. The gods only know Papa.” Gavain said as everyone’s hopes lifted and they waited.

Yidane was lost, utterly lost in despair and longing. The most surreal creature lay in his arms. Delicate as a spider web, his limbs missing tone from laying idle in bed so long, his long curtain of darkest brown hair falling like waves over Yidane's arms as he pulled Gandes to his chest and wept into the downy softness. Skin, pale like moonshine and flawless and warm, oh so very warm.

"Gandes, oh please Gandes. Come back beloved. It is just in your mind dearest, the storm is long over." Yidane whispered, now knowing exactly why his dreams had been plagued, why his head ached like an axe had laid buried in it for weeks. He had been sensing Gandes and their bond, the mental cries Gandes was shouting for help had reached his wielder and now it was up to the wielder to reach his wellspring in return.

Yidane cradled Gandes in his arms, laying back with him on the bed, fighting his rage to weep and only send comfort along their bond to his wellspring.

::Gandes, please do you hear me?: Yidane tried telepathy and a sudden and brief surge of power responded and then fled again.

::Gandes, I know you hear me. Turn to face me dearest, come to the sound of my voice. I will protect you.: Yidane sent again and Fioretta gasped as she saw Gandes' hand twitch.

"He moved! Did you see that?" She asked and Grantham nodded.

"Aye. Shush. Don't interfere beloved. Only Yidane can reach him now, let their bond be Gandes' ladder." Grantham whispered taking his wife's hand as the very long wait began.

Gerdar was already sitting at the desk in the room, writing Goh. The little pain in his ass had the right answer! Now it was just waiting, no matter the outcome. Gandes was legally free now.

Everyone settled on chairs and couches along the outer wall, Yidane's eyes deeply closed and his breath deep and for a long time the only movements were the occasional twitch of Gandes' hand.

Yidane shut out everything except their bond and reached for it like a rope and pulled. Gandes' fear was so very real and Yidane had to pull him out of the dream he'd fallen into and had been sharing with Yidane for weeks.

::Gandes. I will not lie to you. Your dream was real, but it is also over beloved. Goh got to you in time, you're safe dearest. They are all gone, the storm is long over. Can you try to reach for me dearest. Take my hand Gandes and let me pull you up again. I will never let you fall again on my life dearest. Feel our bond

Gandes, reach for it please.:: Yidane sent then felt a response and he seized it and pulled.

::Who?:: Came the quiet, lost, confused and terrified voice.

::I'm Yidane, Gandes. Can you hear me now?::

::HELP ME MASTER WEILDER PLEASE!:: Gandes sobbed in return and Yidane pulled that frightened mind into his mental embrace.

::You have already been helped Gandes. There is nothing to fear now. It's all over.::

::LOCUSTS!::

::Gone dearest, they only live in your dreams now where they cannot harm you.::

::GOH! PAPA!::

::All safe Gandes. Your Father and mother are here with you. Gavain is here, your uncle is here. Goh is safe and has bonded and is away but all safe. I am here too Gandes, waiting for you beloved.::

::Master Wielder?::

::Call not your husband 'Master' Gandes. Call me Yidane please beloved.::

::This is real?::

::Very real Gandes. I've wished for you so long, please come back to me dearest. You're free and I vow always to take care of you. Please come back with me.::

::Yidane. I'm lost!::

::I know my love. Don't fear again. Just let it go and follow my voice, you can do it follow the power you feel I am right here at the end of it, come back and open your eyes and look at me. I'm here, holding you in my arms.:: Yidane said and everyone in the room had been dozing for what seemed hours as Yidane fought a mental battle. It was Amandine who sobbed first and alerted everyone as Gandes moved.

Truly moved and gasped as his eyes shot wide open, shivering with fear.

Yidane was smiling at him and his hand coming to rest on a perfect silken cheek. "Welcome back dearest." Yidane said and Gandes took several moments to return to reality and he just crumbled into a sobbing joy.

Yidane held him close in his arms and kissed Gandes' temple lightly. "It is all right Gandes. I told you it was over beloved and it shall never happen again." Yidane promised as he let his shields drop and allowed the others to come closer.

"He's still fragile, talk slowly. He's confused and his senses befuddled." Yidane said softly as Fioretta sank to her knees and took Gandes' hand.

"Gandes honey, it's Mama. Do you feel me here with you baby?"

Gandes just turned confused eyes at her, still half in his mind and half in reality again. He was weak as a kitten with muscles long dormant not wanting to respond but he nodded.

"Mama?"

"Aye honey. We're all here. Papa is Here too." Fioretta said as Grantham smiled and leaned over to cup Gandes cheek in his hand.

"My precious boy. Long scare you gave us my son." Grantham said and Gandes closed his eyes and leaned into the touch of comfort.

Gandes then lifted his head and placed his cheek against Yidane's chest and just nuzzled silently for comfort like a lost babe. "He needs time now, he's not all here yet. He's still half asleep I shant let him fall back again. Please may we have time alone?" Yidane asked softly and Grantham stood and nodded.

"Aye, son of my heart. Saved him like none of us could." Grantham said, his joy evident as he smiled at Yidane and everyone silently left the new couple alone and shut the door behind them.

"Gandes, try to wake up more please. Don't fall back asleep yet dearest."

"Real?" Gandes sighed and Yidane smiled and kissed his brow lovingly.

"Aye. Very real."

"I dream."

"I know. I have seen and felt it, you called to me Gandes and I have come. Please look at me." Yidane said and Gandes obeyed automatically, still coming into slow consciousness and tipped his head up and Yidane was awash and shipwrecked in stormy eyes. So large and clear, still glassy with long sleep but so captivating Yidane would never tire losing himself and seeing himself reflected in those stunning eyes.

“Yidane? Is that what you said?”

“Aye. Your Yidane.”

Gandes' face transformed with a tender smile. “Yidane, you're so warm.”

“It is our bond that is warm. I have prayed to the Gods for this bond and I will cherish you always.”

Gandes' eyes closed again and this time in silent weeping as he turned his face into Yidane's broad chest and sank into Yidane's embrace.

“Always afraid this would never be. Always wished you'd come.” Gandes sobbed and Yidane just held him tighter.

“Come I have and will never leave you I promise.”

“Hold me Please Yidane. Please don't let go.”

“I won't. Not ever my beautiful Gandes.” Yidane was weeping now holding Gandes tightly like a phantom dream about to fade. Everything he found most beautiful, everything that he'd wished for, everything he'd dreamed paled to the youth in his arms. His wellspring, his husband, his very soul.

A gentle hand lifted with great effort and touched Yidane's face and Yidane's turned to kiss the palm and smile. “You are real.” Gandes sighed, more aware and assured and Yidane nodded.

“Aye. You are hurting holding your arm up dearest I feel it. Let me restore some life into your limbs beloved.” Yidane said gently laying Gandes' frail body back down. He was so weak he couldn't even sit up by himself yet.

Yidane moved and gently but vigorously began to rub muscles in arms and legs, getting the blood flowing again. “Better?”

“Why am I so weak?” Gandes finally asked and Yidane sighed, with the return of lucidity would come the very hard questions to answer.

“You've been sleeping a very long time Gandes. Your body has gone weak because it has lain still for too long.”

“How long?”

“Over a year dearest.”

“A year?” Gandes gasped and Yidane nodded reaching up to lay a hand on Gandes’ brow in comfort.

“Aye. We’ll tell you everything a little at a time Gandes. I only know myself very little. Right now worry not what is passed, just focus on getting better again. I want to dance with you under the stars and walk with you under the moonlight and run with you under the sun. First however, we must take small steps and get you healthy again.” Yidane said and Gandes smiled again and it went straight to Yidane’s heart and squeezed.

“I always wanted to dance. You will dance with me?”

“Whenever you desire it Gandes, I vow.”

“My heartaches.” Gandes sighed and Yidane leaned over and kissed his lips with a chaste brush.

“As does mine. Bonds make one fall in love strangers for no reason at all. It will be fun to learn the one I love most. I will tell you my stories if you will tell me yours.”

“Will you start with where you come from Yidane? I never heard one speak like you do.” Gandes asked as Yidane sat back up and pulled over a chair so he could face his beautiful mate and they could talk and get to know each other better.

“I’m not surprised. Very far northwest of here form Merchant’s Row.”

“I saw it on a map once, so very far away.”

“It is and I walked all the way here. I knew I had to come here and now I know why. You were here waiting for me.” Yidane said and Gandes smiled looking up from his pillow.

“Why can I feel how upset you are? Why? Am I not what you wanted?” Gandes asked and Yidane’s eyes widened.

“Oh gods no, Gandes. I am upset because you have suffered so. You feel that because of our bond. You should also feel you are everything I have ever wanted. I won’t be able to take my eyes off you, so beautiful you are to me.” Yidane said smiling softly, taking Gandes’ very limp hand to hold and entwining their fingers.

“I’m little.”

“All wellsprings are little Gandes.” Yidane said with a smile and Gandes sighed.

“Are all wielders as big as you and Goh?” Gandes asked and Yidane chuckled.

“Not all no beloved, I am just what my poor mother called an ox. I was always bigger than most, I even stopped growing at fifteen. I shot up tall very early. Now I just get wider.” Yidane said with a wink and finally Gandes laughed. A light chuckle, more breath than sound but so lovely it gave Yidane gooseflesh to hear.

“You are big. I think it’s very handsome. I always read poems and I always dreamed that a wielder like in the stories would come. The monks called me silly.”

“It sounds to me you’ve just got a romantic heart Gandes. Tell me, what did you wish for?” Yidane asked and Gandes closed his eyes and sighed.

“Tall and handsome just like you. That you’d come and climb into my window and carry me away.” Gandes said and Yidane stood and scooped Gandes into his arms. He was so light, even dead weight it was no effort to lift him.

“Like this?” Yidane asked and Gandes smiled and his head rested on a large shoulder.

“Aye.” Gandes’ voice taking on a dream like quality.

“Then what did I do in your dreams?”

“You’d put me on your horse and ride away.”

“Well, I have no horse, but how about I improvise?” Yidane said sitting down with Gandes in his lap, his arms around him as if they were on the back of a steed, Yidane gently swaying like a on the back of the horse.

“Do we ride north or south dearest?” Yidane asked and Gandes smiled.

“South. The books say it’s so warm there.” Gandes replied, lost in the moment.

“So south it is. Where the air is rich with perfume, the skies filled with rainbow colored dragons. The fruit always on the vine and the lush jungles and sandy beaches always unspoiled. What do we do when we get there?”

“I don’t know. Tell me what you like Yidane.” Gandes replied, this was as far as his own dreams ever went.

“I’d like to see you with a crown of flowers in your hair, your skin healthy in color in the sunshine. I want to walk barefoot in the sand with you and listen to the sea call from the inside of a shell casing. I want to kiss you under the full moon and

swim with you under the stars. I want to feed you grapes from off the vine and watch you drink juice from hollowed out coconut shells.” Yidane supplied the vision and Gandes responded by turning closer into him, his breath tickling Yidane’s throat and he shivered and not from cold.

“I have never seen any of those things. I don’t even know what they look like but such a beautiful dream just the same.”

“A dream I promise to show you for real someday Gandes.”

“I never dreamed you this wonderful.” Gandes sobbed, his emotions paper thin and Yidane just held him close, his own heart aching.

“To hear you call say that fills me with joy. I only ever want to please you Gandes. Your happiness is mine.” Yidane said truthfully standing again and carrying Gandes back to bed.

“You’re tired love, you have not slept peacefully in a very long time. Your body is drained. Rest a while and then we can tell more stories to each other. I want to go and see about getting you something to eat, you need it for strength. I will only just be outside the door for a moment I will be right back dearest.” Yidane said going to the door and leaving it open so Gandes could still see him, he could feel Gandes’ fear of being alone.

Yidane startled the guard as he opened the door. “Please, Gandes needs something to eat. Can you find his mother to bring him something light for him please?” Yidane asked and the Guard nodded.

“Right away Master Wielder. They are only in the garden waiting now to be called.” The guard said and went on his errand and Yidane went back to Gandes’ side and taking up the chair again and Gandes’ hand.

It was just a few minutes when Fioretta returned with a tray of broth and cool iced mint tea. Gandes smiled when she walked in and her smile was exactly the same as she came in and first set the tray down and Yidane vacated his seat for the woman that Gandes so very much resembled. Her tender hand brushing the hair off Gandes’ face.

“Hello darling. How’s mama’s baby feeling?” She asked tenderly and Gandes drank in touch like he was starving for it.

“Tired Mama.”

“I don’t doubt it dearest. You’ve been through a long journey and your body is weak. But your bonded is here and you’ll see in no time the light will make you well again.” She said and Gandes smiled and turned his eyes up to Yidane.

“He is light.” Gandes sighed and once again Yidane’s heart constricted painfully with joy.

“We are light together dearest.” Yidane said moving behind Gandes in bed to be his support to help him sit up. Fioretta took up the bowl and there was no way Gandes would be able to feed himself, his arms lay limp at his sides and she just smiled and took up the spoon.

“I haven’t fed you like this since you were a baby and getting more on Mama than in your tummy.” Fioretta said kindly as she spoon fed Gandes the weak broth.

The look on Yidane’s face was shocked and Fioretta just smiled. “We tried to hide him. None of us wanted to let him go into the temple. I can tell you’re shocked my heart son. We managed to keep his birth a secret for three years and we all defied law and spoke to him mind to mind after they came to take him. Goh ever defying law and sneaking in to see him.” Fioretta said and Gandes smiled between bites.

“And getting caught often. Mama is he really bonded too?”

“Aye baby, day before yesterday.” Fioretta said spooning in another bite.

“Is he like Goh dreamed?” Gandes asked and Fioretta nodded.

“Aye. Down to the beauty spot he says. His name is Obie, he was in the temple over in Garth. That’s all I know so far. You know your brother forgets to tell others details he usually wants to know himself.” Fioretta said as Gandes yawned after the last bite.

“Will you tell him about Yidane please? Tell Goh he’s everything I dreamed too?” Gandes said tilting his head up and smiling at his wielder who smiled in return.

“Aye. I will. Yidane, do you think you can manage to move him to a more comfortable room? Gerdar and Amandine have a nice room being prepared for you both while Gandes recovers. Much closer to them should you need anything in the family wing. Grantham’s old bedroom.”

“I’d carry him all the way to Merchant’s Row for his comfort. Aye.” Yidane said picking up Gandes and carrying him down the corridor behind Fioretta. They met with Amandine in the hall and she ushered them into a grand suite.

Gandes was lost in the large feather bed as Yidane laid him in cool sheets. “Gavain has gone to collect your things Nephew of my heart, you both are to stay and have all you need while Gandes recovers. The doors behind you lead into our private gardens and the pull cord by the bed will call servants at any hour.

Gerdar and I are across the hall, wake either of us also at any hour should you need us. The bathing room is just behind the small door to your left and I'm sure you'll find everything else on your own." Amandine said hugging Yidane tightly and then leaning over to kiss Gandes' cheek.

"Rest well dearheart. Let your big man take care of you. Bless you both." She said turning with Fioretta and leaving. Yidane turned to Gandes who was trying hard to stay awake.

He walked over and just pulled the sheet up over Gandes. "Sleep dearest, I'm right here."

"I love you Yidane." Gandes sighed as his eyes closed content and Yidane's heart burst, it was the first time Gandes had said he loved him and it was a joy that would never be equaled.

Yidane sat at the desk in the room and wrote to his parents and sent the letter off with a light heart. He'd found his heart at last.

Gavain returned with Grantham carrying Yidane's meager possessions and Grantham stood beside the bed for a few minutes just looking down at his son. "He sleeps at peace at last. So very much like his mother." Grantham said quietly and Yidane nodded.

"He does look like her greatly. I noticed." Yidane replied and Grantham smiled.

"I know I do not have to say it with a bond as fierce as yours. But do take care of my son, he's so very precious to me."

"And to me sir. You have my vow." Yidane said and Grantham just nodded and turned and left with Gavain.

Yidane undressed to his under trousers and crawled into bed with Gandes. Bringing him into his arms to hold and he could feel Gandes' massive wellspring of power respond and wrap around Yidane in returned comfort.

That night there were no nightmares for either of them. Just southern beaches and skies filled with dragons while they walked sandy shores hand in hand.

“Shipwrecked in Stormy Eyes”

A Wielder and Wellspring Story

Author: D. Sanders

ACT III - Recovery and Romance

Yidane didn't want to move that morning he awoke so happy. Sometime during the night, Gandes had turned and was using Yidane's chest like a pillow and he was curled up content and warm and their bond was even more firmly cemented than the previous day. Yidane ached to kiss him breathless and love him until they both were boneless but Gandes' health was a long way away from that sort of activity so Yidane would have to reign in his desires for the time being.

Yidane just sighed and ran his fingers through Gandes sinfully long hair and marveled in the softness of the strands. Gandes stirred only slightly and unconsciously nuzzled his cheek against Yidane's bare chest. Yidane was in heaven, Gandes had no idea just how much he delighted Yidane's senses.

He had always liked men that were more graceful than athletic, the gentle ones, the ones who would rather be playing the lute than be one of the drunkards listening to the tune. He had always been drawn to midnight beauties, dark and willowy. Yidane often said to himself he liked men more on the feminine side. All the glories of women and all the glories of men combined in one breathtaking form.

Gandes was all that and more. Unrivaled beauty in his features, his voice soft spoken and serene, his hair luxuriant in silken pleasures, his skin soft, flawless and smooth like glass and his eyes, orbs taken from the sea and sky and filled with such tenderness Yidane wanted to weep for joy all over again.

“Yidane?” Came a sleepy voice as Yidane smiled.

“What is it Gandes?”

“Is this alright?” Gandes asked and Yidane quirked an eyebrow.

“Is what alright dearest?”

“You being here with me. They aren't going to be mad you stayed with me are they?”

“Gandes, beloved you're joking right? Of course it's all right. We're bonded, even the King couldn't order me from your side and he wouldn't. A bond is even more binding than a marriage contract. You are my husband and I'll be damned if I leave you alone for a moment. You my love are stuck with me for quite a long time I hope you realize.” Yidane said and Gandes' sigh was full of contentment.

"I'm just so afraid someone is going to tell me this isn't true and I'm going to be sent away again. I don't want to lose this feeling, I've never felt this way before and I'm so scared it's going to go away."

Yidane squeezed slender shoulders and then rolled so Gandes was beneath him slightly and they were looking into each other's eyes. "Until the Gods call us home Gandes, this feeling will never go away. I love you." Yidane said closing the space between them and giving Gandes his first real kiss.

This wasn't the chaste brush of lips on skin as Yidane's affection had been the day before, this was a kiss that had Gandes gasp with shock and Yidane took advantage of his surprise and his tongue delved deeply into a warm and pliant mouth that melted into the kiss which burned the moment Gandes' lost himself to Yidane's kiss.

Yidane's inner senses igniting in response to Gandes' well of power that surged with sudden desire and Yidane had to break the kiss long before he wished too. "You my love make me burn and if I let myself touch you well too long I will succumb to your power and lose my mind. Doubt not I love you, I ache for you and right now you are far too fragile and infinitely more precious to me whole."

Gandes' shivered and his lazy smile that spread across his features transformed his beauty into nearly an ethereal presence laying beside Yidane. "I want to cry, I never dreamed a kiss was as nice as that."

"Just you wait my lovely. Just you wait." Yidane said pressing Gandes' nose with his finger before sitting up and raking a hand through his horribly messy short hair. Gandes chuckled and his eyes crinkled in mirth.

"What?"

"Your hair. It's standing straight up in the air." Gandes said, filled with good humor and better spirits.

"Get used to it dearest. I always have the worst hair, it never wants to be tamed and first thing in the morning I look a right mess, everyday without fail."

"I love it. I think you look wonderful." Gandes said and Yidane chuckled.

"As I do you my lovely." Yidane said getting out of bed and picking up a frail Gandes' in his arms.

"Now then, let's get you taken care of. I am positive you need to visit the privy as much as I do and I think I am going to relish the fact I have a brand new husband and pamper you silly with a bath that will get the blood moving in your limbs again." Yidane said marching into the bathroom.

There was no way Gandes' could stand, his leg muscles were painfully lacking in tone from disuse. Yidane however was non-pulsed as he carried Gandes' into the privy and set him on the porcelain commode. Setting Gandes' legs wide as he lifted the night shirt and holding him one handed upright made sure Gandes' was balanced.

"Awkward I know dearest."

"I'm so embarrassed." Gandes was flushed a bright red and Yidane just smiled tenderly.

"Would you do this for me if I were ill and weak?"

"Yes, but..."

"But nothing Gandes. There is nothing to be embarrassed about, you can't do this alone yet and this is much better than a bed pot. Now, can you hold my shoulders? I know you don't have much arm strength yet, just rest them on my shoulders for balance." Yidane said helping lift Gandes' arms over his shoulders.

With one hand supporting Gandes' chest so he didn't droop forward and then with the other Yidane reached down and took hold of Gandes' manhood and made sure it was controlled and aimed into the bowl. Gandes was shivering. "Gandes it's alright. I love you now please try and go, you'll get an infection if you don't relieve yourself and hold it too long. I love you, let me help you beloved." Yidane encouraged and Gandes' swallowed his fragile pride and shut his eyes and just let nature take its course.

"Both Gandes, don't hold back. You ate last night and I know it's sitting foul in your belly, I can feel it. Just let it all out." Yidane said and was unaffected as Gandes' body purged itself.

"Now, lean forward against me Gandes. Put your chest on my shoulders and I'll clean you." Yidane said and Gandes' obeyed and bit his lips against the intimate embarrassment as he was even too weak to clean off his own backside.

Once Yidane finished he pulled off Gandes' night shirt off completely and tossed it aside and then moved Gandes onto the floor a moment. "Just sit there a moment Gandes. It's my turn and then I need to draw a bath." Yidane said with a smile as Gandes' eyes widened as Yidane stood and pulled from his breeches something so large Gandes' throat went dry.

Surely the man was either deformed or Gandes was exceedingly small because never in his life had Gandes seen a penis so very large and he'd seen quite a few. The monks had a communal bathhouse and none of them had ever looked

like Yidane. Yidane finished his business and turned and stripped himself and then leaned over the tub to fill it with warm water.

Gandes was still in shock as he watched. Even from behind the man's testicles were just as huge as the man himself. Everything on Yidane was larger than life and still quite flaccid. Gandes wasn't sure he really wanted to know how big Yidane would be erect, moreover how they were even going to be intimate together.

Gandes had been very sheltered and knew of sex but never any details and the only ones he did know had come from books and had always involved men and women together, not two men. He was horrifically ignorant and now highly scared he'd do something wrong being so naïve. Yidane turned his head over his broad shoulder and smiled.

"I can feel your fear Gandes. There is nothing to be afraid of and we'll cross the bridge you fear much later dearest. I don't even want you worrying over it right now, just concern yourself with getting strong again love." Yidane said as he tested the water then went back to retrieve Gandes from off the floor.

He settled Gandes in the tub first then crawled in behind him to support him. Yidane washed everything from Gandes' hair to his small toes. Fear evaporated in the relaxing bath where Gandes' back rested against Yidane's chest.

Once they were both clean, they sat there a while in the warm water and just talked.

Yidane told him of the Northwest, of his parents and all about the brother he'd lost and Gandes told Yidane about his time in the temple and of Goh's visits and all his dreams and wishes.

"I am sorry my dreams hurt you Yidane."

"Dearest, I'd walk through fire for you. Because I shared your dreams I was able to help you, I am so glad I was given that glimpse it aided me in guiding you. I could see it was much the same fear I had and had already found a way of escaping before. Let's not dwell on pasts neither of us can alter. Let us be grateful to have survived and have this wonderful chance to live and move forward again."

"I'd like that Yidane. I am so happy I want to burst. Can I ask you another question?"

"Always beloved."

"You never did tell me how old you are."

Yidane chuckled. "Not much older than you. I'm nineteen."

"Really? You seem so much older."

"You're not the first to say that. Life is hard up north and as you already noticed I'm rather large for my age. We're actually very lucky Gandes. We met at the age most bonded pairs meet. I'm just slightly older than normal and you are sixteen, most wellsprings bond at your age. Sixteen and Seventeen are average. We got very lucky. Goh is already a score and one and I don't know how old Obie is, they had to wait longer."

"My great uncle Dune was a score and five before he met Great Uncle Parna. They are both male too so Goh tells me. They moved up north near where you came from before I was born. Goh said he remembers them from when he was little. They are Aunt Amandine's fathers. They adopted her when she was very little and Dune is actually Uncle Gardar's real uncle. Queen Duna was Uncle Dune's twin sister."

"I know Dune and Parna. They live in a village about ten miles south of Merchant's Row. I grew up seeing them about once a month. They always came to see father. They like the simple life and Pernath was just too big for them and Dune missed the sea. He taught me how to board surf when I was about six. He's a wonderful man. He and Parna gave me much hope I'd find you eventually when I grew and realized I was like them."

"What are they like?"

"Dune is big like me and you'd never guess he was pushing seventy now. He's healthy as a plough horse and looks no older than maybe fifty. Parna is I think sixty-two now. Dune's about seven years older I think. Parna's hair is all white, but Dune told me he used to have dark red hair. The white in Parna's hair is about the only thing that looks aged. He looks even better than Dune does, Mama always says she hopes when she's over sixty she has skin like Parna's. Not a wrinkle in sight and if his hair was still red, you'd swear he was still only in his forties. They'll live a long time together, they still act like they did when they were younger. Parna always says youth is in the soul, not the body."

"How Romantic!" Gandes sighed and Yidane smiled. Gandes was such an incurable Romantic at heart. His whole spirit was alive with gentle wonder at Yidane's tale.

"Aye. Very. It gives me much joy to think I get to spend a life like that with you. In fifty years I want to still wake up like I did this morning as your living pillow." Yidane said dipping his head to plant a kiss on Gandes shoulder.

“It was so lovely to wake up in your arms. All warm and comfortable. You make a handsome pillow beloved.” Gandes replied tilting his head back to smile up at Yidane.

“But was it soft enough?” Yidane joked and Gandes laughed.

“My goodness, yes. I slept like a babe. I never woke all night long and I feel so good this morning even if I can hardly move.”

“You’ve just lost muscle Gandes, that you’ll get back quick enough with movement and food. Speaking of food, I’m famished and we’re pruned. Let’s get out and see about filling our bellies while we talk more.” Yidane said letting the water out of the tub and wrapping Gandes in a towel carried him back to their bed.

It appeared the servants were waiting to be summoned and arrived with breakfast for them both. Soft oatmeal for Gandes’ stomach and rosehip herbal tea and a heartier breakfast for Yidane’s needs. Strong coffee in a carafe, thick cuts of ham, potatoes, scrambled eggs and cheese and still warm from the oven biscuits and fresh cream butter.

Yidane fed Gandes first, leaving his own meal covered until Gandes was attended and then he just pulled the table closer to sit and eat himself while Gandes rested propped up in pillows as they continued to talk happily together.

Yidane was halfway through his meal when Amandine arrived with a Physician who examined Gandes thoroughly while Yidane finished his breakfast.

“Healthy as he should be, all wellsprings are and you’re no different lad. Just weak from losing quite a bit of muscle tone. Common for folks who’ve been in a coma like you son.” The Doctor began as he tested muscles in arms and legs.

“You however are gaining tone again much faster than normal folks. I see this too in gifted ones. It’s the power you all possess, it stimulates bodies in ways that have always fascinated me. Try moving as much as you can Gandes, the more you work, the faster you get out of bed again lad. When you’re tired sleep, when you’re hungry eat. I can already see Yidane is taking good care of you. Clean and warm and bright eyed is a good sign. Continue as you are and I’d say two weeks and you’ll be walking again. For the next two days however, stick to soft foods, you don’t want to upset your system. The monks tell me they’ve been spoon feeding you broth so your stomach is not used to digesting heavier foods at the moment, Build that back up slowly.” The doctor winked and Gandes smiled.

“I will. Thank you Doctor.” Gandes said and the Physician smiled.

“You’re welcome.” He said excusing himself.

Amandine didn’t stay long, just a few minutes to chat before she too left them both to continue with their day, looking very happy to have Gandes back again.

The first few days they spent together, were spent with long hours talking and learning to love each other beyond their bond. Yidane loved to hear the sound of Gandes’ laugh, his sweet romantic nature and his genuine gentleness. They hadn’t moved their physical relationship beyond that one kiss. Yidane knew it was tempting fire and he was far too preoccupied with helping Gandes gain back his motor control.

Yidane spent hours encouraging Gandes to try and lift things like the vase off the table or a couple of heavy books off the shelf to build up his arms while at the same time, trying to help Gandes stand again.

Some attempts were successful for a few moments and others Gandes was just too tired and too taxed so Yidane had him sleep before they tried again.

He was improving however rapidly which was a good sign. He was now sitting up on his own and able to feed himself again by the end of the third day.

Gandes was currently sleeping off the last round of trying to stand on his own and Yidane was watching him sleep and marveling again at his beauty. His left hand was curled on the pillow and Yidane felt his ring finger was far too bare. As a wielder and wellspring couple, Marriage bands were not necessary but just the same a romantic edition to the relationship and Yidane just felt like doing something more to show Gandes how very much he loved him. So while Gandes slept, Yidane ventured out of their room for the first time in four days.

Amandine volunteered to sit with Gandes in case he needed anything while Yidane made a short trip into to town.

He was whistling a merry tune as he made his way to a jewelers and the door chimed with an equally merry bell. The old man behind the counter smiled.

“Master Wielder, can I help you sir?”

“I want a Marriage Band for my Wellspring. Something simple but elegant will suit his hand. He has small hands. I measured his finger while he slept.” Yidane said handing over the small bit of string and the Jeweler smiled.

“He does have small hands. Not many male pairs about either. Are you the one who bonded to the young Prince that was in the temple?” The Jeweler asked and Yidane paused taken aback.

He’d never even thought of Gandes’ family ties before that moment. It suddenly dawned on Yidane that Gandes was indeed a Prince. Not a direct line to the throne, but a Prince nonetheless. Everyone called Gandes’ father Grantham, Lord Grantham, but he was technically the Prince, his elder brother was King. Which made all three of his sons Princes as well, even if Goh and Gavain also opted to just be addressed as Lords themselves. They had taken these titles years ago after Gerdar and Amandine had their first son Amdar twenty years earlier, just so confusion on who was next in line for the throne wasn’t an issue. It was suddenly a lot to digest and Yidane just nodded.

“Aye. Gandes is my Bonded.”

“Congratulations Master Wielder. I always heard he was a lovely.” The Jeweler said and now Yidane was back on familiar ground and he couldn’t have stopped the smile that spread across his face if he tried.

“Aye. He’s beautiful. He looks like his mother.”

“Ah, the Lady Fioretta is famed for her beauty and her charming manner. If the son is like the mother I have no doubt he is most fair and I think I have just the thing to suit the young one.” The jeweler replied bringing out a tray of simple delicate bands in Gandes’ size of precisely cut and etched silver and gold that made them shimmer and catch all available light like gemstones.

One silver and gold band of mixed metals really capturing Yidane’s eye as he lifted it to the sunlight to inspect it. Two string thin bands of metal that had been shaped together like braided vines of ivy. Tiny delicate leaves in both colors etched with even more delicate veins to truly bring out the artistry of the metallic plant. “Ivy is ever growing and easy to take hold of the earth just as love when it is true is ever growing and easily fallen into. Both sturdy and strong and can whether bad times.” The Jeweler said and Yidane smiled, he didn’t need to look anymore, this symbolic gesture of love was perfect.

“You’ve sold me, this is beautiful and I think Gandes will love it, my beloved has a very romantic spirit. How much?” Yidane asked and the Jeweler just shook his head.

“Master I’d not take a penny copper from you sir. You done quite enough freeing that boy from hell. Like Tarnack of old came for Perdain. Only you came and freed him not just from his prison but from his torment. My brother is a monk in the temple, I know how that boy suffered after that storm we had. My brother tried everything to help wake up our little Prince. My brother said Locusts had

almost eaten the lad alive and then his power nearly consumed him on top of everything else. Nay, take it with my blessings and wishes for a long and happy life together. I'm sure only good things will come from such fortuitous bonds. How is he doing if you don't mind me asking sir."

"He's doing much better, getting stronger everyday. Thank you so much for your kindness I'm speechless."

"Just be happy young sir. Gods bless you for coming to Pernath. Perhaps when he's well you can bring him so I may meet him and that's payment enough. Now go give that to our little Prince." The Jeweler said shooing Yidane away and Yidane pocketed the ring and vowed to bring Gandes back before heading back out into the city.

Yidane was in wonderful spirits as he walked the streets and paused in front of a bakery displaying beautifully decorated little cakes in the window. He knew Gandes couldn't have much on his stomach but the tiny cakes were hardly more than a few bites. It was tradition to celebrate Marriages with cake so Yidane purchased two cakes with white icing and carried the small paper box holding his purchase as he continued on his way again.

He rounded a corner and a young girl selling bundles of beautiful roses in a basket was standing there. She had about a dozen left and Yidane bought every last one of them, basket and all and had that on his arm as he once more resumed his journey back.

Tarri from the Tavern came out of the local butcher and Yidane almost plowed him over. "Yidane! Is it True? Did you bond?" Tarri asked happily excited and Yidane smiled and nodded.

"Aye. I did."

"I take it those roses are for him?" Tarri asked and Yidane smiled.

"Aye."

"What's he like? I'm dying to know. We all are. Does he look like Goh?" Tarri asked and Yidane smiled.

"Same coloring, but nothing like Goh. You'd not believe me if I told you just how beautiful he is."

"I would, I've seen Goh's mother. Most beautiful lady in all of Pernath she is, all her sons have her coloring even if the two eldest look a lot like their sire. What's his name?"

“Gandes, and he looks like Fioretta greatly.”

“Is he nice? Is he well?”

“He’s doing much better, still very weak but getting stronger. Nice doesn’t even begin to describe him. I couldn’t be happier.”

“Oh that is such wonderful news. I was so worried about you and your headaches that just kept getting worse. I thought there was something really wrong which is unusual for a wielder. I hear it was just your bond?”

“Aye and headaches are gone now. I must thank you properly Tarri for all your kindness to me. Everything happened so quickly I never got a chance. It was very appreciated.”

“Anytime Yidane. Anytime at all. Please promise when Gandes is well you’ll bring him by the Cock-n-Bull at least once so we can all meet him.”

“I promise and I need to hurry before he wakes up from his nap. These are all surprises.” Yidane said and Tarri laughed.

“You romantic bugger. I’m so jealous now. Go, be off with you and see you later my friend!” Tarri said smiling as Yidane hurried back.

Gandes was still sleeping and Amandine smiled as Yidane returned with Roses and cake. She winked as she left and Yidane sat on the edge of the bed and ran a rose along Gandes’ cheek and under his nose and Gandes’ eyes fluttered open and he smiled and smelled the deep red rose.

“Did you bring me flowers?” He asked and Yidane smiled.

“More than flowers beloved.” Yidane said as Gandes sat up and grinned.

“Why?” Gandes asked as Yidane set the basket of flowers beside Gandes on the bed and Gandes took up the rose Yidane had been holding to smell again.

“Because I love you. Now close your eyes and give me your hand dearest.” Yidane said and Gandes obeyed and held his hand palm up.

Yidane fished the ring out of his pocket and turned Gandes’ hand over and slipped the ring on his finger. “For my love, my husband and my life’s meaning. I love you Gandes.” Yidane said and Gandes’ eyes shot open and he gasped as he looked at the ring on his finger.

“Oh it’s so beautiful!” Gandes cried, his eyes growing misty as he fought tears.

“The Jeweler said that Ivy is ever growing and easy to take hold of the earth just as love when it is true is ever growing and easily fallen into. Both sturdy and strong and can weather bad times. I can’t think of a more appropriate symbol for our bond than that ring. Always remember how much I love you when you look at it dearest.” Yidane said and arms were suddenly flung around his neck and sobs were cried into his chest and Gandes’ entire wellspring of power erupted in overwhelming love and devotion. Penetrating Yidane’s heart like a dart. He was in no doubt how much Gandes appreciated the gesture.

“I love you so much Yidane! I will never take this off ever. You make me so happy.” Gandes sobbed and Yidane just held him close.

“You make me happy and I have more still to give you.” Yidane said and Gandes chuckled and wiped his eyes as he sat up.

“Are you trying to spoil me and woo me until I melt into this bed with love of you?”

“That is the general idea my lovely.” Yidane winked bringing over the small box that held the cakes.

They fed each other the small treat and licked icing off each other’s fingers and Gandes was floating high on a cloud of romance. Yidane was so wonderful, Gandes couldn’t have asked for a man better suited to him. If anyone doubted bonds were born because two people perfectly matched each other they were fools. Yidane managed to turn Gandes into blissful joy by just breathing and when he did things this romantic Gandes’ heart raced wildly in his chest and all he wanted to do was smother Yidane in affection.

Which he did. He reached out and placed both hands on either side of Yidane’s face and pulled him into a kiss that curled Yidane’s toes. He’d expected joy, but not a kiss like that one.

It was Yidane’s turn to have his heart race and his blood boil before Gandes deigned to release him from sweet and passionate torture. “Gods Gandes, don’t do that yet love. You drive me to distraction!” Yidane breathed and Gandes smiled.

“That was the idea my beloved.” Gandes said with a wink throwing Yidane’s words right back at him and Yidane chuckled.

“You’re feeling much better I see. Now before I let you run away with my senses, how about we try instead to stand some more.’

“Task master.”

“Oh Aye. Hard work is good for the body and soul. Up out of bed my love.” Yidane said standing and helping Gandes to his feet. He was still unbalanced and needed to hold onto Yidane still for support but he was standing for greater lengths of time now before his legs shook too badly and he needed to sit again.

Yidane tied books to his legs and sat him in a chair and for a good hour he had Gandes lifting books or at least attempting to, they didn't move more than an inch or two, until they paused for a late lunch and rest before Yidane had Gandes working again until dinner.

Gandes' arms and hands were the first to really come back quickly, by the end of the week he was eating normally again, able to pull himself upright easily and support himself while on the privy which was a relief. Yidane had to still carry him to and from the room, but taking care of himself with the return of functioning arms was a relief.

His muscles ached now, he was working them so hard to try and restore them Gandes hurt in places he didn't know he had, but it was a satisfying ache and proof he was regaining what he lost if he hurt.

Yidane was ever present, always pushing for just one more, encouraging and congratulating Gandes on his recovery and making the time pass quickly. His constant love and affection bolstering Gandes' confidence and joy.

There wasn't a thing about Yidane Gandes didn't love. His crooked endearing smile, his handsome hard edged and rugged face always sporting a shadow of a beard even if he had shaved that morning, his hazel eyes always filled with love and affection, his hair that defied gravity and always managed to look messy even after he'd combed it. His large frame that had a lazy grace about it. He moved like he was on water, his balance always rock steady and sure. He could lift Gandes without batting an eye and Gandes was sure at this point Yidane would have been able to carry him all the way to Merchant's Row without breaking a sweat.

Yidane was comfortable in his body and it showed. The way he didn't just sit in a chair, but filled it with his presence like he'd been poured into it. The way he slept all sprawled in the bed but still managing not to crowd Gandes but rather wrap him protectively in a cocoon of comfort like he was just an additional large pillow in their bed. He exuded intelligence and confidence with just his body language. When he spoke, his deep bass was soft and lilting in that lazy northern drawl indicative of the people from the region. He sounded like the sea itself washing up on the shore. He was calming and tranquil and drew people into his trust the moment he smiled and spoke to them.

He'd have made a perfect teacher, patient, wise, caring and understanding. The servants seemed to adore Yidane almost as much as Gandes did. Whenever they came to bring them food or linens Yidane would talk to them as equals and he treated everyone with a great amount of respect and kindness which made Gandes love him even more.

Here was the hero of all those romantic epic poems right here with him. All the handsome rugged looks, all the chivalry and honor and all the spiritual kindness that was always written about these men, Yidane embodied them all and so much more.

Gerdar had taken to coming in to visit them quite often and he'd talk with Yidane about a great many things and listen to his views and nod and digest Yidane's thoughts with a smile on his face. He liked Yidane's unbiased viewpoints and just utilized an ear to vent frustrations with the council with his family in private settings.

In the evenings Fioretta and Grantham would come to the palace and they'd all have a private dinner in Yidane and Gandes' room with Gerdar and Amandine and some nights they'd talk about current affairs and others they were just a normal family laughing over silly mundane things.

Gandes felt a freedom of spirit that he'd never felt before. He was no longer relegated to the temple and only speaking to those he loved most telepathically. He was right here with them, at the same table, eating the same meal and cherishing every moment spent in their physical company.

Touch was the sensation Gandes' loved most. To feel his mother's hand in his, to feel his father bend over to hug his shoulders, to have Amandine always pinching his cheek playfully, Gerdar reaching out to ruffle his hair. Most of all Yidane's hands that burned so sweetly when he held him at night, rubbed tired muscles with cream to relieve the aches, brushing his knuckles against his cheek or just the constant hand of comfort on him somewhere most of the time.

Yidane couldn't keep his hands off Gandes and Gandes relished the touch like a warm fire on a winter's night. Even if they'd yet to be intimate beyond a few shared kisses, it was still heaven on earth to Gandes. He wondered why Yidane still stopped anything more than a handful of potent kisses, but he wouldn't press or answers to questions he didn't even know how to ask.

Gandes knew he wanted to feel something more, but had no concept of what that feeling was. He was sure it had to do with wanting to mate but the act and the mechanics of it were still as foreign as the city outside the room. He had a word, a knowledge people who loved each other mated each other but what it was, how it was done and what it truly involved was a mystery and Gandes didn't

know where to start asking and wasn't sure if he was even supposed to ask about it. Yidane knew and Gandes was sure he'd tell Gandes eventually.

Gandes could tell at least so much the only reason Yidane halted was his concern over Gandes' recovery and nothing more. The want was equal and that put Gandes' fear to rest. It wasn't that Yidane didn't want him, he'd made it very clear he did in everything he said and every gesture he made. So Gandes would wait and let Yidane choose when they would consummate their bond and teach Gandes the lessons of love he'd never learned.

Gandes was seated at the dresser, brushing out his long hair and braiding it for bed when Yidane came in from his bath and just leaned against the doorway smiling.

"What?" Gandes asked noticing the rather overly affectionate look on Yidane's face that night.

"You, you're so damn beautiful. I still can't believe how lucky I am to have you. I want to memorize you just like this."

Gandes melted every time Yidane said something like that to him. "So long as you think so, I'm happy." Gandes sighed setting down his brush as using the table to help himself stand.

Yidane was there in a moment, wrapping string arms around him and dipping his head for a kiss. Gandes' arms wrapping around broad shoulders and sighing into the kiss.

"You always defeat my lessons in one kiss. My legs leave me every time." Gandes said and Yidane chuckled.

"Make you weak in the knees do I?"

"Oh aye." Gandes purred as Yidane supported Gandes to help him half shuffle half try to walk across the room to their bed. It was more dragging his feet along, but so much better than he had been.

Once to bed Yidane let Gandes sit on the edge of the bed and he helped lift tired legs into bed. "You've worked so hard Gandes, you make me proud of you. You never give up trying, it's one of the things I love best about you." Yidane said pulling up the covers before walking around to his side of the bed and crawling in as he snuffed out the candles.

As always once he was settled, Gandes was in his arms and curled up warm against him. "There is not a thing I do not love about you Yidane." Gandes said, his voice soft and content.

Yidane just kissed his brow. "Goodnight dearest."

"Goodnight beloved." Gandes replied and once more nothing else happened before sleep, just a simmering and building burning presence beneath the skin where their bodies touched. Every night the burning grew hotter and whatever it was, it was not going to remain denied indefinitely.

By the end of the second week Gandes was walking again on his own. Very slow and his feet still were rather useless, his ankles were taking the longest to come back so for longer walks Gandes needed Yidane's arm for support but just across their room Gandes managed good enough on his own with a cane.

They had just finished breakfast when Fioretta came in carrying a bundle. It was new clothes in beautiful sky blue silks. It was summer and the outfit sleeveless. Just a soft cotton under skirt without sleeves in white. A longer silk vest in pale sky blue with white lace trim. Short silk pants and matching silk slipper shoes to protect still delicate feet. Yidane smiled as she toted them in.

"As you asked Yidane, clothes for fresh air." Fioretta winked conspiratorially and Yidane chuckled.

"What?" Gandes asked and Yidane smiled.

"I am taking you outside today my lovely. I have a small horse and buggy waiting outside and today I am congratulating you on your recovery by taking you out to see the city and it's charms." Yidane said and Gandes squealed and almost toppled out of his chair to throw his arms around Yidane's neck.

"Really?"

"Aye. So let's get you dressed." Yidane said as Fioretta laid out the garments on the bed.

"I have been wanting to dress you like this for years. Goh and Gavain are such brutes on clothes. Gavain the worst, and Goh is not much better unless he's hitting the town like a dandy peacock. You my boy are Mama's dream come true. So much more demure than your brothers and so pretty too. Shine my beautiful boy." Fioretta said kissing Gandes' cheek before heading outside to wait in the hall while he dressed.

Yidane whistled low in his teeth as Gandes stood there in his new finery. The cut of the long vest and the good fit of his pants giving him almost feminine curves to his hips the way the fabric fell. His shapely calves bare and smooth and his small

feet encased in slippers looked longer in short pants and his slender bare arms were held wide. "So how do I look?" He asked with a smile.

"Like a prince you do. Is my head swelling yet? I get to parade around town with such loveliness on my arm, I'm positive I'll be a gloating bastard all day."

Gandes chuckled. "I'll take that as an I look fine then?"

"More than fine. Amazing." Yidane breathed handing Gandes his cane and offering his arm. "Shall we beloved?"

"Aye." Gandes grinned and everyone was waiting for them by the small two person buggy. A single white horse leading a white and gold gilded buggy from the royal stables.

Everyone reacted very much as Yidane did seeing Gandes as he should be. His long dark hair braided simply hung down his back, his face awash with a brilliant smile and his small frame accented in silk. He was breathtakingly beautiful and looked every inch a happily mated wellspring on Yidane's arm. Princely regal as Yidane helped him into the carriage and he sat there beaming with joy.

"Have fun today sweetheart." Fioretta said hugging Gandes' shoulders as Yidane took up the reins and climbed in the buggy beside Gandes.

"See you later!" Yidane said clicking his tongue and driving the cart out of the courtyard of the palace. Gandes waving back at his parents before turning to lean against Yidane and take in the city for the first time in his life.

His excitement was infectious and Yidane was grinning like a stupid fool as the buggy slowly ambled down cobblestone streets. People coming out of homes curious to see the buggy and then eyes widening when they realized just who was in the buggy. No one had ever seen Gandes before, they knew of him and word had spread like wildfire that he'd been rescued from the temple and was recovering. People were already buzzing about the old Prince Perdain tales and how similar the tales were. Tongues wagged with rumors of beauty and now those rumors were confirmed as they saw Gandes for the first time.

Gandes didn't notice. His attention was on the city itself as a whole. The big buildings, the streets, the crowds of people. All delightfully overwhelming and his already large grey eyes were even larger with wonder. His smile brilliantly white and his face was glowing with joy.

The first place Yidane took him was the city square and he parked the buggy and helped Gandes walk over to the fountain of bonding. A beautiful stone fountain depicting several famously historical Wielder and Wellspring pairs. The top two people with bowls in their hands that water cascaded out of was Perdain and

Tarnack themselves and Yidane's arm was around Gandes' shoulders as they looked at the fountain together.

"Can we go in it?" Gandes asked and Yidane smiled.

"What in the fountain?"

"Yes."

"I don't see why not if you want to." Yidane said helping Gandes Remove his shoes and he picked him up and placed him in the fountain and let the water splash his feet and lower legs. Gandes was happily laughing as Yidane held his hand for support and let Gandes get his feet wet while he stayed dry outside.

People were watching and smiling and letting Gandes' joy infect them as well. After a circuit of the fountain, Yidane lifted Gandes out and a woman came over chuckling with a towel for Gandes feet.

"All new bonded couples play in the fountain. A joy to watch. Might I ask, are you Gandes?"

"Aye. Thank you." Gandes smiled as Yidane wiped his feet and slipped his shoes back on.

"So lovely like your mother. How are you feeling your highness?" She asked and Gandes just smiled.

"Much better. My Yidane gives me much strength and joy." Gandes said smiling at Yidane who was still kneeling at Gandes' feet.

"As you give to me beloved." Yidane replied handing the towel back to the woman. "Thank you." He said and she just smiled.

"Thank you for coming Master Wielder. You bring joy to this city with you." She replied as she left them and Yidane helped an effervescent Gandes back to their buggy and carried on with the tour.

As promised, the next stop was to the jeweler's and the old man was overjoyed at seeing his work on Gandes' finger.

"It suits your hand indeed. I am so proud to have my work on your hand."

"I think it's the most beautiful ring I've ever seen and I will never take it off." Gandes replied, Yidane's hand on his hip for support as they stood at the counter.

“Yidane, can we get one for you too?” Gandes asked and Yidane smiled.

“I would be honored to wear your ring too Gandes. Of course.” Yidane said and the old man brought out a stool for Gandes to sit on and a cup of tea.

“Just let me get your size Master Wielder and I’ll bring out a selection.” He said measuring Yidane’s large finger and then bringing out a tray of rings in his size, Sturdy rings, for large hands.

“Pick whichever you like best Gandes. I picked yours, you pick mine.” Yidane said and Gandes smiled and studied every ring. One immediately catching his attention. It was a very simple band, also in silver and gold combined. It was like two seas meeting in a very plain but elegant wave pattern. Like two rings fitted together in a jigsaw puzzle. Just something about the sea motif and simplicity screamed Yidane’s personality to Gandes and he set that one aside while he looked at the rest and always coming back to the sea ring.

“This one, this one is you to me. Constant like the tides.” Gandes said and Yidane smiled. Of all the choices that was the one that had caught his eye too. His wellspring knew him well and this was proof. Yidane just held out his hand smiling and Gandes slipped the ring on his finger, a perfect fit.

This time, Yidane would not take ‘no’ for an answer from the jeweler and he paid him happily for their purchase while they finished their tea and bid him a good day.

It was nearing mid-day now and they were both getting hungry so Yidane opted to keep another promise to Tarri and drove the buggy to the Cock-n-Bull for lunch.

“Goh told me about this place. This is for non-breeders isn’t it?” Gandes said as they parked and Yidane helped him out of the buggy.

“Aye. Your brother showed me this place when I arrived and everyone here is very friendly. I promised Tarri I’d bring you to meet him. He took good care of me while I was suffering our bond headaches.” Yidane said and Gandes smiled as he climbed out of the cart.

“Then I must thank him too.” Gandes smiled as he was lead inside the brightly lit tavern where a few men were having their own lunch and Tarri was wiping a glass behind the counter and let out a joyful shout as Yidane walked in proudly with Gandes on his arm.

“Yidane! Oh Gods, are you Gandes?” Tarri asked rushing out from behind the counter and Gandes smiled.

“Aye. Are you Tarri?”

“I am. Oh what a joy, come in come in!” Tarri said leading them both inside to a table and quickly bringing them both wine.

“A toast to the bond! Congratulations!” Tarri said holding up a glass and Yidane and Gandes accepted the toast with a smile.

“I must thank you for taking care of Yidane Tarri. My nightmares gave him horrible headaches and I thank you for tending him.” Gandes said and Tarri just smiled and plopped down at the table and rested his chin in his hand with a grin.

“My pleasure. The Gods don’t make gentlemen like your Yidane much anymore. I’m jealous of you, you know.” Tarri said with a wink and Gandes dipped his head smiling and blushing.

“Aye. Yidane is most wonderful.”

“Gods, you are so lovely and shy. I can’t stay jealous with you being so sweet. I couldn’t be happier for you both. It is so rare non-breeders get to bond at all, the whole pub every night is singing for joy like Perdain and Tarnack live again. Especially what with news Goh’s bonded too. I do hope you all come back often as a group to celebrate. We get such few chances at real love and romance it’s so nice to see it alive and well.” Tarri said and meant it, he was thrilled.

“That’s a promise Tarri. To love, to health, to happiness and to you finding your own love like ours.” Yidane said holding up his glass for another toast and Tarri laughed and held up his.

“I’m not holding my breath, but you never know. Cheers!” Tarri said smiling and drinking.

Food was brought out and they all ate lunch together and talked happily. Tarri’s eyes always straying to Gandes with a mixture of genuine awe, admiration of beauty and a little jealousy. Not anything troublesome, just a longing that was evident.

“Tarri you’re so pretty and kind I’m surprised you don’t have a dozen men in here singing to you.” Gandes said and Tarri shrugged.

“I work here, after a while people only notice me like they would the bar itself.”

“Bullshit, you sell yourself short Tarri. Gandes is right, there are more than a few men interested in you. I noticed that myself from staying here.”

“Well, then I wish they’d say something to me occasionally. You notice more than I do then.” Tarri said getting up for a moment to take care of a customer that had come in. A young Lord in his early twenties, a regular of the pub and one of the ones Yidane knew for sure only came because of Tarri. He’d seen this lord stare shamelessly at Tarri for hours before he went home again.

Tarri was kind to everyone and as soon as he brought the young lord his meal and drink he was back at the table again, not noticing the lovesick eyes the young lord was making at him.

“Tarri, you’re a blind fool.” Yidane said and Tarri raised his eyebrows.

“What?”

“Lord Maxim there likes you.”

“No he doesn’t he likes my stew and my beer. He always comes in for lunch and dinner.”

“He comes in for you dolt.” Yidane said and Tarri looked taken aback.

“He’s a lord, I’m a commoner. Trust me, he’s not interested in me.”

“No, he is. He keeps looking over here at you. Yidane is right.” Gandes said smiling and loving the moment.

“Tarri, some men look not at titles. There’s nothing forbidden about a lord marrying a commoner or another male for that matter. I tell you, I stayed here for weeks, I think he’s just doubting how to approach you. You are nice to everyone, give the man an indication you’d accept his offer.” Yidane said and Tarri looked flabbergasted and now afraid to turn around to see if Lord Maxim was indeed looking at him.

“Are you sure? Don’t get my hopes up Yidane. Lord Maxim is one of those rare breed gentlemen I mentioned.”

“Here’s your chance, he’s coming over.” Yidane said under his breath as Lord Maxim stepped over to the table.

“I pardon the intrusion. Wielder Yidane I must know, is this your bonded?” Lord Maxim asked and Yidane smiled.

“Aye. Gandes.” Yidane said and Maxim gave Gandes a bow and a smile.

“Congratulations on your bonding. I can see immediately the Lady Fioretta’s influence on you Lord Gandes. Such a marvelous woman your mother, she must

be so happy to see you free as we all are.” Maxim said kindly and Gandes smiled.

“Thank you. She is most happy as am I. Would you like to join us for Lunch Lord Maxim?” Gandes said and Maxim smiled.

“I would be honored to. Pardon me just a moment while I gather my dinner from my table.” He said and Tarri stood.

“No, please just sit Lord Maxim. I’ll get it for you sir.”

“Dear Tarri, it is I that intruded on your table conversation. Please sit, you work enough for ten men catering to us. It is no trouble for me to carry a simple bowl, rest yourself please.” Maxim said smiling before turning to grab his bowl and mug from his table and he carried it over and sat opposite Tarri next to Yidane.

Lord Maxim was quite funny and kind and the conversation was stimulating. Every time Tarri got up to wait on a customer, Lord Maxim’s eyes followed him and it was obvious he cared a great deal about Tarri.

During one of the moments Tarri was occupied with customers Yidane nudged Maxim. “Will you just tell him already you like him. He’ll never know if you don’t say anything your lordship.”

Maxim gave a sheepish smile. “That obvious am I?”

“To everyone but Tarri. Yes. Say something.”

“Easier said than done, he never has a minute to himself where I can corner him alone. Believe me, I have been trying to find that moment for months. Ever since I first came in here, he’s so beautiful inside and out.”

“And alone and I’m positive he’s equally interested. You have to make Tarri take a break, he won’t do it willingly, he cares about everyone and will work himself to the bone for other’s comfort.”

“Aye, I noticed. Any suggestions?”

“Just be honest, go over and grab him ask for that moment and he’ll give it to you.”

“I’m too used to court where you have to wait for opportunities it seems. You’re right. Excuse me please.” Maxim said and got up and walked over to Tarri who had just finished serving a couple their meal and without preamble he just bowed and took Tarri’s hand and indicated Tarri should follow.

Which he did stunned and curious at the sudden change in Maxim's behavior.

Maxim lead Tarri out the side door to the alley and once the door closed behind them Maxim turned and smiled. "What's wrong your lordship?" Tarri asked and Maxim sighed.

"Absolutely nothing. I'm just tired of waiting for you to have a free moment so I'm kidnapping you for one. Tarri, I care for you greatly and I am begging on my knees for a chance to prove my affection to you."

Tarri's eyes widened in shock and Maxim did indeed go down on his knees. "Oh, please don't. Get up you'll dirty your pants my lord!"

"I don't care. Say you'll be mine Tarri. Say you'll allow me the joy of wooing you."

"You're serious."

"Deadly."

"I'll say yes on one condition. Get up!" Tarri said and Maxim smiled and complied.

"May I kiss you?" He asked stepping forward and pinning Tarri against the wall.

"Yes, you may." Tarri sighed closing his eyes and losing himself to a wonderful first kiss.

They parted both smiling and Maxim lead Tarri back inside by the hand to cheers and shouts and Tarri blushed but grinned just the same as Maxim led him back over to their table.

Yidane and Gandes were both smiling and clapping with the others.

"How romantic." Gandes sighed dreamily and Yidane chuckled.

"And about damn time for both of you!" Yidane said as they finished their meal and bid good-day to their friends and headed back out into the city. With a promise they'd return for dinner.

“Shipwrecked in Stormy Eyes”

A Wielder and Wellspring Story

Author: D. Sanders

ACT IV - Lessons in Love

Yidane took Gandes all over the city center pausing wherever Gandes wished. The temple itself was a bittersweet moment and Gandes never got out of the cart but they paused a long time and Gandes just sighed. “I can appreciate the beauty of the building itself, but to me I never want to go inside ever again.”

“I know beloved.” Yidane said taking Gandes hand to hold as Gandes eyes traveled upward to the bell tower.

“My whole life, that was where I viewed the city, where I almost died and if I never see that tower again I wouldn’t care. Beautiful or not.” Gandes said and Yidane wrapped an arm around his shoulders.

“When I first arrived, I felt pulled to that tower. I could see it from my window over at the Cock-n-Bull and Tarri was the one who told me you were in there. That was the first night I sat daydreaming and wishing you were mine. I so desperately wanted to reach out and touch you but I was afraid I’d hurt you after he told me you’d been injured. I had no idea then that’s what I should have done all along right from the beginning. I should have trusted my gut feelings better.” Yidane said and Gandes smiled and closed his eyes as he leaned his head against Yidane’s shoulder.

“It’s all in the past now. We’re together and that’s all that matters.” Gandes replied and Yidane turned his head to kiss Gandes’ brow.

“Aye. Forever mine you are.” Yidane said as they continued on away from the temple and paused that afternoon in a lovely park right in the middle of the city. Vendors lined the perimeter selling all manner of trinkets. From kites to fly in the park, to iced treats, to baubles and beads and to easy to hold finger foods.

They left the cart and sat in the park and watched children fly kites and swans swim in the pond and peacocks strut across the lawns. Couples walked hand in hand, children played and frolicked and the settling tranquil in the middle of the bustling city.

They sat together under a tree sharing a romantic afternoon in each other’s company. Talk wandered from topic to topic and drifted back to their time at the pub and Yidane learned what exceptional hearing Gandes had when he asked a rather difficult to answer question.

“Yidane, back at the pub, someone said a word I don’t know and I almost forgot to ask you about it. What does ‘Bugging’ mean?” Gandes asked very seriously and Yidane choked.

“Where did you hear that?” He exclaimed and Gandes smiled.

“The men by the fire said you were a lucky man to be bugging me and I have no idea what that means.”

“That was rude Gandes. They shouldn’t have said that in your hearing.”

“I don’t think they meant for me to hear it, I just hear well. What does it mean?”

“It means, Gods how do I put this tactfully? Bugging is when... when I...” Yidane began and was stumbling over the explanation and looking red faced and he never looked embarrassed.

“When you what?”

“When I make love to you Gandes for lack of a better description.”

“I don’t know what that is either.” Gandes said a little sadly and Yidane took up his hand and kissed it.

“I know love. Believe me I know.”

“Will you tell me? I’m so afraid Yidane.” Gandes said quietly and Yidane wrapped arms around him where they nestled under the tree.

“There is nothing to fear Gandes. There are many ways men make love to each other. Eventually I’ll show you them all. I want our first night together special and tonight I’d planned on just that. I want to make love to you in the place I first felt our bond, where I sat wishing for you night after night. I’ve already asked Tarri for my old room back at the Cock-n-Bull for tonight. Just you and me alone. I’d wanted it to be a surprise but I don’t want you to worry either beloved.”

“I’m just so afraid because I don’t know anything I’m going to do something wrong.” Gandes said pathetically and Yidane leaned over and kissed him.

“When you love like we do, it cannot be wrong Gandes. It’s instinct really, you have nothing to fear if you just follow your heart when it’s time. Trust me beloved.”

“I do trust you Yidane. I love you.”

"I love you too dearest." Yidane said and Gandes seemed appeased for the time being and Yidane distracted further discussion on the topic by getting up to buy Gandes some strawberry ice from a vendor which he seemed to love and which brought the conversation back to more things they each liked and disliked.

Yidane was pleased to learn he'd never have to eat turnips again since Gandes didn't like them either, he disliked them so much in fact he shivered at the mention of them. Apparently when one lived in a temple, turnips were a staple in the diet and mashed turnips were high on Gandes list of never wanting to see or eat ever again.

As they sat there talking Yidane noticed like all wellsprings Gandes had a serenity about him that drew people and animals to him like a magnet. Every stray dog or cat wandered over to be scratched and they were lovingly seen to by a smiling Gandes and the last little cat, hardly more than a kitten had yet to leave and was contentedly purring in Gandes' lap while Gandes' fingers were lost in her thick white fur.

Every child had to come over at least once and Gandes indulged them all with smiles. Every couple had to pause and smile, every old biddy had to stop and comment on what a handsome couple they made together. Several more had to know if Gandes was the boy from the temple and when they found out he was had to gush on about Prince Perdain and Wielder Tarnack and how lovely it was Gandes was free again.

Their bonding had sparked off a city wide murmuring and people were quite vocal about how they thought it was abhorrent Gandes had to spend so many years a prisoner in the temple and almost die before he bonded when he was such a lovely and normal wellspring like all the rest. There was even a petition circulating now started by the people asking that the laws be rescinded.

Yidane and Gandes already knew Gerdar was petitioning for the same thing and with the added voice of the people behind him, the council of lords would have no choice but to honor the requests. It lifted both their spirits and hopes that Gandes would be the last boy in the city to ever have to live in the temple apart and condemned for nothing more than being born male.

As Afternoon faded into evening, Yidane and Gandes made their way back to the Cock-n-Bull and were delighted to see Tarri seemed to have acquired a new staff member. Maxim was there, sans his vest in just his rolled up shirt sleeves behind the bar laughing and filling mugs of ale from the tap.

Tarri was hustling patrons to tables and serving dinner with his three young boy helpers. Orphans he'd taken in off the streets and given room and board to for their help at dinner time. During the day Tarri sent them to school, but at night when he was busiest, those extra sets of hands were needed. The boys were

strictly off limits to customers and the clientele knew it. It helped that Tarri ran a high class establishment and there was absolutely no prostitution allowed and Tarri would not tolerate a single person, Lord or not, to touch 'his boys'.

Not that Tarri was much older himself. He was only Twenty years old and like the boys he'd taken in, he had been taken in once off the streets too. The former owner of the Cock-n-Bull had raised Tarri like his own son when he'd found him begging on a street corner, orphaned and alone. He'd schooled him, clothed him, taught him how to run the business and then left it to Tarri when he passed away.

Tarri still had a mourning candle lit on the mantle next to the old man's portrait. This to Tarri was his father, his mentor and his savior and he'd loved Old Jax dearly and even after two years with him gone, Tarri never failed to light a candle to his memory daily.

Tarri looked up and smiled as Yidane and Gandes walked in. "Come in my friends! Best table in the house reserved for you!" Tarri cheered and the whole room applauded and lifted toasts in Yidane and Gandes' honor as they were seated at their table. The boys brining over their dinner with smiles and Maxim himself brought over a pitcher of ale.

"You working now?" Yidane asked and Maxim chuckled.

"I had to beg Tarri to let me help and I am finding I absolutely love it. My mother would probably faint dead away if she saw me getting covered in beer but I'm tired of being a fixture doing nothing constructive. She always claims work is for other men and I'll let my four older brothers buy into her madness and be lazy good for nothing lords with more money than sense. I'm loving this." Maxim said with great cheer as Tarri walked over smiling.

"He's not doing too bad either." He said with a wink and Maxim chuckled.

"Once you showed me how to pour a pint without getting a mug full of nothing but foam aye!" Maxim said smiling and then turning to return to manning the bar while Tarri hustled about the room with the boys and the three other adult serving men Tarri hired to work and supplied room and board to as part of their wages.

Tarri took a quick break to hug Yidane's shoulders. "Maxim told me it was you who urged him to confess. Thank you."

"Anytime Tarri. He loves you and you him and I was just getting tired of watching you two avoid the obvious." Yidane said and Tarri chuckled.

"Old habits die hard. I'm used to Lords and Ladies, like his mother, who think working involves getting up before noon and visiting the opera house for a social engagement. Maxim is my commoner in lordly clothes it seems. We talked all

afternoon after you two left. He's brilliantly smart. He studied mathematics and business at the university and I swear he had my accounts balanced in five minutes just looking at them. I've always been horrid at math, I'm lucky I can count out my workers wages every week. I always want to cry when it comes time to do the books and when I mentioned that, he volunteered to have a look for me and my word if he didn't just save me hours of work." Tarri said smiling.

"So is he a permanent fixture now like you?" Yidane asked and Tarri smiled so brightly he lit up the entire room.

"Aye. He's moving in with me upstairs and will keep our books and run the bar for us. He's already asked me to marry him. Can you believe it?" Tarri laughed a little manic and Yidane smiled.

"I can. He's been wanting you for months and that was just in the time I noticed. Goodness knows how long before that."

"He said over a year now. I've been so stupid."

"You've been used to being alone Tarri and he was used to having to wait for opportunities. Now that he has you, I'm not surprised he doesn't want to waste any more time with you. Did you say 'yes' I presume?"

"Aye. I did. When we'll have time to marry we have no idea, but for now the engagement is enough for us and it will give us time to really get to know each other better too. His mother wasn't happy he went home just long enough to announce he was moving out and in with me. She was even less happy to hear him say he intended to work for a living. He basically told her he was happy and he didn't care whether she approved or not and back here he came with his shirt sleeves rolled up and ready to go. He's a wonder." Tarri said hustling off again to work and leaving Yidane and Gandes to eat.

Gandes' smile spoke volumes. "You romantic fool. Eat." Yidane chuckled and Gandes laughed.

"I can't help it, it IS romantic!"

"I know and they both deserve to be happy. They've been in love with each other for ages apparently."

"Aye, and they make a beautiful couple too. Tarri is so pretty and Maxim is almost as handsome as you are." Gandes purred and Yidane chuckled.

"You're biased beloved. Maxim makes me look like a toad."

“In your opinion. Not mine and mine matters most does it not?” Gandes asked grinning and Yidane reached over and took Gandes hand and kissed his palm.

“Aye beloved, Aye. It’s not a biased review however, when I say I have the most beautiful man in the room with me. You’re stunning tonight.”

Gandes just smiled and blushed and ate his dinner giving Yidane the most love filled adoring looks all evening.

The pub came alive at night, there was music and dancing, lively conversation, couples getting to know each other and established couples out to have a nice evening in a friendly atmosphere.

Gandes was having a wonderful evening watching couples get cozy together or dance together. He especially loved watching Maxim steal a kiss every time Tarri had to come behind to bar for something and Tarri smile and slap at Maxim to get out of his way so he could work.

They were such a heartwarming couple already and Gandes just couldn’t tear his eyes away from them. The bard sitting by the fire struck up a ballad and announced that Tarri and Maxim had two minutes to get out on the dance floor together and patrons laughed and prodded the couple onto the floor and Tarri was laughing gaily as Maxim spun him out onto the small floor for a dance.

Gandes’ eyes were dreamily misty as he watched and Yidane had to chuckle inwardly. He had never in his life met anyone so moved and enraptured by romance as Gandes. He drank it in like wine and just the thought of something romantic had Gandes tipsy on emotion.

Yidane stood and took Gandes hand and helped him to rise. “Just stand on my feet dearest.” Yidane said and Gandes complied and laughed and clung to Yidane’s shoulders as Yidane spun him on to the dance floor too.

The cheers were deafening and Gandes was virtual putty in Yidane’s arms as Yidane danced for them both since Gandes’ feet were not yet able to do this himself.

Gandes was no longer in the pub, his whole world was centered around the music and the feel of Yidane’s arms around him. He’d never danced before and he was fighting tears of joy as Yidane slowly turned them around the floor. His inner wellspring ignited with emotion and fueling his wielder in ways that just caused Yidane to hold him tighter and sup from power like a starving man.

As the song ended Yidane swept Gandes up into his arms and headed directly to the staircase leading upstairs. The bawdy cheers from the room erupted and Yidane just smiled as he marched purposefully up the stairs with Gandes.

Yidane practically kicked the door open and Gandes was laid on the bed immediately and crushed in the fiercest kiss he'd ever received from Yidane and he was absolutely breathless and panting when Yidane released him.

"Wait for you anymore I cannot. I'm on fire and your power is driving me mad." Yidane grunted, trying to control himself and failing miserably. Gandes' wellspring was overflowing with power like a raging river and Yidane was caught in the flow and struggling to keep his head above water.

Gandes' chest heaved to breathe where he lay in bed, his eyes glassy with need and desire and fear. He didn't know what he wanted and could only telegraph naïve need to things he had no name for. His body was taut as a bowstring and his power was scorching to touch. "Don't think Gandes, just feel." Yidane purred, his lips on Gandes' throat as his fingers undressed Gandes and clothes were tossed without a care onto the floor.

First his chest was bared and Yidane's lips covered every inch of skin and nipples were sucked and kissed until they were hard and puckered and Gandes was mewling beneath him, his power in a frenzy.

Never before had Yidane touched him like this, never had it burned so much, never had it driven him so wild with want of more. His whole body shook and quivered involuntarily and his instant erection was almost painful in the confines of his pants. He'd never in his life become so electrified with arousal. He'd experienced erections before, but never like this one, it was painful and he needed more, so much more.

When Yidane ripped away his pants and pulled them off his legs, Gandes' erection sprang free and Yidane's eyes were possessive and feral. His lips turned into an uncharacteristic smirk as his warm hands traveled up Gandes' legs and firmly gripped Gandes' weeping manhood making Gandes gasp and moan and throw his head back as he arched into the touch.

"So beautiful, come for me Gandes. I want to see it." Yidane said before his mouth became far too occupied for more words and Gandes almost screamed and his hands became buried in Yidane's messy hair and clenched involuntarily as Yidane did things to his body he'd ever have dreamed possible.

Gandes was overloaded with sensation, his mind lost to it in flames. Yidane's tongue so wet and warm on his flesh drove him to the brink of madness and his body erupted in response and he quaked as his body released.

Yidane sat up licking his lips and smiling even more feral than before. "You even taste like wine to me." He purred and Gandes whimpered in response, he couldn't talk, he couldn't move he could only feel.

Yidane stood for a moment and Gandes eyes widened as Yidane's clothes were removed and he stood there in all his naked glory, his own erection red and swollen with desire and so very large Gandes just whimpered at the sight of him. He wanted to touch and feel what such sheer masculinity felt like under his hands.

"Touch me Gandes." Yidane said walking to the edge of the bed and Gandes' hands trembled as his fingers closed around male perfection.

Yidane hissed, taking Gandes hands in his and showing him how to stroke. "Open your mouth beloved." Yidane said and Gandes obeyed and his eyes closed in bliss as Yidane guided his erection inside and moved in a languid tempo. "Suck on it Gandes, like I did you, that's right. Just like that. So good." Yidane moaned as Gandes once again lost himself to the moment and obeyed Yidane's desires and responded to his own.

Yidane was so close and he didn't want it to end yet so he pulled away and Gandes whimpered as he did so. "When I come tonight, it's going to be inside of you beloved. Lay on your stomach, now I make love to you." Yidane said, picking up a bottle off the nightstand and returning to bed and straddling Gandes legs poured the oily contents on Gandes posterior.

"Spread your legs for me Gandes and relax, this will not hurt." Yidane panted as once more Gandes obeyed immediately and Yidane's objective came into glorious view.

A gentle finger encircled the opening and then pushed, coating Gandes with the oily lubrication. Gandes moaned and gasped. "Yidane?" His voice quivered.

"Just feel Gandes. I have to make you ready to take me first just relax."

"Are you going to put your... INSIDE ME THERE?" Gandes asked, his fear suddenly erupting and Yidane leaned over and kissed his spine.

"Aye dearest. Trust me I will not hurt you. I will make love to you until you lose your mind with pleasure. This my beloved is bugging and I am going to bugger you until you cannot stand without leaking my seed from you. You are my wellspring and tonight I mark you as mine. I cannot wait any longer, I need you!" Yidane growled, his fingers invading and pulling, his lips sucking on Gandes' neck and shoulder and Gandes was moaning uncontrollably now. Once more his wellspring spewing out fiery power like a volcano and saturating Yidane in flames.

Yidane couldn't stand it anymore, he was sweating profusely and his manhood strained and throbbing with need. Yidane grabbed pillows and shoved them under Gandes' stomach to lift his posterior higher and then with one swift push, claimed his lover at last.

Gandes cried out and his whole body constricted and Yidane moaned loudly. "By the gods so tight!" Yidane whimpered pulling back and thrusting again.

"YIDANE!" Gandes sobbed, his body on glorious fire, feeling Yidane fill him so completely.

Yidane's pace was brutal, so long denied he needed to possess this man, mark him as his, claim the body as he'd already claimed the soul. Gandes responded like a vixen in heat open and accepting and vocally moaning and gasping Yidane's name in need.

The bed springs were protesting loudly as Yidane drove Gandes to the point of madness again, his well of power gushing like a damn exploding and scorching and drowning everything in its path.

Yidane was on molten fire, every muscle in his body burning, every breath labored, every sound strained and ripped from his throat against his will. He was lost in power, lost in Gandes, his possessive wielder nature passed all scope and reason. He needed to own, he needed to capture, he needed to possess, he need to hear his name screamed in ecstasy.

Gandes was his! This man, this power, this creature belonged to him. This was his love, his mate, and his source of power. His greatest strength and ultimate weakness. All of his base primal instincts coming like a controlled passionate rage. He'd never in his life made love to a person that drove him to such frenzied need, which stirred in him such possessive responses. He'd heard bonds did this to wielders over their wellsprings but feeling it firsthand was a surreal experience.

Gandes was white knuckled gripping sheets and his body was exhausted. Twice Yidane had sent him reeling from passion and it just could not take much more. Yidane was loving him to the breaking point and just when it reached said point he felt Yidane shudder and moan with his own release.

Liquid fire filled Gandes and Yidane's weight crushed him as arms held him tightly and Yidane was muttering Gandes' name like a prayer as he heaved to breathe and calm his racing heart.

"I am Burned, your power is so hot." Yidane gasped and Gandes was afraid again.

"I hurt you?" Gandes asked and Yidane was quick to kiss away the fear.

"Nay. So good, like bathing in a volcano. Love you so much I do Gandes." Yidane said, wheezing out of breath.

Gandes sighed as Yidane slowly pulled out of him and rolled to his side facing Gandes on the bed smiling.

"How did it feel Gandes?" He asked and Gandes smiled, his eyes exhausted but filled with love.

"So good. It hurt but not in a bad way, does that make sense?" Gandes said and Yidane chuckled.

"Aye. There is some pain that brings pleasure, this is one of them. It hurts me too in the best of ways."

"Does this mean I'm not a virgin anymore?"

Yidane chuckled. "Aye. You have been thoroughly bugged my love and if I had any strength left in me at all, you'd be in trouble again. So wonderful loving you, I will never cease enjoying that with you." Yidane said and Gandes smiled still laying awkwardly in the pillows on his stomach.

"I cannot move my whole body is so tired." Gandes said and Yidane smiled and reached out a hand to push sweaty hair off Gandes brow.

"As is mine. Let's get you comfortable though before we both pass out with sleep." Yidane said helping Gandes to roll off the mound of pillows, sticky with semen and those were tossed to the floor as they curled up together in the wrecked sheets of their bed.

Gandes' posterior was against Yidane's now flaccid and spent manhood and he smiled a smug smile into Gandes' hair as he felt the warm wetness trickle out of him. He had been mated and marked and it was Yidane who owned him body and soul and it was Yidane's seed that now filled him full.

Gandes was worn past the point of exhaustion and was already asleep as Yidane reveled silently in possessive glee before he too succumbed and slept, his whole body even in sleep proclaiming ownership of the man in his arms as it wrapped around Gandes protectively.

They were not the first Wielder and Wellspring pair to mate and would not be the last, but as typical of such intense bonds Gandes responded as all wellsprings did and fed his mate power and gifted him with body, mind and soul. Yidane as all wielders took and cherished and turned into a possessive fool like a child over

a coveted toy, his soul delivered to Gandes' hands as he clutched Gandes in his own tightly never to let go of what was ultimately his and his alone.

The birds were chirping merrily and the sun was filling the room with cheerful sunlight as a gentle knock awoke Yidane and too tired to get up and actually answer the summons just muttered "Come in" knowing by sense it was just Tarri outside his room.

"Rise and shine lovebirds. It's a glorious new morning and I've just drawn myself a nice hot bath and have come to collect Gandes to share it with me. I've no doubt you've left him with aches this morning." Tarri said with a wink walking not too gracefully himself that morning either and sitting gingerly on the side of the bed to rouse Gandes with gentle fingers in Gandes' hair.

"Good morning Tarri." Gandes yawned and Tarri grinned.

"Good morning, come with me and we can gossip about our men while we wash each other's hair." Tarri winked as Yidane sat up yawning and scratching his head.

"Don't you look a sight first thing in the morning." Tarri teased as Maxim came to the door.

"You and I are relegated to the shower room my friend." Maxim said holding towels and Yidane nodded and stood, wrapping a sheet around his middle for modesty before coming around the bed to help Gandes to his feet.

"Oh Gods I ache." Gandes moaned and Yidane supported him.

"I know, the bath will help, do you need me to carry you love? How are your legs?"

"My legs are fine. It's everything else." Gandes sighed leaning heavily on Tarri's offered arm.

"That's what I figured too. Come on lean on me Gandes, this will sort us both out this morning." Tarri said as they both hobbled off down the hall to the bath.

Maxim looked as sheepish as Gandes. "It's been a long time since Tarri slept with anyone and I think I over did it last night." Maxim said and Yidane nodded as he followed Maxim downstairs to a little room that was just filled with shower heads for the residents and servants.

"You and me both. I forgot about the morning after soreness, I forgot to warn Gandes about it. He really didn't know anything at all." Yidane said looking distressed and Maxim just tossed him a towel as they stripped and plunged into cold water raining down from the shower heads.

"I can figure as much. Living so long in a temple in celibacy it must have been a shock. Hell I lived normally and my first time was a shock." Maxim said scrubbing his hair with soap and rinsing.

"Me too. All fifteen years old and bloody clueless and it's not like non-breeders come with instructions on how to mate where it doesn't burn like fire if you do it wrong."

"But so nice when it's right." Maxim grinned and Yidane laughed.

"Oh yes. Very nice." Yidane agreed as they washed and shaved and refrained from gloating too badly over their beautiful mates.

Tarri helped Gandes into the tub and ten crawled in facing him as well, sitting just as gingerly as Gandes.

"Oh Lordy I forgot how sore you get the next day when you're not used to it. My ass is on fire this morning." Tarri said breaking the ice and Gandes sighed.

"Is it always like this?" Gandes asked as Tarri handed him a soft sponge and fragrant soap.

"No, just the first few times until your body gets used to being pummeled into submission and adapts. I haven't had a lover in, goodness, three years now. I have to get used to it all over again. But boy is it fun getting used to." Tarri winked and Gandes smiled.

"It was nice." Gandes said blushing and washing his face to hide his blush and Tarri just splashed him.

"More than nice Gandes. I know better. When you love the one you're with it's even nicer. I've never felt gladder to be sore in my life. By the Gods Maxim is wonderful. Last night after the bar closed and we were alone downstairs he danced with me by the fire and like you he carried me all the way upstairs. I felt like a damn queen I did. He had candles lit in the room and wine waiting and I never saw him sneak upstairs to do it. There were even rose petals in the bed. I swear I melted into my damn shoes. I have never in my life been swept off my feet like that. What boy can resist a man that romantic?" Tarri said and Gandes chuckled.

“You can’t. Yidane is like that, he’s always bringing me flowers or reading me poems I like. Look at the ring he gave me, isn’t it beautiful?” Gandes said holding out his hand for Tarri to look.

“Gods, that’s gorgeous. Yidane always struck me like he was a closet romantic. All rough and tumble exterior with the heart of a lamb.”

“Aye. Exactly. I feel so very loved and I ache to show him how much I love him back.”

“You did last night Gandes. With men like Yidane and Maxim it’s pretty easy to, we just need to bend over.” Tarri laughed with a wink. “Now turn this way and I’ll wash your hair. I’m dying to play with it.” Tarri said and Gandes complied and sighed as Tarri washed his hair and rinsed.

“Now it’s my turn. I like yours too. We almost have the same color and I think you’re so pretty Tarri.”

“Then were even, cause I think you are too. I hope we can be good friend Gandes I like you so much.”

“I like you too. I never had a friend before I like it much.”

“So do I and we need someone to gossip about our men with don’t we?” Tarri grinned as Gandes washed his hair.

“Aye.” Gandes laughed as he rinsed and they moved to wash each other’s backs as the hot water relaxed abused muscles.

Tarri grinned devilishly and leaned forward as they soaked. “I gotta know Gandes. I’m a horrible busy body and insanely curious. Is he a big boy?”

Gandes grinned right back. “Aye. Scared the life out of me he did when I realized where he wanted to put that monstrosity.”

Tarri laughed. “I knew it, big all over that one. Maxim is deceptive. He’s built like Goh, all tall and lean so I was not expecting the bonus attributes myself he kept hidden in his trousers. I can relate to feeling scared of being torn in two myself. However, Gods was it nice, I swear sometimes I think I should have been born a girl with the way I react sometimes. Forget driving the pony cart, I want to ride.” Tarri said and Gandes laughed so hard he had tears in his eyes.

“Tarri you’re horrible.”

“Deny you felt the same Gandes. I know wellsprings and I know how all of you get with your men. Gender is irrelevant, you’re all bent over in two seconds flat when your wielders get the itch.”

“Very true. I can’t deny it. The minute he started getting aroused, I was immediately. I can’t fight it and don’t intend to either. He’s so good to me, I know he loves me.”

“Gandes, a blind idiot could see he thinks you are the stars and moon in the sky. He was sitting like a proud peacock over you all day. It’s the happiest I’ve ever seen him and it’s all because of you.”

“I can say the same for Maxim. When he first came in he was all quiet but his eyes were always on you. Last night he was a changed man, he was alive with happiness, I felt it in the power in the room, he was creating so much power from his happiness I was drunk with it and my well full the minute I stepped into the room.”

“Really?”

“Aye. Same as you right now. You’re so happy I can feel it.”

“What do you feel, I’ve always been curious just what is a wellspring. What do you feel that we don’t? Tarri asked and Gandes took a moment to formulate his response.

“It’s hard to describe really. Because wellsprings are so different from wielders but we are very similar at the same time. Wielder’s can feel power, but they can’t hold it, they just can move it around and make it bend to their will. They have to learn how to do that too, they aren’t born with the knowledge. The only thing they can do on instinct is drink power, they need it in their bodies to function. They cannot create their own power, they have to get it from other sources. First from mother and then from the land and then from their own wellspring. For me I was born just as I am now. I never needed to learn power, because I feel it in everything and my body automatically pulls it and collects it. I can tell when anyone is sick because the power is bad and tastes wrong. It’s angry. What my body does is it takes the bad power and collects it and then changes it and cleans it and then it leaves my body back to the land or the people. I’m kind of like a dam in a river. I regulate the flow and I cannot do it consciously really, I do it as naturally as breathing. The only thing I can control is the flow itself. I can let it trickle out slowly or I can open the floodgates and let it out all at once. That’s the extent of my manipulating powers. I can’t control anything beyond flow. Unlike wielders who can alter the flow.”

“Wow, that’s a lot more than I ever knew. So what happened to you? Do you mind me asking?”

“No, not at all. What happened was the storm. It was very violent, the power was not just angry but furious. When I opened up my flow to give the wielders more power I also opened up to the storm. I was overwhelmed with the violence and it burned me badly. Then the locusts came...” Here Gandes shivered and shut his eyes for a moment and audibly swallowed and Tarri took his hand.

“Those I know. They scared everyone Gandes. The whole tavern was full of them and we spent hours fighting them off with brooms and locking windows and doors to keep more from coming in. It was terrifying for everyone.”

“I know, I had my own terror and everyone else’s too. Because everyone was scared the power in the area went into chaos. I couldn’t fight it and I was trapped in the bell tower. They were eating me alive, I couldn’t get out because the door was locked too, and with the storm also burning me and everyone’s fear feeding the storm I went mad. Very literally. I am lucky I am here at all and my sanity was returned. I fled the madness into my own mind and all that time I was trapped in the storm, living it constantly. Even when it was long over, I was still in the middle of it. Dreaming it over and over in an endless loop and I was lost behind that locked door of my mind just like the door of the bell tower. It was my nightmares Yidane felt and experienced when he came here. It was why he had such horrible headaches all the time and why he never slept. He saw my dreams like they were his own. When they brought him to the palace to see me, our bond exploded. My father and Uncle Gerdar had kept me shielded all this time to protect other wielders from my well that was tainted. When they dropped the shields for Yidane and he connected fully to my well through our bond I almost killed him right then and there. He’d already been sensing me through very strong shields, the full force of my madness almost drove him into bond rage instantly. He’s very strong though, he fought his rage and broke into my mind and showed me the unlocked door at last. I owe my very life to Yidane, no one else could have saved me.” Gandes said and Tarri looked awestruck.

“I cannot fathom such hell. I am amazed and humbled and furious all at once.”

“It’s over now and I am almost fully healed. My body had to learn to do every thing again I had laid still for so long the doctor said my muscles had atrophied. Nevertheless, Yidane has been working with me every day so I can build them up again. Soon I won’t need the cane anymore to walk. It gets easier every day.”

“You have amazing strength yourself Gandes and don’t let anyone tell you otherwise. Your positive attitude is infectious and how you can be so after all you went through it astounding to me. I am so honored to call you my friend.” Tarri said taking Gandes hand to hold and Gandes just smiled.

“I am not the only one who suffered. My Parents suffered my time in the temple, my brothers felt such guilt at my injury, and my uncle wept at having his hands

tied all these years to free me. I would dishonor them if I didn't accept my blessings with joy."

"That is what I mean Gandes. You are a saint, you really are. I am forced to look at my own blessings and thank the gods I had such luck in my life. I was orphaned as a boy, I cannot even remember my real parents it was so long ago. I only remember hunger and even that is now a distant memory for me. My father, Jax, found me on the streets and adopted me and took me in to live here. He used to own this place. He'd lost his life long lover to illness the year before and he was already old when he took me in and raised me like his own son. He sent me to school, clothed me, taught me how to run the bar and I miss him so terribly now that he's gone. He was the only father I ever knew. He made me what I am today, he was the one when I was fourteen and discovering myself and my desires who took me aside and told me what it was like to be a non-breeder. He told me all about Hadius and how much I reminded him of Hadius and he basically prepared me for life, gave me stability and gave me a family. I will never look back on my life without remembering how much I owe who I am to him. I may not have been born of his flesh, but that man was my father. I am so very lucky and even when I was upset for not having a lover I should never complain. Especially when I compare my life to yours and see just how much I was given." Tarri said and Gandes just smiled.

"Every life is different Tarri. I may have been in the temple, but I knew I was loved. Goh always came to visit me even though he wasn't supposed to. My parents always talked to me telepathically even though they couldn't come to see me. My uncle and brother Gavain always protected me. I may have been physically alone, but I will never be able to say I wasn't loved. It matters not where you are, when you're loved it makes all the difference."

"Never a truer word I ever heard Gandes. And before we get even more sappy and pruned I think we join those we love and feed our bellies I'm starving." Tarri said climbing out and wrapping in a robe and helping Gandes out and handing him a robe as well.

"Me too. I could eat a horse this morning I'm so hungry." Gandes said as Tarri offered his arm to help Gandes walk without his cane.

"Sex always makes you hungry. I'll bet our men are ready to chew through furniture downstairs waiting for us." Tarri laughed as they walked. Yidane was at the foot of the stairs waiting and smiling. He walked up the stairs to carry Gandes down, there was still no way he could handle a flight of stairs yet on his legs.

"So did you two have a nice chat?"

"Lovely."

“Do I have any secrets left?” Yidane asked and Gandes laughed and winked as Yidane set him down again.

“A few.” Gandes chuckled as he shuffled over to a table as Tarri went to collect breakfast from the kitchen.

The Tavern was closed so it was only the resident workers sitting around the large room and sharing breakfast. Tarri’s three boys looking bleary eyed as they came out of their rooms and flopped at the table themselves for breakfast.

It was cozy and quaint in the tavern at this time of the morning before they opened in a few hours for lunch, Yidane had always liked this time of day best in the Tavern, it was homey and comfortable and everyone was cheerful.

Maxim was up and about fixing coffee behind the bar and looking like he’d lived his whole life in the bar, he fit right in with everyone else which was a good sign in Yidane’s opinion, when the people were happy, the environment was happy.

The energy in the bar was flowing nicely and Yidane could tell by the look on Gandes face he was feeling the same gentle power structure the occupants were creating in the room.

Gandes’ face however changed in an instant and he stood so quickly he knocked his chair over. “Yidane! Kitchen Hurry!” Gandes said and Yidane zoned in on the strange power signature mere moments after Gandes had sensed something amiss.

Yidane was up and running to the kitchen when the door burst open and standing there was Tarri in the arms of a rather large man with a knife at his throat. “Everyone stay where you are!” The man called and Maxim froze behind the bar a look of horror and anger on his face, his hand twitching for his sword which was sadly up in their bedroom.

“Drop the knife man, don’t make me hurt you.” Yidane said standing and facing the man still dressed in his robe and without his clothes which always bore a wielder ranking insignia, a blazing sun coat of arms, the man could have no idea Yidane was a wielder.

“Big un’s still bleed. I gots a message for his lordship. He gives up this and goes home or the pretty one dies. It’s his choice. His Family is not happy he chooses to rut in the gutter like a common animal. Mind you, I think it’s all bullshit but a job is a job. So what’s yer answer Lord Maxim. Go home or watch him die?”

Maxim looked devastated and was about to answer when Yidane held up his hand, his face livid. “I said drop the knife!” Yidane shouted and the knife turned white hot in the man’s hands and he dropped it with a painful cry.

Maxim dove out from behind the bar and tackled Tarri in his arms and pulled him out of the man's reach and Yidane growled.

"I bind you in place and I would hear only truth from your lips. Sealed you are until I choose to release you." Yidane said and the man tried to turn and run but his feet were frozen to the floor and Yidane stalked forward and grabbed the man's face in his hands.

"Talk. Who ordered this?" Yidane asked and The man obviously struggled and his eyes took on a look of horror when his lips and voice betrayed his will.

"The Lady Gertine and Lord Mason."

"Mother and Eldest Brother. Why?" Yidane asked and Tarri and Maim watched in horror as Yidane interrogated the man and Gandes looked uncharacteristically fierce and practically glowing with power that was damn near visible and going right from his body into Yidane, fueling his magic.

The man struggled again not to speak and failed again. "Said he'd gone crazy, was turning his back on family and shaming them working like a commoner and bedding one."

"Gandes, call the constable. I want Gertine and Mason taken into custody immediately for questioning and I want this one arrested for attempted blackmail and threat with a deadly weapon."

"I already have. Father is sending them at once. I opened the link to our bond, he saw your questioning through my eyes." Gandes replied and Yidane nodded.

"Good. You oh man can just stand there until they come to collect you! I will remind you again of the laws of Holst. Any man or woman is free to choose the mate of his or her heart. Regardless of rank, gender, or creed. The gods dictate our hearts and no one is allowed to interfere with the Gods discretion or in the lives of others. You disgust me." Yidane said angrily turning away from the man and going over to Tarri and Maxim.

"Are you alright Tarri?"

"Aye." Tarri's voice was shaking and Gandes shuffled over to take his hand and pull him toward a chair.

"Just sit Tarri." Gandes said smiling tenderly, his large grey eyes filled with such gentle kindness they drew you into comfort and compassion.

“How did you know he was there?” Maxim asked, he too looking shaken with fear. “You knew he was in the kitchen! How?”

“Gandes felt him, he disrupted the flow of power in the building. The intent was contrary to the power here, once Gandes feels the disturbance I do much faster than I normally would through our bond. It is hard to describe to those who do not feel power as we do.” Yidane said and Gandes just smiled.

“Gandes, thank you.” Maxim said and Gandes shook his head.

“Thank me not. It is my purpose and what the gods made me to do. I serve my wielder and the people and my dear friends and nothing more.” Gandes said tenderly as Grantham arrived with half a dozen young wielder constables.

He walked over and glowered at the man. “Detestable behavior! When will the higher class start earning those distinctions? Arrest this one on the charges Wielder Yidane set. I want Lady Gertine and Lord Mason brought in for questioning and in my office immediately.” Grantham said turning to his son and smiling.

“I’ve never in my life had a clearer picture than from you. Not even your mother can broadcast telepathically like that. Every wielder and wellspring in the city saw your message clearly. I’m proud of you.” Grantham said and Gandes smiled.

“Thank you Papa.” Gandes said and Grantham turned to Yidane.

“I want you both to stay here for a few days, make sure this was the only man they hired.”

“Already planned on that Sir, I’m not leaving my friends alone now until this is all cleared. Can you have someone send us some clothes and necessities. We’re sadly not prepared.”

“I just sent word to Fioretta, she’ll gather you what you need and I’ll transport it over as soon as I get back.” Grantham said turning to Maxim.

“I’m sorry son. Your choice should not be in question.”

“I know Sir. My mother and my brothers and I have rarely seen eye-to-eye on a great many things. This just being one of them. I knew she disagreed with my choices, I had not expected she’d go to such lengths. I wash my hands of them all. Disown me if they wish, Tarri means more to me than her titles or money.”

Grantham just smiled. “And it’s men like you who deserve the titles more. Spoken like a true lord. Your titles are safe, I determine who and who does not keep titles in Pernath. Rest easy and I’ll send word later after I meet with your mother. Good

Day to you all.” Grantham said turning regally and walking out of the Tavern and back onto his horse to ride back to his estate to wait for Gertine and Mason.

“Tarri you just rest there, Maxim get him some tea. Gandes if you would monitor the power I think I will borrow these fine boys and go salvage our breakfast. Come on lads, help me out.” Yidane said taking the three youths with him into the kitchen while Gandes sat with Tarri as Maxim brewed tea on the fire and fixed his lover a cup.

“Max, I’m so sorry.” Tarri said and Maxim laid a finger to Tarri’s lips.

“Don’t be Tarri. I meant what I said to Lord Grantham. I love you, I’ve been in love with you for the longest time. Longer than you think. I will confess more to you Tarri, the first moment I fell in love with you, before I even knew who you were, before I knew about this pub even. It was almost two years ago, I was taking a break from my final classes to have lunch. I was sitting outside in the park when you walked by. I thought you were the loveliest creature I’d ever laid eyes on and you looked so utterly sad. My heart ached to ask you what was wrong, but I could tell from the black ribbon around your arm you were in mourning and knew my asking would only cause you more grief. I watched you feed a lump of bread to the swans in the pond and sit looking lost into the water. Then your beauty really struck me, and I mean the beauty of your soul, when even in your grief you noticed a boy crying. You walked over to him, it was little Yardley. He looked half starved and I look back at myself now and wonder now at my own coldness. I hadn’t noticed the child, only you. You smiled at him, walked him over to a vendor and bought him something to eat and then I followed you both when you left. You stopped and bought him clothes and then brought him back here. Even in your darkest hour, you took the time to care for another. I lost my heart to you that day. You to me were the most noble of men. My mother would have never fed that child, would have called him an eyesore. My brothers would have made sport of him and tossed him around like a game. Not you. You took him into your home, you gave him a warm bed, a family, a chance to grow. I wanted to be you, to grow myself into the kind of man you were.” Maxim said and Tarri was crying now as Maxim folded him into his arms.

“You showed me that day I was wasting my life. I only did what I thought I was supposed to, what my mother wanted me to do. I felt so empty, I was doing nothing good for another just existing. I came here every day just to watch you, to learn what it felt like to be honest. That first year I couldn’t even get the nerve up to come inside, I only watched you from outside. My heart ached to see you work so hard for so little reward. I saw you alone day after day. I wanted to comfort you like you comforted so many others. I started coming inside, waiting for a chance to confess to you my heart and it took Yidane kicking me in the ass to push me out of thinking like a lord who has to wait for opportunities and thinking with my heart and making those opportunities reality. I cannot even begin to describe the depths of my feelings for you. I want to serve you, care for you,

protect you, and comfort you like you do so many others Tarri. I love you with my very soul and I'd give up everything in this world just to be with you." Maxim said and Tarri was sobbing now, clinging to Maxim's neck as he wept.

Maxim just held him close, closing his eyes and taking a shuddering breath, his own tears trickling down his cheeks. "Ah, gods I almost died earlier to see you threatened because of me! I would rather die than see you come to harm." Maxim was sobbing now and Gandes leaned over and hugged them both, his own tears falling.

"The only wrong path you can take is the one that leads away from your hearts. This power between you is so strong and so good, never let it go." Gandes said quietly as Yidane came out with the boys and clearing his throat.

"Enough sadness for one day. Gandes and I are not going to allow anything to happen to either of you. Come eat my foul cooking and laugh at my expense." Yidane said with a wink and Tarri chuckled through his tears.

Yardley, the youngest of the boys at seven years old came and crawled into Tarri's lap. "Don't cry brother Tarri. We'll all protect you. We love you." He said and Tarri just squeezed him tightly.

"But will you love me when I say you still have to go to school today and you are going to be late if you don't hurry and eat now." Tarri said and Yardley made a face with the other boys who ate quickly and got dressed and raced off to school.

"You're more their father than brother you realize." Yidane said and Tarri smiled.

"I know, they do too I think. It matters not, I love them all and like my father Jax told me once. When you are able to help another you do so without thought of reward because you must always remember that one day it might be you who are in need. I've never forgotten those words, they are so very true. I owe my life to you who gave me aid when I was in need."

"Because we care. It's as simple as that Tarri." Yidane smiled and passed the pot of coffee over to Maxim. "Now eat, and let's just carry on today like nothing happened. That's the best way to handle these sorts of situations. Gandes and I will be more than enough protection just in case. I doubt any one will try anything more today. We're just here as a precaution only." Yidane smiled as Gandes coughed.

"What's wrong?" Yidane asked as he patted Gandes back where he choked.

"Egg shell. Yidane you cannot cook." Gandes said and Yidane chuckled.

“Ah, yes I am sorry. No I can’t.” Yidane chuckled and the mood was light again once more as people tried in vain to eat Yidane’s cooking.

“Shipwrecked in Stormy Eyes”

A Wielder and Wellspring Story

Author: D. Sanders

ACT V - With the turning of the Seasons

Yidane and Gandes spent the rest of that week with Tarri and Maxim at the Cock-n-Bull. There were no other attempts made against Tarri and when the regular clientele heard what had happened after Lady Gertine and Lord Mason’s arrest there were several others vowing support for their favorite pub owner and fellow lord.

Grantham had not been pleased at the arrogance displayed by Lady Gertine and Lord Mason. So furious in fact he not only sentenced them both to a year in prison, he’d stripped them of their titles for behavior unbefitting of their station and shaming the monarchy with their actions.

Grantham interviewed all her sons, including Maxim and by the end of the week he announced his decision that all the land, property and money was to be divided up between the remaining four sons. The only one however allowed to keep his title was Maxim because in Grantham’s opinion he was the only one to display true nobility. The other three brother’s had been innocent of the crime but had not been innocent of the appalling arrogance that Gertine and Mason had demonstrated. They were very lucky to retain any of their wealth and had been reduced to gentlemen of the city only.

They were shamed and shunned by decent society. The estate went up for sale immediately and sold just as quickly. The money from the estate was divided into the brother’s accounts and the three eldest left Pernath without one word to their youngest brother who didn’t care.

Quite independently wealthy Maxim could have packed up Tarri and carried him off to live a life of luxury wherever they chose, but they didn’t. they both loved the Cock-n-Bull, this was their home, their friends and family. Therefore, Maxim just invested in the business itself. He purchased the vacant adjacent building and work was already underway to expand the Cock-n-Bull into a full fledged Inn as well as Tavern. More permanent staff was hired so Tarri could do what Tarri did best. Host and greet the people with smiles and cheer and just manage the bar itself.

Tarri made sure everyone was comfortable, wandered tables chatting with customers and making the Cock-n-Bull the bright spot it was. Maxim enjoyed working behind the bar and continued to do so with great relish. He loved chatting with men over the counter and hearing their tales and just being the resident Lord of the Bar. He could discuss everything from politics, to business, to rhetoric and literature. The boys no longer worked other than to help clean

after school for their daily chores, they had been able to hire more than enough adult help.

Business was at an all time high. Those non-breeders who'd not heard of the Cock-n-Bull were now coming in droves after the gossip hit the streets about the Lord Maxim and Tarri's brush with prejudice. There was so much demand even from breeders to get a look that the rules had changed slightly. For lunch hours of operation only the pub was open to everyone who wanted to come inside but in the evenings it was still Non-breeders only since this was their only place in town to meet and gather. In the new addition a private gaming room was built for gentlemen to drink rich port wine and smoke cigars and play cards and gamble in a controlled environment with betting maximums in place. Tarri was adamant no one would be allowed to go into bankruptcy in his pub, only friendly gaming was allowed, there were other pubs where a man could lose his entire inheritance if he wished.

The cock-n-bull had become a truly gentlemen's club with patron's lining up at night to enter. Several private dining rooms were built in the second building for romantic dinners for two as well in case the crowded main dining room which was always loud with cheer was a bit too much for those wanting a more intimate night out.

Tarri remarked one evening he hadn't known there were so many non-breeders in the city to which Maxim remarked he doubted most of them were and were just tired of their wives for the evening and were just searching for an evening out with the boys.

Whichever the case, no one complained and the profits were singing. The original pub rooms now just housed the staff, with only two guestrooms remaining which were reserved for Wielders and Wellsprings only. The original room Yidane had occupied upon his arrival one of them and on the door now hung a little plaque that read "The Yidane and Gandes Suite" in tribute to their dear friends who were regular visitors to the pub.

All of the regular guestrooms of the Inn were now solely in the new addition in the adjoining building.

Two weeks after Tarri's incident and after Yidane and Gandes returned to Grantham's estate rather than the palace since Gandes was now completely healthy again. Just a few short days after they settled into their rooms, Goh and Obie returned from Garth and Gandes had been on pins and needles all afternoon waiting for their arrival.

The minute Goh and Obie arrived, Gandes was running down the stairs with great joy and smothering Goh in affection before turning and bestowing the same greeting upon his new Brother in Heart. He was amazed to learn that Obie was

just a year older than himself and within the hour they were laughing and joking as if they'd been brothers all their lives.

Goh took Yidane aside as Gandes and Obie chatted over tea. "He looks so alive. I have never seen him so radiant in all my life. Yidane you have my eternal gratitude brother."

"Thank me not Goh. I love him and I couldn't have wished for a better man to call my wellspring and husband. I have been blessed." Yidane said and Goh smiled and hugged him tightly.

"We both have Yidane. We both have. What with you and I bonding within days of each other and all the commotion it caused there will never be another male wellspring ever to suffer what Obie and Gandes did. That alone is something to thank the gods for. Having them also give us our hearts. We cannot be anything but blessed." Goh said and Yidane smiled and nodded.

"Aye. Although I could do without all the comparisons to Perdain and Tarnack. Those are mighty big boots to fill." Yidane said and Goh laughed.

"Thankfully only YOU have those references to deal with. Obie and I thankfully escaped those being out in the country."

"It doesn't help Gandes looks a lot like Perdain either."

"Blame that on my mother, she's from that bloodline. Well not directly obviously." Goh chuckled and Yidane laughed.

"I rather gathered that. I don't think Perdain ever produced his own heirs after all." Yidane said and Goh winked.

"Would have been difficult aye." Goh winked as they settled on the couch beside their mates.

"Tarri would like to see you Goh. He's dying to meet Obie." Gandes said and Goh nodded.

"Aye. Tarri is the biggest gossipy hen I know. I heard through the grapevine big things happened over there and I saw lots of signs of construction as we passed." Goh said and Gandes nodded and explained the upheaval.

"Gods Balls. You're kidding me. It's about time Maxim got off his ass and went after Tarri but even I wouldn't have suspected the old bitch of his mother would have tried to kill Tarri. Tarri is just about the sweetest bloke in all of Holst!" Goh gasped and Yidane nodded.

“Aye. I thank the Gods Gandes and I were there to stop it. Tarri was a great help to me when I was suffering my bond and since then we’ve become very good friends. He’s got a golden soul that one and Maxim is just a perfect match for him.”

“I always thought so. Maxim was always the odd fish in his family, he had a damn heart for one. A brain second, and honor to round him out nicely. When I was in school as a boy, Maxim was two years ahead of me in class and tutored me in math. That man can work numbers like no ones business. What with him doing the books now, they’ll never be so much as a copper out of balance. He’s got an amazing head for business.”

“We noticed, it was his idea to pour his money into expanding the pub and it’s already paying off. He has workers around the clock and he bought out the whole building. He’s not going to let Tarri work his fingers raw anymore and just have Tarri do what Tarri does best.”

“Schmooze. Tarri can talk you into confessing your deepest most darkest secrets, have you unburden a mind or just make you laugh until your jaw aches from smiling. He’s got a golden tongue even I envy.” Goh chuckled and Obie grinned.

“A man who can out talk and out persuade you? Now this is a person I have to meet.” Obie said and Goh laughed.

“Aye. Tarri’s a lot of fun. I want to take you to the Cock-n-Bull anyway, it has always been my favorite place in town. Good food, great music, better beer and oh so soft beds just made for playing in.”

“Were beast!” Obie scolded and Goh just waggled his eyebrows.

“But of course, you should know that by now my love.”

“Aye.” Obie winked and Gandes laughed happily.

“It’s so good to have you both home!” Gandes cheered and Goh just smiled and reached out to hug Gandes tightly.

“It’s just good to have you in it at last Gandes. Where you belong.” Goh said, next to Obie there wasn’t a person he loved more in the world than his youngest brother.

They didn’t get a chance to visit the pub for a few weeks. Goh and Obie had reports to file for the King, celebrations with family to attend to and acclimation to

the city in general for Obie to accustom himself too. The construction was already completed on the Cock-n-Bull by the time two couples, dressed in finery walked arm in arm down the streets one evening toward their destination.

“Great Gods Balls, there’s a line to get in! There cannot be this many buggers in the city!” Goh gasped and Yidane nodded.

“I told you, they’ve become insanely busy. Thankfully we have orders from Tarri and Maxim not to wait in line and come in directly. Sometimes knowing the owners has its perks.” Yidane winked as they walked passed the line of men waiting to get inside and normally grumbling would have occurred had it not been obvious by the Wielder Ranking insignias on both men’s breasts these men had preferential treatment. Most in line already recognized both Yidane and Goh for who they were as well and several smiles and hails of greetings were said as they passed.

“Goh! We heard you got back! My word but it’s great to see you mate! Wellspring Obie it’s a joy to see you sir!” Several called out and Goh nodded and talked and winked without pausing long. Once they reached the open doorway is when they paused, waiting for Tarri to catch sight of them.

It didn’t take long. “GOH!” Tarri almost screamed and raced over laughing and throwing his arms around Goh who returned the hug with a smile.

“Looking lovely as ever Tarri.”

“Flatterer.” Tarri winked and without missing a beat turned to Obie with a large grin.

“You are sight for sore eyes you are Obie! I daresay you are absolutely everything Goh always said you would be, gorgeous you are.” Tarri said and Obie blushed but smiled.

“Ah, thanks.” Obie said and Tarri just winked.

“You’re welcome beautiful! Come in, come in! Gandes I want that outfit, you look edible in blue.” Tarri teased and kissed Gandes’ cheek with evident affection.

“You’re horrible Tarri. I do think Maxim likes you in red more.”

“Ah he does. I know when I want him cornered I just throw on red and he’s putty in my hands. I have a table back here for four by the fire. Come follow me.” Tarri said with a wink as he sashayed through the crowd to lead his friends over to a table.

As they passed the bar, Goh did a double take to see Maxim working the bar himself and looking like a dashing bartender at that. "S'truth. That can't be Max! What the hell happened to the quiet bloke brooding in his beer?" Goh asked and Tarri laughed.

"Nightly playtime." Tarri winked and Goh chuckled.

"Dog!" Goh laughed ruffling Tarri's hair as they sat.

"No he's the dog and I'm so his bitch." Tarri laughed and Goh just laughed even harder.

"God, I missed you, you horrible bastard. You could use that tongue as a cudgel it's so damn blunt."

"I tell it like it is Goh, you know that. What can I get you to drink?"

"You can bring us a pitcher of ale and steal Maxim and come join us for a toast." Goh said

"You got it, I'll tear him away from the bar." Tarri said going off to obtain the pitcher and pull Maxim away from his bar to come over for a break with friends.

"Goh! Welcome back." Maxim said coming over with Tarri and carrying six mugs while Tarri carried the pitcher.

"Good to be back mate. It's about damn time you two got together." Goh said standing to shake Maxim's hand before they both sat back down again.

"I know, I know. I was dragging my feet like an idiot. Yidane already punted me in the ass already." Maxim smiled then turned his gaze to Obie.

"You must be Obie. It's a pleasure to meet you and congratulations on your bonding." Maxim said holding out his hand to Obie to shake.

Obie smiled and took his hand. "Thank you, I am most happy indeed. Gandes tells me you both intend on marrying soon too?"

"Aye. Next Weekend, we're closing the bar for the day and having the wedding here in the pub. You and Goh are both invited I do hope you come." Maxim said and Goh smiled.

"Wouldn't miss it my friend, Obie and I will be here with bells on."

"That reminds me Tarri, Mother wants you to come by tomorrow to have you fitted for your clothes and is adamant you stay with us the night before since it's

tradition you both shouldn't see each other before the ceremony for luck." Gandes said and Tarri nodded.

"Aye. I'll be there."

"And I'll be here, Keeping Maxim occupied naturally. That is the best man's job right?" Yidane said and Maxim laughed.

"Just chain me to a chair so I don't go sneaking off. I'm rather used to having my warm Tarri near me now, I might chew through simple rope." Maxim winked and Tarri laughed.

"You and me both Max. I think we'll survive one night." Tarri winked as they all laughed and talked over beer and still the best stew in the city.

"Hey, you think you have it bad? I know I won't sleep being away from Gandes myself. Since I won't be sleeping for shit anyway I know Maxim won't be going anywhere." Yidane winked and Gandes sighed.

"Like Maxim, I think we shall both live my love. It's only one night." Gandes grinned and Goh once again did a double take, it finally hit him Gandes was bonded and with bonding came other more intimate things. He had a hard time wrapping his brain around the fact his little brother was sexually active.

Obie nudged him and grinned. "Did you think he was still a virgin Goh? Like Gandes I was just as clueless and I believe you made short order of my virginity yourself."

"You are not my baby brother."

"No, but he's a wellspring just like me and bonded and he's far from a baby." Obie said and Goh just sighed.

"Aye. I know. Just a lot to digest really. I'm horribly double-standard when it comes to Gandes."

"You are. You loveable fool." Obie replied as they enjoyed the rest of the evening themselves.

The wedding was intimate and beautiful. The main dining room was full of all their friends from the pub, their closest friends and enough flowers and paper streamers to transform the place into an indoor garden.

Gandes escorted Tarri as his best man and Yidane escorted Maxim up to the old Monk grinning at the makeshift altar at the bar itself.

Simple traditional vows were exchanged and the marriage contract signed by Maxim and Tarri and Yidane and Gandes as witnesses.

Tarri and Maxim were both dressed in traditional white and looked so very happy as they shared their first kiss as a married couple.

The food coming from the kitchen was spectacular. Here Maxim spared no expense hiring bakers and chefs to cook a feast to celebrate, several musicians were over by the fireplace performing all throughout dinner and once the food was finished, the tables were all moved back to make space to dance.

Wine flowed, people danced and made merry and Goh and Yidane managed to disappear for a few minutes only to come back looking far too ornery.

“What have you done?” Gandes asked and Goh just grinned.

“Only short sheeted the marriage bed and put a few charms on it to vibrate at the most inopportune times. Come on, like it’s not also tradition to play practical jokes on the married couple? Think again.” Goh winked and Yidane was chuckling.

“You’re horrible.” Gandes said looking at them both like they were devil spawn.

“Naturally.” Goh replied right back and not wasting another minute before whisking Obie out onto the dance floor.

Gandes pinched Yidane’s arm. “That’s mean.”

“It’s a laugh and hey, the vibrating might be a turn on, you know Tarri.” Yidane winked and now Gandes laughed.

“True.” Gandes conceded as he took Yidane’s hand and allowed his own husband to twirl him around the floor.

Summer quickly turned to autumn and Goh and Obie were gone again, heading southeast on duty once more. Checking on rumors of a series of rouge nodes changing livestock into were feral beasts and running amuck in the forests that bordered the southern jungles.

Winter came and went and by spring Gandes was healthier than he'd ever been and was helping pack his and Yidane's small wagon with supplies. A sturdy Shire horse in midnight black shaking his mane and stomping his hooves in anticipation of the journey as Yidane finished getting him to the rigging and reins.

He and Gandes were heading north. They'd eventually end up in Merchant's Row to meet Yidane's parents and Gandes' great uncles. Along the way they'd stop in every village on a tour of duty and sort out the King's business as was their profession as a bonded Wielder and Wellspring pair.

It would take several months journey with so many stops, but Spring had arrived and they'd make Merchant's Row by Mid-summer.

Fioretta seemed worried and Gandes just kissed her cheek. "Don't fret Mama. I'm fine now and you know it. Besides, I have Yidane nothing will happen to me."

"I can't help worry, I'm your mother." Fioretta smiled as the last trunk was stacked in the Cart and Gandes was climbing up into his seat.

"Got the map boy?" Grantham shouted and Yidane patted his breast pocket.

"Aye, but don't need it. I walked all the way here and Gandes has a damn photographic memory, I doubt we'll get lost." Yidane said climbing up into the driver's seat.

"Then safe journey and have fun wandering!" Grantham called as Yidane clicked his tongue and the horse headed out at a brisk trot, his massive frame pulling their small cart with ease.

Gandes smiled and waved back and headed out on the first journey of his new life at Yidane's side.

“Shipwrecked in Stormy Eyes”

A Wielder and Wellspring Story

Author: D. Sanders

ACT VI - Chaos at Waysmeet

“By the Gods, it’s getting nasty out there.” Yidane said ducking into the small hay shed he and Gandes had taken refuge in from the storm. Their poor horse drenched and under rough blankets to keep warm. Much as Gandes was huddled for warmth under a blanket, his long hair sodden and hanging in his eyes as he handed his husband his own blanket.

“It blew in out of nowhere. I felt the node go rouge and then the whole storm just appeared.” Gandes said and in seven years Yidane knew Gandes could feel a hiccup in a node at a hundred leagues away while asleep and drunk.

“How far is the node?”

Gandes closed his eyes and reached out with his senses. “Northeast, probably thirty clicks. I’d bet money on Waysmeet. I said last time we were there I didn’t like that node.”

“That was four years ago Gandes. I couldn’t feel a damn thing then. I thought you daft for having me put barriers on it. I will never doubt you again beloved.”

Gandes just smiled. “I feel it, you tame it. This storm is only going to get worse, we’d better just leave the cart here where it’s safe and dry and just ride the horse in. While you were out bringing in our supplies, Father replied to our letter. We’re the only pair within leagues and the watchtowers are signaling help from that direction. If we push hard, we’ll make Waysmeet by morning and try to salvage what isn’t destroyed.”

“They raise cattle, I don’t want to know what a rogue node did to so many heads of steak on the hoof. Those bulls are nasty enough without being feral and I really don’t want to be riding Nightshade into that sort of power, he goes feral on us, we’re both bucked and trampled. Leave him here stabled. There’s plenty for him to eat in here and plenty of water. Let our boy stay dry and let the locals here watch him for us. I say we borrow one of their older nags, less likely to be able to turn on us if she goes were. Gerdar will replace whatever we take from here, but I’d feel safer with you on a regular horse and not our big friend here.”

“Probably very wise. I’ll pack a travel pack, you go grab us a horse dearest.” Gandes said going into their wet supplies and packing a small pack of rations, their tinderbox, their oil skin coats Yidane’s father had given them perfect for such wet weather and dry socks and boots. Nothing was worse after hard riding than also having to deal with wet feet in boots.

Yidane's feet were always ripe with odor if Gandes let him abuse his feet in wet boots for too long. The poor man's feet would drive him crazy with itching too as they dried. Yidane had always suffered with "Fisherman's Foot" as he called it, a fungus that affected most men and women of Merchant's Row. It liked to settle in between toes and as long as feet were clean and dry never bothered the people who carried the fungus. Moist and warm conditions inside damp boots and socks and it drove the poor people afflicted with the fungus mad with burning pain and itching. Gandes packed their medical kit and the foot powder used to treat the fungus too as Yidane returned with their 'borrowed' nag, saddled and ready to go.

Yidane tied their supplies on her rump and helped Gandes into the saddle then crawled up behind him and set the poor old nag onto a brutal pace to reach Waysmeet as quickly as possible.

The closer they got to Waysmeet, the worse the power grew. The node had not only gone rouge, but was spewing out power and tainting every other smaller node in the area. Gandes was working over time, his well side open and purging as much taint as he could to fuel Yidane's shields he had erected around them and their nag as they raced along, rain stinging their faces as they traveled all night long.

Waysmeet was in chaos, Dogs, cats, chickens, cattle, every animal in the vicinity had gone were feral and the nag was only spared due to Yidane's shield on her. The rain was coming in torrents and the streets were ankle deep in water as they skidded to a halt and quickly ushered the horse to the safety of an empty barn where Yidane took mercy on the terrified beast and put her to sleep. Gandes slung on their pack on his back quickly.

"Gandes, I saw up on the ridge an old mine. Let's get that purged of animals first then get the people inside. I'll barrier you in while I try to get this mess cleaned up and pray we get back up soon. You and I will be exhausted in no time."

"I'm already exhausted. Lets go!" Gandes said and hand in hand they went blazing out into the tempest. Gathering villagers, killing feral were animals and getting everyone into the entrance of the old mine.

"Be careful beloved!" Gandes called and frantically kissed Yidane good luck.

"Always dearest. You give me strength." Yidane said returning the brief kiss before placing a protective barrier around the mine and dashing off into the torrential rains to fight.

"Everyone, stay calm and stay put. This old mine is not much safer than outside. Children do not wander off, everyone just sit and get comfortable to wait this out. Please do not disturb me, I have to try and tap into the node to purify it and it's

nasty and I need my concentration. You sir, keep watch on the entrance. You watching the back and make sure no children or fools go wandering into the mine. Trust Yidane, he's one of the strongest wielders we have, he can handle this for now until more help arrives." Gandes said ordering villagers to positions and then sitting down himself and closing his eyes and seeking out the very dangerous power that only he, as one of the strongest wellsprings would be able to filter.

::Watch that node Gandes, it's biting back.:: Yidane sent.

::I know, but I'm in now I'll get the core stable again, siphon off the excess for me, and use that to fight the animals. I want to drain this node into other smaller ones, break it up. It just got too big.::

::Good idea. I'm trying to corral them first, it's bedlam out here. Some damn pussy already left a bite mark on my ass.::

::Just make sure it's not a bull beloved. I'm going in deeper I feel another wellspring riding hard this way and tapping in already. It feels like Obie, only he has this sort of range like I do. Still far, twenty leagues west tops and coming fast.::

::Good. Watch that fissure! They get earthquakes out here I don't want the ground shaking on top of everything else.::

::I see it, the node is right on top of it though. Once it's drained, we're going to have a tremor, unavoidable. I'll try and buffer it as best I can.::

::Just tell me when you're at the core and I'll throw a support in there.::

::THERE'S ANOTHER NODE IN HERE! GODS PRESERVE ME! This one under the first. Oh God Yidane it's black with rogue power! It's like the first one gave birth to a bastard baby! This was not here last time!:: Gandes sent and Yidane could feel the strain on Gandes' well.

::Leave it Gandes! Wait for the others!::

::I can't, if I don't get that one first, the top will just collapse into it and we'll have a black hole here and nothing left of the village, the whole area will shake to the ground!:: Gandes said, his mental voice strained. Yidane knew when Gandes was this taxed, the power was more than violent and burning him from the inside out.

Yidane's attention was divided, he was trying to siphon off power by destroying were beasts and cattle were dropping like flies and making a butcher's holiday out of the landscape as Yidane blasted with power while also trying to keep

himself from getting killed by random other animals gone rabid. Not to mention trying not to slip in the mud and breaking his leg at the same time.

It was exhausting mentally and physically and neither of them had any warning when the world around them exploded. Gandes was deep in concentration trying to tame the dwarf node when the upper node collapsed on it's own. Sending a backlash into the lower node and in and out of Gandes' knocking him out with a power recoil, nothing fatal but enough to make Yidane stumble when it hit and he felt Gandes black out. That crucial moment however was timed badly, Yidane slipped and went down and a feral cow backed into him and her hoof landed square in his ribcage and he could hear the snapping of ribs. He blasted her off him wheezing, his ribs killing him. Then hell opened its very gates, the backlash set off the fissure and the ground shook horribly, but reviving Gandes as it did so.

::YIDANE! THE MINE!:: came the frantic call and Yidane's head spun, he was dizzy and breathing badly and his heart stopped as he watched the mine collapse under the stress of the rain and the earthquake and bury everyone alive, including Gandes.

::GANDES!:: Rage, uncontrolled killing rage welled up inside. Fear, anger, dread, every horrible and frightening emotion threatened to send Yidane into a state of madness and he couldn't afford to lose his mind!

They'd all die if he did. He was coughing up blood and trying to dodge cattle and walk on ground quaking with aftershocks.

::YIDANE! I'M ALRIGHT! Several of the other's hurt though. You're hurt too!::

::Broken Ribs. I'll live. I'm coming!::

::No, too dangerous, more tremors coming. The Node is trying to stabilize itself now just put a barrier on us and focus on outside right now.::

::NO, you're in danger!::

::YIDANE DO AS I TELL YOU! RAGE LATER WE NEED YOU ALIVE I NEED YOU ALIVE!::

That snapped Yidane out of his single-minded madness and he shook off the suffocation of bond rage and threw up the barrier on the mine just in time as the next massive earthquake hit. Knocking him over and with his ribs aching and his vision impaired by the storm he couldn't get out of the way fast enough as a bull also struggling under the shaking muddy ground fell.

Another bone breaking under the weight of the massive beast and Yidane's left arm was useless.

::YIDANE! LOVE YOUR PAIN!::

::IGNORE IT GANDES! HOW CLOSE ARE THE OTHERS?::

::FIVE LEAGUES AND GAINING TIME. WHAT IS WRONG? BELOVED YOUR POWER IS WEAKENING!::

::I'LL LIVE, I HAVE TO! GIVE ME STRENGTH LOVE::

::ALL I HAVE!:: Gandes cried weeping and pouring all he had into Yidane.

Goh gasped as he and Obie laid flat their mare's head and raced to the scene. "Big Trouble! Gandes is lighting up the area, this is bad!" Goh yelled over the din of hooves and wind.

"The whole area is like a torch! Hurry Goh! Gandes will burn himself out at this rate! I'm at my limits to drain that node as it stands! We have four others on our heals, I feel their wellsprings. They're an about an hour behind us, we're the only ones close!"

Goh dug his heals into the mare and prayed to the gods they weren't too late.

Yidane struggled up the slick incline leading to the mine entrance, his arm dangling in pain at his side and his breath coming in ragged gasps. He couldn't afford to lose time, he had only two options, build a shield around the mine to keep the beasts out and work to save the people and leave the animals to the others when they arrived or leave the villagers losing air and dying, Gandes among them.

Yidane's mind held no options, he had to get to Gandes and he had to get to him immediately. So he threw up a shield to keep out the animals, another around the villagers so no more earth could fall on top of them and literally began transporting large mounds of earth up an away from the mine entrance and dumping it a few feet away, burning up all his energy just to remain alive himself.

::Yidane stop please dearest!:: Gandes begged, feeling Yidane suffer through their bond.

::No Gandes. I need you alive too! You're running out of air, I feel it!::

::Yidane you're DYING!:: Gandes sobbed pouring all his strength directly into Yidane just to keep him from collapsing where he stood. His own wrist wrenched and painful where he'd fallen under a beam and his forehead bleeding from the same beams that had fallen on him.

He was emotionally and physically exhausted and Yidane's life was hanging on by the barest of margins.

"GODS BALLS ITS BEDLAM!" Goh shouted as his horse went feral right under his legs and Goh barley had a moment to tumble he and Obie off the mare's back before it reared and began running amuck. Goh put the beast out of its misery as he and Obie ran covered in mud into town.

"GOH! LOOK ON THE RISE!" Obie said pointing at Yidane who was manic and desperate to get inside what appeared to be a mound of earth.

"Obie! Tame that node Love! He's killing himself!" Goh shouted as they raced to aide Yidane.

Once inside Yidane's barrier Obie went to work focusing on the node and Goh caught up Yidane in his arms.

"BROTHER STOP! You're Killing yourself AND GANDES!" Goh shouted and Yidane was sobbing.

"He's inside the mine. Help me Goh! They're all dying in there!" Yidane said and Goh only nodded, seeing the painful struggle Yidane was in. Had it been Obie inside, Goh knew quite well he'd push himself to the brink of death too in order to save him.

With Goh's added strength, the earth was flying away rapidly and once there was a breach, Obie began ushering people in an orderly fashion away and to the side and out of the way of the wielders. People were carrying the wounded, weeping and choking and frantic with fear and devastation.

"OBIE! Get them in that Barn! I've got a barrier on it!" Goh shouted and Obie began the exodus just as two other bonded pairs arrived and took over fighting animals and getting people tended while Obie went back to work on the node itself.

"GANDES!" Yidane needed to see him, feel him, touch him. He was frenzied with maniacal need. Gandes was the last person out of the mine and he went stumbling delirious over to Yidane. Drained to almost a catatonic state and reeling with Yidane's pain shared through their bond and the moment Gandes touched Yidane by wrapping his arms around him, they both collapsed.

"GET THEM INSIDE AND TENDED! YIDANE IS AT DEATH'S DOOR!" Goh shouted and the other wielders carried Yidane and Gandes to the barn where they immediately began tending Yidane's broken ribs and arm.

“He’s lucky he’s still breathing. Four ribs shattered and it’s only the God’s grace they didn’t puncture his lungs.” One of the wellspring women commented as she bandaged Yidane and the other tried keeping Gandes from going into bond shock.

“Gandes is spent, he gave everything to keep Yidane alive. I felt him open up like no wellspring I’ve ever seen other than Obie.” She said stroking Gandes brow.

“Aye. Both Obie and Gandes can generate more power in an instant than I will ever generate in my lifetime.” The one working on Yidane said as a battered old woman came over.

“Glowing the little one was in the mine. He was lighting it up like mid-day inside. I have never actually seen power in all my days and he was like looking at stars. Tried so hard they did to protect us all, it was just too much for only the single pair.” The old woman said helping to set Yidane’s arm and wrap it in a splint.

“Too much for ten pairs. The whole area is hostile.” Goh said coming in with the other wielders and wellsprings. “We’re changing tactics. We can’t fight both fronts simultaneously like we’ve been trying. We have to tame the power first. We’re barricaded in here under shields and safe from the animals until the power stabilizes. Gandes did a great job establishing ley lines to other nodes trying to drain the rouge. Obie and the others can finish siphoning off the power and only then can we get to work on purging the area of the animals affected.” Goh sighed sitting with Obie by their loved ones and Goh took Gandes’ hand.

“Any lesser power in the pairing bond and they’d both be gone. Gandes tackled the worst node I’ve ever seen by himself and handled it without burning himself raw. Unbelievable. That rogue is pitch black with taint.” Obie sighed as he knelt by Yidane and looked pained.

“I will never call Yidane anything but the most powerful wielder I’ve ever met. Not only was he wounded but he was extremely wounded and still able to continue working and manipulating power while also keeping bond rage under control. I have never met a wielder able to even contain let alone control bond rage and use the power it generates to work with. Had that pair been us beloved, I daresay I don’t think I’d have been able to control the rage and we’d both be gone. Yidane has more than earned everyone’s respect for his sheer willpower alone.” Goh said and one of the wielders nodded affirmation.

“Worked with them both before up on the Eastern Moors once about three years ago. Even my Trina and I don’t have that sort of bond stability and we’ve been bonded fifteen years. They are the best field pair we have and they don’t rest until everyone is safe. I watched Yidane work fifty-two hours straight and he only rested because Gandes drugged the bastard to sleep so he could sleep himself. Gandes won’t sleep if Yidane is awake and they both work until they’re ragged. I

can't imagine Trina and I would have survived here five minutes alone. Let alone do what these two managed until more help could arrive." He said and Goh nodded.

"Obie and I were only near by chance. We were coming in from Fortuna early. We saw the watch towers signal the alert and then rode hell bent for leather to get here." Goh said and Obie nodded.

"I felt the rogue about fifty leagues from here and I felt Gandes already tapped into it trying to tame it. He acknowledged my presence in the node too but I was too far away to do much than try to just filter it. Gandes had his hands on the branding iron for far too long." Obie said as Gandes moaned and without waking blindly reached out a hand to touch Yidane.

Goh helped him and moved their hands together, they needed each other's touch and Gandes settled again once he connected physically to his wielder.

"They have a very unique bond. They have to touch often. It's like they say, with strength comes equal amounts of weakness. Right after they bonded, some friends of ours got married and Yidane was going to stay with Max for the pre-bonding night and Gandes was going to stay with Tarri. They didn't last four hours. Yidane was pacing like nobody's business and Gandes was tossing and turning in bed. It was then we realized how needy their bond is, they have to feed it or it consumes them. You will never see them in separate rooms for more than an hour at any given time. Their bond acts like a rubber band that snaps if pulled too taught. They fall to pieces apart, but together you won't find a stronger pair. Even Obie and I have to struggle to keep up with them and our bond is just about as potent at times. A blessing and a curse all at once." Goh said as the storm raged outside. Everyone listening intently.

"So add to that, knowing as you all do how insane you get when your wellspring is suffering. Now multiply your bond needs which in turn would make you even more insane. Now fight that off and stay coherent. How he managed it, I'll never know. Yidane's will is unbreakable. Even if his bones aren't." Goh said and Obie had to chuckle a little.

"You have a mad cow fall on you and step on you. No thank you." Obie said as Yidane blinked open his eyes.

"Gandes." He rasped and Gandes responded immediately.

"Here Yidane." He said quietly, moving closer and neither of them aware of anything other than each other. Still in a fog of exhaustion.

Yidane seemed appeased and his good arm literally clutched Gandes closer and then both were sleeping again.

“See what I mean. They need each other more than any thing else. They’ll be alright now, let them sleep. Let’s first make sure everyone else is tended and then work out shifts with the wellsprings first and get the power clean in the area. Then we wielders can go out and clean up everything else.” Goh said dragging a blanket over Yidane and Gandes while everyone went to work or rested themselves.

“Yidane, I mean it do not get up and force me to tie you down to rest. You have broken ribs and a broken arm beloved.” Gandes scolded as he caught Yidane trying to get up, again.

“My legs and ass aren’t broken!”

“Don’t argue with me. Goh and the others can finish what you started. I am not going to almost lose you again and that’s final Yidane.” Gandes said folding his arms over his chest and defying Yidane to argue with him. The stubborn set of his jaw indicating the normally passive and carefree Gandes was serious.

“I need to do SOMETHING Gandes.”

“You do enough resting and healing. I’ll drug you if I have to.”

“I told you never to do that to me again Gandes!”

“And I told you once and I’ll tell you again. I will do whatever it takes so you don’t work us BOTH into an early grave. Do I respect your ethics? Yes. Do I think you are a workaholic bastard with a death wish sometimes? Oh Yes. Being Idle occasionally will not kill you Yidane. Trying to work in your condition will and I am not about to let you do it.” Gandes said and Yidane just frowned as Goh walked in smiling.

“He’s right Yidane. Rest you big bull we’re coming along now. If you want to work so bad, how about using your good right hand to write a letter to Gerdar and make a report and ask for more supplies, we’re getting low.” Goh said and Yidane nodded and Gandes looked appeased.

“Shipwrecked in Stormy Eyes”

A Wielder and Wellspring Story

Author: D. Sanders

ACT VII - Completion (Epilogue)

Yidane looked out over his Southern Trade port city and smiled. It had been four years since he and Gandes had come to live here and finally settle. They'd been together twenty-six years and they'd had their moments where they hadn't seen eye to eye, faced some harrowing times together, but in the end Yidane wouldn't have traded a minute of that time.

Gandes was coming up the path holding their infant niece on his hip and smiling. "I stole her for the afternoon while Goh and Obie meet with the merchant guild masters."

"Any excuse to baby-sit..."

"...I take." Gandes finished Yidane's sentence grinning. He was still as beautiful today as when Yidane fell in love with him all those years ago. His hair was still a dark sable, not a strand had begun to turn white yet. His skin still smooth as glass and his smile youthful. To say Gandes was aging gracefully would have been a drastic understatement. He was still as firm and lithe at forty-two as he had been at sixteen. Granted he was a little broader than he was then, he wasn't quite the waif he had been those early years. Living hard and off the land for so many years had only served to tone and shape him into a slim athletic frame.

He looked wonderful in his colorful sarong wrapped around his waist. His tanned toes poking out of his favorite toe-peg sandals, his chest bare save for his tattoos and the baby was playing with the colorful glass beads hanging around his neck.

His hair still hung to his waist and his ever present braid swinging behind him as he walked.

"By the Gods you're beautiful." Yidane murmured, taken aback again at just what a lucky man he was to call Gandes his husband. Gandes just smiled.

"You're just biased my handsome brute." Gandes winked as he walked over with Lilia who had begun chewing on Gandes' beads.

"But it's still the truth beloved. Isn't that right Lilia? Your uncle Gandes is something else." Yidane said giving the baby his finger to play with.

Yidane still had to walk with a cane occasionally if his leg was bothering him more than usual. However, the south was doing wonders for his health. It didn't ache nearly as much from the old injury as it had in the north where cold and

damp wreaked havoc on his knee joint. The hot spring in their hut always served to purge the worst of his aches with a good soak.

At forty-five Yidane still cut a dashing figure. His hair was still ever untamed, even if the dark brown of his hair was beginning to turn gray at the temples. His large frame looked average amongst the southern men and his skin had taken on a healthy olive toned hue from the sun, just like when he was a boy in summer playing in the surf of the north. Only now his tan lasted year round considering he spent most of his day out of door on the docks.

He could still lift Gandes with ease and did so often just for fun, especially on evenings when a good old-fashioned night of romance was planned. Even after twenty-six years, Gandes was a hopeless romantic and Yidane knew every single button to push that would have Gandes melting into his sandals and naked in their comfortable bed and moaning in pleasure in three seconds flat.

Life had, on the whole, treated them both exceedingly well and as they went inside their hut and settled on the floor with Lilia Yidane looked up smiling.

“I had a chat with a dragon earlier today on the beach.” Yidane said grinning and Gandes quirked an eyebrow.

“I saw, I didn’t know you were talking to her, what did she say?”

“Oh, something I think that will make you cry Gandes.”

“Yidane, EVERYTHING makes me cry, you know that. Spill it.” Gandes grinned as the baby played with his hair.

“Lilia will have a playmate soon.”

“What?” Gandes gasped, his eyes already filling with joy.

“I know. She didn’t tell me if it’s a girl or a boy just that in six moons be ready.”

“Oh Yidane! Really?”

“Aye. I just sent off our request to be put on the adoption registry with Gerdar and I reported to the council of Elders we’d like to be considered as parents to any orphans. So whether he or she is gifted or not, whether it’s north or south we won’t know, but I don’t give a damn do you?”

“Oh no. Oh Gods Yidane!” Gandes was sobbing now with joy and Yidane just reached out and held him close smiling. They were home at last and soon to be a family like they’d always wanted and just never had time before.

The ship docked and the nursemaid caring for the baby stepped off the gangplank and over to a very nervous Yidane and Gandes. They'd received a letter from Gerdar indicating their petition to be parents was received not a day too soon.

The baby's mother had died giving birth and subsequently his father passed when the bond severed. The newborn wielder had lost both his parents to little more than just tragic nature that sadly happened far too often.

He was now just under two months old and struggling, due to not having a constant wellspring to feed from and the moment the woman passed the bundle to Gandes he gasped as the baby made an instant connection and began suckling from Gandes' well.

Gandes was just laughing and crying as he covered the baby's face with affectionate kisses. "Hello sweetheart. I'm your Papa." Gandes said softly and Yidane smiled as he leaned over Gandes' shoulder to look at their new son for the first time.

"He's so small."

"And sickly without a wellspring Master wielder. He'll be fine now that he's here." The nursemaid said smiling as she delivered the child to his adoptive parents.

"Aye. Thank you so much for taking care of him. How long will you be staying in port?" Yidane asked her as Gandes fussed over the baby.

"I'm taking the next ship back. We have too many little ones to care for, he was just a very special case and needed extra and immediate care."

"Then stay with us tonight and rest well madam. Next ship leaves tomorrow and I'll see you are comfortably installed onboard." Yidane said and the old lady nodded and followed Yidane and Gandes up to their home.

Gandes was sitting in the hammock, Yidore, named after Yidane's lost brother, was contentedly resting against Gandes' chest, suckling power from a nipple just like Tanju had done with Juubie. Also like Tanju, he'd demanded it with wailing until Gandes gave in. Not that he minded much as he ran fingers through the six month old baby's strawberry blond hair and sighed with contentment as Yidane walked in and smiled.

"Would you kill me if I said I love that?"

“Love what?” Gandes asked looking up at his husband.

“You, sitting there nursing him like a mother does.”

“Better than him throwing a fit and no I wouldn’t kill you. I thought Juubie was just crazy, but this is nice to bond with him. He’s happy, I’m happy so there’s no need to quibble over the fact there is no milk in this nipple. He’s getting nourishment in other ways.”

“He loves you. I can feel it.”

“The feeling is more than mutual. You both mean everything to me and I just can’t get over how complete he makes me feel. It took us a long time to settle to where we could raise a family together, but he was worth the wait.” Gandes said smiling and Yidane nodded.

“Aye. He was.” Yidane agreed as he just ran a hand down the baby’s hair and then Gandes’ thick mane. “I wouldn’t change a day of our lives together.”

“Nor I beloved.” Gandes said tipping his head back to accept a kiss from the man he loved most in the world.

Yidane leaned over to kiss the man whose very eyes were like a stormy sea he was ever shipwrecked within since the first day he encountered them. He loved his man with his very soul and those beautiful eyes ever showed the love was equally returned.

The kiss itself bliss, familiar as everything else in their lives but even the familiarity never lessened the joy. Their lives were at last, finally peaceful and content and utterly complete.

END