

Epilogue

The future seemed gray misted to Gwyniffar as she looked into her curved, silver mirror. She could feel the lapping of waves upon the Island shores and a sense of curious anticipation filtered through her being like feathered wings. From between the planes she watched both the Realm of Light and the Realm of the Wheel. The Cymric People were now decisively at war lead by a Ricon chosen from the Bardic Council. Gwyniffar had to admit approval; had he not been the decision of both Rhiannon and Taliesin, dear kinsmen, both? Gwydion, the brother of Arionrhod, brother to one of the most unusual women of the whole of the Island of the Mighty. It caused Gwyniffar to smile in remote satisfaction.

A rustle of leaves along the shore caused her to remove her gaze from the mirror. Patterns of shimmering colors filtered in strange angles near the water, someone else was moving between the Realms and Gwyniffar arched her brows as she waited. However, she was not truly surprised by the image that entered her vision. A Tall, red-haired human woman finally appeared after several moments as the patterns of lights began to taper. "How like you to appear just as I think on you... Perhaps you have come to play Chess?"

Abruptly turning to the sound of the other woman's voice, Arionrhod found herself more startled than she would have thought. However, when she perceived the Elven woman, she smiled widely and moved towards Gwyniffar. "Sister!" She exclaimed; and seeing the women together would make one wonder if the sentiment were not true, excepting that one was Elven and the other not, as they greeted each other warmly. "It has been long and long."

"Ah, but you have been to the Isle before on more than one occasion." There was no reproach in Gwyniffar's statement, only one of fact.

"Many changes come, as you must know. The Cymric People are at war. And I must seek to protect what I believe most dear."

"By coming here...?" Smiled Gwyniffar. "Rhiannon and Taliesin had a son, did they not? And are you not his foster?"

Looking off back towards the shore, Arionrhod sighed, "We fade, Sister... Our time of greatness fades. But not all, and not quite yet. The Holy Isle has seen wonders and it is hardly for naught that they have appeared. Even so... Rhiannon and Taliesin came so that they might be as bright stars in the sky that our kinsmen should have some guidance in the darkness that shall be. So, too, the Holy Isle and those favored by It... Perhaps, yes... I do come to play 'Chess'..." She smiled warmly with a sportive glint in the corner of her eyes.

"And what of Gwydion?"

"My brother is more than warrior, as you know... I understand your concern, and yet... he is the most suited to this unfortunate task... I would the Cymru should never have such a need. But, the need comes and it must be filled." An energy shift sparkled the air like a wave, mounting and cresting all around them. "So... you would teach Llyria your craft?"

The question was sudden and rather unsettled Arionrhod a moment. "You watch closely, Sister."

"Llyria is a child of this Isle. Her knowledge shall be special to it, she shall learn the Flame with her mother and learn her Bardic status with her father..."

"I have no intent of rushing her... for now, I watch her only... I would not take her from this; I would be fool to do so... I even doubt I shall be her actual teacher in the Realm of the Wheel. But, life moves on and those capable of learning ever-greater Mysteries shall find the Keys and open the Doors. I would give Llyria all I can to help her in her quest."

"Gwyniffar regarded Arionrhod thoughtfully a long while, weighing the other woman's words carefully. "You are a great Weaver, Arionrhod... I respect you. I honor you; I concede your place at the High table. And if by your word you say to me that you bring no ill will, then I shall abide by that word and know it to be so."

"I love the Cymru, I love the People of the Light. Nothing I propose to do is meant to harm either. I only note Llyria's specialness and seek to give what I can. She has much to offer the People of Cymru."

"So be it." Whispered Gwyniffar. An explosive burst of sound lit up the sky in ripples like shattered crystals. Jolted, both women watched in unanticipated apprehension for something glazed the airs and dusted their senses with unaccounted foreboding. "The future..." reflected Gwyniffar.

"Taliesin rides with Gwydion... And so, the Bardic Council is scattered, though It is not broken." Pronounced Arionrhod.

"And even if that Council should ever needs recede to Its Inner Temple... It shall never be broken." Whispered Gwyniffar in a firm statement of destiny.

"And the Flame?"

"Is 'any' Mystery ever really destroyed?... The Realm of the Wheel shall cry out and the Children of the Flame shall answer that cry."

"Yes, Sister," said Arionrhod after Gwyniffar's declaration, "I did, indeed, come to play 'Chess'. Is the Great Game Board set?"

Appraisingly, Gwyniffar looked at Arionrhod and smiled largely, "But of course..." She said, indicating with her arm that they might proceed. "Shall we begin in the West?"

"Why not." Remarked Arionrhod as the two women left the shore to walk a lesser path where they might join their fellow players.