

## Two Roses

Dori pondered a long while as she walked from the Cavern sacred to the Healers. In her mind's eye she watched her young daughter, Llyria, and the Wisewoman friend of Manora, Caron, standing together as they had watched Manora's funeral pyre burn into the night's darkness. Even that Caron knew she must leave the Healer's Island soon to return to her own village, Dori would ask her to stay at least a moon to help ease Llyria's as well as everyone's sorrow. Caron had known Manora better than anyone else there and Dori hoped she might be even brought around to speaking about the talented Healer. Only the Elder Healer, Wyndel, had caused more grief in the Island's hearts at his passage a couple years before, his gentle wisdom a mainstay of every student's life. Of course, Caron had her own pain, so Dori hoped she would also find it advantageous to stay a little while because of that as well.

Now Dori would go to the Librarian to sit a while and discuss some things that Dori still had to learn. Someday, Dori would be the Librarian herself as the woman in that place at that time intended to retire as soon as she and the other elders felt Dori ready. It was a position that took several years to attain. No longer did Dori need the shielding of other Healers to call the Flame inside herself, or at least a certain amount of It. It was still more comfortable to have others there when her work was intense.

However, even when she called up the Four Doors, she often did it without help. She was teaching other selected Healers of the Flame, guiding their own slow and careful entry into Its more profound Mysteries.

Walking to the Librarian's dwelling, a strong, sharp image of Manora abruptly sprung into Dori's mind. Delight lit the image's eyes and the words 'Eastern Doorway' echoed into Dori's mind. Saying nothing of this to the Librarian, Dori thought on it, trying to decide when and what she ought do. She realized she was seeming distracted to her Mentor, yet even as she apologized, she gave no indication as to the cause of that preoccupation.

When she went home that evening, her Bardic husband had a quick, simple dinner for she was fairly late and he was not one to wait on her. Helping him was Llyria who set aside what she did a moment to hug her mother as she entered. Tamlynn smiled wanly, "A long day, Love?"

Nodding quietly, Dori went with Llyria still at her side to kiss Tamlynn's cheek. His look indicated that he garnered her thoughts were busy as he squeezed her hand firmly. "I'm alright." She said at last. "But, I may go to the Cavern this night."

"By yourself?" She nodded and he cocked his head, "Areyou sure?"

"I'm sure..." She could feel Llyria clinging to her, "Little one..." she smiled, "it's fine...don't worry." The nine year old was growing quickly. Soon she would be within grasp of Dori's height, causing Dori to close her eyes and shake her head, "You grow too fast... I must put a stop on that." This made Llyria relax and giggle a little, "But, first I'd like to eat."

Tamlynn helped her to the small round table on the floor where things had been set, a few scant rugs and pillows scattered about so they might eat comfortably. Most of the food was raw vegetables that Dori especially preferred, though Tamlynn had cooked a little cut up meat in a broth that he was especially fond of.

They ate rather quietly that evening in a sort of undisturbed communion. Afterwards, Dori merely got herself ready as Tamlynn helped her and Llyria cleared the table up. He didn't fear for her, although he did sense a certain tension in this decision. "Is there not something that I could do?" He asked before she actually left.

"No, It's quite all right. I'll be back at breakfast."

"I don't like sleeping alone." He half teased.

"Um, I guess we'll just have to make up for that later."

"Oh?" His eyes brightened, "Is that a promise?"

Llyria pushed in to hug her mother again, her silvery hair catching all about them. Dori placed a hand on her head. "Mama will be back soon, Sweet. You and Papa get some rest, now." Kissing Tamlynn roundly, she turned out into the night, a pack of blanket, pillow and some drinking water slung across her back.

As she sat in the Cavern in the place set aside for her, she spent a long while envisioning protection and shielding before she even began to call the Flame up to herself. As she proceeded to the Flame and then to the Core Circle where the Four Doors would stand, each step was done with close, intense thought and precision.

Each visualization took time and fixed strength, lessons firmly taught to those chosen to take their learning from her. Someday she hoped Llyria would also be numbered with those she taught as it was now distinguished that Llyria would be a Healer as well as Bard.

Finally standing in the Circle's midst, the Four Doors erected as the Flame filled the whole of the sphere, Dori paused to consider what must come next. The only ventures she had made was with the Western Door, the Door of the Elves where Gwyniffar had helped her pursue that Realm. She still could not step full into It, but had learned much of its dealings, which delighted Tamlynn to no end. Having dwelt there once, for Tamlynn, it helped bring a sense of completeness. He had even come into the Circle on occasion and was actually quite valuable in helping Dori become familiar with the Realm of Light. However, he was not allowed to even look beyond the Western Door as it was grasped that for the rest of his life, it would mean Death, no matter how much he was tempted.

Dori looked at the Western Door a long while deciding if she ought rap on it three times to signal her presence to the Lady there. Deciding to turn round and face the Eastern Door, she gradually stepped up to It instead, and was about to rap on It when Gwyniffar appeared at her side, "No, my friend... Soon shall come time to begin the other Doors... but not yet... Not yet."

"Lady!" Dori burst, startled and a bit shaken. "Oh... I'm sorry..." She said nearly breathless. "But... You see, Manora indicated to me the Eastern Door."

"Manora?" Asked the Elven woman, her flaming strewn about like sparks rustling through the Winds. "Is she not one with the Flame, now?"

"Do you not know?"

"I do not understand all human Mysteries, Bright Star. Though, the Eastern Door 'is' the Healer's Door... I would suggest, however... If you wish to call her from that Realm... that you do so from here. And with me at your side."

"Thank-you." Remarked Dori, "Thank-you for your honesty and for your help." Gwyniffar gave a wan smile, "I'm just glad I caught you in time."

Giving a sheepish grin, Dori turned to face the Eastern Door again, whispering lightly, "Manora, I am here. I can go no further. It is you that must make your way from there."

Gwyniffar rested her hands upon Dori's shoulders as if to gently brace her. The Eastern Door slowly gathered a golden glow as they stood until the light was nearly blinding. At this, a shadow stepped through as the light receded a little. The form of Manora stood in front of the other women, a great batch of red roses in her arms, as she smiled kindly. Handing two to Dori she said simply, "These are for Llyria and Caron... I am a Guide now... I am one of their Guides. I am at their sides... tell them, please... do not be so sad." As Dori took the roses, Manora left to return through the Door. A tear glinted Dori's cheek, but it was not from sadness.

Awakening in the Cavern as Dawn began to sprinkle through its colored lights, Dori was pleased to find her hands still grasping the beautiful flowers. She left her blanket and pillow there as she felt it best to contact Caron and Llyria as soon as possible. Great joy was greeted for both as Dori explained what had been and said to her. Caron was also elated to stay on a month or so, sending out a Runner to inform her village as such. Smelling of the flowers, Caron and Llyria looked at each other in surprise, "It smells like Manora!" They both said together as a wave of wonderful energy swept through them and a wash of releasing tears burst in their eyes.