

Talibah, the Egyptian

Chapter 4

In the Between

The shift of the energies, with their vibrancies moving all around her, tended to cause some dizziness as Talibah tried her best to keep up with Jared as he moved to and fro from here to there. "Focus on me, Talbah... Just me. Forget the other... Watch, watch."

This was not her favorite sort of training, but she did her best. It was as if he moved through curious rooms and tunnels and where had that wall suddenly appeared from? She felt startled and trapped. "Jared?... I can't see... Can't see you."

"Close your eyes... Forget 'what' you see... 'Feel' what you see."

"Feel?" She whispered, then closed her eyes. "Feel...okay, sure." She tried to reach out, but wasn't certain what she was reaching for.

"Hey!" Talibah, startled and opened her eyes to find herself looking directly into Jared's almost unblinking ones. She had to admit that his eyes were strikingly beautiful, but their piercing quality still tended to throw her. "Couldn't tell I was here? Hmmm..." He touched her face lightly, "Let's go back to our sacred space." He said quietly, "Here, take my hand. As we walk, try to sense my energy."

Jared deliberately walked at a slow pace as the images moved about them. Sometimes ripples of crisp feelings moved through Talibah and though breath was not a reality in the 'Between', she found herself catching it, gasping at the intensity. "My God, how do you do that?"

"What, do what?" He faced her and frowned.

"How do you find your way so easily? Through this? Without a Guide..." Her dark brown eyes were wide and flustered.

"I see... sense, you know... Lines... Power... From one point to the next... You get nothing?" He seemed perplexed. "No?... Hmmm... Doing my best... Let's be back, then." With that they seemed immediately back in an enclosure and Talibah felt she was near her physical body once more. Quietly Jared bade her sit facing him cross-legged on the ground, watching her intently. He took both her hands, "Now close your eyes again a moment." She did and she could feel his hands tighten over hers. "Reach out, through my hands... Don't you get a 'ring'?"

"Ring?" she queried, yet began to try as he asked. After a moment or so she thought to give up, then very slightly began to feel a gentle hum that seemed as if it did, indeed, emanate from out his hands. After a little more time, she felt as if she could sense slight colors as well like light greens and yellows of intertwining bands that somehow followed on the scent of wild flowers she already associated with him well enough. But when she opened her eyes again, it all disappeared. "Hu... Can't put the two together..."

"What?" He looked at her blankly.

"Sight and feel... Can't put them together." She said rather frustrated.

"Don't... Not yet... No hurry... Never any hurry... Now."

He looked strongly in her eyes. Was there any way to really get him to stop that? It was too much like he could see all the way through her yet she could not see beyond the too large pupils. Something almost animal-like about it. "Please don't do that..." She almost hissed.

"Do what?" He blinked, rather taken aback.

"Do you have to stare so hard?"

"Stare?" With that he did look away a moment seeming to try to understand, thinking, but then returned to the usual eye contact that was almost like a fixation to Talibah.

"Never mind." Talibah sighed, "Maybe... watch my eyes... or, how I 'handle' them... Maybe you'll get it at some point..." She tried to smile gingerly as in a truce.

He said nothing, just continued to stare a moment, then nodded slightly, "I'll try... but, now... Let's go back... to how we do that energy flow – life flow between us... You push/direct your energy or 'life force' through me as I pull it in, and I push mine through you as you pull it in... and both our energies start to be circling through each other... Do it as if you have breath... Breath... Make it audible... Need to 'hear' it... Need to 'feel' it ... Makes it easier. I'll do the same.... But... pay attention, Talibah... This is not like before... This is 'my energy' ... 'your energy' we are sending to each other, sending through each other. Mine through you, you through me... in a circle like the sun." He indicated the sun wise direction with his hand. "Does that make sense?"

"Not sure..."

"Okay... Before... We took energy – Life force – from around us... right? Outside us. And ran it back and forth... through each other..." He nodded his head looking for her assent.

"God energy, Divine energy..." She nodded back still frowning slightly.

"Earth energy... the Life force... the 'Life' all around us... Yes?"

"Yes... yes, I remember... the shimmering rainbow silver stuff... It was beautiful... Made me feel very peaceful." Talibah smiled wishing they could do that again.

"Well... not quite like... but similar, eh?... But, just us, this time... Our energy, our 'life force'." Jared's face was fixed and definite.

"Why, exactly?"

"Why?... Goodness!..." Jared looked a little exasperated, "So you can tell it's me out there! Not 'trying' to lose you. Don't want..." His outburst had startled Talibah and noticing this, Jared tried to soften his look though he remained determined, smiling slightly into her face. "Wouldn't want to lose you out there." He said much softer. "Not good... Maerdynn would get upset... Me, too." Seeing she gave a more consenting look he went back to the task at hand, "So now... shall we try this?"

She nodded tentatively as they both settled and closed their eyes that they might concentrate. Talibah listened to the breath he made, then doing as he asked by synchronizing her 'breath' to go out as his was indrawn. As that became more instinctive, she began to sense the same bands of greens and yellows she had gotten of him before in a pervasive hum move through her as she drew her breath in. Finally she could sense the hum that came from her in blues and white bands going through him. 'How strange.' She thought as she began to feel her whole being begin to hum and knew their energies were

actually beginning to mix as opposed to simply flowing through. It went around and around until she realized that it was also 'centering' between them like some focused force.

The crystal of her spine began to tingle, as strange emotions seemed to fill her chest. She started crying and Jared whispered, "Hold on... hold on... slow your breath... let it wind down... gently, gently... Shh, shh... Let it move down into the ground... Quiet, quiet..." Very carefully he let her hands go letting their energies release from one another as softly as he knew how. Her sobs had quieted quite a bit as he released her. "You alright?" He touched her brow gently.

She blew out a breath, "I'm trying."

"You're very strong... I didn't really expect that... Perhaps next time we could 'charge' something... Might even make it a lot easier for you."

"Charge something."

Shrugging, Jared quipped, "Help the Earth... Feed Her."

"Feed Her?"

"Of course... Direct it 'into' something... Bury it, maybe... or keep adding until it was full... Course we fed the Earth some then... But, we could make it stronger that way... Or... we could put it 'in' something that you could keep... Would help you, I think."

"Not sure I'm following." Talibah's thoughts were still confused about what had just happened.

"Done now." Jared's attention sometimes turned so fast it could make Talibah gasp. "Let's go have fun."

"Fun?"

"Sure... You can 'tell' my energy now, can't you?"

"Well... maybe... yes."

Jared stood, carefully helping her to stand as well. "Well, let's go try... It'll be fun, I promise." He took her hand, though, as they left again, as if he, too, wasn't totally certain of her awareness yet. Or, perhaps, as she suddenly realized, he might simply now wish the contact. What they had just done was causing curious ripples throughout her being.

After a time they seemed to be standing on a great sandy beach like white twinkling stars beneath their feet. Looking out was a great ocean of water that churned in beautiful colors of blues, greens and vibrant grays. A knot of both fear and excitement filled Talibah's chest as she gazed upon it. Sprays of water touched them, cold and invigorating and terribly exciting as well. "We mixed our energies, our life forces... I feel disorientated... why did we do that?"

"But, that's what is done, Talibah." Jared seemed surprised. "We must work together as partners here... It's important... You said 'yes'... Are you thinking 'no' now?" Jared's eyes suddenly flashed a look in them that told Talibah that he was a bit hurt and the earlier thought of his eyes being almost animal-like melted totally away. She could read him now and it both surprised and pleased her, though she hated that she might have hurt him.

"I'm sorry, Jared... that's not what I meant... I definitely wish to work with you... things just... Confuse me some... I'm getting many feelings that I don't exactly know how to respond to... Or where to go with them..." she found herself watching his

eyes now, fascinated that she 'could' tell more of what he was feeling in them, yet this time he strangely looked away from her out at the water rather than returning his gaze. "Jared... are you angry?"

He shook his head 'no' as he continued to look out over the water, "It's Her, you see... The Sea... The great Dreaming of the Mother." She looked back out at the water, too, knowing he also felt the fear as well as the excitement as they gazed, both drawn and repelled at once. What seemed out of nowhere Jared said, "Let's jump in!"

"What!" Exclaimed Talibah too late as Jared tightened his grip on her hand as he began to run with her. Then he jumped straight up pulling her with him as they seemed to fly in the air for several moments over the water watching it churn and curl beneath them. "And this is fun?!" She finally was able to yell at Jared.

"Yeah... of course!... Let go, Talibah... Let the fear go... It's wonderful!" He laughed as they finally hit the water and Talibah letting out a cry clutching Jared's hand as hard as she could hold. She closed her eyes tight as they entered, feeling the tug of what she supposed was water all about them. After a moment she felt Jared shake her shoulders, "Talibah... Open your eyes. Don't worry... No need to breath... Remember? Look around."

Knowing he was right about it, Talibah finally opened her eyes and looked about. Images floated all about her like dancing fluid lights of curious colors. Waves of smoky emotions passed around them and she got the impression of being closely watched. Yet, as Jared promised, she started to realize that this was fun, fun and different as they floated and looked about. Streams of sparkles circled them as if to dance and Jared played his hands through them. He had let go of Talibah's hand at that point, though he kept a close eye and Talibah began to truly gaze about in wonder. "This is crazy!" she laughed as what appeared to be pretty transparent fish swam about her as if she, too, fascinated them. Then something caught both Jared and Talibah's eyes causing them to smile at each other as they swam over to it. It was a great crystal of rose and rainbow glints pulsing slowly as fish and sea drifted by. Fascinated, they both swam up to it and compulsively touched its brightness. "How beautiful!" Talibah murmured feeling a warm rush of sensation pass through her, startling her a bit. She looked over at Jared to see that he seemed to be reacting the same way.

"Maybe we better leave." Remarked Jared. "Beautiful things are not always something one expects." With that, Jared went over and took Talibah's hand again to proceed back out of the water and on to the beach. Yet, as they returned and settled themselves upon the sand, a strange stream of rose and gold followed from out of the depths of the churning waters as well. Talibah and Jared stood and stared as it came to stand in front of them forming into a tower of shimmering, churning light.

Not certain whether to be afraid or not, Talibah watched motionless as the tower began to hover over them beginning to give a menacing feel that ran like a shiver down her spine. "Now what?" She whisked breathlessly to Jared beside her.

"I think this is one of those times where... we run!" he said grabbing at her tightly and dashing off pulling her behind him.

The images shifted and strained about them like a whirl of dazzling lights that frightened Talbah as much as what pursued them. "Jared! I can't keep going like this! I'm terrified!"

Jared stopped a moment and looked at her frightened face, then pointed in the distance. "Can you see that, then?"

She followed where he pointed and for a moment saw nothing. Then suddenly a shimmer appeared ending at a great golden globe of energy that slowly pulsed in a warmly friendly fashion to her senses. "Yes, yes! I see it this time! I get it!"

"Fix on it, then.... With your feelings... Feel it... Both of us... Let it draw us to it... Now!" With that, Talibah felt a rush like wind and a loud snap like the crack of a whip stunning her senses a moment. Blinking from it, she found that both she and Jared were within the globe of gold just as the pursuing energy crashed upon it like a great wave from the sea in rainbow colors. However, the foreign energy did not dissipate, clinging instead about the globe itself, like leeches all over it. It looked like sparkling dust glinting in variant colors and would have seemed rather pretty if it weren't for the sensations it was extending at them.

"Now what?" asked Talibah, "We're rather caught in here, aren't we?"

"Yep..." Said Jared in an almost nonchalant manner as they stood looking about at the perimeter of the globe, "Going to have to do something... Maerdynn sure wouldn't like this hanging on his doorstep for very long... er, Taliesin."

"Maerdynn..." She looked back at him and shrugged, "I guess I got his 'approval'..." Jared nodded and went over to sit in the center crossing his legs like they had before. "Sooo... Do we have any plans?... Do you think Maerdynn knows?"

"Probably... Sit... Sit with me... like before... We 'must' resolve this... I doubt Maerdynn will intervene unless we just... well, can't fail... Not going to... Just sit, okay?" She softly came over and sat to face him. At least for the moment they were safe so she allowed her nerves to settle as she watched his face and eyes and though he still had his almost steady stare, she found that it no longer unnerved her quite so much. And though his features were somehow 'off' in a human sense, (his eyes were a little too long and almost slanted, the nose flared a little too deeply and the whole body seemed a bit more lithe than any human would be) he was still very pleasant to look at and she found herself becoming very comfortable in his presence. "You alright now?" He asked as he felt her settling and relaxing. When she nodded he indicated the space between them, "See the crystal?" And though it had been empty space the moment before, now a fair sized crystal with a smoky hue lay between them. "We need to draw the foreign energy out there through a small opening at the top of our sacred space down into the crystal where it will be trapped. We will 'know' it is finished when all the smoke in the crystal is clear."

"And how do we do that?"

"Basically... What we did before... Only... this time when we feel our energies mixing we'll place our hands on the crystal as we draw the foreign energy in from the opening, down into the crystal." Jared saw panic building in Talibah's eyes. "It's okay... we're safe... I'll direct it... Just follow my lead... and... trust me."

Talibah drew a long, low breath, "And how do you 'know' this will work? Have you done this before?"

Jared cast his eyes down a bit, "Well... no... not exactly..." then he looked back up at her with a firm cast in his face, "But, I 'know' the principal, Talibah... It 'will' work..." He reached out his hands to her for her to take that for a moment she just looked at.

Sighing once more, though a bit more resigned, she finally grasped his hands, “I guess we have to try ‘something’. It’s not going to just go away, is it?”

“No... no, it’s not.” Calming into it and closing his eyes, Jared whispered before they started, “Settle into it, Talibah. Don’t rush... No need to rush. Remember... we’re the ones in the ‘safe’ place. We can take our time. It’s actually quite vulnerable out there, believe it or no... Sooo...” Jared quit speaking and began a conscious sound of a low breath that Talibah began to mirror. She briefly wondered if her physical body might not be responding as she could almost feel a breath actually moving through her as she circled her energy, feeling it begin to mix with Jared’s. It mixed easily this time, and far more gently than it had at first. Letting Jared ‘lead’ what was happening, she suddenly sensed a small glint of energy coming from above them. What surprised Talibah was realizing that this energy began to pass through them. But before it could really attach into them, Jared whispered, “Put your hands on the crystal now... We’re drawing it in, but we need to pull it down into the crystal.” They put their hands on the crystal then, Jared making certain their fingers touched to continue their own contact with each other as they did so. It seemed a long while that Talibah felt immersed in their mutual activity, and though she understood the seriousness of their efforts, she found herself also enjoying it. What had almost panicked her the first time, she now found deeply soothing. So much so, that when Jared finally took a look to make certain that the smoky cast of the crystal was gone and began to disengage with her, she really didn’t wish to do so.

However, when they had finally finished and did indeed disengage, each sitting back to quietly return and open their eyes, Talibah was surprised to see Jared’s eyes welling some. “What’s wrong?” asked Talibah rather taken aback.

For a moment Jared could only look at her, sad and almost accusing. Then, in what seemed a rather surprising gesture, he looked away as one tear tried to escape. “You’re leaving.” He said so quietly Talibah wasn’t certain she had heard it.

“Leaving... Did you say leaving?”

He nodded, still not looking towards her, “Away from here... From me.”

“I don’t understand...”

“I feel what you feel... I know what you know.” He said with a tint of bitterness.

“Do you mean Wynseren?... Maerdynn... Maerdynn says he wishes to take me to the Council Seat soon... Is that what you mean?”

“‘I’ can’t go...” Jared withdrew from his seated position away from her and the crystal to stand and stare into space. “Can’t go.”

Talibah, confused by his exclamation, also got up and went over by him, “Can’t go?... What do you mean, ‘can’t go?’... Why not?” Jared turned away a bit more, “Jared... please, I don’t understand... ‘why’ can’t you go?... You’re my ‘working partner’... You ‘have’ to come with me... don’t you?”

“I...” Jared seemed a bit frustrated, as if he didn’t know exactly how to explain himself, “This is my home... this place... this area... I ‘can’t’ go.”

Talibah thought for awhile until it finally struck her, “You mean your energy... your ‘life’... you’re ‘part of’ this area, this land here... Somehow, you can’t leave it...?”

“Can’t go...” he said again, this time tears tracing his face. “Not without permission from the Ladies. Not without taking away energy and replacing it. Too hard... Too much diplomacy... Everywhere... permission.”

“Jared.” She whispered gently and hugged him “I ‘know’ Maerdyonn could not have meant for this... He wants us to work together... I ‘know’ he does... Let me talk to him... Please... I ‘know’ something will get figured out... Please... Jared.”

After a moment he hugged her back, though he was still a bit shaky. He nodded to her a bit, “I hope so... our energies have mixed now... It would hurt, hurt bad... more than I can do... I thought I’d been a good guide... I thought this was...” he gulped the words down and couldn’t say anymore.

“Shhh, it’ll be alright... Quiet now...” she touched his face, a little uncertain just what she was feeling or even what she ought to feel. When she saw in his eyes that he was getting more settled again she asked, “What do we do with the crystal now?”

Pulling away from her and wiping his eyes off, Jared quietly remarked, “I’ll take it to Cordelia. She will know.”

“Is it safe now?”

“Safe?... Yes... safe enough... We did good... We do good... together.” A timid smile drew across his face.

“Maerdyonn will find a way, Jared. I just ‘know’ he will.” With her last words Talibah felt herself drawing back into her sleeping form into the Realm of the Wheel, yet for a long while she could sense Jared’s presence before finally opening her eyes to get up.

It had been a wonderful autumn day and the Court of the Ricon Gwydion was finally something of grace and beauty. The largest Greathouse ever erected in the land of the Cymric People, it all sat on a immense hill, the same hill that had been the site of Lord Sean’s Great House and Court, the Court where Taliesin had once been its Chief Bard many years before in the Northern area of Powys. Lord Sean had been made Gwydion’s Chancellor and construction begun to greatly enlarge the area with buildings to house much more people, animals and equipment. A large stone wall had also been built around it when finished, with outfitted guards at strategic points to watch over the countryside. Beautiful, but also foreboding and a constant reminder of how unsettled the countryside had become.

A backdrop of mountains stood in the distance behind the home of the Ricon like another barrier to any opposition. It was within that range that the main Seat of the Bardic Council was set up. A place that had also seen much construction over the years to make it more habitable in the network of caverns and tunnels that had been found. Though in some ways it had brought all the levels of power and strength of Cymru in one main area in its more Northern reaches, not all of the Bardic Council tended to center there and there were two other large centers of command in the Middle and South that both reported to Gwydion and that he traveled to on regular rounds sure of their loyalty and support. It was with these locations that two other centers of the Bardic Council also resided. It had become a time of Great Lords and Ladies who were more solidified in cause, who had sworn fealty to their Ricon and had cast out any in Cymru that opposed this over the last several years.

The trees were dressed in their many colored leaves as Taliesin and Jenna walked about along the stone buildings where they had a pretty view of the countryside below the

hill dotted with cattle and a couple small villages in the distance. Jenna had been made Chief Bard of Gwydion's Court and though it had taken some time to put all into order, instead of one Second, she had three Bards of Chief Bard status under her who had Seconds of their own so that in time Jenna tended to be referred as the Senior Chief Bard and with all that responsibility she was very thankful Wynseren was only a day's ride away. This meant that Taliesin could stay a great deal of the time and she could go to visit him when need kept him at the Seat for more extended periods. It was only under extreme circumstances that Taliesin might go to the other Seats, usually choosing his Chief Advisor, Gwen, to do so in his stead. Jenna would that they could be together all the time but that was not what their lives were about and at least they both had the comfort of a love that had sustained them over many difficulties and crisis throughout the years. A love neither had ever thought would be a part of their lives.

Though the country battled with the Britons to their East and the reality of warfare had become a true factor in day-to-day life, there were times when things were not so unstable and it was hoped some agreement, some truce might be settled on. Sometimes things seemed better than others and in that fall some hope actually lit the hearts of all in Gwydion's Company. Yet, the past had now also taught them that they no longer would be the simple Country they had once known. They must remain solid, they must remain united, they must look to a central authority, hoping it would always remain to the good.

"You look pleased today, my Lord." Spoke Jenna easily, taking Taliesin by the arm and hugging lightly. She was a good bit shorter than he, yet it was rarely thought about as she carried herself with such great stature. She enjoyed wearing the full garb of a robed Chief Bard and though a gentle soul, was able to wield her power to great effect. Though Taliesin was Head of the Bardic Council, together they seemed more as equals than anything else.

"Jenna... You do look wonderful today... Things must be going fairly well with you?"

"Well... you know... Jesse will now be a full apprentice to Kaerri to become a Healer and I know Llew has been doing well with the studies the Chief Musician has set for him... You should be very proud of both your younger children, I should think... And, of course, you are here for a while..." she smiled, the curls of her dark hair framing her face and great brown eyes with only a gray strand here and there to give any indication of age. She held her age well, though Taliesin never noticed for he was proud of her and would always see her as young and lovely.

"New moon this evening," he remarked as they paused before their walk would find them entering the building that housed their apartments. "I would ask that you come with me this evening. There is something we need to do..." He said a bit cryptically.

She looked up at him quizzically, "And that 'something' is not something you will tell me now, Maerdydd?"

He smiled again at her and raised a brow. "Tonight... you shall see tonight." He hugged her to him as he gazed out over the landscape, her head tucked beneath his chin.

"Maerdydd?" said Talibah softly into Taliesin's ear having heard a restlessness and his voice muttering. She had stewed up some oats and rye to make a mush for

breakfast beginning to wonder why he hadn't gotten up yet. "Maerdynn? I have some breakfast... Are you alright?"

"What? What?" He spoke, finally beginning to come to consciousness. Talibah peeked around the corner as Taliesin blinked his eyes sleepily, shaking himself out a bit. "Oh... Talibah... Breakfast did you say?"

"You slept late..." she remarked as she slipped a little more into the area. "And you sounded troubled... You're not ill, are you?"

"No, no..." He sat up among the covers and stretched, "Dreaming... Remembering, really..." smiling, he began to dismiss her, "I'll be out in a moment."

She began to leave, then turned back as she remembered something, "Maerdynn...?"

"Yes?"

"When we go to Wynseren... Why can't Jared go?"

"Why can't Jared go?" Maerdynn frowned.

"He said he can't go... His energy, his life force... It must stay here."

Realizing, Maerdynn's eyes widened, "Oh dear... He's an Elf of Place..." he sighed, "Oh, no... foolish me... I wasn't thinking... We'll have to do something about that."

"He was quite upset... He says it's a bit of a problem." She said watching Taliesin's face.

"He's right..." Taliesin thought a moment, "But, we'll fix it... whatever it takes... he needs to be able to go, appear, wherever you go, wherever you are." He looked straight into Talibah's eyes, "I'm sorry... I truly am... But, I promise... By the time we go, something will get worked out... And not just to the Seat... You need to be able to connect with each other wherever you are... From what I understand, you do very well together. I don't want to sever that... do you?"

Not sure why, Talibah blushed a little, "We're trying to do well... He's... curious."

Taliesin smiled, more to himself than to Talibah, "Yes... Elves are curious creatures."

"Why... why does Jared look 'not quite' human... but 'you' look very human?" remarked Talibah suddenly as she toyed with the rocky wall behind her back in a shy manner.

"I do?" He quipped a bit merrily, "Well... really... when you see each other, you are in the 'Between'. You are seeing a projection in a sense... You are quite real, but you are more 'just energy' in that state, you see. So what the other person 'sees' is how you see yourself. If he were to come into this Realm he would look, well, 'human'... Or one 'could' say humans look a lot like Elves. High Elves, anyway... There's great variety in the Eldritch, as I'm sure you've noticed... But, come to think of it... there's quite a great variety in humans... who's to say why, eh?"

"So, then... I look..."

"As you project, yes."

"I saw myself in a 'mirror' there once... I 'thought' I looked as I do here." Her brow furrowed tightly as Taliesin smiled widely watching her face and thoughts.

"Jared probably thinks you look a lot like his folk, but not quite... Perhaps he has asked the same question of Cordelia..." He chuckled lightly.

“You know... Why can I understand him...? I mean... language?”

Taliesin stretched and yawned wide, “Sorry. Still trying to wake up... Language is not a barrier in the ‘Between’. He thinks you are speaking his language; you think he is speaking yours... Your minds operate in a similar enough manner... There are beings where it would become far more problematic...” Then he looked up to her, “Something about breakfast, you say?”

“Oh, yes!” She suddenly remembered and quickly left the room, leaving Taliesin chuckling as he finally truly began to get up.