

TALIBAH, THE EGYPTIAN

Chapter 9

Messages

The stone walls of the Greathouse of Gwydion stood firm over the landscape as a tall woman with long dark auburn hair displaying only a wisp or two of gray, gazed with deep green eyes along the gray stones in meditative study. She stood by a window that lit the room in the apartments she stayed in with a fine sheen of mellow light. Dawn was filtering through the skies; the soft oranges and reds seemed to blend into the colors of the large, open room. Her apartments were generous for they befitted her status as sister to the Ricon and a great priestess to her people. Though not a Bard, Healer or Wisewoman, she, too, served the Goddess in some long held tradition of the area she had grown up in. She had been well trained by others before her and held the wisdom of that training in carefully skilled hands.

Her apartments were alive with masks and polished copper mirrors, rugs and pillows with low tables and no chairs. Everything seemed to be created in earth tones, some muted, some bold; but all distinctly part of the Earth and Her richness. Incense quietly burned, herbs that also conveyed a moist, fertile fragrance of the forest and the wild. Allowing no Court servant to attend her, one of her better students kept the apartments and stayed with her in her room. A young woman of thirteen summers, the student was thrilled to have been chosen to go with her Mentor to stay at Gwydion's Greathouse for a season or so. Having two large bedrooms and a small inner sitting room as was per usual for anyone of estate unless need dictated more; the other bedroom was taken by the best student of this venerable Priestess, a young man of around fifteen who also helped keep the rooms and attend his Mentor. She had brought both students purposely to her brother's house that year, traveling from her home on the West coast off the Sea in Gwenydd. She had felt it time for both to experience other people, other Courts, but especially the boy. He had been specially trained and she seemed to wish a certain acknowledgement for his training.

"Arionrhod." She heard her name noiselessly spoken in the still morning light like the glitter of a near hidden flame. The young man had stepped carefully from his room, blinking in the light in the first throes of wakefulness. Dark hair dispersed itself about his face in semi-tangle, his light brown eyes still blinking in a pleasant face as his body sought a certain control in a still fairly gangly form. He wore earth-toned clothes, as did his Teacher, almost blending into the room about them as he approached.

"Madrod." She answered, "You are up early... perhaps you would join me in a morning chant and meditation."

"Teacher..." He said, watching her carefully, "I have had strange dreams... I dreamt a man was coming; strong and dark and purposeful...and he knew my name... And, yet, did not... That somehow I ought know him... But, I do not."

Frowning at his words, Arionrhod looked into his face, looking for some sign of his dream's meaning in his countenance, but remaining unsure. Coming into the main

room away from the window, Arionrhod bade they both sit on some of the pillows, the illumination in the room slowly beginning to brighten in a warm, soft glow like a lover's tender, yet fervent touch as they both placed themselves comfortably around one of the circular tables carved with oak leaves all about it, a small thurble burning incense in its center. Facing each other on the pillows, the table small enough to reach across, Arionrhod took both Madrod's hands in her own, "Close your eyes." she said lowly, deeply, "Open your thoughts... Perhaps there is an answer there."

Doing as she asked, Madrod slowed his breathing, drifting into a mild trance almost immediately. Doing the same, Arionrhod gingerly reached out her mind to him, opening and letting him open to her. All she could get were quick, faded images; images of his dreaming and uncertainty.

A knock rapped on the doors to the apartments, breaking their momentary trance, though both came out easily and cleanly. Getting up, Arionrhod bid Madrod remain seated for the time being. "Continue to meditate, Madrod... Perhaps we may know the answer yet."

A young woman's face appeared from Arionrhod's room as Arionrhod crossed to go the door. "Teacher." The girl said quietly, sleep still framing her large gray eyes and ruffled blondish hair, all willow with yet to learn grace, like some pixie caught outside its natural habitat.

"Enid, it's alright...why don't you put some clothes on and get us all something to eat? Then we'll all study awhile with the Healers about some herbs in the area." Arionrhod said, low and deferentially to Madrod, who continued his trance. Answering the door, Arionrhod was surprised to see her brother, Gwydion. "My Lord... you do not send for me?" Looking back at Madrod and letting her brother see the boy in trance, Arionrhod indicated it might be best that she step outside. Coming without and carefully closing the door again, she faced her brother once more, a bit disturbed he would decide to be there himself.

"My Lady." He said, his fawn colored hair catching about his open, generous face that could close like steel when faced with battle. He was a well-built, sturdy man; a warrior, a chieftain, a fitting Ricon for the people of Cymru; and Arionrhod was rightfully proud of her younger sibling. His gray, hazel eyes studied her in keen respect; they understood each other well. "This information is for few ears... I have come quietly before too much is astir, before others are aware of my movements; though I suspect all shall know in a day or two." He said in hushed tones as he watched the hall they stood in, listening.

"Know?" Queried Arionrhod quietly, imitating her brother's manner, "Know what, my brother?"

Just then the door of Arionrhod's apartments opened again and the sleepy face of Enid entered their vision. "Oh!" she startled, looking at Gwydion, shy and a little frightened.

"Shhh." Said Arionrhod raising a finger to her lips and bidding her student come out quietly and shut the door. "Go on, Enid... find us something to eat, but do not hurry... Let life awaken around you a little before you return."

"Yes, Teacher." She replied, a little puzzled, though she knew it was not her place now to question. She left them without another word, the stone walls gathering about her as she walked away, then turning from view as the hall's passage turned.

Looking once again at his sister, studying her face for reaction he finally said, “It’s Taliesin... the Senior Chief Bard, Elen. She spoke with me last night in private counsel... Taliesin is returning to Wynseren.”

“Taliesin?” A wash went through her as if her blood might be being swept away. “Now? My Goddess, now? Why now?”

Surprised that she sister seemed so taken aback, Gwydion asked, “does this not please you, sister? I thought you felt well disposed to this man. He is our ally, after all.”

“It’s his timing.” She said, suddenly a bit breathless. “Seven years... seven years and we don’t even know if he’s alive or dead but for what his Chief Advisor claims. And ‘now’ he reappears... I am not ready for him to appear. Not now.”

“But, why?” frowned Gwydion.

Recomposing herself carefully, calming her face as best she could she looked up at him. “Never mind, brother. It does not concern you, nor should be a disturbance to you... In fact, you ought go to Wynseren yourself. It would be a wise thing to do.”

“Yes, I had planned to... Elen sends her Chief, Dylan, and I shall ride with him when he goes.”

Nodding and tentatively smiling for her sibling, Arionrhod also began to turn away. “Send my well wishes to Taliesin, will you? Tell him, I will come to see him when I can.” With that, Arionrhod went softly back into her apartments leaving Gwydion in puzzled thought as he stood a moment more in the hall.

The area seemed alit with subtle, oscillating colors that merged into each other, then out again. A slow beat of earthy sounds rumbled low and pleasing as Talibah found her bearings in the Realm that always felt both like a giant void, and yet filled to its brim in curious imagery and impression. She could still smell the sweetness of the grass about her sleeping form, the smoke of diminishing embers and the sweated scent of human bodies exhausted from their nights’ activities. It had been a most amazing dance, that dance to stimulate and feed the Earth; and Talibah thought on it a little while as she awaited Jared’s presence. Yet, first she called her Dragon, feeling the splendid energy like fire from her spine, awakening itself and rushing through her in a roar of golden lights that encircled her.

Once the Dragon was well established and firm in its great cocoon about her, she was not surprised to see Jared standing by her. “I waited.” He said. “Best to wait for Dragon.” He smiled and hugged her, not waiting for her indications. Yet, she hugged back warmly, feeling a comfort in his presence she could not explain. Jared stepped back and looked at her a moment as if in appraisal. “Have you been well?... Been busy?... Miss you.”

She smiled, “Yes, very busy... they danced the power last night. Where the lines of energy meet.” She said, happily remembering.

“Ohhh...” Jared’s eyes widened in his smile, “Danced on the bones of the Great Dragon.”

“Great Dragon?” She queried.

He nodded as he indicated the ground beneath his feet, “The Mother, the Earth, the Great Dragon... Your Dragon is Her daughter. Like you are.”

Talibah drew a warmth across her face, “How beautiful... what beautiful imagery that evokes.”

Frowning a little, Jared remarked. “Imagery? It’s real.”

Taking both his hands in a gingerly tender gesture, Talibah replied, “I know... Should we ride her, do you think? Ride my Dragon?” Jared looked at her questioningly, rather confused by her words and her gestures; wanting to believe they might mean one thing, fearing that they did not. As he continued to look very perplexed, Talibah finally said, “Can we not become one with my Dragon? With her energy. Ride within her?”

Feeling fairly thrilled and yet a bit deflated, Jared replied very low and breathless, “Maybe.”

“Shall we try?” she watched his eyes noting his display of nervousness as he bit his lip and actually avoided her gaze a little. “Does the idea frighten you?” she finally asked.

“Don’t know.” Was his hushed response.

The golden wash of light created a sort halo about Jared, distracting Talibah a moment as she watched the genial glitter caress his form. She only vaguely realized that he had whispered something more. “What?” she finally asked, pulling herself back out.

Knowing she had not heard him, Jared pulled his hands away and went to stand close to the extent of their cocoon to gaze at its glow a moment. Carefully he extended a hand to touch it with his fingers. Startled by a tremor of energy that rippled through her, a quick run that raced down her spine like pricks of sparkles, Talibah gave out a tiny ‘Ah!’ that brought Jared’s eyes to look at her again. “See.” He breathed, “You ‘are’ Dragon... Part of you... You must...” He pursed his lips, then sighed a little, “Protect... protect...” He walked back up to her seeming to try to look as deeply into her eyes as he possibly could.

“Surely... surely... the Dragon ‘is’ protection. She protects us now.”

Jared tapped her forehead slightly with his finger, “Mustn’t forget... Mustn’t forget who Talibah is... who Dragon is... who Jared is.”

Squinting at him, Talibah said, “I don’t understand. Why would I forget?”

Breathing once deeply, in that mimic of an actual intake of air, Jared remarked, “Before... We have merged... Mixed energies, you and I... But... I ‘knew’, I knew how to separate... Taught by Cordelia... This...this... Not sure...”

“But, surely, Maerdyann would not let anything go awry.” Greatly surprised by his uncertainty, she tried to entice him. “There’s wonderful energy here, you know. Power of the Earth. Could we not touch the stars? Could my Dragon not tap into the Earth’s vast life force... Show us the tapestry of Her living Wheel?” Grasping his hands and pulling him to sit down with her, she felt the tremble in his body. “Are you so frightened?”

“Frightened? Yes; and excited... I want to. But...” He watched her one more time, thinking, then exclaimed suddenly, his mind finally set, “Let’s go, let’s do it... Let’s ride your Dragon.” With that Jared settled himself as he sat facing her, smiling openly once more.

Proud of herself for having taken control, yet suddenly realizing that she might have taken on more than she truly understood, Talibah felt a trickle of her own uncertainty wrinkle through her. Yet, she pushed the thought aside, firmly holding his hands as they settled themselves to begin. This time she directed the energy, the breathing, the movement as their life forces began to mix, slow and sure. After being

reasonably confident that she could maintain stability between she and Jared, that she remained aware of herself even in this blur, Talibah began to turn her attention to the Dragon that enfolded them. At first she became aware of a tug within as the Dragon became aware of her. For a moment it seemed like the Dragon looked full at her and Jared; a little surprised, a little reflective; as if she had paused in some internal dance. Then the Dragon drew her head back to let out a grand roar that sped like pleasure through Talibah, through Jared; an abrupt snap that pulled the two rushing within the Dragon, a part of her, one with her.

Almost lost within her, Talibah and Jared rode as the Dragon seemed to take to the skies in a wind that appeared to be filled with thunder and lightening. Stars and worlds seemed to whirl about them as the Dragon soared; her massive opalescent wings outstretched, reflecting off the lights of the stars themselves. It was like being part of some greater knowledge; older, wiser, deeper and free of time or encumbrance of any kind. It astonished Talibah that she felt no fear, only a sense of wisdom and completeness she could not explain, surprised that she still maintained a sense of self through it all.

For a long while they raced, caught up in a glorious freedom, the flurry of time and space beome meaningless. Suddenly there was an utter stillness, a void, an emptiness of both blackness and light where Talibah and Jared stood in a motionless center. Before them a figure appeared, tall and beautiful; sexless, yet seeming both; with long hair that glittered like stars and huge opal eyes. For a moment it simply stood, just looking at them both from one to the other; neither threatened not threatening, only seeming to decide what its next move ought to be. Finally it nodded to Talibah, and though she saw no movement in its beautiful full mouth, Talibah knew what it said. "Greeting, Sister... You have ridden far on your wonderful steed... And it is for the best for we needs contact you."

Startled, Talibah stood close to Jared, making sure of his presence, lightly taking his hand. "You need to contact me?" She whispered.

Though the being showed no enmity, it seemed almost unconcerned with Jared as it continued to address Talibah though Jared 'heard' everything it was saying to her, "Sister...through the Dragon you know us... And she brought you to us. And we need to tell you. Tell you of a great battle... And that it seeks to play itself out on your World. The place you have chosen to call your home."

"On Earth, you mean. A battle... What are you?" Feeling Jared's arm go about her waist, she welcomed his steadying presence as she felt tremors moving through her at this strange, disturbing news.

"There are those of us who love your World, your Earth; who came to her to help, to heal, to guide... In time, others of us took note and their intentions were not ones of honor... Not all of us are light; there is darkness as well. And it is with true regret that it was that those of us whose only intention was to help further the Earth in her journey of growth and awareness that we would awaken the desire in others of our own kind a need to seek control and abuse of that growth and awareness... Our only hope lies in that the light we brought came there first and that only now does our darkness begin its approach. And though it is a darkness indeed, with a terrible strength that anguishes much of our kind; we must look to a greater awareness and growth already on your World; of our own and others of the light who might assist. Talibah, you 'must' tell them. You 'must' warn them."

“Tell, tell who? Warn who?... Maerdynn?” Talibah stood in consternation and alarm, her eyes like darkened disks, her form ashen and shaken.

“Whoever is of the light, whoever believes in the Earth and Her sanctity.” The being watched the bewilderment in her eyes. “I am creating confusion in you... I am sorry to be so abrupt... surely there are those who ‘care’ for the Earth, for Her growth... for Her protection?” The being said gently now, trying best to soften its words.

“The Elves.” She whispered as Jared tightened his grasp about her.

With that, the being looked about itself furtively as if it had become alert to something neither Talibah nor Jared could see. As if breathless, the being turned its glittering eyes once more fully on Talibah, “Yes. Elves, and others, too... I must go. We are in the middle of a battlefield, but I braved this when I saw your ride... I send you back, now. Grace be with you and Wisdom attend you... Now go.” With that, the being disappeared like mist in the airs, and just as Talibah began to wonder what to do next, she and Jared were standing back on the Earth in their cocoon, the Dragon encircling them, but no longer their steed.

With a long, low breath, Jared turned to Talibah to hug her deeply and warmly, then pulled back to look intensely into her eyes. Brushing a hand on her face, he seemed to be deciding something, then shook his head a little as if in understanding, “Not yet.” He said lowly, “Not yet.” Then he looked off as he drew away, Talibah frowning at his gesture. Not giving her the time to respond, Jared remarked, “Must tell Maerdynn. Tell Cordelia.” Thinking, Jared glanced back at Talibah, “It knew you... beautiful being, Star Child... It ‘knew’ you. Why?”

“I don’t know.” Talibah responded wonderingly, “Perhaps my family.” suddenly Talibah sighed, “This is so strange for me, Jared... So strange... In Gnostica, we respect the Earth, but try to transcend Her. Yet, here... with you, with the Bards, the Elves... What ‘is’ the Earth?... I am confused.”

Not too sure he understood, Jared shrugged, then smiled watching her, “Need to go back now, friend. Must speak with Cordelia; you with Maerdynn. Call me back soon. Miss you... a lot.” With that, Jared disappeared back through her ring as he had before and though Talibah knew she would return to the waking world soon, she chose to sit in the cocoon as long as she could, contemplating what this night had told her.

Slowly awaking to the filtered glow of a late morning’s light as the birds trilled in the trees above them, Talibah groggily stretched her arms and legs. Finally sitting up and looking about she noted that she could see no tents, only the careful remains of where others might have been. A small campfire had been set where Kevyn and Saffir sat watching over it, drinking from their cups and apparently tending something they had cooked over the fire as well. Looking further, she saw Taliesin with their horses, checking them; but all three Runners were obviously off doing something, probably gathering greens or other edibles. Noticing Talibah’s sleepy form, Saffir smiled with delightful, young white teeth in a generous mouth, “Why, hello... sleep well, friend?”

Shaking the sleep out of her eyes as she yawned and stretched, Talibah said, “I guess I slept better than I knew. Is everyone left?”

“Everyone.” Remarked Kevyn, “But for our little band... and Saffir.” he smiled at his companion, obviously pleased to have her company.

“Well, how could I go?” Saffir said, rather matter-of-fact, then jerked her head slightly towards Taliesin, “When you travel with ‘him’.” Her green eyes glowed a little when she said this, happy to see a bit of startlement in Talibah’s eyes though Taliesin seemed to hardly notice the remark. “Yes, I ‘know’ who he is... No one else caught it. He didn’t want them to. I guess it didn’t matter so much with me... Besides, won’t be so bad. Kevyn is great entertainment.” She laughed a little, tickling him.

“Oh, thanks.” Kevyn laughed back, pushing at her playfully and nearly spilling some of the contents of his cup. “Couldn’t just come with us ‘cause you fancied me for a bit?”

Laughing in an open, pleasant way, Saffir shook her head, “Dear Brother. Certainly I do not mind spending a space with you... But, when you throw in traveling with the Head of Council as he returns at last to Wynseren...” she shrugged, “Who could possibly resist?” Saffir said the last directly to Talibah as she came over to the fire to sit with them bringing her cup and bowl, Kevyn taking them, filling her cup with tea and her bowl with some cooked grain. Talibah sipped at the tea and ate some of the mush gratefully, sighing at its delightful warmth in the yet chilly airs, though the sun seemed to promise a bright and friendly day.

Taliesin, having finished with the horses, seeming satisfied with their packing and readiness, also came over to sit. “Are my ears ringing?” He asked amiably, “Are you speaking of me?” Smiling lightly, he also gave his cup to Kevyn for him to fill as Saffir looked into Taliesin’s eyes fully, smiling back. “Well...” He said, taking the cup and sitting back, “I guess it ‘is’ time for the ruse to be over... We will pass by Gwydion’s Greathouse today and stay at a town’s inn tonight. Rooms, privacy and in estate; performance only if we’ve a mind to... We are on Bardic business now. And I suspect Gwydion already realizes I am on my way at this point.”

“So, where ‘are’ the Runners?” Remarked Talibah, stretching once more. “Won’t we be leaving soon?”

“Oh, just making certain the rest of the area is truly put back in order.” Responded Kevyn, “It’s best to try and make this place look as close to the way it had when we got here, you know.” He shrugged, “and they’re like to gather some greens and nuts for later... and goof off.” He grinned.

“Speaking of Runners...” Said Taliesin, looking at Kevyn with a thoughtful frown, “We ought send someone on to Wynseren. A formal announcement... they go now with speed they’ll make the Council Seat tonight easily enough. Roads will be clear from here just over the rise due North. I’ll point it out to them.”

“Adian’s still a bit young, but... she could do with the experience. The horses are all packed, except some food utensils... and sleepy head’s gear.” Kevyn gently chuckled at Talibah.

“Yes, Adian will do fine.” Remarked Taliesin, smiling at Talibah as well as if reflecting a private thought. “I’d insist on Brandon, but I think it better he stayed.” Talibah’s eyes shot to his but he gave no other indication, “And I’d still rather watch out for Osla some... I don’t feel he’s at full strength, even yet. Not for this, anyway.”

With that the Runners themselves appeared, tumbled and rather pleased with themselves having filled a rough towel or two with gathered foodstuffs. “Hey, Talibah finally awake?” asked Osla playfully. “Not used to our dancing antics, eh?”

“I guess not.” Talibah replied pleasantly, not even slightly goaded, then gave a private look to Taliesin, “Strong dreams... strange dreams.”

“Well.” Taliesin frowned a bit at her, then looked at the Runners. “Better pack the food you gathered and have a last sip of tea, children. Adian... let Osla and Brandon do that, alright? You sit now... I think all your cups are right here, yet.” Finding hers by the fire, Adian took the tea Kevyn offered, then sat. “Well, Adian, we need to find you a good solid straight stick to put the Bardic banner on.”

Frowning, not certain, Adian’s bright gray eyes looked at Taliesin in question. “Father?” she queried suddenly dropping all pretense of who he was.

“Yes, Father indeed. It ‘is’ time to dispense with Brother Gwion... We’re sending you ahead of us at all due speed. I’ll show you which way to go, but when you see the roads, I’m sure it’ll be clear enough. Keep following the Northern roads, they’ll get you there. You’ll fly the Bardic Banner Kevyn has so that no one impedes you. You’re on business now. We’ve another banner for ourselves... and the Council Standard. It’s time... drink your tea, then you’ll be off.”

Though a little nervous about it, Adian’s face suddenly beamed with pride. “Yes, Father. I am happy to do this for you.”

Taliesin squeezed her hand gently and smiled warmly, “You’ll do just fine.”

As the other two Runners came back, Taliesin took Adian to get the banner and find a stick to fasten it on before seeing her mount her horse. Finishing her tea, Talibah packed her gear up feeling Brandon’s eyes on her as she moved. She smiled a little to herself deciding she rather liked the attention, it always felt good to be in his presence. Getting up to the horses to pack as Adian was waving to all once before she took off Taliesin standing near, Talibah grasped a moment at his arm for his attention though she juggled the bundle in her arms to do so. Having waved Adian off, the banner of a silver and gold harp on a green field flashing in the breeze, Taliesin looked back at Talibah raising his brows.

“About my ‘strange dreams’...” she said very quietly, “I need to speak to you, Teacher.”

“I know.” He replied frankly, “But it can wait. I promise... when we get to Wynseren there are things that need to be discussed... Don’t worry, I already know.” He said kindly as he helped her pack her horse, “One more night, Sister. Tonight we truly relax. Let’s enjoy it, alright?” Having finished with her horse, Taliesin hugged her before bringing her back to the fire. “Well, are we about ready? Let’s dismantle our area and be off... The town, Gwyncath, is an easy ride from here. Four or five hours, I’d guess. But, I’d like some time to linger. Much of this area that we are entering I used to call home. It has a lot of memories for me. I’d like a little time to relish it.”

The horses stood ready and tendered that morning near the gate of Gwydion’s Greathouse by the horse master’s apprentices waiting on those who would make their way to Wynseren that day. Someone had seen the flash of a Bardic banner the day before

chasing down the road and all the Greathouse was a buzz with anticipation as the Ricon made ready to leave. Rumors had been floating all morning though no one seemed certain what all the fuss and movement was truly about. A beige sturdy pony with bright colored gear stood next to the horse with Bardic trappings and these were tended by a young Runner who also had his own horse as he had been given permission to go as well. To him this was a great accolade for he could sense the excitement that this leaving was foreshadowing.

In this grand courtyard by the gates was a platform made of stone with steps so that the Ricon could make address when it was needed. Now he and those who would ride with him went up on the platform as many from the Greathouse, and even some of the villages, gathered, hoping he would clear the rumors floating so freely on the airs. The buildings surrounded them, two and three stories high, the stonework fine and strong with windows where others peeked or sat with curiosity, awaiting their Ricon to speak. Above the buildings banners flew in variant colors and symbols that bespoke the various Greathouses they represented; and over this flew Gwydion's standard, a wonderful red dragon argent upon a golden field. The sky was clear and blue amid the flurry of humans as the horses stamped and snorted, a little nervous from so much unusual activity. Dylan stood with Cerirhosyn upon the platform, her eyes huge with wonder as her small hand grasped his tightly. She looked so uncommon in her tiny riding outfit of Bardic colors, her dark mass of curls bound in braids. Dylan smiled and winked at her a moment, an intimacy that seemed to immediately calm her. Members of everyone on the platform's immediate families and staff stood next to the platform, so that Rhys and Cerirhosyn's caretaker, Lowri, a dark little woman who also kept Dylan and Rhys' apartments as well as being one of the best cooks of the Greathouse so that she was often occupied in the kitchens, were standing and watching from below. Rhys smiled warmly up at Cerirhosyn, though a look of concern also flitted through his eyes when he moved them up to Dylan's. Dylan arched one brow, yet smiled back as Gwydion raised his arms for some silence so that he might speak. Arionrhod also stood at the base of the platform, her two students standing close in attendance, a veil over her face that she sometimes chose to wear in public, especially when outside her home area; a symbol of her standing as a Priestess of the hidden Goddess and her sanctity as such. The small crowd finally quieted, though the stamping and some snorting of the horses continued. "My friends." Spoke Gwydion amiably, he truly wanted his people to feel they were his friends, "I and these comrades of mine before you are making ready to go forward on this day. And I am glad to say that this time it is not to battle or to settle affairs of state. It is merely a happy journey. We go to greet a friend. A friend and ally who has been gone far too long... The Head of the Bardic Council, Taliesin, returns to the Bardic Seat of Wynseren and we have determined it best to go and welcome him back home." Though most had already heard the rumors, many were rather surprised to hear them as true as they looked up with startled eyes. Then some pounding and shouts of "Good, good. Gwydion our Ricon, our friend!" seemed to go up as Gwydion nodded and indicated the party on the platform to go ahead toward their horses.

Getting to their mounts, Lowri helped Cerirhosyn on her steadfast pony as Dylan and Rhys spent a more personal moment just holding each other and looking at each other. Rhys finally broke it with, "Be well."

“You, too. It’s been some time since we’ve been separated... Treat my Second well. Modlen does not always understand your sense of humor.” Said Dylan good-naturedly.

“Your Second doesn’t always understand ‘anyone’s’ sense of humor, love.” Chuckled Rhys, who then shrugged before kissing Dylan fully before letting him go, somewhat resigned. “Get going now... I’ll worry of you.”

Giving Rhys one long look but saying nothing, Dylan finally took to his horse. The Runner having mounted his own horse next to him put up the Bardic banner as Dylan looked to make certain Cerirhosyn was all right and ready to go as well. Satisfied, he looked once more at Rhys, “I’ll miss you... If you change your mind...”

“I’ll miss you, too.” Responded Rhys simply as he and others backed away from the horses so that the party could leave. With that, Gwydion signaled them and the horses trotted out of the courtyard and through the gate amid waves and some flowers for their send off. Though Dylan rarely went far from the surrounding area and was not really one who enjoyed much travel, he found himself truly exhilarated to be making this short journey, his heart full of happy anticipation. The sky was wondrously clear, the air clean and delightfully mild as they rode and Dylan observed the many people working in the fields planting and digging for that year’s crops. Only the missing of his mate and companion dampened any of his travels that day and he was pleased to see Cerirhosyn looking at everything with her large blue eyes in wonder and curiosity. Soon he would meet with his oldest friend again; to him his brother, his family; the only family he had ever known for many, many years and he found himself holding back tears from time to time. Soon he’d have all his family back again; Rhys, Cerirhosyn and Taliesin; all but Jenna; but at least it would feel complete, it would feel whole. And some of it would come full circle that night.