

# TALIBAH, THE EGYPTIAN

## Chapter 12

### *Reunion*

Stars are wonderful, beautiful lights that shimmer and twinkle in the dark skies of night away in the heavens like beacons to mysterious pathways. They create curious patterns across the night sky that are both conjectured over and utilized for both physical and emotional guidance for those perceived meanings. Yet, they do seem to speak in a removed language, afar and distant, the guardians of secrets rarely, if ever, fathomed, sentinels of truths beyond the mortality of the fragile life below them. They live in an immense sea of blackness, after all, and perhaps their greatest truth is that blackness regardless that anyone may seek their light. Only the sun belies such thoughts that might crowd the hermit's tortured imagination before the dawn, for the sun, too, is one of those shimmers of the sky, nestled in the womb of eternity. And the sun declares himself each and every day that life exists and that for every star that declares its own existence out within that universal sea within the midnight sky; there, too, may life exist, and there, too, may the void be held at bay by fire and light.

Darkness and light are not always easy divisions for they do not really divulge any certainty of good or evil, or even sorrow and happiness. Neither the void nor the lights of life are good or evil in and of themselves. Great evil can appear gentle and lovely, glittering with seeming bounty and happiness, while good may be found in the cracks and crevices of the deepest vats of fear and sorrow. Right and wrong is never an easy summation and truly a decision that only each individual must decide for themselves, for no other answer will ever present itself. Even the greater good of one species can lead to the despair and destruction of another.

In the overall scheme of things life will always struggle and on the Earth that life is a sea of moving, dancing energies, reaching and striving in a continuous expansion of drive and awareness. The Earth awakens, yet she still dreams, as the swirl of her movement wraps itself back about her beneath the sway of the sun and moon around her. Awareness, a certain consciousness undulates, churns within, looking out and wondering at the cosmos. Bright with life, bright with movement, bright with the dance.

So much beauty, so much wonder, so open and so vulnerable. The Earth is becoming and the Cosmos takes note of her progress. Does the Universe celebrate her slow awakening like a child tottering on her first steps? Or is there jealousy here as well; greed, desire – to exploit, to abuse?

Worlds dance between dream and consciousness and back to dream, souls awaken to their own interlocking dance to stretch out like bursts of light, and then merge back into the dream again. The Earth learns, the Earth expands as its Soul becomes many souls to become one Soul again; to expand even again as it, too, merges into the larger Soul of the Cosmos. And these Souls also become many souls, ever expanding, ever merging, ever dancing to the eternal rhythm of the All. Souls no longer part of the physical dream, who play amidst the stars; wandering and wondering between realms and realities. But

even in their expansion, even in this Cosmic Dance, is not each soul but the directed seed of energy seeking expansion and personal self-worth? The physical can hold its own attraction even for the Gods.

Darkness and Light. In the dreaming of the Worlds does brightness and shadow exert their own powers, their own forces, for they are the excitement of existence wherein emotions can arise. Even expanded Worlds know radiance and shade and battles rage within the stars as worlds merge, as worlds collide in turbulence, for that, too, is the Cosmic Dance.

What is intelligence but the awakening of consciousness within the energy stimulated by the dance? Awareness of self, awareness of light and dark, awareness of choice and the ability to align with those forces consciously. Souls who no longer dance in the physical still align, still choose, still exert and manipulate their perceptions. The Earth had but begun her journey into her Soul's awareness when she was espied by others; some benign, some filled with greed and lust. There is no other reason but greed that steers the hearts of those who choose abuse and exploitation. What is always so surprising is how much like their brothers and sisters who choose light that they seem. Their faces, their eyes, their ethereal bodies seem fashioned in the same way, yet hearts so different, so dark, so clouded with envy and dark desire. The Earth knew, she felt the awful presence of these darkened dreamings and she took what steps she could, calling beings to her that would help and steadfastly those within her to her cause. And though she had stayed those in greed of her from their intentions for a great period of time, it could not be held forever unless other means might appear. A shield made, a blanket of awareness maintained and enforced by those born of the Earth and called from the stars. Both cunning and strength were needed for such an act, and sacrifice with a certain boldness and certainty of purpose. It would take the direction, the focus of the Gods Themselves to enact such a thing and the Earth prepared herself to call such forcers forth.

Deep in the Cosmos worlds flashed and crumbled, energies merged and drew apart as the ages rushed by. Star beings played in the ethers, in the dust, souls whose worlds were no more, merging into vaster wells of being to be splintered again in some other dance of existence. Exquisite beings, star souls, yet some grown dark of heart and mind, lusting now for that which was no longer theirs. Contriving, scheming one with the other, thinking what they might do to disrupt and finally control the bright new consciousness of the Earth. In strange meetings between time and place, in a nowhere yet everywhere, these exquisite star children plotted like whispers on a starless night, the clouds amassed in the skies.

“And you believe that these ‘once Elven’ will aid us, will help us deceive these but barely awakened souls who now infest the planet they call Earth?” Shimmering energies like glinting silver filtered through the Cosmos; gathering, plotting; their huge eyes shining as if they themselves were bits of starlight.

“There is anger in them. Hatred, too, in some. They seek a justice from those we seek to dominate and eradicate. If we show them power and strength and a means to overcome their enemies, I know in time they shall become excellent pawns for they do not see beyond their pain and resentment.”

“Yes, but what of these humans we also seek to deceive?”

“Ah, yes.” The star beings moved to and fro, thinking, questing both as one and separate. “They seek audience with us. They, too, must be shown power, strength and

means. But in their case, it is greed that drives them, greed that lures them; and they, too seek power over others and we will provide it them. At a price, of course. If we but work a way to let them fight each other they effectively will rid us of the barriers we seek to crush and our task is easier won. We have the key our real enemy seeks, but for the moment they are too strong to succumb to us even without this element. And there is fear other contacts may also being made. Yet, humans are weak and weak-willed and that is where we must strike. We must go to this Oswald for he is a fragile creature who will be easy prey to dreams of prowess and glory. And through him and those who follow him can our objective be brought into our hands.”

“This is well.” Agreed all, the liquid movement rushing like water over rocks, the crash of splashing silver filling the portals of nowhere in streams. A mask would be built. A mask of self that might carry itself into time and space, small and unassuming into the confines of the Earth without her detection and awareness, a mere shadow drifting in the night like so many others. And in those places of shadow would this created self be made manifest so that those of the stars whose desire and lust drove them to this covetous and covert design might communicate, implant and deceive.

\*\*\*\*\*

In Gwen’s rooms, the rooms accorded the Head of Council, the rooms accorded Gwen as Acting Head, Taliesin met and sat with her and her Chief Advisor and husband, Pwyll, before they might go to the main cavern halls where a celebration for Taliesin’s homecoming would be enacted. Comfortable and wide, the rooms of the Head of Council had floors covered with rugs of fur and thick stuffed pillows scattered all about. In the main room, a large bed stood in the corner with many covers and pillows across from a generous fireplace whose embers glowed a low and even warmth. The whole of the area was simple, yet truly relaxed and easy, giving an air of near opulence because of it. The three sat upon the floors amidst the rugs and pillows, sipping thoughtfully at a little tea one of the Runners had provided them. After several quiet moments Gwen looked up at Taliesin. “And would you stay here with us?” Gwen said, indicating the rooms for in truth these rooms were rightfully his.

Giving a little frown beneath a playful smile, Taliesin replied, “I’m sure you’ve other quarters I may occupy. I shall be quite comfortable with that.” Surprised to hear a gentle sigh from Pwyll, Taliesin looked over at him with empathy, “Dear friends, it is your rooms now. And rightfully so... It would hardly be fair for me to say otherwise. And I shall give the reigns over to Gwen as soon as may be, there are preparations and things that I need to see to. I know your hesitation, Pwyll. The Bonding of the Head and their Chosen is deep and emotional. But I am not here to cause difficulties with the sacred bond you two have chosen of your love and free will. I only seek to give over this power back into a natural lineage again as it should be.”

“Father, I do not seek to oppose you.” Pwyll sat back in the pillows they had piled about themselves so they might be at ease as they talked.

Taliesin reached over and squeezed Pwyll’s shoulder for they all sat close together in a private little huddle of a ring. “I know that. I really only want to assure you... You must understand that though I’m told I’ve been away for seven years, and I believe that to be so... For me, it’s more like mere months. Perhaps. Perhaps not even

that.” He shook his head, his smile sad and reflective seeing the almost startled looks on the others’ faces. “My heart and head has known terrible confusion and I am not even sure I knew who and what I was for long periods. Yes, I searched. But, even that seems clouded though I know I’ve been many places in many realities and faced challenges I still cannot bring myself to speak of. But of Jenna’s soul, not a whisper have I gained.” Sitting back himself, Taliesin sank into such a formidable shadow of sorrow that tears glistened on both Gwen and Pwyll’s eyes wherein they surrounded his energy with their own seeking to give him comfort and love. For a moment he was a near impenetrable shell before finally breaking to let their life force in. Quietly he began to weep as their love echoed through him and in a moment or so they put their arms about him as he expended his grief.

Though Pwyll had been one of Taliesin’s Advisors and like anyone of the Council, had had great awareness of Taliesin’s energy as well as the energies of all other Council Members; still, he had never known Taliesin as deeply as he might or even ought. Pwyll had his own sorrows, even tinged with some vague envy when it came to Taliesin and it was difficult to be entirely open in his heart for this man no matter that he assuredly bore him no ill will. Yet now, becoming so keenly and intensely aware of Taliesin’s own grief and pain, even a certain confusion, many barriers suddenly broke and Pwyll’s first thought was to console his friend.

They stayed in place for several moments as Taliesin finally felt soothed, his heart more firm again. He kissed both Gwen and Pwyll’s rather wet faces softly breaking the ring so that they moved back away from him a bit. “Thank-you. It is what I’ve needed sorely. More than I honestly realized. And I will continue to search though I recognize now that I must not lose connection. It would not serve me, or anyone to do so again...” He looked at both thoughtfully his mind glancing over things he knew would have to be brought up before long, especially concerning the warning Talibah had gotten from the stars. “There are things that will need some serious discussion in a few days time with full Counsel, though for the moment I am neither truly prepared nor in heart ready for that discussion at this time.” At this Taliesin wiped his own rather wet face as he shook out his head a little and cleared his mind some, “For tonight we celebrate.” He smiled tentatively at the other two who echoed it back attentively. “Though... there are a couple things we might discuss quickly, I think. Just for your consideration... You know, I might very well still be wandering out there in my malaise, somewhere between time and realities. Near mindless, really. Perhaps forever, even, but for the appearance of a rather special one. A special young woman with some rather surprisingly strong gifts. Umph... You’ve met Talibah. My student... Yes.” For a moment he paused and thought on his next words. “She needs training yet. And some time. But it is training and time with others more than anything. Some memory work. Tasks to sharpen and enliven her memory. And I wish her to remain my especial student. Not that I would expect an argument, but I do wish that to be understood.”

“You obviously have plans for her, then.” Beamed Gwen, for she knew Taliesin well, seeing and feeling beneath his words easily.

“Yes... perhaps.” Returned Taliesin with a slight nod, his mind briefly with his student rather than those around him. “And I hope the Counsel shall back me when the time comes that I may wish to see those plans bear fruition.”

“Umm.” Spoke Gwen gracefully, “I know you, dear friend. You are not one for deciding things lightly. It is what made you Head of Counsel and made you one of the best. I know that... And despite the Bonding, despite the passing of Power to me I would think your voice shall ever carry the weight it justly deserves.”

A sparkle lit Taliesin’s eyes and face, a small grin of pleasure playing about his lips. “Well... I would rather expect you would also like me to give my views on Kevyn and Brandon.” He said, changing the subject, which seemed to relax them all some. “I realize that neither was sent to me without consideration. I even expect you believe Osla and Adian of note. For I readily admit that you sent me bright and able children all.”

“When you came to me that time to tell me of your re-entrance... That you would be coming home before long. That you had a student. I sensed your need. Your need to be given focus. Of course, you had Talibah, but still. I felt that whom I sent to you when the time came ought be those that might help you. To help draw you back to this life. Give you purpose that any Counsel Member has. To be a teacher, to be a watcher, to be a guide. To help you remember.” Gwen spoke all this with a light, soft touch, smiling gently at her friend and watching his face attentively, his eyes almost locked with hers. Then she lifted her brows. “Ah, and did my selection please you?” She said with a touch of a teasing lilt in her voice.

Smiling back warmly, Taliesin replied. “Umm, very.” For a moment he said nothing, as it was apparent he was considering before proceeding with his thoughts. “Kevyn. A little young yet. But not much. He handles the Runners well. He handles people well, really. But... just a tad young just yet. In spirit, mostly. But he’s certainly Chief Bard material from what I could garner. Perhaps even more in time, though I’d surely set him as a Chief Bard a while and see him with that first. It’s best to test his ability to counsel in that sort of setting. And ‘do’ separate him from Osla, his brother. That proved an unfair test.”

“Oh, how so?” Asked Pwyll, frowning but curious.

Taliesin brushed it off some. “It’s just one of those things. He cares more for his brother than his own life, I think. I would not see him judged in it. I would not see him judged now or in the future. And I wish this to stay in this room. Just see to it that the two do not work together from now on. For I also believe both of them will do well and be a credit to the Bardic Path. And I want only to make certain that they’ve a fair chance to do so.”

Gwen shook her head ‘yes’, “I even think I know where to send our young friend. Would being a Second do for a time? There’s real need of a good one down in Glamorgan near the borders of Powys and Gwent. The Chief Bard is of age, her health thinning. She’s not had one in a while and she’d be best to have someone who could succeed her. I’d been mulling over whom I might send, as there really hasn’t been anyone I felt comfortable sending though I had thought there might be some soon. It was Kevyn I had foremost in my mind when I sent him to escort you as I thought he was beginning to show some real skill. Better skill than I fully understood from what you are reporting!”

“I think that’s an excellent idea, Gwen.” Spoke Taliesin amiably. “For now and later. I’m sure the Chief Bard shall be pleased to have someone she can feel confident in training. And it will give him time to adjust to it all. And ‘do’ watch him carefully. He’s more than he may appear. His skill with people, handling people when he’s out there, is

impressive. He's courteous, instructive and firm when he needs be. He may honestly make an exceptional teacher someday."

Gwen raised her eyebrows and nodded thoughtfully and Pwyll queried, "And, so, the others?"

"Ah, well." Breathed Taliesin pleasantly, "Adian and Osla are very bright. And still rather young to be sure. I sense Osla may become a Player and Adian a Storyteller." He shrugged. "I'm not certain, really, but something in their individual life forces. The glitter perhaps. The colors they tend to emit from time to time. Sometimes the people they pay attention to. Bards? Ummm, unsure yet. But I do see talent there. I expect both to touch near-Bard status at the least. And I don't expect either of them to really return to one of the Seats, no matter. I think they'll both find their place in the greater landscape of Cymru..." Taliesin looked off, thinking a moment and drinking from his tea in order to pace himself some as the other two did the same as they waited for him to continue. He looked up at them both a little playfully as he began again. "Which, of course bring me to Brandon, dear boy that he is." Here Taliesin grinned fully as he shook his head, rolling his eyes in a mock distress. "My student is rather fond of him, I think." He chuckled. "And he her. And perhaps that is meant to be, do you suppose? A near-Bard and Bard like that."

"Near-Bard, yes." Breathed Gwen forcefully, "Very, very 'near'. You can almost hear it whenever he's about. Like he might well step over the precipice and burst into a million Bardic shards of splintered lights if left alone in this state much longer!"

This tickled Taliesin mightily, causing him to laugh grandly. "Goodness, Gwen! What an image you inspire! I think you may have caused my poor brain to take a wrong step somewhere!" His outburst caused the other two to join him in his amused state as they chuckled with him. "Ah, but seriously." He finally said once they had all quieted down again and he wiped at his eyes a bit from it. "You are more than right and perhaps we can do something about it before long at all."

"You really think so, then, Maerdydd?" Asked Gwen, a more serious cast back upon her face.

Shrugging slightly, he looked back at them both, his mind chasing his thoughts a bit before he let out a brief breath that was not quite a sigh, "Certainly it is not absolute, but I've a strong sense... Friendship, attraction, love even. These things can be more important than any other factor in the making of a Bard, as we all know. And Talibah has surprising strength." Taliesin looked off again, thinking as he continued to speak, "That the spirit of a Bard should choose to be born so far away from her center. And, yet, find her way back, too. What was the intent?... It both puzzles and fascinates me... besides all that, it was her call to the Goddess that also reawakened me. It brought her and I together. And my attention to her... How can I see her as anything but unique?"

Just then a gentle rapping was heard at the outer door causing all three to look up. "Yes?" spoke Gwen. "You may enter." Being said, a young child of only five or six summers entered. Her golden hair and light eyes easily informing Taliesin of her parentage, causing him to give a warm smile. "Yes, Maerdydd, this is my daughter. And Pwyll's. Though neither of us is so young anymore, still we were blessed. And she was an easy birth. I'm truly thankful for her, none of my other children had lived beyond a few months and I struggled with that for many years, as you know. Her name is Gorawen for she is our joy."

With that, the young girl ran up to Gwen and being a little shy of Taliesin, sat between her parents. “Mama.” She said as if almost pendulous, “Runners told me to come for you. They said the Ricon grows impatient.” She looked up at her mother for response.

Gwen laughed a little, a twinkle dotting her eyes. “Really? Somehow I rather doubt that, but I do expect the Runners are... Young folks... The smell of good food and the proposition of a night of celebration free of studies and real duties makes them restless.”

“I do not blame them that.” Said Pwyll, putting a hand atop his daughter’s head fondly. “And here are the old folks holding everything up!”

“Well, well.” Spoke Gwen. “I suppose we really ought be on our way, um? There really are people who wish to see you, Maerdydd. Which, of course, does include my Lord, Gwydion.”

Taliesin shook his head ‘yes’ as he reflected a moment. “And Dylan. More than anyone I can think of, I am so very pleased he is here.” Having said this Taliesin rose as did Gwen and Pwyll, Pwyll picking up his daughter into his arms as Taliesin watched closely. “Ah, yes. And someone else, too. Someone I scare remember but am very anxious to see.”

“Shall we go, then?” Asked Gwen as all three looked at each other with some new understanding and the sense that a solid friendship had been cemented between them all. Taliesin nodded slightly to Gwen indicating that she might lead the way as they left the rooms to enjoin themselves with the greater Bardic activities that would take place that night.

\*\*\*\*\*

In the first throes of awareness in the Earth, in her first genuine perceptions that that awareness, that grasp for initial consciousness was both noticed and that there were some who lusted for the use and exploitation of that consciousness, the Earth gave forth her song. A song that was magnificent and beautiful, yet full of her pleas for help against those who might abuse her. And in this plea the Elves and the trees aided her so that who and what responded would rightly be those who sought to aid her. Not only to aid, but also to be willing to lie down and forfeit their claims of other worlds, other realms, other planets and systems to become one with her energies and her concerns as her sense of being and consciousness grew. For in effect, she asked that they would be adding what they were, what they had been and what they would be to her strength and burgeoning awareness.

And some of these beings had long since left the physical confines of their planets and stars, who now played within the Cosmos like children of some strange and far removed reality and perception. Yet they heard the exquisite and sadly distraught singing wherein they, too, became distressed and concerned and began to wonder what they might do to help this awakening child. It was then that the song of the trees drifted to them in their reflection and its subtle melody lured them, fascinated and drew upon them, letting them know within its quiet melody what the Elves proposed as they awaited with open arms of welcome for them.

Strikingly stunning, bright star children, they, that declared themselves Deva to the Elves and the trees as they looked upon the Elves and tried to duplicate an Elven-like form for they no longer honestly had forms or even real memories of forms of their own anymore. This caused great delight in the Elves and they showed their appreciation through much clapping and happy laughter as they spoke, "So you shall be Elf-kin to us and Elfland be your home from now and ever into time's counting!" The Deva agreed happily to this and they made their place within the Eldritch realm, swearing to help in any way that they could as their energy and life force became yoked to the Earth and her concerns. They also listened long to the wisdom that the trees imparted for the trees had much to say, much to teach and something about the trees and their understanding seemed in kinship to the Deva as well.

It was the way of the Earth, that through the trees, through the Elves she could be assured that those who answered her call were true and the help they offered of honest and pure value. For only those who honored the Earth as their new and rightful home and Mother passed through the song of the trees and the questing of the Elves. And of all these, the Deva were the most esteemed for they glistened with a special light and life, some spark not known before, causing the Earth to sigh as she had found some missing piece that gave her a greater sense of real completeness in her search and expansion.

When the time of the Great Crossover filled the hearts of the Elves who went to help further the future of humankind, many of the Deva sought to do the same and bore the same fate when they had stayed overlong. And though there were otherkin of variant kinds who also joined humanity in its tentative steps, the Elves mourned the Deva's fate near as much as their own. Yet, the Deva did not feel so pained by it all; had they not been dancing in the stars for uncounted ages? They had learned to see the eternity of life and being and in time they would play in and among the stars again. In this they even helped many of the Elven to acceptance, as Elven souls, along with various others, became part of the Realm of the Wheel never to find rest in Elfland again. For this the Elves were deeply grateful to the Deva as the gates between the Realms were all but closed at last.

The Deva, a bit of stardust that answered the trees and came to join their wills to that of the well being of the Earth. A missing piece that made the Earth feel complete within the firmament. Like some key they seemed to unlock the gates to eternity and gave an insulating power that kept the Earth's enemies at bay for long and long as the human children began to reach their own consciousness into their own first glimmering of real awareness.

\*\*\*\*\*

In all her some seven years, Cerirhosyn had never been but within a couple or so miles of the Greathouse of Gwydion, and even then, only during the day. Most of those times she was also accompanied by Lowry, her nurse and female guardian, though there were enough times when she might be with Rhys or Dylan without Lowry's service. Which was just as well with Cerirhosyn as she sometimes felt the woman made far too much fuss sometimes. It was terribly exciting to go alone with Dylan beyond the gates of the Greathouse for places she had only heard of before. But as excited as she was to be traveling to this place that seemed almost something out of fantasy, she did not quite

understand this idea Dylan had spoken of. That her father would be there and that there would be wonderful celebration in his homecoming. Her father. The concept seemed somehow vague and near unreal to her. Lowry said by rights that Dylan was her dad, or even both Rhys and Dylan were, though Dylan certainly the most. The woman had even suggested once that Cerirhosyn's father had run out on them when her mother died, but Dylan caught wind of this and reprimanded Lowry with angry words and warning that to speak so again would bar her from having Cerirhosyn under her care. Lowry, who deeply loved the child and could not even imagine doing anything else, promised fervently never to transgress so again and though Dylan felt a certain amount of misgiving, he allowed it and dropped any further discussion on it. Yet, thereafter, Dylan kept Cerirhosyn more and more with him than he had before explaining that she was becoming less a child now and need not be so much with a nursemaid. Lowry felt a bit chastened by his actions, but realized that it was of her own doing and that she must be happy that he had left her to be an active member of their small household, after all. And in this trip to Wynseren, Dylan had felt it best to keep Cerirhosyn firmly by his side without any interference on Lowry's part no matter that it might be well intended.

So Cerirhosyn felt a strange wonder when they had finally come to this place where caves and tunnels had been made into a huge complex of human concourse and development. She could not quite conceptualize ideas of her father or all this about the Bardic Seat and was more than happy that her Dylan, who in her heart was the only father she really understood or knew, was there while she gazed in wonder at the whirl of imagery that had befallen all her movements in their arrival.

They had been given their own singular room, she and Dylan, generously sized and comfortable, with a large and small ample bed, a small but well equipped fireplace, a decent window that looked out upon the ranges, as well as basins of water on a modestly sized table and the expected chamber pots. A large trunk occupied a space between the beds where they might store gear and clothes in their stay and a long mirror of polished metal stood fastened on one wall across from the beds near the fireplace. The beds of sweat grass had been filled but lately with warm blankets and pillows set thereon giving a cozy air to comfort a weary form. Several rugs were strewn upon the floor of fur to help keep the rooms warm in the chill of night. "They count us well." Smiled Dylan as he sat on his bed watching his young ward with clear and deep affection. For a little bit of privacy wherein each could change their clothing or freshen up, a tapestry of unicorns, dragons and colorful birds had been hung to the side near the basin. Cerirhosyn had undone the braiding her hair had been in for travel and had retrieved her brush to try and brush out her mass of dark, thick curls. For a moment Dylan watched her struggle, a glint of humor in his eyes. "Ceri." He finally said. "Let Dy do that, uh?" She rolled her eyes a little in a child's frustration but in short order came over to Dylan to sit next him and let him do as he requested. "Do you want to change at all? I doubt anyone cares if we're a bit dusty, but you might be more comfortable in one of your shifts."

Cerirhosyn shrugged as Dylan worked. "Do you think he'll care, though?"

"Who? Who'll care?" Asked Dylan back, busy with a tangle and trying not to pull too hard.

"My father." She nearly whispered as if afraid of Dylan's reaction.

"Your father?" Remarked Dylan whose face took on a remembered softness, "I expect your father shall be more than pleased no matter you wore a ragged sack with

wind ruffled hair.” The image made Cerirhoysn giggle a bit as Dylan continued, “Your father will be nothing but very, very pleased with you.”

“How can you know?” She asked suddenly and sincerely as she turned to look at Dylan.

“Because... Because, my little one, we are old, old friends. I’ve told you that many times, little love. He is dear to me as you are dear to me.”

“Is he like Rhys, then, for you?”

Dylan sighed, shaking his head with a casual smile, “No, not quite... Rhys is my mate. And I want for only one. No, your father is a dear friend. But, he comes just after Rhys. And after you, of course. And, he ‘is’ family. My family and certainly your family. You aren’t afraid of him, are you?” Having finished brushing her hair he looked at her upturned face a bit concerned. She shook her head ‘no’ and shrugged again. “Well... You certainly oughtn’t be... Though, you know, he is as big and scary as a wolf!” Dylan burst as he tickled the girl playfully. She squealed happily a moment with Dylan laughing as well when he finally heard knocking at their door. Still chuckling as he gently put Cerirhosyn down he remarked, “Well, well. I guess I better answer that.” In a happy mood, the girl left his arms to look through her clothes as Dylan walked over to the door.

Opening it he found himself simply standing and starrng for he had assumed that a Runner had come to fetch them for the festivities and instead was facing Taliesin. Immense tears formed in his eyes as Taliesin smiled at him warm and knowing. “Ah, no.” is all Dylan could finally say before he grabbed and hugged the other man as closely as seemed humanly possible. For a long moment they simply stood embraced, Dylan feeling as if he could barely breath as quiet, gentle tears moved slowly on his cheeks. Long sighs were emitted from both and when they drew apart at last, Dylan impulsively kissed Taliesin’s hair and cheek. “It’s been so hard... and so very long.” He breathed, “Are you real?”

“Goodness.” Perked Taliesin, “I certainly hope so.” He said pleasantly. “I was supposed to go in with Gwen and Pwyll, but decided not. Giving you a moment beforehand seemed a far more proper thing, which I can now see to be but truth. And going in with you to be far more genuine and appropriate. After all, you are my family.”

Gently pushing Taliesin away, Dylan appraised his friend a moment with his eyes, then brushed one hand through the other man’s hair, his mien thoughtful. “I’ve known you for years and perhaps because I saw you so much it never really touched me. Not really.” He fingered the hair a bit as he looked into Taliesin’s eyes as if almost searching, “Your hair. It may now be white. But your face. I know you’ve told me. And so have others. But, I still was young enough for it not to totally sink in. But these last seven years. I see lines in my face as much as gray in my hair and even the subtle changes that begin to happen in my stance and how I move. But you. This is a young face before me... and a young man’s carriage and stance. The same face and carriage I knew when I first came to you to work at your side, to be your Second at Lord Sean’s Greathouse so many years ago... And so it is truth, then. You are Eldritch. Even so.” Dylan nodded, partly to himself.

Taliesin smiled slowly at his friend. “Yes... but, I am also a man.” He clasped Dylan’s shoulder looking at him warmly. “And I also feel as a man does.” He sighed in affectionate undertones. “You do not ‘fear’ me now... do you?”

“No!” Laughed Dylan. “Oh, no! I have known you far too long for that. It is just a marvelous wonder I am glad to finally realize and fully accept.”

Noticing a torc on Dylan’s neck, Taliesin fingered it, frowning slightly. “I remember this.” He remarked.

“Yes.” Said Dylan suddenly serious, “You left it. And I used it to keep connected with you. To know if you were still alive. Still ‘somewhere’.”

“Yes... it is what I hoped. That WiseMan training. It serves you well.” Spoke Taliesin, his hand still on the torc.

“Perhaps. But, it ‘is’ your torc.” Dylan said as he began to remove it.

Frowning, Taliesin took away Dylan’s hand from his task. “No. Not anymore. It was yours the moment you put it on, friend. For it is you, now, that it serves.”

Suddenly some noise and movement interrupted their reverie causing Dylan to turn back into the room. “Ah. I think I hear someone.” He said cheerfully as a little form peeped from behind the tapestry. “Come out, dear. I’ve someone who’d love to see you.”

Cerirhosyn very shyly stepped out into the room. She had obviously decided to change into little robes of green and white trimmed with yellow flowers in an interlocking pattern throughout. Her hair was loose in the wonderful dark curls that surrounded her small round face with huge blue eyes. Eyes so much like Taliesin’s, her father nearly gasped. “If there is anything that causes me to honestly ‘know’ it has been full seven years, it is seeing you, my child. Cerirhoysn, yes. It is the name Jenna chose for you. And she chose well.” Taliesin crouched down to try and equal the child’s height in hopes to make her more comfortable. Yet, she remained quite shy, for though she came up to the two men, she clung hard onto Dylan’s clothes and began standing behind him. Taliesin gave an understanding sound, nodding his head a bit as he straightened up. “Who is this stranger, eh?” He sighed.

Dylan shrugged as he put a comforting hand on the child’s head. “In time, in time.”

“She looks wonderful, Dylan. You’ve done more than well.” Thinking a moment, Taliesin frowned in his consideration, “I know they had gone out to be trained before I even went on my questing. But, would you know how Jesse and Lleu are?”

“Ah, yes.” Nodded Dylan. “Your other children are well... Jesse went three years ago to the Holy Isle to pass through the fires and become a Healer. I understand she has gone somewhere into Clwyd to begin her work in earnest. Lleu is a full Musician now and goes with a wandering Troupe that tends to trek upper Powys. He comes through Gwydion’s Greathouse from time to time. So both your younger children are well and Lleu looked quite hale and hardy the last I saw of him. Actually, he resembles Ceri a good bit. So, he’s breaking hearts where ever he goes, of that I am certain!” Both Dylan and Taliesin grinned heartily at Dylan’s remark.

“Have you heard anything of Branwen, then?” Taliesin inquired, hoping he might garner some information about all his children. “It’d been a good while since I had even seen my eldest, but she used to me write from time to time. At least I was able to enjoy her Handfasting with Gylwynn. It would have been sorely disappointing to me had I missed that event. I recall the Counsel granting leave for them to settle in Gwynedd. At Arionrhod’s Greathouse. Actually, I think Arionrhod was rather more than pleased by that as well.”

Dylan nodded, "Indeed. Branwen and Glywynn are well. They traveled back here once, oh, four years ago. To see how I was doing, what Branwen's younger siblings were up to, to connect a little and see what I might also know of you. But, on a happy note, you are a grandfather. They had a two year old with them named Llyr. Hardy little boy. And have had a girl they call Vanora. Maybe two years ago, now. Sea names, both. Like mine... I hear it's a beautiful place, too. And from what I understand they are quite happy, though they would hear something of you."

"A grandfather, you say?" Taliesin's mind wandered, an inner warmth glistening his face and eyes. "Family and family." He whispered.

With that, Dylan remembered something. "Oh, yes. You might even ask Arionrhod herself about Branwen's family. The Lady is on a visit here at Gwydion's Greathouse."

"Really?" Stated Taliesin, feeling a peculiar sense of disquiet at Dylan's words. "Arionrhod." He bit his lip, then pursed them, his eyes unfocused a moment as he searched his internal thoughts. "I guess I shall. Does she stay long?"

Dylan shrugged. "I think it has been mentioned that she may stay until the following spring. She has students with her. She does this for them, I believe. But I am unsure."

Shaking a vague sense of foreboding off, Taliesin returned his focus to Dylan with a large, open smile. "And you, Dylan." Taliesin said suddenly more than curious. "Are you happy?"

"Happy? My... And, of course, you wouldn't know. Though you did know Rhys a little bit."

"Yes... the one you took into his Gift. Yes, of course. Jenna always liked him a great deal. Said he was good for you, though he traveled with a Troupe that went pretty wide, if I recall... But, surely, a very good soul." He said, cocking his head and wondering.

This caused Dylan to chuckle merrily, "Well... I rather thought he was a good soul, myself. I eventually convinced him to stay with the Troupe at the Greathouse, you see... and now he's their Leader. And so we were Handfasted... More than five years ago. I guess I've been quite happy, yes... Quite happy, indeed."

"Handfasted!?" Brightened Taliesin, smiling greatly, "How wonderful! Though I surely seem to have missed many important occasions since I've been away. More than my heart even likes to contemplate. Ah well... Perhaps it is what I must expect, after all." Taliesin looked down at Cerirhosyn who still hid herself in Dylan's clothes trying to coax her with an understanding smile. Then he looked back at Dylan. "I guess we better go now if you're ready. I know they're waiting on this." With this he took Dylan's hand firmly in his own as they began to leave the room. "I go with family." He said, kissing Dylan's cheek as they began down the halls toward the festivities. "And I am finally and truly home."