

**Seers**  
*by Atk. Butterfly*

Alania halted upon reaching the shore. She gazed down at the water, intent upon seeing into the future. Unfortunately there was no future for her to see anymore. Her magic was gone, somehow taken from her. Had she taken the time earlier to foresee her own future, she might have known what steps to take as protection. Instead, she had helped others willingly that their lives might be a bit easier.

"Nothing?" Jodry asked as he tightened the splint upon his leg momentarily so that it wouldn't slip out of place.

"Only blackness. I do know that you shouldn't make that so tight."

"It slips loose when I walk."

"We should rest anyway. Maybe we'll find steeds soon. Then you won't have to worry about it slipping."

"I deserve having to walk. It's my fault that our other mounts were lost. I shouldn't have lost my temper at them after falling off," Jodry said.

"It happened. Now it's past. We should forget about it as it doesn't accomplish anything for us."

"Is all of your magic gone?"

"Yes, I believe it's all gone or blocked. I don't know which." Alania drew her crystalline dagger and dipped it into the water. "My dagger is still intact, however. Cidra still drinks."

An eye on the hilt blinked at Alania in a manner that she understood. She lifted Cidra from the water and slipped it into the sash around her waist. There was no need for anyone to ask of Alania whether she stood for good or evil despite the plain, dark, hooded robe that she wore. Anyone seeing her crystalline dagger knew immediately that she stood against the wicked as crystalline daggers never served those with evil intentions.

Jodry nodded silently. There was no need for him to state that he was glad she carried such a servant. Without her magic it was up to her crystalline dagger to defend her. Certainly, in his condition, Jodry knew that he'd have a difficult enough time just defending himself should the need arise. He definitely couldn't run to her defense.

It didn't bother him that her dagger's eye constantly scanned the landscape before her. At least, not like it did when he noticed Cidra eyeing him upon his first meeting with Alania over a year ago. Knowing of the reputation held by crystalline daggers, he'd sweated profusely over his fear of saying something wrong that might trigger Cidra into action. By the end of that first day, he had more or less adjusted to the fact that the dagger's eye constantly scanned around her for danger.

"You're probably right. We should rest some. At least the countryside appears hospitable for us to find new steeds. I promise I won't lose my temper if any of them complain about how I behaved the other day."

Alania said nothing. She bent down to drink her own fill. Upon finishing moments later, she dipped in her right hand and waved her left over the water. "Oh my, I can still draw water," Alania exclaimed as she drew forth a globe of water in her right hand.

"Is that good?"

"Yes! It means that I haven't completely lost my magic. Very likely, I'm being blocked."

"There is evil afoot?"

"Not necessarily. It could be merely a way of sending for me."

"Why not just send a messenger?"

"There are reasons that justify such behavior. Perhaps it is too urgent and too far for a butterfly to travel with a messenger. Perhaps it is the only safe way to communicate. This might be meant to put me on my guard so that no harm will come to me."

"Seems silly to me that you'd be served by taking away almost all your power."

"I still have Cidra."

For a moment, Jodry considered her words. He realized a moment later that she was right. Her other powers were mostly useless in battle. Her real defense was almost always relegated to Cidra. Had she been more powerful, she would have needed a crystalline dagger to protect her. As it was, seers were almost always given such protection by those more powerful. Alania had received her servant when she could barely speak as a toddler. The bond between them was strong and comfortable to both as they fully understood each other and knew of each other's needs.

"If you're being summoned, shouldn't we hurry? Maybe I should let you travel on ahead since you can move faster without me."

"Summoned or not, speed is not called for under the circumstances. If this is a summoning, it's clear even though I cannot foresee the future right now that we should travel cautiously. We shall rest. Then we'll resume our journey together."

Alania and Jodry halted at the edge of the short sandy bluff. He gazed along the edge for an easy way down in consideration of his leg. She was staring off into the distance as if she could see something that he couldn't.

"Is something wrong?"

"No, I thought I heard humming."

"Mounts? Then we might ride over that desert before us?"

Alania nodded her head. As she did, she drew from beneath her robe a leather satchel. Opening it, she reached in with her right hand and waved her left over it so that a globe of water could be drawn. She held it out as an offering while reaching into another satchel beneath her robe with her left hand to find sugar. Moments later, the offering was complete.

"I hear it now. You're right. Hummers are heading in our direction," Jodry said.

The small herd of hummers slowed down upon catching the scent of Alania's offering. Within moments, several had maneuvered into position before her and hovered on wings that beat so fast most people saw only a blur.

"We need a ride. I have little to offer now, but my honor is unblemished. Upon my honor, I promise fair compensation." Alania said softly.

Several of the hummers glanced back and forth between Alania and Jodry. Several took note of Cidra tucked in Alania's sash.

"I am unworthy. Leave me in this desert, but please carry my friend," Jodry said.

Two of the hummers slowly approached Alania and dipped their beaks into the offering, accepting the contract.

"Are they communicating with your dagger?" Jodry asked as he noticed his mount lag back once more and look over

Alania's direction. He had to grip tighter for a moment so that he wouldn't fall off. If he did, the fall would be much worse than the one in which he broke his leg as he was considerably higher than before.

"I believe so. Quite likely they understand more of Cidra's language than I do," Alania replied as Jodry's mount surged back into the lead. "I think that Cidra's directing them on where we need to go."

"What if we get to wherever it is and find out that there's big trouble waiting for us?"

"If that happens, then we'll do our best to survive and try to help whoever might be summoning me."

"You believe that someone's calling you?" Jodry asked.

"I'm hoping that's why my powers are mostly blocked. I'm also hoping that it's for the purpose of helping someone in need."

"What you're saying is that we'll be in big trouble if it isn't."

"We could be. I'm trying to look at this from a good angle," Alania said.

The hummers descended to the desert floor. From the height they had been at, Alania and Jodry both knew that the desert ended only a short distance ahead. Even so, below them was a scraggly, scrub brush type of countryside. They long ago passed over the last of the sandy portions of the Dark Desert, so named because its sands were black and kill ignorant or unwary quicker than any other desert they knew of. Even the Great Desert was safer to travel, though larger in every respect.

Alania looked around as the hummers touched down and briefly ceased beating their wings so that she and Jodry could dismount. "Surely I will pay you, but there's naught around here that I can transform for you," Alania said as she carefully dismounted off so that the hummer's feathers wouldn't be damaged.

"They're looking at Cidra, again," Jodry said.

Alania drew Cidra from her sash and stared into Cidra's eye. A few blinks later, Alania replaced Cidra within the sash and then reached beneath her robe to her satchels. Moments later, she held out another globe for the two hummers to consume. As they did, she turned her head toward Jodry. "Cidra assures me this will satisfy our contract with them. You were right about there being danger ahead. We're to travel the rest of the way on foot."

Jodry instinctively felt for his short sword to ensure that it could be unsheathed in a hurry if danger presented itself. "If there's danger, I'll try to be ready," he said as the hummers took flight to leave them standing alone once more.

"Then we might as well continue," Alania said.

Jodry's eyes widened as he observed something for the first time that he had only heard about in stories. He couldn't give his attention to Cidra whose crystalline blade was now glowing with a rose color. His reaction, of course, caught Alania's attention. She glanced down at Cidra, then shoved Jodry off balance so that he fell. At the same time, she dropped Cidra and dropped to the ground. Even as she released her hold on Cidra, Cidra was already sprouting crystalline wings for its flight. Sounding like a miniature hummer, Cidra flew off in attack even as several arrows passed over Alania and Jodry.

Jodry awkwardly drew his sword while ignoring the throbbing pain that shot through his body from his broken leg. He rolled onto his back and glanced about to see where Alania and any threats were positioned in relation to himself. He was barely aware of the first arrows that just missed striking his body. He easily caught sight of the second wave of arrows t

slammed into the ground as near misses. "Roll so they can't get their aim on us!"

Screams filled the air moments later. Only one arrow flew past Alania and Jodry. Then another scream sounded brief. Jodry lifted his head as he paused rolling to avoid receiving an arrow. He knew he was taking a chance, but he also knew that he couldn't keep rolling forever. Not in his condition. As it was, he caught sight of Cidra winging its way back to Alania. Blood dripped from what was once more a clear crystalline blade.

Alania halted her own rolling motion when she heard Cidra approach her. She sat up and held out her right hand so Cidra could land. Nothing needed to be said as her eyes and its did all their talking.

Jodry sat up as well upon seeing Cidra fly to Alania. He sheathed his sword while feeling a bit useless in the short skirmish that had just taken place. He hadn't managed to defend anyone, not even himself.

"Common bandits."

"You can see again?" Jodry asked.

"No, I can't. Cidra told me. We surprised them in their camp. They're not involved with why we're here."

"I get the feeling that you're trying to warn me that we might encounter worse."

"I wish I knew," Alania said as she placed Cidra back inside her sash.

Jodry halted as Alania stopped in front of him to stare ahead at the village. Small and isolated, considering its location near the Dark Desert, it was still large enough to be a village. People lived within its confines and somehow managed to make out a living.

Alania gasped.

"What's wrong?" Jodry asked as he reached out to steady her. His other hand shrugged the captured bow off his shoulder. He'd not rely solely upon his sword if another fight was imminent.

"My vision has returned. I know now why we're here. We seek another just beginning to talk. I am seeing part of her at this very moment."

"I don't understand."

"We seek another with sight. Rather, she soon will have sight."

"Amazing. I've never been in the presence of two seers before."

"You won't be, to my knowledge. She is receiving my power already. That is what drew me here. She is ready to receive my full power and my body is ready to release it."

"You're going to lose your power forever?" Jodry asked.

"Yes, but is that so bad? Think about it. Soon I'll have the one thing I've most wanted in my life. Freedom to live my life in exchange for the power I held isn't such a bad trade. Sure, I'll probably miss helping out others as I did before, but I don't need power to offer a hand. You've done that and you've certainly held less power than I. Now it is time for me to humbly turn over my power. Now I understand why the hummers wouldn't carry us into the village. They knew it would be easier for me to release my responsibility if I entered the village as a commoner."

"I've never thought of you without your power. Not even when it went away the other day. I felt sure then that you'd

recover it, though I was concerned that we might have to fight for its return," Jodry said.

Alania stared at Jodry for a moment. A smile graced her face for a moment beneath the hood that perpetually hid most of her features. Had Jodry not been looking straight at her then, he would have missed it.

"Something pleases you?" Jodry asked.

"Yes, your strength and ability to learn from your mistakes."

Jodry blushed. "Yes, I've learned to hold on when a hummer takes off. However, I doubt that I've any real strength."

"You have strength of character, Jodry. I like that in a man."

"You're seeing my future now, aren't you?"

"I'll not deny it. However, I didn't expect to see what I've encountered. For that reason, I can only counsel you that you can expect good things once your leg heals."

"That's as much as you're willing to tell?" Jodry asked.

"My power is fading from me fast. What I couldn't understand as a little girl is only too obvious to me now."

"Why do you have to meet her?"

"Because I have seen what I must do in seeing my first vision of her life. To do anything less would be dishonorable."

"Then we should walk to the village to meet her."

"I think that Karina will be a good seer. She appeared to be from what I could see of her first few years as one."

Alania approached the toddler, Karina. Villagers hadn't failed to notice Alania enter the village in her plain, dark, hooded robe with a crystalline dagger visibly tucked inside her sash. Some moved aside to give her free access rather than make her walk around. Such was the respect that common folk typically gave a seer. Unerringly, she made her way to face the toddler and stopped to kneel down so that they could face each other better.

"Look into my heart with the power you take on. It is a power that has endured for ages and shall endure within you now." Alania drew Cidra from her sash and held Cidra in her open palm. At the same time, Alania removed the sash from her own waist with her free hand and wrapped it around Karina. "Cidra will guard you against evil," Alania said as she held Cidra so that Karina and Cidra could eye each other. "Take Cidra into your care."

Alania gently pressed Cidra into Karina's open palm a moment later. A tear fell from Alania's cheek to splash upon Cidra's blade. In response, Cidra glowed an icy violet and pulsed with a humming that could only be taken as a fond farewell.

Dropping her hood in public for the first time in years, Alania stood before Karina for a moment. Then Alania turned away and walked to rejoin Jodry who had watched from a short distance.

"I thought you'd have a lot more to tell her," Jodry said as he turned to walk away with Alania.

"She learned most of what she needs to know from using her new power to see my life. Everything I do for the next few years will be guiding her."

"I didn't know you'd have to give up your dagger to her."

"She needs Cidra more than I. Besides, I have you to protect me."

**The End**