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Ars Nova Magica

Book One:

The Maiyim Bourne

By

Jonathan Edward Feinstein

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Author's Foreword

The start of a new series is the second most exciting part of writing for me. The first, of course, is the conclusion. But where a conclusion is a bittersweet experience, the beginning is pure joy and optimism.

I have a certain fondness for *The Maiyim Tetralogy*. It was my first attempt at a complex fantasy world that I designed entirely from scratch. *World of Water* was also my first attempt at a serious fantasy adventure. Previous to that I had only written humorous stories... well aside from assignments way, way back in creative writing classes.

I wasn't completely happy with my attempts at humor. The other members of my writers' group liked them well enough, but I always felt they could have been funnier. I just didn't have the knack of shooting off rapid-fire surreal humor like Douglas Adams and Terry Pratchett. I still don't, but these days I've gotten more comfortable with my brand of humor and if my characters aren't hitching a ride across the galaxy or falling off the edge of Discworld, so be it.

With *The Maiyim Tetralogy*, I discovered that not only could I make up an entire world which turned out to be easier than I expected, but I could use my humorous bent to tell an essentially serious story. By the way, it was also my first attempt at a planned series of novels. For something filled with firsts, I think I managed to pull it off okay.

So when I finally concluded the series with *Gods of the Air* I was not ready to say goodbye to my first world. I've told the story of how I came up with the idea for *Ars Nova Magica* elsewhere so I won't repeat it here, but I knew from the start that I did not want to tell more stories about Silverwind and Oceanvine. I mean, I like those characters a lot, but I felt I had pretty much gone as far as I could with them. Their later accomplishments (some of which are mentioned in this story) were impressive, but not particularly conducive to adventure stories, and I also did not want to write the prequel stories of Silverwind and Windchime. Too much of that sort of thing and I could end up writing the penny dreadfuls that were a running gag in the first series.

The Maiyim Tetralogy was set in a world that spanned a period roughly analogous to the late 1890's and the first decade of the Twentieth Century. Pushing the timeline forward sixty years turned out to be more work than designing Maiyim in the first place.

Some authors use notebooks for their stories, some plot directly on their computers. When I'm planning a story, I practically live on legal pads and ballpoint pens. I drained two new pens dry and lost track of all the legal pads I consumed in the process of bringing Maiyim into the latter half of the Twentieth Century. The world grew as I wrote the first series, but while I knew from the start what I wanted the world to be like in the second series I had to work out how it got to be that way. Then I had two new main characters to develop. One of them was no more difficult to develop than any other I've come up with, but the other, by necessity, has a back story three generations long.

It was almost with a sense of relief that I finally started writing. All the planning worked out well for me and I breezed through the writing process of the rough draft in record time. That record was broken when I wrote *The Cold, Clear Skies of Midnight*, but that is another story... literally. I get nervous when I write that quickly. The process is so exciting that I worry about the story getting away from me, so I put this story through more proofings than I ever have before too. The result is I liked it. I liked it a lot. I liked it so much, I began to think I was keeping it to myself. So, finally here it is. I hope you all like it as much as I do.

By the way, I'm not sure anyone is going to believe me but this story was entirely written before the tsunami of December, 2004 in the Indian Ocean basin. I remember TV news commentators saying most Americans would hear that word and think a tsunami was some sort of Italian sausage. I also remember thinking what morons those commentators must be. I've known what a tsunami was since I was in grade school. Admittedly, back then we called them tidal waves, which I learned was an erroneous term in the *Weekly Reader* roughly forty years ago. Okay, I admit I live on the coast so the possibility of a large destructive wave is more likely here than in, say, Missouri (where river flooding is a greater likelihood), but heck, I live on the East coast. Tsunamis are possible here, but not as likely as around the Pacific basin. Oh well.

Regular readers know that rather than ask for money for myself I usually suggest various charities you may consider donating a dollar to two to. With the recent devastation in the areas surrounding the Indian Ocean, instead of those listed in the books, might I suggest sending a donation to one of the accredited charities that are collecting for disaster relief for the people who have been affected by the earthquakes and tsunamis? There are quite a few of them to choose between from the American Red Cross to The Jewish Federation of Greater New Bedford (which I mention in the forewords of some of my stories). Remember when donating, to specify that you want your donation to go toward the relief of the 2004 tsunami victims of the Indian Ocean area.

Jonathan Feinstein

Westport, Mass.

May 21, 2005

The *Maiyim Bourne*

Prologue

"Ready about!" Sir Honnas Quait, captain-owner of the *Emmine's Pride*, shouted to his crew. "Hard alee!"

The *Emmine's Pride* was a sleek yacht with a tough fiberglass hull. She boasted a mast almost twice as tall as her hull was long, teak woodwork and a cabin capable of sleeping six comfortably. Like all racing yachts on *Maiyim*, she also had a pair of hydrofoils that would lift her hull up and out of the water when sailing directly downwind of a stiff breeze with her spinnaker deployed.

Her design was based on the legendary *Maiyim Bourne* a boat that had been sailed across the world by the famous wizards Silverwind and Oceanvine. The stories said that the *Maiyim Bourne* could hydroplane with only her Granomish jib raised in moderately windy conditions, but Sir Honnas doubted that. So many boat builders had studied the *Maiyim Bourne* in the most minute detail. If she could fly in a moderate breeze then surely all those boats built along her lines should have as well, and yet they could

not. Obviously the stories had improved in the telling.

Emmine's Pride came about and rounded the southern cape of the isle of Kemalart in the archipelago known on older charts as "The Southern Chain" although modern maps labeled those islands as the royal colony of Sutheria. She was surrounded by similar boats in one of the closest races Sir Honnas had ever experienced.

They were racing on a quartering wind as they sailed through Edmond's Hole, the gap between Kemalart and Lamona. Across the way they could see Mount Kol, an ancient and dormant volcano and the northern shore of Lamona.

They were in the third race of five of the Silamon Cup trials, the most prestigious and longest running yacht race on Maiyim. Every four years crews from all over Maiyim competed for the Silamon Cup. So far it had been won only by boats from Emmine although there had been a few close calls posed by boats from Granom and Bellinen. This year over thirty yachts had entered the competition, but most had been winnowed out in the preliminary trials until only one crew from each nation made it to the finals.

The human crew of the *Emmine's Pride* had won the first two races and could sew it all up today with a three race sweep, but at the moment they were far from assured of a victory. The Orentan crew from Bellinen was staying several lengths ahead of them while the mixed crew from the Isle of Fire were less than a length behind. The whole race could hang on how well they came out of Edmond's Hole. As they did so they would need to come about once more and then sail with the wind on the final leg back to Silamon. The key would be how smoothly they could drop the jib and raise the spinnaker while deploying the hydrofoils. A small mistake could send them to the back of the pack with the Granomen or the boat from Wennil.

Sir Honnas was not overly worried about that. His crew had practiced the maneuver until they could have done it blind-folded. Even so, a chance wave at the wrong moment or a slick spot on the deck could throw them off. Win or lose, Sir Honnas looked forward to the parties that night in Silamon. They were the best part of the Silamon Cup, he thought. He and his crew would relax and blow off steam until dawn and it would be a good night even if they lost today.

It had been a long day; up just two hours past midnight, the crews were in their boats and crossing the starting line before the sun was up. With Midsummer just a week past it meant the day at this latitude was nearly twenty hours long and that was a good thing if they expected to complete the course around Kemalart and return to Silamon by dusk.

Finally, the marker buoy came into sight. "Stand by," Sir Honnas ordered. He didn't need to tell his crewmen what to stand by for; they all knew. A short eternity passed as they approached the buoy. "Ready about! Hard alee!"

He swung the rudder and the boat turned to run with the wind even as two crewmen pulled the jib down. Then as soon as the jib was down and removed from the stay, the rainbow spinnaker was raised in its place just as the boat completed the turn. Two other crewmen raced to deploy the hydrofoils and suddenly *Emmine's Pride* was aloft and shooting ahead of all the other boats. It was not until then that Sir Honnas could take the time to see just what was going wrong.

An impossibly high wave was rising ahead of them, coming up quickly from the south and east. It was just starting to break as they sailed up its side and crashed through the foaming water at its crest. *Emmine's Pride* sailed through the top of that wave with such velocity she was suddenly in thin air on the lee side of the wave and falling bow first into the sea beyond.

They did not quite crash, but there was an ear-splitting shriek as the foils bit into the lee side of the wave. The boat slewed around as one of the foils was ripped from its mount and she slid down the watery mountain stern first. There was a great ripping sound from the bow and Sir Honnas was dimly aware that the spinnaker was rent in several places.

When, at last, *Emmine's Pride* came to rest, Sir Honnas looked around and asked, "Is anyone hurt? Are we all still aboard?"

"Aye," several crewmen replied. Fortunately they escaped with a few bruises, but their erstwhile competitors had not been as lucky.

Behind them the great wave smashed its way through Edmond's Hole, throwing the other yachts around like toys in a child's bathtub. The Orentan boat ended up on her side with her bowsprit piercing the hull of the boat from the Isle of Fire.

Sir Honnas tried turning *Emmine's Pride* back around to help the survivors, but found her response sluggish. Looking over the stern he announced, "I think we lost most of the rudder." Slowly, he forced the boat back and called his first mate over. "Nialen, take the helm. I'm going to radio for help. Sure hope there's someone out there listening."

Rallena

One

The Lady Elinor Jenynges caught a tear threatening to escape her left eye. She had no sooner mopped it up when two more rolled down her right cheek. Trying to catch those only made it worse and soon she gave up the battle and just let them flow. At the age of nineteen she told herself she ought to be mature enough not to weep, even at a funeral and especially one for an old lady she had known for barely two years. But the hymn the small choir was singing as part of the graveside service had a heart-breakingly sad melody combined with words of hope and prayer and it struck at Elie's core.

Finally when her kerchief was soaking wet, a tall young man with light brown hair and hazel eyes near her handed her another. "That hymn always gets to me too," he whispered.

Elie turned around and recognized Sixtus Hardisty, a graduate student her roommate had once tried to fix her up with. The date had been pleasant enough; dinner and a movie. Six had been a perfect gentleman, but they couldn't seem to find much in the way of common ground. They hadn't gone out again, although they did occasionally meet in the Student Union and when they did they sometimes enjoyed a cup of coffee together.

"Thanks, Six," she replied, proceeding to mop up still more tears with the scrap of cotton he had handed her. The wind started blowing, whipping Elie's very long, almost black hair into her face where it stuck to the tears still coming from her deep brown eyes. When the hymn ended, however, Elie managed to quell her rebellious tears in time to listen to the eulogy.

"Doctor Oceanvine was a most remarkable woman," the priestess of Emmine began. "In her youth she

was knighted by the King of Granom for services to the Crown. She was also the first woman to ever matriculate at the University at Querna. Younger people may not understand just how amazing that is because it was Doctor Oceanvine who later founded the League for Women's Rights which spearheaded the successful struggle for women's suffrage in Emmine and Granom. She taught in all three Universities and several smaller colleges as well as founding a school of her own. Her ground-breaking work on wards is still the premier work on that subject sixty years later and is the basis for many facets of our modern technology.

"Further, she was a true wizard in a day when only a handful of men were able to achieve that level of mastery in general practice magic," the priestess continued. "It embarrassed her greatly, but she was featured as the supporting character to her husband, Silverwind the Great, in a series of novels that were very popular in their day. But that was nothing compared to the impressions she made on her many students.

"After finishing her work on wards she went on to study botany and marine biology and made major contributions to both of those fields as well.

"Doctor Oceanvine was born in Medda on the island of Kern; the daughter of a blacksmith. She paid for her lessons with money she earned by sweeping out fireplaces and running numerous small errands and she learned those lessons so well, that she was able to earn a full scholarship at the University at Randona. After earning her journeyman's degree, she met and went to work for her future husband, the Wizard Silverwind, and together they developed the bases for most of the modern conveniences we take so much for granted.

"Others may have been given the credit for perfecting the telephone, radio, television, electric lights and so much more, but without the research by Silverwind and Oceanvine that joined magic with the physical sciences, none of those modern marvels could have come to be."

The eulogy went on for another quarter of an hour. When it was over the presiding priest of Emtos led the attendees in the concluding prayers. Oceanvine's casket was lowered slowly into her grave and then the priest picked up a chrome-plated spade and shoveled in two measures of dirt from the pile beside the grave.

Next the priestess of Emmine did the same thing. One by one, all the attendees took their turns; starting with King Hacon Ancel and his queen, and proceeding to all the others in the crowd. Then after adding their two shovels full of dirt, each participant joined the slow recession from the cemetery.

Over two hundred people had attended the funeral so by the time Elie and Six, who had stood at the back, got their turns, the grave was already filled and they had to remove dirt from the grave and replace it in order to participate in the ancient ritual.

Elie paused at the edge of the cemetery and drew Six aside. "Six, would you do me a favor?"

"Sure," Six shrugged. "What?"

"Will you come with me to the Museum of the Royal Institute?"

"Right now?" Six asked. "Why?"

"I made her a promise," Elie explained, "but I'm going to need help to keep it."

“Well, sure, why not?” Six agreed. “It’s not like I really want to follow the recessional back to town. Let’s go.”

“Wait,” Elie stopped him, looking back to see an old man making his way toward Oceanvine’s grave. The man was tall with thinning long white hair and beard. He wore a shirt of Orentan silk emblazoned with a bright floral pattern that mixed vivid shades of red, yellow, white and blue that was considered garish in any part of the world except the Bellinen archipelago. What caught her eye, though, was that he walked with a long gold-colored staff, which she found quaint and old fashioned. “Who is that?” she asked as the old man slowly knelt beside the grave.

“Wizard Candle,” Six replied. “I work for him.”

“Wizard?” Elie asked disbelievingly. “Not Doctor?”

“He prefers to be called a wizard. You know, he actually took the old wizards’ exam on one of the Five Demons. He told me that the oral and written exams that went along with it were some of the toughest he ever encountered too. A wizard candidate could be and usually was tested on anything and everything his examiners could think of. Wizard Candle’s one of the smartest men you’ll ever meet and he says he generally breezed through examinations, but not those. A lot of the tests covered subjects he never studied. It must have been amazing!”

“What was his specialty?” Elie asked.

“I don’t think he ever really had one,” Six told her, “although his dissertation was on creative magic, an extrapolation of some of Wizard Onestone’s work. Really advanced stuff. It’s hard to believe any one mage could do some of the stuff he had to have done to research it. And in spite of what the priestess said about Doctor Oceanvine, Wizard Candle had a lot to do with developing modern technology as well.

“Strange thing, though,” he continued as they walked on. “I never realized he knew Doctor Oceanvine. Well, they were both on faculty so I suppose I shouldn’t be surprised, but he never even mentioned he planned to attend her funeral today.”

“I saw him there once or twice,” Elie informed Six.

“There? Oh yes. You worked for Doctor Oceanvine, didn’t you?”

“I was her companion,” Elie replied. “She paid me, though I really didn’t need or want the money. It was just an after-classes thing to do in my sophomore year; I’d go to her house and we’d chat over cups of tea. She’d tell me stories about some of the things she did when she was my age. She was a real hell-raiser, did you know that? Her grades were high enough that she should have been valedictorian of her class, but she was also on probation over half the time she was in school here. I enjoyed it so much, I kept going back to visit this year as well. And she always insisted on paying me. ‘Go on, girl,’ she’d tell me. ‘Buy yourself something pretty. You deserve it.’ I don’t think she realized I’m sort of an heiress; we never discussed my family or that my Dad’s the Earl of Olen.”

Elie laughed nervously then continued, “The family would be scandalized if they knew I had been working as a paid companion. They’d tell me it was beneath me. If I wanted to work for a living it would be better to go into public service or join the Royal Friendship Corps or something like that. I don’t regret it though. I got to know, even if just a little bit, one of the most famous women in the world.

“Well, anyway, I did see him at her house a couple of times, but I never knew his name and when he was there he and Oceanvine always spoke privately. What does he teach?”

“Not much these days,” Six replied. “He conducts the occasional graduate seminar on any number of subjects, but mostly what he does is research, and before you can ask, on anything and everything, just as though he was trying to prepare his students for an old-time wizard’s exam. Too bad he’s the last wizard.”

“What do you mean?” Elie asked.

“You know they changed the academic titles from journeyman and wizard to bachelor of the arts or the sciences and doctor, right? The title of master remained the same, but when they changed the title of wizard to doctor they also redefined that level of academic achievement. A doctor of the sciences, for example, is a highly educated specialist. A wizard these days is considered a generalist and most of the doctors consider them just highly decorated dilettantes. Wizard Candle disagrees, of course. He says...”

Elie and Six continued walking away from the cemetery and didn’t look back so they never saw the Wizard Candle look carefully around him to make sure there was no one in sight. They also never saw him stand back up and step away from Oceanvine’s grave as it opened up again and her casket rose up into the air while the dirt from the grave filled itself back in again. They also never heard Candle murmur, “Come along, Sis. Time to go home.” Then the coffin floated behind him as he left the cemetery.

The Museum of the Emmine Royal Institute of History was a large and fascinating collection of buildings. Each building was dedicated to a different subject of Maiyim’s past with a collection of displays and artifacts that were considered the finest and most complete anywhere in the world. It was to the newest building, the History of Transportation Museum, however, that Elie dragged Six. Here, on the front lawn stood the *Hope of Nildar*, the first airplane to fly non-stop from Randona to Merinne and then from Merinne to Querna. The plane was open to the public so that children and adults alike could sit in the same seat her brave pilot, Sir Chas Kellin, had decades earlier. Very few people knew that seat had been replaced a dozen times since then.

The centerpiece of the entire collection was proudly on display just inside and took up the center of the museum’s circular foyer. There floated a very modern-looking yacht suspended from the ceiling over a large hole in the floor so that the deep keel and rudder stuck down to the lower level, the tall mast and unfurled sail reached up past three balconies and her deck was just a few inches above floor level. Her hydrofoils were fully extended beneath her white fiberglass hull on which the only markings were a thin blue stripe at her waterline and her name emblazoned across her stern; *Maiyim Bourne*.

As Six and Elie entered the museum, after paying the token admission price, a tour guide was lecturing, “Yes, folks, this is the same boat on which Silverwind the Great and his companions sailed around the world six decades ago, righting wrongs, saving lives and according to some tales, ridding our beloved Maiyim of demons.” The guide laughed lightly at that and many of the tourists chuckled along with him. Who in this day and age believed in demons after all?

“But no matter what they did aboard this boat, the *Maiyim Bourne* set a standard in boat design that revolutionized pleasure sailing the world over. Old Silverwind always claimed the boat had been divinely designed and built by Nildar and Wenni, but most scholars agree he was merely being his usual modest

self and that what he really meant was that he felt divinely inspired when he built the boat thereby inventing fiberglass, hydrofoils, and the self-steering autopilot mechanism, not to mention the revolutionary shape of the hull and keel.”

Elie and Six continued to listen to the guide as he discussed various other exhibits in the hall, but when he led the tour out of the foyer, Elie hung back and leaned over the rail to get a better look at the boat. The hole in the floor was wide but not circular so that the bowsprit was a mere three feet from one end of the oval opening and the stern about four feet. The sides were at least five feet beyond the rail, however.

“Now what?” Six asked Elie.

“I need to get on board,” she replied softly to make sure nobody could overhear her.

“What?” he asked, astonished. “Why?”

“Oceanvine made me promise her I would,” Elie told him. “She said I would find something that is mine on board.”

“That’s crazy!” Six exclaimed.

“I’ll say it is,” a voice chuckled. They turned hastily to see Wizard Candle standing right behind them. “That’s the wrong boat.”

“What do you mean, sir?” Six asked as politely as he could in his shock at being caught out.

“I mean that is not the *Maiyim Bourne*,” Candle replied. “I ought to know since I’m the one who donated her to the museum.”

“Why?” Six frowned.

“It’s a very long story,” Candle waved the matter away. “The point at the moment is that I’m here to keep a promise.”

“You too?” Elie asked curiously.

“Yeah,” Candle chuckled again. “It appears your great grandmother had surprises in store for all of us.”

“Who?” Elie asked, this time in tones that implied she must have misheard the old wizard.

“Never mind that for now,” Candle told her, “Tell me, Lady Elinor.” Elie flinched a bit at her own name. She had never liked it much and most people, even her teachers, called her Elie. “Tell me. Do you believe a person’s last request should be respected? Assuming, of course, it is honorable to do so?”

“Of course,” Elie responded automatically. “But what has that got to do with my great grandmother? She died before I was born. Her portrait is in on the main stairway at home.”

“Wrong side of the family, dear,” Candle replied. Elie frowned, but before she could ask him to clarify what he meant, he continued on. “Anyway, Vine told me to come here, well not here, actually, but she made me promise to take anyone I found trying to get on board the boat to her funeral.”

“But we just came from her funeral,” Elie replied.

“No,” Candle shook his head, “her real funeral. I must say, Sixtus, I didn’t expect to find you here as well, but then I’m not sure who I expected to find.”

“Sir,” Six began, “I doubt, Doctor Oceanvine expected me to be here either. I’m only here because Elie asked me to help her. Perhaps I should let you two go do whatever it is she had in mind.”

“Nope,” Candle told him decisively, “I promised her I’d drag along anyone who was here and a promise is a promise. Come along, I’m going to need a driver anyway and I know I can trust you to keep your mouth shut.”

“A driver, sir?” Six asked as Candle led them back out of the museum. Just outside there was a long dark brown car, a large station wagon, parked in the museum’s loading zone. A policewoman was nearby and looked as though she was considering decorating the car with a parking ticket, but Candle spoke to her for a few moments and she smiled and continued on.

“Well?” he turned toward Six and Elie. “Get in. We have a long trip ahead of us. We’ll have to all squeeze into the front seat, the back is rather full. No, Sixtus, I already told you. You drive.”

Six shrugged and started walking around the car. Elie poked her head inside and saw a coffin in the back.

“Isn’t that...?” she started asking.

“Vine’s remains,” Candle cut her off. “Yes. It’s another part of the promise. In you go, I’m sure I’ll have plenty of time to explain along the way.”

“You’d better,” Elie replied nervously. Candle merely raised an eyebrow and gave her a crooked smile.

Six, finding the keys already in the ignition, started the engine up and drove away from the museum.

“Just head for thePanrallen Highway ,” Candle instructed him.

“The highway?” Six repeated. “Where are we going?”

“Renton,” Candle told him. “Ever hear of it?”

“Seen it on a map,” Six replied, “butRenton ’s on the other side of Rallena. It must be twenty hours away.”

“You’re spoiled,” Candle laughed. “When I was your age this trip would have taken two weeks each way, assuming we were in a hurry. That is, unless you took a ship across theGreatBay , but even that would have taken a few days.”

“But driving all the way toRenton ?”

“I didn’t want to hire a plane,” Candle explained. “The fewer people who know what we are doing the better.”

“And just what are we doing?” Six demanded, turning left on High Street, “uh, sir?” he added belatedly.

“Not too bad, Sixtus,” Candle remarked. “I think you went almost five minutes without calling me ‘sir.’ Let’s see if you can go even longer. We’re going to be spending a lot of time together the next day or two and while I appreciate the courtesy, I fear it will get a bit tiresome after fifteen hours or so.”

“If that’s the case,” Six replied, “maybe you should call me Six. Except for you only my parents call me Sixtus and then only if I’m in trouble.”

“Six it is, then,” Candle agreed.

“Why are we going to Renton ?” Elie asked a few minutes later.

“Haven’t you been listening?” Candle retorted. “Think about it a moment. There’s a coffin in the back of the car and I told you I was taking you to a funeral. Put it together for yourself.”

“No,” Elie shook her head as Six took the turn on to the Panrallen Highway , “I figured that out. Why Renton ?”

“Because that is where she wanted to be buried,” Candle told her.

“Then why wasn’t she? What was the point of the funeral this afternoon?”

“There wasn’t any point to it at all,” Candle countered, “That’s why I didn’t show up until it was over. As to why, well that’s a long story.”

“I appear to have at least twenty hours free at the moment,” Elie pointed out.

“So you do,” Candle agreed.

“Hey!” she exclaimed before Candle could go on. “This is an overnight trip.”

“To say the least,” Six agreed.

“I’m eighty years old and a senior member of the University faculty,” Candle told her dryly. “Don’t you think I qualify as a chaperone?”

“Chaperone? Nobody bothers with chaperones anymore,” Elie shot back. “Not for men and women of college age.”

“Really?” Candle asked, “Then the Duke of North Horalia ’s daughters must be younger than they look.”

“Oh, well, North Horalia ,” Elie replied dismissively. “They’re a bit old fashioned there.”

“Really,” Candle replied dryly.

Elie didn’t catch the sarcasm. “Well, it’s understandable,” she shrugged. “The island is so far from the capital they are bound to be a bit out of date, aren’t they? But I wasn’t worried about being chaperoned. I don’t have an overnight bag with me. I don’t even have a toothbrush. We should go back and pack.”

“No time,” Candle told her. “We’re running late already. The...” he paused as though searching for the right word, “There are people waiting for us.”

“But I don’t have a change of clothes,” Elie protested.

“I’ll buy you a new dress if you want,” Candle told her. “Several, if it will make you happy.”

“I don’t want a new dress,” Elie complained.

“A pair of jeans and a blouse, perhaps?” Candle suggested. “Really, don’t worry about it. I’ll buy what we need when we need it.”

“How about dinner?” Six asked.

“Are you hungry already?” Candle asked him.

“Just thinking ahead,” Six shrugged.

“Good,” Candle told him approvingly. “It’s always good to have a plan. Being able to wing it, though, that’s good too. No need to worry, however, there are restaurants every hour or so along the highway.”

“Not very good ones,” Six pointed out.

“They’re okay. The food’s a lot better than some of the dumps I’ve been in, it just isn’t gourmet fair. There’s a standard sort of mediocrity to the food is all, but the places are clean and you know the food won’t make you sick and the clam cakes and chowder they serve aren’t really all that bad at all. I like the ice cream too,” Candle added.

“Great, I’ll buy you a chocolate double dip,” Six retorted.

“I prefer the chocolate chip,” Candle told him, yawning loudly and theatrically. “It’s been a very long day. Wake me up when you’re ready for dinner.” A minute later Candle was apparently deeply asleep and Elie realized that he hadn’t really told them anything.

Two

They drove all night and the next morning. Some time after midnight, Six declared he was too tired to drive, but Candle, who had woken up for dinner and then went right back to sleep, stayed asleep even as Six pulled the car over to the side of the road.

“I’m wide awake,” Elie told Six and they traded places. “Did I sleep through the last petrol stop?” she asked, seeing the indicator said they had a full tank.

“We haven’t stopped for petrol,” Six told her. “The needle hasn’t moved since we left Randona.”

“Six, that was what?” Elie countered, “Seven hundred miles ago?”

“Closer to eight hundred,” Six replied.

“That’s impossible,” Elie replied. “No car gets mileage like that. The needle must be stuck. How long has it been since the last petrol station?”

“I think we passed one about twenty minutes ago.”

“The next one must be at least thirty to forty miles ahead. Maybe I’d better turn around and try to get back to the last one before we run out of fuel.”

“Just keep driving, Miss Jenynges,” Candle told her. “We won’t run out of gas.” Then he started snoring again.

“Gas?” Elie asked.

“Short for gasoline,” Six told her. “I think that’s what the Orenta call petrol.”

“Oh. My folks would be livid if they knew what I was doing,” Elie fretted.

“Why?” Six asked. “Don’t you have a driver’s license?”

“Of course I do,” Elie shot back. “I mean driving all over Rallena with a dead woman in the back of a car just because that woman made me promise to sneak into an old yacht.”

“I’d have thought they’d find it more amusing than shocking,” Six replied.

“You don’t know my family,” Elie responded. “Strict, straight-laced and ever vigilant against the hint of scandal.”

“They must be the only noble household that is then,” Six replied.

“Not really,” Elie told him defensively. “You only hear about the exceptions in the newspapers. I mean what sort of headline would ‘Lord Waasisname Found to be a Perfect Gentleman’ be?”

“Aside from a bad pun?” Six asked.

Elie realized what she had said. “An inaccurate one as well,” she replied a moment later. “Under the somewhat antiquated feudal system nobility ranks above gentry, but yes, aside from being a bad pun.”

“I guess it depends on what he had been accused of in the first place,” Six commented.

“Good point,” Elie conceded, “but let’s assume he hadn’t been accused of anything and that the headline just appeared out of the blue.”

“Then I’d say the journalist who wrote the story was trying to imply just the opposite,” Six responded instantly.

“You have a suspicious mind,” she accused him.

“It comes from having spent the last year as Wizard Candle’s lab assistant. He has a talent for getting people to see the world through a new set of eyes. Just wait; you’ll see for yourself.”

“I see the world well enough already,” Elie replied defensively.

“Do you?”

“What do you mean by that?” she demanded.

“Elie, you’re okay, but the life you’ve lived so far. Priviledged is the word, I think.”

“Sounds like you really mean ‘sheltered,’” she replied coldly. Six remained silent. “I was not sheltered!”

“Of course you were,” Six told her calmly. “Oh you probably have a better grasp of the politics of the royal court than I have, but how many meals have you been forced to miss simply because you didn’t have the money to buy food? Have you been forced into prostitution? Have you been beaten or raped by a member of your family? Have you...”

“Of course I haven’t and I dare say neither have you.”

“Well, not the latter stuff, of course, but I’ve had to go hungry a few times because my dad’s boat came back without much of a catch or too damaged for there to be any profits. Do you know how a fisherman gets paid?”

“By selling his fish,” Elie replied carefully.

“Naturally,” Six nodded, “but before anyone can get paid, the boat’s expenses have to be paid off, then the profit is split. Half of it goes to the owner of the boat.”

“That seems fair,” Elie commented. “He takes the financial risk after all.”

“Fair? Maybe, but whether it is or not, that’s the way it is. After that a fisherman’s share depends on his position in the boat. The captain gets a quarter of the profit and the first mate fifteen percent. The rest of the crew splits up the remaining ten percent based on their experience and duties. There’s a fairly complex formula that determines it, but a basic crewman makes only a fraction of one percent.”

“Doesn’t sound like much,” Elie opined.

“Depends on how well the trip went. Catch the right fish at the right time and it can be enough to live on for months or more. Usually, though it’s just enough to get by and sometimes there’s no profit to share at all. A lot of fishermen don’t have the brains to save their money, for that matter. I’ve seen crews come in after a good trip and then spend or gamble away everything they made in a single night. Mom always kept Dad from doing that, but even so, after a bad run meals could get scarce and as you might figure from my name, I come from a large family.”

“And that makes you better than me?” Elie demanded.

“I never said that, I just meant I’ve seen things you haven’t. I’ve been very lucky. I earned nearly a full scholarship to University or else I’d be out on the boats hauling in nets and praying to the gods for a good catch. You’ve always had the money to pay for an education so you never had to work to pay for your books or tuition or any of the other expenses most students have.”

“That’s not my fault,” Elie told him.

“It isn’t,” Six agreed. “It’s just the way it is, but we’ve gone way off on a tangent. All I was saying is that there are many ways to see the world and the more points of view you can acquire the better. Wizard Candle seems to have a way of giving people new insights and I’m not sure how he does it. He doesn’t lecture; not really, but when you listen to him, you just learn even if he’s talking about the weather. I wish

I could do that.”

Elie didn't know what to say to that, so instead she lapsed into silence and without her to prompt him, Six stopped talking as well. He finally broke the silence an hour later.

“Take the next ramp please, Elie,” he requested. It was the entrance to one of the highway's rest areas with a restaurant and petrol station.

“You heard the wizard,” Elie told him. “We won't need fuel.”

“The car doesn't need fuel, but I do,” he replied. “Just an ice cream cone to hold us over until breakfast.”

“I think I'd prefer a cup of coffee, but okay,” she nodded. She drove in and found a parking space near the white-walled restaurant with the bright orange roof.

“Breakfast already?” Candle asked, waking up.

“Just a snack, sir” Six told him.

“Good idea,” Candle decided. “You still owe me an ice cream.”

“So I do. Wait here,” Six told him, once Candle had gotten out of the car to let Six out. He ran into the restaurant and returned a few minutes later with Elie's coffee and two waffle cones filed with double chocolate chip.

Elie was napping when he returned to the car, but she woke up soon enough and took a few sips of coffee before starting the car back up. A few minutes later they were back on the road. Candle nodded off again as soon as he had finished the ice cream and didn't wake up again until they stopped for breakfast. After that he slept until they reached the exit ramp for Renton just before noon.

From descriptions Elie had heard, she expected Renton to be a small village where two roads crossed. At this intersection there would be a village tavern and maybe a dozen houses, but nothing could be farther from the truth. What she found as the car rolled down the ramp from the Panrallen Highway was, in fact, a small city.

The exit ramp left her in a suburban neighborhood, but under Candle's direction she drove past the largely residential neighborhood and into the downtown area. Downtown Renton covered less than forty blocks, but in that area most of the buildings stood three to six stories high. Their route took them past City Hall, a four floor brick building with a huge arched doorway, and a similar building that Candle explained was the main branch of the Renton Public Library. As they headed north out of the business center of the city, the buildings got shorter again as they entered another suburban neighborhood. The houses were larger here than they had been at the east end of town and the yards around them covered an acre or more each.

They drove past a large wooden structure that looked almost like a small manor house, but was actually a hotel and an attached restaurant with a sign out front that merely said “Candle's” “We'll be stay there tonight,” Candle commented, “but keep going straight until you reach the stop sign, then turn left.”

“The Renton School ?” Elie asked, reading a sign at the corner that pointed in the direction they were going.

“Yes,” Candle nodded. “That’s the school Vine founded along with a bit of help from Silverwind and me. When it closed, we gave the buildings to the town. They use the school buildings for the high school and our old house is a museum now.”

“A museum?” Six asked.

“Of course,” Candle replied. “It’s the house Silverwind and Oceanvine lived in. It’s been pretty much kept the way it was when Silverwind died. Hmm, twenty-two years ago that was. I lived there too for a while, but after my wife died I started spending most of the year in Randona when I wasn’t traveling to various parts of the world, that is. There’s the school. It’s the weekend so nobody’s there today. Just drive around back.”

Elie did so and got her first look at the house where Oceanvine had lived before moving to Randona. Oceanvine’s Randona home had been a small, one-floor faculty cottage with only four rooms. The house in Renton, however, was a long, three floor, v-shaped structure with a slate roof and many mullioned windows.

“It’s beautiful!” she gasped, “and so large. My family’s manor isn’t this large, nor as grand, I don’t think.”

“We had to build large,” Candle explained. “When we started the Renton School, the classrooms and dormitories were in the north wing. We didn’t start building the main school building, which was less than half the size of the current school for some years. We didn’t need it at first as we only accepted a dozen students the first few years. However, once it became known we were teaching, mages from all over Maiyim wanted to attend so we needed more room. The town added extensions as their needs grew as well. There was a large barn we used as a laboratory, but that was demolished to make room for the school.

“A barn?” Elie asked.

“Well, when Silverwind started living and working here, he bought a small cottage and a barn. He used the barn for storage and a lab. After the fire, he naturally had a new barn built to serve the same purpose. It was a bit silly of him, I admit, but he was comfortable with the arrangement even though the new house was large enough to hold everything he owned with room for more than we could acquire in a lifetime. Now just continue around the house.”

As Elie steered the car around the north wing of the house she saw four people waiting for them near the trees about one hundred yards from the house. As she got closer, she saw there were two double-width gravestones and in front of one a grave had already been opened. The people were a mixed lot. The men were human; one had fair skin and hair and the other had darker, almost grayish skin that was dark for most humans, but would have been considered light had he been an Orente, and jet black hair. One of the women was an Orente, tall, dark-skinned and elf-like with pointed ears that protruded slightly through her dark hair. The other was a Granom; short and wide with chalk-white skin and brown hair.

“Oh, Candle, I’m so sorry,” the Granomish woman told him as he got out of the car.

“Thank you,” he replied and paused ever so slightly before continuing, “Fireiron. Please let me introduce my companions. Mister Sixtus Hardisty, who has been my assistant this past year and Miss Elinor Jenynges, or do you prefer to be called ‘Lady Elinor?’”

“We’re not in court,” Elie replied, “and I prefer Elie if you don’t mind.”

“I don’t mind at all,” Candle laughed. “Elie has been Oceanvine’s companion these past two school years. Perhaps that is where she gets the sensitivity to her name, or maybe it’s genetic. Elie, Six, this is Fireiron and her husband Artifice,” he indicated the darker human male. “And these are Mountain and River,” he concluded introducing the other human and the Orente. “They used to teach here at the school as well.”

Elie thought that was odd since the others seemed too young to have taught in a school that had been closed for thirty years or more, but she was distracted from asking about that when she noticed the Granomish mage, Fireiron, studying her closely.

“An honor to meet you, Elie,” Fireiron told her with a strange look on her face. Elie had not met any Granomen before, but on a human or Orente the expression might have been the sort worn by one keeping an amusing secret. She was uncertain if it meant the same thing on a Granomish face but as Fireiron was obviously a friend of Wizard Candle, she decided not to risk offending her by asking.

“And you, Fireiron,” Elie replied at last. She was proud of her attempt to sound sophisticated, but something about her answer seemed to amuse the four mages. Elie, uncertain what she might have done wrong, attempted to fade into the background by letting Candle and Six do all the talking. They seemed interested in meeting Six as well, but Elie kept catching Fireiron glancing at her.

“Well, we may as well get to it,” Candle said at last, leaning on the golden staff tiredly as though he’d walked all the way from Randona. He opened the back door of the car and started levitating the coffin out.

“Please, old friend,” Artifice stopped him. “Allow me.” Without waiting for Candle to consent, he took over the chore and levitated the casket to the open grave.

“Hold up,” Candle stopped him as it hovered over the hole. He walked over and opened the lid. “Anyone care to view the body?” he asked with deceptive lightness. “The embalmer did a good job, I think, although perhaps he should have dyed her hair back to the blond it was in her youth.” As soon as he said it, Oceanvine’s hair turned from silver white to golden blond. “Who? Oh, thanks, River.”

“My pleasure, Candle dear” she replied softly.

They all spent a moment looking at Oceanvine’s remains until Elie said, “That’s not her.”

“Of course it’s her,” Six told her while the others watched the exchange.

“No,” Elie shook her head decisively. “That’s her body, but she’s not in there anymore.”

“True enough” Fireiron agreed as she started to close the lid again.

“Wait,” Candle stopped her. He reached in and pulled out a strand of Oceanvine’s hair.

“Eew!” Elie exclaimed disgustedly. “What was that for?”

“You’ll see,” Candle replied as Fireiron finished closing the lid. Then the coffin was lowered into the hole and the dirt was replaced, also by levitation. “All right,” Candle continued, “No matter how tired I am this next chore is my job.”

As he approached the gravestone, Elie and Six noticed there was a simple inscription on the other half. "Silverwind," it read above the dates, "Methis 11, 2203 – Secondmonth 21, 2294." Candle concentrated and on the side of the stone above Oceanvine's remains a new inscription formed, "Oceanvine, Winterbreak 3, 2223 – Midsummer 24, 2316." Then just above her name, Candle caused an oblong hole, about the size of the palm of his hand to form. He reached into his pocket and pulled out a piece of crystal exactly the same size and shape as the hole. Then he put the strand of hair into the hole and closed it up with the piece of crystal. As he did so a symbol embedded within the crystal began to glow with a bright golden light. Candle concentrated once more to make sure the crystal was permanently fused to the gravestone.

"There," he told them once he was done. "It should glow for... well not forever, I suppose, but as long as the stone lasts. A good long time. Too bad Silverwind's wizard stone was destroyed on Ellisto."

"Will this do?" Mountain asked. A small golden light started glowing above Silverwind's name.

"Thanks, Mountain," Candle told him tiredly.

"What is that symbol?" Elie asked, "And why is it glowing?"

"That's an old-time mage stone, isn't it?" Six asked at the same time.

"Yes, it's a very special one, in fact," Fireiron told them.

"Vine had another one from Merinne University," Candle explained, "but this was a very special gift from one of the Gods."

"Really?" Elie asked, taking a closer look at the stone.

"Yes, it was given to her by Aritos," Candle confirmed. "That symbol is called the Seal of Aritos, in fact."

"Aritos?" Elie asked apprehensively, jumping away from the gravestone. "But he's the God of Evil. Why would he...?"

"His reputation is not particularly deserved," Candle explained.

"You've met him?" Six asked interestedly.

"Quite a few times actually," Candle shrugged. "He's always been a good friend to me."

"That's not what the priests say," Elie replied.

"Aritos has his flaws and he's made some mistakes from time to time," Artifice told her, "but he isn't evil. Keep that in mind if you should ever happen to meet him." Behind him, Elie was certain she saw Fireiron smirk.

"Perhaps we should move along to my son's place," Candle suggested. "If nothing else there are chairs there. Food and drink too."

"We cannot stay too long," River replied.

“But we do have time for one drink at least,” Artifice told her.

“One drink,” River nodded, “Yes.”

“Just a moment, please,” Candle told them as he walked over to the other gravestone.

Elie started to follow him, but Fireiron held her back. “His wife,” she whispered to Elie. “Her name was Jillanda.” Elie looked at her questioningly and Fireiron added even more quietly, “Influenza.”

Candle knelt by his wife’s grave for only a minute. Then he reached his hand out and a long-stemmed pink rose materialized in it. He placed the rose at the foot of the gravestone, then stood up and rejoined the party.

Three

When Six put the back seats up in the car there was sufficient room for everyone inside and he drove them back to the hotel Candle had pointed out earlier.

While the outside of Candleson’s looked like a manor, inside it had a more rustic feel. Except for the modern check-in counter, in fact, it had the feel of an old-fashioned village inn.

“Grandpa!” a young woman at the check-in counter called as they entered the building.

“Ah, Jill,” Candle greeted her warmly. “Did you get my message?”

“Of course,” Jill replied, “your rooms are ready as always.”

“Why aren’t you in school?” Candle asked her.

“Oh, Grandpa,” she laughed, “KeesportCollegelet out for summer vacation two weeks ago.”

“Hmm? Oh yes, I suppose it would have,” Candle agreed.

“Oh, Fireiron, Artifice!” Jill exclaimed. “I haven’t seen you two in years. You came for Auntie Oceanvine?”

“We did,” Fireiron told her. “It’s nice to see you again, Jillandette.”

“We saw the funeral in Randona on the TV,” Jill told them, “but we thought it would be best if only a few were there when Grandpa brought her home. Dad thought it might be noticed if we all were there.”

“It probably would have,” Candle agreed, “although the locals will notice eventually anyway. Jill, I don’t think you’ve met Mountain and River and this is my lab assistant Sixtus and Vine’s great-granddaughter, Elie.”

“Really?” Jill asked, turning toward Elie. “I think that kind of makes us cousins although there’s no blood relationship between us. Grandpa and Auntie Oceanvine were like brother and sister, you see, even though they weren’t actually related.”

But Elie was only half listening. Instead she turned to Candle and demanded, “What? It’s about time you explained that, you know.”

“Yes, it is,” Candle yawned. “Let’s go into the tavern make ourselves comfortable, shall we?”

“I’ll have your bags brought to your rooms,” Jill offered.

“No bags, dear,” Candle told her. “We left Randona in a bit of a hurry.” Jill looked a bit puzzled, but did not question her grandfather.

“Well?” Elie demanded of Candle when they had finally sat down in the tavern, but she was still unable to get an answer because at that moment a tall man with long dark hair, just starting to gray at the temples, came to the table.

“Dad?” he asked. “You’ve done it already?”

“It didn’t take long,” Candle shrugged, with another yawn. “And I did have help. You remember the old faculty members don’t you?” He said “faculty members” with a noticeable emphasis.

“Of course,” the man replied. “Fireiron and Artifice stop in several times a year. Welcome back. And River and Mountain, it’s been years. Very good to see you again.”

“And these,” Candle introduced, “are my assistant Sixtus Hardisty and Vine’s great-granddaughter, Elinor Jenynges. My son Thomas. Yes, Elie, I’ll get to that in just a moment. Somehow toasting Vine with ale doesn’t seem right,” Candle observed. “Thom, could you have a round of hard cider brought over?”

“I’ll bring it myself,” Thomas offered and rushed over to the bar to fill the order.

“All right, Elie,” Candle told her. “I can see you fidgeting. It’s possible your mother brought you up to be too polite, you know. In your place I think I’d have done something far more physical to get an answer out of me. Still, Erinne is a fine person, one of the nicest I’ve had the pleasure to meet, so I won’t say anything against her.”

“You know my mother?” Elie asked.

“I know more of your family than you do, dear,” Candle told her. “I should, I’ve been watching you lot for years.”

“Why?”

“You already know that Oceanvine married Silverwind, right? Well, before even that when Vine was still a journeyman mage, although she insisted on being called a journeywoman, and working as Silverwind’s assistant, they were hired by the Duke of North Horalia to stop a demon cult. Well they didn’t know that at first, merely that someone was using a demon’s sign to kill deer in the ducal forest, but never mind that for now. On their way to Castle North one night they caught me rummaging through their wagon for food or anything I could find that I might sell in order to buy food.”

“You were a thief?” Elie and Six both asked.

“I wasn’t very good at it,” Candle shrugged, “but I could pick locks and pockets with some amount of

success. Anyway, for reasons far too long to explain if you want your direct question answered, Silverwind chose to apprentice me rather than turn me in to the local constables. I was an orphan; I'd run away from the orphanage in Tarnsa, in fact, but to me Silverwind was always a father figure. Oceanvine, however, wasn't all that much older than me nor was she any more likely to think of me as a son than I was to think of her as a mother, but we did develop a relationship that was very much like that of a brother and sister. I even started calling her 'Sis' and similar terms after a couple of years. Later she became Auntie Oceanvine to my children and grandchildren just as I was Uncle Candle to her daughter, Myrrha."

"My grandmother?" Elie asked.

"Right," Candle nodded.

"She was the daughter of the two most famous wizards in history? I find that hard to believe."

"I'm getting to that," Candle assured her. "Myrrha showed quite a bit of talent at magic early on, but by the time she was a teenager her interest in 'doing tricks' waned. Then when she was your ages she joined a group known as One Maiyim

"One Maiyim started out as a pretty good idea," Candle continued. "It was dedicated to uniting all the people of Maiyim in peace and respect for each other and for our world in general. Sounds good, right? Silverwind was one of the founders and Oceanvine, herself, was a member when she was your age. A lot of young, idealistic magic students were. By the time I got to University, though it had changed. The organization still claimed to be a positive force for peace and unity, but by then they advocated accomplishing that goal through the abolishment of all magic use."

"Why is that?" Six asked.

"Well their justification was that mages represented potential destruction for all Maiyim," Candle replied.

"Their accusations were half true," River added. "In the past there had been several near disasters brought on by the abuse of magic."

"Not anytime in the last few centuries though," Artifice cut in as though this was an old discussion.

"True," River agreed, "nothing within mortal living memory, but many with little or no magical training have always had a tendency to resent those who through their own hard work had mastered the science of magic."

"Not that many others didn't make heroes of certain mages as well," Fireiron cut in. "Silverwind and Oceanvine were particularly good examples of that."

"And not just them," Mountain agreed. "Don't forget Wizard Crossreed, who single-handedly ended the war between the Granomen and Orenta at Sinid."

"And Wizard Bowsprit," Fireiron put in. "He accomplish so much in his life, not the least of which was his 'Theory of Evolution by Natural Selection.'"

"And there were many such in the ancient world," Artifice commented. "From what I've seen, I'd say the popular distrust of mages is a most modern phenomenon."

“I think it was always there,” Candle disagreed. “It was always just below the surface waiting to break out, but it didn’t do so until mages started to over-specialize. Modern mages aren’t really taught the same way we were in my day. I’m not even sure you can call them mages. They’re magic technicians. Take Sixtus here for example. He’s quite talented and in the old days he could well have been on his way to being a wizard. But there are no wizard degrees being offered any more. No general magic is taught at all. In fact, general practice is discouraged.”

“There aren’t a lot of jobs available for general practitioners,” Mountain pointed out.

“No, I suppose not,” Candle agreed. “most journeymen, no, excuse me, bachelors of the sciences or of the arts go directly into entry level jobs as technicians for large corporations that manufacture the magic-based items, or produce the services that make the modern world run. No one takes a mage name anymore because it’s old fashioned to be a mage. Over half the journeymen in my class failed to take a mage name for that matter. The title is now ‘magic technician’ anyway and magic techs learn only enough to do their jobs. My colleagues tell me this allows specialists to learn far more in their fields than any generalist ever could, but they rarely see the value of interdisciplinary work.

“Research these days is by teams of specialists funded by government or corporate grants” Candle continued. “Very few work like Silverwind, Oceanvine and I did, which is ironic since it was our ground-breaking interdisciplinary work that opened up a lot of new specialties. Well, never mind that for now, the point is that the place for magic and those who could use it has changed. Magic powers the modern lifestyle, but very few people know how to use it even in its most basic forms. So Sixtus, who one day would have been a wizard will probably turn out to be a Doctor of Science, specializing in astrophysics.”

“What’s wrong with that?” Six asked.

“You can be so much more, lad,” Candle replied. “But I’m trying to get back to Elie’s question. One Maiyim had changed and had adopted an anti-magic agenda. We didn’t know why at the time, but after that little to-do on the Island of Arithan, Oceanvine and I went to the University of Merinne to earn our wizard’s and master’s degrees respectively. While there, we discovered that One Maiyim had not only changed outwardly but inwardly as well. There was some sort of secret Inner Circle using the organization for their own ends. Corny as it sounds they were out to conquer the world.

“Vine and I stopped them in Merinne where they were trying to hijack the Senate, and then a few years later Southgate and I ran into them in Querna. This time they were attempting regicide. The odd thing was that even though they outwardly were spearheading a campaign against magic, they used magic in their assassination attempt.”

Candle yawned widely then continued, “After that, they were outlawed in both Bellinen and Granom, but the organization was still legal in Emmine. That was actually the start of the current adversity between Emmine and Granom. Old King Ksaveras IX tried to convince Hacon II to outlaw One Maiyim here too, but Hacon had ceded his legislative power to the Parliament, so short of convincing Parliament to declare martial law, he could only make the request. Ksaveras had also tried a similar bicameral parliamentary system, but after it turned out that the majority of the MPs there were either in on the assassination or sympathizers, he gave up on the House of Commons as a bad experiment and abolished it. After the attempted regicide, the House of Lords was fully in agreement with His Majesty and Parliament reverted to its previous form in which all laws must be ratified by the king.”

“And where does my grandmother come in on all this?” Elie pressed.

“Myrrha?” Candle amplified, pouring himself another glassful of cider. “Well, like I said, she joined One Maiyim about the time she was your age and she embraced the organization’s agenda as though they were divine pronouncements.”

“Oh, like that would ever...” Fireiron started to say just as Artifice poked her gently in the ribs. “Hey!”

“Sorry, dear,” he replied mildly.

“Oceanvine and Myrrha fought over her involvement in One Maiyim until Myrrha just packed her bags and left Renton. Oceanvine and Silverwind tried to reconcile with her, but Myrrha could hold a grudge even longer than her mother and I’m sorry to say the break became utterly permanent two years later when we exposed and destroyed the remainder of One Maiyim’s Inner Circle just as they were trying to overturn the government of Emmine.”

“I would have thought their being found out would have changed Myrrha’s feelings about this One Maiyim group,” Six opined.

“That would have been logical, Sixtus,” Candle agreed, stifling another yawn, “but people are rarely logical about their deeply held feelings and the stated goals of One Maiyim were not bad. The way they went about trying to achieve them was where we had our differences, but Myrrha has never truly believed that the people we exposed were anything more than renegade members. She was able to convince herself that except for these few members the rest of the organization was as good and pure as she wanted it to be.”

“Do you know that it wasn’t?” Elie asked.

“Well, maybe it was, or at least maybe the remnants of the organization were all good people. I don’t know one way or the other,” Candle admitted, yawning widely once again. “The problem is, the Inner Circle had already done its damage in so many ways. The remaining One Maiyim members had taken their anti-magic message to heart and that attitude spread quite easily to the populace. Parliament responded to the anti-magic attitude of their constituency by passing a number of laws that restricted magic use to very sharply defined conditions. They couldn’t outlaw the general practice of magic, but they did pass laws that made it practically impossible to teach a general magic curriculum. Ten years after we had saved the day, so to speak, we were forced to close up the Renton School of Advanced Magical Studies because we did not have the official approval of the newly created Bureau of Education.”

“Why couldn’t you get approval?” Six asked.

“We could have,” Candle replied, “and I suppose we also could have paid the prohibitively high licensing fees, but enrollment in the school had been down for several years and we could see the writing on the wall. Fewer students needed or wanted to learn what we were teaching because there was no immediate employment benefit for them. We can blame Parliament for that as well. The restrictions on magic meant that magic technicians could only work under highly regulated conditions. That’s why I’ve remained affiliated with the University at Randona, in fact. As a wizard or, if they had their way, a Doctor of the Arts and Sciences, I can continue to do research in the field of my specialty.”

“But you don’t have a specialty,” Six objected.

“True,” Candle agreed, tiredly. “My degrees were all in general magic so I may do research in whatever suits my fancy. Loopholes can be fun, eh?”

“So my grandmother was the daughter of Doctor Oceanvine,” Elie remarked as though trying to convince herself. “But why didn’t I know that?”

“When she turned her back on her parents,” Fireiron told her, “she decided to deny the relationship as though it never existed. She married another prominent supporter of One Maiyim, your grandfather, who at the time was heir to the County of Olen, and had three children; your father and your aunts Klarissa and Kaisa. None of them ever knew they were related to Silverwind and Oceanvine, so naturally there was no one likely to tell you and your cousins.”

“Strange,” Elie commented sadly. “I never even noticed that I knew nothing of that half of the family.”

“Well, you know your mother’s relatives, don’t you?” Fireiron pointed out. Elie nodded. “and probably quite a few of the families of your uncles, so Myrrha’s part of the family only represents one quarter of your relatives, although I imagine you might be surprised at some of your other relatives and the friends of their families.”

“Me, for example,” Six supplied. “I didn’t realize we were cousins.”

“We are?” Elie asked.

“Well, not particularly close cousins,” he shrugged. “Certainly more distant than most folks bother to keep track of, but I’m from Ketch. That’s the same island Silverwind was born on. It’s a fairly insular community and everyone is related to everyone else to one extent or another. Silverwind was granduncle to my second cousins making him – oh I don’t know – fourth cousin? Fifth? Not close enough to matter really except to be able to consider him kin, and if you are the great-granddaughter of Silverwind it makes you something like a seventh cousin, or maybe that’s a fourth or fifth cousin several times removed, I never did understand how such distant relationships were reckoned. The way I see it a cousin is someone whose relationship to you can be described.”

“That’s as good a way to figure it as any,” Fireiron replied. Candle started snoring loudly. “Oh dear,” she remarked with a smile. “He’s had a very hard day.”

“Hard day?” Elie questioned her statement. “He slept most of the way here.”

“Candle slept all the way? I doubt that,” River remarked.

Artifice stood up. “Mountain and I will get him into his bed. I imagine he needs to sleep for a while.” Both men left the barroom with Candle floating behind them, still emitting loud snores.

Fireiron chuckled. “More likely he kept that car going,” she remarked. “Honestly, if he was going to create a car, why didn’t he create one that ran on gasoline?”

“That’s fairly complicated,” River commented. “His solution was simpler.”

“But a lot more difficult to actually accomplish. Why didn’t he just buy a car or rent one?” Fireiron asked.

“I’m afraid it may have something to do with something my husband once told him.”

“Huh?” Fireiron asked, confused.

“Think of it as a test,” River quoted enigmatically.

“Oh,” Fireiron nodded. “He shouldn’t have taken it so seriously.”

“What?” Elie and Six asked together.

“Oh, nothing important just now,” Fireiron assured them.

“But what about the car?” Elie asked. “Did you say Wizard Candle created it?”

“Oh yes,” Fireiron nodded. “Creation magic is one of the most advanced forms. Candle’s been able to do it since he was a journeyman though. Very impressive. I was much older than he was the first time I managed it. Anyway the problem here is that he obviously didn’t feel up to creating a car that actually works. Well, I can’t really blame him. He was obviously in a hurry so he didn’t have the time to get the electrical system or even the motor itself right. So what he did was create something that looked like a car and let you guide it while he provided the propulsion.

“When you thought he was sleeping, he was actually in a deep self-hypnotic trance that allowed him to concentrate on keeping the car going,” she concluded.

“It must have drained him badly, but he may well be the only wizard who could have done such a thing with the possible exception of... Silverwind,” River added.

“Haven’t you forgiven him yet?” Fireiron laughed. River shrugged.

“Silverwind?” Six asked.

“River here cast a summoning charm once that should have brought him directly to her,” Fireiron explained, “but she hadn’t accounted for Silverwind’s strength to resist.”

“Nor his stubbornness,” River added acidly.

“Nor his stubbornness,” Fireiron agreed lightly, “so she’s held that against him ever since.”

“I was not particularly fond of his sense of humor either,” River commented.

“Your mother found it delightful,” Fireiron shot back.

“Parents!” River exclaimed, then drained her cup. Fireiron laughed and a moment later River joined her.

“Elie,” Fireiron said to her, suddenly much more serious, “there’s something quite important I have to tell you.”

“What?” Elie asked, looking deeply into the Granomish woman’s eyes. “Are you related to me too?”

Fireiron laughed as though Elie had just told her the funniest joke in all creation. “Good heavens, no! We’re not even the same species. Do you have any notion of how far back you would have to go to find a common ancestor between us? No, it’s about your Uncle Candle.”

“Uncle?”

“Well great-granduncle if you want to be accurate, but that’s such a clumsy way to say it, don’t you think? You heard Jillandette earlier, you and she are kin even if Six is more closely related to you. She and her siblings always called Oceanvine their aunt and your grandmother called Candle her uncle before she divorced herself from the family, so yes, your Uncle Candle. I just want you to know that he’s been watching over you and your family ever since Myrrha left Renton . It was he who arranged for you to get to know your great-grandmother.”

“He did? Why me? Why not my brother or one of my cousins?” Elie asked.

“I think he saw something special in you,” Fireiron told her. “Or maybe it was your mother.”

“Mom?” Elie asked, only dimly aware that Mountain and Artifice had rejoined them.

“She’s not thaumaphobic like your grandmother, dear,” Fireiron explained. “She doesn’t fear magic. I believe she taught you a few of the ancient housekeeping spells, didn’t she?”

“Just little things she learned as a girl,” Elie admitted a bit nervously. “She taught me the spells to loosen dirt before cleaning and how to maintain an even temperature in an oven.”

“And I believe you got in trouble for using magic when you were a girl, didn’t you?” Fireiron continued.

“How did you know about that?”

“What did you do, Elie?” Six asked interestedly.

“Dad caught me levitating a rubber ball,” Elie replied, blushing in embarrassment.

“That’s no housekeeping spell,” Six told her. “I’ve never done that. Did your Mom teach you that too?”

“Nobody taught me how,” Elie replied looking around the room in case someone was trying to eavesdrop on their conversation. “I figured it out for myself.”

“That’s why,” Fireiron told her firmly.

“Fireiron?” Elie asked. “Did Oceanvine know who I was?”

“Of course,” Fireiron replied with a twinkle in her eyes. “You don’t think Candle would have kept that from his sister, do you?”

Four

When Elie woke up the next morning, she found a new pair of jeans, a blouse and a sweater on the chair near her bed. While the hotel had been built to feel like an old-time inn, the rooms had all the modern conveniences. Elie stumbled into the bathroom with the new clothes to find a new toothbrush, still in its wrapper and toothpaste as well as the usual other items a hotel room might normally be equipped with. After a quick shower, she started getting dressed.

“Clean underwear might have been nice,” she muttered to herself, remembering this was the first time she had changed clothes since before Oceanvine’s funeral. “Oh well, it won’t kill me,” she told herself

practically. "I suppose I can buy some later." She was just considering whether or not to wear the sweater when there was a knock on the door to her room.

"Hi. I'm Sally," a sandy-haired girl in jeans and a sweatshirt told her when she had opened the door. "Jill say's you're my cousin. Is that true?" That last was almost a demand.

"I suppose so," Elie replied. "Jill, uh Jillandette is your sister?"

"Uh huh!" Sally nodded, "and you're Auntie Oceanvine's granddaughter."

"Great-granddaughter," Elie corrected her. "And Uncle Candle is your grandfather, right?"

"Uh-huh!" Sally repeated enthusiastically. "Cousin Elie?"

"Yes?" Elie responded.

"Thank you for bringing Auntie Oceanvine home," Sally told her very solemnly.

"You're very welcome," Elie told her after a pause, not really very sure what else she could say.

"Oh," Sally added in such a way that implied she was finally coming to the matter she had actually intended to on her arrival. "Grandpa says you should come downstairs for breakfast."

"What if I'm not hungry?" Elie countered. Sally looked confused. "Never mind. As it happens, I'm famished. Should I wear the sweater," she asked Sally.

"Oh yeah, sure," Sally replied. "It's a bit cold this morning."

"Cold?" Elie asked as she pulled the sweater over her head. "But it's nearly summer."

"We're in the mountains," Sally told her. "It's colder here."

"You know that from experience, do you?" Elie asked. Sally, she decided, couldn't be more than ten or eleven years old.

"Daddy takes me to Keesport and Lon with him sometimes," Sally explained.

"Makes sense," Elie nodded. "So where is Uncle Candle?"

"Come on! I'll show you," Sally told her enthusiastically, grabbing Elie's hand.

"About time you woke up," Candle commented when she finally joined him and Six at a table in the restaurant. "I wouldn't have expected anyone to out-sleep me."

"Yes, good morning, Uncle Candle," Elie replied tartly. Then she caught Sally waving at her from the doorway, so she waved back before explaining, "I was up late, talking to Fireiron. Where is she this morning?"

"She and the others had to leave early this morning," Candle told her. "Busy folks those four. I'm surprised they were able to stay as long as they did really. Fireiron must have taken a real liking to you if she spent the night with you. Ask her about flint knapping next time you run into her."

“Flintknapping?” Elie asked, awash to the term.

“Yeah; the act of knocking chips and flakes off a chunk of rock until you have something useful,” Candle chuckled. “First time I met her face-to-face she spent all night showing me how to make a stone axe.”

“Why did she do that?” Elie asked, confused.

“I guess she was just in the mood, or maybe the book she was reading wasn’t enough to hold her attention,” Candle said off-handedly, although Elie had the feeling there was more to it than he was willing to say. “What would you like for breakfast?” he asked, seeing Jill approach their table. “They make a great country breakfast here.”

“Just some coffee and toast, please,” Elie responded politely.

“Sure,” Jill replied. “What sort of toast? White, rye, wheat or cinnamon? And how do you like your coffee?”

“Um,” Elie stammered, trying to make a decision, “Cinnamon and regular?”

“I can handle it,” Jill laughed. “Be right back.”

“So like her grandmother,” Candle commented wistfully.

“Uncle Candle?” Elie asked.

“Uncle Candle is it now?” Candle replied, lifting an eyebrow.

“Fireiron said you were,” Elie told him defensively.

“I suppose I am,” Candle shrugged, “although it’s been decades since anyone on your side of the family called me that.”

Jill brought Elie’s coffee and a tall stack of cinnamon toast and a dish full of butter just then. “Here you go, Cuz,” she said lightly. “Sally seems quite taken with you.”

“I don’t know why,” Elie remarked, “we’ve barely spoken.”

“My sister has a talent for reading people,” Jill told her. “She always knows who the good ones are. Oops, gotta get back to work!”

“So both my granddaughters like you,” Candle remarked.

“I didn’t know you made friends so easily,” Six added.

“I don’t,” Elie replied, “normally. But, Uncle, what happened to the original *Maiyim Bourne*?”

“What do you mean?” Candle asked in response.

“You told us the boat in the museum wasn’t the real *Maiyim Bourne*. So if that wasn’t the real one. Where is it?”

“Keesport,” Candle told her. “She’s sitting up on blocks in a warehouse.”

“Keesport?” Six asked. “Why Keesport?”

“Everything has to be somewhere,” Candle shrugged. “Look, there are aspects of the original that just wouldn’t be safe to leave in the hands of just anybody, so when King Hacon Ancel hinted that he would just love to have it for his museum I created an almost exact duplicate – one without those particular aspects.”

“What sort of aspects?” Elie asked.

At first Candle looked like he was going to remain silent, but then after a very long moment, he replied, “I would have to show you.”

“Then show me,” Elie demanded. “Oceanvine made me promise to go on board, remember?”

“That,” Candle waved that aside. “That was just to get you here.”

“Don’t you believe a person’s last request should be respected? Assuming, of course, it is honorable to do so?” Elie threw Candle’s earlier argument back in his teeth.

They left for Keesport in Candle’s no-engine car the next morning. Elie wanted to leave right away, but Candle told her, “Not on Emtsday, nothing would be open.”

Now that his secret was out, though, Candle didn’t bother to try fooling them with illusory engine noises and Elie was amazed at just how quiet the vehicle was, but one thing bothered her.

“Uncle Candle, this really tired you out the other day. Are you sure it’s safe for you to do it again so soon?” Elie asked when they were halfway there. She might have not tried to distract Candle, but unlike on the previous trip he wasn’t in a trance.

“I’ve had plenty of sleep since then, Elie,” he told her, “and this is a much shorter trip. When I was your age it would have taken two days, you know. Now we should be there in another thirty to forty-five minutes. I think it was somewhere around here that Jim-peg had his inn.”

“Jim-peg?” Six asked.

“An old former sailor with only one leg. He spent some time in Granom, learning to brew *als*, their form of beer. He made some pretty darned good beer too. *Hiskamo* biscuits, the traditional snack eaten while drinking *als*, were pretty good too.”

“He’s not still there is he?” Six asked interestedly.

“Jim-peg? No, he passed on decades ago. His daughter and her husband kept the business going until they were ready to retire, but the guy who bought them out didn’t have their ability. He didn’t brew his own beer or make his own food. Just bought the beer by the keg and reheated various frozen foods just like a lot of places do these days.”

“That should have worked,” Six commented.

"It did, but not for him," Candle replied. The problem is, if you have competition you have to be better, otherwise you might as well just throw dice to see who is going to stay in business. Another pub opened up just a few miles up the road and eventually put the first guy out of business. Well, by that time the journey from Renton to Keesport was no longer a two day trip, so I rarely stopped in even when I was in the neighborhood."

Keesport was at least twice the size of Renton. They drove through a wide swath of suburban homes on the southern edge of the city before getting stuck in traffic after taking the exit that dropped them off on Harbor Street.

"This place looks busier than Randona," Six commented.

"Keesport is the most active port in Emmine after Randona," Candle replied, "and the streets here are much narrower than in the capital, so it's not surprising that you'll see more traffic jams in this town than in Randona. Also you're forgetting your history. Most of Randona burned to the ground two and a half centuries ago. When they rebuilt, they laid out the streets on a grid plan. It's all straight lines and wide streets there. Keesport's streets are pretty much where the ancient country roads meandered. The locals laughingly say they used to be cow paths, although some of them must have been traveled by some fairly drunken cows."

"It seems so disorderly," Elie noted. "Why couldn't they have just rebuilt the city along modern lines?"

"Do you have any idea of how expensive it is to build a city?" Candle asked her. She shook her head. "Well, I don't either," he admitted, "but I do know how much it costs to build a single large building, having served on the campus committee a few times. The cost would be that times the number of buildings you want, plus the cost of building streets, running water and electricity, sewage, maybe natural gas and that doesn't even count how much it costs to run once you build it. No, you don't rebuild unless you have to. Actually, I suspect we've just hit town at the wrong time. I wouldn't be surprised if we run into a traffic accident a few blocks up the street."

Candle's prediction came true when one mile further down the street they were forced to make a detour around a flooded area where a water hydrant had evidently been destroyed by a head-on collision with a truck. Rather than making their way back to Harbor Street, Candle had Six continue another four blocks and then turn left on Chandlers Lane. Traffic was much lighter here and they were able to make their way downhill toward the harbor area.

They were only three streets from the wharfs and in a carefully maintained historic district when Candle told Six to turn right and then left again almost immediately. The car passed through a low arch set within an old brick building and into an open garden area that was completely surrounded by the building that, except for the garden, covered the entire block it was on. The garden was surrounded by a paved drive that formed a border between it and the building and Six drove most of the way down one side before pulling into a parking space.

They walked past a wide plate glass window and in through the back door of a bustling office. On the far side of the office were more plate glass windows looking out on the street. Elie was able to make out the sign on one of those windows, "Carter Imports."

Candle paused before entering the office, resting his right hand on the doorpost. It was a gesture Elie had seen him perform in Renton on entering his son's home. After a moment he continued on through the door. He led the way toward a secretary's desk and asked, "Is Gerry in?"

“Do you have an appointment, sir?” she asked officiously. The look she gave him implied that she doubted an old man in an informal Orentan shirt and dark gray slacks was likely to have any business with her boss.

“I never do,” Candle chuckled. “Just let him know the Wizard Candle is here to see him.”

The woman lost just a shred of composure at that announcement, but swallowed hard and finally replied, “Mister Carter is on an important call just now, sir. I’m not sure how long he will be.”

“I’m clear now, Dorna,” a man said from a doorway just behind her desk. He was of average height, with mostly gray hair and was dressed in a conservative business suit. “Uncle Candle! I saw you arrive through my office window. I like the shirt,” he added, earning a shocked look from Dorna. “Wish I could get away with wearing Orentan silk around here, at least on the hot days. Whatever sort of car is that contraption.”

“Self-created, Gerry,” Candle replied. “I needed it for a special purpose and it was easier to continue using it rather than creating a new one. Also cheaper than hiring one that runs on petrol.”

“Come into my office, Uncle,” Gerry invited. Once the door was shut he continued, “I think I can guess what that special purpose was. Have you seen the news this morning? No? Well, it seems some countess in Randona claims the body of Oceanvine has been stolen and wants to have the grave there opened to find out for certain. A spokesperson for the Crown says, ‘no dice’, and anyone who opens that grave will answer directly to His Royal Majesty. Whereas I don’t need to dig out that grave to know it’s a cenotaph. You moved her next to Silverwind, didn’t you? Remind me to go pay my respects next weekend.”

“You figured that out for yourself, huh?” Candle replied. “Well, you always were as clever as your mother.”

“Yeah? And what did I get from Dad?” Gerry asked, laughing.

“Trouble, probably,” Candle shot back. “Still, I always liked Windchime. I even got a chance to team up with him once on Marga. Speaking of which, I should introduce my young companions.” He did so and Gerry Carter greeted two students. “So how have you been? I haven’t seen you since your Aunt Jocey passed a few years ago.”

“I’m fine,” Gerry replied. “The business is good. I could use a good long vacation, though.”

“Why not take one?” Candle asked.

“I just did,” Gerry laughed. “I spent two weeks with the family on the shore of the Mek. That’s why I need another vacation.”

“That’s probably why I never take vacations,” Candle replied.

“It always seemed to me you were always on vacation,” Gerry countered.

“That’s because you’ve never actually seen me work,” Candle smiled.

“Uh, isn’t that what I just said?” Gerry asked.

Candle chuckled, then added, "Not quite, but I didn't come by to spar with you today. We're here to see the boat."

Gerry sobered instantly. "That's the first time in years you've even mentioned her," he observed. "I was starting to wonder if you'd forgotten her."

"No," Candle shook his head, "I'll never forget the *Maiyim Bourne*. How is she?"

"I'll admit I haven't seen her in a few years myself," Gerry replied. "When you told me to keep her well out of sight, I pretty much buried her in her own room, deep in one of my warehouses and only I have the key. Let's go take a look for ourselves, shall we?" He made a quick phone call to his warehouse manager, "Gene, I need you to clear everything away from room 115," he said into the phone. A minute later they started walking.

A few minutes later they found themselves in front a pair of wide double doors that were held together by a large padlock. Gerry pulled out a key and unlocked the doors, then together with the others, opened the doors. The room inside was nearly pitch black, but Gerry stepped carefully inside to find a light switch.

The other three stood in darkness waiting for their eyes to adjust as they stared at the place they knew the *Maiyim Bourne* must be. When the overhead lights came on they were not quite blinding, but after the darkness their dim light seemed bright at first.

"Is that her?" Six asked, looking at a large object entirely covered by a dark green tarpaulin.

"Under the tarp? Yes," Gerry replied. "Give me hand, will you. That tarp is heavy."

"Did you cover the boat to protect her from water and dust?" Elie asked and she stepped forward to help.

"Not really," Gerry admitted. "At least I don't think so although it was my Dad, Master Windchime, who put the tarp on her. It was to keep her out of sight. Probably didn't need to go that far, but we weren't taking any chances. He and Wizard Candle here moved the boat in late one night, then I spent the next week rearranging the warehouse to keep lots of pallets in front of the doors."

"You called ahead to move those pallets," Six realized.

"We'd never have gotten those doors opened otherwise. Okay the tarp is slipping now. Keep pulling." Then the tarpaulin slipped completely free to reveal the world's most famous boat.

It looked exactly like the model on display in the Royal Museum except for one vital detail.

"Where's her mast?" Elie asked. The hull of the boat was obviously intact but the mast and the wire stays that held it erect were not in place.

"It's over there on the floor," Gerry explained, pointing at the far wall. "The *Maiyim Bourne* could never have fit in here if we hadn't unsteped the mast. So what do you think?"

"She's beautiful," Six breathed.

"She is, isn't she?" Candle agreed.

“Tell me, Uncle, why did you want to see her after all this time?” Gerry asked.

“It appears my sister left her great-granddaughter a legacy,” Candle told him wryly. “In fact, I think it’s time we took the old girl out for a sail.”

“Really?” Gerry asked, astonished. “I thought no one could ever know what you had done here.”

“Well, maybe I made the case a bit too strongly,” Candle shrugged. “Do you have any idea of how many thousands of yachts are exact copies of this boat? And out of all of them there must be at least one hundred that have been named *Maiyim Bourne*. Who would know?”

“The king might,” Gerry countered. If he hears you’ve been sailing on this supposed copy, he’s likely to figure it out. How do you think he’ll react if he learns you gave him a counterfeit boat?”

“Who’s going to tell him which one is the copy?” Candle asked pointedly. “Oh, Hacon Ancel will guess, he may even be certain which one is which, but I doubt he’ll admit I got the better of him. Besides, I’m not planning to sail her into Randona harbor.”

“Well, I’ve got to admit, I’d like to see her in the water again,” Gerry told them. “A boat this beautiful belongs in the water, not on stands in a dusty old warehouse.”

“Then you’ll make the arrangements?” Candle asked.

“She’ll be ready to sail in the morning,” Gerry assured him.

Five

“I want to see what’s inside,” Elie insisted. “Oceanvine wanted me on that boat.”

“Tomorrow, Elie,” Candle told her. “The cabin is locked tight. No one is going to get inside before you.”

“But...”

“Tomorrow,” Candle repeated firmly. “Don’t worry you’ll be able to spend as much time on board as you like. I have an idea, in fact. How would you two like to spend the summer on board with me sailing around the Emmine Archipelago? One heck of a way to spend your summer vacation, you have to admit that.”

“I’d love to, sir,” Six replied, “But I can’t afford to take the summer off. I need to work or else take classes. Well, both really because financial aid only goes so far.”

“I still need a lab assistant,” Candle replied. “I’ll see that you are paid at least as much as you would make from a normal on-campus job, and I’m sure we can work out an independent study project to earn a few credits with.”

“It does sound like fun,” Six admitted.

“I’d love to go,” Elie told him, her eyes looking at the hull of the *Maiyim Bourne* longingly, “but what

would I tell my parents?"

"Tell them it's a special independent study project reserved for the most advanced students. One of those "floating school sessions" you hear about these days. Should be worth six hours over two summer sessions. I'll make a few phone calls later and arrange that for both of you."

"What will we be studying?" Elie pressed. "They're going to ask, you know. And how do you know my grades are good enough to be admitted to a special advanced program?"

"Tell them it will be a sociological study of people on the smaller, more isolated islands of the archipelago," Candle told her. "As for your grades? I'm a teacher and your uncle. Did you think I really wasn't keeping track?"

Six and Elie went shopping that afternoon while Candle made the arrangements for their summer session.

"Wizard Candle told us we didn't need to buy anything for the trip," Six pointed out to Elie.

"I don't know him very well, yet," Elie admitted, "but I get the impression that Uncle Candle would be happy wearing the same silk shirt for years on end just so long as it was bright enough to make your eyes bleed just thinking of the colors."

"He doesn't wear them in the winter," Six told her.

"What then?" Elie asked. "Granomish woolens and furs?"

"Sometimes," Six nodded. "Sometimes he just wears a sweater and jeans. He tells me when he was our age the faculty members wore academic robes most of the time, especially in classes. He used to annoy some of the others by wearing the sort of academic robes the teachers in Merinne wear."

"What do they wear in Merinne? Two-piece bathing suits?"

"These days? Could be, but back then they wore the same robes teachers wore at Randona and Querna or that we all wear these days at graduation ceremonies, but while our robes are black and Granomish robes are dark brown, Orentan robes are made of silk and have those same bright colors and floral patterns Candle's shirts do."

"That must be something to see," Elie opined.

"It is. You've never been to a commencement ceremony, have you?"

"Not yet," Elie shook her head. "I just finished my junior year and my folks left me home when my elder brother, Clemen, graduated. I guess I'll just have to wait until next spring. So Candle wore Orentan robes to class? I thought you were supposed to wear the robes of the university or college you graduate with your bachelor's degree throughout your career."

"That's traditional," Six told her, "but there's no law that says you can't wear the robe from any school you actually graduated from and Wizard Candle has a degree from all three universities, only the third

person in history to do so.”

“So he’s a bit of a rebel, huh?” Elie observed. “I’m surprised he gets along with the rest of the faculty.”

“He doesn’t with a lot of other professors,” Six explained. “From the stories he tells, he was a real hell-raiser too, just like what you said of Doctor Oceanvine.”

“That makes sense,” Elie laughed, “especially if they were brother and sister.”

“They weren’t really,” Six pointed out, “but I guess living together could have had an effect. I didn’t know Doctor Oceanvine. Was she as eccentric as Candle is?”

“It’s hard to tell, really,” Elie replied. “I only knew her for the last two years of her life. She was a tired, old lady. She told me she used to have a short fuse sort of temper, but she was always so patient with me.”

“You were her great-granddaughter and she knew it even if you didn’t, Elie.”

“Yes, maybe that’s it. Or maybe she learned patience the hard way. That’s something my Mom says of some people – that they would have to learn patience the hard way. Sometimes I think she really means me.”

“You seem more patient than a lot of kids I know,” Six told her.

“Maybe it’s not patience I need to learn, maybe it’s something else.”

“Like what?” Six asked.

“I don’t know,” Elie admitted. “It just seems like I’m not entirely here sometimes. It’s like there’s some part of me I haven’t found yet. Do you ever feel like that?”

“Can’t say I do,” Six replied. “In my case it’s always been a matter of finding a better path than the one I’m on. That’s why my scholarship was such a Gods-send. It saved me from the life of a fisherman. So how do you intend to find that missing part of yourself?”

“I’m not sure. I’ve been thinking of joining the Royal Friendship Corps. Maybe doing a tour of service among the Inaliands or the Merinta would help. What do you think?”

“I don’t know, but I doubt how I feel about it matters,” Six told her. “Do you think you’ll find yourself among the Merinta?”

“I don’t know,” Elie responded after some thought. “At least it would be doing something worthwhile.”

“Elie, when was the last time you slept in a tent?”

“A tent? Well, there was the wedding of the Duke of Solen. I was rather tired.”

“You slept in the reception tent, right?”

“Uh yes,” Elie replied, embarrassed. “I wasn’t the only one. Dozens of us took naps there that afternoon.”

“Fine,” Six nodded, “but that wasn’t what I meant by sleeping in a tent. Scale that pavilion down so that only two people can fit in it comfortably. Now imagine yourself sleeping in it with three or four others. You would have no heater except for a fire pit in the Inaliands and in Merinta, no air conditioning. You would have mosquito netting however. I understand you really need that.”

“Doesn’t sound like much fun when you put it that way,” Elie told him.

“It’s not supposed to be fun,” Six countered. “It’s work. A real job; a little like being in the navy, but without the uniforms and no going home until your tour of duty is out. Still want to go?”

“Maybe,” she replied stubbornly. “If others can do it, why not me?”

“I’m sure you could,” Six allowed, “but you wouldn’t do it happily, at least not until you acclimated to a primitive lifestyle.”

“I can do it,” she maintained.

“Sailing the islands with Wizard Candle sounds a lot better to me,” Six told her. “I wonder what sort of project he has in mind for us.”

“What do you mean?” Elie asked. “Aren’t we just going to sail around?”

“Not if I know him even a little bit. The sailing vacation is a gift, but he isn’t giving us six academic credits for sitting around and working on our tans. He’ll find some sort of project for us and it will take up most of our free time, I’ll bet.”

“So much for sitting around and watching Emsday morning cartoons,” Elie laughed.

“As if a sixty-some year-old boat would be equipped with a television,” Six joined in.

“Would it have a marine band radio, though?” Elie asked. “Aren’t they required on any craft above a certain size?”

“They’re required on commercial craft,” Six replied, “but not on private ones. It is highly recommended, however, that we have one but I doubt the *Mayim Bourne* does. Maybe we’d better bring it up with Wizard Candle.”

“All right, but I still need another change of clothing,” Elie told him, “and a pair of boat shoes. I’ll probably spend a lot of time barefooted on deck, but not all the time and on a cool, wet night a pair of boat shoes will be just what I want. How about you?”

“A hat,” Six replied. “Something to keep the sun off my head.”

“That’s all?”

“He did say we didn’t need to buy anything,” Six pointed out again.

“If I take that to heart I could well be in rags before our first port of call,” Elie shot back.

“Still, he has yet to steer me wrong,” Six maintained, “so unless I see something I like, the hat is all I’ll be

looking for.”

“Oh look!” Elie exclaimed, looking up the street. “It’s the *Maiyim Bourne*, they’re taking her down to the harbor.” A block away a small, but powerful tractor was hauling the boat downhill on a trailer. It’s pace was slow – no more than walk – but steady and determined. “Shall we follow and watch them launch her?”

“I’d rather wait until tomorrow,” Six decided. “We’ve already seen her hull in the warehouse. I doubt she’ll look much more impressive in the water until they’ve finished rigging her. Besides I suspect they’ll be working into the night for Gerry to be able to keep his promise. We’ll help out best by keeping out of their way.”

“I suppose. Oh, look at this,” she changed the subject as they passed a dress shop. “Isn’t that just the cutest cocktail dress?”

“I doubt they have it in my size,” Six told her dryly.

“Oh, you!” Elie laughed. “It is nice, though. I wonder how much they want for it?”

“I’m not sure you would have many occasions to wear it while on the boat,” Six told her.

“Hmm, no, I suppose not.” Elie replied sadly.

In the end, she only bought an additional pair of jeans and a loose knit shirt. Six never found a hat he wanted although both purchased canvas duffels in which to pack the few clothes they did have.

Six

Elie was unable to sleep well that night. She was tired after everything that had happened, but the excitement of finally being able to go aboard the *Maiyim Bourne* as she had promised Oceanvine – her great-grandmother – she would, kept sending strange and sometimes disturbing dreams. In each of those dreams she would see one or more of the four mages she had met in Renton and they kept calling for her.

“We’re waiting for you,” Fireiron told her in one particularly vivid dream. Artifice was standing next to the Granomish mage and they both looked anxious, concerned and maybe just a bit impatient.

“Me?” Elie asked in the dream. “But what do you need me for?”

“You’ll be surprised,” Artifice chuckled.

“Elinor is not the right name for you, dear,” River commented in another dream.

“It’s the only one I have,” Elie protested.

“That will change,” Mountain replied.

The most memorable dream, however, featured Fireiron by herself. “I miss the Renton School,” she confided to Elie. “I taught there at least one class every session, you know.”

“You don’t look old enough to have taught there at all,” Elie observed” Unless you started teaching the day you were born.”

“You know, I may have,” Fireiron laughed, “but not the way you mean it. I’m older than I look, much older.”

“What did you teach?” Elie asked.

“Everything,” Fireiron told her. “I taught whatever occurred to me.”

“Doesn’t sound like a well-planned curriculum,” Elie replied critically.

“That all depends on what the students are expected to learn,” Fireiron replied.

“And what were they expected to learn?” Elie asked curiously.

“How to think. I expected them to learn how to think, Elie.”

“I would have thought they knew that before you accepted them as students,” Elie opined.

“No,” Fireiron shook her head. “They had to show the potential to be able to think correctly. Elie,” she continued very seriously, “I want you to make me a promise.”

“What?” Elie asked apprehensively.

“Promise me that you’ll take my class someday,” Fireiron replied.

“But the Renton School closed long ago,” Elie replied.

“Promise me,” Fireiron insisted.

“If I can,” Elie hedged.

“Promise?” Fireiron pressed. “Promise?”

“Yes!” Elie shouted, waking up in a cold sweat. It was another hour before she got back to sleep after that and when she did, the eastern sky was already pink.

She only slept another hour before the rich aroma of coffee tugged at her consciousness and all but dragged her into the kitchen where she found Gerry’s wife, Karilyn.

“Good morning, Elie,” she greeted her warmly. “Your Uncle Candle is already down at the harbor. He said for you and Six to join him as soon as you’ve had breakfast, but I don’t think you’ll need to rush because Six is still asleep. Tea or coffee?”

“Coffee please,” Elie responded tiredly.

“Restless night, dear?” Karilyn asked, holding out a large mug full of coffee.

“Oh yeah,” Elie replied, reaching for the mug. She spooned several measures of sugar into the hot black liquid.

“Would you like a little coffee in your sugar?” Karilyn asked, amused.

“Just hoping for a bit of energy,” Elie replied. “I didn’t sleep for more than an hour at a stretch all night.”

“I’m sure tonight will be better,” Karilyn assured her. “Your first night at sea should steady your nerves.”

“If I don’t get seasick,” Elie smiled weakly.

“Do you have trouble that way?” Karilyn asked, concerned.

“Not unless it’s very rough at sea,” Elie admitted.

“Then tonight should be all right. The marine forecast is for clear weather all through the Quarna Strait. Oh oh, another one. Good morning, Six.”

“Couldn’t you sleep either?” Elie asked him.

“I guess I’m too keyed up, thinking about the trip,” Six replied, helping himself to a slice of toast.

“Well, Uncle Candle is waiting for us down at the boat,” Elie informed him.

“He can wait until you’ve had a good breakfast,” Karilyn told them.

“I’m not really hungry,” Elie told her, sipping more of the hot, sweet coffee.

“You’ll at least have a slice of toast,” Karilyn told her firmly. “Really, you two are worse than my own children were.”

They wolfed down several pieces of toast each before thanking Karilyn and bidding farewell, grabbed their bags and then rushed out and down toward the harbor district of Keesport.

“Um, do you know which pier or wharf the *Maiyim Bourne* is tied up to?” Six asked as they started passing the shops of ships’ chandlers.

“I thought you did,” Elie confessed. “Oh well, how many can there be?”

“In a port this size?” Six countered. “Oh probably no more than a dozen or two. I suppose we could go back and ask Karilyn.”

“Nonsense,” Elie scoffed. “We’ll just walk on past until we find the right one.”

Six kept his mouth shut, but it was evident that Elie had never spent any time to speak of in a busy port town. It turned out they arrived fairly close to the middle of the port area with wharves stretching out in both directions. Not knowing which direction to go, they chose to head eastward. The wharfs jutted out as much as three hundred yards into the harbor formed by the Kee River and they found themselves walking most of the length of each one looking for the *Maiyim Bourne*.

They reached the end of the long wharfs on the east end of the harbor and discovered a large marina that held several dozen boats that, not unexpectedly, all bore some resemblance to the *Maiyim Bourne*, but after a lengthy search along the piers of the marina, they still hadn’t found Candle or the boat.

Six commented. "I suppose it's predictable she would have been moored on one of the western docks." Elie nodded and they started walking back in the other direction. "How did we miss that beauty?" he commented twenty minutes later as they continued checking out slips along the western wharves.

At the far end of the port area a small two-masted tall ship sat proudly in her slip. Her masts, booms and spars were dark brown, almost black, but her sheets and sails were bright white. The foremast was square-rigged with five courses of sail, but the mainmast had fore-and-aft rigging. As they got closer to the wooden ship, dwarfed by her modern steel counterparts, they saw her hull was the same dark brown as the masts, but the gunwales were as white as her sails. She had five gun ports on each side and her holystoned decks were nearly as white as the painted gunwales.

"She is beautiful," Elie breathed from the bottom of her gangplank. "I didn't know there were any ships her age left."

"There aren't many," Six replied. "They are expensive and time consuming to maintain and there are only a handful left in the world."

"Still, I could almost wish we were sailing on her this summer," Elie told him.

"We'd need to hire a crew," Candle said from behind them, "assuming the City of Keesport would allow us to borrow her. I imagine they would frown on our sailing on the town's favorite museum." They spun around to see the wizard's head and shoulders just barely above the pier they were standing on. Looking closer they realized he was standing on the deck at the bow of the *Maiyim Bourne*. "I do agree though, Elie, the old *Skate* is a gorgeous little brigantine. Captain Jocey always took good care of her, that's probably why she's survived all this time."

"You knew the captain of this ship?" Elie asked.

"She was Gerry's aunt as a matter of fact," Candle replied, "and I sailed with her a few times. The *Skate* along with two other ships used to belong to Gerry, in fact."

"Then why doesn't the *Skate* still belong to Gerry?" Six asked.

Gerry appeared just then from inside the *Maiyim Bourne*'s cabin "I couldn't afford to keep her," he explained. "We got lucky and sold the *Lady of Keesport* about twenty years ago. The next owner lost everything a year later when she went down in a hurricane. The only other ship we owned was the *Windchime*. She was the largest and fastest wooden ship ever built. I still remember her from when I was still a kid, but she got blown off course in the Great Gale of 2273 and was driven aground on a reef in the Nildar Ocean. A lot of the owners went into bankruptcy when that happened, fortunately my parents had a lot of other interests so it hurt but it didn't drive us under either."

"So what are you two waiting for?" Candle asked. "Come aboard. What took you so long, by the way? The morning's half wasted."

Six quickly considered several responses but finally decided on, "We took a shortcut."

"Got lost, huh?" Candle nodded. "Well it's a big port, that's understandable. No helping that now and we aren't really in all that much of a hurry. After all these years, I'm anxious to take the old girl out again is all."

“Sorry to have kept you waiting, sir,” Six replied as he lowered his duffel bag down to the deck of the boat.

“Forget it,” Candle shrugged. Six carefully sat on the edge of the pier then jumped down to the deck.

“Where do we put our bags?” Elie asked, indicating the duffel she still had slung over her shoulder.

“Down below, of course,” Candle replied. “Here, why don’t you hand it down to me.” She did so, then with Gerry’s assistance, boarded the *Maiyim Bourne*. “There are three cabins below. I’ve already taken the master’s cabin on the starboard side. There’s a port side cabin and one in the bow. You two can fight it out between yourselves as to who gets which.”

“Starboard side?” Elie asked.

“First and most important lesson for life on a boat,” Candle replied with mock severity, “Port is left and starboard is right. The bow is the front of the boat, the stern is the back. To head toward the bow is to go forward, the opposite direction is aft. Got it?”

“What’s up?” Elie asked.

“Not much,” Candle chuckled, “What’s up with you?” Elie just stood there not knowing how to react.

“You fell into that one, Elie,” Six told her gently. “Up is up. Tell you what, you can have your choice of the available cabins.”

They climbed down into the combined galley, dining and chartroom area. Everything was bright and polished and dust-free inside and with none of the musty smell one might have expected after having been locked up and stored for four or five decades. Elie stopped to look around, but Six tugged on her hand. “Come on,” he told her, “We can poke into all the drawers and holds later. Let’s pick our cabins first.”

“Okay.” Elie went forward and poked her head into each of the remaining cabins. “I’ll take this one,” she decided, returning to the small port-side cabin. “You can have the big one in the bow.”

“Are you sure?” Six asked, delighted. “The bow cabin is much larger; more room to spread out.”

“I don’t need all that much room to sleep in,” Elie replied. “And this will be easier to keep neat. Uh, where’s the... you know?”

“No, can’t say I do,” Six replied confused.

Elie blushed with embarrassment. “The, uh... ladies’ room?” she finished in almost a whisper.

“I doubt we have one,” Six laughed, “not just for women, anyway, but if I had to guess I’d say the head,” he gave the word just a bit of emphasis to subtly correct her terminology, “is through that door on the other side.” He suited his actions to words and stepped over and opened the door. Inside he found a very small shower stall, a sink and what appeared to be a chemical toilet. “Amazingly modern for a boat that was built sixty years ago,” he commented.

“The *Maiyim Bourne* was supposed to have been way ahead of her time,” Elie replied.

“In design. I never heard her conveniences were so advanced. Still who am I to complain?” Six

shrugged. “Well, let me throw this bag into my cabin and we can go back up on deck.

While waiting, Elie opened her bag to start unpacking and dumped everything out on the bunk. She picked up the skirt she had worn to Oceanvine’s funeral and flattened it out. Then, idly wondering what Oceanvine herself might have worn sixty years earlier while sailing on this very boat, she opened the closet door.

Inside the closet were several Bellinen silk blouses and skirts. Some of which were solid colors but most were emblazoned with the usual garish floral patterns associated with Orentan style. “I see Uncle Candle expects me to appreciate his sense of style,” she muttered. What really caught her eye, however, were the bathing suits. They were also cut along Orentan lines and would be considered far too risqué on many beaches in Emmine and would have the wearer banned outright from any beach in Granom. They were very skimpy two-piece bathing suits that wouldn’t hide enough to count and the thought alone of wearing one made Elie blush clear to the roots of her hair. “That dirty, old man,” she growled yanking one of the bright suits out of the closet.

She bolted out of her room, all thoughts of unpacking banished and ran headlong into Six returning from the forward cabin.

“Are you planning to wear that?” he asked interestedly.

“In your dreams,” she told him and continued back up on deck where she confronted Candle. He was inspecting the wheel, but Gerry was nowhere in sight. “What is this?” she demanded.

“Looks like something your great-grandmother would have worn,” he commented dryly. “I didn’t know your tastes ran that way.”

“They don’t,” she snarled. A moment later what Candle had said sunk in. “Oceanvine wore this?”

“Well, not that particular suit,” Candle started to reply.

“And you just thought I’d like to do the same?” Elie interrupted.

“I had nothing to do with it,” Candle protested. “That outfit came out of your own mind.”

“It did not, it came out of the closet in my cabin. Hey, how did you know which cabin I’d pick?”

“I didn’t, but I also didn’t tell you about some of the more exotic features of this boat,” Candle replied. “I’ll tell you more about it once we’ve cleared the harbor. For now, let’s start getting ready.”

“Excuse me, sir,” a voice came from above. “Is this your boat?” A tall, sandy-haired man in a dark blue uniform was standing on the pier, looking down at the *Maiyim Bourne*.

“It is, yes,” Candle replied. “Is there a problem?”

“A small one, perhaps, sir,” the man agreed. “Why haven’t you paid your port fees yet?”

“An oversight, perhaps,” Candle admitted. “I thought this was a private dock.”

“It is, sir, but I’m empowered to collect the fees on behalf of the owner.”

“That’s all right, Vill,” Gerry called from up near the bow. “I gave them permission to use the dock. Hell, I’m the one who towed her hull here after we launched her yesterday.”

“Mister Carter? Well, it’s your dock, sir, so if you want to waive the fees for the use of your dock, that’s fine, but there are still use of port fees to be paid.”

“I’ll cover it, Vill,” Gerry assured him. “Just bring the bill over to my office and I’ll write a check.”

“If you say so, sir.”

“I do, Vill,” Gerry told him. “I’ve been storing this boat in my warehouse for decades. It only seems right I should cover port fees while we were re-rigging her.”

“I had nearly forgotten that,” Candle commented after the assistant harbormaster had left. “There aren’t a lot of free ports on Maiyim.”

“Do you need some cash to cover expenses, Uncle?” Gerry asked.

“No, not at all. I’m fairly well off and this boat pays for herself in any case.”

“So you’ve said before, but I never quite understood what you meant by that,” Gerry hinted.

“That’s because I never explained,” Candle told him seriously.

Gerry tried to stare the old wizard down, but soon lost the battle. “Right,” he said at last. Well, I can’t accuse you of taking the mystery out of life.”

“Don’t worry,” Candle laughed. “Not knowing won’t kill you. Besides it will give you something to look forward to next time I visit.”

“And you’ll tell me then?” Gerry asked.

“It’s always a possibility,” Candle chuckled.

Gerry just shook his head and wished them, “Good trip, folks. I need to get back to work anyway. I’ll see you when you return.”

“Do I have time to straighten up my room?” Elie asked. “I have clothes all over the bed.”

“I’ll give you five minutes,” Candle replied. “Oh, by the way. Don’t put anything you want to keep in that closet. Use the chest of drawers instead.”

Elie shot him a puzzled look, but then quickly rushed back to her cabin to straighten up. In spite of Candle’s warning she hung the blouses and slacks in the closet and was about to rejoin him and Six on deck, but she took another look at the clothes in the closet and changed into one of the floral blouses and a cream colored skirt. Then, finally, she rushed up on deck to find they had already left the dock and were gliding quietly out into the harbor. It seemed odd to her because the sails were still furled and there was no sound of an inboard engine.

“Took you long enough,” Candle told her from his position at the wheel. “I thought I told you five minutes, but...” he trailed off staring at Elie. “Your great-grandmother was wearing something just like

that the day I met her.”

“Do I look like her when she was my age?” Elie asked.

“I wouldn’t know,” Candle told her, “she was six years older than you when I met her. But maybe a little. Your chin is very similar to hers and you wear your hair the same way she did, but your hair and eyes are dark brown. Her hair was blonde and her eyes were gray, but your breasts are a bit larger.”

“Hey!” she exclaimed, crossing her arms in an attempt to hide behind them.

“You did ask,” Candle reminded her. “Vine was slimmer than you are and a few inches shorter. You’re just a bit more, uh, filled in, that’s all. And that shirt is completely opaque, by the way. If you keep your arms folded like that you’re going to have a hard time hoisting the sails in a few minutes.”

She looked around and saw Six seated on top of the forward section of the cabin. He was chuckling at the exchange. “What’s so funny?” she demanded. Wisely, he kept his mouth shut and just shrugged exaggeratedly.

“How are we moving?” Elie asked Candle a minute later after she had calmed and taken a seat in the stern area.

“Simple propulsion spell, dear,” Candle replied. “Up until twenty five years ago, almost every active port employed specially trained mages as pilots. They knew the harbors they worked in very well and used the spell I’m using right now to guide ships in and out of the port. It’s a fairly easy spell with practice and a lot of journeyman mages made a living that way. Would you like to learn how to do it?”

“What use would I ever have for such a spell?” Elie asked.

“Well, it would allow you to bring the boat into or out of a port even if the winds were unfavorable and I wasn’t here,” Candle told her. “Vine and I introduced a new sport to the magic students in Merinne. Those pilots I mentioned, after guiding a ship out of the harbor would use a dinghy to return with the same propulsion spell. We started having races with those pilot boats in Merinne harbor. You could do that as well. It’s a lot of fun and you’ll never have to worry about losing an oar or a paddle.”

“It might be interesting, but I don’t really know how to use very much magic,” Elie answered.

“But you’re willing to learn, aren’t you?” Candle pressed.

“My father would never approve.”

“And your grandmother would absolutely hate it,” Candle chuckled, “But Vine would approve.”

“Uncle Candle, I’ve been meaning to ask. Why do you keep calling her ‘Vine?’ I knew her well enough to realize how sensitive she was about her name. I can’t imagine her permitting you to call her anything but Oceanvine.”

“You have that right enough,” Candle sighed. “It was a game we played. I’d call her Vine and she would automatically correct me. Half the time I don’t think she even noticed she was doing it. She eventually stopped correcting Silverwind though. I guess being her husband gave him the right to abbreviate her name.

“Anyway,” he continued, “I’ve decided that’s going to be your summer project; to learn as much magic as I can teach you. We’ll discuss the actual syllabus of this course later, but it’s time we unfurled the sails. Do you know how to do that? Well, it’s easy enough. Six will be happy to teach you I’m sure. Help him raise the jib first, then we’ll hoist the mainsail.”

“And then?” she asked.

“Wait until you see this baby fly!”

Kern

One

Once under sail, the *Maiyim Bourne* slipped effortlessly out of Keesport harbor and into the Quarna Strait. Six, who had often gone sailing, growing up on the small island of Ketch, had been amazed by the speed she attained in the light quartering wind.

“Six, you’ll be navigator, at least for this leg of the trip,” Candle announced.

“Aye aye, sir,” Six replied. “What’s our heading?”

“That’s for you to tell me,” Candle told him. “Set us a course for Kern. I’ll give you a clue, however, we could cross the strait and hug the coast of Horalia as we head more or less south. See if you can set a better course.”

“Kern?” Elie asked and Six went down to the chart room. “What’s on Kern?”

“A part of your family your grandmother never told you about,” Candle replied.

“I’m game,” Six told Candle when he proposed his idea for a summer class that evening. They had crossed the strait and found a small cove to spend the night in. “But how are you going to justify that with the University?”

“I told them you two would be conducting a study of the magical techniques of the last century and comparing them to those of today.”

“And they bought it?” Six asked skeptically.

“I did after telling them it was a special advanced seminar open by invitation only. They get to charge double tuition for classes like that.”

“But I’m on scholarship,” Six protested.

“Don’t worry,” Candle laughed, “neither of you are paying for this class. I guess it’s time to show you two some of this craft’s secrets. Elie, you found your closet full of Vine’s old clothing this morning. Have you taken another look in there since then?”

“I haven’t had to,” Elie replied. “Why?”

“It’s a little cool up on deck right now. Would you really want to go outside in that short a skirt and short-sleeved blouse?”

“A sweater and jeans would be more appropriate,” Elie replied.

“Let’s go take another look then,” Candle suggested. He and Six followed Elie into her cabin, where she opened the closet door to find it filled with jeans and sweaters of various types.”

“What happened to all the other clothes?” Elie asked.

“The closet provides whatever sort of clothing you deem appropriate at the moment,” Candle explained.

“And the stuff I bought in Keesport? That’s gone too.”

“I told you not to put it in the closet,” Candle reminded her. “For that matter I told you that you didn’t need to buy anything. Well it’s not a big deal. I suppose you can get those clothes back merely by concentrating on wanting them.”

Elie frowned in concentration. “Well? Why aren’t they there?”

“You have to close the closet door,” Candle explained.

Elie did so and then opened it again. The contents had changed. “That’s close but not exactly what I wanted,” she announced.

“You need to discipline your mind,” Candle told her. “you obviously had a few random thoughts running around in there. Never mind that now; that’s part of what you two will learn this summer. Now, Six, you were asking about expenses. Here’s where you both will be on the honor system. In each room there’s a small cloth sack on top of the dresser. It’s full of money. Care to guess how much?”

“What sort of money?” Six asked. “Coins or paper certificates?”

“Coins,” Candle told him, “Any sort you want; gold, silver, bronze, some of that new clad coinage from Granom should you need it.”

“Gold?” Six asked. “Nobody uses gold in common transactions anymore, not since the Granomish king took his nation off the gold standard.”

“Gold in coin or bullion isn’t illegal in Eminne or Bellinen,” Candle pointed out, “but you are correct that it isn’t used much these days now that we’ve adopted paper currency. We may have to sell the gold coins to collectors, or just use silver, I suppose. So how many coins do you think the sack holds?”

“A few hundred to a thousand,” Elie replied, “depending on the size of the coins.”

“You think so?” Candle countered. “Watch this.” He stepped over the Elie’s bed and up-ended the bag. Gold and silver coins spilled out of the bag and started piling up on Elie’s bed. He let them keep pouring out until the pile was obviously several times more than could have fit in the bag.

“Nice trick,” Six admitted, “just how much money does fit in that bag?”

“It’s a cornucopia spell,” Candle explained. “It will never run out. That’s why you’re on the honor system.”

“Can we get all these back into the bag” Elie asked, looking at the huge pile of coins on her bed.

“Only a few hands full,” Candle told her. “The rest we’ll use for expenses and paying your tuition. We can put the extra in a bank account at our next port of call.”

“How does that spell work?” Six asked interestedly.

“It’s very high level,” Candle told him. “It’s a selective creation spell that has been permanently cast on the bag. At least that’s what I’ve been told. It’s way beyond anything I’ve been able to do.”

“But I thought you were one of the most powerful wizards in history,” Six objected.

“Am I?” Candle countered. “I suppose I can do anything Silverwind could and I’ve learned even more since he died, but he always did it more effortlessly. Oceanvine always released more power than I did, although she had to be angry to do it. And I’m sure there were other magical prodigies in history who were technically more powerful than I am, or maybe not. It’s a hard thing to measure especially if your subjects aren’t competing side-by-side and I wouldn’t recommend such a competition – too dangerous.”

“But if you didn’t cast this spell, who did?” Six asked. “Silverwind?”

“No, Six. Even Silverwind couldn’t have done this. This was done by the ones who built this boat.”

“Nildar and Wenni?” Elie squeaked. “I always thought that was just a story told to the tourists at the Museum.”

“No, that story is true enough as it goes. They really did build the *Maiyim Bourne*, well, Nildar did most of it. Wenni assisted with some of the finer touches. I suspect the cornucopia spells were Her doing, in fact. They seem more Her style. Anyway, They really did build the *Maiyim Bourne* specifically to assist us while we were tracking down the demons sixty years ago. We were shipwrecked in the Wenil Archipelago and we stumbled on Their home there. When the quest was over though, They let us keep the boat complete with all the enchantments on her. Silverwind thought it was a situation ripe for abuse, but Nildar told him to think of it as a test.”

“A test, Uncle Candle?” Elie asked.

“Yes,” Candle replied, “and we all got the impression that we had better not fail it. Money was never an issue for us. I swear Silverwind had accounts in banks in nearly every city on Maiyim, so we didn’t feel much temptation to abuse these bags, but we were concerned by what might happen if they fell into the wrong hands. That’s why I gave His Majesty a copy of this boat rather than the real thing. It would have been too easy for someone to stumble across the various gifts on board.”

“What other gifts are there?” Six asked.

“The box in the galley that looks like a refrigerator, isn’t. Well it can be, if you want it to, but what it actually dispenses is any food or drink you want, hot or cold. It can even produce foods that don’t exist yet.”

“How does it do that?” Elie asked.

“Darned if I know,” Candle shrugged, “but I had my first pizza out of that box sixty years ago, a good thirty-five years before an enterprising young man in Midon invented it. That’s not all, however. The medicine cabinet in the head will dispense whatever medications and other supplies you need, but will not dispense anything you don’t need. At one point Vine broke her clavicle and the cabinet dispensed a single pill that accelerated the healing process by weeks. The bunks will be perfect, by the way; exactly the way you like them, even if you previously thought otherwise. When Vine broke that collar bone, her bunk reconfigured itself to allow her to sleep sitting up.

“The chart room area is equally amazing,” Candle continued. “In it you will find absolutely accurate charts of the entirety of Maiyim, and the finest navigation equipment anywhere. I know Oceanvine absolutely loved the sextant she found there. She took it with her when we put the boat in storage, but you’ll find another or an octant, if you prefer, in its place. You may have also noticed the boat is equipped with navigational aids that didn’t exist sixty years ago. They didn’t exist on this boat then either, but they do now. You’ll find a small radar screen at the interior helm as well as Loran and a Marine band transceiver. I’ve heard talk of one day using artificial satellites as part of a global positioning system, and if that comes to pass, you’ll probably find whatever sort of scope you’ll need to use that.

“There’s a drawer in that room that will supply any sort of paper product you need. Sixty years ago we mostly used it for notebooks and thaumagrophic paper.”

“Thaumagrophic paper? Nobody uses that any more,” Elie commented. “Photography is so much more accurate.”

“And more reliable as evidence,” Candle agreed. “The problem with thaumatography is that to get a good image you need to be both magically talented and experienced as well. Any fool with a camera can figure out how to snap a picture. Outside of the professional magical community, thaumatography was never more than a popular party game. That’s all I can think of at the moment, but it’s always possible we never discovered all this boat has to offer. It didn’t come with an owner’s manual. Come to think of it, maybe it did but we never thought to look for it. You will find manuals for the navigational equipment in the chart room, so who knows. Maybe if you need a guide to the *Maiyim Bourne* badly enough, you’ll find one there.”

“What are we going to do with all this money if we can’t put it back in the bags?” Elie asked, looking at the pile of coins on her bed.

“Sweep it up into one of your duffel bags,” Candle decided. “Keep some for pocket change for the two of you and we’ll use the rest of it for the few expenses we’re likely to incur. Port fees will probably be the most of it, but you never know.”

They rose with the sun the next morning, weighed anchor and continued southward. “I haven’t seen this boat fly yet,” Elie commented.

“We haven’t had a favorable wind yet,” Candle told her. That happens sometimes. “Are you in a hurry?”

“I have all summer,” Elie replied.

“Good. If the current wind direction keeps up we should be able to hydroplane by tomorrow sometime,” Candle told her. “But maybe it’s just as well we’re starting off in such a sedate manner.”

“Why?”

“Because we’re going to start your lessons today, apprentice mage,” Candle told her with a smile.

“Then I guess I’d better have a good breakfast,” Elie decided, “because from the look on your face I suspect that may be the last good experience I have for a while.”

“Probably,” Candle laughed, “but it will get better, I promise.”

Candle went up on deck while Elie decided to let her subconscious choose breakfast and on looking inside the food box she found a large cheese and onion omelet with hash brown potatoes along with a pot full of hot coffee; black but already sweetened the way she liked it. She was just starting to eat when Six came out of his cabin. “Breakfast ready?” he asked.

“Self-service in this restaurant,” she told him tartly, “just like last night.”

“Suits me,” Six replied, although something about his manner suggested he would have appreciated having a plate waiting for him. He didn’t show it, however, as he reached into the food box and pulled out a plate of steak and eggs, a tall mug of coffee – his was black and unsweetened – and a bottle of pepper sauce which he proceeded to sprinkle liberally on the food. “It’s going to be all too easy to get used to that box,” Six commented to Elie between bites.

“Think of it as a test,” she told him, consciously repeating what Nildar had said years earlier.

“Yes,” Six agreed after a moment’s thought. “it probably is. Remind me to have a chat with that particular teacher if we ever get the chance.”

“You’re going to deliberately pick an argument with a god?” Elie asked pointedly.

“Nildar isn’t really known for having a short temper, but I’d have to be careful about how I do that. I suppose I should think of that as a test too,” Six concluded.

“You might consider ducking out of that particular exam,” Elie advised. “Merely choosing to take it could be a sure way to fail.”

“Good point,” Six agreed. “Are we moving?”

Elie looked out a port hole. “We appear to be. Looks like Uncle Candle decided to get moving already. We ought to get up on deck and help out..”

“I just started eating,” Six complained.

“The food box should keep the food warm,” Elie conjectured.

“Or replace it entirely,” Six replied.

“Only if you want it to,” Elie told him. She picked up his plate even as he tried to grab another bite and put the left-over food back into the food box. “Let’s go.”

“You ate quickly,” Candle commented as they climbed up.

“We figured we could finish after we’ve hoisted the sails, sir,” Six told him.

“We did, did we?” Elie added sourly.

“Uh, it was Elie’s idea,” Six confessed.

“And a good one,” Candle told them. A few minutes later they were once more under sail and Six and Elie were able to finish their breakfasts.

“School time,” Candle announced when they were once more on deck. “Now I realize that you, Six, have been specializing with modern propulsion spell technology and your mother, Elie, taught you some old-fashioned housekeeping spells when you were young and both experiences will help you, but this is going to be the first experience in what used to be considered apprentice-level magic for both of you.

“I am going to start you off the same way I started, with basic levitation. Now Silverwind started out by handing me a pebble to make float, but I don’t have any pebbles handy here on the boat. I could have picked some up in Keesport when I first came up with the idea, but a quick trip into a hardware store gave me a fairly inexpensive substitute.” He reached into the pocket of his jacket and pulled out a small paper bag. “Hex nuts,” Candle announced. He handed each of them a large, galvanized, hexagonal nut. “Now you probably both know this, but I’m going to tell you anyway. The key to magic is to hone your abilities to both relax and concentrate at the same time. Most basic spells are achieved entirely through your own mental power, but that power must be carefully channeled through your concentration and the power behind those spells cannot flow unless you are entirely relaxed. The trick is learning to relax when you’re trying to do something for the first time.”

“Basic spells are entirely mental?” Elie asked.

“That’s right,” Candle nodded.

“How about advanced spells?”

“Most advanced spells are combinations of the basics, although when you reach that level you’ll often be using those basic spells to set up the potential for other spells or using power sources that are not entirely your own. The real key to your abilities as mages, however, will be inherent in your basic understanding of the world and for that you’ll need to continue your educations in otherwise non-magic related fields.

“Elie,” he continued, “I fear you’re going to have a harder time there than Six will. You’ve been a liberal arts major these past three years. Okay, I imagine you’ve taken some first-year-level biology and chemistry classes, but if you decide to continue learning magic after this summer you’ll need to improve your understanding of the physical and biological sciences. Magic is a means by which we can exploit scientific knowledge.

“Six, you have a head start on Elie, but don’t get complacent. Your knowledge is specialized and you’ll need to generalize more to get the most out of your magical ability. You’ve both heard the old platitude that knowledge is power. In magic that is literally true. However, the furtherance of your education along those lines will have to wait until we get back to University. For now the goal is to teach you the basic magical tools by which you’ll be able to use that knowledge effectively.

“You each have a hexnut. Your first assignment will be to make those nuts float. Have fun!”

“I can do that!” Elie exclaimed happily.

“You can?” Candle asked, amazed.

“Well, it’s been years since I tried it last, but I figured out how to levitate small objects for myself when I was just a kid. After Mom taught me those housekeeping spells, I started playing with the techniques she taught me. I figured that if I could loosen dirt, why not just lift it away altogether? I did that fairly easily and then started in on a rubber ball I had. That’s when Dad caught me. He walloped me until I couldn’t sit comfortably for days. Told me he wouldn’t tolerate a “common magician” in the family and pretty much had the servants keep an eye on me for two years after that to make sure I never used magic again.

“Oh, this is going to get me in so much trouble,” Elie fretted.

“Only if you tell them,” Six pointed out. “No one else is likely to.”

“If I continue to learn they’re going to find out.”

“Elie,” Candle told her seriously, “you aren’t a child anymore. You’re an adult and what you do with your life is entirely up to you, not your father and certainly not your grandmother. Look, if you really don’t want to do this, you don’t have to. Just enjoy the cruise this summer and that will be that.”

“No, I agreed to do this for the academic credits,” Elie decided. “I won’t back out on that, but I can’t promise I’ll take up magic practice after we get back.”

“That’s fair,” Candle admitted. “So let’s see you levitate that nut.”

“Okay,” Elie replied. She was suddenly very unsure of her abilities, but she sat down cross-legged on the deck, closed her eyes and willed herself to relax. It took her a long time to accomplish that. She had never tried to do anything like this when she wasn’t alone and in a nice quiet place. This time she was painfully aware that both Candle and Six were watching her, the wind was blowing in her face, whipping her long hair out behind her, and the sound of the boat gliding through waves were all big distractions. Then just as she was about to give it a try, a spray of salt water jumped over the bow and chilled her. She opened her eyes in shock.

“Not as easy under real-world conditions is it?” Candle asked mildly.

“I can do it,” she told him determinedly. She closed her eyes again. This time she concentrated on what she wanted to do first, then willed herself to relax.

“Not bad,” Candle admitted a moment later.

Elie opened her eyes to see the nut floating in the air in front of her. A moment later, she lost her concentration and the nut dropped toward the deck. To cover her error, she thrust her hand out and caught it just before it hit the deck. “See?” she asked triumphantly.

“Very good,” Candle commended her. “Where did you learn to relax like that?”

“Oceanvine taught me,” Elie answered.

“I thought as much. It’s the way she used to relax. What else did she teach you?” Candle asked.

“Simple ward construction,” Elie replied. “I was never very good at it, but she kept asking me to try and

eventually I was able to create a simple curtain ward, although it's hard to maintain."

"It would be," Candle nodded. "It was over a year before she would show me how to do it and I was already casting some fairly high-level spells by that time. I'm surprised she didn't keep you doing pebble exercises until then."

"She also showed me how to heat and cool objects as well as create a light, although I wasn't as good at those spells. It was mostly the relaxation techniques she helped me with. She told me to practice between visits, but I didn't dare. If word had gotten back to my parents..."

"I doubt any of your classmates would have told them," Candle observed.

"No, they would have just laughed at me," Elie replied.

"They wouldn't have if they thought you could turn them into fairy tales," Candle laughed, wondering if Oceanvine had ever used that expression with Elie. From the look on her face, he decided she must have heard it at least once. "Well, never mind. Can you do it with your eyes open? No? Have you tried controlling two objects independently, but at the same time? Well, there's your next assignment."

"Which?" Elie asked.

"Both, but I think you'll gain some confidence if you try it with your eyes shut first. I don't mind if you do that while learning something new, but you'll rarely have time to get yourself into a self-hypnotic trance in an emergency."

"When would levitating a hex nut be of use in an emergency?" Elie countered.

"Not long after Silverwind apprenticed me, I did something like that, but with a pebble."

"How?" Elie asked.

"We were fighting the demon, Pohn, in the capital city of North Horalia," Candle began.

"Silverwind took you out to fight a demon when you were a raw apprentice?" Six asked suspiciously.

"No," Candle admitted, "I sneaked along behind him in case I could help out. It was a stupid thing to do, but I was only ten years old at the time. Anyway when the demon manifested, he was enormous. Silverwind and Oceanvine were throwing everything they had at him and he was blocking all of it. I'm still not entirely sure what happened – Silverwind and I talked about it off and on for decades afterwards – but I shot that pebble at Pohn like a bullet coming out of a rifle and somehow it punched a hole in his defenses that Silverwind and Oceanvine were able to exploit. And the moral of that story, kiddies, is that no spell is entirely useless in the right circumstance. It's not what you can do, but what you do with it. Ouch," he concluded, "I think I've exceeded my cliché quota for the year."

They were all silent for a few minutes as the boat continued to slide on past the Horalian coast. "May we practice in the cabin?" Elie asked at last.

"Nope," Candle replied. "Although I won't mind if you do so when you just happen to be inside, I want you to practice with as many distractions as possible. It will be harder at first, but in the long run you'll be better mages for it. Six, do you want to take a shot at it, before I let you work on it on your own?"

Six looked like he would rather do anything but that, but with a quick glance at Elie, he put his hex nut down on the deck and stared at it. He wanted to be able to close his eyes just as she had, but with her watching he felt he had to do her one better. He immediately realized his mistake; it was nearly impossible to relax and concentrate on the job at hand while everything was happening around him. Then he suddenly realized that what he was trying to do was not entirely unlike the basic propulsion spells he had been forced to learn in freshman year physics. They were spells of the old fashioned sort, but they were still useful in lab exercises concerning forces and vectors. There were more modern ways to accomplish the same things but unless one were magic-null there were still some things done in the classroom simply because they had always been done that way. Now Six was glad he had learned that even if he hadn't had to use it in years.

With a small, confident smile he applied the one spell he knew and in the next instant his jaw dropped open as the small piece of steel streaked up and out of sight. "Uh, trying too hard, do you think?" he asked meekly.

"Levitation takes a lot more control than simple propulsion, Six," Candle told him patiently, "but at least you didn't damage the boat, not that you could have. The first time I made my pebble move it took a chip out of the stone of one of the walls in Castle North. It's still there. If you ever happen to go there, ask Duke Norton about it."

"But the basic concept is the same, isn't it?" Six asked.

"Yes it is, but the propulsion spell you just used applies a great amount of force to the target for just an instant. Levitation involves using far less force, applied over an extended period. What you are doing is applying just enough force to lift the hex nut and then hold it in place or move it gently as you direct. For now, just hold it in place."

"Uh, any idea where my hex nut went?" Six asked, looking upward.

"Orbit, maybe," Elie laughed

"I doubt that," Candle told her. "He couldn't have achieved anything better than a suborbital flight, much like the space flights a few years ago. More likely, though, the nut landed a mile or two away. Here, Six, have another."

"Thanks, sir," Sir replied, reaching into the paper bag. "I'll try not to lose this one."

"Just in case," Elie giggled, "you'd better practice out here until you have your control down."

"Funny," Six growled.

Two

Elie and Six applied themselves to the exercise all morning. Once she did not feel the pressure of having to perform in front of Six and Candle, Elie had little trouble levitating two nuts at once and was able to make one orbit her head while the other moved back and forth in front of her. At least it worked as long as her eyes were closed. When she opened them, however, the hex nuts continued to do as she directed for about two seconds and then fell to the deck and she would have to start all over again. Candle told her she was doing very well, indeed, but she thought he was just humoring her.

Six, in spite of being a graduate student with several years experience in technical magic, was having as much trouble as Elie was. He lost the next hex nut just as spectacularly as the first and then was unable to move the third one for the next hour as he tried to apply just the right amount of force. The problem was that the spell as he had learned it was not one that required control and the task of learning control left him sweating with exertion.

He managed to get the fourth hex nut to just float in front of him for several seconds until he lost control again and it shot upward. This time, however, Elie had been watching and quickly reached out with her mind to slow and finally stop the rocketing nut and then bring it back to Six. "Thanks," he told her reluctantly.

"How did I just do that?" Elie asked.

"If you don't know, Wizard Candle is only going to make you do it again and again until you know," Six replied.

"I know what I wanted to do," Elie corrected him, "but I did it without thinking."

"That might be part of the key," Six pointed out.

"Not thinking about what we're doing?" Elie countered. "I doubt that. It goes against everything Oceanvine told me about magic. 'Without careful control, magic is chaos,' she said."

"Vine had it right," Candle told them from the helm. "However, you're thinking too much as well. Elie was able to do what she just did because she didn't have the time to tense up as she considered what to do. However, if it had not been for the practice, she wouldn't have been able to do it at all. Six, you're trying too hard, but I think you'll both have this exercise down by tomorrow. In the meantime you've both worked hard enough for now. Let's have lunch and relax for a bit before you try again."

"Sounds good," Six commented. "What would you like?"

"Surprise me," Candle told him. "While you're down there, however, would you turn on the radio and get the latest marine weather forecast? Looks like a change coming up ahead and I haven't been able to set the autopilot in these waters so I could go listen for myself."

"You got it," Six replied, swinging down the ladder into the galley.

"Autopilot?" Elie asked. "Is that something new?"

"Not for this boat," Candle told her. "It was another of Nildar's inventions. See this little miniature sail on the stern here? Well, it connects to a device that when set will maintain whatever heading I choose. It isn't perfect. In rough seas it doesn't work worth a damn and we cannot use it while hydroplaning for the same reason. Also it isn't safe to use on the inner seas where there are too many things we might hit like ships, reefs, other boats and the occasional stray island."

Elie smiled at the joke. "Uncle Candle, why am I having so much trouble with this exercise?"

"What trouble?" Candle asked. "It took me days to be able to lift that pebble under control for the first time."

“But I can already do that,” she replied. “But I can’t do it with my eyes open.”

“Ah, well I may be wrong but part of that might be because deep down you’re still afraid your father is going to catch you so whenever you actually see the hex nut floating in front of you, you immediately make it stop.”

“So I’m trying hide it even from myself?” Elie asked.

“Could be. I’m no psychiatrist,” Candle told her. “The other possibility is you don’t really believe what you see.”

“That’s silly!” she scoffed.

“Yes, it is,” Candle agreed, “but it happens anyway. Don’t worry, if that’s the case you’ll eventually decide to trust your own eyes.”

“Sir,” Six reported from inside the cabin, “the weather reports that there’s a storm moving toward us slowly from the south. It’s not much of a storm, but it sounds like we may get wet by tomorrow morning.”

“That depends on how slowly it’s moving,” Candle replied, “and just where the center of circulation is. However that coincides with how I’ve been reading the clouds this morning. No matter, we’re about to have the wind change and that means we’ll be able to stop tacking back and forth across the Quarna Strait.”

“I decided on steak sandwiches for lunch,” Six told him, ducking back into the galley then reappearing at once. He brought two plates with large sandwiches on them, gave them to Candle and Elie, then went back and got one for himself. He also brought a pitcher of light ale and three cups.

“No alcohol for you,” Candle told him.

“Why not?” both Six and Elie asked.

“Consumption of alcohol will decrease your ability to concentrate,” Candle replied. “There have been very few mages who were able to cast spells while drunk. Silverwind did and was capable of doing more while drunk than when sober, but if alcohol had any effect on that it was probably to remove inhibitions that kept him from doing certain things he might not normally have been inclined to try.”

“Such as,” Six prompted.

“Creating living creatures,” Candle replied.

“You’re kidding?” Six asked.

“Not at all. It was before I met him, but evidently Wenni observed it. One night when he was particularly drunk, never mind why just now, he created a living dove. He told me once that it wasn’t the only time he had done it, but never while sober.”

“How about you?” Elie asked. “Have you ever tried to cast a spell while drunk?”

A cloud of sadness shaded the wizard’s face at the question. “I’ve only been drunk once,” Candle

replied at last, “and casting spells at the time was the furthest thing from my mind. Even if I had been so inclined, M... uh... Fireiron would have stopped me from trying.”

“But you drink from time to time,” she pressed. “I’ve seen you do it.”

“Very few other mages did. In fact many mages abstained from alcohol of any sort. Vine and I only had the occasional drink because our association with Silverwind showed us that an occasional drink wouldn’t permanently affect our ability with magic.”

“So why can’t we have an occasional drink?” Six asked. “It seems to me that the key is in moderation.”

“I suppose it could be, but there have been tests along those lines and even a single glass of beer can have a measurable effect on your ability to concentrate. Neither Oceanvine nor I ever had a drink in our first few years as apprentices.”

“You were both too young to drink at the time,” Six pointed out.

“Look, you want the ale, have it. As I think about it, you’re both having problems relaxing. Maybe a small drink will help you relax. Just don’t make a habit out of this,” Candle warned them.

Elie was inclined not to have the drink after what Candle had told them, but the sandwich made her thirsty and she decided that she might as well have the ale. It was only after finishing the cup that she realized there was nothing to stop her from getting something else to drink.

That afternoon, Candle continued to steer the boat while Elie and Six practiced levitation. It turned out that Candle was correct on both counts. Elie, feeling more relaxed than she had that morning had no trouble keeping two or three hex nuts aloft. Six, however did have problems. He was no longer attempting to send hex nuts to Midbar, Maiyim’s one natural satellite, but now he was barely able to make them float for a few seconds before they would fall back to the deck.

He was just starting to get some control back an hour later when he suddenly felt the boat rise up beneath him.

“Flight ho!” Candle called out. “Now this is what I’ve been telling you two about.”

Elie caught two out of three nuts in the air and scooped the third up from the deck and rushed back to the stern. “Are we really flying?” she asked Candle.

“In a sense,” Candle replied. “Our water wings or hydrofoils are skimming over the surface of the water and will continue to do it so long as we can maintain this speed or better. The neat part is that now that our hull is up and out of the water we’re only going to travel faster. I was thinking of spending the night in Southport, but now we’re practically running with the wind. If we raise the spinnaker, I think we can reach Adda by dusk. Six, plot us a course to Adda and double check that forecast. If it hasn’t changed, we’re going to have some fun.”

Six laid out the chart for the lower Quarna Strait on the table and checked their position by Loran while listening for the latest forecast. He was mildly surprised at how far south they had come even before the winds became favorable for hydroplaning, but the forecast held out and he returned topside to report as much.

“Good,” Candle replied. “Retract the foils.”

“Retract them, sir?” Six asked.

“Yeah. It was one of the first lessons we learned on this tub,” Candle explained as Elie hastened to comply. You can’t pull down the jib and raise the spinnaker fast enough to keep the boat from slipping back into the water. When you do that, she’ll decelerate suddenly. The first time we tried slowing down by dropping the jib, I ended up going for a swim in Castelon harbor.” Elie laughed at that thought even as she retracted the foils and the *Maiyim Bourne* dropped back into the water. As Candle had described, the boat slowed down rapidly, A large amount of cool saltwater splashed up and over the boat’s bow, raining down on all three of them. “You’ll get used to that,” Candle commented. “Okay, both of you go forward and lower the jib and raise the spinnaker. Six, you know how to do that, don’t you?”

“I crewed on a yacht a couple summers ago,” Six confirmed. “I’ll show Elie the ropes.”

“Literally, in this case,” Candle observed. “Very well, you’ll find the compartment for the Granomish jib is right next to the one for the spinnaker.”

“You keep specifying this as a Granomish jib, sir,” Six noted. “Does anyone use the old-style Emmine jibs anymore?”

“I couldn’t say,” Candle admitted, “but we have one anyway. It never got much use, except in a storm, but we do still have it. Go change the sail, though, we’re wasting time.”

Even before the foils were redeployed the *Maiyim Bourne* was sailing faster than Six would have believed. However, when Elie turned the crank that pushed the foils back out of their compartments, the boat lifted back up immediately and gained speeds faster than any other boat Six had sailed in. There were some experimental motor-craft Six had heard about that might go faster on water, it wasn’t a patch on the current land-speed record, and many true airplanes could fly faster, but for an all-sail vessel, it was obvious that this was the fastest on *Maiyim*.

At top speed the journey was too exciting to get back to magic practice, nor did Candle expect them to. Instead he told them tales of his previous trips on the boat. The stories were not chronologically arranged and both Six and Elie lost track of just what happened when, but many of the stories seemed like epic tales from out of the Middle Ages. Elie, in fact, said so.

“Well, I suppose they do,” Candle agreed easily. “We were out fighting demons and sea monsters, evil magicians and other creatures out of legend. We were commanded by the Elder Gods to undertake a quest of all things. Of course, it sounds like a medieval epic. I don’t think you two realize just how much the world has changed in the last sixty years.

“I was born before the first sustained, powered flight and engine driven ships were just being built for the first time. Now Eminne and Granom are in a head-long race to see who can land on Midbar first. There was no such thing as radio or television. Heck, I didn’t see my first motion picture until I went to University. On my first trip to Querna, the streets were still being lit at night by gas lamps as they were in every other city in the world. There was telegraphy, but none of it was inter-island so it was only used on the larger islands like Rallena and Quirmlia.

“Of course that’s nothing compared to the social and political changes. When I was young, Emmine and Granom were on the friendliest terms. There were still some nasty frictions between Belinnen and Granom – holdovers from the wars just a century earlier, but relations there were getting better. Believe it or not, Emmine was the go-between peacemaker for the Granom and Bellinen archipelagos. Now we

have what the media are calling a “Cold War” between us and Granom and the Orenta are the political neutrals.”

“Wasn’t that caused by the space race?” Six asked.

“Not really,” Candle replied. “It was more the other way around. Relations were already tense between Emmine and Granom because Ksaveras IX abolished the House of Commons from his Parliament after an attempted regicide. There was also a purge of those affiliated with the regicides that was a little too draconian. Our King Hacon went a little too far in protesting the move and while it wasn’t in quite these words, Ksaveras told him to keep his big nose out of Granomish business. We nearly went to war with Granom, although not until another two decades later. The fact that we didn’t you can thank Oceanvine for. We all – Silverwind, Oceanvine and I – tried to talk Hacon out of making such a declaration when Ksaveras proclaimed his intention of building a military base in Methis’ chain, but it was Vine who managed to calm him down long enough for her to travel to Querna and talk old Ksaveras out of establishing a permanent base there. The Orenta helped out, which was the beginning of their reputation as peace-makers, although without Vine it’s likely they would have declared war on Granom too since some of the colonists in Methis’ Chain are, or were rather, citizens of Bellinen. I’ll bet nobody mentioned that at the funeral, did they?”

“No, they didn’t,” Elie admitted.

“That’s because nobody knew. As far as the public was told, the deal was hammered out by the Orenta, Vine’s part in the whole mess was never widely known.”

“Why not?” Elie demanded.

“For one thing, your great-grandmother valued her privacy. Silverwind was the most famous wizard of all time and because of her association and later marriage to him, she became well-known too. Sixty years ago people respected the privacy of others so while almost everyone had heard of her, there were few television or still cameras following famous people around for the sake of taking more pictures of them without their knowing about it. That was starting to change too around thirty-five years ago, although it wasn’t as frenzied nor as invasive as it is these days. If you want my opinion, it’s only going to get worse before it gets better. So Vine decided to let the Orentan legates take the credit. It allowed her to get back to teaching, which was what she wanted to do most.

“So where before,” Candle continued, “Emmine stood as referee between the Orenta and Granome, now it’s Bellinen standing between the Granomish government and ours. Politics is a waste of time if you ask me. I’d rather see all three intelligent species working together to reach Midbar and beyond. That’s what the Gods had in mind for us.”

“Going to Midbar?” Elie asked.

“No, well yes, maybe. They want us to work together. We’re different because they are different, but the Elder Gods worked together to create Maiyim. Their immortal children cooperate as well. They never intended their mortal descendants be at odds with each other.”

“Ship ahead,” Six pointed out.

“Looks like an oil tanker to me,” Candle opined. “She’s moving slowly and we want to continue on to southeast until we reach the northern coast of Rallena. Retract the foils, Six, we’ll need to adjust our course and stop running with the wind.” Once the spinnaker had been stowed and the large jib raised

again, they continued on, crossing the tanker's path a quarter mile off her stern.

The change of sails didn't make much difference in their travel time and they arrived in Adda, as predicted, just as the sun was setting over the Inner Seas.

Adda had once been a prosperous whaling port, but petroleum had begun to replace whale oil even before Candle had been born. When Candle apprenticed to Silverwind only a handful of whalers left port each year and by the time he entered University, the industry had ground to a halt with the only market for whale oil in the less technologically advanced corners of the world like Wennil and Saindo. Adda fell into decline for two decades after that until the local Member of Parliament decided to bolster his popularity by instituting an annual music festival. The festival, modest at first, also attracted poets, painters, sculptors and other artists until the old seaport became a blooming art colony.

It helped that the area boasted some of the most beautiful beaches on Rallena and that after a few years of attending the music festivals, many prosperous people chose to build vacation homes in the area.

Adda was filled with beautiful old mansions that had been lovingly restored. Most had been turned into schools, offices and inns, but some few continued to be dwellings, although the affluent newcomers to the area preferred to build their houses with an ocean view and unlike similar areas on the outer islands, the land around Adda was sheltered from most hurricanes and tropical storms which usually were broken up by Mifde, Kern and Horalia before they could reach Adda.

Candle radioed ahead to arrange a slip for the *Maiyim Bourne* and was assured that there was plenty of space available in the public marina since the festival wouldn't be for another month yet.

The boat entered Adda port still up on her foils, giving the people in the harbor a splendid view of her with the deep red sun setting just behind. Then as the last direct rays of light began to fade, they retracted the hydrofoils and splashed magnificently back into the water a mere two hundred yards from the marina. Candle told Six and Elie to furl the sail while he piloted the *Maiyim Bourne* in using the ancient propulsion spell he'd told her about.

"How soon can I try that?" Six asked him interestedly.

"Get a bit more practice with the hex nuts," Candle replied. "I know it can be boring after a while, but you need to build up your control. It was a lot better this afternoon. Maybe I'll give you a chance when we leave Kern if you practice hard before then. I want you to get as controlled as Elie first."

"Was I that good?" Elie asked.

"Surprisingly so," Candle told her. "Evidently levitation is like riding a bicycle, at least for you. Once you know how, you always will. With very little to go on, I think Six is going to have an easier time once we get past the basics, however. He's got the more technological education so he'll have a better understanding of how things work. You'll have to play catch up for a while at that end, but in the long run I think you both show a lot of promise. You're both doing a lot more than I did at the end of the first day of my apprenticeship. Come to think of it, Silverwind didn't give me my first lesson for days afterward."

"Are we apprentices?" Elie asked. "It sounds funny."

"And old-fashioned too," Candle agreed. "Well, I suppose you could just say you're students... No, I've changed my mind, you are apprentices. All mages start out as apprentices and work their way up to the rank of journeyman."

“Why not bachelor?” Six asked.

“You’re already a bachelor of sciences, Six,” Candle pointed out. “Do you think you’re a journeyman mage yet?”

“Not hardly,” Six grinned.

“Actually, you are,” Candle told him, “technically anyway. You’ve learned magic theory and know more than any apprentice and most journeymen in my day. It’s the practice of magic where you’re weak. Still, given a year, I think both of you will be worthy of the title journeyman.”

“Really? So soon?” Six asked. “I thought apprenticeships usually took years.”

“True, but those years were filled with classes and learning, at least in the last century. There was also a certain amount of working to pay for those lessons. I know Oceanvine used to clean fireplaces and run errands to pay for hers. Some masters took their pay in direct service, but not very often in the last century. You two are fortunate that Silverwind just taught me and all I had to do for the lessons was to learn and do my share of the household chores, so I’m not going to demand a whole lot of service from you as well. Still if I choose to send you out for pizza, think of it as earning your keep.” They all laughed. “Anyway, you’ve both learned more than most students your ages were taught in my day, so aside from bringing Elie up to speed in the sciences, all either of you need is experience in practical magic. Now, Sixtus, Elie, get ready to secure us to the dock. We’re almost there.”

Elie and Six didn’t need to do much to obey that order. Six readied the painter at the boat’s bow, while Elie did likewise with a line at the stern, but the dock was so filed with people watching them come in, that all they had to do was toss the lines up and others quickly secured them to the cleats.

“Nice boat,” a middle-aged gentleman on the dock told them. “I’ve seen the real *Maiyim Bourne* in Randona and I must say this is the best copy of her I’ve ever encountered.”

“Thanks,” Candle told him while Six and Elie exchanged an amused grin. “I worked hard to make it that way.”

“Good job,” the man replied. “You made quite an entrance there too.”

“Timing is everything, don’t you know,” Candle laughed. “Not sure how I managed that beautiful sunset though.”

“If you can ever do it on command, let me know. The festival would pay a king’s ransom to have one like it every evening. I’m Ben Hollits, by the way, the harbormaster. We spoke on the radio.” He reached out his hand toward Candle. “Mind if I come aboard?”

“Candle,” the wizard replied, shaking Ben’s hand. “Welcome aboard.”

“Just Candle?” Ben asked.

“It’s a mage name,” Candle explained. “Wanna, uh... want to see me do a card trick?” he held up his hand and a deck of cards appeared in it. Ben laughed and shook his head. “Well, some years ago I wrote a series of children’s stories under the name of Ange Tarnsa, but Candle’s always been my legal name.”

“Ange Tarnsa, really?” Ben asked. “I used to read your stories to my kids when they were young. I read them now to my grandkids. Great stories.”

“Thanks,” Candle replied, “but I don’t suppose you came by to chat about my literary pretensions.” He looked to see what Elie and Six were doing, but they seemed to be chatting with the other people on the dock.

“Unfortunately not, although had I known who you were, I might have brought one of your books by for an autograph.”

“Stop by tomorrow morning, we won’t be leaving again until after breakfast, but in the meantime why don’t you come on inside. I can sign whatever bits of paper you have for me over a cup of coffee or anything else you’d like and I’ll pay the marina fees. I hope you don’t mind getting paid in coin. Do you take gold, by the way?”

“No one’s paid in gold coin as long as I can remember, but I can only accept them at face value, you understand. A collector would probably give you a lot more,” Ben told him.

“It’s not a problem,” Candle replied. “I just don’t have a lot of paper money on me and I figure I ought to hold on to it in case I come across some young upstart who forgets that gold is money too and I don’t want to load you down with too much silver.”

“Whatever you like,” Ben told him. “It’s all legal tender.”

Three

The harbormaster stayed just long enough to enjoy a cup of coffee and then rushed off, explaining he had to get home for dinner. “That’s a good idea,” Candle noted to Six and Elie after seeing Ben off. “What would you like to eat tonight?”

“We were thinking of going into town, sir,” Six replied. “The locals told us there’s a Garadian restaurant just a few blocks from here. We’ve never tried that sort of food, so we figured it would be an adventure. Want to join us?”

“I think I’ll pass,” Candle decided. “Garadian cooking is a bit heavier than anything I want tonight – too much chocolate, but you two go ahead and enjoy yourselves.”

The marina was next to the old port of Adda where a few small commercial ships still came in. The harbor had never been modernized so it was too shallow for the larger vessels. They left the harbor area and strolled up three blocks of smoothly paved street and then over another two blocks where the streets were still paved with cobblestones until they found a four-story red brick building with a restaurant called, “The Vanilla Bean.” The sign on the front had a bright green orchid flower on it which clashed with the other bright colors the owners had used on the name of the restaurant. Elie reminded herself that while this was garish to human eyes, it would be considered tasteful in the Bellinen Archipelago.

Inside, the restaurant had been decorated with palms and other tropical foliage plants and the walls had been covered with grass cloth which went a way toward making it look like the inside of a Marintan hut. Six wondered about that, since modern Orenta lived in air-conditioned buildings that were not entirely

unlike anywhere else on civilized Maiyim.

The cuisine was not, as they had been told, strictly Garadian although all the featured entrees were. There were many concessions to human tastes including half the menu offering the sort of fare one might expect in any decent diner in Emmine. Both Six and Elie, however, chose from the Orentan side of the menu. Six started off with a drink made from various tropical fruits and rum, but Elie, mindful of what Candle had told her about alcohol and magic chose a non-alcoholic fruit beverage that was both tart and sweet but left her palate clear to enjoy the other flavors to come.

Six laughed at her for avoiding the alcohol, "We aren't practicing tonight, Elie," he pointed out.

"It just seems to me that moderation is a good habit to get into in any case," she replied just a bit defensively.

They were waited on by a young Orentan woman, who looked to be younger than Elie. On asking, they learned she was the proprietor's daughter and had just come back from school in Bellinen. She gave them more in-depth descriptions of the unusual foods than the menu had room for.

Candle had been right in characterizing Garadian food as being heavy on chocolate, although it wasn't the sweet chocolate that Elie expected, but one mixed with tomato and various interesting herbs and spices she could not readily identify. For herself, she chose a plate of mixed fried vegetables topped lightly with the restaurant's signature spicy chocolate-vanilla sauce. Given the choice, however, she asked for the sauce to only be of medium heat. Six, looking for something bolder, chose a chicken dish with extra spicy sauce. Although they each sampled the other's plate, they both thought they had made the better choice.

"Too much of a good thing," Elie commented after tasting Six's chicken. Six replied that he thought the vegetables could have used more of the chocolate-vanilla sauce.

Elie enjoyed a second cup of the fruit beverage with her meal, while Six moved on to a Granomish ale from Palsondir. "Mostals we import comes from Marga," he explained. "I thought it might be nice to try something different."

"And Palsondirish cooking is highly influenced by Orentan contact," Elie noted, "so it would probably go better with this than the beers from Marga."

"Sure you don't want any?" Six asked.

"I'll pass," she replied. "I don't really drink all that much beer anyway. I only drink it to be sociable on most occasions. Given a choice I prefer hard cider anyway, though it does seem to be harder to get it these days, doesn't it?"

"Not as many people drinking it anymore, I guess," Six conjectured. "Can't expect brewers to keep producing a product they can't sell."

"I noticed they still had it in Candleson's in Renton," Elie told him.

"It may be a local favorite," Six told her, "or maybe it's still in style all over that end of the island."

For dessert, there was an interesting ice cream concoction with both vanilla and chocolate ice cream and bananas. Both ice creams had other tropical spices in them, the chocolate was laced with chili pepper

and the vanilla with cinnamon and were covered with a mango sauce. They lingered for a long while over a pot of Belinnen tea until it became obvious the restaurant staff was waiting for them and only one other couple to finish up.

Finally, feeling all too full, Six paid the bill and they started back toward the marina. The streets were dark even with the overhead electric lights. The lights, Six, observed were too high and spaced too far apart to adequately light the area for night-time strolls. As if to accentuate his point, a man stepped out of an alley just ahead of them.

“Got a light, buddy?” he asked. The man was not well dressed; both shirt and slacks were badly soiled – obvious even in the dim light – and a rank smell seemed to precede him. He was reaching into a pocket as though searching for a cigarette.

“Sorry,” Six replied automatically. “I don’t smoke.”

“Too bad,” the man replied, pulling a small pistol out of the pocket, “Gimme your money instead.” He pointed the gun at Six, but his hands were shaking enough that either of them could have been hit had the gun actually gone off.

Six mentally shrugged, thinking, *Easy come, easy go*, and pulled out the coins from his pocket.

“Your wallet, too,” the man demanded, “and the purse...” However, that was as far as he got when suddenly his gun levitated up and out of his hand. As he stared incredulously at the floating gun, now pointed directly at him, Six hauled off and smashed his fist into the man’s face. As the pain of impact shot up his arm, Six immediately regretted his choice of target, but it was effective nonetheless as the man screamed and ran away from them as fast as his shaky legs could carry him. The gun dropped to the pavement with a clatter.

Still cradling his sore hand, Six turned to Elie and exclaimed, “Wow! I guess you’re a real mage now. Well done, Elie! I just wish I’d thought of that, my hand wouldn’t be bruised right now.”

Elie was just staring at the gun, now on the ground and surrounded by silver coins. “I did that?” she asked weakly.

“You sure did,” Six told her happily. “Why? Didn’t you mean to?”

“Of course I did,” Elie replied. “But it was so simple. This afternoon, I had to work to make those nuts float, but here it just felt as natural as if I’d reached out and taken the gun from him. Good thing he didn’t try to take it back, though. I was so surprised it worked, I nearly dropped it.”

“Hmm, that would have been a bad idea,” Six opined. Well, just let me pick up our money. He tried reaching out with his mind, but with a slight alcoholic buzz in his head, nothing happened. He said nothing of that to Elie, but filed the lesson away in his mind as he stooped to pick up the coins. Several of them floated up and toward him. “Thanks,” he told her politely, sorry now that he’d been drinking. “You want the gun? A trophy or something?”

“No,” Elie replied disgustedly.

“Didn’t think so.” Rather than picking it up himself, Six kicked it far back into the alley. Then they hurried back to the *Maiyim Bourne* to tell Candle what he had missed.

“You got lucky,” Candle told them. “He might have squeezed the trigger when you lifted the gun out of his hand. You probably should have knocked it to one side first, but I’m glad to see you can take care of yourselves. There are more reliable ways to protect yourself in such a situation though, and I suppose I’ll need to teach you some of them. I’m not sure you’re ready for solid wards yet, however. Well, you did well, in any case. It’s like the early flyers used to say, ‘Any landing you can walk away from’ and all that, eh?”

“How about you, Elie?” he asked very seriously. “How do you feel?”

“Feel?” Elie echoed tentatively. “Well, I was very scared when he pulled out that gun.”

“I imagine so,” Candle replied dryly. “How do you feel now?”

“I’m a bit tired,” she told him. “That’s not what you mean either is it? Well, it felt good to be able to defend myself. It was like a whole part of me I never knew existed just woke up and shouted, ‘Hey! I’m in here and I want out.’”

“Did it feel good to bully that robber?” Candle pressed.

“Bully him?” Elie considered. “No I didn’t bully him, I only did what I had to do in defense. Had I chased after him to continue threatening him with his own gun; then I’d have been a bully. Actually it was Six who drove him off.”

“Good answer,” Candle told her. “I don’t want you getting a thrill for the wrong reasons.”

“What felt good was the fact that I was using magic for something real,” Elie explained. “It wasn’t just an exercise. This was the sort of thing you were talking about, Uncle Candle. Being able to cast a spell in an emergency with my eyes open. And it came naturally. Look!” She glanced at the food box and, with her mind, reached out to open it. Inside was a bottle of sweet seltzer and three glasses. She levitated them to the table shakily and then as an after thought, remembered to close the box’s door.

“Very good,” Candle told her, impressed in spite of himself. “Can you pour it that way too?”

“Let me try,” Six requested. He tensed up to make the attempt, then realized he was supposed to relax, so he took a deep breath and willed the cap of the bottle to pop off. The bottle moved jerkily up and then tipped over to fill the first glass, but Six realized he had to reach out and pick the bottle back up by hand. “So I need to work on that,” he concluded humbly. “Go ahead, Elie, why don’t you finish it?”

Elie shot a quick glance at Six, trying to decide whether she should accept the challenge or not. After a long moment, she said, “Okay,” and picked up the bottle by hand and filled the other two glasses. Six looked at her suspiciously so she told him, “I’m tired too.”

Candle wasn’t fooled for an instant, but he was pleased that Elie had not chosen to flaunt her new-found ability. She was doing so well, he would have felt bad had she made it necessary for him to berate her for a lack of humility. “Well, then,” he told them instead, “here’s to both of you. If you have accomplished this much with your first day of practice, I can only imagine what you’ll be doing by the end of the summer. And, Sixtus,” he added, “maybe I will let you try to pilot us out tomorrow.”

They were just casting off from the dock the next morning when Ben returned with one of Candle's books for an autograph.

"You wrote that, Uncle Candle?" Elie asked.

"Yes," he replied. "Ange Tarnsa was my birth name, although I never knew it until after I had my journeyman's degree."

"Mom used to give me those books to read," Elie commented. "Why didn't you know your own name, though?"

"I was an orphan," Candle explained, "nearly a foundling, in fact. Nobody knew who my father was, my mother was a prostitute who died not long after I was born. From what I later learned she must have stayed alive just barely long enough to name me. I was brought up in an orphanage by a couple named Harvester. When I was still very young I evidently burned my hand, trying to grasp a candle flame. They called me Candle after that. Anyway, I ran away before I was ten years old and fell in with a group of other boys who were all working for a man known as Daddy Fox. I learned how to pick pockets and locks while with him, but his teaching methods included letting all the other boys beat up on whoever stole the least for him that day. I was a smart kid and it didn't take me very long to realize that wasn't the best path to a long and healthy life. Well, actually, I just didn't like getting beaten up so I ran away again. I met Silverwind and Oceanvine a few days later.

"Some years later we had occasion to pass through Tarnsa again so I went to visit the Harvesters with Oceanvine. What I had in mind was to apologize for running away, though I never actually said I was sorry. Maybe I just wanted them to know I was all right. Anyway, while I was there, Mrs. Harvester mentioned how she would let the children read a series of nickel novels about Silverwind and Windchime. He was later replaced in the books by Oceanvine, but Mrs. Harvester hadn't read any of the later books. Anyway, she let the kids read them, but except for the fact that it got them interested in reading, they were so badly written, she didn't really approve of them. I wrote my stories, hoping they would be something she might have approved of. I returned to Tarnsa some years later, but she had died a year earlier and I don't know if she liked them any better than the Silverwind novels."

"Well, I've always thought they were great," Ben told him, "and it was wonderful to meet you at last. Safe travels!"

"Thanks," Candle replied. "Take care."

The harbormaster left and they finished casting off. Candle piloted them away from the dock, describing to them how the piloting spell worked, then he turned the chore over to Six, although Candle continued to supervise and helped smooth out the ride a few times as Six was still having a bit of trouble keeping the thrust absolutely even.

"Not too bad, but you still need to work on control although you're much better than yesterday."

"Back to the hex nuts then?" Six asked.

"Absolutely," Candle told him. "Trust me on this. Eventually you'll find yourself going back to simple levitation just to help you relax or to understand a new spell. I still do even now."

"What sort of spells do you research these days?" Six asked him, just ahead of Elie.

“The last couple of decades I’ve been trying to understand that staff you see me walking around with,” Candle responded.

“The staff?” Six asked. “What about it?”

“Ah, now that’s a very long story,” Candle told him, “and one I’ll leave for another time after you’ve learned a lot more magic. But I’ll tell you this; it is much more than just a pretty walking stick. If I’m lucky though, maybe you two will learn enough in the next few years that you can help me learn everything it has to teach us. Elie, you want to try this?”

“Am I ready?” she asked.

“I don’t know,” Candle replied. “You tell me.”

“I’ll try,” she told him.

“You can do this with your eyes closed if you like,” Candle instructed here. “A lot of pilots did. Part of the spell, if you do it right, is that you’ll be totally aware of everything around you from the bottom of the harbor to hundreds of yards out and up. Just relax and let your mind expand outward. Try to feel the boat. When you can, imagine yourself opening your inner eye.”

“Inner eye?” Elie asked.

“It’s just a metaphor,” Candle explained. “A lot of magic is accomplished through metaphors. That is especially true in analytical magic. What you choose to use as a metaphor determines how effective your spell is going to be. A lot of mages I’ve known only used one sort of metaphor; they might see spells as animals, for example, or plants. Oceanvine used to look for patterns; that’s actually a more flexible metaphor and often very effective. I never stuck to any one image, however. I would use a different one depending on the situation. Deciding just which metaphor I use can be hit or miss sometimes, but if one doesn’t work I try another.

“In this case, keep your eyes shut, but imagine yourself opening a third eye in the middle of your forehead and look around you with that eye.”

“Oh, that’s weird,” Elie commented. “I’m seeing the world in textures. It’s like I can feel everything around us.”

“That’s different,” Candle admitted, “but if it works for you, that’s good. Now that you can ‘see’ around us, or feel or however you think of it, try pushing the boat forward.”

She did. “Are we moving?” she asked.

“Only a little,” Candle told her. “Push a bit harder.”

A moment later they started moving much faster, but only for two minutes, then Elie opened her eyes and let the spell go. “That’s all I can do. You didn’t tell me how tiring that is.”

“Oh sorry,” Candle apologized. “I forgot you don’t know how to draw energy to yourself from all around. This sort of thing takes too much to expect you to use only your own power, although you do need a lot of that too. I think we’ll need to work on meditation next, but not today. You look tired. Why

don't you go lie down for an hour or two? It didn't take long, but you just did several hours worth of work."

Elie nodded mutely and headed back into the cabin. From the bottom of the ladder, she asked, "Shouldn't I help Six with the sails?"

"That's all right," Candle told her. "One person can man the sails if needed. Sleep."

"I must admit that I feel the strain of having used that spell," Six told Candle, "but I'm not exhausted like Elie is. Why is that?"

"She's a lot like her great-grandmother in this respect; she puts everything she has into a spell. Little tricks like levitating a pebble or a hex nut don't take a lot of power so she's never had to learn how to harness external power. That knowledge, by the way, was always the biggest difference between common household magic and what trained mages were able to do. If she had known the trick, she would have not just loosened dirt while cleaning, she would have effortlessly lifted it away without having to wipe it up.

"You, on the other hand, have had a bit of training. Not much, I'll admit, and nothing a mage in my day would have considered overly useful, but you have learned how to use external power and you do it instinctively. In that respect you are way beyond Elie even if she has more control. In fact, that may be why she has more control at this point. You see, the control comes from within; it's a matter of applying your internal energies to control the external ones. Elie is still working solely on her own power, while you are exploiting the power around you. Don't worry, Sixtus. You'll get the hang of it.

"It's time to hoist the sails. Hoist the mainsail, but hold off on the jib. When we clear the harbor, I think we're going to be able to use the spinnaker at least for the first hour or so. We might even get into Medda while it's still fully light."

Once they were underway, Six applied himself to his levitation exercises and as Candle had predicted, he had a far easier time of it than he had the day before. By the time Elie woke up again, just before noon, he was easily causing three nuts to juggle themselves as he watched. He wasn't paying attention to much else until the nuts suddenly flew away from him and started playing leapfrog in front of Elie.

"Oh funny," Six told her acidly.

"You know," she told him, "we could make a fun game of this. You've seen jugglers, of course. Get another three going and every third beat we can exchange one of the hex nuts."

"Every third might be a bit much to start with," Six decided. "Let's start off with just once." He grabbed another three nuts and started them off again. "We need to synchronize," he told her. Carefully she changed the speed of her hex nuts to match his.

"When I say now," she told him, "you grab the one of mine that's on top and I take yours. Ready? Now!" All six nuts fell to the deck. "I guess even that was too ambitious," she admitted. "Let's just try with one nut."

"How do you juggle one nut?" Six asked.

"You don't," Elie replied, "but I'll have this go in a vertical circle. Now when you're ready, grab it and make it do the same thing only in front of you. Then I'll try the same thing." That worked better and

before long they were exchanging the floating hex nut every time it reached the top of its orbit.

“What’s that you’re doing?” Candle asked when he finally noticed the strange motion of the hex nut. Six explained. “Good thinking,” Candle told them. “That should be a good beginning exercise in cooperative magic. We discovered that two mages working in concert could accomplish far more than they could each working alone. You aren’t ready yet to try a cooperative spell, but exercises like this should get you used to working together. Take a lunch break and then why don’t you see how far you can take that exercise.”

They spent two hours that afternoon and eventually improved to the point where they could each juggle three hex nuts and regularly swap nuts back and forth. They were working on new and interesting patterns when the coast of Kern came into view.

“Avast, kids,” Candle stopped them. “Stand by to retract foils and strike the spinnaker.”

“You get the foils,” Six told Elie as he slipped the hex nuts into his pocket, “I’ll take the spinnaker.”

“I’ll come forward to help stow it,” Elie told him, scooting aft. On Candle’s commands, she retracted the hydrofoils and Six lowered the spinnaker. Then Candle turned the boat into the wind while they stowed the spinnaker and raised the jib. Six, who had raced, was thankful he didn’t need to do so against the wind. Soon they were under sail once more.

They were able to hydroplane until they rounded the southern cape of Kern. After that they were dealing with a quartering wind that was insufficient to keep them aloft. However, even at normal yachting velocities, they made Medda port before four o’clock.

It was not the spectacular entrance they had made into Adda port, however Elie was glad not to have to look forward to fighting her way through a crowd. She knew Candle had radioed ahead just before they entered the harbor, but she wasn’t aware of what he might have said to the harbormaster.

There were a dozen men and women and two children waiting for them on the dock as Six piloted them in. Elie guessed that perhaps the boat looked nice enough to attract a crowd even without coming in on her foils, but she could not understand why they were all smiling at them.

“Ahoy, Candle!” an older man who was wearing a khaki uniform shirt over worn jeans called as he approached. “Welcome back! It’s been a few years.”

“Too many, Jack!” Candle called back. “Come on aboard and we’ll settle the port fees and whatnot.”

“You’re money isn’t good here, Wizard,” Jack laughed, stepping aboard. “The families will pick up the tab and the larger you run it up the better.” The others on the dock nodded and voiced their agreement.

“Well if you’re going to have it that way,” Candle replied, “please allow me to introduce Oceanvine’s great-granddaughter, the Lady Elinor Jenynges of Olen. She prefers to be called Elie, and this here is Mister Sixtus Hardisty, who claims some distant relationship to Silverwind. Elie, this is Jack Smith, Harbormaster of Medda and Oceanvine’s nephew. The crowd on the dock is also related to you in one way or other – Smiths, and Coopers, most of them. I’ll let them introduce themselves.”

“Welcome, cousin,” Jack told her, then shocked her by grabbing her up in a ferocious hug. After that it seemed she was passed from cousin to cousin as each in turn greeted her in the same manner.

To Elie, whose immediate family had always been far more reserved and dignified it was an alien experience although not an unpleasant one. The welcome was warm and spirited although she was certain she would never manage to remember all their names. Six, while not a direct relative was welcomed as kin as well. Soon they all made their way to a nearby restaurant that turned out to be owned by one of the Coopers and where still more cousins continued to arrive for the next few hours.

“How are we related?” Elie asked a young woman about her own age when she finally had time to talk to anyone for more than a minute or two.

“Oh,” the woman began, “I’m Jollin Smith. Jack is my granddad and his father was Mikhal who was Oceanvine’s brother.”

“Okay,” Elie nodded, “How about everyone else?”

“In some ways it gets a bit murky which isn’t too surprising after three or four generations,” Jollin laughed. “I’ll simplify it for you though.”

“I’d appreciate that,” Elie told her relieved.

Jollin laughed again. “Well most of us here are either descended from Mikhal Smith or Duncan the Potter. Most of Duncan’s descendants are Coopers, at least those in the male line, of course.”

“Cooper?” Elie noted curiously, “Why not Potter?”

“You would think, wouldn’t you,” Jollin agreed, “but no one on Kern had surnames except the local earl and his family until the Great Census. Duncan’s son Steffan made barrels, so the family name became ‘Cooper.’ My side of the family were blacksmiths until that sort of work started going out of style. Granddad went into politics after he gave the smithy to Dad and got elected harbormaster. These days we still call the shop a smithy, but actually we hire machinists, although I’m more interested in civil service. I may enter the Friendship Corps for a hitch after college next year.”

“A lot of kids seem to be doing that,” Elie observed. “I’ve thought about it myself.”

“I thought you were studying to be a mage, like Auntie Oceanvine.”

“Maybe,” Elie replied. “Uncle Candle wants me to, and I agreed to learn a bit of magic over the summer, but my family certainly wouldn’t approve.”

“Why ever not?” Jollin asked.

Elie shrugged. “My grandmother... Oceanvine’s daughter. She’s never allowed magic in the household. Mom told me it was forever before Grandmother would allow electricity in the house and we didn’t even have a television until two years ago, and that was only because Dad needed it to keep up with the news. Before that the only radio we had was for the same purpose. I didn’t even realize there was more than news on either until I got to University and saw the television in my dorm’s common room.”

“No television?” Jollin asked. “What did you do for entertainment?”

“I read a lot,” Elie replied. “Classic literature, comic books, newspapers; whatever I could get my hands on. It was okay to go to the movies. I guess as long as it wasn’t in the house it was all right. Or maybe Grandmother just wasn’t told.”

“Seems strange that Oceanvine’s daughter would be so opposed to the use of even common magic,” Jollin opined.

“They had some sort of fight,” Elie told her. “It was a long time ago but when it was over Grandmother wouldn’t even admit that Oceanvine was related to her. The first I even heard of it was a few days ago after the funeral.”

“We saw the ceremony on TV,” Jollin recalled. “Cousin Sho closed the restaurant, just like he did for us tonight and we all crowded around a set to watch.”

“That wasn’t the real funeral,” Elie blurted. “Oh maybe I shouldn’t have said that.”

“That’s all right, girl,” Candle said from right behind her. “These people are family, they have a right to know too.” Then he moved away to talk to a pair of elderly women on the far side of the room.

“You were saying?” Jollin prompted Elie.

“Maybe I had better start at the beginning,” Elie decided. “I first met Oceanvine at the beginning of my sophomore year just under two years ago.” She told Jollin the full story hardly aware that as she spoke most of the Smiths and Coopers started edging closer to hear what she had to say.

“Thank you, Elie,” a middle aged cousin, Glori Cooper, told her when she finally wound down.

“Didn’t you ever wonder about your grandmother’s side of the family,” Jollin asked Elie as the family started drifting away again.

“I mentioned that to Fireiron in Renton,” Elie recalled. “She pointed out to me that grandmother’s family represented only a quarter of my relations and since she was much older than me and because the rest of the family was fairly large, I just never happened to notice the gap.”

“Who is Fireiron?” Jollin asked.

“A friend of Uncle Candle,” Elie replied. “She must be older than she looks because she seems to have known him a long time. She’s a Granom and a mage and very nice.”

“Well you may not have known about us,” Jollin told her, “but we certainly knew about you.”

“Me?” Elie asked, taken aback.

“Well not you personally, but we knew we had noble relatives in Olen. To tell the truth, I always thought you had nothing to do with us because we embarrassed you.”

“Embarrass me? How?” Elie asked seriously.

“Well, you know,” Jollin replied shyly.

“Not really.”

“Well, you’re noble and we’re common as dirt. Aren’t most noble families proud of their ancient lineages? We figured you all were ignoring us because on our side of the family you’ve only been noble

for three generations.”

“It never mattered to me,” Elie replied. “My mom wasn’t noble either, her family was gentry, they owned land, but had never been elevated to the nobility. I’m called Lady Elinor in court, but it’s a courtesy title and I haven’t been in court more than a few times. Their Majesties wouldn’t know me if I walked up and bit them.”

“Are you certain?” Jollin laughed at the image. “I think I’d remember you if you did that.”

“Perhaps, but I know they have more on their minds than the younger daughter of a relatively unimportant earl.”

“Is there such a thing as an unimportant earl?” Jollin asked disbelievingly.

“Dad sits in Parliament. I suppose that makes him important in that way, but he’s just one of the several dozen lords in that house. His is only one voice and not generally a leading one. Wow, as his daughter I probably shouldn’t say stuff like that, should I?”

“I won’t tell him you did,” Jollin whispered back, then in a louder voice, “but you’re still titled.”

“The king knights hundreds of people for service to the kingdom every year,” Elie replied, “and these days you can buy a higher title if you really want to waste the money. There aren’t a lot of them available, but there’s always an open seat or two and the Crown can always use the money.”

“How much does a title cost?”

“It depends on the title,” Elie told her. “I don’t know what seats are available at the moment, but a few years ago the County title of Milla was purchased for three hundred and fifty million crowns.”

“Wow!” Jollin whistled. “That’s a king’s ransom!”

“No, an earl’s,” Elie replied seriously, then laughed, unable to keep a straight face. “Okay, so they’re not cheap, but they can be bought.”

“Who bought that one?” Jollin asked, “and please don’t tell me he was the Earl of Milla.”

“Well, he was,” Elie laughed. “Earl Marlion made his money in the shipping business. He owns dozens of cargo ships that sail all over the world. What I can’t tell you is why he felt he had to buy a noble title. Because he purchased the title, he and his heirs will not be entitled to a seat in the House of Lords for two decades.”

“It means something to someone who grew up common,” Jollin pointed out.

“You may be right,” Elie agreed. “I never really thought about it that way.”

“Well, it’s certainly not something just anyone can afford to buy, is it?”

“Not really, but it doesn’t matter what sort of life you were born to, you know,” Elie replied. “It’s what you do with it that counts. Where’s Six? I haven’t seen him for a while.”

“He’s probably with the boys in the barroom,” Jollin told her. “It’s getting pretty late, though and you’ll

want to be fresh for the service tomorrow.”

“What service?” Elie asked.

“For Oceanvine,” Jollin explained. “Uncle Candle called even before the broadcast and asked us to hold off on our memorial until he arrived.”

“You call him ‘Uncle’ too?” Elie asked.

“Of course,” Jollin replied. “Oh I know he isn’t really related to us by blood, but Auntie Oceanvine always called him her brother when they were here so...”

“For a person who started out as an orphan, Uncle Candle certainly seems to have acquired a lot of family, hasn’t he?” Elie observed. “How often did they come to visit?”

“Every two or three years, although Auntie Oceanvine hadn’t been well enough to travel in the last five years. It will be good to finally be able to hold the memorial though,” Jollin told her.

“I’ve already been through two funerals,” Elie commented, “I suppose one more won’t hurt.”

Five

It wasn’t until late the next day that Elie realized that the memorial for Oceanvine had actually begun the moment they had arrived in Medda.. The service in the temple the next morning was merely the next part of the tribute to Oceanvine by her family. Nor was it a private ceremony. The Temple of Nildar was filled with people from all over Kern and many more stood their vigil in the town square outside the temple.

A fleet of limousines carried the family members to the service. Candle rode in the first car with other elders who claimed a close relationship to Wizard Oceanvine. Elie rode in the second one with Jollin and the other younger close relatives who could claim direct descent from Oceanvine’s brother and uncle. Six found himself much further back in the line with some fifth and sixth cousins.

Elie had expected a service that was as sad and formal as what she had experienced in Randona and Renton, but nothing could have been farther from the truth. Instead, what she found was a cheerful gathering in which people took turns telling stories about their now departed cousin.

“My dad,” Jack Smith began, “was proud of his sister, Oceanvine, and he used to tell me stories about her when they were young. They lived in Narrontown, although at the time it was a distinct village known only as Narron. He told me that she was always too big to fit in such a small town and when I was very young I imagined my aunt as this thirty-foot tall giant, crushing buildings beneath her feet as she tried to go shopping. You can imagine my surprise when I finally met her when I was ten years old and she was no taller than I was.

“However even then it was obvious my dad meant her spirit was too big for a backwater like Medda. As a young girl she decided right from the start that she would be a mage, even in an age when very few women were accepted as magical students. The town’s master mage had never trained a girl in magic before and was not inclined to do so. He convinced her father that women had no place in magic, but young Oceanvine would not be deterred, so the master agreed to give her a few lessons designed to discourage her.

“Neither of them had considered Oceanvine’s determination and when she met and exceeded the master’s expectations, he changed his mind about her and accepted her as his apprentice. She still had to pay for her own lessons, but that was no different from any other student in those days.”

When Jack was finished one of the older Coopers came forward and told a story about how one of Oceanvine’s early experiments had backfired on her. Then Candle came forward to talk about his early lessons with her.

“Everyone’s heard these stories before,” Jollin whispered to Elie, “but we’re all wondering what you have to say.”

“Me?” Elie squeaked a little too loudly, causing several people to turn and look at her.

“Yeah, sure,” Jollin replied. “That’s how it works. Everyone gets up to add a story.”

Elie blanched. “I’ve never been much for public speaking.”

“This might be a good time to get over that,” Jollin giggled.

After that Elie didn’t pay much attention to the other speakers, trying to decide just what she could possibly talk about. The only one she thought who might have more trouble would be Six who had not really known Oceanvine and had attended the Randona funeral out of respect for a famous member of the faculty. However, before she could screw up her courage to take her turn, Six got up and spoke about Oceanvine’s reputation on campus and even managed to dredge up an amusing incident that had occurred during her days as a student; one that had put her on probation for at least the second time. Elie had a hard time imagining the dignified old lady she had been companion to as such a troublemaker, but then she also had a hard time imagining herself getting into such trouble.

Finally, Jollin grabbed Elie’s hand and dragged her up to the front of the sanctuary where others were waiting in line for their turns. When the time came, Jollin went first and told a brief story about her first encounter with her venerable aunt. She didn’t speak long and in the end turned it into an introduction for Elie. Still uncertain what she was going to say, Elie stepped forward.

“I wish I’d known Oceanvine was my great-grandmother when she was alive,” Elie began. “I hadn’t even heard of her before I decided to take a job as her companion. But even though I didn’t know who she was then, I found out soon enough.”

Elie went on to describe her first few weeks as Oceanvine’s companion, spending afternoons after classes with her, running errands and doing small chores for her. She had not been Oceanvine’s only assistant; the old professor had a maid who came in daily to straighten up and cook meals and toward the end of her life there had been several nurses, Elie’s job had been mostly just to keep her company. In retrospect it seemed obvious that it had all been a set-up on Uncle Candle’s part to get her together with her great-grandmother, but Elie didn’t bother to mention that. Instead she spoke about the small lessons Oceanvine gave her in how to discipline her mind. Those lessons had come in handy while studying and while taking exams. Elie had tended to panic at exam time during her freshman year, but after a few months with Oceanvine she had mastered some basic relaxation techniques that allowed her to pull the information she needed from her memories. Her grades had improved significantly after that, putting her on the Dean’s List for the last four semesters.

But Oceanvine had taught her more than just how to relax under stressful conditions. She had also

shown her how some forms of magic worked. Elie had learned how to cast a simple curtain ward and to make floating lights not from a desire to cast spells, but because it pleased Oceanvine to teach her, but as she spoke to her cousins in the Temple of Nildar, she found herself demonstrating the simple spells Oceanvine had convinced her to learn.

Elie spoke for a long time. In the middle of her speech she thought she spotted a pair of familiar faces; one human and one Orentan, but when she glanced back a second later they were gone. When she was finished she couldn't clearly remember exactly what she had said, but evidently it was exactly what her cousins had wanted to hear because afterwards in the square outside nearly all of them came over to tell her how wonderfully she had spoken or to thank her for giving them such a wonderful new perspective on their most famous relative.

"Maybe you should consider a career in politics," Jollin told her jokingly as they rode away to a formal reception.

"No thanks," Elie replied, somewhat dazed. "I'll gladly leave that to my brother, He's the heir to the county seat anyway."

"You did speak very well, though," Jollin told her more seriously. "I'm kind of jealous that you got to know Auntie Oceanvine so well."

"But I didn't even know we were related," Elie protested.

"So?" Jollin asked. "She knew, didn't she? I mean, she must have. Right?"

"Right," Elie agreed.

"Then all you have to do is think back and you can remember her as your great-grandmother all those times you were together."

"It's a shame my grandmother wouldn't let us – my brother, first cousins and me, that is – know her openly though."

"Now that I don't understand," Jollin admitted. "So she argued with her mother. Doesn't everyone?"

"I've generally gotten along with mine," Elie replied.

"Well, I argue with mine all the time," Jollin retorted. "Nearly everyone I know argues with their parents once in a while. It's normal enough, I think, so long as you don't stay angry all the time because of it."

"My grandmother is very good at holding a grudge," Elie told her. "Maybe better than I've ever given her credit for. Oh well, nothing I can do about that now. What's going to happen at this reception?"

"Oh it will be pretty much like last night, except we've invited the whole city in. Last night we mourned in private, tonight we mourn with our friends."

"You all seem pretty cheerful for mourners," Elie noted.

"Are we? Elie, we're sad about losing Auntie Oceanvine, although it's been a while now; the shock is over. But the whole point of the memorial service is to be thankful for her life, not mope about the fact she is gone."

“It’s not the way we do things in Olen,” Elie told her. “We would be in strict mourning for a month and then somewhat informal mourning for the remainder of the year, but I like your way better. You show the departed respect by celebrating the fact they were with us in the first place.”

“Of course,” Jollin replied confidently. “What other way is there? Oh, do you have any plans for tomorrow?”

“Just lessons and practice with Uncle Candle,” Elie replied.

“Lucky you! Well, Aunt Hola’s invited you and Six over for tea. Well, she’s a cousin to you, I guess, but she’s my father’s sister. She asked me to bring you two over around four o’clock and I thought we might spend the afternoon before that in Norrentown. I can show you the smithy and some of the places where Oceanvine grew up like you’ve been hearing about.”

“I can’t speak for Six,” Elie told Jollin, “but it sounds good to me.”

The formal reception lasted all afternoon and evening as townsfolk filtered into the Coopers’ restaurant. Candle allowed Six and Elie to eat lunch before pulling them into a small private room.

“What’s wrong?” Six asked.

“Nothing,” Candle replied, “but I don’t want you two taking a day off from your lessons just because we’re in port. Now let’s see that cooperative exercise you came up with yesterday.”

Six and Elie sat down on a pair of chairs facing each other and after a few false starts, began juggling hex nuts by levitation. Candle let them stay with it for about fifteen minutes before stopping them.

“You need to keep working on that,” he told them at last. “You do it well once you get going but I want you to be able to do it right away without any false steps. From now on, until I tell you to stop, use that as your first exercise every day and keep at it for at least fifteen minutes.

“Now you each have your strengths and weaknesses,” Candle continued. “Six, you still have to work on your control. I know I keep saying that, but you’ve only been at this for a couple days. It’s going to take weeks before you have the fine control you’re capable of, but once you achieve it everything will come that much easier to you. Also you’ll never be able to do analytical magic without that control. So I want you to keep on with the levitation practice until well after you can’t stand it any longer. Don’t worry, however, I’ll be teaching you a lot of new spells so hopefully it won’t be too bad.”

Six nodded and started levitating hex nuts in various ways to hone his control skills.

Candle continued, “Elie, you aren’t that far ahead of Six on control, but Vine taught you some basic exercises that have given you a head start. What you’re lacking, however, is the ability to use external power sources, so I’m going to start with you on that today.

“There are all sorts of power. Let’s start with potential and kinetic energies. Simple definition: energy is the ability to do work. From the very name you might guess that potential energy is somehow being stored and is ready to use. It is because in some way work has already been done to store that energy. Kinetic energy is the energy of motion. The usual example I hear involves a boulder. If it is sitting on top of a hill it represents potential energy, but if it is rolling downhill the energy becomes kinetic. That’s fairly simplistic, but it should hold you until I can find some time tomorrow to buy you a basic physics text.”

“I know about kinetic and potential energy,” Elie responded. “It was covered in high school physics.”

“Was it?” Candle asked. “Maybe you aren’t as far behind as I feared, but it’s been a few years since you studied any sort of physical science, isn’t it? Hmm, yes, I thought so. We’ll consider the texts I assign you as a refresher course then. Let’s move on from theory to practice then, shall we?”

“This can be very dangerous, so I don’t want you trying it without my supervision until I tell you otherwise, understand?” Candle asked. Elie nodded. “Now, this morning I saw you create a visible curtain ward. What was its purpose?”

“None, really, it was just a demonstration. I suppose I shouldn’t have?” Elie replied uncertainly.

“A mage has to make that sort of decision for him or herself,” Candle told her. “I’m not going to question the reasoning behind why you choose to use a specific spell in a situation. You’re an adult and you are responsible for your own actions. I will probably make too much of a habit of suggesting alternatives, however. I’ll also be questioning your methods. This is just such a case. Now how did you create that ward and what were its properties?”

“It was a simple, low energy, curtain ward,” Elie answered the second half of the question. “I mean it was just a sheet of energy. It wasn’t keyed to do anything and no harm would have come to anyone or anything to pass through it. I don’t know how to create a ward that actually does anything.”

“I realize that,” Candle told her. “Casting a ward that triggers another spell involves more training than you have had although by the end of the summer, you’ll probably have that training. The biggest step will be learning to cast more than one spell at a time. However, today we need to work on your basic spell-casting method.

“Common household magic, well, the sort that used to be common household magic, like that dirt-loosening spell is powered entirely with the energy you have within. I’ve never encountered anyone who figured out how to tap into external energy sources without training.”

“Someone must have,” Elie disagreed. “Otherwise, how did anyone learn how?”

“One of the Gods might have taught him,” Candle replied.

“The Gods,” Elie echoed, skeptically. “Right.”

“They do interact with us mere mortals from time to time,” Candle told her. “It’s also possible that some magical genius in the ancient world figured it out for himself.”

“Why not herself?” Elie demanded.

“Maybe it was a woman,” Candle conceded. “I wouldn’t know. Believe it or not, it was before my time. If it was, though, my bet would be on an Orentan woman, since neither the ancient humans nor Granomen accorded women much along the lines of equality, so only an extremely unusual woman could have been a mage in ancient Emmine and no Granomish woman would have at all. Until the end of the Middle Ages it was a capital offense for a woman to practice magic in Granom.”

“If the Granomen bothered to pass a law against it,” Elie pointed out, “wouldn’t that tend to argue that there were some women practicing magic?”

“Possibly,” Candle conceded. You have to realize that Granom was divided up into a collection of small kingdoms until about fifteen centuries ago when Ksaveras I consolidated the Kingdom of Granom. However, these were absolute monarchies and even the consolidated kingdom was for another six centuries when the king was pressured into instituting the first Parliament. For all we know the law could have come about because of a dinnertime argument between the king and queen. It may also have been declared in response to the development of the colony on the Island of Fire.

“Enough history, however. I suspect you’re at least as well-versed on that as I am. Time for today’s lesson. Now Vine taught you how to meditate, right?”

“That’s Oceanvine,” Elie replied unconsciously.

“What?” Candle asked, then remembered their earlier conversation in which Elie had correctly surmised that Oceanvine would not have appreciated his use of that nickname. “All right, Oceanvine. Happy now? So Oceanvine taught you to meditate. That’s what I want you to do now. Meditate. Relax and concentrate on everything around you. Don’t try to do anything physical, just study everything you can see with your eyes closed.”

“How can I see something with my eyes closed?” Elie asked. The question interested Six as well. He stopped playing with the hex nuts and listened carefully to Candle’s response.

“Silverwind used to have a tavern trick that never ceased to amuse him. He used it to throw tiny balls of fire into a wine bottle on the far side of the room, while he was blindfolded and often sitting with his back to the bottle. Once I saw him do it from a location around a corner of the room from the bottle. The point was to make bets on how many he could successfully get into the bottle in a row without missing. He used a similar spell playing darts. Some of the local boys in Renton never did figure it out, but there was no way he could miss unless it was intentional. You see, he didn’t just make a ball of fire and throw it. A lot of apprentices I knew would do it like that.

“Instead he made the target part of the spell so that when the spell was cast several things happened in sequence,” Candle continued. “First, the ball of fire was formed, then it moved directly toward its target, or in that latter case it went forward and took a right-hand turn and then sailed neatly through the mouth of the bottle. With the target part of the spell there was no way it could miss.”

“I understand that,” Elie nodded, “but how did he do it?”

“I’ll show you when you can show me you’re capable of reliably casting all the components of the spell. You aren’t too far off even now, but you cannot yet cast a fire spell and you don’t know how to use external power sources, which brings us back to today’s lesson.”

“Excuse me, sir,” Six interrupted, “but do you mind if I try the exercise too? Seeing with my eyes closed isn’t anything I’ve ever done either.”

“Really?” Candle asked. “Then how did you learn to tap into external power?”

“Professor Thoms used to have us funnel power from a battery,” Six replied.

“An electrical battery?” Elie asked.

“You could,” Candle told her, “but in this case it was far easier to do it from a magical battery.” Six

nodded agreement. "This was a technology rediscovered by Wizard Bowsprit in Querna back about the time I graduated as a journeyman. He was doing research into ancient wizards' staves. One of the things he learned was that you could build up magical potential or, in layman's terms, store power in a staff of wood. Denser woods, he discovered did the job better. Stone and metal does it even better though. Bowsprit showed me how he did it just before patenting the process. It's a patent that kept the University at Querna in very good financial shape for decades until it expired. It would have made Bowsprit a very rich man indeed, had he lived long enough to collect the royalties.

"Now, let's get back to work. Both of you close your eyes now and stretch your minds out. Remember what I told you about using metaphors through which to effect spells? This time the metaphor will be this room and everything in it."

"So we have to imagine the room as it is?" Elie asked.

"No, not imagine. You have to be able to actually see it," Candle insisted. They both tried but all they managed to see was the insides of their eyelids. "Let's see... It's been so long since I had to teach complete novices. Maybe I'm going at this the wrong way," Candle told them at last. "Auras. You don't really see auras with your eyes, but with another magical sense that we often confuse with vision."

"How do we see auras?" Elie asked.

"Well, it's sort of what I'm expecting of you right now and it's what I'm actually asking you to do. However, generally when you are examining something's aura, it is much stronger than most anything in this room. Here, let's start with something easy." He reached into his pocket and pulled out one of the gold coins from the *Maiyim Bourne*. Right now this coin has no real aura. Actually it does, but it's about the same as the background so you won't see it under normal diagnostic conditions and that's good, by the way. Otherwise we wouldn't be able to use analytical magic." He paused for a moment and appeared to stare at the coin. "There," he said a minute later. "Now it has an aura and a fairly bright one too."

"What did you do, sir?" Six asked.

"I charged it up with a bit of magical energy. Think of it as a small battery. Now examine it as a power source. Can you see the aura?" Candle asked.

"Yes, it's bright blue," Six replied.

"I still don't know what to look for," Elie admitted.

"May I?" Six asked Candle.

"Go ahead," Candle nodded.

"Elie," Six began, "look at the coin with your eyes open. Now keep the image of the coin in your mind and slip into your meditative trance. Can you still hear me?"

"Of course," Elie replied. "Oceanvine warned me to never go under so deeply I lost track of the world around me."

"There will be times you need to do that too," Candle remarked, "but it was good advice for an apprentice or even a journeyman."

“Good,” Six told her, ignoring Candle’s interruption. “Now with that image in mind, reach out with your mind as though you are letting your thoughts enfold the coin.”

“I’ll try,” Elie replied. “Wow! That is all lit up. Why can’t I see it with my eyes open?”

“Maybe you can,” Candle suggested.

Elie opened her eyes. “Hey! I can. No, wait, it faded out.”

“You lost your concentration,” Candle told her. “Try again.” Elie closed her eyes, but had trouble relaxing. “Okay, levitate a hex nut,” Candle suggested instead.

Six held one up in his hand and Elie quickly levitated it up and over toward her. Candle let her play with it for a few moments as she set it up to travel in a lazy circle just over her head before telling her to try looking at the aura of the coin again. This time she closed her eyes only briefly and when she opened them again she was able to see the aura without having it fade from view.

“Very good,” Candle told her. “Did you realize the hex nut is still orbiting over you?”

“I thought you wanted me to do that,” she told him.

“That was actually your next assignment, but that’s okay, I used to jump ahead of Silverwind’s lessons all the time. He always felt it meant I was seeing through the basic exercise to the actual goal he had in mind. I suppose I should have expected the same of his descendant. So let’s see if you can take this to the next level. Right now you’re using your own energy to float that hex nut. Can you use the energy in the coin to do it instead?”

“How?” Elie asked.

“Have you ever used a siphon?” Six asked her.

“Can’t say that I have,” she admitted, “but I understand what you’re saying, I think. I’m supposed to siphon power off from the coin. Right?”

“That’s pretty much it,” Six confirmed. “It’s not an entirely free process as you have to use some of your own energy to call the power within to you and you need to use a bit more to guide it, but in the end you use a lot less energy than you would.”

“It is also the key to casting spells that last,” Candle informed her. “Nothing lasts forever, but once you tap into an energy source to power a spell, the spell will last until that source runs out, even if you take your mind off the enchanted object. Go ahead and give it a try. I’ll be able to stop you if you do something wrong.”

Elie took another look at the coin, but with her eyes open she was unable to work on the act of siphoning energy. She shut her eyes and started to relax, then she tried to imagine a siphon hose draining energy from the coin to the still-orbiting hex nut. After a minute she decided the metaphor was wrong because the nut was higher than the coin. She realized that shouldn’t have mattered and briefly considered moving the coin so that it was higher than the hex nut. Instantly she realized that was even sillier and would only cause Candle to ask her why she had done it. She knew that it shouldn’t be necessary. What she didn’t realize yet was that spell metaphors were such a personal thing that

sometimes one that worked for someone else would not work for her.

She considered the problem for a long time until she was aware of only the magically charged coin and the floating nut. The circular motion of the nut inspired her, however. Back home she had a small skiff she liked to row around the estate's lake. As she swept the oars through the water, small whirlpools would spin away as she lifted the oars up for another sweep. The image was wrong, she realized since a whirlpool drew water and objects downward, but the shape also reminded her of a waterspout she had once seen off the coast of Olen. That water-bound tornado sucked water and air up into the funnel, so she imagined a long thin tornado of energy connecting the coin to the hex nut. Having done that she decided the thought of a tornado was unnecessary and imagined a simple string of energy between the two objects.

Elie was uncertain of what to do next, but decided to try "instructing" the thread of energy to continue directing the nut to circle over her head. Then she opened her eyes and intentionally took her mind off the hex nut. The nut continued to circle. "I did it?" she half asked.

"Looks like it," Candle grinned. "It took you long enough, but you figured it out for yourself and on the first attempt. I've seen a lot of students take a week or more to do that."

"I was tempted to give up several times," she admitted, "but you made it sound so easy."

"It's not easy," Candle told her. "Magic is never easy the first time you try something. Sometimes, however, you get it right the first time."

"Where's Six?" Elie asked, looking around.

"When you got lost in your trance I gave him a similar exercise," Candle told her. "but since he had done work like this before it wasn't much of a challenge for him. I gave him a mental exercise I hope will help with his control and told him to work on it out there in the crowd."

"How long has it been?"

"Over an hour," Candle replied with a chuckle at her shocked reaction. "That's one of the reasons you need to try not going that deep into a trance. It can make you miss more than one or two meals. That's also why you should not practice without supervision. If necessary I would have woken you up, it's part of my job."

"Then why didn't you?" Elie asked.

"You were in no danger and I could see you were working on the problem. Tell me, why did you finally decide on a simple thread of energy?"

"It seemed to me that the whole point was to create a connection between the coin and the nut. Once I had that, it was just a matter of transferring the spell instructions to the thread."

"We call it a string," Candle told her. "It's a mystic connection between any two or more people, places or things. Take another look, uh... with your eyes closed."

"It's still there," Elie noted.

"Of course it is," Candle agreed, "and given the amount of energy I put in that coin, it should stay there

for a year or two.”

“That’s a lot of energy,” Elie commented.

“Not really,” Candle corrected her. “Levitation is a fairly low-level spell. So far you were actually expending more energy sending instructions to that hex nut than you were in maintaining the spell. With practice you’ll be able to do it almost without thinking. Come to think of it, you already have twice; with the bandit in Adda and earlier with that hex nut Six nearly lost when he was starting. In practice it still takes effort because you’re thinking too much about it.”

“It seems much easier than it did the first day,” Elie told him.

“And it will get still easier as time goes on,” Candle assured her.

The door to the room opened just then and Jollin stuck her head. “There you two are! Dad asked me to find you. The Earl just came in.” Candle and Elie got up and started heading for the door, when Jollin noticed the hex nut, still orbiting Elie’s head and asked, “What’s with that? Some new fashion out of Randona?”

Six

“Nice of you to show up,” Candle told Earl Merrald of Medda after having been introduced to him, “considering what my sister did to your grandfather.”

“That was before I was born,” Earl Merrald replied. “And from what Grampa used to say, he learned to live with it and eventually decided she had done him a great favor. All of Kern was better for it as well. From what I’ve heard, Grampa was pretty insufferable as a kid. Wizard Oceanvine’s spell taught him a valuable lesson and by the time it was his turn to serve here he was much better for it. Of course he was a stubborn old man and it took twenty years for him to finally realize he was better off,” Merrald laughed.

“Some of us need more time than others,” Candle shrugged.

“From what some of the older servants have told me it’s amazing he isn’t still working on it,” Merrald laughed again. “I wonder if you might do me a small favor while you are here, Wizard.”

“I might,” Candle nodded. “What did you have in mind?”

“Something strange has been happening in the wheat fields to the north of town. If you could just go have a look and let me know what you think, I’d really appreciate it.”

“What sort of strange thing?” Candle asked.

“I’d prefer if you go into it with an open mind,” the Earl told him.

“Everyone always does, it seems,” Candle sighed. “Very well. I’ll go take a look at whatever it is.”

“Thank you, Wizard,” Earl Merrald told him gratefully. “I’ll have my driver pick you up in the morning. Are you staying here?”

“No we’re staying on the boat. Pier Five.”

“Excellent!” Merrald replied.

True to his word, the earl arrived at the pier the next morning in a black limousine with his coat of arms painted on the doors. Six and Elie were performing the warm-up exercise they had devised with the hex nuts and Candle was just pouring himself a second cup of coffee. “All ready?” Merrald asked.

Candle herded his two students into the car and they were off. Six and Elie continued their practice in the car, but after a few minutes worked on their own private assignments.

“What are they doing?” Merrald asked Candle quietly when both students appeared to become extremely quiet and unresponsive to their surroundings.

“Homework. It’s part of their summer study program,” Candle replied.

“Teaching them to become wizards?” Merrald asked jokingly.

“Yes,” Candle replied seriously.

“In this day and age?” the earl asked, astonished. “Of what use would that possibly be to them?”

“You asked me to help you today, did you not?” Candle countered.

“Well, yes, I suppose, but...”

“There will always be a place for the general practitioner, My Lord,” Candle replied, “even if all the specialists on Maiyim say otherwise.”

“You may be correct, Wizard. I know I’m glad to have you here today.”

Medda, while a city by any standard, did not cover a wide area and ten minutes later they were driving out through fields of grain that covered a rolling terrain. The wheat, Candle decided, must have been planted early as it was already waist high even though Midsummer was still days away.

Finally, the driver stopped on the top of a small hill overlooking a broad field. “Wake up, kids,” Candle told Six and Elie. “Time to go to work.”

They got out of the car and as directed by the earl, looked down into the valley before them. There were several circular marks that seemed to have been pressed into the growing grain as though something large and round had been pressed down into it.

“What caused that?” Six and Elie both asked.

“I was hoping you might be able to tell me,” Earl Merrald told them.

“Is it safe to go down there?” Elie asked.

“No one has been harmed so far,” the earl replied.

“Check for auras,” Candle instructed her. Both she and Six did so. Candle was pleased to see that

neither of them chose to sit cross-legged to as so many of his classmates would have. Even Oceanvine had continued to do so for years after they had first met. Candle himself had as well until he was at University and caught himself showing off by attempting to emulate Silverwind's off-handed way of casting spells. Even then he still continued to do so when extra concentration was necessary and he expected Six and Elie may well do likewise, but the fact they did not feel the need for such a crutch this early in their training was a good sign.

Elie did close her eyes, however, and then imagined opening them again. Nothing happened at first; she wasn't relaxed enough to let the magical energy flow. To help relax, she let her mind wander and she found herself thinking about the very first time she had caused something to float. A song had been playing on the radio. She didn't know the words but it had a silly little melody of the sort that catches on just long enough for promoters to make a bit of money before the public tires of it. Years later such tunes sound dated and those who used to listen to them feel embarrassed to admit it, but just now, she found herself humming the melody and as she did so the world before her closed eyes lit up.

She could see the valley in front of her and, as she stretched out her senses, she realized she could see behind her as well. It was not like seeing with her eyes. Instead, the world was made up of strange colors. The world was a sea of light blue with varying textures although the circular marks in the wheat were dull purple, as though she was seeing the blue wheat through a sheet of red cellophane. The sky was white; she could not see the clouds. The earl's car was a slick and shiny red and the people around her were each bathed in auras of various colors. Those auras stretched out away from the people they surrounded and gradually faded away when they were one or two feet away.

"What am I seeing?" she asked, unaware she had said it out loud.

"The world," Candle told her. "You have tuned yourself into the background aura of Maiyim. "This is how Silverwind did those tricks we talked about yesterday."

"Is the world always this blue?" she asked.

"Blue? It's usually green for me," Candle told her. "It doesn't matter, except keep that color in mind, because there will be times you need to filter it out. You've come a very long way in a short time if you can see it now, however. Can you make out details?"

"Of course," Elie replied. "I see every blade of grass, every leaf on the trees, the road - I can even detect stones beneath the surface of the ground - and creatures too; mice, worms, insects. I see so much more than I could with only my eyes. I could walk down there with my eyes closed."

"Be careful," Candle advised. "What you see this way can be deceptive. Also better pull back a bit. I'm impressed by the breakthrough, but right now we need to pay closer attention to those marks in the wheat. Six, how are you doing?"

"I filtered out the background aura already and was only looking at the circles, but I don't know how to interpret what I see."

"I would be surprised if you did," Candle told him. "The first thing you can do is compare the auras of each of the circles out there." Both Six and Elie did so although before they could come to any conclusions, Candle continued, "That's a technique forensic mages used to use in order to associate evidence in a case. If two auras are exactly alike there is probably a relationship between them. You look for points of commonality."

“Something else to look for is a spell string. Elie, you should remember that from yesterday. You created a string between the coin and the hex nut. So look to see if there are any strings out there either between the individual circles or going from the circles to somewhere else. The existence of a string is clear and undisputable proof of a connection even between otherwise dissimilar objects. Of course, just because you have a string you still need to analyze it to know what sort of connection it might be and learning that can take years.

“Sometimes you can examine auras associated with spells for signatures which you may see as patterns or some other metaphoric image. If you know the spell, you can ascertain the nature of the associated aura. And with real experience you will eventually be able to do that even without knowing the actual spell involved,” Candle concluded. “The first thing we need to decide on is whether the circles down there were created by a spell.”

“Wouldn’t the fact they have their own distinct auras suggest magic was involved, sir?” Six asked.

“Not necessarily,” Candle replied. “All living things have an aura, although it may often be weak or nearly identical with the background aura. That’s why Elie is seeing most of the valley below us in blue. When a living thing is damaged, its aura will often reflect that damage.”

“Then the auras of those circles are like that just because the wheat has been damaged?” Elie asked.

“Maybe,” Candle told her, “but there may be something else at work here. However, from here I don’t detect anything immediately dangerous. Let’s get a bit closer. We don’t want to actually step into a circle yet, but there may be more to be learned from just outside.”

“Wizard,” Earl Merrald interrupted, “quite a few people have already been inside those circles; myself included.”

Candle turned to examine the earl. “You don’t seem any worse for wear,” Candle concluded after a few seconds, “although it was a foolhardy thing to do. Still, I don’t blame you. Nobody thinks of dangerous and contagious curses these days.”

“Are such things real?” Merrald asked as they started walking down the slope.

“Absolutely,” Candle replied. “Happily I haven’t encountered any in recent years. The one good thing about the decline of the number of mages is that we also have fewer rogue mages running around misusing magic as well. However, I’m still around and I’m hardly the only old mage left on Maiyim, though most my age retired years ago.”

“Why didn’t you retire, if you don’t mind my asking?” the earl inquired.

“I thought about it,” Candle admitted, “but I don’t have the time to retire. Seventy years ago Silverwind started my education and learning became a habit I still can’t break. So I stay active. I give the occasional lecture and conduct a seminar or two; just enough to be considered an active faculty member at University. I suppose I could do the same outside of University – Silverwind did – but the University offers me access to services that I cannot get if I were holed up in a place like Renton.”

“Why did Silverwind choose to work in such a remote location?” Six asked, “Not that it’s all that remote these days,” he added.

“Silverwind and his first partner, Master Windchime, ran afoul of a demon’s curse.”

“A demon?” the earl asked incredulously.

“Yes, they really do exist,” Candle told him. “They’re all imprisoned now in such a way that only the Gods can free them, but there was a time when they were free. They had to be careful in the way they practiced their particular forms of evil, otherwise the Gods would have imprisoned them earlier than they did. Anyway Silverwind and Windchime got caught by a particularly nasty curse and it took both of them years to completely cure themselves. Windchime got out of magic almost completely, but after a two year hermitage, Silverwind started doing the research that became the basis for much of our modern technology; the combination of magic with the physical sciences. The funny thing is I didn’t realize how unusual that was until I got to University. I thought all mages worked like he and Oceanvine did. But when he started back in on research he wasn’t quite ready for a University setting, so he found a nice quiet town, not quite in the middle of nowhere, but far enough from Randona that he wouldn’t have to put up with the distractions or memories. Even then I wouldn’t call Renton off the beaten path since it was directly on the old Innercoastal Highway that was replaced by the Pan Rallen Highway so it was on the main trade route. He wasn’t trying to be cut off entirely, just somewhere quiet enough where no one would bother him. And we’re here.

“Six, Elie, let’s walk around the outside of this circle and see if we spot anything. Look for patterns and spell strings. Keep in mind that strings can be entirely underground.”

They searched the area carefully but found nothing unusual save the circle that had been stamped into the wheat itself. Then they turned toward examining the aura of the circle, but found it almost blank. “I think it has a spiral pattern,” Elie decided, but maybe I’m just seeing the way the wheat was stamped down.”

“I’m picking that up too,” Six agreed.

“Yes,” Candle nodded, “I would say this circle was formed by some sort of spiral motion and the aura is reflecting that. However, I could have told you that even without magic. As Elie implied just now, the wheat plants have been stamped or pressed down in a spiral motion too. Now what would cause such a thing?”

“A small but rather strong whirlwind?” Elie suggested.

“Maybe,” Candle allowed. “That could explain why there are several circles in this field.”

“The whirlwinds would have had to recur over several nights,” the earl informed them.

“Okay. I guess we can scratch that notion or at least put it way down on the possibilities list. My Lord, I take it this area has not previously been susceptible to such minute storms?” Candle asked.

“Whirlwinds happen all the time,” Merrald replied, “just like anywhere else on Maiyim, but since this sort of thing has never happened here before, these would have had to be unusually strong and while that might happen once, several times seems unlikely to me.”

“And to me as well,” Candle agreed. “Let’s try an experiment. Hopefully the farmer won’t mind if I create a similar circle.”

“If it helps solve the mystery,” Merrald replied, “I’ll gladly compensate him for any loss of grain.”

“There may not be a loss at all, My Lord,” Six replied. “I don’t think the stalks are actually broken, just

bent. These plants may recover or at least keep growing.”

“Compared to the entire field these few circles are very small,” Merrald pointed out. By themselves they won’t be a great loss, so long as the wheat in the rest of the field is healthy.”

“A good point,” Candle nodded. “Let me check for disease. It’s not my greatest strength, but the plants seem healthy enough to me. If this continues, though, you may want to hire Masters Waterfall and Airblossom from Bellinen. Between them they can spot and cure just about any disease that is curable, I think. I’ll give you their address and phone number if our investigation proves inconclusive. Well, I’d say it is safe enough to step out into the circle itself. Six, Elie, look at the plants while I attempt to create a new circle.”

Candle turned to the northeast and a moment later they could all hear the sound of wheat stalks being quickly knocked to the ground. Then leaving the others behind, he walked a few steps to the new circle. It was smaller than the ones they were investigating, but size was not the factor he was interested in just now. He looked at the new circle and saw that it appeared to be physically constructed like the first one.

“The aura is very different,” Elie opined from just behind him. Candle started at her voice. “Sorry, Uncle,” she apologized.

“No matter,” he told her. “I just didn’t know you were there, and you are right. The aura is very different. If you look carefully, you can see two components to this one. The first is the way I pushed the grass over. You can see the pattern of the spell I used.”

“I see that,” Elie agreed, “but underneath that... Is that right, or is it on top or intermixed?”

“It’s your metaphor,” Candle told her. “Use it whatever way gives you the best result.”

“Underneath,” she continued, “it looks like the same as in the first circle.”

“And what does that suggest to you?” Candle prompted her.

“That magic probably was not used to create the other circles,” Elie replied. “Does that mean we’re done here?”

“No,” Candle told her. “If possible we should determine what the cause was.”

“I think I found something!” Six called from the other circle.

Candle and Elie found Six kneeling on the ground at the center of the circle. “What do you have?”

“It might be a hole in the ground,” Six replied. “I may have ruined it, though. Should have cleared the wheat away carefully then used levitation to clear away the possible loose dirt. I got a bit clumsy and I think the hole collapsed on me. It’s not more than a quarter inch wide.”

“So try again on another circle,” Candle suggested. “We have another four or five.”

Six nodded and they moved to the next circle about twenty yards away. This time he moved directly to the center of the circle and knelt again. He looked like he was about to move the grass by hand then stopped himself. “Sir?” he asked Candle. “If I pull the stalks up the movement might obscure or collapse the hole I think is here.”

“It probably will,” Candle agreed. “Let me clear it off.” There was a swishing sound near the ground and then all the stalks from a two foot radius around the circle’s center lifted up and moved to the side revealing the stumps and ground beneath. “Should be somewhere in there,” he concluded.

“Right...” Six pointed where the center of the swirl had been and hesitated. His hand moved in a slow circle until it was about six inches to the right. “Right there. Uh, maybe.”

“Levitate the loose dirt away from the edge of the hole,” Elie suggested.

Six nodded and started to prepare himself for the spell. Suddenly he was nervous. This was the first time he would try the spell for something other than practice and he had doubts about his control. For one brief moment he was tempted to ask Elie to do it, then immediately rebelled against the idea. He was the graduate student, after all. He closed his eyes and forced himself to relax. When he was ready, he imagined himself opening them and the area came to life as he examined the aural evidence. Immediately he saw that he had been correct. The hole was where he thought it was although there was dirt plugging up the first half inch. He removed the plug and opened his eyes. “There!” he told them triumphantly.

“What does this mean?” Earl Merrald asked.

“My Lord, these circles were made by one or more people,” Six explained.

“Nobody was seen making them,” Merrald argued. “I even had people watching this field the night one of them formed.”

“Was the moon in the sky?” Six countered. “Did they watch the entire field all night. It’s a big field and the circles are not so close together you could see them all in the dark.”

“And I don’t think a circle like this would take very long to make,” Elie agreed. “Look, this hole is obviously where someone pounding in a spike of some sort to mark the center.”

“Then they tied a rope or a chain to the spike to measure the radius of the circle,” Six added, not to be upstaged. “I’m not certain how the wheat was trampled, but from the look of it, I would guess they used a board or a pipe about two and a half to three feet long. Maybe they just rolled a log. Hard to say without trying it for myself, but the point is this was obviously done by someone by perfectly ordinary means.”

“Exactly,” Candle agreed. “I’ll admit I was certain of that from the nature of the auras, but it was Mister Hardisty who gave us our proof. And no matter what exact tool was used to construct these circles, there was no magic involved, nor is there any sign of a plant disease or any other reason I can determine that might have tainted what’s left of the crop.”

“Any idea of why anyone would do this?” the earl asked them.

Six shrugged, then replied, “Probably some kids out for a bit of fun.”

“Fun?” Merrald asked incredulously.

“I don’t see the attraction,” Six admitted, “but I’ve known guys who might get a kick out of creating some sort of mystery out here in the field.”

"I'll have to put a closer watch on this field then," Merrald decided.

"You'll only encourage them, My Lord," Candle warned him. "Making it more difficult to get away with will only increase the challenge and the fun. Besides, I don't imagine this is the only wheat field on Kern."

"I'll need to stop them in some way," Merrald told them.

"Good luck," Candle told him. "Frankly I think you'd do better making a competition out of it."

"A competition?"

"Sure," Candle nodded. "Set aside a large field and challenge circle makers to create a circle on a certain night. Give a prize for the biggest or the most circles, or maybe challenge them to be artistic. I imagine all sorts of designs could be stamped into a field."

Seven

Earl Merrald was not keen on the idea of a contest, but Candle kept giving him reasons why it would be good for Medda as they rode back to the city. Privately Elie agreed with him. If nothing else it would probably be very good for the tourist industry.

They stayed on Kern for another week during which time Jollin made it her job to show Elie and Six around town and around that entire part of the island. As promised they started out that same afternoon in Norrentown.

Elie enjoyed Jollin's tour of the Smithy, where skilled machinists were manufacturing custom parts used to repair various engines and other machines in town. In one corner was a small forge with an anvil and a large set of tongs, hammers, chisels and other blacksmithing tools.

"Do these actually get much use?" Six asked, looking interestedly at the smooth anvil face.

"Every once in a while," Jollin admitted. "Would you like me to make you a horseshoe?"

"You know how to use a forge?" Elie asked wonderingly.

"Of course," Jollin replied smugly. "Grandad always insisted all the kids know how. It's fun actually. If you're here long enough, I'll be glad to give you lessons. Not today, though. We'd get all dirty and Aunt Hola wouldn't be very happy with us if we tracked coal dust into her parlor."

After the Smithy, Jollin dragged them around the old neighborhood where Oceanvine had been born, showing them where the home of Master Sunbear, Oceanvine's first teacher, had been and where Elie's and Jollin's common ancestors had lived.

"Did Oceanvine know about all these bronze plaques?" Elie asked. "I'd have thought they would have embarrassed her greatly."

"They did," Jollin laughed, "but she always said they weren't the worst things written about her, but she would never tell me what she meant by that. Do you have any idea?"

“None at all,” Elie laughed.

Tea with Jollin’s Aunt Hola was tolerable although Elie could see that Six would have rather been almost anywhere else and she caught him trying to levitate his tea cup and various other small objects out of boredom. Each time she stopped him by forcing the object back down before it had lifted more than an inch or two. She didn’t realize it, but it was probably the best practice she had since her lessons began.

They had no shortage of dinner invitations and everyone in the family seemed anxious to have them over for dinner and Candle was more than willing to stay long enough for everyone to have their turn until one evening when they stopped by the Cooper’s restaurant for an after-dinner nightcap with Jollin and a few other cousins. It was a quiet evening in the barroom with only a few others there. Six was playing darts with Jollin’s brother, Will, and Elie was drinking cider and playing a form of backgammon with Jollin while several female cousins offered advice. Candle sat with Jack Smith and others of that generation discussing politics and what the king’s reaction would be to the recently announced Granomish military base to be established in Methis’ Chain, while a television played next to the bar. It was what Elie had come to think of as a typically relaxed evening in Medda until the regular programming on the television was preempted.

“...a special news bulletin,” they heard the announcer say as the bartender turned the volume up. “This afternoon a series of large waves battered the islands of Sutheria, destroying homes, and businesses in the low-lying harbor areas of Silamon. No word yet has reached us about the number of deaths in the region, but that number is expected to be high on east-facing shores of Lamona, and the other islands of the Southern Chain.

“We will bring you further details when they become available,” the announcer wrapped up his brief speech.”

“We now return you to your regularly scheduled programming,” another voice informed the viewers. A moment later the scene returned to the neatly arranged suburban living room where a famous comic and his supposed family lived, but nobody was watching the show any more. Instead they were discussing the newscast they had just witnessed.

A few minutes later, Candle came over to where Elie and Six were talking with the others who were roughly their age. “I think we ought to sail over that way and see if there’s anything we can do to help,” he told them.

“That’s on the other side of the archipelago,” Six pointed out.

“It’s an entirely different archipelago actually,” Candle retorted, “but we should still try to help.”

“It’s a long trip,” Six continued. “It’s going to take at least a week and a half.”

“Then we had better get started first thing in the morning,” Candle replied.

“Shouldn’t we let organizations like the Royal Navy or the Friendship Corps handle this sort of thing?” Elie asked.

“The navy will have their hands full with security problems,” Candle told her, “and the Friendship Corps isn’t likely to have a contingent on site for a month or more. Besides we can offer help of a sort that they cannot. Let’s say our farewells and get back to the boat. We’ll be leaving at first light.”

Ketch

One

The eastern sky was just light enough to blot out all but the brightest stars although it was still quite dark in the Medda marina when there was a knocking at the cabin door of the *Maiyim Bourne*. Elie, who had been unable to sleep, stumbled out of her cabin to see who it was.

On opening the door, she discovered an equally tired-looking and somewhat grimy Jollin smiling back at her. "Morning!" Jollin greeted her with forced cheerfulness.

"Morning," Elie echoed. "Are you sure?" she asked looking out past her cousin.

"Must be," Jollin replied. "I've been working all night."

"On what?"

"This," Jollin replied, holding out something vaguely round that Elie could barely make out in the dim light. "I was up all night making it for you."

"What is it?" Elie asked, adding, "It's too dark to see it." Suddenly the cabin of the *Maiyim Bourne* lit up and both women were temporarily blinded.

"Wow!" Jollin exclaimed, recovering first. "Did you do that?"

"In a sense," Elie replied. "The boat attempts to give her occupants everything they require. When I commented it was too dark I was thinking we needed light, so the boat gave us light. I wish I knew how the builders did it, but I can't even figure out where the light is coming from. It might be a very sophisticated illusion charm that just happens to show us what's really there."

"If it's really there, is it an illusion?" Jollin asked, looking around for a hidden light source.

"Illusions are really just complicated light spells," Elie replied. "That's what Oceanvine said anyway. I can barely make a small, glowing spot. So, what did you bring?"

"I made you a horseshoe," Jollin told her.

"Thank you, uh, I don't have a horse," Elie blurted.

"You must be the only noble girl who doesn't," Jollin remarked, "but if I had that in mind I'd have had to make four. Having the horse nearby would have been essential too. No, this is for luck. Hang it over the door of your manor."

"Really? I mean, thank you."

“Doesn’t anyone hang a lucky horseshoe over their door in Olen?” Jollin asked.

“It’s the first I’ve heard of it,” Elie admitted, “but it’s lovely and I’ll make sure it gets hung there.”

“I hear that on Horalia they hang shoes with the open end up so their luck won’t run out,” Jollin told her cousin, “but here on Kern and on the other northwest islands we hang them open end down so luck will pour out and onto those who walk through the door.”

“Open end downward it is,” Elie replied solemnly.

“I’m going to miss you, lady cousin!” Jollin told Elie, hugging her fiercely.

“Lady cousin?” Elie laughed. She was also amused at herself. A week earlier she would have felt awkward with someone who displayed feelings so openly.

“The younger kids have started calling you Lady Cousin Elie,” Jollin told her. “I guess it’s catching.”

“I’m going to miss you too, Jollin,” Elie told her. “You’re the closest thing I’ve ever had to sister.”

“No female first cousins?” Jollin asked, flattered.

“Katrin is sixteen and more concerned with what noble boy she’s going to marry,” Elie commented, “and Ema is only nine, besides, they’re related through my aunts Klarissa and Kaisa who live in Bernol and Sollen respectively. So I only see them occasionally.”

“And until a little over a week ago you didn’t even know I existed,” Jollin pointed out, letting go of her at last.

“You’re different,” Elie maintained. “We’re about the same age and you’ve lived such a different life from me.”

“I’ll trade you anytime,” Jollin told her.

“No you wouldn’t,” Elie replied laughing. She pulled Jollin back into a hug and told her, “You’ve a wonderful family and I’m so glad we’re kin.”

“Me too,” Jollin murmured, then as they broke the embrace once more she added, “but maybe you ought to get some sleep before Six and Uncle Candle wake up. Oh, too late.”

“Good morning, Jollin,” Candle greeted her as he came out of his cabin. Unlike Elie, he had managed to get dressed before going to see who had arrived. “Are you here for breakfast or attempting to stowaway?” Six, stumbling out of his cabin just then, was too busy yawning to do more than wave at Jollin.

“Morning, Six. Neither, Uncle Candle,” she replied. “I just stopped by to give Elie a little going-away present.”

Elie held up the horseshoe. “Ah, that explains why you smell of coal smoke so early in the morning.” Candle turned to Elie, “Are you planning to hang it with the points up or down.”

“It’s a Kernan horseshoe and I’m at least part Kernan,” she replied. Out of the corner of her eye, she

caught Jollin beaming at that. "It'll go points down to spill luck out on anyone who walks beneath it."

"It might be interesting to see your father's reaction when you hang a chunk of ironmongery over his front door. They don't do that on the east side of the archipelago, do they?"

"How do you hang a horseshoe on Ketch?" Jollin asked Six.

"We don't," he replied, "but then we don't have any horses on the island either."

"Getting light out there," Candle observed. "We should probably cast off in the next half-hour or so. Let's have breakfast and then make our farewells. That is unless you plan to sail off into the sunrise with us, Jollin."

"Oh, don't tempt me," she laughed, "but I have responsibilities here on Kern. I agreed to work in the Smithy this summer. Besides I've never had much talent for magic, even the little spells Grandma tried to teach me."

Six opened the food box and brought out trays filled with eggs, hot cakes and bacon, then reached back in for a large bottle of maple syrup, a plate of kippers, a dish of butter and some hot biscuits.

"This boat really does want to please, doesn't it?" Jollin observed.

"All part of her charm," Candle told her. An hour later they had cleared the buoy that marked the outer harbor and were under full sail.

"Should I plot a course around the southern end of Rallena?" Six asked as they headed toward the southern cape of Kern.

"The seas are pretty rough this time of year in the Inaliands," Candle replied, "and that route will take us too near the polar ice for my comfort. It may not be much warmer in Silamon but at least we can take the warm route. Plot us a course to the Quarna canal. I'll bet we can land on Ketch in three days."

"Maybe," Six agreed, "but only if the wind stays to the west."

"It's the prevailing direction," Candle replied.

"And the canal will slow us down too," Six maintained. "It will take us at least a day to get through the whole length, maybe longer."

"I can pilot us through as fast as any motor-driven craft," Candle replied confidently.

"We still won't make it in less than four days," Six told him. "What do you want to go to Ketch for anyway?"

"It's not far out of our way," Candle replied. "We could stay on that island Silverwind spent his hermitage on, but there's nothing there anymore, not even the cabin he lived in. I just thought you might want to spend an evening with your family. Besides I've never actually been to Ketch and I've always meant to."

"It's a great place if you like fresh seafood," Six replied uncertainly.

“My master grew up there too,” Candle reminded him. “But before you plot the course, it’s time to discuss what your next lessons will be. You’ve both come a long way in the last week. Six, your control is much closer to what I would expect of a journeyman, although I want you both to keep playing that levitation game you came up with. It’s sort of like doing calisthenics before starting a real work-out. It will loosen you up and continue to tighten your control.

“However, now that you have basic levitation down, that’s about as much as we can do safely while on the boat along those lines,” Candle continued. “So what would you like to learn next?”

“Fire spells?” Six asked.

Candle rolled his eyes. “Students always want to play with fire, it seems. I did too, when I was starting out and Silverwind kept me from doing it for a year or so. Of course, teaching a ten or eleven year old boy to cast a fire spell may not have been the wisest thing to do without proper preparation. It’s easy enough, but I think I’d rather we didn’t practice that while on the *Maiyim Bourne*.”

“I thought the boat was indestructible,” Elie remarked.

“If you don’t mind, I’d rather not test that the hard way,” Candle retorted. “And even if it is indestructible, none of us are, so let’s wait until we have some time on dry land again. Illusions should be safe enough, however, and, if anything, they are actually more difficult than merely making a fire. They’ll also hone your control to the point of mastery.”

“I thought illusory magic was considered too advanced for novice mages,” Six protested.

“It is, but we’re not going to get into highly detailed illusion spells just yet, although to tell you the truth, the difference between them and mere glowing lights is a matter of mental discipline. I also don’t expect you to cast a tactile illusion just yet. That really is master-level magic. For now we’re going to play with simple illusions; glowing lights, or better yet balloons.”

“Balloons?” Elie asked.

“Yes,” Candle nodded. “The shape of an illusion is a matter of using your imagination. The apparent solidity – how opaque or real it seems – is a matter of applied power, carefully controlled. Elie, I heard you tell Jollin you couldn’t get more than a small, dim light, but have you tried it since I started teaching you?”

“No,” she admitted. “I’ve been too involved with the other exercises. That and I thought you didn’t want me experimenting on my own.”

“I don’t, but I can’t recall ever saying so. You two are entirely too well-behaved,” Candle accused them.

“Is that bad?” Elie asked quietly.

“No, not really,” Candle admitted, “but I was a troublemaker as a journeyman candidate. I came very close to getting expelled in my junior year.”

“Why?” Six asked. “What did you do?”

“There used to be a test,” Candle explained. “We were told that sometime during our third year one of

the faculty would attempt to get into our trunks. We didn't have clothes closets in the dorms back then and all our belongings were kept in trunks. Anyway, I was accused of going way too far to protect my belongings."

"Are you going to tell us how?" Six pressed.

"Eventually. You'll find the spells I used helpful."

"Especially when you decide to test us that way," Elie commented.

"I won't do that," Candle assured her. "Not like that anyway. I was morally offended by the test. The invasion of privacy, I felt, was unconscionable. And considering this comes from a one-time pick-pocket and thief, that's a fairly strong statement."

"But what did you do that nearly got you expelled, sir?" Six asked.

"Several things, actually. I was forgiven for using spells beyond my technical level – there are, or rather were, spells that we were not allowed to use unsupervised until we reached Master level. Those laws may actually still be on the books, but since you two are probably the only apprentice mages on Maiyim at the moment, I doubt there's anyone actually enforcing them. Anyway I used some spells that had the faculty ever heard of them might have been classified as such. I also used magic to pick the teacher's pocket; I doubt that would have got me anything beyond a mild reprimand, but I also caused the testing professor a nervous breakdown through a series of visual and tactile illusions."

"And they let you off after that?" Elie asked.

"Sort of," Candle replied. "The dean allowed me to graduate a year early although I was on strict probation for a year afterwards. My probation was supervised by Silverwind. Anyway, I guess I keep expecting you two to try stuff you ought not to."

"Well, if you want..." Six began.

"Never mind. Let's get to the point of illusions," Candle suggested. "You already know that visual illusions are just very sophisticated light spells. The more practice you have the more realistic they will be. Similarly any of your senses may be fooled by illusion, although, those sorts of illusion are far more complex and done by fooling the target into feeling, smelling or tasting what you want them to."

"What about hearing?" Elie asked.

"Auditory illusions are similar to visual ones. You need to create sound and, with practice, you can create any sound you can imagine. That's pretty easy and we'll try that after you're comfortable with visual illusion. Tactile illusions and the others are accomplished by the manipulation of a person's nerves or taste buds or whatever and that is much more difficult. We won't be trying that for a year or two. For now I want you both to work at creating visual illusions of balloons. And in case you need a model to work from," he added, reaching into a pocket, "I bought some balloons in Medda." He handed a small paper bag to Elie. "Elie, you already know how to create a light. Now all you need to do is figure out how to make that light look like one of those balloons. Six, don't think too hard about this exercise. Just relax and imagine a glowing light. The method that always works for me is to imagine what you want, then with the image clearly in mind, just sort of put some magical energy into it."

"Sounds reasonable," Six told him uncertainly, "but isn't there a danger of actually creating something

material that way?"

Candle laughed. "Trust me on this one, you have a long way to go before you can cast a creation spell. Oh, I wasn't much older than you when I did my first, but I'd also had over a decade of experience by then too. Don't worry about it though; you aren't likely to create anything solid even if you attempt to do so on purpose. The chances of doing it by accident are so slim as to be ridiculous."

"Probably just as well," Six admitted.

"Don't sound so disappointed," Candle told him. "You'll be casting creation spells before you know it. I'm hoping to have you doing that within five years."

Six nodded and a minute later he and Elie were doing their usual warm up exercises. Taking Candle's original instructions about working with distractions to heart, they sat up near the bow of the boat where salt spray doused them at irregular intervals. After about twenty minutes of levitation juggling, Elie put the hex nuts away while Six inflated one of the balloons.

"Oops!" Six muttered after he tied off the blue pear-shaped balloon.

"What's wrong?" Elie asked,

"There's no place to put this where it won't immediately blow away," Six responded.

"Tie it to the mast," Elie suggested.

"What with?"

"I'll get some string from the cabin," she offered. "Oh, have you charted that course to the canal Uncle Candle wanted?"

"Not yet," Six told her. "I knew I was forgetting something."

"Good!"

"Good?" Six asked.

"Sure. He said we could practice in the cabin if we happened to be there. So let's go check out the charts and while we're at it we can try illusions inside."

"Well," Six considered, "I don't suppose we need to go out of our way to make this hard on our first attempt."

"Stopping early today?" Candle asked as they came aft.

"We just remembered Six had to chart our course," Elie explained.

"There wasn't all that great a hurry for it," Candle replied. "I know we turn due east after rounding the southern cape of Kern in the next half hour or so. Then we keep that heading until we fetch up against the coast of Rallena. What I'll really need is a bearing to follow on the other side of the canal. Still I suppose it would be best done now, and it's an excuse to try a new spell inside, right?"

“He wasn’t fooled even for a moment, was he?” Six asked once they were in the chart room.

“Did you think he would be?” Elie asked.

“No, but I didn’t think he’d go along with it,” Six replied.

In spite of the interruption, they spent the next hour working on illusions spells. Once again Elie made progress slightly faster than Six did. By the end of the session she had produced an illusion that looked like a balloon, while Six was still only getting fuzzy lights of various shades. That annoyed Six and he made a point of continuing his practice at various times throughout the day, even while at the helm of the boat, until he felt he had caught up to her.

“Not bad for only the second week,” Candle told both of them, “Although they’re a bit flat. Remember, that you are creating the illusion of a three-dimensional object. It has to look round from all sides. Also, you haven’t got the hang of shading yet.”

Elie concentrated and, after a minute, produced as perfect an illusory balloon as possible.

“Yes, very good!” Candle told her. “That’s more like it.”

“This is fun!” Elie replied excitedly. “May I try other sorts of objects?”

“Whatever you like,” Candle told her. “The balloons were just something to start with.”

Elie nodded, then with a more serious tone, “Uncle Candle? This is why Oceanvine wanted me here, isn’t it? I thought at first she wanted me to have something she might have left on board, but that’s not it. There wasn’t anything left on board really. The closets and all produce stuff anew each time they are opened. So she must have wanted me to have magic as my legacy. Does that make sense?”

“Vine saw something very special in you,” Candle told her.

“Oceanvine,” Elie corrected him, hardly aware she had even done it.

Candle smiled gently and reminiscently. “Yes. Obviously she never met your brother or her other great-grandchildren, but she did get to know you and she tried while she was still with us to teach you. But she also saw you weren’t quite ready to begin such studies, so instead she merely encouraged you to develop your independent streak. You may not realize it, but it’s there and fairly visible to those who get to know you, even if you do try a little too hard to be the obedient daughter of an earl.”

“There are times I would have rather been common,” Elie admitted. “Grandmother makes us all feel like our lives have been predetermined for us.”

“Hmm, yes, Myrrha would, but don’t blame her too badly,” Candle replied. “she just wants what’s best for you all. It’s just that what she thinks is best and what you want are two different things. But I’ll tell you this much; it has nothing to do with being noble. Everyone feels that way sometimes.”

Two

The prevailing winds remained in their favor and they reached the mouth of the Querna canal sometime

after sunset that evening. Candle radioed the Canal Authority for permission to enter and was instructed to wait until morning. "It's one-way against us at the moment," he reported.

"How can a canal be one-way?" Elie asked.

"The Quarna Canal was built over eighty years ago and made wide enough to accommodate any two ships passing through it," Candle explained. "However, since then we've been building ever larger ships. Some of them are too wide to allow other traffic while they're using the canal, except for other boats and ships going the same way.

"There are three lakes along the way where it's wide enough for a dozen ships or more," he continued, "so generally you only have to wait for the next leg of the canal to clear out. I got the impression, though, that the entire western half of the canal is clogged at the moment. It'll be passable by morning. We should just join the queue on the northern side of the canal's mouth and wait until then. May as well get a good night's rest since we'll be pushing the boat through the canal most of the way, tomorrow."

They were just enjoying a second cup of coffee then next morning, when a large oil tanker cleared the mouth of the canal and the Canal Authority announced that vessels could now enter from either direction. There were thirty boats and ships of various sizes waiting at the western end along with the *Maiyim Bourne* and after an orderly entrance they all proceeded at their own paces.

With Candle, Six and Elie all pushing the boat using the old pilot's spell, the *Maiyim Bourne* moved at a faster clip than any of the others and they were soon well ahead. Once in the lead, however, Candle instructed the other two to hold off on piloting the boat. "We'll need to do this in shifts," he explained. "Relax, do some simple exercises if you want, but don't tire yourselves out. The one thing this boat does not have is an inboard engine."

Travel in the canal, except for having to propel the sailboat on their own, was an idyllic experience. It was rare not to see several other vessels as they had traveled through the Quarna Strait, but they were usually not very close to any of them. In the canal, however, they frequently passed others going in the opposite direction and exchanging a friendly wave or even a verbal greeting.

They reached the first lock around mid-morning just as it was opening to allow west-bound vessels continue on. The lock operator was surprised to see only the *Maiyim Bourne* waiting to continue upward to the next level of the canal, but with a line waiting to come westward, he instructed them to enter the lock immediately. Behind the boat, the lock doors closed and the large box that was the lock began to fill with water.

"What's going on?" Elie asked.

"The canal crosses the narrowest part of Rallena," Six explained, "but the engineers who built it were unable to cut the channel all the way down to sea level. They'd still be working on it today if they'd tried. Instead, they constructed it with several sets of locks, each of which will raise or lower us to the next level. According to the chart, this is the first of four locks called the Morrien Locks. They will raise us up one hundred and twenty feet to Lake Morrien. From there we continue on to Horric's Locks, which will raise us up another seventy feet. Then there are another three series of locks on the other side of the isthmus."

"Why three when there are only two on this side?" Ellie asked.

"A more gradual drop toward the Great Bay fits the contours of the land better," Candle told her. "Also

tides in the Great Bay don't range as greatly as in the Quarna Strait and the mean level at the mouth of the canal at the bay is ten feet lower on average than it is in the strait. Ah, we appear to have reached the top of this lock. Six would you like to take the next leg of the journey?"

"All right," Six agreed. The lock doors opened and they moved forward into the chamber of the next lock, exchanging places with a number of vessels coming from the other direction.

In spite of Candle's prediction they were only about two thirds of the way through the canal by day's end. "The canal is well lit," Candle pointed out to Six and Elie, "Unless you two are too tired, let's continue on."

"There are still two more set of locks left," Six considered. "I doubt we'll be able to clear the canal until an hour or two past midnight."

"That's a bit late," Candle admitted. He thought about that for several minutes. "Let's move past the next set of locks," he suggested. "Lake Helduris just beyond them. We'll find a quiet cove to anchor in, and then tomorrow I'll show you some really advanced magic."

"What sort?" Elie asked interestedly.

"The same sort we've all been doing all day – propulsion. Just something more than a simple piloting spell, though."

"Speaking of piloting," Six interjected. "Elie, if you'll take over, I'll be glad to find something for dinner."

"No, let me. I'll take over after I bring something from the galley," Six nodded and Elie rushed down into the cabin. On arriving in the galley, however, she was unable to decide just what she wanted to eat. Finally, slightly frustrated, she told the food box, "Surprise me," and opened the door. Inside the box were three large plates filled with steaming hot slices of meats, vegetables, and some thin bread-like wafers of a sort Elie had never encountered before. In the center of each plate were several dipping sauces. She removed the plates and discovered three cups, and a pitcher of some sort of bright red liquid. "This is going to be a messy meal, if we eat with our fingers." She checked what was normally a silverware drawer and came up with a large number of moist towels. "Yes, that makes sense, I guess" She grabbed a stack of towels and put them over her arm, then grabbed two of the plates and brought them up to Candle and Six.

"What's this" Candle asked curiously.

"Darned if I know," Elie replied. "You're the world traveler, you tell us."

"It looks a bit like the way they serve food on Palsondir," Candle replied, "but the presentation is different as are the sauces."

"Wait," Elie told him, "I'll be right back with the drinks." She returned with her own plate, the cups and the pitcher.

"I'm not sure what this is," Candle commented as he drank the red liquid. "It tastes like a cross between some of the fruit juices the Orenta favor and Granomish sweet seltzer, although not as sweet. Interesting combinations of flavors. What made you choose this?"

"I didn't," Elie replied. "I just told the box to surprise me."

“I’m surprised you didn’t get a whole roast and stuffed ostrich,” Candle retorted. “The one time I tried for a surprise from that box, I ended up with a pizza.”

“What’s so unusual about that?” Elie asked.

“I ate that pizza about forty years before it was invented on Mairsten,” Candle told her. “Six, take a break and eat some of this. It’s not bad and you may not see anything like it again until you’re my age. I’ll pilot the boat until Elie finishes eating.”

“Are you sure, sir?” Six asked.

“Absolutely. I can pilot and eat at the same time,” Candle assured him.

“Is this a piece of raw fish?” Six asked, holding up one of the fleshy pieces on his plate.

“Looks like salmon to me,” Elie told him.

“Raw?”

“The natives of Methis’ Chain eat some fish raw,” Candle informed him. “So do people in the eastern Probellinen Islands. It won’t kill you. It’s very fresh. You ought to know. You come from a fishing port.”

“I prefer mine cooked,” Six maintained.

“Then stick to the beef, lamb and chicken slices,” Candle suggested. “They’re all cooked.”

Six put the raw salmon to the side for a few minutes, but after a while he couldn’t help but try dipping it in one of the spicy sauces on his plate. He was still making up his mind about it when he caught Elie looking at him, obviously waiting for a reaction. “It’s okay, I guess,” he told her finally.

The next morning Elie cheerfully took the first shift and had them moving toward the final set of locks even before Candle woke up. Six provided breakfast and Elie attempted Candle’s feat of the previous evening. However, her control, while eating was haphazard and perhaps that is why Candle came aft to ask why the boat was shaking so much.

“Oh,” he chuckled after she had explained. “Nice try. I’m impressed you can get us moving at all that way. By the way, why are we moving so soon?”

“We thought you were in a hurry,” Six explained.

“Not so much that an extra hour would have made a difference. We’ll be sprinting, if possible, after we leave Ketch, but the canal has speed limits and to tell the truth we’ve been pushing them a bit. Whoa!” he exclaimed after another shaky motion. “Elie, there’s no reason you have to be able to do two things at once at this stage of your development.”

“Three things,” Six corrected him. “We’ve been talking while she piloted as well.”

“Impressive,” Candle admitted, “but let’s keep your ambitions down to only doing two things at a time until you’ve been practicing for a whole month. Six, have you tried that yet?”

“I’ll give it a shot,” he shrugged. Six closed his eyes for a moment.

“Try to grow out of that habit, both of you,” Candle told them. “There will always be times you have to use the trance state to relax before attempting a difficult spell, but in an emergency you may not have that luxury. This piloting spell is fairly simple and you both do it well. Casting it while eating or talking does not make it any harder; those things just add extra distractions. And unlike almost all of your predecessors, you’ve learned to cast spells with distractions. You know, if I let you work in a quiet room, you’d probably both be casting master-level spells by the end of the summer. I don’t want this going to either of your heads, but you two are the best students I’ve ever taught. You have no idea how fast you’re absorbing everything I throw at you. Frankly, had you been apprentices in my day, your classmates would have all been jealous about how easily it comes to you.”

“Like yours were about you?” Elie asked perceptively.

“Oh yeah,” Candle smiled reminiscently. “Of course I also got in more trouble than any of them did, so I guess it evened out. Anyway, I learned how to cast spells with my eyes closed too, but even though you can sense where everything around you is, you can do the same thing with your eyes opened and when you can use both your eyes and your magical senses in concert you’ll have as much control as any wizard in history.”

“I’m trying,” Elie commented, “but I can either see with my eyes or those magical senses you’ve taught me to use. If I open my eyes, the magical view goes away.”

“It took me a few years to be able to do it,” Candle admitted. “Hey, it took me a few years to even think about trying it. Silverwind always made it seem so easy but even Oceanvine usually shut her eyes when she needed to concentrate. I think the reason I got as good as I did so quickly was because of Oceanvine. After a few years of training I found myself trying to do anything she could. I didn’t realize until much later that an apprentice wasn’t expected to cast spells like a master mage. And, of course here I was a mere apprentice doing things she found difficult. I didn’t learn until years later that she was struggling to stay ahead of me even as I was struggling to catch up to her. That was good for both of us in the long run although eventually we came to respect each other’s strengths and cover for each other’s weaknesses.”

“But you were the more powerful wizard, weren’t you?” Elie asked.

“More powerful at what?” Candle asked. “She’s the one who stopped the Demon Arithan in the end. Silverwind and I were just part of the team compared to her that day. She’s the one who impressed Aritos with her abilities. Silverwind and I were just excellent mages as far as He was concerned, but she did something He thought only a god could do.”

“Aritos?” Six asked.

“The Devil Himself?” Elie asked simultaneously, shock in her voice.

“Oh, He’s not as bad as all that. Nice guy, really. You’ve met Him, in fact,” Candle told them. “Remember Artifice?”

“That was the God Aritos?” Six asked. Candle nodded.

“Then who were those others?” Elie asked, but a moment later she silently answered herself. “Oh, my

Gods!” she exclaimed unthinkingly.

“Exactly,” Candle agreed.

“River and Mountain... uh... Wenni and Nildar, were they? Well, They may have been a little aloof,” Elie recalled, “but Methis seemed like a nice Granomish woman just a few years older than me. And we chatted almost all night”

“No seeming about it,” Candle told her. “That’s the way She really is. Well now that you know that much, perhaps it’s time I told you a few other things the history books try to ignore.” He spent the next hour describing details of the Gods-given quest to battle and imprison the demons he had performed with Oceanvine and Silverwind some six decades earlier. Neither Six nor Elie asked many questions as he spoke, so he was able to describe some of the forms of the misnamed Bond of Aritos, their properties and how they related to the demons they represented. “I won’t show you what they actually look like now. That would be horribly reckless of me. Better you should never have to deal with them at all. Even Silverwind would have never shown them to me if we didn’t have to deal with them and he wanted to protect me from their insidious effects.”

“A symbol can do all that, sir?” Six asked.

“It’s not just a symbol, Sixtus,” Candle told him seriously. “It’s a spell and the really nasty thing is that anyone except someone who is magic-null can cast it, and will do so, just by drawing it or even thinking too much about its shape. Nasty, huh? In fact it takes serious training to learn how to draw it or think about it, without actually casting the spell.

“Well, I think that’s all in the past now,” Candle concluded as they approached the final locks. “Arithan was destroyed and the others were permanently imprisoned and since the Bond of Aritos is, among other things, a summoning spell it should be fairly safe. If you can’t summon the demon, you shouldn’t be able to summon his power. It doesn’t pay to take chances, however.” Then he stood and called to the lock’s operator a brown uniformed woman. “Ahoy! Do we have much of a wait this morning?”

“A long wait, I’m afraid, sir,” the woman replied. “Two ships collided at the canal entrance. Word’s been passed all along the canal to hold up traffic until further notice.”

“But we’re supposed to be rushing to assist in Sutheria,” Six protested.

The woman did not question that. Instead she just shrugged and replied, “I’m sorry, sir. Orders are to not open the locks to anyone.”

“What if we don’t use the locks?” Candle asked.

The woman laughed. “If you know a back way around, you’re free to use it.”

“Thank you,” Candle replied. He reached into his pocket and pulled out a thin golden pen. He held it outward and it grew larger until Six and Elie recognized it as the staff Candle habitually walked around with when on land. “I don’t really have to do this – let it become a staff, that is – but it just seems more natural this way.” Then he and the staff started to glow with a visible golden aura. The golden aura grew and expanded until it contained the *Maiyim Bourne* and everyone and everything on board. Then the boat rose up out of the water until it was about twenty feet higher than the lock.

“What the hell?” the lock operator asked.

“You said we could,” Elie told her cheerfully as Candle directed the boat forward. “Have a nice day!”

Several men and women, all of whom worked for the Canal Authority, stopped what they were doing to watch the floating, glowing boat as it sailed over the locks and then quietly dropped into the final leg of the Quarna canal. Once the boat was back in the water, Candle told Six and Elie “Deploy the hydrofoils.” They did so even as the boat started to accelerate and soon they were aloft. “We’ll be at the end of the canal in fifteen minutes,” Candle told them confidently.

“But that’s about twenty nautical miles away,” Six pointed out.

“Maybe sooner then,” Candle laughed. “Sixtus, you take the wheel. This will be easier if I just push and someone else steers, not that it’s very hard with the staff to back me up, but as you two have learned, you can always do more if you aren’t distracted.”

The wind was moaning in the rigging as Elie decided, “I may as well clean up from breakfast, especially since it’ll be time for lunch soon.”

As Candle had predicted, they reached the end of the canal within a quarter of an hour, but they found their way blocked by two ships, one of which had crashed bow first into the other’s port side.

“That’s not pretty,” Six observed as they slowed down and sank back into the water. Somehow in the dead of night a freighter had rammed into a luxury cruise ship. The two ships were still joined and from the angles they were floating at it appeared that only the bow of the freighter was keeping the cruise ship from going to the bottom. As the *Maiyim Bourne* approached, the Royal Emmine Coast Guard was still evacuating passengers.

“Were you expecting it to be?” Candle countered as he watched a launch painted in the Coast Guard colors speed toward the *Maiyim Bourne*.

“Attention, unidentified sailboat!” they heard an amplified voice coming from the launch. “You are in a restricted area. Turn about immediately!”

Candle took a deep breath and using magic to amplify his voice shouted back even louder, “Attention Coast Guard launch! This is the *Maiyim Bourne*. We’re here to assist. Request permission to proceed!”

“Negative, *Maiyim Bourne*. There is nothing a pleasure boat can do to assist here.”

The *Maiyim Bourne*, once more bathed in the warm golden light, rose completely out of the water and hovered over the Coast Guard launch. “I wasn’t offering the boat,” Candle replied dryly.

“Copy that,” the amplified voice replied. “Maybe you can help. Let me radio my CO. Please stand by.” Candle moved the boat to the side and then let it back down gently. When side-by-side, the launch dwarfed the *Maiyim Bourne* and none of the mages could see any of the Coast Guardsmen on the launch. A minute later the young officer who had spoken to them earlier leaned over the side of the launch. “CO wants to know who you are, sir”

“Tell him, ‘Wizard Candle’ with two apprentice mages,” Candle replied.

“You’re kidding, sir. Right?” the young officer asked.

“You know anyone else who can make a boat float in thin air?” Elie retorted tartly.

“Point taken, miss,” the ensign nodded. “Hold on.” There was another long pause before he returned. “Sir,” he addressed Candle, “Commander Kellins would appreciate any advice or assistance you could render. Please proceed to the cutter just starboard of the freighter.”

“Just the other side of the freighter,” Candle confirmed. “Got it.”

“Uh, sir?” the ensign asked. “Are you really a wizard?”

Candle transferred the golden staff to his left hand and held out his right hand out. As the officer watched, a small leather clad ball identical to the ones used in a popular stick and ball game known as “Eightbase” appeared in it. “You didn’t want it autographed, did you?” he asked.

“If you wouldn’t mind, sir.”

Candle looked at the ball and his signature appeared on the leather skin of the ball. Then he nonchalantly tossed it up to the ensign. “There you go, kid,” he said before causing the *Maiyim Bourne* to move on quickly to find the Commander on duty.

The boat was only moving a few seconds before her velocity was enough to cause it to rise up on her foils. The movement startled Candle slightly when it happened, however. “Didn’t anyone retract the foils?” he asked.

“You didn’t say to, Uncle,” Elie replied.

“I suppose I didn’t,” Candle admitted. “No harm done. The boat is indestructible after all and the first time we took her out with Nildar and Wenni they were extended before we’d boarded. I think Nildar made them retractable only so we could navigate in shallow waters. It was only through experimentation that we found other reasons to retract them. However, we had better pull them back in as soon as we get past that freighter.”

“Got it,” Six affirmed as he readied himself to comply.

Two minutes later they were beside the Coast Guard Cutter *Monaril*, a tall but narrow white ship with a wide, bright blue, diagonal stripe and a thinner red one painted on her hull a third of the way aft of her bow. Coast Guard ships were used to dealing with vessels in trouble of all sorts and an accommodation ladder leading up to the ship’s deck had already been lowered for the mages’ convenience in boarding the ship.

Two ratings assisted in mooring the *Maiyim Bourne* to the base of the ladder and then helped Candle, Elie and Six on to the ladder.

“Permission to board?” Candle asked formally as he reached the gangway at the top of the ladder.

“Permission granted,” Commander Kellins replied. The commander was a tall, muscular man in his forties. His face was clean-shaven and his hair dark brown. “Jonnan Kellins. Thank you for coming, Wizard. You probably don’t remember me, but I took one of your introductory magic classes my freshman year at university.”

Candle looked hard at the man. “You used to sit in the front row – third seat from the left.”

“I did. I wish my ability with magic had been as good as your memory, Wizard.”

“You aced the course as I recall,” Candle replied.

“Only because you didn’t have a practical exam. I knew the answers on paper, but would have failed miserably if I had to cast some of those spells you had us study.”

“It was an introductory course,” Candle explained. “I designed it to show students whether or not they had the talent to be mages. I taught you magical theory. Anyone can learn theory and you learned it as well as any student I had. You just didn’t have the talent to apply the theory, but I could hardly penalize you for that. Not in a theory class.”

“Well, it was still the most interesting class I ever had, but it also showed me that my life was elsewhere. I ended up majoring in history, but then I was on a military scholarship so after graduation I served a term as ensign. I’ve been in the Coast Guard ever since.”

“And done fairly well for yourself I see,” Candle told him. “Captain of your own ship.”

“And I’m up for my fourth ring next year,” Kellins told him.

“A full captain,” Candle translated for Six and Elie. “Excellent. Oh, where are my manners? These are my students Sixtus Hardisty and the Lady Elinor Jenynges.”

Elie flinched inwardly at the sound of her title, but smiled graciously when addressed as “My lady,” by Commander Kellins. Then she followed the Commander and Candle as they moved toward the port side of the *Monaril* where a gangway had been rigged to the deck of the cruise ship *Queen Otillia*. They climbed the gangway to the liner where the deck was listing about ten degrees. There were a dozen Coast Guardsmen visible as well as crewmen from the *Queen Otillia*.

“We’ve got all the passengers off safely enough,” Kellins told them, “and most of the crew. They’ve been ferried ashore. In some ways it’s a good thing this accident happened here. We’re near enough to shore that we had no trouble getting survivors to safety and the wounded to hospitals.”

“Survivors,” Candle made note of the word. “Then there have been casualties?”

“Unfortunately,” Kellins confirmed. “The bow of the *Admund Rainelds* tore through several decks of passenger cabins. We’ve removed most of the bodies, those we could find, but our problem right now is in separating the two ships. If we back the *Rainelds* out of the hole she tore in the *Otillia* I’m certain the *Otillia* will sink within minutes. If we were out at sea it would be a sad loss, but mostly only to the owners, although we did not allow passengers to take their entire luggage with them.”

“No, of course not,” Candle agreed.

“If she sinks here, however, she’ll block the entire canal for weeks or maybe months.”

“So we need to seal the leaks below the water line either before or while the freighter is backed away from the cruise ship, right?” Candle asked.

“That’s pretty much it, yes,” the commander nodded.

“Tricky,” Candle commented. “Let’s take a look at what we’re dealing with.”

Commander Kellins led them below. The damage where the ships had collided was horrendous and Elie found herself feeling sick at the thought of what must have happened to the unfortunate passengers who were in the damaged section. She was glad the area had been cleared of victims, but the twisted metal in the wrecked area could easily be concealing still more. She shot a glance at Six and saw that he too was feeling queasy.

They made their way down deck by deck until they reached the water line where water was still gushing in.

“Better take care of that first,” Candle decided. He looked briefly at his staff then went silent as the entire area resonated with a medium-pitched hum. He stood still on the deck for fifteen minutes while the hum continued, but after a while the inrush of water slowed to a trickle. “Sorry that took so long,” he told the others after the hum faded out. “I had to work very slowly or else risk welding the two ships together. We’re not done yet, though. We need to inspect the damage on the *Rainelds* first. I imagine there must be leaks there as well.”

“There are,” Kellins confirmed as they started walking back toward the lift that had brought them to this level, “but only in the forward compartment. The water-tight doors there are keeping it from reaching any of the aft compartments.”

“Doesn’t the *Otillia* have water-tight compartments too?” Six asked.

“She does,” Kellins replied. “The *Rainelds* managed to hit her just right, or hit her just wrong rather. The damage is keeping the doors to the next two compartments from closing so three compartments are flooding and that’s more than this ship can handle.”

“Her pumps should be able to stay ahead now,” Candle informed him. “We’ll finish the job here, but I want to make certain that we won’t have an even worse problem on the freighter when she backs off. Besides even if her damage is confined to the forward compartment, she’ll be all the safer if we seal off the leak there.”

Work on the *Rainelds* went slowly as Candle, using the golden staff as a power source, welded what was left of the freighter’s bow together. Part of the process, was in finding all the leaks and Candle assigned Six and Elie to wander about looking for damage he could repair. They were nearly finished on a deck that appeared to be used strictly for storage of the freighter’s large anchor chains when Elie thought she heard something. It was a strange, high-pitched, whining sound. Candle was still on the deck below inspecting his own work so she turned to ask Six if he had heard the strange sound, but he was nowhere in sight.

A moment later, she heard it again – a high pitched mewling sound. She made her way over the chains in the crowded compartment to the area where the bow had been crushed in on itself. The going was slow and all the steel was greasy. She realized she was getting absolutely filthy as she did her best to make her way forward, but the odd sound kept coming from just in front of her. She kept pushing forward until she could go no further where two heavy steel plates from the bow had caved in and now overlapped at an odd angle so that they were separated by a foot at the top, but were pushed and deformed together near the bottom. Through the gap at the top, however, Elie could still hear the high sound and when she did her best to peek through the gap, she saw a small human arm moving weakly back and forth.

“Six!” she shouted for help. When there was no response, she turned back to consider the problem.

Levitation, she knew was just a specific form of telekinesis. There was no reason the same spell couldn't be used to open a door or push something aside even if all she had done to date was to lift small objects. She was unable to get comfortable, but she did her best to relax and concentrate on what she wanted to do. When she was ready she attempted to push the two steel plates apart enough for her to get past them, but try though she might, she couldn't find the power to move either of them. "Six!" she shouted once more. Then she came up with another idea.

Telekinesis, she reasoned, was the physical movement of matter through the power of her own will. If she didn't have the power to bend a giant steel plate it was possible she could use what power she did have to cut her way through it. It was really just a matter of moving the molecules of the steel away from each other and after all, how much power did she need to move a few molecules?

The effort required more than she expected, but she remembered Candle's lessons about using external power sources and she kept working at it until she had a deep, circular groove in one of the plates.

"Elie? What are you doing?" Six asked, coming over the chains behind her.

"There's a child behind these plates, Six," she explained, "but I can't move them aside so I'm trying to cut my way through. Help me!"

"Help you?" Six asked. "I don't even know how you're doing that."

"I'm just moving molecules apart," Elie told him. "Can't you help?"

"Wizard Candle says we aren't ready for cooperative magic yet," Six pointed out.

"Just let me use your power," she told him, desperately taking hold of his hand. She thought of it as reaching into his internal power source, but as she did so he drew on his own better mastery of external power and fed her all the energy she needed. The inscribed circle in the steel began to glow red hot and after a minute it fell in toward them. It clattered a bit as it bumped and slid down a pile of chains to their right and was still moving even as Elie poked her head through the hole she had made.

"Do you have enough light to see in there?" Six asked. "Watch out, that steel is still hot."

"I'm being careful and it's not in there," she told him, "It's out there and the sun is bright enough. It's a young girl – I don't know – Three or four years old, I think. Hold on." She concentrated again and levitated the girl up and through the hole. The girl was crying weakly, but did not appear to be physically hurt. "And who are you?" she asked the little girl she cradled in her arms.

"Ima," the girl replied softly. "Where's Daddy?"

"I don't know, dear," Elie told her, "but we'll try to find him. Let's get her out of here," Elie told Six.

They carefully made their way back out of the storage area. Candle was just coming up a ladder toward them as they finally got back to a spot where they could stand up comfortably. "What have you there?" Candle asked.

"A survivor," Elie told him. She went on to explain the circumstances of the rescue. Little Ima fidgeted while Elie told the tale until Candle gave the child a lollipop.

"Not just a survivor, my lady," Commander Kellins told her. "A miracle. The Gods themselves must

have been watching out for her. Let's rush her to the medics, though. She seems unharmed, but it's always safe to be certain. And I imagine she must be hungry."

"And we must find her father if we can," Elie told him firmly.

"Of course, my lady," Kellins replied. Ima was turned over to the medics who after a thorough examination lasting better than an hour declared she was just hungry. Elie, still covered in grease, had waited outside the examination room the entire time while Six assisted Candle in finishing the emergency repairs.

After the examination, Elie brought Ima to the *Monaril's* galley for a far-too-belated breakfast. Ima was about halfway through a large bowl of soup when she heard her name from the doorway.

"Daddy!" Ima exclaimed, getting up from the table and running toward the haggard-looking man who met her halfway. Elie had to wipe more than a few tears from her eyes over the next few minutes.

Three

Elie was spared from having to deal with more than a few minutes worth of Ima's father's effusive thanks, however, when a loud metallic tearing sound could be heard from outside. "Excuse me," she told Ima's father as she hurried to see what had just happened.

The loud shriek of tearing metal was just ending as she arrived on deck to see the freighter and the *Queen Otillia* finally separating. She looked carefully at the side of the *Otillia* and saw the awful hole in her side seem to close itself up. It wasn't completely healed, but by the time Candle was finished the bottom of the hole was two decks above the water line.

A hour later they were on their way once more but with only an hour's worth of sunlight left, Candle chose to set a course to the nearby port of Bolta. "We'll sail on to Ketch in the morning," he told Six and Elie.

Candle offered to take them to dinner at a nice restaurant he knew in the port town, but Elie was far too tired after all that had happened that day and begged off in favor of going to bed early. In fact she went to bed without bothering to eat at all, but around midnight hunger pangs woke her up.

She made her way to the boat's galley to look for something to eat then realized that she was the only one onboard. Concluding that Six and Candle must have gone off to a pub in town, she shrugged and reached into the food box for something to eat. Once more she didn't have anything consciously on her mind, but this time the box only delivered a roast beef sandwich on rye with horseradish and a mug of coffee. She finished the sandwich and decided she was still hungry so she went back for another. She was just opening the boxes' door when Six and Candle returned.

"I'll have whatever you're having," Six told her, "if you don't mind." She handed him the sandwich she had just taken from the box. "Uncle Candle?" she asked.

"That looks good to me too," he replied.

"So how was your boys' night on the town?" she asked after they had all been served. Six and Candle shared a guilty glance at each other. "Never mind," Elie replied with a quick blush. "I don't need to hear

about it.”

“No!” Six told her hastily. “It was nothing like that.”

“I was just showing him that old barroom trick I told you about.”

“I wasn’t able to create little fireballs to throw into a wine bottle,” Six told her, but I could use telekinesis to throw a dart. Wizard Candle was right; when you make the target part of the spell, you can’t miss. I’ll probably have to stop playing darts in the pub from now on. It’ll be too great a temptation to use it.”

“On the other hand,” Candle told him, “it’ll be a quick way to make a little pocket change should you ever find yourself stuck in some backwater on a day the banks are closed.”

“You have a larcenous soul, Uncle,” Elie accused him.

“Are you just figuring that out?” Candle smiled.

“So how do you do this trick?” she asked.

“I’ve already told you,” Candle replied. “Pick something you want to throw, connect a spell string between it and your chosen target and let it fly.”

Ever since Elie and Six had started their lessons, the bag of hex nuts had a place of honor at the dining/chart room table. She used her mind to reach into the bag and pulled one of the hex nuts out. As it floated in front of her, she spied a knot in the wood of one of the galley cupboard doors. She reached out with her mind to connect the nut to the knot, but uncertain whether she had actually done it, she closed her eyes. She immediately saw a thin, blue, glowing spell string connecting the nut to the knot.

“Yes, it’s always easier with your eyes closed,” Candle told her. She expected yet another lecture about casting spells with her eyes closed, but instead he surprised her by saying, “And in this case you’ll more often be doing the spell with your eyes closed because non-mages will think that makes it harder to hit the target. Sometimes they’ll want you to do it with your back to the target, but in truth you won’t be able to miss even if the projectile has to travel through a maze. Go ahead.”

Stubbornly, she opened her eyes anyway and was surprised to be able to still see the spell string. She smiled and sent the nut on its way. It hit the knot dead center with a satisfying thwack.

“It’s easy!” she exclaimed. “Now when can we learn to make fire?”

“I thought I promised to show you on Ketch,” Candle countered.

“Why not here and now?” Elie pushed.

Candle wanted to say, “No,” but there was a gleam of such excitement in Elie’s eyes, he just couldn’t bring himself to do it. “Very well, but let’s go outside and up on the wharf.”

“The wharf?” Six asked.

“The wharf is paved with asphalt, you won’t likely set it on fire. I can’t say for certain about the fittings of the *Maiyim Bourne*. I’d really hate to have to tell Nildar we burned his boat.”

“You keep saying that,” Elie pointed out as they made their way to the wharf. “But you also told us the boat was indestructible.”

“I’ve never seen any outside agency leave so much as a scratch on her,” Candle replied. “However the *Maiyim Bourne* is an obliging lady and it seems to me that if someone, say someone who was passenger or crew, tried to destroy her, she might just allow it.”

“I don’t want to destroy her,” Elie protested.

“I know that,” Candle assured her, “but would she? I considered scuttling her some years back when the king started hinting that he’d love to have this boat in his little collection. But given some of the special enhancements we’ve all been enjoying this trip, you can see why I gave him a copy instead of the real thing. Those money bags alone could ruin the economy in the wrong hands. In fact there’s nothing on board that couldn’t be abused with horrid consequences for all *Maiyim*. Nildar told us to treat this boat as a test. I think I told you that as well. Would either of you care to speculate as to what would happen if we failed the test?”

“Uncle Candle?” Elie asked as they sat down on the hard wharf surface.

“Yes, dear?”

“You weren’t in the room at the time and I didn’t know who they were and what they were talking about, but River, I mean Wenni, said, ‘Think of it as a test.’ And Fireiron, uh... Methis, said you shouldn’t have taken it so seriously. I suppose I should have remembered it sooner, but at the time it had no real significance to me.”

“Well,” Candle shrugged, “perhaps I have been a bit over-cautious, but I see the *Maiyim Bourne* as more than just a test. She’s a trust. Nidar and Wenni trusted us to not abuse their gifts and I’ve never betrayed a friend’s trust. Besides, there’s nothing on this boat I really need.”

“But you could have used the money to buy or rent a car rather than create one to carry Oceanvine’s body to Renton,” Elie pointed out.

“That had nothing to do with money,” Candle explained. “Silverwind left me almost as much money as he left your grandmother. Oceanvine may have done likewise, or maybe she left her entire fortune to you.”

“Me?” Elie asked.

“Her favorite great-granddaughter,” Candle responded. “Or maybe she left something to each member of your family or to your relatives on Kern. I don’t know. I wasn’t there for the reading of her will. In any case, I have more money than I could spend in a dozen lifetimes. It hasn’t been an issue since Silverwind apprenticed me.”

“Then why...?”

“Why did I create a car?” Candle asked. “Well, I needed something special that would hold Vine’s casket. I thought of renting a hearse, but I was trying to get Oceanvine out of Randona without anyone noticing and I figured an ordinary seeming station wagon would be better suited to the job. Problem was I could never have fit her in the back of an ordinary wagon. All the ones I looked into were a foot short, so with very little time in which to act I decided the best solution would be to just make one of my own.”

“The Gods thought you were short of cash,” Six commented.

“I’m not entirely certain the Gods really understand money. Well, maybe Aritos does. He spends more time among mortals than the others do.”

“He does?” Six asked.

“Oh yes,” Candle laughed. “He has a pleasant little office in Midon. It’s really just a base of operations since he doesn’t run a business, but I’ve visited him there a number of times. We have lunch together at least once each month during the school year although he usually joins me in Randona. By the way, I do have a car of my own; a real car. It’s a sporty little two-seater convertible. Bright red. I’m surprised you haven’t seen it around campus. Remind me to give you a ride in it sometime. So you want to learn how to cast a fire spell?

“This is some of the world’s oldest magic,” Candle explained. “The ancients used to think that everything in the world was made of one or more of four basic elements; earth, water, air and fire. The first three are material. You can feel them in one way or another. They can be handled with the right tools; a bucket or a bottle for water, a fan or your lungs for air. Fire is different; there’s no way to hold it. I’m not sure why anyone would think of it as an element, but since air is somewhat ephemeral, perhaps they saw the four elements as ranging from solid to completely ephemeral. Or perhaps they thought the physical manifestation of fire was a matter of releasing it from matter in which it had become trapped.

“You can’t blame them, since a ball of fire looks like this,” Candle continued. He gestured with his hand and pointed at a small, shimmering ball of orange light. “The color varies by how hot you make it, of course, but this is how it looks more or less. But there’s nothing burning there. What you see there is a manifestation of almost pure energy. Some of that energy reaches you as light and some of it as heat. I’ve learned that some of it comes out as radio waves and as radioactivity. Fortunately, very little of it is harmful radiation. It’s mostly heat and visible light. With concentration you could produce mostly harmful radiation, but I’d recommend against it, it’s a horrible way to die. Still want to learn this spell?” Both Elie and Six nodded.

“All right. It’s really not all that hard. All you have to do is concentrate energy into a single small spot. When that spot has enough energy and it touches something combustible, you have a fire.”

“That’s it?” Elie asked. “That’s all there is?”

“That’s all,” Candle nodded. He created two pieces of wood and handed one to each of them.

“I thought it was sort of an advanced form of the heat spell my mother taught me,” Elie told him.

“Not really,” Candle replied. “They are only vaguely related. Heat and refrigeration spells are the application or removal of energy over a relatively large volume. Fire spells are concentrations of energy in very small volumes. You could concentrate the energy of a fire spell into a single point, although in most cases you’ll find it more effective if spread out into something the size of a ballbearing to a foot or so across, depending on what you’re trying to set on fire.”

“But could you start a fire with a heat spell?” Elie asked.

“Oh yes, if you were very determined or extremely careless, but your heat spell is really just a regulator spell. It modifies an already active heat source, throttling it down or up as needed as opposed to a true

heat spell which acts directly on the item you are heating or cooling. Let's stick with fire for now. I doubt either of you will have much trouble. Just try to light those pieces of wood on fire." Candle readied himself just in case either Six or Elie applied too much energy to their pieces of wood but it was unnecessary for him to do so.

Both Elie and Six succeeded on their first tries and the two pieces of wood burst into flame at one end only.

"That was almost too easy," Six commented.

"You were expecting otherwise?" Candle asked. "I told you it was very old magic. The reason it is so old is that it really does not take much training to accomplish. The main reason I waited to show you how to do it was that you could easily have incinerated yourselves if you tried too hard. Well, I do want you to practice this, but remember what I said about practicing on the boat.

Four

Neither Elie nor Six had time to practice any spells the next day while sailing to Ketch. The Celenan subarchipelago, of which Ketch was the largest island, was a group of nearly one hundred small islands, many of which were considered dry, having no fresh water sources. They were also fairly close to one another, making navigation at speed an exciting experience.

The wind was favorable for hydroplaning and Six insisted that Candle allow him to stand at the helm for this leg of their journey. "I know these waters," he told the wizard. "I grew up in them. Navigation here is like that in the Probellinens; only a native can do it at the speeds you want to travel." To his surprise, Candle did not argue the matter, but instead had stepped aside and allowed Six to take over.

To Elie the trip was an exciting and nerve racking voyage as they threaded their way between islands and reefs through carefully marked channels. Six had been correct, however. The Celenans were a maze of channels and more than once she was certain they might never have been able to take the course they did had the *Maiyim Bourne* not been aloft on her foils. However she was aloft and Six expertly guided her past the treacherous reefs and shoals that were all a part of his home waters.

They arrived in Ketch that afternoon to find a busy harbor filled with fishing boats, tugboats and a few barges. "Ready about!" Six shouted as they approach the point at which they must come about. "Retract the foils!"

Elie worked the winch that controlled the foils' position and they splashed neatly down. Then she prepared for the next order.

"Jibe ho!" Six called. He turned the wheel and the boat turned against the wind. The sails began to luff and then suddenly refilled with the wind and the boom swung violently across from port to starboard. Elie scrambled to walk the jib around the mast. But Six told her to strike the jib altogether. "We won't need it from here on," he explained, "so now's as good a time as any to stow it."

There was no public marina in Ketchport and with most of the fishing fleet in port, there were no open slips at the docks either, so Six brought the *Maiyim Bourne* into a dock already two-deep in fishing boats in most of the places and along side a bright green-painted one with the name *Kelaleanne* emblazoned on her stern.

“Ahoy, the *Kelaleanne* !” Six shouted. A woman leaned over the gunwales a moment later. She was tall and had Six’s light brown hair and hazel eyes, although that was where the similarities between them ended. Where Six was tall and slim, this woman was quite muscular and looked as though she might have tied Six in a knot had she taken a notion to. “Oh hi, Sis,” he continued in a much softer tone of voice. “Mind if we moor ourselves to your namesake?”

“Six?” Kelaleanne asked, “Where did you find a racing yacht?”

“She belongs to the Wizard Candle,” Six replied, gesturing toward Candle. “You know, Silverwind’s student.”

“Pleased to meet you, Wizard,” Six’s sister told him politely. “Sure, Six. Heave your lines up here and I’ll secure you to the boat.”

A few minutes later all three mages had filled their bags with a few changes of clothes and were climbing up a ladder Kelaleanne had placed over the side of the fishing boat.

“Kela, where’s Dad?” Six asked once they were on the same deck. He helped Candle up and over the gunwales “For that matter what are you doing here? You don’t usually go out with the fleet.”

“Taking inventory,” Kela replied. “Inspecting damage to the nets. The usual sort of stuff. Dad and Gareth made port yesterday with a full load of flatfish. We got a good price too, but one of the nets got snagged on something and we lost most of it. I’m trying to decide if we should just replace them both and repair the one that’s left to use as a spare.”

“That sounds like a good plan to me,” Six told her as he helped Elie aboard..

“You don’t have to pay for the nets,” Kela shot back. “And who is this?”

“Ah,” Six cleared his throat. “Elie Jenyniges, a descendant of Silverwind himself. Elie, this is my sister Kela.”

“You’re kidding?” Kela asked Six. Six shook his head. “Nice to meet you, Elie. Your grandfather was he?”

“Great-grandfather,” Six supplied.

“Well, that’s going to create a sensation,” Kela commented. “Six, you may want to get them home without making any public announcements unless you’re planning a parade with marching bands, speeches and no time to eat for the next day or two. Not to mention keeping the newsmen happy once they find out who you’ve brought home with you”

“I, uh, hadn’t thought of that,” Six admitted.

“What’s the problem?” Elie asked.

“I figured folks would just be politely interested in meeting you and Wizard Candle, Elie,” he replied. “I certainly didn’t think there’d be much more of a sensation than we caused on Kern, but Kela’s right. We’d be mobbed.”

“Why?” Elie pressed.

“To the Smiths and Potters, Oceanvine was close kin,” Candle explained. “They welcomed you as close kin as well. Silverwind left Ketch when he was eighteen and I doubt he ever returned after graduation. If I’m reading between the lines correctly the people of Ketch turned him into some sort of legendary figure. If the word gets out, you and I are likely to be given a royal welcome.”

“Is that so bad?” Elie asked.

“There was a brief time when I was jealous of the notoriety Silverwind and Oceanvine got whereas I was the member of the team who never got mentioned. Eventually I realized I was the lucky one because I was able to go to a movie or an eightbase game without having to fend off a flock of newspaper or radio reporters. That was one of the reasons Oceanvine stayed in Renton until after Silverwind passed on. The people of Renton respected their privacy and made it clear to the press they were not welcome to trespass in that particular area. I doubt the people of Ketch would do that, because they’d be too busy trying to meet us, and especially you, themselves. Yes, Six, let’s make this a quiet visit.”

“I had hoped to meet some more cousins,” Elie remarked.

“Let me take care of that,” Kelaleanne volunteered. “I’ll have to figure out who’s actually closely related to you. Let’s see, Silverwind had one brother and he had a daughter. Now who was it? Well, I can look it up. You three run along. I’ll see you later.”

Ketch, the city, was much smaller than Keesport or Medda or even Renton. The city square was three blocks from the harbor. City Hall sat on one side of the square and the library on the other. Between them were various small businesses; an apothecary, three restaurants, a hardware store, several clothing shops, two dozen professional offices and at least as many apartments. The center of the square was a small park with a well-manicured lawn, several garden beds filled with flowers and a tall, bronze statue in the very center.

The statue depicted a man with long hair and a trimmed beard wearing an archaic set of clothing that looked vaguely like what a child’s picture book might have clothed a wizard in.

“Is that him?” Elie asked as they took a short cut through the park.

“It’s supposed to be,” Candle laughed as he read the inscription. “You would have thought his family would have made sure they got his likeness right.”

“What did they get wrong?” Six asked, looking up at the statue as though seeing it for the first time.

“For starters,” Candle began, “if he ever wore a beard it was long before I met him. Oh, no, I take that part back. He did wear a beard when I first met him and for about a year after. He shaved it off just before he married Oceanvine. His hair was never that long and the only time he wore a robe was when he first got out of bed. He certainly wouldn’t have gone out in public like that. If it wasn’t likely to get us all arrested, I’d correct that statue. The shape of his nose is wrong too. His was larger. That statue does look familiar though... Oh no,” he concluded, mixing shock with sadness.

“What’s wrong?” Elie asked, concerned.

“I just remembered where I’d seen that face. It was on a book cover. It was on several dozen book covers, in fact,” Candle told her.

“What sort of books?” she asked.

“Tell me, Elie,” Candle asked her. “Do you read any science fiction?”

“Never,” she replied. “If I’m looking for escape literature, I generally prefer a mystery. Why?”

“Close enough,” Candle shrugged. “You’ve seen the sort of artwork publishers put on the covers. Have you ever noticed that the flashiest artwork often seems to show up on the worst-written books?”

“I’ve noticed,” Elie confirmed. “Are you saying that this statue...”

“Is based on the artwork from some really badly written books,” Candle nodded.

“What sort of books?”

“I’ll tell you about them some other time,” Candle promised. “This is just too depressing.”

Six had always made so much about his being the son of a fisherman that Elie half expected his parents’ home to be one tiny step up from a rude shack on a desolate pebble beach. In truth their home was a two-story gray-green cottage with a slate roof and a small front yard enclosed by a white picket fence. The door was unlocked and Six pushed it open and called out, “Hello! Anyone home?”

“Who?” a woman asked as she stepped around a corner. “Six? I thought you weren’t coming home this summer.”

“Surprise, Mom,” Six replied, stepping forward to kiss and hug her. “We were on our way to Sutheria and Ketch was on our way,” he explained after she had finally let him go. “Oh, this is Wizard Candle and Elie Jenynges.”

“Wizard Candle? Six has told us so much about you. Welcome to our home and you too, Miss Jenynges.”

“Please call me, Elie, Mrs. Hardisty,” Elie told her, “and thank you so much for welcoming us here.”

“Any friend of Six is welcome here, dear,” his mother replied. She bade them follow her into the kitchen where she promptly served coffee and cookies. “So,” she continued once they were seated and served, “Six, you were very mysterious about this class you’re taking this summer when you called from Keesport. Tell me about it now.”

“I was mysterious about it,” he replied, “because I wasn’t certain yet just what it was going to be. Wizard Candle is teaching Elie and me how to cast magic spells.”

“Oh, so now you’re going to be a wizard, maybe, like your cousin?” his mother asked, obviously proud. “Elie, has Six told you he is related to Silverwind the Great?”

“Yes, Mrs. Hardisty,” she replied, smiling, “I’ve heard.”

“Mom,” Six interrupted. “It’s not that impressive. Elie is his great-granddaughter so if anyone has a right to brag...” he trailed off.

“Is that true, dear,” Mrs. Hardisty asked Elie. “Silverwind was really your great-grandfather?”

“Yes, ma’am,” Elie nodded shyly.

“Sixtus Hardisty!” his mother turned on him sternly, “how dare you bring kin into my house without introducing her as such.”

Six was speechless, but Elie replied, “It’s such a distant relationship after all, and we don’t think of ourselves as cousins.”

“I’m sorry, Mom,” Six apologized quickly, “but Kela pointed out that we probably didn’t want to make a big public announcement about it.”

“So you kept it from me as well?”

“I guess I just wasn’t thinking. I’m sorry, really.”

“Well, I think Kela is wrong in any case,” Mrs. Hardisty decided. “You shouldn’t be hiding from the rest of the city. Elie is related to one extent or another to almost everyone in town. I think they have the right to meet her.”

“We weren’t planning to stay more than a day or two, Mrs. Hardisty,” Candle told her. “We’re actually on our way to see if there is anything we can do to help out in Sutheria.”

“I’m sure we can arrange a public reception tomorrow afternoon in the park,” she replied. “I’ll make a few calls.”

“Mom, that really isn’t a...” Six began, but she had already left the room, “good idea. Now what?”

“You can try again,” Candle suggested. “Your phones aren’t working and will continue not to work until after your sister arrives.”

“How did you do that?” Elie asked.

“When you understand how telephones and radios work, it really isn’t all that hard to set up interference,” Candle replied. “This is only a temporary solution though and, Sixtus, your mother is not entirely wrong. It would be ungracious of us not to meet some of Silverwind’s closer relatives if they want to meet us. Let’s see what Kelaleanne comes up with.”

It was over an hour before other members of Six’s family arrived. Four of his siblings, including Kela, had married and moved out, so that only his sister Marianne, one year his elder, still lived with their parents. However, Kela had gotten the word out to the entire immediate family, at least, and by dinner everyone was gathered around the large dining room table.

“I was surprised,” Kela told them over a take-out meal of fried chicken with mashed potatoes and various sorts of salads, “but there are very few direct descendants of Silverwind’s brother on Ketch. Elie you have one third cousin here and two fourth cousins directly in the lineage of Denzil Fisher, he was Silverwind’s brother. The rest of us are related, of course, but the relationships are distant and a bit murky.”

“Fisher?” Elie asked. “Was that Silverwind’s surname?”

“Yes,” Kela replied. “Asketil Fisher. Terrible name for a wizard isn’t it?” she laughed.

“No worse than Ange of Tarnsa,” Candle commented. “I think that’s part of why we took mage names. Our given names were often so ordinary sounding. Although in my case I didn’t know my true given name until after I was already a journeyman.”

The doorbell rang just then. “That’s probably them. I’ll get it,” Kela told everyone. She returned a few minutes later with a middle aged woman and two men in their early thirties. “Everybody,” Kela announced, “This is Mrs. Rhonna Netter and her sons Humphrey and Morres.”

“Lady Elinor?” Rhonna Netter asked stiffly, approaching her.

“*Lady*Elinor?” several Hardistys asked at once.

“The correct and formal title is ‘the Lady Elinor Jenynges’ as the daughter of the Earl of Olen,” Rhonna informed them. “Didn’t you tell them, my lady?”

“It didn’t seem all that important,” Elie replied, “and my friends and relatives all call me Elie. I hope you will too, cousin.”

“Ah, so you are aware of our relationship?” Rhonna asked.

“Not until just now,” Elie admitted. “Kelaleanne was just telling me I had one third cousin on Ketch and two fourth cousins. You?” Rhonna nodded. “How did you know who I was and what my title was?”

“My father was always very proud of being Silverwind’s brother,” Rhonna told her and I was always interested in genealogy. Since my own ancestors lived here on Ketch and were either fishermen or employed in businesses that supported the fishing industry, naturally I found your side of the family more interesting. I first became aware of you when I read the announcement about the wedding of your grandmother, Countess Myrrha, but I know the names of your brother and cousins, aunts and uncles. I have wondered, however, why none of you ever came here to look for other relatives.”

“We never knew about you,” Elie explained. “My grandmother Myrrha never told us about her parents so I never even knew who they were until recently.”

“Didn’t you even wonder about that?” Rhonna asked her.

“It just never came up,” Elie told her. “We were taught about our lineage from the first earl of Olen, and my mom told me about her family, but somehow we were never encouraged to ask about where our grandmother came from.”

“I doubt Myrrha wanted you to know,” Candle put in. “She pretty much cut all her ties when she left Renton . Come to think of it, she had just finished her junior year at University, just like you.”

“That’s sounds appropriate,” Six added. “She cut her ties, but you’re reestablishing them.”

They stayed up late that night, talking to the Netters. Elie revised her opinion of her cousins as the night went on. At first Rhonna had seemed stiff, formal and not a little overbearing. So much so, that she had seemed to over-shadow her sons. She reminded Elie very much of her grandmother, in fact. However after the first hour, while relaxing over coffee and pastry, Humphrey told a joke that had everyone

laughing, including his mother and Rhonna lost her domineering bearing and became far more human and, to Elie, likeable.

When it came time to leave at last, Rhonna took Elie aside and told her, “I think the rest of the family would like to meet you, dear. Please come to tea tomorrow afternoon. And do bring Wizard Candle and your young man.”

Elie was about to tell her that Six was just a friend, but suddenly Rhonna drew her into a tight and rather surprising hug. Elie had grown accustomed to the demonstrative nature of her relatives on Kern, but Rhonna had seemed ever so much more reserved until just then.

In spite of the late night, Elie woke up with the sun and came downstairs to find Six’s mother already at work in the kitchen. “Did you sleep at all?” Elie asked after saying, “Good morning.”

“I went to sleep a few minutes after you did, dear,” Mrs. Hardsity informed her.

“How can I help?” Elie asked, eyeing the large pot of oatmeal Six’s mother was working on.

“That won’t be necessary, dear You’re company.”

“No, I want to help,” Elie insisted.

“Well, why don’t you set the table? There will be five of us this morning. Six’s father went down to the harbor early to see about buying new nets for the boat. Plates are in this cabinet and the flatware in that drawer.”

“Placemats?” Elie asked.

“Not this morning, dear. We won’t be eating in the dining room. We eat here in the kitchen most mornings anyway.” When Elie had finished setting the table Mrs. Hardisty asked her to check on a loaf of fresh bread in the oven, and then while that was cooling, they both sat down for a cup of coffee.

Six’s sister, Marianne, came in next. She told them she was late and was in a hurry to get to work, but she did stay long enough for a cup of coffee and a slice of the bread with butter. She was just out the door when Six came downstairs.

He started helping himself to some of the oatmeal but Elie asked, “Shouldn’t we wait for Uncle Candle?”

“We were up late,” Six replied. “He may decide to sleep in this morning especially since we won’t be sailing off until tomorrow at the earliest. Have you been waiting for us?”

“Well, yes,” Elie replied, feeling a little silly and hurt for having done so.

“Sixtus,” his mother cut in sternly. “Lady Elie had the courtesy to wait for you. The least you can do is say, ‘Thank you.’”

Six looked rebellious for a few seconds, then wilted and muttered, “Thank you, Elie. Would you like a bowl?”

After breakfast, Six suggested he show Elie the town. “So far all you’ve seen are a few blocks between here and the harbor.”

“Oh? Is the house Silverwind grew up in a museum here?” Elie asked.

“It’s not even still standing,” Six chuckled. “It was right on the water and was destroyed in a hurricane about forty years ago or more. I know about where it was, though.”

They spent the morning walking around Ketch. After seeing various small memorials to Oceanvine in Medda, Elie was surprised to discover that the only similar one to Silverwind was the stature in Ketch Square. “Well,” Six explained. “you have to realize over half the town was destroyed in that hurricane I mentioned. And most of the rest of what was left has been replaced since then. Ketch is a fairly young city architecturally. Also you may have noticed that as a group we’re not as openly affectionate as the folks we met on Kern.”

“You’re not as standoffish as my family,” Elie replied.

“Perhaps,” Six nodded, “but being out of the mainstream, our behavior is considered somewhat old-fashioned. I didn’t realize that until I went to University, of course, and deep down our way of displaying feelings is more comfortable to me, but that’s the way it is.”

They arrived back at Six’s home just after noon to discover Candle quietly meditating in the back yard, a comfortable garden area filled with early summer flowers and several trees. He opened his eyes as they entered the yard. “Back from sight-seeing?” he asked.

“Doesn’t take long to see the whole town,” Six shrugged.

“You could have come with us, Uncle,” Elie told him.

“Not hardly,” Candle replied. “You all were still sleeping when I left the house this morning.”

“You left before breakfast?” Elie asked.

“I was trying to learn more about the tsunami in Sutheria,” Candle explained. “I was hoping there might be more news by now, but we evidently learned more on the boat’s radio than anyone here knows.”

“Well, I’m glad you’re back now,” Six told him. “I was hoping you could supervise our practice with fire magic again this afternoon.”

“I thought you had learned that fairly well the other night,” Candle replied.

“We learned how to start a small fire safely in a fireplace, but what if we need something larger?” Six asked.

“Planning to take up arson as a hobby?” Candle asked.

“What if I need to make a firebreak?” Six pressed. “Something to stop a much larger fire from spreading? How much should I put into such an effort?”

“That’s a good point,” Candle admitted. “Yes, you should have experience with applying larger amounts of power to a fire spell, if only to keep you from overdoing it in an emergency. There are also some fire-extinguishing techniques you may find helpful.

“Now the thing to realize about fire is that it requires three things to exist; heat, fuel and air, well the oxygen in the air really. Take away any one of those three and you don’t have a fire anymore.”

They spent the next two hours igniting and extinguishing fires of various sizes in the outdoor fireplace in Six’s backyard. Finally it was time to go to Mrs. Netter’s tea.

Even though they had said their goodbyes warmly the night before, Elie was expecting Cousin Rhonna’s idea of tea to be a quiet, formal sit-down affair with polite, but meaningless chatter, not entirely unlike the afternoon affairs she had been forced to endure in Olen whenever her grandmother was in residence.

However, it turned out to be a rather informal affair in the large back yard of the Netter home.. Humphrey and Morris arrived late, but their wives and children, of whom Elie had not even heard until she met them, were there as were a small host of various other cousins. In Medda Elie, Six and Candle had often been separated as various members of Oceanvine’s family treated them as individuals. At Rhonna Netter’s tea they were treated as a unit for most of the time, even though Six turned out to know several of the Netter’s guests quite well. They were seated together and people came to talk to all three of them. There were young children playing in various corners of the yard, while the adults sat down at a set of long tables. After a while, however, some adults went to play with or take care of their children and others moved to other parts of the table so eventually everyone had a chance to sit near and talk to Elie and Candle. Elie found she enjoyed her time with this part of the family, but she was unable to establish any close connection as she had in Kern. She decided she would have to return sometime to get to know these people better.

The afternoon tea lasted into the early evening, well past dinnertime at Six’s home, so Candle suggested they stop to eat in the pub in Six’s neighborhood. “You won’t be familiar with the pub food here,” Six told her.

“I’ve been to pubs before, Six,” she retorted tartly.

“I know, but not in Ketch,” Six replied. “I was a bit surprised at pub food in Randona so it seems only natural you might find what we have a bit odd. First off, almost everything is made of fish.”

“This is a fishing port,” Elie shrugged. “That seems natural. So we’ll have fish and chips, then?”

“If that’s what you want, sure,” Six agreed. “You’ll find the dark ale goes well with it.. But that’s not all. There are also various fish stews and chowders, fish burgers, and fish sausages.”

“Fish sausages?” Elie asked with a wrinkle in her nose.

“I said you wouldn’t be familiar with them,” Six shrugged. “Hey, get the fish and chips if you want. They’re very good here. What sort of fish do you want?”

“What sort of fish?” Elie asked.

“Haddock? Cod? Plaice? Lemon sole? Sand dabs? Winter flounder? Blackback? Grouper?”

“Wow!” Elie exclaimed, “You do take your fish seriously here.”

“Of course,” Six chuckled. “If you want something fairly heavy you can try the tuna and chips, but if you do, I recommend a small serving. It’s pretty filling. There’s also squid, clams, scallops, quahogs, oysters, mussels, crabs and lobster. Well, no, the pub won’t have lobster and they won’t have all those things at

once. They'll have whatever is cheapest at the moment. From what Dad told me last night, if you order the plaice, sand dabs or haddock it's likely to have come off our boat. They may have shrimp, but it isn't local."

"I just want fish and chips," Elie decided stubbornly.

"Okay, I'll order for you," Six told her. Once they were seated, Six ordered cups of quahog chowder for all three of them, then ordered haddock and chips for Elie and a plate of the fish sausage for himself. Candle, on learning it was the season for soft-shell crabs, ordered them.

They stayed in the pub for an hour after they had finished eating while Six talked with a few old friends, but when Candle remarked, "You two can stay up, if you like, but I need to get some sleep," they chose to join him.

Sleep, however, turned out to still be hours away. "Have you heard?" Marienne Hardisty asked as they came through the front door.

"Heard what?" Six asked.

"There's been another tsunami in the Southern Chain!"

Sutheria

One

"Another?" Elie asked. "Waves like that aren't that common, are they?"

"Maybe they are down there," Candle replied as Marienne pushed them toward the family room where the television was broadcasting the news. "The Crown Colony of Sutheria didn't even exist when I was your age. Before that there were a few tribes of native humans and a few nesting colonies of dragons. Maybe the last fifty years have been unusually quiet."

"There have been civilized people on Elisto for almost four hundred years," Six countered.

"True," Candle agreed, "but until recently all the Elistan settlements were on the east side of the island. If there is a source of tectonic activity somewhere between them, it could well be that no one was around on the west coast to see the waves come in."

"But they might have been noticed in southern Bellinen," Elie pointed out.

"This was the second series of large waves in as many weeks," the television announcer was saying. "The first tsunami hit during the final race of the Silamon Cup, destroying half the competing boats and damaging the rest. Shipwrecked crewmembers from those boats had just today finally arrived back in Silamon in time for this second disaster. The amount of damage is unknown at this time because communications with the islands of Marh and Kemalart have been lost and the only line still open to Lamona has been reserved for emergency communications by the government. We will report more on this as soon as details become known.

“And in local news,” the anchorman continued, “It appears we have been visited by a celebrity these last two days. The rumors are true, the great-granddaughter of Silverwind has been meeting with some of her closer relatives on Ketch. A private reception was held this afternoon at the home of Mrs. Rhonna Netter for the Lady Elinor Jenynges and it is rumored that she has been staying with friends in the Oldtown section of the city...”

“Time to cast off, I think,” Six interrupted the news report.

“Morning should be soon enough,” Elie replied.

“It sounds like we really need to get to Sutheria as fast as possible,” Six told her, “and yes, I think a few hours could make a difference.”

“And it’s only a matter of time before someone notices the name of our boat,” Candle added, “and puts it all together.”

“There’s no reason for anyone to think she’s the real *Maiyim Bourne*,” Six countered, forgetting that was an argument against leaving. “There are plenty of yachts with that name.”

“Maybe so,” Candle nodded, “but even if we had arrived on the *Queen Otilia* people would have thought a boat named *Maiyim Bourne* would have made people assume Elie had arrived on her. You were right, though, we ought to leave tonight. I’m not particularly worried about the local news people finding us here, but we were already in a hurry to get to Silamon and I know I’m not likely to get much sleep for the next few hours. How about the two of you?”

Six and Elie agreed and they all quickly ran to their rooms to pack their bags. Half an hour later they were saying their goodbyes to Six’s family on the deck of the *Kelaleanne*. Elie hugged each of them in turn and then made her way carefully down to the deck of the *Maiyim Bourne*. Once down, she turned and waved.

“Stand by to cast off,” Candle commanded after tossing his bag down into the cabin. Six and Elie did likewise, then got into position to bring the line that moored them to the *Kelaleanne* back in. Six’s father and sister untied the lines and tossed them down and Candle began easing the boat back into the harbor. Another round of farewells and they were once more on their way.

Slipping out of the harbor in the dead of night gave Elie an odd feeling. They were navigating the lights, whistles and bells of the buoys through a world of darkness speckled by pin points of light. While one could see where land was by the street and house lights, there often wasn’t much difference between those lights and the lights of the hundreds of navigational markers in the Great Bay especially by the time they were an hour out from Ketch. Every so often, she would spot a set of moving lights out in the blackness and it would take a moment to realize that was another boat or ship.

The *Maiyim Bourne* had lights for running at night too, although like the ones in the cabin, they appeared to have no source. They just came on at need. When asked, Candle explained, “They’ve always been there; they just come on when it gets dark and the boat is under sail.”

“Can you turn them off for running secretly?” Six asked.

“I’ve never needed to, but it wouldn’t surprise me if you could, if you really had to. I wouldn’t suggest it though, except at need. That’s how wrecks happen, you know. By the way, one of you two ought to try

to take a nap for an hour or two,” Candle suggested once they were in open waters. “I doubt I’ll be able to stay up all night and as large as the Great Bay is, it’s still too small and busy to rely on the autopilot. I see at least five ships all around us. None of them are close, but who knows what will happen an hour or more from now?”

They finally decided that Elie should try to get some sleep. She did not have much hope of actually sleeping, but she went down to her cabin, spent a few minutes unpacking her bag and then stretched out on her bunk. It seemed like just a few minutes later that Candle was shaking her awake. “What’s wrong?” she asked, startled.

“Nothing,” Candle replied. “You’ve been out for two hours and now it’s my turn.”

“Really?” she asked. “Feels like I just got here.”

“I’m sure,” chuckled Candle. “Well, do me a favor and wake me up at dawn. Oh, and you may want to bring Six a snack, and a large coffee. He won’t admit it, but I think he’s jealous of you for getting to sleep first.”

“I could probably handle the boat by myself,” Elie offered. “We’re sailing an even course for the next few days.”

“With detours only for passing ships,” Candle agreed. “But running at night the way we are, I’ll feel better if two of us are on duty during the night-time hours. On the outer seas I’d say, just set up the autopilot and we can all go to sleep, but here in the bay the traffic is too heavy. In daylight we can try working single shifts if you like, but not at night.”

“Then we’ll let you sleep yourself out,” Elie told him. “I’ll take the first day watch by myself while Six catches up on sleep and I’ll sleep when you’re done. After that we should be able to work out reasonable watches.”

Candle looked like he was about to say something for a moment, but eventually just nodded and went to his cabin. Elie went into the galley and pulled a tray of sandwiches and a vacuum bottle full of coffee out of the food box.

“I could hear your stomach growling,” she told Six playfully as she arrived on deck.

“I’m not surprised,” Six returned. “I think we could have used it as a fog horn if we’d been fogged in.”

Elie looked around. “I see what you mean. Very clear tonight. Cold too. Maybe I should go below for a sweater. You want one too?”

“No thanks,” Six replied. “I’m fine. Besides, I’m not sure your closet would provide me with anything that fit.”

“I’m sure it would give me whatever I asked for,” Elie replied. “Uncle Candle tells me all sorts of people have stayed in that cabin, including Methis. The closet is enchanted to provide what is needed. It’s up to us to figure out what that is.” She hurried back to her cabin, opened the closet and found two comfortable fisherman’s sweaters in heavy cotton. One was just her size and the other looked just about right for Six. She grabbed that as well and brought it back to him.

He looked at it in the dim light, then cast a small light spell to give him a better look at the garment. “This

was knit in the pattern of Ketch sweaters,” he told her wonderingly.

“Excuse me?” Elie asked.

“In the old days before boats had radios and other emergency equipment and before the Royal Coast Guard had fast ships that could go to the rescue when a vessel was in trouble, each village would knit the sweaters their fishermen wore in different distinctive patterns.”

“Why?” she asked, finally helping herself to a sandwich.

“When a fishing boat sinks, usually in a bad storm, the men aboard end up in the water. These days we have inflatable rafts, life vests, emergency beacons and more to help the Royal Coast Guard find them before they die of hypothermia or drown although sometimes that happens these days as well. A century ago, it happened far more frequently and when it did the odds in favor of survival were slim. Occasionally the body of a dead fisherman, still wearing his life vest, would wash ashore. The knit of his sweater would tell whoever found him where he came from so he could be returned to his loved ones for a proper burial.

“Anyway, a lot of old fishing towns still make sweaters in their traditional patterns. This is the Ketch pattern,” Six concluded.

“The closet knows all,” Elie laughed. “I just asked for a sweater in your size since you were so sure it wouldn’t give it to me. How’s the sailing been tonight?”

“Fairly dull,” Six admitted, slipping the sweater on over his head. “You can see the other boats and ships – mostly ships, actually – all around us, but in spite of the traffic out here, I doubt we’ve been within half a mile of anyone. Of course that can be too close in a fog, but when the conditions are this clear, that isn’t a problem.”

“Uh huh,” Elie agreed. “We don’t even need the radar to keep track of everyone around us.”

“No, but it’s easy to become hypnotized by the lights. I think we have enough wind to hydroplane, but Wizard Candle says to keep our hull in the water until daylight.”

“I’m sure we can find a way to stay occupied until then,” Elie told him, helping herself to another sandwich. She was preoccupied so she didn’t noticed that she levitated it to her hand from the plate, rather than stretching out for it.

“You’re getting pretty good at that,” Six told her.

“What?” she asked, then realized what she had done. “I’m going to have to be careful about doing that sort of thing next time I’m home.”

“Why’s that?”

“Haven’t you been listening? My father doesn’t like it when I use magic. He says that’s for the working class.”

“Like me?” Six asked archly.

“Like you,” she confirmed. “Hey, don’t blame me. I’m not the one who thinks that way.”

“So do you want to stop in Olen on our way to Sutheria?” Six asked. “It’s on our way, you know.”

“I don’t think so,” she replied. “Dad and grandmother wouldn’t approve of what I’m doing this summer if they learn Uncle Candle is with us. Grandmother will remember him, I’m sure, and I don’t think any of the family would approve if they knew exactly what I’m doing this summer.”

“They’re going to know eventually if you continue your training,” Six retorted. “You are going to continue, aren’t you?”

“Of course I am,” she told him forcefully, “I’m just not ready yet to face my father and grandmother.”

“Why not?”

“Six, your family was thrilled to think you could be the next Silverwind, but my family would be utterly scandalized if they thought of me as the next Oceanvine. I don’t know if Dad knew of our relationship to her, but my grandmother was her daughter. Trust me; when they find out, I’ll be disowned, so if you don’t mind, I’d like to have them as family for a little while longer.”

“Can’t see why if they’re as intolerant as you say,” Six told her, “but any way you want it. Have you thought of what you would like as a mage name?”

“Not really,” Elie replied. “I’ve had a few ideas, but none of them seem just right. How about you?”

“Sextant,” he replied. “it came to me while we were on Ketch. It will allow close friends to continue calling me Six if they like, I’m sure it will be a while before most people use my mage name and besides it sounds very much like Sixtus so it fits like an old glove. Nice and comfortable, like it’s been my name all along.”

“Sextant,” Elie murmured. “I like it. When do you intend to start using it?”

“I suppose I could start right now,” Six replied, “but I’ll wait until I feel like more than a raw apprentice. I’ll wait until I have actually done the work of a mage.”

“All right,” Elie nodded. “Sounds reasonable, but don’t be so modest you put it off too long,” she paused, then added, “Sextant.”

They sailed on in silence for a few minutes until an eerie sound could be heard coming from the cabin. It sounded like a mournful trumpet fanfare heard played under water. “What’s that?” Elie asked.

“Must be the shortwave set,” Six told her. I was listening to an Orentan concert an hour or so ago. At the frequencies of that band, the signal bounces off the upper atmosphere and can be heard thousands of miles away. We lost the signal shortly before Wizard Candle woke you up. I thought he turned it off.”

The wavering trumpet music stopped and they heard a voice in a medium of the oddly distorted background tones of radio signals that bounce thousands of miles. There were traces of other broadcasts mixed in, but above them all the voice spoke in clear measured tones, “Whisky. One. Four. Heaven. Turkey . Freedom. Niner. Arsdlay.” There was a pause, then the voice continued, “One. Seven. Six. Six. Niner. Eight. Five. Three. Seven. Two. Five. Five. Five. Two. Three. Seven. Six. Two. Two. One. Four...” The voice continued on like that for another minute then faded out.

“That was strange,” Elie commented. “What was it?” Six had no good answer.

Two

With the dawn, Six and Elie rigged the *Maiyim Bourne* for hydroplaning. Then Six went below to get the sleep he needed. A few minutes later Elie regretted having let Candle sleep in, but by then she was too busy sailing the boat.

The wind, already providing ample push to keep the boat aloft, freshened just after dawn, propelling her at an alarming speed. Traffic on the Great Bay during the night had never been something to look at more than every ten minutes or so. Suddenly it felt as busy as the Randona Bypass on the Panrallen Highway. Ships and boats almost seemed to be standing still as Elie struggled to steer a course around and between obstacles. Not having looked at the charts, she did not realize that she was currently crossing one of the Bay’s major shipping lanes.

An hour later, exhausted and more than a little frazzled, she finally reached the far side of the lane and the hazards decreased. Then, just as she might have appreciated the extra burst of speed, the wind slacked off and the hull slipped back into the sea. Without sufficient wind to stay aloft, Elie retracted the foils, which in the water would only slow their progress.

It was another hour later that Candle finally came up on deck. “Would you like some breakfast?” he asked.

“No thank you, Uncle,” Elie replied. “Could I get some sleep instead?”

“Go ahead,” Candle told her. “Not enough wind to fly this morning I see.”

“You should have seen it earlier,” she told him. “Around dawn the wind was really blowing.”

“That’s odd,” Candle replied. “Dawn is normally the calmer time of day, in fair-weather at least.”

“Then there was nothing normal about this morning,” Elie retorted. “I’ll see you in a few hours.”

When she did reappear around mid-afternoon Six was deep in meditation near the bow and Candle was at the helm. “Did I miss anything?” she asked Candle.

“Two serps and a shipload of pirates,” Candle replied deadpan, “Nothing we couldn’t handle.”

“Apparently,” Elie replied. “What’s Sextant doing?”

Candle looked confused for a moment then realized who and what Elie had meant by the question. “Sextant is he now?”

“Well, it’s the mage name he has chosen,” Elie explained, “but he isn’t really ready to use it. He wants to truly have done something worthy of the name first.”

“That will put him one up on many of his predecessors,” Candle laughed. “Well, he’s entitled to take a mage name if he likes. And what name have you chosen for yourself? I hope it isn’t something like ‘Elephant.’”

“Ugh, no,” she squirmed at the thought. “I haven’t decided. Nothing really fits. Well, one name feels right but I think it would be presumptuous of me.”

“What did you have in mind?” Candle asked.

“No, I’m not really ready to talk about it,” she told him, blushing.

“Well when you are ready you’ll know what your name is and should be. Some of us know it from the start and others need to discover it. No matter, you have time. The mage name would not be officially yours until after graduation, although many magicians used their mage names years earlier.”

“You didn’t answer my question, however,” Elie pointed out. “What is Six doing?”

“Mind training exercises,” Candle told her. “Similar to some of the ones Vine taught you last year. I told her you weren’t quite ready for them at the time, but I may have been wrong, though. You may not have mastered those exercises like she hoped, but what you did get out of them has stood you in good stead lately. Are you ready for today’s lesson?”

“I haven’t eaten since this morning,” Elie replied, “but I can wait until dinner.”

“We’ll eat early in that case,” Candle replied, “and the sooner you complete this assignment, the sooner we’ll all eat. I instructed Sixtus to go under as deeply as he could, to become totally isolated from the world around him.”

“Oceanvine told me that was too dangerous to attempt,” Elie argued.

“For an untrained novice working without supervision even the simple exercises you did would be dangerous. Vine never let you do it unsupervised, did she?”

“No, never,” Elie admitted, “and she warned me against it strongly enough to keep me from experimenting. The relaxation techniques did help during exams, though.”

“I’m sure they did,” Candle chuckled. “All right. This may be the last technique you will have learned before Six. Pretty soon now we’re going to be in territory in which he’ll be the leader. However, each mage has strengths and weaknesses. Eventually we’ll see where your specialties lie.”

“I thought you wanted us to be general practice magicians,” Elie replied.

“Even generalists can do some things better than others,” Candle pointed out. “So Six is in a deep trance, but I’m keeping an eye on him. Now what I want you to do is bring Six out of his trance solely by using your mind. No fair shaking him awake with your hand. Actually I doubt that would work, he’s pretty deep right now.”

“How do I do that?” she asked.

“You need to invade his trance. Link to him and try talking to him,” he suggested.

Elie shrugged, went forward and sat down across from Six. She took a deep breath and then let it out slowly. After a moment it occurred to her she was not going to be able to do this with her eyes open. That bothered her as Candle had told her he didn’t want them relying on that crutch. It seemed to her

that anything she did with her eyes closed she should, with effort, be able to do with them open. She sat staring at Six for the next ten minutes trying to sink into a meditative trance with her eyes open and just as she was about to give it up as impossible her vision blurred and she seemed to be seeing two worlds at once.

The first was the Great Bay all around them. She could still see the waves, the *Maiyim Bourne* and a few ships going about their business in the distance. However, she could also see some other place; a town or a city somewhere, but her views of both worlds competed with each other. It was in that moment that she realized that there were some spells that could only be used effectively with her eyes closed.

She lost concentration then and dissolved in a fit of giggles, but she thought it very funny that the experience of closing her eyes physically had opened them intellectually. After a few more minutes she began to get control of herself and tried again. This time with her eyes closed. Finally, after several false starts, suddenly found herself on the streets of Ketch.

That did not surprise her by itself, but while the street she was on was perfect to every detail as far as she could see, there was nothing moving here. There were automobiles in the street, people on the sidewalks and even birds flying through the air, but they were all frozen in place. Getting her bearings she realized she was just a block up hill from the city square. She rushed that way then stopped beneath the colossal statue of Silverwind and looked down the street toward the harbor. There appeared to be boats and ships moving around in the harbor so she headed that way.

Once in the harbor area she looked around again and noticed a white herring gull hovering motionlessly in the air to the south, so she headed north. A short time later she found Six sitting on a narrow stretch of beach looking out toward the sea.

"Nice view," she told him. "Why didn't you show me this while we were in Ketch?"

"Huh? What are you doing here?" Six asked. "My mind must be wandering. Well, I'll take care of that." He frowned a moment later when he realized she was still there. "Okay, a challenge," he laughed.

A great wind blew up. Elie felt like she was about to be blown away, but with a bit of added concentration on her part she managed to direct the wind to part around her. A moment later a large hole opened up beneath her feet, but like in a cartoon, she remained standing on thin air until she noticed. She only fell one foot before catching herself and floating back up.

"What are you playing at?" she demanded.

"I'm supposed to be maintaining this vision in my own mind. The more details the better," Six replied, "although why I'm explaining this to a figment of my lack of discipline is beyond me."

"A figment of your lack of discipline?" Elie asked angrily.

"Of course," Six replied calmly. "How else could you be here?"

"Because Uncle Candle sent me," she told him.

"He did?"

"This was *my* assignment," she retorted. "Now wake up. It's time to eat." Abruptly she found herself staring at the inside of her own eyelids. She opened them to see Six staring back at her.

“You really were here,” Six noted in surprise. “How did you get into my head?”

“I don’t think I was really inside,” Elie replied. “I just concentrated on you and sort of stretched my personal aura over until it touched yours. When I did so I could see what you were seeing. Tell me; did you briefly have a double vision problem before I showed up?”

“Yeah, I did. It was like I was seeing the real world through my image of Ketch. Did you do that?”

“Sorry,” she apologized. “I was trying to contact you with my eyes open so you were seeing what I was for a moment.”

“Oh. I thought I was losing my concentration,” Six admitted. “It isn’t easy to maintain the image of an entire city.”

“I’ll bet,” Elie nodded. “Was everyone supposed to be moving around even if you weren’t looking at them?”

“Weren’t they?” Six asked, standing up and starting back toward the stern.

“Sorry, no. That’s how I found you, though. It was very strange seeing birds hanging motionless in mid air, although I found myself walking carefully when crossing streets just in case they suddenly came to life when I was directly in front of a lorry or something. I wasn’t sure if I could be hurt so I wasn’t taking chances.”

“I don’t think you could have been hurt,” Six told her as they came within hearing range of Candle. “I mean you weren’t really there physically.”

“Actually that depends on you,” Candle told Elie. “It is possible to be hurt physically when interacting that way although nobody really knows why. I asked Doctor Miles, the head of the Psychology Department about that, but he wasn’t really sure. The best he could come up with was that the victim might be doing it to him or herself in response to what was expected. The problem is most common in less experienced mages. Even then most students never gave themselves more than a few light bruises. In this case, though I was watching both of you. There was no danger.”

After eating, Elie took her turn at the helm for the early evening watch. After four hours, Six took a shift and then Candle and then Elie was at the helm as false dawn began to lighten the sky.

Three

All three mages were on deck near the end of the morning watch when they smelled a wisp of sulfur in the air. A moment later the *Maiyim Bournewas* engulfed in a vast cloud of noxious steam and poisonous gas when a large bubble erupted beneath her. Elie screamed as the boat fell into the bubbles and foaming water swept across the deck in a great wave.

Candle reached into his shirt pocket and pulled out the golden pen that quickly grew into his walking staff. A new bubble, this one a spherical ward of red-golden energy surrounded the boat. They continued to fall into the foaming sea, although the ward kept any further water and gas from getting in. Slowly the air inside the ward began to freshen although all three mages continued to cough and gasp for breath for

another half an hour.

Finally, the water outside the ward became less foamy and turned almost black. It remained black for almost a minute, but then gradually lightened to blue, light blue and finally they were bobbing up on the surface. Candle let his ward go and allowed the *Maiyim Bourne* to settle gently back into the sea. Four hundred yards off their port stern a cloud was bubbling up out of the water.

“What’s happening?” Elie managed to ask between coughs.

“I think it’s a volcano,” Candle replied hoarsely.

“What, here?” Six asked. He continued with many coughs punctuating his words, “There are no volcanoes in the Great Bay.”

“Are now,” Elie commented, then started coughing again.

“It wasn’t on the chart,” Six maintained.

“Take another look,” Candle suggested. “I’ll bet you’ll find your chart has changed.”

“I’m sure it has,” Six coughed. “I’ll look at it anyway, and then we’ll need to radio the Coast Guard and give them our position. A new volcano is a major navigational hazard, especially since this one is entirely submerged.” He headed for the cabin.

“We would have died if not for your abilities, Uncle Candle,” Elie observed. “How many years before we can do something like that?”

“The staff helped more than you know,” Candle informed her. “I probably could have lifted us up and out of that mess without it, but I would not have been able to clear out the air and water.”

“Not from down here,” Six called up. “It’s almost a foot deep down here.”

“I’ll take care of that,” Candle assured him. He poked his head into the cabin and after a few moments all the seawater vanished instantly leaving the interior deck only slightly moist. “Better open all the hatches and let the air dry the cabin out,” he added.

Outside, Elie heard a big splash and saw the water Candle had translocated one hundred yards away. “Now there’s a trick that may take you a year or three to master,” Candle told Elie. “In my first year with Oceanvine and Silverwind, Vine told me that spell was very difficult and took a lot of power to accomplish. She also said that very few mages could do it. It does take care to do it properly and safely; this staff makes it easier than it might otherwise be, but we learned later that most of the difficulty is in doing it safely. I nearly drowned the first time I tried it, in fact, and when trying it on a living creature there’s a shock that knocks you out for a while. There was a rogue mage in Querna that used it as a matter of course, in fact.”

“We’re headed into the wind,” Elie told him after what he had told her sunk in. “Should I reset our course?”

“No, we should stay nearby at least until after we’ve talked to the Royal Coast Guard,” Candle decided. “I’ll take the helm, while you strike the sails.”

They were there for the next two hours as volcanic steam and ash continued to rise from the ocean floor. Then while Candle was using the staff to assist in his private investigation of the new volcano a high speed launch painted in the Coast Guard colors appeared on the horizon. Six spoke to them on the radio as they approached.

“Right,” Elie heard him reply. “Nearly drove us under. We’re standing off by half a mile at the moment while Wizard Candle investigates. Over.”

“A wizard eh?” the amused sounding voice replied. “I didn’t know there were any left. Over.”

“There’s at least one. Over,” Six replied seriously.

“We’ll be at your position in approximately five minutes,*Maiyim Bourne*,” the man on the other end informed him. “Over and out.”

The launch held five Coast Guardsmen commanded by a lieutenant who came onboard to talk to Candle. “It took you by surprise, sir?” he asked. “No advanced warning?”

“There was a slight smell of sulfur a few seconds before but that’s pretty much it. Most boats and ships would have gone under in our position. Was ours really the first report?” Candle asked.

“If it wasn’t, we would have had marker buoys up all around the area warning all ships off, sir,” the lieutenant replied. “I’ve already transmitted my confirmation of your report, but Mister Hardisty told us you were investigating the volcano. May I ask how and why, sir?”

“The how is simple enough,” Candle replied. “Magic can do anything technology can. Since so much of our technology is based on the magic of the last century, I suppose that shouldn’t be too surprising. But just as you might take soundings with your sonar equipment, I can use magic in the same manner and faster and in finer detail.”

“Makes me wonder why we have so few wizards left,” the lieutenant commented.

“Simple answer again. It takes quite a few years of training to make a wizard. Sonar units are manufactured in far less time. You lose a bit of accuracy in favor of a much lower cost and a heck of a lot less training.”

“And what did you learn, sir?”

“I think this one’s going to be with us for a good long while. There’s a fair-sized volcanic vent down there and enough pressure beneath it that I think the lava will pile up and eventually break the surface. We’ll have a new island here. Not sure how large it will get finally nor whether it will have any violent eruptions. So far the eruptions seem fairly calm as these things go. Even magic couldn’t have saved us had it been a big eruption.”

The mages stayed another hour until a cutter joined the launch, then set sail and continued on. They reached the coast of Cape Serd by sunset. Cape Serd was a popular vacation spot for people in northeastern Rallena. Some of the resorts were fairly expensive and Candle was in the mood to splurge a bit, but Elie talked him out of his first choice. “There’s too much chance there’ll be someone there who knows my family. I spent part of last summer there with friends and family. It’s fairly popular with the local gentry and nobility.”

So Candle had them sail another few miles up the coast to the next town, Truwich. Truwich had marinas, public and private, all along its twelve mile long coast. Most of them were filled however and it took a while to find an open slip. That slip turned out to be in one of the more expensive marinas in the area, but Candle commented, "It's only money and it's not as if it's coming out of our bank accounts."

"Know any good places to eat in this town?" Candle asked Elie.

"I've never been here," Elie replied.

"Why don't we just walk around until we find something that appeals," Six suggested. The other two agreed and they walked into town.

It turned out that Truwich was an old town that had been an artists' colony for many years. The marina was near the historical touristy section of town where several blocks of bars all of which featured live music were interspersed with restaurants, museums and fashionable second-story homes. The buildings were all decorated with ornately carved wooden porches which over-looked the narrow streets of that neighborhood.

They wandered around unable to come to a consensus of where they wanted to eat until their second pass down one of the streets, when they found a small place they had somehow overlooked the first time. From the street it didn't look like much; just a door and a window with a small sign between them.

"I think there were musicians playing here half an hour ago," Candle recalled. "That's probably why we missed it."

"I'm hungry enough to eat anywhere by now," Six commented. "What's on the menu?"

"Steaks and chops," Elie told him after glancing at the menu that was part of the small sign.

"Good enough for me," Six told her. "After all the fancy meals we've had onboard a simple steak sounds perfect."

"There was nothing stopping you from having steak," Candle told him.

"I just didn't think of it," Six admitted. "When you can have any gourmet meal you can imagine, somehow steak and potatoes just doesn't come to mind."

"Didn't stop you from having fish and chips several times," Elie pointed out as they went inside.

"Comes from having grown up on Ketch," Six explained. "Fish and chips was something we had at least once a week, so whenever I can't make up my mind, that's what I fall back on. I have to admit that the box serves up the best fish I've had since leaving home. No one in Randona knows how to make it right."

"You mean no one makes it the way you remember it," Elie told him while Candle asked for a table for three.

"Same thing," Six shrugged.

"I've been considering our trip to Sutheria," Candle told them once they had placed their orders and they had all had a sip of the fine red wine the waiter suggested, "and I think that, barring a lack of wind,

tomorrow should be the start of a sprint to Silamon. We could stay overnight on Cannen or in Olen, but we'll lose a few hours of travel time in Cannen and I know you, Elie, want to avoid Olen."

"If I can, yes," Elie nodded. Both Candle and Six noted she had tensed up at the possibility.

"I don't see why we should have to stop there if you don't want to," Candle told her, watching her relax again. "In fact we'll move all the faster if we sail around the clock and we'll have to do that eventually anyway. Even the shortest path between Randona and the Southern Chain would take us two days with ideal conditions and it would take us another two or three days to get there by hugging the coast and then at least another day or two getting from Marh to Silamon. A direct course after we round Cape Serd will still take us three or four days to Silamon, but that's a savings of two days, I think."

"We've already sailed around the clock to get here from Ketch," Six pointed out. "It's not so bad and as we go further south we'll be able to stay aloft later each evening. I don't imagine night lasts very long in Silamon this time of year."

"Less than three hours," Candle replied. "Of course the wind may not be with us the entire way."

"I'll check the charts as soon as we get back to the boat," Six offered. "I'll work out the best heading."

"Better get reacquainted with the octant too," Candle suggested, "both of you. Once we sail beyond Cannen and Olen we'll officially be on the outer seas and we won't have any navigation buoys until we reach Sutheria's waters."

"Loran should be able to give us our position on that part of the Wenni Ocean," Six told him. "I've been using it all across the Great Bay, in fact."

"And we want to keep using it," Candle told him, "but man-made devices have a bad habit of failing just when you need them the most. Use the octant to verify our position whenever you can."

"Our Loran unit isn't man-made," Elie pointed out.

"No, but the transmitters that emit the signals we pick up are. It takes at least two to triangulate and we have no proof as yet that any transmitters in Sutheria are still working."

They were about halfway through their meal when they heard a high pitched voice squeal, "Oh my Gods! Elie! Is that you?"

Elie flinched microscopically but recovered quickly to turn and reply, "Janie! How wonderful to see you. I thought you'd be in Harbingtonport again this summer."

"Oh no," Janie replied, "We got tired of that place. Truwich is the new in-place. Everybody's here! You'll see."

"Afraid I won't, Janie," Elie replied. "We're only here for the night, we'll be leaving at dawn. Oh this is my friend Six Hardisty and..." she paused ever so slightly, "our teacher, Wizard Candle."

"So soon?" Janie asked. Then she looked again at Candle while Elie continued.

"Gentlemen, may I present Lady Jane Terrun from Gaithen," she finished the introductions. "We were classmates in prep school,"

“An honor, my lady,” Candle told her. Six merely nodded at her with a polite smile.

“The honor is mine, I’m sure,” Janie replied automatically then turned back to Elie and dropped her voice as though afraid of being overheard. “Elie? Do your parents know you’re taking classes from a magician?”

“They know I’m sailing around the Archipelago on a special independent study project with Wizard Candle,” Elie replied, trying to sound unconcerned. “It’s not a secret.”

“Really?” Janie asked. “Oh it doesn’t matter, dear. It’s your business in any case, but I wouldn’t have thought your father would approve. Mine wouldn’t, I’m sure.”

“Janie, it’s independent study. Very exclusive,” Elie insisted. “This year only Six and I were accepted into the class.”

“Really?” Janie asked. “Wow!”

“Would you like to join us for dinner, Miss Terrun?” Candle invited her.

“Oh, I’d love to,” Janie told him, “but I have a date this evening. Lord Teddy,” she added in a giggle to Elie. Elie looked behind Janie and saw a tall, good-looking, blond-haired gentleman waiting patiently for Janie at another table.

“Have fun,” she told her friend.

“Oh I will!” Janie giggled again. “I’d better get back. Wouldn’t want him to get any wrong ideas. I’ll tell everyone you said, ‘Hi,’” she promised, then flitted back to her table.

“Terrific,” Elie muttered sourly once Janie was well beyond earshot.

“An old dear friend, I take it,” Candle observed dryly.

“It’s been less than three weeks, hasn’t it?” Elie asked and then clarified, “since Oceanvine’s funeral?”

“Sounds about right,” Candle agreed, pouring some more wine into his glass.

“So why does it feel like I knew Janie in another lifetime?” Elie asked. “Am I that shallow?”

“I think the proper word would have been sheltered,” Candle told her, “and if you can ask the question, I’d have to say not any more.”

“But I was, wasn’t I?” she pressed.

“Wisdom comes from experience,” Candle told her. “There were sides of life you had not yet experienced. Now you’ve spent time in places you were barely aware existed before. You’ve also been to University and from your introduction of Lady Janie, I assume she has not. A private college for her, was it?”

“Yes,” Elie replied. “MaxtaCollege.”

“Your experiences have been more broadening than hers. You can’t help but feel you’ve grown apart a little bit.” Candle commented.

“I didn’t feel that way last summer,” Elie pointed out. “We spent almost every day together for over a month in Harbingtonport. I can’t have changed all that much in under three weeks.”

“You haven’t,” Candle agreed. “You’ve hardly changed a bit.”

“Then why does Janie seem so alien to me all of a sudden?” Elie asked, concerned.

“You’ve spent the last three weeks away from anyone of noble birth,” Six answered. “I wouldn’t have thought it was long enough to notice a difference, but evidently you’ve discovered that there are more important things to be concerned about than what to wear on your next date.”

“I was never that shallow!” Elie insisted.

“No, you weren’t,” Six assured her. “I doubt your friend Janie is either, but your main concerns were getting good grades and making your family proud of you. I think those are still your main concerns. It’s just that now you have a lot more family to be proud of you.”

“Something else,” Candle added. “You know you’re about to head into a disaster scene. You have never experienced that before, but you’ve seen pictures in the papers and on the television. You can’t help but be concerned about it. Janie there is not in the least concerned about the Sutherians.”

“She might be if given the chance,” Elie told him.

“She’s had the chance,” Candle insisted. “All Emmine, maybe all of Maiyim has had the chance. But how many of us are racing there to help out?”

“Just what are we going to do when we get there?” Elie asked, grasping onto the less distressing subject.

“Haven’t the foggiest,” Candle chuckled. “It’s very possible we’ll be asked to leave.”

“What will we do if that happens?” Elie asked.

“We’ll leave,” Candle told her. “The Sutherians are not required to accept our aid. We’re just going to offer, that’s all. If we don’t stay maybe we’ll spend a few weeks in the Probellinens instead or spend some time in Kanaduin. That would be exciting.”

“It would,” Six agreed. “Kanaduin has a rough reputation.”

“It always has,” Candle laughed. “But if you don’t like that idea we might have time to spend a few weeks in Merinne. The library of the University there will have texts we can’t find in Randona anymore.”

They finished their meal and Six wanted to stroll around the town. Elie shot a glance in the restaurant’s window and saw Janie still sitting there laughing with the heir to Maxta and decided, “I’ll be more comfortable on the boat.”

“I thought she was your friend,” Six commented.

“Janie? Of course she is,” Elie shot back. “But I’d hate to run into someone who might report it back to

my parents. It's bad enough Janie will make sure the entire aristocracy will know I've been here."

"Oh come on," Six scoffed, "so you'll run into another old friend. So what? You aren't here illegally. You even have your parents' permission. We'll only stroll about for an hour or less. I just want to stretch my legs for a while. It'll be a few days before we can again, you know."

"I suppose," Elie shrugged.

"Well, you two kids enjoy yourselves," Candle told them. I'm going to head back to the boat. Don't stay up too late. We have a rough few days coming up."

Six and Elie wandered around the town, passing bars and restaurants. They found a small park where an orchestra was performing. They sat down on the grass and listened to the measured strains of music over a century old. When it was over, they got up and started back toward the marina. It was a pleasantly warm summer evening and without even realizing she had done it, Elie slipped her hand into Six's. It may have been a full minute before she noticed and when she did, she realized it made her happy. It was turning out to be a perfect night until they walked around a corner and found themselves face-to-face with her brother.

Four

"Elie?" he asked, startled by her sudden appearance. He was of average height and kept his dark brown hair closely cropped. He also had a neatly trimmed moustache and was dressed in light tan shorts with a midnight blue silk shirt. "What are you doing here?"

Elie clumsily snatched her hand back from Six's and sputtered, "Uh, hi, Clemen."

"Hi, Clemen?" Clemen echoed. "Elie, I thought you were supposed to be on some School-at-sea course. Was that just some story you told Mom and Dad?"

"Of course not," Elie replied quickly. "I'm studying with, uh, Doctor Candle on the *Maiyim Bourne*."

"Right. Look Elie if you're going to lie to have a summer fling, the least you can do is make your lies believable," Clemen advised.

"I'm not lying," Elie insisted.

"Yeah, right," Clemen repeated in the same unbelieving tone. "First of all, I've met Wizard Candle. Yes, that's right, Wizard Candle. He was a guest lecturer in my sophomore year physics class. He doesn't use the title, Doctor. Also, I know as well as you do that the *Maiyim Bourne* is currently hanging from a set of chains in the Royal Museum. So fess up because the least you can do is remember your manners and introduce me to your boy friend."

"Clemen Jenynges," Elie began, "Sixtus Hardisty. But I really wasn't lying, well, except for Uncle Candle's title. Oops!"

"Uncle Candle?" Clemen echoed.

"Oh hell," Elie swore softly. "Look, Clemen, there's something about our family we've never been told."

“I dare say,” Clemen commented dryly, “and it sounds like a long and thirsty story. I’ll buy the drinks, but I am going to hear it.”

He said that with such quiet force that Elie realized that it would only make matters worse if she tried to hush up now. She gave Six a “Help me,” look, but all he could offer was a consoling shrug so they let Clemen lead the way into a nearby tavern.

“Are you sure all you two want is sweet seltzer?” he asked them, surprised.

“It’s part of the story,” Elie assured him. “We need to keep our drinking in moderation from now on.”

“Good advice in any case,” Clemen agreed.

“Perhaps,” Elie nodded, “but for us especially and we’ve already had some wine this evening. Look, I need to start somewhere and I guess this is a good place to start.” She took a deep breath to relax herself, then decided she’d better do this with her eyes shut.

Clemen watched, mouth open as Elie’s glass floated up off the table, tilted slightly when it reached her lips and then settled gently back to the table in front of her.

“Dad tanned your backside for doing something like that when you were eight as I recall,” he said at last.

“I’m much better at it now,” she told him, unable to keep the pride completely out of her voice, “and if he tried it now, he’d probably burn his own hand.” She wasn’t sure she could really do that. It would involve a certain amount of control and moderation which she wasn’t sure she could manage in such a circumstance.

“Okay,” Clemen nodded, “So maybe you really are studying with Wizard Candle. Dad’s going to have a fit when he finds out. You know that as well as I.”

“Yes, I know,” Elie agreed despondently, “but are you going to be the one who tells him?”

“That would be despicable,” Clemen told her without a moment’s hesitation, “but one way or the other he is going to find out. How long are you planning to wait to tell him?”

“As long as possible,” Elie admitted.

“That’s your choice,” Clemen told her. “Now what’s this about ‘Uncle Candle?’”

“Clemen, who were Grandmother’s parents?” Elie countered.

Clemen looked like he was about to say something, but stopped before he could speak. “You mean Countess Myrrha, right?” he asked instead. Elie nodded. “Now why don’t I know that? We used to get drilled for hours on our genealogy. Six, you really don’t know how lucky you are.”

“What makes you say that?” Six countered. “Where I come from the kids have to memorize how close or distant a relationship they have to Wizard Silverwind. You want to talk genealogy? I can match you, oh, say fifth cousins twice removed any time.” Elie laughed at that.

“What’s so funny?” Clemen asked suspiciously.

“He meant that even more literally than you think,” Elie replied, “but he’s also stepping on my side of the story.”

“No,” Six laughed, “just prodding you to tell it already.”

“Clemen?” Elie asked very seriously. “Do you know what I’ve been doing these past two years at university in my free time? I’ve been a paid companion to a retired member of the faculty.”

“Why would you do that?” Clemen asked. “You don’t need the money.”

“Some things we don’t do for the money,” Elie replied. “My faculty advisor asked me to meet her. He told me she was lonely and just wanted someone to talk to every now and then. I figured, ‘Okay. What’s the harm?’ He didn’t mention she would pay for the companionship and I never asked.

“So I went to meet her the next afternoon,” she continued, “and we talked over a few cups of tea. I found I liked her and her stories about what the University had been like when she was my age so I went back a few times a week as my schedule permitted.”

“That was very sweet of you, Sis,” Clemen told her, “but you didn’t have to accept payment, you know.”

“I tried not to, but after the first few visits she insisted. Told me to go buy myself something pretty. I did that once or twice, but usually I just donated the money to whatever charity the Temple of Nildar was collecting for that week.” Elie swallowed hard and decided she’d better just get to the point. “Her name was Oceanvine and I didn’t learn until after she died a few weeks ago that she was our great-grandmother.” She looked to see what Clemen’s reaction would be.

He let out a long breath and finally commented, “Well, I should have seen that coming. That would mean Silverwind was our great-grandfather, wouldn’t it?” Then something Six had said sunk in and Clemen added, “And you would be my fifth cousin twice removed?”

“Something like that,” Six chuckled. “As I told Elie, I was never too clear on that sort of complex relationship. Silverwind was the granduncle of my second cousin. You’re probably better at that sort of math than I am.”

“Maybe,” Clemen replied, “but I wouldn’t count on it. I can tell you who my common ancestors were with most nobles in Emmine, but I never bothered counting that sort of thing either. The only reason I need to keep track is so I don’t try marrying a first cousin, but since all my female first cousins are too young anyway, it’s not much of an issue.”

“You could legally marry a first cousin,” Elie pointed out, “but it isn’t approved of much.”

“Just as well,” Clemen laughed. “I wasn’t planning to marry either Katrin or Ema anyway.”

“You have someone in mind?” Elie asked.

“You don’t think grandmother’s going to leave it up to me, do you?” Clemen told her tiredly. “Now there’s someone who will really be upset if she hears you’ve been using magic.”

“No fooling,” Elie replied just as tiredly. “But at least I won’t have to worry about her trying to marry me

off to the Viscount of Festa like she was talking about last winter break.”

“Is that why you’re doing this?” Clemen asked.

“Until this moment, the possibility hadn’t even occurred to me,” Elie admitted. “If it had I wouldn’t have resisted Oceanvine’s insistence on trying to teach me magic and if you think grandmother can be insistent, you haven’t met her mother.”

“I haven’t,” agreed Clemen, “and it’s a bit too late to do so now, I hear. So what are you really doing this summer anyway?”

“Pretty much what I told you already,” Elie replied and went on to describe nearly everything that had happened to her since Oceanvine’s funeral.

“Beats the heck out of my summer,” Clemen admitted. “I should have thought of doing something for the people of Sutheria.”

“It’s not too late,” Six told him.

“No, it isn’t,” Clemen agreed, “and I was getting tired of the usual round of summer parties anyway. Now, I wonder how many of the gang I can recruit.”

“Probably no more than a handful,” Elie replied, “but that should be enough. What are you planning to do? Send money or physically help pick up the pieces?”

“I’m not sure yet,” Clemen replied. “Maybe I’ll do both.”

“Well, Bro, it’s getting late and we leave at dawn,” Elie announced.

“Good voyage, Sis,” Clemen told her. “Who knows, maybe I’ll see you in Sutheria. And say ‘Hi,’ for me to our new uncle.”

Five

“That didn’t go too badly,” Six commented as they walked back to the marina.

“I was never worried about Clemen’s reaction,” Elie told him. “With all the stuff I’ve helped him keep from our parents over the years he owes me and he knows it. Of course this will pretty much even the score. You don’t know my brother at all, but he’s a master of understatement. So when he said Dad was going to have a fit, what he really meant was, ‘So long, Sis. Been nice to know you.’”

“It can’t be that bad,” Six disagreed.

“Oh, Dad will be upset and he’ll demand I stop practicing magic. I’ll tell him no and he’ll threaten to disown me, but on his own he’ll only stop speaking to me for a year or three. Grandmother, however, will banish me from Olen.”

“She’s only the mother of the current earl,” Six told her. “She can’t banish you.”

“Technically, no,” Elie replied, “but she’ll kick up such a fuss, Dad will suggest that perhaps I should stay away for a while to keep peace in the family. Grandmother won’t ever forgive, however. If she’s as long-lived as her mother that’s likely to be a twenty year absence from home.”

“That’s a long time,” Six commiserated.

“Yeah,” Elie agreed. “but the good news is I won’t have to marry Viscount Honnes.”

“Is he really all that bad?” Six asked.

“You have no idea,” Elie rolled her eyes. “Blotchy skin, runny eyes and halitosis that we’re certain is responsible for endangering several species.”

“Maybe he has a nice personality,” Six suggested.

“Depends on your preferences,” Elie replied. “How do you feel about slugs?”

“I see.”

“Well, maybe it’s not as bad as all that. My grandmother’s reaction, that is. Honnes is the perfect argument for retroactive birth control, but never mind either of them for now. Any consequences are in the future and well, I guess it is good to know my brother will still talk to me at least.”

In spite of her words, Elie did not get to sleep easily that night. She tossed and turned for an hour, then finally gave up on sleeping for a bit and found one of the text books Candle had bought for her. It was a physics text that discussed some of the latest theories of cosmology without getting bogged down in the higher mathematics that went along with the theories. She fell asleep in the middle of a discussion of the relative merits of the Big Bang and Steady State theories of creation.

“I really don’t know why Candle chose that book,” someone said from just behind her. “Its arguments are poorly reasoned at best.” Elie turned around and saw Fireiron sitting in an overstuffed chair in what looked like a tremendous library. The Granomish woman waved Elie to another chair. “I’d offer you a better book on the subject, but you wouldn’t be able to take it with you.”

“You’re Methis, aren’t You?” Elie asked.

“Ah, the cat’s out of the bag, is it?” Methis asked. “Good. I don’t like shouting My identity out to everyone, but I’m glad I won’t have to use the usual subterfuges with you. We have a lot to do together, dear, and it will be best if we know each other as well as possible. Besides I hate having to hide from friends and I hope we shall be very good friends.”

“Where are we?” Elie asked, confused.

“Good question,” Methis told her. “Actually, I’m being polite. As questions go, it was all too predictable, but the answers are very interesting, indeed.”

“Which means You’re not going to tell me?” Elie asked sharply.

“Do you always talk to the Gods like that?” Methis countered, but before Elie could reply she continued, “Good! It shows you have some backbone. To tell the truth, when we met in Renton I was afraid you might be a little too sweet and innocent. I should have known better, of course.”

“Too sweet and innocent for what,” Elie asked, “and why should You have known better?”

“You *are* different,” Methis chuckled. “Do you have any idea of how many mortals I’ve had to convince I was not omniscient?” Elie just sat there and gave Methis a pointed look. “Okay, don’t overdo it,” Methis continued. “You’ll lose all your adorability points.”

“Sorry,” Elie apologized. “I just thought I ought to show more, uh, backbone as You put it.”

“Just be yourself, dear,” Methis told her.

“All right,” Elie replied. “Where are we?”

“I am in My home at a location Candle refers to as Methis’ Forge. You are in your bunk aboard the *Maiyim Bourne*. We are in both of those places and neither. This is a dream. Well, for you it’s a dream anyway. I don’t sleep.”

“But You do have dreams, I’ll bet,” Elie commented.

“Yes, but not the sort one has by sleeping. Anyway, this is the manner in which Gods have been communicating with mortals for millennia.”

“Couldn’t You just send a letter?” Elie asked. “Postage isn’t all that expensive.”

Methis laughed, “Oh my, I have missed you... I mean, your great-grandmother. For just a moment you reminded Me very strongly of Oceanvine.”

“I doubt I have enough peroxide handy at the moment to pull off that masquerade,” Elie replied dryly.

“You don’t look very much like her either,” Methis replied, “except for maybe the line of your chin. But there’s something else about you that makes you her spirit and image. I suppose you could say your soul is the same shape as hers.”

“Is it?” Elie asked. “She was a great lady.”

“She was a great person,” Methis corrected her gently. “Neither her gender nor her station had anything to do with it.”

“May I ask why You’re here?” Elie finally asked the question that she wanted to ask most, “or why I’m there or whatever?”

“Just to chat,” Methis told her. “I sensed your distress this morning.”

“Morning?”

“It’s morning where I am. Actually it’s early afternoon now. It’s still night where you are. You seemed very worried about something and I thought you might want someone to talk to.”

“Do You do this sort of thing often?” Elie asked. “Coming to people in their dreams?”

“Hardly,” Methis laughed. “Generally, We only talk to people in their dreams when We need them to do

something very badly.”

“You did this the night before I saw the *Maiyim Bourne*, didn’t you?” Elie accused. “All four of you did.”

“We did,” Methis agreed. “It was necessary to make sure you knew there was more to your trip to Keesport than seeing an old boat.”

“And in what way do I need guidance this time?” Elie pressed.

“In so many ways,” Methis told her quietly, “but I’m not here to give advice, just a sympathetic ear. What’s wrong, dear?”

Elie told Her about her encounters with Janie and Clemen and the worries they had renewed.

“Ah,” Methis sighed, when Elie was finished. “I wouldn’t worry so much about that were I you. Janie is a friend, I doubt she’ll turn on you all that easily. I think your real problem is that you’ve already started to grow away from her and that scares you, doesn’t it? As for your family, your father may be angry with you, but you’re still his only daughter. It may take him a while, but he’ll come to accept your decision.”

“My grandmother won’t,” Elie pointed out.

“Myrrha still has a bit of growing up to do herself,” Methis replied, “I knew her when she was your age and younger. Give her time; I think she’ll eventually discover just what is important in the end.”

They were both quiet for a long time. Then Methis said something Elie did not catch. “What was that?” she asked.

“I said to find your own inner peace, dear,” Methis replied. “Once you do, you won’t be quite so concerned about pleasing your family.” A moment later Elie woke up.

She opened her eyes and realized she felt better than she had in weeks. She looked out her cabin’s port hole and realized the *Maiyim Bourne* was already at sea and aloft on her foils. She opened the closet and found a pair of very short cream-colored shorts and an Orentan silk blouse with the usual bright floral pattern.

Once dressed, she went to the galley and discovered someone had made a pot of coffee with the percolator on the stove. That seemed odd to her. While the galley was fully stocked, so far they had taken food already cooked from the magic food box. She also noticed a pastry box with raspberry-filled croissants inside and helped herself to one of them to go with her morning coffee. Then, with a large mug of coffee and a croissant she went up on deck.

“Morning, sleepyhead,” Candle greeted her.

“Good morning. Why didn’t you wake me?” Elie asked between sips.

“I couldn’t,” Candle replied. “You wouldn’t wake up when I called.”

“Oh sorry,” Elie apologized quickly.

“So how is She?” Candle asked.

“Methis? She seems fine,” Elie replied without thinking. “She was in her library, I think.”

“Her entire house is a library,” Candle chuckled, “but I suppose she meant the large reading room.”

“How did you know?” Elie asked.

“When you wouldn’t wake up, I took a closer look at you to make sure you weren’t ill. I saw immediately you were having a divine visitation, and each of the Gods has his or her own style. I couldn’t tell Emtos from Merinne, but I’ve had a lot of experience with the spells of Aritos and the Younger Gods..”

“Where are the Elder Gods?” Elie asked suddenly.

“What?” Candle started. “Where did that question come from?”

“It’s just that when talking to Methis, I caught myself saying “You four” meaning all the Gods on Maiyim. She didn’t correct me so I got to wondering. I notice you don’t mention them much either.”

“It could just be that I haven’t had much contact with the Elders,” Candle told her. “The Younger Gods have always been more directly involved with people, you know.”

“Perhaps,” Elie allowed, “but I don’t think that’s the answer.”

“Wisdom comes in a dream, does it?” Candle smiled. “Well, the truth is, they aren’t on Maiyim at the moment.”

“What?”

“The Elders are out exploring the universe,” Candle told her. “Sixty years ago, when the last demon was destroyed, they decided it was time to let the people of Maiyim live their own lives without direct divine guidance. Even the Younger Gods and Aritos agreed it was time to take a more observational role. So, the Elders took off to see what else may be out there. I have to admit; that I would too, given the opportunity, but the space program isn’t quite up to taking tourists up, is it?”

“No, so far all they do is hurl small capsules up into orbit,” Elie agreed. “The capsules only hold three or four men depending on whether they belong to us or the Granomen.”

“This fall the Granomen will do more than just orbit, though,” Candle pointed out. “They plan their first trip around Midbar. They won’t land this time around, of course, but they will orbit several times before returning home. If all goes well, they’ll actually land in a year and a half.”

“Plenty of time for our own space program to catch up,” Six added as he came back to join them.

“I don’t know, Sixtus,” Candle shook his head. “Much as I’d like to see our own people on Midbar, I think we’ve been taking a few too many chances in our attempt to keep up with Granom. It would only take one small error to kill an entire crew and we’ve already had two near misses in the past year alone. I’ve tried telling His Majesty we need to be more careful, but I think he wants to beat Granom to Midbar too much. It would be better to combine our efforts, I think.”

“The Granomish ships do seem safer than ours,” Six opined, “but our navigational systems are superior.

However, can you really see us allied with the Granomen these days?"

"Sadly, no," Candle shook his head. "The governments of Emmine and Granom were the warmest of friends sixty years ago, but that cooled off about forty-five years ago when the One Maiyim movement attempted to assassinate Ksaveras IX and Hacon II refused to ban the group from Emmine, not that he had a lot of choice. I don't think Ksaveras ever truly understood how politics worked in Emmine."

"The Granomen briefly experimented with a bicameral Parliament, but after the attempted regicide, Ksaveras abolished the House of Commons when investigations showed that over one-third of their members belonged to One Maiyim. You see he retained the power to do that. Hacon's father ceded that power to the Parliament itself, so old Hacon couldn't have done the same if he wanted to, and by the time it was over, he certainly did want to. You know, this is a really heavy subject for the morning."

"The *Maiyim Bourne* doesn't have a fireplace we can gather around at night," Elie pointed out. "Do Six and I have time for our morning exercises before we round the Cape?" she asked, finally noticing how far they had come while she had been asleep.

"Why don't you hold off for half an hour?" Candle suggested. "You'll have plenty of time after that."

Elie nodded but rather than just watching the scenery, she picked a hex nut out of her pocket and set it to orbiting her head. "Oh, by the way," she said to Candle, "Methis doesn't like that cosmology book you picked out."

"Neither do I," Candle admitted with a shrug, "but it was all they had."

Six

They rounded Cape Serd and, as though the Gods themselves were guiding their progress, the winds shifted so that the *Maiyim Bourne* was running directly in front of the wind. However, Candle insisted on waiting until after they were out of the rough tidal currents of the hole between Serd and Mairsten before having them raise the spinnaker. Once that was done, however, they shot across the Wenni Ocean to the islands of the Southern Chain.

Elie kept the hex nut circling around her head for the next three hours regardless of what she was doing until Six finally reached out and grabbed the nut with his hand. "Hey!" she protested. She tried to grab it back, but it was her turn at the helm and he backed up out of reach.

"Sorry," he told her immediately, "it was making me dizzy."

"Uncle Candle," she called into the cabin.

"Play nicely, children," he told them.

"No, not that," Elie corrected him. "I was wondering if we were ready to learn how to cast wards that actually did something."

"Maybe," Candle replied. "Either of you could cast a destructive ward, just by putting too much power into it, but I imagine you want to cast a ward that is keyed to another spell. The trick to that is to cast two or more spells simultaneously. I imagine it's going to take you two a while to master that, but that is pretty

much all there is to it.

“So just decide what you want the ward to do, and cast the ward and the spell or spells keyed to it at the same time,” Candle finished.

“What about an impermeable ward?” Six asked.

“You key a telekinesis spell to the ward; one that pushes everything away,” Candle replied. “To make it truly impermeable you need it to push harder than anything trying to get through it, of course, so a bullet-proof ward would need a lot of power incorporated into it.”

“All right,” Elie laughed. “Best not to test such a ward by standing behind it.”

“Good thinking,” Candle laughed. “Pick a nice safe sort of spell to use the first time, and keep in mind that wards do not have to be curtains. They can be any shape or size. What happened to your satellite?”

Elie and Six spent the rest of the afternoon attempting to cast keyed wards as Candle had described, but neither of them succeeded. “It doesn’t have to be wards,” Candle told them as they were eating dinner. “You can get the same practice casting any two spells simultaneously. However it’s going to take you a week or two to get the knack. Once you do, however, it’ll be like riding a bicycle; you won’t forget how. And to cast three spells at once won’t take anywhere near so long.”

“And then four or five spells?” Elie asked almost playfully.

“When you can cast five spells simultaneously, you can be my teacher,” Candle told her. “I’m not saying it’s impossible, but you’re not likely to ever need to do so. By the time you can cast three spells at once you’ll be ready for building a spell modularly.”

“Wizard Candle?” Six asked, “Can telekinesis be done at the subatomic level?”

“Theoretically,” Candle replied, “but you’d have to be suicidally insane to try it. I doubt you could affect enough atoms to get a measurable effect, but if you did, more likely than not you’d kill yourself with an overdose of radiation.” Six stared at him. “Don’t let my title ‘Wizard’ warp your thinking, Sixtus. My dissertation on creation magic was technically on subatomic physics, so if you’re intent on creating new elements, wait until you can do it directly. It’s harder but safer, although if you create something horribly radioactive you could kill yourself that way too.”

“I sort of had turning lead into gold in mind,” Six admitted.

“Get it out of your mind,” Candle told him firmly, “at least until you’re ready for creation spells. Elie, you probably ought to get some sleep if you can. Your night watch at the helm will begin at midnight, then you’ll stay with Six at least until sunrise.”

Six’s readings with the octant the next morning were verified by the Loran proving them to be over halfway to the island, Marh. The wind died down around dawn, although it picked up again just after breakfast. The wind was no longer favorable for using the spinnaker, but was still strong enough to get them aloft.

Just after lunch, they heard a loud, low-pitched shriek from above. Looking up, they saw a large winged creature with a snakelike body and long, feathered wings. “Is that really a dragon?” Elie asked in wonder.

“And a fairly large specimen at that,” Candle confirmed. “It’s pretty far north for this time of year, but with the loss of prime nesting habitats on Lamona, this one is probably living on one of the small northern islands of Sutheria.”

“What’s it doing so far out to sea?” Six asked.

“Hunting,” Elie replied. “They eat a lot of fish.”

“They’ll go after land animals as well,” Candle added. “That’s one of the reasons they’ve been dying out. Dairy farmers and shepherds don’t much appreciate losing animals to dragons, so they’ve been poisoning them.”

“That’s terrible!” Elie exclaimed.

“It’s not particularly nice,” Candle agree. “Dragons are very rare. That may be the only one we see this trip. For that matter, it is odd this one would be so far from the nesting grounds at this time of year. Males and females take turns tending the nest so they don’t normally go too far away.”

However it turned out Candle was mistaken. Not only did they see another an hour later, but three more by sunset. “Something’s been stirring them up,” Candle decided.

“Not surprising,” Elie agreed. “Those two tsunamis probably did it.”

Six came up on deck for his next watch at the helm just then. “Did what?” he asked. Elie explained about the dragons. “Could be, I suppose,” he replied. “I don’t know much about them.”

“If they’re that stirred up, is it possible one might attack the *Maiyim Bourne* ?” Elie asked.

“Not much chance of that,” Candle told her. “Nildar and Wenni left us well protected. I’m not sure exactly what they did, but most dangers cannot get close enough to attack. We were headed for Ellisto sixty years ago when one tried to strafe us. It swooped down, but it just couldn’t get close enough. Then it just flew off.”

“Maybe it just changed its mind,” Elie suggested, looking nervously at the latest dragon.

“In which case several serps just changed their minds too as did a large patch of oceanvine,” Candle told her. “Trust me, you couldn’t be any safer than you are right here. We did once have a bit of trouble with a pod of pilot whales, but that’s not likely to happen again.”

“Land ho!” Six called out a few minutes later. “We can see Marh.”

Candle turned to look where Six was pointing. There was a dark smudge on the horizon. The edges of the dark mass looked as though they were slightly above the horizon, in fact, but Candle knew that was an optical illusion. There was another, much smaller island south of where they could see the tip of Marh. He didn’t know the name of that island, but it was in the right place to confirm Six’s assertion that the large island was Marh. “Good,” he told them. “Six, take your sightings and plot the course from here to Silamon. We’ll want to stay to the west of the islands until we sight Mount Kol . I know that course looks longer on the map, but the winds are generally more favorable this way. Elie, catch what sleep you can. You have the midnight watch again.”

“Aren’t we going to stop off on Marh?” Six asked.

“I’ve decided not,” Candle replied. “Silamon is the capital. It also seems to have been the city that was hardest hit. We’ll start there. If we’re needed more elsewhere, I’m sure they’ll let us know.”

Midbar was full that night and with clear skies Candle decided they could continue hydroplaning for a while. They slipped past Marh and two hours later Six spotted lights from a city on Kemelart. Shortly before midnight, however, the wind slackened off to only a few knots and the boat slipped back into the waves. Six retracted the foils and they sailed on.

Elie rejoined them shortly before midnight, having brought a tray full of flat bread sandwiches that would normally only have been found on Chastigon. Candle had one then retired to his cabin.

“Quiet night so far,” Six told Elie as she checked their heading. No sooner had he said that when they heard the low shriek of yet another dragon. “Maybe I spoke too soon.” They looked up to see the silhouette of the dragon undulate across the bright silver disk of Midbar.

“They *are* beautiful in flight,” Elie sighed.

“Is there something wrong with Midbar?” Six asked.

“What do you mean?”

“I think it’s darker on one side,” Six pointed out. They watched for another minute until Six continued, “Yes! See? There’s a small bit out of the side. It’s an eclipse. I wonder how that got past me. I usually stay up for these things, at least when they’re visible.”

“It couldn’t be an unnatural eclipse, could it?” Elie asked, watching as the chip out of the moon became more pronounced.

“Not unless all the Gods got together and decided to remake the universe and I think we would have noticed,” Six replied, with a chuckle. “As it happens, I do remember there’ll be a solar eclipse in a couple weeks and these things almost always come in pairs. If I remember correctly the totality will only be visible along a thin, curved stretch halfway between here and Ellisto. I was invited to go on an eclipse watching trip with some of the grad students in the Astronomy Department, but I had to beg off because I couldn’t afford to go sailing halfway around Maiyim during the vacation.” He laughed at that.

“And yet here we are,” Elie laughed, “Sailing halfway across Maiyim during summer vacation.”

“Here we are,” Six echoed. “Nice night for an eclipse. It’s warm, even here on the water and with a nice light breeze.”

Elie looked at Six and smiled slightly, then turned back to the boat’s wheel, agreeing, “It is nice, yes.”

Six watched her for a bit. He had been hoping to be able to pick up where they had left off when they had held hands as they walked down the streets of Truwich. Elie had not been at all cold toward him since then, but she also did not seem to even notice his polite advances. He felt it might have been better if she rejected him outright. At least that way he would know for certain. Elie was not like the other women he had dated and he was fairly certain it had nothing to do with the fact she was noble-born. He just could not figure out exactly how she felt about him. He even wondered whether she even noticed his attempts. With the sound of the slight breeze and the slap of the boat’s hull against the water as

competition, she did not hear Six's sigh.

They watched the eclipse progress, speaking only occasionally until all they saw of Midbar was a dark dusty orb that faded to black to the south but with a tan rim along the northern edge. "Why is it so orange?" Elie asked.

"Diffraction," Candle told her from the hatchway to the cabin. "What you're seeing is the sun's light that had been bent around Maiyim by the atmosphere. The white light of the sun is actually a combination of all colors, but when it passes through the air, the blue light and other short wave lengths are scattered by moisture, volcanic ash and anything else floating in the air, but the long wave length colors, like red, continue on. Sometimes Midbar turns deep red during an eclipse and other times it just gets very dark gray. It all depends on the condition of the atmosphere."

"Shouldn't you still be sleeping, Uncle?" Elie asked.

"I didn't want to miss the eclipse," Candle replied. "I've been watching eclipses since before Silverwind apprenticed me. Mister Harvester at the orphanage would let us stay up to watch Midbar eclipses. I didn't see my first solar eclipse until years later, although I've never been in the right place to see a total solar eclipse. Someday maybe."

The lighter edge, which had been centered on the northeast edge of Midbar, slowly rotated over the next hour-and-a-quarter until its center was on the northwest, then Maiyim's one natural satellite slowly left the shadow. After another hour there was still a small chunk out of its disk, but it was the end of Six's watch. He refused to go below, however. "I'll stay up until it's completely over," he explained.

The eastern horizon was just showing the first evidence of the rising sun before the eclipse was finally over and Six finally went back to his cabin. The wind stayed light through the end of Elie's watch and they were unable to get up on the foils.

"We're still making good time," Candle assured her. "Kemelart may have been to our port all night, but I'm fairly certain those cliffs about ten miles ahead mark the southern shore of the island. Even if the wind doesn't pick up, we'll be in Silamon this evening. Why don't you get some sleep?"

"Six isn't up yet," Elie pointed out.

"Then wake him up," Candle told her. "I think we'll all sleep well tonight."

Candle's prediction turned out to be correct, although they did not do so as early as any of them had hoped.

Seven

Silamon, while a port city, had not been built on flat, level ground. The city had been founded near the mouth of a short river of the same name and the land rose up rapidly in tiers as one moved away from the river so most of the city sat above the area of devastation that was what was left of Silamonport.

As they approached the city, they could see the colorful buildings perched on the side of the long hill. Silamonans seemed to prefer their homes and workplaces decorated in moderately bright pinks, greens, blues and yellows. The color scheme was not as garish as preferred by traditional Orenta, but it was still

an alien sight to the untraveled eyes of both Six and Elie. Even the tall glass and steel buildings in the business section of the city were faced with various colors of mirrored glass. Most of the buildings were all one color, but the tallest alternated between pink, blue and silver making its thirty stories a set of vivid stripes.

Below the colorful display on the hill were the remains of similarly colored buildings in a few places, often besides rock or cement lined holes that had once functioned as the foundations for waterfront buildings.

There were hundreds of pylons where wooden docks had once been. Stone and dirt wharfs were still in place but boats and ships were tied up two, three and four deep around them. Six radioed the harbormaster and was told he could lash up to one of the other vessels, but someone would have to stay on board to move her should one of the inner vessels want to leave.

“Forget that,” Candle muttered, taking the microphone out of Six’s hand. “Is there any reason we can’t just land on the beach?” he asked the harbormaster.

“We have no security in place off the wharfs,” the harbormaster told him, “but if you want to take the chance, go ahead.”

“Good enough for me,” Candle replied. “*Maiyim Bourne* out. I don’t think I told you, Sixtus, but the centerboard can be completely retracted.”

“How does that work?” Six asked. “I’ve seen the hull, remember? The keel reaches over twelve feet below the waterline.”

“To tell you the truth, I haven’t the foggiest notion,” Candle admitted. “It’s another one of Nildar’s and Wenni’s innovations, but I’ve never figured out how it works. Fortunately, we don’t need to know how it works, just how to work it.”

They worked the mechanism that retracted the centerboard and ran the *Maiyim Bourne* up on the beach as near the harbor as they could. Six and Elie jumped off the bow and set anchors in the sand to keep the boat from floating off at high tide and Candle cast a warding spell on the boat that would keep anyone from stealing her, or even getting on board. He pulled out the golden pen and once more it expanded into a walking staff, and then they headed into town.

They kept near the harbor at first because of the random piles of rubble that blocked their paths up hill. As they passed the wharfs they saw most of the boats and ships docked there had been damaged as well. “It might have been a safe bet to dock there after all,” Candle opined. “Most of those vessels will be in port for a while getting repaired. However, I suspect we’ll be sleeping on the boat while we’re here and having to climb over three or four other vessels would have gotten tiring all too quickly. Also, we may all be needed, so leaving one of us onboard all the time would have been counterproductive.”

As they started uphill, they saw that people were repairing the surviving buildings and starting to rebuild those that had been destroyed. “I wonder why they haven’t started rebuilding where we beached the boat,” Elie commented.

“There are only so many workmen in any town,” Candle commented, “and they had to start somewhere. It will be years, probably, before everything has been rebuilt and I suppose many businesses will rebuild away from the water too. Now, where do you think we’ll find the Prime Minister at this time of day?”

“It depends on whether the colonial Parliament is in session,” Elie replied. She checked an unfolded map in her hands. “I believe they meet in Southern Hall, and their offices are very nearby. They’re on the way to the Residence anyway.”

“What’s that you have there?” Six asked.

“It’s a map of Silamon,” she replied.

“How long have you had that?” he asked.

“I took it from the shelf with all the charts.”

“But I thought that only supplied nautical charts,” Candle told her.

“Good thing you didn’t tell me that,” Elie replied.

“I suppose I should have realized,” Candle laughed. “That boat still has surprises even for me.”

“Can we really just walk in and talk to the man in charge of the Sutherian government?” Six asked uncertainly.

“We can,” Candle assured him. “None of us are lame. Of course he may not be willing to talk to us.”

“What will we do then?” Elie asked.

“We’ll go talk to someone else,” he replied.

There were several thousand people picketing around Southern Hall and Candle decided it would not be wise to get too close.

“What are they protesting?” Elie asked.

“From the signs and the chants,” Six replied, “I’d say they’re protesting the recent tsunamis.”

“What? Do they think the parliament caused them?”

“More likely,” Candle corrected her, “they don’t think the government has done enough for them.”

“What do they expect?” Elie demanded. “Should someone come along and plant house seeds or something? I would have thought they’d have more demands to make of the insurance companies.”

“I’m sure they’ve been busy too,” Candle told her. “I suppose you can’t blame people for wanting help to rebuild.”

“Then they should be out rebuilding instead of marching around with placards,” Six retorted impatiently. “We’ve had bad storms do at least as much damage on Ketch. Nobody parades around City Hall when that happens, we just start helping each other to rebuild, and we keep helping until everything has been rebuilt.”

“I don’t recall any government handouts when we rebuilt the house and lab after the fire,” Candle remembered, “although the townsfolk of Renton came and helped build the house and barn. That was a

long time ago, however. Times change and the governments of Emmine and her colonies do guarantee disaster assistance these days. Regardless, however, I'm glad we don't need to make our way through that crowd. Let's try the Prime Minister's office. Even if he's not there, he'll have a staff of assistants who can arrange for us to meet him, assuming he wants to see us."

There were more protesters outside the ministerial office building, although there were not more than a few dozen and they were much more orderly than the mob outside Southern Hall. "You going inside, old timer?" one of the picketers asked Candle as he, Elie and Six approached.

"We were hoping to," Candle replied, leaning on his staff just a bit.

"Lots of luck getting an appointment," the man told him.

"The PM's schedule is bit full, I take it?" Candle asked.

"It must be," came the response. "His pet dragon won't even let us make appointments."

"Pet dragon?" Candle asked.

"You'll meet her," the man laughed humorlessly. "If you manage to get past her, see if you can put in a good word for the rest of us."

"I'll do that," Candle chuckled, "though I can't say it'll do much good."

"It can't hurt," the man told him.

"That wasn't so bad," Six noted as they entered the office building.

"No television cameras here," Candle replied. "All the real action is down at Southern Hall. At the moment this is just a listening post and a reminder to any members who are hiding out in their offices. Now let's see where the PM sits when he punches the time clock. Of course, top floor," he added reading a directory. "Should have guessed. Well, in spite of everything else, I see they still have electric power in the governmental buildings."

"No wonder they're protesting out there," Six commented. "I saw one sign at Southern Hall that suggested not everyone did."

"Well," Candle replied as they entered the lift, "the government decides who has first priority, so is it any surprise when they decide they come first?"

"Like you said," Six nodded. "They had to start somewhere."

"They could have got by with candles and hurricane lamps for another week or two," Candle replied, "but it's time to put my prejudices away," he added just as the lift came to a halt at the top floor.

The doors slid open and they found themselves in a large, comfortably appointed waiting area. At the far end from the lift doors stood a large dark wooden desk just beside a heavy frosted-glass door. Behind that desk sat a middle-aged woman with steel-gray hair that had been tied back into a tight bun. She was wearing a dark blue business suit with a red ribbon where a tie might have been had she been a man. A small sign on her desk proclaimed her to be Kael Urchart. The look she gave the mages made it clear she had lost all patience with protestors and anyone else who arrived in this office unannounced.

“I’ll tell you three the same thing as I told all the others,” she announced before they had made it half way across the room. “The prime minister is a very busy man and does not have any openings on his calendar for the foreseeable future. If you want assistance in repairing flood damage, an estimate of when power, telephone or water will be restored to your neighborhood or wish to report incidents of looting or strange noises in the night then I suggest that you are in the wrong office and indeed the wrong part of town to have your complaints redressed. Further, we are expecting relief from Emmine within the next few days so if you would just be patient, all issues will soon be resolved.”

“Good news,” Candle replied dryly. “How much of that is true, by the way, Miss Urchart?”

The woman sniffed loudly and tilted her head back so she could look down her nose at him. “That’s Mrs. Urchart and I’m sure I do not know what you are talking about.”

“Heavens!” Candle chuckled, “I really hope that’s not true. Anyway, we’re not here about any of those things, at least not on our own behalves.”

“Oh,” she retorted acidly. “Lawyers.”

“Hah!” Candle laughed, startling the woman. “No, actually we’re part of the relief coming from Emmine, at least if you all will have us.”

“You’re with the Royal Friendship Corps?” she asked uncertainly. “You certainly are not regular Navy.”

“No, we’re here on a less official basis. We were on Kern when the first wave hit and we raced here as fast as we could. There are other disaster aid volunteers than the Friendship Corps, you know. Further, I realize that the PM is a busy man. Actually we are here to consult you.”

“Me?”

“Why not?” Candle countered. “Are you telling me the administrative assistant to the prime minister would not be able to tell us where we should report? I am Wizard Candle and these are my students; the Lady Elinor Jenynges and Mister Sixtus Hardisty. Tell me, where can three general practice mages be of the most use?”

“I’m not really sure,” Mrs. Urchart replied. “I wasn’t aware there were any mages left on Maiyim, let alone wizards.”

“Oh there are still quite a few mages around, though these days they call themselves magic technicians.”

“That is what I meant,” Mrs. Urchart replied.

“Well, yes, there is a difference,” Candle admitted. “Most mages as we knew them growing up are maybe my age or older, but there are still some around, a small handful only, but we’re not entirely gone yet. Even a few wizards; most of my colleagues are called ‘Doctor’ these days, but some still deserve to be called ‘Wizard.’ So where should we go? Local police? One of your hospitals? The electricity plant?”

“I think Sir Henric should speak to you first,” she decided. “Wait here.” She got up and went through the door.

“I didn’t think she was going to let us in,” Six commented.

“We’re not in yet,” Candle told him. “I figure she’s just the first line of defense. This is a very large building after all – almost three blocks long. If I didn’t think you’d pay off from the bags on the boat, I’d bet you the PM’s office is at the far end of the building.”

“I wouldn’t let him take the bet,” Elie cut in. “I know it is. The governmental buildings here are slightly smaller copies of the one in Randona, and I’ve been in there. There are some differences, though. For example there’s an underground tunnel between here and the prime minister’s residence.”

“I’m surprised there’s no viceroy,” Six commented. “Isn’t that normal for colonies?”

“It used to be,” Elie explained, “but Sutheria is a special case. King Hacon Ancel decided that viceroys were remnants of the old feudal system and no longer necessary in this modern world. Sutheria holds her allegiance to the throne, but she is ruled by her own people. The Parliament here is unicameral with only a House of Commons. There are some noble men and women on the islands, but they are not automatically members of Parliament.”

Mrs. Urchart returned a minute later and requested, “Would you and you party come with me, Wizard?”

They followed her through the door and down a long hall lined with paintings and frosted-glass office doors. The paintings were all Sutherian land and seascapes. After about fifty feet, Mrs. Urchart opened a door on the right and told them, “Someone will be with you soon. Please wait here.”

The room was not a normal waiting room. There were several chairs and tables along the walls and magazines on the tables, but there was also a pool table in the middle. When nobody arrived within a minute, Six chose a cue, racked the balls, and started playing. After he had taken a few shots, Elie chose a cue and joined him. “You want to start over?” he asked.

“That’s okay,” Elie replied. “I’m not very good at this anyway. I just like to knock the balls around.”

Six shrugged and let her take a turn. She looked the table over carefully and then picked a shot. She sunk the first ball and then two others, the latter of which was a complicated double bank shot. “Just like to knock the balls around?” Six asked archly.

“Yeah. It’s fun,” she replied, ignoring his tone.

“I’ll bet you could make good money working the tables like this,” Six commented after she had sunk two more balls.

“Playing for money would take all the fun out of it,” she told him just to see the expression on his face. “Besides, I’m cheating,” she added, sinking yet another.

Six thought about that a moment before realizing what she meant. “Oh,” he said flatly.

“Well, I didn’t have enough practice time earlier,” she explained. “Here, why don’t you take a turn?”

“This sort of takes the fun out of the game,” Six commented two shots later.

“I always thought so,” Candle told them, “but it is good practice for you. Try sinking several balls in a single shot.”

That turned out to be more challenging and it kept them going for another twenty minutes. Finally they both stepped back from the table, although out of habit, Elie took the cue ball with her and levitated it in complex patterns as they waited. Not to be outdone, Six picked up three of the balls and started juggling them. A moment later Elie matched him and they started some of their usual telekinetic juggling routines.

“It’s more impressive with billiard balls,” Elie commented.

“Easier to see what we’re doing,” Six replied.

They were still juggling when a man in his late thirties opened the door. “Well, I’ll be,” he whistled. “You really are mages. Uh, I’m Roges Fuldson, second undersecretary to Sir Henric. The prime minister is not in at the moment, but he is expected back shortly. Would you like me to get you some refreshments while you wait?”

“Something light would be nice,” Candle replied.

“Of course, Wizard Candle,” Roges replied and disappeared again.

“That probably means he wasn’t planning to come back this afternoon,” Candle interpreted, “but someone got word to him we were here.”

“That’s a good sign if true,” Six commented. “It would mean he actually wants to see us.”

“It’s also a bad sign,” Candle replied. “It means he’s desperate enough to try anything. By the way, I was impressed just now by the way you two were able to keep the balls moving in spite of the interruption.”

“That’s what you’ve had us practicing for, wasn’t it?” Elie asked.

“It was, but I’m still happy to see you were able to do it so early in your careers.”

It was another hour before they were finally escorted into Sir Henric’s office. The office was on the northwest corner of the very long building and looked large enough to comfortably hold fifty people although only the four of them were present. Sir Henric had chosen to decorate the walls of his office with hand-woven woolen blankets from the Iniliand Islands. There was a multicolored rug on the floor of the office in which the Seal of Sutheria had been woven. There was an impressively large walnut desk near the northern windows, but Sir Henric invited the mages to sit on a set of comfortable leather-bound chairs tastefully placed around a coffee table.

“I’m very sorry to have kept you waiting,” he told them as they sat down.

“Somehow I doubt we forced you back from a fishing holiday,” Candle replied dryly.

“Oh yeah. I wish I could take a fishing holiday about now,” Sir Henric chuckled humorlessly. “I hope you won’t mind, but I’ve arranged to have dinner delivered for us all so we can talk without interruption.” Several people came in bearing trays of food, plates, cups and dining utensils. The food was fairly simple, but well prepared and smelled wonderful.

“That’s very considerate of you,” Candle replied as he started helping himself. “So how might we be of assistance.”

“Well, I think between our local citizens and the aid promised by Mother Emmine...” The comment caused Six to look upward wondering if Prime Minister Wembar had some private line to the Gods, then realized he was referring metaphorically to the government of the Emmine Archipelago. Sir Henric continued, “we have the mundane matters well in hand, but I am quite concerned about the abundance of unusual circumstances that have occurred in the last month or two.”

“What problems are you having besides the aftermath of the tsunamis?” Candle asked.

“First of all, Mount Kol has been dormant throughout history, but now has started to erupt,” Sir Henric replied.

“Has it?” Candle asked. “It seemed quiet enough as we came through the Jacome Hole.”

“It has been quiet for a few days, but there were a series of small eruptions last week and geologists assure me that a series of quakes in the area indicate some deep activity.”

“Perhaps it isn’t too surprising if volcanic activity is up in this part of the world. We nearly ran afoul of a new volcano in the Great Bay on the way here,” Candle told him.

“And I understand Mount Mira has been rumbling lately as well,” the prime minister informed him.

“Not particularly good news,” Candle commented, “but these things happen naturally and tsunamis are caused by tectonic activity, so that might be related, although if you had damage on the eastern sides of your islands, then the source of those waves must have been even further east. Any news of waves on Ellisto or in Bellinen?”

“The surf has been rougher than normal in South Bellinen,” the prime minister reported, “and there have been some large waves coming ashore on Ellisto, although their western settlements were in protected areas.”

“So the source must be within the Wenni Ocean,” Candle decided.

“I’ll have you meet with members of the Geological Survey,” Sir Henric told him, “but that’s not the only problem. One of the main issues of the protesters you must have noticed since your arrivals has been the large number of missing people.”

“I suppose a lot of people were unfortunately killed by the tsunamis,” Candle commented.

“True, but there were several disappearances during the recent Cup trials.”

“Oh, who won the Silamon Cup this year?” Six asked interestedly.

“The Emmine team was ahead on points, but when they all got caught in the first set of waves, the competition was cancelled this time around,” Sir Henric replied. “The missing people, in fact, were already making headlines before the first wave of destruction, but there have been others since then as well. Understandable the population is concerned. It’s bad enough we have years of rebuilding ahead, but if we cannot even keep our people safe while doing it, the government is likely to fall and if that happens at this time the results could be chaotic. Do you think all this could be related?”

“I don’t know,” Candle replied. “I don’t see a connection, but I suppose we should consider it. Mount Kol and the other volcanoes and the tsunamis may be related, but the string of disappearances?”

Who can say? We'll keep open minds though. I've seen stranger coincidences prove out as related. I'm not at all sure what we can do about a volcano, I'm not even sure if we wouldn't make the problem worse if we tried, but a missing persons' case? I've been on more than a few in my day."

"I would appreciate any assistance you might give," Sir Henric told him gratefully.

"No one can work in a vacuum, however," Candle told him. "I'd like to meet with anyone who is already on the cases. They'll need to know I have no intention of usurping their authority; that we are here to help them, not replace them."

"I can arrange a meeting tomorrow morning if you like and I'll have Kael find some office space for you in this building."

"Thank you, Sir Henric," Candle replied.

"For nothing, Wizard," Sir Henric told him. "It is the very least I can do in return for your assistance."

"We won't be putting anyone out of their office, will we?"

"Not at all," the prime minister laughed. "When we built these offices we made the building much larger than we immediately needed. The point was, we expected the government to grow with the population – that's been the norm in most places – but we haven't grown much in the last twenty years since we moved in, so there are a lot of rooms available. I'll see you have a suite prepared by tomorrow morning. Where are you staying, by the way."

"On the boat," Candle replied.

"I'm sure we can find you better accommodations here in town," Sir Henric suggested uncertainly.

"No need," Candle told him. "I imagine you're a bit short of space at the moment and when the Friendship Corps arrives you'll be even more pressed. Besides the bunks on my boat are customized. You won't find a more comfortable sleep anywhere."

Eight

They returned the next morning to be welcomed warmly by Mrs. Urchart. "Good morning, Wizard. Your offices are in Suite 212. Miss Denfirth is already there to orient you."

"Miss Denfirth?" Candle asked.

"Your secretary."

"I wasn't aware I had a secretary," Candle mused.

"She was assigned to you from the pool just this morning," Mrs Urchart replied.

"I hope she was given a chance to dry off," Candle chuckled.

Maia Denfirth was a serious young woman the same age as Six with short, sandy hair. Like the other

secretaries employed by the government of Sutheria, she appeared to have bought her clothing off the gentlemen's rack before having it taken in just enough to remind people she was, in fact, a woman. She was working intently at the reception desk of Suite 212 as the mages entered.

"Wizard Candle?" she asked as Candle leaned on his golden staff.

"Last I checked," Candle replied with a wink. "Miss Denfirth?"

"Please call me Maia," she told him crisply. "And these are?"

"My students," Candle replied, making the introductions formal.

"My Lady, Mister Hardisty," she nodded at each of them in turn.

"Call me Six," Six told her.

"Not at work, Mister Hardisty," she told him politely. "Would any of you like coffee or tea?" she asked getting up. As she did so, a short stack of paper fell to the floor.

"We can help ourselves, Miss Denfirth," Candle told her, as Elie and Six rushed to help retrieve the papers. "if you'll let us know where to get it."

"Maia, Wizard," she corrected him. "I know it sounds old-fashioned but here in Government House, superiors are addressed by title and surname, but underlings and those of lesser status by their first names." Seeing he was about to object, she added, "I am grateful for the courtesy, but it would only cause problems in the pool if it became known I was being addressed as if I were one of the bosses. Thank you," she added.

"We can't have trouble in the pool," Candle replied with mock horror, earning a tolerant smile from Maia.

"There is a kitchenette over this way," Maia told them, leading the way. "I took the liberty of bringing in pastries for your meeting this morning." She reached for one of three cardboard boxes and missed knocking it off the counter, although Elie's quick reflexes allowed her to catch it telekinetically and return it to safety. "Oh, thank you," Maia responded. "I guess I'm having a clumsy day. Don't worry, I'm very good at my job," she added hastily, showing a bit of nervousness.

"I'm sure you are," Candle responded. There was already a pot of coffee made so he started pouring. "How do you like yours, Maia?"

"Oh, I should be serving you, Wizard," Maia protested.

"Never mind that," Candle told her firmly. "If anyone gives you trouble, just tell them I'm a foolish old man trying to impress a beautiful, young lady."

"Nobody would believe that, sir," Maia told him.

"Yes they would," Candle laughed, "However the truth is after many years of living alone, I'm used to serving myself. I don't mind if you bring me a cup occasionally, but only if you happen to be going for yourself. Otherwise if I want coffee, or anything else, I can very well get it myself."

“Yes, sir,” Maia replied softly. “You have a meeting in an hour with Chief of Police Marin, Detective Lieutenant Quentes, Admiral Centerin, Sir Rechard Wiss, the Minister of Internal Affairs, Quennis Thames, the Minister of Defense and, I’m sorry, I forgot their names, but a pair of geologists who have been studying Mount Kol as of late.”

“And you bought three dozen pastries?” Candle asked.

“Some of them are likely to bring several staff members, Wizard,” Maia replied.

“I see,” Candle nodded “and where will we be meeting?”

“In the next room, sir,” she replied opening a door to reveal a long room with a conference table in the center. One wall was all window and overlooked the plaza outside Government House. Opposite that was a door that led to the reception area. On the wall opposite the kitchenette were three small offices and next to the kitchenette was a much larger office. This will be your office, Wizard Candle,” Maia indicated the larger one. “The first two on the other side are for Lady Elinor and Mister Hardisty.”

“Who’s the final office for?” Six asked.

“Nobody,” Maia replied. “It’s empty. If you were going to be here for the long term, we would probably use it for files.”

Candle looked around, then poked his head into his office. Finally he asked, “Would it be possible to get some chalkboards in here?”

“Chalkboards, sir?” Maia asked.

“Yes, maybe it’s just the ingrained habit of an academic, but I like to have chalkboards in my office. Two of them if you can manage it and one for the conference room. How about you two?” he asked Six and Elie.

They both shook their heads. “I prefer working on paper, sir,” Six replied.

“Whatever you like,” Candle told him. “Oh, and I could use a few standard forensic tools, like magically neutral forceps and gloves.”

“The chalkboards should be easy, Wizard,” Maia informed him, “but I’m not sure where to ask for the other items.”

“The police department,” Candle started to suggest, but his voice trailed off. “Oh yes, I see. Forgive an old man. I forgot the police no longer use forensic magic in their investigations. Never mind, I can get what I need from the *Maiyim Bourne*. ”

“The *Maiyim Bourne* ? Maia asked, then a light dawned in her eyes. “Like the boat Silverwind and Oceanvine sailed in. You were with them, weren’t you?”

“I was,” Candle admitted.

“Did you get the *Maiyim Bourne* back out of the museum? May I see her?”

“It’s a copy,” Candle lied. “I’ve always had a fond attachment to the old girl so I had a copy made.”

“I would still love to see her, sir,” Maia told him. “I’ve never been to Randona and I would love to see even a copy.”

“She doesn’t look all that unlike half the boats that compete in the Silamon Cup,” Candle warned her, “but if you are available you may have dinner with us some evening. Tomorrow, perhaps?”

“You’re on!” Maia told him.

They spent some time settling into their offices; getting to know where things were and just getting comfortable with the arrangements. Before they knew it, various people arrived for the meeting. Admiral Centerin was first to come. He brought with him a Navy commodore and two captains.

“Thank you for offering to help out,” the admiral told Candle after introducing the other officer. “The announcement of your arrival alone has done much to calm the city down.”

“I wasn’t aware of the announcement,” Candle admitted, “but I’m glad it had a beneficial effect. I noticed there weren’t any picketers outside this morning, but just assumed we got here before they did.”

The admiral did not have time to reply before Sir Rechard and Mister Thames arrived with two aides each. The Chief of Police and his lieutenant arrived on their heels followed in a few minutes by Doctor Dashen Gonnev and Miss Eileanne Stass, the two geologists who had been studying Mount Kol. It turned out that they knew Candle, having both had classes with him in Randona before accepting positions at Silamon College. Candle also requested Maia’s presence to keep the meeting’s minutes.

“Now what’s this nonsense about you three coming in to solve all our problems?” Sir Rechard demanded after introductions had been performed.

“All your problems?” Candle replied. “Even the Gods wouldn’t make that claim. No, we’re just here because the prime minister asked us to see if there are any connections between the recent tectonic activity and the spate of missing persons cases you’ve been plagued with.”

“Ridiculous!” Sir Rechard scoffed. “What sort of connection could there be?”

“If I knew that, we wouldn’t need to have this meeting,” Candle replied.

“We don’t need any magical hocus-pocus to find missing persons and I doubt you could stop a tidal wave,” Chief Marin put in.

“Which shows how little you understand magic,” Candle snapped. “I’ve been involved in the investigations of several kidnappings and homicides and each time the successful conclusion hinged on evidence gathered and interpreted by forensic magic.”

“So you say,” Chief Marin replied hostilely. “In Silamon we have never resorted to such old-fashioned methods. My department uses only the latest forensic technologies.”

“As I understand it,” Six cut in, “The percentage of unsolved crimes has risen substantially in the last thirty years world-wide. It sounds to me as though you and your colleagues are missing a bet.”

“You don’t know what you’re talking about, boy,” the Chief of Police snapped back. “World population has also risen proportionately.”

“As have the size of most police forces,” Six countered.

“Gentlemen!” Candle broke through the argument, with a glare at Six. “We are not here to criticize your investigative technique. We’re here to augment not replace.”

“We don’t need foreign interference to solve our cases,” Detective Lieutenant Quentes replied.

“Foreign?” Elie asked quietly. “Are you not loyal subjects of His Royal Majesty Hacon Ancel, just as we are?” Both policemen glared at her, but kept their mouths shut.

“What they meant,” Sir Rechard clarified, “is that we have no need of assistance from Royal Emmine in solving matters that are strictly internal. Further, I heartily agree with Chief Marin and I am only here because Prime Minister Wembar insisted I attend. Unless you can give me a good reason, I shall not attend any others and will recommend your immediate dismissal. And I certainly will not recommend that Chief Marin or any of his fine men demean themselves to work with you.”

Candle looked inscrutably at Sir Rechard for a long moment. “I’m not going to beg you to allow me to help, sir,” he told him at last. “You do not understand that we cancelled our summer vacation out of humanitarian concerns for the people of Sutheria and are only here because of our own desire to help. We won’t force ourselves on you. Good day, sir. What I just said goes for you as well, Chief Marin. We came here to help, not to take over any of what you see as your responsibilities. Your recent problem with missing persons is what the prime minister felt you might want help with, but if he was mistaken, so be it. You may continue to work on your own. Frankly, I don’t see why the prime minister took it on himself to intrude on what must be strictly a municipal matter without at least inviting the mayor or some of his staff to attend this meeting.”

“He was invited,” Chief Marin admitted, “but saw nothing of value he might gain from his personal appearance at this particular time. He instructed me to deal with you as I see fit.”

“And how do you see fit, sir?” Candle pressed.

“You have offered me no proof that you can do anything my own men cannot,” Chief Marin replied.

Six and Elie started protesting immediately, with the two geologists backing them up, but none of their arguments were received well and a few minutes later Sir Rechard led the two policemen out of the conference room.

“An auspicious start,” Candle sighed.

“I’m sorry, Uncle Candle,” Elie apologized at once even as Six did likewise. “I should have kept my mouth shut.”

“You both might have been more polite,” Candle admitted, “but I doubt it would have made any difference. They were intent on having nothing to do with us from the start and were here only so they could say they gave us a chance. How about you gentlemen and lady?” he addressed the other attendees. “May we be of assistance or should we just back out of your business?”

“You’ll have to forgive my fellow minister,” Quennis Thames replied. “He’s been hard-pressed by our local journalists since a few years ago when he hired an outsider to head up the Bureau of Internal Intelligence.”

“Oh. Yes,” Candle replied. “I remember hearing about that. It made headlines all the way to Querna when his appointee skipped town. Did they ever find him?”

“Not even a trace,” Quennis replied. “My personal theory is that he went to Saindo.”

“Probably so,” Candle agreed. “It’s one of the few places on Maiyim a man like that can hide out indefinitely. You could probably send an agent or two to ferret him out, but it would cost more than it’s worth unless some political facesaving is needed.”

“Not any more,” Quennis laughed. “He survived that particular storm, but he isn’t likely to take any chances like that in the future.”

“Seems to me he could be making an even bigger mistake,” Elie commented.

“My Lady?”

“If we manage to help out in the way Wizard Candle hopes,” Elie replied, “he’ll be seen as having refused legitimate help. Then if those missing persons cases are never solved, he’ll catch the blame even if we might never have been able to come up with a solution.”

“That’s life in the political world, My Lady,” Quennis shrugged.

“As it happens,” Admiral Centerin cut in, “I and my officers are here because we want to be. I am old enough to remember what the world was like when mages worked in every field, not just as technicians. Before Sutheria was founded, I was an officer in the Royal Navy of Emmine and we had mages in most branches of the Service. The new technology may be useable by more people, but a radar or sonar unit cannot think for itself. If I had my choice we would still have mages working as pilots in most ports. I also remember how valuable magic was in Intelligence, so I’ll accept any assistance you can render.”

“It is the Navy’s duty,” Commodore Rengal added, “among other things, to ensure the safety in the seas of Sutheria. We have no separate Coast Guard here yet, although Parliament has been considering the matter, so that is our responsibility as well.”

“I failed to mention it,” Admiral Centerin admitted, “but Commodore Rengel heads up what will be our Coast Guard when Parliament finally splits the services up. He and Captain Maislen will be your liaisons with the Navy for the duration of your time here.”

“Excellent,” Candle replied, “and Captain Hayshe?”

“My representative here. My apologies, but duty will usually prevent me from working with you directly, but Captain Hayshe has my complete confidence.”

“Very good,” Candle replied. “And I suppose you want us to work on the source of the recent tsunamis?”

“If you could,” Admiral Centerin replied.

“We probably can, although I’m not certain what we’ll be able to do about them.”

“If they appear to be a situation we’ll need to live with, then knowing that will be worth while,” the

admiral replied. "I have been recommending against rebuilding below the recent high water line, except for the docks, of course, at least until we know more about the recent waves."

"And I assume that's where our geologists come in," Candle commented. "Are we stepping on your toes?"

"On the contrary, Candle," Doctor Gonnev replied, "Both Elieanne and I were pleased to learn we would be working with you."

"Thank you," Candle responded. "Let's get down to work then, shall we? I'm aware of volcanic activity at Mount Mira and the recent emergence in the Great Bay and just last night we heard about Mount Kol. Is this activity at all related and is there any more such in this part of the world?"

"It may be related," Doctor Gonnev replied. "We have recently come to understand that the surface of Maiyim is made up of tectonic plates that float over the molten rock of the magma layer of our world. These plates are constantly in motion although they move very slowly. They also bump up and grind against their neighbor plates. When this happens we have quakes, although quakes can also occur in the middle of tectonic plates and while those are not as common, they can often be of even greater destruction when they do occur.

"Sutheria is on or near the eastern edge of the plate that includes all but the very northernmost tip of Rallena, Horalia and the other western islands," he continued. "The Probellen Islands, along with Mairsten, Narnda, Chastigon and Milla are on a different plate. The new volcano in the Great Bay is on the edge of that plate as is our own Mount Kol, so it would not be too surprising that pressure on one part of the Rallena Plate's edge might manifest elsewhere as well."

"How about Mount Mira?" Elie asked. "That would be near the center of the Rallena Plate, wouldn't it?"

"It is," Doctor Gonnev agreed, "but as I said, it is not unknown for volcanic activity to take place in the middle of plates as well and Mira is a very good example of that. That mountain has been dormant for centuries now, but it erupted once in ancient times and destroyed several cities on the shore of the Great Bay when it did by burying them in lava or volcanic ash. However, it may well be that the activity on Mount Mira is not related to what is happening here. Also I must admit that I don't believe the source of the recent waves were on the Rallena Plate. More likely that source was somewhere on the Wenni Plate or maybe along the mid-oceanic ridge."

"The what?" Candle asked.

"Mid-oceanic ridge," he repeated. "Ever since the first inter-archipelago telephone cable was laid between Bellinen and Granom we've known that the oceans were neither flat bottomed basins nor ones that became deeper toward their centers and then gradually shallower as they approached the coasts. Their bottoms are, in fact as varied in topography as our islands are. However it wasn't until recently that deep soundings showed that there was a system of broken ridges that ran all across the world in the ocean bottoms."

"They're areas where the tectonic plates are spreading apart," Eileanne explained.

"So could our tsunamis be originating on the mid-oceanic ridge to our east?" Six asked.

"It's a possibility," Doctor Gonnev replied. "Eileanne and I have been too concerned with the activity

at Mount Kol to have monitored activity in the Wenni, but we can contact the Geological Survey organizations of Emmine and Bellinen and see what their instruments picked up.”

“Good idea,” Candle agreed. “You can also bring us up to speed on the mechanics of tsunami generation. This afternoon will be soon enough for that, however. All right, this first meeting was just to get to know what we would be working toward and with whom. Silverwind used to hold daily meetings in this sort of circumstance, but I’m not sure we’re going to have news for us all to consider quiet that often, so why don’t we meet again in three days. Any questions?”

Nine

“Just how is a tsunami generated?” Six asked later that afternoon when most of the others had gone off to other business. The mages and the geologists were in the conference room as was Captain Maislen and Maia.

“Generally they are formed when part of a plate along a fault line is pushed either up or down,” Doctor Gonnev replied.

“That’s it?” Six asked, surprised. “It sounds fairly simple. A fault shifts and a fifty foot tall wave starts streaking across the ocean?”

Not fifty feet tall,” Gonnev corrected him. “The actual wave on the open ocean may only be a few inches to feet tall.”

“How can that be? Elie asked. “The waves here reached over fifty feet above sea level.”

“Compression,” Gonnev replied unhelpfully. “Lady Elinor, do you understand how waves are transmitted?”

“Just Elie, please,” Elie replied. “No, I don’t think I do. Is it complex?”

“Not really,” Gonnev assured her. He got up and strolled over to the nearby chalkboard Maia had arranged between meetings. “Let’s say you have a wave formed by a sudden shift along a fault line, say on the mid-oceanic ridge or any other submarine fault for that matter. Let’s say one side of the fault is suddenly pushed upward by six feet. That doesn’t sound like all that much does it? So we now have a wave six feet tall at the most traveling across the ocean. Now it’s not a sudden wall of water, it spreads out fairly quickly over a fairly broad width.” He drew a long wave form on the green chalkboard. “A ship or boat encountering it in the middle of the ocean might not even notice it. A six foot wave like this is actually quite huge, but as I said out on the open sea it is a very long wave. Still, it is six feet tall and it’s headed toward land. Now as it approaches land the water starts to build up as the sea gets shallower and the wave length becomes shorter. Well, the water has to go somewhere. If you had a six foot wave that was spread out over a quarter of a mile, for example and suddenly the wave is only half that length because it is reaching land, it will also be twice as tall.”

“Why does the wave length shorten?” Elie asked.

“A normal wave breaks at the shore and then slides back,” Doctor Gonnev replied. “The water sliding back causes the next wave to build up and break and then the next and the next has generally enough space between waves that they don’t actually pile up on each other except during a storm, but with a

long wave like a tsunami, the first part of the wave may be sliding back, but the rest of the wave is still coming. This is a matter of shoaling. In shallower water the wave starts moving slower, but the energy of that wave is still there so it gets transmitted vertically. Soon you have a very large, breaking wave and that six foot wave that was a quarter of a mile long, is now maybe two hundred feet long and almost forty feet tall.”

“But this wave was over fifty feet tall,” Maia pointed out. “Oh, I’m sorry,” she apologized instantly. “I should be keeping my mouth shut.”

“No, Maia,” Candle corrected her, “that’s quite all right if you have a question or an idea to put forth, especially if you think we might have missed something. You go right ahead. I don’t know how government administrators do it, but anyone on my team is expected to contribute in any way they can. And you did have a good point. Doctor?”

“Well, to tell the truth,” Doctor Gonnev admitted, “my numbers were hypothetical. I’ve never actually studied tsunami waves so I’m not sure how long a wave length they actually have or how much they shoal up when approaching shore.”

“You or Miss Stass can look that up locally, can’t you?” Candle asked.

“Of course,” Gonnev agreed. “Do you think we’ll need to know the exact details?”

“I don’t know,” Candle admitted freely. “We might, and now that it’s come up I’m curious about it. And it may turn out to prove or disprove various hypotheses we come up with.”

“Excuse me, Wizard,” Captain Maislen interrupted. “I don’t mean to cause trouble like Sir Rechard did this morning, but where does magic come into this? So far we seem to be discussing some very natural phenomena.”

Candle smiled. “You’d be surprised how often I’ve been asked to solve this sort of problem in which magic played little or no direct part in the solution. Back when I was an apprentice I was with Silverwind and Oceanvine in Querna when they were investigating a series of murders. I’d be lying if I told you there was no magic involved in that case. It turned out the murderer was a rogue mage who used magic in the commission of his crimes. We used a fair amount of forensic magic in the investigation as well, but the actual work of tracking him down was done with our minds. There have been other cases where I never actually cast a spell. The real thing you get when hiring a mage is someone who has a lot of knowledge on a lot of different subjects.”

“But no specialties?” Maislen asked.

“I wouldn’t go that far,” Candle replied. “Most people see generalists as jacks of all trades, but masters of none. That is actually very rarely the truth. More often a generalist has one or more different specialties but also has experience in a lot of other fields as well. What he can do is take generalized knowledge he had and forge cross-disciplinary solutions to problems. This is how new fields of knowledge are developed. These new fields rapidly acquire specialists who explore these fields to their ultimate expressions, but without generalists to open them in the first place, a lot of those new fields might not have existed in the first place.

“I often wonder how wise we are to encourage specialization in our modern world,” Candle concluded.

“Good,” Maislen commented. “That’s the same way we feel in the Navy. Everyone has a specialty to

start with, but the higher your rank the more generalized you need to become. I'm surprised we ever stopped using mages ourselves."

"Could be the necessary training time involved," Candle replied. "It takes years to train a mage to the journeyman level. In my day we started learning in childhood. Sixtus and Elie here just started learning a few weeks ago and they are making amazing progress, but they still cannot do what I could at age twelve and it may be another year before they can. Well, maybe less. The difference is that while I was learning magic, I was also learning everything else; mathematics, literature, philosophy, science and more. They already know far more than I did in many subjects when I graduated as a journeyman. They'll both be able to do journeyman-level spells within the year. Master level, however, will be two to five years after that and I hope I'm still around to see them achieve wizard level. How many men stay in the navy that long?"

"Over all?" Maislen shook his head. "Not many, but would we need many?"

"Trust me," Candle laughed. "You would find uses for as many as you had. There would be another answer, though. You already give student scholarships contingent on their service in the Navy for a set term thereafter. You could do likewise with journeyman candidates, master and wizard candidates as well, although at the moment there aren't any I'm aware of."

"I'll keep that in mind," Maislen told him, "and if I'm similarly impressed at the end of this, I'll include some recommendations in my report. One thing, Doctor," he added turning toward Gonnev.

"Yes, Captain?"

"I have had a bit of study time in tsunamis. They're common enough that all officers are given some classes in the subject. I believe you'll discover that while your math was accurate enough, the wave heights and lengths were way off. As I recall, a tsunami can have a wavelength of three hundred nautical miles or more and depending on the depth of the ocean it can move up to 600 miles per hour. Consequently, a six foot wave would be of horrendous and rather improbable height once it started to shoal. Tsunamis may reach a run-up height of one hundred feet if near the epicenter of a quake. The series of waves that struck here was as high as most long range waves are likely to get. The real question is what events triggered it and where?"

"Sounds like you should be teaching me, Captain," Gonnev replied, "but I intend to look up those exact figures. Also by tomorrow I should have replies from the Emmine and Bellinen observatories so we can triangulate the epicenters and get a measurement of how strong the quakes were. Why didn't anyone think to ask sooner?"

"Until you arrived, Doctor," Candle told him, "nobody knew what questions to ask."

"Perhaps, Wizard, but until you and your students arrived, even I didn't think to ask those questions," Gonnev replied.

"Teamwork, Doctor," Candle laughed. "That's always the key, isn't it?"

"Very strange," Gonnev reported the next day. "The epicenters were, as we expected, in the extreme

south of the Wenni Ocean – well to the east of here – but the associated quakes were not particularly strong.”

“How strong were they?” Candle asked.

“If they had struck Silamon directly, everything would have rattled for a minute or so. Most buildings would have sustained minor damage, maybe one or two might have collapsed, but only if they were already in poor repair and that’s about it; a strong minor quake, but still a minor quake. It was not the sort that in our experience should have created waves of the size that struck the eastern shores of Sutheria or even the lesser waves that washed ashore in Ellisto and Orent, Garad and Sa.”

“Sounds like we don’t know everything there is to know about such waves,” Six commented.

“Do you have something in mind, Sixtus?” Candle asked.

“I’m not sure,” Six admitted. “I’m a bit of a hands-on person. When encountering new ideas, I need to work with my hands if possible. I was wondering if we could build a large, long tank in which we could create waves and watch them travel. Something with a glass side so we could see them both from the side and from on top.”

“The navy has a wave tank,” Captain Maislen offered, “although it is entirely made of steel. We use it to test ship designs in various ocean conditions. We’ve never needed to study wave forms, although as I think it through, we may have been remiss.”

“Would the Navy allow us to modify it as Sixtus has specified?” Candle asked.

“We would need the Admiral’s permission, of course,” Maislen replied carefully, “but so long as we do not impair the facility for its conventional use, I doubt he’ll object.”

“All right, why don’t we go take a look at this tank?” Candle suggested.

Maislen nodded and stepped out to make a phone call. A few minutes later he returned and told them, “We can go right now if you like.”

A small group of protesters were once more marching outside Government House after the one-day hiatus and the man who had spoken to Candle was back. “I see you managed to get in,” he observed.

“Guess I said the right thing,” Candle admitted. “Or maybe it was the wrong thing. They gave me a job.”

“Then you must be this Wizard Candle the papers mentioned this morning,” the man concluded.

“They mentioned me? I’ll have to pick up a copy.”

“Any news?” the man pressed.

“Not yet, I just got here,” Candle shrugged.

“Maybe we should back off and let you do your work, Wizard,” the man suggested politely.

“Feel free to keep picketing,” Candle told him. “We haven’t any results yet and the right to protest is yours.”

“You’re the only one out of that building who admits that,” the man told him.

“As insecure and worried as you may feel,” Candle replied, “the people in there feel the same way. It may not seem that way at the moment, but it’s true nonetheless.” The man nodded and wished them luck.

They got into a pair of automobiles and with Captain Maislen to escort them, drove to the naval base on the south side of town. The base was over twelve miles south of Silamon and had been spared the worst of the tsunami’s damage as its harbor was better sheltered from the direction the waves had approached from. Most of the damage there had been from the backwash flooding the area, but, unlike in town, no buildings had been destroyed and it was already mostly cleaned up.

The base was a fair-sized city all its own with a population of nearly one hundred thousand, representing not only the base-bound sailors but the crews of those ships that were in the harbor. Maislen directed them to a long low building next to a large drydock in which a submarine was being refitted.

The building was filled with all sorts of measuring equipment and hundreds of scale model boats and ships, but down the center of the building sat the reason they had come. The tank was ten feet wide but almost one hundred feet long. It was about ten feet deep as well. At the moment, however, the tank was in use. Several men in bathing suits were standing at one end of the tank while another was inside, on a surfboard. A wave was generated and the surfer rode the wave to the far end of the tank to the cheers of the others.

“Captain on the floor!” the surfer announced as he sailed past.

Captain Maislen walked toward the rest of the men as they suddenly became quiet. He stopped and assumed an “at rest” stance and rocked slightly back and forth, while keeping his face sternly emotionless. “Care to explain?” he asked quietly.

“Wave research, sir?” one man replied uncertainly.

“I dare say,” Maislen replied without a hint of amusement. He let the men stew for a full minute before telling them, “Next time, book the facility in advance. The CO is not averse to using the tank for recreation, but there are safety precautions that must be followed and the time must be scheduled.”

“Aye aye, sir,” the man replied. “Sorry, sir.”

“Now which of you have official experience with the wave tank?” he asked. Two of the men raised their hands. “Get dressed. We could use your assistance.” The sailors all slipped away and Maislen turned back to the others. “Can’t really blame them. That used to be one of my favorite winter activities. So this is the tank. How were you planning to install a glass wall?”

“Like this, Captain,” Candle replied. For a moment a golden aura glowed around the wizard. Then it expanded and flowed along the nearby steel wall of the tank. It stayed that way for several minutes while the others just watched. Elie and Six closed their eyes to take a different sort of look at what Candle was doing. They did not understand what they were seeing but they were able to watch the energy of his spell flowing back and forth and then up and down along the tank wall. As they watched, the energy appeared to sink into the wall and as they opened their eyes again, the steel wall had been replaced by two-inch thick glass panes, bracketed every five feet by steel beams.

“Amazing!” Maislen breathed.

“I’m glad you appreciate it,” Candle told him. “The tricky part was remembering the seams had to be water-tight. So how does one go about producing waves?”

“The controls are over here, but we should wait for the specialists to come back. They know how to work it better than I do,” Maislen told him.

“All right,” Candle nodded. “Sixtus, this was your idea, so it’s your show.”

“Thank you, sir,” Six replied. A short time later the sailors returned and Six spoke to them, “We’re trying to understand the nature of waves. How does this machine work?”

“Sir,” one of the sailors responded, “the back end of the tank has a moveable plate. We can make the plate move a little or a lot and with some control over the speed.”

“Would you show me, please?” Six requested. “Just one pulse at first. I assume you can do that?”

“Aye aye, sir,” he agreed, “Yes we can.”

They spent the rest of the day in the tank room using the mechanism to generate waves of various sizes and frequencies as suggested by Six, the geologists and Elie, but they weren’t getting the sort of results they wanted.

“The wave speed doesn’t vary much does it?” Six asked.

“It’s the depth of the tank,” Captain Maislen reminded him. “We can make the waves bigger or smaller, but not faster or slower.”

“This really doesn’t simulate the rise and fall of a plate along a fault line either,” Six commented, “although I’m not sure if this action would create a different effect.”

“Let’s find out,” Candle suggested, “I can try that with a ward.” Using an expanding ward, Candle caused an invisible block to rise up suddenly from the bottom of the tank. However, the wave it formed, once the initial splash was over, was not discernibly different from the others.

“It might help if the far end of the tank was shallower,” Six commented. “We could study shoaling.”

“I can do that,” Candle told him. He used the staff again and after another golden light covered the area a series of nineteen hand cranks appeared alongside the tank. “Now that, I think, was clever.” Candle commented. “Each of these cranks can be used to raise or lower a five foot long section of the floor of the tank. I left some room at the starting end for the mechanism to work, of course. Now you can create a shoal starting wherever you want. It’s getting late, however. Maybe we should quit for the day.”

“When can we return?” Six asked.

“I’ll check the schedule and let you know,” Captain Maislen promised.

They were able to get time for three hours the next morning and then all day for the next two days. Candle stayed in town with Doctor Gonnev during those occasions, going over the data sent from the various observatories, but Six, Elie and Eileanne returned to the base to meet with Captain Maislen as they tried various tricks with the wave tank. They slowly came to realize that there appeared to be an

upper limit to the size of the wave they could generate.

“I can’t tell if it’s the limitation of the machine or of waves in general,” Six admitted.

“Some rare waves do get larger,” Captain Maislen informed him. “When I was an ensign, the ship I was on was nearly destroyed by what we call a rogue wave. We were out in a hurricane, not because we wanted to. We ran into it by surprise. Communications and the ability to track storms were not as advanced as they are today, although I must say we still have a way to go. The monster must have been over ninety feet tall and it looked like a wall of water as it rolled over the ship. We were darned lucky that day. The ship might have rolled over while it was submerged, or the pressures might have broken her, but somehow we just came bobbing up like a cork. More of us were injured by getting thrown off the walls than anything else, but we were lucky and we lost no men that day. I have since heard experts say such waves are impossible, that the mathematics don’t support storm waves of such a height, but I know what I saw.”

“Let me try something,” Eileanne requested. “I’ve heard of those rogue waves before, but it’s never really been my field of study. So far we’ve been generating small packs of waves; no more than five at a time.”

“That was so we wouldn’t have one wave rolling down the tank while others were coming back the other way,” Six told her.

“I realize that. Now I want to see that happen. Let’s set the tank to just keep going for a while,” she suggested. They did so and watched the results. “Interesting,” she murmured a while later.

“What?” Elie asked.

“See how some waves get cancelled out, but others pile up. The same things happen with the troughs, some are cancelled and others get deeper,” Eileanne explained.

“That is interesting, but how does that explain the tsunamis?” Elie asked.

“I don’t think it does, but it may explain rogue waves like the one Captain Maislen saw.”

“I’m more concerned by how a small quake was able to generate such a large tsunami,” Six told her. “I don’t suppose you have any ideas about that?”

“Unfortunately not, although we have discovered damage from monstrously high waves. As Doctor Gonnev mentioned, most tsunamis don’t get over thirty feet high although close to the epicenter they may reach one hundred feet. What he didn’t mention is that a few years ago a geologist, working in northern Palsondir, discovered proof that a tsunami over fifteen hundred feet high scoured the land around Markin Bay sometime in the last century. Nobody knows what may have caused it, however.”

“Markin Bay?” Six asked. “Can’t say I’ve ever heard of it. Still I wonder if we can make a taller wave.”

“We’d have to push harder,” Elie told him. “Let’s crank up the artificial shoal again. I have an idea.”

They did so, making the far end a foot higher than water level. Elie asked the sailors to send the largest wave they could down the tank. It was an impressive try, but the wave broke and crashed before it reached the end of the tank.

Elie let the water calm down again as she contemplated what she really wanted to do. Then, having thought it through she sat down, cross-legged on the floor the way Oceanvine had taught her to relax, and then summoned up as much power as she could. She had a notion of how Candle was using wards to push the water and decided to try it for herself. Up until now her wards were not very effective, but this time she tried to imagine a sheet of telekinetic force. It wasn't a ward that incorporated two spells at once so she was confident it was something she could do. She turned that sheet into a box that fit perfectly into the first twenty feet of the tank and then brought it down in an instant.

The results were even more spectacular than she had hoped. The initial splash drenched them all, but in spite of that, Elie maintained her hold on the spell as the large wave rolled down the tank. When it reached their artificial shoal, it rose up as expected, came up even with the walls of the tank and kept rising. Water from the far end of the tank drained away as it became part of the approaching wave and then the wave, already spilling over the top of the tank, began to break. The top of the wave was still rolling over as it hit the far end of the tank and crashed out over the floor.

"Okay," Six admitted in a hushed voice. "I think that was a miniature tsunami by anyone's standards." No one disagreed. "Elie, want to tell us your idea now?"

"I want to get into dry clothes now," Elie laughed as she released the spell and let one of the sailors help her back to her feet. Water sloshed around in the tank still more but with so much having spilled out already and with the remnants of the big wave still rocking back and forth, none of the resulting turbulence managed to slosh out again. Six gave her a pointed look. "Okay! I felt like taking a shower." That earned her glares from everyone. "Sorry. What I had in mind was trying to simulate a landslide. I was curious as to whether the wave it produced would be effectively larger than anything we were producing up until now."

"I'd say it would," Captain Maislen chuckled and looked pointedly around the room. Water was still over an inch deep in places where drains were unable to keep up. Most of the water was draining out beneath the large, closed overhead door. "We'll have to refill the tank if you want to try that again."

"I don't know if it is necessary," Elie replied.

"I'd like to try that a few more times," Six commented. "Elie's experiment was interesting enough, but if it's to be of real value, it needs to be quantified."

"That could take weeks," Eileanne told him. "We would need to rebuild the tank and make the wave maker stronger and faster. It would also have to be calibrated so we would know exactly how much force was being imparted. I suppose we could have Wizard Candle fabricate that, however."

"I doubt it," Six replied. "A few weeks ago, he needed a special car so he created one, but he admitted he didn't know enough to create the engine or electrical system, so instead he just propelled it by telekinesis while I steered. I imagine he was also daunted by the complexity of creating a fully functional vehicle that way too. You'd have to have all the details in mind before casting the spell. We would have the same problem with the machine you describe. Look at the modifications he's done already; they're impressive. Turning steel into glass, creating the movable floor panels – don't forget he had to change the floor under the tank as well. But the mechanisms for raising those panels are simple gear driven machines and we have to do it by hand. If he could have created engines to do the job electrically, I think he would have. As it is, however, this was a feat only the very most advanced wizards and the Gods could have accomplished. We still have a couple hours left, however," he continued, turning to the captain. "Let's refill and try again. Now that I know what Elie was after, I'd like to experiment with shapes and relative force, even if we cannot measure it accurately at this point."

It took over half an hour to refill the tank, but using wards, instead of the wave maker, Six and Elie were able to send several more waves down the length of the tank before Six was satisfied. "I think we could manufacture what Eileanne wants by introducing something that falls into the tank using gravity. It would have to be heavy and of variable weights and sizes, but we could use a heavy-duty motor to winch it up to its starting position, and a simple release mechanism to let it down. Knowing how heavy and what size that weight is would give us figures to work with. Measuring the height of the resulting wave would do likewise. We may need a taller tank, though."

"We can probably fabricate something here on the base," Maislen told him. "I'll look into that tonight."

Ten

"That was very well done!" Candle complimented Six and Elie that evening on the *Maiyim Bourne*. They were having dinner with Maia for the second night in a row. "Next, I think we should seek out the source of the tsunami and see if it was caused by a landslide of some sort."

"That could take weeks, couldn't it?" Maia asked.

"This boat moves faster than most," Candle assured her, "but we could be gone for up to two weeks. We're fairly certain the waves were generated somewhere in the southern Wenni Ocean. Knowing what caused it could be invaluable to rebuilding efforts, don't you think?"

"I suppose," she nodded. "If this is the start of a long series of such waves we might have to move the capital."

"Exactly," Candle agreed. "Now I'm going to trust you to hold down the fort while we're at sea. Captain Maislen will be working with the geologists on their study of waves, so that should keep them occupied profitably, but I'll need you to prepare reports of their results for Sir Henric, Admiral Centerin and Minister Thames. And if you have a little time, a carefully worded offer of assistance, pending our return, to the local constabulary. They'll likely turn it down."

"More likely they'll deny they ever saw it," Maia told him. "That's the way it works in politics, deny everything unless you're caught on film or tape."

"Yes, and then claim you were actually conducting a private investigation of your own," Candle sighed. "I know."

They left late the next morning after letting the others know where they were headed. Doctor Gonnev rode with them down to the harbor, giving Candle instructions on what to look for and where to look. On checking the charts, Six was surprised to find the mid-oceanic ridge was only about three days to the east at the *Maiyim Bourne*'s high speeds.

"We may be there even sooner," Candle told him, "if the winds hold out. The days are longer this far south, you may have noticed that. Also we'll be on the outer seas. Traffic will be much lighter compared to the way it has been so far. We can set the autopilot and go to sleep. I'll take a page from Oceanvine's book and cast a wide ward all around us that should wake us up if anything gets too close, and we can safely hydroplane so long as one of us is awake."

Elie had become accustomed to the rush and hurry of travel in Candle's company, so she was surprised an hour after leaving Silamon, when Candle ordered her to retract the foils. The boat slipped back into the water and continued on in a more leisurely fashion as they approached a large, deep-toned gong buoy.

"Come astern," he invited Six and Elie. "The ceremony I am about to conduct is Granomish, but because the first time Oceanvine and I left Emmine it was on a Granomish ship we both always said this prayer or one very like it whenever we passed from one sea to another. This gong we are about to pass marks the outer boundary of the inner seas of Emmine. Each of you should consider your own prayer if that suits you."

He paused to take a deep breath then intoned, "Emtos and Emmine, divine king and queen, we now leave your protected waters to sail the deeps that accompanied the birth of Wenni, daughter of Bellinen and Merinne and beloved wife of your divine son, Nildar. We pray that we have done sufficient honor to you while among your lands and that you will grant us your protection when we return. Divine Wenni, we pray to you for your protection and guidance while we sail in your waters."

"Amen," Six and Elie replied as one. They all sat down and listened until the gong's voice merged with that of the sea. Once it had, Elie redeployed the foils and they continued on.

"Uncle Candle?" Elie asked sometime later, looking up from her ward casting exercises. There was a hex nut circling her head, an exercise she had taken to continuing for hours at a time. Candle realized amusedly that he had become used to seeing her like that. "You know the Gods personally. Why do you pray to them?"

"They *are* the Gods after all," Candle replied with a chuckle. "To be honest I don't pray very often unless you consider the act of talking to the Gods as prayer. But some childhood experiences made indelible marks on me. I always pray when moving from one ocean to another and I always perform the doorpost blessing when entering someone's home in Emmine."

"Is that what you were doing?" Elie asked recalling his pause by the doors in Renton and Keesport.

"When was that?" Candle asked. She told him. "Yes," he admitted. "Well spotted. You may have seen me reciting the blessing in Medda. I did several times."

"Not while I was around," she replied. "I didn't think anyone did that anymore; not outside my father's manor anyway. Grandmother insists on it."

"That may be the only bit of her upbringing that stuck," Candle replied sadly. "Poor Myrrha."

"Poor Myrrha?" Elie asked incredulously. "Better you should pity us, her grandchildren. Do you have any idea what it was like growing up under her matriarchy? You would have thought she was the daughter of a hundred kings the way she reigned over the household."

"Where did that anger come from?" Candle asked seriously. "It wasn't all that long ago that you respected her highly."

"A respect that came from fear," Elie replied. "I've learned a lot these past few weeks and not just the magic. My grandmother kept us from knowing who our great-grandparents were as if that was something to be ashamed of. Some of my favorite relatives live on Kern and I never would have even known they existed. And all those years growing up in the manor. You know I was beaten once for levitating a

rubber ball? I was angry at Dad for that, but now I know it was her fault. My cousins were only slightly luckier; they didn't have to live in the same house with her." Elie continued on, reliving several childhood incidents, and Candle let her finally wind down.

"I still say, 'Poor Myrrha,'" he told Elie. "For all that she denied you, she denied herself far more. You never knew what you were missing, but she did and not only did she deny you a bit of your heritage, but by her own high-handed actions, she also denied herself your love. Now that's sad. She wouldn't appreciate it, but I do pity your grandmother."

Elie was silent for a while, then at Candle's urging, she returned to her exercises although never once had the hex nut faltered in its orbit.

They reached the mid-oceanic ridge late the next day in gently rolling seas. "This weather isn't going to hold up," Six announced after listening to the shortwave band on the boat's radio. He was certain there had been no such available sets of frequencies on the rig before they left Silamon. "There's a storm brewing to our north and east."

"Yes," Candle agreed after a distracted moment.

"What did you just do, sir?" Six asked.

"A trick I saw Silverwind do once," Candle replied. "He cast a very wide, but low-power ward, which measured the atmospheric conditions around him. The storm you mention is still a good hundred miles away, but it might be heading our way." Six then noticed Candle had the golden pen/staff in his hand.

"If you can do that," he asked, "why do we need the radio?"

"That trick is no substitute for official weather reports," Candle told him. "I cannot always tell what I'm looking at. It's only because I knew there was a storm that I knew what the change in air currents that way meant. Try it for yourself."

"Am I up to that, sir?" Six asked.

"You tell me," Candle replied.

"You say that a lot," Six grumbled a bit.

"True enough," Candle chuckled. "Just sit back and work on sending a very low-level ward off toward the northeast. Make it as large and wide as you can and think of it as an extension of your senses."

Six tried that for a few minutes and found that he could, indeed, feel the wind over a mile away from the *Maiyim Bourne*. "I can't stretch out as far as you did," he reported after ten minutes of trying.

"You need a lot more power to do that," Candle told him. The ward may be low-power, but it is very large. Believe it or not, this is probably the most power you have wielded to date. Go ahead and put everything you can into it. I'll spot for you."

"Spot for me?" Six laughed, losing concentration. "Like in gymnastics?"

"Pretty much," Candle replied. "I'll make sure you don't accidentally lose control in a destructive manner. Don't worry," he added at Six's worried expression. "You haven't done so yet. I'd have told

you.”

“All right,” Six replied nervously. He closed his eyes and went through a relaxation exercise. When he was ready he drew in as much external power as he could and once more cast the wide-ranging ward.

This time he was able to extend the probing ward out over fifteen miles. “Much better!” Candle told him.

“Still nothing compared to what you did,” Six replied.

“You’ll improve, but I had help,” Candle admitted. He took the pen-like staff back out of his pocket. It expanded as Six watched until it was the size of a walking stick. “Without this, I doubt I could do much better than extending a ward more than two or three times further than you did.”

“Just what is that?” Six asked.

Elie, who had been doing her own exercises at the bow end of the boat came aft and added her own, “Yeah. I want to know that too.”

“All right, I had thought to wait a bit longer, but you two are coming along a lot faster than I would have expected. I’ve already told you that I don’t know everything there is to know about this, but I probably know more than anyone alive except the one who made it.”

“Who made it?” Elie asked.

Candle held the staff up for a moment and it smoothly transformed into a golden sword. “Nice trick, hmm?” he asked. “It will transform into any hand weapon you desire. At first we thought it would take any shape we desired, but there turned out to be limits. Now look at the pommel.”

“Isn’t that the same symbol that was inside Oceanvine’s magestone?” Elie asked. “The Seal of Aritos?”

“You remembered,” Candle noted. “Yes, it is.”

“Is it time for us to know more about that too?” she asked.

“There’s not much to tell,” Candle replied. “At least I haven’t been able to get much out of it yet. Aritos told me to study it and I did study it. I’ve spent years with it. I can draw it in my sleep, I can see how power would flow through it if I were able to use it, but I have never been able to. I must be doing something wrong.”

“So this staff was made by Aritos?” Elie asked. “Why?”

“It was a gift to his children,” Candle told her.

“His children?” Six asked.

“Don’t you recall your mythology?” Candle countered. “The demons were His children. He created them out of love, but He didn’t realize His error until after. Without a God and a Goddess involved together in the creation of intelligent life, that life is born without a soul. It took Him five tries before He realized it.”

“Persistent devil isn’t He,” Elie remarked. Six groaned at the pun. “Sorry,” she apologized. “It was

unintentional. Literally true, however.”

“Only as the religions of Maiyim are concerned,” Candle replied. “You’ve met Aritos or Artifice as He calls Himself among mages. He has other less flamboyant names when He associates with other mortals, but He doesn’t tempt us into sin or try to steal our souls. Actually, He told me once He didn’t know how to steal a soul and if He did, He wouldn’t know what to do with it. He has His faults, but unreasoning evil isn’t among them. His main problem, if you ask me, is that He used to be too stubborn.”

“Used to be?” Six asked.

“He’s smart enough to learn from His mistakes eventually. Not so strangely, after all He’s been through He is probably the wisest and most scholarly of the Gods, Methis included. Anyway, this is His seal and He made this staff for His children. One of the things it can do is create some sort of mystic passage through which the demons could travel. That’s not much use to us. Demons are virtually indestructible. They would need to be to travel the sorts of paths I’m talking about. It also acts as a power amplifier, that appears to be its most basic function. After that it reacts differently to different people. For me it distills many of my spells, mostly on the mental level, making them more effective than they might otherwise be. I can use it to read minds, see through another’s eyes, compel others to do as I order; that sort of thing.”

“How often do you do that?” Elie asked nervously.

“I haven’t in years. I don’t like forcing people to act against their wills. Reading minds isn’t much fun either. I wasn’t actually reading thoughts, just intentions and motives. It wasn’t as useful as you might think either. Minds are amazing things and most people think of a lot of different stuff at once or in very fast succession. And the better you get at reading these very fleeting thoughts the harder it gets to do because you start picking up more than the thousands of surface thoughts and eventually all you can hear are the automatic commands from the brain to breathe, pump blood etc.”

“But the ability to compel others to do things?” Elie asked. “You never feel tempted to use that?”

“There’s a spell that does that,” Candle replied softly. “It was a very big problem once. It was called the Hook and it was nothing more and nothing less than an enslavement spell. What was worse, any apprentice could learn it. Fortunately, very few mages actually knew how it was done although, for over a millennium, there always seemed to be at least one mage who not only knew the spell, but was unscrupulous enough to cast it.

“One of its most common uses has always been to keep prostitutes in line. That’s why they’re sometimes called hookers. You see, once the spell is cast the victim has no choice but to do anything the slave master says. The victim is not entirely without volition, but he or she can never disobey a direct order.”

“That’s horrid!” Elie exclaimed.

“It’s worse than you think,” Candle told her. “First of all, the slave master does not have to be the person who cast the spell and a slave master could transfer his slaves to another slave master, although that was not done very often. Or, if the slave master was afraid of being caught or just wanted to make an example of a slave who tried to rebel, he could kill them simply by cutting the spell string that bound the slave to him. Of course killing isn’t necessary to make an example, since the spell could also be used to starve or torture a victim as well.

“That first time I was in Querna when I was just a kid,” Candle recalled, “the rogue mage who was a murderer was also making money on the side by Hooking prostitutes, a strange circumstance since he was also killing prostitutes. Fortunately, Silverwind’s first partner, Master Windchime invented a cure for the Hook. Sometime later, Silverwind improved on it, so the spell became less effective. These days there are so few mages around, I doubt anyone who would cast the spell knows how. However, it’s because of the Hook that I don’t like controlling another person.

“It’s not particularly effective on someone with a disciplined mind and that includes most mages above the apprentice level. However, Silverwind wasn’t able to do any of that stuff with the staff, but then he was able to do things with it I’ve never been able to. For him the staff made his abilities with heat and cold spells powerfully out of proportion. It assisted his experiments in superconductivity, however. Oceanvine was never particularly interested in the staff, which is a shame since I would have liked to know what aspect responded to her most.” Candle sighed.

“Of course the added abilities this staff gives me are not entirely negative,” he continued. “Most of magic has a mental aspect after all, so the staff gives me incredible control. But Aritos has told me that while I’ve gotten more out of the staff than Silverwind did, I have barely touched the surface of the staff’s abilities.”

“Won’t He tell you what it can do?” Six asked.

“He told me to think of it as a test,” Candle replied.

“The Gods seem to use that phrase a lot,” Elie observed.

“They do,” Candle agreed easily. “Some habits are hard to break.” An alarm bell started ringing inside the cabin. “Sounds like we’ve reached our destination. I set the sonar to ring that bell as soon as the bottom rose enough to indicate we were at the mid-oceanic ridge. Sixtus, take your sightings. We need to know our latitude.”

“But it’s not the right time,” Six protested.

“Don’t worry about that. You’ll discover the chart room will provide the correct tables for whatever time you take your sightings. It used to bother Vine. She learned how to use the sextant at only certain times. And it bothered her to find the tables revised every time she used them.”

Six took his readings and reported they were at fifty-five degrees, seven minutes and sixteen seconds south latitude so Candle turned the boat southward. “Doctor Gonnev told us the epicenters were between fifty-nine and seventy-four degrees south. We should be in position to start looking tomorrow.”

Eleven

“Can’t we use magic instead of the sonar?” Six asked Candle in the middle of the next day. The wind had slacked off to an occasional light breeze sometime earlier. Six had been concerned that the readings they were getting would be deceptive because their rate of progress was so variable. But Candle assured him the recording unit was also recording their current speed so Doctor Gonnev would be able to interpret the data accurately. “It would be faster wouldn’t it?”

“It would also be harder to make a paper record,” Candle replied. “I can do that, with thaumagraphic

paper, of course, but Doctor Gonnev would like detailed scans of the ridge and the sonar is keeping records for us automatically. It's a lot easier than doing thaumagraphy on the fly."

"Thaumagraphy?" Elie asked. "Does anyone even make the paper for that any more, Uncle?"

"I doubt it," Candle replied, "but if you want it, the boat will supply it."

"I've always wanted to try that," Elie commented.

"It takes a lot of concentration to get a clear and unambiguous image," Candle warned her, "but I planned to use it to back up the sonar records when we actually find something. You may try it if you like after your watch is over."

Elie nodded. It was her turn at the wheel and keeping the boat on a steady course just now was essential. Six was below trying to interpret the sonar readings and Candle was taking one of his few leisure shifts. "Looks like that storm is going to catch up to us," he noted.

"What will we do then?" Elie asked.

"We'll set the sea anchor," Candle replied, "then go below, close the hatches and wait it out. We'll get blown all over the place, but this boat has been in worse and always come through and while you may not have noticed yet, the inside of the cabin doesn't move as much as the outside."

"Oh good!" Elie said, relieved. "I thought that was my imagination. Either that or the seas were calmer than they looked."

"No, just one of the many surprises of the boat," Candle chuckled. "Methis told me She thought it wasn't an intentional feature installed by Nildar but a side effect of those magical closets. The energy has to come from somewhere, after all."

"What do you mean?" Elie asked, confused.

"The closets, the money bags, the food box, medicine cabinets and everything else on board are examples of the class of spells known as cornucopia spells. A cornucopia spell is actually a semi-continuous creation spell. They have limits, of course; you can't get food out of the medicine cabinet or clothing from the chart room, but compared to the spells you or I can cast, their limits are on an entirely different plane. Creation spells take a lot of energy. But cornucopia spells take even more. When I create something, say, this ruby..." He held out his hand and a bright red stone in the shape of a round cabochon, nearly an inch in diameter, appeared in his hand. "It takes supreme concentration and mastery of power use, but I only need exert that concentration and power for a moment.

"The cornucopia spells on the boat are always ready to go to work. They can sense our needs, or more accurately our perceived needs and desires, and produce whatever we want within the limits of their abilities and, if there is a limit to how much they can produce or how often, I certainly haven't found one. The energy to keep even one such spell in operation is amazingly high; for the entire boat it's positively astounding! From what Methis told me, Nildar and Wenni powered them by using the boat's motion in some way. It's probably the elusive perpetual motion spell physical magic techs have been looking for. I don't know, though I have tried to duplicate it unsuccessfully. Anyway, it absorbs all the motion from the inside of the boat and stores it in some way. The end result is not only that all the spells continue to work, but the inside of the boat doesn't move anywhere nearly as much as the outside does."

“That doesn’t make sense,” Elie shook her head.

“Not in a four dimensional world,” Candle told her.

“Four dimensional?” she echoed.

“I was including time as the fourth,” Candle explained. “We really do need to teach you more about modern physics. Anyway, I don’t think the boat is operating entirely in the world as we know it. Nildar won’t tell me how it’s done which probably means he doesn’t think we’re ready to know how to do such things. So if you ever start chafing when I tell you you’re not ready for something, just keep in mind that I get told that sometimes too.”

“I think that storm is getting closer,” Elie noted, seeing a band of dark clouds moving rapidly toward them from the northern horizon.

“Looks that way,” Candle agreed. “I thought that might be what was happening with the wind dropping off these past two hours. Those clouds are moving fast. Let’s strike the sails and deploy the sea anchor. We won’t get much farther anyway and furling the mainsail will be a lot easier before the storm hits. Six! We need you on deck.”

“What’s happening?” Six asked. Then he saw the clouds rolling in and didn’t bother waiting for orders. He moved rapidly forward and started pulling the jib down while Candle and Elie dropped the mainsail. They furled the sail around the boom and secured it tightly with gaskets of braided cord. Meanwhile Six folded up the jib as well as he could and stowed it way in its compartment.

“Belay that hatch well,” Candle advised him. “And check the spinnaker’s hatch. It’s on your side.”

“It’s a tight fit,” Six complained. “Why couldn’t the Gods have made one compartment each for the jibs instead of expecting us to stow both in the same one.”

“To tell the truth,” Candle chuckled, “I doubt Nildar ever expected us not to have at least one of the foreward sails in use. They are indestructible, just like the rest of the boat, after all. I’ll just feel better if they are stowed. Now let’s get out the sea anchor.”

The sea anchor was not, as the name might suggest a large, heavy object of iron with an extremely long line attached to it. Instead, it was a huge expanse of strong, fine textured cloth. Candle showed Six and Elie how it attached to a dozen eyeholes around the bow of the *Maiyim Bourne* with snap shackles at the ends of an equal number of lines. The cone-shaped anchor stretched out as it filled with sea water and the boat swung around until she was bow to the now rising wind..

“I think it’s larger than the boat,” Six observed.

“Nildar never actually tested the boat before He gave her to us,” Candle replied as they headed back to the stern. “He didn’t even realize she needed a name. So He tended to err on the side of caution. Well, that’s all we can do except wait out the storm.”

“I ought to turn the sonar off,” Six commented. “I didn’t take the time to do it when you called.” He jumped back down into the cabin.

“Shouldn’t we go below too?” Elie asked.

“We have a little time left,” Candle told her. “No need to cage ourselves up until we have to. If we were on our way somewhere, we would have continued sailing until the waves were crashing over the deck. This boat is fast enough to outrun some storms after all. So how are you doing on your keyed wards?” he asked noticing Elie’s signature hex nut was still circling her just above her eye level. It seemed odd he hadn’t noticed that while they were furling the sails and setting the anchor. He realized that while on board he had rarely seen her without it.

“They keep slipping away from me,” she admitted.

“The first such ward I cast,” Candle told her, “caused a pebble to float.”

“Why?”

“Why not?” Candle countered. “It was the first spell I learned, so it came easily.”

“I’ll try it,” Elie decided. She reached up with her hand and caught the hex nut. Then she closed her eyes and went through her relaxation exercises. She took her time preparing, but when she opened her eyes again there was a pale red sheet of energy in the air in front of her. Tentatively, she reached out with her hand and poked her finger through the ward. The ward disappeared instantly, but the hex nut rose up and started circling her head again. “Hey! It worked!” she announced happily.

“Not bad,” Candle agreed. “Can you stop the nut now?”

Elie concentrated and the nut made one more circle and landed in her hand, but the moment she stopped concentrating it flew back up to return to its orbit. Several more attempts had the same effect and she eventually looked to Candle for a solution.

“Keep working on it,” he chuckled. “it should come to you in an hour or two.” He went into the cabin as Six was coming back up on deck.

“What’s wrong? Six asked, seeing Elie frowning. She explained. “But that’s great!” Six exclaimed. “How did you do it?” She told him. A few minutes later they both had hex nuts flying around their heads. “And how do we make it stop?” Six asked.

Just then it started raining. There was no light prelude to the storm, it just came crashing down all of a sudden and Six and Elie rushed into the boat’s cabin. They closed the hatch behind them and stood dripping water all over the galley floor.

“Don’t you two know enough to come in out of the rain?” Candle asked acidly from the dining/chart room table.

“Of course we do, Uncle,” Elie replied sweetly. “Elsewise we would still be up on deck. Would you like a hug?” Water dripped liberally from her outstretched arms.

“Perhaps you should get into something dry before you catch your deaths,” Candle suggested.

Elie and Six went back to their respective cabins. In hers, Elie opened the closet door to find the usual assortment of Orentan blouses and skirts. She remembered Uncle Candle’s reaction the first time she had worn such clothing. It made her feel like she was wearing her great-grandmother’s clothes – not a feeling she really enjoyed. And yet, the closet seemed to keep offering her fashions the young Oceanvine might have worn. Generally Elie assumed that this was the work of her subconscious, and maybe it was,

but this time she decided it was time to assert her own personality. She took one of the blouses. She really had grown fond of the silk from Bellinen and she had to admit that after her initial shock, the bold floral patterns suited her. The mid-length skirts were all right for sitting down to tea in or going out on a date, but current fashion dictated much shorter skirts. Elie had never been daring enough to wear one of the new “miniskirts.” She much preferred to wear jeans most of the time. Closing the closet she tried to concentrate on a pair of blue denim jeans that looked new but were as soft as a pair that had been washed a dozen times or more, but her mind wandered and what she got was an assortment of denim miniskirts. She was about to close the door and try again when it hit her that this was a perfect time to try a miniskirt. She did not have to go shopping for just the right one and if it was as uncomfortable as she feared she could come right back for something else.

She slipped on the dry clothing and returned to the galley area where Candle and Six were drinking coffee out of tall mugs. “That smells good,” Elie commented as she helped herself to a mug. She stopped in mid-pour however when she caught Six staring at her. “What?” she demanded before realizing what he was staring at. “Never seen legs before?”

“Not that much of them,” Six replied, “Not yours anyway.”

“Sure you have,” Elie reminded him. “I wore swimsuits when we were in warmer waters.”

“Somehow it looks different in that get up. I never thought you were the sort to wear a miniskirt,” Six told her.

“Why not?”

“Your fashion sense is more conservative. You tend to wear styles that are not extreme. Your clothing is the sort that will remain in fashion for a long time to come.”

“Well, today,” she retorted, not feeling at all as brazen as she was trying to sound, “I decided to try something that is on the edge. Do you object?” she challenged Candle.

“Not at all,” he shrugged. “They’re your legs and if you want to show them off, it’s none of my business.”

“Sir?” Six asked. “With Elie’s help I managed my first keyed ward, but now we both have these hex nuts whizzing past our eyes.”

“I had noticed,” Candle replied dryly as he finished his coffee. “What about them?”

“How do we stop them?” Six asked.

“That’s your next assignment,” Candle told him, pouring a second cup.

“I should have expected that by now,” Six grumbled.

“Yes,” Candle agreed.

Six and Elie continued to work on a solution as the storm grew outside. Elie very quickly learned not to look out the portholes. As promised the inside of the boat barely rocked with the waves at all, but the view through the port holes told an entirely different story. The boat was rolled back and forth in the rough seas and waves could be seen rolling over the deck outside. She wondered anew how the Gods

could have accomplished such an enchantment and in her curiosity she found herself trying to examine the spell.

To her surprise, she discovered that instead of one spell with links to the various cornucopia devices on board the entire boat, when viewed properly, was an incredible complex of magic with many layers of spell strings that formed a network so intricate that she was unable to follow any single string, let alone analyze one, because the strings merged and diverged from one another, were braided in some places and some just seemed to disappear and then reappear at seemingly random intervals. Through all the spell strings of the *Maiyim Bourne*, however, Elie could see magical energy pulsing. Through this aural vision, it almost seemed as if the boat were a living creature. Certainly as a construct it was no less complex than life.

Totally hypnotized by the magical vista before her, she did not at first notice the spell string attached to the index finger of her right hand. It seemed to be moving around in a loose spiral. As she concentrated on that, her view of the *Maiyim Bourne*'s enchantments faded and she quickly realized that the spell string on her finger was attached to the flying hex nut. She broke the string and heard the nut clatter to the floor.

"Took you long enough," Candle commented, "although I will admit that I didn't figure it out until the second time I tried that spell." There was music playing on the cabin radio. Elie assumed it must be the short wave band because they were too far from land for any other signal to reach them. It wasn't a very dependable signal, however, probably because of the storm.

"It didn't take all that long," Elie protested.

"No? You've been out for over three hours," Six told her. His hex nut, she noted with some small satisfaction was still orbiting him. "What was so fascinating?" She told him about the enchantments bound together in the *Maiyim Bourne*. "Really? That I've got to see."

"Now he'll be out for hours," Candle commented. "Good thing he just ate. Are you hungry?"

"Just a little," Elie admitted. She got up and pulled a small pizza out of the food box. "What happened the first time?"

"What first time?" Candle asked.

"The first time you cast that spell," Elie amplified. "Did Oceanvine help you break it?"

"Not hardly!" Candle laughed. "She took profound satisfaction out of the fact I was having trouble with it. In my case the pebble was only floating, not trying to be a Midbar to my Maiyim, but the spell was essentially the same; a ward keyed to levitate a small object. Had you been stumped like I was, you would have discovered the spell would have worn off in a few more hours or maybe in a day or two, depending on how much energy you put into the spell.

"The longevity of a spell is dependant on the amount of energy you put into it and the rate at which it uses that energy," he continued. "So far, most of your spells have been designed to use whatever energy you put into them instantly. That's normal. If you need a permanent spell you have to connect your magical construct to a source of powering some way. If the source is limitless, then so will be the duration of the spell.

"Well, in theory anyway," Candle shrugged. "In practice almost nothing is limitless, but you can cast a

spell whose longevity is so long it may as well be permanent. Even the Gods will tell you their spells aren't truly permanent. Take Maiyim herself, for example. Our world will come to an end someday, but she's still got a billion or more years to go, so neither we nor our descendants are likely to be around when it happens.

"Anyway, energy that kept the hex nut floating was finite. It was the same amount of power you put into the ward. When you disrupted the ward, the energy bound up in it went to power the spell. Since it was not connected to an external power source, the energy would have eventually been expended and the nut would have stopped flying. Judging from the way you cast the spell, I think it would have stopped sometime before dawn," Candle estimated. "I didn't see Sixtus cast the spell, so I don't know how long his will last, but probably not too much longer."

The music on the radio abruptly turned completely to static, but just as Elie was about to turn the set off, the sound of a distorted trumpet fanfare could be heard followed by a female voice saying in measured tones, "Apple. Whisky. One. Niner. Seven. Michael. Two. Merday." The voice paused before continuing on with a long series of numbers.

"What is that, Uncle Candle?" Elie asked. "Six and I heard something like it the first night after we left Ketch."

"Did you?" Candle countered. "I've never actually heard one of those broadcasts, but I have heard of them. As you might guess it's code."

"What sort of code?" Elie asked.

"Nobody knows," Candle told her, "or maybe it's just that nobody is admitting they know. I suspect there are many such code stations broadcasting these enigmatic messages. Emmine is probably using them, and Granom as well. I wouldn't be surprised if there are stations broadcasting instructions and reports to and from agents of all the world's governments."

"Why?" Elie asked.

"Elie, beneath this open and honest world you and I inhabit is one of deceit and intrigue," Candle told her. "I don't understand it anymore than you do, but there's a lot of espionage going on in this world. Humans spying on Granomen, Granomen on humans, Bellinen wants to know what's happening on the Isle of Fire, Ellisto wants to influence some minor vote in the Orentan Senate. It's all pretty silly if you ask me, but I suppose there are others who see it as vital to security. I don't know whose security it's vital to, but there you are."

The coded message continued on for another few minutes before it faded into static and was replaced by the latest popular music from Emmine.

Six was only captivated by the *Maiyim Bourne's* complex of spells for a little over an hour, although it gave him no clue as to how to break spell that kept his hex nut afloat. When he came out of his trance, however, Elie told him what she had learned and he was able to break the spell immediately.

Candle was not entirely pleased, "I had hoped Sixtus would figure that out for himself," he told Elie.

"That's silly," Elie retorted. "We always share knowledge. It means we can learn as a team and we'll advance faster too."

“Well, you have already cast at least one collaborative spell,” Candle admitted after thinking it through. “And this may help you both along those lines.”

“You gave in amazingly easily,” Elie observed.

“I’m not exactly closed-minded, Elie,” Candle replied. “You correctly pointed out that a team effort will teach you both faster than the more traditional independent study method I was trained with. Besides, I did not have to figure everything out for myself. Both Vine and Silverwind gave me hints or told me outright how to do certain things. So if you two want to trade recipes or whatever, go ahead.”

Twelve

The storm continued for the next two days as the *Maiyim Bourne* was tossed and turned across the Wenni Ocean. On two occasions she was capsized, and even inside the cabin Candle and his crew were thrown around painfully. Each time, Candle used magic to right the boat.

Six and Elie spent most of the time honing their skills with keyed wards. Having done so several times, they quickly realized their only real limits were experience and imagination. As they learned new spells, those spells would not be any more difficult to incorporate into a ward than any other spell they had mastered. They were still having difficulty keying two spells at once to a ward, but understood it was just a matter of time and practice before they succeeded.

They woke up on the third morning to discover the storm had moved on, leaving them near the shore of Robander’s Island, the largest island on Maiyim. Robander’s was uninhabited save for a few scientific outposts because it was almost entirely Antarctic. Sixty-five years earlier, while Candle was still just learning magic, explorers from Emmine, Bellinen and Granom had raced across Robander’s Island to the South Pole. Several dozen men died in the various attempts, including one entire expedition, but eventually Sir Mikhal Robander from Granom became the first to reach the pole and consequently loaned his name to the great island.

Only the coastline, the areas near the scientific stations and the marked pathways that served as roads between them were well-known. The rest of Robander’s Island was still a great mystery of unmapped mountains and glaciers. The center of the island was thought to be well below sea level but with over two miles of land-locked glacial ice piled up on top. Most of the glaciers, however, eventually flowed to the circum-polar sea where bergs of various sizes calved off and started floating northward. It was in a sea speckled with icebergs that the crew of the *Maiyim Bourne* found themselves when they woke up that morning.

Elie was surprised to find her closet filled with heavy woolen clothing that morning, but one look out her cabin’s porthole told her why. It was nice and warm in the cabin, but the icy vista spoke volumes.

Candle was already on his second cup of coffee when Elie joined him. “Yesterday you were dressed like an Oriente, today like a Granom. And I thought my tastes were widely varied.”

“Are these Granomish clothes?” Elie asked. “They aren’t all that different from what’s being worn in Emmine.”

“There aren’t a lot of differences between human and Granomish fashions,” Candle told her. “There’s not a lot of difference between us and the Granomen unless you want to count genetics. Culturally,

politically and socially they're more like us than the Orenta."

"Then why do we get along like dogs and cats?" Elie asked.

"You got along well with Fireiron, didn't you?" Candle countered.

"But she is really Methis. She's not really a Granom, is she?"

"Says who?" Candle laughed. "If she isn't a Granom, there are no Granomen. Elie, people are people and it doesn't really matter what their species is. At the moment the governments of Emmine and Granom are not enjoying warm relations, but when I was your age it was just the opposite. Granom was friendlier with Emmine than anyone else. No doubt we will be on those terms again some day. Politics are transitory. Don't let that sort of nonsense blind you to true friendships."

"All right," Elie replied uncertainly. "Except for Methis, I don't really know any Granomen. You're right. I have no basis for comparison. I promise not to let political prejudices get the better of me."

"Don't make promises you may not be able to keep," Candle told her. "Just promise to try."

"All right," she agreed. "I'll try. So will we go sailing around the Granom Archipelago next summer?"

"Perhaps," Candle told her. "It will be winter there, you know."

"I appear to have a wardrobe for almost anywhere," Elie laughed. "How did you know these clothes were Granomish then?"

"Granomish woollens tend to be woven tighter than Emmine cloth. Also the shades of brown are typically Granomish. They look good on you too, for that matter. Have you taken a look outside yet?"

"We're surrounded by icebergs," Elie replied, finally helping herself to the coffee.

"That too," Candle nodded. "Take a look to starboard."

"That's a volcano," Elie replied.

"You noticed," Candle said dryly. "Yes, I think it's Mount Petronelle. Hard to tell, though. It doesn't look all that much like the pictures. It's shorter for one thing."

"And it used to be a fairly symmetrical peak too," Elie recalled. "What happened?"

"It's a volcano," Candle commented. "Volcanoes erupt. I imagine this one lost its top in the usual way. I just don't know when."

"It's still smoking," Elie pointed out.

"It's been doing that off and on since it was named sixty-five years ago," Candle pointed out. "However, there's a scientific station not too far to the east of here. I believe one of their missions is to study this mountain so they'll be the ones to ask."

"Are you sure this is the right mountain?" Elie asked.

“It’s the only volcano I know of on the coast of Robander’s Island,” he replied.

Six had another question when he woke up half an hour later. He rose to find Candle and Elie had already raised the mainsail and were carefully threading their way through the iceberg field. “Are you sure we’ll be welcome at a Granomish base?” he asked.

“It’s a scientific base,” Candle replied, “not a military one. They’ll welcome us, especially if we come with stuff to trade.”

“What do we have to trade?” Six asked.

“Six, have you forgotten what this boat can do?” Elie asked pointedly. “What haven’t we got to trade?”

The coastline of Robander’s Island was, to Elie’s eye, a desolate wasteland. There was no vegetation anywhere in sight. And a layer of volcanic ash made everything a uniform charcoal gray. Inland they could see a range of snow-covered mountains and below the high tide line were black sand and pebble beaches. The only signs of life were the black and white penguins they spotted from time to time and a colony of seals basking in the frail summer sunlight.

Two Granomen were shoveling an inch of volcanic ash from the small wooden pier at Petronelle Station when the *Maiyim Bourne* arrived three hours later. “Ahoy, Petronelle Station!” Candle shouted as they approached. There was a motorized launch on the other side of the pier. A tarpaulin had been draped over it to keep the ash off.

“Ahoy, yourself, *Maiyim Bourne*!” one of the Granomen shouted back. Like most Granomen, he and his companion were short, but powerfully built, with chalk-white skin and dark brown hair and black eyes. They were wearing mid-length heavy woolen, double-breasted dark brown coats. One also wore Emmine-manufactured jeans although the other Granom wore heavy woolen pants. “You got here faster than expected. We’d hoped to have the dock completely cleared.”

“Allow me,” Candle laughed. A moment later all the ash on the dock and on the tarp-covered launch disappeared.

“Nice trick, Wizard,” the Granom laughed. “I always knew I went into the wrong field. Did you just disintegrate it?”

“Hardly,” Candle laughed as Six and Elie threw lines up to the men on the pier. “Translocation. I dumped the ash a few hundred yards out to sea. How have you been, Alexos?”

“Fine, Wizard, fine. How did you know I was here this year?” Alexos asked, securing the line Elie had given him to a cleat.

“Can’t say I did,” Candle admitted. “We were in the neighborhood and it seemed a good idea to come calling.

“So you said on the radio,” Alexos replied.

“How’s your aunt?” Candle asked as Alexos helped him up out of the *Maiyim Bourne*.

“She’s well,” Alexos replied. “I’ll tell her you were asking when I get home this summer.”

“And give her my love, as always,” Candle added.

“I will,” Alexos assured him. “Oh, this is Sammal Bresslon, a fellow scientist here at the station.” They exchanged greetings and further introductions while Six and Elie joined them on the pier.

“Are there many people stationed here?” Elie asked.

“Only a dozen of us this season, My Lady,” Alexos replied, “although most of the others are out on survey at the moment.”

“What sort of survey?” Elie asked. They started walking toward the station.

“Depends,” Alexos replied off-handedly. “Some of my colleagues are biologists. They’re surveying the local seal and penguin populations in the area. Some are doing geological work, we even have an archaeologist on hand this year.”

“An archaeologist?” Six asked. “Whatever for?”

“He’s studying the remains of the various bases of the failed Borronow expedition.”

“I remember reading about that one in school,” Six recalled. “Half his men froze to death in a blizzard trying to make the pole, but he saved the rest by trekking west along the coast to a whaling station on Point Emilea. If it had not actually happened I’d have said the story was unbelievable.”

“The word you’re looking for is ‘incredible,’” Alexos corrected him, “but you’re right. It was an amazing feat. Anyway for safety reasons we send out everyone but a skeleton staff. So only three of us are ‘home’ at the moment. The others should be back day after tomorrow.”

“Where do they stay while doing their surveys?” Elie asked. “They don’t camp in tents do they?”

“Only in dire emergency,” Alexos told her. “Survey parties do carry tents in case of emergency, but generally they stay in wooden shelters we keep stocked with food and fuel. No need to rough it any more than necessary. Robander’s is probably the most dangerous place on Maiyim, so we don’t take chances”

The station was not large, but there were two common rooms, one of which doubled as a dining room, a kitchen, a radio room and twelve bedrooms each equipped with a bunk bed. “In a way we’re lucky this year,” Alexos told them. There’s not a lot of privacy down here and a six-month stretch can be grueling. This year, at least we all have private bedrooms. No offices, of course, we all work in the common rooms. “Oh, Deela! Come over here and meet our guests.” He performed the introductions. “Wizard Candle here is an old friend of my Aunt Southgate. Now you said you had a trade in mind?” he finally asked Candle as everyone sat down at a dining table.

“Well, all you have that I want is information about Mount Petronelle,” Candle told him.

“That’s it?” Alexos laughed. “You can have that for free.”

“Well, to tell the truth,” Candle replied, “I would feel a bit better if I paid in some way. You folks are stuck down here for six months at a time. That’s a sort of dedication to your sciences that even I’ve never had to display. I figure you lot deserve whatever luxuries I can supply.”

“What do you have?” Deela asked.

“Just about everything but a telephone line back to Granom,” Candle replied. “Tell you what, just like in the old fairy tales I’ll grant you each three wishes. You name the luxury and if I can supply it, it is yours.”

“That should be interesting,” Deela snickered. “I don’t suppose you can produce my husband?”

“No, sorry,” Candle shrugged, “Just various luxury items.”

“You don’t know my husband,” she pointed out, smiling, “but I understand. Just three wishes?”

“As many as you think the information is worth,” Candle laughed.

“This information must be very valuable to you then,” Deela returned slyly.

“It is,” Candle agreed. “You’ve heard about the tsunamis in Sutheria? What are the chances they’ve been caused by landslides from Mount Petronelle?”

Elie watched as Deela’s bantering attitude drained away. “Sorry, Wizard,” Deela replied finally, “I would never have tried to bargain with people’s lives on the line.”

“You didn’t know,” Candle told her, “but the offer still stands; whatever you want in return.”

“No,” Deela told him, shivering in spite of the warmth of the station. “I think not. Whatever you need, if it’s mine to give it’s yours. And yes, I’d say there’s a very good chance those waves were spawned by Mount Petronelle. Doctor Yarran,” she nodded toward Alexos, “would know more about that than I would, though.”

“There have been two major eruptions this past month,” Alexos confirmed, “and a fair number of minor ones as you could probably tell from the ash fall. Both of the big ones generated landslides. We were out in the launch a few days ago taking a look. Half the north face blew out.”

“We saw,” Candle replied. “That’s why we stopped in. I wanted to know when it happened.”

“Oh, two or three hours before the waves hit Silamon,” Alexos replied. “Was it bad? We haven’t heard much.”

“The east sides of the islands got hit pretty badly from what I’ve seen,” Candle replied, “although we’ve only been in Silamon. Mount Kol is erupting now as is a previously unknown volcano in the middle of the Great Bay. I hear Mount Mira has been waking up too. Isn’t that a lot of volcanic activity for so short a span?”

“It’s hard to say,” Alexos replied. “We’ve only been studying volcanology for less than a century. We have some rudimentary observations for the last millennium or so, but for all we know, recorded history may have taken place during a time of relative inactivity. This could be normal.”

“Do you really believe that?” Elie asked skeptically.

“Not at all,” Alexos laughed, “but it is a possibility. I cannot say it is all connected, however. Mount Kol may be on the same tectonic plate edge as this new volcano, but Mount Petronelle is definitely not and Mount Mira is on the middle of its plate, and it is over two thousand miles away for that matter. It’s

hard to imagine a connection at that distance.”

“One might say all Maiyim is connected,” Candle commented.

“It’s possible,” Alexos replied. “It is also possible we do not know enough to answer that yet. Perhaps someday when we know more and can actually predict volcanic eruptions, I’ll be able to say. What I can tell you, though, is that it’s a darned good thing Mount Petronelle didn’t let go all at once.”

“Why is that?” Six asked. “I would have thought that a single wave would have been better than two of them.”

“A single wave would have been hundreds of feet high when it reached Lemona and the other islands. It would have been destructive in southern Bellinen as well. I’d say we got very lucky. I’ll have copies made of all my notes, seismograph readings and photographs for you.”

“I don’t suppose you have sonar readings of the sea floor in front of Mount Petronelle,” Candle asked.

“No sonar units here,” Alexos told him.

“I have one you can have,” Candle told him. “And I’ll see you get credit for what you give me. I won’t let Doctor Gonnev publish your data as his own.”

“I never thought otherwise,” Alexos assured him. “Actually I’ve corresponded and co-authored with Gonnev in the past. There shouldn’t be a problem. Tell him I’ll stop by Silamon College on my way home at the end of the season.”

They stayed at Petronelle Station for another half a day; time enough to exchange Alexos’ data for the promised sonar equipment. Six and Elie were both amazed to discover an extra set of the equipment was already boxed and ready to go when they returned to the boat. “After these past few weeks,” Six commented, “you’d think I would be used to this by now.”

Candle also insisted on giving the Granomish scientists all the fixings for a traditional celebration of the King’s Birthday including a whole goose for roasting, a bushel or so of fresh vegetables and two cases of wine. “Toast His Majesty for me,” Candle told them.

Thirteen

On their return, their first sight of Silamon was a thick streamer of smoke on the horizon. As they approached it became obvious that several blocks of the city were on fire. Calling ahead, the acting Harbormaster informed Six there was a dockside slip reserved for them at one of two repaired piers that had been finished in their absence. They also learned that the fire had been declared under control, but only after over one hundred deaths.

Silamon was a city in chaos. Even in the middle of the harbor, the cacophonous sounds of sirens, horns, whistles and gongs could be heard cascading down the hill. On their arrival, they noticed a contingent of Marines standing at the end of the dock.

“Sir,” the sergeant in command greeted Candle as he approached, “we have been ordered to escort you to Government House.”

“Are we in trouble?” Six inquired.

“Sir?” the sergeant asked in return.

“My guess is not,” Candle told Six. “We would be escorted to the city jail if we were in trouble. Sergeant, it looks and sounds as though the nightlife in Silamon has gotten entirely too exciting in our absence.”

“We live in interesting times, sir,” the sergeant replied.

“Ellistan, Sergeant?” Candle asked.

“I grew up in Sonatrie, sir,” he replied. “How did you know?”

“The proverb about interesting times is typically Ellistan,” Candle replied.

The sergeant smiled. “My parents use it all the time. We have been assigned to you for the duration of the current crisis, sir. The prime minister is most concerned for your safety.”

“Kind of him,” Candle replied. “He underestimates our abilities, but then it never hurts to play it safe. Let’s go.”

“We’ve only been gone a week,” Elie observed. “How could everything have gone downhill so quickly?” She did not get an answer until they joined the prime minister.

“The protests were getting dangerous, so I was forced to impose a curfew,” Sir Henric informed them.

“And I’ll bet that only made the problem worse, right?” Candle asked.

“How did you know?”

“Your people were worried and uncertain, but they still believed your government could help them. Imposing a curfew only proved the situation was entirely out of control. Once you allowed that to happen, the riots were bound to follow. So what are they demanding?”

“They started out by demanding the reinstitution of all civil liberties,” Sir Henric replied.

“You should have given it to them,” Candle advised. “Trying to clamp down when you did would only evoke calls to abolish the government.”

“How did you know that?”

“Already?” Candle asked. “I would not have expected that for at least another week or more. Somebody’s been planning this then. Any idea what they want in its place?”

“If anyone has decided, it isn’t obvious to me,” Sir Henric replied. “What worries me are the demands for secession from Emmine.”

“An interesting idea,” Candle considered. “The king has always encouraged autonomy here in Sutheria, but this is exactly the wrong time for it. A few weeks ago I’d have told you it was a good idea. Now you

have too many other problems. Just don't declare martial law."

"Uh..." Sir Henric groaned in reply.

"You already did? Terrific. Are you trying to get killed? I hope you have an escape route planned. Well, we'll have to work with what we've got. What's the situation on the other islands?"

"Not as critical," Sir Henric replied. "Demands are for the restoration of civil liberties, but there is no talk of secession."

"That's a mercy, at least," Candle replied. "It probably means that whoever came up with the idea is local and has not yet spread the notion to the other islands. It is odd, however. The demand for normalcy is understandable. Secession would be anything but normal. I could understand it catching on had this been going on for a few months, longer maybe, but not so immediately."

The intercom on Sir Henric's desk buzzed and his secretary announced, "Chief Marin is here to see you, Sir Henric."

"Send him in," Henric instructed her.

"Perhaps we should leave," Candle suggested. "Our presence might not be helpful at this point."

"Please stay, Wizard," Marin requested from the doorway. "I was here to request your assistance anyway."

A dozen responses crossed Elie's mind at once, none of them particularly kind, so it surprised her when Candle merely replied, "I am at your service, Chief. How may I and my students be of assistance?" He was not sarcastic, nor did he say it gloatingly. Candle's tone was exactly what she might have expected had he been meeting the chief of the Silamon Police Department for the first time.

Chief Marin looked relieved as he replied, "It turns out that you may be of some help in that missing persons' case, sir. It's not so much that we aren't able to handle such a case, but with the other problems this past week, we simply don't have the man power."

"Understandable," Candle nodded.

"Uh, yes. This afternoon we found two of the missing people in a shallow grave near the road out of town to the north. I'm afraid that when the news of this breaks we'll have panic on the streets."

"It's a possibility," Candle agreed. "I suppose it would help if you could say the case is well in hand. So where would you like us to start?"

Together with their Marine guards, the party made a strange sort of parade as they walked the three blocks to the city coroner's office. Once there, the chief led them down into the basement where one of the two bodies was being examined by a pair of coroners. Seeing Lieutenant Quentes was already there, the chief left them with him and beat a hasty retreat.

"I take it he can't stand the sight of a body?" Candle asked Quentes.

"Can't say this is one of my favorite ways to spend an afternoon, although it could be worse. It could be first thing in the morning. I never have gotten use to the sight or the smell of a decaying body and these

are far from fresh. If our initial identifications are correct, these two have been missing over a month.”

There was a gagging sound and Candle saw Elie put her hands to her mouth and rush away. Six was looking decidedly green, but he seemed determined to brave it out. Fortunately, they were unable to get very close while the coroners were working. “I’ve never gotten used to it either,” Candle commented, “but it’s also been a few years since I had to for that matter.”

Elie returned a few minutes later, looking pale, but otherwise unharmed. “Sorry, Uncle Candle,” she whispered.

At that moment Six made an odd noise and suddenly bolted for the door. “I guess it’s my turn next.”

“There are buckets near the door if you need one,” one of the coroners told him, looking up for only a moment.

“I’m fine,” Candle replied. “Do you mind if I conduct a non-destructive aural scan of the other body?”

“A what?” the doctor asked.

Candle explained, “When this sort of work used to be conducted by magically trained coroners, we would begin by doing an aural scan of the body. It has no effect on the body, nor is it possible to contaminate the magical evidence.”

“As we aren’t looking for magical evidence,” the coroner replied, “that wouldn’t matter if it did. Well, so long as you aren’t going to actually physically touch the body, go ahead.” He got up and opened a long mortuary drawer and then returned to his work on the first body.

Six returned just as Candle and Elie approached the second body. He joined them as Candle began to instruct, “You heard what I said. This is a no-touching examination. We will be looking only. Do not attempt to actually use magic. Just check for magical auras.”

Elie and Six began to do so, when Candle gasped and suddenly cast a completely impenetrable ward around the body. Opening her eyes, Elie saw a black box where the body had been just as she had when examining the aura with her eyes closed. “Don’t look,” Candle told them. “In fact, everybody should leave the room immediately.”

“What’s wrong?” Elie asked.

“The hell I’m leaving!” the head coroner told him.

“Your soul in on the line, Doctor,” Candle said urgently. “It’s possible your life is too.”

“I’m not leaving,” he replied stubbornly.

“Fine. I warned you,” Candle shot back. “Sixtus, Elie, get out of the room now! Lieutenant, I strongly suggest you do the same. It will only take me a few minutes, but it will be safer if you are not here at all.” They all left, but the two examiners stayed, although the younger one backed away a few feet.

“What did you see?” The head coroner asked.

“Spell traces only,” Candle told him, “but ones of a spell so powerful, even the traces can be dangerous.

“Let me look at this body for a moment.” The doctor stepped aside while Candle examined the body for magical auras. “Yes, that’s what I thought,” Candle said, mostly to himself. “These men were killed by magic.”

“Magic?” the coroner repeated incredulously. “What sort of magic?”

“You might call it a curse,” Candle replied, not yet looking up, “although a curse is technically any spell used maliciously, so that is not particularly accurate. There, that’s done. Let me look at the two of you for a moment. No, you’re safe enough, thank the Gods! Let me just cancel the traces on the other body and you two may go back to work.” He spent a good ten minutes on the second body, but when he was done, he slid the drawer shut.

“Do you want to really tell me what you found now?” the head coroner demanded.

“I will,” Candle agreed, “but first please allow me to call the others back in.” Once everyone was back in the room, Candle began to explain. “Sadly, there is very little in this world that is so good and pure that it cannot be corrupted. I’ve heard some people try to explain that magic in itself is neither good nor evil, only the intent of the caster counts. Most magic is neutral so if that is the only sort they are aware of then their mistake is understandable. Happily there is some magic that is entirely good, blessings for example. However, there are also spells that are entirely evil. They too are rare, thank the Gods, and in fact I only know six of them for certain.

“One is called the Hook. Elie and Six have heard me speak of it before. From the looks on the rest of your faces I can see I don’t have to go into detail about it now. There was a time when the other five were thought to be a single spell, but my own research proved it was actually five families of spells. They were called the Bond of Aritos, because part of their manifestation included a unique sign that carried and distributed the power of the spell.

“Actually,” Candle continued, years of lecturing experience taking over, “they had nothing to do with Aritos, but with his children, those beings we called demons. There were five demons and each one had his own strengths and weaknesses, which were reflected in their version of the Bond. Until now, however, I would have thought it was just an ugly design. I have not seen it in any form in over sixty years and could easily have gone the rest of my life without seeing it again. We thought the Bonds had become useless when the demons were permanently imprisoned, but evidently that is not the case.”

“If they were imprisoned, couldn’t one or more have escaped?” Six asked.

“No,” Candle answered directly. “The Elder Gods saw to that detail themselves. The demons will never be free again.”

“What does the Bond of Aritos do?” Elie asked.

“Nothing good,” Candle replied flatly, then caught himself and embellished the answer. “The Bond in any of its forms is a fairly flexible spell and, much like a ward, it can be linked to just about any other spell. Depending on which demon it is linked to, its primary attributes will vary. That’s how I was able to catalog and describe the differences. Then there are the secondary and tertiary attributes. The secondaries will usually include contagion – the ability to spread through contact – and the manner in which it can be spread. Well there’s more to it than that, but considering it took me over a year to write my thesis on the subject, you’ll understand if I don’t spend all night describing the Bonds in detail. The tertiary attributes define what the spell is actually supposed to do; carry disease, capture souls, kill victims, you name it. Anything you can imagine that is horrible, the Bond of Aritos can do it.

“The most insidious aspect of the spell is that it always corrupts and eventually destroys the mortal mage who casts it as well, because the primary purpose of the Bonds was always to give power to the demons,” Candle concluded. “I’ve deactivated the traces on these bodies, but we are going to have to be extra careful. I don’t know which version of the Bond was used here, because the traces were too corrupted themselves. That may be all that protected us before we discovered what was at work here.”

“This all sounds a little far-fetched,” Quentes responded.

“Good,” Candle told him instantly. “It should. I thought we had rid Maiyim of this particular perversion sixty years ago. By now it should be something you only find in poorly written dime novels.”

“Uncle Candle?” Elie countered. “When was the last time you saw a dime novel? They’re about four crowns these days.”

“You know what I meant,” Candle told her sourly. “Doctors, I’m not sure what else you may learn, but if there’s a definite physical cause of death I would appreciate knowing. Lieutenant, when can we visit the site where these unfortunates were buried?”

“It’s a bit late today,” Lieutenant Quentes replied as they left the coroner’s office. “How about tomorrow morning?”

“Perfect,” Candle told him. “We’ll go right after the meeting.”

“We have a meeting in the morning?” Quentes asked.

“I think we’d better,” Candle replied. “I have some information for our geologists courtesy of Petronelle Station and now this.”

“Petronelle Station?” Quentes asked. “Isn’t that a Granomish base?”

“It is,” Candle confirmed.

“Why would they help us?” Quentes asked suspiciously.

“Why wouldn’t they?” Candle countered. “The people there are scientists, sharing scientific knowledge.”

“Mighty generous of them, considering the political climate these days,” Quentes considered.

“Not everyone lets politics determine their behavior,” Candle replied.

Fourteen

Lieutenant Quentes was not the only one suspicious of Granomish generosity, however. The next morning everyone except the geologists were aghast that Candle had requested assistance from the Granomen.

“I don’t understand,” Doctor Gonnev commented. “Doctor Yarrin and I have collaborated on several papers. He is a fine gentleman and a scholar and is always fair and open in his dealings. I’ve never known

him to hold back on data especially.”

“He is also a loyal subject of Ksaveras XI with whom our own beloved Hacon Ancel is at odds. In my experience a Granom is always loyal to his king first,” Admiral Centerin announced.

“Which is as it should be,” Elie told them all. “Are we not all loyal subjects of our own king? Why should the Granomen not be loyal to their own monarch?”

“Well spoken, My Lady,” Sir Rechard commended her.

“Thank you,” Elie responded. “Look, I’ll admit I was suspicious of the Granomen too. But my eyes were opened while we were at Petronelle Station. We went in offering to buy that data. We offered them a blank check. Anything, and I mean really anything, they wanted for those few sheets of paper, but when they learned that we were there investigating the source of the tsunamis, when they learned it was to help prevent other Sutherians from dying because of such destructive waves, all bargaining was off. They didn’t want to take anything in return for the data; insisted on it, in fact. We eventually managed to give as good as we got, but only because we dressed it up as a feast in honor of Ksaveras’ birthday.” She smiled as she remembered that. “They couldn’t very well refuse that, but I doubt we could have come up with another reason that would have worked.

“They’re good people and I would be proud if I could call them my friends,” Elie continued. “I imagine you would too if you could meet them.”

Her speech was met by silence, but it was not the silence of a shocked audience but of one that has been forced to think. The two geologists were nodding emphatically, but most of the Sutherians were silently introspective. Sir Rechard was trading glances with Chief Marin and the admiral was studying Elie intently. Six was watching her too, although there was a small smile on his face and Candle leaned way back in his chair with a crooked grin.

“Well, gentlemen?” Candle broke the silence. “We have the data we need. Do you really need to worry about the source?”

“I cannot say I like being in the debt of Royal Granom,” Minister Thames commented.

“You’re not,” Candle told him. “I doubt Ksaveras will ever even hear about it, though if he were there, he’d have been the first to give us what we needed.”

“How do you know that?” Sir Rechard asked.

“I’ve known Ksaveras since he was born. I knew his father and grandfather too. I don’t want to hand you too many shocks in one day, but should you look into my past you’ll discover that I’m the Marquesse of Sentendir and a knight of the Silver Stay although I hold no such titles in Emmine.”

“How?” Sir Rechard asked.

“The legacy of a misspent youth I assure you,” Candle replied.

“Actually Wizard Candle saved the lives of Ksaveras IX and Petronelle over fifty years ago,” Admiral Centerin told them. “In thanks His Royal Majesty inducted him into the Silver Stay, only the third human to ever be inducted into that highest order of Granomish knighthood and named him Thane of Sentendir. You see, Wizard?” he asked with a smile. “Some of us do our homework. I understand you have also

declined knighthood from King Hacon Ancel and his royal father on several occasions.”

“I would hardly call twice several,” Candle replied, “but we’re getting off track. The emergence of the use of the Bond of Aritos greatly concerns me. I wish now I had made a magical examination of Mount Petronelle. If it had shown similar traces...”

“Do you really think that’s likely?” Maia asked. Several others nodded.

“I’m not a firm believer in coincidence,” Candle told her. “It’s possible, I suppose, and I’ve encountered much wilder coincidences in the past, but most of the time troubles that coincide have common causes.”

“Can this Bond of Aritos cause a quake or a volcanic eruption, sir?” Six asked.

“Certainly. Some forms of the spell are better suited to it than others, but any of the Bond variants could harness that sort of power,” Candle told him. “It is possible that the Bond is not actually in use and the spell traces I found on those two bodies had corrupted in such a way that they looked like they might have been fragments of the Bond.”

“You seemed very certain yesterday,” Quentes pointed out.

“I’ve had a chance to think it over,” Candle admitted. “I can think of a few ways a spell might decay into what I saw. I still think I saw the Bond of Aritos yesterday, but I’m keeping an open mind. There are a lot of problems involved with either situation, however. If it wasn’t the Bond, there’s an accomplished mage running around Silamon who is using his abilities to commit serial murders. I would have thought there were only a few mages left on Maiyim who were capable of using that sort of power and I thought I knew all of them. All that applies if it was the Bond too for that matter, with the added problem that whoever is behind this is using a spell I would have sworn blind would no longer work.”

“But demons, Wizard?” Commodore Rengel asked. “They didn’t really exist did they? I always thought they were tales told by mothers to keep their children from misbehaving.”

“They are real enough,” Candle told him. “The worst of the lot was Arithan. We don’t need to worry about him. He was utterly destroyed. The others were imprisoned for eternity by the Gods and only Arithan had the knowledge and power to free himself. No one but the Gods Themselves could free the demons and that They will never do.”

“Couldn’t a mortal magician muster up the power to do so?” Six asked, “say, by incorporating the power of a nuclear bomb?”

Candle looked at Six for a long moment. “I hope you’re wrong,” he told him quietly.

Sir Rechard asked, “Wizard, when will you be willing to give a press conference?”

“A what?” Candle responded. “No, I heard you. Why do you need me to talk to the press? I would have thought you or Mister Thames would have more practice with that sort of thing.”

“Sir Henric hopes that you might be able to help calm down the current crisis by assuring the public that the matter is well in hand,” Sir Rechard explained.

“And how is that going to stop this ill-timed secession movement?” Candle asked.

“By demonstrating that we are getting concrete help from Emmine, we feel that the people will not only feel reassured but see the wisdom of remaining loyal subjects of His Majesty.”

“You’re asking a lot from a crowd of frightened people, but I’ll give it a shot. I do have to warn you, however, I’m not a politician. I don’t know how to ignore questions when a reporter asks so instead I just give them an honest answer. Are you certain that’s what you want?”

Before they went with Lieutenant Quentes to see the burial site, Candle had a brief, private session with Six and Elie. “In spite of what I just told the lot out there,” he told them in his office, “there’s not even a chance that we are not dealing with the Bond of Aritos. The question is, ‘Which one is it?’ Now have you two been practicing that exercise I showed you last night?” Both nodded. “Good. Protection from the Bond is a matter of concentrating on your own pattern. This protects us from external change.”

“You told us that last night,” Elie pointed out, “but I still don’t understand. Do we all have patterns? Are there signs that represent us in a mystical way like the Bond of Aritos represents the demons and the Sign of Aritos is for Aritos Himself?”

“That is correct. Don’t obsess over that too much. You don’t actually have to know your pattern to protect it. It will be sometime before you can actually see your pattern and when you do, you won’t find the knowledge very useful since you won’t be able to do anything with it as a spell ingredient that you cannot do in another way.”

“What about somebody else’s pattern?” Six asked.

“Don’t do that,” Candle advised. “In essence that is what the demons did and what other mortals do when they use the Bond. The capacity for harm by directly manipulating someone’s pattern is too great. There are gentler and equally effective means at your disposal, or will be. Besides, your pattern is supposed to change over time. It is the symbol representing you and everything you know and can do. As you grow and learn and experience, it does as well. For now, just keep concentrating on maintaining who you are. If we run into a fresh Bond of Aritos, you’ll need all your personal strength to resist it.

“I wish we had not run into this at this particular time in your training, but then I was not much more advanced when I was first exposed to the Bond. Be careful and do not attempt to examine the Bond if we find it unless I tell you to. Do not look at it, or touch it or even think about it too much. Those are all ways in which it can affect you.”

They rode north out of Silamon along a moderately busy three-lane highway with an open carload of marine guards just behind them. The road was unlike anything Elie or Six had seen before. The outside lanes were for traveling north and south respectively, but the center lane was for passing. “This seems rather dangerous,” Six opined as he discussed it with Quentes.

“It is,” the policeman confirmed. “It was all right, I suppose, thirty years ago when the road was built. There was far less traffic on the road then and the likelihood of two cars in that lane, but traveling in the opposite direction was less frequent. There is talk of adding an extra lane and perhaps a barrier in places between on-coming lanes.”

“Why didn’t they just build four lanes in the first place?” Six asked.

“Road building is expensive,” Quentes explained. “Doing it this way cut the expense by twenty-five percent and it did work at first, but as traffic has become heavier, people have come to take more unnecessary chances, so in the long run the expense has been much higher this way.” He pulled the car he was driving over to the shoulder. “We’re here,” he announced. Their guard contingent pulled in just behind them and the marines in the car got out and stationed themselves strategically around the cars.

The makeshift graves had been dug into the ditch on the side of the road. Freshly overturned earth showed the mounds where the bodies had been. “They were not buried deeply,” Quentes explained. “We had hoped there might be more in the area, but so far no others have been found.”

Candle pulled out the golden pen and allowed it to grow out into the staff he customarily walked with. Elie and Six watched as he concentrated on the burial site. “Nothing here,” he told them almost immediately. “not so much as a trace of the spells I saw yesterday. Lieutenant, how far up and down the road did your men look?”

“A quarter of a mile at least,” he responded. “You can see the overturned dirt where they looked.”

“You missed a few spots,” Candle observed, seeing the spaces between the areas where the policemen had been digging.

“There wasn’t much need to look beneath areas that were obviously undisturbed,” Quentes replied.

“I suppose not,” Candle agreed.

“Why didn’t you look on the other side of the road?” Elie asked. She was standing by the car with her eyes closed, facing away from the others.

“How do you know we didn’t?” Quentes asked.

“I’m a relative beginner,” Elie replied, “so maybe I’m misinterpreting what I’m seeing. Uncle Candle? Please be careful, I think this is that Bond of Aritos you’ve been warning us about.” She suddenly wrenched her head away from the far side of the road and opened her eyes.

“Are you all right, Elie?” Six asked worriedly.

“I think so,” she replied. “I think it tried to get me though.”

“You’re okay,” Candle assured her. “It was powerful, but, like the ones at the coroner’s, it has already degenerated. You three stay here, and don’t try to watch what I’m doing.”

He walked across the highway enveloped in a faintly visible red aura. One of the marines followed him, but stayed several feet away. On the other side of the road Candle walked back and forth for a while, shadowed by his guardian, then stopped for a long while as the faint aura spread out to cover the ditch on the other side for as far as the others could see. Then the aura disappeared and two rays of golden light shot out from the staff.

“You’ll find five more on that side; a group of three and another pair,” he told Quentes on returning. “I marked the locations with wooden stakes.”

“How?” Quentes asked. “You didn’t have a hammer to drive them in with.”

“I didn’t have stakes to drive in either,” Candle replied. “Don’t think about it if it bothers you. I did learn one thing, however. There’s no chance of my having been wrong. Those poor people were killed by the use of the Bond of Aritos. Someone has found a way to tap into the power of the Demon Xenlabit.”

Fifteen

“I’m sorry, kids,” Candle told them after they had returned to the *Maiyim Bourne*, “but we’re going to have to accelerate your training. Elie, you had a near miss this afternoon.”

“I know, Uncle,” she replied. “I could feel it pulling at me.”

“Sixtus, you probably would have been able to resist it better than Elie could, but you could easily have been taken by surprise. I hope you’re both ready for this.”

“We will be,” Six assured him.

“I hope so. The danger here is that I’m going to be teaching you some high-powered techniques. If you aren’t completely under control, you have a good chance of killing yourselves.”

“All right,” Elie replied. Her face had gone slightly white at Candle’s words and she was trying to not act afraid. “What do we do?”

“You two are still having trouble with keyed wards,” Candle noted, “but I want you to stop working on them and start practicing impervious and selectively pervious wards.”

They spent the next hour working on that and Candle was pleased that both Six and Elie showed such immediate progress on the new technique. He was certain they could erect adequate protection against a Bond of Aritos spell, if it didn’t catch them unawares. Impervious wards, however, were not particularly dangerous, but before he could get to what he really had in mind, Maia arrived at the pier.

“Hello in there!” she called out as she boarded the boat. “Anyone home?”

“We’re in here,” Elie called out, “but hold up a minute. It’s a bit odd in here at the moment. Okay, it’s safe now,” she finished, opening the hatch for Maia.

“What are you doing here tonight? Is there a problem?” Candle asked her as she entered with a large basket.

“You’ve been having me over for dinner so much, I thought I should at least bring something for you,” Maia replied. “That’s not really why I’m here, but I did want to reciprocate and my apartment isn’t really big enough for all of us.” She opened the basket and started removing various items from it.

“So what really did bring you here?” Candle asked as Maia took a bottle of wine from the basket.

“The Dragon scheduled your press conference first thing tomorrow morning,” Maia told him. Next she pulled a ceramic pot from the basket.

“The Dragon?” Six asked. As if on cue, they heard the low shriek of a dragon from outside, a common nighttime sound in Silamon.

“Mrs. Urchart,” Maia amplified. “I’m sorry, I tried to stop her; tell her that was up to you, Wizard, but she said it was on Sir Henric’s orders.” Finally, she brought out a loaf of bread and some cheese.

“The prime minister and I are going to have words about that if it’s true,” Candle growled. “Oh well, what’s done is done. I warned them what would happen if they put me in front of a bunch of reporters.” Elie started bring plates, glasses and utensils to the table.

“Why, sir?” Maia asked, fearfully. “What will you do?”

“I’ll tell them the truth, of course,” Candle replied grimly. “I’ve rarely encountered a politician who wanted to have anything to do with the truth, but this lot is going to have to meet it head on now. Oh, cheer up,” he told her, seeing the worry on Maia’s face, “by this time tomorrow you’ll probably be back to more normal jobs around Government House.”

“But I like working for you,” Maia told him. She opened the pot and started dishing out generous portions of a thick stew. “I don’t suppose you could use me in Randona? Look, I’ve even learned that first exercise you’ve given me!” She screwed her face up and closed her eyes. Then, ever so hesitantly a fork lifted up off the table. It rose all of two inches before plummeting back down to clatter on the wooden surface.

“Very good!” Candle commended her even as she looked disappointed by her effort. “Maybe we can work something out. In the meantime, we’re not done here yet and that stew smells delicious.”

They enjoyed Maia’s stew for a few minutes before Maia asked, “But what will you do if Sir Henric dismisses you?”

“We’re not going anywhere,” Candle told her firmly. Sir Henric would have to have us forcibly expelled. Even then I’d just sail to another part of the island and hire a car to bring me back here.”

“That could get you arrested,” Maia worried.

“I know it sounds like something from bad cinema, but there isn’t a jail in the world that can hold me if I don’t want to stay there. If I’m in a good mood they’ll still have a jail left when I’m done. What’s going on is too important to worry about politicians and bureaucrats. However, I doubt it will come to that,” Candle concluded. “The situation is too iffy. They’re telling the public they brought us in to handle the situation. Firing us the next day would only make matters worse, no matter what I said. Besides, I’m not so cracked that I would really go out of my way to worsen the situation. I’m just used to speaking my mind and I wanted those yahoos you have running the government to realize that I can’t be expected to lie for them. Now, apprentices, it’s time to move on to the tough stuff.”

They spent the next three hours until midnight up on the pier where Candle continued to coach them. Having given them some grounding in protective wards, he now started them on offensive magic. “You already know what you need; fire spells, levitation, that sort of thing. Now you need to learn a whole new way to apply that knowledge. You also need more practice with impermeable wards, so for starters, Elie, I want you to cast as strong an impermeable ward as you can near the end of the pier. Six, I want you to find a way to break through it. When you do, you change places.”

While they did that, Candle caught Maia practicing basic levitation. “Is this a serious interest?” he asked her.

“I don’t know,” she admitted. “I’ve always been a bit clumsy, that might not be a healthy trait for a mage.”

“Silverwind was not particularly coordinated when he wasn’t practicing magic, Candle informed her. “Now that was a little too exciting, especially when he was experimenting with explosives. The funny thing is I was never really worried about it. I trusted him implicitly, I guess. Look, if you want to be a mage, I’ll give you the same training, Sixtus and Elie are getting. If you just want to get better at telekinesis so you catch whatever you drop before it hits the floor, I’ll help you there too. Whatever you want.

“You don’t have to be a professional mage to use magic. There was a time when everyone used some magic.”

“Everyone used telekinesis?” Maia asked skeptically.

“No, but why not?” Candle countered with a chuckle. “Why shouldn’t they? Why shouldn’t talented children play catch with their minds? Why shouldn’t a young woman be able to protect herself with a ward when she thinks she’s in danger, or be able to fight back if attacked? And how is casting your own spells any different from using technological magic to do the same things? Except technological magic doesn’t do the same things does it? Now why is that?

“I know it is possible to store a spell in an object until it is released by someone who holds it,” Candle continued. “I’ve seen it done. For the life of me, however, I cannot figure out how it was done.”

“Why didn’t you just ask the person who did it?” Maia asked.

“It isn’t that easy,” Candle sighed. “Did you ever hear of ‘One Maiyim?’”

“Yes, I have,” Maia replied, surprising Candle. “My grandfather was a member when he was at University. I found a small membership pin in his desk drawer once when I was young. He told me about a wonderful organization that was committed to peace and interspecies cooperation. Then he told me how the organization was implicated in the attempted assassination of King Ksaveras. He quit immediately. Said he wouldn’t have anything to do with such a pack of hypocrites.”

“Good for him. The group was already trying to abolish the use of magic by then but they were evidently not above using magic themselves. They did that in Querna and then again some years later in Randona. They were not likely to give me the answers I wanted in the best of cases. After they were dead, not even the Gods could have gotten the answers out of them.”

“The Gods probably already know how to do that,” Maia commented.

“They probably do at that,” Candle chuckled, “but they’re not likely to tell me, now are they?”

“I suppose not,” Maia smiled. “Well, I don’t know that I want to be a mage. Maybe I will, maybe not, but I do know I like magic. I like seeing magic used. I really like using magic, even if I’m not very good at it and I think I really like working with mages or at least I like working with you.”

“There aren’t too many of us left,” Candle told her, “but don’t sell yourself short. There are a lot of folks

who couldn't do what you've managed in the short time I've known you."

"I've been trying longer than that," Maia confessed. "A lot longer. I found an old book in the back of a used book store a few years ago. It gave instructions on how to cast simple spells. I wasn't very good at them."

"I know that type of book," Candle told her. "They aren't very good; very ineffective in fact. I wouldn't judge your abilities by anything you tried to do according to that book. What you do need to work on is control. Lately I find myself saying that a lot," he chuckled, taking a look at what Six and Elie were up to. Six was currently maintaining a ward at which Elie was hurling fireballs. Six's ward was visibly buckling under the assault, but it was still holding, but Candle knew it was only because Elie's attacks were still too weak, not because of Six's defense abilities. "It's true though," he continued with Maia. "Control is what sets masters apart from novices. Why don't you practice a bit more while I talk to Sixtus and Elie."

He got up and walked over to where the two apprentices were working, "Let me give you some help. Sixtus, hold that ward." A moment later, Candle cast a spell that shattered Six's ward with ease.

"How did you do that?" Six asked, amazed.

"I used what's called a projectile ward," Candle explained. "I made a small, spherical ward about the size of an eight-base ball and shot it at your curtain ward. Elie's fireballs are unlikely to have ever gotten through your ward unless they were backed up by a projectile ward, although she was shaking your ward up more than she should have been able to. Remember what I've told both of you about using external power sources. There are other forces that might have smashed through as well, but I think I'd like you two not to experiment with lightning just yet.

"There's another way to get past most wards, however," Candle continued. "Study the way a ward is built. The ones you've been learning are what Oceanvine and I used to call direct current wards. You'll see that magical energy flows through your wards in a regular pattern and in a set frequency. Once you know that pattern and frequency, it is possible to make something, even yourself, in phase with the ward and thereby pass right through it as though it's not even there. It's getting late though. Maybe you want to break for today?"

"I'd like to keep working," Elie told him. Six nodded agreement.

"Very well, but no more than another hour. I have a feeling tomorrow is going to be a long day."

An hour later, Six entered the Cabin to tell Candle, "Elie and I are going to see Maia gets home safely. What's up?"

Candle had just turned on the *Maiyim Bourne's* transceiver. "Calling a friend," Candle replied. "Normally I'd just use the telephone, but a call from Sutheria to Granom these days is too likely to be tapped."

"Anyone could listen to your broadcast, sir," Six commented as Elie and Maia entered the cabin.

"Not on this frequency," Candle replied. "So far as I know this band isn't in use anywhere else in the

world. Technically, I suppose it is illegal to use it, but since I'm not likely to get caught, what the Communications Ministry doesn't know won't hurt it."

He picked up the microphone and started talking, "KBMG 7776 calling Fireiron. Come in, Fireiron." He paused and said to the others, "If She doesn't answer, I may have to resort to using the phone at Government House. "Come in, Fireiron," he repeated. "It's mid-morning at Her forge, but there's no certainty She's at home, of course."

"Who is Fireiron?" Maia asked as Candle repeated his call.

"An old friend," Elie explained. "We met Her a few weeks ago in Renton ." She refrained from explaining just who Fireiron was since Candle was not calling Her Methis.

Finally a response came, "This is Artifice. M... uh... Fireiron is not in at the moment, Candle. May I assist?" Maia was amazed at how clear and strong the signal from Granom was, but said nothing.

"I was actually looking for you," Candle admitted, "But I was not sure which of Your offices You might be in today."

"I was planning to spend some time in Midon," Aritos replied, "but it's still night there. How may I help you?"

Midon? Maia wondered. *But if this Artifice person is in Granom... how?*

"I have a few questions," Candle told him.

"You always do!" Aritos laughed.

"I suppose I do," Candle admitted wryly. "This time I'm really in a need-to-know situation."

"Tell me about it," Aritos requested.

Candle explained what they had discovered so far. "Is there any way Xenlabit or one of his brothers might have escaped their captivity?"

"None whatsoever," Aritos responded immediately. "None but Arithan was capable of doing so previously and this time they were imprisoned far more securely. You would need the combined cooperative power of all seven Elder Gods to undo what was done."

"What if someone were to find a way to invent a spell that incorporated the power of a nuclear device?" Candle pressed.

Aritos was quiet for a long time, but eventually he replied, "No, not even then. It took Me a while to work out the implications, but even with several such bombs you would still be shy by an entire order of magnitude of the power you would need. There is currently no power on Maiyim capable of freeing Xenlabit or any of the others."

"Then that raises the next most unpleasant possibility," Candle replied, "That the power of the demons can be tapped even though they are imprisoned."

"Well, yes of course, it can," Aritos replied.

“Oh, I was hoping that was not the case,” Candle muttered.

“Why would you have even thought that?” Aritos asked.

“In my experience, the Bonds of Aritos have only been used in conjunction with an active demon,” Candle replied.

“I’m sorry, old friend,” Aritos replied, “but strange as it may seem to hear, your experience is limited. There is no reason the signs of the demons cannot be exploited even if they are imprisoned. In fact, it is far safer in that situation since you do not risk raising the associated demon. The peril to one’s soul, of course remains as great.”

“Is there anyway you could detect when someone attempts to use the Bond and perhaps prevent it?” Candle asked,

“I wish that I could,” Aritos replied, “But it has apparently slipped your mind that the Bond is actually misnamed. It has nothing to do with Me, but there is a small service I can do for you. You have permission to use My Seal at need.” There was a bit of static coming over the speaker.

“That’s generous of You,” Candle acknowledged as the static grew slightly louder, “but how do I do that?”

“You’ve been studying My sign off and on for the last sixty years,” Aritos replied, his voice now nearly lost in the static. “I imagine you ought to know enough by...” That was all they were able to hear.

“Was that who I think it was?” Maia asked in a small frightened voice. “Was that really...” her voice dropped to just a whisper, “Aritos?”

“It was,” Candle confirmed simply.

“He’s not at all like the stories told about him,” Six commented. “I spoke to him at length one night a few weeks ago when we were in Renton . He’s a very pleasant sort of fellow to spend time with, I thought.”

“Elie?” Maia asked. “Did you talk to Aritos as well?”

“Briefly,” she responded. “I spent most of that evening chatting with Methis. That’s Fireiron. Nildar and Wenni were there as well.”

“They were?” Maia asked. “What in the world were they all doing in Renton ?”

“They came to my great-grandmother’s funeral,” Elie replied.

“Doctor Oceanvine,” Six explained hastily.

“Oh,” Maia replied softly. “No wonder you’re so good at magic. It must run in the family,” she added to Elie.

“Not so you could tell,” Elie replied. “I’m the first of my family to even try in recent generations.”

“Still, if you’re the great-granddaughter of Ocenavine and Silverwind, you must have some natural

ability,” Maia insisted.

“Only time will tell,” Elie replied modestly. “I’m still doing beginner stuff. In a few years we’ll see what I can do.”

“Not so,” Candle corrected her. “You’ve been performing journeyman level magic for weeks now. Many apprentices did, even in my day. What differentiates you from a journeyman mage is that a graduate would have a wider range of experience. Apprenticeship is the period in which you learn journeyman level magic. In your term as a journeyman, you’ll learn how to cast master-level spells. And as I told you earlier, we’re going to accelerate your training so you’ll have a chance if we run into whoever has been using the Bond of Aritos. Some of the stuff I’ve had you doing this evening was considered Master level by some when I was your age. It’s not a clear cut line, you see. Oh there are some forms of magic that all agree should not be performed by an unsupervised apprentice or journeyman; spells that directly influence the mind or creation magic, for example, but in many cases the amount of energy in a spell was the differentiator.”

“It’s very late,” Maia commented, “and I ought to get home.” As if to punctuate her words the sound of sirens could be heard uphill in the city.

“It’s too late,” Candle disagreed, “and I don’t like the sound of things out there. You had better stay here tonight. It’s too late to call a taxi and our marine guards are off duty until tomorrow morning.”

“You can stay in my cabin,” Elie offered. “The bed is fairly large. I doubt we’ll bother each other over much.”

“I don’t have any bed clothes here,” Maia protested, “and we don’t wear the same size by a long shot.” Maia was several inches taller than Elie and proportionately larger in all dimensions.

“If I can’t find something that’s a perfect fit, in both size and fashion,” Elie replied, “it will be a first.”

Maia looked puzzled at that announcement and then even more so when Candle told Elie, “Go ahead, and answer all her questions. Maia will figure it out for herself eventually, I think. Good night.”

Sixteen

“I can’t believe this is the real *Maiyim Bourne*!” Maia said yet again while she and Elie had breakfast the next morning. They were dressed in identical outfits from what Elie laughingly called the “Oceanvine Collection;” Bellinen silk blouses over mid-length cream-colored skirts. Elie was sipping coffee and Maia had strong black tea. Both were enjoying small, round pastries with a variety of fillings. Neither had ever seen anything like them. Because of the way they were dressed, Elie had merely “asked” the food box for something Oceanvine might have liked. The plain-looking pastry spheres had at first disappointed her. They just did not look like anything special until they bit into them. Their mouths were filled with the tastes of fresh berries, chocolate, custard and much more. Each pastry seemed to have a different flavor inside and because they were so small, the women were each able to eat nearly a dozen of the delicate morsels.

“What’s this?” Candle asked, seeing how they were dressed, “the new school uniform?” He was dressed in a similar shirt and a fresh pair of jeans.

“The latest fashion for young, up-and-coming female apprentices, don’t you know?” Elie shot back

playfully. Maia did not quite blush, but she did look like she was about to. “We thought it was appropriate.”

“You’ve hardly worn anything else since you got onboard,” Candle observed. “I’m a bit surprised at you, Maia, however. Won’t that outfit clash with the unofficial uniform of Government House?”

“Not really,” Maia shrugged. “The colors are a bit brighter than most of the girls wear, but the materials are very normal.”

“The color scheme was what I had in mind,” Candle replied.

“It’s flashy,” Maia admitted, “but it’s about time there was a bit of color in the office. And so long as my current boss doesn’t complain, it’s allowable. You aren’t going to complain, are you, Wizard?”

“I suppose I’m not,” Candle laughed, looking at the sleeve of his own shirt.. He helped himself to a large mug of coffee then spotted the platter of pastries. “Where did either of you ever learn about these?” he asked, even as he eagerly reached for several of the pastries. “Wow! I haven’t had these in years.”

“What are they?” Elie asked, “other than utterly delicious, that is?”

“They’re from Sahren, one of the Granomish islands. I first discovered these in the kitchen of the WurraPalace in Querna.” Candle gobbled down the pastries he had chosen and reached for more.

“I could eat these every morning,” Maia sighed.

“Eat too many of these and I’d probably attain the same shape,” Elie remarked taking yet another spheroid.

“Hah!” Maia laughed. “You look like the sort who has to gorge several days in a row just to gain a few ounces.”

“I wish!” Elie replied.

“Why didn’t you all warn me we were supposed to dress like Orenta today?” Six asked as he joined them. He was wearing a denim shirt and tan slacks.

“There’s one in every crowd,” Maia chuckled.

“Eat up,” Candle instructed. “The press conference is in less than an hour and I imagine the politicians will be a bit less nervous if I actually arrive a bit early.”

“That probably explains why there are so many guardsmen up on the dock this morning,” Six observed.

“Are there?” Candle asked.

“I stuck my head through the bow hatch to see how the weather was this morning,” Six explained. “It’s decidedly military out there. A new ship, a carrier, is in the harbor and there were a lot of armed sailors patrolling the docks. Our marine guards are waiting for us too.”

“That was to be expected,” Candle replied. “Sir Henric wouldn’t want me to lose my way looking for Government House this morning. Just for that, I’m going to have another cup of coffee.”

In spite of the pretense of stalling, Candle rushed through his second cup, grabbed another handful of the Sahrenese pastries and managed to arrive at his office a good half an hour before the press conference. The trip through the city was less eventful than the previous day, but the presence of marines and sailors at every corner obviously had a quieting effect on the city. Sir Henric said as much when Candle asked.

“I just hope it doesn’t make matters worse,” Candle worried. “Posting military guards everywhere doesn’t really say you have everything under control. To me it says just the opposite and that the only way you know how to deal with it is to be ready to shoot anyone who makes a fuss.”

“Well, I hope this morning’s press conference will go a long way toward reassuring the public,” Sir Henric replied, “but just in case, His Royal Majesty is sending a brigade of the Royal National Guard. Oh, and he commended me on hiring you and your students.”

“He knows we’re here?” Candle asked, slightly shaken.

“Yes,” Sir Henric nodded happily. “I mentioned how you sailed into port and volunteered your services and His Majesty graciously agreed to pay your bill himself on your return to Randona.”

“Yes, that was nice of him,” Candle agreed, wondering just how much Sir Henric had told the king and whether Hacon Ancel would realize that Candle had given him a counterfeit *Maiyim Bourne*. He had not planned on being so high profile in the boat this summer; events just happened. *No helping that now*, he thought to himself. “So how will this conference go?” he asked out loud. “I’m not expected to give a speech, am I?”

“No, that won’t be necessary,” Sir Henric replied assuringly. “I’ll make a statement as will Sir Rechard, then eventually we’ll turn the podium over to you for questions about the magical aspect of the case.”

“Oh good,” Candle nodded. “I lecture well enough, but if I have to make a speech I need more time to prepare than I had this time.”

Sir Henric performed a polite and practiced chuckle while Candle sourly wondered what the prime minister found so amusing. Candle reminded himself that Silverwind had always been willing to talk to reporters and give official statements, but Candle was more action-oriented and resented any thing that diverted him from his chosen course of action.

The press conference went well enough. Sir Henric gave a brief speech that essentially said nothing, followed by Sir Rechard who gave the reporters the latest updates on where bodies had been found and who they had been if their next of kin had been notified. His news was very up to the minute including another victim who had been found to the south of the city. Unfortunately, three more people, one man and two women, have been reported missing in the last day and the ladies and gentlemen of the press demanded to know why the police had been unable to prevent these disappearances and what they intended to do to prevent still more in the future. That’s when he announced that the prime minister had hired three mages to assist in the investigation “And this seems to be the perfect time to introduce the Wizard Candle who will be delighted to take your questions on the matter,” Sir Rechard concluded.

“Wizard Candle!” Several reporters chorused at once. Candle may not have liked giving press conferences, but he did know the routine. He let them go on for an extra second or two and then chose one of them at random.

“Jarred Grocer, Silamon Post,” the first man introduced himself. “What are your credentials, Wizard?”

“My credentials, Mr. Grocer?” Candle echoed. “You have just stated them. I’m a wizard. My two assistants are also mages.”

“Excuse me,” the reporter requested. “I meant, where did you earn your degrees and what do you usually do for a living?”

“Ah. I have degrees from all three universities,” Candle informed him. “I currently am on the faculty of the University at Randona, where I conduct research and occasionally even teach.”

“I see,” Grocer nodded, “and how does that qualify you to conduct a murder investigation?”

“I am hardly conducting the investigation,” Candle replied, “I am merely handling the forensic magic aspects of it. Before you ask, however, I have, in the past, worked on similar projects for The Royal Bureau of Investigation in Querna, the Emmine Royal Intelligence Bureau, and the Department of Justice in Rjalkatyp. Ladies and gentlemen, I am what is sometimes called a general practitioner in magic and as such the range of my abilities is far wider than that of a modern magic technician. Next question?”

“Maidel Kornedd, Randona Herald. We heard that you were also investigating the cause of the recent tsunamis,” a woman began. “Is that true and what have you learned?”

“True enough, Miss Kornedd,” Candle told her, “We discovered the waves were caused by landslides in association with recent eruptions of Mount Petronelle on Robander’s Island. There isn’t a lot of land left to slide into the ocean there, so I’m fairly certain there shouldn’t be any further large waves from that quarter for some time to come, although I am still waiting for a full analysis of the data supplied by scientists at Petronelle Station.”

“Isn’t that a Granomish Outpost?” she asked.

“It is, yes,” Candle replied. “Do you have a problem with that?”

“We are not currently on friendly terms with Granom,” Maidel Kornedd pointed out.

“You may not be on friendly terms with Granom, Miss Kornedd,” Candle shot back, “but I have never had that particular problem. Besides if I had to wait for human scientists to provide that particular data, I would still be waiting a century from now. The Granomen were in the right place and time to make the necessary recordings and they were generous enough to give them to us with no thought of repayment. Obviously you would not have done likewise had the situation were reversed. Too bad. Next?”

The next few questions involved the deaths of the people who had been found so far and Candle answered as best as he could but when one reporter asked, “Wizard Candle, isn’t it true you are a foreign agent for King Ksaveras and have been for most of your adult life?”

“That will be all,” Sir Henric interrupted the press conference abruptly. “We will hold another conference tomorrow afternoon.”

“No,” Candle told him. “I’ll answer that question before we break.” He turned toward the man who had asked the question. “And you are?”

“Mike Maison, The Emmine Examiner,” the reporter replied defiantly. The Examiner did not enjoy the same good reputation as the other papers that were represented at the conference. However, Candle

answered the question as though it had come from a more reputable source.

“Mister Maison, I am not now, nor have I ever been an agent of the Granomish Government. I do freely admit that I hold a knighthood granted me not by the current monarch of Granom, but by his grandfather. I am also the Marquess of Sentendir by the actions of that same King Ksaveras. I imagine that had you saved his life, he would have been similarly grateful. As I mentioned, I have been employed by His Majesty’s Bureau of Investigation on a few occasions when they were in need of my talents. Every such occasion was in Querna and never on what for them was foreign soil. For the record, my title to Sentendir comes with no revenues, since the island continues to be uninhabited. So it really is just a pretty title used on those rare occasions I actually show up in court. Last time that happened was about twenty years ago.

“However, I have advised and assisted King Hacon Ancel far more times than I have any Granomish monarch or Orentan senator. It may seem hard for you to believe, but even these days there is some small call for the services of general practice mage. Any further questions?” There was a brief silence while the assembled reporters paused to take in his speech, but Candle didn’t give them a chance to recover, “Thank you for coming,” he told them all. “Now we can leave,” he said to Sir Henric while the assembled representatives of the Press all started screaming for one last question. “Why do they always do that?” Candle mused as they left the room through a door at the back. “They know we’re not going to answer any more questions.”

“The nature of the beast, Wizard,” Sir Henric replied. “The nature of the beast. I wish I had known about your Granomish affiliations, however.”

“There was a time when Granom was Emmine’s closest friend. It was during that time that what you call affiliations were formed,” Candle told him coldly. “I will not turn my back on friends, regardless of their species or politics any more than I would simply walk away from you in this time of crisis.”

Sir Henric stopped walking, causing a pile-up among the others behind them. He turned and faced Candle and just looked at him. He spoke again only after a long pause, “Thank you, Wizard. I appreciate it. What will you be doing next?”

“Continue to work with the police, I suppose,” Candle replied. “The bodies they are finding are incredibly dangerous and it’s probably best if I dispel even the degenerated spell traces on them. I do wish I had thought to check for magical traces on Mount Petronelle, however. That eruption could be related to what is going on here.”

“I don’t see how,” Sir Henric disagreed.

“That’s because you aren’t a scholar of demonic studies. The spell being used here is linked to the power of a demon called Xenlabit. Like his brothers, Xenlabit has a number of unique attributes and abilities. One of those is the ability to create tectonic disturbances. The last time I faced him, creating tsunamis was his favorite trick. We’re fortunate to not be facing him directly here, but merely a mortal who has found a way to exploit Xenlabit’s power.”

“Will you be able to track this person down and stop him?” Sir Henric asked.

“I’m going to try,” Candle responded grimly.

The next week was spent mostly in helping the police. The mages spent an entire day, just riding around in the back of a slow-moving police vehicle, looking for more spell traces that would mark the bodies of missing people. The mission was fairly successful in that they were able to find another twelve victims, but the spell traces were all too degenerate to be of much forensic use. One, however, was close enough to intact for Candle to show his two students some basic diagnostic techniques. The techniques started with comparing auras for similarities, but their questions about how much they could learn led Candle to lecture on the more advanced forms of diagnosis.

“The trick to figuring out how a spell works and what it is supposed to do has a lot to do with experience,” Candle told them after casting a protective ward that allowed them to study the spell traces on one victim in safety. “Now you already know there is a strong compulsive element to this spell. That aspect fades fairly quickly, although not as quickly as the key aspects of the spell.”

“How do you know that?” Elie asked.

“What do you mean?” Candle responded.

“How do you know there are other key aspects of this spell?” she clarified. “Maybe it was all compulsion and that’s why those traces we do find are so strong.”

“That is a possibility,” Candle admitted, “but using the Bond of Aritos to simply compel someone is roughly analogous to using a sledge hammer to drive in a one-inch brad. It’s clumsy, over-powered and likely to do more than you actually want. Still, I suppose whoever is behind this may have no idea of the sort of fire he or she is playing with. Perhaps he thinks he is safe so long as Xenlabit is imprisoned.”

“So, if the spell was used only for compulsion, what were the victims compelled to do?” Six asked.

“Impossible to say,” Candle admitted. “With a less dangerous spell, we could sink ourselves into the workings and follow the paths of energy. When you have studied enough spells you can understand what a spell is supposed to do when you analyze one that way. In this case we would be in too much danger of falling afoul of this curse. Keep in mind the compulsion could be simply to die. A spell like this can reach right down into your automatic functions. It can make you forget to breathe or cause your heart to stop beating. We’ll work on that sort of analysis this fall when we’re back in Randona. For now, I’m satisfied you can be in the presence of this sort of magic safely. However, don’t let your guard down. Anyone might be vulnerable to a spell if they aren’t especially careful and whoever is casting the Bond of Aritos may have enough power at his disposal to blast through your defenses.”

They did not see the geologists at all that week because they had left to make more observations at Mount Kol, but Captain Maislen continued to show up for the meetings even though the Navy’s main interest in the case had already been satisfied. “We are still involved in the security of these islands,” he explained, “and the recent riots and on-going protests are of great concern. Admiral Centerin suggested to General Jancourt that the Marines would be well-served in sending a representative to these meetings, but the general did not believe we could be of any use to him.”

“There always has been tension between the various armed forces,” Candle observed. “What is happening on the other islands?”

“That’s what I wanted to talk about,” Maislen replied. “Our operatives on Marh and Kemalart have reported the continued unrest is being supported by outside agitators.”

“Outside agitators? Any idea where they are from?” Candle asked.

“Naturally we suspect Royal Granom,” Maislen replied.

“Naturally,” Candle replied sourly. “What would Ksaveras gain from unrest in Sutheria? She’ll never be a Granomish colony and Hacon Ancel has been encouraging Sutherian autonomy for years.”

“That’s not for me to say, Wizard. I’m just passing on the latest word,” Maislen shrugged. “At least one foreign agent was arrested on Marh; a Granomish subject.”

“Are you sure he was an agent?” Candle asked.

“I’m sure he was a Granom and he was encouraging the protestors to riot. He confessed readily enough. I understand Sir Henric has ordered that all foreign Granomen be detained for questioning.”

“This is getting out of hand,” Candle grumbled.

However, when he went to the prime minister to protest the action, Sir Henric told him, “My concern is for the people of Sutheria, not foreign troublemakers.”

Candle finally decided it was time to take a look at MountKol . “Doctor Gonnev hasn’t returned yet,” he explained to those who were at the meeting the next morning. “I’ve really been regretting not having taken a closer look at MountPetronelle , and Kol is only a few hours away.”

Just then the door to the meeting room open and Sir Henric rushed in. “Terrible news,” he told them. “You must have heard about the arrests in Marh.”

“Captain Maislen informed me of them yesterday,” Candle replied. “I must say that was rather heavy-handed of you.”

“We’ll argue that later if you still insist on it,” Sir Henric snapped back. “One of the Granomen escaped incarceration by using magic.”

“Are you certain?” Candle asked, all traces of belligerence gone now.

“I’ll leave that to you,” Sir Henric replied. “Mayor Rauway of Neria tells me it was magic and I promised I’d ask you to look into it personally.”

“I’ll leave within the hour,” Candle promised.

Seventeen

“Wizard, I can arrange for a Navy plane to fly you to Neria,” Captain Maislen offered as they rode away from Government House in a Navy staff vehicle.. Maia was in the car with them, getting instructions from Candle as he would think of them

“Very kind of you, Captain,” Candle replied, “and normally I would take you up on the offer, but I still want to get a good, long look at MountKol . My boat is fast. We’ll be in Neria in time for dinner. Maia,

please let the authorities know we're on our way. I'll look at the cell in question immediately on arrival, no matter how late that may be."

"Yes, Wizard," Maia responded in a crisp, businesslike manner. Elie admired the way Maia could turn that professional tone on and off.

"Oh, and please tell them to stay out of that cell. Too many people inside may destroy what evidence we can use," Candle added.

"Yes, Wizard and I'll arrange a slip for the *Maiyim Bourneas* well," Maia told him.

"Good thinking," Candle commended her. "Please do that as soon as you get back to the office."

They drove right up to the base of the pier, Maia still scribbling Candle's instructions down on a steno pad. "Captain, would you be kind enough to take Maia back to Government House?" Candle requested.

"Of course," Maislen replied with a smile.

"Thank you," Candle replied, getting out of the car. Six and Elie were already racing down the pier to prepare for their departure. "Oh, Maia, one more thing," Candle added, sticking his head back inside. "Please come down to the boat."

"Might I have a quick look at her as well?" Maislen asked.

"We're in a hurry, but of course," Candle replied as they headed down the pier.

On board, Six and Elie already had the cabin open and were taking the cover off the mainsail. "In here, Maia," Candle told her as Captain Maislen helped Six and Elie. Inside the cabin, Candle picked up a small dark box with an antenna and a microphone. "This is a special radio," he continued. "You remember how I called Aritos the other night?" Maia nodded. "Use this to call me if you need to. Use the phones if I'm not on board, of course, but this way you'll be able to contact me, no matter what. This will work best at night, of course, unless I'm within fifty, sixty miles or so, but there's a chance I'll pick you up at any time of day."

"There are only three frequencies on it," Maia noted. "Which one do I use?"

"The one it's set on," Candle told her. "Don't use the others unless it's a dire emergency. It's only polite to let the Gods have Their privacy after all."

"And They probably wouldn't believe I dialed the wrong number, would They?" Maia asked with a smile.

"Ha, no," Candle chuckled. "Well, they would be polite enough, but until you've met them, it might be best to keep your conversations with the Gods restricted to the temples."

Candle piloted the boat away from the pier, but once they were clear of the other boats and ships, they hoisted the sails and were hydroplaning away from Silamon moments later.

They sailed up the east coasts of Lamona and Kemalart before crossing to the western side of Marh, but even when the wind died off two hours out from Neria, Candle used the staff to keep them aloft until they had entered the harbor.

They were met at the dock by Detective Lieutenant Jamis Gufford. "Thank you for coming so swiftly, Wizard. We all appreciate your assistance."

"You're welcome, Lieutenant," Candle replied. "I hope we can live up to your expectations. Has everyone been kept out of the cell?"

"We had already cordoned it off by the time your secretary called," Lieutenant Gufford replied.

"Wise move," Candle commended him.

"Perhaps not," Gufford shook his head. "Several men had already come down sick after entering."

"That doesn't sound good," Candle shook his head. A quarter hour later he repeated himself, "Not good at all."

The cell, like the others in the city's jail, was a small room with a cot, a toilet and a small sink. The bed had been tipped over to make more room and whoever had been inside have evidently used the heel of his shoe to leave scuff marks on the floor. Far from random marks on the bare cement floor, however, these formed a symbol Candle knew all too well. "The Bond of Aritos," he announced. Elie instinctively turned away from the cell, but Candle told her, "No, you can look in safety. I have it warded. This one works by contact, however, so merely looking at it is fairly safe so long as you do not dwell on the shape of the symbol."

"In fact," he continued, "I want you two to take a look at this one on the aural level. What do you see?"

"The energy of the spell," Six noted. "It's flowing back and forth."

"Like the tide," Elie added, "It flows in and out through the parts of the Bond."

"Yes, exactly," Candle agreed. "This is what the Xenlabit variant of the Bond looks like when it is completely intact. Notice the intricate swirls and eddies in the design. Those exist in each variant, of course, although the others don't look like flowing water. Gredac's Bond, for example, looks like it's some sort of plant, a thorny vine usually, with lots of tendrils."

"The water of this one looks polluted," Elie observed.

"Another common feature of the Bond of Aritos," Candle informed her. "They almost always contain an element of illness. Okay, now I'm going to drop my protective ward. I want to see if you two can resist the effects of this Bond."

Six and Elie both blanched, but nodded to acknowledge what was about to happen. "Don't worry," Candle encouraged them. "You've already done this with the degenerate forms of the Bond. The control you need is no different in this case. Ready?" They nodded and he let the protective ward dissolve.

Elie felt a slight tug in her head which she instinctively fought. It was a solution that would work for a time, but if forced to face this curse for more than a few minutes, she realized it would eventually deplete her resources. She considered the matter even as she fought. The Bond had more energy on its side than she had on hers. The difference was that the Bond had a limited set of instructions – things it could do – while she was bound only by her own imagination. A ward would work, of course. Candle had been using one to filter out the aggressive features of the Bond, but she was not certain she could cast such a

ward, just yet. She could cast one that was completely impervious, but then she would be unable to see the Bond as Uncle Candle obviously wanted her to.

Elie's mind was a creative one, however, and in spite of all her attempts to concentrate on a single matter, it had a habit of wandering at the oddest times. She did not yet understand that it might be the subconscious portion of her thoughts attempting to come up with new solutions. All she knew was that suddenly she had a mental image of one of the new "miracle" non-stick pots and pans that had come out on the market two or three years earlier. The apparent lack of concentration annoyed her and she quickly tried not to think of non-stick pans with the same results one gets as when told not to think of purple elephants.

Then a conscious thought came to her. It felt as though the Bond was trying to grab at her; to latch on to her soul. What if there was a layer of this new non-stick substance between her and the Bond? With that thought in mind, she quickly cast a ward to which the Bond, or anything else for that matter, could not stick.

Instantly the Bond of Aritos lost its tenuous hold on her and she felt the pressure release. She opened her eyes, unaware she had closed them to see a field of faint sparkles between her and the cell in front of her.

"Remarkable!" Candle exclaimed. Before Elie could ask what was remarkable the wizard continued, "Sixtus, that was very well done. Exactly what I wanted. A selectively permeable ward. But, Elie..."

"What did I do wrong?" she asked immediately.

"Wrong?" Candle laughed. "Nothing that I can see. You just invented an entirely new sort of ward. It was not what I had in mind, and I do want you to work on selective permeability, but this is utterly remarkable and will, no doubt, be extremely useful in the future. How did you do it?" Elie explained her thought process as best she could. Candle just shook his head. "Your great-grandmother must be laughing at me right now. I think I understand now why Vine used to get so exasperated while training me. I used to do the same sort of thing. I would just think of a solution and make it work, but when she tried the same stunt, she couldn't do it. Congratulations, Elie, you just avenged her. Well, if you're going to go invent new spells, I'll just have to treat you the same way Silverwind treated me when I did that. Your next assignment is to figure out how you did it in such a way that you can teach it to Sixtus and me."

"But I don't understand why you can't just do the same thing I did," Elie protested.

"If I imagine a non-stick pan, all I'm likely to come up with is something I can make an omelet in without butter," Candle told her. "Sixtus might not even do that much. What you need to figure out is why your ward functions the way it does rather than just the mental metaphor you used to create it. When you've figured it out, write it up as a paper."

"A paper?" Elie asked.

"Of course, a paper," Candle replied. "You are a student, aren't you. It's been a while since I taught a regular class, but I seem to remember we required our students to be literate. I want you to write me a paper. In the old days I would have seen it got published in one of the scholarly journals, but none of them are still in business. Still there are a few people who will want to see it; Southgate will be interested especially considering who you are. And Blizzard will too. She always did like to keep up with new magic even though she hasn't had the time to practice in decades."

“Blizzard?” Six asked. “Do you mean Madame Blizzard of Rjalkatyp?”

“Yes, that’s her. She still uses her mage name as you may have noticed.”

“She was president there practically forever, wasn’t she?” Elie asked.

“Thirty years is hardly forever. She kept trying to retire and the people kept calling her back. It’s been ten years since she was last involved in politics, however. Last letter I got from her, she’s been enjoying time with her grandchildren. She taught me some of the same forensic basics I’ve been teaching you.

“Now, I want you to watch me deactivate this copy of the Bond of Aritos,” Candle continued. “I could wish we had a different variant to start with. The Xenlabit Bond always was the toughest to work against because of its fluid nature. You have to affect the whole thing at once. The others you can take apart as long as you do it carefully and from behind a very strong ward, but this one you have to work on all at once. Fortunately, there is a major weakness we can exploit. Xenlabit, himself, was especially susceptible to heat. He got his power from water and when he got too hot, he would dehydrate and thereby lose energy. Carefully applied heat should cause his version of the Bond to lose energy as well.”

“But you cannot destroy energy,” Six objected. “Where will it go?”

“That’s where care and control come in,” Candle replied. “In this case I will use the staff to absorb it, but you can also allow it to dispel safely in other ways. On some spells you can actually turn the energy back on itself and cause the spell to bleed itself dry, but I wouldn’t recommend that in this case. The feedback loop you would create would make the spell far more powerful, although for only a short time. Now watch, but keep in mind that I only want you to understand what I am doing, don’t try it for yourself unless I tell you to.”

Candle went to work and as Six and Elie watched, the aura of the Bond of Aritos scratched into the floor slowly began to glow red. Then a gleaming spell string attached itself to Candle’s staff and they could see the raw energy of the spell flow into the golden staff. A minute later, the auras faded and when they opened their eyes again, the floor was clean, showing not even trace of the symbol that had been there.

“Other than confirming the fact we’re dealing with another mage,” Six commented, “we didn’t learn much here, did we?”

“What makes you say that?” Candle asked. “I could have dispelled the Bond in seconds. What took so long was my analysis of the spell. The mage did not need the Bond of Aritos to leave this cell. He translocated himself about one hundred yards to the north of here. That’s a tough spell, but requires nothing like the Bond to power it. There is, however, a major drawback when you translocate a living creature. Shock. The shock of the spell will knock you out for a while. If I were to translocate one of you one hundred yards I estimate you’d be out cold for five to fifteen minutes. I would probably be out for hours if it didn’t kill me altogether. This guy evidently used the Bond to absorb the shock. It allowed him to hit the ground running. A neat trick, although he took the risk of destroying himself in the process. It does give me a few ideas for safer ways to do the same thing, however.

“Now, let’s find out what the police knew about him, shall we?” he concluded.

“His name, or the name he was using, in any case, is Terabawa Grovinsk,” Detective Lieutenant Gufford told them a few minutes later.

“That’s the sort of name you might find on the Isle of Fire,” Candle commented. “Terabawa is of Orentan origin and as warm as relations may be between Bellinen and Granom these days, I doubt you’ll find many males in Granom sporting Orentan given names.”

“It could have been an alias,” Gufford replied.

“It probably was,” Candle agreed. “The question is, did he choose an alias from the Isle of Fire to throw us off or because it was what he was used to? My guess is that it was what he was used to. The Isle of Fire may be on good terms with Granom, but they are also very strict about the use and abuse of their passports. I cannot think of anything that would be more likely to cause them to sever their ties with Granom than a Granomish agent using a false passport.”

“Then who do you think this Grovinsk may be affiliated with?” Gufford asked.

“I honestly don’t know,” Candle admitted. “The Isle of Fire is technically neutral. I think they’re currently friendlier with Royal Granom, but there are no tensions between her and Emmine either. There are, of course, Granomen who are subjects of Emmine or citizens of Bellinen. There are not very many of them percentage-wise, I’ll agree, but they are loyal to the lands they live in, not the place of their species’ origin. There are also Granomen who live on Ellisto and in Wennil, but I don’t see what either of them would gain by your misfortune, especially when Emmine is their closest friend.”

“How about Saindo?” Six asked.

“Saindo?” Candle laughed. “No, I shouldn’t laugh; that isn’t funny. Wennil’s organization is based on self-governance. Some would call it anarchy, but only until they take a look at Saindo. Saindo is made up of petty chieftainships and gangs. They’ve been on a downward spiral of destructive anarchy for the last seven or eight decades. There are no longer any settlements large enough to be considered cities there. I would be surprised if there’s anyone there with the wherewithal to get out of the archipelago short of stowing away.”

“So there’s no one who would benefit from disrupting the peace in Sutheria,” Gufford concluded.

“Except maybe Terabawa Grovinsk,” Six put in.

“What do you mean?” the detective lieutenant asked.

“Good point,” Candle told Six at the same time. “This Terabawa may be attending to a private agenda. How old is he?”

“He claimed to be fifty-five and from the way he looked that couldn’t have been too far off,” Gufford replied.

“Good,” Candle nodded. “My guess, if that’s the case, is that he had some magical training at the apprentice level back in his teens. There were still a few small town masters taking on apprentices if they could find them back then. Somewhere along the way he discovered books on demonic magic. He may even have read my masters’ thesis. No one ever quite wrote down how to use the Bond of Aritos, but I found a good dozen books in the University Library at Merinne on the subject that told me everything I would need to know if I were stupid enough to want to play with demonic magic.

“One of the features of the Bond of Aritos in any form, is that it can be used to drain the energy from its victims and deliver it to the mage who casts it. Mister Grovinsk may be attempting to consolidate power

for some reason all his own and he could well have chosen Sutheria because he knew these islands were colonized after mages of my sort went out of fashion. There are no general practice mages here and if we had not chosen to come help in the aftermath of the tsunamis, there would have been no one here to even guess what he was doing. Did you say that there were people who entered the cell before we got here?"

"Indeed, Wizard," Gufford replied. "They are all in the hospital, in fact."

"Contact plague," Candle noted enigmatically. Seeing blank faces around him, he explained. "Everyone who touched the Bond while it was active got sick. How about everyone who touched them?"

"Only those who went into the cells to pull them out," Gufford told him.

"Is there anyone else who touched those people still here on duty?" Candle asked, showing concern.

"There may be," the detective lieutenant replied. "Let me check."

It turned out that there were five men on duty who had physical contact with the people who had entered the cell. Candle checked them, but very quickly sighed with relief. "We got lucky on that count," he told everyone. "The curse only worked by direct contact with the Bond in the cell. We could have had a really big mess here, but fortunately our rogue mage didn't think of that particular twist, or maybe he just didn't know how. Either way I won't complain. Now, let's go see if we can help those victims in the hospital."

Candle spent half an hour studying the victims in the hospital and the doctors and nurses who had been tending to them. As at the jail, there was no sign of person-to-person contagion of the spell, but the victims themselves were a different story.

"Sixtus, Elie, take a look at this man," Candle told them. "See how the Bond of Aritos is intertwined with his personal aura? That's the way it works, it adapts to the person it attaches to and insinuates itself into his aura and thereby latches on to his body and in some cases, his soul.

"Now in this case, the spell is not as complex as some I've seen," Candle continued his lecture. "Just as well. I wasn't looking for a challenge this evening."

"Uncle Candle?" Elie asked. "What is that spell string?"

"Well spotted, Elie," he commended her. "Xenlabit strings can be difficult to see. In water it is close to impossible except at night. This is why the victim is still unconscious. It is draining energy from him to our rogue mage. However it also has one benefit to us. It tells me approximately where our mage is. He is approximately two hundred and fifty miles to the south-southeast. My guess is Silamon. We must have crossed paths.

"The cure in this case is quiet easy. The spell is simple in spite of the fact it could have been far more complex, we can cure the victims merely by cutting the string. In fact it is something both of you are capable of doing. Just cast a small impermeable ward that breaks the string. Like this." As he concluded, a small black ward, visible to the eye, formed directly across the spell string, breaking it. The curse on the victim immediately dissipated. "Simple, right?" Six and Elie nodded. "Good, go ahead and cure the others, but leave the last one for me."

It took a few minutes for them to finish the cures and get to the final victim at which point Candle took over again. "You won't be ready to try out this trick for a while, but it's something we will hopefully not

have too many occasions to try. I can hijack this spell and send it back at our rogue. I can also use this string to send spells of my own at him. I'm really tempted to just kill him outright, but that much power on the string could cause a backlash that would rebound on the victim because we're so close to him. I do feel comfortable stunning him from here. Even if there is backlash, our victim can recover since most of the energy will be going the other way."

Elie and Six watched as Candle fashioned a fat bead of energy on the spell string and sent it speeding toward the Granomish mage. Then he neatly cut the string. The victims of the curse were all badly drained, but some of them were already starting to stir from their curse-induced comas.

Candle instructed the doctors. "Give them lots of rest, food and drink, as much as they feel the need for. They should be all right in a day or two, three at the outside. Now," he said turning toward Lieutenant Gufford, "where's the best restaurant in Neria?"

Eighteen

Candle tried calling Maia on the radio that evening after they had returned to the *Maiyim Bourne*, but got no response. "Well, I didn't tell her to leave it on, did I?" he commented to Elie. Six had already gone forward to his cabin. Elie shrugged, not knowing what instructions her uncle had given Maia.

Candle was just about to turn the radio unit's volume down to low when a smooth, low female voice came from the speaker, "Hello, Candle. How are you this evening?"

"Methis?" Candle asked. "I didn't expect to bother You. Was I on the wrong frequency?"

"No, dear," Methis replied, "I was just fiddling with the radio here, toying with the idea of seeing if you were awake this evening."

"Obviously, I'm awake," Candle chuckled.

"Hi, Methis!" Elie interrupted. "It's Elie. How are You?"

"Hello, Elle. I'm fine. Thank you for asking. Is there something I can do for you?"

"No, I don't think so. I just wanted You to know I was here," Elie explained.

They chatted for another minute or so, before Methis asked her a more serious question, "Have you given thought to choosing a mage name, dear?"

"I have, but so far none of the ones I considered seem to fit," Elie admitted.

"Don't worry about it. When you find your name, you'll know it right away."

"Methis," Candle cut in, "Aritos gave me permission to use His seal last time we spoke."

"Yes, He told me. It sounds like it may come in handy and since I never showed you My sign, it is the only one you have access to. Is there a problem?"

"Oh, probably not, but I have to admit I've never successfully used the sign for casting a spell and I

wasn't sure if I could really do it."

"Oh you have the ability," Methis chuckled. "Aritos has known every time you tried. What you were missing was His express permission to do so. That's no longer a problem. Do be careful, however. You'll probably find any spells you cast through it will be more powerful than normal."

"Just like what the staff does to my spells if I'm not careful?" Candle asked.

"Does it?" Methis asked. Candle explained some of his earlier experiences with the staff. It had vastly over-powered even the simplest spells. "Then yes, something like that. This will likely be even more so, of course. The staff sounds like it is simply an amplifier. When you employ the Seal of Aritos, He will be lending you His strength just as in collaborative magic."

"That's good to know," Candle told Her, "but it isn't likely to be a problem. If I use it, I may well not be in a position to worry about limits."

"Perhaps, dear, but there is more to using a God's sign than raw power," Methis replied.

They spoke a while longer before Candle realized how late it was and excused himself and Elie. "We'll need to set sail at dawn," he explained.

For their own reasons, sleep was hard to come by that night for the mages and they were all awake well before dawn. Elie served coffee and toast from the food box, but nobody ate much. Finally, when it was still half an hour before they could expect false dawn, Candle decided, "Let's just go. There are enough lighted buoys out there to show us the way to the open sea."

They were already coming up on Kemelart's western coast when the sun rose and by mid-morning they were within sight of Mount Kol. "Now where did Doctor Gonnev say his base was?" Candle asked.

"About ten miles to the east of the mountain," Six replied, "and about a mile inland. Do we need to find him. He could be back in Silamon by now anyway."

"I suppose not," Candle shrugged. "Let's get a closer look at the mountain. It's putting up a fair column of steam and ash this morning. Sure glad it's not coming toward us."

"But a landslide could," Elie pointed out, remembering how a large portion of Mount Petronelle had fallen into the sea.

"Good point," Candle agreed, "but we're already going to pass in front of the mountain. I'll take a close look as we do, but if we aren't stopping to see Doctor Gonnev, I can probably find out all we need to know along the way. Just as well, we really should get to Silamon before that Granom decides to skip town."

"Will we arrive today?" Elie asked.

"I don't see why not. The winds are favorably strong today," Candle answered.

The volcano rumbled as they approached, but except for a thicker pillar of ash, there was little added excitement. Candle looked long and hard at Mount Kol but after two hours – longer than he had intended to stay in the area – he had to report, "I'd like to say I saw something. No. I'd really like to say there was nothing to be seen, but I'm not sure of that either. There are wisps of a spell, but for all I know they

might be traces of the magic the Gods created the world with.”

“That would be worth studying,” Six commented.

“It would, but I’m not certain if that is what I thought I was seeing. My mind may have been playing tricks on me as well. It might be worth a long winter’s night discussion with Aritos sometime. He would know if there are any traces of the Great Spell still floating about and what their properties might be. I’m not sure how forthcoming He’ll be though.”

“Why not?” Six asked. “I got the impression He was an okay guy at least according to what you’ve said.”

“He’s a great guy,” Candle replied, “but He won’t tell us anything He thinks we need to learn for ourselves. Most likely He’ll confirm whether or not such traces exist, but won’t tell us much more about them, that is unless He doesn’t know for certain either. The Gods are not omniscient, at least not as individuals – sometimes I wonder if between them, they know all – so if Aritos doesn’t know either, He’ll be glad to discuss the matter for hours on end. I’ve learned more from His speculations and those of the other Gods than I would have, had they just answered my questions.

“I realized there were no certain spell traces here fairly quickly,” Candle continued. “Most of what I was doing was using the staff here to explore the local fault lines. I was able to explore the faults that make up the conjunction of tectonic plates for hundreds of miles in either direction.”

“What did you find?” Elie asked.

“An interesting insight on how this world is made,” Candle replied. “I wouldn’t be surprised if our rogue mage used the Bond of Aritos to trigger activity all along this plate edge, but if he did, it must have been far away from here. Mount Petranella may have been where he worked it, if he did; or maybe the Great Bay volcano. I think he may have done something like that. If so, he may have been practicing, still learning how to use the Bond.”

“That’s a frightening thought,” Six commented.

“What’s that?” Candle asked.

“Someone without proper training fooling around with power like that,” Six replied.

“There’s no such thing as proper training to fool around with that sort of power,” Candle replied, “but I take your meaning. No one who truly understands the risks would ever attempt to utilize the Bond of Aritos. Unfortunately history is full of the fools who thought the cautionary tales applied only to others.”

An insistent chime sounded just then from inside the cabin. “What’s that?” Elie and Six both asked.

“The radio,” Candle replied. “Someone is trying to call us.” He climbed down into the cabin with Six and Elie close behind him. “The alarm was Methis’ idea. It allows the set to be turned down to use less energy, but the alarm lets us know someone is trying to call. Candle here,” he said into the microphone as he turned up the gain.

“Wizard Candle!” Maia’s voice filled the cabin. Even the tinny-sounding speakers could not hide the worry in her voice. “Thank all the Gods you’re there.”

“Maia, child,” Candle replied soothingly, “what’s the matter?”

“It’s terrible, sir,” Maia replied, tears in her voice. “Silamon is on fire!”

Nineteen

Candle did not wait for the *Maiyim Bourne* to catch the right winds before ordering the hydrofoils deployed. With only a moderate quartering wind to assist, he used the staff to augment a piloting spell to propel the boat forward at a speed too fast for the boat’s indicators to measure, but Six estimated their cruising speed was in excess of forty nautical miles per hour. Even with that extra burst of power, however, their delay at the foot of Mount Kol prevented them from arriving in Silamon harbor before dark.

As the boat entered the harbor, still aloft on her hydrofoils, the mages could see the light of many fires up on the hill and the incessant sirens filling the air. At least one third of the city was ablaze.

Maia was at the dock as they came to rest and helped secure them there. “Oh Gods! I’ve been so scared,” she told them, jumping on board to hug them all.

“You should have stayed at Government House,” Candle told her. “It would have been safer.”

“No it wouldn’t have,” she retorted. “The rioters stormed Government House twice today. If it hadn’t been for the Marines protecting us, they would have gotten in.”

“How did you get down here?” Six asked her.

“Same way we’ll get you all up the hill,” Maia told him, “in an armored car.”

“We’ve only been away for two days,” Elie commented. “It’s hard to believe the situation could have gotten so bad in such a short time.”

“It all started this morning,” Maia told her. “There were just the usual protestors when I came to work, but by ten o’clock there were thousands of people surrounding the building. The fires started at noontime though. I called you as soon as I realized what was happening.”

“And a good thing you did,” Candle told her as they climbed back up to the dock. He cast a protective ward over the boat and they all headed for the armored car. “We think we know who’s behind this. We still need to track him down, but it’s almost certain he is in Silamon.”

“Who is it?” Maia asked.

“The same rogue mage whose jailbreak called us to investigate in Neria,” Candle replied, helping Elie and then Maia up into the car. “He was using the name Terabawa Grovinsk. Who knows, it may even be his real name, not that it matters. At least I don’t think it does.”

The marines had set up a defensive line around Government House that included hastily erected barbed wire, dozens of armored vehicles and several hundred heavily-armed men. As the mages’ car approached several groups of civilian men and women were congregated on the far periphery of the open area around the government offices.

“How many rioters have been killed so far?” Candle asked sourly.

“The hospital reports that there are hundreds of wounded, but so far they haven’t reported any deaths resulting from clashes between the armed forces and groups of civilians,” Maia told him.

“That won’t last,” Candle predicted, “and when the marines and sailors are forced to fire on civilians, the results will make what we’ve had so far look like a municipal picnic. How about fire deaths?”

“Unknown, sir,” Maia responded. “Survivors in various states are being brought in by the truckload. The doctors, civilian and military, are at wits’ end trying to keep up.”

“We’re going to have to find a way to calm everyone down,” Candle muttered, “but I’ll be damned if I know how we’re going to manage it.” Two fire engines raced by just as they were passed through the cordon around Government House. “How are the fire companies doing?”

“Having trouble of their own,” Maia told him. “The fires are bad enough, but some of the rioters are attacking the firemen, driving them away.”

“Okay, so my faith in human intelligence is restored,” Candle replied sourly. “And the Police Department?”

“Doing whatever they can,” Maia answered. “There have been hundreds of arrests since this started. The Police are working with the Navy, Marine Corps, Civil Defense Force and we expect the Emmine Royal National Guard to land within in the hour.”

“What? No Friendship Corpsmen and women?” Candle asked sarcastically, getting out of the armored car.

“They’re coming too,” Maia told him seriously, as she and the others followed him into the office building, “but they will be held up at the airport until the situation settles down.”

“Hail, hail, the gangs all here,” Candle replied dryly. “Our place is out there, looking for Grovinsk. He’s behind all of this; I should have killed him when I had the chance yesterday and damn the consequences.”

“You don’t really mean that, Uncle,” Elie told him with quiet certainty.

Something about the tone of her voice stopped him. He turned to look at Elie. She had been a shy and somewhat shallow young woman just a few weeks ago. She still had a long way to go – who didn’t? – but she had changed since boarding the *Maiyim Bourne*. She displayed far more self-confidence than Candle had expected. Once before, she had surprised him with an unexpected resemblance to her great-grandmother. That first time was just her taste in clothing. This time it was something far more fundamental; it was in the sure and steady way in which she held herself and all that implied. “You’re right,” he admitted at last. “I don’t mean that. Not really. I spared him because to do otherwise would have risked the life of another man. I doubt he would have done the same, but I’d like to think that makes me a better person.

“Let’s get to the top floor,” he continued. “We’ll be able to get a view of the whole city. Maybe we can spot a place where magic is being used from there. Maia, keep an eye and ear out on the incoming reports. We need to know where Grovinsk is.”

“What are we looking for?” Elie asked, looking out at the city. Her eyes were closed so Candle could see she was examining the aural evidence as he wanted her and Six to do.

“Sudden flare ups and stray strings,” Candle told them. “You’ll notice there are all sorts of auras out there. Very few have anything to do with magic, however. Look for changes, especially sudden ones. Also look for spell strings. None of us have any active spells here, least of all ones that use a string, so any flying around out there are probably attached to Mister Grovinsk.”

“How likely are we to be able to spot anything like that?” Six asked.

“It’s a slim chance,” Candle admitted, “but until something else comes up...”

The building shook just then with a long, low rumble that didn’t seem to want to end. “Tremor,” Six commented tensely. “Aren’t we supposed to stand in a doorway or something?”

“This high up?” Candle chuckled. “I suppose it might help but if the building falls we’ll still fall with it. It’s not much of a quake, but we may have to evacuate if it keeps up.”

“Or maybe we should go and investigate that area over there,” Elie pointed at a spot over half a mile away. There was a sudden flare up of a bright blue-green aura; exactly the sort that could be generated by a powerful use of magic.

“That’s got to be our man,” Six commented.

“We’re going to need backup,” Candle told them as the tremor got a bit louder and the shaking got worse. “Sixtus, do you know where that is on a map?”

“It’s one block south of Deliverance Square,” Six informed him, “according to this map, anyway.”

“Good, let’s go!”

They ran down the stairs to their office suite where they found Maia, taking notes while she spoke to someone very seriously on the phone. “Yes, I know where that is,” she told the phone. “He’s right here. Do you want to talk to him? Very well. We’re on our way.”

“We are?” Candle asked, emphasizing the word, “we.”

“PM’s orders,” Maia shrugged as the building shook a bit more. “He said, and I quote, ‘Get yourselves down there immediately.’”

“I hope he meant one block south of Deliverance Square,” Candle replied.

“How did you know?” Maia asked.

“I’m a wizard, it’s my job to know these things,” Candle told her with a straight face. Six chuckled, but Elie just rolled her eyes. “Do we still have our military escort? Good. And did Sir Henric also call for as many men as he could dredge up to meet us there?”

Maia got up and started leading the way out of the building. “I got the impression that the Police and Navy currently have the area surrounded, but are waiting for backup...” The building shook still more. A long crack appeared in the corridor wall and plaster dust fell gently down from the ceiling. “...before they

move in,” she finally completed the sentence. “And maybe it will be ever so slightly safer in Deliverance Square than here.”

“You could go home,” Candle suggested.

“No,” she replied. Suddenly her calm, businesslike demeanor showed as many cracks as were forming in the walls around them. “I can’t.”

“Oh,” Candle replied, at a loss for his usually clever words. “I’m sorry.”

“It’s not your fault,” she assured him. “That block went up in flames hours ago. At least I don’t have to worry about packing,” she added as they left Government House and re-entered the armored car. Elie sat next to Maia and when Elie heard a small, quiet sniff, she put her right arm around Maia. Maia turned and hugged her, crying softly on the offered shoulder.

“Thank you,” Maia told her a few minutes later. “I’m better now.”

They were let off at the edge of the Police cordon, some three blocks away from Deliverance Square. “This a large area to attempt to contain,” Candle commented to Police Chief Marin.

“That’s why we’ve been waiting,” the chief replied. “There are over ten thousand people in there and only five thousand of us, counting the sailors.” The tremor, which had stopped just after the mages left Government House, started up again just then. Two blocks away, the side of a building fell away, rubble flowing out into the street and a cloud of dust up into the air. “There will be more of that if these quakes don’t stop.”

“Can you stop them, Uncle Candle?” Elie asked.

“Stop a quake?” Candle asked incredulously. “Do you have any idea how much power we’re talking about?”

“Well, I just thought that if the Bond of Aritos could be used to cause a tremor, perhaps the Seal of Aritos could be used to stop one.”

“Oh, very good thinking,” Candle agreed. “I should have thought of that myself.” Candle looked at the staff and it rapidly contracted in a round disk, five inches in diameter. The disk was covered on both sides with the Seal of Aritos.

“I didn’t know it could do that,” Six commented.

“Neither did I,” Candle admitted distractedly. Almost all his attention was on the golden disk. He studied the Seal as he had so many times in the past. Every twist and turn, every detail of the sign was etched in his mind by years of such study. Until now, for him the Seal of Aritos was just a very ornate symbol on the ends of the golden staff and, incidentally, inside a very special journeyman’s mage stone that Aritos had given him sixty years earlier. It was the twin of the one Candle had embedded in Oceanvine’s gravestone, save that the symbol and Candle’s name, which was superimposed over the symbol glowed red, rather than gold. Now however, the Seal seemed like a living creature. It began to glow and Candle felt it meet him half way as he stretch his mind out to encompass it.

Years of experience cautioned him to back off, but this chance to finally use the seal of a God, especially in a situation in which it was fully justified, was too much to resist. In spite of his fears, however, the

power in the Seal was not like that bound up in the misnamed Bond of Aritos. The Seal had no agenda. It made no attempt to tell him what to do. Instead it was as patient as a loyal pet, just waiting for the command to action.

Candle tapped into the Seal's power and sent an exploratory spell deep down into Maiyim's crust examining the fault along which the current quakes were taking place and got a shock. Yes, there was a fault line running through the heart of Silamon. He expected that, but it wasn't the fault that was grinding away to cause the current quake. Magical energy was being used to form a volcano in the heart of the city. Candle no longer had any doubts about the recent volcanic activity. Mount Petronelle, the Great Bay volcano and probably even Mount Kol were all practices for Terabawa Grovinsk. This, however was the grand concert. Candle was determined it would be the Granom's swan song, but first he had to stop the growing disaster from beneath.

The power of the Seal was incredible. Candle thought he had an idea of its potential magnitude from the way the staff behaved, but he was wrong by several orders. The Gods of Maiyim, Aritos and Methis had both assured him, were not omnipotent. Methis had also tried to convince him once that She could not see the future. That turned out to be a polite lie, but if the Gods were not omnipotent, their notion of limits were far beyond anything Candle had ever experienced. *I should have known*, he thought. *I should have realized. The Gods created Maiyim. Of course their power is on a level far beyond ours.* Then, he had a less reverent thought, *Aritos and I are going to have a long hard talk about this one day.*

Through his exploratory spell he discovered a column of magma rising up from Maiyim's mantle layer through a wide crack being formed by Grovinsk's Bond of Aritos. The magma was still one mile below the surface, however, so he quickly cut the spell string through which the Granom was creating his volcanic column. The tremors immediately slackened off, although there was still some residual shaking going on. Then, Candle distributed the heat of the lava out into the surrounding rocks as widely as he could, cooling the magma down into a large volcanic plug. Distractedly, Candle wondered whether the resulting rock was basalt or obsidian and decided at the speeds at which he had worked, it was probably obsidian. The ground at the surface shook still more, and then it finally quieted down.

Twice more, the Granomish mage tried to create a volcano in Silamon and Candle quickly snuffed out the attempts. Then, the rogue tried something else and Candle, taking a more direct look at what was going on inside the cordon saw there were actually two mages at work and through the Bond of Aritos they were draining the energy off from the roughly ten thousand rioters within. With that much energy at their disposal, Candle realized there were few acts of destruction they would not be capable of. Once more he used the Seal of Aritos to disrupt the Bond.

The clash of the two titanic spells set up a tremendous backlash within the cordon and Candle detected that everyone involved had been knocked unconscious. "At least I hope they're only unconscious," he told Chief Marin a moment later when he reported what had happened. "Your men can start arresting the rioters although where you intend to put them all is beyond me."

"The eightbase stadium," Marin replied. "I set that up early this morning. Probably we'll end up letting most of them go, but we'll process them, looking for their leaders."

"Well, you may as well get started on that. I don't know how long they'll remain unconscious," Candle told him. "Meanwhile, you'd better let me handle the mages. I hope I don't have to use that spell again," he added and Elie could see signs of exhaustion on her uncle's face. "It's very powerful, but it is not without a price. Come along," he told Six and Elie. "Maia, please stay here." Then without waiting for a response, the mages were off.

The scene inside the cordon looked as ghastly as any battleground. While thousands of people were still knocked out by the shock of the two colliding spells, the mages could see that many had been injured and killed when pieces of the surrounding buildings had fallen on them. As they reached the center of the area, they had to slow down to make their way through the tangle of bodies. Candle spared a moment to make sure that most were still alive, then he saw two figures stirring far ahead. One was obviously a Granom and the other was human. He and his students just barely had time to recognize the human as Roges Fuldon, Sir Henric's second undersecretary, before both enemy mages disappeared.

"Where'd they go?" Elie asked.

Candle closed his eyes, checked the scene for spell traces and immediately saw a fading spell string. "They're only one hundred yards off that way," he replied. Without another word Six and Elie were off again. Candle paused to mentally grab at the spell string and send a tracer spell on up it. The string suddenly stopped fading and in his mind, glowed brightly. Six and Elie were far ahead of him now, however and he did not want them rushing into danger alone, so he did something he had not tried in years.

It was more than mere self-levitation, it was flight. He rose up twenty feet into the air and swooped after his apprentices. "Looks like fun," Six opined as Candle landed directly in front of them three blocks later beyond most of the unconscious rioters.

"It has its charms," Candle replied. "They're in that building up ahead."

"I hope they aren't looking out the windows," Six commented.

"I'm tempted to wait a while," Candle told them both. "At the moment they're not all that pleased with the way things are going. They're arguing. Well, actually, Mister Fuldon is whining and Grovinsk is threatening to put him out of his misery. I'm not impressed, though. Grovinsk does not really have the hang of threats. He sounds more like he is blustering or bragging. Maybe we should try sneaking up on them while they are otherwise occupied."

They started running across the street, but when they reached the middle they were met by the roar of flame and the shattering of glass from a third floor window. Candle barely had time to cast a protective ward. "So much for the element of surprise," he muttered.

A moment later he gasped in pain. Elie turned and saw Candle enveloped in a harsh red aura. Closing her eyes, she saw that Grovinsk had evidently discovered the tracking spell, Candle had cast and sent back a nasty curse along the string. She quickly cast an impenetrable ward that broke the string. Candle fell to his knees on the pavement, but Six put his shoulder under Candle's arm and lifted him back up and dragged him to the sidewalk.

"Thanks," Candle panted, "both of you. Object lesson; be careful, be prepared, and don't take anything for granted. Keep your wards up. Your defenses are stronger than your offenses at this stage, so don't drop your wards to throw fireballs. Do both at once."

They paused to erect their wards and Candle checked those of Elie and Six. He nodded and they entered the building. The building was in the midst of being rebuilt for use as office space. The first floor seemed finished but when they reached the second floor they could see all the way across the floor, although there were uprights where walls were being installed. The stairway from the first floor ended at the second and they had to make their way across to the far side of the maze of partial walls to the

stairway up to the next and final floor. The top floor was still being used as storage space. Stacks of lumber and plywood stood next to still more stacks of plasterboard, tubs of spackle and paint. There were boxes full of paint brushes, scrapers and other tools, but there was no sign of the two rogue mages.

“They were in here,” Candle told them. “Keep your guards up, but let’s see if there’s another way out of this building.” They crossed the floor and found a ladder leading up to an open hatch to the wide, flat roof. “I’ll go first,” Candle told them. Without any warning he suddenly flew up and shot through the hatch. As soon as he did Elie and Six saw a bright violet beam of energy strike Candle, seeming to splash where it hit his aura.

Six went up the ladder next, followed closely by Elie. On her arrival, Elie saw Candle, still floating in the air and shooting high energy spells back at Grovinsk. The two senior mages were locked in battle with each other, but Six and Elie suddenly found themselves under attack from Roges Fuldon.

Unlike Candle’s students, Fuldon had never learned to use magic without sinking into a trance. He sat cross-legged next to Grovinsk and threw balls of fire alternately at Six and Elie. Their wards stayed up, but their attempts to go on the offensive were easily deflected by the Granomish mage’s ward which protected both of the rogue magicians.

“Cover me,” Six told Elie as he ducked behind a ventilator fan. Elie continued her flamboyant, but ineffective attack, wondering what Six had in mind. It was several minutes later that she found out when a huge ball of fire suddenly streaked away from Six on a wide, circular path. It came up behind the two enemies striking them both. Fuldon screamed in pain, but Grovinsk cast a counter-spell with ease.

Candle attempted to use the distraction to attack Grovinsk, but the Granom invoked the Bond of Aritos and sent its full force at Candle, causing its energy to wrap around the wizard and attempt to constrict around him like a great snake. Then Grovinsk turned to face the two apprentices and threw a similar spell at them, but was blocked when Elie cast a non-stick ward up at an angle that caused the energy to glance past both of them. The energy of that spell hit a building across the street with a great explosion. Six threw another fireball, but Grovinsk caught it with ease and tossed it right back again. Only Elie’s ward saved Six from being roasted.

Fuldon struggled to his feet and started attacking as Elie and Six hunkered down behind the non-stick ward. Meanwhile Candle, still wrapped by the snake-like avatar of the Bond of Aritos, summoned the power of the staff. He swung it and it changed into a golden sword, just as it had that night he showed it to Six and Elie on the *Maiyim Bourne*. It sliced through the Bond of Aritos, absorbing its energy as it did. Then he shot it back at Grovinsk as a bolt of lightning.

The Granom’s protections nearly dissolved at that point, but they held and he was about to fight back, when he realized that Candle had turned the snake-like spell back on him. Coils of lightning were wrapping themselves around Grovinsk and he struggled to break free. Fuldon sent a stream of fire at Candle. The fire slashed against the wizard’s ward and distracted him from maintaining his attack on the Granom, but otherwise had little effect.

It was almost without thought that Candle made a swatting motion that sent Fuldon flying through the air until he crashed into a chimney, sank to the roof and remained motionless.

Grovinsk used that opportunity to dispel Candle’s attack and copied him by throwing a wave of telekinetic force at Six and Elie that knocked them out cold. Candle did not have time to see to them, however, as he was also forced to fend off the large wave of force that hit his students.

“Give up, old man!” Grovinsk growled at Candle. “You cannot win this.”

Candle looked at his opponent. The Granom, was dressed mostly in a black business suit, which showed signs of having become charred at the edges, but with a light blue shirt and a bright blue tie. Candle bit back a retort about how the Granom’s mother dressed him and merely replied, “Forget it, Bosco!” and pressed his attack anew. They were not using clever spells at this point, just applying power against power in the rawest form of magical combat. On a whim, Candle chuckled and added, “Try me!”

“Try me.” It was a traditional challenge among young mages when Candle was an apprentice. Oceanvine had taught him how it worked before he went to University; she didn’t want him to fall afoul of the most basic traps. She need not have worried. The challenge, to an outsider, looked like a simple stare-down, but it was much more than that. Two contestants wrestled using sheer mind power. In this form of mental combat there were no restrictions except one should never actually try to harm one’s opponent. Candle was not counting on that bit of politeness, but then, he wasn’t planning to stop there either.

The Granom accepted the challenge and Candle suddenly found himself in an ancient pine forest. The trees all stood over one hundred feet tall, although there was little undergrowth. The ground was mostly a thick carpet of pine needles.

Candle cursed at himself at having let his opponent make the first move. It allowed him to set the rules of this part of the combat. Then he mentally shrugged and went on. *No helping it*, he told himself. *Besides, I used to let my classmates do this all the time*. Having come to grips with that, it was now his turn to figure out what the rules were before his opponent killed him.

Cautiously, he took a few steps and noticed that Grovinsk’s illusion was sadly incomplete. A truly adept mage would have included sound, smell and tactile aspects to the illusion. Silverwind had been one of the first mages to become proficient at non-visual illusions, but once the technique was known any properly trained journeyman could use it. Candle wondered once again where Grovinsk had received his training. Almost as an afterthought, Candle added the missing components. In doing so he suddenly understood the rules the Granom had set up.

How disappointing, Candle thought to himself. The rules were even simpler than he had expected. They were playing a deadly game of Hide and Seek. Move around until you find your opponent and attack.

Candle caught a tree moving out of the corner of his eye. It was falling toward him. He used a telekinetic spell to push it back and found nothing happened. He tried again as the tree continued to fall, with a similar lack of results. He was so caught up in attempting to use magic that he only managed to jump out of the way at the last moment. The tree hit the ground with an exaggerated thud, throwing Candle a dozen feet through the air.

He landed in the pine needles behind a large boulder. *No magic?* Candle considered. *He cast a spell so he could fight without overt magic?* Candle chuckled at the irony and tried several spells to test his hypothesis. That was it, except he could still manipulate the illusion. He thought of the island, Ellisto, and instantly turned the pine forest into a vast red sand desert.

Unlike Grovinsk’s illusory forest, Candle’s was an exact simulation of the greatdesertofEllisto . A scorchingly hot sun beat down on the landscape and the gusty wind blew sand through the air that stung as it hit unshielded flesh. Beyond a veil of red sand, Candle saw Grovinsk. He was twice as tall as he was in reality and twice as wide. He also did not see the large red, bipedal reptile silently stalking him.

Candle had always wondered how the Ellistan sandwalkers were capable of hunting. Two tons of

walking lizard, he thought, sounded like thunder as they ran. However, his first encounter with the huge reptiles was not typical. Sandwalkers, he learned later, were solitary hunters who used their natural camouflage to sneak up on prey. They had no trouble walking silently and did so whenever they were stalking. Once they were close enough to their prey they would run. There was nothing silent about the way a Sandwalker ran, but when they did, they could run for hours and were capable of outlasting their prey.

Tarabawa Grovinsk saw Candle leaning casually on his staff and scowled. In response, Candle smiled and waved. To Candle's eye, it looked as though Grovinsk tried using magic, but Candle had already decided the moratorium on spells was a good idea. At the last possible minute Grovinsk noticed the sandwalker and started running. He was still running when Candle decided on a long, leisurely sea voyage.

It was not a modern ship, it was the *Skate* as Candle had known her as a boy. Captain Jocey and First Mate Madoc smiled and nodded at Candle as Grovinsk kept running and tripped over the port side gunwale. Had his self-image not been larger than life that probably would not have happened. Candle leaned over to see the Granom treading water.

"I'm almost impressed," Candle admitted. "The fall into the cold water should have made you lose your concentration."

"Never!" Grovinsk grated. A moment later, the *Skate* dissolved into mist and Candle felt himself falling into the sea as well.

"Nice day for a swim, hey, Bosco?" Candle asked as they both treaded water. A moment later, he caused the illusion to change to the island of Arithan as he remembered it.

Arithan's terrain was treacherous as Candle had experienced it. There was very little on the island that was as it truly appeared. What appeared to be tall grass might be a field of molten lava and a deep pit. Of course the illusion had been generated by the demon Arithan, so Candle had to create an illusion within the illusion to duplicate it. It wasn't something he had tried before, but it turned out to be deceptively simple.

Grovinsk was having none of this and attempted to change the illusion. But in spite of the illusory dangers, the point of this contest was to not injure one's opponent physically, but to be the one who controlled the illusion itself. It was actually a battle at the mental level. Normally the worst the loser could expect was a bad headache, but Candle was playing to blow Grovinsk's mind out like a birthday candle caught in a gale.

He could feel Grovinsk try to take hold of the illusion, but Candle's will was as iron-strong as it had been in his youth and the Granom's efforts were hopeless. Candle could feel his victory approach as Grovinsk started to lose control when a surge of pain shot through his skull at the same time something hard hit him in the stomach.

The illusion world vanished and Candle realized he was doubled over around a thick pipe that Roges Fuldson had slammed into his gut. He hadn't the faintest notion where his staff had fallen. The backlash pain from having been wrenched out of the contest with Grovinsk still blazed across Candle's skull, but just before losing consciousness, Candle blasted Fuldson with a telekinetic spell that threw him completely off the roof. His scream was the first sound Elie heard as she started to come to.

Grovinsk was badly shaken as Six stood up and attempted to levitate the Granom off the roof, but Six

was not entirely recovered from the assault that had knocked him out and could only raise Grovinsk up a few inches before being forced to let him go. Grovinsk was still in shock after his battle with Candle, but he recovered in time to deflect a flurry of levitated pebbles from the roof.

Elie, still groggy, fought her way to her feet even as Grovinsk and Six dueled. Neither Six nor Grovinsk was at the peak of his form, but they both continued to fight. Six, as Candle had taught him, worked primarily on keeping his protective ward intact and tossed in an offensive spell only when he was certain he could do so without exposing himself. Tarabawa Grovinsk, on the other hand, concentrated on his offenses, sparing only second thoughts toward protecting himself. Under Six's tenuous assault, however, that was sufficient.

Elie longed to join in, to assist Six, but her head was still swimming and the necessary concentration eluded her. She caught a glimmer of gold out of the corner of her eye and when she turned to investigate, saw Candle's staff just a few feet away from her. She didn't know how to use it, but felt it would at least keep her from falling back over. She nearly passed out as she reached for it, but the moment her fingers touched the warm golden metal, her mind cleared. All the cobwebs of unconsciousness were swept away. It felt like a fuzzy curtain was being drawn open before her. All her aches and pains vanished as the staff healed her.

Just then, Grovinsk cast a powerful telekinetic spell at Six. The force of it smashed against Six's ward, but while he was able to maintain the ward, he and that ward were pushed forcefully backward and he fell down through the hatch they had climbed through to get to the roof. As an added precaution, Grovinsk caused the hatch itself to slam shut and lock. "Now it's just you and me, girl," he growled at Elie.

Elie threw a ball of fire at him. The Granom let it splash impotently against his own defenses. "Your grandmother would be very disappointed in you, Elinor Jenynges," Grovinsk told her, laughing harshly. "Yes, I know who you are. My probably-late apprentice informed me." Elie said nothing, but kept throwing fire and what ever detritus she could find on the rooftop. "Pitiful," Grovinsk sneered as each new attack was fended off with ease. "Little Elinor Jenynges thinks she's a magician."

"Don't call me that?"

"Why not, little Elinor?" Grovinsk laughed. "It is your name." with that pronouncement he threw the same spell that had pushed Six down the ladder's hatch. Elie used her non-stick wards to deflect the energy of Grovinsk's spell, but even so she was pushed a few feet toward the edge of the roof.

"Not any more!" Elie shouted back at him.

"Oh? Has little Elinor taken a mage name? How cute," Grovinsk laughed. Elie growled her defiance. "Mine is Adamant. You should know the name of the man who kills you. So, little Elinor," Adamant began.

"Stop calling me that!" Elie shouted back. She had never liked the name her parents had given her; Elinor was such an old-fashioned name and it never really felt right either. For weeks she had been considering what sort of name to take. Most of her choices had involved the names of flowers, much as many Orenta chose for mage names, but none of them seemed quite right. With sudden clarity, however, she realized that Methis was correct. She would know the right name when she found it. The right name was botanical, but it was not that of a pretty flower, but something else entirely.

"What great and glorious name has little Elinor chosen?" Adamant asked even as Elie shouted in rage.

“Not Elinor!” she shouted defiantly. She concentrated on sending a small piece of her ward, blazingly fast at Adamant’s protections. It was her first attempt at a projectile ward and an amazing success. The small bullet-like projection shattered Adamant’s ward, leaving him dazed. Elie instantly followed up with the largest fireball she could muster, adding in the same defiant shout, “My name is Oceanvine!”

The fireball hit Adamant. It rapidly spread across his body and turned him into a living torch. He screamed for a few, very long seconds, and then fell to the roof, a dead cinder.

“My name is Oceanvine.”

Twenty

“Well done, Oceanvine,” Candle told her in a thick raspy vice. He was sitting up in the place he had fallen. His shirt had several small spots of blood on it, mostly on his left side, and it was ripped in several places. “Very well done.”

Elie/Oceanvine looked at what was left of Adamant and replied, “That had better not be a pun.” Immediately she regretted saying so. Sickness rose up in her throat and she doubled over to let it out.

Candle let her finish. He had been in a similar situation once, although sickness had not been his reaction. He had come to discover, however, that each person had to deal with what Oceanvine was going through in their own way. The time for support would come shortly, but had not yet arrived. He caught a gleam of gold on what was left of Adamant’s finger and saw it was a ring. He levitated it off the finger and to his own hand, but did not have chance to look at it.

Oceanvine finished retching, looked at Candle, but said nothing. He took her into his arms and held her for a long time. Eventually the overwhelming self-pity ended. Candle noted absently that it had actually only lasted a few minutes before Oceanvine realized that not only had the world not come to an end, but that there were other pressing matters. “Six!” she gasped suddenly, pushing herself away from Candle.

“Where is he?” Candle asked as he accepted his staff back from Oceanvine.

“He fell down the ladder,” Oceanvine told him, rushing to the hatch. She tried to open it, but it was still locked and the bolt was on the inside of the hatch.

“I’ll get it,” Candle told her. A moment later she could hear the sound of the bolt sliding back and the hatch lifted up. “I’ll teach you to pick locks on the voyage home.”

“Why do I need to know how to pick locks?” she asked as she looked down the ladder for Six. He was looking bruised but had just started climbing the ladder to return to the roof.

“It’s come in handy for me from time to time,” Candle told her.

Oceanvine’s attention was not on Candle, however, but on Six. She leaned out over the ladder and greeted him softly, “Hello, Sextant.”

“Huh?” Six asked.

“I said, ‘Hello, Sextant.’ We won,” she continued sweetly, “and I’ve taken the name Oceanvine. So, hello, Sextant.”

“Hi, Vine,” Sextant replied.

“That’s Oceanvine.”

“I’m sure it is,” Sextant chuckled.

The riots in Silamon and the other Sutherian cities ended abruptly along with the tremors. However, the protests continued for another week until it became apparent the military’s role had changed from suppressors of rebellion to friendly rebuilding. The Marines and most of the National Guard were withdrawn when the Royal Friendship Corps volunteers arrived to help with the rebuilding.

“Tarabawa Grovinsk, or Adamant as he evidently thought of himself,” Candle explained to Sir Henric a few days later, “was as much an enemy to Royal Granom as he was to Sutheria and all Emmine.” They were seated together in the prime minister’s office. It was a warm but foggy day outside and the normally beautiful view of the harbor was obscured.

Candle had managed to break a rib in the battle on the rooftop, but Sextant and Oceanvine had come through, merely covered with bruises. They considered it a fair trade since both Adamant and Fuldor had died in the encounter.

“So you say, Wizard,” Sir Henric replied, “but where is your proof?”

“Right here,” Candle answered, placing the gold ring he had found on Adamant’s finger on the desk between them. “That symbol on the ring, the stylized wave. I’ve run into it before. The last time was over thirty-three years ago, and I thought they were all dead. I was evidently mistaken. That is the symbol for the One Maiyim organization.”

“I remember them,” Sir Henric admitted. “Are you sure?”

“Very. They’ve been quiet for a very long time, but if there is one member still around, there must be more.”

“But I thought they were opposed to the use of magic,” Sir Henric protested.

“That was their public face,” Candle replied. “I saw them use magic during their attempted regicides in both Querna and Randona. I know there were several mages in their Inner Circle, but I thought Oceanvine, the first one that is, had killed them all, aided and abetted by Silverwind and myself, I should add.”

“You may have missed one,” Sir Henric commented.

“Apparently,” Candle replied tightly. “You did well to extend amnesty to the rioters,” he changed the subject.

“It was the proper thing to do,” Sir Henric replied. “They were dupes of Grovinsk.”

“And of Fuldon,” Candle added.

Yes,” the prime minister agreed grimly, “Fuldon. I do wish you had managed to bring him back alive.”

“I’m sure you do, but he would have had to die anyway,” Candle replied.

“Why? I know there are laws against the felonious use of magic, but death is not usually the penalty for a first offense.”

“It is for a third offense and then it is mandatory,” Candle retorted, “and a damned good thing too. You see, you cannot hold a mage in jail against his will. Adamant proved that in Neria. If a mage cannot tread the straight and narrow, there’s no way to turn off his power and no way to punish him if he doesn’t want to sit there and take it. Masters were always very careful of whom they took as apprentices because of that. I didn’t realize what risk Silverwind took when he apprenticed me. I was already a pickpocket at that age, but I guess I turned out all right.”

Sir Henric looked at the wizard. “A pickpocket, huh?” Candle nodded. “It shows.” They were silent for a while. Outside, the fog was beginning to lift. The nearer parts of the harbor could now be seen. Three large freighters had arrived that morning with cargos of building materials and the stevedores were already busy. “I’ve decided to call for elections in ninety days for a new government,” Sir Henrick told Candle.

“Is that necessary?” Candle asked.

“I believe so. It will restore the people’s faith in Sutheria and Emmine. Silamon wasn’t the only Sutherian city where there were riots and fires, although it was worst here.”

“How many new faces do you expect in the next Parliament?” Candle asked.

“A few maybe,” Sir Henric told him. “For the most part it will be the same old faces.”

“Then why bother?”

“Like I said,” the prime minister replied. “It will renew the people’s faith.”

“If you say so. You’re taking a great risk, politically,” Candle pointed out.

“I don’t think so,” Sir Henric replied, “but if so, I’ll likely have a position of some sort in the next government, then in a few years I’ll run again.”

“Politics,” Candle snorted. “You can keep them.”

“It’s an exacting game,” Sir Henric replied, “and not for everyone.”

“That’s the problem,” Candle told him. “Politicians often think of it as a game. It isn’t, though. It’s lives - people’s lives, and it is just plain wrong to try playing games with people’s lives.”

“Well, that’s just an expression,” Sir Henric protested. “I’m not really playing with the lives of Sutherians.”

“I hope not,” Candle replied flatly, “because that’s just what Adamant and your boy Fuldon were doing. So anytime you start thinking of politics as a game, even if it is just an expression, remember what One Maiyim tried to do here.”

“You really think this Adamant was an active member of One Maiyim?” Sir Henric asked. “Maybe he just used to be and just happened to still wear his ring.”

“I pray that you’re correct,” Candle told him seriously. “But for now, you’ll have to forgive me if I continue to act as though they are still out there, plotting.”

Epilogue

“This just the start,” Candle told Oceanvine and Sextant. They were back at sea now, headed back toward Keesport, albeit on a roundabout course that would deliver them there a week and a half before the new semester. “I let Sir Henric think I was a paranoid old fool, but I know for a certainty that One Maiyim is still out there and a threat to the world as we know and love it.”

“How, sir?” Sextant asked.

“Divine revelation,” Candle replied. “Methis told me, or rather She told Oceanvine. I just happened to be within ear shot at the time.”

“I don’t recall that,” Oceanvine disagreed.

“Your great-grandmother,” Candle clarified. “It was sixty-three, sixty-four years ago. Methis said that She saw a time in the future when One Maiyim’s activities would be a great threat to the world, but it would be a long way off. She said the time to act would not even come within Vine’s lifetime. Well, she passed away last spring, didn’t she. I never realized that Methis was being so literal. Oh well, I was never in a position to appreciate the quiet life anyway.”

“I saw you give Maia a large handful of gold coins,” Sextant recalled. “That was one heck of tip, but I guess she earned it, didn’t she?”

“Oh, that was no tip,” Candle laughed. “That was to cover her moving expenses. I decided I could use a secretary like her. We all can. When I was an apprentice, Silverwind hired his old partner, Windchime, to ensure he got all his mail, no matter where he was in the world. It worked out pretty well. These days we have the various governments’ postal systems for mail, but now there’s telephone too and it seems to me that having someone to answer the phone and relay messages when we aren’t in town is a good idea. I know we all like Maia and she likes us, so I hired her.”

“But you used the money from the *Maiyim Bourne* to pay her,” Sextant pointed out. “I thought you didn’t want to use too much of that particular money.”

“From what you two told me, Nildar and Wenni never intended us not to use any of Their onboard gifts. They just did not want us to abuse them. It’s the same way with the Seal of Aritos. Didn’t you wonder why I didn’t just use it to defeat Adamant right away?”

“I think we were a bit too busy fighting for our lives to ponder that particular point,” Sextant replied.

“Well, it’s like this. Aritos gave me permission to use it if I needed to. He didn’t say, ‘Go ahead. Have fun with it.’ The point was I was to only invoke it if there was no other way to accomplish what I needed to, but when I did need it, the only limitations were defined by what the Seal itself could be used to do.”

“All right,” Sextant nodded, “I follow that, but how does it apply to hiring Maia?”

“We need someone to help us. Maia is an excellent organizer even if she does appear to be naturally clumsy on the surface. She has a better understanding of mages and magic than most secretaries these days so she’s ideally suited to our needs. If Methis’ prediction is correct and I’m certain it is, we’re really going to need someone like Maia, so why not Maia herself?” Sextant nodded. “However, I expect you both to type your own papers.” Both younger mages laughed.

They sailed on, but it became obvious to Candle that young Oceanvine wanted to talk about something, but was having trouble finding the words. “What’s the problem, Oceanvine?” he asked finally.

“I killed him,” she said almost too quietly to be heard.

“You did that,” Candle agreed, “and did a fine job of it as well. How’s that paper coming, by the way?”

“I figured out how I’m doing it, I think. It should be finished by the time we dock in Keesport. Uncle Candle, how long does it take?”

“To write a paper?”

“To get used to killing people,” Oceanvine replied sadly. “How long does it take?”

“I’ll let you know if I ever get used to it,” Candle told her seriously. “It may stop hurting after a while but you should never get used to it. Keep this important point in mind, however. Adamant was trying to kill you. He was trying to kill all three of us and he did kill or attempt to kill thousands of people in Sutheria. You only did what had to be done. Sextant and I would have done the same thing, but we didn’t have the opportunity.”

“What would my great-grandmother have done to him?”

“Pretty much the same thing as you did,” Candle shrugged. “There wouldn’t have been as much of him left by the time she was through, mind you, but I saw her use pretty much the same spell on a few occasions.”

“Thanks,” Oceanvine told him. “That makes me feel a little better at least. She really would have reduced him to ashes?”

“Oh yes,” Candle nodded. “Vine was never a very subtle person.”

“That’s Oceanvine,” she corrected him.

Candle stared at his young niece for a moment, then started laughing. After a moment she joined him.

“I do miss her,” Oceanvine continued, seriously. “I really wish I could have known I was her great-granddaughter while we were together.”

“You’ve said that before,” Candle pointed out.

“I know,” Oceanvine sighed. “Uncle Candle, is there really a Heaven?”

“I don’t know,” Candle told her. “Not even the Gods know for certain.”

“Why not?”

“It’s a place they cannot go, at least while they still live and none of them are in a hurry to die,” Candle answered.

“Can the Gods die?” Oceanvine asked.

“It’s a possibility. None of them have done so yet, so maybe not. You’ll understand if they are not anxious to find out for certain?” Candle asked.

Oceanvine smiled slightly, then sighed again. “I would like to think my great-grandmother is still with me somehow. I think that’s why I finally took her name.”

“Young Oceanvine,” Candle began, “so long as you remember her and the time you two spent together, she will always be with you.

Oceanvine nodded and stared out at the shore of Lamona as they sailed past. The sun was high in the sky and the wind directly astern. Six had hoisted the spinnaker and they were hydroplaning north at a marvelous speed. Oceanvine felt she should be happy at this moment in her life, but something very crucial was missing and until this moment she did not understand what it was.

“Uncle Candle, will you tell me all about Silverwind?”

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