
Another Place

by Juniper
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On his sixth day at Benden Weyr, just before breakfast-time, Huriro was still towelling his damp head when the Weyrlingmaster came to the candidate quarters, read out a list of names, and told the dozen candidates he'd called to follow him. Huriro didn't recognise all the names yet, but when he heard his own, he quickly finger-combed his hair to flatness and tagged along behind the others with more resignation than curiosity. After the last few days, he thought, his head was spinning so much from all his new experiences that a new duty or some further instructions couldn't make much difference to him.

It was still almost dark outside, but he was no stranger to early starts. At home, at this time of the Turn, he'd already have been out to help check on the beasts in the barn, and now he'd be eating hot cereal with his brothers and sisters, and trying to get close to the fire. The frosty air of Benden's vast Bowl was a bitter contrast to the warmth of the sleeping-cavern and set Huriro shivering. Cold stung his skin where his damp hair had wet the back of his neck, and he wondered why the Weyrlingmaster was bringing them out here.

He didn't find out until they were all gathered round the elderly bronzerider, with the wall of the crater looming impossibly high above them. He had only caught a glimpse of the Weyrlingmaster before today, but the man wasn't wasting any time on introductions. "The twelve of you are excused work today. Immediately after breakfast, pack your things and return here, to this spot, where riders and dragons will meet you. You are all going to Kadanzer Weyr."

A ripple of surprise ran through the group of candidates. Huriro was as startled as any of them. "Kadanzer Weyr? Where on Pern is...?" But the old man was continuing, in that tone of voice that people used when they wanted something to sound important.

"We have been given a splendid opportunity," he pronounced. "An opportunity for you and for this Weyr. We have the chance to bring Benden's historic bloodline back to Benden – the blood of Ramoth and Mnementh, whose riders saved Pern in the Ninth Pass."

Huriro felt himself staring. He had a vague recollection of a harper ballad about someone called Lessa, and there had been a lot of chatter in the Weyr about dragon bloodlines, now that he thought about it. And about the Ninth Pass – even up at the hold, the harper who sometimes called in had told the amazing story of dragons and riders coming from the past, from a lost Weyr... somewhere. Was that Kadanzer? Huriro liked a good tale as much as the next lad, but he was a bit sketchy on the details.

"There are eggs on the Sands at Kadanzer Weyr: eggs whose sire is a Benden half-blood. Those hatchlings will be descendants of Lessa's Ramoth, the mother of the Benden line."

That made more sense! One of the dragons that had come forward in time must have flown a queen and sired a clutch, and Benden wanted to get dragons from that clutch to breed into its

own bloodline. Breeding stock, that was something that Huriro *did* understand. Not that dragons were like sheep, of course, he hastily corrected himself, with a brief internal apology to Benden's dragons for the thought. And now he'd missed something.

"If you Impress the queen, and possibly if you Impress a bronze, you will be returning here, as the object is to bring the old Benden bloodline back to Benden. Those who Impress other colours will stay at Kadanzer. If you don't Impress, we'll bring you back here."

They were going to this Kadanzer place to Stand for a clutch there – in addition to Standing here? Well, that meant another chance to Impress. Huriro certainly wasn't going to turn his nose up at that!

"As you know," the Weyrlingmaster continued, "Kadanzer Weyr has been established at its current location for only a few Turns."

Huriro didn't know anything of the sort, but apparently the older candidates did: at least, they weren't showing it if they didn't. He felt a momentary regret that he hadn't listened more closely to that visiting harper.

"You're likely to find conditions rather less comfortable than you're used to at Benden. I believe they live in wooden huts." In the near-darkness, Huriro couldn't really see the Weyrlingmaster's expression, but he could almost hear the man looking down his nose at the mention of those huts – and what became of wooden buildings, in Threadfall?

"Kadanzer is in a part of the Southern Continent where the climate is tropical, like Ista or Southern Boll. You must prepare for..."

Whatever he should be preparing for was lost to Huriro. "The Southern Continent? But... I've been here six days. This is the furthest from home I've ever been in my life. And he wants to send me to the *Southern Continent*?" It was more than daunting. With an effort, he forced himself to listen again, but he'd missed the rest of the instructions, and the Weyrlingmaster was asking,

"Are there any questions?"

Huriro had a hundred – and couldn't find the words to express any of them. Some of his companions seemed to be similarly dumbstruck, though that Darian who was so full of himself had drawn himself up as if he were a bronzerider already.

"If we go to this place," he began. Huriro wondered if he knew how he sounded. That was as far as the older boy got, though, as the Weyrlingmaster forestalled him with a raised hand.

"There's no 'if' about it. You are all going, and you should be grateful for the opportunity." He didn't sound pleased.

As the bronzerider dismissed them, Huriro turned away with 'Southern Continent!' ringing in his mind.

Behind him, he heard Darian tell Balshan, "They've had one disaster after another, you know." Huriro wasn't sure what he meant, but it didn't sound good, even though he'd started to suspect that Darian was usually full of hot air. He tried to imagine how far away the Southern Continent must be. He'd go to the ends of the planet for the chance to Impress, but if he found his dragon in that far-off place, would he ever see his home again?"

Then he grinned at his obvious mistake. If he Impressed, he would be able to fly wherever he wanted: Benden, Kadanzer, home to Trejan Creek – or places he hadn't even dreamed of. As he heaped sweetener into his breakfast klah, he was still smiling. His world seemed bright – and much, much larger.