
Reborn

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Well, they'd made it. He, Mulujath and little green Fern had been among the lucky few that struggled their way across more than four hundred Turns to reach the Tenth Pass. To reach Kadanzer Weyr.

Now almost three months had passed since the fateful day that Southern Weyr's survivors almost fell out of the skies into Kadanzer's lap.

Had it all been worth it?

Brownrider N'larion sat in the doorway of his still-unfamiliar feeling cot and sipped slowly at a cooling mug of klah. The brown bulk of Mulujath snoozed in his wallow, his hide turned red and gold in the last rays of the evening sun. Fern, his green firelizard, sat by N'larion's feet grooming her tail fastidiously.

The daily fight that the journey had entailed – the struggle to survive on hastily gathered food and scavenged oil – had strangely invigorated N'larion. By the end of it he and Mulujath had been as exhausted and haggard as the rest of the Southern Weyr survivors – and Mulujath's hide still bore scars where infections had set into the cracks in his skin. But still... the relentless need to travel on and on had fanned a flame of determination in N'larion that he hadn't felt since he'd been forced to admit that his Threadfall injuries were not going to disappear.

He flexed the fingers of his crippled right arm now, viewing the weakness – the loss of proper power and control in the hand – through new eyes. His arm would never heal to what it had once been. Mulujath's right wing-shoulder could no longer sustain the exertion needed to fly more than a fraction of a 'Fall's duration.

However, in Kadanzer – unlike Southern – they still fought. Not a full 'Fall. Not in one of the regular wings. But nevertheless they fought.

He and Mulujath flew with the Queen's Wing. The dragonhealers had approved. Despite his size (and there was another surprise awaiting in the Tenth Pass – who'd have thought that the Benden bloodline would have perished?), Mulujath could not last a full 'Fall. But he could fly *every* 'Fall, even if only for part of it. The Queen's Wing was the perfect place for them.

They'd had to learn the tactics of the Tenth Pass fighting wings from scratch – unlearning the habits of a lifetime and approaching the whole affair as if they were weyrlings once

more. From weyrling to wingsecond to message rider and then to weyrling again: N'larion shook his head at the strange turn his life had taken.

But the glory of fighting Thread again... not to feel crippled and unwanted and useless! In selfish moments, N'larion admitted that that alone made the devastation of the tsunami and the tragedies on the journey seem worth it. He almost felt that he and Mulujath had impressed anew.

His ex-wingmates back in the Ninth Pass – those who had died – he missed them and mourned for them, but the loss and the grief had started long before the tsunami reached Southern's shores. The downward spiral had started during his long time in the Southern Weyr recuperation wing, as finally, inevitably, the knowledge took hold that he would never be a wingsecond again... never fly in L'tan's wing again. His life had become divorced from his wingmates long before the killer wave crashed down on the Weyr.

There had only been three from L'tan's wing who jumped *between* times when Nioranth gave that fateful command. Himself, D'loren and A'ranis. A'ranis had vanished during their tenth jump – lost *between* to exhaustion or infection.

D'loren. There was irony in *that* survival – it had been greenrider D'loren's foolishness that had been the root cause of N'larion's crippling injuries. Even now, with four hundred Turns separating accident and consequences, he couldn't help but feel a grudge, place in the Queen's Wing or not. Still, D'loren was his only tie back to L'tan's Wing now – the only person who could recall the Wing's tall tales and traditions.

N'larion grimaced at that thought. He wasn't a toothless old Uncle yet, to want to sit and while away the hours remembering *What Once Was*.

Fern looked up from the task of grooming her tail, checking that her human was still there, and gave a satisfied cheep to find that it was still so. N'larion was unsure what her little firelizard brain had made of the journey *between* times, but the urgency of his commands that she had to stay close by him and travel curled inside his flying jacket when they jumped had certainly stuck. Despite all the temptations to explore this new home, Fern rarely strayed more than half a dragonlength from his side these days.

He put the mug down and reached forward left-handed to give Fern an affectionate rub on the eyeridge. A ripple of firelizard emotions of pleasure and contentment washed over him.

"This place will do, eh girl?" he said. "Yes, this place will do."



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