
Between the Lines

by Leia Fee

2860.10.14

Printed in FTA #25 (2008)

This story is printed by Kadanzer Weyr (www.kadanzer.org), a fan club approved by Anne McCaffrey in 1995. Kadanzer Weyr is a non-profit group – all materials pertaining to Ms. McCaffrey's works displayed on this website may only be accessed for personal, non-commercial purposes. Please do not reproduce without permission. All references to worlds and characters based on Anne McCaffrey's fiction are copyright© Anne McCaffrey 1967, 2005, all rights reserved, and used by permission of the author. The Dragonriders of Pern® is registered U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, by Anne McCaffrey, used here with permission. Use or reproduction without a license is strictly prohibited.

Calendryl Harper Hall, 2860.09.26

"Dear Lina," Suza started, then paused, twisting her hands. The day before when she'd planned this she'd known exactly all the things she wanted to say, but sitting in front of the expectant look of the alert young harper apprentice perched behind his sandtable, it seemed a bit more difficult.

She cleared her throat. "How are you and young Tayath getting along? I suppose she's shooting up even faster than human children do, is she?" Suza paused again but this time she thought she had an idea. She sat back and closed her eyes, pretended her daughter was there in front of her and she was just having a conversation. Without staring at the stylus moving across the sandtable it was easier to think.

"I hope things are going well, you both looked so happy at the Impression -- even though I've never been so close to a dragon, in any mood, I could tell she was happy to have picked you. "Me and your father--"

"Sorry, but could you slow down a bit?" the apprentice interrupted, in a deferential, but firm tone. Suza's eyes flew open and she sat up, blushing. The apprentice's stylus was still flying across the sandtray. Of course she could talk faster than the poor young man could possibly write.

"Sorry," she said, embarrassed. "I didn't think."

She composed herself again and resumed speaking, consciously talking a little more slowly this time.

"Me and your father are both very proud." She glanced over, waiting for the stylus to still before going on. "Every time anyone so much as mentions dragons or the Weyr within earshot of your father, he jumps in to start telling them about your Impression." Suza fell silent for a moment, but out of more than patience for the apprentice's scribing this time. She'd already decided to leave out the fact that that same pride had nearly led Lemual to blows with someone he'd overheard making a decidedly crude joke about greenriders and their habits in the bedchamber. She cast about for a safer topic.

"Things are much the same here. Timmo is still in mischief constantly, but he's starting to show an interest in working in the gardens." She shot a glance at the apprentice, who looked up and nodded. "He's at least been coming in covered in mud from actually doing something useful instead of larking about, so I suppose that's something."

And that was about all of it really. If Suza was honest with herself she would have to admit that the real reason for her letter was more the hope of getting one in return than

updating Lina on the day-to-day goings on at the Hall. It was the furthest any of the her children had ever gone -- her and Lemual's extended family littered the Hall's support staff, and those up at Drake as well, and though she often told herself that if Lina had not been Searched, she would still have married and moved away, somehow having her at the Weyr was different.

Knowing she was off on some harper circuit with her husband was not at all comparable with knowing she was training for something that might well get her killed. Shards, knowing that the training *itself* might get her killed! Only the other day the watchdragon had let out one of those awful keening calls the dragons gave when one of their number died. It had been several minutes before the possibilities caught up with Suza and she'd run to find Greenrider Tristiana to ask who it was, anxiety warring with deference. The name had not been familiar and she'd tried to hide her relief in sympathy, since any loss always hit the other riders hard.

The harper taking down her letter cleared his throat, and Suza came back to herself.

"Sorry, I was woolgathering." She made a small smile. "I'm done. End it..." She faltered for a moment. "Tell her we miss her and love her and to take care of herself."

The harper nodded, and then added the final lines before covering the sandtray to stop the writing from being disturbed.

"I'll get some parchment to copy that out for you and get it sent it as soon as I can. It may be a few days."

Suza nodded and smiled at him as she got to her feet. "Thank you."

She left the room, her thoughts again on the Weyr.

Again she mouthed the words, "Take care."



Kadanzer Weyr, 2860.10.14

"Shard it!" Lina exclaimed in frustration, scrubbing out the words with the back of her stylus for at least the fourth time and making several people in the Weyrhall glance over at her. "That's not right either. How do you spell *between* anyway?"

Sapherlin put down the strap she was mending and leaned over her shoulder to check. "Not 'betwin' that's for certain." Her mouth twitched. "Not unless there's two of you going, anyway."

Lina elbowed her and she subsided and answered. "Two 'E's no 'I'."

"Hmm." Lina wrote the word again. "Betweeeeen. Fine." Better to laugh about her spelling of the word than attempt to explain to her mother, particularly in front of her fellow weyring, just how gut-churningly frightening that first trip had been. Or write about the lost friends and classmates. She looked back over her last sentence, scored slowly and painstakingly into the smooth wax.

We have been learning a lot. Me and Tayath can fly together now and have started going Between.

No. She couldn't convey any of the emotion of that first experience. Not in this stilted, struggling writing,

where every word was a challenge. Would it be any easier if she dictated, got someone else to write for her? She doubted it.

She chewed the end of the stylus then added, *So far I think I like just flying places better. Going Between is scary at first.* There, that was as close as she could come. Worried about foisting off her anxieties on her family she added, *But Tayath thinks going Between is easy and I am being silly.*

She smiled fondly at the mention of the green, currently dozing contentedly back at their cot. This was a far better topic. How could she explain what an amazing individual the green was growing into?

She is full of her own... "Opinions," Lina said aloud. "O Pin Ee Ons?"

Sapherlin, who'd settled down to her mending again, looked up. "'I' not 'E' this time."

Lina blew through her lips in exasperation.

"How long did it take you to get this writing stuff sorted out? I'll never ever learn all the words in the world to spell! How does anyone?"

Sapherlin just grinned.

She is full of her own opinions. She talks all the time about what the other dragons are doing. She is... Lina stumbled over 'quite' then left it out rather than ask again, **a gossip.**

Sometimes the dragons act like the drills are a game and play around. Timmo would love to see it. They act just like him and his... She considered "friends" but that was more 'I's and 'E's. Instead she scrubbed out 'his' and added, *the boys he plays with.*

She missed Timmo, the youngest and most endearing of her brothers. He'd never quite grown out of the cheeky infant, and somehow still got away with it as he approached ten Turns.

Once they let us start going away from the Weyr I will visit.

Lina heaved a sigh, suddenly tired. The letter from home had been lovely, her mother's words and the care behind them shining through the clear, neat letters she must have had a harper write for her. Returning the message had proved a challenge though, both to Lina's faltering writing skills, and to her emotions. She was glad Tayath was already asleep. She didn't think she could explain her mixed feelings to her dragon right now.

She put the stylus to the wax once more.

Give my love to all. Tell them I am being careful. She stopped to underline the "am" firmly. Me and Tayath are being careful for each other.

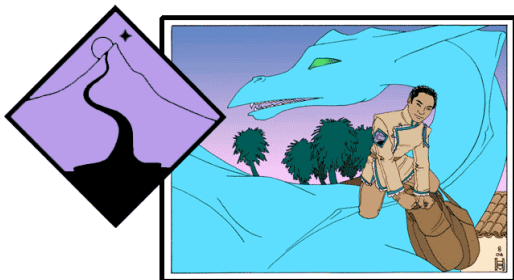
She put the stylus down with a definite click on the table.

"Done?" Sapherlin asked.

"Yep," Lina got up and stretched out her cramped neck. "I'll copy it out in ink tomorrow, I'm done for tonight. Thanks for your help."

For a moment she regarded Sapherlin, wondering if it was any easier to have a parent who was already a dragonrider, who understood, and presumably accepted the dangers and rewards without having to struggle to explain them.

But she didn't ask, and after a moment she scooped up the wax tablet now bearing her carefully-composed letter and headed back to her cot.



Kadanzer Weyr

Alternate Tenth Pass *Dragonriders of Pern*® Fanclub

www.kadanzer.org