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Prologue

Aloft, On Wing



Even in the dank grey chill of an autumnal morning, Kawanth looked superb.

They'd been up since before dawn, Peninsula-time, making their final preparations for departure, and despite Kawanth's reluctance to leave the comfortable warmth of his ledge, Sh'zon had him in fine order. Now, as the big bronze spread his wings in the mist over Madellon Weyr, Sh'zon admired how the shining hide brightened the dismal day.

To their left, and half a level higher, Trebruth kept pace with Kawanth. Though scarcely the size of a blue, and so dark in colour that his hide seemed to absorb the grey light, the brown dragon was familiar and reassuring company. Sh'zon raised his arm to M'ric, signalling the command to descend.

As the two dragons lost altitude, the Bowl of Madellon Weyr came into view through layers of fog. The irregular crater with its central lake, and beast paddocks, and the neat rows of plants in the kitchen gardens, was a far cry from the stark, windswept, beautiful cliffs of the Peninsula. Sh'zon quelled the regret that accompanied the thought of his home – former home – and repeated his mantra silently to himself. *Tomorrow is your concern, not yesterday.*

The dragon standing watch near the Star Stones bugled a query, and Sh'zon felt as well as heard Kawanth's answering rumble. *The blue asks who are we, and what is our business at Madellon Weyr.*

"Tell him, then, lad, and ask him to point us towards the Weyrleader."

The bronze expanded his chest. *We are Kawanth and Trebruth of the Peninsula. My rider would see the Weyrleader.*

Sh'zon saw the blue's rider indicate a welcome, and thumped the bronze neck. "That's it. Take us down."

Epherineth and his rider the Weyrleader are waiting for us, Kawanth reported as he angled on one wing to glide towards the far end of the Bowl. The watchdragon warns us not to go near the Sands. Shimpeth protects her eggs.

Sh'zon turned his head to look at the yawning entrance to the Hatching cavern. "And the golden one?"

Most fiercely of all.

The bronze rider grinned. "As well she should, Kawie. As well she should."