

Chapter 4 Answers

As Kelvy sprinted along the border between the murmuring forests of Emerlyr and the Madlands, dawn swelled upon the horizon like a storm of light. Soon, the sun would come up and he would be utterly vulnerable in the Madlands. Daylight, unfiltered by trees, would blast the open grass, and possibly Kelvy, too. The Thinderzim – the vast magical current flowing throughout the world, would surge from a reasonably steady nighttime tide to a raging cyclone.

Kelvy kept glancing back over his shoulder, expecting to see the Ardeld Raarchlan sweeping up behind him. He skirted the pockets of *darbane* gathering beneath certain spirelock trees. He ducked at the windy rustle of every branch.

“Next time we venture into a Ghost house,” Flyndyng suggested, “let’s do it during the day.”

“Some *thief* you are,” Kelvy huffed.

“Masters of the Acquisitional Arts are adept at *avoiding* confrontation, not so much at confrontation, itself.”

“From what I can see, you’re mainly a master at *eating*.”

Just as Kelvy was nearly out of sight of the Ghost House where he’d encountered the Ardeld Raarchlan, a little quiver raced up his spine clear to the top of his scalp, a warning sense possessed by all Ellouarch. He dove into some harkleaf bushes. Flyndyng plunged after him, all but crashing into a tree. Kelvy strained to keep from panting too loudly and feared that even the drumming of his heart might give him away. The danger could be anything, perhaps most obviously the enraged

Collector of Names seeking revenge. Kelvy peered at the now-distant Ghost House and saw familiar shapes – Ellouarch – creeping from the trees towards the deadwood house. Would these Ellouarch – undoubtedly *Tslir Traas* – also survive the *Ardeld Raarchlan*? The Collector of Names might at least delay the legendary Ellouarch hunters a few hours.

Kelvy padded away from the Ghost House as quickly as he could. He had to find a place to hide and rest, but where? Ghost Houses were, he had learned, never safe, least of all during the day. When full daylight arrived, he would have to stay within the forest. However, he couldn't go too deeply into Emerlyr, either. The denser the woods, the greater the chance he'd encounter Ellouarch, any of whom might recognize him.

He remembered a village called Laalnaer, where he and his mother Evenor had lived a few years before. It was less than a day's run away from where he now was. Near Laalnaer there were some overgrown and all but forgotten ruins, the remains of a Fangeye stronghold. Aeons ago, during one of the Great Magical Race Wars between the Ellouarch and the Fangeye, Ellouarch Silver Guards had decimated the enemy fortress and razed it with magic. Kelvy had discovered the ruins while exploring the woods and had declared it his personal bastion.

He might make it there by nightfall. If he stayed along the border where it would be harder for the *Tslir Traas* to track him, he might even make it before he was caught.

The *Ardeld Raarchlan* must have slowed the *Tslir Traas* or even taken their souls, because nothing confronted Kelvy the entire day. He reached the Fangeye

ruins near Laalnaer late in the afternoon. His speed was boosted by Ghost food, which filled him with a crazy energy. However, he was utterly exhausted when he climbed the ruin's stone steps. Everything was carpeted in moss and lichen. The mammoth ramparts were now crumbled rows of stone, and the proud towers were mostly granite mounds. Parts of two towers still stood, however, offering some shelter and protection. Many standing stones still bore the weathered runes of the Fangeyes and thus still stank very faintly of their magic, but it had never bothered Kelvy all that much, and it sure didn't now. He crawled into the covered lower level of a tower, curled up in a corner, and fell into a sleep as dark as *durmurk*.

"I'll keep the first watch," Flyndyng offered, as he gently tugged the boy's food-filled bag away from him.

Kelvy awoke to a night thick with *teneros* and to the feeling of someone's warm hand upon his head. He jerked away and rolled against the tower's far wall. He had no real weapons, only a dull fruit knife that that idiot gargoyle had undoubtedly used to feed himself. The figure across from him was hidden by a cloak and by the deep *teneros*.

"*Kelvy!*" the figure hissed. "*It's me!*"

He stared, as the figure pulled back its hood.

"*Mother!*" For a moment, it was as though the past horrible days had not happened at all. For a moment, all Kelvy knew was Evenor's embrace, as shielding as any magic.

"I knew you'd come here," she said. "You'll be safe for at least a few hours, I think. I sensed no other Ellouarch when I arrived."

Kelvy had not seen his mother since before the *Rosul* had been stolen.

“I didn’t take the *Rosul*, Mother,” Kelvy pleaded.

“I know, Kelvy. I know you didn’t.”

“I was trying to *warn* everyone it might be stolen. I heard a voice in my head telling me it might be taken. I didn’t know whether to trust the voice, but I had to do *something*. I couldn’t find you in the crowds. I tried to tell the Silver Guards, but it was too late.”

“All will be right soon enough, Kelvy. You will not bear this for long, and not alone.”

His mother’s words were like warm water washing over him. It was all Kelvy could do to not start crying.

“Mother, the Tslir Traas are after me. The Lords of Emerlyr declared I am an enemy of the Realm. What can I do? I’ll have to flee into the Madlands.”

“Yes, you will.”

“*I will?*” His mother’s answer was not at all what Kelvy had expected. His mother had spent years keeping him away from trouble and specifically away from the domain of Ghosts.

“Most of the Lords of Emerlyr are twisted by fear and anger because the *Rosul* has been stolen,” Evenor said. She gently pulled curly golden strands of Kelvy’s hair away from his face. “Only a few powerful Ellouarch know that you are innocent. Most of the rest are wasting precious time and energy accusing you instead of identifying more likely culprits.”

“*Why me?* I’m just a boy. I get in trouble, and I tried to warn them about the theft, but why would they think I really had anything to do with the Rosul being stolen?”

“Because of your father,” Evenor said. More than a little bit of her usual ferocity left her face. “If the Tslir Traas catch you, they will do more than interrogate you. There are spells they will use, awful spells, to make you talk and even to confess to things you didn’t do. So you cannot stay in Emerlyr. And if the Rosul is not recovered, Ellouarch will not be protected *anywhere* in the world. You must find your father, because with him you may be safe.”

Seeds of understanding began to blossom horribly within Kelvy. “And my father...is in the Madlands?”

“Yes.” Evenor took a big breath. For an instant, it seemed trapped within her. “Your father is out there somewhere, because your father was...is...a man.”

“*No!*” Kelvy proclaimed the word as though it were a magical command that would dispel what he was hearing. He shook his head so hard it hurt. He felt bruised, as though each new horrible event or bit of information was another blow of a club.

He wanted his mother to tell him that his father’s identity, the stolen *Rosul*, the impending fall of Emerlyr, all were another one of the elaborate yarns she used to tell him. He wanted all the horrible things to just stop.

“*A Ghost?* No. That’s *not* true.”

But now that his mother had said it, Kelvy knew it *was* true.

Evenor gripped her son’s fingers with the smudged and powerful hands of a silversmith and bellmaker. She looked gray, determined, guilty. “I should have told

you. I was trying to *protect* you. I hoped you would have never needed to know, and it probably would have been better that way. At least until you were much older.

Most Ellouarch don't understand."

"I don't understand. How can this be?"

Or, Kely thought, how could it not be. It explained much, if not everything, but it also filled Kely with a sickening awfulness, as though someone had scooped out a great hollow in his chest and loaded it with lead. All the bad things he had ever heard about Ghosts were suddenly part of *him*. The Madlands. Sun Lust. A feverish greed. Killing trees and hoarding the deadwood. Destroying magical things. He felt nauseous, scared of himself and angry at everything, his mother included. She *also* had done this to him. Somehow, she was responsible.

He pulled his hand away from hers. "I'm a monster."

Most mothers might have begun weeping at this point, but not Evenor.

"You're no *monster*. There's barely a bit of bad in you."

"The Elders and Wardens and Lords all think I'm a fiend. *Everyone* in Emerlyr thinks I'm a fiend."

"You know that's not true, and all of Emerlyr will know it soon enough. The Realm is terrified because of what happened to the Rosul. But Ellouarch are wise and will see all the good in you."

"They'll *see* I'm not even *Ellouarch*."

"We Ellouarch value the truth above all else. To see you for the person you are will require many Ellouarch to think differently than they often have. Ellouarch change slowly, but we *can change*."

The moon had risen in the east, painting milky white *lusollum* on the sides of trees and on the rune-etched rocks. Kelvy felt the laughing magic of Emerlyr swirling and drifting through the forest, rising and falling on the White Wind. The stars danced in the dark night far above the cover of the forest canopy. The trees themselves murmured their mysterious music. Was he even a part of this? Had he ever been?

Kelvy's anger gave way to a swelling bitterness. "My father is a Ghost. So what does that make *me*?"

"It makes you *different*. It makes you *Kelvarlor*. It makes you special. It makes you my *son*."

Evenor's fierceness, as always, made Kelvy's entire body feel warm and good, a sensation as powerful as any charm. She would, he knew, dare the most powerful Archmuses, even the hideous reaches of the Shadowghast to save him. She had moved them both from village to village all these years not just because one or both of them inevitably got into trouble with the local Village Elders, but because she was trying to protect him.

Something occurred to Kelvy, then. "The strange language you taught me, the one you said was spoken by my far-off cousins. That's human speech, isn't it?"

"I wanted you to be able to talk to your father if...if he ever came back. And who knows? You might have far-off cousins, only in the human domain."

"You still want him to come back," Kelvy said, wonderingly.

"Your father was a beautiful man," Evenor said. The word, "man," flashed through the dark like lightning.

“What is his name?”

“Daniel Jones.” Evenor spoke the name in the human tongue, in syllables that were rough jewels compared to the Ellouarch language. “Daniel was a musician and a human scholar. I first fell in love with him because of his music. He played the flute so beautifully, so magically, I heard it far off in the woods.” She stared at the cold wall of the ruined tower as though a picture of her long-lost husband were carved there. Her smile was a small silver sliver. “This was when I lived among the *Garlyr*, the forest of Red Giants. I came into the clearing where he played, and your father saw me. And I saw *him*. It was his music, but something more. It was something *in him*, a magic within his heart, that enabled us to see each other when we should not have been able to. It was a miracle.” She turned her sad and smiling gaze towards Kely. “You were a miracle, too.”

How bitter and wonderful and strange, Kely thought, to have questions he’d carried his whole life like a bellyful of stones answered only as his life was ruined, only as Emerlyr was about to fall.

“What happened to Daniel Jones?”

His mother shook her head. “I do not know. We secretly married in the deep woods, we married in music. We journeyed from the Red Giants east to Tefirien, of the burning waters, and then to the northern forests near Eorpan. Daniel Jones was studying numbers and human calculations at a human school there when you were born. You were only a baby when an evil from out of the Madlands tried to destroy Emerlyr. This evil was led by a banished Archmuse named Maerlstane Mardhark Slirnum. He and his accomplices planned to inject a poisonous bane into the magic

of Emerlyr. Your father tried to stop them, and I believe he succeeded. After he thwarted them, he returned to Emerlyr, to the forest near Eorpan. He was terribly injured, but still saved you and me from the horrors sent by the fiend Maerlstane. After that, your father vanished into the Madlands. I never saw him again. I do not know if he survived or if he was too badly injured to create the magic that revealed us to each other. I don't know anything."

Evenor's lips pressed tightly together. She was boundlessly sad, but her eyes suddenly turned angry, as though they were burning words.

"Some Lords of Emerlyr claimed your father was evil. *He was not.* Your father was *good.* He loved me and you and all Ellouarch. He thought we were wondrous. '*People made of music,*' Daniel called us."

His mother again seized Kelvy's hands, a grip that was warm and hard and quick.

"No matter what people say, Kelvy, believe that your father disappeared *saving* us, not trying to destroy us."

Kelvy squeezed his mother's hand in his own, larger, barely stronger one. "I believe you."

Evenor practically crushed her son's fingers, in response. "Right now, many Ellouarch will say that *you're* evil, too, Kelvy. Don't you believe them. Don't you dare believe them. Ellouarch who believe that have lost their light."

His mother's burning expression settled like an ember into Kelvy's chest. He felt it would glow within him for a long time.

But time was not something Kelvy possessed much of.

“How can we find my father?” Kelvy asked. He thought of the deadpaper maps he’d taken from the Ghost House, of all the Ghost cities and towns. “Where is he in the Madlands?”

Evenor shook her head, causing the *lusollum* to shimmer through her hair. “I don’t know where he is. And I can’t go with you. I would risk almost anything to go, even the open sun. But I know so little about the Madlands, and they have changed so much since I was with Daniel, that I would be a hindrance more than a help. I would simply put you in greater danger. Your human half, I think, will enable you to go places in the Madlands ordinary Ellouarch can not. But I and others will help you every way we can.

“Others? You mean Archmuse Mutterpearl?”

Evenor nodded. “We have much to thank him for.”

“Sure, but he’s an utter loon. He goes around telling everyone the dragons are about to invade again and swearing at the ground. It’s why they call him, ‘The Cursing Mage.’”

“He’s one of the few who believes you are innocent. He risked much to enable you to escape, and asked little in return.”

Kelvy golden eyes narrowed at the expression on his mother’s face. “What do you mean he asked, ‘little in return?’ What did he ask?”

Evenor sighed, almost guiltily. “The Archmuse Mutterpearl believes that your father and I were able to see each other because he unknowingly rediscovered a lost Ellouarch magic called the *Lumellor*, the Key of Revelation. It can reveal things hidden by magic and perhaps even make known the location of lost magics. It may

be how Daniel saved Emerlyr all those years ago. The Lords of Emerlyr have concluded that whatever stole the Rosul has taken the seed into the Madlands. Whether Daniel has the Key of Revelation or not, the Archmuse Mutterpearl believes your father may be able to help us find the Rosul. When you find Daniel Jones, you need to ask him to help us.”

Kelvy couldn't decide whether his father, this Daniel Jones, was a hero or villain. One mystery had been replaced by another.

“But you haven't seen him in many years. How do you know if he'll help us? Or if he's even still alive?”

“Archmuse Mutterpearl thinks he is.” Evenor sadly shook her head. “And as for whether he'll help us – or simply you, we have to hope he is at least partly the good man he used to be.”

“Ghosts change quickly, don't they? Faster than Ellouarch.”

“That is the nature of humans. But often they change for the better, and not for the worse.”

Kelvy tried to smile. “Well, since I know his name, how hard can it be to find him, even in the Madlands?”

“It may not be easy. I think there are many humans named, ‘Daniel Jones.’ Humans do not have unique names, like Ellouarch.”

“Oh. Then this could be really hard.”

“As I said, you have help. Archmuse Mutterpearl give you that gargoyle companion, did he not?”

Evenor looked around for Flyndyng, and, unable to see him, frowned. She finally located him by tracing his wet and rattling snores. The little gargoyle sprawled across a stone shelf, his belly lolling to one side. He was covered in bright orange crumbs.

“At least Flyndyng knows a lot about the Madlands,” Kelvy said.

Evenor’s pinched face showed that Flyndyng did not inspire much confidence in her.

“I brought you some things, including a *simskirr*,” she told Kelvy. “It’s in a meadow near here.”

“A lightship?” Kelvy for a moment forgot about all the danger he faced. “How many sails does it have? Is it fast?”

Kelvy’s love for *simskirrs* had caused him and his mother to be expelled from at least three Ellouarch villages. He had never been able to resist flying them, even if it was prohibited or if the ships hadn’t belonged to him. He had hammered together several *simskirrs* from deadwood scraps and gloamlace rags and had thoroughly amazed – and dismayed – village wardens by getting the contraptions off the ground. He had piloted several “borrowed” lightships far beyond the safe village limits, and had even on two occasions outrun pursuing wardens. Kelvy might be magically incompetent and unable to sit still during lessons, but he had a gift for music, for lying, and for flying.

However, unauthorized flight was not simply improper and hazardous, it could also be dangerous to Emerlyr itself. Lightships were critical to the Ellouarch’s survival and thus were not to be taken by boys on joy rides.

The villages and cities of Emerlyr lie within a thousand separate forests, great and small, scattered across the Great Western Land. They are like a vast archipelago of forest havens. The Ellouarch can communicate with each other using devices and spells that send words through the currents of the *Thinderzim*, but simskirrs are the primary way that Ellouarch travel. They cannot safely cross on foot the Madlands that lie between forest islands, but *do* fly over the human domain at night.

After the sun has set and the Thinderzim has calmed and darkness masks the sky, Ellouarch throughout Emerlyr launch their glimmerwood lightships. Ellouarch sailors fill their dark gold, gloamlace sails with the Breath of the Sun and sing a hymn of the Thinderzim. The blue-black ships rise into the magical dark. Every night, thousands of simskirrs flit and soar across the sky, nearly invisible to the human eye. And if Ghosts do happen to notice something in the night, a flash of gloamlace or a gloamlight lantern, what do they conclude? That the object is a UFO and its occupants are aliens.

Evenor smiled knowingly at her son. "The simskirr I brought has four sails."

"Four! And how long is it?"

"Not long at all. I believe it's a courier ship. Lloubrahaar is so chaotic right now, and it's such a small simskirr I was able to sneak off with it. Barely. It is not an easy craft to sail."

"I'm so proud of you, Mother. You stole a quick ship!"

"I *did not* steal it. We're *borrowing* it."

"Of course I'll return it. *Eventually.*"

Evenor gave her son a hard look. She picked up a tube of glimmerwood from a small pile of things at her side.

"You'll need maps," she told Kelvy. "Unfortunately, these Ellouarch ones show almost nothing of the Madlands."

"Don't worry, Mother," Kelvy said. "I pilfered a stack of maps from the Ghost House I went into last night."

"What?"

"That's where the *Ardeld Raarchlan* almost trapped me."

Evenor's mouth moved, but nothing came out except a little strangled sound, like something a newborn bird might make.

"But see, I escaped!" Kelvy quickly added. "And I tricked the Collector of Names into telling me a secret. He told me that he was gathering Ellouarch blood for a creature for whom he worked, a human named Thomas Blane. He said this Thomas Blane would go everywhere and that, after Emerlyr falls, he will become the Lord of *Slevros*, the Empire of Noise. What could that mean? Could it have something to do with the Rosul being stolen?"

Evenor's face had changed from the color of pink porcelain to something more like bread dough. "It may concern the theft of the Rosul. I do not know either what *Slevros* is or a Thomas Blane. However, the creature that stole the Rosul, the *Shrade*, was created by dark sorcery. Archmuse Mutterpearl believes the *Shrade* may have been able to penetrate Emerlyr because it was bred with Ellouarch blood. Perhaps that is why the *Ardeld Raarchlan* is collecting our blood. I will tell Archmuse Mutterpearl about this."

She pressed her slightly sooty, silversmith fingers against her forehead. “But is the *Ardeld Raarchlan* chasing you? You cannot go back into the Madlands if he is.”

“He can’t hunt me. Because I won a contest with him, he agreed to not pursue either me or my family.” Kelvy was disappointed to see that his mother seemed no less fearful at hearing this.

“Demons follow rules,” she explained, “but they also *break* them. I *must* go with you.”

“You *can’t*, Mother. It’s too dangerous for you. As you said, because I’m half human, I’ll be safe.” Kelvy had no idea if this were true, but he could not bear the thought of anything happening to his mother, especially because of him.

Evenor looked as though she were in great pain. “You will need all the help we can give you. Let’s begin with this.”

She handed Kelvy a fireworm silk bag the color of the midnight sky. It contained a small Ellouarch knife, the kind you might use to peel fruit, some proper food in which Kelvy was not the least big interested, and miscellaneous spell components.

“I brought something else for you,” Evenor told her son. She handed him a slender, foot-and-a-half long velvet bag. “I guess I’ve waited a long time, probably *too* long, to give it to you. But you certainly should have it now, given all that’s happening.”

“It’s not another secret, is it, Mother?” Kelvy asked. “I mean, you *are* truly an Ellouarch, aren’t you, and not a sprite or something?”

Evenor laughed. “No more secrets. At least not ones to which I know the answers. Open it.”

The bag contained a beautiful silver flute. The gleaming surface cast flashing rainbows in the room's artificial light. The metal felt warm and alive in Kelvy's hand, like a metallic kind of glimmerwood. He recognized the style of the instrument, the graceful sweep of the mouthpiece and fine Ellouarch etchings.

"You made this for him," he told his mother.

"It was one of his favorites."

"And he left it *behind*?"

"Don't be angry, Kelvy. Your father didn't want to risk taking this on trips into the Madlands, both because he valued this flute and because it might make other humans wonder about its origins, wonder about *us*. I think that's the least of our worries, now."

Kelvy gently gripped the instrument. It seemed to have been made to fit his hands.

His mother smiled. "You have his fingers."

"Do you miss him?" Kelvy asked.

Kelvy ran his fingers across the holes. He played, "The Boundaries of Silence," one of his mother's favorite songs. It was a soft and sweeping piece. It made you feel as though you were sitting on top of a forested mountain summit, *feeling* as much as *hearing* the high breezes hushing over the horizon. His mother smiled.

"You sound just like him," she said.

Kelvy played for a while longer, until his lips grew numb and his last notes disappeared into the darkness. He could not recall his mother ever looking so happy.

"There's one more thing," Evenor said, after a few moments. She silently descended the tower steps and returned a moment later with a shimmering blue, gloamstone vase about the size and shape of Kelvy's head. In the vase was a small

glimmertree, no more than two feet tall and perfectly straight. And as Kelvy's mother approached him with it, Kelvy heard the little tree murmuring, in a voice not unlike the one that had told him to warn Emerlyr about the imminent threat to the Rosul.

"This is a shoot from the Tree of Tones," Evenor told Kelvy. "It is a gift from the Gloraiden Grove itself. One of the Fellows of the Grove who believes in your innocence smuggled it to me. The Fellow told me that, by carrying this shoot, you will bear a bit of the Grove's magic with you, even in the Madlands. You may also be able to Listen to Leaves, and hear where the trees otherwise would be silent."

Evenor gave the vase to Kelvy. It hummed in his hands.

Don't drop me, warned the Shoot.

Surprised by this new voice, Kelvy nearly did.

And water my roots thrice daily and ensure I receive a considerable quantity of indirect sunlight. And don't tear my leaves or bend my branches.

Evenor had a curious expression on her face. Of course, Kelvy thought, she can't clearly hear the voice of the Shoot. To understand the voices of trees, to be a Listener of Leaves, was an uncommon ability among Ellouarch, one usually possessed only by Fellows of the Gloraiden Grove. For most of his life, Kelvy had heard the trees just as most Ellouarch did, heard them murmuring and whispering beautifully and incomprehensibly. But now he heard some of them clearly, for reasons that he could not begin to understand.

Life, Kelvy's old teachers often said, like magic and love, is full of mystery.

“The Fellow of the Grove said that this glimmertree is both a gift and a charge,” Evenor said.

The Shoot straightened itself importantly.

And you should loosely, loosely wrap me in a soft cloth if the air is too cold or too warm. Or if it's too dusty, because the pores of my leaves will get clogged. I do like it when my leaves are massaged. It improves my circulation.

Kelvy carried the Shoot over to where Flyndyng still snored. The boy prodded the little gargoyle until, with a series of snorts and small cascade of snack crumbs, the creature awoke. Flyndyng struggled to a sitting position, blinked deeply, and tried to bring Kelvy and the vase into focus.

Kelvy presented the vase to the gargoyle

“The Gloraiden Grove wants you to take care of this,” he told Flyndyng. “It's their special charge to you.”

Ideally, said the Shoot, my caregiver should be trained in aboreal arts. You should change my soil twice a week and, as part of my daily care, lightly spray me with very fresh spring water each morning.

Flynyng's face struggled to express a specific emotion, as if he couldn't decide whether to be confused or irritated. He evidently heard *something*, but couldn't understand *what*. “Is that bush *talking*?”

I come from a delicate, yet profoundly lyrical family, and so my new branches require a light coating of chime oil at least every other day.

“The terms of my curse *do not* specify I have to be a *gardener*,” Flyndyng protested.

“Just help me make sure it doesn’t die.”

After a snack consisting of more Ghost snacks, which prompted Evenor to say that she’d rather eat squirrel, she led Kelvy and Flyndyng to the nearby meadow where she had landed the simskirr.

It was, Kelvy thought, a beautiful, if very well-travelled lightship. It was sleek and dartlike, definitely a messenger ship. It was less than twenty feet long, no more than four times Kelvy’s height. The simskirr’s gloamlace sails were worn, but nonetheless suggested that, filled with the Breath of the Sun, they could pull the ship forward at an impressive clip.

“Where should I start looking for my father?” Kelvy asked Evenor.

She ran a shiny, sooted hand through her golden hair and thought for a moment. “I know the places in *Emerlyr* where Daniel and I lived, but not the places in the Madlands where he worked and travelled. You’ll need to trace him through these Madland places. I think you should begin at the Garlyr, the Red Giants. Yes. That’s where you should start.”

There is no good way to say goodbye to someone you love, especially if you are not sure how or when you will see him or her again. A promise that you will see each other again is often more a hope than a guarantee, but what else can you do in the face of the unknown? Love and hope may be unknowable, but the future is even less so.

After Kelvy and his mother had said goodbye, the boy climbed into the simskirr with Flyndyng and the Shoot and flicked free the mooring lines. The ship was far more sophisticated than anything he’d flown before, and it took him a few

moments to figure out the system of guylines. The gloamlace launch sail billowed out and slowly filled full of the Breath of the Sun, that flowed through the sky in the form of moonlight. Kelvy softly chanted a song of flight, a hymn of the Thinderzim. The sails tugged the lightship upward. Kelvy pulled too hard on the simskirr's guiding grips – the twin handles by which the craft was steered – and pitched the surprisingly tippy ship to the right.

“Have you ever flown one of these things before?” Flyndyng clutched the gunwale, looking more green than gray.

“Sure.”

Kelvy jerked back on the guiding grips. The large, primary sails swelled open. The ship suddenly accelerated straight forward, towards a certain collision with towering pines.

“Sure!”

Stressful travel does not produce favorable growing conditions, said the Shoot. Trees are not nomadic plants.

Kelvy fumbled for the vertical tiller. He pulled it back, prompting the simskirr to rock crazily backwards so that the bow pointed almost straight up. Gargoyle and elf boy and bags and Shoot tumbled back towards the simskirr's stern. Kelvy snatched the Shoot's luminescent vase just as it was about to fly out of the ship. A precious bag of potato chips cartwheeled across the simskirr, popped the boy on the head, and hurtled away into the meadow below.

Kelvy desperately kicked the vertical rudder. The ship's bow dropped. Treetops brushed the underside of the hull as the simskirr seesawed over the pines.

The ship suddenly yawed to the right as the Thinderzim flared. Everything and everyone were tossed to starboard. Kelvy overcorrected with the guiding grips and almost put them into the side of a hill.

“If I die in a lightship crash,” Flydyng mused miserably, “then having my curse dissolved is pretty pointless.”

This activity is causing potentially damaging stress to my branches, said the Shoot.

It will be even more stressful if the Tslir Traas catch us and use you as a toothpick, Kelvy snapped.

After several endless minutes of nauseating, mid-air floundering, Kelvy began to get a feel for the ship. It was tricky and fast, like a racing ship. A simskirr like this would be tougher to catch, even if it were harder to fly.

As they spiraled and careened higher into the night, Kelvy watched the meadow shrink into the darker-than-night *vergleam* of the surrounding forest. His mother was a small figure, a speck of white face among all the green. He could not even wave to her.

“Where are we going again?” Flydyng groaned from the bottom of the hull.

“The Red Giants,” Kelvy said. “We’re going to the Garlyr. That’s where my mother met my father. That’s where we’ll begin.”