

Twenty-two year old Vincent Gahan shook his head yet again as he took aim at the target with his short dark-stained yew recurve. "Vincent? Are you ok?" asked Tarathorn. Vincent was a medium-heighted youth with an athletic build, expressive almond-shaped brown eyes, and jet-black hair, and this time, he wore a pair of khaki pants and an oatmeal grey polo shirt with the Caltech logo embroidered on it. Tarathorn, on the other hand, was a tiny young woman of about twenty two, also with almond-shaped brown eyes, long jet-black hair, and deeply tanned skin.

"A bit of a headache," lied Vincent, not wanting to ruin the archery tournament for his friend. In truth, he had heard a cold female voice in his mind. Ever since he recovered from Tehanu Syndrome, he heard that voice insinuating into his mind.

*Eöl, seek out the path to Dûnhèasa,* said the voice in his mind.

Concentrating to the best of his ability, he stared at the black and white target that was about twenty-five yards away. Drawing back on his bow slowly, he continued to focus before his hand anchored to the corner of his mouth and the string touched the tip of his nose. After holding and confirming his aim, he loosed the arrow with a fluid motion. With a soft twang, his scarlet-fletched cedar arrow flew through the air and struck in the center of the white dot.

"Good shot," said Tarathorn, smiling. "You've been practicing, haven't you?" She then took her own bow, a yew longbow with dark accents that was taller than her and nocked a blue and white-fletched arrow to the string. Taking aim and also concentrating, she drew the bow gracefully and held the shot long enough to mentally pinpoint the target. Like her best friend, she loosed the arrow and it arced through the air and landed right next to Vincent's arrow

"Good shot yourself too," laughed Vincent. "I wonder how those guys on training wheels are doing," he joked, pointing to the group of compound shooters in front of them. He and Tarathorn had already loosed four arrows each at the target in the field round at Pasadena Roving Archers in less than half the time the compound shooters loosed two or three of their arrows.

"Dr. Claudio is the only compound shooter I know who doesn't take all day to aim," replied Tarathorn. "She's almost as fast as we are. But then again, she'd always tell stories of how she had that one coach in Florida who'd tell her to slow down. Supposedly she was faster than us when she first started and that she shot a bow very much like Dr. de Salvo's." Ten minutes later, the compound group finally moved from the next target, allowing Vincent and Tarathorn to advance.

After taking their four shots from the forty-three and the thirty-seven yard lines, Vincent and Tarathorn went to examine their arrows. "Five, ten, fourteen, eighteen, and one X for me" counted Vincent. "And you got five, ten, fifteen, nineteen, three Xs. Is it me, or are we just doing freakishly well?"

Writing down the numbers on the score-cards, she replied, "We are. Dr. Claudio isn't even shooting that well and she's the one who won the world championships repeatedly with that Bowtech Equalizer of hers." Drawing closer to Vincent, she then whispered, "I don't know about you, but I've been having nightmares about a cold, cruel woman named Cylithera who offered me the powers to be as great of an archer as she is if I turn my back on the Alfar. And I've also been dreaming about a guy who keeps offering me eternal youth and innocence if I turn my back on the Sidhe. It's been like that ever since I woke up from Tehanu Syndrome."

Gasping, Vincent replied, "I've been dreaming about that woman too. I also hear her voice sometimes. I thought I was the only one going crazy over quads. Do you think having Tehanu Syndrome gave us brain damage of some sort? Ivan told me that he was having some pretty bad dreams too. Last night he was telling me about how he dreamed that Galka turned into a dragon on him and then told him that he's a dragon in human form too."

"Galka's been really protective of Ivan lately too, she's been acting a bit odd, almost like she's getting jealous of you after that little Geekster tour," added Tarathorn.

At the next target, Joanne looked intently at the target and took aim with her short dark-wooded take-down recurve. Focusing hard, she drew the bow smoothly and fired one of her black-shafted carbon arrows with red and white fletching. "And you say compounds are more precise?" laughed the short, middle-aged Hispanic woman. "I'm doing as well as you guys, and look at Vincent and Tarathorn, they're kicking all of our asses!"

"Yeah, but you were also Soronthrel Cúthalion once upon a time, and I think you're still her when you're shooting that bow. Damn, it looks way too much like that Chek-Mate Hunter recurve I took with me to UF. And well, Vincent and Tarathorn are both Tehanu survivors, which did some interesting

things to them,” retorted Helen, taking her range-finder and confirming the distance before dialing up the distance on her sight. “By the way, what they claim to be fifty-five is really fifty-three and a half. Not that it really matters to Soronthrel since she aims instinctively.” She then drew her shiny blue and silver flame-patterned compound bow with her back-tension release, then focused for what felt like an eternity to Joanne, although she knew that she was by far the fastest of the compound shooters in the group. “And looks like I just landed my arrow right next to yours in the X ring. Looks like you boys are going to have a bit of a rough time.”

The huge, heavy-set man in the group looked at what the two short women in the group had accomplished. “Well, don’t blame me if you’re down another arrow!” laughed Thomas, the six and a half foot tall muscular man who refused to leave Joanne’s side. He hefted his massive camouflage-colored compound bow, drew it back, and took aim before loosing his arrow right next to the two arrows in the center.

Suddenly, Dr. Claudio and Joanne clutched their foreheads, as if in intense pain. “Mierda santa!” swore Joanne. “My head... and that voice... Cylithera is calling to me again.”

“Same here,” groaned Helen. “Maybe I should’ve been more careful with what I wrote back in the day!” she added, trying to reduce the gravity of the situation.

A short Hispanic man who was barely bigger than the two women, laughed at Helen’s comment. “You wrote some crazy-stuff back then and you still do.” James shifted his feet a bit, trying to settle into a comfortable position before drawing his relatively small compound charcoal grey bow and taking aim.

“Damn you!” groaned Thomas, watching James’ arrow striking his arrow and splitting it. “What is it with you and the Captain breaking my arrows all day?”

Then a sharp cracking noise and two loud male voices from the target ahead of them resonated with intense profanity throughout the archery range. “Looks like some arrows got destroyed!” said Joanne, trying to ignore the headache. Throaty, triumphant female laughter floated through the air. “And it looks Katie just ticked off two of the guys in her group yet again by hitting right in between their arrows in the X and breaking them!”

“At least they’re not in our group,” commented Helen. “Two buddies from University of Florida are in that group, including my first ever coach, who still loves his chewing tobacco, and a long-time colleague who’s had his share of misadventures.” At the mention of that group, James gave the slow-moving people ahead of them a disgusted look.

“I feel sorry for that girl who has to put up with them,” added James. “Helen, how did you put up with those two guys?”

Cylithera Eaglestrike gazed into the small basin she had just filled with water from one of the many pristine, clear rivers in Dûnhèasa. “The time draws near,” she thought to herself. “Eöl will return to his rightful place among the Sidhe, and the Calling will come to a close.”