

Magic of the Ancient Kings

Farrendel strode down the steps from his and Essie's bedroom of their set of rooms in the elven palace of Ellonahshinel. His hair lay wet down his back from his shower, his muscles pleasantly aching after his morning exercise.

As he entered the main room, he smiled as he caught Essie's eye. She cut up strawberries and grapes on a plate for Elliana, their youngest. Elliana, toddler that she was, shrieked and made a grab for the food, her red hair flying around her ears.

Louise, their middle daughter, also sat at the table, spooning brown sugar onto her oatmeal. She mumbled a *good morning*.

Noises came from the stairs that led to the children's rooms, which branched so that Fieran, Adriana, Louise, and Elliana each had their own room.

Fieran's and Adry's voices rang out into the morning.

"Stop!"

"Hey! You quit it!"

"You're the one being annoying!"

"Why are you so...argh!"

Farrendel met Essie's gaze, then headed in that direction. He would handle it. Especially since, he was beginning to suspect the reason behind Fieran's extra jitters and discomfort that was coming out in an irritableness that was so unlike Fieran.

He had only taken two steps when a scream rang out—Adry—followed by Fieran's panicked shout, "Dacha!"

Farrendel broke into a run, yanking the door open and charging up the stairs.

Adry stood at the top of the stairs, her back pressed to the door, her eyes wide. She wasn't scared, exactly. Her reaction seemed more surprised, and she was following the directions Farrendel had given all of them when he sat them down and gave them a talk on what to expect as each of them came into their magic, namely, to stay back and not panic.

A few steps down from her, Fieran hunched, curling over his hands, as a few guttering blue bolts of magic curled around him.

"It is all right, sason." Farrendel forced himself to slow his pace. He did not want Fieran to panic any more than he already was at that first rush of magic blasting from him, and running up like there *was* something to panic over would not help.

"No! Don't! I don't want to hurt you!" Fieran backed up a step, only to freeze as Adry made a sound. Something almost wild flashed through his eyes as he realized he was pinned between Farrendel and Adry.

That fear...how well Farrendel knew it. He could still taste it, the pain of it still aching deep in his chest. The magic of the ancient kings was terrifyingly powerful, and no amount of reassurance beforehand could forestall the utter panic of feeling it burn through one's veins and burst from one's hands, so fiercely uncontrollable, for the first time.

But Farrendel could make sure that this was the only time Fieran felt this afraid of his own magic. He would never know the continuing panic and terror of his magic that Farrendel had grown up with, not if Farrendel could do anything about it.

Stuffing down his memories, Farrendel forced a smile and a huff of a laugh. "Sason. You cannot hurt me."

With that, Farrendel let his own magic flow from his chest and out of his fingers, keeping it at just a trickle compared to the power still inside him. His own magic had long since settled, at full strength and full control now that he was fully grown.

Farrendel wrapped his magic around Fieran in a shield, creating a barrier between Fieran and Adry so that Adry was now fully protected. Only then did Farrendel let another trickle of his magic reach out and wrap around the bolts of Fieran's magic.

As soon as his magic touched Fieran's, a shock went through him at the sense of his magic interacting with a magic so similar to his own and yet so very foreign and *not* his. While he could sense the existence of other magic like Weylind's, his magic usually ate through it too quickly to fully sense anything about another magic besides its existence and perhaps its type.

But this...Farrendel could sense every nuance of Fieran's magic, from the fact that it belonged to Fieran to the sputtering feel of it, just a candle flame kindling to life yet with a lurking potential to grow into an inferno.

This was different even than wielding magic alongside Essie since all of the magic belonged to him in that case. Here, his and Fieran's magic sparked alongside each other, not consuming the other. Farrendel could sense how he could guide Fieran's magic, using the way Fieran would be able to sense Farrendel's magic in turn to teach him how to use his magic.

Weylind had tried to explain what it was like to teach his son how to use his magic, but Farrendel hadn't understood at the time. He'd had no one to teach him how to use his magic. No father with the same magic to guide him like this.

Fieran stilled, then swung his gaze up to meet Farrendel's as understanding filled his eyes. "Oh."

“You cannot hurt me, sason.” Farrendel repeated the words, even though Fieran surely felt the truth of that through their interacting magic. “Your macha shares my magic. You cannot hurt her either. You do not need to be afraid of your magic. Yes, you will need to learn to control it. But when you fear you cannot control it, come to your macha or me, and we will help.”

Fieran nodded, sucking in a shuddering breath. The magic bursting around him lessened, then flickered out. He released his exhale slowly, the panic fading fully from his eyes as his shoulders sagged.

With Fieran’s magic fully out for the moment, Farrendel released his magic. He reached out and gripped Fieran’s shoulders in an elven style hug. Fieran was still trembling slightly, but at least he was calmer. “Come. It is time for breakfast.”

Fieran nodded, then trudged past Farrendel, heading down the stairs. At the bottom, Essie was already waiting, and she wrapped their son in a tight hug, murmuring something Farrendel could not hear.

Farrendel remained where he was, waiting as Adry picked her way down the stairs, her gaze on Fieran’s back. She halted next to him, rubbing her arms. “Coming into your magic looks...terrifying.”

“Your macha and I will be there for you, just like we are there for Fieran.” Farrendel gave Adry a shoulder hug as well. She wouldn’t be that far behind Fieran as she was only four years younger than him. It might not even be a full four years before she came into her magic, as elves—even half-elves—came into their magic at varied, unpredictable times.

Fieran likely wouldn’t have achieved much in the way of control in that time. The thought of two of his children with new, uncontrollable magic was...daunting.

Not that Farrendel did not have enough magic. As new to their magic and not yet come into their full power, Fieran and Adry put together would not have enough magic to cause Farrendel to struggle to hold them back.

Adry nodded, then her smile returned to her face. She trotted down the stairs, poking Fieran in the ribs as she wiggled past him. “You made us late for breakfast.”

Fieran rolled his eyes as he stepped out of Essie’s hug. “It wasn’t like I could help it.”

Farrendel made his way back down the stairs. He halted and pulled Essie into his arms, kissing her temple and murmuring into her hair, “And so it begins.”

He felt like he had been preparing for this moment from before Fieran had been born, ever since he and Essie had begun seriously considering children. Why did he still feel so unprepared despite all of that?

“Our children will be all right.” Essie hugged him tighter for a moment before she stepped back, patting his chest in that way that always helped still his whirling thoughts before they could continue spiraling, though she kept her voice low so that their children would not overhear over their boisterous chatter. “You did a good job this morning. Yes, you’ll make mistakes. We both will. But we will do our best, and our children will always know they are loved. They will feel safe. And they will turn out all right.”

“My dacha did his best and still...” Farrendel could not finish.

That was the source of his gnawing worry, one he could not fully banish. He knew without a shred of doubt that his own dacha had loved him—loved him enough to sacrifice his reputation, his legacy, and his own life for Farrendel. He’d done his level best to raise and train Farrendel, and still Farrendel had spent decades working through the trauma from his childhood.

Loving one's children and doing one's best was not always enough to prevent hurting them, and that terrified him beyond anything he could express.

Essie gripped his hand, meeting his eyes. "Your dacha was also trying to raise you all by himself without sharing your magic while fighting a war, ruling a kingdom, and living with unresolved trauma from the loss of his wife. You share the same magic as Fieran, and you'll likely share the same magic with all our children. Thanks to the Wall you created, we are living in a time of peace so you can make training our children your priority. You don't have a kingdom to rule, nor are you trying to parent alone. You have spent decades working through your own trauma to prevent placing that trauma on our children, and you will continue to be conscientious of that. Your situation isn't the same as your dacha's, and our children's childhood won't be the same as yours."

Farrendel released a long breath, nodding at the truth of her words even as he struggled to settle them in his chest. It was so much easier to give in to the spiraling worries instead of the calm of reassurance.

Especially as one worry spiraled into another. "We will have to take him to Taranath to test his magic."

Farrendel's grandfather Ellarin—a grandfather Farrendel had never known—had the magic of the ancient kings, but he had died young for an elf due to a disease tied to his magic.

"A precaution only, remember that." Essie squeezed his fingers even tighter, helping to ground him. "As Taranath reassured all of us, if your dacha had been a carrier for the disease, one of you would have had it. It's highly unlikely it would skip two generations before making an appearance again."

Also true, but that could not fully banish the gnawing in Farrendel's chest. He tried to tell himself that Taranath had studied the disease and—after comparing his theories with those of the human scientists studying heredity—concluded it was passed in the matrilineal line. That if Machasheni Leyleira and Dachasheni Ellarin had had a daughter, that daughter would have been a carrier and her children would have inherited the disease. But their son Lorsan and his line had been spared.

Still, Farrendel would not be able to fully rest easy on this worry until he took Fieran to Taranath to test for the disease, as his father had taken him when he had come into his magic.

“Dacha...” Fieran's voice had an uncertain note in it.

Farrendel turned back to the table. Fieran's hands had bolts of magic twining around them again.

Louise glanced at him, edged her chair slightly farther away from him, but continued to eat her oatmeal. Adry glanced up from preparing her own oatmeal, but she did not seem as wary this time as she had last time. In her chair, Ellie was gaping with a grin, like she thought the blue magic was a game like the ones Farrendel played with her with his magic, something he had done with all of his children so that they would grow up seeing the magic of the ancient kings as something other than a power to be feared.

With one last squeeze of Essie's fingers, Farrendel released Essie's hand and headed for the table. He rested a hand on Fieran's shoulder, letting a trickle of his magic flow down Fieran's arm and over his hands to direct his magic into more controlled bolts. “Finish your breakfast, sason. Then we will begin your training.”

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After breakfast, Farrendel took a moment to strap his swords onto his back and grab a canvas wrapped bundle from its hiding spot under his and Essie's bed. He collected Fieran and led the way farther out on the spreading branches of Ellonahshinel until they were well away from any other rooms, surrounded only by the broad oak leaves, dappled sunlight, and slightly swaying branches.

Farrendel halted and faced Fieran, holding out the bundle between them. "Now that you have come into your magic, sason, you are a Laesornysh in magic as well as name. It is time to give you these."

Fieran took the bundle, his brows scrunched as he unwrapped the canvas. His eyes widened as the last of the canvas fell away, revealing a twin pair of finely crafted swords in leather sheaths.

The swords were nearly identical to the ones Farrendel wore, though Farrendel's were heirloom swords belonging to the elven royal family and Fieran's were newly commissioned from the best dwarven smiths. Only the very best weapons—wrought by the most skilled swordsmiths and imbued with dwarven magic—could hold up under the force of the magic of the ancient kings. The dwarven magic also had the benefit of making them far more hardy and less easy to damage in practice.

Fieran gaped, first at the swords, then up at Dacha. "These are just like yours."

"Yes." Farrendel flexed his fingers. "Now that you have begun coming into your magic, you will join me in the mornings for practice instead of the afternoon practice."

For years, Farrendel had practiced swordfighting with wooden swords with his children. In part so that they would know how to fight, but also because the discipline of swordfighting would prepare them for learning how to control their magic.

Fieran grimaced. “In the morning?”

“After I have completed my own morning training. You do not have to get up as early as I do.” Farrendel could not help the note of laughter in his tone. Fieran had inherited Essie’s preference to linger in bed rather than get up with the first glimpse of the sun.

“Oh, good.” Fieran’s shoulders slumped.

“The practice in the morning will help, sason.” Farrendel gestured to the swords in Fieran’s hands. “You will exhaust your magic first thing, and it will rest easier in your chest the rest of the day.”

“All right.” Fieran clenched his fingers over the swords, as if trying to stifle his magic even now.

But Farrendel did not want him to stifle it nor to grow up thinking that should be his first instinct. “Come. Strap on your swords, and we will begin.”

Farrendel helped Fieran buckle the sword sheaths onto his back. Then he stepped back, reached over his shoulders, and drew first one sword, then the other.

Fieran swallowed, his face pale beneath the smattering of freckles across his nose. He slowly drew the swords, his motions clumsy and hesitant. His magic danced over his fingers, then down the blades.

“It is all right, sason.” Farrendel let his own magic flow down the blades, then burst into a crackling shield of magic around the two of them. “Release your magic. Do not try to hold it back.”

With a nod, Fieran’s magic burst around him, wild and uncontrolled, sparking down the length of the glittering blades of his new swords.

Farrendel lifted his swords, directed some of his magic to wrap over Fieran's magic, gently guiding it into controlled bolts, and began, for the first time in his life, a training practice with another elf wielding the magic of the ancient kings.