

Sleepwalker's Dream
by Felora Amberhoof - 2014

There had been a time when Felora had found the Swamp of Sorrows to be close and even stifling, with the way that its fetid mist let in so very little sunlight that even the moss grew sparse and thin. And now, as she sat beside a swath of ferns which were just opening their fronds to the dim light, she could think of nowhere in the world that she felt more at home. Her months in the Emerald Dream had left her mind hazy and unfocused, as though she were still struggling to wake in the Hyjal Barrow Dens.

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"Sister, are you well?"

Tholo Whitehoof knelt over her on the stone floor, his brow furrowed with concern. Felora stared up at him, disoriented. She struggled to open her mouth, to tell him anything at all. Everything was still cloudy and tinged with green, and the right side of her body screamed with pain. How had she fallen? Where was Faquarl?

Gone, she reminded herself. Gone forever, his soul consumed by his Nightmare. She would never see him again. Oh, Therazane, she pleaded.

He lives through you. The Earthmother's voice echoed in her head. Honor his spirit.

Tholo had eased her into a sitting position and was holding out a ewer of water. Felora took it with shaking hands and brought it to her lips. The water was cool on her throat. She tried again to speak.

"...thank you." Her voice came out broken and thready, but Tholo nodded all the same. He took the ewer from her hands and set it back onto the small table beside them. His eyes followed her as she pulled herself up from the floor to sit instead on the edge of the bed, and held his hand in her direction, palm up.

Felora thought that he was offering to help her stand, but as she looked at his hand she realized that he held something. She cupped her hands and into them Tholo dropped a piece of horn, broken clean at the widest edge.

"This belongs to you," he rumbled. "A gift from the Earthmother."

Felora gasped and immediately reached up to probe at her head. Her fingers confirmed the damage, and she let her hand fall back into her lap. She stared past Tholo into the mirror on the opposite wall, numb as she inspected her new reflection.

"Are you injured elsewhere, Felora?" Tholo asked. She shook her head slowly. "Then I will leave you to recover."

Felora did not answer.

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That had been only weeks ago. And even after emerging from the dens into the clear beauty of Hyjal, Felora's thoughts were still a jumbled mess. But they were no longer entangled with visions of Faquarl's plunge into the Rift of AIn, and she considered that progress. Her dream from the previous night surfaced again in her mind.

Felora came suddenly into the presence of her goddess.

Therazane stood before her - a stony, imperious presence in a room full of dazzling crystals so bright that Felora found herself blinking back tears even as the lucidity of her dream wavered. The elemental's mouth stretched into a grimacing smile.

"Daughter," she rumbled. Felora bowed her head but - to her own surprise kept her feet. The gesture was not lost on Therazane. "You have grown."

The timbre of her voice made it difficult to tell whether this was a compliment or not.

"I had much to do with this," Therazane continued. Felora smiled at her words. The Stonemother had always been a bit of a narcissist.

"Of that I have no doubt, Earthmother," Felora replied.

Therazane leaned forward to look closely at the druid, her bright eyes narrowing. "I see that you have accepted my gift."

Felora reached up to touch the end of her broken horn. "I have, Earthmother. But I fear that I do not fully appreciate it."

Therazane rumbled with what could have been laughter.

"That was not a gift, but a reminder, daughter. Not that you would ever forget."

Felora's smile was tinged with remorse. Even in her dreams, Faquarl had followed her. But if her new reflection was not Therazane's intended gift - then what had she been given at all? She frowned at the elemental, the question plain in her eyes.

"You have been loyal, Felora, over these many years to me and to those you hold dear," Therazane said, turning to amble back to her glittering throne. "I would not take him from you without providing another in his place."

The vision of Deepholm began to shift around her, until it faded to black altogether.

A sudden clamor from the worg pens and an incoherent shout from what could only be an errant grot startled Felora from her inner thoughts, and the corner of her mouth quirked in a smile. Some things would never change, in the same way that Stonard and its band of orcish rebels would always be home. She stood from beside the water's edge and turned to walk back through the gate. The emptiness in her heart was finally beginning to fill.