

Chapter 1

A question of discipline

The sun was sinking, sinking into the sea, people would think and they would be surprised to see it again when the sun rises again. A carriage with a dark figure leading it were on a narrow road leading through a dense forest. They have been on this road for a long time. The dark figure turned around, but there was nothing to see on the road either way, except the endless look of trees and bushes of this land.

„We should rest here.“, said a man in a dark blue cloak, „We shouldn't meet any other merchants or travelers this night. For this night is cold, colder than other nights I know, but a fire should warm our bodies and hearts for this night. Let your horse rest and make yourself a comfortable seat. I'll find some lodges to make a fine fireplace.“

The carriage stopped and an elder man stretched himself and yawned. He was standing tall and breathing deep. It was a

long ride for him and yet they haven't reached the town they seek.

The man laid down and looked up the trees to their branches and to the red sky which would be filled with stars soon. Again he took a deep breath, then he sat himself up and looked into the forest to search for the man who accompanied him on his way to Landriel the greatest city in this world for merchants, for the city is known for its great market which would be filled with people daily. But also for their fruity wine (which tastes like you'd eat 6 different fruits at the same time) and their fresh fish, which comes from the best fishers of the Basilisk Islands and from the Freed Island. Every man and woman wants to have been there at least once in their life. For our lad it's the first time in this land.

Then his companion came back from the woods with long and dry logs in his hands. His coat is dirty but he is used to it, he told him. He knelt down on the cold earth and placed the logs on the ground. Then he used a firestone to lit the logs on fire. Soon the logs were in flames and suddenly the night wasn't so cold anymore.

„I always liked it near a fire. It does not only warm my body but also my heart. It kind of strips away all the bad thoughts I have and I can only think of the good things that have happened. For me, it takes all the bad things from this world.“, said the elderly man. He isn't so old as he seems, for he doesn't have any grey hair, but he is older than his companion. But he does have a dark mustache, unlike his companion, who only had some stubbles on his face. The coat suited the old man well and it had the same color as his hair, a brighter black.

„This is a really nice thought and I'd love to know this feeling too, perhaps it comes with the age. Cause I don't know this feeling.“

„If I remember correctly, when I was in your age I haven't been so often near a warm fire place. In our home it was always cold and thus I may now enjoy my time near a fire place.“

They both looked into the flames, as the flames flickered the merchant stood up and walked to the carriage. In the mean time the other man placed his sword in front of his knees and

then he closed his eyes. The elder man returned and looked confused at the kneeling man before him.

„Excuse me Sir, but what are you doing there? I’ve never seen a person like this.“, the old man asked him.

With closed eyes the man spoke softly: „Probably cause I’m the only person who does this or who has learned this. I’m concentrating, training my senses. I’m looking out for dangers that could harm us this night.“

„Then why aren’t you looking with your eyes and instead listening with your ears? How could you be so sure, that no danger would come in this night?“

„Everybody knows how to see with their eyes. They’ve done it for so long, they couldn’t even imagine what it would be like to not see with their eyes. Some people in this world know very well how it is to see with your other senses, as they never knew how it is to see with their eyes.

„Who taught you this? Who was your teacher?“

„I was my own teacher. I learned this when I was eight years old and I was just about to become nine. In my hometown the elder men taught us kids how to hunt in the forest with bow and arrow. I was terrible with the bow and

arrow. I could see my target, but while I would pull the string and let it go my target was already long gone. The other kids would laugh at me and my father wasn't proud of me. On some festive days our town would have a tournament for us kids. I never took part in these, on the wishes of my father. That's when I tried something different: I closed my eyes and started to breath deeply, then I started to concentrate on my ears and other senses. I tried to hear the sounds that my target does and from where they come. It took me very long until I could find my target, but I was able to find it and then I would hit it before it noticed me. On another festive day I took part in the competition and used my new way of finding my target. Surprisingly I won the competition. My father then came to me and said: *„Son, you've made your father proud.‘*. This was one of my happiest memories of my childhood. I'm not only doing this to train my senses, but also to remember myself of the easier times, when I'm currently in a hard time. But do not worry, for I did this now only to ensure our security for the night!“

„Then I hope I didn't disturb you?“

„No you haven't. I couldn't hear any ominous noises and if there would be any danger, it wouldn't be able to find us until the next morning and until then we would be long gone.“

„Happy news have reached my ear. Then I shall rest now. Good night!“

„Good night!“, the elderly man fell asleep, but not his companion, who goes by the name of Darian. His parents are currently still living in the realm of man, in Darian's hometown. He meets them every once in a while, when he has the time. He would love to meet his parents again, but right now he doesn't have any time to spare, as he has a long road ahead of him.

He watched into the flames for a long time. The cracking of the logs filled the forest. Sometimes he looked after the sparkles flying into the air and then fading away. But soon he laid down too and closed his eyes, but this time to relax his senses, not to train them.

The sun rose anew. The reign of the stars ended for this time and the sky colored itself red. They are back on the road again and walking to Landriel. The animals of the forest woke up and the birds started to sing their hymn. It is said by the

elves that where ever you are the birds have a hymn. In some regions they're different, but all the birds of one forest know their hymn. When Darian first heard this story, he tried to remember, if the birds in the forest next to his hometown had a certain hymn. Surely they did, but Darian couldn't remember it for certain. *„The next time I come home, to visit my parents. I should look after the birds and their hymn.‘*, were his thoughts.

„Is it true what they say about the cities and towns of the elves?“, asked the merchant. He was sitting on the bench of his carriage with the reins in his hands.

„I must apologize, for I don't know what people are saying about the elven cities.“, said Darian.

„You don't? I thought especially you are a person who knows all the stories, which are told in the streets. Nonetheless they tell that when the sun shines, the elven cities look like a forest and you wouldn't even know that you are in an elven town, if you were standing inside one. But when the night comes over the forests, when the fires are light in the chimneys, you would see thousands of lights in the trees once you look up. I heard these stories in Goldkeep and I wondered if they're

true. You have to know this story warms my heart and gives me the will to travel to the elven cities.“

„I hear many stories but I can't remember all of them. Thus I couldn't recall this story. But this story is right. When no elf is on the street you can't tell whether you are in a forest or in a city of the elves and at night the thousand lights shine through the branches. It must be an astonishing view for a bird to fly over a city during the night time. When I first saw an elven city during the night, I couldn't speak anymore and I immediately had the wish to be in one of these houses and sit there with them.“

It has to be said that the realm of the elves is mostly a forest, that's why the story tells you can't distinguish between a forest and an elven city. The elves live in huge trees, but the king of the elves apparently doesn't live within a tree, instead he has his own palace. But there was once a tree, for the elven king, but King Ralind was so kind, that he decided to offer the tree to elves, who just recently lost their homes. These trees have an ongoing staircase inside of them. The elves have an easy way of life. In the morning they're coming together to eat, then everybody does what he desires. Mostly the mother and

her kids are going to the market or meet some friends, then the kids can play with the other kids. The father is usually going to the forest to collect some logs or he goes after his duty, to earn the needed money for his family. You're probably asking yourself now, why do they collect logs? Well the elves do have a chimney in their trees, but these chimneys have a special separation from the rest of the tree, so the trees can't catch fire. Apparently there are poor and rich elves, but they don't call each other poor or wealthy. The only elven family which distinguishes it from other elves, is the family of the king, as they have many servants and are also guarded by many elves. The seat of the elven king is in Vasindrul, being situated northwest from Landriel.

„Then I hope that we will arrive at night! For the feeling of a warm place is the loveliest of all.“ and suddenly the old man, whose name is Girabel, felt strong and full of power, for he wanted to see an elven city now more than ever before.

„Well I can't tell you if we'll arrive at night. But you should experience this magic, as I guess you'll stay for some days, am I right?“

„Of course! You don't have such a chance twice in your life and I'll gladly take it!“

And thus they walked on for the rest of the day. They've met some other merchants on the street and exchanged stories about times full of happiness and joy. However there was an incidence, where one of the wheels of the carriage broke, but thankfully they came across a craftsman, who was able to help them and repair the carriage.

When the sun has sunken again the two travelers were just about to enter Landriel. They were greeted nicely by the elves and the story became reality in Girabels eyes. It lifted up his heart and although he has visited the elven cities for countless times Darians heart was lifted too. Probably due to the happiness in Girabels eyes. The lights remembered Darian of the sparkles of a fire, but these sparkles wouldn't move and only fade away, once the sun rises. They went on a path and on both sides were huge trees as high as the clouds, with white trunks and green leaves. The elves started to go back to their homes. There were no guards in the city, which was a strange look for Girabel as all the cities of man have guards on the

paths, but the elves trust each other so they don't need guards on their streets. Sometimes there actually are guards on the road, but this only during special occasions. They were silent until they've reached Girabels accommodation, then Darian spoke with a soft and saddened voice: „And thus our paths will separate from each other. I have to go on, for I seek an other place than this city, but I'm glad that our paths found each other. Farewell!“

„This is a sad announcement, but go as you wish, knowing you made the life of an elder man merrier. Farewell!“

Now Darian went on the path through Landriel lonely. Some time he found himself standing and looking with his eyes into the tree branches to see the thousands of lights. Between the branches you could sometimes see the stars, if it's a cloudless night and your walking on the main path of the city. Many elven cities have a main path, from which you could see the stars for the branches of the trees don't reach completely over the path. Landriel wasn't a small or a big city, it had many roads and paths to discover, but the people know each other as they often meet at feasts or on the market.

It has to be said that the elves have hundreds of special days which they celebrate and for each one of them the whole city meets and celebrates the day. One of the most heart warming days is the day of *Zivot*, the day of life. They celebrate life in all its variations, they would sing a certain song and some say they even worship a god, which was long forgotten in the other realms. The day of *Zivot* starts with a special breakfast, with mostly fruits. Then all of the elves would leave their homes and go out. There they talk with their friends and take a stroll out in the woods, but they don't take the main road. Instead they go deep into the woods, to see all facets of nature. For lunch they mainly eat warm bread and drink fruity wine. Then the elves go to the main celebration near the biggest tree of the city. Dancing, singing and meditating are mostly practiced there, during this day. The celebration goes until the day has ended and the next one begins. The day of *Zivot* was introduced, during the Autumn Sickness of 355. Many elves were in a deep depression and everywhere were ill thoughts within the minds, the reason for the sickness is unknown, but soon help was coming from an elfe called *Zivolta*. He created this day to remember the elves,

about the good things in life, the actual beauty of life and it worked.

Soon Darian stood before a stable in which 4 horses were resting, two complete black ones, one white horse and a brown horse, with dark hair on its neck. He paid for one of them. He took the brown one with black hair on his neck. He wanted to know if the horse already has a name, but he decided to rather give him a name, once they traveled for some time. Darian mounted the horse and he galloped the long street down out of Landriel and he made his way up north.