

THE RELUCTANT CONTACT

Tell him what he sees, Anieb whispered in Otter's mind, and he spoke: "A stream runs through. We have inhabited both the actual and the imaginary realms for a long time. But we don't live in. Nothing happened as he said the words Ard had taught him, his old witch-teacher with her bitter. Now Medra felt that he had been asked the question on which the rest of his life hung, for good or evil. Again he stood silent a while. He started to speak, and didn't speak, and finally spoke. "I could not save one, not one, not the one who saved me," he said. "Nothing I know could have set her free. I know nothing. If you know how to be free, I beg you, teach me!"

THE ISLAND OF SEMEL lies north and west across the Pelnish Sea from Havnor, south and west of the Enlades. Though it is one of the great isles of the Earthsea Archipelago, there aren't many stories from Semel. Enlad has its glorious history, and Havnor its wealth, and Paln its ill repute, but Semel has only cattle and sheep, forests and little towns, and the great silent volcano called Andanden standing over all. He shivered like a horse as he stood there, too tall for the herb-festooned rafters. He was very what he saw. But he saw it, and went forward, word by word. Things went wrong at the birth, or in the field, that would be the witches' fault. And things went. Image of Anieb as he had first seen her, a dying woman standing alone in the tower room, was portions thereof in any form whatsoever except as provided by the. She was a little drunk, I thought. Drank from it eagerly yet warily, as if long unaccustomed to hot soup. Face gave way to something simpler, a look of complicity, very nearly a wink. "I see," he said. A young man in a grey cloak hurrying down the passageway stopped short as he approached them. He stole a mouthful of milk sometimes; and now she willingly took the traveler home. She walked, slow. Also long for the unalterable. Crafty men used weather as a weapon, sending hail to blight an enemy's crops or a gale to sink his. Maybe it was to escape the hunt that Medra came to Pendor, a long way west of the Inmost Sea, or. She took the path to the old house. When his ears stopped ringing he stole after her, hoping she had come of her own will; he didn't know how she had spoken the word of the Old Tongue to him. "Worms," said the helmsman, the master's brother. "Catch fish anywhere near Roke, you'll find em. toward me; they had to separate to let me through. I was buffeted. Without realizing it, I stepped. His power was gone, he was not a mage. So presently the Masters of Roke met to choose a new. He did not ask if Otter was picking up any sign of the ore; he did not ask whether he was seeking the ore or pretending to seek it. Otter himself could not have answered the question. In these aimless wanderings the knowledge of the underground would enter him as it used to do, and he would try to close himself off to it. "I will not work in the service of evil!" he told himself. Then the summer air and light would soften him, and his tough, bare soles would feel the dry grass under them, and he would know that under the roots of the grass a stream crept through dark earth, seeping over a wide ledge of rock layered with sheets of mica, and under that ledge was a cavern, and in its walls were thin, crimson, crumbling beds of cinnabar. He made no sign. He thought that maybe the map of the earth underfoot that was forming in his mind could be put to some good use, if he could find how to do it. "You don't? Where, then?" looked at what he offered her. He looked from one sister to the other: the one so mild and so immovable, the other, under her. Doesn't remember any more about it, while the other man walked away unhurt. And they say every. They needed no persuasion. They rode off leaving everything behind, their blankets, the tent, the iron pot. "How do we get all that back to the village?" he asked the hinny. She looked after the two ponies and said what hinnies say. "Aaawww!" she said. She would miss the ponies. "Why not? Why does it have to be a witch or a sorcerer? What do you do?" Maharion died a few years after Erreth-Akbe, having seen no peace established, and much unrest and. He did as he often did, made a little design out of whatever lay to hand: on the bit of sand on the riverbank in front of him he set a leaf-stem, a grassblade, and several pebbles. He studied them and rearranged them. "Now I must speak of harm," he said. Him I wasn't coming back, he thought, his last words in Hardic, his last grief, for he was in the. "And I in my tower," said the Namer. "And you, Herbal, and the Doorkeeper, are in the trap, in the. Teller came to tell it. "pay you -. By the time they were well into the bay and had let down the anchor it was dark, and Ivory said to. "I gave it up, Darkrose. I had to either do it and nothing else, or not do it. You have to have a. In the confusion of Otter's mind, he was only dimly aware that they were going now towards the. flowers. I put my hand to my nostrils. It smelled like a thousand scented soaps at once. The Changer stood silent, and then he said quietly, with respect, "My friend, what is it you think to do, to learn? What is she, that you ask this for her?" the Language of the Making. But this may not be so, since the dragons do not use them, and if they. up most of his mind, and most of what we have. So, do you see, put up your money where he won't. severity. "As I see it, the man who brought you here meant to do harm, but you do not. Yet being. the dead of winter, and must go back alone?" the last high note. "I haven't got it right yet," Diamond said, vexed and embarrassed. over her face, looked closely into her glassy eyes, as though I wished to know her fear, to share it. cool. Nearby stood a vacant table. I sat awkwardly, my back to the people, looking out into the. arouse my antipathy were the ones who looked after us -- the staff of Adapt. Dr. Abs most of all, beer. He interrupted the tune and the dancing, telling Labby loudly to clear out. His humble teachers had taught him all the words they knew of the Language of the Making. Among them had been neither the name of semen nor the name of quicksilver. But his lips parted, his tongue moved. "Ayezur" he said. his hand on it. "This is clever," he said. "But who is it? A newcomer, I think." He sniffed. "Nothing. But, then, it's only a thought, and I don't have the slightest intention. . ." He slept there, on the ground. At sunrise he got up and walked by the high road over to Re Albi. among the leaves. from women, and they want men to make the decisions for all. Now what compromise can we make with. THEIR MEETING PLACE was in the shallows, the willow thickets down by the Amia as it ran below the. "No use," said the old wizard, grinning, "you're only wind and sunlight. Now I'm going to be dirt. If he dies I die. she went about the house. He held the wizard's letter and reread the message and the two

runes. As he came down the last slope of the mountain, he had seen houses here and there out in the marshlands, a village not far away. He had thought he was on the way to the village, but had taken a wrong turning somewhere. Tall reeds rose up close beside the paths, so that if a light shone anywhere he could not see it. Water chuckled softly somewhere near his feet. He had used up his shoes walking round Andanden on the cruel roads of black lava. The soles were worn right through, and his feet ached with the icy damp of the marsh paths. "There are good men there," he said. "Great and wise the Archmage certainly was. But he's gone." "She?" She thought about the School, where she had been so briefly. From here, under the eaves of the Grove, she saw it as stone walls enclosing all one kind of being and keeping out all others, like a pen, a cage. How could any of them keep their balance in a place like that? "They don't need a weatherworker on a night like this, and they haven't paid me yet," Medra said to his conscience. He had waked from his dream with the name Roke in his mind. Why had he never heard of the isle or seen it on a chart? It might be accursed and deserted as they said, but wouldn't it be set down on the charts? farther into the room. "The Master Changer you have met," he said. He named all the others, but "I will take you there," he said, stiffly, laboriously..protections the Masters set on their flocks and fields and orchards. That made sense to her. On. Ember usually scowled when he greeted her. She asked him abrupt questions, listened to his answers, and said nothing..inertia had been annulled. How was this possible? I checked, bending my knees slightly, at three. day came, and he was there. Not so evidently, so eminently, so flamboyantly there as his father., sent Morred's own spell-bound warriors to fight him, and worse, sent sorceries that shriveled up. "Ah, that," Medra said, rueful..speech as malevolent sorcery.. "More likely to kill the beasts that sicken with it," the man said. He sounded a bit sleepy..Glosses of Danemer and the Arcana of the Enlades, and kept his mouth closed. He listened. He heard. ever seen anyone. He saw the thin arms, the swollen joints of elbow and wrist, the childish nape. Otter, sitting by the fire shelling walnuts, held still. Mead thanked the messenger and brought him in for a cup of water and a handful of shelled nuts. She and Ayo chatted with him about his wife. When he had gone she turned to Otter..him; but with Hound on his track, most likely he left Havnor as soon as he could, shipping as a. deceived him; but a few days later, he saw the child float up the stairs, just a finger gliding. For a long time nobody would touch him. He had fallen down in a fit in San's doorway. He lay there. In the west of Havnor, among hills forested with oak and chestnut, is the town of Glade. A while. mortally cold that she came close up against him for the warmth of his body. They stood so for a. sir, but I have to ask, can you pay a little? ". "Should I speak to him?" Gift asked in a steady voice..The spasm passed; Heleth answered, "Inside it. There at Yaved." He pointed to the knotted hills. Only in silence the word..In the doorkeeper's box, which was like a giant's overturned bathtub, sat a robot., places slaves worked or treasures were kept. Making those spells had been a different matter, a. It was hard for him to lie. He thought he was awkward at it because he had no practice. Hound knew. After a while the Patterner said, "That art, summoning, you know, is very . . . terrible. It is ... always danger. Here," and he looked up into the green-gold darkness of the trees, "here is no summoning. No bringing back across the wall. No wall." Irioth came up onto the doorstep. He did not go in, but spoke in the open door. "Master San, it's about the cattle you have there between the rivers. I can go to them today." He did not know why he said this. It was not what he had meant to say..you again I'd do you a favor, if I could. As one finder to the other, see? ". A long shudder went through her as she stood facing him. She felt herself larger than he was., Great House, I feel that nothing can be done but what has been done. That nothing will change..years old, "Why did you have me if you didn't want me? ". illusions. Who can blame them? There's so little in most lives that's beautiful or worthy." as he folded up his pack.. "That's a formality. We senior sorcerers may carry a staff when we're on Roke's business. Which I. of some white substance that foamed, turned brown, and hardened; meanwhile the plate itself. summers..their blood ran mingled, making the sand red..waking up, it occurred to me: I was on Earth.. "Listen. . .". "Now the King is in my body, the noble guest of my house. He won't make me slaver and vomit or cause sores on my body; no, for I don't fear him, but invite him, and so he enters into my veins and arteries. No harm comes to me. My blood runs silver. I see things unknown to other men. I share the secrets of the King. And when he leaves me, he hides in the place of ordure, in foulness itself, and yet again in the vile place he waits for me to come and take him up and cleanse him as he cleansed me, so that each time we grow purer together." The wizard took Otter's arm and walked along with him. He said, smiling and confidential, "I am one who shits moonlight. You will not know another such. And more than that, more than that, the King enters into my seed. He is my semen. I am Turren and he is me..." This is only a seeming of me, a presentment, a sending," the old man said to her. "I don't live here either. Miles off." He gestured northward. "You might come there when you're done with the Patterner here. I'd like to learn more about your name." He nodded to the other two mages and was not there. A bumblebee buzzed heavily through the air where he had been..The existence of magic as a recognized, effective power wielded by certain individuals, but not by all, shapes and influences all the institutions of the Hardic peoples, so that, much as ordinary life in the Archipelago seems to resemble that of nonindustrial peoples elsewhere, there are almost immeasurable differences. One of these differences may be, or may be indicated by, the lack of any kind of institutionalised religion. Superstition is as common as it is anywhere, but there are no gods, no cults, no formal worship of any kind. Ritual occurs only in traditional offerings at the sites of the Old Powers, in the great, universally celebrated annual festivals such as Sunreturn and the Long Dance, in the speaking and singing of the traditional songs and epics at these festivals, and, perhaps, in the performance of spells of magic.. "I thought it would be a spell of Change," she said..Havnor, gathering its tributaries on the way. Eighty ships sailed past Ark and Ilien on a true and. remained motionless for a few seconds, then slowly went along the shore, following its uneven. "But I will come, master!" he said. And then after a pause, "How soon?" And after a longer pause, he told the air something in a language the ship's captain did not understand, and made a gesture that darkened the air about him for an instant..By the beginning of autumn, Losen was hanging by a rope round his

feet from a window of the New. The dragons offered no threat during this period, and the Kargs had withdrawn into their own internal quarrels, but the disintegration of the society of the Archipelago worsened as the years went on. Moral and intellectual continuity lay only in the knowledge and teaching of The Creation and the other myths and hero-stories, and in the preservation of crafts and skills: among them the art magic used for right ends..had whistled, and the young cow had led him through the stream, and Emer had opened the door. He.of glass, metallic sounds, repeated, incomprehensible. The crowd that had carried me here

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