

JEDDIN GOES TO THE ARCHIVES

Alone in a tiny cubby, Jeddin sat drained and naked on the floor pad, his eyes closed, hunting through the tangle of skin-memories, smells, and pleasure surges of the past hour, searching for the inner door in his brain. He needed to be elsewhere. All he had to do was to find the door within.

He angrily shoved away the intrusions of sense-memories, of how the muscular woman had bitten him gently in just the way he liked when he'd been with... with... the memory slipped away like water into sand, a woman, an andro woman... no. It was gone. Someone he'd loved, or maybe loved. And she'd loved him, and he could not recall her name or her face, as if it came from before his awakening here in the City, before this life.

His breathing came fast. He forced it to slow down, willed his heart to gentler rhythm, relaxed his body and stretched out. The dim yellow light shone on him, making his pale skin's purplish undertones look like rot; no above-violet radiance graced his vision with its caroling of treiss and tejar hues against the dissonant yellow. Again he closed his eyes. There: in his mind, the inner door stood gleaming Gold before him.

He stared at the vision. Inscriptions snaked across the door in knotwork cadences in several of the scripts of the City and its region. One read: "Embrace all hope, andros who enter here." He laughed softly. The inscription bore a signature: Hyonarsa: a vague memory. The door bore scratches, tarnish, and worn spots in its Gold sheen. Still inside his vision, he took the door's long handle and turned it slowly.

Comfort,. He drew the door open. As if from the sun in the world above, warm light overwhelmed him. The shock and frenzy of dozens of colors assailed him, and he stepped through the door onto a deep, sweet cushion of fragrant grass. Over his head, trees large and small arched their branches, with varied patterns of pinnate, arcuate, palmate leaf shapes scattering brilliant sunlight in dancing gems on the green and brejin floor.

Several octaves of light sang in his eyes. Humans saw red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and violet and the tints between, in less than one octave of color; andros saw these and the ranges above and below them, each added color having its cognate in the human range. Mazz lay one octave below red-violet, just below red, and urr fell one octave deeper into the infrared. FleyatZK was just a bit brighter than urr, and

an octave below red, resonating with the ordinary red as if in pure harmony, making red into Red, super-red, the epitome of red.

For Jeddin and other andros, true colors could be titled Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo, Violet, all resonating harmonies invisible to humans. Jeddin's tastes in color ran to the sharp and poignant, mixing the yellow-cognates SRyion and tsrZK with accents of blue-violet octaves like vuzmin and priZKSRar.

Wanting to enter the Archives, he called out, "Uizalai."

His Archive ainon appeared before him, her brilliant golden-SRyion eyes smiling at him. "Yes, Jeddin."

He remembered the innerspace door. "Who was Hyonarsa?" "Why should I tell you these things again, Jeddin?"

"Because I asked you. It is your task to answer my questions here. You've never told me this before."

"I will not answer this question. I have answered it for you many times."

Anger came up in Jeddin. "Has anyone else asked you this before?" Maybe an indirect question would provoke some new ideas.

"Yes."

"Who was it?"

"Ferdinand, your friend. But he is Talu Tribin's now. I don't speak with him."

Of course. Ferdinand. Ferdinand loved the Archives almost as much as he loved sex, or maybe even more – both helped him forget other things. "Thank you, Uizalai."

Jeddin left innerspace and opened his eyes in the cubby once more. His hearing, attuned to the ultrasonics of anjive speech, caught the delicate whispers of approaching muffled feet. He tensed: a signature of andro hunters. He was a fugitive, both here and in the sun world above. He shut off the cubby lamp and peered through a tiny grille in the door.