

The Art of Restoration: Part 1

Druil had never understood his mother's aversion to her homeland. The journey was difficult, true, nearly three days aboard a vessel and rough waters that made his stomach do somersaults. The irony made him laugh when he wasn't struggling against the urge to retch. The healer of their voyage—with all his skill in magic and potion craft—was undone by a bout of sea sickness.

"I'd suggest mixing it in water...or something stronger, if you can stomach it," Druil explained to an older man. Druil's patient had been having stomach problems as well and wanted to know if the healer had something to take the edge off. The green glass bottle swirled with streaks of emerald and summer grass. "It's concentrated from the herbs directly and can be quite a shock to the system if you're already feeling ill. I use this same mix myself."

"Healer tend thyself, eh?" The old man chuckled. He had thick hands marked with burn marks and cuts. Druil placed him as a blacksmith heading toward the Isle of Tribose for another ring to add to the Master's chain hanging from the bracelet around his wrist. "If only these accursed elves would live somewhere a bit more civilized! Or at least didn't have us come all the way to their island to gain their approval!"

"The elves are wise," Druil said, absently touching the slightly pointed tips of his ears, "though famously against change. My mother always said her father was stern to a fault. They are unyielding in their way and their traditions weigh on many with shorter lifespans like shackles."

"I didn't mean any disrespect," the human said. "My uncle married a half-elven woman, ya know? Perfectly fine woman and always greeting me kindly."

"It's quite fine," Druil said. "The...Tribose Elves are known for their mastery and their stubbornness. I was raised on tales of both their greatness and their folly."

"If I could ask," the blacksmith asked, "why are you heading to the island? I'm looking to add to my links, but surely you learned your craft from elves yourself."

"I was trained in many disciplines. Mostly wood elf and valley elf. But the Tribose Elves have a practice that is unique to their island. There are—as the tales would say—some healers who have the gift of regrowing entire limbs that were lost. I can heal a cut just fine and tend to an infection, but to create a perfectly healthy arm? Regrow an eyeball? Replace an entire diseased liver with—?"

"Healer, please, my stomach is already dancing in my chest..."

"My apologies," Druil chuckled. "I'm afraid that my medical detachment was also a gift from my mother's side. It's easy to think of my practice as static. Sometimes, unless I'm looking the person in the eye, I forget the living being behind the great techniques of the masters."

"Do you think they'll teach you?"

"I had written several letters, but only received a response once. An invitation with their Great Healer to see the technique firsthand. No promise to teach me how it works, but I feel it's a gentle suggestion that they could be enticed. After all, what is the point of having so many years of life if you won't be a little persistent now and again?"

"I envy you, truly," the blacksmith said. "I've worked my fingers to dust trying to collect the knowledge I can. And all I'll have to show for it when I die is four links above my grave."

"Four is more than many humans can get, my friend! Don't fill yourself with such dread. There will be more rings in your future and great crafts for you to make. Both of us! Now, I

also recommend an hour of fresh air. The boat has stopped pitching as hard now. Perhaps we could go up together?”

“I should like some rest for now. I may head up if the weather stays quiet for us, but I find my stomach has been keeping me up all night. Perhaps your elixir will bring me an evening’s rest.”

Druil bowed his head and showed the blacksmith out to the hallway. The ship was fairly still, given how challenging the night before had been. Druil felt most days and nights that he had to tie his belongings down to keep them from shattering, but this morning, he could nearly walk straight. The narrow hallway led to a staircase that opened to the deck of The Ember Wave. The deck was a flurry of activity from the bow, where the braver passengers enjoyed the day, to the aft, where the captain held tightly to the wheel. The captain—elven, of course—sporting a chain of six links hanging from his wrist and his crew was a good mix of elven and human sailors. The sailors were all talented, but the elven sailors would swing from long ropes, daringly gliding over the open water rather than take a simple staircase. The humans were more surefooted than Druil, so he confided himself to the closest stairs that he could grasp the railing of.

The horizon dipped and rose with each wave, but it was gentler than it had been. The bow of the boat cut through the gentle waves, a spray of salty sea drifting through the air. Dolphins danced along the wake and ivory gulls dipped gracefully into the water off the port side of the ship. Like throwing spears, they dove beneath the water only to be thrown back out again with precision. Sometimes, they would sport a fresh fish in their mouth for their trouble, but the ivory gulls would also harass the luckier fishers for a morsel. Druil followed the flight of an ivory gull and his eye settled on Tribose Island.