

The Art of Restoration: Part 3

Breakfast hadn't taken long, so Druil went to watch the Great Healer work. The medical theatre had a row of chairs on a small balcony grown a few feet over Sorit's work space from a bough of oak branches. A large chaise covered in moss stood in the center of the theatre, with a man stretched out on it. A small earthen table held a collection of simple looking tools and a beautifully crafted wand of light-colored wood. A few shelves were within close reach of the healer, but they weren't arranged in such a way that Druil's view was blocked. Druil took a seat and leaned on the railing, watching Sorit as he consulted the man with a leg injury.

Great Healer Sorit tended to an elf-man's leg. There had been a laceration the cut into his thigh, but he showed no pain as the healer tended the cut. Healer Sorit gently applied a balm over the gash and Druil watched as the wound absorbed the cream knitted itself together again. Druil could see muscle pulling together over the cut and the blood vessels reaching out to one another. The skin stitched itself together last, only the faintest line revealing the healer's work.

When the work was done, Sorit stepped back and folded his hands behind him. The elf man stood and flexed the leg, checking for any signs of pain or discomfort. When he was satisfied, he bowed to the Great Healer silently. Healer Sorit bowed back and the pair parted ways silently. Another woman came in, green and sweating from some illness. Druil listened to her breathing and touched her wrist to check her pulse.

"How long have you been sick?" Sorit asked when he was finished taking vitals.

"Eight days," the elf woman said, dabbing her forehead with a cloth. "Fever and night chills...vomit in the morning and evenings, but most of the day I can stay strong. I fear my strength is waning."

Wordlessly, Great Healer Sorit walked over to a collection of vials and flasks. With indifferent precision and frightening speed, he snatched bottles off the table and racks. He poured a few into the same flask, stirring it constantly with a gentle turn of his wrist. Druil appreciated the concentration as the Great Healer swiftly concocted a potion as if he were batting away a fly. Before Druil could discern half the ingredients, Sorit walked back to the elf woman with a slightly green elixir.

“Three tablespoons,” Sorit ordered. “Twice a day: morning and night. It will relieve the vomiting and night chills. Once you’ve had enough sleep, your body can begin to fight the fever at it’s source. If it hasn’t resolved by the end of the week, come back again.” The elf woman bowed, reverantly, and left.

Sorit walked to a small container of water to clean his hands. He looked up and noted Druil leaning over the rail with complete focus. “You work so quickly,” Druil said, “how can you determine the root of an illness that fast? Those symptoms could have been anything.”

“It was not the symptoms that told me,” Sorit explained, calmly drying his hands with a towel. “She had staining under her fingernails: an unmistakable, earthy green. It comes from the Willow Wheat harvesting, they need to scrape the wheat off the trees by hand. The root of her illness is a parasite that comes from that plant, probably inhaled during the most recent harvest.”

“Then why not cure the parasite? Why tell her to come back?”

“The parasite has no interest in killing her. Once she’s strong enough for her body to fight back, the parasite will leave on it’s own.”

“But why not tell her?”

“She came for a cure for her symptoms,” Sorit said, a little sterner than usual. “The knowledge of her condition changes nothing for the treatment. If the parasite persists, then we will try a different medication. All she needs to know is that she will have her health back. Knowledge can do more harm than good.”

Another hour passed, Druil in silence while the Great Healer prepared for the Art of Restoration. The attendants brought Sorit a decanter of wine to drink and prepared his table of tools with care. The patient finally arrived.

He was a young elf with a missing right hand. His arm ended in a red, angry stump just before the bend in his elbow. His chest bore claw marks and he proudly displayed a tattoo of dark ink in the shape of a bear beneath it. The story was clear to Druil in an instant and Sorit ushered the young elf to his chaise.

Sorit studied the stump with a discerning eye, as if trying to find some obscure mark that would tell a different story. After a minute of study, he nodded and pulled his wand off the table. In the air, he scribbled out an incantation. Druil had used some simple magic in his work before,

enough to know a spell to relieve pain when he saw it. A sense of calm passed over the young elf's face, his gaze focused on a point a thousand miles away and above the House of the Great Healer.

The wand twitched again, making runes in a language Druil did not know. The runes continued, flowing together like a child's scribble, but Sorit's control was absolute. The wand twitched downward and Druil saw his very first miracle.

First, a layer of bone to replace what had been lost. This seemed to grow rapidly from within the amputated limb, thick rods of ivory springing out of the flesh and taking on new shape. The radius and ulna bent inward gently, followed by a collection of smaller, more delicate bones for the hand and wrist.

Muscle followed, flowing down the length of the limb like water. The red fibers twisted and linked, braiding across the surface of bone and forming a musculature to match the elf hunter's other arm. Veins and arteries followed, thicker cords that were already filling with blood from the man's steadily beating heart. Nerves followed, nearly invisible threads skating across the new muscle as the nervous system wound its way through to the fingers, making the twitch and flex for the very first time.

Lastly came the skin, sliding down like a sleeve from the shoulder to the tips of the new fingers. It matched the shade of the hunter's body perfectly as tiny freckles and arm hairs sprouted on the newly formed limb. As the last of the finger nails grew, Druil realized he had seen the impossible