Prologue

It is always the map of believing,
the white landscape
and the shrouded farms.
It is always the land of remembrance,
of sunlight fractured
in old, immovable ice,

And always the heart,
cloistered and southerly,
misgives the ice, the drifting
for something perplexed and eternal.

It will end like this,
the heart will tell you,
it will end with mammoth and glacier,
with ten thousand years
of effacing night,
and someday the scientists
rifling lakes and moraines,
will find us in evidence,
our relics the outside of history,
but your story, whole and hollowed, will end
at the vanishing edge of your hand.
So says the heart
in its intricate cell,
charting with mirrors
the unchartable land
of remembrance and rivers and ice.

This time it was different:
the town had surrendered
to the hooded snow,
the houses and taverns
were awash in the fragmented light,
and the lake was marbled
with unstable ice,
as I walked through drifts
through lulling spirits,
content with the slate of the sky
and the prospect of calendared spring,
\textit{It will end like this,}
the winter proclaimed,
\textit{sooner or later}
in dark, inaccessible ice,
and you are the next one
to hear this story,
\textit{winter and winter}
occluding the heart,
and there in Wisconsin,
mired by the snow
and by vanishing faith,
it did not seem bad
that the winter was taking
all light away,
that the darkness seemed welcome
and the last, effacing snow.

He stood in the midst
of frozen automobiles,
cars lined like cenotaphs.
In a bundle of coats
and wool hats and mufflers
he rummaged the trunk
for God knows what,
and I knew his name
by the misted spectacles,
the caved, ridiculous
hat he was wearing,

And whether the courage
was spring in its memory,
was sunlight in promise
or whiskeyed shade,
or something aligned
beyond snow and searching,
it was with me that moment
as I spoke to him there;
in my days I am thankful
it stood me that moment

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as I spoke to the bundled
weaver of accidents,
the everyday wizard
in search of impossible spring.

Tracy, I told him, poetry lies
in the seams of the story,
in old recollections and prospect
of what might always and never be
(And those were the words
I did not say, but poetry lies
in the prospect of what should have been:
you must believe that I said these words
past denial, past history),
and there in the winter
the first song began,
the moons twined and beckoned
on the borders of Krynn,
the country of snow
resolved to the grasslands
more brilliant and plausible.
And the first song continued
through prospects of summer,
where the promise returns
from the vanished seed,
where the staff returns
from forgetful deserts,
and even the northern lands
cry out to the spirit,
this is the map
of believing fulfilled;
this is the map of belief.
Where’s my hat? You took it! I saw you.
Don’t tell me it’s on my head! I know better! I . . .
Oh, there it is. Decided to bring it back, did you?
No, I don’t believe you. Not for a minute. You’ve always had your eye on my hat, Hickman. I—
What? You want me to write what?
Now? This minute?
Can’t do it. Don’t have the time.
Trying to recall the words to a spell.
Fire sale. Fire engine. Great balls of fire. . . .
That’s close. . . .
Oh, very well. I’ll write your blasted foreword.
But just this once, mind you.
Here goes.

Foreword

A long time ago, a couple of doorknobs named Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman decided to leave their homes on Krynn and go out adventuring. I’m afraid there’s some kender blood in those two. They just couldn’t resist traipsing off to visit other new and exciting worlds.

But Weis and Hickman are like kender and bad pennies—they keep turning up. And so here they are again, all set to tell us about the wonderful things that are happening in Krynn.

Some of these stories we’ve heard before, but they have a couple of new ones, too, all about the children of that small band of adventurers who are now known as the Heroes of the Lance.

Many years have passed since the war. The Heroes’ children are growing up, going off on adventures of their own, heading out into a world that, I’m sorry to say, still has plenty of danger and trouble left to go around.

Now, as you read these stories, you will notice that sometimes Weis and Hickman contradict certain other stories you may have heard. Some of you might find yourselves more
than a little perplexed over their accounts of the Heroes’
past lives—accounts that differ from other accounts.

There is a perfectly simple explanation.

Following the War of the Lance, Tanis and Caramon and
Raistlin and all the rest of the Companions stopped being
ordinary people and became Legends. We liked hearing about
the Heroes’ adventures so much, we didn’t want the stories to
end. We wanted to hear more. To fill the demand, bards and
legend-spinners came from all over Krynn to tell the won-
drous tales. Some of these knew the Heroes well. Others
simply repeated stories they’d heard told by a dwarf who had
it from a kender who borrowed it from a knight who had an
aunt who knew the Heroes . . .

You get the picture.

Some of these stories are absolutely, positively true.
Others are probably almost absolutely, positively true, but
not quite. Still others are what we refer to in polite society
as “kender tales”—stories that aren’t true, but sure are a
hoot to hear!

And so you ask: Fizban, Great and Powerful Wizard,
which stories are which?

And I, Fizban, Great and Powerful Wizard, answer: As
long as you enjoyed the stories, you doorknob, what does
it matter?

Well, well. Glad we got that settled.

Now, go pack your pouches. Pocket your hankies. Grab
your hoopak. We have a lot of adventuring to do. Come
along! Forget your cares! Travel with Weis and Hickman
through Krynn once again, if only for a little while. They
won’t be here long, but they do plan to come back.

( Maybe next time, they’ll return my hat!)

What was my name again?

Oh, yes.

I remain, yours sincerely,

Fizban the Fabulous

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At the edge of the world
the juggler wanders,
sightless and pathless,
trusting the venerable
breadth of his juggler’s hands.
He wanders the edge
of a long-ago story,
juggling moons,
parading the fixed
anonymous stars in his passage.
Something like instinct
and something like agate
hard and transparent
in the depths of his reflexes
channels the objects
to life in the air:
stilettos and bottles,
wooden pins and ornaments
the seen and the unseen—all reassemble
translated to light and dexterity.

It is this version of light we steer by:
constellations of memory
and a chemistry born
in the blood’s alembic,
where motive and metaphor
and the impulse of night
are annealed by the morning
into our countenance,
into the whorls
of our surfacing fingers.
Something in each of us
yearns for this balance,
for the vanished chemistries
that temper the steel.
The best of all jugglery
lies in the truces
that shape our intention
out of knives, out of filament
out of half-empty bottles
and mirrors and chemistries,
and from the forgotten
ore of the night.
It was autumn on Ansalon, autumn in Solace. The leaves of the vallenwood trees were the most beautiful they’d ever been, so Caramon said—the reds blazing brighter than fire, the golds sparkling more brilliantly than the newly minted coins that were coming out of Palanthas. Tika, Caramon’s wife, agreed with him. Never had such colors been seen before in Solace.

And when he stepped out of the inn, went to haul in another barrel of brown ale, Tika shook her head and laughed.

“Caramon says the same thing every year. The leaves are more colorful, more beautiful than the year before. It never fails.”

The customers laughed with her, and a few teased the big man, when he came back into the inn, carrying the heavy barrel of brown ale on his back.

“‘The leaves seem a tad brown this year,’” commented one sadly.

“Drying up,” said another.

“Aye, they’re falling too early, before they’ll have a chance to completely turn,” another remarked.

Caramon looked amazed. He swore stoutly that this wasn’t so and even dragged the disbelievers out onto the porch and shoved their faces in a leafy branch to prove his point.

The customers—longtime residents of Solace—admitted he was right. The leaves had never before looked so lovely. At which Caramon, as gratified as if he’d painted the leaves personally, escorted the customers back inside and treated them to free ale. This, too, happened every year.

The Inn of the Last Home was especially busy this autumn. Caramon would have liked to ascribe the increase in
trade to the leaves; there were many who made the pilgrimage to Solace, in these days of relative peace, to see the wondrous vallenwood trees, which grew here and nowhere else on Krynn (despite various claims to the contrary, made by certain jealous towns, whose names will not be mentioned).

But even Caramon was forced to agree with the practical-minded Tika. The upcoming Wizards’ Conclave was having more to do with the increased number of guests than the leaves—beautiful as they were.

A Wizards’ Conclave was held infrequently on Krynn, occurring only when the top-ranking magic-users in each of the three orders—White, Red, and Black—deemed it necessary that all those of all levels of magic, from the newest apprentice to the most skilled sorcerer, gather to discuss arcane affairs.

Mages from all over Ansalon traveled to the Tower of Wayreth to attend the conclave. Also invited were certain individuals of those known as the Graystone Gem races, whose people did not use magic, but who were involved in the crafting of various magical items and artifacts. Several members of the dwarven race were honored guests. A group of gnomes arrived, encumbered with blueprints, hoping to persuade the wizards to admit them. Numerous kender appeared, of course, but they were gently, albeit firmly, turned away at the borders.

The Inn of the Last Home was the last comfortable inn before a traveler reached the magical Forest of Wayreth, where stood one of the Towers of High Sorcery, ancient headquarters of magic on the continent. Many mages and their guests stopped at the inn on their way to the tower.

“They’ve come to admire the color of the leaves,” Caramon pointed out to his wife. “Most of these mages could have simply magicked themselves to the tower without bothering to stop anywhere in between.”

Tika could only laugh and shrug and agree with her husband that, yes, it must be the leaves, and so Caramon went about inordinately pleased with himself for the rest of the day.

Neither made mention of the fact that each mage who came to stay in the inn brought with him or her a small token of esteem and remembrance for Caramon’s twin brother, Raistlin. A mage of great power, and far greater
ambition, Raistlin had turned to evil and very nearly destroyed the world. But he had redeemed himself at the end by the sacrifice of his own life, over twenty years ago. One small room in the inn was deemed Raistlin’s Room and was now filled with various tokens (some of them magical) left to commemorate the wizard’s life. (No kender were ever permitted anywhere near this room!)

The Wizards’ Conclave was only three days away, and this night, for the first time in a week, the inn was empty. The mages had all traveled on, for the Wayreth Forest is a tricky place—you do not find the forest, it finds you. All mages, even the highest of their rank, knew that they might spend at least a day wandering about, waiting for the forest to appear.

And so the mages were gone, and none of the regulars had yet come back. The townsfolk, both of Solace and neighboring communities, who stopped by the inn nightly for either the ale or Tika’s spiced potatoes or both, stayed away when the mages came. Magic-users were tolerated on Ansalon, (unlike the old days, when they’d been persecuted), but they were not trusted, not even the white-robed mages, who were dedicated to good.

The first year the conclave had been held—several years after the War of the Lance—Caramon had opened his inn to mages (many inns refuse to serve them). There had been trouble. The regular customers had complained loudly and bitterly, and one had even been drunk enough to attempt to bully and torment a young red-robed wizard.

That was one of the few times anyone in Solace could remember seeing Caramon angry, and it was still talked of to this day, though not in Caramon’s presence. The drunk was carried out of the inn feetfirst, after his friends had removed his head from a fork in a tree branch grown into the inn.

After that, whenever a conclave occurred, the regulars took their business to other taverns, and Caramon served the mages. When the conclave ended, the regulars returned, and life went on as normal.

“But tonight,” said Caramon, pausing in his work to look admiringly at his wife, “we get to go to bed early.”

They had been married some twenty-two years, and Caramon was still firmly convinced that he had married
the most beautiful woman in Krynn. They had five children, three boys: Tanin, twenty years old, at the time of this story; Sturm, who was nineteen; sixteen-year-old Palin; and two small girls, Laura and Dezra, ages five and four. The two older boys longed to be knights and were always off in search of adventure, which is where they were this night. The youngest boy, Palin, was studying magic. (“It’s a passing fancy,” Caramon said, “The boy’ll soon outgrow it.”) As for the little girls . . . well, theirs is another story.

“It’ll be nice,” Caramon repeated, “to get to bed early for a change.”

Sweeping the floor vigorously, Tika pursed her mouth, so that she wouldn’t give herself away by laughing, and replied, with a sigh, “Yes, the gods be praised. I’m so tired, I’ll probably fall asleep before my head hits the pillow.”

Caramon looked anxious. He dropped the cloth he was using to dry the freshly washed mugs and sidled around the bar. “You’re not that tired, are you, my dear? Palin’s at school, and the two older boys are away visiting Goldmoon and Riverwind, and the girls are in bed, and it’s just the two of us, and I thought we might . . . well . . . have a little time to . . . uh . . . talk.”

Tika turned away so that he wouldn’t see her grin. “Yes, yes, I am tired,” she said, heaving another weary sigh. “I had all those beds to make up, plus the new cook to supervise, and the accounts to settle. . . .”

Caramon’s shoulders slumped. “Well, that’s all right,” he mumbled. “Why don’t you just go on to bed, and I’ll finish—”

Tika threw down her broom. Laughing, she flung her arms around her husband—as far as they would go. Caramon’s girth had increased markedly over the years.

“You big doorknob,” she said fondly. “I was only teasing. Of course, we’ll go to bed and ‘talk,’ but you just remember that ‘talking’ was what got us the boys and the girls in the first place! Come on.” She tugged playfully at his apron. “Douse the lights and bolt the door. We’ll leave the rest of the work until morning.”

Caramon, grinning, slammed shut the door. He was just about to slide the heavy wooden bar across it when there came a faint knock from outside.
“Oh, blast!” Tika frowned. “Who could that be at this
time of night?” Hastily, she blew out the candle in her hand.
“Pretend we didn’t hear it. Maybe they’ll go away.”
“I don’t know,” the soft-hearted Caramon began. “It’s
going to frost tonight—”
“Oh, Caramon!” Tika said, exasperated. “There are other
inns—”

The knocking was repeated, louder this time, and a voice
called, “Innkeep? I’m sorry it’s late, but I am alone and in
desperate need.”
“It’s a woman,” said Caramon, and Tika knew she’d lost.
Her husband might—just might—be persuaded to allow
a man to go in search of another inn on a cold night, but a
woman, especially one traveling alone—never.
It didn’t hurt to argue a bit anyway. “And what’s a lone
female doing wandering about at this time of night? Up to
no good, I’ll wager.”
“Oh, now, Tika,” began Caramon, in the wheedling
tone she knew so well, “you can’t say that. Maybe she’s
going to visit a sick relative and darkness caught her on
the road or—”

Tika lit the candle. “Go ahead. Open up.”
“I’m coming,” the big man roared. Heading for the door,
he paused, glanced back at his wife. “You should toss a log
onto the kitchen fire. She might be hungry.”

“Then she can eat cold meat and cheese,” Tika snapped,
slamming the candle down on the table.
Tika had red hair and, though its color had grayed and
softened with age, her temper had not. Caramon dropped
the subject of hot food.
“She’s probably real tired,” he said, hoping to pacify his
wife. “Likely she’ll go straight to her room.”

“Humpf!” Tika snorted. “Are you going to open the
doors or let her freeze out there?” Arms akimbo, she glared
at her husband.
Caramon, flushing and ducking his head, hastened to
open the door.
A woman stood framed in the doorway. She was not what
either had expected, however, and even the soft-hearted
Caramon, at the sight of her, appeared to have second
thoughts about letting her in.
She was heavily cloaked and booted and wore the helm and leather gloves indicative of a dragon rider. That in itself was not unusual; many dragon riders passed through Solace these days. But the helm and cloak and gloves were a deep blue, trimmed in black. The light caught a glint of blue scales, glistening on her leather breeches and black boots.

A blue dragon rider.

Such a person had not been seen in Solace since the days of the war, for good reason. Had she been discovered in daylight, she would have been stoned. Or, at the very least, arrested and made prisoner. Even these days, twenty-five years after the end of the war, the people of Solace remembered clearly the blue dragons that had burned and leveled their town, killed many of their kin. And there were veterans who’d fought in the War of the Lance—Caramon and Tika among them—who recalled with hatred the blue dragons and their riders, servants of the Queen of Darkness.

The eyes in the shadow of the blue helm met Caramon’s steadily. “Do you have a room for the night, Innkeep? I have ridden far, and I am very tired.”

The voice that came from behind the mask sounded wistful, weary . . . and nervous. The woman kept to the shadows that had gathered around the door. Awaiting Caramon’s answer, she glanced over her shoulder twice, looking not at the ground, but at the skies.

Caramon turned to his wife. Tika was a shrewd judge of character—an easy skill to acquire, if you like people, which Tika did. She gave a quick, abrupt nod.

Caramon backed up and motioned for the dragon rider to enter. She took one final look over her shoulder, then hastily slid inside, keeping out of the direct light. Caramon himself took a look out the door before he shut it.

The sky was brightly lit; the red and the silver moons were up and close together, though not as close as they’d be in a few days’ time. The black moon was out there, too, somewhere, the moon only those who worshipped the Dark Queen could see. These celestial bodies held sway over three forces: good, evil, and the balance between.

Caramon slammed the door shut and dropped the heavy bar across it. The woman flinched at the sound of the bar thudding into place. She’d been trying to unlatch the clasp...
of the pin that held her cloak together—a large brooch wrought of mother-of-pearl that gave off a faint and eerie glow in the dimness of the candlelit inn. Her hands shook, and she dropped the brooch to the floor. Caramon bent and started to pick it up. The woman moved quickly to forestall him, attempted to hide it.

Caramon stopped her, frowning. “An odd adornment,” he said, forcing open the woman’s hand for Tika to view the pin. He found, now that he studied it, that he was loath to touch it.

Tika peered at the brooch. Her lips tightened. Perhaps she was thinking her infallible judge of character had failed her at last. “A black lily.”

A black, waxen flower with four pointed petals and a blood-red center, the black lily is reputed by elven legend to spring up from the graves of those who have met their deaths by violence. The black lily is said to grow from the heart of the murdered victim and, if plucked, the broken stem will bleed.

The dragon rider snatched her hand away, slid the brooch back into the black fur that trimmed her cloak. “Where’ve you left your dragon?” Caramon asked grimly.

“Hidden in a valley near here. You needn’t worry, Innkeep. She’s under my control and completely loyal to me. She won’t harm anyone.” The woman withdrew the blue leather helm she wore to protect her face during flight. “I give you my word.”

Once the helm was removed, the frightening, formidable dragon rider disappeared. In its place stood a woman of perhaps middle age; it was hard to tell how old she was by looking. Her face was lined, but with sorrow more than years. Her braided hair was gray, prematurely gray, it seemed. Her eyes were not the cruel, hard, merciless eyes of those who serve Takhisis, but were gentle and sad and . . . frightened.

“And we believe you, my lady,” said Tika, with a defiant glance at the silent Caramon—a glance that, to be honest, the big man didn’t deserve.

Caramon was always slow to react, not because he was thick-witted (as even his best friends had once thought, in his youth), but because he always considered each new or unusual occurrence from every conceivable angle. Such
rumination gave him the appearance of slowness, and frequently drove the quick-thinking among his comrades (including his wife) to distraction. But Caramon refused to be hurried and often came up with some astonishingly insightful conclusions in consequence.

“You’re shivering, my lady,” Tika added, while her husband stood flat-footed, staring at nothing. Tika left him be. She knew the signs of her husband’s mind at work. She drew the woman close to the fire pit. “Sit here. I’ll stir up the blaze. Would you like some hot food? It will take me only a minute to whip up the kitchen fire—”

“No, thank you. Don’t bother about the fire. It’s not the cold that makes me shiver.” The woman said the last in a low voice. She fell more than sat on a bench.

Tika dropped the poker she was using to stoke the fire. “What is wrong, my lady? You’ve escaped some dreadful prison, haven’t you? And you’re being pursued.”

The woman lifted her head and looked at Tika in wonder, then the woman smiled wanly. “You are near the mark. Does so much show in my face?” She put a trembling hand to her lined and faded cheek.

“Husband.” Tika stood up briskly. “Where’s your sword?”

“Huh?” Jolted from his thoughts, Caramon jerked his head up. “What? Sword?”

“We’ll wake the sheriff. Turn out the town militia. Don’t worry, my lady.” Tika was busily untying her apron. “They won’t take you back—”

“Wait! No!” The woman appeared more frightened of all this activity on her behalf than she was of whatever danger threatened her.

“Stop a minute, Tika,” Caramon said, resting his hand on his wife’s shoulder. And when Caramon spoke in that tone, his headstrong wife always listened. “Calm down.”

He turned to the dragon rider, who had jumped to her feet in alarm. “Don’t worry, my lady. We won’t tell anyone you’re here until you want us to.”

Breathing a sigh of relief, the woman sank back down onto the bench.

“But, darling—” Tika began.

“She came here on purpose, my dear,” Caramon interrupted. “She didn’t stop at the inn just for a room. She came
on purpose to find someone living in Solace. And I don’t think she escaped some evil place. I think she left.” His voice grew grim. “And I think that when she leaves here, she’s going back—of her own free will.”

The woman shuddered. Her shoulders hunched, her head bowed. “You are right. I have come to find someone in Solace. You, an innkeeper, you would know where I could locate this man. I must talk to him tonight. I dare not stay long. Time . . .” Her fingers, in their blue gloves, twisted together. “Time is running out.”

Caramon reached for his cloak, which hung on a peg behind the bar. “Who is it? Tell me his name, and I’ll run to fetch him. I know everyone living in Solace . . .”

“Wait a moment.” The prudent Tika stopped him. “What do you want with this man?”

“I can tell you his name, but I cannot tell you why I want to see him, more for his sake than my own.”

Caramon frowned. “Will this bring whatever danger you’re in down on him as well?”

“I can’t say!” The woman avoided looking at him. “Perhaps. I’m sorry for it, but . . .”

Slowly, Caramon shook his head. “I can’t wake a man in the middle of the night and take him to what may be his doom—”

The woman lifted anguished eyes. “I could have lied to you. I could have told you that all will be well, but I don’t know that. I know only that I bear a terrible secret and I must share it with the one other person alive who has the right to know it!” She reached out, caught hold of Caramon’s hand. “A life is at stake. No, sir, more than a life! A soul!”

“It’s not up to us to judge, sweetheart,” said Tika. “This man, whoever he is, must decide for himself.”

“Very well. I’ll go fetch him.” Caramon flung his cloak around his shoulders. “What’s the name?”

“Majere,” said the woman. “Caramon Majere.”

“Caramon!” repeated Caramon, astounded.

The woman mistook his astonishment for reluctance. “I know I’m asking the impossible. Caramon Majere—a Hero of the Lance, one of the most renowned warriors of Ansalon. What could he have to do with the likes of me? But, if
he won’t come, tell him . . .” She paused, considering what she might say. “Tell him I’ve come about his sister.”

“His sister!” Caramon fell back against the wall. The thud shook the inn.

“Paladine help us!” Tika clasped her hands together tightly. “Not . . . Kitiara?”