Songs of the Seasons, Song Two



A SAMPLE of the short story by Janine K. Spendlove

Songs of the Seasons, Song Two: White Flag

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light knock sounded at the door. Anxiety and anticipation tore through Eilath. Ever since arriving at the queen's island, the elf had been both dreading and hoping for this moment. When his eyes had first met hers across the marble hallway, so much had been communicated between the two of them. Yellow fear and orange shock on the queen's part and, surprisingly enough, a swirl of hope. Eánna's welcoming words had washed away all of the hostility emanating from the clan leaders, and suddenly he'd felt a spark of hope too.

Though, he reminded himself, she could just have been behaving politely. Most likely this is just Eídolin coming to reprimand me for staying away for so long.

While his clan leader was not exactly happy with some of Eilath's life choices, Eídolin also didn't treat him like a traitor to their race, as nearly everyone else tended to. Eilath's gaze flitted over to Adair, who was in the process of jumping into the overly

large bathtub in their shared quarters. His half-dryad daughter never could resist a swim, no matter the location. He felt calm spread through him, and he knew that his eyes had faded from being yellow to sea green.

The knock sounded again, and he set down his faolán before walking to the door. His dust covered knee-high boots clipped loudly on the marble floor, and he belatedly wished he'd taken the time to clean up before now. Pausing in front of the wooden door, he tucked his long, white-blonde hair behind his pointed ears and closed his eyes.

What must she think of me? Coming back here to her island instead of his own family's, especially after all this time away. And I brought Adair!

He rested his hand on the highly polished brass doorknob—a luxury in their metal deprived world—and took a deep breath.

He opened the door, and there she stood, nearly as tall as he, but vastly more elegant and beautiful. He knew in that moment that she still firmly possessed his heart.



150 YEARS AGO

anna propped the wooden bowl of the faolán up on her lap and tried to play the complicated tune once again. Her slender fingers wrapped around the neck of the instrument and formed the chords as best as she could, while her right hand strummed the six lower strings on the instrument. She was still too much of a novice to even attempt incorporating the two additional bass strings into the arrangement.

After missing the proper chord progression again, she pressed

her eyes closed, grateful no one was around to see the red flickers of aggravation in her eyes.

"I like to close my eyes, too, when I play, but when you're still learning I've found it's helpful to look at your hands." His lilting, fluid voice caressed her, and Eanna's eyes flew open.

Flushing, she stared down at her hands. Her heart raced as she was both thrilled to hear Eilath's voice and worried he'd seen her mistake. Her tutor sat down across from her, mirroring her with a faolán of his own. Though only twenty years older than her, he was a master of his craft—or rather, a prodigy—as his clan had all pronounced him. And they would know, being that they too were musicians and artists of varying degrees. His mastery was in evidence now as he easily demonstrated the scale he wanted her to practice on his left hand—his weaker hand.

She watched as his fingers moved nimbly up and down the fretboard of the instrument, and his melodic voice sung out the notes as he played them. She found herself feeling, once again, quite irrationally jealous of his faolán.

"My princess?"

"Hmm?" Eanna looked up and met his liquid silver eyes with her own. "Oh, I'm sorry. My mind was elsewhere."

A concerned look flitted across his face, and she thought she detected a hint of yellow worry in his eyes, though that was probably just wishful thinking on her part. Besides, it wasn't just lovers and family but often close friends who were able to see each other's emotions.

And that's all he probably thinks of me as. All he'll ever think of me as. A close friend.

Though she doubted even that. She was certain that he, just like everyone else, thought of her only as "my princess."

Eanna smiled at him, though she did not feel it, and placed her fingers around the faolán's neck trying to mimic the placement of his long, graceful fingers. "Shall we continue, Master Eilath?"

"If you wish, though if you have more pressing matters..."

"No, Mother says there is nothing more pressing than for me to learn each of the clans' trades before I become queen myself."

He inclined his head respectfully toward her before resuming their lesson.

Sighing quietly, Eanna focused on her task. She was only thirty, but already she could see the life she'd been born into was going to be lonely. She'd never be one of the normal elves. Never a part of a clan. No, she would always be "my princess," the child training to one day be "my queen." Mother and spiritual leader to a slowly dying race, and friend to none.

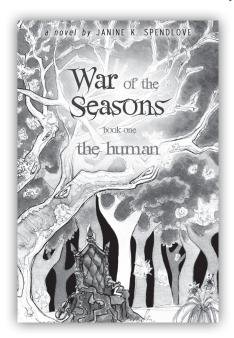
Apart, different, alone.



END OF SAMPLE

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About the Author

Janine K. Spendlove is a KC-130 pilot in the United States Marine Corps. Prior to that she graduated from Brigham Young University in 1999 with a BA in History Teaching. An avid runner, she also enjoys knitting, playing Beatles tunes on her guitar, and spending time with her family. She currently resides with her husband and daughter in Washington, D.C. Her first novel, *War of the Seasons, Book One: The Human,* was published in June 2011, and she's also had several short stories published in various anthologies. She is currently at work on her next novel.