



RUNES OF GALLIDON

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The Great Drift, part 6

Maia Jacomus

a novella chapter set in the world of Runes of Gallidon

Determined to forget all about how she was deceived by people she used to admire, Luka returned directly to the Traveler's Respite, plucked an ad from the community post, and left immediately for the location noted on the paper. The ad was from a local weaver who was seeking a spinner and a dyer. She knew dying would be an easy job; just add the right amount of coloring as specified by the manual, stir it in the boiling water, then add the thread or cloth or whatever was to be dyed. She wasn't as confident in her spinning skills, as the only time she ever tried it was when she helped her granddam—and her granddam had died five years ago, cutting Luka's apprenticeship short.

The weaver was a very cheerful and kind man of advanced years named Arkadi e'Termonik. He was hesitant to make Luka his dyer but walked her upstairs to where the spinning wheel was kept. The tub of dye also occupied the room, though it sat in the corner where two windows kept the area ventilated.

"Would you mind if I watch you spin some selki hair?" Arkadi asked.

"I'll do my best to remember," Luka said as she sat at the stool. She appreciated the comfort of the cushion and the small back on the stool, which would make sitting at the spinning wheel for hours a day much easier. At first, the tools at her feet confused her. She was more used to cards and clumps of wool. But then she remembered she was spinning for a weaver, not a knitter. So she took a fistful of selki hair and combed it, picking out whatever pieces of dirt wouldn't comb out easily. When it felt smooth, she fed it in with her hands as her foot pushed the pedal to keep the wheel spinning. She was surprised by how easily the task came to her; after so long practicing the more complicated long draw method using wool, using the short draw method with selki hair was no great feat at all. With little effort and her memory easing back into her hands, she had a fine strand of thread twining around the spindle.

Arkadi smiled and pat her on the shoulder. "Can you start work right away?"

"Yessir!" she said with a smile, finishing her handful so she could comb some more. She had forgotten how much she enjoyed the rhythm and grace of spinning, and relished in the memory of her granddam that it granted her. In that first handful of selki hair, she forgot all about her dealings with Lani, Enzo, and the wretched seizkin.

After her first day of work and her first day's pay, Luka was truly feeling the fresh start that the Great Drift granted her. In celebration, she bought a mudcake and brought it back to her room at the Traveler's Respite, where she shared it with her three roommates, much to their delight.

"Many praises on your job!" Kuzma said to Luka, her mouth full of the rich cake.

"Have you found a place for your shop yet?" Luka asked as she cut another slice.

"Mmm!" Darya voiced, trying to swallow her bite before talking. "There's this wonderful little place in the next neighborhood over. It's perfect. It has one floor for the shop, and a second floor for storage if we need it. We're also thinking of just putting a living space up there, but it's not furnished for it, so we still need to save up before we can move in."

Ilya tried speaking with her mouthful, but she accidentally spat out a crumb in the effort, to which everyone laughed. After swallowing and settling her chuckles, Ilya said, "No husband for me yet, but lots of fine prospects! In fact..." She looked to Luka. "Well...your brother..."

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Luka raised her eyebrow. “Did he say something to you?”

“Oh, no, nothing like that. He’s just...on my list. He’s already been hired on as an entertainer at the Waning Moon Tavern. I went there for lunch.” She sighed dreamily. “You know, I think half the local women are already in love with him.”

Luka merely smirked and rolled her eyes, knowing her brother wouldn’t be thrilled to hear that. “We still have half this cake left. I think I’ll let the boys have it.”

“I’ll go with!” Ilya volunteered.

Luka laughed as she picked up the tray. “Thanks, but I think I’ll go it alone.”

Carefully balancing the half-full tray, Luka walked across the hall and rapped on the door. Yuli answered, saw the tray, and turned back to his roommates to shout, “Cake!”

Luka walked in and set the tray on the table, where everyone in the room congregated to share the cake.

“What’s this for?” Rurik asked as he cut a slice.

“I got a job today,” Luka said. “A spinner for the local weaver, Arkadi.”

“Ah, well, many praises,” he said, holding his slice like he were giving a toast.

“I heard you got a job, too.”

He shrugged. “Just a thing at the tavern down the road.”

“Nothing in line for us yet,” Yuli said between bites. “We don’t have any money for our business, so Yakim’s looking for some other work while I earn some money with a bit of hunting and fishing.”

Looking around the small room, Luka noticed someone was missing. “Where’s Esfir?”

“He’s on a day trip to the other end of town,” Rurik said with his mouth full. He put his hand over his mouth as some crumbs tried to escape, and remained silent until he swallowed. “That’s where all the best boating companies are.”

Yakim was about to cut out another slice, when he asked Luka, “Did you have some?”

Luka replied, “Why do think there’s only half there?”

“Is that weaver looking to hire anyone else? I mean, I can’t spin, but is there anything else?”

“He needs a dyer.”

“Mmm,” Yakim nodded as he swallowed a bite. “I can do that. I’ll see him tomorrow.”

Luka took the ad from her purse, unfolded it, and handed it to him.

“Thanks,” he said. Then he gestured to the cake and added, “And thanks.”

In one voice, they all said, “Thank you, Luka!”

She snickered and headed toward the door. “Just watch out—that tray isn’t edible.”

“That’s what you think,” Yuli said.

“Maybe try to save one small piece for Esfir.”

“He can have the tray.”

Leaving the boys’ room, Luka headed outside toward the pier. Having opened her purse to give Yakim the ad, she saw something else she wanted to get rid of. Staring into the waving water, she took the snuff box of pollen out of her purse and chucked it into the water and for a moment watched as the current carried it away and under the boardwalk.

When Luka went to bed that night, it was the best sleep she’d gotten since the Great Drift began.



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At first, Luka wasn't too conscientious with spending her earnings. Secretly, she liked staying in the Traveler's Respite with her Drift friends, but as Kuzma and Darya saved up their money and moved into their new shop, the reality came that Luka would need to strike out on her own.

A week later, Kuzma and Darya said farewell, having secured their new work. Ilya got a job serving at the Waning Moon Tavern, where she could meet eligible men and listen to Rurik's music all day. Luka and Ilya agreed to buy a house together when they had enough money, unless either of them got married first. It was faster than saving for a house on their own, and despite their differences, they were becoming good friends.

With his new job, Rurik was granted his own room in the tavern's adjoining inn, the Rising Sun. After a full day's work, Luka was more inclined to return to the Respite to relax or wander around town. But she made sure to visit her brother every weekend, when they would try a new tea flavor at the brewery, then talk during some leisurely fishing or skipping rocks.

There were times when she would see an object floating on its own or would hear a cry of "Thief!" She ignored them.

Luka had a full month of happiness in her new Alkat home, between spinning at work and resting at the Respite. Yakim walked with her back to the inn as he always did, since they spent their entire work days in the same room talking, telling stories and jokes, and singing favorite songs. He offered to take her to the Waning Moon for supper, but she was too tired for anything but returning to her room and picking up where she left off in the new book she had bought a couple days prior. Luka was surprised to see Ilya's bunk occupied as she closed the door.

"Short shift today?" Luka asked as she plopped onto her own bunk.

A flash of red caught her eye. Turning her head, what she saw made her jump and slam her back against the wall: Lani Ouranos was sitting on Ilya's bunk, and rather looking like five leagues of bad river.

"Glad you made it alright," Lani remarked as she pulled back her hair and tried to pin it into a bun.

"You're alive?!" Lani gasped.

Lani nodded, then sighed at her failed attempt to style her hair as the red strands fell into her face. "I managed to keep my head above water until I could grab onto a branch and pull myself to shore. There's only one very defined path of ground shallow enough to walk across from there to here." She scraped mud off her boots with a butter knife. "Sometimes knee-deep, sometimes waist-deep." She winced at a snail that had become caught and smooshed into the groove of her boot. "In other words, I had all kinds of fun trying to get my ass here."

Gathering her sanity, Luka went to the door. "You need to leave."

"Your generous nature aside, this was the room I was given when I signed in upon arrival. Something wrong?"

"Well, you'll probably freak out Ilya and..." Luka opened the door. "I'm glad you're okay, but you need to leave."

Lani shrugged and rose to her feet. "Well, then how about my gloves, my pollen, and my papers?"

Luka unearthed the papers from under her pillow and handed them over. "I threw the pollen away, and the Shamaness has your gloves."

Lani started. "Who? How does she have my gloves? Do you have any idea how hard it is to get

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bear, wolf, and lion hides?!”

“I’m not falling into your game anymore, whatever it is, okay? Enzo told me all about your stupid theory, and I don’t want any part of it!”

“Stupid theory?!” Lani thrust her face into Luka’s. “You saw the seizkin yourself! And they’re all coming here to Alkat, all because—“

“Shut up!” Luka shouted. She stepped aside and gestured to the door, her breath rapid. “Get out.”

Lani shook her head with fury and banged her fist on the door as she walked out. Luka slammed the door after her, then clamped her hands over her face, trying to breath and trying not to scream.

A soft knock sounded from the door, then it slowly opened. Yakim peered inside. “You all right? I heard yelling.”

When Luka let her hands down, her face was beet-red, and her eyes were wet.

“What’s wrong?” he asked.

She inhaled a deep breath to calm down, and said, “Lani’s alive. She was here. She had me sucked into this whole thing that turned out to be some conspiracy theory against the Shamaness, so I kicked her out.”

“What?”

Luka shook her head and waved her hand dismissively. “I really don’t want to talk about it, ever. Just leave me be, okay? I’ll be fine.”

Yakim hesitated before answering, “Alright, but I’m right across the hall, you know.”

Luka smiled faintly. “I know. Thanks.” Luka shut the door, and as soon as Yakim left, she sank onto her bed, face-first onto the pillow, with a sigh of exasperation. She planned to hide her face behind her book until she calmed down and Ilya came from work.

The following day, as Luka walked in to Arkadi’s shop for work, she bid him “good morning” as she always did on her way to the stairs. But today, she paused. “Arkadi, do you know, or have you heard of someone named Baron Enzo el’ Adal Berat?”

“Of course,” he said matter-of-factly, not taking his gaze off his loom.

“Well, who is he? Or who was he?”

Arkadi dropped his work to look at her with a wrinkle in his brow. “You don’t know? Really?”

“He captained the boat I was on for the Great Drift, but that’s all I know about him. I came here, and everyone treats him like...I don’t know.”

Arkadi scratched his neck as he tried to think of a proper beginning. “Well, when he was eighteen, he became Chieftan of Adal Berat. He came to Alkat often, of course, for monthly meetings with the Chief Council and the Shamaness—Shaman, at the time, though. He was always admired for his great skill in Spirit Mastery, and a lot of people seem to think that’s why he decided to take an oath of silence, you know, so he can hear the Spirits better at all times. I don’t think he was silent while he was a Chieftan; that’d be difficult.”

“How did he lose his position as Chieftan?”

“Not sure. He just sort of disappeared for awhile, didn’t show up at any of the Council meetings for some time. Then, one day, he came to Alkat dragging his leg and bleeding buckets. He was checked into the infirmary for about a week, wouldn’t say a word to anyone. About three days later, there was an attempt on the Shaman’s life, then he went missing. The Baron ignored the healers’ pleas to stay in the infirmary, and hours later, he came back with the Shaman safe and sound. The Baron himself was all beaten up, and he had that bleeding scar by his eye. Shaman said the Baron saved his life but wouldn’t

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give up any more explanation than that.” He shrugged and turned back to his loom. “Ever since then, it’s like anything that goes wrong, it’s fixed by the Baron. You ever heard of the Flood Pirates?”

“They pillaged during flood season, right? That was over six years ago.”

“He was the one who caught them and took them in. The Flood Pirates, the Hydra Assault, the Saphyre Syndicate, all stopped by him.”

Luka just shook her head as she stared into space with disbelief.

“Just about anything you’ve heard about in the past twenty years or so has to do with him. Though he’s been a bit out of it for the last five years. You heard about that outsider who was stealing with her telekinesis? Set foot on the Baron’s boat and was never seen or heard from again. Well, you said you were on his boat, yeah?”

“He didn’t get rid of her; that was an accident.”

Arkadi chuckled. “Baron Enzo doesn’t have accidents, not with his record.”

“But she was thrown by the...” Knowing that she was sorry she ever asked, Luka just heaved a sigh and dashed up the stairs to sit at the spinning wheel and regain her senses.



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