

# THE WIND COMES

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Saying my farewells in Haert took an entire day. I shared a meal with Vashet and Temp and let both of them give more more advice than I needed or desired. Celean cried a bit, and told me she would come visit me when she finally took the red. We bouted one final time, and I suspect she let me win.

Lastly, I went to Penthe. You might think that I had learned the full spectrum of intimacy from Felurian, but she did not teach me to say a true farewell. Felurian knew I was going to return. I had promised with kisses after all.

But Penthe was Adem and of the red besides. She may not yet have left Ademre to go among barbarians but she knew what a leave-taking was. She knew that someone could leave Haert and only their sword might return. It was not a thing to mourn. It just was. Still.

When I arrived at her snug little house she met me at the door with a single candle. The light played around her heart-shaped face and teased the smile from her lips. The sweet smile of a true friend. That secret curve and small flash of teeth. There is nothing more appealing in the world.

I had been long enough among the Adem, with their impassive public faces, to value the intimacy of her private smile more than the fact that she opened the door wearing only the shadows and light of that small flame. Enough to value it, and enough that it added to the allure of her form. The amber light kissed the gentle slope of her breasts, the long smooth muscles of her thighs, and hid

in the soft darkness of her flower. With her hands cupped around the candle, half her voice should have been muted. But in perfect Aturan she spoke a single word, with all the inflections of promise and seduction that a native speaker might have crafted from a single syllable.

"Come."

And when she stepped back from the door, her smile changed from that of a true friend to that of a lover full of mischief and delight.

I inhaled deeply. She had been practicing. Or perhaps the bittersweet nature of the day made me particularly responsive to the sight of a lovely woman. When I walked into the house I was already aroused and by the time I pushed the door shut behind me, my breath had quickened as if I were still sparring.

Penthe backed away, hooded eyes beckoning me to follow her into the second of her two small rooms. The motion of her passage made the flame dance in the breeze, lighting her breast, the curve of her hip, the bend of her knee.

"Come."

I reached for the hem of my shirt, intending to shed it as I followed her, but Penthe raised her finger and in a very Aturan gesture shook it at me. "Not yet." Then her smile deepened with the delight of someone who has remembered a phrase in a foreign language. Yet even that, she gave the accents of Adem so the single waggle of her finger promised pleasure if only I would wait.



God's body. She was lovely. I have compared women before to instruments or music, but Penthe was a Ketan of her own. Each movement an expression of control and inevitability to be studied and studied again.

The light dimmed as she passed through the door to the inner room, leaving her in a frame of radiance. I followed her out of the dark and into her bedchamber.

What breath I'd had remaining, she stole.

She had brought in armfuls of papavler-flowers and covered her bed with the bright red blossoms. While I gaped, she put the candle in a holder and came around behind me. Her warm breath brushed my cheek as she brought her mouth close to my ear.

"I thought we should finish as we began, with barbarian rituals of sex and flowers." She took the lobe of my ear between her teeth and nipped it. My arousal pulsed higher in answer. I started to turn, but she stopped me with her hands on my shoulders. "No. I want to take your anger slowly."

She kissed the nape of my neck. "I want to savor it." Her hands ran from my shoulders down my chest, skimming over my stomach to the waistband of my trousers. "I want to build memories from it."

The room became unreasonably warm, even with only a single candle and the wind whistling in the night. Penthe drew her hands around my waist, almost, but not quite touching my erection and leaving the fabric to hint at the possibilities. I ached

to turn. She dug her fingers into the cloth of my shirt and drew it upward. As it untucked, the fabric whispered over my skin, caressing by proxy, and I let out a small moan.

She giggled. It was a three note ascending scale, so achingly beautiful that I understood why the Adem reserved music for their most intimate moments. My nature being what it is, I answered instinctively and then added a variation to make it a melody.

Penthe's right hand stopped its movement upon my upper arm and tightened. I squeezed my eyes shut at the stupidity of that little bit of music. How many times had I been told that among the Adem musicians were like whores? And here I'd just sung to her. Seven notes, but still.

And then she sang them back.

There is a charm in an untrained voice that can bring a man to his knees. It is rough. It is honest. It shakes with passion that a trained singer might feign or hide. It cannot lie. I might have fallen were it not for her strong hand on my arm and the one she slid around my waist.

This time she let me turn. Her eyes were wet and I had to wonder if anyone had ever sung to her before. Penthe drew her hand up my arm, along my shoulder, until she caressed my cheek. She ran one thumb over my mouth leaving a trail of shivers behind. I pursed my lips and pressed a kiss into that thumb. It paused, resting against the swell of my lower lip.



Watching her dark grey eyes, I opened my mouth and took her thumb gently between my teeth. I tasted acrid oil from cleaning her sword, mixed with the honeyed spice of papavler-flowers and the salt of her skin. The hair on her arm stood on end and she closed her eyes, humming with pleasure.

Penthe's lids flew open, a blush rising to her cheeks. I hummed back and let the vibrations throb through her flesh.

Her free hand danced patterns on my chest, circling through the hair and skipping closer to a nipple till she pinched it hard. I gasped. Her thumb escaped my open mouth and traced a liquid line down my neck that cooled as the moisture evaporated.

She bent and nuzzled my chest, nibbling the skin with tiny bites until she found the tender flesh of my other nipple and took it between first her lips, then her teeth, then toyed the tip with her tongue. I wrapped a hand around the small of her back and pulled her hips against mine. The pressure against my crotch sent a current of warmth from my toes to my scalp. Penthe hummed against my chest, resonant tremors scattering my thoughts.

I managed to gasp, "Barbarian."

She giggled again, peeking up at me. "It is scandalous."

Sliding lower, she circled my navel then hooked her fingers in the waist of my trousers and eased the cloth over the aching length of my erection. My

hand had found her unbound hair and knotted in the strands. With the other I braced myself against her shoulder as the fabric fell to the floor. Penthe's strong, clever hands could be so gentle. Barely touching the skin of my calves, she swept up to the weak spot behind my knees. That soft flesh could be parted to hamstring a man, or drop him just as surely with a delicate touch.

She ran her hands around my legs with the rhythm of Threshing Wheat, then swiftly up the inside of my thighs. She left them at the junction there, going no higher, fingers circling in and out of the hair in a motion like the Adem for "patience." The top of her head tilted and the silk curtain of her hair slid to the side, just brushing my left thigh. I trembled as my body made its appreciation clear.

She leaned into me, forehead cool against my belly, and breath hot against my phallus. Her fingers circled. Patience. In and out, gently stirring the hair, stroking the skin, teasing. Patience. With her head against my stomach, I could see little beyond the line of her shoulders and the curve of her spine.

The touch of her tongue bent me into a gasp as surely as if she had used Climbing Iron. Then she took me into the warmth of her mouth. Teeth just grazed skin, to remind me they were there. Her tongue found the vein that throbbed up the length of my shaft.

And then she hummed, seven notes low and deep in her throat.



There is power in an untrained voice. It can fell a man.

\* \* \*

Chronicler lifted his pen from the paper.

Kvothe raised an eyebrow in surprise and leaned back in his chair. "Is something the matter?"

Shaking his head, Chronicler cleared his throat but his cheeks were flushed a bright red. He looked down at the page and blushed a little brighter. "You are not usually this...explicit."

"You asked for the full account of my life."

Kvothe shrugged dismissively and nodded toward the paper. "This is part of it. You didn't blush when I told you about Felurian."

"She is a legend. And besides you used mostly euphemisms. The Fluttering Hand. Birdsong at Morning. Circling the Moon. This is— These are not." Chronicler picked up his cloth and began to clean the brass nib of his pen in quick, irritated motions. "This is only sex."

"Only sex? *Only* sex." Kvothe came slowly to his feet and leaned forward over the table, eyes becoming a dangerous green. "Taking leave of someone is never only sex."

"I only mean—why tell this, in such detail, when you skipped most of the trial at Imre, all of your shipwreck, and who knows what else?"

The red-haired man looked past the scribe to where Bast sat, appearing to lounge idly in his chair, but his blue eyes were wide with interest. "Because sometimes my stories are not for you." He

smiled a wide, lazy smile, and rapped his knuckles on the table. "Let's pause there for now."

"I am sorry," Chronicler said, leaning forward in his chair. "Of course, I can write this down."

"No, no. You're right. This isn't for your book." Kvothe shrugged and his voice was perfectly calm. It was perfectly normal. It was smooth and solid as polished wood. "Why don't you just say that I spent a pleasant evening with Penthe that turned into a pleasant night, and eventually into a pleasant late night. We'll resume after I was on the road again. I need to tidy the kitchen, anyway."

"I can dry the dishes." Bast came to his feet in a motion that made it seem as though he were still slouching. His dark hair fell over his brilliant eyes in an artless cascade.

Kvothe swept a hand through his hair. "Thank you, that would be welcome."

Chronicler opened his mouth but before he could speak, Bast leaned down and smiled. It was not a lazy smile. It was sharp and brittle and filled with too many teeth.

He straightened from the blanching scribe and followed Kvothe across the common room, behind the bar and into the kitchen. When he pushed through the swinging door, the innkeeper was standing by the tin wash basin under the wide window. His hands rested against the sides of the metal tub, and he leaned there with his head bent. At the sound of Bast's footsteps, he raised his head. "There aren't really that many dishes to do."



"Why *did* you tell that story?"

With his head half-turned, Kvothe paused. The light from the window brushed his hair into flame. "I shouldn't have. It won't go in Devan's book, that's for certain."

"But if it wasn't for the book..." Bast took a light, hesitant step forward. "Who was it for?"

Kvothe bent his head again and picked up a clean cloth. He wiped it along the dull gray rim of the wash basin. "Me?" He gave a chuckle that perfectly expressed amused self-mocking. "Wanting to relive my youth?"

"Reshi..."

He sighed and the motion of the cloth on tin slowed, then stopped. "I keep thinking about what you said about the Cthaeh."

"You should not listen to me, Reshi." Bast crossed his arms. "I ramble sometimes, and tell tales to make wild mischief. You know that."

"I do." He turned and met the other man's gaze. "This wasn't that, though."

With a voice so soft, it was almost drowned out by the wind outside the glass, Bast said, "No."

Nodding, Kvothe bent his head again and studied the cloth he still held. The soft white fibers twisted and bunched as he turned it over and over. "So I began to think about leave-taking. And the making of memories. And the ones I have not yet made."

His hands tightened in the cloth. He took a breath, held it, then lifted his eyes. They were the

grey green of old moss and nervous longing. He wet his lips, looking away as though Bast's gaze were too bright to bear.

Bast covered his mouth, eyes wide and for a moment too blue, too bright. His breath was quick and shallow. His breath was longing. His breath was the sound before a storm. Carefully, as though he were holding a broken egg, he lowered his hand. It trembled under the weight of nothing.

He whispered, "Come."

Kvothe looked up, expression softening until it was easy to see that he was still a very young man. For a moment yet, he hesitated, and then he pushed away from the basin, dropping the cloth upon the floor.

Bast met him in the middle of the kitchen, arms sliding around his waist. His hands feathered across the solid strong back, careful of the stitches in Kvothe's side. Wrapped in an embrace, it was not easy to tell where one man began and the other ended. Long hands slid over muscles, gripping or brushing. Mouth pressed against mouth. Tongue tasted tongue. Red hair against black made a tangle of burning night.

Tugging at Kvothe's shirt, Bast pulled it over his head, revealing a scarred back and a line of new stitches to add to it. "Ah." He lay his hand against the hollow of Kvothe's collarbone. "Ah."

Catching it, Kvothe turned the palm up and lay a kiss into the middle, while his free hand traced a circle on the inside of Bast's wrist.



Bast leaned in, and whispered against Kvothe's neck. "I wish you had not suggested the kitchen."

With a grin, the innkeeper looked up at him. "I am trained to be silent backstage." He moved his hand to Bast's trouser and laid his palm over the bulge there. "But if you make a noise, I'll stop."

"But what of the power of a trained voice?"

"Trained silence can be just as effective." He pressed against the fabric.

Bast's eyes fluttered shut and he bit his lower lip. Inhaling, he rocked his hips forward into Kvothe's hand. "No noise at all? He will be suspicious if we are too quiet."

"There are many types of silence—" Kvothe broke off, demonstrating one as Bast's hand found its way past his apron and to the first button of his trousers. It was a silence of anticipation, one of yearning, and of pain. Kvothe exhaled slowly, leaning his head against Bast's shoulder. The second button provoked a silent inhale that made the scars on his back shift and stretch. The third tightened his hand where it rested against the swell of Bast's phallus. "There are... There are many types of silences and unless he is more familiar with... with how inns work than I think, he will... he will not notice that this is the wrong—God."

"Does that count as a noise, Reshi?" Bast murmured, working his hand up and down in Climbing the Ivy.

Kvothe laughed. It was the silent, breathless laugh of a performer backstage, tinged with a wild

madness brought the beneath the trees of the Eld. It cracked his face into a grin and he grabbed the collar of Bast's shirt, pulling him down into a kiss.

Taking hold of the shirt, Kvothe began to work it free until Bast pulled back, an offended look raising his brows. "Nothing so crude." He whispered a single word and there was a scent of maple and new frost.

His shirt. His pants. His boots. All gone, the glamour stripped away to leave only a perfect, lean body still pressed against Kvothe, whose fingers were now wrapped in hair as black as a raven's wing, soft as smoke. The pale column of his torso rose from there, unmarred by other hair or scars. All the hair began on his legs as they dropped from strong thighs to bent calves and cloven hooves.

He lowered his gaze, sudden apprehension drawing his brows close together. "You do not mind, do you?"

Kvothe shook his head, mute with a different kind of silence, that of trust and wonder and shaping memory. Shifting his weight, he slid his other hand around to Bast's tight buttocks and held him pressed close as they eased down to the floor.

Bast found the strings tying the apron and tugged them free. Lightly, delicately, his fingers played along the length of Kvothe, and then wrapped around him and squeezed. Kvothe's back arched, chin tilting toward the window. Bast repeated the motion and again. Kvothe matched him at first, then when hands alone would not



serve, they rocked together in a third type of silence, one of play and of sweat and of leave-taking.

Kvothe inhaled sharply, eyes widening in recognition, and he exhaled a single word.

The air in the room shifted, wind teased the tendrils of Bast's hair and lifted the strands of Kvothe's like fire. The apron tumbled across the floor, strings fluttering as the wind circled the men. It caressed their skin and whispered in their ears and lifted them in an embrace. Bast clung to Kvothe, grinning as it gusted around them, drying their sweat almost before it formed. Then it set them down with a sigh.

Groaning, Kvothe covered his face with his hands and rolled away. Bast sat up, alarmed. He laid a tentative hand on Kvothe's shoulder. "Reshi?"

"I had forgotten." His voice cracked and he cleared it. "I told Devan what it was like, but I was half-making it up. I had forgotten what it was like when the wind comes."

Sinking down again, Bast wrapped his arm around Kvothe's waist and curled against his back. He pressed his face into the hollow of his neck. "Will you tell him?"

"No." Kvothe dragged his hands away from his face and his gaze, which Bast could not see, was that of a man waiting to die. His trained voice was not. His trained voice was calm, and sated, and a little laughing. "No. This does not belong in his book. Not at all."



Special thanks to Mary Robinette Kowal, Patrick Rothfuss and DAW Books. This is a non-canonical work written by Mary Robinette Kowal for the Worldbuilders 2013 fundraiser.

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Author Patrick Rothfuss founded Worldbuilders with the belief that bookish geeks can make the world a better place. In the last few years, countless readers, authors, creators, and publishers have proved him right by joining together to raise millions of dollars for Heifer International.

This particular PDF was a special project used as a stretch goal during the Worldbuilders 2013 fundraiser. When donations reached \$150,000, Hugo-award winning author Mary Robinette Kowal graciously donated her time to write this playful erotic fiction based on Pat's novel, *The Wise Man's Fear*. The second installment of this project involved Mary dressing as Kvothe and reading this story on video.

All the stretch goals can be found at [www.worldbuilders.org](http://www.worldbuilders.org).