WHEN SHE COULD SECURE DISPENSATION, Sister Peren went for long walks. 

There was no physical need for her to do so. The Elixir of Life regulated her metabolism perfectly. She would have been happy to acknowledge, had she been challenged, that she enjoyed the landscape of Karn. She had once walked for months across continents, leaving the rock faces beloved of the Sisterhood and instead crossing meadows and forests, sahel and savannah. She had memorised the world's flora and found what plants were safe to eat, savoured the experience, and analysed the effect each substance had on her body. She had walked pebble beaches and counted the colours in the stones, then suspended sand in salt water and lapped to taste the elements. She'd found straits which she could comfortably swim, and met twelve-legged beasts of many-coloured fur, none taller than four feet, who had been overjoyed to meet her. She'd tried their milk and had felt renewed. They had something of the Elixir in them too, with something more, and she knew then it was time to return and tell the sisters of her discovery.

When Peren returned, Ohila confined her with centuries of documents and bade her dispute with the oldest sisters, in public, every week for ten years, before writing her conclusions. Gradually other parties of sisters were sent out to make more specialised studies, to cultivate, to try more of the rainbow creature's milk.

The first thing Peren did when she was released was to find the many-coloured creatures and express repentance. They spoke to her in her head, and told her not to be sad; all was foreseen, and the needs of this world were being met. They said that under the ministrations of the farming sisters they had grown taller and stronger. Peren measured them and agreed.

Ohila requested a formal report on her return, but at least there wasn’t another decade of public examination. Ohila read Peren's report and called her to her chamber for further discussion.

The first thing she said was: ‘After all these centuries, you still use feet and inches.’
There had been little of the Warrior’s original organic form left to be incorporated in the metal shell the sisters had found themselves tending. His remains had been buried in soil barely adequate for their preservation. After a few years, even the skeleton had crumbled. Nevertheless, the repugnant fusion of Gallifreyan and Cyberman technology had extrapolated the DNA and strung through the mechanics a flesh that owed a lot to the human.

‘Not enough,’ Ohila said. ‘The helices are compromised. The protocols of the Cybermen are written into every cell.’

‘He is human, despite them.’

‘He has the will to resist. He knew his enemy. We share a friend, he, me, you, all of us. He has a daughter, whom he believes continues the best of his life’s work.’

‘Not a soldier, then.’

‘No. You see, you know him already. He will know you. Sister Peren, I am going to ask for your spirit, and for your flesh.’

Peren closed her eyes.

‘I know you don’t like to be reminded, sister. But all that has been made of you on Karn has drawn from she who was born on Earth. This man lives despite being remade by heretics after death. Will you give of yourself so life can triumph over unlife?’

Then Peren looked into herself, and travelled.

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For almost as long as she remembered, it had been Mam and Sal and Dor. Sal wasn’t sure if she really remembered Dad; there was a large figure in a dark corner of the kitchen, smelling of beer and man-piss, whom she watched fearfully from a stool in case he shouted again and hit Mam. Then he was gone and she didn’t know if he had ever been there, or if she had only dreamed him.

Then there were the years of running about and playing with sticks in the street and staying out of the drains. There had been a piece of wood she’d drawn a face on with a fragment of coal, tied a strip of cloth round her and called Jenny, but she’d dropped her in the street one day and some lads took her and stuck her in the midden. Sal had more sense than to try to dig her out. So began and ended dolls for Sal.

Mam took in washing and mending and if she was really lucky a bit of baking for the neighbours when times were good. Sal helped more as she got older. Mam helped Sal with her letters and sent her to the National School by the church. Even though she was often tired from helping Mam sew at night and with keeping an eye on Dor, she remembered spellings and sums and the other chil-
dren whispered she’d make monitor when her time came.

Then Mam said it was no good and she couldn’t manage as well as she had done when she was younger. There would be no more school for Sal. There was a job in the match factory three streets away; Mrs Kendal had told Mam so at church. Dor could do her share in the house now; Sal and Mam had worked together well but Dor needed to be trained up so she could manage something, as her attention was always wandering. The factory needn’t be for ever but it brought in a steady wage.

So Sal started at the matchworks. She was meant to be growing up, but the place made her feel smaller and weaker: large machines grinding and splitting wood drowning out the noise of people, smothering them with the foul stench of the poisonous soups which made the matches burn. Sal was frightened that if she fell against a rough paving slab on the way back from work, she’d burst into flames. In the winter she was lucky if she saw the sun. Fourteen hour shifts were usual and if you weren’t careful you could lose all your pay in fines. She saw one girl get all her fingers cut off when unblocking one of the machines, another made to sit in the corner like a naughty child when she put a burnt match down with the fresh ones by mistake. Then there were the people whose teeth fell out and whose mouths began to bleed, their chins swelling up with bruises as their bones shrank.

Sal worked on when she started losing her teeth. What else could she do? She was exhausted, but the pain kept her awake. At home, Mam wrapped her jaw up for an hour or two at night as if she could stop it falling apart. Dor was out of it; Mrs Kendal at church had told Mam about a merchant’s senior clerk’s house in a better part of town which needed a scullery maid, so off Dor had gone. She’d come back every fourth Sunday and Mam had told her to make sure her pretend courting of the butcher’s boy stayed pretend, and said things which made Sal feel queer, as if she wasn’t meant to be here; and she thought Dor might just have felt the same. So it was just as well she was falling to bits.

Then one Sunday her mouth started to bleed in church. She had her Sunday best handkerchief – well, her only one, really, a gift from Mrs Rowbotham the baker’s wife one Christmas after Mam had helped with the baking – and couldn’t stop it. She got up and fainted in the aisle, her mouth falling uselessly open, the sores visible to everyone. She came to ashamed and not caring all at once.

Mr Whitmore –Father John, he asked them to call him – had a word with Mam, she saw, as the verger and Mr Eccles the butcher took her away. She saw Mrs Kendal at the vicarage, but from the look in her eyes Mrs Kendal thought everything was Sal’s fault. When Father John arrived Mrs Kendal went to meet him and said something about wickedness showing itself and little else could be expected from anyone from Sal’s street which was full of vice as anyone who came within nine yards of it could see. Father John talked of charity and a merciful Father (not, thought Sal in delirium, she’d had much of
one) and mentioned the sisters. Mrs Kendal said she’d keep house for Father John, but he should find himself a wife before more Papistical notions took root in his head; but nuns were welcome to a factory girl.

So much, thought Sal, for Mrs Kendal. Then, almost too quickly she thought, two silent women in very plain gowns and covered heads took her from the vicarage back parlour and down the street to the nunnery.

As Sal expected, the nunnery was a peculiar place to live. She was given a bed in a large room shared with other young women. That was to be expected. There were prayers all times of day. She wasn’t sure she understood them. The sisters fed their charges thin soup with no meat and vegetables cut into tiny pieces so Sal didn’t have to chew much. There was medicine too, but it wasn’t like anything you could buy in bottles from the chemist, or that Mam might get as a hand-me-down at church. Instead it was ladelled into small dishes, like a thin tea really, and tasted differently each time. The sisters had syringes and took blood samples, which Sal hadn’t known before. The girls had nicknames for the different nuns. Sister Mary Ethelfled didn’t seem to bother whom she hurt, and she was called Bitch Nancy after the guard dog at the docks who’d torn off Beth Williams’s brother’s thumb and bitten his leg so badly he never walked without a limp again. Sister Frideswide was very gentle and was the smooth to Bitch Nancy’s rough, always smiling and smelling like she’d just bathed in flowers. It was the bathing idea that stuck, so they called her Suds.

Bitch Nancy didn’t like Beth Williams, they decided. Beth had a hole in her jaw which had to be wrapped and dressed and which oozed pus and blood everywhere, given the chance. Bitch Nancy would unwrap Beth’s jaw every morning, snort, paste ointment on the wound, force Beth to drink what was definitely a different medicine every day from one of her old metal bowls, and then bind Beth’s jaw without word or regard for her tears. Sal was one of Suds’s girls, and Suds was far more gentle, talking Sal through the pain in her gums and whether she would be able to eat properly again, always offering hope even when Sal knew that if there had been change it was only that the shrinking and splintering of her bones had stopped for a few days.

Then one day Bitch Nancy looked at Beth’s wound, snorted, prodded it with a knife, which made Beth scream, and snorted again. Before anyone knew it Beth had been taken away without explanation. Two silent sisters Sal hadn’t seen before appeared, grabbed Beth and her few possessions, and took her away.

A couple of days later, Sal asked Suds what had happened to Beth.

‘She’s not dead, if that’s what you are thinking,’ said Suds. ‘She’s moved to another room because she is getting better.’

Sal repeated the words back to her. She’d not truly recognised how she’d not believed anyone recovered from this disease, but she trusted Suds.

‘Yes,’ Suds said in her bright voice, just a little like a mother to a small child. ‘You are
getting better too. Say your goodbyes and come with me.’

Upstairs was a large red-painted room, where more effort had been put into the furnishings. Dark wood screens separated four beds which looked more comfortable than the ones Sal had left downstairs. Curtains hung from rails, drawn back for now. By each bed was a chest of drawers and a jug and a bowl.

‘Sal!’ called Beth from one of the beds, more strongly than Sal had ever heard her. ‘Look!’ She unwrapped her bandage. The hole in her jaw was no longer bleeding, and it was noticeably smaller.

‘Elizabeth, take care!’ said an insistent, motherly voice. To Sal’s astonishment, Bitch Nancy dashed from a corner carrying more bandages and waving a polished metal tube which she brought up to her right eye and pointed at Beth’s jaw. She busied herself tying a new bandage on Beth.

‘She’s changed!’ said Sal to Beth afterwards.

‘I know. It’s not the same as downstairs. They all bother about us more.’

And they did. The number of upstairs girls grew, and two other rooms in the house were opened to fill them. Sal’s teeth stopped falling out and her jaw stopped hurting. Beth’s wound disappeared. Other girls, Sal swore, were recovering from worse. Mary Kelly, a tiny thing whom Sal barely recognised from the matchworks, had as good as grown a new jaw. She asked Sister Frideswide – she felt too close to her and the other sisters to use nicknames like Suds now – about it once, but the sister only smiled.

The girls were allowed out for exercise, and spent more time in the garden as the weather grew warmer and they got better. First, they walked in circles round the lawn. Then, Sister Frideswide and Sister Mechthild asked them to sing songs they knew, while the sisters played on a stringed instrument picking up the tune.

‘You’re not from round here, then, sister,’ called one of the girls. ‘Everyone knows Johnny Todd.’

No, thought Sal. Of course, they are not from round here.

Sal couldn’t sleep that night. Once she turned over in bed to catch sight of someone tall and willowy looking up at the night sky, raising her right hand as if joining up the stars to make constellations. She got out of bed and made as little noise as she could on her way over to the sister, whose face was serene but wistful, in the room but not in the room at all. It was Sister Frideswide, and though she made no sign that she had heard Sal, Sal knew the sister was aware of her.

‘Which star have you fallen from, sister?’

Sister Frideswide inclined her head very slightly towards Sal, and might have begun to smile and thought better of it. She spoke softly and firmly.

‘Bed.’

* 

‘Sister Mary Ethelfled, when might we go home?’
The question was asked by Ellen Flowers, a tall, round, red-haired lass whom Sal couldn’t imagine anyone getting the better of if everyone was in good health. She’d ploughed through the question without stopping for permission from the sister to talk, which wasn’t usual when all the patients were present.

Why had no-one asked before? Sal thought.

‘It’s good to know,’ Sister Mary Ethelfled replied, somewhat stingingly Sal thought, ‘that you can think for yourself, Ellen Flowers.’

There was no further explanation, but Sister Mary Ethelfled and the other nuns would have been able to hear the girls hum with a curiosity about their families. Sal wondered whether Dor was still seeing that butcher’s boy and how Mam was getting on without either of them. It had been months. She was suddenly consumingly guilty that she’d not thought of them.

She felt a lot better after her medicinal draughts. She was alert enough not to be surprised by this.

The next day a new figure was seen in the corridors. Sal had a first impression of overwhelming toughness, like Mrs Neill in the next street from home, who had arms like pistons and who took in so much washing Mam always had the leftover clothes that no amount of pounding would clean. This wasn’t so much a physical presence as a thought, heating the house like a furnace. That wasn’t to rule out this woman’s features. Mary Kelly said she had a face like an old chicken, like Mrs Gregory who was the housekeeper for Father Byrne at St Patrick’s and whose eyes saw where to peck and whose beak could hurt if you had something she wanted to know and you weren’t telling.

‘I bet you she’s Reverend Mother. She’s the head nun.’

She was.

The morning after, all the patients were assembled in chapel to hear the head sister speak. She walked with a stick but no-one dared to look away as she talked. Her eyes were piercing but at the same time seemed to be looking a long way away. She thanked them for helping the sisters in their work, and apologised for keeping them so long from their families. They knew that their lives had been in mortal danger; those gathered in the chapel were the lucky ones. Others lingered in the room below; others had returned home in coffins. Family members had visited hoping to see the recovered, and had been told that they were in good spirits, but still unwell. Those gathered here must understand that the sisters’ work was new and experimental; there was little that was certain about the results of their work –

‘What about me bairns?’ asked a woman sitting across from Sal. This gave Sal a start; she’d not thought of any of the ‘girls’ as being old enough to be mothers, but of course there were girls her age who had babies, and the matchworks bosses employed women in their twenties and older too.

‘Margaret,’ began the Reverend Mother, who was called Catherine.
‘Yor canny lasses in grey have told yous wor name, then. That should be Mrs Robert Marling to yous. I’m worried sick about who or feeding wor lad and wor lass. My Robert’s been on the sick two year, five years at the docks since we came down from Newcassel --’

If there was one thing Sal remembered, so many years later, it was Margaret’s voice, from a town somewhere to the north of where Sal had lived.

Something had to be done. The sisters started to take their patients out of the house, and into the streets, in groups. The way they did so was underhand. The girls had to cover their lower faces as if they were still disfigured. Were they cured, thought Sal, or not? The others must be thinking the same.

Sister Frideswide took Sal to her old home herself. The streets were dirtier than Sal remembered, and she could pick out every scent from the gutter and the privies and the midden. It should have been foul, but she felt detached. It was queer, really it was.

They knocked on the front door. Mam came to the door. She looked older than Sal remembered. How long had it been? Sal didn’t know. Months, she guessed.

‘Our Sal...’ said Mam. ‘Poor Sal...’ Then they went outside, and Sister Frideswide unwrapped the scarf covering Sal’s face.

Mam sobbed. Sister Frideswide had something prepared in a phial, and put it to Mam’s lips. Then they all sat down, and Sal took in the sight of Sister Frideswide, enveloped in her thick grey gown, sitting in her kitchen.

‘I wish we had a parlour, sister,’ was the first thing Mam said.

Dor wasn’t there, of course; she was still in service but had been promoted to kitchen maid. Mam said she wanted her butcher’s boy to come and visit with her next time. Mam had said yes, but she was too young to think about being engaged. Mam asked when Sal would be coming home, and Sister Frideswide replied, to Sal’s surprise, that Sal would be helping them with their work and she would not be able to go home yet.

‘But are you managing?’ asked Sal. Mam said yes; Mrs Neill had fallen over a few months before and had never got properly back on her feet. Mam had taken over the lion’s share of Mrs Neill’s laundry customers and Mrs Kendall had asked her for more baking for church and paid her on time, too. So, she did manage.

Then Sister Frideswide asked again about Dor and the butcher’s boy, and when they would next visit, phrased in such a way as not to sound nosy, and with a voice full of concern.

‘Not for a couple of weeks, love – sister, I mean.’

Sister Frideswide smiled with grace.

Almost immediately after their return, Sister Frideswide told Sal that Mother Catherine wanted to see her right away.

Mother Catherine had moved into a small office at the very top of the house. Sal thought it must have been built for a servant. It had been painted red, very quickly, she thought, and smelled of sulphur. It reminded her, unhappily, of the matchworks. She
fixed Sal with those eyes, so beady, as if a stuffed bird had come to life, and came straight to the point.

‘Sister’ – was there a slight pause? ‘Frideswide says that you are literate. That you can read and you can form letters. That you are numerate, too.’

‘I remember all my arithmetic, if that’s what you mean, Mother Catherine. My headmaster said my handwriting was the best in the school, before I had to leave, that is.’

‘Good. We have letters for you to write, and ledgers where numbers will have to be written. There is not very much time, if we are to achieve what we seek to do.’

So Sal set to work. She took dictation from Mother Catherine, writing letter after letter to shipping companies enquiring about passage to the colonies at short notice. The letters requested meetings here, in the nunnery, with Mother Catherine. At the same time blockily printed messages were arriving from the telegraph office from around the world – Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Cape Colony, with promises of places for families of different sizes. Sal wrote the details of each one down in columns as they arrived, once in each of two ledgers. There was a good deal about this that worried her.

‘Why are you sending us away?’ she eventually asked. ‘Aren’t we meant to be better?’

It was a peculiar thought, but she was sure it was the right one.

Mother Catherine frowned, but she didn’t tell her to get on with her work immediately. ‘My child. You are certainly meant to recover, at least from our point of view. As for how your society understands it… There is no cure for your condition.’

‘Then how am I better? How is everyone?’

Mother Catherine paused, and then told her ‘We have knowledge beyond that of your medicine, child.’

Sal wanted to ask where Mother Catherine and the sisters were from, but then was not the time.

Before too long, the girls started to disappear. Sal saw parents, siblings, aunts, cousins, and children and sweethearts and husbands, at doors, on stairs, and through windows. There were thanks, but there was sometimes anger. This soon disappeared after one of the sisters put something in the tea. Families would head down to the docks with new clothes and trunks. Sal had accounted for them in her ledger, alongside the names of the benefactors. Even the hardest of hearts, Mother Catherine said, can be influenced to kindness.

‘I don’t want to forget this,’ Sal said. ‘I mean it.’ Mother Catherine said nothing.

Sal wrote the final entry in her ledgers knowing Mam, Dor and her husband-to-be, Albert, were downstairs. Four places were booked on a ship bound for New Zealand. Sal met them in the parlour in their new clothes. There were jobs for butchers in New Zealand, Albert said, but perhaps one day he’d be a farmer, with his own sheep, in the country, and he and Dor could have lots of children running around and Mam would only have to do their washing and not take in other people’s.
Mam’s face was composed and polite throughout, but especially when the last sentiment was expressed.

‘Sal,’ said Sister Frideswide. ‘You’ve not touched your tea.’

I’m just excited, that’s all,’ Sal replied, convincingly enough for Dor and Albert, not so convincingly for Mam, and not at all for Sister Frideswide. ‘Can I speak to you, sister, alone? Just once. Sorry, Mam.’

They went outside into the hall of a deathly quiet house.

‘You’ll make me forget. It’s all done with drinking with you, isn’t it? Making us better, making everyone else forget why we are better, and never understanding how. You’re not from here. You’re not fairy folk like Mary Kelly said, and she forgot all that after one night. With all the red you like about you, I’d think you came from the Devil, but I’d not believe the Devil is so kind, but you are, so who are you? Tell me.’

‘We are not kind, Sal Thompson.’ It was Mother Catherine, perched on a step, bannister in one hand, stick in the other. She was wearing a habit Sal hadn’t seen before – red, she wasn’t surprised to see, but with a kind of apron decorated with gold embroidery. A pattern of circles arranged in regular lines caught the eye. ‘Did you see all the bodies leave this house? Did you see all the people who still suffer in this city, of cancers in their jaws, of great hollow sores in their lungs, of palsies and tumours and deaths sudden or lingering from plagues that we could easily cure?’ She climbed down towards Sal. ‘You are right that we come from somewhere else. Another world, with its own place in time and space which can be found by those with the proper thread to guide them through the maze. We are the champions of life, Sal, but we can only gift it in circumstances we deem proper. Here, we wanted to learn about human beings and the potential for tissue regeneration when suffering from cancers influenced by the environment. We looked through human history and found this moment.’

‘So you aren’t going to help anyone else?’

‘Not here, not now.’ Mother Catherine turned, to look up the stairs towards a stained glass window. It showed St Luke. ‘Our science is based on the properties of one element, found only on our world, and extracted by a single flame, which we venerated above all things.’ She reflected. ‘Veneration of a flame is a useful discipline. It reminds us that immortality comes with a price.’ She turned again. ‘We are not the risen to whom your hymns look forward. We are those who have deferred our eternal rest.’

Another nun had joined Sal’s family in the parlour, to keep them company. Sister Frideswide stood with Sal, and spoke softly. ‘We have all been very taken with you, Sal. The spirit with which you recovered. The questions you asked and the help you offered.’

‘There is undeveloped potential in you,’ Mother Catherine stated. ‘It will never be realised fully in this world.’

‘Not even in New Zealand,’ laughed Sister Frideswide. Sal realised she’d never heard her laugh before; it was happy, musical, so full but so ethereal at the same time, that Sal
 wasn’t sure it could be made by human speech. ‘So,’ she smiled. ‘Mother Catherine has a suggestion.’

‘I ask that you come with us, and join our order.’

Sal felt that the world was ending and beginning at once. She didn’t know what to say, and couldn’t remember afterwards what she had. The enormity of the choice was too great.

‘The question is always unfair.’ Mother Catherine acknowledged. ‘You have the time it takes you and your family to ride to the docks. Sister Frideswide will accompany you.’

Of course, Sal was almost silent on the ride down in the cart. She felt every cobble, heard every voice, smelt the open possibilities of the sea. Above her, though, was space; and within her, an abyss which she had never known before, which she yearned to stare into.

At last they were at the riverside, overhung by the shadow of the future. There was a queue for the gangway. Mam began to say goodbye to Sister Frideswide.

‘I’m not coming with you,’ blurted Sal. ‘I’m staying with the nuns.’

Mam, Dor and Albert were dumbstruck, Sal thought, but Sister Frideswide was speaking softly: ‘I understood you discussed this possibility with Sister Anthony.’

‘Oh Sal,’ Mam said and clasped Sal to her. Sal remembered how small Mam seemed. She looked up at her smiling through her tears. ‘It was so good of you to see us off.’

‘Aye, Sal, it was grand of you to come down.’ Albert held out his hand.

‘Look after yourself, Sal,’ said Dor. And they were off.

‘I might have known,’ said Sal. ‘Just as well you didn’t tell me, as I might have changed my mind.’

‘No, you wouldn’t,’ said Sister Frideswide. ‘That is an observation. To reassure you, your choice is based on free will, as far as such a thing exists. But I leave that question to philosophers.’

When they returned, the sisters were all dressed in red, cloth bags hanging behind their shoulders.

‘Sister Mehila,’ called Mother Catherine. ‘You must robe yourself appropriately for the return to Karn.’

Sister Frideswide knelt and rose quickly. ‘Of course, Mother.’ She disappeared.

‘Ah, Sal. You must be prepared for travel. Drink deeply.’ Mother Catherine gave Sal a flask. ‘There are vital minerals here, and proteins, and other factors of which you will learn. You have decades of study ahead of you. Now, drink!’

Sal felt unsteady on her feet, but the sisters held her and took her to the garden. She heard behind her talk of the ledgers; one copy was to go with them, the other would be left behind, ‘a puzzle to their historians,’ said Mother Catherine.

It was early evening by the time all the sisters were gathered in the garden. They formed a circle, with a gap facing the sinking sun. Winter, Sal realised, was ending; she
had been confined for all of it, and more. Mother Catherine was in the centre of the ring. She raised her hands and called out.

‘Sisters! Think on this setting sun and remember the flame of Karn which never dies. Remember, and find your way through the paths of the universe back to it. Welcome the woman who will become our new sister there. Hand her the thread, and hold her hands.’ A cord was threaded through Sal’s hands and other hands took both. ‘I, Ohila, leader of the Sisterhood of Karn, open the way.’ She made a gesture with her staff, and the ground and sky shook and split. Mother Catherine – no, Ohila – joined the circle and they began to dance, circling closer and closer to the gap. When Ohila reached the gap she loosened one hand and raised her staff again –

– and Sal was somewhere else. Her first sight of the sacred plain of Karn.

‘This young woman listened carefully to my instructions,’ said Ohila. ‘When I admit her to the order I will name her Peren. As you all know, this means attentive listener in the tongue of the Triff people of Amboskan, before their subjection to the Geroks.’ So Sal became Peren; and despite the ability to read minds which she gained as a sister, she never knew whether or not Ohila had just made the name up.

* 

Now Peren was standing with Mehila and Ohila looking down at the buckled and scorched form of the Warrior. He groaned and inclined his head towards her.

‘Free me,’ intoned his mechanical voice, yearning for the organic.

Peren looked at the obscene parody of a human being in front of her; the segmented torso like an insect’s abdomen, the handles on its head like a giant padlock running through the top of the skull.

‘I will,’ she told him.

Mehila approached with a syringe, preparing to take the first sample immediately, but Peren held out her hand, palm open.

‘It’s over a century since you were my nurse and my doctor, Sister Mehila. I can do this myself.’ So she took the syringe and plunged it deep into her forearm.

The Warrior turned away, his expression, as always, blank.

**Next: THE BROTHER OF KARN**