

FROM: **MELD SCHOOL RUNAWAY**, CHAPTER FOUR,  
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When Hallie was no longer touching Jeanne, Jeanne felt alone again. Jeanne reached out with her mind and DonEl and Al'Lan were right there. And Jeanne was careful and cautious. They did not know that Jeanne was linked with them in their minds.

She had been linking unconsciously with them for over seven years. This was the first time she linked with them consciously and she discovered that she could link with them without their knowledge.

Jeanne did not want to make her presence known to them. She kept quiet and under their radar. DonEl and Al'Lan were still talking with their parents so Jeanne let them alone and moved out of their minds.

Now Jeanne knew. It was Jeanne being melded with Hallie that prevented Jeanne from connecting with DonEl and Al'Lan instantly as before. That was something to remember.

After Jeanne left DonEl and Al'Lan alone, Jeanne reached out further with her mind. It wasn't very far to go and there were ten, twenty, thirty, a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand minds that Jeanne could reach out and touch.

Jeanne knew that she could be in connection with any one of them without their knowledge in an instant. Jeanne did not leap into anyone impulsively. Jeanne took some time and surveyed all of the minds available to her. And she was able to survey them quickly, without even thinking very much about it. It was almost instinctive.

When she was finished surveying them, there were a couple of minds that seemed so different to Jeanne. And it was as though they were reaching out to her. Jeanne focused on one of the two.

It was a boy feeding a goat!

Jeanne crept into his mind and looked through his eyes in the same way that Jeanne saw through Al'Lan's eyes with her mother.

Jeanne was in a stable. Through the boy's eyes, Jeanne looked at the boy's hands. The boy was feeding grass to a goat. Jeanne felt the muzzle of the goat on the boy's hands. It tickled.

The boy looked up through the open stable door and Jeanne could see the sunrise coming up over a meadow.

Jeanne realized that her mind had left the Second Continent where it was nighttime. Jeanne was now on the Big Continent where it would be early morning. And Jeanne was in the mind of a Tara boy.

Jeanne melded with the boy without the boy's knowledge. The Tara boy was named Jon Singkara. He lived on a homestead high in a mountain near a pass that went over the mountain to the Valley of the Round. Below the homestead was the trail down the mountain to the inland sea and the Valley of the Tara.

The Tara were a part of the World that the People left alone. Jeanne remembered that from Meld School.

The Tara were an agrarian culture. They were survivors from the same starship as the People. The Tara did not know that the People existed. The Tara thought that the Tara and the Smythes were the only survivors of the starship. And the People did not want them to know anything different.

The Tara boy looked back at the goat and Jeanne saw more through his eyes.

There was a woman wearing a shirt and pants and boots. The woman was sitting on a milking stool beside the rear end of the goat. She was milking the goat. Jeanne could hear the milk squirting into a bucket.

As Jeanne looked at the woman, Jeanne wondered what it would be like to look through the woman's eyes. Suddenly Jeanne was in the woman's mind looking out through the woman's eyes.

It startled Jeanne! But Jeanne kept quiet just as she kept quiet when she first invaded the mind of the Tara boy. It was such an easy thing to do.

Now Jeanne looked up and the woman looked up at the boy feeding the goat. The boy was the same age as Jeanne. The boy looked a lot like DonEl. He had green eyes and long reddish-brown hair.

As Jeanne looked at the boy through the woman's eyes, Jeanne realized that she was in the mind of the boy's mother. Jeanne felt the love the mother had for her son. It was wonderful to feel that love. It reminded Jeanne of Hallie's love for Jeanne. Feeling that love made Jeanne feel so good. Then Jeanne looked back at the woman's hands and paid attention to the milking of the goat.

After a while, milking the goat got boring. So Jeanne reached out to the second mind that had intrigued her. Instantly, Jeanne was in the mind of a girl. Jeanne had melded with the girl without the girl's knowledge and Jeanne did it by just thinking about it. Jeanne was so surprised at how easy it had been.

The girl was dreaming. The girl was dreaming about hugging and kissing. Jeanne opened her eyes and Jeanne was looking through the eyes of the girl. And looking back at the girl was another girl only inches away.

They were in bed together.

The other girl thought, **{\*Marianne, you'd better get out of my bed before the Crone catches you in bed with me.\*}**

Jeanne heard herself whispering through Marianne's lips, "One more kiss, Gracie, then I will go."

Gracie thought, **{\*All right. One more kiss until tonight.\*}**

And Gracie kissed Marianne on the lips. Gracie hugged Marianne hard and then Marianne got out of the bed and stood up.

Jeanne looked back down at Gracie through Marianne's eyes. Gracie was a girl with long straight blonde hair. Gracie was lying naked on a cot. Gracie was about seven years old; the same age as Jeanne.

Gracie looked a lot like Jeanne. Only Gracie had golden brown skin on a hairless body; Jeanne had pale skin and nearly invisible short blonde hair all over her body.

Jeanne looked up and around. Jeanne saw through Marianne's eyes. Marianne was in a dormitory. There were a lot of cots in the dormitory. And on each cot was a naked little girl. The little girls were of various ages, sizes, and skin and hair colors. They all seemed to be sleeping, except Gracie.

There was light shining through a window. There was a mountain in the distance.

When Jeanne first melded with Marianne, Jeanne thought she was with a Tara girl. But now Jeanne knew that Jeanne was in the mind of a Smythe girl. The Tara did not keep naked little girls in a dormitory.

Jeanne looked back at Gracie and Gracie smiled and thought, **{\*Until tonight.\*}**

Marianne nodded her head and locked eyes with Gracie.

Suddenly Jeanne was no longer in Marianne's mind but in Gracie's mind.

Jeanne had wondered what Marianne looked like and unconsciously Jeanne had instantly melded with Gracie so Jeanne could find out. And Jeanne saw Marianne through Gracie's eyes.

Marianne was a beautiful girl about Jeanne's age. Marianne had pale skin like Jeanne. But Marianne had a curly mass of black hair that hung down her back from the top of her head to below her waist.

Gracie looked past Marianne at a door. Gracie thought, **{\*Hurry!\*}**

And Marianne jumped into a nearby empty cot and closed her eyes and pretended to be asleep.

The door opened and a naked old woman came into the dormitory.

Jeanne felt the feelings of hatred that Gracie had for the old woman, the Crone.

The feelings of hatred were so strong that Jeanne broke her meld with Gracie.

Jeanne sat up in her bed back on the Second Continent. Jeanne was panting. Jeanne had never felt the emotion of hatred before. It was an awful feeling.

Right now, right then, Jeanne needed to feel loved. Jeanne reached out and melded with her mother in an instant. And Jeanne could hear her mother's heartbeat from inside her mother's body.

Hallie thought, **{\*Jeanne, what's wrong, honey? Did you have a bad dream?\***}

Jeanne thought, **{\*Yes, mama.\*}**

Hallie reached out through Jeanne's arms and hands. And Hallie wrapped Jeanne's arms and hands around Jeanne. And Hallie hugged Jeanne tightly through Jeanne's arms and hands. In that way, Hallie held Jeanne for a moment or two.

After a while, Hallie thought, **{\*Is that better?\***}

Jeanne felt Hallie's love again. And Jeanne felt Hallie hugging Jeanne even though it was with Jeanne's own arms and hands. It felt almost as good to Jeanne as feeling Hallie's arms around her.

Jeanne thought, **{\*Yes, mama. I feel so much better. Thank you, mama. I love you.\*}**

Hallie thought, **{\*And I love you. Now, go to sleep. I want to work on these blueprints for a while.\*}**

Jeanne withdrew from her instinctive meld with her mother. Jeanne lay back down in her bed and thought about all that she had done with her mind: All the wonderful things; and all the scary things.