

WE ARE LIVING WELL

# WE ARE LIVING WELL

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*Anonymous*

We Are Living Well  
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## ABOUT THIS PIECE

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## CHAPTER 1

# WE ARE LIVING WELL

### 1.1 I

Bec

A note lay on our front step. On the underside were these words: Come to the garden now.

My hands began to tremble.

Three Seasons Earlier

Frae

The Harvest is done. All our muscles are weak, but we are grateful. My body wants to rest, but I want to see my family smile tonight. Bec has been in the kitchen all day making a meal — the only meal this year where there will be seconds. My brother Til joined our home when his wife shriveled and dried from the freeze last Winter. We will need to be very careful with our seed count to survive until the next Harvest.

A Master Gardener with three names, Parro Altrious Finnto, came from far away and said very good things about all of the pickers. His shiny white robes had no soil stains, not even at his feet. Our Central Gardener, Dallei Shyk, agreed with the Three-Name that we are living well.

Pyn is asleep in the husk piles, exhausted. I will let him sleep more for now. He worked very hard to help bring in the Harvest. I wish he had more time to play.

Bec

WE ARE LIVING WELL



Frae is smiling after the Harvest. I am glad. He has too many worried thoughts. I have not counted our seed stores for Winter yet. Perhaps after dinner. Perhaps I do not want to know.

Frae

Dallei Shyk called everyone to the Central Circle this morning. The Harvest had been loaded on wagons and wheeled away. All around us was barren, nothing but brown and gray mud and the skeletons of trees. He said the Harvest was good. He said the Mana seeds will go to the Master Gardeners far away where they will sow and grow more in abundance. They will share that abundance with us.

Quietly to me, Boe said, 'They say that always. Lump seeds for us this Winter, and not many of those.'

'We are living well!' Dallei Shyk shouted.

Pyn

I forgot to cover the seed stores last night. The seeds are now covered in frozen water. They are all dead and I think we are all going to starve. I am so sad.

Pyn

My father found me hiding in the bark piles. He lifted me up and squeezed me hard and told me the seeds were ok. He said only the top seeds died. He said I am better than Mana seeds and squeezed me again with his whole arms.

Frae

We have only lump seeds for the Winter, and we have much less than last Winter because of a fresh tax from the Central Gardeners. I told my brother this and he said he will eat less. I will also eat less. Bec and Pyn will not know about this.

Til

My brother laughs when Bec says the seed stores are too low. Frae said, 'The Gardeners say 'We are living well!''

Later that night, I saw Frae on the East clearing of the land. He was there by himself. He wore an angry face. I saw him throw a fistful of lump



seeds onto flat rock there. That place is too shady for growing, and nothing takes root on the flat rock.

## 1.2 II

Frae

This morning, in the shady East clearing, I found a large stone among the flat rocks. I could see through the stone like it was frozen water. I touched it with my foot. It was not cold. I tried to lift it. It was not heavy like stone. This stone moved in my hands in very small ways.

Inside the clear stone are seeds! They move slowly in circles like light-flies. I looked hard. They look like Mana seeds. The skin of the seeds is smooth and white, and they have fat bellies.

Now I speak with truth when I say my hand can move into the stone. Inside, I can touch the seeds, even grab them. They are good Mana seeds.

Bec

Frae says we have Mana seeds! He put them in my hand. They were very fat. He took me to the flat rocks in the East clearing. There was a stone that looked like frozen water. He put it in my arms and I could feel it move. I felt great concern. This must not be stone, I thought. Frae told me to grab the seeds inside, but I could not. Only he can pull out the seeds from this stone. I must be hungry, or going mad.

Frae told me to throw some lump seeds on the flat rocks as he did. I protested saying we did not have a single seed to spare this Winter. He pleaded with me, and so I did. I would retrieve the seeds one by one in the morning and return them to our stores. I would not tell Frae this.

Frae

I woke early and sought to see what lay in the shade of the East clearing now.

Bec was already there, standing over a new clear stone where she had thrown lump seeds. Her mouth was open but no words came. I tried to touch the seeds in her stone. I could not. Then Bec reached in and pulled out some seeds from the stone she grew.

So it must be that only the grower of the stone can reach within.

Bec

The fat Mana seeds from my stone are good! I fed us all tonight. The Mana seeds made Pyn sing silly songs and make us laugh. My belly is fat today. I have missed my fat belly. I am very happy. We even saw Til smile for the first time since his wife shriveled away.

Til

Frae and I brought the fine fat Mana seeds to Dallei Shyk who lived in the garden past the Central Circle. The Two-Name Field Gardener looked hard at the seeds in his hand for a long time. Dallei Shyk finally said, 'I will take them to the Master Gardeners and they will decide if they are bad or good. Go away now. We are living well!'

Frae

I have told everyone about the clear stones and the good fat Mana seeds. Boe laughed hard at me and said I was lying. His laughing stopped when he saw the clear stones in our East clearing. Stones stacked knee-high. Our family has thirteen clear stones now, big and small. The stones move in small ways and make a hum. I like the sound very much.

I showed Boe how we grew the clear stones. He refused to cast any seeds down.

'These stones,' he said, 'should not sing. They should not move as they do.' I told Boe that I liked the song they sang. I tried to give Boe a handful of good Mana seeds to bring to his family. He refused to take them. 'Venom,' he said, and spat on the ground.

Pyn

I can call clear stones to me!

I shout my name: Pyn! and my clear stones lay at my feet in a blink. I shout Pyn! again and my stones go back to the stacks. I told Tuy to shout his name. He did, and his clear stone lay at his feet. The stones hum a good sound. My father calls it the Song of the Earth.

Bec

The tower of clear stones has become taller than trees. It rises above the shade now and casts out rays of bright light when the sun is out. Many

say it's a bad thing and stay far away, but I think it is good. A few pickers have come to grow the clear stones and make good fat Mana seeds for their families. Pyn teaches them how the stones can be called forth. He made up a silly song:

My name sits where seeds are plenty  
no one else may pry  
A name brings food where fields are empty  
My stone, my One-name cry  
...PYN!

The pickers always cheer when they witness the stones appear and disappear back into the tower.

### 1.3 III

Bec

We saw Dallei Shyk on the far hill today. He was with two others. One was short and fat. She wore green robes. The other was tall and wore white robes. Frae said the tall one was called Parro Altrious Finnto, a Master Gardener.

All their eyes were on the tower in the East clearing. Parro Altrious Finnto turned and looked upon Frae and me. We showed our arms and hands high and wide in greeting. Then, Parro Altrious Finnto turned and walked out of view without greeting us. The short fat one, and Dallei Shyk also left without greeting us.

Frae

Dallei Shyk called everyone to the Central Circle today. He said the Master Gardeners have studied the seeds from the clear stones. Dallei Shyk said that the Master Gardeners have found the seeds to be very bad. Many shouted in agreement. A few made loud words in protest. Dallei Shyk lifted his hand for quiet. Then he said that good Mana seeds can only come from the Master Gardeners and we should wait for their abundance.

Now I speak the truth when I say my face became hot and my hands shook when Dallei Shyk said these words: 'The tower must come down.' More cheers rose from the crowd.

I shouted 'But there is no harm!' This is anger I have never felt before.

Dallei Shyk looked at me hard.

I said, 'These are good seeds! They are good Mana seeds!'

Dallei Shyk held his hand up again and said, 'You know better than the Master Gardeners, Frae?' He said the words loud and slow.

I felt every eye on me. My throat dried and shriveled. I felt ashamed. I tried to take back my words but I could not.

Dallei Shyk said, 'The tower falls tomorrow. We are living well!'

Pyn

Everyone came to the East clearing today. Many were happy, but some were dripping tears on the soil. Many came with heavy hammers, my father's friend Boe among them. The clear stone tower was very tall now. I did not want the beautiful humming to end and that made me drip many tears.

Dallei Shyk was on the far hill with two others looking over the field. They were smiling. I wanted them all to dry out and shrivel right there and then. I did not feel ashamed about this.

Then, a great noise became very loud in my ears! Everyone was running hard in every direction. They screamed as they ran; some stumbled. Many hammers were dropped in the shady place around the tower. The clear rocks were moving like I had never seen. The soft hum of their song was gone; instead, an angry gnashing of stones made loud grinding and clacking sounds that rose higher than the screams. I had to cover my ears.

When everyone was far enough away the clear rocks began to rest, and the tower hummed its gentle song once again. Dallei Shyk was shouting from the hill. He was telling everyone to pick up the hammers and break the tower. Nobody did. Dallei Shyk was jumping up and down. It made me laugh.

When Dallei Shyk and the two others were gone many started singing my summoning song!

My name sits where seeds are plenty  
no one else may pry  
A name brings food where fields are empty  
My stone, my One-name cry

...

Then we all shouted our names at once and it made everyone laugh hard. We sang the song many times.

Frae

Bec handed me a note she found on our front step. The words made my heart beat fast with worry. It read: Come to the garden now.

Frae

Bec and I walked slowly across the large Central Circle towards Dallei Shyk's garden. We had passed scores of poor families. Many dark sunken eyes watched us pass. We also saw children too famished to raise their heads.

In the garden we were greeted by Dallei Shyk. He pointed his finger to the garden path and stayed quiet as we passed him.

Parro Altrious Finnto wore a happy face. He told us to sit with him and his companion, the short fat woman in green robes. Parro Altrious Finnto told us this was Mashell Mi Chelke, a Master Gardener. She smiled, but her eyes did not.

Two cups were close by. Parro Altrious Finnto said that it was warm honeywater, just for us. 'We have never drunk honeywater,' Bec said. It is known by all that honey is gone forever, but I do not say this. Was I told a lie?

Parro Altrious Finnto spoke. 'Bec and Frae, you have grown a great tower where nothing else can grow. Do you know what that means?'

We said nothing.

'It means that you are Gardeners,' said Mashell Mi Chelke.

'You both should have Two names. You both should be Central Gardeners,' she said.

I held my air in my chest. I looked at Bec. She held air as well.

Parro Altrious Finnto said, 'You would like Two names, yes? You could have a garden.'

Mashell Mi Chelke pointed her squat finger to where we had come from. 'You can have your own green garden, there, just outside your East clearing. By the tower.'

I let go of my air. I made my mouth ready for words.

Bec spoke before me, she said, 'What must we do?'

'What?' the fat Gardener said.

Bec said nothing more, she knew her words were heard. Mashell Mi Chelke looked at Parro Altrious Finnto and then looked at Bec again. The Master Gardener's cheeks turned the color of fireberry and dew shone on her nose.

'You must give us... a Gardener's oath,' she said.

'What is the oath?' I asked.

Parro Altrious Finnto stood and put the cups of warm honeywater in our hands. 'You guard the tower,' he said. 'The clear rock tower must be walled and guarded. No one can come near it.'

Mashell Mi Chelke said, 'You are respected among the One-names. Even feared by many. The One-names will listen to what you say.'

Parro Altrious Finnto bent over and said these words softly to us, 'And you may still make good Mana seeds for your family. All the seeds you want.' His breath smelled of sweet honey.

'Why?' I said. 'Why do we get abundance while others get lump?'

'Not just you,' said Mashell Mi Chelke. 'Look! There is Dallei Shyk. He can have good seeds. Any Two- or Three-Name Gardener can have clear stones full of good Mana seeds.'

Now I speak the truth when I say my face became hot as coal. I cared not what face I wore. 'Every name should have good Mana seeds,' I said through closed teeth. I stared hard at Parro Altrious Finnto. 'You have all the seed you need already,' I said. My words did not shake.

In his other ear, Bec said, 'You must have more Mana seed than all of us. Bring us the abundance you have promised.'

Parro Altrious Finnto looked at Bec and then he looked at me. Dew ran down his cheek. He turned his back to us. 'We cannot do that,' he said.

'Why?' I said.

The Master Gardener did not answer.

'Because they have nothing,' Bec said.

I looked at the Master Gardeners and I knew it was true. 'They keep all the best seeds for themselves, but now it is...'

'All gone,' said Mashell Mi Chelke. 'We ate like there was no end. The Master Gardeners will not last another Winter.'

Parro Altrious Finnto turned and dropped to his knees in front of us. We jumped up to our feet, surprised. Our cups turned over and the honey-water splashed onto the grass.

I said, 'You have all the honey too. Do you not?'

Mashell Mi Chelke fell to her knees as well. She pressed her hands on the grass wet with honeywater then licked her fingers. She said, 'Not much now.' Her words were timid now, even pitiful.

I reached my hand into Bec's hand. She said, 'We are leaving.' Bec and I turned and walked out of the garden.

Parro Altrious Finnto called out 'We will give you THREE names! Come back!' but his words became weaker as our steps became stronger.

Three Seasons Later

Pyn

I asked Father why we did not work a Harvest this season. Father put on a funny face and said, 'Do we not get all we need from the tower?' I looked at the tower in the lush East pasture. It touches clouds high in the sky now. I saw Uncle Til there with his new wife, Vae, helping everyone call forth their clear rocks and exchange lump seeds for good Mana seeds.

I asked why we never see any Gardeners anymore. Father thought on this for a while, then he said, 'Our bellies are fat and we are happy. I suppose they, too, must be living well.'

## SOURCE

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