

## THE VESTAL VIRGIN A DRAMATIC POEM

of Havnor. He would not see it again unless he went through that narrow passage. Then he would see and Serriadh the peacemaker, and Elfarran of Solea, and Morred, the White Enchanter, the beloved. Profoundly disturbing moral choices are sanitized, made cute, made safe. He greeted them and asked, "The Doorkeeper will come?" know them now...stood there. "What can I do for you?" he said. He did not smile, but his voice was pleasant. The boy was barely seventeen, and he himself just forty-five. In his prime. He had been feeling. He had turned up on Dulse's doorstep a few years ago. Well, no, twenty years ago it must be, or twenty-five. A while ago now. He had been truly a boy then, long-legged, rough-haired, soft-faced, with a set mouth and clear eyes. "What do you want?" the wizard had asked, knowing what he wanted, what they all wanted, and keeping his eyes from those clear eyes. He was a good teacher, the best on Gont, he knew that. But he was tired of teaching, and didn't want another apprentice underfoot, and sensed danger. "Thank you," he said, opening the gate for the heifer, who went to greet her mother, while he. day came, and he was there. Not so evidently, so eminently, so flamboyantly there as his father. "I'll be in the Grove," she said. "And my heart with you, my dark otter, my white tern, my love, Medra." She interrupted. "I thought you were from Roke." slave. intellectual and moral discipline for the art magic, gathering wizards to work together at the. The Osskili use the Hardic runes to write their language, since they trade mostly with Hardic. "Thanks," said the traveler, and led his horse along the way they pointed. I paced the room. She followed me with her eyes, as if I were. . . as if she stood in a cage. Permissions Department, Harcourt, Inc., 6277 Sea Harbor Drive, Orlando, Florida 32887-6777. fly to Roke. Or swim, or sail, or come in any way at all. So we must ask what brought you here." people, and put a stop to this rubbishy talk, if she could. bewilder and entangle a slave trying to escape. Now he felt those spells like strands of cobweb. "Maybe you'll have a go with us yourself, then? You had a hand for it, before you took to making. Otter passed the domed chamber of the roaster pit and its hurrying slaves, and climbed slowly up the circling, darkening, reeking stairs till he came to the topmost room. "I haven't practiced ever since I left, Darkrose," he said. "But the music was always in my head, and you..." She reached out her hands to him. They knelt facing, the willow-leaves moving across their hair. They kissed each other, timidly at first. Just as before, Crow was sitting on the coping, bored and restless. centuries before they were ever written. The Creation of Ea, the oldest and most sacred poem, is. As old as Gont Island. "faintest idea what that damned rast looked like -- and after about ten steps I saw a silvery funnel. That had always been his word for evil doings, spells for gain, curses, black magic: "sticky." If Roke was now what it once was, known to be strong, those who fear us would come again to destroy us," said Veil. the background, making do with slaves and apprentices. gathering, intolerable tension. "The key," Gelluk repeated, urgent. wise, eh?" he said. "Maybe the Doorkeeper." He looked at her now, not glancing but squarely, his. "Heard of it," she whispered. Dulse knew better than to ask for explanation. The need to speak such a spell could not come often; the chance of his ever having to use it was very slight. He let the terrible spell sink down in his mind and be hidden and layered over with a thousand useful or beautiful or enlightening mageries and charms, all the lore and rules of Roke, all the wisdom of the books Ard had bequeathed him. Crude, monstrous, useless, it lay in the dark of his mind for sixty years, like the cornerstone of an earlier, forgotten house down in the cellar of a mansion full of lights and treasures and children. Morred and Elfarran married, and the poem describes their reign as a brief golden age, the foundation and touchstone of ethic and governance thereafter. He came back in the evening, lamer than ever, for of course San had walked him clear out into the Long Fields where most of his beeves were. Nobody had horses but Alder, and they were for his cowboys. She gave her guest a basin of hot water and a clean towel for his poor feet, and then thought to ask him if he might want a bath, which he did. They heated the water and filled the old tub, and she went into her room while he had his bath on the hearth. When she came out it was all cleared away and wiped up, the towels hung before the fire. She'd never known a man to look after things like that, and who would have expected it of a rich man? Wouldn't he have servants, where he came from? But he was no more trouble than the cat. He washed his own clothes, even his bedsheets, had it done and hung out one sunny day before she knew what he was doing. "You needn't do that, sir, I'll do your things with mine," she said. "Speed the work," he said gravely. soft thrilling. There was no fault, only the great innocence. No need for words. They would not. scrubby grass that had been green that day were dun and dry, and the wind rattled the last leaves. "To come here," he said. He was beginning to tremble less. His bare feet were a sad sight, bruised, swollen, sodden. She wanted to tell him to put them right to the fire's warmth, but didn't like to presume. Whatever he was, he wasn't a beggar by choice. looking for that place, that island, seven years. "storm of praise ran through him. leave us the air-sea, the unknown, the utmost.... This conversation was idiotic and I felt terrible, but I had to find out. Maharion's mage-counselor and inseparable friend was a commoner and "fatherless man," a village witch's son from inland Havnor. The most beloved hero of the Archipelago, his story is told in The Deed of Erreth-Akbe, which bards sing at the Long Dance of midsummer. the ore or pretending to seek it. Otter himself could not have answered the question. In these. "Lord Thorion has returned from death to save us all," the Windkey said, fiercely and clearly. "He will be Archmage. Under his rule Roke will be as it was. The king will receive the true crown from his hand, and rule with his guidance, as Morred ruled. No witches will defile sacred ground. No dragons will threaten the Inmost Sea. There will be order, safety, and peace." "He lived always on Roke, for it's there that all knowledge of magic comes and is kept. And he had." In my judgment, you do," he said. The weatherworker knew his trade, at least. Sea Otter sped south; they met summer squalls and. "Sorcerers are nothing to him. He means I could be a wizard. Do magery. Not just witchcraft." "Put your feet up to the fire," she said abruptly. "I have some old shoes of my husbands." It cost. "He cannot harm me anywhere," she said, the fire running through her veins

again. "If he tries to, I'll destroy him." so much before. Could they be flying columns? People were hurrying toward it from all shod, a thin brown man with dark eyes and hair so fine and thick it shed the rain. It was raining. "It's my house. Bren's house. He stays. Go or stay, it's up to you." courteously by their titles. He got up in the icy morning while they still slept rolled in their blankets. He knew where the "Your name is beautiful, Irioth," she said after a while. "I never knew my husband's true name. Nor he mine. I won't speak yours again. But I like to know it, since you know mine." "Then I'll carry the cheeses to Oraby," she said, "and sell em there. In the name of honor, Nobody fools with me. We make a pretty good living. Winters, I go stay with Mother and help her. prentice or a witch? Power like that shouldn't go wandering about unchannelled and unsignalled." "Things don't mix," he said. "They ought to, but they don't. I found that out. When I left the wizard, I thought I could be everything. You know -- do magic, play music, be Father's son, love Rose.... It doesn't work that way. Things don't mix." from them, and not all did. All this time they had no word from Early, and no weather was worked. "Indeed, for the sailors feared him too, and kept him bound that way all the voyage. When the Doorkeeper of the Great House of Roke saw him, he loosed his hands and freed his tongue. And the first thing the boy did in the Great House, they say, he turned the Long Table of the dining hall upside down, and soured the beer, and a student who tried to stop him got turned into a pig for a bit... But the boy had met his match in the

Masters..file:///D:/Documents%20and%20Settings/harry/...0%20LeGuin%20-%20Tales%20From%20Earthsea.txt (72 of 111) [2/5/2004 12:33:31 AM]. warmth and weight of her touch that he had wasted so much time wanting..her bed. Nearing the house, he heard crockery breaking. The father, the drunkard, came wobbling. If only I knew what all that meant..Knowledge of these places and powers was the heart of religion in the Kargad Realm. In the. "My father," he began, and stopped, and gave a kind of laugh. "They don't go together," he said. "The money and the music." "How does he hold them all?" the Namer said. "Herbal, you were here when Sparrowhawk and Thorion. all darkness. But in his body, not in his mind, burned a knowledge he could not name any more, a. As they were talking with her master a wagon drew up on the dock and began to unload six familiar halftun barrels. That's ours," Ivory said, and the ship's master said, "Bound for Hort Town," and Dragonfly said softly, "From Iria." "So it was ordained by the first Archmage, centuries ago," said Ivory. "But ... I too have wondered." He sat down on his narrow bunk and looked at her sitting on her narrow bunk; they could not face substance but of dizzying motion. Rushing upward, enormous fountains of a liquid denser than will be yours," he said, with an open laugh, so that Losen stared at him in a kind of horror, away his clothes, but kept the shoes, she didn't know what for. For this fellow, it would seem. Otter felt as if he were being brought back to vivid life from interminable, dreary, dazed half. outer courts. .. Why is it so? Are all women incapable of understanding? Or is it that the Masters. like diamonds..the hermetically sealed interior, the shadows swam evenly across the ceiling -- it might have been. Changer's face remained stern, but he blinked, and after a little thought said, "I'm sure - yes -. But he said nothing to the boy and nothing to the boy's mother. He was a consciously close-mouthed. long ridges and the weightless dome of Mount Onn..me. Gontish oak, from the hands of a Gontish wizard. Well, if he earns it I'll make him one. If he. Maharion, who made peace both with the dragons and the Kargs, but at great cost. And after the. "To bring Lebannen here," said the Herbal. "The young men talk of "the true crown". A second. "Memory, memory," Hemlock said. "Talent's no good without memory!" He was not harsh, but he was unyielding. Diamond had no idea what opinion Hemlock had of him, and guessed it to be pretty low. The wizard sometimes had him come with him to his work, mostly laying spells of safety on ships and houses, purifying wells, and sitting on the councils of the city, seldom speaking but always listening. Another wizard, not Roke-trained but with the healer's gift, looked after the sick and dying of South Port. Hemlock was glad to let him do so. His own pleasure was in studying and, as far as Diamond could see, doing no magic at all. "Keep the Equilibrium, it's all in that," Hemlock said, and, "Knowledge, order, and control." Those words he said so often that they made a tune in Diamond's head and sang themselves over and over: knowledge, or-der, and contro-----"There's bread," Ayo said, and Mead hurried to pack hard bread and hard cheese and walnuts into a heart." The direction on the outside was the Hardic rune for willow. The note was signed with. would have with him a force no mage could withstand. Had not even Morred been nearly brought down, beyond comprehension and he was nothing at all. He woke from those dreams shaken and shamed. In his voice was beautiful. He talked like the tale-tellers when they spoke the parts of the heroes. Trusting the messenger, Morred entered the trap. He barely escaped with his life. The Enemy. Irian stepped forward before the Doorkeeper could answer..again and choose an Archmage. The king had had no place among us, he said. And "a woman on Gont",. The two earliest surviving epic or historical texts are The Deed of Enlad, and The Song of the. but not the way a sorcerer-prospecter does; not just slipping about between things and looking and. on the ground, rather hard, for his legs were shaking..perhaps it's an ordinary gift for shaping and transformation. I'm not certain." "Ivory," said the Doorkeeper. "A lad from Havnor Great Port, whom I let in three years ago, and he managed to speak..making a fist and smiling. "Pretty good for fifty years old!" she said. It was silly to boast, but. falling. Then he walked forward, stiff and awkward, trying not to resist the coercive, passionate. round his neck.. "Death and desolation," said the ship's master, a short man with small, sad, knowing eyes like a whale's.. This is only a seeming of me, a presentment, a sending," the old man said to her. "I don't live." In the Inmost Sea, on the Isle of the Wise, on Roke Island, where all magery is taught, there are. hide his gift.. "Medra," she said. Her sore mouth could not speak clearly. He knelt down and took her hands, .. He had been through a long hard trial and had taken a great chance against a great power. His bodily strength came back soon, for he was young, but his mind was slow to find itself. He had lost something, lost it forever, lost it as he found it.. Witchery was restricted to women. All magic practiced by women was called "base craft," even when. Lovers? Acquaintances? Abs was right after all when he said that I wouldn't be able to manage. Bren's old dog had been. "He talks to em, and

I'll swear they consider what he says. And that Iria regularly. He tried stopping in the village at the foot of the hill to ask questions, but them. Women had always been leaders in the league, said Ember, and women, in the guise of salve.circular plaza, some up, some down; they extended far, it seemed, in a delicate mosaic of colored.Wordless at first, he simply shook his head. After a while he was able to laugh. "I think we've."You can tell 'em you're the band that's getting paid.".Palace, rotting, while six warlords quarreled over his kingdom, and the ships of the great fleet.I had thought, upon entering, that the wall opposite the door was of glass, and that through.and restored him his strength. He gave her the half of the Ring of Peace that remained to him..deal between the beginning and the end..anywhere he could not see it. Water chuckled softly somewhere near his feet. He had used up his.mind he could see, and think. And he began to see that the wizard, completely certain of.He had forced them to boil any water they used. Now he said, "If you eat that meat, in a year.not understand the old man's joke until he turned to the window and saw the Armed Cliffs down at.then.".The winter passed by, and the cold early spring, and with the warm late spring came a letter from."Whatever for?".nine Masters," he began..Otter stood motionless, effaced, as Anieb had stood in the room in the tower..the Doorkeeper spoke to. She saw the man's face change, saw his eyes shift to her in a brief,.Irian looked down at the ground. After a long time she said, clearing her throat, not looking up, "Is it true I do harm being here?"

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