

About Schlüsselblumen

... “Well maybe you don’t have to, maybe we had this all wrong. You said something about no key could be forged – well key flowers need to grow. I think, Dorr, you will have to be patient, sow Cowslip seeds, and wait to see what it all means.” Archibald stretched his legs. “Remember what I said about wisdom not being in books? Well this is where you learn how to find it in all things around you. Now get out of here you two, I need a nap before dinner.”

“Can I ask one more question?”

“If it will buy me some peace in my old age, but make it quick and short. Learning patience is your job, not mine!” growled Archibald.

“You haven’t said what the words *Primula Veris* mean. I know they’re Latin but what do they mean?”

“There is no culture in education these days, they teach nothing but useless rubbish and expect young minds to be able to comprehend the world equipped with only one language. At best drizzled with a bit of Japanese, or parsleied with Indonesian as if ancient languages were a sauce or dressing. Its bad enough to turn milk sour; *Primula* comes from *Prime* – it means first of course, and *Veris* from *verde*, which is green. Ergo, *Primula Veris* means first green. Now out!”

As soon as the study door had closed behind them, Dorr had left for home, promising Kenzy that he would tell her if he found out anything else. As Kenzy watched Dorr walk through garden gate, she saw him stoop and pick up a school bag. It was bulky and must have weight a bit, because Dorr swung it onto his back with a *poof*. Before closing the door she paused, wondering why he would bring his bag. She shrugged; maybe he didn’t go home first as he had planned. He was weird after all, but in a really nice way, and Grandpa liked him. He only growled at people he liked.

Archibald Nachton sat in his armchair. There was a dram of malt by his side and a book on his knees, but he was staring straight ahead. He had a lot to think about; Dorr was a bright lad, riddles were always a good test. They let you know who you were dealing with sure enough. That’s why the ancients had used them. Archie knew it wouldn’t shake Dorr off for long ... that bit about the meaning of the words ... sooner or later he would work out that *Veris* didn’t mean green at all. At the most it would shake him off till spring when cowslips flowered, still until then Archibald Nachton had bought him self some time. The boy must not be allowed to get control over the Door. It had to stay open. It was a question of life and death. Suddenly he thumped the armrest of his chair; there was nothing he could do until autumn.

Boggle grumbled and wriggled until Dorr stopped and let him out of the bag. He snarled reproachfully, and shook himself, making his pelt stick out all around him. Boggle didn't like this bag-business and, Boggle decided, from now on he was back on his own two flat feet. Boggle had looked after himself for centuries, now it was boggle's job to look after Dorr – Boggle couldn't do that stuck in a bag.

Dorr was weary; spring was a long way away, it was still three weeks or so till the start of autumn. The Mòr Rìgan and the Salamander had both sounded urgent, and he felt urgency himself, fluttering like a moth caught in his heart.

“But Key Flowers don't bloom until spring!” he spoke out loud, his sounded voice harsh and cracked. Boggle looked as kindly at him as a boggle can look. But Dorr trudged on, his head down and the weight of the world on his shoulders. He just knew he had to do something long before next spring; something told him if he waited till then it would be too late. But the worst of it was, he did not know *what* it was that he had to do. Miserable he made his way home and went straight to bed.

## Chapter 9

### Bad Hair Day

Dorr was in a deep gorge hidden from above by scrub and tangled vines. He groped his way forward in the dim half-light, crawling over split stones with sharp edges and rocks rough to the touch. A mist descended; he was cold, his skin felt clammy. The vapors swirled aside and before him loomed a great iron portal. It swung open without a sound. The black knight appeared out of the thin dank air. Pointing downward he commanded Dorr to look at something by the hoof of his steed. It was strangely bright in this dark and somber place. It glowed like sunlight. Dorr bent down to look more closely; it was a small yellow flower. The black knight summoned Dorr to pick the Key Flower and follow. The way was narrow; either the gorge descended deeper into the earth or the sides reared up steadily. It was as dark as night the sky studded with single stars

separated by emptiness by the time the gorge opened out into a great hall ... in the sudden brilliance emeralds bejeweled the walls, sapphires covered the ceiling, diamonds sparkled and rained down in cascades of light, there were chests of all make and sizes filled and overflowing with gold. The air was as sweet as in springtime and the feasting tables were laden. You hold the key to all this treasure said the black knight, take from it what you need. But forget not the greatest treasure if you would live. Dorr took only of the gold. Suddenly the hall was filled with the Knight's Company. Dwarves bore platters of food and crystal carafes of mead. The knight called Dorr to take his place at the table. A chill ran down his spine; Dorr realised the table was covered in black cloth, decked out as if for a funeral. Fear overwhelmed him. He seized a glass of mead and drank and felt better. It was time to leave; Dorr turned to thank his host for the gold, but he was alone. The dwarves and the knight and his host ... had vanished. The floor began to shake, the walls crumbled, tumbling down, crashing round him. The great gate to the hall clanged shut. He would be crushed to death. Desperately Dorr looked for the Key Flower ... it was nowhere to be found for he had placed it on the ground to better fill his pockets with gold. The hall and the gorge were gone, Dorr floated over a meadow filled with Key Flowers. He stretched out his hands but he was floating too high. They were out of reach. He hear voices, no more than whispers at first, he concentrated ... harder ... "Ochan! The puir wee bookworm; they found him, with his neck broken. His heid twisted so far round that his face was pointing back'ards ... if ye ken imagine tha'. The puir wee lad." Dorr felt sorry for the boy and looked closer at the face. It was his own!

The light leaking into his room was bleak and pale. Rain fell in slow heavy drops from dull skies, dripped from the treehouse tree, slowly forming puddles. Dorr sat up; it was hard work. His body felt like led. He made his way to the bathroom; someone must have just showered. The room was full of steam. Dorr wiped the mirror with his hand and stared. His hair was in tight knots as if someone had been twirling it into tangles all night long.

"Was that you?" he accused the boggle.

Boggle just stared back at him and blinked. Dorr made his way to breakfast, he had showered washed and combed his hair, even used conditioner, but it stuck out in all directions showing the effects of the crinkled mess it had been. Gowan look at him and grinned, but said nothing.

"Fairy knots!" exclaimed Ishbel. "Did you have nightmares, Dorr?"

"I had the weirdest nightmare ever, someone tuned my head back to front – there was even a horse in it, but I think it was a stallion not a mare." His voice sounded a bit shaky.

“Nightmares aren’t call ‘mares’ because of something to do with horses, Dorr. The mare bit comes from *mara*, means evil. There are beings that sit on the sleeper’s chest and make breathing hard. That causes bad dreams.” As Ishbel spoke Dorr though he saw her look directly at boggle. But neither of his parents had mentioned the footpad yet, and Dorr didn’t feel up to anything requiring long explanations this morning, so he ate his breakfast in a hurry and was ready to leave for school, when Ishbel pinned a sprig of something on his jacket.

‘What’s that?’

‘Witchwood.’ Said Ishbel

‘What wood?’ asked Dorr confused.

Not Whatwood, Witchwood or Mountain Ash, some call it Rowan.’

‘But why war you pinning tree stuff to my jacket?’.

‘Witchwood keeps evil spirits away. Now stop dawdling, you’ll be late.’

Dorr rolled his eyes at adult logic; he had been ready to go ten minutes ago! In his rush he totally forgot to take a hat to hide his hair.