

“Father, when did you choose a name for your son?”

They were out on the river when he asked, drifting lazily with the current. It was his father’s boat. They always went down the river when the summer grew old and dusty, and the western forests were all alight with brilliant colors. Amber, orange, and golden-yellow greens. The wind always carried his favorite sort of smell when autumn came. A crisp, breezy scent. A smell full of memories.

“It was only a month before they called me to the High Seat of the House,” his father told him, sitting with one arm resting along the edge of the boat and another steadying the rudder, face tipped toward the yellowing sky. “It was your mother who thought of it first.”

“What does it mean, my name?”

“It comes from an old kind of speech. Words no longer spoken in the western lands.”

“An ancient language?” He had been so intrigued by his father’s words—leaning forward and gripping the edge of his bench, almost toppling over when the boat swayed gently beneath them. He was ten years old, that year.

“Yes, very old.” His father nodded to the river then, a thin smile spreading at his lips. “*Thehlýnin*, ‘my completion.’ Because you completed our family, when you came.”

The boy couldn’t hide the pride in his face when he heard the honor of his name. Thehlýnin Dredékoldn, son of Távihn, the High Eviskýóneh of Tekéhdeth. But the glory soon faded from his mind, and the thought became suddenly overwhelming. Who was he, really?

“Father, how could I deserve such a name?”

The man at the rear of the boat with the stern jaw and strong shoulders, the man whose eyes had a way of shining like clean water, despite their dark color—the man who was his father—turned to look at him. Turned to capture the boy in his unbreaking gaze.

“Thehlýnin, if your mother gave it to you, there’s no need to question. And never forget, my son, your name has another meaning. *You* are its meaning. You define it.”

It was near the eight-year anniversary of his mother’s death, that day on the boat. And he never did forget.