

TIME of CELEDON

VOLUME I

Naida E. Kirkpatrick



Royal Fireworks Press
Unionville, New York



TIXE OF CELEDON SERIES

Tixe of Celedon Volume I

Visitors on Celedon Volume II

Return to Celedon Volume III

Copyright © 2012, Royal Fireworks Publishing Co., Inc.
All Rights reserved.

Royal Fireworks Press
First Avenue, PO Box 399
Unionville, NY 10988-0399
(845) 726-4444
FAX: (845) 726-3824
email: mail@rfwp.com
website: rfwp.com



ISBN: 978-0-88092-511-2

Printed and bound in the United States of America on acid-free, recycled paper using vegetable-based inks and environmentally-friendly cover coatings by the Royal Fireworks Printing Co. of Unionville, New York.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| Chapter One: The <i>Great Endeavor</i> | 1 |
| Chapter Two: Tixe..... | 3 |
| Chapter Three: Discovery | 6 |
| Chapter Four: The Padua Hunt | 11 |
| Chapter Five: Jeremy | 19 |
| Chapter Six: Teaching Jeremy | 22 |
| Chapter Seven: The Mountains..... | 24 |
| Chapter Eight: The Cave..... | 29 |
| Chapter Nine: Secrets from the Ship | 34 |
| Chapter Ten: Jeremy's Ship | 38 |
| Chapter Eleven: The Village | 42 |
| Chapter Twelve: Jeremy Is Missing..... | 47 |
| Chapter Thirteen: The Decision of the Elders | 55 |
| Chapter Fourteen: Rescue | 59 |
| Chapter Fifteen: The Rando..... | 63 |
| Chapter Sixteen: Echoes from the Past..... | 68 |
| Chapter Seventeen: History of the Beginning | 74 |
| Chapter Eighteen: Visitors | 80 |

CHAPTER ONE

The Great Endeavor



The three crewmen were off duty, but when the klaxon whooped, they scrambled to gather their things and reach his scouter. “I’m on my way,” the pilot shouted at the wall console, but he doubted whether anyone heard him. Snatching up his backpack, he stuffed as many of his books and papers as he could inside and snapped it shut. He slung it across his shoulders as his crew raced through the tilting passageway to the launch bay. The *Great Endeavor* lurched and swayed as she lost altitude and stability. The young pilot had a knot in his stomach telling him to hurry, but the launch sequence had to be entered in a precise manner—not to be rushed. In the middle of a wild shudder, the scout ship launch was completed and they were away, thrusting the little ship through thick, roiling clouds.

The *Great Endeavor* plunged through the thick overcast and exploded onto the side of the highest mountain. The escape hatch peeled off like the label from a wet bottle. The impact slowed the descent somewhat as the crippled vessel slid down the side of the mountain, the rocks gouging and slicing the exterior. Finally, she came to rest in a gentle, grassy valley. The roaring and pounding gave way to quiet, broken only by the sound of the wind, and the cries of the wounded.

The young crew came out of the clouds just in time to see the *Great Endeavor* slam into the mountainside. The pilot froze, horrified at the sight. His small scout ship, snatched up by the wave of turbulence from the large ship, began to slip and buck. He managed to pull up just in time



to avoid an outcropping of rock dead ahead. By the time he regained control of his ship, he could no longer see the *Great Endeavor*. Finally, his fuel reserves gone, he managed an abrupt landing on a narrow ledge halfway down the face of the mountain. The pilot assessed the damage and took his supply of water, the few emergency rations left in the ship and his compass.

“Well enough,” he announced to his two crewmen, “I have no idea whether this compass is showing true north or something else.” He left his bag of books in the ship and started leading the way downward and toward what the compass showed as east.



Jeremy Butler, a young scout ship pilot from the *Endeavor II*, broke through those same turbulent clouds to find himself heading straight into the same mountainous terrain. With no chance of a decent landing, he relied on all his training and instincts to crash land his vessel at a survivable angle.



CHAPTER TWO

Tixe



Tixe paused at the window and studied the distant hills of Celedon. It was the season of planting and the fields below were swarming with workers.

“I wonder what it would be like to live so close to the land and never go into the hills.” Tixe spoke aloud as she twisted her cinnamon colored hair into a tight roll around her petite face. She didn’t bother to use a reflector. She knew how her hair looked from the feel. She dressed carefully, selecting her favorite black and yellow leggings and soft black tunic. Slipping her slender feet into soft boots of padua skin, she left the room and padded softly up the stone steps to the tower. Tixe moved with a quiet grace that was misleading to those who did not know her. She rarely contradicted anyone, yet managed to do as she wished anyway.

The Eye of Trane had been here for so long that even the old ones could not remember how long. The legends told of a band of weary travelers, looking for a new home, who had crashed on this world and settled here. It had not been easy or comfortable. The mighty trees of the forest seemed endless. They cleared enough to make a place to grow the vegetables for their tables, but at a terrible cost. Bands of marauders swept down from the hills and carried off much of their equipment and food. They even kidnapped some of the settlers, the ones who were weak or who were foolish enough to venture into the woods alone.

Tixe loved to hear the stories of the Beginning time and how the settlers agreed to use only what they needed from the land. All vegetables and fruits were tended with great



care. Goats were kept for their milk, not to be eaten for meat. It was against the laws of the people to kill any animals. The settlers had brought seeds of all kinds, among them flax. The fibers of the flax plants were woven into cloth for garments.

The children never tired of hearing about the old ones who built the Eye. Every evening, just before bedtime, Tixe and little Egor would beg, “Tell of the building of the Eye, mother.”

Nepo would then sit on the edge of Egor’s bed. “Well, it was after many attempts that the early ones managed to build the Eye.” Here she was interrupted by Egor.

“They took parts from the ship, The *Great Endeavor*, and built the Eye. But how did they know just what parts to use?”

Nepo smiled. “They were scientists, some of them. They just knew what to use. Any parts they lacked, they made from something else. Then after the Eye was finished, they had to carve out the steps and this chamber. It took a very long time.” Nepo paused.

“Mother, I would like to explore the hills around the town someday, if you will permit me. Egor can help. There’s much to be learned about our past.”

“Please mother. It would be such an adventure.” Egor’s bright blue eyes glistened at the idea. Egor was four years younger than Tixe and adored his big sister. Whatever she suggested, he followed.

“I don’t think that is wise, little ones.” Nepo smiled at the children. “Just now you need to sleep. Exploration can wait.”



The tower was a place of quiet efficiency and Tixe loved to come here. Today her mother was waiting with one of the elders when Tixe arrived.

“This is Elder Olen, Tixe. He is to instruct you in the management of the Eye.”

“But mother, I do not wish to be the keeper of the Eye.” Tixe turned toward Elder Olen.

“I beg forgiveness, Elder. I do not wish to appear rude, but I was intending to study the stories and poems of our people so I could become a teller of tales. Besides,” she turned back to her mother, “I am not of the age to be a keeper of the Eye.”

Tixe’s mother smiled at the determined girl. “As you know, Tixe, we are the chosen ones, the descendants of Trane. It is through us that the Eye is maintained. Your brother is too young. You are a Trane and have reached your thirteenth season. It is time you started your training. This training will not take all your attention. You will still be able to study the poems and stories you like.”

Nepo fastened a silver badge to Tixe’s tunic. Placing a hand on each of Tixe’s shoulders, she stooped to kiss each cheek.

“You are now the probationary keeper of the Eye. Elder Olen will determine when your probationary period is over.”

And just like that, Tixe’s training began.



CHAPTER THREE

Discovery



The tower room was not a large area, but because of the windows, it gave the illusion of space. Each wall contained a large panel of a clear material that was strong enough to withstand the ravages of the weather and temperature. Tixe learned the panels were once the observation ports of the early ship, the *Great Endeavor*.

“How did they manage to keep them for so many years without breaking?” she asked Elder Olen.

“It is said the early ones packed the branches of the Shabar trees around the panels to protect them.” Elder Olen answered Tixe’s unceasing questions so patiently that she was sure he knew everything.

Tixe learned quickly and began to look forward to her work in the tower. It was quiet, and the soft humming of the equipment was soothing and relaxing. She learned the configuration of the stars, and the pattern of their rotations. She observed the build-up of the clouds at the beginning of the green hour. Elder Olen pointed out to her the location of a smaller, weaker sun that rose just as the brighter one set.

“According to our records, the small sun takes the place of a moon, but it doesn’t give off much light.”

“What’s a moon, elder?” Tixe had not heard this term before.

“A moon is a satellite which moves with the planet around the sun.”

Tixe shook her head. “I must think about this.”



During the daytime hours, she observed the area of forest and meadows around the village. Once, during the time when the leaves were absent from the Shabar trees, Tixe saw a large body of water.

“Elder Olen, is this an ocean that I see through the trees?” Tixe was unable to contain her excitement. “The old stories tell of a large body of water near where the *Great Endeavor* crashed. Has anyone explored there?”

“Slowly, little one,” Elder Olen cautioned. “It is too dangerous to go very far into the woods.”

“You mean in all this time, no one has tried to get to the sea?” Tixe was shocked. “There must be so much to explore. I think I’d like to find out for myself someday.”

Late one morning, she became aware of a new configuration beginning to appear on the screen. “Elder Olen, look at this. I haven’t seen this before.” She pointed to a small shadowy object in the upper left quadrant of the screen. “What do you think it is?”

Elder Olen studied the object for so long that Tixe became impatient.

“Is it a visitor? Is someone coming from the sky?”

“Of course not! It’s probably a new star. I must inform your mother.” He left the room in such a hurry that he forgot to close the door and Tixe could hear him clattering down the steps.

I don’t believe him. I think it is a visitor. I must tell Egor, she thought. Then a plan occurred to her.

During the green hour, Tixe and Egor crept down the steep stone steps to the opening onto the courtyard. At the opening, Egor stopped, pulling on Tixe’s arm.



“We must not cross the open space during the green hour. It is forbidden; you know that, Tixe.” His voice was shaky and his face betrayed the panic building up inside.

“If we run as fast as we can, we’ll be safe. Just hold your breath and run!” With that Tixe sprinted off across the courtyard. Egor took a deep breath and darted after her.

Just as in the beginning, in the late afternoon the green clouds closed in around the city. After many years and many accidents, the people adapted to the strange clouds. Their bodies gradually absorbed the chemicals of the clouds, and although they were not harmed anymore, their skin gradually turned a green tint.

Although the Eye kept the danger away, it was mandated that everyone remain inside at these times. Breaking the law was a punishable offense, but Tixe had developed the ability to hold her breath for as long as it took to run across the open space. Besides, if they took the longer way through the halls, someone would certainly stop them and send them back home.

When Tixe and Egor reached the other side of the courtyard, they scurried down the long flight of steps carved into the earth. At the bottom were three large rooms. It was not permitted for just anyone to enter these rooms. Tixe and Egor had never been here, officially. It was a great place to learn what was going on, though.

Two rooms contained the power drive units that maintained the Eye, and supplied the power needs of the village. The third was a meeting chamber for the members of the council. The council was known as the Band of the Rood. The name was so old no one knew any longer what it meant.

Tixe dragged Egor along until they reached a section of wall constructed of lattice work. Crouching behind a section

of generators, they had a clear view of the room. There were all of the elders sitting around a long table. Standing at the head of the table was their mother, Nepo.

“We must not panic. We are the Band of the Rood and as you all know, it is up to us to guard against all entry to our village, whether by land or sky. Remember our history. Perhaps this discovery is something described in the old legends.” Nepo’s words were calm but the effect on the elders was electrifying.

An undercurrent of sound grew until all the elders were shouting at each other and no one was paying attention to anyone else. Tixe and Egor could not understand anything being said.

At last Nepo struck a small gong standing on the table, and announced, “We must continue to monitor the new discovery. If it approaches and attempts to land, we will extend every courtesy. Go to your homes now, and speak of this to no one.”

Egor scrambled back up the long flight of steps with Tixe at his heels. He had no desire to be caught in the forbidden place. When Nepo came to say good night to her children, they were resting quietly in their sleep chambers.



Tixe monitored the strange object on the screen of the Eye. It remained at the side of the screen for several days without any apparent movement.

“Elder Olen, I don’t understand why this thing isn’t moving.” Tixe turned to speak.

Elder Olen was occupied with charting a new map and, without looking up from his work, said, “It is probably a new star or some such formation. It will probably remain there and we’ll include it in the next chart.”



Tixe sighed. She had so wanted it to be a spaceship of some kind. She had been learning about how the early settlers had arrived on Celedon in a spaceship. She studied the ancient books and papers that had survived these many years. Some of the words were strange and without meaning, but at the same time, they had a familiar sound, as though the words were something she had known but forgotten. She was curious whether such things as spaceships were still possible. She turned back to the screen and gave such a screech that Elder Olen dropped his work and rushed to her side, concern written on his face.

“Tixe! What is the matter?” The old man was shaking as he tried to calm her.

“Look at the screen! Look at the screen!” Tixe screeched at the top of her shrill voice. “The spot is gone!”

By the time Nepo and the others arrived, Tixe had calmed down enough to talk in a reasonable voice. “I’m sorry, mother. I beg forgiveness for alarming everyone. I have been watching this area for several days and I was sure it was a space vehicle of some kind. I can only say that I was mistaken, that it must have been an asteroid of some kind that has finally moved out of range.”

“You have been working too hard, my dear.” Nepo gave Tixe a hug. “Why don’t you rest now and get ready for the hunt tomorrow. You and Magda have been planning this for a long time.”

CHAPTER FOUR

The Padua Hunt



Magda lived in the village. She was waiting when Tixe and Egor arrived at the gate.

“I have wonderful news, Tixe.” Magda’s dark eyes sparkled. “After the harvest, I am to begin training with Elder Raja in the healing arts.”

Tixe threw her arms around her friend. “That is wonderful. You’ve been waiting so long for this.”

Magda pranced a little. “They told me that because I work so closely with the soil, it has developed my healing skills.” She shrugged. “I don’t know about that, but I really didn’t want to spend all my life digging carrots.”

“Tixe, Tixe; let’s go. There won’t be any skins left if you stand around talking all day.” Egor was impatient.

“You’re absolutely right. Come on.” Grabbing the hands of Egor and Magda, Tixe ran over to the tent where the bags and tongs were being distributed.

This was the day of the padua hunt. Every year, all work was halted while everyone who wished to participate scattered throughout the woods and fields hunting padua skins. Each hunter carried a bag and a pair of wooden tongs. After the hunt, a feast was held and the entire village celebrated another plentiful year.

The gentle padua is a medium sized animal about two feet long, and a foot and a half tall. Its large, luminous eyes glow in the dark, although it usually does not roam around after the sun sets. The only sound it makes is a slight hissing



noise. Long slender legs make it easy for the padua's narrow body to zig-zag quickly through the tall grass. The padua skin is as soft as a flower petal, as durable as a rock, and will shape itself to any foot or body it is placed around. It was said to have special powers, because those who wear boots of padua skin have no foot discomfort at all.

The padua sheds its skin at the time the Shabar trees get their new leaves. Hunters search through the woods and fields for the discarded skins. To kill a padua is an offense punishable by death.

Tixe, Magda, and Egor started their search in the field next to the fern woods, but soon discovered the field was empty. "Why don't we go into the woods? It's not so far and no one else has gone there yet." Egor was anxious to bag a lot of skins so the older boys wouldn't tease him about having to go hunting with his sister.

"Why not? Let's go." Tixe led off and the three tramped the mile to the edge of the woods. Tixe loved the quiet, restful woods. The only sounds were the birds and an occasional breeze sighing through the trees. It was the beginning season when the leaves were small and pale green, and the air rich with the smell of warm soil. The underbrush remained the brittle brown of the quiet time, and rustled crisply as they made their way across the meadow. It was difficult to track the padua, because its soft brown skin blended with the underbrush.

"Quiet." Tixe held up a hand, silencing Magda and Egor.

"What is it?" Magda's soft whisper sighed past Tixe's ear like a breeze.

"I hear something. It must be a padua. Remain absolutely still."

Egor could not remain still. The grass tickled his legs and made them itch and besides, he was tired. He plopped down on a tuft of grass, and as a result, startled a padua. The frightened animal stood looking at them for a second, then darted off under the cover of the underbrush.

“Well Egor, that’s one you scared off. Can’t you keep quiet even for a little while?” Tixe scolded and shook her head at the youngster. “We’ll have to go on.” She started off, with Magda and Egor following. They had gone only a few yards when they heard a sound they had never heard before. A high-pitched whine was followed by a shrieking hiss, then silence.

The three young people looked at each other. Egor was suddenly frightened. It wasn’t a pleasant sound. Tixe gathered her bag and tongs.

“Come on, we must find out what made that sound.” She began running in the direction of the noise, Magda and Egor trailing behind.

Running was difficult through the dense underbrush. Finally Tixe slowed to a walk, but kept looking in all directions as she moved. As she waited for the others to catch up, she studied the ground around her. When Egor finally reached the girls, he pointed to some dark spots on the bushes.

“I’ve been seeing these for some distance. What do you think they are?”

Magda stooped and examined the spots, then rubbed at one with a finger. “It’s blood.” She twisted around to look at Tixe. “Someone must have been injured.”

“Look.” Egor pointed off toward a stand of Shabar trees. “The spots seem to go that way.”

They followed the bloodspots through the underbrush until the bushes thinned out into a meadow of tall grass.



It was easier walking here, and they made quick work of getting across the field. Just inside the arch of trees, they paused. It was darker here after the bright sunlight of the meadow.

“Oh look! Oh, the poor thing.” Tixe dropped to her knees beside a padua. “It’s been hurt. Can you do anything, Magda?” She knew Magda had some powers of a healer.

Magda’s soft hands slid over the head and body of the injured creature. She sat back on her heels, and closed her eyes as tears slid down her face.

“There’s nothing I can do. Someone has killed it.”

That day others brought back many padua skins, enough to supply the village for another year. Tixe, Magda, and Egor had none to add to the collection this time. That night as Nepo tucked her children into bed, she saw the trouble in their eyes.

“What is it, little ones?” Did not the hunt go well?” She was unprepared for the cloudburst of tears from both Tixe and Egor.

“Oh, mother. We found one padua. He was full grown and had already shed his coat, but he was dead.”

“Dead?” Nepo asked. “It’s unusual for a padua to shed his coat just before dying.”

“No, mother.” Egor sat up, rubbing his face. “The padua was dead because someone killed him. Magda tried to help, but we were too late.”

Nepo sat for a while, comforting her children, then said, “Tomorrow we shall go to the place where this happened and determine who is responsible.”

Nepo and two of the other elders followed Tixe, Egor, and Magda to the woods beyond the meadow. The elders,

Latch and Esole, were slow and required help, so it was almost noon by the time they reached the place where the padua was found the day before.

“It’s gone. I know this is the place.” Tixe dropped to her knees and felt the matted grass. “It was lying right here.”

Magda also felt the grass, then sat back on her heels, her eyes closed. She extended her right arm. “That way,” she pointed.

“Egor, I want you to wait here with Elder Latch and Elder Esole.”

“But mother—,” Egor protested.

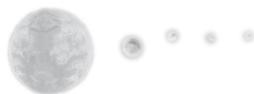
“They are old, my son, and it will be a kindness if you keep them from loneliness in this strange place.” Nepo smiled at Egor.

They reached the padua much sooner than they expected and received an unwelcome surprise. In the center of a small clearing lay the padua, still as the hunters had seen it the day before. Perched on a log beside it sat a young man. His dark skin and black hair contrasted sharply against a pale blue suit. He wore boots of some kind of green skin, the color of the new Shabar leaves. As Nepo and her party approached, he stood, placing his hand on a black rod hanging from a belt around his waist.

Nepo continued toward him, holding out her left hand, palm up. “I do not recognize you. Are you a stranger to our land?”

The man spoke, his words as strange sounding as his appearance.

“Nepo.” Nepo pointed to herself. She pointed to each of the children. “Tixe, Magda.” She then pointed to the stranger.



“Oh,” he chuckled and said something. Then pointing to himself, he said “Jeremy.”

“Come.” Nepo motioned for Jeremy to follow her. Turning to Tixe and Magda she said, “You carry the padua and follow us. Treat him gently.”

It was a strange procession that slowly wound its way into the village. The people came out to stare at the stranger as well as at the dead padua. The elders argued about where to keep the stranger who had broken the law. People crowded around, pointing and arguing among themselves.

“It is the law,” argued Elder Latch, “that anyone who kills a padua must himself be put to death.”

The voices of the crowd became louder as they agreed. “Death to the stranger!” “Death to the stranger!” The words echoed through the crowd. Many of the townspeople reached towards the stranger, shaking their fists, but Nepo shielded him.

The stranger, Jeremy, turned from one accusing face to another as the voices grew louder, a look of bewilderment and anger growing in his large dark eyes. Finally, Nepo raised her hand. The voices ceased.

“I will keep the stranger in the tower with my family for the time being. My mate, Trane is versed in languages. He can help us learn about this man, Jeremy. Perhaps he does not know of our laws.”

That night when everything was quiet, Tixe shook Egor awake. “Egor, wake up.” Tixe whispered. She didn’t want to wake anyone else.

Egor stirred and sat up. “What is it now, Tixe? I’m really tired.” He rubbed his eyes with the heels of both hands.

“Come on. You have to get up. We must go down to the council chambers to hear what is being said about the stranger. Come on.”

Egor struggled into his clothing and boots. He stared up at Tixe. “Are we going to get into trouble?”

Tixe didn’t answer. She just grabbed his hand and the two ran down the stone stairs as quietly as two shadows. They ran quickly across the green and down the steps leading to the council chambers.

As they settled behind the lattice divider, they heard Elder Latch say, “I think we should enforce the law and put this young stranger to death. That is the law for killing a padua, is it not?” This brought an instant response from everyone that resulted in nobody hearing anyone else.

Nepo raised her hands and the room became quiet. “I understand how you feel, and I, too, feel that our laws must be enforced. However, we don’t know much about this stranger. I think we should try to learn more about him first. If we kill him, we’ll never learn anything.”

“She’s right.” Another of the elders spoke. “Did you say his words are somewhat familiar?”

“My mate, Trane will work with him to discover how to understand his words. It will take some time. We need to give them that time.”

The voices rose and fell like the sound of the wind in the Shabar trees. Finally, Elder Olen held up a hand for silence. Then in his deliberate manner, he spoke. “We will allow them fourteen days. By then we will know whether the stranger shall be permitted to live. It is agreed.”

When Nepo came to check on her children as was her habit each night, she found them sleeping. It did puzzle her



a little that Egor's cheeks were so flushed and his breathing so rapid.



CHAPTER FIVE

Jeremy



Jeremy was established in a small but comfortable room in the tower. There were no family chambers nearby. Nepo did not feel comfortable having a stranger who had killed a padua close to her children. The room contained a sleeping couch with soft pillows and several bright blankets. Sometimes the rooms in the tower stayed cool because of the thick stone walls, and a blanket kept the chill away. There was a small clear panel where one could see outside and watch the passing of the clouds and the changing of day into night. A small table and a chair completed the furnishings. Off to one side was a bathing chamber and a closet for clothing. Nepo placed Jeremy's small collection of belongings in the closet. She turned to Tixe.

“Go to the kitchen and prepare a tray of food for this man. Select a variety of foods, not just your favorites.” She smiled at Tixe, taking the sting out of her words.

As they left, Jeremy started after them, saying something in a questioning tone. When they did not respond, he began shouting, but still they did not understand.

Tixe prepared the tray of food carefully. First were several slices of bread made from the wild wheat grown on the farms at the edge of the village. There was a selection of carrots, a long crunchy bean with a sweet flavor, and some other vegetables all grown in the village. In another bowl, she placed a selection of nuts, dried fruit, and apples. This last was a special treat for the people of Celedon. It was told that the *Great Endeavor* carried seedlings of many fruit trees so when the travelers reached their new home, they would have



some plants to raise. Only the apple trees bearing yellow fruit were sturdy enough to survive. The people called it the sun fruit because it reminded them of their lost sun. It didn't make sense to Tixe. The sun of Celedon was too bright to look at, but she was sure it wasn't yellow like the apple.

When Tixe returned to Jeremy's room, she found her father there. Trane, Tixe's father, was a tall broad-shouldered man with shoulder length red hair and bright blue eyes. He had large square hands that looked as though they should be guiding a team of mules instead of flipping through the pages of ancient books. Trane was a scholar who had made his life's work deciphering the writings of the ancient books and maps. Tixe knew that if anyone could figure out how to talk to Jeremy, her father could.

"Any progress yet, father?" Tixe set the tray on the table and went to the other room to fill the water pitcher.

"A little. Listen." He said something to the young man. At his words, Jeremy's head snapped up and he pointed to himself, saying "Jeremy."

"What did you say, father?"

"I think I said, 'What is your name?'" He turned to another section of his book. "While I check on something, why don't you tell him the names of the foods you have brought."

Jeremy learned quickly, repeating each word after Tixe and touching each item. Then he paused. After staring off into space for a short time, he said carefully, "Where am I?"

"Father!" Tixe was so startled she dropped the cup and the water splashed onto her boots.

"Yes, I heard." Trane smiled at the young man. "You are on Celedon."