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The Scent of Rotting Roses

By Jay Lake

18 November 2002

High in Deuce Landing Keep, overlooking the market, Queen Marie's Vizier twirled a perfect ivory rose with a fully doubled bloom. Martel could scarcely pay attention to the discussions, as his gaze was fixed on the flower -- *Madame Legras de St. Germaine*, an old French breed with a strong fragrance, long extinct among the worlds of the Reunification.

"The Queen's histories record the Terran evacuation of this planet," the Vizier told his two off-world visitors. His Anglo-Terran was excellent, almost standard, his voice high for such a broad-chested man. "They fled during the Collapse like dogs in the night. Four centuries later, you come back to Eutyclus offering Reunification, as if we were lost children crying for home."

"It is not that we consider you, um, children." Allis, their Speaker, always gave the pitch this way -- her hesitant tone was part of the delivery. "Reunification brings trade, commerce, healthcare . . . many benefits you cannot derive alone. And we are interested in *your* progress since the Collapse. There are numerous . . . agendas, in the Reunification."

Allis and Martel had tried repeatedly to see the Queen. It seemed no one saw the Queen but the Vizier. There wasn't a court as such, either. Just this man, the world of Eutyclus clenched in his pudgy fingers.

The Vizier walked to the window embrasure, glancing outward, slick black curls of hair swinging as he moved. "We don't get back into the family unless Her Majesty brings something to the table, eh? No matter what remains lost to us otherwise."

Allis frowned, marring her flame-haired beauty. "That's not what the Charter of

[Before Paphos](#)

by Loretta Casteen

8 January 2007

It starts again. The baby begins to cough and choke.

[Locked Doors](#)

by Stephanie Burgis

1 January 2007

You can never let anyone suspect, his mother told him. That was the first rule she taught him, and the last, before she left him here alone with It.

[Heroic Measures](#)

by Matthew Johnson

18 December 2006

Pale as he was, it was hard to believe he would never rise from this bed. Even in the darkest times, she had never really feared for him; he had always been strong, so strong.

[Love Among the Talus](#)

by Elizabeth Bear

11 December 2006

Nilufer raised her eyes to his. It was not what women did to men, but she was a princess, and he was only a bandit. "I want to be a Witch," she said. "A Witch and not a Queen. I wish to be not loved, but wise. Tell your bandit lord, if he can give me that, I might accept his gift."

[Archived Fiction Dating back to 9/1/00](#)

