Friday Snippet—from THE MOONROADS

written by Holly
August 24, 2007
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This is the first few paragraphs of the second book of the **Moon and Sun** series. My hope is that it will be mostly self-explanatory, and intriguing where it's not immediately clear.

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Chapter One—Down in the Deeps

"I do not know where we are," I told Catri. I held out the map we'd been given, and she leaned over it, staring at the lines that were supposed to be corridors, and the numbers that were supposed to be levels.

She shrugged. "If we're lost, what of it? You're the girl who brought Doyati to Arrienda after a hundred years, and you helped kill that monster, and you helped free the slaves. If you ask for directions, the nightlings will probably throw a parade and carry you home on a litter." She frowned into the dim, cavernous room that greeted us. "Though I don't like this place," she added.

I did not like it, either. Arrienda, the vast and layered underground city of the nightlings, had so far seemed warm and welcoming to us. Though she was being sarcastic, Catri wasn't far from the truth when she mentioned parades and

litters. The nightlings we dealt with daily showered us with every kindness.

Here, though, I saw taandu monsters talking with well-dressed nightling men; and, creatures I would have sworn were from the nightworlds watched us as we passed.

“You’re sure Yarri wanted us to meet her here?” Catri asked.

“Of course she didn’t. I’m lost. I haven’t seen a marker in ages, and…”

Something dripped on my shoulder. I jumped, and turned and looked up. Above me a tree root tangled its way through cracks in Arrienda’s beautiful stonework, and something from the root had dripped onto me. It was sticky, I discovered when I tried to brush it away. And sweet-smelling. Raw taandu sap, I realized, as I saw the cut that had been made in the root.

An ugly, squat, heavily muscled creature the colors of fungus under rocks waddled up to me and glared at me with fangs bared and eyes narrowed. “You want that, you have to pay for it,” it growled.

“The … the sap? I don’t want it.” I started backing away. But its tongue whipped out and licked the remainder of the sap from my shoulder with a sandpaper tongue.

“Don’t get in the way, then,” it said. “People who do want it pay good money to stand there. Human.”

Heads turned then, and everyone stared at us. The word “human” rippled through the well-dressed and the unsavory, through the talkers and the doers and the leaners-on-walls. Over the shoulder the sap-seller hadn’t licked, Catri whispered into my ear, “I think we need to be going.”

But the creatures of this level were moving toward us slowly. Menacingly. “Humans,” they muttered. “Humans. What are they

doing here? Humans.” I did not sense a parade in the making, no matter Catri’s previous optimism. This felt more like the start of an execution.

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