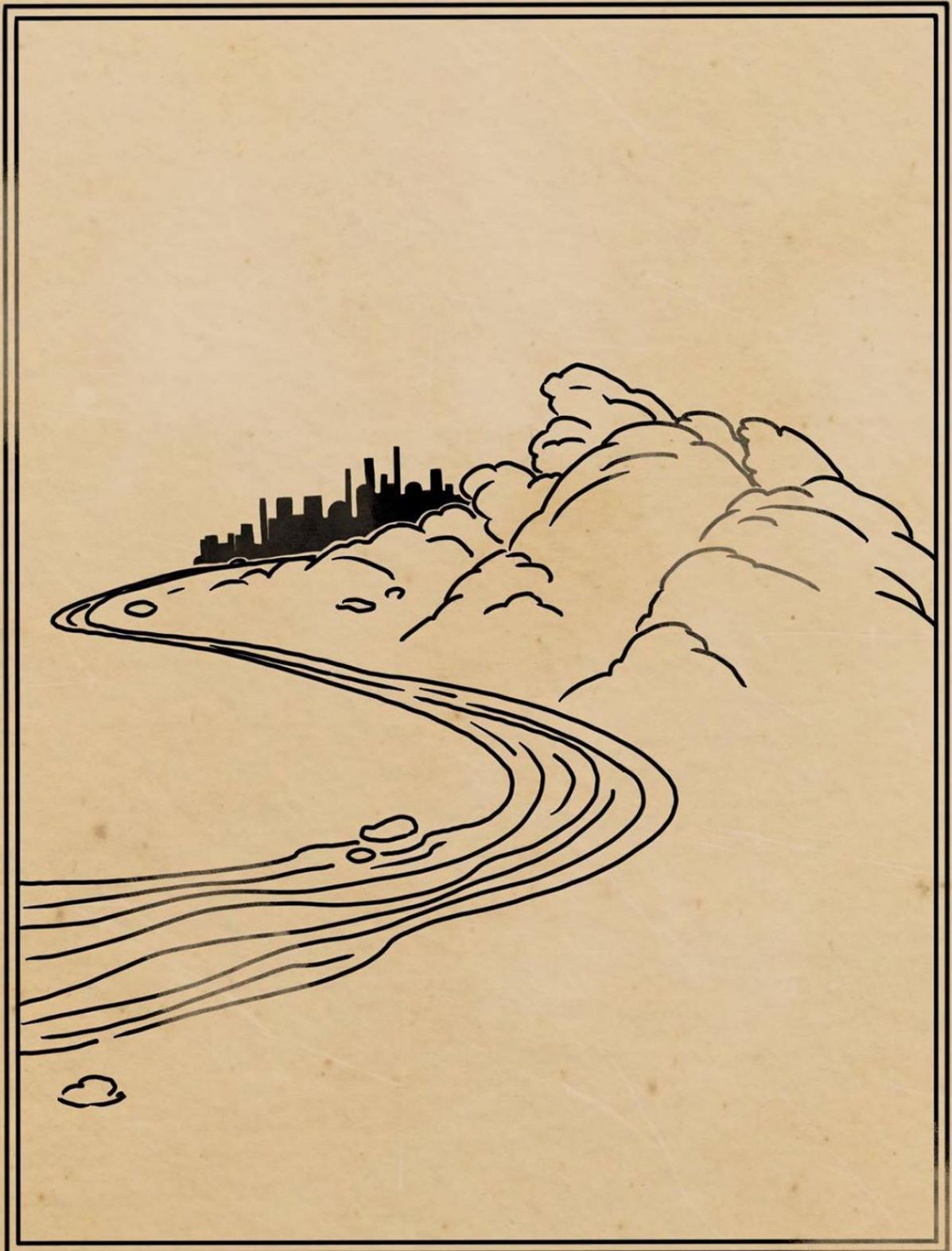


THE RIVER

ARASHK AZIZI



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By: Arashk Azizi

Prologue:

Dawn was upon the vast field in front of Logan. On the horizon under the shadow of great mountains laid a still shape. Logan walked toward the shape and soon enough reached what seemed like a dead tree. Rocks were all around the tree, Logan was enchanted by the tree and tried to pass through the rocks to get by the side of the tree.

He has never seen a tree in his life, except in the books of course, and now here it was, a tall tree with a thick body. Though it was dead and had no leaves on it, it still looked unbelievably beautiful.

As Logan was walking through the big rocks toward the enchanting tree, he realized the rocks started to move, for a moment he stayed still, nothing happened, so he continued to walk. This time rocks shook hard under his feet and made him fall.

Logan stood up as fast as he could, to his surprise he saw a big human shape made out of rocks standing between him and the tree. It was almost twice taller than Logan. He looked back and decided to run back to his village, but the tree started to shake. It was as if the tree needed his help.

The rock-man started walking toward the tree after seeing that Logan is not approaching it anymore.

Logan hesitated but finally started to run toward the tree, he passed the rock-man fast and reached the tree, the rock-man was closing in on them.

He was confused and didn't know what to do, the rock-man reached them, he grabbed some branches of the tree in his hand and started to pull, the tree started to scream from the pain. Logan attacked the rock-man and succeeded to push him away for a moment. This time the rock-man chased Logan. He ran away until there was enough space between them to let him think. There was nothing to help him escape or win the fight. So he did the first idiotic idea that came to his mind.

Logan grabbed some rocks and threw toward the rock-man. All the rocks absorbed in its body and did not stop it. The rock-man reached Logan and grabbed him by the waist. Pain ran through his body as he was being pulled up in the air by the rock-man.

Logan opened his eyes breathing hard and fast, his body was drowned in sweat. It took him a moment to realize where he was. It was early in the morning but still, the darkness of the night was ruling over the village.

Logan stood up and went to the window, everything was in peace. The sun was coming out and the vast field behind the village was getting rid of the heavy shadow of the mountains.

From the time Logan was a little child he would see dreams and most of the time his dreams would come true. He had a fortune-telling power with his dreams. But it didn't take that long for him to lose his ability and start seeing weird nightmares.

It has been some years that he would see nightmares like this, and what would make him scared was that a part of him still thought these nightmares could come true one day.

Logan went back and sat on a chair in his room, he was feeling better now, not every night he would see a nightmare like this. Some nights he had a dream about big tall mountain-like houses in enormous cities, like the cities from ancient times that his parents had told him about when he was a child.

Of course, Logan's main problem was not the dreams he had when he was asleep, the main problem was the thing that only he could see during the day time, the river.

Chapter 1:

Logan was a mature masculine man in his early forties. He had lost both his parents many years ago in a war between his tribe and the centaurs that lived up the valley. The war was over a huge amount of Crickets that migrated to a field between the two tribes. But after a year the population of insects that were the main food source of every tribe, increased and peace started again between them. In fact, one of Logan's best friends was Hector who was a centaur himself.

The dry landscape around seemed never-ending. Although Logan has never been so far from his village, all the places he has been into were as dry as his own village and he has heard from others that there is no water to be found in the world except the underground sources that everybody would use as their main water resource.

There was one of these water reservoirs under the ground near Logan's village and a water fairy was living in it. Logan has never met her in person but his closest friend Laura has seen her several times before. The water fairy's name was Amphitrite and was one of the few mermaids left on earth. Logan's people considered themselves lucky since a mermaid was living in their water reservoir and it was a sign of the depth and vastness of their reservoir.

As the older members of the village remember, they have heard from their fathers that once all the underground water reservoirs were connected with each other through underground water canals. Mermaids were living in those reservoirs and would travel from one to another through these canals.

As time passed by, the water resources became smaller and smaller and most of the canals dried out. Today nobody even knows where the canals are.

Most of the old people of the village have been killed during the war. In fact more than two-thirds of their population died in those years due to famine and then the great war. Now only a memory of those people left for them.

Before the war, the village had a chief with a consul of five people in which Logan's mother was one of the members too. Two of those five members were goblins and three of them were humans. They would decide most of the important decisions for the village and would solve the problems between people and their properties.

The central hall of the village was a place for everybody to get a consul. There were also four people trying to preserve their culture with books and objects from ancient times. Logan's father was a member of this consul. They believed that people of this village are among the few people left on earth that still have direct roots in ancient times and can speak their language. They knew themselves as one of the few tribes left who could read and write in the language that was being spoken in ancient times.

But the war changed many things, they lost most of their important members, now there was no political or religious belief among them. Sometimes they would gather in the central hall of the village and talk over some problems with each other. It would almost always end up in chaos, but at the end they would compromise with each other. After all not many people were living there now. The population of the village was less than a hundred people. Most of them had died

in the war and many had left the village in those times to find a better and more peaceful place for living. None of them has ever returned.

After Logan's parents died, he felt alone for a while and since he was living alone, his childhood friend, Laura moved in with him. She was a thin goblin almost half his height with dark brown skin, long ears, and a pretty face. Laura had lost her mother when she was born and her father left the village before the war. He left with the wave of immigrant goblins who left the village in order to avoid the fight against the mighty centaurs, among the few that stayed in the village, Laura was the only one who has befriended with Logan and not long after the war she left her old small room in the southern part of the village and moved to the bigger house that Logan was living in, near the center of the village.

It was a one-floor house, there were two separate rooms in the back and a big living room with a small kitchen on the corner of it. There was a very small storage and a toilet attached to the home with doors from outside.

Logan was living in his small room from childhood and Laura has moved to his parent's room, she was not comfortable at first, but Logan did not accept to change the rooms, and after a while she got used to it. The room itself was bigger than the previous home that she used to live with her father and her little sister who left the town before the war.

Laura's daily task was to bring water from the reservoir and fill the tank in the upper part of the village. It was the main source of the water people were using in their daily life. She also had changed her old home to a kitchen laboratory. She was testing new mixes of plants with the insects that she would gather from the fields herself. Laura always tried to make the food taste more delicious and last longer.

It was around the time that Laura moved in with Logan that he started to see water streaming on the ground. It seemed unbelievable for him to see a stream of water flowing freely on the surface, when he brought Laura and Hector to the valley where he had found the water, they could not see anything there but dry land as it always has been.

Logan was the only person in his village who could see the river. Everybody thought he was lying to attract attention, but he didn't care what others were thinking, he could see the stream of the water in the valley not far from the village, and he could not believe how others wouldn't see it. He could even drink the water and wash his face with the water from the river. It was streaming from up the valley, the same valley that on its upper side lived the tribe of centaurs.

This valley has turned into a tourism attraction for the people of villages around. They have heard about the river and how Logan can see it. Some people were curious enough to check it out, but none of them could see the river. Of course, they were actually just visiting to see the famous crazy Logan, not the river.

Nobody except for Logan has ever seen a river, even the magical mermaid believed that Logan was crazy, though there was a myth that thousands of years ago, there was water streaming on the earth. She knew about the myth of the river too, it was said that there was a vast body of water flowing freely on the earth, and those streams were named Rivers. And those rivers would end up in places like the sea or ocean that was a big body of water on the surface of the earth.

Something like today's underground water reservoirs, but on the surface and millions of times bigger.

In this myth, the earth was not just a big ball of soil, most of its surface was covered by water. but it was just a story, Nobody believed that water could just freely run upon the earth. It was very difficult for people to believe that there was something besides soil and sand on the horizon. Their world was just desert and hot shining sun. there was nothing to cover the sky day or night except the dust and sand in the stormy days.

Chapter 2:

Logan was a shepherd, he had twenty sheep and four camels. He was considered one of the most wealthy people of the village. There was just one other person with more camels and sheep than Logan in the village. Of course in the next village, Hector had almost two hundred sheep. He could take care of them all without any help since he had legs like a Horse and could run fast.

Logan was his friend and always wished he could have legs like Hector instead of his weak human legs. They mostly used their flock for providing milk, and very rarely if a sheep or camel would die they could eat their meat. Of course most of the time they would just smoke the meat and store it to be eaten on ceremonies or feasts. Their main meal was insects. Humans, centaurs, goblins, and all other creatures that Logan knew of their existence would feed on the sources of insects around them. Of course with so much little water reserved for them, it was hard to keep up a good living anyway. They usually gave the most part of their water resources to kettles and used their milk instead.

Logan has seen very few kinds of plants. There were the dry thorn bush, thistle, and two kinds of Cactus, one would grow on the surface and the other would rise up and grow upwards with its green body. Sometimes people used the Cactuses as a food source too. But since they were few in number not many people would use them. There were some people who named themselves 'Insecterians', they believed in order to preserve the last plants left on earth, it's better to just eat insects and don't kill any kind of plants.

There were some books in the village's central hall. These books have remained from the ancient times. Most of them were just writings. Logan and only two other villagers could understand a bit of those writing. They were not able to read, but if tried they could understand some words.

Many years ago, people of the village could actually read and write, but as time passed by, they forgot it. Parents would not teach their children to read anymore, it was considered a useless act. Some families like Logan did not believe that reading is useless and taught their children a little bit of reading and writing. Logan remembered his father teaching him how to read. He was better at it than his mother, therefore he accepted the task of teaching Logan. He was not a good student, but he managed to learn a little before starting to work beside his father as a shepherd.

From all the fifty or so books that were still in the village's central hall, Logan preferred two of them. They had some drawings in them. One had some drawings from birds and animals which most of those animals Logan had never seen. Some birds were in the book that Logan had seen them living in the mountains years ago when he was exploring around with his parents. Her mother always encouraged him to be an explorer, to see the world. His parents have explored a lot in their youth. They always told him stories about big abandoned villages with tall buildings made from iron and stone. Buildings that were taller than the mountains. It seems that ancients lived in those big villages and called them cities.

The other book had drawings of plants and none of the plants in the book, Logan has ever seen in his life. There was only one plant that looked a little like the upright and tall Cactus that would grow in the fields everywhere, but he couldn't decide if they are the same or not. Besides that

one plant, there was no other plant in his world that looked like the plants in the book. They had leaves, lots of leaves and some were drawings of tall plants beside a human. Plants were almost three to five times taller than a normal human. He always wondered if there were any of these plants in the world today. He really liked to see one of them someday. They kind of looked like the tree from his dreams and he would really liked to see a tree like that one day.

Usually Logan would talk about these plants with Laura, she has seen the pictures in the book and one of her wishes was to see some of them in reality so she could use them to make new variations of foods.

But Logan's biggest passion in recent months has become the River. It has been more than two years since he saw the river for the first time. Before that, it was just a dry valley like all others in the area, but one day as he took his flock out to the field near the valley, a new and weird sound drew his attention toward the valley. He could not believe his eyes the first time he saw the river. It was the most beautiful thing he has ever seen in his life. A small stream of clear water was flowing down the valley and made the most relaxing sound he has ever heard in his life. Even more relaxing than the lullabies of his mother.

Since then he has brought his flock near the valley every day and sat beside the river and just looked at the stream and listened to its sound for hours knowing that his flock is safe around here.

One day after almost an hour by the river Logan thought he heard something. It seemed that someone or something was calling his name from far away. He got up and started to walk around, it seemed that walking away from the stream made the sound go away. He went just beside the river, laid down on the ground, and carefully listened. Yes, it was the river, the sound of running water was changing its pitch and mesmerized something that was like Logan's name. He thought for a moment and then said "River, are you talking to me?" he smiled to himself, for a moment he thought it sounded crazy, rivers can't talk, but yet he concentrated. There was a sound combined in the sound of the river, it had the same timber and it was so slow, but Logan could hear it better every moment. River whispered "Yes Logan, hear me" Logan widened his eyes. He couldn't believe what he was hearing. "What? What do you want to tell me?" said Logan as he sat up beside the river. "I need your help, you are the only one who can help" whispered the river. Logan hesitated for a moment and talked back to the river "What is it? What can I do for you?" there was no more sound. He thought he just heard the river say his name again, but that was it. He started walking inside the river, he felt a hand grab his foot as he walked in, he tried to walk away, but his foot was stuck in the water. He started to scream for help, he hoped for other shepherds, especially for Hector to hear him and come to help. Suddenly he woke up screaming. His body was wet from the sweat but everything was back to normal. He was in his room.

A few seconds later, Laura knocked and entered his room, she just woke up and the sound of Logan screaming made her worried. "I heard it calling my name," said Logan, Laura looked at him with eyes wide open. "What? who?" asked Laura with an almost high pitched voice, Logan looked at her in shock then answered with calmness "The river, I was sitting beside it and it

called me, it needed my help, then it grabbed my foot and tried to drown me in itself” “Well, dreams never are true, right?” said Laura with a smile, “But,” said Logan with a serious deep voice, “There was something different,” Laura stared at him waiting for him to continue, “Have you ever?” continued Logan, “Had a dream that felt more real than the time you are awake? I mean a dream that makes you think maybe this is the real life and the actual life is the dream,” “No,” said Laura strongly, “Whatever happens in the dream belongs to the dream world, it is not real,” “But,” said Logan “I used to see dreams that would come true, I could see things before they happen,” “No,” interrupted Laura, “I’ve been living with you enough to know what you are getting at, you will just feel miserable and nag about your dream while there’s nothing you can do about it. Just forget it, come to have breakfast and you will feel better,” then she left the room without waiting for his answer. Logan stood up, looked outside the window for a moment, the sun was almost up, the small village houses were standing humbly under the tall shadows of the faraway mountains. He then walked toward the door to join Laura for breakfast and start a new day.

Chapter 3:

That day Logan was thinking about his weird dream the whole time. He walked the herd so far from the village that he suddenly found himself near Hector's village. Logan could see Hector and his herd nearby and so he decided to meet him. It has been a while since the last time they talked.

Hector was resting when Logan came to him. He told Hector about his dream, but got no reaction for some minutes. They spent some time in silence that suddenly Hector said, "I don't know if I'm crazy or not," continued Hector turning his head and looking at Logan, "But I don't think you are crazy," Logan smiled "It really is nice to hear that," said Logan, "Really," continued Hector, "I know you for a long time, I knew your parents too, I don't believe that suddenly you've gone crazy," "So you believe that there is a river in the valley?" asked Logan, "No," interrupted Hector with a rush, "I don't believe that there is a river, I just said that I don't see you as a crazy man." Logan started to say something several times but didn't say anything. After some time in silence, Hector started again, "I have seen the mermaid in your village once," Logan looked at him in surprise, "It was years ago," continued Hector, "Before the war began, I went to see her," Hector hesitated but continued, "It was just after the time that I had lost my family, they got sick and died and I really wanted to die with them, I could not kill myself, that's not in our ways, some of my friends made me go to her, and finally I went to her," Logan was listening carefully, Hector continued after a deep breath, "She was, something otherworldly, I don't know how to describe her, not everybody that goes to the reservoir will see her, but she was waiting for me. The moment I saw her, most of my pain went away, she created a warmth in my heart inside that cold underground hole. I know it sounds like I'm romanticizing it, and most probably I am, but she made me feel that way. And then we talked for a while." Hector looked at Logan and saw his eagerness to hear the continuation of the story, so he continued, "She made me feel alive again and told me that everything happens for a reason, we don't understand everything that happens around us, but it does not mean that they are stupid or unreal." Hector started to smile and continued, "To this day, I don't know why I stayed alive or why all my family died in a short period of time, but I believed her. The first day that you told me about the river, I believed you too and I still do. Maybe I'm just out of my mind, even more than you, or maybe," Hector breathed deeply and continued while looking to the horizon, "Maybe I stayed alive to believe in you," Logan looked at him in wonder, "I don't really get what you mean, but I think I appreciate what you say," said Logan, "I know it does not make much sense," said Hector, and then showed a hand gesture as he will regret what he is going to say and continued "Ok, I should tell you this," Hector looked at Logan and continued, "She told me that I will help someone do a great thing," "Someone," said Logan with a bitter smile, "I have seen many weird dreams before" said Hector, "And in some of them I have seen you putting a small cup up in the valley and then water started flowing out of it without interruption, and then you would say that you have found the source," "Source?" asked Logan, "Yeah," said Hector, "It did not make sense to me and since I always see different weird dreams, I did not tell you about it, but when you

started to see the river at the same place that I saw you with your cup and unstoppable water streaming out of it, it made me thinking. Maybe there is something to it,” “Or maybe,” said Logan, “It means that we are both crazy,” “Yeah,” said Hector while laughing, “That's more like it.”

Logan went back home that night feeling a little better. Laura was not there and before she came back home he fell asleep.

That night Logan saw another dream. This time he had a small cup in his hand and was pouring water in the fields. Everywhere that he poured water, a green tree that looked like the ones in the ancient book, grew immediately. He continued pouring water faster and faster until the cup fell out of his hand to the ground and broke into pieces. Suddenly all the trees disappeared. He gathered the pieces of the cup together and it got repaired magically in his hands. There was water in the cup again, he started pouring the water, and trees started to grow one more time.

Logan woke up early in the morning. He didn't know how to feel about his new dream. Surely the cup idea came from Hector's dream. But what did it mean?

That day Logan went to the village's central hall to look at some of the old books that were in good condition and could be touched. The books were all stored in a back room, there was also some odd and unusual stuff in the storage, beneath all of that stuff laid almost fifty books that some of them still were readable. Most of the books were so old that they would change into dust by a touch, some others had lost their writings in time and most of their pages were blank now. Logan spent most of the day with the books trying to find something about rivers in the books. He found the word “water” in some of the books. He was not sure but as he could tell there was nothing related between those words and a river. He could not read very well and the books were old enough to make it harder for him to read.

After hours of looking through hundreds of pages, he came up with nothing about rivers. Logan looked fast over all the books again, it was bothering him that there was nothing of the river in these books, then he thought to himself that it was not the books that were incomplete, it was their own neglect that created the illusion of the incomprehension of the books.

It's been years since someone went back to the books, they have been forgotten for a long time. People even forgot how to write and read. When he finally gave up and couldn't find anything, he felt a little blue, he felt regretful that what humans knew were more than what they know.

When he finished and went out, it was already dark. He has spent all day in the city hall and did not take his herd outside. He went straight to bed that night.

For several days nothing new happened and he did not see any dreams. Life was back to normal, almost. The river was still there and Logan would go to it every day.

After a week Logan saw a new dream. He saw that he was walking by the river's side, but in a new strange place, he didn't know where he was, the only familiar thing was the river beside him. He was walking in the opposite direction of the stream. There were some hills in front of him and the river was flowing out from between them. He walked toward them and after a turn inside the hills, there was a big field and on the horizon laid the strangest thing he had ever seen. The river was flowing in the field toward him from a wired place. It seemed like a big city with

enormous buildings as tall as mountains. It was far away in the field and yet could be seen easily. There was something frightening about that city, so frightening that the moment Logan started to walk toward it he woke up in cold sweat.

That morning he found Laura in the home and told her about his dreams. "It is just a dream," said Laura, "You gonna make yourself crazy, don't think about it," "But," said Logan, "There is something abnormal about my dreams, I feel like they are all connected." "Sure," said Laura mockingly, "There is an undeniable connection between a cup and a big city," Laura continued with emphasis after a pause, "That you saw from far away."

They did not talk about the dream anymore that day. But it was not over for Logan. For the next few nights, he saw exactly the same dream every night and each time that he started walking toward the big village he would wake up.

For some days he tried to ignore his dream but it was not possible. One day Laura came to him and said, "I can see you are bothered with your dreams, and I really like to help you, but I don't know what I can do," "Thank you," said Logan "You being concerned for me is enough," "No," said Laura "I believe that it's not me who should do something about it, you should do something," Logan looked at her with a confused face, Laura continued "I think you should go and see Amphitrite," "What?" asked Logan with shock, "She wouldn't see me." "Yes," said Laura, "She will see you, I'm sure. I have seen her many times, she is so kind and I'm sure she can help you," "How?" asked Logan, "There is nothing she can do for me," Laura looked at him in silence and then said after a deep breath, "I know that you are a little scared of her, that's ok, she is alive and yet she has become a myth between us. Don't be afraid of her, she is a normal being like us, she will help you." Logan tried to say something back but knew that Laura was right. He was thinking about going to see the mermaid himself for a while now. But he was afraid of her. "I will go see her tomorrow," said Logan, "Tomorrow she will still be the same as today, she won't be less scary, don't postpone it every day," said Laura and then continued with a smile, "But if you feel like it, let it be for tomorrow."

Chapter 4:

The next morning Logan went to see the mermaid. He wished Laura could come with him, but Amphitrite didn't like to have company, he himself was not welcome there. Surely if they both would go down there it would not be pleasing for Amphitrite. He arrived at the door to the underground canal that led to the main part of the water reservoir. It was dusty, one could totally see that there has not been a single soul going in or out of there for a long time. People of the village loved her but they also were afraid of her, there was no reason to disturb such a magical creature. So almost nobody would go down there. Nobody knew how and when Amphitrite came there, this water reservoir was not connected to any other underground water sources. But somehow, years ago people saw her down there. At first, they would go talk to her, but after a while, she wouldn't come out of the water in case there was somebody in there. So people decided to let her stay alone. People would go to her only in case that they really felt the need of her help. Some people even would see her in their sleep and thought that she was calling them to herself. But not every time someone would go down to her, she would show herself.

Now after many years, Logan was going down there. Suddenly he realized it had been some time that he was just waiting there staring at the door. So he took a deep breath and walked through the door. The corridor was narrow and dark, there were just some windows on the ceiling, letting the sunlight through. As he walked through the corridor the humidity increased to the point where he could feel the water source was near.

He could hear the sound of water from the far end of the corridor, it sounded like something was in the water, he thought to himself, obviously, it is the sound of Amphitrite swimming in the water. He continued going down the narrow path, there were no more windows in the ceiling after some walking down the corridor, It was almost dark in the corridor. Logan thought it was better to have candles here, as he was walking forward it was getting darker. He couldn't believe that moments ago he was standing under the direct sunlight in a dry deserted land, it was totally a different world down here, dark and humid.

After some twists in the corridor, now he was suddenly in the middle of a great hall with a high ceiling. It was like a big and high dome. There were five windows in the ceiling and the morning light was coming through them and lighting up the whole place. These were the same windows that were in the northern part of the village and Laura would take water out of them to fill the village's water reservoir. He could see a rope and a can that was hanging from one of the side windows on the ceiling.

He looked at the ground and saw that not so far from him there was a line that the ground would change from solid soil to water. It was a weird scene for him, though he had seen the river, this was different. River did not have that much water and he could see the ground beneath the clear water of the river. But here it was different, the water was deep, nothing but water could be seen. Maybe there was no ground beneath it, maybe the water continued deep forever.

The water level and floor were exactly the same, he could walk straight to the water if he didn't know that he was walking in the water reservoir.

Suddenly Logan realized that there was no more sound of the water. Maybe Amphitrite heard him coming and went under the surface. There was nothing he could do but to wait. If she wanted to talk to him, she would come to the surface. Logan waited for some time, it felt like a long time to him, though from the change of the shadows caused by the light from the ceiling windows, he could say that it was not that much long since he was standing there. Yet there were no movements anywhere.

He tried to see under the water. The water was so clear, he could see right through it. Of course, it was deep and dark, so he could see just a little into it. There was nothing as long as his eyes could see. He thought to himself, maybe it was a bad idea to come here. He turned to go out with a lot of regrets.

As Logan turned around he heard a sound in the water. For a moment he just froze, then slowly turned back toward the water. Yes, there she was. He has never seen her with his own eyes, his father has seen Amphitrite many years ago. It was his favorite story and would tell it almost every day. Now that Logan could see the mermaid for himself, he could understand why it was such an exciting thing for his father.

Amphitrite was floating on the water not five meters from Logan. Half of her body was under the water, but due to clearwater, he could see her completely. The dim light under the dome made it hard to see the line of water and so she seemed floating in the air near him. It was adding to the magic that she already was bringing with her looks.

She had two legs like humans, but her feet were different from humans, there was no thumb on them, instead, she had flat thin feet, they were wider than a normal human foot and also a little transparent. Her skin was not so different from humans, but it was whiter and somehow brighter. Except for her feet, she looked like a normal female human.

But she was glowing with magic. It was not her beauty that enchanted Logan, she was not very beautiful in fact, there was something about her, as Hector said she was unworldly. Her hair was grayish with black and white stripes in them, and it was not as long as Logan expected it to be. Her eyes were green and glowing, and now that Logan looked at her eyes, suddenly realized that he was staring at her the whole time. She was just looking and smiling at him as if she was giving him time to enjoy her presence. He wished he could stay and look at her forever.

Finally, Amphitrite said "What are you doing here?" her voice was so soft, it sounded clear and quiet at the same time. "I see something that others don't see," Logan said but Amphitrite put her hand up as a sign to silence him and said, "I know, you see a river, it's been a while, I thought you might come here sooner." Logan was hypnotized by her, he tried to talk again and said, "But, how do you know about that?" "That's not important," said Amphitrite. Logan hesitated a moment and said "So, what do you think about it?" Amphitrite did not answer, she laid on her back and went under the water.

Logan came closer to the water, he was standing right on the edge of the water. Amphitrite went down till he could no longer see her. Logan waited for some time and then saw her coming up from deep. She came to surface again, this time she was closer to the edge, there was a distance less than an arm between them. It made Logan's heart pound fast and hard.

Amphitrite started to talk again “You may be crazy, or you may not be, I don’t know yet. But you did not answer my question, why are you here? If you wanted to tell me that you saw a river, I already knew that, so what else are you waiting for?” “Dreams” said Logan, “I see dreams about places I have not seen before”.

Then Logan told her about his dreams as fast as he could. She seemed bored by his words, as if she already knew every word that he was saying, and it made Logan feel a little regret for coming here.

After Logan finished talking, Amphitrite smiled and looked at his eyes. It was like she was looking beyond his eyes. Logan continued, “The truth is I don’t know why am I here, I don’t know what to do, I need help, I’m here to see if you can help me. Tell me I’m crazy or not.” Amphitrite turned around and swam away from Logan, then she stopped. Logan didn’t know what to do so he waited in silence.

Amphitrite turned around after a minute, swam toward Logan and took her hand out the water, it seemed that she wanted Logan to take her hand, so he did, her hand was much more firm than he expected, she pulled his hand down so he had to sit down on the floor. Then she grabbed him by the neck with her other hand and pulled herself out of the water, now they were eye level with each other.

She looked at him closely and finally said, “I think you are definitely crazy. Rivers are no longer on the earth. There may have been some of them, millions of years ago, but no more. There is not enough water to stream as a river.” they just looked at each other. There was a big disappointment in Logan’s eyes, Amphitrite said with a smile, “I’m sorry. I know that you thought you are special. You thought by coming here I would tell you a mythical secret or send you on a quest to solve a problem for the world. But the truth is you are just another normal man, like any other man. And that’s not a bad thing. I know that the whole time here you were thinking if it is possible to have sex with me more than any other thing in the world.” Then she leaned forward and kissed Logan’s lips. It was a deep long kiss. After the kiss, he was feeling a little dizzy. It seemed that her lips had a magical potion on them.

Then she let go of him and went down to the water again. Then said “Don’t worry, the moment you walk out of here, you will feel better. You will remember that you don’t care what I think, you just came here because your little friend told you to, so what if I think you are crazy, I’m another one who doesn’t believe in you, like any other person you know. You will remember that I’m just a magical creature not a wise creature, and I should say that, it is true, I may be magical, but I’m not the wisest of people. I’m not omnipotent nor immortal. My race is doomed to end, I am one of the single few left of my race and will die here alone. I know that I don’t know, maybe that’s the only wise advice that I can give you. I think you are crazy, But I don’t know enough to be sure about what I told you.”

Then she went away and dived into the water. Logan saw her going down again and she was no longer visible to him. He sat there for a while and thought about Amphitrite. She might be right, maybe he was just another ordinary man. He wished to not be able to see the river anymore. Maybe he could just, don’t go to that valley anymore.

He was thinking to himself that Amphitrite came back again. She said “Hey Logan,” Logan looked at her in shock, “Don’t stay” Logan stood up to go out, but she gestured at him with her hand and showed Logan to stay and continued “I don’t mean just in here by the water,” then she gave him a smile and went under the water again.

Logan thought to himself what did she mean? How did she know my name in the first place? I didn’t tell her anything. How did she know I have a little friend? Maybe Laura has been here recently.

He then stood up and went out. It was near noon, it didn't feel like a long time, but he has been inside the reservoir for half a day.

Chapter 5:

Laura did not come home that night. Logan could not sleep, he didn't know what was bothering him, what Amphitrite said, or maybe seeing her was enough to rob him from sleep. Finally he fell asleep at midnight and saw the same dream as the recent nights.

The next morning he woke up to the smell of breakfast by Laura. He was really tired from last night, maybe from lack of sleep, but he didn't really remember if he slept late or not. After a few minutes, he got out of bed and went for breakfast. Laura was not there again, she must have left the house too early for her work, but she had left something to eat for Logan. It was a new dish, it must have been one of her new experiences. It mostly consisted of some green stuff that looked like the inner parts of a cactus, and some insects were visible too.

Logan ate breakfast, to his surprise it was more delicious than it looked like. Then he went to take his herd out to the fields. He started going toward their usual way, but hesitated for a moment and then changed his way to a new field where there was no river. Actually he has heard that there is another field near that has lots of cockroaches and thistles, his sheep and camels could eat as much as they want over that field.

He went toward the new field, it was a little farther away but eventually, he and his herd got there. And indeed, there were lots of thistles, cockroaches and other insects there. Sheep went crazy and started eating them up. Not long after they arrived there Logan could see a big herd coming their way. Yes, it was Hector's herd. Hector came to Logan with a smile and started talking with cheer in his low and powerful voice "Hello, my old friend, I see that you have changed your field." "Hello," said Logan, looking up at Hector "Yes, I prefer not to go to the river anymore" "Why?" asked Hector, "I don't like it there anymore, it's making me crazy" answered Logan. "Good," said Hector with a smile "This way I'm not alone either, we can be together all day" Logan nodded and smiled.

They walked a little around their sheep and made sure none of them went too far away. After some time they got together again and sat on a big rock facing the vast field.

Logan looked to the horizon and asked: "Do you think rivers are just myths?" Hector looked at him and sighed and after a moment of silent answered "I don't know, for us it is impossible to think there ever was that much water on the earth, but I remember my grandfather talking about his forefathers when I was a child, he always said that they had seen some trees in their youth, of course, it was hundreds of years ago. And if there were trees everywhere, maybe there were even rivers and waters everywhere." "Maybe," said Logan, still looking far away. "You know," said Hector, "I remember him saying that sheeps used to eat grass instead of insects" "What is grass?" asked Logan, "I don't know," said Hector, "I think it was some kind of green plant, but unlike the thistles we have here it was supposed to be soft," said Hector and continued "The grass was short and on the earth. Think if it is true then our fields would be green instead of brown." they dreamed of a green field and stopped talking for a moment then Hector said "Maybe you should ask the mermaid in your village about the river, after all, she is the most magical creature around us," Logan smiled "I did talk to her," said Logan, then he looked at

Hector and understood that he was eager to hear the rest “Yeah, I went to her yesterday, actually now that I think about it, we didn’t talk that much, she was so magical that I could not talk to her that much, but anyway, she said that I’m crazy, there is no more such thing as the river” “So there were some rivers before?” asked Hector, “I don’t know, and I think she didn’t know either” said Logan “She didn’t say much, but she said there are no more rivers.” “I wish I could go see her again,” said Hector, “Why don’t you?” asked Logan, “Because,” said Hector “I don’t think I have any reason to do so.”

They spent a while in silence looking over the vast field in front of them. Then Logan started to talk and told Hector about his new dream and how he is having the same dream every night. He also talked about the books he read and his inconclusive search for the river in them.

Hector didn’t say anything for a while and then said “I changed my mind, now I think you are crazy” Logan looked at him and then looked the other way slowly. Hector continued “You are crazy, not because of what you see or hear, but because you don’t act against your problems. You must find out what’s going on, always try to find your own way out of things, don’t wait for mermaids to tell you what to do, find out what you should do.” “But I don’t know what to do,” said Logan. “I know,” said Hector “That’s why I said ‘find out’ what to do” Logan didn’t say anything.

After a moment Hector said “If you ask me, I always try to find the source of my problems first. If you know what you are against, you can find an answer. Your problem is a river, and as I know rivers are streams of water, so they start somewhere and Finish somewhere. So get up and find the source of that river. If you find it, you may find some answers and if you find nothing, then you will know for sure that you are just a crazy man and then you can just stop being crazy.” “You just say it because of your dream you had about me talking of the source,” said Logan, “Yes,” answered Hector, “Do you need a better reason?” “That makes sense somehow,” said Logan “But how can I leave? what about my herd?” “I will take care of them,” said Hector. “Today, I will take them home with me, you can go to the source of the river tomorrow.” “Tomorrow?” said Logan in shock, “Then,” said Hector, “When do you think?” “I don’t know,” answered Logan, “But tomorrow is so sudden,” “When ever you go it’s sudden,” said Hector, “The sooner the better, every day that you postpone it, it will become a bigger and scarier task to do,” Logan thought to himself for a while and then nodded in agreement and smiled at Hector, “But it’s scary,” said Logan “I don’t know if I can do it.”

“What are you afraid of?” said Hector. “I might die,” answered Logan, “That’s not a good reason to sit around and do nothing,” said Hector “Besides, death is not that much scary, actually I remember my mother used to say that we start the process of dying the moment we are born,” “That’s,” said Logan slowly while thinking “Confusing,” “Yeah,” answered Hector “As she would say and I understood, our bodies are made from millions of small parts, and those parts are changing constantly, during our life span, our body loses its small parts and replaces it with new ones several times. So if you think about it like this, we have already died several times to this day. The Logan I met years ago was somebody else physically, that Logan is already dead, your tiny body parts are back to nature and you are a new version of yourself now.” “So you

mean,” said Logan, “We are not the same people as we were when we met?” “We are the same idea,” said Hector “But we are not the same body, and since death only destroys your body, not your idea, then it is not actually something different from living,” “I remember when I was a child,” interrupted Logan “Our chief in the village would say that death is a part of life,” “That’s not what I’m saying though,” said Hector, Logan looked at him waiting for his next words “I believe that life is a part of death, we are constantly dying, but we fight against death and reborn in each moment until on a certain point we stop doing that and let the death continue without interruption,” Hector took a deep breath and continued after a moment “Death is a way for our body to rest from reborn and get back to nature,”

“But what about our idea?” asked Logan “If we stop being reborn and go back to nature completely, there is no vessel to contain the idea of us, isn’t that scary?” “Yes,” answered Hector “I accept that the idea of us, might not exist without our body, but I think that if after death I can think about me and feel the death of my body, then the idea of me, that is me, is still there, therefore I still exist, and if I can’t think about it and I die with my body, then there is no me to mourn on me, so either way it’s not scary, I will be immortal as an idea or I will die and not feel the pain of not being alive, both are equally comforting for me.”

“That’s not so crazy,” said Logan “But death is not the scariest thing on the way,” “What is it then?” asked Hector, “Well,” answered Logan stretching his words as he was thinking about what he was going to say, as he was saying it “There are many difficulties, being alone in nowhere, not knowing where to go,” “But,” interrupted Hector with a strong voice, “I think, being miserable and doing nothing as you are right now, is scarier than the dangers that might threaten you on the way.”

Logan thought for a while and finally said, “Yes, you are right, I will think about it, you are a good friend,” “I try to be,” said Hector “We may not be of the same species but I like you,” Logan smiled and said, “Me too.”

That day Logan came back with his herd, he was not still sure about the journey. It was getting dark, and he needed to talk to somebody about it, so he went to Laura’s old home. He knocked on the door and Laura opened the door surprised to see Logan there.

They went in and started talking, Logan told her all about the mermaid and his talks with Hector. “I don’t think that’s a good idea,” said Laura “But I’m not you, I can’t decide for you, I know I would not risk going to the unknown, at least not right now. But the more I think about it, the more I realize that Hector might be right.” they sat in silence for some time and Laura continued with a cheer in her voice, “Maybe we should not just go to find the source of the river, maybe we should find somebody who knows something about it. Maybe there is someone in another village nearby that has the same experience as you.” “Maybe,” said Logan “But, it’s not just about that, I think I know that going to the source is the right thing to do. My dreams are all about one thing, I mostly see myself in a place where the river starts, whether it’s a tree or a city or a hole in the ground, it’s always about a source.”

Laura thought about it for a moment “Then you think we should find the source,” said Laura “By following the river in the opposite direction?” “We?” said Logan, “I prefer to go alone,” “Why?”

asked Laura with a surprised voice, “We have been together since childhood,” “I know,” said Logan with a calm voice, “I really like you,” he looked at her affectionately and continued “I don’t want to put you at risk.”

They did not say anything for a while, then Logan saw her new experimental food and they started talking about it and tasted it.

Logan thought about the journey for some time and finally decided to go. His dreams would repeat every night, now he believed that the dreams are more of a call for him to take action, and after a lot of thought he really believed that it was all about the river and its source. One day he took his herd to Hector and said goodbye to him.

That evening Logan came back to the village without his herd. He got home and started packing some stuff. He didn’t know how much time he would be away and had no idea what to take with himself. He has never been very far away from the village. It was at the same time scary and exciting for him. After lots of thinking, he decided to travel light. He just packed a few necessary things like his dagger, some firestone, food, and a small flask to drink water from the river.

At night Laura came back home, she was surprised by seeing Logan “The sheep were not in their stall, I thought you didn’t come back yet.” said Laura, “I gave the sheep and camels to Hector for some time,” said Logan, “Why?” asked Laura “Because” answered Logan, “I want to go away for a while” Laura just looked at him as she was expecting more explanation, then Logan continued, “I want to find the source of the river.”

“And you are planning to do it alone?” asked Laura “Yes,” said Logan with a sad voice, he would prefer to have Laura by his side, it’s been some time that he had feelings for her, but he was not sure about it. They were more like brother and sister and at the same time they were not from the same species, Logan found it best to deny his feelings for her and now that he was going away, he preferred for her to stay here in safety, this way he didn’t have to deal with his feelings anymore.

Laura looked at him, there were tears in her eyes “But I’ll miss you” said Laura, Logan went to her, picked her up the floor and hugged her “Me too,” said Logan “But if I don’t do it, I will never know, I will always have a regret in my heart that I did nothing, I just need to see if there is really something happening or if it is just my imagination, and I always have this regret in my mind that I couldn’t be like my parents, they explored the whole world and I have done nothing after they have gone.”

Then he let her down. Laura kissed his cheek and said “Please be careful,” “I will,” said Logan. That night they stayed up for a long time and just talked about their memories. It was a fun night for both of them. Laura insisted on going with Logan at one point, but Logan didn’t agree with her, he needed to be alone. More than the river, this journey was about himself.

Chapter 6:

The next morning, like most of the days, Laura left the house before Logan woke up. Before leaving the home, she kissed his lips in sleep and left with tearful eyes. After a while Logan woke up from his every night dream and started his journey.

He went toward the valley where the river was. It was not so far and he would be there soon. After reaching the river, he sat beside it and took a long look around. This might be the last time he would see this place, where he would come and sit every day for the last months.

It was a small valley, not too deep, he could jump over the walls with a little effort. There were lots of thistles and some cactuses around in the valley, though no insects were in the valley, they were mainly in the field up the valley inside the little holes they had in the ground. He would bring his herd to the field every day, sit on the side of the valley, and watch the river the whole day.

After a long last look, he stood up and started walking in the opposite direction of the river. Around noon he passed Hector's village, suddenly he felt a wave of sadness in his heart. He was leaving everything behind. His friend, his home, and his beloved Laura. But he did not stop and continued his journey.

After he passed the village of Hector, he stopped for lunch. Logan had some smoked insects and meat with him, Laura had prepared it for his journey early in the morning. But he decided not to eat them and hunt some insects now that there were enough of them here. He didn't know how his journey would turn and where he would go.

After lunch he resumed the journey and walked for the whole day. The landscape did not change that much, except that the valley was no lower than the fields around it anymore. The river was flowing in a flat field, but there were mountains far ahead and hills here and there.

That evening Logan found a big rock before the dark and decided to spend the night there. It was his first night out under the sky in many years. The last time he spent a night outside was several years ago, when he was still a teenager and went on a trip to the mountains with his father. He fell asleep thinking about his parents. That night he did not see the usual dream, he did not remember his dream at all from last night. He thought it might be a good sign, now that he started the journey the dream is gone, it means he is doing the right thing.

During the day nothing special happened until the evening. Before the sunset he reached a series of tall hills and stood in front of them. Hills were tall with steep slopes, they had a dark color and the river was flowing out from between them. It was not a pleasant scenery, the hills had made a labyrinth and going into them was not anybody's first choice. Logan spent the night in front of the hills.

The next morning Logan stood up, washed his face in the water of the river, and walked inside the hills. He thought to himself that the river will guide him through this maze. As he walked in more, the hills were getting higher and higher, there was not enough sunlight coming inside the labyrinth, but it was enough for him to continue.

After lots of turns and ups and downs, he reached a place that seemed like a dead end. The water was streaming out of a small thin crack between the hills. He tried but could not get in there, his body was too big for that crack.

He thought maybe he could turn around this hill and reach the river from the other side, he went back a little and tried to remember his placement really hard. Now that he was getting away from the river, there was nothing but his sense of direction to guide him through.

Not long after, he found himself lost in the labyrinth. He couldn't even see the sun to find a general direction. Sunset arrived and everywhere went dark. Logan had no choice but to spend the night where he was.

The next morning he woke up before dawn. He could see around a little now. Logan ate some of the food that he had in his bag and started searching for a way out or a sign of the river. On every corner he would sit and listen carefully in the hope of the sound of the river. It took him a long time since he could find a place with shorter hills. He thought probably it is a way out of this labyrinth. And finally, he could find his way out.

He had no idea where he was. It was almost noon and he couldn't tell his direction. So he started eating lunch until the sun gave him a direction.

He was traveling north all this time, now he was wondering if he wanted to go north to find the river again or go back and try the way within the hills again. After a long time thinking about it he decided not to go back inside the labyrinth and try to find a way around the hills.

He traveled for a day, but it seemed that the hills are like a chain and the only way is going through them. Thus he spent another day going back to find the river again. He had run out of the water and could not take it anymore. Fortunately there were lots of insects in the field and he did not have to eat his small portion of smoked food. But he was thirsty.

When He finally reached the river by the hills, Logan just sat beside it and drank as much as he could. the more he would drink the more he felt thirsty, but eventually his body got tired and didn't feel the thirst anymore.

There he was again, in front of the hills, by the side of the river. He didn't know what to do next. He knew what is at the end of the road now. And he had no idea how to get past his first obstacle. He wished Laura was here with him. The unsolvable dilemma of his journey was in front of him, he could not continue, and he didn't want to go back.

After Logan spent a night there, finally he decided to go back. He needed help. He was thinking of going back to Amphitrite and taking her advice. Although he knew what she would probably say. Maybe even Hector could help him.

All he knew was that there was nothing he could do without somebody's help. It made him ashamed of himself, but he could not think of any other way.

It took him almost three days to go back and reach his village. On the evening of his arrival, he wanted to go straight to the mermaid, but he couldn't skip meeting Laura again.

He found Laura in her old room sitting and waiting for something to boil. She got excited about seeing him and they hugged each other for a long time.

“So, did you find it?” asked Laura, “What?” asked Logan in wonder “Found what?” “The source of the river,” asked Laura with a smile, “Oh,” said Logan with shame, “About that,” Logan started telling her everything that happened to him and his reason to come back.

“Maybe that was it,” said Laura, “Maybe you found the source, what else did you expect?” “No,” interrupted Logan, “That was no source, I’m sure, that was just a narrow way that I could not pass alone.” “Well, what are you going to do now?” asked Laura, “I don’t know,” said Logan, “That’s why I’m back, I need to get help, maybe from Amphitrite,” then he paused and looked at Laura, and she continued, “Did you talk to her before the last time I go to her?” “Why?” asked Laura in shock, “She,” said Logan and continued after a small pause, “She knew too many things about me, she knew my name without me telling her,” Laura looked at the ground, Logan asked again a little louder, “Did you talk to her about me?” after an uncomfortable silence Laura started talking with a low voice, “I talked to her several times about you,” she continued with her eyes full of tears, “I often go down there and talk to her about the man I love.”

Logan was shocked, for a while they did not say anything, and after Laura started to cry he got up and hugged her. Logan felt like an idiot, all this time Laura felt love for him and he was ignorant enough to not see it. Probably she had the same feelings about their relationship as Logan.

They talked for a while about their feelings and decided not to care about their species and their situation. Life has been hard enough for both of them and it would be better to not make it harder for themselves by thinking about unimportant things. Finally they left Laura’s small home and went back to their home, and for the first time in their life they spent the night together on the same bed.

Chapter 7:

The next day, Laura did her job of bringing water to the village and came back home to Logan before dawn. When Logan woke up, she was by his side on the bed. After spending some time together they went and ate breakfast.

“Maybe after all,” said Laura, “It was good that you went to find the source, it caused me to tell you how I feel, after you left all I could think about was how idiot I was of not telling you about my feelings, but now we can be together,” Logan looked at her with a serious face “But,” said Logan, “You know that I’m going to go again.” A deep uncomfortable silence filled the room.

“Do you love me?” asked Laura with a low voice, “It’s not about that,” answered Logan, “Just,” interrupted Laura, “Just answer me,” Logan took a deep breath, “Of course,” said Logan, “Of course I do,” “So why are you leaving?” asked Laura, “I can’t really explain how I feel, it’s like I didn’t feel alive, but with this goal in mind I have just started living, I can’t just let it go, something deep inside tells me that this is my destiny, I know that it may sound dumb, but that’s how I feel, if I stay here, I will always regret what I have not done for the rest of my life. Besides when I was on the journey I did not see any weird dreams, but from last night it’s back again, I think it’s a very obvious reason to know that my journey was on the right path, I just need to resume it.”

“I understand that,” said Laura, “At least I will try to understand that,” and then she got up and left the home without saying goodbye. Logan stood up to follow her, but then changed his mind and sat on the chair again.

Later that day, Logan went to the underground water reservoir to see the mermaid again. He entered the corridor, this time it was not as mysterious as the last time.

He reached the water after some walk and waited for a while. Surely Amphitrite was aware of his presence. Not long after that, she came out of the water looking at Logan with a smile. He did not say anything and just smiled back. Amphitrite came closer to him, “What is it this time?” asked the mermaid, “I need help,” said Loga, “With what?” asked Amphitrite with impatience, “I want to find the source of the river,” answered Logan, “Why?” asked Amphitrite, “Because,” said Logan, “I believe this is my destiny to go there, I feel a force calling me toward there,” “Oh,” interrupted Amphitrite with a loud voice, “This crap again,” Logan looked at her in surprise, “What?” asked Amphitrite, “You did not expect a magical creature to speak like this?” Logan did not say anything and only nodded his head slowly answering yes. “Look,” continued Amphitrite, “I told you before, I am not who everybody thinks I am, just because I live in the water and a little far from other creatures does not mean I am superior to you. I don’t know if you should go there or not, but if you feel that you must, I won’t stop you. My only advice to you is that never trust a mermaid if you see one in your journey, we may not be able to see someone’s destiny or be omnipotent, but we are powerful and can do things you can’t imagine,” she came closer to Logan and continued “And we are not nice creatures.” Logan wanted to say something, he wanted to ask her about the last words she said last time, Logan still was wondering if she meant for him to go on this journey by saying ‘Don’t stay’ but before he knew,

Amphitrite reached him, pulled his legs, and made him fall down on the water. Then she took his head in her arms and pulled him under the water. He did not see anything after that.

Logan woke up knowing nothing of where or when he was. He was in a dark cave, no light was there, but it seemed like there was some light coming from the water in the other corner of the cave. Nothing else could be seen. He was all alone in there and there was no trace of Amphitrite. The last thing he remembered was being pulled into the water. Logan checked his clothes, they were all dry, so it must have been a while since he was here. He wanted to shout and call for help but something made him regret the idea, he didn't know where he was and maybe it was better not to grab any attention here. It didn't look like a place that any other friendly creature would be in it.

He stood and walked a bit, there was no light in the opposite direction of the water and he couldn't see how long the cave continued into the dark, so he just turned back toward the water, he leaned on the water with extra caution this time.

There was nothing in it that could be seen, it just seemed that the water shines a bit. Maybe water always shines but just can't be seen due to other lights present. He didn't know what to do, there was nothing to do, he had to wait there for Amphitrite or some other creature to show up and see what happens next.

Logan looked around a little bit more carefully, he was under a natural dome inside a dark cave. On one side there was a small pool with bright water in it. The walls of the cave were all around the pool. On the other side, the cave was connected to a big corridor, though it was dark enough that nothing could be seen beyond that point. Maybe the other side was also a dead-end and the only way out was through the water.

There was no opening in the cave and no living creature could be seen. It was both comforting and frightening.

He remembered Amphitrite was talking about her kind and how he should not trust them and then she pulled him into the water. Why did she do that? If she wanted to kill him he would be dead by now. He had no idea what was going on.

He heard the loud sound of his stomach in the silence of the cave. It scared him for a moment, but then he started laughing quietly by his reaction. He was so scared that his stomach could frighten him. Of course, he started to feel hungry and there was nothing to eat, this made him scared again. Would he die of starvation?

After hours of sitting and waiting Logan could not stand being still anymore. The complete silence and the dim light that wouldn't let him see anything but some parts of the cave around the pool was making him crazy. He felt that this is a cave for oblivion. He would lose his mind and forget everything if he stayed there longer.

Logan thought there might be two ways out of here. One was from the water and another through the complete darkness. He went to the water and leaned over it. No movements could be seen. Water had a dim dark blue color, he put his head in the water, but nothing changed, there was nothing there to see but the color of the water. He didn't know how deep the water was. If he jumped to it, he could have drowned. So there was no other choice but the dark corridor.

Logan stood in front of the corridor for a while and wished there was a way out at the end of this darkness. He started walking toward the complete darkness of the cave. After some minutes of walking he turned back and could not see anything behind, there was no trace of the light of the water anymore. He was in complete darkness now and he really didn't know if he was walking the right way out or not.

He closed and opened his eyes several times and there was no difference. It was just total darkness. It was a weird feeling, the one he had never experienced before. He felt blinded. There was no sound in the cave, and he preferred not to make any sound himself, except for the quiet sound produced by his feet touching the ground, no other sound could be heard.

The floor of the cave was not that rugged, so he just walked by the side of the cave touching the wall by his right hand and walking slowly toward the direction that he had no idea about. As time passed by he could see some white shapes trembling in front of his eyes. At first they seemed like rays of light showing the way out, it made Logan so happy. But then he realized that wherever he looked they were there. Even when he would close his eyes, those white shapes were in front of his eyes trembling.

He figured these shapes might be just from his own mind or eyes. Of course it was a new and abstract concept that the mind of Logan could not bear. But at least he understood that it was not real and tried not to care about it.

As he continued walking slowly and carefully, he heard a noise. It was coming from the direction in front of him. He stood there for a moment, there was complete silence for a while, he thought maybe he just heard an unreal sound just like the unreal white shapes that he is seeing.

There it was again, he heard the sound for the second time, and this time it was louder. It seemed like footsteps. Someone or something was coming toward him. His heart started pounding. He had no idea what to do. There was nothing he could see. He could not hide, he could not run, maybe the best thing to do was to stand still.

The footsteps were getting closer. He tried not to breathe and become invisible. Maybe the creature approaching could not see in the dark too. By the sound of its footsteps, Logan could feel that whatever it was, it knew exactly where to put its foot. Its steps had no hesitation in them. So probably it could see in this darkness.

As the footsteps got closer Logan could realize that it is not a two feet creature like himself or a goblin. It had four legs. Maybe it was a wolf or a lion. Of course lions have not been seen in a long time, but even a wolf is enough to kill the defenseless Logan in a matter of seconds.

He could feel that the creature reached him, it stopped near him, he could hear its breath. There was a very quiet and slow roar in its sound and it didn't seem friendly at all. The roar didn't sound like a wolf or a lion's roar. It was something that Logan had never seen or heard of.

Logan was getting ready to be attacked. He could not even see his own hand, so if the creature was standing right beside him, he could not tell. He heard the breath of the creature getting closer, after a moment Logan could feel the warmth of its breath on his left hand. He did not have a dagger or a knife with him, but what would be the point, one way or another, he was armless in this situation.

Chapter 8:

As Logan stood still in the dark feeling the breath of the creature on his hand, he felt that the creature leaned backwards and then the footsteps started again, the creature walked past him and left. Logan waited for a while till the footsteps completely faded away, he sat on the ground until his heart got back to normal.

His feet were no longer shaking, so he stood up and started walking in the dark again. After some time he felt that he could see the walls of the cave, it seemed like there was a light after all, and the white tremoring shapes were no longer in front of him. He was getting excited, light meant that he was getting near to the exit. And just like that, the light became brighter and finally, he could see the end of the cave. It was too bright for his eyes so just waited for a moment to let his eyes get used to the light.

Logan came out of the cave, he almost knew where he was, it was a valley near their neighboring village, where Hector was living. He didn't know how he reached this place, but it didn't matter anymore, he was alive and outside in the world again, this made him happy.

He almost ran toward Hector's house. When he got there Hector was not there. It was not the evening yet and he must have been in the fields. Logan wanted to go to the fields but he was too tired to do that, so he just laid down at Hector's house waiting for him to come back.

Logan felt unusual tiredness, now that he was out in a safe place he could see his body shutting down from hunger and too much stress, and before he knew it, he was in a deep sleep.

Logan opened his eyes lying in a bed inside Hector's home, he sat up and saw Hector and Laura on the other side of the room. They smiled at him, Laura ran toward Logan and hugged him. Logan was a little confused. Before asking anything Hector said "I found you at my door two days ago," Logan looked at him with a stunned face, "I was asleep for two days?" asked Logan, "I don't know if it was sleep or something else," answered Laura, "At some point, I thought you are not even taking a single breath," Logan was still shocked, "I went to Amphitrite," said Logan and continued "She took me to the water," and Logan told them what has happened to him in the cave and how he got out of it.

"I was worried sick about you," said Laura with affection, "I left the village and found Hector to get help," "I did search for you everywhere," said Hector, "But you couldn't be found anywhere, we even thought you might have gone on your journey again, but I found you by my door and went fast to get Laura here." Logan couldn't say anything back and just nodded in thanks toward Hector and hugged Laura "I missed you," said Logan, "When I was there, I realized how much I really love you," Hector left the room for them to be alone.

It took a few hours for Logan to completely recover from the shock and understand where or when he is. That day, they stayed at Hector's place. Hector had a big house with a very high ceiling. His interior was a little different from a human or a goblin home. Centaurs are taller, so everything was out of reach for Laura and hard to reach for Logan. There was no bed as they used to have, but there were some soft bundles on the floor in one of the rooms that they would use as the bed.

At night Logan could not sleep well and suddenly realized that the last time he was asleep, or better to say passed out, he did not dream like always, in fact he did not remember to have any dreams at all.

Logan fell asleep thinking about his dreams and that night he saw a new dream. This time he was in a flat field, there was nothing there, not even a thorn. Everywhere was full of sand, it was like a desert that he has always heard about. A place where life ends, there is not even a single underground water source in a big desert.

Logan has never been into a desert, but now he was there in his dream. He was walking alone toward a direction, but he didn't know why there was no river or anything to guide him. In the horizon a big city like the one in his other dream came to view. A city with tall buildings. This city was bigger and had much taller buildings than the last one in his dream. He started running toward the city that suddenly sands started running down a big hole in front of him and took him down the hole.

Logan woke up in cold sweat. It was still dark and Laura was beside him in the bed. He hugged her and went to sleep again.

The next day Hector brought a long dagger for Logan that according to him it belonged to his forefathers. It was an ornamented silver dagger with a bronze cover that had carvings of a war on it. According to what Hector knew, it was a carving of the first war between humans and centaurs that took place hundreds of years ago. There were lots of myths about this war between centaurs. The dagger was a little rusty but the blade was still sharp as new.

They had to leave Hector and get back to their village because Laura had to provide water for the village. With Logan's help, the daily task finished faster than usual.

After that they started talking about all that happened, it was obvious that Logan had to resume his journey again, and Laura was not against it. But she convinced him to go on the journey together. It was easier than she thought to convince Logan, he already had this idea in his mind and was waiting for her to volunteer again and as soon as she talked about it, he accepted it.

There were two reasons for them to go on the journey together, Logan could not go alone, he faced his first obstacle and already had to come back.

But the reason that was actually in Logan's mind was that he didn't think they would come back to the village anymore. He could sense that the journey will be a long one, maybe as long as their lifetime, he realized that the first time he started the journey and a part of him knew that he surrendered to the first obstacle that easy to come back and start the journey again with Laura, he did not want to leave her and the idea of not seeing her again was sorrowful enough to make him stop the journey.

That evening after deciding to go on the journey together, they went to the village's central hall's storage to find useful things for their journey.

But first Logan went to the books again in the hope of finding something new. He spent the whole day there but couldn't find anything. He wished to be able to read all the books, there must have been some useful data in there for him. But he was not educated enough to be able to do that.

In the storage they found some useful stuff. Laura found a bow with seven arrows, it was her childhood dream to learn how to use a bow, now it was a necessity for her to do that. They also found a long rope that felt useful.

Logan and Laura packed some necessary stuff and enough food and drinks for ten days in their backpacks and started walking toward the river. In less than an hour, they reached the valley by the stream of water running in the middle of it, they started their journey by walking in the opposite direction of the river. Laura looked at the empty valley and followed Logan.

They walked alongside the river for a few hours then they reached a point where the valley was narrowed. Logan remembered passing this place several days ago, then he stopped for a moment. "What happened," asked Laura, "Besides this point, there is just the river inside the valley, we should walk through it," answered Logan. Laura sighed almost heavily and said "I just see a dry valley. I can walk through it." Logan looked at her and started walking to the river. It was not a deep river, it has never been deep. Water was not getting higher than his knee. But walking in the water was harder so he was walking slower. Laura was walking normally in the water and Logan could feel that she was laughing in her mind to the way he is walking now.

"So," asked Logan "When you are looking at me, am I completely dry in your eyes?" Laura looked at him and his funny way of walking and said "Yes," "You don't see that my pants are wet beneath the knee?" asked Logan, "No, they are completely dry." answered Laura, "That's weird" Laura stared at him and said with an annoyed voice "Yeah, I'm the weird one here." Logan didn't continue the discussion.

Logan saw a big flat stone in the middle of the river in front of them, pointed at it and said, "Maybe it's better to eat lunch there" Laura nodded in agreement, they went there, ate lunch and rested for a while. It was noon and the sun was shining on them. "Thank you for accompanying me," said Logan, Laura just smiled at him and nodded. Logan continued "As long as I remember you have always been by my side, even when we were children and were almost the same height," they both smiled.

After a little rest, Laura stood up to practice the art of bowing with her new weapon. In less than two day's she was already as good as a trained soldier. Despite her thin arms and body, she could use the bow very easily.

But more than how she was using the bow, Logan was amazed by how easily she could walk from here to there inside the water without any trouble. He could see the water splashing beneath her feet, but it didn't make her walk any slower.

It was time for them to continue their journey. As they were walking Laura asked, "How much do you think we should go to get to the narrow passage in the hills?" Logan looked at the horizon for a moment and answered "I think we will get there tomorrow," after a while in silence Laura asked again, "What do you expect to find?" "A way to get into the passage," answered Logan, "No," said Laura with a smile, "I mean after that, in the end, how will you know that we've reached the source?" Logan continued walking for some time and just looked at the water beneath his feet, finally, he said "I think I will know the source when we reach it," "I hope it's not that far," answered Laura with a little bit of laughter.

As they were walking, Laura found something and stopped walking, “What happened?” asked Logan, “This plant,” said Laura as walking toward a cactus not far away from their path and continued, “I’ve never seen something like it, I wonder how it tastes,” “What?” said Logan with wonder, “I’ve seen likes of it all around our village,” “No,” said Laura trying to touch the plant, “Come take a look at it, it’s different,” then she took a small knife out of her pocket and cut a part of the plant and put it in her backpack.

They walked all day, there was nothing special on their way, it was all deserted drylands, and the river was streaming through a little valley that as they were walking, its depth reduced to the point where it was less than a meter beneath the surface.

By nightfall they had to stop, there was no moon shining that night and they could not see anything. So they just found a big rock and laid down beside it. That night Logan did not see any dreams any more, it was the sign again, he resumed the journey and the dream was gone again, by now he was sure that his dreams were some kind of trigger for him to go on this journey, but still, he was not sure about what was going to happen next.

By the first rays of the sun, they started their second day into the unknown journey. They did not talk much on their way. Around sunset they reached the hills again, the river was streaming from within them.

They decided to spend the night at the entrance and go inside this labyrinth tomorrow morning. Next day morning they resumed their journey inside the hills, the river had a lot of turns inside the labyrinth and Laura had no idea where they were going, the river was only guiding Logan through this maze.

Laura saw some new plants inside the hills and they had to stop several times for her to pick up a part of those plants for her later experiments.

It didn’t take much time to get to the passage, it was as before, a thin passage inside a hill and as Logan would see it, the river was flowing out of it.

“Well,” said Logan, looking at Laura “What should we do now?” “Do you have any plans?” asked Laura “Surely you did not resume the journey without a plan for this,” Logan looked at her as if he had a proposal but was ashamed of saying it, finally he said, “I thought maybe you could fit inside it and see how long the passage goes,” Laura looked at the passage, Logan continued, “But don’t go too far, just see if it is wider inside and the entrance can be carved,” “Ok,” said Laura “But just in case think about another plan so that if it was too deep and we couldn’t carve it wide enough for you, there would be something else to do about it.” “In that case,” said Logan, “I thought that we should put sings in our way and try to find a new passage through the hills and find the river again on the other side,” “that does not seem easy,” said Laura as she was taking her backpack off and walking toward the narrow passage.

Laura could fit in the passage without her backpack, so she went inside with a light in her hand to see if she could find any useful information.

It didn’t take seconds that she came back out, “It’s not that deep,” said Laura, “Less than your height inside this passage, there’s a tunnel big enough that you can freely walk in,” “So,” said

Logan “Do you think we can carve it out?” Laura grabbed a part of the hill in her hand, and it came off to her hand easily, “Yeah,” said Laura, “It will be easy.”

They did not lose time and started digging the entrance wall. Logan with his new dagger and Laura with her small knife. They did their best to open the entrance big enough for Logan to pass through it.

Although it was not much deep, their simple tools were not giving them any support for this task. “Why didn’t we take a spade with ourselves?” asked Laura, “I thought about it,” answered Logan, “And honestly I even took one, but then I thought having extra food the same weight as the spade would be a better idea, I was not sure about the depth of the passage,” “Yeah,” agreed Laura “I hope we don’t need a spade later too, it’s not that easy to carve a hill,” “But,” added Logan “Even with a spade we would not be able to do it faster than this.” they resumed the carving without any further discussion over the spade. On the first day they had good progress, but could not finish it before the dark.

After sunset, they ate a meal. Laura used some of the new plants she had found and mixed it with some of the dried plants and insects she carried to make a meal. It was not the best food she has ever made, but it was edible, so they ate it in silence.

After the meal, they cuddled to sleep and suddenly something made Laura shake in her place, “What happened?” asked Logan in shock, “Did you hear that?” answered Laura with fear in her voice, “No,” said Logan, “What was it?” “I don’t know,” said Laura as her ears were moving fast in every direction, “But I think there is something moving near us,” “Is it coming toward us?” asked Logan as he sat up and took his dagger in his hand, “Shhhh,” said Laura, “Let me listen,” they stood still for some moments.

Laura could hear much better than Logan, her ears could detect quiet noises from far away while Logan had normal human ears.

“It’s an animal,” whispered Laura, “With four legs, and it’s getting closer,” after a moment she added, “And I think there’s two of them,” “Maybe we should lite a fire,” said Logan, “In case that wolves are coming, a fire would be handy” and Laura nodded in agreement.

They would not light a fire in usual times, nights in their area were cold, but not unbearable, and the light of the fire would attract all kinds of creatures, so they preferred to not light any fire at night. But they had with them some dry thistles in case they needed to make a fire in times like this.

Logan opened his bag and threw some wood out, now that they were sure some animals were coming toward them it was better to have a fire so they could see better, the moonlight was not enough for a fight against an unknown animal. He lit the fire up using firestones and at the same time Laura fired an arrow with a scream.

A wolf jumped toward her, Logan did not have the chance to help her, the second wolf jumped toward him. Logan threw the fire at him, the wolf jumped back a little with a howl.

Laura was defending herself with her small knife, the arrow she shot did not harm the wolf. Logan roared like a wild animal and attacked the wolf, his dagger cut a small wound on the left hand of the wolf. The second wolf attacked Logan again from behind and bit his right shoulder,

Laura jumped high and stabbed her knife to the wolf's snout. Wolf howled in pain and went back, the other wolf bit Laura on the left hand, she screamed, Logan attacked with his dagger again and managed to scare the wolf back.

Logan went toward the fire, grabbed it by his hands and threw it toward the wolves, they stayed back a little, he shouted to Laura "Run," and he saw Laura run away with her bow, one of the wolves started following her soon after. Logan ran toward the wolf but the other wolf attacked him. Logan fell down and the wolf stood on his body, he howled in victory, there was another howling, Logan thought if it was the other wolf chasing Laura, they were already too far.

Logan caught his dagger again and cut the wolf's neck. It did not cut deep but made the wolf jump in pain. Now Logan had a little time to escape, he started running as fast as he could. The wolf followed him after a moment, but it was hard to chase a prey in this dark maze. Logan tried not to make too much noise. He found some natural steps on one of the hills and climbed on them. It was harder than he thought but he managed to climb a little.

The wolf was closing, Logan could hear it. He focused and tried to see the wolf under the dim moonlight between passageways. He could see a movement down a vista, and made sure this is the wolf, and thought to himself, 'one wound at a time'.

The wolf saw him and was approaching slowly. Logan had a pain in his right shoulder, he touched it and felt the blood on his torn clothes. Finally when the wolf was close enough he roared and jumped on it and tried to stab his dagger all the way into the wolf's body.

The wolf jumped toward Logan and they met in the air, his dagger reached the wolf's body before it could harm Logan with its sharp teeth.

They fell on the ground, the wolf was howling in pain, but managed to stand up faster than Logan and attacked him again. Logan didn't let go of his dagger, attacked back. They wrestled for a moment. The wolf threw Logan away. He still had his dagger in his hand and the best thing he could do was to run away again. It did not take much time for the wolf to catch him again.

Logan smelled like blood and it was not easy for him to lose the wolf now. So he decided to stand his ground. The wolf stood a little farther waiting for one last attack. The wolf jumped on Logan and he jumped on the ground toward the wolf, facing up and holding his dagger toward the wolf. He could cut the wolf's throat, but it was not enough, the wolf attacked again. He pushed the dagger in its mouth, the wolf bit his hand but Logan didn't let go and pushed the dagger harder into the mouth and throat of the wolf.

Chapter 9:

Eventually the teeth loosen up and the wolf fell on the ground. Logan started roaring again and stabbing the wolf's body several times to make sure it was dead. Then he himself fell beside the wolf too. His right hand and shoulder were wounded.

Suddenly he remembered about Laura. He stood up and started shouting her name and going in different directions. There was no answer, but before he knew it, he fell down again and passed out from the pain.

Logan opened his eyes, the sun was up and he could see around. He was inside the labyrinth of the hills. His hand was in much pain, he looked at it and saw the dried blood on it. He could see the wolf's teeth marks on his hand. Logan tried to get up but his shoulder started to hurt. He looked at it, fortunately, the wound was closed, but there was some small bleeding on his shoulder.

Logan remembered all about last night and started shouting Laura's name again. He ran in all directions shouting. There was no answer, he was going crazy. He found the body of the wolf he had killed last night. His dagger was still in the wolf's body, grabbed it and started searching for Laura again.

Hours passed and he could not find any sign of Laura. He was thirsty and hungry, his wounds were not helping him. Logan decided to find the river again, maybe Laura had gone back to their camping place.

Finding the river was harder than he thought, he searched a lot and saw the wolf's dead body two times in his search inside the mountains. Finally after tiring hours he heard the sound of water streaming and knew that it was near now.

Logan found the river and after drinking some water ran toward their camp. Everything was still there, Laura had not been back. But before thinking about anything he started eating some of the food from the bags.

With a full stomach, he started to think of a way to find Laura. An idea came to his mind for a fraction of a second but he preferred not to even consider her death.

Logan remembered about the rope they had found, he took one side of the rope in his hand and started walking, this way he could at least make sure that he was not turning in small circles. He did not tie the other end of the rope to anywhere and let the rope follow him after its length finished. It was not the most brilliant idea, but still better than nothing.

With a bag full of food and water, and his dagger in hand, he grabbed the rope, and with a more focused mind, could recognize the general direction of his walks. Now he was searching every corner and coming back to the main passage using the rope and continuing in one direction.

Logan planned to do the same for the trip back, this way he would probably find the river fast enough.

It was almost dark, and he could not find Laura. There was not enough time to go all the way back, so he decided to spend the night in a corner inside the hills. It was closed from three sides and made a feeling of safety for him.

Nothing happened that night, and like recent nights, Logan did not see any dreams. In the morning he woke up early and ate breakfast in silence and continued his search.

He was getting farther and farther from the river, and his food and water supplies would end in a matter of days if he wouldn't find a new source. Of course insects were all around him, the main problem was the water, but it was too soon to be worried about water supplies. Around noon he decided to go back and try some other ways.

Two days Logan searched for Laura and nothing, not even a torn part of her clothes or a trace of fighting with the wolf or even a drop of blood was there. Logan was disappointed, he did not have any more energy left, not to search for Laura nor to continue the journey to find the source. Finally Logan went back to their last camp together with Laura. Still, no sign of her was there. He started digging the entrance of the passageway alone.

He was working slowly. The next day he thought to himself, that there might be nothing to eat inside the cave and his food supply was enough for three or four days, including the smoked meats that Laura had prepared and stored months before for a fist or celebration. So he decided to go alongside the river and gather some plants and insects.

Logan gathered some cactuses and cut the outer parts with his dagger. He also found a colony of cockroaches and killed as many as he could and put them inside his bag to eat later.

He went back to the entrance of the passageway, it would be over soon and he could continue chasing the river inside the tunnel, but he was tired and couldn't finish the job before the dark. He didn't want to finish the job, he still had hope, Lara was alive, there was no doubt about that, but he had to wait more or even search again for her. As Logan was thinking about these matters and deciding to start a new search in another direction for Laura after the hole was carved completely, he fell asleep beside the river.

The next day he continued his work and finished digging the tunnel forenoon. He went inside, it was not a big tunnel, but he could walk inside it as Laura had told him so.

He came back and packed his stuff, Laura's bag was there, he couldn't decide whether to leave her bag or carry it with himself. He sat by the bag for a while, if he would go in alone it was not for sure to come back soon, as much as he was eager to see what's inside the tunnel and go deeper in it, he could not leave Laura behind. So he decided to put Laura's bag on the corner of the entrance and go search for her again.

Suddenly he heard a sound, it was the sound of footsteps, he got prepared for a fight, it might have been another wolf approaching in daylight. From behind a turn he saw Laura coming toward him. She had something on her shoulder, Logan ran toward her and they hugged.

Laura had brought a leg of the wolf with herself, she was wounded, not as deep as Logan, but she had lots of scratches all over her body.

"What happened?" asked Logan with cheer in his voice, "Where were you? I knew you are still alive," "Long story," answered Laura, "First I need to rest, do we have water left?" "Yes," said Logan while helping Laura to sit beside their stuff and taking off her bow, and he continued, "Your flask still has water, I did not use it that much,"

Laura drank some water, rested her eyes and as she was lying with her eyes closed in Logan's arms started to tell about her adventure with the wolf.

“After you threw the fire at the wolfs I ran toward a random direction that night,” said Laura, “But I didn’t want to go very far, I thought you would need my help, I heard howling from your direction as I reduced my speed and turned back, I saw a wolf right behind me, without thinking I put an arrow inside my bow and shot at the wolf. The arrow went right through its eye and made it howl, but the wolf was still following me, though at a slower speed. Now I could outrun it, I was in a better situation overall, though I just had one arrow left with me,” suddenly Laura opened her eyes and said “where are my other arrows? I should have four arrows left here,” Logan pointed at her bag and there could be seen four arrowheads out of her bag, Laura relaxed again and continued as she was closing her eyes, “With one arrow left, I could not risk shooting at the wolf, and I had no idea of my where beings, I was running inside this neverending labyrinth and the wolf was running behind me, I tried to hear any sound coming from you, but I couldn’t hear anything from any direction. Eventually, I came to myself, I knew you can take care of yourself, I should have found a solution for myself, I could not run forever, then I gathered all my energy and ran as fast as I could, after some time I turned back and didn't see the wolf behind me. Though I was sure that it could smell the blood coming out of my wound on my arm and find me anyway. But now I had some time to plan an attack. I kneeled on the floor and listened carefully, I could hear the wolf’s footsteps coming toward me, I detected its direction and prepared my bow with my last arrow in it, I pulled the bow as hard as I could, I had to shoot a fatal shot and I only had one chance. I heard a wolf howl from far away, I thought you might have killed your wolf then. But immediately after that the wolf appeared where I expected it to do so, I shot my arrow and it went right in the wolf’s body behind its left arm. He howled in pain and started to walk away from me. We both knew that it was a fatal shot. Good thing, wolves can’t count how many arrows you still have, so he was afraid of me and started to go away. I took a deep breath but something frightening occurred to me.

I was lost in nowhere with a small knife and a bow without any arrows, I had no foods, or drinks so I thought maybe it's better to get back my last arrow from the wolf’s body, I ran toward him before he got far away. The wolf started running when he saw me catching up on him, so there we were doing the chase again, this time in the opposite situation. I was the chaser now.

I jumped on him when I thought it’s close enough and grabbed my arrow inside his body, but the arrow did not come off and the pain made the wolf go faster, I could not let go of my last defense tool so I grabbed it hard, but could not pull it out because I was being pulled on the ground by the wolf.

The wolf ran for a long while before giving up and falling on the ground. And I had scratches all over my body from being pulled that long. But finally I was victorious, I stood by the wolf's head and saw it dying. There was a hatred in his eyes before death. I pitied him for a moment, then I remembered that he was the one who attacked first and made me suffer this much, so I grabbed my knife and blinded his remaining eye too.

He didn't have enough energy even to howl. Then I grabbed my arrow out of his body and cleaned it from his filthy blood.

It was at this moment when I realized I am not inside the hills anymore. It was dark and I could not detect my situation against the hills. The pain in my arm was getting worse so I laid down on the ground just beside my predator and fell asleep till morning.

By the morning I was already feeling better, but still had pain in my body, especially my arm, my right ear could not hear very well, there was blood inside it and lots of scratches on it, and it did not get better until recently. I needed to eat something, I was very hungry, so I tried to find some food, not many plants were around and I could not walk, suddenly my eyes fixed upon the wolf. There was fresh meat beside me and I was looking for food, so I took my knife and started cutting the wolf's arm.

After eating some food, and resting for a long time under the sun, I stood up and found the hills. Before walking toward them I took one of his arms off to have something to eat for the future.

Of course finding my way inside the labyrinth was impossible. I searched everywhere and at some point I realized I was going in circles. Until yesterday I heard the sound of digging, then I knew you are alive, and back here, I just needed to follow the sound, but it got dark and you stopped working till today. And finally today I could follow the sound and find you back here."

Chapter 10:

After Laura rested for a while, they packed all their stuff and went through the tunnel. Laura stepped in first. It was not hard for her to walk inside the cave, but Logan had to bend a little. Laura was carrying a small light that used fat as fuel. She has brought this lamp for dark places like this.

Inside the cave was dark and a little humid. It was weird for Laura that even she could feel the moist air. So she concluded that there should be a water source up ahead, it could not be the effect of the river, as Logan was putting it.

As they were walking, the tunnel was getting wider and taller, not long after they entered the tunnel, Logan could stand tall and walk normally again. They could no longer see the entrance of the cave nor see any light from it and there was nothing in front of them either. They just had their light as the only source of light in the cave.

The tunnel was not in a straight line, it was as complex as the labyrinth outside, but luckily it was just a one way tunnel and all the intersections were blocked a little farther through them. As they proceeded forward, the tunnel was getting bigger and more straight.

They walked and walked, it seemed like the tunnel would never end. Suddenly Laura stopped to examine something on a corner of the cave. She gave the light to Logan and kneeled on the ground by the tunnel's wall. There was a new kind of plant, a kind that they have never seen likes it before. It was a kind of mushroom. The first mushroom they have ever seen in their lives. Laura cut a little bit of this new dark and weird shaped plant and tasted it. It had no thorn to injure her hand, and was very soft. And the taste, it was delicious even without any other edible thing to accompany it. She gave a bite to Logan and he liked it a lot too.

Laura gathered all the mushrooms she could find on the way. She was looking at all the corners in the tunnel and would pick up as much mushroom as she could find.

After a long walk and mushroom picking inside the tunnel, they got tired and decided to rest for a bit. Laura laid down on the ground in the middle of the tunnel for a bit. Logan could not do that, he would be annoyed by the water, he just sat down on a corner to rest on the side of the river.

They had no idea of the time now. There was no sky visible to them to measure their time. It could be night time, or just minutes after entering the tunnel. Their tiredness was a sign that let them know it has been a long time since they entered the tunnel.

While resting Laura realized how dead silence the tunnel is. Logan could hear the water streaming but for Laura it was different. Now that they did not make any sound themselves, she felt haunted by the heavy silence that had filled the tunnel. It felt like doom to Laura and she didn't take it as a good sign.

After some rest Logan started to prepare something to eat, and Laura mixed some of the mushrooms she had found with parts of wolf's fresh meat and some dried plants from before. It was one of the most delicious meals they have ever had.

Now it was time to check their wounds, Logan's hand was almost healed and though his shoulder didn't look so good, he didn't feel much pain in it. Laura had lots of small scratches, but the main problem was her arm. The wolf's teeth mark was still clearly visible. Logan tore a piece of his shirt and bandaged her arm.

They started walking in the cave after some time. Farther in the way, the cave got bigger, it was no longer just a narrow tunnel, now it was a big cave with water streaming in the middle. Laura could not see the water yet, although she felt that the air was more humid than before. They reached a place where Logan stopped and just looked at his feet for a moment. "What happened?" asked Laura, "Water is streaming out of the ground from here" answered Logan looking at his feet. They looked at each other and finally, Laura said, "So this is the source?" she was looking at the ground beneath Logan's feet. Logan did not say anything and Laura asked again "Now what?" Logan looked at her again and said, "I don't think this is the source, maybe we should go deeper into the cave" "Maybe we should sleep here for a while," said Laura, "I think it is night time outside the cave and time to sleep," "Yes," answered Logan, "I'm pretty tired too, let's sleep here."

They put their bags in a corner and laid down beside the bags. Logan wanted to blow the light off but Laura stopped him, "No," said Laura, "I don't feel very good about this place, let's let the light on," "But we will be asleep," said Logan, "And our fuel will be consumed," Laura hesitated for a moment and picked up a candle from her bag, "Let me light this candle then," said Laura while lighting the candle using their light, and then she blew it off.

After some hours Logan woke up to the open eyes of Laura looking at him, her eyes looked magical under the dim light of the almost finished candle. "How long have you been awake?" asked Logan, "Not long," answered Laura, "I just woke up, but the question is what time is it now?" Logan looked around, "By the size of your candle," said Logan and continued, "I'd say we have been asleep for half a day, but I have no idea when was it that we went to sleep," "I wonder," said Laura, "What we'll see when we reach the end of the tunnel," and after a long pause continued, "If there's any end to this doomed darkness that we are walking in," Logan did not say anything back to her.

They got up and ate something for breakfast and then prepared to continue their journey, "So," said Laura, "Now we have to continue this path without a river in it," "No difference for you," said Logan, "But I think it's natural, look at the ground here, it's not the same soil as we have always seen, it's like sand and it's moist, water could run under it, I'm sure that up ahead there will be hard solid on the ground and water will stream on top again," "And yet," said Laura, "It will not make any difference for me,"

They started walking in the path, it did not take long until they reached a big natural dome inside the cave, there was a big water reservoir at the bottom just like the one they had in their village. Laura could see it too and she finally felt relieved, now she knew the humidity in the tunnel should have been caused by this big water reservoir, she was not going crazy.

With the humidity it made inside the cave, it was obvious that this water source was much bigger than theirs back at the village. And since there was no sign of any creatures walking inside the cave, they figured it has been preserved for years.

They wondered if there are any mermaids living here too. They sat by the side of the underground lake and Laura filled their water flasks. Logan was trying to see through the water if there's anything in it or not. There was nothing that the eye could see.

When they stopped by the water and looked at its vastness, Logan could feel the deadly silence too. The water was so still and yet so fresh. Their little lamp couldn't light up the whole cave, but as much as it was visible, there was water.

"Maybe," said Logan, "Oceans were something like this," "Maybe," answered Laura in awe. They both have been hypnotized by the atmosphere of the cave.

Suddenly Logan started throwing some little rocks into the underground lake. "What are you doing?" asked Laura with a little shock in her voice, "I want to see if there's anything in the water" answered Logan "Like a mermaid?" asked Laura, "Yes," answered Logan as he was throwing a rock with all his energy, "What if there is a monster living in there?" asked Laura and Logan hesitated before throwing his last rock, but he did it anyway and said, "Even if there was one I think I made it awake now."

Laura gave him a crooked smile but deep down she was afraid of what creatures might be here with them, not just in the water, but outside too. Since there is a big source of water here, it is very probable that some creatures live in the cave or at least visit here to get water.

The sound of rocks thrown in the water made a big echo that reverbed through the big cave for a long time after Logan threw the last one. When the sound finally stopped the doomed silence began again, it felt like something was going to happen soon.

Their heart rate increased and Laura started to sweat on her forehead. They stood there for a while in horror but after a while that nothing happened, they started to feel better, Logan said in a whisper, "I think it's better to continue moving, there's a way around the water and I think the cave continues that way, maybe we get out of it soon," Laura whispered back "I'm afraid, maybe we should go back now," Logan looked at her and smiled and said "I have a feeling that the way in front of us is much shorter than the one behind us," "Have you considered," said Laura, "That this vast body of underwater could be the source of the river you have been seeking?" Logan looked at the water and did not say anything, "No," said Logan finally, "I will know the source when I see it."

Laura shook her shoulders and started walking toward the direction Logan has shown earlier, Logan started walking in front, he felt that it was better to walk in front to make a kind of shield for Laura, it made him feel useful and affectionate towards her.

They passed the water reservoir after a long walk and continued walking in the cave, the cave was bigger than before, the ground was suspiciously flat like someone made it this way, it didn't seem natural. A little up on the way Logan found the river again. There was a point where the river was absorbing to the sand on the ground and before that, there was water running on the surface again.

“Here,” said Logan pointing at the ground while there was a joy in his voice, “As I predicted, here the river goes under the ground,” “So,” said Laura, “You can see the river again?” “Yes, it’s streaming here and continues that way,” said Logan while pointing to the way with his hand.

They continued walking in silence when suddenly Laura stood still and also stopped Logan by taking his arm. Laura looked at him and said “I think I heard footsteps,” then she listened carefully, nothing could be heard, they started walking slowly and tried not to make any footstep sounds, Laura stopped again and listened carefully, there was nothing again, Laura whispered “I think something starts to walk and then stops just as we do, I can hear three footsteps, even more, but when we stop, there’s nothing,” Laura was afraid again, Logan couldn’t hear anything, but he could feel something is wrong, Laura felt that someone or something is watching them.

They started walking so slowly again, Logan was checking all the directions, but could not see anything, until suddenly he heard a very familiar voice. It was a roar, a very quiet but deep and powerful one, and it was the same sound as he heard in the mermaid's cave before.

Chapter 11:

Laura heard the roar too and started to look at Logan with fear. Logan pulled his dagger out of its cover and took the light up his head so that it would make a farther distance visible. Laura pulled out her bow and put an arrow in it. The same arrow that she killed the wolf with, she felt lucky having this arrow in her bow.

They were both standing still, they knew that a powerful enemy was on the way. A few seconds later they could hear the sound of footsteps coming toward them. They were shivering but yet stood strong, Logan was hoping that this creature would just pass by them like the one before.

Maybe they should have just blown off their light, but he was sure any creature that lives here can see in the dark, so blowing the light off would just make it harder for Logan and Laura.

Suddenly in front of them appeared, two shining eyes looking straight at them. Nothing else could be seen. The creature stopped there and looked at them. Laura was aiming straight toward the eyes but avoided to shoot yet.

Logan took a deep breath and was thinking about what to do next. Suddenly the creature started running toward them with a loud roar. Laura screamed and shot her arrow, and the sound of the arrow hitting the wall made her disappointed. The creature was advancing with the same pace, she put another arrow in the bow, if she would shoot this one, there would be just three more arrows left, she decided to let the creature get closer to have a better chance.

Logan put the light on the ground and stood in front of Laura with his dagger in his right hand and ready to fight. He could see the creature coming fast, and in a matter of seconds the creature passed by him and attacked Laura.

Logan turned and ran to help Laura, she had shot her second arrow and it did nothing but a scratch on the creature.

Laura was screaming loud. The creature bit Laura's right hand, then dropped her on the floor and put its lion-like paw on her chest and started dipping its nails into Laura's chest and blood started running out of her body.

Logan reached them at this moment and jumped with all his weight on the creature. It did fall off Laura and gave her a chance to get up and run behind Logan. Logan was on top of the creature trying to hurt it with his dagger. But with a powerful blow the creature threw off Logan.

The creature stood on its four legs and walked slowly toward Logan and Laura. It was black, looked like a lion but bigger and its face was different, it was so much like a human face. Logan didn't notice its face till now and he got shocked in a moment.

Its face was so human-like that for a moment Logan wanted to talk to it, but when it opened its mouth and showed its tiger-like long teeth, Logan changed his mind. The creature was advancing slowly, it was looking at Laura and completely denying the presence of Logan. Its long black tail was straight up and its nails were out of its big paws, ready to tear apart anything in the way.

Laura had three arrows left and put her next arrow in the bow. She tried hard but the pain in her right arm and her chest wouldn't let her pull the bow. Logan realized this and told her in a

whisper, “Just let go of your bow and run as fast as you can when I tell you,” Laura wore her bow on her back with the arrows inside her backpack and took a deep breath.

“Run,” shouted Logan and attacked the creature, Laura ran back toward the direction of the water reservoir. Logan managed to do several injuries on the creature, but the creature was not attacking him at all and just wanted to get rid of him and follow Laura.

Finally the creature got rid of Logan and ran fast toward Laura, Logan roared and followed the creature. They ran for some time before Logan heard Laura screaming, he was getting farther away from their lamp and it was almost completely dark, but he gathered his energy and ran as fast as he could, finally got to them beside the underground lake.

There was no light coming from the water this time, but something was lighting up the dome. Logan looked around for a fraction of a moment and saw some little dots of light on the walls. Some of them were moving, he had heard about these insects from his parents before, they could light up the night as his parents told him, and there they were lighting up the cave. The noise of the fight between the creature and Logan must have woken up the insects and made them light up.

But Logan focused on Laura fast, the creature was on top of Laura and was about to bite her head up, Logan jumped on it with all his power and threw it off Laura. Laura could not get up, she was laid on the ground feeling too much pain.

The creature stood up again and started walking toward them slowly. Logan started to roar like a wild animal, the creature roared back with such a loud voice that Logan actually stepped back a little.

Suddenly they heard a sound from the water, something was inside the water. They all looked at the water, even the creature, a mermaid came out of the water. For a moment Logan thought that was Amphitrite, but she was very different.

This mermaid was darker and somehow wilder. The mermaid started to speak in a language unknown to Logan, she seemed to be singing a chant, then she went straight toward the creature, and the creature went by the side of the water toward her.

The mermaid hugged the creature, pet it, kissed its face, and whispered something in its ear. Then the creature walked some distance away and sat on the floor like a cat and started watching Laura.

The mermaid swam toward Logan and said with a deep harsh voice “who are you? What are you doing here? Who has blessed you?” Logan was confused and asked “Blessed? I’m blessed?” “A mermaid or another powerful creature blessed you, or else you would be dead by now,” said the mermaid. Logan looked at Laura on the floor in wonder and then ran toward her and hugged her.

“Answer me, you pathetic creature,” said the mermaid again with a loud voice, her voice seemed to be the combination of several voices talking in unison. “My name is Logan,” said Logan, “I and my friend are on a journey to find the source of the river, we mean no harm,” said Logan. Mermaid stared at him with anger and Logan continued “I didn’t know that I’m blessed but now that you mention it I remember another mermaid named Amphitrite made me unconscious for a while, maybe she did whatever you are referring to.” the mermaid was shocked by hearing the

Amphitrite and said, "Do you know Amphitrite?" "Yes," said Logan with confidence, "And she sent you on this journey?" asked the mermaid, "Actually," said Logan while looking at Laura's wounds in her chest, then he realized that the voice of the mermaid softened a little after he mentioned Amphitrite's name, so he thought to himself that maybe lying a little bit would help them, "Yes," continued Logan "Amphitrite helped us for the journey."

The mermaid looked at Logan and then Laura, she seemed a little calmer now, "What is the purpose of your journey?" asked the mermaid, "We are looking for the source," said Logan, "Source of what?" asked the mermaid again with doubt, "River," said Logan "We are searching for a source of water," "You can not," screamed the mermaid "Use these waters, this lake is mine," "No, no," said Logan while his body was shaking from the mermaid's angry voice "We are not looking for an underground water source, we seek a place where rivers are made."

The mermaid looked at Logan deeply, she was a little confused "There is no river," said the mermaid, "I know," said Logan denying the river "But there might be a source to the rivers from ancient times," the mermaid was getting bored and shook his hand toward Logan "I have no time for your nonsense, and I don't care for it."

Then the mermaid swam to the edge of the water, she seemed more friendly now, "What happened to your friend?" asked the mermaid, "That creature of yours," said Logan pointing at the creature, "Did this to my beloved Laura," "Well," answered the mermaid, "It's not his fault that she was not blessed like you," then Logan looked at the creature and said "What is that?" she put her finger on Logan's lips and made a hissing sound. Logan stopped talking. She swam back in the water and said: "You will die, go no further, turn back to your home, you have lost enough already." Logan looked at her, "Can't you do anything for Laura?" asked Logan, "Bring her by the water's side," Logan grabbed Laura and put her down near the side of the underground lake.

The mermaid came close again and touched Laura's body all over. Laura moaned in pain by the mermaid's touch. Then the mermaid started to sing, suddenly her voice went soft, she no longer had that horrible sound, it was so beautiful and the reverberation of her sound in the big stone dome made it more magical. While singing, she washed Laura's wounds

After some time Laura fell asleep to the mermaid's unworldly singing and then the mermaid stopped singing. Mermaid Looked up at Logan, "There is not much I can do," said the mermaid, "She needs to rest, but she will survive," "Is there anything I can do for her?" asked Logan, "Yes," answered the mermaid, "There is a small plant growing there," said the mermaid as she pointed at the tunnel "You can pick some of them for her, she will heal faster by eating them."

Logan remembered about their stuff and stood up to go get them, but he suddenly stopped and looked at the creature, "Don't worry about him," said the mermaid, "He won't attack you or your friend unless I want him to," Logan stood for a moment "And I don't want him to," continued the mermaid with a smile.

Logan started walking with hesitation in every step, "That way," said the mermaid, "You are going to the wrong direction," "I know," said Logan, "We have picked some of those plants and they are in our bags, I'm going to bring them back,"

Chapter 12:

Logan was almost running, he could not trust the mermaid and her creature. On the way he noticed that the light insects were all over the place. All the tunnel was lit up with little blue lights, and it was continuing straight forever. It was a magical scene. Finally he reached their stuff, picked them up fast, and started going back to Laura.

He slowed down a little bit because his speed was making the light blow off, suddenly he saw the light insects again and blew off the light and walked fast toward the underground lake.

He reached by Laura's side and sat beside her. She took some of the mushrooms out and started to squish them, so she would eat them easily.

The mermaid was not around and the creature was sleeping at the same place as before. Logan laid beside Laura and looked at her for some time. After some moments the mermaid swam toward them and Logan sat up to see her.

She came close to them, "Did you bring the plant?" asked the mermaid, Logan showed her the mushrooms, then she nodded, "I don't think that's enough," said the mermaid, "You have some wounds too, I strongly suggest you eat some too," Logan looked at her for a while and then stood up, grabbed the light and lit it up with his especial stones, walked toward the other side. Logan had his light in one hand and his dagger in another when passing by the creature. But the creature did not move at all. It looked like he was in a deep sleep.

After a little walk Logan found some mushrooms by the side of a stone near the lake. He picked up as much as he could and went back to Laura.

The mermaid was not there again, Laura moved a little and then opened her eyes. Logan was by her side and she smiled, "How do you feel?" asked Logan with an eager voice, "I've been better," answered Laura with a smile, "Sit up," said Logan, "Let's eat these," Logan showed the mushrooms and continued, "Apparently they can help us heal faster,"

Laura sat up and saw the creature, a shiver ran through her body, Logan put his hand on her shoulder and gave her a kind look. Then they started eating lots of mushrooms.

The mushroom was very delicious and juicy and the more they ate the more they wanted to continue eating. Logan has picked a lot of mushrooms and they ate them all.

For some time they just laid down beside each other, "I feel dizzy," said Laura "And for some reason, I feel happy," "Yeah," agreed Logan "I feel I know everything," "What do you mean everything?" asked Laura with laughter, "I mean everything," answered Logan "Ask me a question, any question," "Ok," said Laura "What should I ask?" "Anything," answered Logan, "But," said Laura "I don't remember any questions," "What?" asked Logan, "Ah wait," interrupted Laura "I found the perfect question," "What is it?" asked Logan, "What is what?" said Laura, "Your question," asked Logan "What is your question?" "I don't have any questions," answered Laura, still laughing "Do you have any questions?" "No," said Logan, "I have answers," "Answers?" asked Laura "Answers to what questions?" "I don't know," said Logan "I just have the answers, that's why I'm seeking a question," "But," said Laura, "I thought you are searching for the source," "What source?" asked Logan, "Source of the river," answered

Laura, "Oh yeah," agreed Logan, "Where is the river?" "Which river?" asked Laura, "The one we are searching for," answered Logan, "I don't know," said Laura and then burst with energy "Wait wait, I think there's water," and pointed at the underground lake, "Oh," said Logan in awe "But that's no river," "Really?" asked Laura disappointed, "Yeah," answered Logan with a feel of deep knowledge "You see, rivers and water reservoirs are different, there are who walk and there are who don't, I can walk, you can walk, but that rock can't walk, so the river is like us, but this ocean, is just a rock of water," "I see," said Laura with wonder "So the rocks can move," "Sometimes," answered Logan "But those who can't will live longer," "Can't what?" asked Laura curiously, "Can't move," answered Logan, "Who?" asked Laura, "I don't know," said Logan with a gesture.

Laura turned on her back and looked at the top of the cave instead of Logan, "Oh, look at those stars," said Laura in wonder, Logan turned on his back too and stared at the ceiling of the cave's dome "Some of them are moving," said Logan with joy, "I thought we were in a tunnel," said Laura, "Yes we are," said Logan, "So," said Laura "How is it that we can see the stars? We are out of the tunnel I think," Logan thought for a while "Maybe I better check," said Logan, "Check what?" asked Laura, "The thing," said Logan, "What thing?" asked Laura, Logan started thinking again, "I don't remember," said he as laughing "But I remember someone said if we don't move we will turn into rocks."

Then Logan tried to sit up but couldn't "I can't sit," said Logan, "Why?" asked Laura, "I don't know," answered Logan "But I can't move from here," "Good for you," said Laura "You will live longer," "Yeah," answered Logan as laid down again with a happy face, "I will, so can you?" "Can I?" asked Laura, "Can you get up?" asked Logan, "If I want to," answered Laura, "Are you sure?" asked Logan with a mocking tone in his voice, then Laura jumped up and stood straight, she looked around for a second, she didn't look like someone who can stand erect without a problem and then threw up.

Laura fell on her vomit and then started to laugh out loud. Logan looked at what happened for some moment and then joined Laura and started to laugh. The creature woke up and looked at them, then started walking away into the cave that led to the Labyrinth.

Laura and Logan stopped laughing after some time, "I think I better wash myself," said Laura, "I will join you," answered Logan, then they took their clothes off and washed themselves and each other with the water from the underground lake.

After cleaning themselves, they cuddled and made love and fell asleep by the lake.

Laura woke up with the sound of water splashing, she remembered fighting with the creature, and then a mermaid came from the water and washed her wounds, and after that she fell asleep till now. She felt so rested, it must have been a lot of time since she went to sleep.

Laura opened her eyes slowly, still scared of what could be going on around her, she felt a little light-headed, but that was nothing to be worried about. Laura suddenly realized that she is naked and saw Logan lying naked beside her. Then she saw a shadow, slowly turned, and saw the mermaid sitting beside Logan outside of the water.

The mermaid had a glass bottle in her hand with a dark red liquid in it, then Laura realized that it was blood. The mermaid looked straight into her eyes, Laura jumped and saw the mermaid was sucking the blood out of Logan's side and pouring it into a second jar.

The mermaid smiled at Laura, "Don't worry," said the mermaid "You can go, I just needed his blood," Laura felt so angry and wanted to attack the mermaid, but she was naked and had no weapon on her, she saw her bow and the only three arrows left nearby.

Laura jumped and launched a shot at the mermaid, she jumped back to the water and the arrow missed her and dropped to the water. Laura ran toward Logan and shook him while shouting his name. Logan slowly opened his eyes, "What?" nagged Logan "Let me sleep," "Get up," shouted Laura "Logan, get up, we need to go, he's coming, the creature," Logan turned his head and saw the creature coming toward them slowly, "No worries," said Logan with a smile and closed his eyes, "The mermaid said he won't attack us anymore," "Logan," shouted Laura.

The mermaid was in the water near them, she was looking at Laura, "There's nothing you can do," said the mermaid "Just go before I change my mind about your life," Laura jumped toward the mermaid and stabbed one of her arrows to the neck of the mermaid, it happened so fast that even mermaid could not move away.

The mermaid screamed so loud that made Logan jump out of sleep, he looked around and saw the creature running toward Laura, while she was naked by the lake and watching the mermaid going under the water. Logan jumped toward Laura and at the last moment before the creature reached Laura, he hit the creature and they both fell into the water.

Laura saw them fall into the water, she reached out her arm to grab Logan but he was a little far away. The creature and Logan fought for some moments in the water, Logan didn't know how to swim and his only chance was to grab the creature. Finally he managed to get on the creature's back. It rolled several times but Logan didn't let go. Creature saw Laura and swam toward her not caring about Logan on his back.

Laura saw the creature swimming toward herself, and pulled her bow with the last arrow left, then she changed her mind. There was a good chance of hitting Logan. She looked around and saw Logan's dagger, she grabbed it and stood by the water waiting for the creature, the moment they were close enough Laura tossed the dagger to Logan, he stabbed the creature several times in the head and jumped out of the water himself.

The creature moaned in pain but still managed to get out of the water, both Laura with her knife and Logan with his dagger attacked the creature again and didn't let him move at all. They stabbed him all over his body and finally Logan kicked him hard and threw him back to the water. The creature went down and after a moment his carcass came back on the water.

Logan realized his wound on his side, it was not bleeding, nor was it in pain, but it was a big wound and he could easily see the mermaid's teeth mark around the wound. Then he looked around and saw the bottle full of blood.

Laura told Logan all she had seen from the moment she opened her eyes. After that they put their clothes on and gathered their stuff, but they were so tired and wounded, so they decided to rest there a little bit.

Moments later the mermaid came back on the surface with the creature in her arms, she started shouting in some words that had no meaning for Logan and Laura, but it was the scariest sound they have ever heard.

The mermaid had a wound on her neck but the arrow was not there anymore. She was shouting with a loud voice, her voice was again a combination of different pitches from high to low.

For some moments Logan and Laura stood in shock but they grabbed their stuff and ran as fast as they could. The voice of the mermaid was not getting lower, it felt that she was chasing them with her voice. They looked back several times, the mermaid was not there, but her voice was powerful enough to make them run still.

After a long running inside the tunnel, the light insects reduced in number and they could not see anything anymore. They slowed their speed and lit their small lamp. The voice of the mermaid stopped eventually, but its horror was still in their bodies.

Logan and Laura kept walking with a fast pace without talking. They knew that they would not stop until the end of the tunnel. They were horrified, wounded, tired and in pain, but they continued their long walk.

Chapter 13:

It took them a long time before they saw some light far ahead in the tunnel. It was the most beautiful thing they have ever seen in their lives. They ran toward the light and finally got out of the tunnel. They came out of the tunnel underneath a big rocky mountain. There was a vast field in front of them. The field looked like it had more plants than what was in the fields around their village.

It was in the afternoon and the sun was setting already. They found a big rock and laid underneath it. The hunger wouldn't let them sleep, so they ate some of their best meals, smoked meat, and then slept without being able to say a word.

Logan opened his eyes, it was almost dark, he thought the sun was not up yet and could sleep a little more before the sunrise, then something shocked him. There was a human figure standing a little farther. He opened his eyes completely and sat up.

Laura woke up by Logan's movements and felt danger as she saw Logan and sat up beside him. There was a dark figure a little farther down, at first they thought it's a man, but it was a little shorter than a human.

Logan grabbed his dagger as he saw the figure approaching. Then they saw a chubby and old goblin is getting closer with his hands up in a sign of peace. He was a little bit taller than Laura, with white long hair on his head and a dark brown, almost black skin.

"I don't want to hurt you," said the goblin with a smile and a weird accent, "Or get hurt, I'm coming in peace." Logan lowered his dagger and the goblin continued, "I saw you two sleeping here this morning, and then again at noon and you were exactly in the same position, I was worried maybe you are dead, so wanted to check on you," "Morning?" asked Logan in shock, "It's not morning yet," "Oh dear," answered the goblin with kindness "It is almost sunset," "You mean," interrupted Laura "We've been asleep for a day?" "I don't know," said the goblin "When did you go to sleep, but you were here this morning."

Laura and Logan looked at each other for a moment, "Come," said the goblin, "You look tired still and you have wounds all over your body, my house is near, I can give you a place to recover if you want to," Logan looked at the goblin with doubt, "I'm not dangerous," continued the goblin "I live alone and I will be happy to have some company if you like to. I don't want anything from you."

"Thanks," said Laura and stood up and said to Logan, "I think it's better to go with this old man," Logan thought to himself the manners of this old goblin does not seem to be malevolent, so he stood up and grabbed his bag and said to the goblin, "Lead the way Mr." "Ubara," said the goblin, "My name is Ubara Tutu, but call me Ubara" and then he started leading Laura and Logan toward the field.

They walked for some time and despite what was visible from where they were before, the field was not as flat as it seemed. There were lots of small hills here and there.

Logan did not tell anything about the river to Ubara, but he could see it and to his surprise they were walking very close to the river's path.

Between some of the hills, there was a small door that was the entrance of Ubara's house. The house was located very close to the river, Logan could hear the sound of the water streaming from where he was standing.

Inside the house was big. It looked like the house was as big as the hill on top of it. There were carved pillars inside the house to prevent the ceiling from falling down. Several lamps and candles were on the walls. Only some of them were lit, but it was enough to make the house light up.

There were no windows and no light from outside could come in. but it was not dark and scary like inside the tunnel, actually, the dim light inside made it feel cozy and homey.

Ubara's house was more like an abandoned castle than a normal house. There were lots of rooms and a big hall. "Suit yourself," said Ubara, "Choose whichever room you like and stay in it." "Thanks," said Logan "Do you really live alone?" "Yes," answered Ubara with a smile, "But it was not always like this, I had lots of servants, but it's a long story, maybe later," then Laura and Logan wondered inside the big house.

There was a room with a fancy door and they figured it should be Ubara's room. There were five other rooms after that in a corridor, all of them had beds. But they were all short for Logan. Finally, they decided to stay in the biggest room with the biggest bed. It was still short for Logan but they could manage to sleep beside each other without a problem. Only Logan's legs would be out of bed and he had no problem with that.

After some moments Ubara knocked on the door and brought them a hot drink. It was a drink from some plants they have never tasted before, But soon they fell asleep again.

The next morning they woke up to the smell of cooked meat and joined Ubara for breakfast. After the breakfast, Ubara checked Logan and Laura's wounds and bandaged them. Then Ubara left the house and did not come back till noon. He had brought some cactus and some kind of big cockroaches with him. "What are they?" asked Laura pointing at the cockroaches, "They are our lunch," answered Ubara with a smile.

Laura remembered the mushrooms they found in the tunnel and went to their bags. There were only a few of them left. Laura brought them out and asked Logan, "When Did we eat these?" "I don't know, maybe they fell out of our bags when we were running in the tunnel" answered Logan, Laura shook his head in agreement but with a little doubt. "What are they?" asked Ubara curiously, "They are," answered Laura, "A very delicious plant I found on the way, I thought maybe we could eat them for lunch today." "Thank you," said Ubara, "You can eat if you want, But I don't eat new food." Laura looked at him with wonder, "What do you mean?" asked she, "I mean," answered Ubara "I don't eat things that I have never eaten before," "But," said Logan with questioned face "There must have been a time when you would try new food, or else you should have been drinking your mother's milk yet," "Yes," said Ubara while laughing, "I would eat whatever my mother told me to eat until I came of age and left the house, I tested a new plant I found in the mountains and it made me sick really hard; after that, I never test new food," "But," said Laura "But," she changed her mind and said something else, "Ok, so we will eat

them with our lunch,” “And,” added Logan “ You are welcome to eat it if you changed your mind,” Ubara shook his hand in appreciation.

After lunch, Laura and Logan felt a little dizzy, but it went away very fast. They were sitting in the main hall that Ubara started, “So,” asked Ubara “Tell me, what are you guys doing here? What has happened to you?” and then they told him everything they could remember of their journey.

“I’m glad you could survive all of that,” said Ubara after some time looking at the wall, “I’ve heard about a witch living in the mountains, my father used to talk about her, but I always thought it’s just a myth.” Then he stood up and started to make a hot beverage, “But,” asked Ubara “You didn’t tell me why you started your journey?” Logan looked at Laura for a moment and then told Ubara about the river.

After Logan's story of the river finished, Ubara came back to them with three wooden glasses of hot beverages and sat on a chair in front of him. He took a sip and then started talking, “I understand why you didn’t want to tell me about the river, but don’t hesitate on your decision if you are sure enough of your vision and came to this journey and risked the life of yourself and this lovely lady,” Ubara pointed at Laura and smiled at her and then continued “So don’t be ashamed of it. Even if I think you are crazy, it’s enough that you don’t think that. So stop doubting yourself and do whatever you think is the right thing to do, finish what you started,” “I appreciate your opinion,” said Logan “It is very wise of you to think this way.”

“You are not the first person whom I said it to,” said Ubara looking at Logan “I remember to say the exact same words to my only son, Utnapishtim,” Ubara’s eyes brightened as they filled with tear, “I’m sorry,” said Laura “for his loss,” “He might be alive,” said Ubara focusing on his guests again “He left many years ago, but I never heard of his death, maybe, after all, he did what he wanted to do,” “What,” asked Laura curiously, and she regretted her question immediately, “Oh, that’s ok,” said Ubara understanding Laura’s reaction to her own question “I don’t mind talking about him, in fact, I actually enjoy bringing the memory of the great Utnapishtim alive again.”

Ubara finished his drink and leaned comfortably on his throne-like chair “He was my firstborn,” said Ubara “And my only son, heir to my lands and wealth, but even when he was a little child, he was different from others, he imagined talking to creatures from other worlds, to gods as he would put it, I did not take it seriously, it was a child's play after all, but as he grew up, his imaginations didn't change. When he was a teenager, he started to learn reading and writing, and then he got into ancient books. I loved him and supported him even if he wanted to read books. We collected a big library, you can see the library with some of its books left at the end of that corridor yet,” Ubara pointed at another corridor that Logan and Laura had not visited yet “After a while, he started talking about oceans and rivers,” Logan’s eyes widened, Ubara noticed it and added, “I don’t know if we have any books about rivers or no, I’m not a very good reader, but as I said some of the books are there, you can check them if you can read,” “I will,” said Logan with joy “I’m sure useful things can be found there,” Ubara nodded to him and continued, “The actual problem happened when he started talking about some vessels that could ride on the water,

apparently in ancient times there were big floating villages on the water, they called them ships, Utnapishtim fascinated with this myths and started to make a ship out of clay. At first, people thought he was making a big house, though it was so big that we tried to stop him, it could attract our enemies, we didn't want anybody to know we live under these hills, so people of the village destroyed Utnapishtim's ship, but it was already too late. A group of savages that live east of here saw the ruins of the ship and attacked us to gather our food and water resources. They almost took everything, we could not live here anymore, they would attack and steal our food constantly, so almost all of the village left except for the family of the chief."

"I was a king, my forefathers have been kings in these lands, but never in my life, my father told me that he was the king over people, we have always been the king of these lands, so I refused to go. They chose another king and left. My wife and daughters stayed with me for a while but the horror of the attack of those savages, couldn't let them sleep at night, so I made them leave me."

"So I was left here with my only son Utnapishtim, who was banished from the village, we lived together for a while, the savages attacked once more and saw that only two of us left, so they did not bother to attack and steal two man's food storage. What happened to Utnapishtim's clay ship, and then our village, made him get depressed, he always said that the gods betrayed him, he started reading books all over again and then he went crazy and started to burn them. I saved him from burning himself."

"One day we started talking after a long time, and he told me what was on his mind, his illusion God has told him to go on a journey and find the key to immortal life, apparently he has found something about the immortal life in books too, he wanted to do it, but at the same time, his guilt for what happened before and me ending up alone here wouldn't let him go. So it was on that very same day that I told my son the same words I told you earlier and it was almost the last time I spoke with anybody."

"He left the next day early in the morning without saying goodbye, at first I was mad at him, but I can see now that he did the good thing, I could not bear the memory of that last goodbye, and probably he could not leave me while I was looking at him go, so he left without saying anything and after that, I have never heard of him or anybody from my tribe even my wife and two little daughters for years."

Ubara kindly looked at Laura and said "You remind me of my younger daughter," then he looked at Logan "And you remind me of my son."

Laura smiled back at Ubara and said: "What would you do if you could live that moment again, would you say the same words to your son again?" Ubara considered the question for some time and finally said, "I would probably say the same thing, but I would also add something to it," "What?" asked Laura, "I would say," said Ubara "Consider immortality for a moment, even if you find the key to immortal life, do you want to use that? Do you really like to lose everybody around you, everyone, you love, everyone you care about? Because if you become immortal, and your loved ones don't, you will someday lose them, do you like to continue living in that world?"

Ubara hesitated for some time and continued, "I don't know if there is a hell as the ancient religions say, but I think I have lived in hell in these years," he looked at Laura and Logan and continued, "Hell is nothing but being alone, don't lose each other under any circumstances." They all stayed silent for some time, finally, Logan stood up and walked toward the library, Laura followed him and Ubara went out of the house.

Chapter 14:

Logan entered the library with a candle in his hand and Laura entered after him. It was not a very big library but it was nice and cozy. Most of the shelves were empty now, but still there were more than a hundred books there.

Logan started looking at the books, some of them were in different languages, he could not even recognize the letters, some were written by the same letters he was familiar with, but he could not recognize any words in them, he figured they should be in some other languages with the same letters. But there were some books that he could understand some words in them. He started looking through the books.

Laura looked around the shelves first and appreciated the fine architecture of the place, she was proud to be in a nice place created with her own kind. After some time she got bored and started to go through the books, she realized some of them have pictures, "I will check the pictures," said Laura "And let you know if there were any pictures of water in them," "That would be great," said Logan and got back to his readings.

Laura was checking the books one by one, for her, there was no difference between the books, she could not read at all, her family did not know how to read and write and she started working as a child, so she never learned to read, "Maybe," said Laura to Logan "Someday you could teach me how to read," Logan looked at her with a smile "Sure, I will be happy to," said Logan, and then both went back to explore in the books.

They read the books for a while, suddenly Laura found something, "Oh, look look," said Laura "This must be a river," Logan jumped toward her and saw a drawing of a river inside a book, it was on a very old book and the picture was not very clear, but he could clearly see a drawing of a river going through some turns inside the rocks, to his surprise there was a drawing of a city in the far back of the picture too, it seemed that the river was flowing out of that city, it was driving Logan crazy, he could swear that he saw the exact same scene in some of his dreams. He looked at the words under the picture for a long time, "What is written under it?" asked Laura, "I can't read," answered Logan "It does not look like our language, I can recognize the letters, but the words don't make sense to me," "Read it out loud," said Laura, "Maybe we figured it out together," Logan looked at her, "There's one letter that I don't know it," said Logan "But it looks like an 'O', so I think it may sound the same," "Ok, just read it," said Laura, "Ok," Logan started to read from the book, slowly and clearly " 'Elu', viimane jõgi põhjas," then he looked at Laura, "Yeah," admitted Laura "That does not sound familiar at all. Are there any other words in that book you can understand?" Logan looked at the book for some time and said "No, nothing."

Ubara interrupted and invited them to eat dinner. He also brought them both new clothes. Laura could find new fit clothes, but Logan's clothes were small for him. "No worries," said Ubara, "I know how to sew, I will make you proper clothes out of these ones."

After a day Ubara sewed new clothes for Logan that was fit on him. They stayed at Ubara's house for several days. Logan spent most of his time in the library with the books trying to find any data regarding the rivers.

Laura spent the first days looking at the pictures of the books but she didn't find anything useful, except for that one picture of a river. Eventually she decided to go see the outside. She realized there is storage from the old village near them and went there in search of some arrows for her bow or even a new bow.

Her search was not any more successful than Logan's. She was stuck with her only and last arrow, however, she could find a goblin forged sword. It was a very beautiful and ornamented sword, the blade was shining gold and the cover was leather. Of course the cover was old and almost torn, but the blade was clean.

Laura asked Ubara if she could take the sword for herself, Ubara looked at the sword and told her to wait. The next day Ubara took her to a place a little far away inside the hills. On the way they passed a tall hill that had a different shape than other hills around.

"Is that?" asked Laura pointing at the tall hill "The ship that your son made?" "Yes," said Ubara "Of course now it's just the ruins of a ship, in its days, it was taller and had a majestic shape." Laura looked at the hill again, it was not anything special now, but she could feel the memories being carried by this artificially shaped hill.

Finally they reached a door and entered a place that seemed like an abandoned blacksmith. It was under a hill like all other houses in the village. Laura understood they were still in the village and then she realized how big the village was.

"How many goblins were living here?" asked Laura while walking inside the blacksmith, "If I recall correctly," answered Ubara, "We were almost a five hundred." Laura's eyes widened, "So how did the savages defeat you?" asked Laura "Five hundred is too many to be defeated." "Because," answered Ubara, "We didn't fight back," "What?" asked Laura in shock, then saw Ubara going behind a round stone with a wheel.

Suddenly she realized where she was. it was an old dusty room, there were some big tools like the round stone in the room, but mostly it was emptied. Ubara took her sword and while touching its blade said, "You see, it does not cut me," said Ubara "We never wanted to fight with anybody, even our swords were not made for war, they were simply a beautiful ornament for our houses. We have always been friendly creatures, war is not a part of our culture."

Then Ubara started to turn the wheel by his foot and put the blade on the turning stone. There were sparkles throwing around. After some time it was done, Ubara touched the blade and it cut his finger, then he gave it back to Laura with caution, "Be careful," said Ubara "Now it's a weapon, I hope you may never have to use it."

Laura took the sword, it was even shinier now, Ubara left the room and Laura went after him while she put back the sword in its cover.

"But," asked Laura while they were walking back "I don't understand," "What don't you understand?" asked Ubara, "How can you not care about your safety," asked Laura, "You could easily defend yourself against those savages, but you decided not to," "I see that it's hard for you to understand, after all you have been raised with humans," said Ubara "Fighting and war is never the answer, it is created by the lower creatures and it should stay within them, we goblins never find the solution of our problems in the war," "You mean," asked Laura "Humans?" Ubara

looked at her and didn't answer, "The point is, no creature should allow itself to kill another just because they think they are better, and I think everyone knows it deep inside. that's why almost in all the wars, both sides try to show themselves as the defender, nobody wants to be the tribe who started the war, even if they admit for starting the war, they will bring some other excuses like how the other side was abusing them or giving them hard time and their only way was in the war, while there is always another way. You can always ignore the fights, you need just to look for other ways."

"But still," said Laura again "Being civil and looking for peace, does not mean to let others take advantage of you," "And we didn't," answered Ubara "Let anybody take advantage of us," "You let them," said Laura "Run you out of your homeland." "Homeland is where we live," said Ubara "It's not some hills or fields, you can go live where ever you feel more comfortable and that will be your home, where you have born, your heritage, they are all lies told to us to make us kill ourselves for the things that don't matter at all, for the things that we don't even understand, when we fight for our land, what are we really fighting for? Does it really matter who rules the land? As long as you live there happily that's your home, but if you are not happy you should just leave it. When we go to war it does not matter who wins, after some time life will be worse for most of the people, or the same at the best situation, it is just a few minorities that benefit from war and they can't make you go to war unless you have some reason to. Land, religion, and even our race is something that helps people from our own land, religion, or race abuse us and kill us for their own benefits. In the end, we are all the same, if we just think about our enemies for a second, we won't let ourselves to kill them, even if they kill us, I was a king and I know what would war do for me, it would just be a benefit, I could have more power by making my people scared of our enemies, making weapons and prepare them to die for the land of our forefathers. But if you think about it for a moment, you will see how idiotic it is, if our forefathers would go right instead of left, we had a different place as our homeland, and then we would be proud of that land and didn't care about this one." "But," shouted Laura "Just some days ago, you told us about leaving your whole tribe because of your land," Ubara looked at her and laughed, then stared toward the horizon as they were walking side by side "Oh, dear child," said Ubara with a sad and serious voice, "That's a lie I told myself and everyone around me to cover the truth."

They walked for a while in silence, "I know," said Laura "That I should not ask it, But I just, can't, what was the truth then?" "You didn't get it?" asked Ubara and continued without waiting for an answer from Laura, "I thought it would be obvious in my story, I stayed because I could not let my son stay alone, he was banished from the tribe, and if I would try to use my power as a chief to get him back to the tribe, that would make me a traitor to my own oath. I knew he did a bad thing, he ended a long peaceful life of a village, he could not be forgiven, but I could not punish him, so I stayed to help him continue his path," "And eventually," said Laura "He left you," "I'm aware of the irony," said Ubara with a bitter voice "But I would do the same again and again. There was no other way for me. And who knows, maybe it was for the best, after all, maybe my tribe had found a better place to live, maybe my son is now immortal, who am I to judge?" Laura put her hand over Ubara's shoulders "Don't feel sad for me," said Ubara "I am just

seeing the consequences of my own acts, whatever is happening to me right now is nobody's fault, and after all, I'm not sad, I have had a great life, it was time for me to let go of everything and I'm happy I did so. Sometimes I feel bad for being alone, but most of the time I feel happy for having nothing, I don't need anything anymore, nothing can make me sad anymore, I don't have anything or anybody, and yet I have never felt more powerful in my life. Even when I was in my youth and just became the king of the tribe after my father's death, I was worried about many things, I had lots of things to lose and they made me weak, but now even the savages don't attack me, they now where I am, I see them sometimes in the fields and I know they see me too, but there is no reason for them to fight with me, that's the ultimate power."

"Now my daily job is to hunt the fat cockroaches and bring water for myself, and my only hobby is to make candles. I love making candles. I know that even if you have the greatest army in the world, there will be another tribe who could at least fight with you and give you a great deal of damage, but for me, no, you can break my candles, that's all anyone can do to me. I have found the greatest power of all. My son might be the immortal one but I am the omnipotent one."

By this time they reached back the house, Ubara was tired and went to rest in his bedroom, Logan was still going through the books, Laura decided to make the dinner, she found some cockroaches, they were big and full of meat, she emptied their meats and made them in her own style.

Laura realized how much she had missed her old hobby, staying inside her little home and experience with different materials to make new foods, it was the best time of her life and she was not aware of that at the time.

After Laura prepared the dinner she called for Logan and Ubara, they joined her to eat the dinner, Ubara looked a little annoyed "Did I do something wrong?" Asked Laura "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to," "No, it's not that," said Ubara and continued after seeing Laura's puzzled face "I don't know what this is," "Oh, I made it my own way," said Laura with a smile "I did not use anything new, I just cooked them differently," "She is the greatest cook," said Logan "Just taste it and you will see what I am talking about," Ubara was still a little annoyed, he sat behind the table "It's still a new food," said Ubara as he was getting up "If it's not rude to you, please let me make my own dinner." "Sure!" said Laura, her eyes following Ubara "It's your home, I don't want to make you uncomfortable."

Ubara made his own dinner while Laura and Logan ate theirs and then they went to bed to sleep. That night Logan saw his dream again. After a long time, the far distant big city with its tall buildings came back to his dreams, just like the picture in the book.

The next day Logan got out of the house for the first time in a week. He went by the side of the river and sat there for a while, then he returned back to the library and continued his readings.

Finally, he could find the word "river" in one of the books. He started reading that page of the book. There was some data about farming and how farmers use the water from the river to grow their plants and trees. Logan could not understand some parts of the page, but it was not the point, he finally had a proof. The rivers were not just some myths, these old rusty books were proof of their existence.

Logan was excited and found Laura to give her the news. It was a good day for them. Logan got back to that book to find more data over it. After a day of study he concluded that rivers were the main source of water in ancient times, something like today's underground sources.

He also found something about the vessels that could surf on the rivers, they were being used as transport vehicles, so Utnapishtim was right about the ships. But he did not say anything to Ubara about it.

After some more days, Logan was feeling completely recovered, his shoulder was healed and he felt no pain at all. Laura was feeling good too. For the last several days she was practicing with her new sword and her only arrow. She had one shot left and she wanted to hit her target whenever it was necessary.

Laura spent a part of the day with Ubara and talked about everything. He reminded Laura of her father, she was using his company as much as she could and Ubara was happy about it. He told her everything that he wished to tell his daughters.

Chapter 15:

After spending almost two weeks at Ubara's house Logan and Laura decided to continue on their journey. They have recovered completely, Logan has found new information about rivers. Now he knew that it was not just a myth, he was in search of something real.

Logan's dreams have come back too. He had the same dream every night and couldn't sleep relaxed, and it was obvious to him that the dream will not give up until he starts the journey again.

In the last days Logan had found a book that had some information about machines that could create water out of air. He could not understand any of the things in the book, but he talked to Ubara and took the book with himself.

They also gathered lots of food and water and fat for their lamp. Ubara had lots of candles and gifted them some of his candles.

They started their journey early in the morning, Ubara accompanied them for a while, he brought a bag with himself and by noon, he opened his bag with his meal in it. They ate the last lunch together under the shadow of a hill near the river and after that Logan and Laura continued their journey alone.

For some time Laura would look back and see Ubara standing there looking at them go until eventually she lost him on the horizon and figured that he is going back to his empty kingdom now.

For several days nothing special happened, the landscape changed a little bit, now everywhere was full of small and big rocks. It made it easier for them to find a shadow and rest from time to time.

They did not need to use their reserved food, every day they would find a plant or insect colony and eat fresh food. Laura experimented a lot with new plants and gathered a bunch of them for later and bigger experiences.

"These plants will make your backpack heavy," said Logan while they were sitting beside a big rock and watching the sun set. "But I can't let them go," said Laura "I want to gather enough materials so when we go back home, I can make different combinations." Logan looked at her when she talked about going back.

He has never thought of going back, not that he wanted to stay on the source forever, but it was a one-way adventure in his mind. It was the first time he actually thought about the journey back. And it made him feel stressed.

"How do we want to go through that tunnel again?" asked Logan with a worried voice, "I don't know," said Laura "We will figure something out then." Logan smiled at her. He was not really worried about the tunnel or things like that, he just didn't feel that there would be a journey back, his journey had no specific end, and it would take forever to finish. but thinking about the journey back, would make it twice as long and twice as hard. He couldn't bear the thought of it and went to sleep after dark.

The journey continued slowly through the rough and rocky landscape. Laura would find many different plants and take a sample from each of them. Most of the nights, Laura would make a fire and experiment with her new material to create new food.

This place was different from their own village and nights were colder here, sometimes they had to let the fire be lit for a long time before going to sleep.

Without the fire's light, the sky was full of stars at night, they would lay on their backs every night and look at the moon and stars. The moon was small until eventually, it disappeared on a night, they knew that it would be back some nights from now. But that night without the moon in the sky, the stars were shining brighter.

"Do you see that?" said Laura as she was lying on her back beside Logan and was looking at the sky, "What?" asked Logan, "That blue line," said Laura pointing at the sky, "Yeah," said Logan "That's so beautiful," "What do you think that is?" asked Laura, "I don't know," said Logan "Star dust maybe," Laura took a deep breath and said "Yeah, maybe, if stars have dust it is probably blue and bright," they stayed silent for a while.

"What do you think they are?" asked Laura, "What?" asked Logan, "Those starts, what are they?" asked Laura again, "They are stars," said Logan with a confused voice, "I know," said Laura, "But what are stars?" "It's like asking what are rocks, they are rocks," said Logan pointing at a rock near them and then pointing at the sky and continued "And they are stars."

"My father used to say the stars are the souls of the good people who are dead," said Laura not paying attention to Logan's theory and continued "But Hector was talking about how our body dies every day and how it goes back to earth," Laura didn't say anything for a moment and then continued again "But I like my father's version better, I don't like to be sand in the earth, I like to be a star in the sky."

"Maybe both are true," said Logan, "What do you mean?" asked Laura, "What Hector said was about our bodies, it was not about the idea of us, maybe the body that I had years ago, is dead now, but the memories, the thoughts, and the mind of me is still alive, maybe our minds go to the sky and becomes a star," "And from there looks at the earth again," added Laura, "Yeah, maybe," said Logan, "I like it too," said Laura.

"But," said Laura, "What are the moon and sun?" "I remember from my parents that," said Logan, "People used to worship the moon and the sun as gods, I think they are still doing it in some places," "So," said Laura "They are gods?" "I don't know," answered Logan, "I sometimes think," said Laura "Maybe the moon is something like our own earth," "What do you mean?" asked Logan, "I mean," continued Laura "It is like earth but in the sky," Logan thought for a moment and then said, "Maybe, but are people living there too?" "I don't know," said Laura "Maybe there are two people on the moon looking at the earth and wondering if anybody lives here." "Yeah," said Logan "And the people over there are shining like the moon itself," "Yeah," agreed Laura with laughter.

On the next day, at noon, they started a fire so Laura could boil some water and make warm food using her new plants. Suddenly she stood still as she heard a noise, before she could say anything to Logan about it, a black panther jumped out from between the rocks and attacked Logan.

Logan could survive the first attack, Laura jumped fast for her sword and bow. Logan was wrestling with the panther for life and death. He stopped the jaws of the panther that was on top of him with his bare hands.

Lora fired her last arrow and it hit the panther exactly on the neck. There was a loud roar of pain and the panther ran away immediately after. Laura went and helped Logan stand up. "Are you ok?" asked Laura, "Yes," answered Logan still in shock "Where did it come from?" "I don't know," said Laura "He closed on us without making any noise, I just heard him before the attack."

Laura checked Logan's body, there were no wounds except some small scratches. But his new shirt was torn a little on his back.

"We better go as fast as possible," said Logan. "He may come back again," Laura started to pack and Logan helped her. They ate some food in a hurry and started following the river.

They walked for some time with fast pace, but eventually slowed down. They reached a narrow passage between two rocky mountains. And as they were walking inside it, a black panther jumped in front of them.

They both stopped and took out their weapons, "Is it the same?" asked Laura, "Does not seem so," answered Logan "He has no wound on the neck," they were getting prepared for the fight with the panther that a roar came from behind. The previous panther was standing behind them.

Laura and Logan stood back to back each facing a panther. The wounded panther started to attack. Laura defended herself with her sword.

"I think it's better," shouted Logan, "That we start to attack, that way at least we have better control over whom to fight." they just shared a look and attacked simultaneously on their obvious first target, the wounded panther.

The other panther attacked them from behind at the same time and they could not complete their attack. They have been trapped between those two black panthers.

There was no other way but to fight till the death, they attacked again this time on the healthy panther, Logan's dagger hit the panther this time and almost cut his throat, the other panther attacked again and made them distracted from their attack. Now both of the panthers were wounded, it was good news, after all they seemed to have some chances now.

Suddenly they heard a whooping sound and a big spear hit the other panther from nowhere and it dropped dead on the spot. Several men ran down from the top of the mountain. They shot another spear to kill the wounded panther, but he was lucky and could run away. Two of the men chased the panther and five more stood in front of Laura and Logan with their long spears.

They shouted something in another language unknown to Logan. There were some words familiar to him in their speech, but not he nor Laura could understand their sentences.

One of the men came fast toward Logan with his spear, Logan defended himself with his dagger and pushed the spear away. Other men attacked right after this and Laura joined the fight to help Logan.

The Long spear of those men gave them an advantage, but Logan's powerful hits plus Laura's fast hits of the sword made them a very hard hunt for those men.

They had long grey dresses with some sheets covering their head and parts of their face. Their clothes had made them scarier. They did not have swords and fought only with their long metal spears. Though it was a good weapon to hunt something or someone from far away distances, it was not the best weapon in terms of handling in a face to face combat.

At one point Logan could take one of their spears in his hand and pulled it as hard and fast as he could. The spear dropped out of the man's hand behind Logan. Now they only had four armed men in front of them.

The danger of the other two men coming back from their hunt was in Laura's mind. She checked their back from time to time.

They all were tired. There was no winner in this fight. Of course they all knew that in the long run, eventually Laura and Logan will lose their energy sooner and had to think of a way to win the fight before that happens.

"Wait," shouted Laura to Logan "I have an Idea," "What?" said Logan, "Put down your weapon," said Laura as she was going to put her sword down, "What?" shouted Logan "Don't be crazy, they will kill us," "No," said Laura "They have no reason to do so, they are fighting because they are afraid of us," "I won't," said Loga as he was fighting hard and poking Laura to do the same "They will kill us in an instance," "They will kill us," shouted Laura "If we continue to fight, please trust me on this."

Chapter 16:

Laura put her sword down and took her hands up. She walked away from the battle slowly, and none of those men chased her. Logan saw the situation and did the same as Laura. He took one of his hands up and slowly put his dagger down on the ground. Then he started to walk away from his dagger and stood beside Laura.

The two other men came back with the black panther dead on their shoulders. They saw the situation and dropped the panther and took their spears toward Logan and Laura.

“We are not here to fight,” shouted Laura toward the men “We come in peace,” they said something slowly between themselves and one of them shouted back “Peace,” he put his spear down and shook his hands in the air, “Why fight us? Kill?” “You attacked first,” answered Logan, They looked at Logan and did not answer, “We,” Shouted Logan this time word by word and clearly so they could understand him “Want to pass, no fight, no kill,” he shook his hands as was saying this words and continued “We are friends,” “Friend,” said one of the men while smiling, “Where you?” and then he added a word that Logan could not understand, but he assumed they are looking for where they are coming from. “We come from the south,” said Logan as pointing toward the south “Traveling, adventure, passenger,” “Aha,” said one of the men “Travel, good, where?” “North,” said Logan pointing to the north.

Finally they all lowered their spears and came closer to Laura and Logan. Though Logan and Laura could not understand all of their words, they understood to follow the men to their village after all.

They reached a village after some walking. Logan had to leave the river for this but did not say anything about it. A look between him and Laura was enough to make him sure it’s better not to talk about the river.

They were still not sure if this is a friendly visit and they were welcome here or not. But having their stuff and even weapons back made them feel a little safe.

The men led them to a field between mountains and a desert. There were some vegetations here and there but a dry desert could be seen on their left that was as vast as the horizon. Suddenly Logan realized a big crack on the ground, it seemed that something was moving inside the darkness under the ground.

He looked at Laura and she had the same wondering look on her face. They walked through a narrow entrance between the mountains, it was dark but the men in front of them lit a big torch and led the way.

Not long inside the narrow corridor, they reached some stairs and climbed down until they were completely under the ground. After some turns that made both Logan and Laura confused, they reached a pathway with no ceiling.

Now they were inside the crack that they saw earlier from the top. They were watching their surroundings in awe, it was not just a crack in the ground, it was a village under the ground.

They could see houses inside the walls of the corridor on two floors, and they had no idea how one should get inside any of these houses. What they could see was just some windows on the walls, there seemed to be no entrance anywhere at the bottom of the pathway.

People were looking at the strangers inside their village from their windows. As Logan and Laura were walking inside the path the silence was growing with them, a deep silence that made them feel unwelcome.

They walked inside the village following the men that were carrying the two dead panthers. Finally they reached a small entrance on the ground, it was short so all the men and Logan had to lean a little to pass through it.

It led to another corridor, there were torches burning and running the darkness away from the corridor. There were stairs and doors inside the corridor that seemed to lead to the houses they have seen from outside. Two of the men led Logan and Laura with themselves and others went in another direction with the panthers.

They reached a door and one of the men went inside, the other stayed by the door and after a while, they heard a sound from inside and the man showed Laura and Logan to get inside with a hand gesture. He walked behind them inside immediately.

It was not very big inside the room but it was nice and clean. Big windows let a lot of light in and it was cooler than what they expected it to be.

A man was sitting in a stone chair in the middle of the hall, of course, it was more like a throne than a chair, a woman was sitting right beside him on a chair as big as the other one. They both had the same clothes as anybody else in the village, but a little more clean and with more colors.

Two other men that brought Logan and Laura here, stood beside the chairs, there were five more men and three women all with a spear in their hands, standing here and there inside the house.

The man gestured to Logan and Laura to sit on two small stone chairs in front of him.

Laura sat first and Logan followed him. "You Travel," said the man and then said something that did not have any meaning to Logan. The man was trying to speak clearly and slowly, but still there were only a few words in common between their languages.

"Yes," said Logan and waited to see if there were any questions. The man and the woman talked a little between themselves, the woman started saying some words with a question mark, she was trying different words and by the reaction on Laura and Logan's face, she would know that they did not understand the word, and she tried another word afterward with a hesitation.

"Purpose?" asked the woman, finally she could say the word on her mind. Logan looked at Laura with doubt and Laura said to them, "Adventure," there was no reaction showing any understanding of the word Laura said. "Explore, Journey, To find the source," Laura tried different words, but they could not understand her clearly. Then Logan opened his bag and took out his book and showed it to them.

They looked at the book in wonder, one of the standing women came to Logan and took the book out of his hand and passed it to the woman. She started looking at the book and going through its pages, the man also leaned over to see inside the book. They started talking about the book with

each other. When they talked normally to each other it was almost impossible to understand any of their words for Laura and Logan.

The man took the book and looked at it for a while, they chatted for some time without paying any attention to their guests. It was obvious that they could not read the book, but in the end, it looked to be almost satisfying for them as a reason for the journey of Laura and Logan.

One of the men gave the book back to Logan, "You," said the man, "Bad?" "No, no" said Logan while shaking his hands and head "Friend, we, you, friends," Logan accompanied all his words with hand gestures. They seemed to understand him.

"You, kill," said the man and continued to show an animal with some gestures and then showed his gratitude.

"I think," said Laura quietly to Logan, "They are thanking us for helping kill the panthers," Logan made a thankful gesture back to the man, and Laura followed him and did the same. "I hope so," said Logan to Laura "Though we barely did anything useful for their hunt," "Us being there," said Laura "And wounding the panthers, probably made it easy for them to kill the animals, they seemed to be pretty clever hunters, probably many of these people are killed by them."

"Stay," said the woman, "Friend, we," and then said something in the other language. "We," said Logan "Travel, should go," "Yes, yes," said the woman, and continued with some other words, but from her gestures it looked like they wanted Laura and Logan to spend some time in the village, or at least stay till tomorrow.

Logan and Laura shook their heads in agreement, a man and a woman came to them and gestured to them to follow. They took their stuff and followed the two people. They went to a new house nearby but on the second floor, and entered it alone. After entering the man and the woman closed the door and went away. It was a house with a bed and other stuff for living, and it seemed to be emptied for a time.

"I'm going to rest," said Laura and jumped on the bed that was covered with some animal skin, "Oh," continued Laura "This is the softest bed ever," "I join you then," said Logan and went to bed with her. It was indeed soft. Though the skin on the bed was not as soft as a sheep's skin, inside the bed seemed to be full of soft plants.

The pressure of everyday walking and the fight with two panthers and then five men, made them go to sleep immediately that evening.

Logan woke up with the soft sound of knocking on the door that was made out of animal's skin. It was dark, But he got up and went to the door, standing there was the woman who had brought them to this house. She pointed in a direction through the window, Logan looked and there was a shaking light in that direction, it looked like a big fire. He went back in and saw Laura already getting up. They joined the woman and went toward the light.

Chapter 17:

Lots of people were gathered in the center of the village. There was a big square at the end of the passageway that had no ceiling, there were no houses on the walls of the square and it seemed like a place for social gatherings of the village.

Logan and Laura stood inside the square a little farther than the crowd and watched them in the center. There was a big fire in the center. People were talking and laughing all around the fire.

The man and the woman that Logan had seen earlier in the house came and one by one people silenced and looked toward their direction. It looked like they were the king and queen of these people.

The man started talking and after him, the woman said some words. After her speech, everybody cheered, some people started playing drums and people started to dance around the fire.

They brought the two panthers. Their skin has been peeled off. There was a big hole beside the fire in the ground that Logan had not noticed till now. They threw some of the fire inside the hole and dropped the panthers on them and then threw some more of the fire on them. After that they started to throw soil in the hole till it was almost full and no fire could be seen inside it anymore.

The dancing and cheering continued that night. Logan and Laura start to walk around, they have given some liquids to drink. It was a cold and bitter drink. They did not like it but the village people made them drink it with cheer. After some drinking, Logan got dizzy and saw Laura in the middle dancing with other villagers.

Logan joined her and they danced for a long time. At some point two men started digging the hole again and brought out the panthers, they were now ready to eat.

The feast continued with eating the panthers, it was one of the most delicious foods Laura had ever had. She checked the hole and tried to remember how it looked. She was thinking about trying to cook some food this way. It was a new way of cooking that she has never heard about before, and the result was unbelievable.

They did not stop celebrating until the sunrise and after that everybody went to their house to sleep. Logan and Laura did the same.

They woke up a little after noon that day. The village was quiet. The silence made Logan feel good. He ate some of their own food for breakfast and started to read his book. Every time he read the book, he learned a new thing or two about rivers and their impact on the life of people. But he was still confused about the machine that could create water out the thin air.

They stayed in the village for two days. On a night Logan saw a new dream. He was standing in a field beside a tree. A tree that was like the drawings of his old books back in their village. The tree was dead and had no leaves on it. Then Logan saw a cube beside the tree, it was a smoothly carved cube and looked like some kind of stone. He touched the stone and water started to flow out of the stone, suddenly the tree started to come back to life, it grew leaves and became green. Logan walked toward the tree and just at the moment of touching the tree he woke up.

That day Logan and Laura wanted to start their journey. They went to the king and queen's house and said goodbye. They received some food and supplies for the journey and two men escorted them outside the village.

The two men stayed with Logan and Laura until they reached the river. Then Logan looked at Laura "We should go this way," he pointed at the direction toward the desert. Laura changed her way toward that direction.

"No," said one of the men who was accompanying them. They looked at him, "No, kill," said the man as he shook his head and hands. The other man was doing the same. Logan said goodbye to them and started walking,

Laura followed him and the men took their arms stopping them from going farther. "You, No," said one of the men, "Kill," said he again pointing to the desert. "Travel," said Logan as he pulled his arm out of the man's hand. "No," said the man again.

Logan took Laura's hand and started walking, the two men said some other words but eventually gave up and walked back to their village.

"I think they were trying to warn us," said Laura "There must be something dangerous in this desert," "I know," acknowledged Logan "But there is no other way, we have to go through this too."

They talked no more and continued their way into the vast desert.

Chapter 18:

They walked and walked in the desert for days. There was nothing to be seen around. The mountains behind the village were the last thing on the horizon behind them, and they couldn't see those mountains for two days now.

It was really hard to bear the sunlight in the desert. Their water source was near to an end. Logan would just drink water from the river and left their water in the flasks for Laura.

At noons it was too hot and they would just sit and take their bags up their heads to be immune of the powerful rays of the sun. even nights were hot. Both Laura and Logan would take off their shirts at nights, and if it was not for the sun rays, they would stay shirtless during the day too.

There was no place for them to hide if any predator would attack, but on the other hand, no one could sneak attack on them, they could see any movement from far away.

Laura started to see water in the far distance, she was so happy, freshwater meant life and they could have some rest at a village. But the more they would advance, the more the water would go away from them. It was impossible to reach the water. Logan could see it too, but he thought to himself that maybe that is where the river is flowing.

The chasing of the distant water had become a nightmare for Laura, one day she started running to catch the water before it would move farther away. But it was pointless. The water moved away exactly at her speed. Finally Laura came to the conclusion that she was turning crazy.

They had no other way but to continue their journey. They have forgotten how many days they have been in the desert. It was a never-ending desert.

One day, Logan realized that all the food in his bag was finished. "How much food is left in your bag?" asked Logan, "Why?" asked Laura "You want some now?" "No," said Logan "It just seems that mine is finished," "Oh," Laura looked at her bag with doubt, there was not much left, it was not enough to get them out of this desert, at least not both of them, "Yeah I have enough, don't worry," said Laura.

Then Logan took out some of Ubara's candles from his bag, "Do you think we can eat these?" asked Logan, "I don't think so," said Laura, "Let's hope we will not have to test it."

After that, Laura would take her share out, and when Logan was not looking put it back to her bag. She knew that Logan would not let her starve, but she knew better that by eating the remaining food, it would run out soon. For two days, she just drank water, and then her water finished. The heat was killing them, it was vaporizing both their bodies.

On a noon, after their daily rest and lunch, Laura could not stand up, it was really hard for her to continue, "Are you ok?" asked Logan with a worried voice, "Yes, yes," said Laura "It's just the heat, I'm going to be alright," she gathered all of her energy and started to walk.

After some time, she could not continue and fell on the ground. Logan came to her aid. "Let's rest," said Logan "We can continue later in the dark, it will be cooler then." "But," said Laura "If we stay we can't get out of this desert soon enough," "Soon enough for what?" asked Logan, Laura looked at him and said with a sad voice, "Before our food runs out." "I know," said Logan "But, you need to rest."

Logan emptied his bag, he peeled off the papers of his book and made a fragile shelter over Laura, she was unconscious when his job was done. Logan brought some water from the river and threw it at Laura's face, but she did not move at all. He thought maybe it's better to let her rest for now. She might be asleep.

After sunset, Logan shook Laura, she woke up and was amazed by the paper shelter on her top. Logan gave some food to her from the bag. He ate less than always and let Laura take the bigger share this time.

They could not continue their journey that night. Logan lit some candles in order to check on Laura during the night. The next morning, Logan woke up and saw the half-open eyes of Laura. The paper shelter has been destroyed and thrown away by wind the night before.

Laura woke up and prepared some food, she didn't let Logan do it as she was always the cook. There was barely any food left for them, she gave a little bit to Logan and tried to eat herself, but she couldn't. She knew her death was near, she could feel it, but Logan could have a chance and with every bite that she would eat, Logan would get closer to death too. After all, she also did not have water, Logan could live on the water from the river.

They walked for some time that morning. But Laura could not walk as fast as before. Logan decided to carry her but she wouldn't accept, she believed this would weaken Logan. She tried her best to keep up the speed.

That day they rested more than usual for lunch. Laura could not bear the hunger anymore, then she started eating the last candle of Ubara when Logan was asleep. It made her feel better for a moment then suddenly she started to feel severe pain in her stomach. It was almost afternoon that they started to walk again. Not long after that Laura fell down again.

Logan took her flask and poured it with water from the river, Laura started to drink, but there was nothing in there to drink.

"You have to continue," said Laura "I'm just a burden now," "Shut up," said Logan "I won't leave you," Laura took his hand and said with a serious voice, "Only one of us can pass, please go, I think you have enough food for two days."

Logan did not answer her, he went straight to her bag to bring some food. Logan looked at the food, he was not sure, but it was as if, only his share of the food had been reduced from the last time he saw their supplies.

Logan looked at Laura, and she was already deeply asleep. He prepared some food for her and laid beside her, and fell asleep himself.

After the dark Laura opened her eyes. She saw Logan laying asleep beside her. She looked at the sky. Lots of stars were in the sky. The dim moonlight was lighting the desert. She thought if she could go back in time, for sure she would choose to do it all again.

She looked at the stars again. She remembered her father telling stories about the stars to her. He would say that her mother now is in the stars, that when we die we go to the stars and live there forever.

Her father used to say that one day we came from the stars and death is our way to get back to where we were before. Laura was not afraid of death, she could see her mother soon, and eventually everybody she knew would join her up in the stars.

She turned her head and took a last look at Logan, it was heartbreaking for her to leave him alone, but he could continue his journey without her. She had to let him go, soon he would go to stars too and they would join together again. She had to wait until then.

Laura leaned and kissed Logan on the lips, and slowly let go, her lips softened but she didn't lose the touch on Logan's face and her head dropped on the ground while still, her lips were touching his face.

Logan woke up and felt Laura's lips on his cheek. He kissed her back, but she did not wake up. Logan got up and brought the food he had prepared for her, he shook her several times. He shouted at her, slapped her, but nothing could make her wake up. She was in deep sleep, forever.

Chapter 19:

The brutal rays of the sun have conquered the desert, Laura's body was laid still under the direct sunlight. Logan has fallen asleep on her corpse, he stayed awake all night and mourned her loss. Logan's tears had made a small river on his cheeks and now its dried mark was visible.

The warmth woke Logan up. He ate some food and sat beside Laura's body. There was no time to mourn anymore, but he could not leave his beloved behind.

Logan gathered all his stuff and put some of Laura's in his bag, including her sword. Then he grabbed Laura and put her on his shoulders and started walking. She was a small person, but as time passed by, it felt as if she was getting heavier.

Logan carried her all day and slept that night hugging her. He continued the same thing for the second day. His food was almost at its end, he did not have enough energy to carry Laura anymore.

The warmth had made Laura's body smell. On the second night, Logan dug a hole with his dagger and let her beloved in it. He could not let go of her. Pouring soil on her, meant goodbye and he was not ready to say goodbye.

Logan knew that she killed herself to save him, or at least give him a little more time to live. His food would end tomorrow and if he couldn't find food fast enough, he would die of starvation too. This thought did not annoy him that much, he did not like the world without Laura.

This was the last night of them together, Logan laid beside Laura that night in the hole and ignored the smell. He kissed and hugged her with tearful eyes all night, The next day he said his last goodbye and poured sand and soil on her distorted body. She was now under the earth, resting forever, and leaving Logan alone on this doomed journey.

Logan walked slowly that day, his last bite of food finished in the evening. There was nothing on the horizon, his only hope of living was the water in the river now. After a day walking without food, his body could not bear the walk anymore and he fell down on the hot sand of the desert.

He dreamed about Laura, she was wearing a fancy dress, he has never seen her more beautiful. She came to Logan and kneeled in front of him. Logan wanted to say something but she put her finger on his lips and stopped her, then she kissed him and stood up. She took him by the hand and helped him get up. Logan stood up, Laura was not there anymore, he was alone in the desert again.

He started walking, the sun was dim, he looked at the sky, there were dark clouds in the sky covering the sun. it started to rain. Logan was amazed, he had never seen or heard anything like this. He could not even imagine water pouring from the sky. All of his body was wet, he woke up in cold sweat. He was laying under the sun and all of his body was wet.

Logan stood up and started to walk, his body was sweating too much. He couldn't bear it anymore, he took off his shirt. Suddenly he realized the river is not there anymore, his sweat formed a flow of water, the river was streaming out of his body now.

Logan woke up, he wasn't sure if he was dreaming or awake anymore. He walked for some time, then felt thirsty and started drinking water from the river. Suddenly something caught his eyes, in

the distance something was visible, he grabbed his stuff and ran toward it, he was advancing faster than he imagined. It was the city with tall buildings from the page of that book in Ubara's library. He continued running toward the city, he might have been able to find some food over there. Suddenly the ground under his feet started to shape a hole and Logan fell inside the hole into the darkness. Laura's corpse was there at the end of the hole, Logan tried to catch her but she flew away.

Logan screamed and tried to catch Laura but he woke up in the desert alone. It was afternoon but the sun was still burning the world. Logan stood up and grabbed his bag, he walked for a bit and the thirst made him stop, he leaned over the river and started to drink from it, but the river wouldn't let him drink water. Wherever he would lean over to drink water, the river would just change its path and didn't let Logan drink out of it. He threw his bag on the ground and started to scream from thirst, he woke up from his own scream.

Logan really was thirsty and his body was wet with sweat under the evening sun, he leaned over the river and drank some water then stood up and resumed his journey. Finally, after a while walking in the desert he saw something on the horizon. It was the shape of a human. He shook his hand in the air and ran toward the human, as he got closer realized that it was a centaur, maybe Hector, he ran faster toward him, but it was not Hector, it was a centaur with big wings, and had Laura's face, Logan stood still for a moment then the centaur grabbed Laura's sword out of her side sword-cover and put it in Logan's heart, Logan screamed and made himself wake up.

It was night time, Logan could not see anything on the horizon, the moon and the stars were shining in the sky, but there was nothing on the ground. Logan stood up and started walking with his stuff, suddenly he remembered about Laura's sword, it was still in the bag and made him feel better. After a while he felt the earth-shaking, it was something like an earthquake, suddenly the earth opened up and the stone-man from his dreams came out of the ground. Logan looked around, there was nothing he could do, Logan realized he was dreaming again, so he let the stone-man get close to him, it grabbed Logan by the waist and pulled him up, then tightened its stone hands, there was a pain in Logan's chest, he started screaming but he wouldn't wake up. Maybe it was not a dream anymore, the pain felt real, then the stone-man threw him on the ground, Logan rolled several times, he could feel his bones breaking. Logan stood up, grabbed his dagger in one hand and Laura's sword in the other, and with all his power attacked the stone-man, both of his weapons broke the moment they touched the stone man's body. Then it punched Logan hard in the face, he started bleeding from his nose and his eyes. There was blood in his eyes and he could not see anything, but he could hear the stone man's footsteps getting close and then putting his foot on Logan's body and pushing it hard, Logan screamed in pain and woke up.

It was almost noon, everything seemed normal, Logan could feel a lot of pain in his chest, he stood up with a lot of difficulties, after some steps he fell on the ground, he checked his bag, there was nothing left to eat, he could not stand up, then he decided to crawl on the ground. As he was crawling the sands in the desert started to cover him, he pushed them away several times, but eventually, he got covered with sand all over his body. There was no air breath anymore, he

was in his grave and still alive, he tried hard to get out of it, but it seemed useless, Logan surrendered to his death and closed his eyes.

He opened his eyes again. It was almost dark in the desert. He felt so hungry, he could feel his body had been shrunk from days before. There was nothing he could do about this. He drank some water and looked around. There was nothing visible on the horizon. He gathered his stuff and started walking again.

He walked until it was too dark and he was too tired, but he wasn't sure if he could wake up from the dreams anymore if he was not already dreaming of course, so he kept walking in the dark until he fell on the ground.

Logan did not try to stand up again, he closed his eyes and thought about Laura and fell asleep fast.

Logan opened his eyes, it was morning, Laura was with him, she came to him and started to kiss him, then she started to lick his face, Logan tried to stop her but it was impossible. Her tongue felt so rough on his face.

Logan opened his eyes again, there was a big animal on top of his head licking his face. It was a camel. One of the few creatures left on earth who had no problem living in a desert like this.

Logan pulled himself back, the camel stopped licking him and looked at Logan with amazement. Logan looked around, there were no other camels around. He thought of killing the camel and eating him. But he was too tired even to grab his dagger. Logan tried to stand but fell down again.

The camel came close to him again and leaned with his long neck. Logan took the camel's neck with his hand and pulled himself on the back of the camel while grabbing his bag.

Logan opened his eyes and saw himself being carried by the camel through the desert. He looked around, the river was not too far, he closed his eyes and fell asleep again.

Logan saw himself in a vast field, there was a tree near him. The tree was dead, he walked toward the tree, the ground under his feet disappeared and he started to fall, he hit the ground and opened his eyes. The camel was standing beside him. He felt a pain in his head and neck. Logan looked around there was no trace of the river, he had no idea how long he had been on the back of the camel. The camel leaned again, Logan grabbed his neck and pulled himself up. He was unconscious right after the camel started walking again.

Logan was alone in a dark place. There was no ground under his feet. There was nothing around him, it was a different nothingness than the desert. There was no ground, no sun, no light. But he could see his own body clearly.

A stream of water started to flow beside him. He could fly around the water shaking his hands as wings, it was flowing in the air, he started to fly toward the source of the stream, he flew for a while, then saw a dot from far away. He flew faster, it was an old woman, she was flying toward him too. They stopped and looked at each other for some time.

Logan opened his eyes again and felt off the back of the camel. He dropped on his hands and his head stayed safe this time. Logan turned around, the camel was going away, he wanted to call him but couldn't.

Then he saw an old woman on top of his head, she was looking at him curiously. Logan closed his eyes and it was dark again.

Chapter 20:

Logan opened his eyes, it was dark, the light of a candle brightened the interior of the small room he was laid in. an old woman was sitting near him, she came close to him realizing he had woken up. She brought a cup of milk with her and Logan started drinking from it.

It was the camel's milk, he could recognize it from his own camels back in his village. They were saltier than the sheep's milk. After he drank the whole cup, the old woman gave him some food. He ate as much as he could while still laying down. Logan went to sleep again.

Daylight had filled the room, Logan woke up and felt some energy in his body. There was no trace of the woman. He sat up and looked around. He was in the corner of a small house with just one room. He heard some footsteps from outside and the old woman came in soon after. By seeing Logan she started talking. Logan could not understand a word she was saying.

She was a short and chubby human, with grey long hair and a small scarf around her head, she was wearing a long dark green dress and had a necklace of small bones around her neck.

The woman was preparing some kind of food and drink for Logan and she was not even looking at him. She talked and talked until her work was done and came to Logan with a plate of food and a cup of milk.

"Thank you," said Logan "But I did not understand a word you just said." Then Logan started drinking and eating. The old woman looked amazed by hearing Logan's words. She shook her head and said something back, but it was impossible for Logan to understand her.

"Can you understand me?" asked Logan as clearly as he could. There appeared a sadness in her eyes and then she answered with fast and quiet words, it seemed that she had no more hope in communication with Logan.

Logan finished his meal, he felt a lot better, he looked around the house, there was no sign of his bags or any of his stuff. The thing that annoyed him more was losing Laura's sword, he wanted to save the sword forever as a souvenir from her, but just two days after her death he has lost it with his other stuff. Was it two days? Was it more? He had lost count of time and had no idea how many days had passed from the last things he could remember.

Finally Logan stood up and walked outside. There were no other houses around. On one side he could see some hills. Insects were walking around here and there and plants could be seen all around. He has finally passed the desert.

Logan looked back and saw the desert, he remembered Laura again, she was in there alone now, he wondered how long inside the desert laid his bag, suddenly he saw a camel walking toward him. It was the same camel that saved his life. He walked toward the camel and stood in front of her. Logan bowed as to say thank you to the camel.

The camel did not care and passed him toward the old woman's house. She stood in front of the house, after a moment the old woman came out and started to milk the camel.

Logan walked to them and stood by their side. Not the camel nor the woman cared for his presence.

Logan looked around a little bit more, it was so much cooler here than the desert now. He sat on a small rock near the house and looked at the woman and her daily routine.

Suddenly he remembered the river, he stood up and looked as far as he could. Logan had no idea where the river was. On the west or east? He was unconscious for a long time before reaching here. And he could not ask the woman or the camel from which direction she had brought him in. At noon, the woman called him to eat a meal. Logan tried his best to talk with the woman using only body language. He was trying to ask her if she has seen the direction the camel has brought him.

After a long and frustrating wordless conversation, the old woman pointed at the east and said something. Logan was not sure but it seemed that they were talking about the same thing.

Logan had no other choice, he had to test one direction, after all, so he decided to go to the east and if he couldn't reach the river after two days, he would turn back and search for the river on the west.

The Only thing Logan and the old woman could communicate with each other was their names. Her name was Tutelary and her camel's name was Seth.

Logan stayed with Tutelary for a day and recovered. On the second day, he showed her his decision, she understood it finally and gave him a small bag with some food and a flask full of camel's milk.

On the morning of the third day, Logan said goodbye to Tutelary and walked toward the east in search of the river. There was no sign of Seth the camel that day, though she could not probably understand Logan's appreciation and say goodbye, he felt bad not saying goodbye to his savior, to the god of the desert as he was thinking with himself.

Logan walked the whole day. He used some of his milk and ate fresh insects trying to keep his food as long as possible. After his last experience he would not like to run out of food again.

On the second day morning, after some walk he saw the river on the horizon. He reached the river and resumed his journey by the river toward the north.

Chapter 21:

Logan continued following the river. For a week, he walked every day and drank water from the river and ate whatever he could find. From thistle to cockroaches. The path was mostly full of plants and insects.

He realized that here he could find a lot more food than the lands before the desert. The more he was walking toward the north the more plants and insects with a lot more variety could be found. Logan passed through the flat fields, mountains, and hills. His hair grew so long he could not recognize his own reflection in the river so he cut his hair using a small knife that Tutelary had given him. After almost ten days that he did not see any village or creature but insects in his way, he reached a vast plain field. In the distance, he could see a big city with tall buildings.

It kind of looked like the city in his dreams. His heartbeat increased, could it be the source of the river? Was he finally reaching to where the river and his dreams were trying to lead him?

It took him a day to get close to the city. From a closer view, he could see that the buildings and houses in the city were actually something like their own houses back in the village, but much bigger and taller.

There were a lot of small houses too, but only big ones could have been seen from distances. The river was flowing from within the city so he had to go inside it.

Inside the city the ground was different, there was no normal soil or sand under his feet, it was a dark and hard ground with a lot of dust on it.

Lots of broken glass and plastics were in the city. Most of the houses were cracked, even the ground had a lot of cracks, and from between them, some thistles or other small plants had grown out.

The streets of the city reminded Logan of the labyrinth between the hills. He was walking between tall buildings, following the river. Odd as it seemed, inside the city, the river was not flowing freely, there was actually a hand made passage leading the water inside the city, as if the river existed before and people had made a passage for water to flow inside the city. It made Logan almost sure that he was following a vision with a meaning in it.

Logan was hypnotized by the city so much that he lost the river several times and had to go back and find it again. Night fell on the abandoned city and he could not find anything like a source of the river before dark. He found a safe place and rested there. It was a little house that reminded him of his own old house. The door was not locked and there was just one little window. He went in, there was nothing inside. He laid on a corner and fell asleep fast.

That night Logan had a weird dream, he saw some people with big candles around him giving him water to drink, but it was not water, it tasted so bitter, as he was dreaming, Logan was thinking what all of this might mean.

The next day he opened his eyes to bright light, everywhere around him was so white and bright that it took some time for his eyes to get used to it. After some moments he realized he was not in the room he slept in last night.

Logan sat up and saw himself chained to the ground. There were no windows on the walls, only one white door. All the walls were white and there were big windows in the ceiling. Sunlight was coming directly through them and made the room so bright.

There was nothing else in the room. Just he and his chains. He tried to free himself from the chains but it was impossible. He started shouting but nothing happened. He had no idea when and by whom he had been brought to this room. He remembered his weird dream again, maybe it was not a dream after all.

Hours passed and he heard some noises coming from outside, then there were some footsteps getting closer. Someone was coming toward him. Footsteps stopped behind the door. the door opened and a tall woman in weird clothes came in.

She was wearing tight black shining clothes from her neck to her feet. She came inside the room and started talking in a language Logan had no clue about. He stopped her by his hand gesture and said, "I can't speak your language. Do you understand me?" she looked at him with a confused face and said something.

Logan didn't understand any of her words, he could just guess by her tone that she probably asked a question. So he just showed her a confused gesture. She said something else and left the room.

Logan started shouting and tried to stop her from leaving. He could not wait again for other long hours without any information about his new situation. She turned back, looked at him, and asked another question, but Logan didn't know what to say and she left the room, locking the door behind her.

Logan started to shout again, but after some time got tired and just sat down. Not long after that, he heard some footsteps again. The door opened, a short person came in, Logan couldn't tell if it was a man or a woman, but it was a human. He or she had long straight black hair, with a slim body and grey clothes on.

Logan started talking to her but saw the confusion in her eyes and stopped talking. She put a bottle of water and a box in front of Logan, she was being so careful as if she was afraid of Logan.

The short person then looked at Logan in the eye, pointed at the box and then at Logan and left the room. Logan opened the box and there was food in it. Lots of smoked meat and insects, and then he realized how hungry he is. He started to eat and drink.

The box was almost too big and gave a feeling to Logan that it is not just for one meal. Maybe he should eat less and reserve it for later, he had no idea when the next visitor would come or when they would give him food again.

Night fell on his small room, the walls were so white that even in the darkness of the night they were shining a little. He couldn't sleep that night. He was thinking about all that happened to him in the recent past, his innocent lovely Laura that died in vain. She died on Logan's sin, The sin of lunacy. And now she was nothing but a memory, oblivion would take that away too and then nothing. He could not even save her sword to be remembered by.

Logan could see the sun's first rays on the ceiling and then fell asleep. He opened his eyes again and it was almost sunset. He has been sleeping all day. There was nothing changed in his room, so he had guessed right before. The box and the bottle were not one meal for him.

He ate a little meat and some water, started thinking again till morning, and fell asleep at dawn again. After three days his food ended, he was starving and nobody brought him food.

He started shouting and beating the walls and the door but nobody answered. Logan was too tired and too weak to try more than this. Another day passed. He had no water left. He ran out of food almost a day ago.

Logan could feel his death coming. His eyes wouldn't open completely. He could see a hazy shape in his room, it seemed to be Laura, he was so happy to see her again. Tried to touch her but she disappeared into the thin air. It was time to die, he thought to himself. He was not sad or angry, he wanted to embrace death to get rid of his meaningless life. And everywhere went dark. He went to sleep.

Logan heard a sound, someone was shouting at him, then he felt a cold all over his body and opened his eyes. There was that tall woman again, she had thrown some cold water at him. She gave him a piece of meat, Logan started to eat without thinking. He drank a lot of water and ate a lot of meat as the tall woman was looking at him.

Now he could see clearly again, He was still in his room but not chained this time. It was daytime, maybe around noon. He stopped eating and then the woman said something. Logan couldn't understand that and just shook his head.

The woman turned around and left the room, but did not close the door behind, Logan stood up and carefully went out of the door. It was a long corridor with white walls and big windows on the ceiling. The woman was walking down the corridor, he started following her. At the end of the corridor, she stopped and turned around and looked at Logan with a smile.

Logan hesitated for a moment, suddenly two big and tall guys came inside the corridor. It seemed like they were waiting for her sign to catch him. Logan was so shocked he did not resist them taking his hands and pulling him with themselves.

Logan looked at them more closely and it seemed that their face was not really human. They were so much hairier than normal humans and had lots of black hair on their body that Logan at first thought they were wearing black clothes.

He realized they were not wearing any clothes, before this he had seen that centaurs and mermaids would not wear clothes, but they were different from humans and goblins, these though creatures looked like humans but they had enough hair on their body that there was no need for any kind of clothes..

The tall woman started walking in some big rooms and those two creatures pulled Logan behind her. They finally went out of the big building. He could see that they were still in the city, big buildings were surrounding them.

To his surprise this part of the city was not that much dusty, it seemed that people were actually living in this area.

There were some other people outside waiting for them. Some of them were human and some were like those hairy creatures that were carrying him. They all were standing together, there were almost twenty of them. The human that had brought him food and water last time was also among them.

They started talking with the woman. Logan could not understand even a word of their language. The creatures were talking as well, but they had a lower and harsher voice than humans.

Sometimes they would look at Logan or just point toward him. One of the humans came toward Logan, he was a tall but very fat man. He looked at the creatures and they pushed Logan to the ground so he had to stand on his knees. They were grabbing his hands tight from behind, Logan could not do anything against them. The fat man came up to him and started talking to his face, it was obvious he was not talking to him and someone else was his audience, maybe the tall woman is the one this man is talking to, Logan tough to himself.

Nobody answered the fat man, of course, maybe he was not asking anything. The fat man touched Logan's face and ran his hands through Logan's hair. Then he opened Logan's mouth and looked inside, He even pushed some of Logan's teeth.

Then he went back and talked to the tall woman again. He gave her something and then looked at another big creature in the crowd, he started moving toward Logan and grabbed him from those two other ones. He was not carrying Logan anymore and only was pushing him toward the direction of the fat man.

Chapter 22:

People started walking in different directions on the streets and Logan followed the fat man by the force of the big hairy creature. They walked a little around the city and on a turn in an alley, Logan could hear and even see the river in the distance. He started walking toward the river but the hairy creature stopped him, the fat man stopped and turned around and told him something.

The creature closed in on Logan and made a threatening noise, it was obvious to Logan that he has been sold as an animal or slave of some sort. He thought to himself now is as good a time as any, there were just two people with him, the fat man was not a problem, he just had to outrun the hairy creature, and as powerful as he seemed, Logan thought he did not look to be a fast runner.

Logan punched the creature in a surprisingly fast act, as hard as he could. He aimed straight for the eye and then started running toward the river. The creature screamed and the fat man started shouting. Logan had no time to turn around and see them, he ran as fast as he could.

Logan finally reached the river, slowed down for a moment, and then realized there are three of those hairy creatures gaining in on him. They must have been around and heard the shouting.

Logan started running again beside the river's canal, he thought one way or another the river would show him a way outside the city.

Despite his expectation, the creatures were so fast and he had to run as he had never done before to lose them. On a turn, a creature came out of nowhere and punched Logan in the face. He fell down and felt a lot of pain, but there was no time for pain, he had to run away.

Logan got up and before he could start running again, someone hit him really hard in the back, he fell down again, a hand came from behind and grabbed him by the hair and pulled his head as hard as it could, Logan screamed in pain, then he saw a hairy foot for a moment before it hit his face.

Logan turned his face toward the sky and saw those three creatures standing on top of him, they started kicking him hard with their legs. Logan could not feel any more pain, he felt that all of his bones were broken. His left eye was absolutely shut, his nose was broken and full of blood.

Eventually, they stopped roaring and kicking Logan, he saw the fat man over his head. The fat man shouted at the creatures and told them something. Two of them grabbed Logan roughly up so he would walk, he tried to walk but fell down after two steps, they started hitting him again. He felt a very hard strike on his head and went unconscious instantly.

Logan woke up in the dark in a very small room, there was no window on the walls, just a hard metal door. He had no idea how long he had been here. His body was in pain, he touched his head and felt dried blood on the top of his head.

There was some food and water by the side of the room, he started eating and drinking. Logan could tell by his thirst and hunger that he has not spent more than a day in there. After he ate the food and felt a little better, he started knocking hard on the door. No answer came.

Logan couldn't tell if it's night time or not. There were no windows and the only light in the room was a small candle in the top corner. There was something weird about the candle, it had a

steady light and it looked like there's a glass on top of it, but Logan had more pain than to care for this. There was nothing he could do so he laid down again and let his body rest a little bit more and soon, despite the severe pain, went to sleep again.

Logan was woken up by the sound of the metal door slamming closed. There was a man with a hairy creature in the room. They told him something, Logan could not understand again, they started asking him questions, and Logan could feel that they were asking one question in different languages, but none of them made any sense for him. Finally, the man pointed at the bowl by his side on the floor. He took the bowl, and looked inside it. There was some kind of soup in it and then started eating the soup.

Still, he felt pain in all of his bones, but in general he felt much better than before. Both of his eyes could see, and his vision was almost as good as before.

The creature and the man just sat there watching him. Before he finished the soup they took him by both hands and dragged him out of the room. They went into a narrow dark corridor and after several turns, in the long corridor, they reached a big hall with big windows. The hall was so bright that it seemed to be around noon.

They dropped Logan harshly on the floor in the middle of the hall. The man left the hall and the hairy creature stood beside a wall. For some moments nothing happened. Logan looked at the creature, but he was standing so still that it seemed like he had changed into a rock.

Logan looked around, the walls of the hall were made from some kind of white and shiny stone. They were clean and seemed hard and soft at the same time. Logan has never seen anything like that in his life.

There were two tall and round columns at the main entrance, they were made from the same white shiny stone and carried the burden of the big dome on them. The ceiling had lots of paintings on it. But not like the paintings Logan has ever seen in the books, they were so real. For a moment he thought some people actually were up in the sky looking down on him, but after he looked a little bit more closely he could tell that it's probably just some kind of very realistic colorful drawings.

There was no movement in the picture above him. Humans in the sky were completely motionless, just like the creature standing beside him. There was a big staircase behind him that led to the second floor, and a very big vase with blue paintings was on it.

Logan could not tell what the painting was about, it seemed all confusing and without meaning to him, but he could feel its beauty. There were two chandeliers hanging from the ceiling but the weird thing was their candles. Those candles had a big glass on top of them and they didn't really seem like candles. There was light coming out of them without any flames.

Logan realized that it's not just the light of the sun that made this hall so bright, those weird candles made a lot of light and actually they were the main source for the light in the hall. He looked around and realized that it's not just the two chandeliers, they were everywhere on the walls, in the staircase, and even in the corridor that he came from. In fact, it was not noon, the candles made the hall so bright that it looked like noon to him.

Logan heard a sound of footsteps coming from the staircase and the fat man came down toward him, he had a big book in his hands. Logan tried to stand up and face the fat man, he came to Logan and stood in front of him and looked at him for a moment.

There was a smile on the fat man's face. Then he opened the book and said "Un der..stand?" Logan felt a little happy and said "Yes, yes, I understand you, who are... ?" The fat man shook his hand hardly at Logan's face to make him stop talking. Logan looked at him with a lot of questions in his mind.

The fat man changed some pages and continued "You" pointing his hand toward Logan while changing the page again "Work" then he closed the book and looked at Logan with anger in his eyes and once again said "Work, for me" and then passed his hand by his throat showing Logan that he would kill him by cutting his throat.

Chapter 23:

Logan was facing slavery as he had thought before, and there was no other way for him but to obey his master's orders. After he showed a face of understanding to his master, the fat man looked at the creature, said something to him, and started to walk away.

The creature walked toward Logan and stood by him for a moment then made a gesture with his hand to follow and then started walking toward the main entrance. Logan stood there still in shock. The creature looked back at him and made a threatening noise and Logan started following him before facing another brutal beating.

They went out of the big hall, it was warm outside, the sun was shining, but it was not noon, the sun was almost at the end of its daily journey. They were in the middle of the ruined city, the ruined but almost clean streets of the city showed no abandonment here.

They continued walking through some streets and arrived at a very big building. It looked different from the other buildings around them. It had plain grey walls with small windows on the most upper part of the walls. There were a lot of black strings coming out of the building and going all through different parts of the city.

The creature pushed Logan through the door of the building and he had no other choice than to obey. The air inside the building was moist and had a very bad smell. It was dark, but still, some candles were here and there to make it light up.

Logan glared at one of the candles and realized that these are also not normal candles. These were again glass candles, but so few of them were in this building and due to small windows, high up the walls near the ceiling, there was not much light in there.

Logan thought to himself maybe that's better, it didn't seem a charming place, so the less he could see, the better it would be. They went through some corridors and reached a big smelling hall in the middle of the building. There were several big round cylinders on their side in the big hall.

Some chains were connected to the cylinders and they each have been attached to a small round shaped wheel. There were some people and some hairy creatures in the hall, most of them in front of the little round objects and they were moving those wheel-shaped objects as fast as they could. It seemed like those movements were affecting the big fat cylinders in some way.

There was a humming sound coming out of the cylinders that their wheel was being turned by people in there. There were also two hairy creatures standing guard on others working. Logan followed the creature to one of the round objects. The creature pointed at him and wanted him to stand behind the object. Then he showed Logan how to take the handle in his hand and move it in a circle. Logan tried it. it was harder than he thought, the object was heavy.

It also seemed so different from other things in this building as if they had added this part later, and could not make it as perfect as the others.

The big fat cylinders were not beautiful but at the same time Logan could see that they were perfectly shaped and had some kind of softness in them, but the wheel shape thing that he had to

move was harsh. Now that he was seeing it up close, he could see the faults in it. It was not even completely round, it was the ugliest thing in this building.

The creature also showed him something at his foot. There was a block on the floor that was in two parts. One part was up and the other one down almost to the ground. The creature put his foot on top of the block that was up and pushed, it went down and the other one started rising up. Then the creature put his other foot on the rising block and now he was standing just on the two blocks.

He was pushing one part of the block at the time and this caused the big column to make the same sound as it was making before with the round thing. Then the creature took off and pointed at Logan. He jumped on the block and tried the same thing as the creature did. It was again much harder than it looked but a little easier than using his hands to move the wheel shape object.

Then the creature made a smile at him and showed him eight fingers and then pointed at the round object and the block. Again he showed four of his fingers to Logan and gestured as he was sleeping or eating.

Logan understood that he should move the objects twice as he could sleep or eat, but he had no idea of the eight and four fingers. He could have just used one and two fingers. Maybe that was a sign of how much time he had to work and rest. But he had no way of understanding it for now. The creature pointed at him to start the work and waited for Logan to go on the block and make it move. Then he told something to the other two hairy creatures in front of them, they said something back and he left. Logan still had lots of pain, especially in his head, but after what they have done to him, he preferred to just move the blocks and save himself from more injuries. At first, it was not very hard for Logan to move the blocks but as time passed by, it got harder and harder. He could not even slow down, every time he would slow down to put the pressure a little off his body, One of the guards would beat him with a hard stick.

Logan felt like it had been a long time that he was pushing those blocks. On some points, he changed from pushing the blocks to moving the round objects, but he couldn't do that a lot. His hands were in much more pain than his legs.

He could not see good, everything was getting blurry, he could not take it anymore. Logan slowed down and the guard came toward him. He tried but couldn't keep up the fast pace. Guard beat him hard, but Logan could not show any reaction to him. The guard beat him again and again, Logan fell on the floor, he could not see or hear anything anymore. He just felt several hard beatings all over his body.

Chapter 24:

Logan woke up with the coldness of water thrown on his face and body. There was a woman in front of him with an empty bucket. She put the bucket down and came closer to Logan. His body was shivering and he could feel a lot of pain. He was still in the dark building, there was no light coming from windows, so he figured it must be night time. The only light in the building was from glass candles.

The woman sat beside Logan and put his head on her lap. She was a mature woman in her fifties with a young-looking face and long grey hair.

The woman picked some meat from a dish beside her on the ground and tried to feed Logan with it. He started eating, there was something on the meat that made it a lot more delicious. It has been a while since the last time he felt the warm and kind presence of another person beside him. After Laura has died no one has touched him this much affectionately, but now there he was laying on the lap of this kind and beautiful woman. She was murmuring something as she was feeding Logan, it sounded like a lullaby. She had a soft magical voice, Logan could feel the healing effect of her voice in his body.

Logan had no idea what she was singing or saying, but it sounded nice to his ears, and the woman was not actually talking to him, she was just murmuring it to herself. Logan tried to enjoy these moments, he knew that soon his labour would begin and he could not bear the pressure with a beaten and broken body.

The resting and singing of the woman lasted longer than he was expecting, but eventually, it was over. Logan regretted that most of this time he was just being concerned about the end of his time with the woman, now it was finished and he did not enjoy as much as he could.

Logan could feel that there was something in the meat the woman gave him, he felt a lot better and almost no pain, he recovered faster than he expected. One of the guards came to them and told something to the woman. She answered and took a kind look at Logan, then put his head down and went away.

Logan looked at the creature, he showed him one of his fingers and then showed him a gesture to go to sleep again and left. Logan was thinking about the woman that suddenly went to sleep.

Logan was standing in the desert again, he saw a shining object in the distance and walked toward it. As he got closer, he could see Laura's sword on the ground. He ran toward it and grabbed the sword. The sands started to run down under the place the sword was. Then a hole created on the ground and Logan saw Laura's dead body at the bottom of the hole. He wanted to climb down the hole but a powerful flow of water threw him on his back. Logan stood up, but there was no hole anymore. He saw a tree nearby and the river was flowing beside the tree. He walked toward the tree with Laura's sword in his hand, suddenly he felt someone's hand on his shoulder. He turned around and saw Hector behind him. Logan was so happy to see him, but Hector did not care and just shook Logan's shoulder. Then Hector let go of his shoulder and started to kick him.

Logan opened his eyes, One of the guards was kicking him, and when he saw Logan woke up, stopped it. Logan stood up, it was still night time, he followed the guard to the main hall. There were a lot of people and creatures at work now.

Every big cylinder had somebody beside it moving the blocks or the wheel shape thing attached to it. Logan followed the guard to one of the cylinders, there was a big sweaty man pushing the blocks hard, then suddenly he jumped off the blocks and the guard pushed Logan on them and before he knew it, he was actually back to work pushing the blocks.

This time he felt more energetic. He had no idea what the woman did to him, but he felt fresh and powerful. He looked around to see the woman but there was no sign of her. There were only two big women there and none of them looked as kind as she was. Maybe some of those other creatures were also female, but he had no idea which is which.

Logan continued working for a while. Nobody talked to anybody, there was no sound except the loud humming of the big cylinders and the sound that the blocks produced. Sometimes new people would come and change their places with people who were working. They needed no guard to tell them what to do, everybody knew where to go. But Logan had no idea, even he had no idea how much more he should work. He was getting tired but he had to keep up his pace, he was trying so hard not to lose speed. Maybe if he knew how much longer he should work before having time to rest he could work better. It seemed like an eternity to do something without knowing when it might end.

Before he was aware of it, came a hard beat on his back. He realized that he lost speed and tried harder to keep the speed up. His legs were in much pain, even his hands started to feel the pain of grabbing the stick in front of him all the time. He could see the light outside from the windows. It was almost dawn.

Suddenly he felt empty inside. He used to continue his journey after a night's sleep at this time of the day. He thought about the river and how he slept near it listening to the sound of water streaming for weeks. He missed being free and living his life. Things have gone so wrong in the last few days that he could not even remember how it felt to be outside. The softness of the wind, the warmth of the sun, he missed simple things that did not feel special but were essential for the joy of life.

He missed being on the field, looking at the never-ending horizon, with the sun rising at the end of the world. He really wished to find a way out again to continue his journey. He could not imagine staying here forever. He would prefer to die than to stay here.

For a moment he thought of scaping suddenly right at the moment. But then he controlled his feelings. He had no idea where he was, how to get out of the building, and worse than that how to get out of the city. He needed to embrace his new situation, for now, so he could come up with a plan to escape later.

Logan looked up again and now he could see the sun rays coming through the windows. It was beautiful, the sunlight felt like freedom. It was a sign from the world outside. But he could not look up that much, he had to focus not to lose speed again.

The goal of escaping from that building made him feel better. Now he had something to fight for. His eyes were burning, he worked so much that his sweat actually reached into his eyes and made them burn.

Logan rubbed his eyes and it felt worse. There were a lot of tears coming out of his eyes. One of the guards was in front of him and saw him crying, he started to laugh at Logan, then he said something loud and everybody started to laugh hard. They were mostly looking at Logan and laughing.

Suddenly Logan realized through his blurry vision that three other men on the other sides of the building are not laughing. they were just looking around a little confused.

Logan thought that they might be speaking his language and therefore didn't understand what everybody is laughing about. So he planned to find and talk to them during the time of their rest.

The pain interrupted his thoughts, he could not take it anymore, his legs were in pain, his body was out of energy and his eyes were constantly full of tears and burning. He wanted to scream but controlled himself.

Suddenly a hairy creature, smaller and dirtier than the other ones he has seen before came toward him and stood beside him. Logan looked at him and looked at the blocks. The creature didn't show any reaction and just stood there.

Chapter 25:

Logan looked at the creature, it didn't feel like the creature was there to guard him. Logan was a little confused, then saw a boredness in the creature's eyes. Suddenly it occurred to him, it was the end of his working shift, this creature was there to replace him.

Logan jumped off the blocks and instantly the creature jumped back on them. He could not believe it. It was his resting time. Logan sat on the floor just beside the blocks, he could not walk at the moment.

First he cleaned his eyes with his dirty shirt, but it worked, his eyes felt a little better. Then stood up and slowly started walking. He didn't know where to go, so he decided to just follow where he last came in from.

He was not sure about it but went into the first corridor. After a turn, he saw a man standing guard in front of a big room with no doors. He looked at Logan and gave him a glass of water and some food and pointed at a corner in the room. Logan went and sat there, there were some other people sleeping, so he tried to be quiet.

He ate the food and drank the water. Then he decided to stay awake to see if any of those men he saw in the hall would come and if he could talk to any of them. Suddenly he opened his eyes, the room guard was in front of him, he looked around, not much has been changed. There was no window in the room, just one glass candle. But he could say that some people who were sleeping here were gone now.

Yes, it was time to go back to work. He didn't feel any rest at all. He just closed his eyes for less than a second and now it was over. All that pain and pressure over again. He stood up and walked toward the hall, while walking realized that his body was not in much pain now.

Logan reached the hall and had no idea whom he should replace. One of the guards saw his confusion and pointed at a direction. Logan went there and stood by the big man that had only one hand. He looked at Logan and jumped off the blocks and Logan jumped on and started working. He looked around but there was no sign of those men that he wanted to talk to. Then Logan thought a little more and realized that he really didn't see their faces. He had no idea what they looked like. He just knew that they were human, not the hairy creatures nor the goblins. Maybe he should start talking to everyone until somebody would answer him. He felt like his plan failed before it even started. But it was just a bad feeling, he felt better after a while and started thinking about the ways to escape again.

Weeks past and Logan got used to his daily hard work. His muscles were stronger now and he could actually stay awake for some time between his working shifts. He realized that nobody cares if he wanders around in the building, but inside the corridor that would lead to the yard and then the exit door, some guards were always standing and Logan could never wander inside the corridor. There were also some other corridors that they all would end up in dead-end or were so complex that even if he would go in, there was no guarantee he would find the way out again.. No light was in those corridors and it was impossible to find a way inside them.

Logan also distinguished two other men that never spoke to anybody else in the last few weeks. He waited for a long time until he could find a little time with one of them in the break time. He was a muscular man, very tall, and had a very rough face. Logan waited for him to finish his meal and then without losing any time slowly walked near him and sat beside him.

The man looked at him with an annoyed face but didn't care that much for Logan and laid down to nap. Logan said "Hello friend," the man looked at him again, there was a curious look in his eyes, "Do you understand me?" asked Logan, the man continued looking at him. He was losing interest in Logan. "I am Logan, I come from the south, nobody here speaks my language, I thought maybe you speak the same language as me," said Logan. The man started talking, Logan could not understand him, he was speaking another language, not Logan's nor the language of these people. Though it sounded a lot like their language, Logan could understand that it should be another language. He gestured in gratitude to the man, in response, the man said something to him that seemed to be harsh, Logan knew that he was bothering the man so he got away from him as fast as possible.

There was still another man he could talk to. It took another week for him to find a good time to speak with the other man. He could not speak Logan's language either. Almost the same thing happened with the second man. It seemed to Logan that he was the only man speaking his language there. He felt so lonely, even more than before. He was really looking forward to talking to someone. It's been a long time since the last time he has spoken to anybody.

After Laula's death, he did not really have a conversation with anybody. He really missed Hector. He could be a very good companion for him now. Hector was a great warrior and could really help Logan escape this doomed place. The fact that there were no centaurs here, made him sure that those mighty creatures would not become slaves of any other creatures.

Some days passed, and Logan was devastated to find a way out. One day as he was working, a woman fell on the ground. Guards went to her and kicked her, but she was almost unconscious. They replaced another worker fast and dragged her on one side. After a little while the woman that took care of Logan before came to the worker. She had some bowls and boxes with her, then she washed the worker's face with water, gave her something to eat and then sang slowly to her as she sang for Logan before.

After a while the worker stood up and walked toward their resting room. Logan's working time finished and he started to follow the healer woman. She saw Logan but did not care for him and resumed her walk. She was walking slowly and carefully as if she was counting and memorizing every step.

She walked through some corridors other than the usual way out, she chose the maze corridors and walked in them, there was nobody there, but something didn't let Logan get close to her. The woman had a light with her that was lighting up the corridor and showing them their path. Logan followed her from a distance. After some turns inside the corridors they were outside in the big yard of the building. Logan saw some guards by the main entrance door and did not go out in the yard, but he watched the woman going out from the door. At the last moment she turned and looked at Logan.

Logan went back to his resting room, it was a little hard finding his way back, but eventually, he did it, there was nobody on the way back and when he reached the resting room, nobody cared for his delay. Somehow he felt that the woman had chosen this specific way to show Logan the guardless way out.

Chapter 26:

After that, Logan tried going through the corridors several times and reached the yard. Now he knew the way out even in complete darkness and with closed eyes.

He came up with a plan. Now that he could not find anybody to be allied with, he had to do this alone. There were only three guards on his way out. Two were guarding the workers and one was always walking near the door. Of course sometimes there was more than one guard at the main entrance, but Logan figured out the times that there was only one guard on the door. There were more guards in some rooms inside the building, but he could just go around them from the new way the woman had shown him.

He studied the manner of the workers in the last weeks closely. And found some of them which seemed to have a temper. He found a perfect candidate that didn't look so big and Logan thought he could beat him in a fight.

On an evening, before the sun goes down. He found the perfect time. There were some of his candidates working at the same time as him. He jumped off the blocks, one of the guards shouted at him but Logan didn't care, he walked fast toward one of the workers and punched him hard in the face.

Guards ran toward them while shouting. Logan turned around and punched a woman working behind him as hard as he could. Both workers came back at him, Logan tried to escape from them. Guards reached them and started fighting with them.

Logan saw a third guard coming toward them. His plan was starting to work. A woman punched Logan hard in the stomach. It was so hard that Logan stopped breathing for a second. All the workers had a lot of anger inside, and when they saw the fight, they started fighting for no reason.

Guards were coming to the main hall to fight with the workers. They were trying to stop workers by beating them hard with bats. But it was not enough. Logan was on the floor in pain and suddenly realized that nobody cares about him anymore.

He grabbed a bat out of a guard's hand and pulled it fast, the guard was surprised and before getting to Logan, he got punched by another man. Logan used his bat to beat everybody on his way, the chaos gave him enough time and space.

He sneaked out of the hall and ran through the corridors toward the exit door. Fortunately, no guard was there as always, all the guards were trying to control the chaos inside the main hall, and some that left had gone to the main corridor and the in rooms.

Finally he reached the yard, there was a guard standing there by the main entrance door as Logan thought it would be. He felt a cold wave through his body. It was his last obstacle toward freedom.

Logan tried to remember the guards and their timings. As he calculated, there should have been a normal human, guarding at this time. And fortunately it was as he predicted. Certainly, he could not beat one of the hairy creatures, but maybe he could beat this man.

Logan ran toward the guard and got him off-guard. He raised his bat as he was attacking the guard, but suddenly punched the guard with his other hand in the face, then kicked him immediately several times, but the guard used his bat against Logan trying to beat him.

Logan felt some hits, but there was an anger in his body that could not let him feel anything. He was roaring like a wild animal, the guard was scared of Logan but did his best to fight against him. Finally Logan hit the guard on foot with his bat, the guard fell down. Logan did not give him any time, he started kicking him and then beating him with his bat. Logan beat the guard hard in the head, he went unconscious, but it was not enough, a wild rage had made Logan continue beating. He did it so hard several times that the guard's head almost exploded.

Logan stood there for a moment and looked at what he had done. He did not feel any pity for the guard, then he heard some noises from the building and realized it's time to escape again. Some guards might have heard them fighting.

Logan opened the door before the other guards could reach the yard. But the door was locked. He tried hard to open it but it was of no use. He looked at the dead guard and saw some kind of key on the floor near him.

Logan used the keys, time was ticking, he could hear the guards getting closer every second. Finally one of the keys opened the door. He started running into the streets of the city. It was dusk and he could not see very well, but he didn't care.

Logan remembered the way he had been brought from to this building and started running in the opposite direction hoping to get out of the city as soon as possible. He heard some shouting behind him. They were chasing him for sure. He dropped his bat and ran as fast as he could. For a moment he turned and looked, there were several men and hairy creatures chasing him, but they were far behind him. He ran faster. His legs were in much pain but, it didn't make him slow down. He ran and ran and finally realized he is near to the city's edge.

There were fewer buildings there and those around him were not that much tall anymore. He looked back again and saw them still chasing him. But he could almost outrun them, it seemed impossible but now there was a bigger gap between them than before. Maybe running in the turns inside the streets made them confused and fall behind. He didn't know how long he could run as fast as he was running now, but it was the matter of his life, he could not just surrender himself. There were no complex streets anymore, Logan had to run straight and this was a misfortune for him, maybe he could outrun other humans in the straight run, but not the hairy creatures that used to run with their four hands and legs like a four-legged animal.

Logan reached the edge of the city. He was running in a plain field, and they were still chasing him. His hope that they would not chase him after the city borders was not happening. He was slowing down, his legs couldn't carry him anymore and they were slowly closing in on him.

Logan saw a hill in front of him there was no other way, he had to run straight a head to not give his chasers any advantage.

He started running straight up the hill. It was getting harder and harder. And in the middle of the hill, his foot stuck between two rocks and made him fall down. He got up as fast as he could,

they were almost coming up the hill and shouting. Logan tried running but he fell down again after three steps.

He could not stand up anymore. His body was shaking after all this pressure. Logan decided that when they reached him, he would fight them to the death. He was getting ready for the final fight when he realized they are not shouting anymore. He looked down the hill and saw that they were standing still there watching him in silence. He felt that they were afraid and knew that they were not afraid of him. Logan turned around and looked up the hill. He couldn't believe what he saw, Hector was there.

Chapter 27:

Hector started walking down the hill and Logan saw that his chasers stood still and some of them even turned back and walked toward the city. Hector got close to him and when he got close enough Logan realized it was not Hector, it was just another centaur.

He reached and leaned toward Logan and started talking in a language that sounded like the city's language. Logan shook his head fast and the centaur stopped talking after a moment. The centaur said something that Logan could not understand again.

Logan did not answer and just looked at the centaur in amazement. Logan was afraid of him, this centaur could be dangerous, not all of the centaurs are his friend after all. The relation between centaurs and humans has not been good during the course of history. Logan could still remember the war between his people and them, the same war that killed his parents.

This one seemed dangerous enough that even those who were chasing him were afraid of. The centaur looked impatient and talked again yet in another language that sounded very different from all whatever Logan has heard in his life.

"I can't understand what you are saying," said Logan almost to himself. The centaur's eyes widened and a smile sat on his face then he said, "So you speak the language of ancients," his accent was very weird and he could not speak fluently. then he continued, "Who are you? Why are you running away from them?" "My name is Logan, I was a prisoner for work in that city and I ran away from them," said Logan, "Where are you coming from?" asked the centaur, it was obvious that he needed to think before some of the words to remember them. "I come from the south," answered Logan.

"What made you come here?" asked the centaur "Wandering alone around that doomed city is not a very wise decision." Logan was checking down the hill every second to see what his chasers were doing. He was still breathing hard and did not like to be questioned in this situation. "I don't know who you are," said Logan with respect in his voice "But if you are not planning on killing or enslaving me, please let me go away, I don't want to be in their reach," Logan ended his sentence while pointing at the foot of the hill.

The centaur smiled "Follow me," said he "You are safe with me," then he started walking and Logan followed him immediately.

"Chiron," said the centaur, as they were walking up the hill, "My name is Chiron, now you know me a little bit, Logan".

Logan took a look at the foot of the hill, they were not chasing him anymore and almost all of them started walking back to the city, he was safe now. They walked for half an hour or so. Logan was still in shock and was letting his heart rate calm down. Chiron understood his situation and did not talk to him all the way.

It was now completely dark. The only light was from the small dim moon in the sky. They reached a small clay house, it was Chiron's house and they went in. Chiron lit up a candle, it looked like Hector's house, but Hector had a bed because sometimes Logan or other men who were his friend, would stay the night with him, but there was no bed. Chiron pointed at a corner

and said “You can sleep there, I have to go do something, don’t worry about them too, take a good rest, we have a lot to talk about tomorrow,” then he left the house without waiting for Logan to say anything. Logan looked around and went to the corner and he was asleep before he knew it.

The next Morning Logan woke up early at dawn to the sound of an animal from outside the house. Chiron was sitting on his knees at another corner of the room reading a book. Logan realized that there were a lot of books in the house, he did not see these books last night. All the walls around the house were shelves full of different old and rusty books.

Chiron saw him and smiled at him. He brought some weird food and water for Logan without saying anything. Logan started eating and Chiron went back to his reading. After Logan’s meal, Chiron went out of the house, Logan followed him, he saw a vast plain field with mountains in the horizon all around them.

There were some sheep on the fields near them walking freely and some kind of birds with wings were walking there too. It was the first time Logan was seeing such creatures. Suddenly one of them started to make a sound. It was like a singing, Logan remembered it was the same sound that woke him up.

“He always sings his wake up call a little late,” said Chiron while looking at Logan, “What are they?” asked Logan, “Chicken and Rooster,” answered Chiron, “In your language, those females are chickens and the males are roosters. They are birds but they don’t fly that often, the food you ate earlier was their eggs,” Logan thanked him with a nod and looked at the birds a little more, he was fascinated with them.

Then Logan looked around again, he could not see the city anymore, though he could see the hills from last night and assumed that the city was behind those hills. “I’ve got a question,” said Logan interrupting Chiron’s peace, “Do you live alone? Nobody’s around here like you?” Chiron looked at him for a moment, “Why? Are you looking for somebody?” asked Chiron, “No, no,” said Logan “Just that nobody seems to be living around here and I don’t know why those city people were afraid of you.”

Chiron sighed “There is a village near my house to the east,” said Chiron as pointing toward the east “There are some humans and centaurs like me living there,” he looked at Logan and continued “Those city people and us did not have a friendly history, there have been even big fights and wars between us and they know passing the hills means a new war. That’s mainly the reason they let you go, you did not worth a war to them. Even if I was not there it’s very likely that they would not follow you beyond the hills, me being there just made them sure that they should not pass the border.”

Logan nodded, they stayed for a while, then Chiron started “Tell me everything,” he was looking straight at Logan “What happened from the start and don’t miss any details, I like stories, especially the long ones.” Logan looked at him for a moment, Chiron continued, “Why are you here, why alone? Are you on an adventure or you are just lost?”

Logan started to talk about his adventures and told all he could remember, he even talked about the river, from the first time he saw the river to what happened with Amphitrite and all the things that happened to him and Laura during the journey.

Chiron did not interrupt Logan at any point and listened to all of his stories carefully. After hours Logan finished telling his story to the point when they met last night. Chiron started thinking for a while “Very interesting,” said Chiron “Where is the river?” “I don’t know,” answered Logan “I saw it in the city last time and it was streaming from the north” “And we are in the north of the city,” said Chiron, “So,” said Logan looking around “It might be that way to the west,” added Logan pointing to the west.

Chiron looked at the direction Logan pointed at “Let’s go see then,” said Chiron and started walking, Logan followed him. They walked for about half an hour, but there was no sign of any river in sight. “Is there any valley near here?” asked Logan, “Yes, there is one behind those hills,” answered Chiron pointing at the hills in front of them.

They passed the hills and walked toward the Valley, Logan started to hear the streaming of water “I hear it,” said Logan with excitement in his voice. Chiron started walking a little faster and Logan tried to catch up with him. Finally, they arrived in the valley. There it was, the river with its clear transparent water. “Do you see it?” asked Logan looking hopefully at Chiron. “No,” answered Chiron, shaking his head and looking up and down the valley, “I see no river,” then Chiron looked at Logan, “But I remember something from long before, my grandfather used to talk about something that he has heard from his forefathers. A river was here, life was the name, city killed it, But my memory is not helping me” Chiron put his hand on his face for a moment and continued, “I’m old, older than you think,” Logan stared at Chiron “Honestly I can’t understand what you are trying to say,” said Logan, “Yes I know, it’s not clear for myself either” said Chiron “And also I can’t speak your language clear, so it makes it harder for me to talk what’s on my mind.” Chiron hesitated for a moment, looked at the dry empty valley and continued, “It’s a long story, let’s go back and I will try to explain you to what my mind is thinking about,” Logan thought for a moment to decline Chiron’s demand and continue his journey from right here and now, but it was not a rational move to do. He needed to rest more, and he needed to grab some food before continuing through his journey again, so he decided to walk back to Chiron’s house and see what he had to tell him.

On the way back, they were walking slowly, there was nothing waiting for them at their destination. “I have heard from my forefathers through generations,” said Chiron suddenly, “That there has been a river in this very field, I don’t know exactly where it might have been located, but it was here might be, and all this desert was a more habitable place living inside too.”

“But besides that, there’s something else that I’ve been reading in some books recently about,” continued Chiron “You see, there is a difference between you and that rock,” Logan looked at the rock they were passing by and then looked at Chiron, he continued, “What makes you different is something named consciousness.” “What does it mean,” asked Logan, “It means” continued Chiron “that you are aware you are, you know of your being, but that rock does not.”

Chiron didn't say anything for some moments, "And?" asked Logan, "It's a little hard to explain for me," said Chiron "But I will do my best," Chiron continued after a deep breathe "What makes you exist is you being aware of you, and what makes the world exist is you, me and all other creatures that are conscious like us, watching it and knowing it exists. The world can not exist without some consciousness watching it." Logan looked at him for a bit and nodded slowly as if he understood, or at least he was trying to understand.

Chiron continued "What makes something real, is it being perceived by a conscious mind. Me and you are living in the same world and right now we are walking on the same path, but our perception of the environment around us is different, therefore the world looks different in our eyes, so the reality is different, right now exactly at this moment, we have two different realities one is mine and another is yours."

"We can define the world around us by our own mind and consciousness, and each of our worlds are as real as the other one, because there is a consciousness defining it. You being able to see the river makes it real, it is as real as all your memories. In fact I believe that dreams whether daydream or night dreams they might be, have an equality of reality as memories. And if we believe that the memory of something seen by us is real then the dream of something seen by us could be real too."

Logan wanted to say something several times but he couldn't decide how to say it. Before he could process this new information they were back at Chiron's home.

Chapter 28:

After a brief rest and lunch they both sat outside Chiron's house on a rock and while looking at chickens and sheep Chiron started talking.

"Most of what I'm about to tell you is from what I've heard from my fathers or read in the books. I have not seen many things in my life, as I remember this place always looked like this and I did not go many to journeys, so what I know not much is more than yours. But since I aged many years more than yours and read a lot about history due to my interest, I might know some things that might help you understand your path."

"Many many years ago, the earth looked so different from what we know it today, and it was actually more habitable. But the funny thing is that in those times, species like me, your friend Laura or mermaids were myths and unreal as considered rivers are in our time."

"At some point in history, humans stop reproducing through natural ways as species do today and did before that, they start to recreate themselves in a non-natural way with machines. After years they start experimenting with their newborns and create their mythical creatures, which is us. Of course, it was not just a hobby for them as it might seem to be. Earth was being inhabitable and they needed to leave it and go, so they tried to produce new generations especially for the hard environments of other planets different from earth's environment that they wanted to visit,"

"What do you mean other planets?" asked Logan with a doubt in his voice, "Planets like earth that we are living on now," said Chiron and then continued after a moment of hesitation, "But in the sky"

"Is moon one of them?" asked Logan, "Yes," said Chiron "Moon is another planet, in fact the nearest one to earth is it, but I think not people are living on it, they went to farther planets in the sky, we can see some of them as stars at nights."

"You are even crazier than me," said Logan while laughing, "I know it sounds crazy," said Chiron with a smile "But I believe it's true and as we speak, there are many creatures in the sky living on other planets, and I hope they have a better life and a better planet than us," Logan looked at the sky for a moment, the bright sunlight annoyed his eyes.

Chiron continued "One of the reasons people wanted to leave the planet was water, rivers dried out, even oceans dried, there were other ways to produce water, like taking the water that is in the air and turn it to liquid form," Logan's eyes widened and he interrupted Chiron, "I found a book about this, and I couldn't understand anything," "Yeah me too," said Chiron "All I know is that there has been machines, that could create water, there is water in the air, but it is not water as we know it should be, that machines could catch this water and change it to the form that we know water is like," Logan thought about it for a moment, it was not too much data but still was more than he could understand from his book.

"There were sources of water like this and the underground water as we have them today," continued Chiron, "But lots of people were living on earth and lots of water was needed. So many of them left the earth and tried to find new worlds. For those who have left, it was not easy"

to continue living, lack of food and water caused lots of wars and many died. Big cities fell and as you have seen one of them lately, there are just some ruins left of them.”

“Some tried to recreate the rivers with some artificial machinery, in hope of recreating a friendly environment for living, and apparently they could make one, it was called ‘Elu’ the last river running the face of earth, but water always brings war and all who tried to make earth alive again, either died in war or escaped the earth in search of other worlds.”

They sat in silence for a moment, Chiron looked at Logan and started talking again, this time his voice was different, it was deeper and more thoughtful as if he was trying to believe what he was saying as he was saying it.

“Before those people leave the earth, they left something behind. As I can recall, it was named ‘the memory of the future’. It is said that with some scientific methods they implanted some data, some memories maybe, into the mind of creatures on earth. They hoped that many years later peace might come back to earth and those implanted memories help people to recreate the river and therefore life again. It sounds like magic to me, but I think it might be true.”

Logan looked at Chiron with a confused face “I believe,” continued Chiron “You might be seeing a memory from the future implanted in your head in the past, that has passed through many generations of different species and was preserved for a purpose. Your vision might mean something, and your dreams can be some trigger for you to pursue what you need to do”

Logan did not answer him for a while. “But you just said that you are in war with the city people right beside you,” said Logan after a while thinking “So it’s not the time of peace,” “There are so few creatures left living,” said Chiron with a sadness in his voice, “If there was a river now, I don’t think there would be a war over it, everyone could use it in peace. No food has left, no water has left, I don’t think there will be any living creature on earth in a few years,” “But,” said Logan, “Why didn’t Amphitrite say anything about these things to me?” “Amphitrite is not a prophet,” said Chiron “She is just another creature made for another world, maybe a world full of water, but the point is, though she and her kind age many years and experienced many things, and though they are magical in our eyes, it still doesn’t mean that they are always right. What we perceive as magic in them, for sure has a simple scientific explanation. But due to our lack of knowledge, we call it magic.”

A deep silence covered the environment around Logan as he was thinking, the sound of the chickens and sheeps in the field was the only thing he could hear, Chiron interrupted his focus and continued “And if you really believed that Amphitrite knows everything, you would not start your journey.” Logan looked at Chiron in silence, “I don’t know if anything that I told you is right or not.” said Chiron looking at the horizon “Maybe you are just crazy and hallucinating. But maybe you are a key to bring life back to earth. I don’t know what is the truth, I’m just an old shepherd who has read lots of books in his life. but I know what I told you can be as true as what Amphitrite told you.”

Logan spent the rest of the day alone near Chiron’s house wondering about what he said. Chiron went to the village and Logan preferred to stay alone there. He thought about what he could do,

he tried to get deep into his mind to find answers. If what Chiron told was true, he might have more information about the river than he thought.

After a lot of thinking in silence, Logan came to the conclusion to continue his journey. He did not have enough data to do anything else. The only thing that he was sure of, was the vision he had from the river and his dreams. Of course, now he was more afraid than ever. His journey did not have nice memories for him. He was afraid to continue it alone.

Logan even considered not to continue and reside here with Chiron for a while. But he didn't like it here despite its peaceful environment, and he would really like to get as far from the city as he could.

At sunset, Chiron came back with lots of food and went straight to storage, Logan helped him and after that, they started eating dinner in the open air by the house.

"Will you consider joining me on my journey?" asked Logan suddenly. Chiron did not react to him at all. For a while, they said nothing and continued eating their meal. After dinner Chiron looked at the sky, the moon was in the sky, "Do you see the moon?" asked Chiron, "Yes," said Logan with curiosity, "I saw some pictures in the books," continued Chiron without paying attention to Logan, "The moon used to be so bigger and brighter before. As it was written in the books, the moon gets farther away from the earth day by day. In the picture that I saw, it was more than two times bigger than what we see now,"

Chiron took a deep breath and looked at the ground "Even the moon is abandoning us," Logan did not say anything again. For him, Chiron was incomprehensible. "I'd like to join you on your journey," continued Chiron, "But I'm too old now. I wonder how much longer I will stay alive. if I join you, I will just be a burden on your shoulders, you better off without a dying old centaur." "But you don't seem dying to me," said Logan, "That's because centaurs don't look very different by age, unlike you humans," said Chiron, "But I know my body, breathing is a hard thing for me to do these days. every night that I go to sleep, I don't know if I will see the moon the next night or not, my dying wish is to die on a night of the full moon." Chiron took a deep breath and looked at the moon again. Logan felt like saying something to comfort Chiron, but he couldn't come up with anything. The best he could do was to let Chiron alone. He looked at the stars and wondered if what Chiron said was true, if there were really some creature living in those little shiny dots named stars in the sky. If it was true then Laura was not a star in the sky anymore, she was just some sand in that desert of oblivion. He could not believe any of the things he had heard today, but he also could not believe most of the things he saw on his journey. After a long wondering, under the clear sky Logan stepped inside the house and went to sleep.

Chapter 29:

Logan woke up the next day seeing Chiron sitting in a corner reading a book as always. Chiron stopped reading realizing Logan was awake, he went out without saying anything and came back soon after with something like a bed in his hand.

“I made it for you,” said Chiron “I realized it’s hard for your body to sleep on the hard floor, so I found an old skin of one of my dead sheep from before, it’s softer than the ground,” “Thank you,” said Logan “You didn't have to, I got used to hard floor in my journey, but it will be nice to sleep on something soft again,”

That day they talked about the river and Chiron’s theory of the memory of the future. “Is there any way to know” asked Logan, “Know what?” asked Chiron, “To know,” said Logan “If I am a part of this memory of the future.”

Chiron thought for a while then he went inside his home and brought some books and started to read through them as if he was searching for something specific.

Logan waited for a long time and finally Chiron concluded something, “There might be a way,” said Chiron “Come with me,” Logan followed him and as they were walking passed the Chiron’s home on the opposite direction of the river he said, “As I could recollect some data from the past, I came to understanding that in the ancient times, they had some devices, some kind of glasses or tablets that could show them pictures and even moving pictures from other places. As they progressed, they could manage to create images inside their minds instead of their devices. They could emphasize the power of the imaginative part of their brains and alter what they were seeing, so they could be in a new place even an unreal place and talk to real or unreal people without moving out of their homes, they were just imagining things, things that were not real or were real but not were there,” “Just like the river that I can see,” said Logan.

“Yes,” said Chiron “Just like the river that you can see,” they walked for a moment in silence between the hills and Logan tried to think about all the things he has heard, “This power of imagination,” continued Chiron “Passed could through the generations sometimes and even after most of the creatures left the earth, some newborns had this ability. Through the time we lost this ability and eventually forgot that it existed at all, but it does not mean that nobody ever had it after a certain time. Some creatures might still born with this ability or at least part of this ability, since we don’t know about it, we don’t know how to use it and if someone sees something that others can’t we call them crazy, but in fact it might be just the altered imagination ability that passed to that person through generations.”

By this moment they reached a dry land, behind them laid Chiron’s home and on the left Logan could see some other houses in the horizon, he thought those are probably other parts of Chiron’s village. But in front of them was a vast empty field with mountains at the far end of the horizon.

“Now let’s do an experiment,” said Chiron looking at Logan and continued “Imagine something, anything, and see if you can see it here,” “What” asked Logan “Should I imagine?” “Anything,” said Chiron and then added after a moment of hesitation “Imagine the river here, see if you can move it all the way to this place,”

Logan looked around, he was confused a little, “Ok,” said Chiron “Just focus on the river, focus really hard and then snap your fingers to summon the river there in that crack,” Chiron pointed at a crack in the ground near them going from left to right.

“But,” said Logan after a moment of silence “I can’t snap my fingers,” “What do you mean?” asked Chiron and then while snapping his fingers continued, “How can you not do this?” “I mean,” said Logan “I can do it, but it does not make any sounds like your snap does,” then Logan snapped his fingers and no sound came out of it.

“How is that possible?” said Chiron “Just push your fingers hard against each other and let them snap on each other,” Chiron did it again several times, “I know,” said Logan as he was snapping his fingers without making any sound, “But for some reason I could not learn to do it properly.”

“Ok,” interrupted Chiron, “It does not matter, it is important to think about the river, not the snap, do something else,” then he thought for a moment and continued “Clap instead,” and clapped his hands himself.

“Ok,” said Logan “I will try it with a clap,” then he took his hands up in front of himself and focused, “But,” said Logan in a snap “It does not make sense to clap and summon something,” “I know,” confirmed Chiron “I always imagined that if I could do such a thing I would do it with a snap, not a clap,”

Logan looked at crack “I should focus,” he thought for a moment then said, “Now I just can think about the snap,” “Maybe,” said Chiron “Just do the snap, the sound does not matter, or even imagine the sound as well,” “Yes,” said Logan “I will imagine it as well.”

Logan focused, closed his eyes, and then did a silent snap with his fingers. He then opened his eyes slowly. “Well?” asked Chiron, “No,” said Logan with disappointment “I don’t see any rivers,” “We should not hurry,” said Chiron “This is not something that happens in a moment, though you might have seen the river because of it, you have never used it consciously, it takes time.”

They headed back home that day and Logan started to focus on his imaginations after that. For several days Logan practiced and tried to see things that he was imagining. Chiron would help him from time to time, going with him near the big crack in the field behind his home and give Logan details so he could imagine better.

The imaginations of Logan never came to reality in front of his eyes, he was devastated and hopeless. One day Logan came back from the crack to Chiron that was sitting beside his home.

“I think,” said Logan “That I’m not the memory of the future, it’s been a while and I achieved nothing,” “I’m afraid,” said Chiron with a smile “That I lied to you,” Logan looked at him in wonder, “What do you mean?” asked Logan, “You see,” said Chiron as was closing his book “If you could see your imaginations, it meant that you inherited some ability from your forefathers and somehow this ability showed itself to you as a river, and besides that, it would have grow to other things and you would see all other stuff too, there have been people that created entire kingdoms in their minds and ruled over them, while they were actually normal civilians like labourers, black smiths or candle makers. And as for others around them, they would just see lonely crazy people living in the desert ruling over emptiness, it's not a bad thing that you don't

have this ability after all, but now, we are pretty sure that you did not inherit that ability, you can not see anything but the river, and there must be some other reason causing that to happen.”

Logan thought for a moment “I’m sorry,” continued Chiron “That I lied to you, but if you would know my intentions, deep inside you might have tried to not see any of your imaginations, in your unconscious and our experiment would not come to the right conclusion, you should have really wanted to see the things you were imagining.”

“No,” said Logan as smiling and shaking his head “You did the right thing,” “So?” asked Chiron “Why do you seem so upset?” “I don’t know,” answered Logan, “Does it mean now that I am what we thought I am?”

Chiron looked at the dying rays of sun in the horizon “I don’t know,” said Chiron with a deep voice “If you are actually the memory of the future or not, and if you are, I don’t know what you can do or how you can do it. But I know seeing that river, and those dreams are not just coincidence. I believe you are meant to do something,” Logan did not say anything back.

For one more day Logan stayed there and he preferred to resume his journey before his dreams started again.

One day morning, Logan gathered all he thought was necessary and left the house while Chiron was in the village. He thought it was a better way to leave his weird and wise friend, he didn’t like saying goodbye to the only man who has been kind to him in recent months, and hard as it might be, saying goodbye seemed to be harder, he remembered about Ubara and his son and decided to do the same.

Chapter 30:

As Logan walked away he felt a burden off his shoulders. It felt like he had won his emancipation from the persecution that had followed him remorselessly for a long time. He didn't feel like this after entering the city. Now all those days were nothing but a memory.

He was back on track again and following the river back to its source was his first and only priority. He followed the river for a week and nothing happened. Though the landscape changed a little bit, now hills were higher and sometimes he would even walk in the shadow of a tall hill. And also he could feel that it was getting more windy as he was advancing.

He had not felt such strong winds for a while and it seemed that those winds were a common thing in this land. As he was walking by the riverside he thought about all the things Chiron had told him. After all that he has been through, he couldn't believe that he was just crazy. Maybe the memory of the future was a true thing. He had no idea what to do even if he could reach the source, but he felt an urge in himself that made him run through without thinking.

After days of walking, he saw the ruins of another big city on the horizon. This city seemed to be bigger than the last one but the buildings were not as tall as the other city. In fact there was only one tall building in the middle of the city, it had tall plain walls and looked more like a fortress. The river was flowing from that direction, but he could not bear the risk of getting near to another city. The vivid imagery of his memories made him stand far from the city for hours.

The torture, the labour, the pain he experienced, they were all in front of him now. Not just a memory anymore, he felt the pain in his body, he could not follow the river anymore, at least not in this direction. He thought maybe it's for the best just to turn around the city and meet the river far behind the city. Of course, he didn't know in which direction the river was flowing into the city. So he had to just guess and go for it.

This detour would make his journey even longer and he was already running out of food. There weren't enough insects in these areas to catch and eat, he only had some meat and some insects from before with him. And now that he was going to depart from the river, he had to control his water consumption too.

It took him a week to turn around the city from the west and reach the other side. He was really cautious about his position toward the city and tried to walk in the shadows of the hills so nobody could see him from the city.

Although he was sure about his where-being, still there was no trace of the river. So he had to go round the city from the other side to find the river. His water supply has already been finished. After five days he was almost back to where he was for the first time. He could see the river in the far, flow from the city. The first thing he did was to sit by the river and drink a lot of water. In the last three days, he had nothing to drink but his own urine.

After a little rest and drinking water, he processed his situation, either the source of the river is in this city or his mind is just really crazy trying to get himself into another big trouble. He did not have enough food to go around the city again in hope of finding the river. The only option left was to go through the city in the hope of finding food and a magical source.

He started walking cautiously toward the city. He walked from one hiding place to another. He waited his last night out in the desert before going to the city and looked at the sky for hours. The idea of other creatures living up in the sky made his mind go mad, but somehow he believed Chiron, he was the only creature crazier than Logan. Before falling to sleep, he saw the moon again and remembered what Chiron said, maybe it was his last time looking at the moon. Then he wondered about his friend, was he still alive? Is he looking at the moon right now? He fell asleep thinking about Chiron.

The next morning he woke up early and started walking toward the city. In all the recent nights that he has been outside the city looking at it, he didn't see any kind of lights at night and that gave him the bravery to walk in the city.

The river was leading him to the direction in the heart of the city and he had no choice but to follow it. On the way, he saw an ally that at the end of it seemed to be some movements. He left the river and step by step walked inside the alley. Not much farther inside he found a colony of insects and without thinking he barged on them and started eating. After having enough food, he killed a bunch of cockroaches and put them in his bag for future meals.

Logan went back to the river, by each step he was getting more and more confident that no creature lives in this city. Maybe the windy weather was the cause, it was not an easy place to live after all.

By noon he was almost in the middle of the enormous city, the houses inside the city were in different colors and had a different architecture than the previous city Logan had been into. For some reason, the city felt more friendly for him. Logan found a very big building with plain tall walls, the river was flowing out of this building. It was the biggest building with the tallest walls he has ever seen and it was the same building that could be seen from outside the city.

It looked more like a fortress. There was not enough space to get in from where the river was flowing out of the building so he started going around the building to find an entrance. Not far from the river, he found a door to the building and it was already open.

He went in cautiously, there was a big yard inside the walls and three buildings inside the yard. But there was something that amazed Logan. In front of one of the buildings, laid a trunk of a dead tree. The same tree from his dreams maybe. He could not believe his eyes.

Logan ran toward the trunk, it was definitely dead, but it was a tree. He imagined what it would look like if the tree was not dead, it could be like one of the trees in his books.

The tall walls preserved the space inside them from the never-ending powerful wind. The buildings were still pretty big. The river was flowing out of the middle and biggest of the buildings, Beside the tree.

He walked toward the building's entrance, there was a big door on the side of the building that was also open. There were big windows on the wall of the building. He went inside and there was a big metal cube in the middle of the building with a decorated passage for the river to flow out of it and then out of the building.

There it was, finally, he had found the source, this was what the river had led him to. Logan had no idea what it was, at first it looked like another building to him, but it had no windows and doors, also it was made of some kind of metal.

There were a lot of buttons and handles on the side of the cube. Also two big holes were on either side of it. These holes have been put there intentionally, they were perfectly shaped and Logan could feel that something is missing from the holes. He started pushing the buttons and pulling the handles but nothing happened. He inspected the cube for hours and tried to do anything that came to his mind, but nothing happened. After hours of inspecting he realized something uncanny. The river was no longer there. He wanted to drink some water but he could not find the river flowing out of the cube anymore. He went out in search of the river, but it was of no use, the river was gone.

Chapter 31:

It was dusk, Logan still wondered of the river's disappearance, he returned to the source and made a place for himself to spend the night. He also found out how to close the door of the place and put a big chair behind it to make sure it won't open from the outside.

That night he spent hours looking at the cube in the dark and thinking about it. Could it be one of those magical machines that Chiron talked about? Could this huge cube turn air into water and start flowing a river?

For the next two days, Logan was trying to start the machine again. He did whatever came to his mind, but nothing could make the machine produce water, or do anything else. It was just a lifeless cube that would not respond to anything.

His food supply finished and he had to go find food again. He also started a search through the city for a water reservoir of some sort.

The river was not flowing in the city anymore, but Logan could see the passage for it through the streets. He followed the passage and found the insect's colony and reserved enough of them for his next few days.

Logan thought to himself that without water there would be no living creatures too, so finding those insects might lead him to a water resource. He had his meal happily and after that started searching for a water resource.

His search came to no results and he went all the way back to the source. He could see the big building of the source from anywhere in the city. It had such long walls that could be seen even from outside the city.

Logan had a little water in his flask, but he finished it the first day that the river disappeared, he had no other way than to drink his own urine for a while. He was desperate to find a water source, even a very small underground water reservoir would help him a lot.

After days of searching he could finally find a small water source under an old stone building. This made him so happy, he finally found fresh water. Then it hit him for a moment. If there is no river now, maybe there was no river before and it was all in his imagination. So how was he drinking the water of the river all this time?

His imagination was so realistic that it could actually stop his thirst by drinking imaginary water? He preferred not to think about it anymore, he had a bigger thing to do now.

With food and water at hand, he started figuring out the cube source. Days passed, and all he succeeded to do was to open parts of the cube. His inspiration has gone, he had no idea what to do. He even thought about getting back to Chiron to get his help, but it was hopeless. Without the river to guide him, he could never find his way back.

Logan checked out the other two buildings inside the fortress he was living in, one of them that was very small, was completely empty, and in the other one there was a lot of weird shaped stuff, he has never seen something like those things, they were long and thin metallic cubes with two sides open and four sides closed. He could see some retransform metal surface on the open sides of the cubes and the other four sides had a white metallic surface, there was also a hole on one of

the sides. Logan could not find any use for them, but the building was full of those cubes and they all looked exactly like each other.

Days passed in vain, Logan gave up and stopped trying to fix the cube. He wished at least Chiron would accompany him, he knew a lot of things that Logan had no idea about, maybe bringing Chiron to this place was one of his tasks and he failed by not persuading Chiron to go on the journey with him.

After a month Logan was pretty sure that no living creature except for the insects lived in the city. He also memorized the city plan, and found a second water source. It was even smaller than the previous one but still more than enough for a lifetime of one person.

In this time Logan started to see dreams that he could not understand at all, he would usually see himself in front of a big shining blue surface, the surface would talk his name and wanted Logan to press it, but before Logan did so, he would wake up.

In his searches, Logan found a building almost identical to the building he has been enslaved and forced to work in. except there were no pedals and wheel-shaped handles in this one. The big cylinders were connected to some propellers on top of the building and the propellers were mostly broken or rusted. Still, some of them were slowly turning due to the powerful winds blowing nonstop.

He followed the black metal strings getting out of the building and saw them going in all directions. It was exactly as the previous city, probably this place made magic and sent them through the black strings to light up the night. Something that a candle could do too.

Logan had a feeling that invited him to stay in this building, but he did not have a good memory from a place like this and forced himself out never to return to this doomed building.

Logan stopped counting the days after some time, but it felt like he was living there for a long time.

After some time he started inspecting the cube again, but again all he could do, concluded to no results. He got so bored that he couldn't take it anymore. There was nobody to talk to and nothing to do. He was now as lonely as Ubara.

Logan started to search for some books in the city, now that he had time, reading books and learning to write and read better would help him pass the time better. He also was hoping for some data about the source in the books.

Finally he found a big building full of books. It was an old building on two levels. There were rows of books on tall shelves. Logan looked at the books with awe. He started looking at the books from the first shelf, the books were old and rusty, it has been many years since somebody has touched them.

He spent a lot of time looking at different books, but could not find any book in his own language. All the books seemed to be written in a different language.

Every day Logan would go to the old building with lots of books in it and look at different shelves in hope of finding something useful. He realized that all the books are not just in one language, so there was a hope that maybe some of the books would be in his own language, or as Chiron has put it before in the language of ancients.

At last he found a section full of books in his own language. The number of books in his language needed more than the remaining of his lifetime to be read. But he did not need to read all the books, he started reading the titles in the hope to find something about a river, or water.

There were also books with pictures in them and he preferred to read them first. Days passed and Logan found a book with a picture of the metal cube in the source on its first page. It made him so cheerful, the answer to all of his questions would be there.

Logan started reading the book immediately. There were lots of words in there that he could not understand. He read the book several times, and he was sure now that the cube was actually the source of the last river in the north that was named 'Elu'. but how did it work, how could Logan start it again? They were all unanswered questions.

Logan continued searching through other books, several days passed and he could not find anything helpful. He thought that there was a good chance he found a useful book, but could not read it properly and left it back on the shelves.

Chapter 32:

For several nights Logan saw a new dream about the building with big cylinders and the long propellers on top of it. Most of the time he was working there as he was labouring in the previous similar building. The nightmare of his slavery would not leave him.

Logan was living for a long time in the city now, he knew it would not be possible for him to find the way back home, but at the same time, he could not stand living like this anymore. He thought maybe getting out of the city would make him sleep better at night and get rid of his nightmares about that doomed building.

His plan was to find the way back home and try to persuade Chiron to come to this city with him, even if he wouldn't know anything about the cube, there were enough books in the building that he had found and surely Chiron could find something useful faster than Logan could ever do.

So he decided to go backward on his journey and try to remember the way back to Chiron's village. There was no river to guide him this time and outside the city everything looked exactly the same, except some mountains and hills in the far distance, there was just a vast flat field with the same looking rocks and cracks in all the directions.

He gathered enough food and water for a long journey and started walking out of the city. Now that he was familiar with the city, he knew which way he entered the city on the first day. So he started walking in that direction. Not long after leaving the city he felt a hostile feeling inside, he felt under the persecution of a choice that yet to be made. It was so powerful that it made him stand still in nowhere for a while. But he had made his choice already. He would rather have a nuisance feeling and be on a journey than to stay safe inside and die in vain.

Eventually, he walked until sunset and slept beside a rock for the night. The next morning he woke up with the sound of streaming water. He got up and looked around and not far from him was the river again. He felt so happy, now that the river was there again, he could find his way back to Chiron.

With the nuisance feeling all gone he started his journey again, this time in the direction of the water flowing. By noon he reached a place that he knew he had never been before, there was a big valley in front of him and the river was flowing down inside it. It was so deep that Logan could never climb down, and even if he could do that, it was obvious that he could never climb up it again. It was a dead-end for him. He knew at that moment that he was walking in the wrong direction and the river was not a guide back to Chiron anymore, it was just a guide back to the source.

Logan sat by the deep valley and watched the river fall down for hours thinking about what to do next. He could wander off in a random direction, but this way it would take him a long time to find the right way.

Finally, he decided to go back to the source to take his chance one more time, maybe he could do something with the cube after all.

He started walking back and by the next afternoon, he was back in the city. He walked toward the source and the door was open, he thought that he closed the door going out, but maybe he

was mistaken, or maybe the strong wind opened the door. He went inside and saw the door of the building of the cube is open also. This time he was sure of closing the door. He went cautiously toward the door and slowly walked in and saw somebody standing beside the cube.

Chapter 33:

Logan dropped everything and tried to guard himself with his knife from whoever was standing in front of him.

He heard a screaming sound and then saw his opponent jump behind the cube and hide from him. It was almost dark and he could not see who was there. "Hello," Logan shouted, trying to be friendly "Who's there?" After some moments of hesitation, he heard a woman's voice that also was trying to be friendly, but he could not understand what she said.

Logan walked toward her slowly and started talking with a more slow speed "My name is Logan, who are you?" then he saw her getting out from behind the cube. There was a woman with a sword in her hand, She was a tall and thin woman with very dark skin, long hair and big ears. She had a smile on her lips and Logan smiled back.

They knew instantly that they were not enemies but they couldn't speak the same language. She was wearing nothing but a short brown skirt made from some animals skin, she had a round blue ring inside the lower part of her ear, to Logan's eyes, her skin was darker and more beautiful than the night sky, her breasts were firm and small with light brown nipples and her hair was dark and shining at the same time. She was enchanting.

After Logan and the woman inspected each other visually, they tried to communicate through body language. Her name was Akonadis, as Logan could understand she had seen the river the same as Logan and got here through a journey to find the source. Logan tried to explain to her that he was here for a long time and he inspected the cube for months. Of course she couldn't understand even half of what Logan tried to tell her.

Akonadis started to inspect the source, but it was already dark and she could not do anything special. They slept that night on opposite sides of the room. The next day Logan stayed with Akonadis and tried to help her figure out the cube in the room.

Logan remembered his first days here, he was as confused as Akonadis, but he thought after all this time he was still as confused, it just seemed that he had surrendered but Akonadis had the energy to investigate it.

Akonadis investigated the cube all over, she pulled every lever and pushed every button, she almost did exactly as Logan had done on his first day. At first he tried to tell her that it was hopeless to do these things, but since they were not talking the same language, Logan thought it would take a long time to give her all the information he already had.

Logan stood aside that day and let Akonadis do whatever would come to her mind, after all, there was a little part of Logan that hoped for her success, he thought maybe she would just do something that he did not think about before and maybe a miracle would happen with her act, of course, it was just a false hope and nothing happened, it all concluded to Akonadis being tired and hopeless.

After a long day of investing the cube again, hopelessness could be seen in the eyes of both of them, suddenly Akonadis took Logan's hand and pulled him outside with herself. She took him

to the trunk and showed him the dead tree in wonder. She talked about the tree but Logan could not understand a word she said.

Logan tried to tell her about his dreams and the tree in his dreams, he couldn't tell if Akonadis understood him, but somehow it seemed that they both had a similar experience with the tree, she was trying to tell him about her dreams and the tree too.

That night Logan and Akonadis sat beside each other under the sky full of stars in front of the tree trunk. Logan tried to talk to her and give her hope again. After some tries he almost succeeded, at least it seemed that he succeeded and could bring a smile back on Akonadis's lips.

It was hard to exchange data for them so after a while they started talking in their own languages. Logan talked about his journey, the city, and how he became a slave, Ubara, and Chiron who helped him a lot in his process, and how he had lost, Laura, how he would love to hold her once again.

Logan talked about how he thought that no one would ever replace Laura, he thought he would live and die alone, but from the moment that he has seen Akonadis he felt different. It would seem irrational to feel this way about someone who he had never seen before, he could not even understand what she was saying and for sure she had the same situation. But as in his dreams that were just a feeling and had no logic in them, he just had a feeling and he was not trying to find any logic to his feeling now. After all that happened to him, he was no longer able to analyze the things that would happen to him, he was unable to see the logic behind everything, there was more he could not understand than the things he could find rational. And after a journey full of unbelievable events, he just wanted to believe in his feelings more than his uneducated and untrained logics.

Akonadis also talked a lot, and the same way that she did not understand Logan, he did not understand a word she said too. But they both felt each other's feelings and they both looked at each other when saying each other's name.

Logan, not being able to communicate freely with his new companion, leaned toward her and hugged her, she did not resist and joined him. They hugged for a while in silence looking at the stars and then went inside to sleep. That night Logan slept well because he could feel the warmth of Akonadis body against his own all night.

The next morning they both woke up early, Logan saw Akonadis in the morning light. He wanted to just spend his time with Akonadis, but she was not yet completely disappointed with the cube, after all she was new to this city and wanted to try everything with the cube.

She got up and started pushing buttons and pulling handles of the cube again. Logan wished he could talk to her so she wouldn't need to repeat everything that he had done before. He did his best to communicate with her, but yet it took almost two days for Akonadis to conclude the same thing as Logan.

After that, their daily activity became wandering around the city, they both hoped to find something that could help them figure out the cube. Logan showed her the water reservoirs and anything that felt interesting to him.

He even took her to the building full of books. Logan hoped that maybe some of the books were in Akonadis's language and she could read them. But from her looks it was obvious for him that Akonadis had no idea what a book is, she was looking at them in wonder and would not even hold them the right way.

Logan was still thinking about going back and finding Chiron, maybe he could do it and maybe Chiron was still alive. But now with Akonadis being here, he was feeling happy, he couldn't let go of her and it would be really hard for him to explain the reason for their sudden journey, and a journey to the direction that he had no idea about. So he decided to do nothing about the journey back, for now, maybe they could learn each other's language in time or maybe some miracle would happen, all he knew, for now, was that being with Akonadis was the best thing that happened to him after a long time and he was not eager to lose his new companion.

They continued their daily walks in the city and one day they passed by the building that Logan didn't like to go in again. The building, that looked like the one he was enslaved in before. It attracted Akonadis and she started walking toward it.

Logan hesitated and Akonadis noticed his strange behavior toward this building. Logan could not explain anything about his feelings to her. It was hard enough to explain things that he could understand, but describing something that was unknown for himself, by just using signs was impossible.

So he just tried to overcome his fear and accompany Akonadis to the building. It was yet the strangest building Akonadis had seen. Even stranger than the cube. She noticed the black strings going out of the building, she asked Logan about them. Logan tried to show her that these strings can carry the light with them to ignite candles that don't burn.

But he didn't hope for Akonadis to understand any of what he said. Of all he told her, Akonadis understood the relation between propellers, cylinders, and strings. She jumped over the walls and reached the top of the ceiling. Logan just realized the physical powers within Akonadis. He tried to copy her movements and reach the ceiling but it was hopeless. She tried to help him and pull him up with her long sword, but the ceiling was higher than that. So she started freeing the propeller alone. Out of all the propellers, two of them looked to be fine and were turning slowly, they seemed to be stuck. She pushed one of the propellers in different directions and finally it made a loud noise and got free starting to turn fast.

The never-ending and powerful wind started turning the propeller faster every second. With that movement raised a loud sound from the cylinder below it and scared them both. Akonadis jumped back down like a Centaur and they both escaped from the building far enough that the sound didn't feel threatening anymore.

For a while, they were just standing on a street looking at the direction of the building. Nothing seemed to harm them after all and they breathed normally again. They went back to the cube again, where they have chosen as their home. Logan had made their bed bigger for Akonadis to lay beside himself, though it seemed that she preferred to sleep on the hard floor. She just used the bed once and even if they had sex, she would move afterward and sleep on the floor.

That night Logan had a dream about where he was, he saw that he and Akonadis had a light in the building. It was not a candle nor a glass candle from the other city, it was a plain mat on the wall on the cube in the building and it was shining with a soft blue light. The black string that was coming from the other building brought light to their home.

In the morning he still remembered the dream like it was a memory. He didn't know how to say what he dreamt about to Akonadis, but he knew that she also had difficulty telling him something.

Finally, she got up, took Logan's hand, and pulled him with herself. They went toward the other building, Logan already knew that she must have had some dream about this place like himself. They went inside, the propeller on the ceiling was still turning and the loud noise was still there.

They got in and saw that there were some red and yellow shining lights in the cylinder that connected to the turning propeller. Akonadis ran toward it and pointed at the lights with excitement. She showed herself sleeping and then pointed at the lights again. Logan understood that Akonadis had seen this scene in her dream. Then he took her outside and showed her the strings going out of the building and tried to show her that he had a dream about the strings and what they had brought to their home.

They tried to find a string that would go to their home, but it was harder than they had thought. There were a lot of strings going in different directions and most of them would go under the ground after some distance. They searched for the strings for a day but could not find anything useful, by the evening they walked back home before it got too dark.

At the entrance of the building, they noticed something that they have never noticed before. There were a bunch of black strings coming out of the ground from the inside the walls of their building, going straight to a little room by the wall, and then divided in several directions. They walked toward the little room. The door was stuck, there was a little metal lock on the door that wouldn't let them open the door.

Akonadis hit the metal lock with her sword several times and then it broke. They entered the room, there was a complex set of different color strings, nothing that they could figure out, the only thing that was familiar for them was a board with some buttons and handles on it. It seemed a little like what they have seen before on the cube and the cylinder.

They started to push all the buttons and pull all the handles. Some of the buttons started shining after being pushed, it made them so excited. Akonadis pulled the last and biggest handle and suddenly a lot of noises rose from different places of the building. They went out of the small room, nothing seemed to have been changed and there were no more noises.

They walked toward the building with the big cube in it. To their surprise, they saw some of the buttons from before shining in different colors. Logan remembered his dream and started talking loudly about his dream and what he thought they should do.

Akonadis understood nothing of his words but she knew that he was just telling what he was doing right now, so she let him do what he thought was right. Logan started pushing the shining buttons on the cube and one of them made the surface of the big mat on the cube to light up.

But it was not just a light, there were words in red color written on the blue surface appearing from nowhere.

Chapter 34:

Akonadis walked toward Logan and looked at the magical blue light and the writings on it. She had no idea what was written there. Logan knew a little how to read and to his surprise, he could recognize some of the words on the screen. The words he could identify were 'Air, Need, Start, Wings, Please and Again'.

Logan touched the words on the screen of light and they went away for a moment, the cube started making a humming sound and then stopped, the screen made a click sound and the same words came on it again.

Logan tried to think of what was the screen telling him. He showed Akonadis some of the words that he could read on the screen. Akonadis's eyes opened wide when she understood the word 'Wings'; she pointed at the holes on the side of the cube and pulled Logan toward another building beside their own which Logan had forgotten about it and what was in there.

Inside the building looked like storage. there were a lot of big weird things that looked somehow like a wing. The last time Logan checked this place the thin metal cubes made him wonder, but he did not realize that they actually look like a bird's wing in a weird way.

Then Akonadis jumped over the wings and from behind them brought some pipes, Logan did not notice them the last time and now it was making a clear relation in his mind, the pipe could be attached to the hole of the side of the wings. There was a good chance that the other side of the pipe could be attached to the holes on the cube, maybe this is the same wing that was written on the screen of the cube.

Those wings were heavy but Akonadis and Logan moved two of them into the cub's room and as they thought the big wings attached to the cube with no difficulty. Then Logan touched the screen again and the humming started once more. Then some new text appeared on the screen, this time in white on the blue background. The humming did not stop but nothing else happened. Logan tried to read the text and all he could understand was 'Please' they waited by the side of the cube for a while but nothing new happened and eventually they both fell asleep.

In the morning Logan woke up by the excited voice of Akonadis, she pointed toward the little ornamented canal in front of the cube, Logan could not believe his eyes, there it was again, the river, like the first day he came here, he could see the river again, and Akonadis could see it too, for sure. Of course this time the water was not as much as before. It was as if the river had become much smaller now.

They went out and saw the river flowing outside the building to the city. At some point, it was divided into three branches, though the water could not run much more after that, and it either went down to the ground or has been evaporated by the sun.

Logan and Akonadis were so happy about what they had accomplished. They knew that all they had seen in their dreams and the vision of the river finally, led them to this point. For some days they spent most of their time by the river and accompanied it as it was flowing outside the city farther and farther away. Logan could feel the happiness within, after all that happened to him,

now he was there with Akonadis living by the side of the only river on the earth. Logan told Akonadis about the book he had found and they named the river “Elu” again.

But his happiness did not last long since Akonadis wanted to say farewell to him and go back to her land. He tried to stop her but she looked at him as he was suggesting something clearly stupid. In her mind she had done what she was supposed to do, and now it was time to go back and live her life as before.

Logan was not so eager to go back, after all the things he had been through in his previous life could not make him happy anymore. Even the idea of living in his old village without Laura made him sad. He had to move forward not go back to where he was before. Even if he would decide to go back, he had no idea how to get there.

He should have waited for the cube to produce that much water so the river would flow again and he could follow it back home. And he had no idea how Akonadis could find her way back without the river.

Before Akonadis leave him, he decided to go with her, when she understood what Logan wanted to do, she guarded her sword against him. Akonadis tried to show him that following her would have nothing for him but death.

Logan didn't understand if she would kill him or her people or something on the way. But he knew that she was talking about him being dead in case he would follow her. Still, he could not accept staying there and getting alone again, he insisted on going with Akonadis so finally she decided to stay with him.

The river was divided in three directions somewhere near the center of the city. One of the divisions flew toward the water reservoirs they had found before. Akonadis found some evidence that showed water would continue to the other reservoir after filling this one completely. And there was no trace to show where the water would go after that. The two other divisions flew outside the city, one of them in the general direction of Akonadis land, she was pretty sure that this was the same river that she followed to reach here, the other one flew approximately in the direction of Logan's village, though he was not really sure about it.

That night they slept in another building to be free of the humming sound of the cube.

The next morning Logan woke up alone in the building, he looked around for Akonadis but she was not in the building or by the cube or anywhere that he could imagine.

He started following the river in the direction of Akonadis land. He gathered some food and started walking by the riverside. After half a day of walking, the river came to its end again. He had no way but to get back to the city. This time his journey ended too fast. He went back and all he could think about was how he did not want to live alone again.

Logan decided to wait for some days and let the river go further away and then start to follow it again. Even if the river would end at some point, he would stay there for a while and let the river flow farther to show him the way.

He spent the next three days gathering food for his long and probably exhausting journey. On the fourth day, he woke up with a loud alarming sound coming from the cube. There was no more water flowing out of it and there were those red texts again on the screen. He touched the screen

and the sound stopped but the text stayed and the cube did not work. He checked the wings, their color had been changed and now most of the parts on the wings were black, there was a lot of dust in the interior part of the wings that were visible from the two open sides.

He took off his old turned shirt and cleaned the wings with it. He then used some water left in the canal inside the building and cleaned the wings as well as he could. Then he touched the screen again and the cube started humming again. It took the cube some time but eventually, drops of water started flowing out of the cube again.

This made Logan think twice about his journey. What would happen if he was on the journey and the cube stopped working again? Maybe somebody should stay here to make sure the cube works still.

Then he remembered the cylinders and propellers. If they would stop working, probably the cube stops and somebody should fix that again. Of course, it was Akonadis who could go on top of the ceiling in three jumps, but maybe he could find a way too.

Logan was not sure about any of these. Maybe it was just a one-time thing. Finally, he decided to stay a little longer to see if he needed to clean the wings again. Almost ten days after he woke up to the same sound and saw the same problem with the cube. This time it didn't take him much time since he was sure what to do and how to do it. Then days after that again the same thing happened. And after several times that he did the same thing over and over again, he found a way to the top of the ceiling of the other building and could make the other propeller turn too. When he came back to the cube, he could feel that the humming sound had changed and the water was flowing a little faster and even a little more than before.

For months he repeated the same thing with the wings, he already knew when the cube would stop working and so he would clean the wings or change them in case they were so stuffed one day before it would happen.

Logan could not leave the city and the cube anymore. The way to his journey either back home or Akonadis's land was the river and the river would not continue flowing without him being there. The river brought him to his doom of the never-ending task that nobody made him do but himself.

Logan had found a home outside the building to stay, he brought lots of books and started to read as he always wished to do. Every day he would check the cube and the propellers of the other building.

He was living in a house by the side of the river now, and as time was passing by, more plants were growing around the river. If only Laura could be there to experiment with all the green and soft leaves of these plants and make new foods.

One day when Logan was checking the cube, on his way out, something caught his eyes, there was something on the dead trunk, he walked closer, yes, there was a green leaf on the trunk, the tree was coming back to life again as in his dreams.

Logan was no longer alone, the tree was there now, he would go see the tree and talk to it every day and watch it grow day by day. He even named the tree Laura.

As Logan was sitting beside the tree each day, he would think that it was finally done, he brought life to the world with the help of Akonadis. And now he was the only protector of life, he was there to make sure the river won't die again.

The End

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