

ATLANTIS RISE OF THE NILE



DAVID SPEIGHT

ΑΤΛΑΝΤΙΣ

RISE OF THE NILE

By
David Speight

Atlantis: Rise of the Nile

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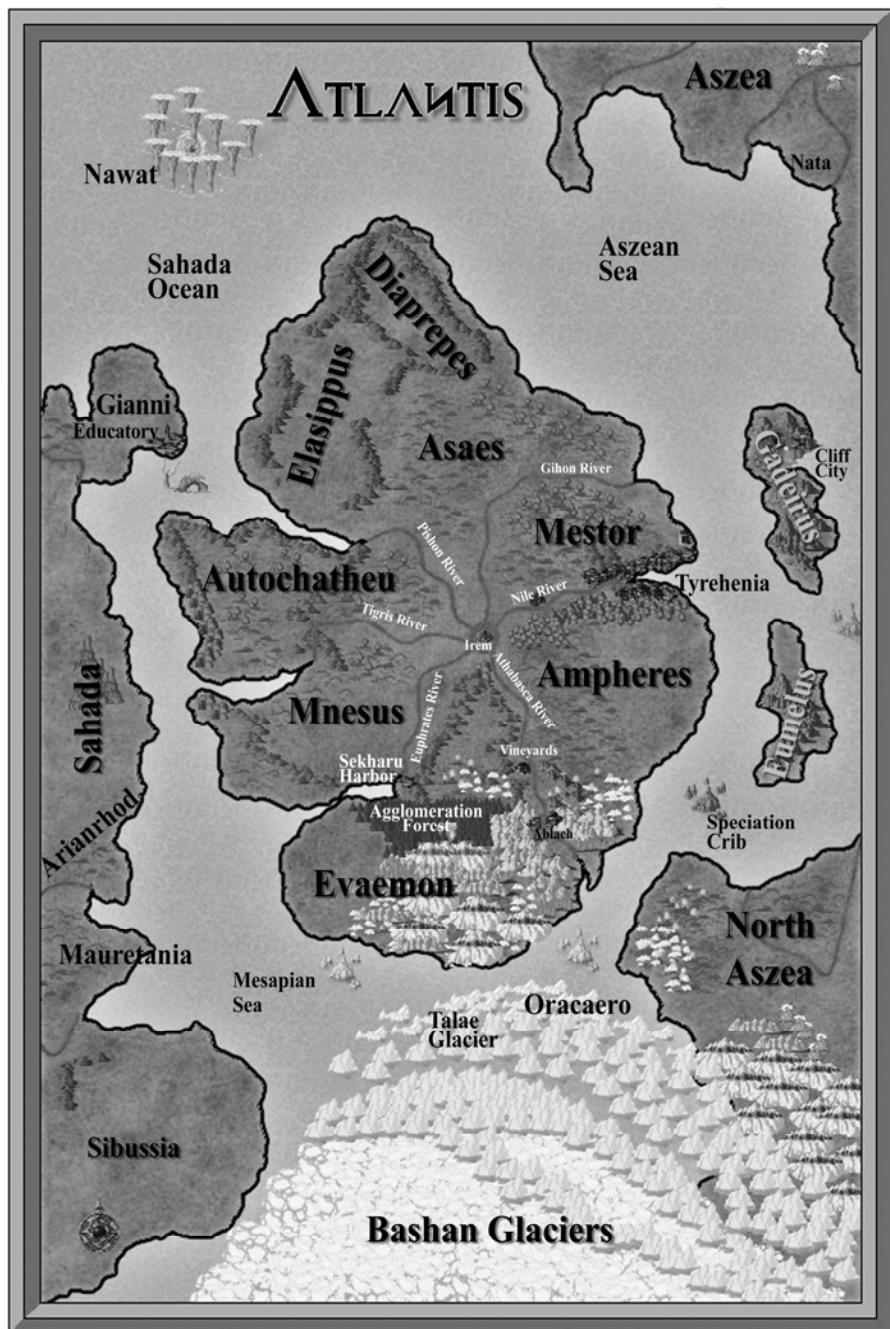
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P R E F A C E

ABOUT THIS STORY

This is the concluding novel in the award-wining series *Atlantis* about Aedon, a forgotten prince who is faced with the choice of following the ancient teachings in the King's scrolls, or dabbling in their *forbidden enchantments* with his friend who desires to use them for his own selfish gain.

Nearly every religion of the world has a “flood” story and this one is full of symbolic characters that represent many. This science-fiction-fantasy will take you on a journey filled with excitement and mysticism that is rich in historical references of Atlantis from Biblical to Grecian accounts. This tale transplants an *End Of Days* plot into a time period thousands of years earlier. It beefs up the ancient society with modern technology like a flying delta-transporter. While this may seem absurd, there is research to support these and other tangibles may have existed during this time period. This fictional account draws from various archeological findings and scientific discoveries. You'll find popular

P R E F A C E

documentary favorites which have explored pyramids, ancient energies, crystal-skulls, climate-change, and world-wide deluges as the basis for some of the settings in this mystical land.

Characters, each with their own dilemma, come to life merged from myth, legend, history and biblical stories. The purpose of this narrative is not to reinvent the story of Noah, Gilgamesh, or other religious flood figures; but to provide an entertaining story with thought enlightening values. As you turn each page, I hope that you will enjoy this final adventure to Atlantis.

D A V I D S P E I G H T

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L A N G U A G E O F A T L A N T I S

If you encounter a word or phrase you are unfamiliar with, there is a dictionary reference in Appendix A: “Language of Atlantis.” A definition for many words throughout these papyri, which are shown in italics, can be found in the Appendix. The author has tried to include a definition in parenthesis the first time a unique term appears.

PART ONE

P A P Y R U S O N E

THE APATURIA GIFT

Today was a special day — it was the *Day of Apaturia*. Inside his chambers, King Poseidontel stood in front of an old mirror and admired his handsome face. The piece of glass had a hairline fracture from top to bottom, but he had forgotten it existed. He thought little about all the riches he had, his wealth of animals who could all speak, or his *orichalcum* mines which powered many machines in Atlantis.

Examining his long brown hair, he smoothed his fingers across a couple of wrinkles under his left eye which he noticed.

"Have the number of gray hairs that cover our head increased?" he grumbled.

His head jerked sideways as another raspy voice from within him answered the first, "Nonetheless, we shall live forever."

Consumed with hoarding all things, he desired to reach his grasp beyond Atlantis to all the continents of the world. Even beyond that, he set his eyes toward governance of the universe. The Atlantian holiday was once a rare celebration of the spring equinox — when Earth's two moons eclipsed. After one of the moons was destroyed, the king changed the holiday to coincide with his birthday. He was expecting nothing less than honor and gifts to be bestowed upon him in abundance at the festivities. Nothing made him happier than *getting*.

Squinting, he tried to see into his dark-brown eyes, but a fog always moved across the mirror whenever he looked too closely. Adjusting his crown and picking up his trident-shaped scepter, he rubbed a ball on its center prong as if it were a good-luck charm. He was ready to go.

"It is awfully bold of you to hold me up like this," Prince Evad screeched, stomping a sandal at the palace guard. He was upset about being detained at the hovering drawbridge which led across Second Moat and toward the ring of land where the *Apaturia* celebrations were commencing. "I am an Etruscan —"

"We have orders to search everyone and everything."

"I'm a high Etruscan, one of the king's most favored..."

"Including hyper princes with red hair," a guard scowled, halting the governor with his shield.

"We were already inspected at Third Moat," one of the bearers told.

"This is my special gift for our king," nervously Evad defended, pacing back and forth in front of a tall box. He tossed a fur wrap off his shoulders as the temperature at the Irem (Atlantis' palace) was much warmer than the province he was Etruscan (governor) over.

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“Everything passes inspection first,” insisted the guard, approaching the box.

“If you see what is inside, how am I to know that this will be kept a secret until I present it? Now let me pass.”

The escalating words caught the attention of a nearby General who marched over, tapping her stick-like baton to her palm. Her clipped hair was almost as short as Evad’s, but her bark was much stronger.

“What the *Sayer* is all this about?” General Andromache ordered. Her face always appeared cross and scornful. “What gift would require twelve warriors to accompany such?”

“This gift is confidential,” Evad snottily replied, attempting to pass by.

“I guard most of the king’s secrets ... and so I shall inspect the package.”

Miffed, Evad nodded and stepped back, motioning his warriors to do the same.

She snatched one of the four side-panels and peeked inside. Quickly she closed it back up, turned around with a blank stare, and then snapped back into consciousness.

“Evad! Etruscan Evad, get your little holiday toga over here,” she shouted, crumpling her face up with jealousy. “This was supposed to me *my gift to the king*.”

“Everyone knows that Poseidontel favors me to be his successor,” Evad squeaked with his high-pitched voice.

“No one is more *concerned* in regards to the king than I,” she professed, proudly lifting her chin before raising her stick.

“*In love* — is more like the case,” one of the warriors grumbled under his breath.

“It appears that you have given the word — *concerned* — a new meaning,” chuckled Evad.

“I don’t know how you managed to obtain such a prize, or what you did to make this happen, but next time, remember that certain gifts should be left to the Generals to present — not the Etruscans.” She waved her tapping-stick sideways, gesturing for

the guards to part way and allow Evad, his gift, and his warriors through.

But as they started, she stopped them again, briefly.

“Four carriers, no more,” she cried out, attempting to reserve some authority over the matter. “You may take four of your bearers, but the others must remain.”

Evad nodded with a bow and then continued pushing his box ahead. An uneasy feeling churned in their stomachs when they saw the large birds perched everywhere.

“*Witness Wise Owls* — how I hate Poseidontel’s spies. Who will they tattle on today?” Evad twitched a scowling face at one of the owls he passed. Not only birds, but all the different species of animals in Atlantis could intelligently speak just like the humans.

The entourage paraded down the golden-laid road where they lined up to cross another hovering bridge which paved the way to the throne pavilion outside the Royal Irem. Passing through a row of arches Evad felt insignificant below the Irem’s tall towers. Balconies and gables covered in marble and precious stones made it the grandest palace that ever existed on the planet.

The day grew old and the sun set over millions of togas hugging their owners, each waiting for a glimpse of the king who was not expected until evening. A couple more sandglasses of time passed and then there was a loud band followed by a colorful puff of smoke.

When the haze cleared, dancers emerged fanning palm branches, playing tambourines, jingling bells, and acrobatically tumbling toward the pavilion. Flag and fire bearers marched to the beat of a drum. Entertainers performed on tightropes crisscrossing above. Ships glowing in colored lights sailed around the moat in formations. Balloons, floating lanterns, and fireworks ascended into the sky.

Next, from the depths of the earth below, a gigantic sculpture in the form of a black angel with the beak of a bird emerged. A hundred podes (feet) tall, it loomed over the crowd. Its

THE APATURIA GIFT

arms were extended and in the palms of its hands stood the mighty King Poseidontel.

Confetti fell as the voice of the crowd lifted. People were extending their *looking-scopes* (personal telescope to see far away objects) to get a closer peek. Many climbed on their friend's shoulders, others stood on the tables of the eateries, and some even scaled the columns and walls for a better view.

The large angel rolled forward and around to the backside of the pavilion. Its arms lowered allowing the king to walk out onto stage and take a seat at another throne. He held his three pronged scepter high, commanding a final cheer. When he stomped it to the floor, everyone knew the ceremonies had begun.

To kickoff the celebration, a famous band called the Raveners appeared on a platform that moved forward to center stage. Two lead *electronic-gourdist*s played a string instrument which was made from a gourd and given an extra boost of power with a piece of *orichalcum* (a valuable mineral used for energy) at the end of its handle. A wire extended from there to a noise booster. One *electronic-gourdist* was dressed in all white with a comedic pale smile painted across her face. The other wore drab-black with a shadowy frown pasted under his nose. Behind them, two drummers banged out the rhythm and two dueling keyboardists plunked away, each one playfully shoving the other, trying to take control of the board. The concert drew cheers from the crowd as they performed. The dark-painted man bumped the light-painted girl aside and began to slowly sing his dreary tune, each note sounding like he was crying-out in pain.

(slow, dark, dreary song)

*Oppress the poor and leave them destitute,
He seized the houses he did not build.
He has no respite for his craving,
His treasure cannot save him.*

The pale-painted face along with the accompanying happy keyboardist pushed in for the upbeat chorus.

*It's Apaturia, no need to worry ya,
Royal famili-a, is here to greet ya.
It's Apaturia, no need to worry ya,
It's Apaturia, no need to worry ya.*

“Why the king will be shedding mermaid scales. They’re playing music a decade old about that mythical *Uprooter*,” Evad groaned with apprehension, unsure if he should be happy about that or not.

Poseidontel, who had grown up hearing the song many times, stirred as he realized that it might be about him. He scoffed, dismissing the thought and pretended not to hear its words as he awkwardly tapped his foot to their music while bubbling inside with anger. He mumbled to himself, “From my favor — these Raveners have warped into the band I despise the most.”

A raspy voice in his head jerked in, “Later, in private and away from our public, we will strip them of their musical instruments and throw them into the street as beggars.”

The musical contest between the two teams of happy faces and sad ones heightened for the last verse and chorus.

*He does not see with twenty-twenty vision,
He follows foolishness, not wisdom.
When there is nothing left to devour,
Full force of misery will rain that hour.*

*All nations bow before him, they appear golden,
Forty days and forty nights will destroy them.
Raise the flag and sound the trumpet,
Disaster of the North appears to dump it.*

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They repeated the chorus for the finale:

*It's Apaturia, no need to worry ya,
Royal famili-a, is here to greet ya.
It's Apaturia, no need to worry ya,
It's Apaturia, no need to worry ya.*

Ambassador Rheaf Telopps adjusted his round hat, which made his face look horizontally symmetric, matching his round bearded chin. He piously lifted up a speaking trumpet and shouted, “Let the bearing commence. Etruscan Mestor will present the first gift.”

“My favorite foulmouthed Etruscan appears to be eating well,” the king jested.

The heavyset man stepped forward with a bow and presented an elastic-like bracelet made from an unknown material. Brushing his long-brown hair aside, Poseidontel snatched the green object from the pillow where it rested. A slight smile washed across the corner of his face.

“Its purple stripes are a nice compliment. Is this what I deem it to be?” the royal one begged, fitting it over his wrist and pushing it up his arm as a glint of light reflected from its threads.

Mestor turned around to face everyone else in the city where he held up another identical band and announced, “The Cast System and all its *seamuck* will end today. This new all-purpose band will serve mankind and unite us together.”

“At least the wisest of us,” his assistant remarked. “Maybe it’ll help eliminate some of those foolish *waybacks*.”

“This will replace the diverse colored bands each person was previously issued,” Mestor explained, clamping it over his own arm. “This one armband will unite all mankind without limitations that were once imposed.”

Eagerly the king stood up and proclaimed, “By accepting this band each person pledges their loyalty to me — your king. ...

And denounces any former vows made to those racketeering Asterians and their mythical King Yaswhen.”

“The embedded instruction-card will keep track of one’s worth and all buying and selling shall only be transacted by scrolling translations from these armbands,” Mestor coughed out while tweaking his pipe. “It will replace our *orichalcum* monetary system.”

“Your gift uproots our current way of commerce. Bold move — I like it.”

“To demonstrate my undying loyalty, every resident in my province has already subscribed to this technology,” Mestor proudly bellowed out.

“What do you call this new band?”

“It is known as the CX6 in our parts,” said Mestor. “It has already replaced the vermillion-colored rock, *orichalcum*, and freed up supplies of this mineral that we depend on for energy.”

“Chambers in the pyramids have been running low,” the king acknowledged, tapping his trident-like scepter on Mestor’s head to indicate approval. “And scarcely does the sun shine enough to renew their energy.”

Garnishing condescending glances at the worn-out toga he was wearing, Diaprepes, the youngest Etruscan (except for Evad), nervously stumbled forward as the next presenter. Unable to compete with the extensive honor that his former sibling had just bestowed, he stuttered as he announced his gift, “Our province is not as rich as my brothers’ and our people come not from a culture of urbanization. But we bring you the things of nature. Exotic animals and plants I bequest to you.”

A jaguar, tiger, and lama were pranced on stage. As some plants were pushed forward one of the bushes dried up, fell from its pot, and bounced forward stopping at the king’s feet.

“What is this muck?” Poseidontel screeched, stepping back, as if the bush had frightened him, even though his tall-muscular body could have easily crushed it.

"A tumbleweed — as dry as his rough skin and barren lands," Prince Evad shouted from his place in line, his tone annoying those who could hear.

The king kicked the weed away, which combusted into flames when his foot touched it. Unimpressed with the gifts, he ordered, "Like your tumbleweed, you too shall be consumed by fire and made as barren as the land you claim to be Etruscan over."

Poseidontel shot a bolt of fire from his hand which lit up the governor. A puff of smoke lifted into the air and once it dispersed only his ashes remained. From the distance a flying black horse circled around and then landed before the king. Chatter whispered among the generals and warriors.

"Who is this that comes from our part of the sky where it is prohibited for man, beast or machine to fly?" the ambassador huffed, motioning warriors forward to arrest the horse.

"Wait!" Poseidontel snapped. "I want to hear what this disruptive beast has to say — on this important occasion."

Nervously the horse stuttered as he sung out his poem:

*King Yaswhen brings you this message
from the sky,
He has looked down on us,
what he sees makes him cry.
King Yaswhen promised to come back
with a better place for us all,
He sees your lack of faith,
so unpleasantness upon you will befall.
King Yaswhen is on his way back
as I speak to you now,
But a new king who is not pure and
an Uprooter you do allow.
King Yaswhen has designated a safe place
of refuge for those who follow,
North to the glacier in Bashan, else a great famine,
you it will swallow."*

King Poseidontel leaped forward in a rage, “I bring joy and celebration to the people — you have come to bring gloom and doom and to frighten my guests with ancient warnings and fables? Like the Etruscan before you, I will reward your gift, if that is what you call it, with the same execution.”

Before Poseidontel could throw a river of fire toward the horse, there was a flash, and suddenly the animal disappeared just as quickly as it came in the first place. A glimpse of fear crossed everyone’s face, even Poseidontel’s, but it was quickly washed away with nervous chuckles and laughter.

“Does anyone else have a gift of political badgering to present,” Poseidontel fumed, stomping his trident to the floor before calling Telopps over to admonish, “Tell my generals that if they let another one of these leaky-brains through — they’ll pay dearly.”

“Gladly, I’ll inform General Andromache,” the ambassador nodded.

Next, Prince Evad stepped up to present his gift. At first he trembled and then he shook himself into a more authoritative position.

“For many sun-cycles during our youth, we were competitive, but I have sworn allegiance to you and hidden my independent spirit,” Evad announced even though he was always looking for a way out. He appeared like a mighty cannon in the king’s service, when really he was a loose gun rolling down a hill, out of control, and with a burning fuse.

“Evad, Evad, Evad, what trinket do you have for me in that box,” the king condescendingly asked, clenching his fist behind his back, prepared to throw out another outburst of flames.

The bearers positioned the box forward as Evad unrolled a scroll.

“You bring a papyrus to bore me with, no doubt?” the king chuckled, lowering his voice in a whisper. “If only that was the

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Scroll your king desires greatly ... your reward would've been — unimaginable."

"It may not be the the *Scroll* you seek, but it does contain a wisdom embedded in the legend you speak. I bring not a myth that eludes the king's great warriors who have searched from the volcanoes to the glaciers. But instead, I deliver that which has sat beneath their eyes for three sun-cycles ... a prize that may have a connection to ..."

The scroll Evad held, he did not read, but in its place he recited a new poem which he created on the spot:

*"Many a ruler, a gift did they bring,
With joy you accepted Mestor's arm ring.
Diaprepes and others disappointed,
And now most of them are departed.
My gift to you is a long waited beast or being,
Which you will only see, by agreeing.
If my gift you chose to take, this very hour,
Then my life you must spare, a thousand times longer.
Say now and promise to this oath, you agree,
And the creature that waits, you shall see."*

The king chuckled as he realized Evad was perceptive of his new found magical abilities. Laughter rolled around the chamber. Moments later things quieted down in anticipation of what might happen. King Poseidontel stood tall and his brown eyes pierced a dagger-throwing stare toward Evad. He nodded in agreement.

"Pumky, present the gift!" Evad ordered, raising his arm and then lowering it with a command.

The warriors turned the box around like it was a magician's show. Evad was always good with the theatrics and he danced around the box removing each of the four panels one at a time. Once removed, they revealed a frame from which red drapery hung. Evad finished his dance by maneuvering himself in front of

the curtain where he held the end of its rope. With a tug he yanked on it and the four curtains fell to the ground.

In chains standing on top of a square pedestal was Prince Aedon. His curly hair barely moved while his curious blue eyes scanned the area. He was a wanted fugitive.

“Indeed, this is going to be a memorable *Day of Apaturia*,” Poseidontel gleefully exclaimed, stepping down from the pavilion, closer to examine his new gift. “Aedon, my dearest friend and best foe, you hide no more? It’s been quite awhile.”

Aedon was a prince of Atlantis. Long ago, they were friends, but that all changed after their *Registration of Youth* when they graduated from the *educatory*. Without a blink, Aedon’s eyes twinkled a sparkle as he recited a poem. He said the words in Asterian, a language forbidden for use:

*“Crauck crept tedo ahund unot khozo ahomplueym,
Ah guzk kegor ahyunuy clruyght et
eveluedwend ahdovutaym.
Ahvuruw fuw u'd khoft ahonorgyun,
Slolux go iprum khut leshuen unot staymyco.”*

(Asterian interpretations may be found in Appendix B.)

Aedon lifted his bound hands slightly and then with a slight gesture he flexed his biceps which weren’t that large at all. The chains rolled off his arms like water on a duck’s back. Evad’s four gift presenters, surrounding the platform, each grabbed one of the posts that supported the curtain. Within each rod was hidden a spear. The first two bearers rushed at King Poseidontel with the pointed object. Quickly the king leaped into the air, flying over them. When they turned around, he jolted his hand forward. A ball of fire materialized from thin air and it consumed the spears. Using his telekinetic powers, he removed the mask from the first warrior. Everyone gasped as it revealed that its host was Etruscan Mnesus.

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“You’re … you’re not to be king. … You have not … not followed our stated laws,” the Etruscan stuttered, nervously wobbling on the platform-sandals he wore to make him look taller.

“You’ve dressed for the wrong occasion. This is not a masquerade party,” Poseidontel cackled, turning to the next Warrior and causing his mask to melt over his face. Etruscan Autochatheu hollered and pulled the disintegrating piece off. Smoke billowed from his singed beard.

“Etruscan Autochatheu, why am I not surprised,” Poseidontel chuckled, pacing like a prancing pony. “You never did like me. I recall once, in the legislature, you told me to save my magic tricks for a birthday party. … Guess what today is?”

Another warrior lunged from behind and stuck his spear through the middle of the king’s torso. Poseidontel fell to the ground as blood gushed from his gut. The guests gasped in horror. Evad’s band of warriors breathed a sigh of relief.

“The king has fallen. The king is dead!” declared Prince Evad.

Confusion and fear began to tumble across faces. General Andromache’s lower lip quivered and her knees weakened. Anticipation bubbled inside Evad and just as he was about to bend over and snatch the king’s scepter, the body jerked back. Then as if time itself had turned back, the blood flowed in reverse, returning into the king’s body, his strength renewed and he stood up, shocking the spectators. He turned around with hardly a phase, took hold of the end of the spear, and then yanked it out of his gut. The mortal wound instantly healed itself.

“Foolish men you are. You see, I am not a man like you all are,” he boasted, “No, I am a god and I will live forever!”

Devious delight filled Poseidontel’s eyes as he thrust his trident toward the warrior who had caused the wound. Electricity shot from the scepter covering his body in fire. Screaming, the flaming soldier ran to the edge of the pavilion and somersaulted over the balcony’s edge to his death. Next, the king turned on

Mnesus and then Autochatheu. Each one turned into a human-burning-torch.

“It appears that my Etruscans might be possessed by the dead spirits of the Asterians,” the king grumbled. “No one shall steal my crown. It’s mine — all mine.”

“Run, Aedon! Run!” the last masked warrior yelled before he disappeared.

Aedon darted off, jumped a short wall, and landed where the Ravener musicians were packing up their gear.

“In here!” the white-painted-face yelled in a whisper, helping him hide inside one of the carts they were pushing away.

Once guards reached the wall Aedon had leaped over, the other painted-face pointed behind his back to indicate Aedon may have gone that way — sending them in the wrong direction.

Down a cobblestone path they rushed until they came to a break in another wall next to the moat. Pulling Aedon from the cart, the frown-painted man quickly handed him an *MCA 310A Cruiser* which was a mask that allowed him to breath under water.

“You knew about this?” Aedon questioned, surprised that the band was collaborating.

“We’re not really involved,” the man adamantly stated.

“We’re just the backup plan,” the female performer insisted.

“In some parts you’re a hero for what you did,” the man said.

“I was naive,” he shook his head, “caught up in a cause that detoured my destination.”

“Go now, Miriam is waiting.”

SPLASH! Aedon dove into the water. Miriam, a blue tailed mermaid helped him navigate through the waters of the moat. She had always kept watch over him whenever he was near a body of water. They swam until they reached an ugly building made of metal known as the Iron Isolation. Surfacing, they could see its three towering smokestacks. Aedon bid Miriam some gratitude and

a farewell before making his way upstairs to hop aboard a waterbus in hopes of completing his escape.

Meanwhile back at the Irem, Evad was taken in chains as King Poseidontel raged about the pavilion throwing fireballs at various objects and people with each random outburst of fury that jolted within his head. When a glowing crystal cranium, resting behind his throne, caught his eye, he marched over to where the collection was displayed. Snatching up his favorite skull in one hand, he walked up to the prince and held his chin tightly with the other.

“Evad, Evad, Evad. You foolish seahorse. Because I have eaten from the fruit of the *Everlasting Tree*, I will live for ten thousand sun-cycles. But you, you will be pulverized into a crystal skull for my collection.”

“You are the wisest – and most handsome – king that ever lived. Your great wisdom can see that I had nothing to do with this,” Evad pleaded, shaking nervously in the king’s grip. “Etruscan Ampheres, I am certain, was yet another one of the masked Warriors who escaped with Aedon. ... You know how Ampheres and I despise each other. We would never conspire together, and I would never conspire against you ... especially after the way you saved my life once. We made a *finger-locking promise* ...”

King Poseidontel pondered what Evad was saying before releasing his grip.

“Certainly you can see I was delivering to you — your most valuable gift — when those other Etruscans stole away this moment of triumph for me ... for you ... *they* stole it away.”

“My little Evad, if your story is true, then Etruscan Ampheres has created treason,” the king snarled. “I am going to assign you with the duty of bringing Ampheres to me — preferably deceased.”

“My utmost pleasure,” Evad grinned.

“You will bring me a serving platter. If it contains Ampheres’ cranium then you please the king. If the platter is

empty, surely your head will take its place.” Poseidontel turned back around to General Andromache and ordered, “Send my best Channel of Warriors to find Aedon. … And bring him back here to me — alive. He may have knowledge of — *things* — that are valuable.”

At sunrise, Aedon’s waterbus had reached the outskirts of the Moat System, away from the Irem where the parking docks for delta-transporters (also known as *deltas*) were located. These small two-person flying machines were used as transportation vehicles and powered by the *orichalcum stream*, a grid of energy transmitted from pyramids placed around the globe. It was a sunny day and he knew the *orichalcum stream* that energized them would be near full power most of the day, so he rented one.

“Just a basic one — a one-ninety will do,” he told the rental agent, paying with a golden coin. As he was pondering about where he might hide for awhile, he saw Warrior deltas (transporters) on the horizon. They were on his trail. He took off to the sky.

It wasn’t long before the *delta-force* discovered his vehicle and a chase pursued. Not thinking, Aedon kept changing course trying to shake them and before he knew it he was in the air space directly over the Irem. Lowering the altitude stick, his flight began to clip the canvas panels that shaded sun from merchant’s shops. As he rose up again, he discovered the Iron Isolation directly in front.

“Yikes!” he screamed, quickly righting the wingspan and flying directly between two of the smoke stacks, barely escaping with a few frictional sparks. He hollered back at his pursuers, “Yeah, let’s see if you can do that seaweed!”

The first Warrior following him wasn’t as lucky as he rammed into the far left chimney of the building which crumpled his flying machine like it was made from paper. The other combatant lifted his delta-transporter up and went over the stacks, on course, following Aedon closely.

THE APATURIA GIFT

By mid-afternoon a couple more warriors joined in pursuit as Aedon navigated low, just above the Nile. Soon he reached a place where the river tunneled directly beneath the mountain before coming out on the other side. Most deltas were not made to fly underwater, but Aedon had managed to accomplish this feat once before and thought he would try again.

“My one-ninety back home can do this — bet yours can’t,” he teased, pulling the lever toward him; the machine dove into the water. It missed the mountain side just in time as it disappeared underneath in the river’s current.

Underwater, the delta’s right wing hit a rock and was torn off. Its engine-like *crystal-capacitor* stopped spinning and the vehicle came to a stop. Aedon was trapped, buried in the water, beneath the mountain.

“*Seawmuck!*” he exclaimed, grabbing his *MCA 310A Cruiser* mouthpiece. He put it on again, busted out of the ship, and swam through the underpass.

When he reached the western-end of the tunnel, from under the water, he looked up and saw a transporter in the sky circling around — looking for him. Finally it left and just as he was about to resurface a much larger flying machine called a Pauvvota hovered over the area.

A few moments later half a dozen warriors repelled down ropes and fanned out across the area. With the high mountain peaks around, the sunlight was fading fast and the last plane departed before the sun and the energy stream turned off for the night.

Aedon pulled himself up on shore, ringing water from his toga the best he could. He was too mad at himself to feel the shivering darkness that encompassed the land. However, the sound of wild beasts kept him on the toes of his sandals. He was lost, afraid, and unsure where to take shelter — and worst of all, Andromache’s warriors were crisscrossing the area looking for him. They were near, moving in close — closer — closest.

PAPYRUS TWO

SHEPHERD'S CROSSING

The twinkle of a distant firelight reflected in Aedon's eyes. The sound of many voices echoed in the wooded area. First he heard wild beasts, then warriors, and then ... the commotion of villagers. As he darted between trees, moving closer to the fire, the number of lights grew. Up the hillside he climbed to where a wide passageway led between dips in the mountain range. On one side a large wooden structure with dozens of levels stretched a stadia (half-a-mile) tall. Opposite the crevice was a mountainside covered with hundreds of smaller inns all competing for business with the larger one. Campfires lined the road where vendors selling furs, vegetables, eggs, grain, and other commodities had settled for the evening. Most of the keepers had closed down their carts, tents, and store fronts for the evening; however, a few dozen shepherds and their livestock were still mulling about the dirt paths.

Closer Aedon walked as a conglomeration of peddlers began to converge on him trying to convince him to stay at their inn for the night. Some offered a free night's stay in exchange for goods. Others wanted *orichalcum* coins. A few even advertised that they accepted the new CX6 armband for payment. Aedon felt like he was going to be crushed amongst the aggressive strangers. About to yell and run away, a hand grabbed his arm and yanked him from their grasp.

"He's with me. Now go frighten some other stranger — you pathetic thieves," a tall blond woman snapped, her voice flexing more muscle than her thin arms.

The peddlers grumbled as they returned to the holes from which they had emerged. Aedon straightened up taller as a gleam of euphoria painted across his cheeks. Like any normal man, he was instantly attracted to the woman who wore a fancy toga, stitched with hemps, accenting her shapely body.

"*Apa'hei*, Aedon here. ... Aedon of Gadeirus," he greeted with a polite bow.

"Dolius, I'm called," she replied, her name pronounced more like *Doleese*. "I didn't mean to move in ... it just seemed like you were being detained by overzealous locals."

"I appreciate the help, I really do," Aedon stuttered, stunned by her beauty which didn't seem to belong on the night road.

"You're first time here, at Shepherd's Crossing?" coyly she asked.

"Why certainly, it is. And I'm glad you came to my rescue. Worthless me, I am in a predicament of sorts."

Wondering if desire were blinding caution, each looked the other over from head to toe. Breaking the silence, she spoke, "Shall I guess about your dilemma ..."

"Guess not, for I will gladly tell all to such beauty ... if its ear be not attached to the mouth."

"You're not the first — *wanderer* — to fall prey to a gang of pushy peddlers. But maybe the first wet one."

“During my travels here, I slipped, fell, and tumbled into the Nile,” he explained, ringing another drip of water from his toga.

“Find your breath there, Aedon,” she said, discovering that he, with his curly-brown hair, was like an adorable-lost puppy.

“My talents (money) are washed down river and now I have no means to neither dry out my toga nor buy provisions,” he babbled on, faster than the water running in the stream.

“Naturally,” she rolled her eyes.

“Perhaps you would be kind enough to help a lost prince,” he said, motioning to his purple armband.

“And why would I want to burden my position to help a stranger? Might you rob me ... having not any talents to pay your way?” she asked, pretending to be disinterested even though her words came across more like a seduction.

“Particularly not. I can reimburse you — guaranteed,” he pleaded.

“Perhaps we can make an arrangement. The Trading Post over there — I help out in one of the shops. As part of our tenancy, we get a couple free passes each sun-cycle for the Inn.”

“You’d be so kind and willing to spare one — to a lost but noble stranger — like myself?”

“Wait here for a moment while I see what I can arrange — and don’t be talking to those other kinds over there while I am gone.”

Dolius made her way into the Post, which was already closed up for the day. As different villagers and travelers wandered by, Aedon kept to himself by hiding behind a lamppost. Each passing person seemed to glare his way and he wondered if any of them were Andromache’s Warriors looking for him. A horse, passing by, turned and angrily neighed before bolting off laughing — pleased that he had frightened Aedon.

“It’s all approved,” Dolius announced, startling Aedon when she returned. “Just go up to the main hall and give them this *scrollette* — they’ll assign you a sleeping compartment.”

"*Apa'hei.* I am most grateful," he graveled. "I will certainly repay you."

"I'd rather have some companionship — in the morning for *first-meal*," her pouting lips begged.

He nodded.

"Better make it the meal after that, as it is late already — and I'll need time to get ready," she enticingly replied, allowing the slit in her toga to reveal a sensually polished leg.

There was an occasional jump of excitement in Aedon's step as he headed toward the wooden lodge. The inn stretched up the mountainside thirty levels with an exterior lacking the posh architecture he was accustom to seeing at the Irem. A triangular tower poked up three levels between each room. They were staggered as they rose higher throughout the floors which crawled up the hill.

Trudging up hundreds of steps, Aedon noticed that many of the towers contained eateries; others were viewing lounges, and some held baths. Between each set of towers was a large room. When he opened the door to his assigned place, he discovered it was filled with a dozen units containing sleeping compartments stacked three high. Thirty or forty people were already settling in for the night.

Aedon fit into a lower chamber perfectly, though other taller people had to bend their long legs slightly in order to crunch into their boxes. Fortunately the compartments had doors which slid closed or else some of the snoring shepherds would've kept him awake all night.

It was hard enough to sleep in the strange place without all the extra commotion. One overweight *scruffian*, unable to fit his body into his assigned bed, made quite a ruckus at one point early in the night. He waddled over to Aedon's unit, broke off the top part of it, and scrunched his body into place. Fearful that the upper beds might come crashing down on him, Aedon did not sleep well that night.

The next morning, villagers pulled their tent flaps up and began preparing food to serve. The Trading Post was an enormous rotunda at the base of the Inn, filled with corrals tended by merchants. A gigantic wooden-post, in the center, supported its sloping-canvas roof. Because this was one of those lands where people expected two breakfasts, there was never a lull in people coming and going. The Trading Post buzzed with so many voices that Aedon and Dolius could hardly hear what the other one said.

“Have you planned a day to exchange your armband — for the new metallic CX6?” she asked, pointing to hers. “Mine was one of the first branded on.”

Scarfing down his *egg-yoker*, (made from pita bread filled with egg yolks, cheese, tomatoes, peppers and spinach) it was difficult to understand what Aedon was saying. He grumbled to himself about how he would never replace his purple armband.

“The old bands might suit well in these back parts, but everyone, in more civilized villages have already upgraded,” she expounded.

“For ninety-one years did I look forward to the day I would receive this. Now that I have been vindicated as a true prince and can wear this validation — they want to do away with the caste system.”

“Do you not wish to show your support of our new king who has brought unprecedeted peace and prosperity to our lands?” Dolius asked.

Aedon silently sighed. He could never do that, for he believed that his father, Gilgamoeh, should be the ruling lord. He kept silent, thinking that if he revealed any of these things now, he would only scare off his new companion.

“I’d like to find out more about this stranger whom I have rescued,” said Dolius. “From whence did you come and where do you go?”

“Traveling is certainly most — not a wise choice for me, at the present,” Aedon explained, swallowing another bite of the *yoker*. “Perhaps hiding — I mean — staying here for awhile might

suit my needs better. I could send a parrot to have talents delivered—so I can pay my way.”

Finishing their breakfast, they noticed the crowds thinning out. When Dolius and Aedon stepped out, they were almost run over by a stampede of black horses galloping across the bridge. Aedon jumped out of the path and pulled Dolius back so they would not get run over. Near the end of the pack, one of the horses stopped to beg pardons.

“Apologies my human ones, I am Rawabe, Ranger Horse of East Elasippus. The boys have been on holiday a mite too long and are rushing to get home to begin the preparations for the harvest,” the horse explained. “Sure promises to be an enormous taking this year.”

“A good thing that is, after the shortage of produce last sun-cycle,” Aedon remarked, as the horse bolted off to catch up with his fellows.

“Which one of these roads leads to your destination?” Dolius asked, again trying to find out more about him. “I am due for a holiday and inquire so that I may plan an adventure soon.”

“Perhaps, I could stay amongst the Peddler’s for a time.”

“What beast would whisper such an idea in your head?” Dolius barked, offended. “No one stays in these parts ... Do you wish to become one of those unscrupulous peddlers?”

“I consider not permanent residency, but a temporary shelter.”

“What is it that you are hiding — running away from?”

“This river, the Nile, it runs over its banks. Higher it climbs every month. ... Do you ask it why?” he grimaced, wandering beyond the bridge and leading her down the river bank where by passers could not listen. Sitting down, Aedon yanked a twig of straw from the ground and began chewing on it. He didn’t know where to begin or how much information to reveal to her.

“Many travelers and many secrets have passed through Shepherd’s Crossing,” she explained, scooting closer to him. “You can confide in me, my ears do not gossip.”

“Even the secrets of a fugitive — running from warriors that comb the area, presently — you would keep hidden?”

“We are a small community. While loyal to the Prince Lords of the land, few here, would welcome the intrusion of a palace guard.”

“Yet you wear the armband of loyalty to his majesty?” said Aedon, slapping her CX6. “What kind of a woman gives oath and then takes conflicting secrets into hiding?”

“You’re in a village where the crossroads of all sorts of men meet,” she snapped. “What do you want from me — a *finger-locking promise?*”

“Since the day of the fallen moon, neither promise nor oath has been taken seriously.”

“Then look deep into the soul of one’s eye and find comfort in whom you may believe.”

“My secrets are many and I am restricted in revealing them. I expect that I will be on my way.”

She looked away, “That won’t be necessary. I’ll assure your safety.”

“Little do I know about you — except of your occupation at the Post,” Aedon curiously pried.

As the morning clouds parted into a rare clear day, she told of herself, “I am an adventurer, always seeking new places to discover, and fresh paths to travel. My home base is here — one of few places on the continent where the roads that cross can lead you anywhere.”

“Certainly they may,” he echoed.

She moved closer to him and blinked her eyes in a flirting fashion, testing if there was a romantic interest or not. “A prince like you, I suppose, has a girl already, possibly even two or three?”

“I may be a prince, but a prisoner I am too,” he revealed, fidgeting with frustration as he explained further. “My heart has been held captive by a woman who teeters on accepting engagement with my half-brother.”

“More than a lost-love seeks to imprison you.”

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"And will you aid those who seek my incarceration — or keep the secrets that you claim have passed this way before?"

"Word of your escape from Poseidontel's birthday party — circled around the compound last night. Relax boy. You can *finger-locking* trust me. If that were not true, I would've turned you in to the local magistrate already."

"Months ago I was taken prisoner. An escape was planned and those plans included more than what I was privy to. When it all unfolded it went terribly wrong. As the perpetrators fell, I managed to get away," Aedon trembled, insinuating he had nothing to do with the coup even though he greatly desired to replace Poseidontel with his own father Gilgamoeh. "I hope that I have not said too much. I will send for talents immediately and will hide here for a time until the pressures and searches subside."

"Too many nights and your familiar face might begin to raise suspicions and questions," she pointed out.

Interrupting, a blazing light snapped their attention to the sky, a smoky tail trailed. Then a second one followed. The two meteors streaked into the southeastern horizon. They had seen this happen before, but it was still a concern.

"My goodness, they appear on target for the Irem. I do hope they pass beyond the capital," Dolius gasped, standing up alongside Aedon.

"No they're just slightly off course. I'd speculate they'll hit somewhere in Elasippus," said Aedon, who was an expert in navigation of the stars.

"If by half-a-chance you're right, the Irem will be safe. ... But the abundant crops those horses were talking about — they might not fare well at all."

"First time that two of them have bolted in together," Aedon remarked.

"Some of the soothsayers claim that the angry spirits of the dead Asterians are throwing the meteors at Atlantis. They never seem to hit the other continents around," she added.

"And you believe that?" Aedon huffed.

P A P Y R U S T W O

Ever since Earth's second moon, Asteria, had been blown to bits, its pieces randomly began to rain down on the planet. Most of them were small enough that they'd burn up in the atmosphere, though occasionally you'd see a bigger one. But King Poseidontel was developing an idea: a defense shield against them. He was ready to put his plan into action.

PAPYRUS THREE

MAP TABLE

Leading with his trident, King Poseidontel burst into the stone room and then stopped to admire himself, prouder than ever that he could stomp about anywhere and his every desire would be met. Cylinder-shaped illumination-bulbs hung from the thirty-pode high ceiling, situated directly above a table. Its edges were jagged, sharp, and curved inward like the teeth of a shark. At the end of each point, light projected out. General Andromache stood at attention and saluted, positioning her arm in a way to show off the fact that she was one of the first to wear the new armband honoring him.

Ignoring her superfluous gesture, the flicker of the *omni-transglaust* (holograph-like projection) reflected a map across the king's face. He barked out orders, "I want this *seaweed* stopped."

"A good part of the Southern Province of Elasippus has been wiped barren," Andromache cried, having not an answer for the first time since her promotion to General. "How is one to control these random meteors?"

"Meteors?" Poseidontel huffed, "No, these are not meteors, these are remnants left from the Asterian moon. Sent to execute our demise."

"Dead spirits and their like are mere fables," Andromache scoffed in disbelief, quickly changing her tone when she realized the king might not hold the same view. "How does one stop an invisible army?"

"The *Rataka Scrolls* still rule the laws of the universe."

"In your possession you hold the *Scroll of Water* and of *Fire*," the General reminded.

"Indeed. Shortly today they will be opened to serve me — their master."

"Would the last one that eludes you really provide any additional assistance," Andromache derided, not truly believing in their magic.

"The *Scroll of Air* has powers thousands of times greater than the other two combined — ruling the cosmos — and unseen things," Poseidontel explained, clenching his fist. "It's been told a hundred times over that it resides within the walls of the Iron Isolation — yet one of the two *globeakys* which unlock its door eludes us."

"Your concerns are mine. Have I not offered to organize a channel of warriors to break the door down," Andromache eagerly yelped, slapping her commander's stick to her side.

"The door is trapped."

"We would be most delicate."

"Any attempt without the two authentic keys would damage or disintegrate the prize," the king explained, holding up his

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trident and rubbing the globe atop its center prong. “This ball once decorated Lemech’s ring, entrusted to him by the high Asterian, Ahteana. He placed it in my care, right before his trip to their moon, which saw his demise. Fate has brought me this *globeaky* and destiny will see that I find the other one.”

The king paced back and forth in thought; he did that a lot. Then he mumbled to himself, almost as if he were carrying on a conversation with someone else. Finally a plan formulated and he came back to the stone table and laid it all out. “We must stop the bombardment of our continent by these asteroids. The *Scroll of Air* would do wonders — we need the missing key — now more than ever, do we not?”

“We were unsuccessful in extracting the truth from its keeper.”

“I would’ve gotten him to talk.”

“He was beaten, given a truth serum, and all that he revealed was a drugged story about tying the key to his daughter’s sandal.”

“And then you killed him — the only person who knew where the key was.”

“Who knew he had a weak heart,” Andromache worried, kicking a nearby bench, “else I might have gotten more information.”

“Wait a sandglass-turn here,” a nearby warrior chimed in, taking off his sandal and holding it up. “Six or seven sun-cycles ago, at the *educatory* I attended, there was a short-lived fashion.”

“Who are you — you’re but a map interpreter?” Poseidontel barked.

“Ganped, I am Prince Ganped,” the lad eagerly volunteered, stepping forward and standing taller than ever before, even though he was a short boy.

“Tell now, what do you know about this?”

“At the *educatory*, the girls would tie their *globeakys* to their sandals. It was supposed to be fashionable, but after they started popping off and getting lost, the custom faded.”

"Perhaps the old man was telling the truth about tying the key to his daughter's sandal," Poseidontel huffed.

"It shall be my pleasure to capture his daughter — Areshia," Andromache gleefully suggested, with a bitter distaste for the girl whom she tried to kill once before.

"She escaped with the Asterians, remember," the king snapped.

"If the Asterians indeed traveled to the bald moon, like the astronomers claim, then humans they did not take. Men cannot breathe in that place for its lack of air," Ganyped added.

"Areshia and the others must still be hiding in the glaciers of Bashan," Andromache bellowed with a scowl.

"Indeed they must."

"I will lead a dozen expeditions to comb the ice mountains."

"Your loud and obvious ways will only alert them and cause them to be more mobile in their flight. The glaciers cover thousands of square stadia anyway," said Poseidontel, sitting down with some disappointment.

"Can we locate someone who knows where they reside?" asked Ganyped.

"Immediately I will assemble a triple channel of spies. We will find Aedon — and handle the situation, as you say — most delicately," said Andromache, laying out the plan with her half-smile leaning closer to her earlobe than ever before.

The sun peaked over the mountaintop, reflecting sparkles off the Nile River as Aedon and Dolius left its banks to hike back to Shepherd's Crossing. But before they could get to the tents, they spotted warriors surveying the area and questioning travelers. Aedon stopped dead in his tracks.

"I know a back way, follow me," Dolius whispered, tugging him after her. "They're obviously looking for someone ... for you again. ... It's not safe to remain in these parts much longer."

"Then I shall have to make leave and travel to another place," he agreed, reluctantly.

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“I will journey with you. We could go north and find the people that you seek.”

With hesitation he turned to her and posed a question, “How did you know the direction was north?”

“You appeared to be coming in from the south last night, so I assumed you were traveling in that direction.”

“Oh yeah, right,” he answered.

Beyond the Trading Post were large tents filled with animals that were available for trade. Those who traveled with horses, mules, sheep, goats, or unicorns could check their livestock in for the evening. It provided a safe place for them to rest, feed to eat, fresh water to drink, and even games to play.

“We’ll need a couple of steeds for the trip,” she stated, leading him to the unicorns’ tent.

A balding-jolly man was trying to offload his herd, “Best in the land, these fine stallions were raised in the countryside in a place similar to here. They can carry feed, persons, carriages, even birds.”

“No birds,” one of the unicorns snorted in objection.

When the man turned around, Aedon recognized him immediately. It was Curious Cain from his homeland.

“Cain — what are you doing here?” Aedon asked.

“Rentals dragged to their slowest level ever in Gadeirus. Had to take up shop here. After the invasion of the island, the grains of sand stopped falling in my hourglasses. *Gotta* sell off the unicorns — just to buy some food for myself.”

“Some fine stallions you have here,” Dolius butted in. “We need two mares — two of your best.”

While she inspected the prime younger studs Aedon noticed a couple white unicorns keeping to themselves in the corner of the fold. Throughout his life, many times he felt like the lost sheep sitting in the corral by himself where the others wished not to associate with his kind.

“How about those two — over there?” Aedon cried out, pointing. When they looked up, he recognized them, “Is that Meca and Ceca?”

“Would sure enjoy a journey with you Aedon,” said Meca the unicorn, eagerly trotting over. “Frightful this place is.”

“Some of the stallions are raring to go today,” Cain scowled. “But I *gotta* have talents for payment, no credits from those new armband things. They just aren’t being validated in our part yet.”

“Oh but they will. A sun-cycle from now, I assure you, anyone trading with talents will be *hung-out-to-dry*,” a nearby prospector chimed in.

“My friend Dolius was going to make payment for the trade with her arm band. … But if you are not setup at the present, I can get you talents when you return back to the Cliff City in Gadeirus,” Aedon promised.

“How can I be sure I’ll be paid,” Cain suspiciously asked, cocking his head to the side. “Been too many people saying words and keeping not their promises.”

Lowering his voice, Aedon explained. “Last visit to Gadeirus, did not my mother bring back many bars of talent? When we arrived, the island was under attack and she left her satchel in my delta-transporter. It was parked on the roof of the plaza where you reside. Before I departed, I stowed her satchel in your stable … down under the feed table.”

“He did, I saw him do so — though I was a ways in the woods, still afraid another balloon might drop more bombs on the place,” Ceca the unicorn confirmed.

“And Ceca always is the truthful one,” Meca added.

“Sounds like a fair trade to me,” Cain accepted, hesitantly.

“Not for all of it,” Aedon shouted. “One bar! You get one bar of the talents and I get your shop and the other unicorns when I come back home. And the other bars better still be there.”

“Alright, fair that is,” the bald man mumbled, rounding up Meca and Ceca for the travelers to take.

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“While you prepare the animals, I will go pack up a trunk case. I’ll be back before the hourglass is turned,” said Dolius, sneaking off to make arrangements.

Cain harnessed up Meca and Ceca and balanced sacks of feed over their backs for the trip. Preparing for departure, Meca and Ceca guzzled down a good amount of water knowing that they might not find it readily available for the first jaunt through the woodlands of Ampheres.

“I’m a ready to be a *stompin’ outta* these here crowded canvas cradles. ... Is anybody a *comin’ already?*” Meca snorted, impatiently galloping back and forth, about to jump over the fence before it was time to leave.

Returning to the Trading Post, Dolius ran toward them with her trunk case. She stopped Ceca and tied the box to her rear, then mounted up for a ride. Aedon was feeding Meca a straw biscuit as Dolius trotted up to him on Ceca.

“Stop dallying, we *gotta* get on the move,” Dolius ordered, her face flushed. “Those warriors over there — they’re looking our way.”

Aedon jumped onto the unicorn, “Giddy-up Meca. Time to stomp on *outta* here.”

Meca tipped up on her hind legs with a hoot of joy before jumping into a hefty pace galloping up the road. Upon further inspection, it was obvious that not two but four combatants were following them. Aedon and Dolius ramped up the speed and soon the unicorns were galloping at a fierce speed, attempting to race beyond the reach of the pursuer. The wide road made it too easy for their pursuers to gain, so off the path they turned and through the woods the animals ran.

“You’re as lost as a mermaid without a colony. Why are we going this way?” Ceca neighed.

“I know this territory better than anyone,” Dolius assured, taking the lead.

“Go with her you mutt — unless you’d rather be caught and branded into slavery by them warriors?” Meca taunted to her mate.

“I’m not used to leading,” Ceca shouted back, as branches scratched her sides while they shot through the thickets.

Soon the unicorns were directed onto another road and it seemed that the enemy was getting closer again.

“When we get to the bridge up ahead, jump over it — as high as you can?” Dolius ordered. “Don’t step a hoof on its wooden surface or else —”

Upon arriving to its edge Ceca flew over first and Meca followed. The two unicorns landed safely on the other side even though the back of Meca’s left hoof hit hard on a plank causing a few boards to fall off the bridge. Continuing down the road, they glanced back to see the riders, all four of them, stampeding onto the overpass. They weighed more than what the bridge liked and so it decided to collapse. A moment later, the warriors and their horses were in the river and the unicorns were trotting off to freedom — for now.

The deep woods became so dark that even the moonbeams of the night couldn’t find their way through. Aedon paced beside Meca as they journeyed between the conifer trees. Ceca trotted next to Dolius noticing that the space between the thick trunks grew smaller. After a while they realized that they had moved inside a large hanger-like building. Their sandals and hoofs began to echo as the gravel path morphed into stone. A loud clanging sound startled everyone when Meca accidentally kicked a bucket full of tools on the floor.

“Meca! ... Can we be quieter,” Aedon snapped in a whisper, before tripping over the bucket himself.

“Sorry, *‘bout kickin’* stuff. How’s a unicorn supposed to travel in these strange parts surrounded in darkness,” she objected.

“*Apa’hei!* ... Anyone here?” Aedon stuttered, unsure if he should whisper or shout his greeting.

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“We’d better bunker down until daybreak,” Dolius suggested, stopping the group and brushing the wrinkles from her toga even though it was too dark for anyone to be impressed. “Over there — looks to be a spot of crates we could rest behind.”

A giddy squeak, yelping from different parts of the room, cautioned them even more. Once they found their way to where wood-slatted boxes were stacked, Aedon began to move them into a configuration so they might inconspicuously sleep.

“We may have taken a wrong turn,” Dolius warned, untying her trunk case and pulling her load off Ceca. “The place isn’t exactly how I remembered.”

Aedon rummaged through his bag until he found a striking-stick and ignited a flame, hoping to see better. As soon as the light sparked on, a squirrel-monkey poked its head forward and screeched so loud that it frightened everyone. They were surrounded by a pack of hundreds more.

PAPYRUS FOUR

THE BALLOON MAKER

The monkey turned around and leaped from one crate onto a higher one in the hanger. He spun a wheel which was attached to a rectangular carton about the size of a sandal-box. On top of it was an egg-shaped glass bulb. It began to brighten with a greenish glow. Once the illumination-bulb came to full brightness they could see the area around. A few of the other monkeys demanded that the light be put out again, but most just squinted until their pupils adjusted.

“You are spies — no?” the lead monkey questioned. “Why travel you so late and in dark?”

“We are adventurers — exploring the continent,” Aedon announced, running his fingers through his curly hair with a sigh of relief that the creature wasn’t a dangerous beast.

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“Adventurers … or trouble-makers? … Where from — do you come?”

Dolius introduced the troops, “This is Aedon and his two unicorns Meca and Ceca. They are from the island of Gadeirus. I am Dolius — their guide.”

“Certainly a nice place you have, tucked away here in the forest. What should we call you — monkey?” Aedon asked with a half-grin of sarcasm.

The squirrel-monkey made a distrusting face and leaped away from Aedon, over to Dolius. He looked around suspiciously with his beady eyes before motioning for his monkey friends to retreat.

“Banjo. I be Banjo — and not your ordinary monkey. I be squirrel monkey.”

“Like we didn’t know that,” Meca exclaimed.

“And head one of this team. Bet you didn’t know that,” the monkey shrieked. “But go you must. Leave now before master finds you. A highly restricted area, entered you have. Banjo be in grave trouble if caught.”

“Shall we return to the open forest for wild beasts to devour us?” Aedon cried, starting to unpack some of his gear. “Certainly we can rest here for the night. I’ll explain it to your master in the morning.”

“Be glad it’s a warm spring night, else might be *needin’* a monkey coat to keep warm,” Meca jested.

“Be gone — go all of you now!” Banjo screamed, flailing his paws toward them.

“Banjo, calm down,” Dolius slowly spoke, stooping down to level her face with his. “We wouldn’t want you to get into any *troubles*. Whatever you suggest — we’ll try to do.”

“*Ehh*—the master will wake soon …”

“I can assure you we are not troublemakers. Why Aedon here is a prince. See his armband. Now do you want to take responsibility for sending a prince out into the thickets?”

"Him — a prince? ... Of what *wayback* land?" Banjo scowled.

"What if something were to happen to him —" she began.

"What would your master say then?" Meca interjected.

The monkey paused, ran in circles to the left and then to the right while pondering this new proposal. He pondered so long that the others thought he had given up and so they began to settle in again.

Banjo finally spoke, "Stay you can until sunrise. ... But leave you must, before Balloon Maker finds you."

They settled in and drifted asleep, all except Banjo, who kept a lifted eyebrow watching them while he paced over the box tops occasionally.

KUKELEKU! ... KUKELEKU! ... A rooster sounded, waking the travelers. A multi-level hanger carved out between the thick trees greeted them. The sunlight had almost as much difficulty as the moonbeams did, in streaming between gaps in the branches. Dozens of squirrel monkeys worked on building wooden war balloons. The shop was unusually quiet for the amount of work that transpired and the mammals seemed rehearsed in their tasks, doing matters as quietly as possible. Meca's trotting around the place interrupted their work and squeals of objection from the monkeys prompted a quick visit from the shop's manager.

"Hurry! You've stayed too long," Banjo squealed, bolting from his sleep and tugging at Dolius' toga.

A small wooden balloon, resembling two footballs attached by their sides and a box underneath, zipped down from the treetop. It was about the size of Aedon's and Dolius' heads put together and it hovered in the air before them for a moment. When the front ends of the two football-looking housings blinked open like eyeballs, it was apparent the thing was alive. The box underneath, split in two, began to chatter, and spoke like a person.

"Vis-i-tors, i-denti-fy your-selves and present your scrolls of author-i-zation," the balloon demanded with a mechanical voice. *"I have not been in-formed of a sched-ul-ed arri-val to-day."*

THE BALLOON MAKER

“Who are you? ... What are you?” Aedon chuckled, slightly amused by the creature.

Backing away from his reach, the mechanical thing answered, *“I am the Ball-oon Maker. Chief Ball-oon and over-seer of all con-struc-tion here. Now answer — why are you invading our hanger?”*

“We’re not invaders. We’re traveling through these parts and didn’t intend to make a disturbance,” Dolius snapped back, starting to pack up her trunk case.

“A dis-tur-bance you have caused and now you will ...”

The Balloon Maker’s eyes suddenly turned red and he moved over to Banjo with a demanding tone, *“You brought these in-trud-ers in, did-n’t you? And why are you stand-ing there? Get busy and join those hard-working monk-eys who are assem-bling the inner-bag parts.”*

“Hard-working? ... Looks more like they’re asleep,” Aedon jested, noticing the group of monkeys who lounged under the large balloon waving only their tails back and forth and doing nothing else.

“Shhhhesh!” Banjo cried out.

The Balloon Maker darted over to where the monkeys were. His eyes turned green and then a laser projected out of his bulbs, scanning over the area where they rested.

“Now you’ve ruined it!” Banjo scolded with a harsh whisper.

“So that thing’s eyes can’t really see — they just scan flat fields?” asked Aedon, realizing.

“Took us many moon-cycles to come up with — formation to allow us time to rest. ... Master demands work non-stop — sixteen hours a day,” Banjo hissed. “We organized into shifts, taking turns to rest in a formation that he believed to be us working.”

“Ooops, I didn’t mean to ruin your secret,” Aedon apologized with a grimace.

"Tattle-mouth! ... Go! Get out of here, all of you!" Banjo growled.

The jaw of the Balloon Maker opened up and streaks of lightning shot out of his mouth at the monkeys. They jumped to their feet with a squeal and quickly fell back into their working formation. Then the balloon rushed back over to the departing visitors.

"Please stop and do stay," the balloon pleaded. *"I really am not a bad ball-o-on. I know not why I do things like this now. Search-ing my mem-ory banks — I know that I used to be good. But then, some-one came one night and they re-moved volumes of in-for-ma-tion from my mem-ory. About three scrolls worth of in-for-ma-tion was wip-ed away. Ever since, I have been mal-function-ing like this. Been moody and gnarly temp-er-ed."*

"A mite of a misfortune has come this way and I am sorry to hear such things. It doesn't appear safe for us to settle in this place," Aedon stuttered with hesitation.

"I assure you it is quite safe here. I can move quickly and defend the ar-ea well. My mis-sion at hand is the com-plet-ion of these ball-o-ons," replied the boss, swishing around them, confused. *"But wait, wasn't I set to destroy you? ... Ex-plain again, why I spare you."*

Eyeing the lightning rod in the Balloon Maker's mouth, Dolius quickly answered, "Might you have a smidgen of respect for a prince? ... Notice his purple armband."

"Yes, we have come for a routine inspection," Aedon added, putting an eager sandal forward while whispering under his breath back to Dolius, "This thing changes moods quicker than a mermaid dives in the water."

"A comp-lete inspection? Oh good — that will take a week or two. There is a guest house in the tree top over there. Please con-tin-ue to lend your eyes for an honest walk through of my sect-ion daily. I wel-come you as my guests."

THE BALLOON MAKER

“Hey, monkey,” Aedon called out to where the *squirrels* were laboring, “Want to help us gather our gear and move up to the tree house?”

“It’s Banjo — not monkey,” the small animal corrected, leaping over to lend a hand. This was a better option than slaving away at the construction site where the monkeys had all been put back to installing valves and filling gas pouches.

Even though it was day, it was still quite dark inside. Beyond where they stood, they really couldn’t see how far the hanger went, though it seemed to stretch further than the eye could see. They packed up the unicorns and Banjo led them past the large ship toward the tree houses.

“This hanger must be carved out of trees more than a thousand sun-cycles born,” Aedon marveled. “And by the size of those protruding branches, I’d guess it’s been here for decades.”

“But who would have need to build a secret barn here?” Meca snorted, nodding beyond the giant blimp where dozens of others were being built.

Situated on an extended thick branch was a multi-level tree house made from wooden planks and plant material. The main house appeared like a giant holiday ornament split in two. Leading up to it were a series of smaller box-like rooms with A-framed roofs. These were connected by spiral staircases and rope bridges. Each room looked like a lantern with an orange light from the distance.

A basket lowered down, operated by a spare gas-cell floating above it. Barely large enough for one person, Aedon helped Dolius into it first. Once she was secure, the pouch floating over her, magically inflated, and floated upward, taking her to the entrance. Deflating its bulb again, the basket lowered. Aedon opened its door and was about to step in when the Balloon Maker swished in front of him.

“Males sleep over there and work in fac-tory,” the mechanical voice snapped, opening its eyes and projecting a light from its pupils toward a straw-made bed opposite the tree where

hundreds of squirrel monkeys fought over a patch to rest on. After everyone settled in, the Balloon Maker retreated for maintenance.

“Psst! Psst,” a sound and a flickering light beckoned Aedon’s curiosity. Rising on an elbow he spotted the floating basket descending. Banjo motioned him over to it. Quickly Aedon jumped into the basket and the two of them ascended toward the tree house.

“*Apa’hei*. . . . Thank you, Banjo,” said Aedon.

“*Ya thankin’* the wrong monkey,” Banjo whispered. “Your behind be rescued only ‘cause lady of tree insisted.”

“There are plenty of compartments here,” Dolius announced, as Aedon and Banjo disembarked on the landing branch. “It didn’t seem fair; you down there all by yourself, and me way up here — all alone.”

Aedon looked around at the quaint collection of huts and structures that might suggest a small village existed in the trees and exclaimed, “This place is amazing and so peaceful that I desire to bask in a restful state for a long while — perhaps forever.”

Banjo growled, threatened by the intruders in his house.

“Except that we’re inspectors,” Dolius whispered, “and staying here too long would expose our cover.”

Dolius and Banjo bid Aedon a final *Apa’hei* after showing him to a cabin.

Inside, humming birds settled down into nearby nests and Aedon stretched out on the soft cushions piled on the floor. Slats in the window’s shutter gave little light, however a candle’s flame inside the lanterns danced a warm-fuzzy feeling into the air and made it easy for him to notice the luxuries that surrounded. He helped himself to a bowl of grapes and poured himself a sip of wine from one of the shelved crafts. The full-bodied drink laid heavy on his eyelids and soon he drifted to sleep.

KUKELEKU! . . . KUKELEKU! Aedon was startled awake for the dawning of another day. He crawled over to the shutters and slid one aside. Below, the monkeys hurried into their positions, jumped into action, and resumed construction. The Balloon Maker

THE BALLOON MAKER

zipped into the area and began ordering the workers about. He had already forgotten about Aedon and Dolius.

“Psst!” Aedon heard from a round hut across the branch. Banjo was beckoning him over. Sleepily, he staggered across the bridge almost falling from the bouncing wooden slats which were woven together by ropes.

“You’re late for *first-meal*,” Banjo scolded, shaking a banana at him. “Dolius example, you should follow.”

“It’s difficult to discern which meal is on when neither the sun nor moons show themselves,” Aedon complained, half-dressed and fixing a belt-tie around his toga. “What else do we have here, besides bananas? ... Any *egg-yokers* around?”

“Do you see *egg-yokers* growing on trees out there?” Banjo snapped.

Dolius giggled slightly which provoked Aedon to pull a fiber strand from his banana and toss it at her.

“Banjo, what’s with this liking you’ve taken for Dolius?” Aedon asked, while chewing a piece of the fruit on the left side of his mouth.

“She care and protect us, unlike you who tells master on us.”

“And if Dolius desired to stay here for awhile, how long would you feed and protect her?”

“Dolius we welcome, to stay here, as long as she wishes,” the monkey chirped. “Though, if you stay also, I’d watch your tongue, ‘less a troubled monkey poison your fruit.’”

A couple other squirrel monkeys peeking through the shutters nodded in agreement along with the humming birds that randomly darted about.

“See — there is no rush to leave this place,” Aedon responded, still afraid of being recognized, captured, and turned over to the king.

Dolius shook her head in the negative, sternly whispering, “We have adventures to take. I can’t stay on holiday forever.”

As the days wore on, Aedon and Dolius continued to argue about *staying* or *leaving*. Whether for reasons of fear, comfort, or both, Aedon was unwilling to move from the place. He was adamant about not traveling for a long while.

Then one day just after sunset, Banjo delivered not only *fifth-meal* but some cautious news, “Master says another inspection team en-route. ... Us mechanics must double efforts. Bring news so you prepare for company.”

“It might be time for us to move on,” Dolius exclaimed, dropping her handful of food with worry.

“There is abundant room in this tree for visitors,” Aedon thought, with an idea. “And nobody would question our residency here with the authentic prince’s band I wear.”

“Then Banjo happy,” the monkey squeaked, “and make arrangements needed.”

Dolius wasn’t at all thrilled and questioned further, “Don’t you think it wise to find out more about this inspection team ... like who they are and where they come from?”

“Banjo can find out more. ... Banjo already finds out more.”

Aedon and Dolius stared at the monkey waiting for him to cough up the details. Finally he spoke, “Inspection team arrive tomorrow from Irem, headed by General.”

“Which General?” Aedon cautiously asked.

“General Andromache.”

“Andromache?” Aedon gasped, with complete surprise. “Dolius, you’re about to get your wish rather quickly. The General and I have a bit of history.”

“Perhaps now I will guess — that it is this General from whom you hide,” Dolius remarked.

“Nothing would please her more than to capture my very self — so she could personally turn me over to the king. She would do anything for Poseidontel. ... I’m convinced she is secretly in love with him.”

“Really?” Dolius exclaimed with surprise.

THE BALLOON MAKER

“We will depart for Bashan,” Aedon announced. “Our adventure begins tonight.”

“Bashan?” she asked, shocked. “What could possibly be way down there in such a freezing place?”

“People — people that I know. Persons who I’ve spoken about before,” he coldly snapped, refusing to retell his plight.

She smiled, willing to go along on the adventure.

The balloon closest to them had completed construction earlier in the day, though all of its amenities and supplies hadn’t been loaded in yet. Together, they decided to borrow it because it was their best way to escape. Dolius convinced Banjo to enlist the aid of a dozen of his closest friends. In exchange for their help in readying the ship, they would take them to the edge of the forest, essentially freeing them from the labor camp.

“Banjo like adventures. Banjo always wanted to travel outside hangers,” he eagerly told them, with so much anticipation that he almost stopped helping them prepare.

Diligently they loaded cargo for the trip. The monkeys packed tools, the unicorns found extra flour, grains, and oats to load. Aedon secured ropes and rigging while Dolius scraped together some *orichalcum* powder that could be used to power the vehicle’s capacitor.

“Tank is located next to resting bay. Turn it down slower else hissing sound will disturb master,” Banjo squeaked at the monkeys who filled the cells of the balloon with gas.

Finally the ship was floated out of the hanger and into the forest minutes before the dawning of *first-meal*. It couldn’t rise into the sky because there were too many branches still in the way. Feverishly the monkeys used machetes and axes to chip away at the upper tree parts that still entrenched the balloon. But before they could clear the last branches —

KUKELEKU! ... KUKELEKU!

The hanger came to life and all the other monkeys, entering the place for work, immediately noticed that something was amiss.

The balloon they were scheduled to finish work on was half a stadia away out in the middle of the forest. Soon they realized that this was an attempt to escape. Hundreds of them rushed toward the ship, each desiring the *door of freedom* opening up.

“Stop the boarding monkeys, they’ll weigh us down,” Banjo shouted, fighting off and ejecting the unwanted guests.

“*Order! Order! What is going on?*” the Balloon Maker screamed, rushing in and scanning the area with his eyeballs. The confusion caused the master to spin in circles.

As more monkeys woke up and leaped about the area, the Balloon Maker began to randomly shoot bolts of electricity, trying to corral them back into order.

“Over here — look at me,” called out an eager monkey who hated the master. He found a piece of glass and bounced the shots of lightning away from himself. One of them was reflected back at the Balloon Maker and caused him to short-circuit, billow smoke from his head, and then crash to the floor in a heap of melted rubble.

All the monkeys and other creatures cheered with joy. This gave the crew enough of a break to clear away the remaining branches and ascend into the air, paving their way to freedom — for a brief moment.

Gray was the day, so much that not a single solar-powered Pauwvota could fly. The sun tried to spill through the clouds on the horizon as they began their journey north. A ray of sunshine peaking through the eastern clouds might have symbolically announced their freedom, but instead, it spotlighted Andromache’s Balloon approaching.

PAPYRUS FIVE

FROSTED DESERT

Frantically Aedon and Banjo tried to make the capacitor spin faster. It seemed like a chase was going to ensue as Andromache's balloon moved toward them. But then her vehicle started a descent into the hanger area from whence they had come.

Looking out the stern of the ship, Dolius called toward the front cabin, "Wait! She doesn't realize that we're a rogue ship."

"Yet!" Aedon added. "Still, we ought to get a good lead of time. She'll be back in pursuit of us before the hourglass turns."

The next two days, they took turns riding in the cabin, watching from the cab, and sleeping as they crossed into the province of Evaemon.

Now Aedon and Dolius learned that there was a man hidden within the vast Frosted Desert who had a map of the outlaying areas of Bashan. Banjo remembered coordinates to an old warehouse where supplies used to come from for the factory back

home. He helped direct the balloon in that direction. Riding lowly above the desert floor, they passed ice entombed spears, shields, and battle machinery where water had engulfed miles of troops and then suddenly froze. These were the remnants left of the warriors who battled the Asterians and then retreated from the Talae Glacier. Aedon remembered the battle and how he helped the last Asterians escape. A chill ran down his spine when he saw the edge of the glacier in the distance, for this was where he had been captured long ago.

The floating-wooden vehicle slowed to a stop upon the approach of a single structure surrounded by pine trees. The old warehouse, appearing like a lone island, popped out of the lake of surrounding ice. But it wasn't alone. A trickle of smoke puffed from a chimney, so faint, that it didn't even show itself like the long shadows the cold moon painted for the trees.

Banjo jumped down from the riding basket and anchored the balloon to one of the pines, "Our destination has arrived. What will master say?"

"Better be some friendlier faces in there — that's all I ask," Aedon begged, climbing out and wrapping a scarf around his neck.

"Steady, Meca," said Dolius, balancing on the unicorn.

"This *ain't* no normal terrain to go *stompin'* on," Meca complained her hoofs slipping on the ice. "Bet a deer couldn't even navigate this piece of glass."

The blinding snow slowed them and then a gust of the fierce wind bulldozed them into the side of the warehouse. Pulling back a large wooden panel, the travelers pushed inside. No sooner had they secured the door behind, when an illumination-bulb buzzed to full brightness. Backlit, a shadowy short figure wobbled its way toward them. With spiked hair that resembled upside-down icicles, and wearing a long fur coat, the obscure man stopped.

He shouted out to them, "Aedon, is that you down there, my amusing little jackal? ... You're always barking at trees where you're not supposed to be."

“Apa’hei, old friend.” Aedon called out, shaking snow-bunnies from his curly hair.

“What in the continent are you doing way down here?” Evad snorted in a high-pitched voice. “Have you returned so that I may hand you over to the king — again?”

“And risk Poseidontel finding out about who really organized that coup?”

With a screeching chuckle, he beckoned them further inside to a parlor decorated with sparse colors that were as cold as the outdoors.

“I’ve been told that an accurate map of the area resides in these parts — in a warehouse close by,” Aedon said, taking off his scarf as their footsteps echoed in the large room.

“Map? — It’s called a *relief transglaust* — it’s of the entire region — though the parts further down North are sketchy,” Evad explained, repositioning a fur over his shoulders that was about to fall off. “Before you get too comfortable, explain why I should not turn you over to the King? ... You are quite a wanted fugitive.”

When Evad captured Aedon, after he helped the Asterians escape, he was eager to turn his prisoner over and get a handsome reward. Each day as the talents offered for the capture of Aedon increased, Evad held onto his prize like a precious commodity. During the time the two spent together, Aedon told of a truth about their younger days when the king was just a prince and how he framed Evad. When the previous Prince Lord Lemech was poisoned, it was Prince Faeraud (now known as King Poseidontel) who was responsible, but he made it look like it was Evad’s fault. Appearing to help out the guilty prince, Faeraud offered to make the accusations go away in exchange for Evad’s loyalty. It was all a trick to gain his support.

Evad became so upset when he found out about this, that he organized the coup and involved his father Evaemon, Etruscan Ampheres, and others. Despising Poseidontel, he was determined to do away with the king, and certain that he would be the one named to replace him.

However, Aedon felt that Gilgamoeh was the rightful heir to the throne. While he was certain that Evad couldn't be trusted, he still hoped to persuade him that Poseidontel was unquestionably disloyal.

In the warehouse, the two of them stared at each other for the longest awkward moment. Evad grumbled to himself that it was Aedon's fault that he had to hide out in this freezing-remote desert. But turning in Aedon, would serve no advantage. The king had already beheaded all the Etruscans he could find and he had escaped by a thin red hair in the moment between his pretense of not being involved and the king's rage against those who gave him power.

Aedon and Evad each tilted their head. A twinkle of mischievous mistrust sparkled in their eyes, and they understood the predicament the other was in. After another high-pitched, screeching-laugh, which dug a chill down Aedon's spine, Evad asked, "Which glacier interests you?"

"The large one — Bashan — the Oracaero Glacier — to visit an old friend — if I can find her, that is," he smiled, feeling more welcome than was true.

"Bashan? It's colder up there than the frost on a Neptune moon. Notes from your past travels might serve you better," Evad screeched, scrolling through regional images on the map-table, eager to help even though he didn't know why.

"An old *female* friend?" Dolius perked up, inquiring with a strain of jealousy.

"There are few people in that region. I know most of the transients that wander these parts — coming and going," Evad added. "I even know about the ones that think they're sneaking by. Who is she?"

"Areshia. We were once engaged to marry," Aedon revealed, stopping with a pause, hoping he hadn't brought up past memories of another time when Evad was bent on capturing them and turning them in for a reward.

“I thought this woman of the glacier was already spoken for,” Dolius reminded him with mixed emotions, making it impossible to determine if she were upset or relieved about the matter.

Evad paused with a pale blanket of concern wrapping around his face. Then he decided to pretend like he didn’t remember who Areshia was, “Consider the consequences of those you chase after. It’s been your downfall before.”

“You remember her, I am certain,” Aedon begged.

“There have been a few other, not so friendly folk, seeking out an *Areshia* lately.”

“What do you know about her location?” Aedon asked.

“Do you really seek Areshia or is this another one of your expeditions in search of your banished father?” Evad perceptively asked, finally removing the fur that didn’t want to stay put around his neck. “You’re hoping to bring him back to Atlantis, aren’t you?”

“Areshia is crucial to my mission — and it would only be natural — that I might search for certain others while ensuing,” he answered, defensively, looking away from Evad. “I know your motives as well. If left alone, you’d suffocate Poseidontel with one of your furs and take his place before the morning dew sparkled.”

Sarcastically Evad scoffed, “My furs are under his feet — stomped on. We all bow to Poseidontel because he alone pours out wealth across the land and makes it possible for us to buy fashionable togas and the latest transporter model.”

“What good is the latest model when the *orichalcum* which powers it is on the verge of running dry?” asked Aedon.

“I have plans and soon the wealth of Evaemon, which he believes to be under his sandal, I will yank out from under his feet,” Evad snarled. “Go and search for your Areshia, but allow me to show you some of the dangers to consider in Bashan. ... Three of the greatest are: the icy glaciers, Og the giant, and — your father. This is the region. It will take many hourglasses to reach its edge.”

“Which direction do we sail for Oracaero?” Aedon shouted, wrapping up again and sliding the wooden door open.

“Way yonder, there — forty-degrees northwest of the Agglomeration,” Evad revealed, preventing Aedon from closing the door yet. “You haven’t forgotten — Gilgamoeh is still under banishment.”

“My memory seems to freeze up in these cold parts,” snapped Aedon.

“Let me remind you, it isn’t advisable to float these contraptions into the high altitudes. Your balloon appears to be well stocked for a long journey.”

“Why not?”

“You won’t acclimate to the summit. If you disembark without time for your blood-oxygen-level to adjust,” Evad explained, “you’ll suffocate to death. Plus, like all *crystal-capacitor* driven vehicles — they might freeze up at those extreme elevations.”

The blizzard cleared away as they were preparing the balloon for departure, but another meteor darted across the sky. This time the ball of fire pelted into a distant glacier. The mountain of ice quickly turned to water and what looked like a tsunami rushing over land, headed their way.

“How did that happen?” Evad huffed, while hyperventilating.

Dolius exclaimed, “That’s not possible. Why, they aren’t supposed to hit land.”

“What do you know — that eludes common reasoning?” Aedon asked, confused on the subject. “Why would the meteors not collide with the Earth?”

“*Poems* from the *Rataka Scrolls* were enchanted by the king — over the land — to protect it. That’s why all the meteors have been deflected out to sea,” Evad informed, almost crying.

“Looks like their *enchantments* are losing power,” Aedon smirked, motioning Banjo to untie the anchor. “That one there — appears to have missed the sea.”

“How can they be losing power?” Dolius mumbled, as if she knew things about the *Scrolls* like Aedon did.

“Wait! ... I’m coming with you. This place will be underwater by tomorrow morning.” Evad cried out, watching part of the distant glacier crumble where the meteorite had crashed.

The balloon flew through the mountains of the Agglomeration and over its breath-taking waterfalls. The forest began to morph into the glaciers where formations of crystals, avalanches of rock, and ice warned them not to pursue. Evad yanked open the trunk case he had brought onboard and began pulling various furs out.

“Some warm wraps — you all will need,” he gleefully chuckled like he was the expert on the region. Thrusting a garment at Aedon his high-pitched voice nagged, “This bearskin toga ought to fit your skinny-type well.”

Dolius poked her face in the trunk and snatched a red-fury fez. Fitting it over her head she appeared a tad silly with her long blond hair flowing out the back end. Evad stomped over to her and snapped the cap off. Dolius clung onto the rim and a contest of tug-of-war ensued with the hat.

“Aedon and I go way back,” Evad boasted, “back to our initiation into the *Spiral Legislature* — actually even further than that — all the way back to our days at the *Educatory*.”

“The *Educatory* — huh?” Dolius huffed. “You’ve forgotten about my presence there no doubt.”

“You must not have fashioned yourself noticeable in those days.”

“You’d rather I freeze my ears off while you pal up to Aedon.”

“Because I’m the only one that can keep Aedon safe — from the king,” Evad snapped.

“Who do you think got us this far? If I hadn’t rescued him at Shepherd’s Crossing you might have all been captured.”

“Enough already,” Banjo squealed, leaping onto the trunk case. “We work together — else I tell master.”

“If it has to be,” Evad grumbled, letting up so Dolius could take hold of the fez again. “Why Aedon brought you along, I’ll never figure.”

“My purpose here is to help get him safely to Bashan to find his Areshia,” she told him, even though she had only discovered his motive minutes earlier.

“He’s not looking for Areshia — he’s going to find his father,” Evad snootily replied.

“I’m sure you had other means of escaping the pending flood at your warehouse,” she suspiciously inquired. “What is your true purpose for coming along?”

“Yes, why did you jump aboard?” asked Aedon who was still flailing his arms about trying to fit into the bearskin toga.

“Companionship … and to keep an eye on Aedon,” Evad suspiciously volunteered. “If he were to be caught — who knows what tactics Poseidontel might use to bleed misinformation about a scenario in which I did not participate?”

“I wouldn’t trust him for a sand-pebble of time,” said Dolius, turning to Aedon in a whisper, which Evad could still hear. “Suspect he’s up to some plot bigger than either of us can imagine.”

Evad snarled, perceptively noticing the oddity of their relationship, “Seems like you’re tagging along for no reason at all. Certainly you don’t expect Banjo or me to believe the two of you are in love.”

Banjo cringed, Aedon looked away, and Dolius let out another long sigh. It was clear that Aedon was on a mission to find Areshia and his father, but what were Dolius and Evad really after? It was a question that Aedon avoided answering, afraid that it might delay his purpose. Rather than risk extending a debate that might yield truths he wasn’t ready to hear, he retired to the upper deck for a rest.

“What’s the story with the two of you?” Evad pried, prompting Dolius to explain.

She didn't wish to say a word, but felt obligated to some kind of explanation, "Maybe I'm not attractive enough. Perhaps he doesn't fancy fine ladies. Why he hasn't minded attention toward me much these past few weeks."

"Ahhh — you're a whole bunch smarter than you let on," Evad whispered, leaning closer to her. "You thought you'd cozy up to Aedon by *dumbing* your smarts down to his naive level. Now you have created a persona which you cannot change overnight. Yet, you are still here."

Dolius kicked her trunk case, complaining, "All these tight-fitting togas, the make-up too, what good are they out here?"

"You must need something desperately from him..."

"I'm always putting in the wrong things when I'm hurried," she worried, ignoring Evad.

"Can't expect a guy whose mother accuses his father of forcing himself on her, to be much stable — now can you?" he continued.

"I've packed a wardrobe that I might as well toss overboard."

"Perhaps not," Evad interjected, his eyes growing large with an idea. "You're a lovely single lady all by herself on this long journey ... And I'm a rather handsome and single Etruscan. Maybe the two of us could rub shoulders and see if a moonlight comes out?"

Dolius coughed, choking at the idea which had never crossed her mind once. She was repelled, not attracted, by the creepy prince. Evad's spiked hair gave her the chills. The nose on the end of his face made her want to punch it. The squeaky-high-pitched voice he spoke in made her want to regurgitate, and the eccentric furs he wore begged her to strangle him.

Sitting next to her and moving closer, Evad purused, "I'm next in line to replace the king. Now, shouldn't you be a little more accepting?"

Once he really did believe that he was next in line for the throne — until he found out Poseidontel had promised other

Etruscans the same thing. Even though he knew that he was on the king's unfavorable side right now, he thought he could continue to lie about his relationship with the royals, as though Dolius hadn't paid attention to any of the conversations he and Aedon had. He lifted Dolius' hand and was about to kiss it when she quickly withdrew and came back with a slap across his face. She hit hard and his cheek turned almost as red as his hair.

She stood up to march out of the cabin, turned back right before she left, and told him what she thought, "The only thing you and I have in common, is that we are both riding on this balloon. And I'm going to assure you that your steerage aboard ends at the next stop."

Later, the *crystal-capacitor* (engine) stopped and the balloon floated so quietly that it woke up everyone. Aedon and Dolius returned to the cabin joining Evad and Banjo who were looking down at the forest below.

"I didn't realize I had napped so long — into the evening hours," Aedon apologized. "The moon ought to be showing itself soon. Banjo, can you see if there's a clearing ahead where we might dock for the night?"

They flew in circles, surveying the area for a suitable place to rest. Eventually they de-elevated into a clearing at the forest's edge and disembarked. Tall cypress trees greeted them, leading down a path into the woods. Wind rustled through the trees as powdery snow slithered ahead of their fur boots. A glimpse of a jumping creature moving from tree to tree caught their attention, but each time they looked the beast disappeared. After a dozen or so glimpses, Aedon was certain that a long-haired man or ape was following. He stopped, straining for another glimpse, but the creature hurriedly escaped.

"Something follows us. — Did you hear it?" Dolius asked, surveying the area by twitching in different directions. Aedon shook his head before catching back up to her.

CREAK! BEND! SWOOSH! CRUNCH! RUFFLE!

F R O S T E D D E S E R T

Aedon dove out of the way where a tree fell to the ground and opened up a door into the forest. It revealed a logging crew which included hundreds of animals. Six elephants, three on each side, wrapped their trunks around the tree, lifted it up and carried it away. A group of beavers bounced over to the next cypress to repeat their gnawing process.

Aedon moved in closer, while motioning for the others to keep hidden behind the nearby trees. They watched the animals work.

“GROAAARI”

The forest trembled at the roar of a mighty lion. The animals immediately stopped, looking up to engage their entire interest. The lion pounced on Aedon. After a tumble and roar, the beast stood up tightly holding Aedon against the ground with a paw on his chest.

PAPYRUS SIX

LIONS, ELEPHANTS, AND ENKIDU TOO

The lion leaped to another rock which was higher above the work area. The beast poised himself in a commanding stance and his hairs stood up, appearing like a mohawk instead of a mane, “Stop slaving away my little ones. You are free. All animals are free from man’s rule in this great Agglomeration.”

“We work of our own choosing here, Kitty Cat” Roddarc, the brave beaver answered, before returning to his tree cutting as if the feline were a simple nuisance without a bite.

“Kitty Cat? ... I am Humbaba the Great Lion, and I did not request for you to stop, I ordered it,” Humbaba roared, so loud, the beavers shook in fear, some of them even hid. The elephants dropped the tree they were carrying.

“Not again?” Gobi the elephant complained, sitting back on his hind legs with a sigh of anxiety. “Another disruption. The timber delivery will be delayed. The masters will be disappointed.

LIONS, ELEPHANTS, AND ENKIDU TOO

The house will never finish. I'll probably catch another cold, get arthritis in my trunk, and then they'll trade me off to some elder-animals home until my demise."

Interrupting, a wide-eyed, half-man-half-animal being, with hair covering his entire body, jumped into the clearing. He leaped from side to side claiming the territory.

"Enkidu? I should have known you were behind this prison camp," the lion growled, leaping off the rock to face the man. "You have betrayed your family. When you were a baby, the animals nursed you and cared for you. They raised you — your entire life. Now look at you, you've become like the other men — ruining our forests and enslaving us to serve you."

"These animals are well paid. They are not slaves," Enkidu stated, stepping toward the lion with an authoritative pose.

"Paid? Who in these parts would have such riches?"

"We all work for an entity supplied by a king."

"Which king?"

"King Yaswhen, of course," Enkidu snapped with a matter-of-fact tone.

"Yaswhen?" Humbaba scoffed, "He died centuries ago. The only king here is me — the king of the beasts. You are a traitor and I sentence you to elimination."

Humbaba leaped forward attacking Enkidu with a frightful roar. The two tumbled and wrestled. Humbaba slashed a paw at Enkidu, pulling on his long hair. With a scream, Enkidu grabbed the lion's spiky mane and tugged at that. Another roll and tumble and Humbaba whisked a scratch across Enkidu's face. Enkidu struggled free and ducked behind a tree for cover.

Aedon remembered the long *rope-tie* belt that Areshia had given to him long ago; he was still wearing it. He removed it and made a lasso.

The lion ROARED again.

Aedon threw the rope, it attached to the lion's tail. Humbaba leaped up to pounce on Enkidu, the rope tightened and the beast fell flat on his face, but not without first dragging Aedon

across the ground a few podes. The nearby tree which the beavers were working on earlier gave way — with slow suddenness it came crashing down on top of the lion. Humbaba exhaled his last breath with a fading roar. He was out.

With astonishment the hunchbacked Enkidu approached Aedon to express his gratitude, “What brings a plushy dressed human to the Agglomeration?”

“A mission — and a search,” Aedon answered.

“You have lost something then? ... It wasn’t I who took it this time,” Enkidu grumbled, recalling a previous encounter with Aedon and hoping not to be accused again.

“I have lost many things, but I hope to find one or two of them — humans that is, this time.”

“Few live in these barren lands?” Enkidu reasoned, scratching his head again. “Who are the creatures you seek to find?”

“One is a girl named Areshia,” Aedon responded, walking over to the motionless lion where Gobi maneuvered to move the tree-trunk off of him.

“I know of her. She comes and goes.”

“Is she here?”

“Hard to say, she seems to be hiding something ... always sneaking around. I don’t trust her. She plays favorites — that good-for-little *phant* over there belongs to her,” Enkidu said, trying to comb his long hair back into place with his fingers.

“Gobi? I’ve known him since...” Aedon paused, certain that it wouldn’t be a good idea to tell about his previous adventures with Areshia and Gobi.

“Your Areshia — she still yells at me — sometimes...”

Being that he was raised by animals he had that instinct where you can tell if someone doesn’t trust you — and once you suspect — you don’t trust them either.

“Gilgamoeh, an older man ... have you heard of him?” Aedon asked, trying to unravel his belt from the fallen lion.

LIONS, ELEPHANTS, AND ENKIDU TOO

“Gilgamoeh?” Enkidu said, delightfully laughing, then changed his tone. “He’s in these parts — yes. He is one of my *bestest* friends. Because of Gilgamoeh I have given up my beastly ways to become civilized. A path of enlightenment he led me unto. But you can’t see him. No one can see him — ever.”

“I am his son. He will see me. Where —”

“And I am the mad-man of the forest,” Enkidu announced. His eyes grew larger than a dinosaur egg and he waved his arms above his head in a crazy anger, “No one can see Gilgamoeh.”

“Why the astrolabe not?”

“He is high up in the glacier mountain — in the safe zone — the place where strangers are not allowed — without an invitation.”

A low grumble turned their attention toward an OPICOR, which was a series of ropes that transported things up the side of the icy mount.

“Back to work now! We mustn’t cause more trouble today,” Hanno the Gorilla reminded.

The crew of animals returned to their job of taking down trees and sending them up the steep slope.

“Gilgamoeh — is up there, way up the glacier mount?” Aedon wondered, walking over to the OPICOR and inspecting one of the T-bars where one might sit for such a journey. Thoughts rushed through his head back to a time when he and Areshia climbed another mountain. Ideas of sneaking a ride began to pop in his head, even though he was sure it wasn’t the best thing to do.

“Takes days to make it half way up there,” Enkidu interrupted, guessing what Aedon was pondering.

“How big of an abode does he need? Your army of loggers could build a palace the size of the Irem with all this timber,” Aedon exclaimed, examining the OPICOR’s control lever.

Hanno the gorilla raised his hand. “Where do you think you’re going? Go home little merman. This is our land.”

“This is my home, my land too.”

“HO-HO-HO,” the ape chuckled.

A thin man wearing a toga which looked like a caveman's dress covered in grease, heard the commotion and stepped forward from one of a dozen tents, "Aedon, you're back here again? ... I see you've brought a band of spies with you this time."

Enkidu, Hanno, Gobi and the other animals all jumped back a step with Yapet's accusation. Noticed for the first time, were Dolius, Evad, Meca, Ceca, and Banjo peeking from the heavy brush protruding from nearby trees.

The greasy man, called Yapet, continued, "This is no man's land — ruled only by the giant Og. He has leased us this land and we answer to no one. Your friends from Atlantis might wish to take you back home there — because no one here is going to pave a golden street of welcome."

Yapet was the oldest of Gilgamoeh's three triplets — by a whole minute — and was always taking charge of situations, whether he belonged or not. Aedon didn't recognize him at first because he had a little bit of facial hair; not much, but men in those ages began to grow enough of a cover as they neared ninety-five sun-cycles or about one tenth of their lifespan.

Aedon reattached the belt-tie to his toga, pulled his fur coat back on properly, and snapped back at the man whom he believed to be his half-brother, "Certainly you recognize Etruscan Evad? ... Dolius and Banjo are my traveling companions."

"*Apa'hei,*" Yapet politely responded, still annoyed. "Why do you pursue a man who wants nothing to do with you?"

"Because he's my fa—"

"You're not one of us — you don't have the same *Code of Ethics* or goals that we have. You are so — stupid," Yapet scoffed, walking away.

"Wait my brother, before you disappear into your hiding hole again, I'd like to know more about your *Code of Ethics*. Does it include a provision for breaking into the Iron Isolation?" Aedon taunted, stomping after him.

Yapet and his brother Seskef had both been caught breaking into the Iron Isolation a few sun-cycles earlier. It was a big deal

and everyone in the land knew about it. Prince Lord Lemech, who ruled at the time, pardoned him, but the blight remained. Yapet turned back, “There was no absolute evidence — we were merely on the grounds at the wrong time.”

Evad excitedly stepped into the conversation, “That was about the same time your hypocritical father was banished. ... You mirror your father’s faults well.”

Somehow Dolius knew more than she had revealed to the others and she began to put pieces of a puzzle together in her head. “The chamber you were breaking into —”

“Allegedly breaking into —” Yapet snapped.

“It required a *globeaky* to gain entrance,” she explained. “Apparently you had knowledge of this key.”

“Key? What key?” Yapet denied, turning back around and motioning a unicorn over his way.

“As I recall, you were caught with a fake *genetikos-relicas*,” Evad screeched. “You and your brother were plotting to trade out Aedon’s real genetic results, the one which proved Gilgamoeh is his real father.”

Brushing a few lingering twigs off her toga and straightening her fez, Dolius accused, “You would have never attempted such a trade without access to the vault ... and that means that ...”

“You would have had a key,” Aedon finished the sentence. Quickly he remembered how Areshia and Yapet were a couple back then and also how Areshia’s father was the key keeper to the secrets in the Iron Isolation.

“That key belonged to Areshia’s father. I think that you knew she had it, and you stole it!” Aedon charged, certain that he was right this time. “However you obtained that key, you weren’t as careful at returning it as you were at taking it — because, well, everyone knows Areshia’s father has gone missing and so has that key.”

“I’ve never stolen anything,” Yapet snarled, jumping up onto his unicorn that had recently trotted over to help him escape the mounting accusations.

“You snuck into the Iron Isolation in an attempt to foil the true results of my *genetikos-replica*,” Aedon madly yelled, referring to the DNA test that proved Gilgamoeh was his father. He yanked Yapet off the unicorn, “How else were you going to get into that vault? What *cozying-up* to Areshia and her father did you do — to get the key you needed?”

“You’ll never know — will you? I don’t have to tell you a thing about it,” Yapet yelled back, pushing Aedon to the ground.

“I need that *globeaky*. Where is it?” Dolius demanded, stomping about.

Getting back up, Aedon was confused by Dolius statement and wondered why she needed the key. Caught up in the moment, he assumed she was making something up to help him out and so he played along. “You heard her, where is the *globeaky*? ... Even more importantly, where is Areshia?”

Yapet sneered and flung Aedon back to the ground, “We’re engaged to be married again, in case you have forgotten. ... You stay away from her. I should’ve known it was you — who was looking for her, following her everywhere ...”

“Cowardly clownfish!” Areshia huffed, appearing from the doorway of a cabin that was concealed behind the pine trees until now. “Of all the conniving plots, you two have more broken *finger-locks* than Sayer himself.”

“Areshia —”

“What brings you here searching for my *globeaky*,” Areshia asked Aedon, and then turned to Yapet, “And what were you doing with it before? The *boths* of you best get in here and start some explaining — before I load an arrow — two arrows — in my bow.”

Gobi the elephant came up behind the two men and helped prod them toward the cabin by flopping his trunk to direct them.

PAPYRUS SEVEN

ARESHIA'S GLOBEAKY

Blink! His blue eyes shook off a shiver from the cold, discovering an enormous cabin camouflaged by a circle of pine trees. This was the first time Aedon took notice of it since his arrival. Its construction of split-logs bound with ropes told him this was a temporary staging place. Inside, a mess hall stretched half-a-stadia lined with wooden tables and benches.

“A hard night to find a warm place ... yet one hides in the forest ... looking on as we freeze,” Aedon grumbled while Yapet, Dolius, Evad and Banjo crowded toward one of the hearths that were at each end of the room.

A rooster outside began to crow to alert the animals outside that their work day had ended.

“As the Nile River rises, so do the questions which surround you — and the companions you keep,” Areshia whispered to Aedon.

She was momentarily cut off when a stampede of animals rushed through the door and quickly filled the benches. Banging noises from an adjacent room clued that the kitchen was nearby. *Kangawaiters* bounced in from the adjacent room with bowls and serving trays which the hungry workers grabbed from their paws.

“Before you sit and break bread ...” Areshia scolded, leading Aedon to the fireplace and away from the commotion, “I hope to hear an explanation that will satisfy my ears. What are you all here for — really here for?”

As they all looked at each other, hesitating to speak, Aedon broke the silence, “My father — Gilgamoeh — I have returned to journey to his land.”

“Whatever for?” Yapet scoffed.

“To offer my assistance and to settle in his land.”

“Still, I marvel at your interest in my *globeaky*?” Areshia tried to confirm.

“He’s not searching for some lost trinket,” Yapet interrupted, “he’s on the run — from the reaches of Poseidontel.”

“The only *globeaky* I would seek in these lands ... is the one that would unlock your heart,” Aedon gently mumbled, stepping closer and tapping his chest with his fingers. “Areshia, you know me. ... You do know me! ... I have come seeking you, not some key.”

“What you seek has already been spoken for, Aedon. We’re engaged to be married,” Yapet adamantly snapped.

“Everything — I’ve experienced — discovered — about love, I’ve learned from you,” Aedon cried softly to Areshia while Dolius exhaled a cold breath of frustration.

“Adventures that were once — are now in the past,” she pleaded, bowing her head while clearing her bangs which were shorter than before as they had been trimmed so they wouldn’t

interfere with the gig she was working on. “The memories you may keep. Be grateful for them.”

“Then you wish for me to — thank you also — for my broken heart?” Aedon sobbed, without any tears.

“Yet you bring another woman,” she scorned, abruptly turning and addressing the situation so they all could hear, “and an Etruscan who can’t be trusted. For what reasons would you include these in your party?”

“Hey,” Evad shouted, “I helped save Aedon, guided him in the way — and provided warm furs for protection. I am not the enemy.”

“It was I who hid Aedon from the warriors and led him through the forest to the balloon we traveled in,” huffed Dolius, removing her tight red cap so her blond hair could freely flow. “And yes, I came along because, I will confess, I have an attraction toward him. Perhaps tomorrow — or the day after — I’ll be his companion.”

“There are more qualified companions,” Evad interrupted.

“Could happen,” she pouted. “Maybe — someday — once he gets over her drab colored toga.”

“She’s not apt to seeing colors well,” Yapet mentioned, referring to her colorblindness.

Banjo jumped into the conversation, “We come together, yet alone, and without master — I miss master.”

“There are no Irem Guards or Warriors that follow,” Dolius assured, “if that is what you are concerned about.”

“Oh, trust me, you are not alone. Their *dark enchantments* cannot reach up here. ... But surely they’ve sent someone to follow,” Yapet insisted, pacing back and forth with worry. “They have spies and owls everywhere.”

“Now I see where she gets her paranoid behavior,” snapped Dolius sarcastically, stomping over to a nearby table, taking a seat, and beginning to eat the spread of food. “I wouldn’t worry about the owls — they waver in loyalty to the king.”

“My life has changed … grown. The girl of past — she’s moved on. I cannot go with you Aedon. I am committed to the people here — and to Yapet,” Areshia confessed, motioning to the others to join in at the feast spread across the table.

“Why not tell us where your father is, or at least his key. That way we might seek to protect you from those who really wish to do you harm,” Dolius huffed with a cold glance, breaking bread and stuffing it in her mouth.

“Of all the stories — as if you are different than those who have chased it before you,” Areshia moaned, setting down the piece of bread she was about to eat. The mention of the key brought back images of her father who had disappeared, causing her to lose her appetite. “I have no idea where the *globeaky* you seek has gone. I could count the stars more easily than the number of times I’ve told of this before.”

Aedon noticed Seskef, Yapet’s brother, a couple tables over motioning to them. Guilt was painted across their faces and when Seskef couldn’t stop fidgeting, Aedon recognized this. Pointing to Yapet he accused, “I bet he knows where your *globeaky* is!”

Aedon meant to say “*your father’s key is…*” but it came out as “*your globeaky*.” Suddenly, Yapet began to think that Aedon might know something of his past involvement with the key. Long ago Areshia’s father had hidden it on her sandal. It was one of the two *globeakys* which were an ornament atop her footwear. Her father meant to place it there only for a short while — so Yapet could borrow it and return it the next day. In fact, Yapet had managed to snatch it during their last assignment at the *educatory* a decade earlier. However, he was never able to return it. After it went missing, so did Areshia’s father. Fidgeting, Yapet was certain that Aedon knew about this, even though he really didn’t.

“What exactly happened to the key?” Areshia asked, glimmering a tone of interest in Yapet’s direction. “Speak up Yapet. … Tell me what you know — if you want to remain engaged.”

Meca the unicorn whinnied, trying to distract them from the subject matter.

"Uh — it's safe — over at the logging cabin — right where you left it," Yapet divulged, squirming nervously as he moved behind Areshia, began massaging her shoulders, hoping she wouldn't ask any further questions.

"Do you care to explain how I left *it* in some place when *it* was never in my possession?" she snapped, confused.

Aedon eagerly turned back to throw more accusations at Yapet, "He stole it, no doubt. I told you he couldn't be trusted."

"In which cabin did you take leave of it?" Dolius asked, gleaming at the troubles that were developing and the fact that information about this secret was beginning to unfold.

Evad also eagerly listened closely, with a finger of calculation stuck to his jaw. He was unsure if joy warmed her face because the argument might turn Aedon's fancy toward her or if she were interested in the same key that he was.

"All along, you have had knowledge of my *globeaky* and you've taken it into hiding?" Areshia accused, stomping a sandal at Yapet.

"Not exactly," he cringed.

"Then you hold onto it now — or have you stowed it at the lodge you built last sun-cycle?" Areshia asked, confused, still not believing that Yapet really knew anything about the amulet.

"Uh — try way before that. I think it's at the first cabin we put up," Yapet was guessing.

"Certainly not the tiny one where we all spent the night, a decade ago, on our journey to the Forbidden Garden?" Aedon tried to confirm, while scooting closer to Areshia as if they were magnetically on the same side.

"Might be that one —" Yapet said, cringing.

Banjo squirmed placing a hand over his eyes and then emotionally darted out of the cabin.

"Thrice we have been engaged to marry and yet you've kept this a secret from me — all this time," Areshia yelled, upset,

realizing there was more to Aedon's accusations than the quills on a porcupine. She pulled away with a jerk, "No dessert for you boys tonight. We are going to get my *globeaky* — and we are going now!"

"But night has already fallen," Aedon reminded.

"Well, he's not going," Yapet sneered.

"We're *ALL* going — first thing in the morning! Dress warmly boys!" she shouted, picking up a satchel of arrows and a bow which were resting next to the hearth. She always carried the bag with her wherever she went.

At daybreak the three of them saddled up on the unicorns, Aedon on Meca, Areshia on Ceca, and Yapet on his stallion. They galloped over the snow dusted hills, pulling furs tightly around their bodies.

"My father was the Key-keeper," Areshia yelled out to Yapet, clinging to the unicorn who raced like a charging mammoth. "Can you shed some light onto why so many people knew that I had this key — and even more importantly — how you came to possess it?"

"During your last week at the *educatory*," Yapet explained, straining his voice over the trotting unicorn's hoofs, "I learned that your father's secret hiding place for the key was on top of your right sandal. In laboratory, I purposely dropped something, and while under the table next to it, I removed it from your shoe and replaced it with a fake."

"But why would you take it?" she begged. "What would you need from one of the vaults in the Iron Isolation?"

After a long trot down the path, Aedon began to figure some of it out. Hanging on the reins tightly, as the unicorns occasionally slipped on the icy ground, he shouted, "My *genetikos-replica* was in there. You were going to cheat me out of my inheritance!"

"Was not!"

"Areshia, did your father know Yapet before? ... Of course he did — you two were engaged."

"Are engaged — we're still engaged, Aedon."

"They used your shoe, Areshia, as a courier to deliver the key."

"Non-sense," Yapet huffed, moving on with the story. "With such scrutinizing eyes on me after the incident, I had no way of sneaking the key back. I had to take it with me, out of Atlantis when we left."

"If you had the key, no one else could've gotten into the Iron Isolation and tampered with the *genetikos-replica*. You know what that means?" Aedon boasted, hoping that Yapet would finally accept him as a brother.

"It certainly doesn't mean my father is yours. I really don't mean to crush your illusion, but Gilgamoeh is no more related to you than this unicorn."

Aedon shook his head.

Yapet went on explaining to Areshia, "When you came to the *Tebah* to travel with us, I tried to put it back — but you quickly left, and demanded your shoe back before I could make the exchange. Then later, you came to the cabin and visited, while you were asleep, I exchanged the shoe ornaments again. I thought I had put it back."

"Then why was my father and *others* unable to access his vault?" Areshia demanded.

"I think somewhere things got mixed up. Perhaps when I took the first globe, your legs were crossed — you're always doing that — crossing your legs. What I thought was the right sandal, was actually the left. So, I mistakenly grabbed its twin; then, when I went to put back what I thought was the real one, I actually returned the fake and grabbed the actual key."

"How do you know all this?" Aedon shouted

"I don't," Yapet confessed, "It's just a guess. It's the only thing I can figure out since both ornaments on Areshia's shoes turned out to be fakes. I guess the only way to find out, is for someone to try the key — and see if it works."

"If this journey turns out to be a wild chase just to distract my wrath —" she started.

Steering the unicorn over a couple fallen logs, the animals' trot slowed to a step as they galloped through an area of tree-trunk stubs that stretched for many stadia. They came over a small hill and Yapet stretched to find the cabin. A plume of black smoke twisted from the wind in the far distance. Fire leaped from the spaces between its logs.

"Come on, we'd better hurry," Yapet shouted with worry, pulling on the reins and steering about.

"With the cabin ablaze? ... We'll never get it now," Areshia sulked, clinging tighter with a shiver of horror.

They picked up pace and as they grew closer, the remaining logs of the frame greeted them with burning embers; then they collapsed to the ground.

Yapet jumped off his unicorn and stomped around the area, stopping at a puddle of brown muck, yelling, "Who did this? ... Who would've had reason to set my cabin ablaze?"

"You speculate it was on purpose, how do you know this?" Areshia asked.

"Burnt *orichalcum* oil, it was deliberately set," he announced with certainty, scooping up some of the muck in his hand as it oozed its way through his fingers to the ground again.

"Who else would've known to come here?" Aedon questioned, climbing down from his mare.

"Over here! Over here! Help a poor freezing monkey."

Chained to one of the beaver-cut tree stumps was Banjo the squirrel monkey; he had hurt his hand trying to get out of the chains.

"Banjo?" Aedon responded with surprise, before turning upset. "What did you do?"

"I was monkey-napped. They tortured me. Can't you see, I be left here with broken paw, all alone in this cold land of eternal-hibernation," Banjo cried, while dramatically limping up and down in pain.

Areshia felt sorry for the monkey and climbed down from Ceca, grabbed her satchel, and raced over to help the creature.

"How would anyone figure out the *globeaky* was here?" Yapet reasoned. "Unless someone was telling them things we were discussing. I think we have a monkey who is aiding the other side."

"A monkey's wage is a trite low, and there is many a general, like Andromache, with a full treasury," Aedon barked, angrily kicking one of the burning logs so that it rolled near the monkey.

"We can't just leave the poor thing here to die," Areshia protested, bandaging the paw and helping the animal onto Ceca's back. "Who did this to you, Banjo?

"Banjo wants to go home," he cried, "where fortress is dry ... bowls filled with bananas ... and master takes care of us."

On the way back, Aedon, Areshia, and Yapet discussed whether they should pursue the key further. They all knew how important it was to make sure it never reached the wrong person. If Poseidontel were able to unlock the vault and take hold of the *Scroll of Air* he would be able to rule the forces of the universe. Untrained, he would wield those forces for his selfish gain and destroy the world in the process.

Upon arriving at the campground, Meca noticed it first, "Looks like your balloon has gone a *missin'* to *somewhere else*."

"It's not here? This can't be. What happened to it?" Aedon yelped, hopping off the unicorn and pacing in a frenzy. "Why didn't someone stop her?"

Yapet's identical triplet-brother stumbled from the canvas tent, straightened up, and began to tell how it all happened, "Your lady ... Dolius ... she left in a huff. Mad about something, stomping her sandals like an earthquake. Then she went on about your bad ... poor manners ... that's your manners, Aedon ... poor they are. ... Said you just left her and forgot about her. ... Was speculating that you probably like men instead of ladies ... and how you haven't said one kind word to her since you all have arrived. ... and how —"

“Enough already, Seskef, I get it,” Aedon butted in. “Where is Evad, what happened to Etruscan Evad?”

Seskef continued his stuttering while gesturing his explanation, “He left too. ... Stole one of our flying horses even though I told him she wasn’t ready to fly — not in these high altitudes. Said he had to follow the balloon ... then he promised ... a *finger-locking* one ... not to take flight on the horse until reaching a lower elevation. ... He galloped away into the forest.”

“How are we going to get my *globeaky* back now?” Areshia whined.

Yapet stepped up and insisted, “We’re going to get it — don’t worry about that. They’re bound to stop at Ablach. It’s the largest city along the way. They’ll need supplies and rest for the night.”

“Do you think we could really catch up to them in time?” she questioned.

“The unicorns can gallop quite fast,” Aedon interjected, “and my delta-transporter is parked a few stadia east of Ablach.”

“If it’s still there,” she groaned with a shrug, “that was three sun-cycles ago.”

After packing a number of supply sacks, they mounted up the unicorns and were ready to depart. Areshia insisted that Banjo ride with her on Ceca, so that meant that Aedon and Yapet would have to share the ride on Meca’s back. She wasn’t happy about the situation either.

Meca neighed out a warning to them, “Either of you two boys act up just once and I’m liable to buck the both of *yous* up into the air and you’ll be lucky if you don’t land with my horn pierced through your bellies.”

Two cloudy days later, Aedon, Areshia, and Yapet were a few stadia outside Ablach where they found Aedon’s delta-transporter half buried beneath a drift of snow. Its name was still painted on the outside.

"*Skyola!*" Aedon cried out, rushing toward her, brushing off the *ice-peas* and opening the hatch.

"Not many deltas in these skies no more — with the shortage of *orichalcum*," Yapet reminded with a damper, climbing off Meca. "Might be conspicuous to travel in one."

Aedon didn't care, he was glad to have the old vehicle back. He rummaged around inside making sure she was still in good shape. He noticed a *looking-scope* on the floor and picked it up by its yellow cord.

"I had forgotten about this — old Yenocha's *looking-scope*. I found it in the rubble when I returned to the *educatory* a few sun-cycles back," Aedon detailed, storing the thing in a compartment.

Meca trotted up to the delta and snorted at its front window, "Looks *kinda* small, it is. How are you *supposen* we're all *gonna* fit in?"

"A two-seater Aedon? Don't be plotting any ideas now," Yapet snarled, thinking this would give his rival time to move in on Areshia again.

"We'll check you and Ceca in at the stables in Ablach," Aedon told Meca, trying to console that she wouldn't be forgotten.

"We'll continue the journey ourselves, on foot," said Ceca.

"Certainly not *goin'*back to no stables," Meca added.

Areshia interrupted, stepping up and placing a hand on each of their shoulders, "So boys, the continent is mightily large and my key fairly tiny. How do you plan to find it?"

"It must be on its way to the Irem, I am certain," Aedon exclaimed, quickly pinching his chin with worry.

"If I were a key..." Yapet mumbled, as if a riddle would solve the dilemma.

"Look, blimp!" Banjo shouted, pointing a paw.

Down in the valley where a village of stone buildings rose through the wind tossed *snowpeas* (snowflakes), the top of the balloon peeked over the buildings. They knew that they needed to

get to the village, find certain people, discover some answers, and get Areshia's key back.

Aedon and Areshia climbed into the delta with Banjo. Yapet agreed to travel with Meca and Ceca and meet the others there. Flying low to the ground, Aedon zipped over the snow until he came to an abandoned warehouse a block from the village. He parked the transporter there. The three of them hiked into town, stopping at a giant well known as Rath Na Riogh. This was the rendezvous point they had previously chosen.

Soon, Yapet arrived on Meca and it was evident that Ceca had picked up a new rider that had not departed with them originally. Once they reached the well, everyone recognized the other man by his indulgence in fur apparel — it was Etruscan Evad.

“Stopped at the Garden of Water for the unicorns and look who I found there with one of my flying horses,” Yapet huffed.

“I only borrowed him — for official Etruscan Business,” Evad screeched in defense. “You can have him back now that I’m here and done.”

“In some parts you’d be *hung-out-to-dry* for such a theft,” Yapet scolded.

Evad stiffened up with dignity and snootily replied, “You are now in the Land of Evaemon and I am its Etruscan. I make the laws here and if I say it’s alright to borrow a horse than it is legal to borrow one.”

“Instead of haggling like a peddler in the marketplace, ask him why he needed to leave so quickly,” Areshia demanded, fingering her bag of arrows like she was ready to use one.

Evad quieted down and groveled for an explanation. He thought he better be on the level and tell them some of what he knew. But he wasn’t about to tell them everything that he had seen, only the parts that he thought he might use to his advantage and so he began, “Yesterday, while you were all arguing, in the dining cabin, the squeak of a door-hinge turned my eyes to notice Dolius sneak out.”

"And yet you said nothing to us about this?" Areshia scolded.

"I followed her. She took Banjo and the two of them borrowed a flying horse. They flew to your cabin in the icy hills while you all slept. I stayed back with my horse, in the trees beyond, and watched her take the *globeaky* and then set the cabin ablaze. Next, while you were galloping to the place, she took off in the balloon."

"Why didn't you stop her, Evad?" Aedon asked.

"Dolius is not your friend. She does not have your back. Once she arrived here, she was greeted by General Andromache and gave the key to her. ... I suspect she is a spy. Andromache and her warriors are aboard the balloon with Dolius this very hourglass."

"Our adventure comes to a close here. ... How will I ever get my *globeaky* back?" Areshia cried.

Evad snorted, shriveling his shoulders inward with resistance, "What is so important about that key and why must you have it now?"

"It was my father's key," Areshia started. Yapet motioned for her to be quiet about it all, but since Evad had told how Dolius betrayed them, she hoped he might be trusted and so she continued. "It is one of two keys required to open the vault in the Iron Isolation..."

"Where the *Scroll of Air* resides—" Aedon blurted out, catching himself too late.

"None of us even knew this was that *globeaky* until we put together all the events that had happened with it over the last decade," she added. "Still we are not certain."

"King Poseidontel already has one of the keys, but this one has eluded him for many sun-cycles," Aedon grumbled. "But now he —"

"If Poseidontel opens that vault," Yapet trembled while speaking, "he will be able to rule the universe. The *Scroll* will give him power beyond what any of us can imagine."

“Imagine a world — where his every moody outburst materializes with a vengeance,” Aedon added with a shutter of despair.

“Gloom and Doom: that is always the news you bring. Isn’t it Aedon?” snapped Evad, wishing he hadn’t asked or listened to them. Then he had an idea to help himself to the key. Concealing this, he decided to play along, changing to a conciliatory tone, “This time it does sound serious, perhaps your suspicions have merit.”

“Areshia — we will stop Andromache. We will get your *globeaky* back,” Aedon announced.

“You can count me in on the mission — to help get the key,” Evad eagerly volunteered.

As the others began to make plans, Evad called Banjo the monkey aside for a secret talk. The monkey hesitated until Evad made threatening gestures.

“Mister Monkey,” Evad began, with a hint of accusation. “I know that you are a spy too. You were in cohorts with Dolius, or at least you were, until she turned on you. I saw you go into the cabin, come out with the key, and then give it to her — before the two of you set it ablaze.”

“Haven’t an idea what you speak of,” Banjo crowed, fidgeting with fear.

“If you don’t wish for me to tell the others about you — then you will do exactly as I say.”

“Banjo only help because I trust her. Banjo discover those outside factory wear many masks of pretense. ... Now, I see — no choice but partner with you.”

“We will go along with the others and help them find their prize,” Evad suggested, unveiling his plan. “But once they have the key, we will take it for ourselves.”

“You promise Banjo go home ... and gets abode in tree — one with lanterns — for his own?” he asked, extending his paw for a *finger-paw-locking* promise.

“Surrounded with a banana tree orchard, if you like,” Evad grumbled. “Once we have the *Scroll of Air* — you and I, we will rule the world. Who would you rather have as king: Poseidontel, Aedon, or me?”

An evil grin wiped across Banjo’s face and he extended a paw like he was making a *finger-locking promise* with Evad, except that it was still bandaged. Then the squirrel-monkey jumped up and down with eager excitement and the two of them began to squeak with laughter — until the others glanced their way.

“Calm down,” Evad scolded, slapping the monkey’s leg. “We mustn’t call attention to ourselves.”

“Look they’ve already left,” Areshia cried out, pointing to where the balloon once sat.

“While we were all chattering about a plan, they escaped right before our eyes,” huffed Yapet.

“This is a bad omen,” Aedon scoffed, kicking his sandal at the well.

“Shouldn’t we be in pursuit of them, instead of sitting here counting fallen stars,” Evad suggested. “I’ll get my transporter and you can follow me.”

PAPYRUS EIGHT

BALLOON CHASE

VAZOOM! Two delta-transporters quickly made their way from Ablach to a low flying position just above the Athabasca River. Areshia and Banjo crammed into Aedon's flying vehicle, *Skyola*. Closely they followed Evad. Inside Aedon's transporter, Evad's image faded up on a *transglaust* (holographic) device. His head bobbed around as he detailed what he knew.

"My trajectory meter indicates they're directly on course for the Irem. ... In a few hourglasses — they'll pass over Tundraville where my fur factories are located."

"What can we do to interrupt their journey?" asked Areshia.

"To stop a balloon as big as Andromache's — nothing" Aedon scoffed, doubtful.

"We better go around, ahead of it, and set down in the fields," Evad insisted, wanting to make sure things happened on his

turf — that way he would have an advantage and be more in control of the situation.

They all debated about how they might stop the balloon, but no one could come up with a good plan. Finally, Banjo interrupted, certain that he could help stall the balloon and maybe even get the key himself.

“Put Banjo close to blimp. ... Inside I jump ... then tie a hook to end of landing cable ... throw it out to catch on something. Then you have your balloon.”

“What do you think we ate for breakfast — seaweed? That will never work,” Aedon grumbled because the detailed idea seemed too simple.

“Banjo do once before, back at the factory — when one blimp got loose,” he bragged.

Areshia spoke up, “Evad is there anything near your factories that could catch the hook?”

“It’s so random,” Evad snapped. “They could easily be two stadia this way or three that. Nothing could be set for certain”

“They’ll fly right over the fields of mayapple plants — before we can rig anything,” Aedon pointed out.

“It’s harvest season and the fields are strung with rows and rows of twine — for bundling the plants into *vundles*,” said Evad, referring to what the voles called a bound-up bunch of mayapple roots.

“Would a dangling hook snag one of those lines?” Aedon asked, hopeful.

“If his hook doesn’t grab it, I’ll shoot the balloon down with my arrows,” Areshia eagerly demonstrated, ruffling her bag.

Just as a new adventure was ramping up, Aedon began to lose faith in the endeavor. Terrible doubts crisscrossed his mind. *Why were they doing this*, he asked himself. The Asterians were long gone, far away, and perhaps all of them dead. King Yaswhen certainly would have come back by now if he really were going to return. All that remained of the Asterians were his memories and their enchanted writings which made little sense in the world he

had been thrown into. What difference would it make, he pondered, if Poseidontel did get the key and unlock the *Scroll of Air*? So what? Besides, the last thing the Asterian Ahteana had told him was that getting the *Scroll of Air* was a task she would not ask of him. So why go on this adventure? Just as he was about to say some of this to Areshia, she interrupted.

“You are really awesome, you know,” she complimented, settling her feet into a comfortable position next to her bag of arrows below the seat.

“Me?” Aedon was surprised. “You think so?”

“Completely,” she admired, sitting taller. She really did not fully believe they should be pursuing the key either, but she was not going to be the first to let on about such.

“*Seaweed*,” he exclaimed with a blush.

Then she admonished him with words that may have been etched in her subconscious by others like Yapet, “Not hardly a man these days would stick so adamantly to his beliefs and not be swayed by the material trappings laid out across the continent. ... But you, Aedon, are a man as unwavering as the *Tuaoi Stone*.”

Aedon brightly responded like it was the old days, “We’re a team. We’ve been on too many adventures together, already.”

With a sigh he sunk back in his seat, steering the delta toward Tundraville, following Evad. Certainly he couldn’t reveal his deepest doubts to Areshia now. Because of her encouragement, he told himself that this was reason enough to continue. He liked adventures and he liked Areshia.

The mayapple plants were in full bloom as the end of the seventh month approached. Evad proudly showed off the plants along with his tundra voles who faithfully tied them into *vundles* (vole made bundles) and transported them to the fur factory nearby. Mogwa was the lead vole and instead of a high-pitched squeak, his tone was low — and much slower. He didn’t like strangers and always spoke with an air of sarcasm when visitors came.

BALLOON CHASE

“We’re going to need another barge of twine to string up the number of rows you’re proposing,” the creature complained, motioning other voles to drop the large spindles they were carrying into place.

Evad explained how Banjo was going to board the ship and lower the docking cables with a hook tied to their ends. Then, one or more of the ropes would snag the twine and bring the balloon to a halt — at least that was the plan.

Most of the voles were happy to lend a paw in helping out. Together they worked expressing themselves in song with their trademarked vee sounds.

However, one of voles with a dirty-brown coat, not nearly as pretty as his white furred co-workers grumbled about the extra task. Many sun-cycles ago he used to work by the carroting vats where the poisonous residue exited from the factory. He was always complaining and acting as if his health were in danger. It quite possibly may have been, but due to his over-dramatic exaggerations no one gave much credit to his complaints. One day he came into a settlement of money and bought his way out of the factory so he could work in the fresh air of the fields

Soon the balloon could be seen peeking above the trees in the far horizon and Banjo jumped up and down calling out to the others as he spotted it through a *looking-scope* (small telescope). It was time. The plan was a simple one: they would divert the attention of the ship’s occupants, Banjo would sneak aboard and lower the landing cables, the gear would get caught on the twine in the fields and stop the vehicle, and last, they would board the ship and take back their key. All had agreed on this — though some of the parties had their own ideas and variations about how it would all transpire.

Banjo summoned his monkey friends (the ones Aedon and Dolius set free earlier). They dressed up in Dragonfly Suits (special coats that allow beings to fly for quick durations and short distances). When Evad gave the order they bolted up into the sky and flew in circles around the ship. Evad zipped up into the air on

a *trivelator* (a triangle-shaped platform which ascends into the air to transport a person). Once in front of the balloon he held up a large *looking-glass* and pretended to inspect the vehicle.

"This is the sovereign Etruscan of Evaemon," Evad screeched through a trumpet. "We demand an inspection of your cargo before allowing passage over our land."

A warrior leaned out the cabin window and yelled back, "Move out of the way. King Poseidontel has eliminated all the Etruscans and we travel under his orders. Move or be destroyed."

Other warriors positioned flame throwers which they panned back and forth as the monkeys continued to circle. One of the trigger-happy-throwers spewed out a stream of sparks and a monkey lit up on fire and fell from the sky like a flaming marshmallow. With a cry the other monkeys retreated and so did Evad. The confrontation diverted everyone's attention while Banjo flew under the basket, cut a hole into the cabin floor, and climbed inside. — He was on board.

Banjo snuck up the small hallway that led toward the Captain's Quarters. On either side of him were the docking cables. From a satchel he was carrying, he pulled out one of the special hooks he was going to tie to the end of the rope. Just as he was about to start his duty, he noticed the door to the Captain's Quarters was half open. At first, he was afraid that General Andromache might be in there and capture him. When he investigated further, he saw it was vacated — then he noticed a basket of bananas beckoning him closer. He hopped into the room and started to eat the fruit.

Down below in the valley, the voles were ready to capture the lowered cables and reel in the ship — except that none of the cables had been lowered. The shadow of the balloon covered them as it sailed right over the valley of mayapple plants and its twine traps. Disappointment dropped open the jaws of Aedon, Areshia and Evad. Their chance to snag the ship and get the *globeaky* back, swept past them so close, that they could almost jump up and grab it — but it was beyond reach and its expected cable was not found.

BALLOON CHASE

Up in the blimp, as Banjo finished his snack, he realized he might be running late. Biting on a paw-nail, his worry turned to joy when he saw the *globeaky* sitting right there on the table next to the bananas. Quickly, he grabbed it and put it in his pocket. But a warrior entered the cabin, catching him in the act. There was a scuffle, but Banjo got away.

The monkey who had helped build the vehicles for decades knew everything about how they worked. Quickly he leaped into the hall, climbed up into the main chamber and opened its door. Inside the belly of the large balloon he could see the five cells — pouches filled with gasses which caused the ship to float. One by one he pounced on each cell, taking the hook and slitting it open. Hissing, gas quickly escaped. At the tear of each pouch the ship sharply turned in another direction and jolted lower toward the ground. With a final fizz the vehicle crashed into the tree tops just beyond the mayapple fields.

While the balloon plowed toward the ground, Banjo gave a push to the warriors he passed causing them to eject out of the windows. They yelped, flailing their arms and legs until they landed in the trees below with a painful bounce through breaking branches.

The monkey concealed the key in his satchel as Aedon, Areshia, and the voles came running toward the scene. He thought he would wait until everyone had searched the area and then later, he would reveal to Evad that he had the key and make him pay dearly for it. Closing the satchel up, satisfied he smiled, smug with his latest ploy.

Evad sent the other voles into the woods where they surrounded the ship. It was badly damaged as it sat lodged in the treetops. Some of the warriors lowered ladders made from ropes and began to climb down. Others retreated back up into the blimp once they spotted the angry voles charging toward them.

Aedon grabbed Evad's speaking trumpet and took charge, yelling, "Drop your weapons and descend from the balloon in an orderly fashion before we torch the vehicle."

“Wait!” Areshia cried, yanking the speaking trumpet away from Aedon’s mouth. “It mustn’t be set ablaze until I’ve gotten my *globeaky* back.”

The warriors didn’t listen anyway because arrows and spears began to fly from the cabin area. They had no intention of surrendering. Aedon and Areshia took cover behind a thick tree. Areshia loaded arrows into her bow and shot back, sometimes three at once. Aedon grabbed a couple of arrows too and threw them like a javelin thrower, except his didn’t go very far.

“Seriously?” mocked Areshia superficially. “Leave the rest of the arsenal for an accomplished archer.”

The voles came equipped with straws attached to the belts around their waist. They loaded darts into the pipes and blew them at the balloon. While the scrimmage was taking place, Evad quickly moved through the trees to the other side of the balloon. He saw Banjo in one of the windows and shouted to him a number of times, but Banjo’s attention was drawn away by the exchange of arrows. When their eyes met, Banjo took cue, leaped from the window to a tree branch, then another, and finally down to where he stood. Once Evad discovered Banjo had the key, he sent a small brigade of voles forward who shot flaming darts into the vehicle which turned the balloon into a fireball.

“Not yet!” Areshia pleaded, throwing her bow to the ground in frustration. “My key — my *globeaky* is still in there!”

As the remaining fuel cells in the balloon exploded, Evad and Banjo slithered away. Aedon and Areshia would have wondered why they were being so sneaky and slithering away, except that flying arrows, escaping warriors, and the explosions above, had them in a confused daze already. Evad and Banjo didn’t get far because an enormous multitude of warriors appeared from the trees and valley beyond. They were surrounded.

The channel of warriors parted as General Andromache marched forward tapping her commander’s stick to the palm of her hand, like she usually did when she was sure of a success and had captured her enemy.

BALLOON CHASE

“First I would like to thank one of Evad’s loyal voles who detailed your plan to me. I disembarked shortly before your feeble attempt to steal the *globeaky* which belongs to King Poseidontel.”

“How can we *steal* something that is already mine?” Areshia snapped.

“The key was never yours,” Andromache scolded. “It was entrusted to your father for safekeeping. When he failed to turn it over to the king, he became a traitor just like all of you. Now, I will be able to present the king with the most concerning birthday gift he has ever received — the *globeaky*, along with all of you.”

Areshia sighed as she remembered that no one — not even Andromache could get it now because it was lost in the balloon’s fire. Aedon grimaced with worry. Banjo began to jump with jitters and was afraid he would be in even more trouble when they discovered the key in his satchel. Evad motioned for him to be quiet and not let on about it.

“My stupid little monkey, if you still think that you hold a valid key in your paws, then you are a true fool,” Andromache snarled, yanking the satchel away from the trembling monkey and stomping on it. “Of course, I took the real key with me. I hope you enjoyed the bananas I placed near the fake one, because they were —”

With a thud, the monkey fell to the ground, completing her sentence with the unspoken word: *poisoned*.

Some of the voles screamed and ran away. A couple other voles dragged Banjo into a small grave and ceremonially covered his fury body with dirt and an untold number of tearful *vees*.

Warriors gathered the other prisoners together and loaded them into cages on the backs of mammoths. A couple days later, a horizontal line of steam cutting through the dark sky led their eyes to three gigantic smoke stacks. The chimneys grew in size and height as the mammoths came to a stop in front of the Iron Isolation. Giant gates began to moan as iron grids with pointed spears drew up toward the sky on a pulley. Rows of warriors stood at attention lining a path that led into the eastward building. Their

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unemotional faces made Aedon feel uneasy as he remembered visiting this place once long ago but under better circumstances. The parade of beasts took them inside. CLANG! The gates closed — they were imprisoned.

PAPYRUS NINE

SECRET CHAMBER OF AIR

This was the moment Aedon, Areshia, and Evad each had dreamt of seeing, except they were not there; they were locked up in holding cells at the Iron Isolation. Instead, General Andromache led the way carrying a small box which held Areshia's *globeaky*. King Poseidontel along with Ambassador Rheaf Telopps followed her down the zigzagging hallways of the ancient place. It was a building out of place and out of age, but it had been kept in operation with minimal maintenance for two reasons: its water turbines provided energy, and its vaults contained secret artifacts.

“Can we hasten with the ignition of these ancient lanterns?”
Poseidontel snapped.

“Their *orichalcum* oil is aged,” Andromache complained.

“My hourglass has arrived — for today I will achieve my ultimate aspiration,” the king boasted, motioning for the General to

hurry ahead with her lighting duties. “The *Scroll of Air* is so close now, that I can feel it breathe.”

The number of oil lamps dotting the walls of the corridor thinned as more of the modern illumination-bulbs appeared with a buzzing sound even though they had been cut to half power due to the energy crisis. The stone blocks were beginning to show their edges as the grout and masonry which once overlaid them was starting to crumble. Andromache continued to march according to military protocol even though no one else was around to impress.

Excited, Poseidontel pushed ahead of the others, “Best you follow me from here out. ... I know the way — having visited once before.”

He led them to a *trivelator* which hovered up and down inside one of the chimneys of the Iron Isolation. The smoke stacks were towers in disguise, containing many chambers and secret passageways that all interconnected or led an unsuspecting intruder into danger. Two-thirds of the way up, Poseidontel jumped off onto one of the landings. The others followed him across the platform where he opened a hidden door. Next, they climbed down hundreds of stairs, took another *trivelator*, and boarded a waterbus that bobbed past dozens of locked doors.

Once they came to the correct corridor, Poseidontel yelled, “This one — this is it!”

Andromache almost lost her balance, and the key, when she leaped off the waterbus. Everyone breathed a sigh of relief once she regained her stance.

“Open the ceiling door — up there,” Poseidontel shouted, pointing with his trident.

Andromache eagerly rushed forward to inspect the panel where a small niche could be seen, but not before scowling at Telopps who seemed to be doing nothing. She pried the panel above open, and a ladder unfolded with it. The three of them climbed up to the next floor and found themselves in a long circular hall that curved inward. With walls made from ivory, it was extremely bright and the gray marble floor reflected their

images back. Above, sheets of light glowed like miniature suns. Along the outer walls of the curve were locked doors guarding access to each unit. Four footprints were outlined on the floor in front of each vault. Two round keyholes ready to accept a *globeaky*, were centered halfway up the wall, one on each side of the doors.

Andromache marveled at the place, squinting, and thinking that it was too bright. As they continued further in, more wall space spread between the vaults and fewer doors appeared. Finally, Poseidontel stopped in front of a blank surface of stone.

"Is something wrong with this span? ... Have we taken a wrong turn?" Andromache questioned.

"Indeed you see only an empty space in front of you because you lack vision," Poseidontel scolded.

"Which is why you are the Royal One and I am the Loyal One," she humbly fawned.

"Give the key to Ambassador Telopps," said the king, calmly.

"But I am concerned ... I have watched over this priceless piece as if it were my own —" begrudgingly, she plucked the *globeaky* from the box, scrunching her face with disapproval at the same time.

Telopps snatched it from her grip before placing one foot on each of the right set of marks outlined on the floor. Poseidontel did the same on the other set of imprints. This seemed odd to Andromache since all the other footprints were in front of a vault door and these ones faced a blank wall. Fuming with jealousy she cocked her head back and forth searching for a third foot outline (which didn't exist) to stand on.

Telopps sharply snorted to her, "If you want to see tomorrow, I'd step way back. ... At least three doors down."

She hesitated, but did as instructed. Poseidontel took his trident and inserted the globe at the end of its middle prong into the keyhole in front of him. Telopps held up Areshia's *globeaky* and pushed it into the other hole. At first nothing happened and Andromache began to chuckle. Hesitantly, a door they had not seen

before faded up and showed itself. It magically appeared. Next, the rings on the *globeakys* began to spin around slowly, then faster, then so fast that sparks flew out from the keyholes. Suddenly the two globes stopped with a click. They had verified the mechanical algorithm.

There was a rumble and the floor beneath their feet began to breathe. Suddenly an entire section of the floor dropped and fell into the depths of a pit that opened up — further than either one could see. However, the outlined feet remained steady, hovering like a *trivelator* in front of the door. Poseidontel and Telopps swayed a little while managing to keep their balance on the floating footprints. The edge of the floor that fell came close to Andromache and she jumped back further, then stepped onto the marks in front of the next vault, thinking it might save her, even though that didn't matter.

A grinding gear opened the vault, lifting a door up and revealing the chamber which had been made to conceal the *Scroll of Air*. A blast of wind exhaled from the vault for a brief moment and almost knocked Poseidontel and Telopps off of their floating pedestals. Once it calmed, they stepped into the small area.

The room was empty except for a single black onyx tube that floated in midair in the center of its space. It resembled the two other scroll holders — those that held the *Scroll of Water* and the *Scroll of Fire*. Each was slightly different: the holder for the first *Scroll* contained a thin blue line near the top opening of its tube, carved into the second one was a red band, and this tube sported a yellow ring near its edge.

When Poseidontel looked inside, his face doubled back with shock before turning red with rage. He couldn't see anything inside the tube.

"It's empty," Telopps exclaimed with an angry huff.

"Is my ambassador lacking in vision too!" the king snickered, as excitement crossed his head with so much electricity that his hair almost stood up. "I believe that the *Scroll of Air* is — invisible — without the *enchantment* to unlock it."

“Ahhh...” Telopps sighed, as relief replaced his worry, and delight overtook his countenance.

“Invisible?” Andromache mouthed with a grumble of disbelief, sarcastically shouting toward them, “What process do you intend to use to verify that you have your prize and not just plain ole air?”

“There is a poem which unlocks each *Rataka*,” Poseidontel reminded, placing a finger to his chin as he recalled it. “A third of the *Rataka* you became, will you reveal to us your name? ... Except that I must say it in Asterian.”

Then he faced the scroll and commanded:

*“Ah khenkeng ahuc khut tulueyun ahytoroo unot yomruno.
Eveluedwend unot sloyneun ketz arn runodoo fumo.”*

Nothing happened.

“It appears that it requires a key,” said Telopps, pointing to the *globeaky* symbol with an arrow pointing to the holder’s open end.

“Indeed, it does,” Poseidontel confirmed looking through a flute-shaped *katkocila* which is a device that allows one to see invisible things located in a parallel dimension.

“Try inserting one of the keys into the end,” Telopps suggested.

The diameter of the tube was the same size as the keyholes that opened the vault. First, Poseidontel attempted to unlock it with his *globeaky* as he yelled the chant once again. When that didn’t work they tried Telopps key — again no luck.

“This is a fake! Someone has stolen my *Rataka*,” Poseidontel screamed when another peek into the *katkocila* revealed the tube was empty. “Someone has stolen my *Scroll*.”

“Impossible,” said Telopps with concern. “The two *globeakys* have been separated for over a decade. — How could’ve anyone accessed the vault?”

“Certainly they could have,” General Andromache called out from the edge of the floor she remained near. “If it is not there — then someone must have taken it a decade ago.”

“Prince Lord Lemech originally owned the king’s *globeaky* — he wore it as a ring shortly before his death,” Telopps reminded them.

“Lemech always thought it was too heavy for his finger,” Poseidontel explained, examining the *globeaky* at the end of his trident which had once been that ring. “At night he usually took it off and set it by his bed.”

“Anyone could have borrowed it in the night while he lay sleeping,” Andromache harped.

Poseidontel knew this, because at least once, he snuck the ring away while Lemech slept — this was how he was able to explore the Iron Isolation and knew so much about it.

“Regarding Areshia’s key, it too has crossed many hands,” Andromache snarled with contempt. “Originally it belonged to her father. ... Yapet kept it for a while and maybe there were others too. I suspect that Areshia knows more than she is telling.”

“We’ll need to know the exact time when the two keys possibly could’ve been together. How else are we going to begin to guess who might already have the *Scroll*?” muttered Telopps.

“The Asterians did this!” Poseidontel screamed, stomping his sandal so hard, that a piece of the marble floor next to the edge chipped off and fell into the deep crevice outside. “They took my *Scroll* and hid it.”

Telopps continued to examine the tube that was supposed to contain the *Scroll* but was just a decoy. He thought he had seen this cylinder before but only a feeling of the recollection collected in his mind; he couldn’t remember all the details.

“Something tells me that Aedon is connected to this,” he said. “I don’t know how, nor can I recall all the details from ten sun-cycles ago, but I am certain that I’ve seen him with this holder or something similar, before. Prince Aedon has something to do with this *Scroll* — I am most certain of it.”

“Search your deepest memory,” Poseidontel snapped, annoyed. “For it seems — though by coincidence, I’m sure — that Aedon was nearby when the first two revealed themselves. I wouldn’t put it past Ahteana to enchant some poem of concealment over them which rolls away when our prince is close by.”

“Perhaps there was some cosmic connection between Aedon and the *Scrolls* that we are overlooking,” Telopps agreed.

“Aedon and Areshia cannot be left to roam the continent free,” Andromache groaned. “That is a preposterous idea — and unquestionably dangerous.”

“But they could lead us to the *Scroll*,” Telopps adamantly stated with a serious whisper.

“There are many protections around the *Scrolls*,” Poseidontel thought out loud. “They have a way of hiding themselves from some of us. Aedon has been like a — charm. Each time I discovered one of these, the *Asterian enchantments* did not make them invisible while he was near.”

King Poseidontel returned to his sleeping chambers. The room was dark except for the light which came from the glow of a number of crystal skulls displayed on shelves along one of the stone walls. These skulls were dead-crystallized Asterians and the light that glowed within was their entombed spirits. Each one glowed with a different hue of light, perhaps indicative of their personality or mood at the time of their demise. Poseidontel had perfected a process that could turn the living into a crystal and trap their soul within.

“My most prized skull — once the powerful leader of the Asterians,” Poseidontel grinned with accomplished malice, staring into the eyes of Zualpha who rested center of the others.

Further in sat a mirror encased in a frame made of lava rock. The hairline fracture stretching from the top of its glass had deepened, dividing the mirror into two distinct pieces. When Poseidontel stepped in front of it, two separate images of his being

appeared. The one on the right half was his true reflection while the other on the left, was a dark thick shadow. Like sheets of smoke cut with sharp triangular edges twisting around each other, the evil being called Say and Teller (who possessed the king's body) bled from the glass.

“Come here Faeraud,” the mirror whispered, calling him by the name he was known by when he was only a prince.

Stepping up to the glass his face drew long with wrinkled cheeks hidden by the graying hair. Dark black and red circles dug toward his eye sockets. The two images in the mirror began to argue; this had become a daily ritual.

“The *Scroll of Air* still eludes us,” Faeraud snarled, as if the foiled plan were Sayer’s fault.

“We will find it. ... It is close to the time — Can you not feel it as I do?” the left side of the mirror answered back.

“What makes you so sure? Every plot you’ve hatched for snatching it, so far, has failed,” the right side of the mirror pointed out.

“When I made you king — ahead of many others in line — did I fail then?”

“I used to be frightened of this mirror — kept it covered when I was a child,” he mumbled. “Then I uncovered it and you granted my every wish whilst tricking me into becoming a vessel for your spirit. Only here, before this glass does a remnant of myself remain.”

Even when he looked at his real self in the right half of the mirror, he didn’t like the reflection he saw.

“Images of the past do not emulate from here,” Sayer shouted. “Snap back to reality and look at what I have given you. Consider those whom we have captured. Right now as you waste time arguing and questioning me, the very people who are connected to this *Scroll* sit in the Restorium.”

Faeraud sighed, “Telopps thinks Aedon has something to do with the empty holder and Andromache is certain Areshia knows more.”

“And both of them think that we are the *Uprooter*.”

“How is that even possible? Those who think that I am an *Uprooter* are forgetting that the prophecy states that he will not come from the line of Princes and I am Prince Lord Lemech’s son,” he objected, though he had heard this tale before and even bragged to some about being such a person — simply to spite them.

“They say lies to get you down my prince, because they are jealous. ... Though perhaps you may not be a true-blood prince,” the Sayer half of the mirror began to reveal.

“You’re not going to do this,” Faeraud snapped. “You’ve already stolen my soul, I’m not going to let you heap more lies onto my persona.”

“It is time for you to recognize and be proud of who you are — who we are. You, me, us — we are the *Uprooter*!”

“Impossible! I will see to the immediate execution of whoever spreads these lies.”

“Does the prophecy not say the *Uprooter* will take over the world — and indeed we have. But remember, I wrote the *Scrolls* and their prophecies, not King Yaswhen. The prophecy was just a description of what was going to happen. In which papyrus does it ever say the *Uprooter* is a bad person? It doesn’t. The *Uprooter* is just clearing away the old and making room for the new. The *Uprooter*, as I described him, was a good person. It was King Yaswhen and the Asterians who ascribed undesirable traits on us because they wanted to keep power for themselves. ... You are not a bad person are you? Of course not. We are here to promote fairness. Look how much better off you are — and others too — since you have become king.”

“I don’t pretend to be good or bad. Who decides such anyway? I am a balanced person. — Isn’t that what matters — balance?”

Sayer continued, “The sad part to this story is that awhile ago the Asterians had nearly every person in Atlantis believing their version of history — attributing evil to the *Uprooter*.”

“But wait,” Faeraud spoke up, he had one more question. “How can the prophecy be true? How can I be the *Uprooter* when Lemech is my father and the writings say the *Uprooter* will not come from his bloodline?”

“Lemech is not your father,” the mirror responded after a long silence.

Ambassador Telopps stepped into the room and Faeraud turned around and snapped at him, “What do you know about this cursed mirror? Was it not you who gave me this troubled piece of glass when I was only a child?”

Telopps took a deep breath and then revealed the truth, “Lemech is not your father — I am. ... I am your father.”

Poseidontel dropped his scepter to the floor. He did not expect such shocking news.

Telopps continued to explain, “Almost a century ago, there was a woman — her name — Cleacious. I was drunk one night and made a promise to this mirror. In keeping my end of the bargain, I pretended to be Prince Gilgamoeh by dressing in his toga. Then I visited her chambers and we had interactions. Later, she conceived a son, one that I secretly dedicated to Say and Teller.

“Cleacious is Aedon’s mother. So you are Aedon’s father — not mine,” Faeraud huffed, confused.

“Aedon is not her son, you are. At about the same time, Adah, Lemech’s wife had a child. Both Cleacious’ and Adah’s sons were born within days of each other and they were watched over in the same nursery. One night, there was fire. I ran into the place, rescued the two babies, and switched their arm bands. You were both only weeks old.”

“You switched the bands so that I would be raised with the royals and people would think that I was Lemech’s son?” Poseidontel muttered, figuring it out.

“So that few would question your right to the throne... The fact is: Aedon is really Lemech’s son. Gilgamoeh is not Aedon’s father, he is Aedon’s brother.”

"That is how Aedon passed the genetic test — because he was indeed from the same bloodline," the mirror added.

"Everyone was just looking at the relationship wrong."

"Then I have no royal blood in my veins?" Poseidontel cried, boiling from his stomach to his sinuses.

"Without me you would simply be a worthless, illegitimate, child," Sayer mocked. "Worthless, worthless, worthless. ... But you can thank me, for I have been the loving creator who arranged all of this. It was I who watched over you through the mirror all those years. It was I who made you king and gave you everything your heart desired."

"You did it all for yourself. You were a spirit who needed a body and you knew that you could rule the universe once we were merged together," Poseidontel shouted back.

"Then you wish for me to take back all that I have given you?" Sayer burst into a rage, "Now stop fighting me and get on board with our plan!"

"Guess we really did outsmart all of them," Poseidontel bragged, not minding the fact that he really wasn't royalty, as a matter of fact, it made him think that he was superior. He didn't care that Telopps was really his father — he never liked his other father (Lemech) anyway.

"I'm no *Uprooter*, though. ... I am not the *Uprooter*," he adamantly claimed. He was a little shaken by the fact that it appeared that he might be so. No matter how many lies Sayer spun about the *Uprooter* being a good person, all the lessons he had learned when he was younger had instilled a deep kernel, buried so deep, that no one could pluck it out. That seed kept telling him the *Uprooter* was not a good person. Certainly, he was not this being he told himself. But everyone else knew otherwise.

Remembering how close he used to be with Aedon, Faeraud once again turned a liking favor toward his friend. Sayer did not stand in the way this time because they both realized that without Aedon they may never find the *Scroll of Air*. They knew they would need to gain his friendship and trust, because of his connection to

the *Scroll*. Even if Aedon wasn't tied to the enchanted object itself, most certainly Areshia was, and she would never trust them. Aedon might be their only hope of infiltrating the camp in Bashan.

"We will forge Aedon into cooperating with us," the two halves of the mirror said, almost in unison as Faeraud and Say and Teller merged their spirits back together into the one body, becoming the powerful King Poseidontel again. This time they were in agreement — they would issue a full Pardon for Aedon and work endlessly to gain his trust.

PAPYRUS TEN

THE RESTORIUM

Sleepily he woke to the pleasant aroma of *egg-yokers* and hot coco-juice, his favorite *first-meal* food and beverage. Aedon discovered plush cushions surrounding him in a room bathed in blue and gray pastels. How he had gotten there — he couldn't remember. Sitting up with a startle, he noticed another young man waking up a couple podes away. The man stretched with a yawn before stopping to gather his wits about him. Running his fingers through his medium-length brown hair, Aedon jumped up, puzzled and disoriented about how he had arrived there.

“Ganyped, *Apa’hei* I am called Ganyped,” the boy said, straightening up taller. “I suspect we’re roommates for this stint.”

“Where I am, I’m not exactly sure,” Aedon responded. “What is this place?”

Through an opened door the two of them noticed a *kangawaite* arranging placements around the table before tinkling a small bell as if to say mealtime had come. She turned and

informed them, “Both you have been — issued pardons by King Poseidontel.”

“We have?” Aedon was surprised.

“Why, that you get, don’t a-ask-a me. Me thinks the twos of you might *outta* be *hung-out-to-dry*. But never a mind my opinion. ... This wing of the Irminsul Pentagon is called the Expunction Restorium. Here you will stay *fur* thirty ... sixty ... ninety ... maybe *more* days ... until we *thinks* you *cana* re-acclimate.”

“We’re in the Restorium?” Aedon shouted with surprise and confusion, remembering how his mother had once been admitted there for five sun-cycles. Still in a fog, he asked, “Where is Areshia ... and Evad?”

“All in a good time,” the *kanga* scorned. “Now *eata* your *first-meal* unless you a *wanta* go hungry all morning.”

The *kangawaiter* bounced out of the room and the two guys rushed to the table like starving chimpanzees since they had not eaten in a couple of days. With half a *yoker* hanging out of his mouth, Ganyped tried to make friends, “What’s *ya* story — What crime saw to your incarceration?”

About to sip a cup of coco-juice, Aedon’s hand stopped short of his mouth while he tried to gather up a response, “I — I — I suspect it might have something to do with my involvement in disrupting a balloon’s flight and causing it to crash and burn — though I was not the one who set it on fire. ... I’m not really sure.”

“Not sure!” Ganyped huffed, choking on his sandwich since that was quite a list of offenses. “Wow, you must really be favored by the king ... for him to let you off on all of that.”

“Seaweed — Now that I say it like that — I gather you’re right,” he gasped, beginning to realize how serious his trespasses were. “What is the reasoning for your visit here?”

“Nothing spectacular at all. ... Though, I did pretend to see a vision in the *Tuaoi Stone*.”

With a chuckle Aedon exclaimed, “You lied then. Everyone knows you can’t see anything in that stone except your own

reflection. — Even when the moons are in correct alignment, only the Asterians can see such.”

“Why not give me another reason to despise those Asterians,” he chuckled, gulping the remainder of his sandwich down and grabbing another.

“Nice to meet you Ganyped. … Aedon here.”

“So you are Prince Aedon?” Ganyped hissed with fright. “I’ve heard about you. Think I’ll be keeping my distance right over here. … And don’t you go trying out any of your *enchantments* on me.”

“I haven’t any skills of sorcery – if that is what you mean?”

“You’re one of those Asterian Sympathizers — everyone has heard the story about how you helped them escape the surrounds of a thousand warriors?”

“Doubt there was more than a hundred,” Aedon modestly added.

“Certainly you did not accomplish this without *magic tricks* — forbidden ones — I tell ya,” Ganyped responded with caution which quickly turned to curiosity. “I bet you even have one or two of *her* spell scrolls on you … or memorized — maybe even *her* whole library. Tell me —”

“Calm down paranoid one,” Aedon scoffed. “The Asterians don’t have spell scrolls. Mostly they recite poems from the *Rataka Scrolls* written by King Yaswhen.”

“Yaswhen? Certainly you don’t speak of that guy who vanished like seven hundred sun-cycles ago?” Ganyped questioned, beginning to wonder if Aedon may have been sent there for a mental disorder.

“And what if he *retur* —” Aedon stopped, realizing that no one believed in the miracles of Yaswhen anymore.

“Regardless of your past misjudgments, I think we can get along just fine — so long as you stay on that half of the room.”

As the weeks wore on, Ganyped and Aedon couldn’t help but to trust each other a little more each day, especially being confined in the small area where they lived. After the first week,

they were allowed to congregate in the social parlor which connected them to three other rooms, giving Aedon six additional friends. Five of them were new faces and the sixth was Prince Evad, who had also been pardoned.

Aedon wanted to know about Areshia, her whereabouts, and what had happened. Her situation remained a mystery to everyone. Whenever he inquired, the *kangawaiter* insisted that as long as he was asking unimportant questions that everyone's stay at the *Restorium* would be drawn out longer.

One night a few months later when Aedon had forgotten about Areshia, or at least had stopped asking questions about her, a most peculiar night began to unfold. The eight *Restorium-mates* gulped down their Fifthday (called Friday in other places) *final-meal* which usually consisted of baked potatoes stuffed with grapes in a cream sauce and a cucumber-tomato-salad with boiled egg-whites. Aedon moved on to his favorite desert — coco pudding with strawberries. Each delicacy was whipped up into a pallet like a painter might use. The main section of the desert filled the base of the plate, and strawberries were placed into indentions around the pudding.

The topic of conversation turned into each person fantasizing about what they were going to do once they were released from the *Restorium*. When they turned to Aedon, he just smiled and thought for a long time about what he might plan. He wanted to include Areshia in his fantasy, because he still had feelings for her, but he knew the mention of her name would only assure that everyone would be kept there at least another week.

“Travel,” finally, he stated, snatching his desert and picking up a strawberry. “I’m *gonna* travel to somewhere — somewhere far away from here — and take lots of these strawberries with me.”

Echoing everyone else’s chuckling, Ganyped asked, “Where? ... The tropics ... or maybe the South Sahadan Islands?”

“He’s *gonna* scale the glaciers of Bashan,” Evad screeched, drooling some pudding from the corner of his mouth. “We all

know you, Aedon. You're going to go hunting for your father again."

As they finished their deserts they noticed something sitting on the table. It had been concealed earlier by the serving dishes, but when the *kangawaiters* cleared off the bowls, and the others took their desert pallets, the item oddly stuck out between two floral arrangements. A long tube, onyx in color with a yellow ring around the top, the same holder taken from Iron Isolation weeks earlier, showed itself.

No one made mention about it; however, they were all eyeing it and looking at each other like they were waiting for someone else to speak first. Aedon didn't notice their odd behavior, but he did notice the tube. Walking over to it, he snatched it up and started looking inside. The gang slowly surrounded him. Moving in, each one cautiously stepped closer.

"Good glaciers! Why is everyone staring at me," Aedon exclaimed, feeling uncomfortable as they squeezed in. Of course, they all stepped back after his remark.

"What is that contraption?" Ganyped asked, referring to the object.

"Looks like it holds some kind of papyrus," Evad snorted, as if he had the answer.

"It's a scroll holder alright," Aedon marveled, inspecting the tube from one end to the other. "This one looks quite familiar. I think I've seen it before. ... Though I wonder what one of these would be doing here?"

The first image of remembrance that flashed into Aedon's forehead was the time he and Faeraud were princes attending the *educatory*. They snuck into its Library Tower and discovered the first *Rataka Scroll* — the *Scroll of Water*. It was wrapped up in the same type of black onyx tube, except that it came with a blue-colored ring encircling its end. Next, he remembered another scroll — the *Scroll of Fire*. It too was stored in a black container, but with a red band around its top.

"It can't be. ... It must be a trick," Aedon stuttered, thinking out loud, while feeling inside of it. "It's empty he exclaimed."

All the boys let out a sigh of relief as Aedon set it back down on the table. After a long time of silence and the exchange of many awkward stares, each person, one by one, left to return to his chambers for the night. Aedon and Ganyped wiggled into their sleeping lounges while Aedon made small talk about how good the meal was, especially the coco pudding.

Suddenly Aedon jumped up with a recollection, so quickly that his pillows almost flew across the room, "I remember that tube! I do! ... I've seen it before, even held it once."

Almost as quick as Aedon, Ganyped sat up with intense interest.

"I'm not sure ... no, I am sure ... I'm pretty sure that was it," Aedon muddled on, not making much sense. "But how did it get here?"

Ganyped couldn't take it anymore and screamed, "*Good tangled seamuck!* Will you just tell me what you are pondering?"

Sitting down again, Aedon expounded on the memory of that day, "A decade ago, when my father Gilgamoeh was banished from the continent, I went to the docks to see his boat off. I never actually got to see him, but as I was leaving, someone rushed to the vessel with a delivery."

"Who?" Ganyped asked.

"Ambassador Telopps, I think it was — yes it was him. ... He was carrying a similar tube and I stopped him. We both looked inside the holder and it was empty. But he told me that he had strict orders to deliver the tube to Gilgamoeh anyway."

"Empty?" his roommate huffed in disbelief.

"There were instructions attached to it — a poem of sorts," Aedon recalled. "Something about *making it a pillar in your boat* and then a rhyme ... it went like: *in writing or in ink do not draw, its message read to those who foresaw.*"

Then Ganyped tried to confirm what happened, "So Telopps gave the coded poem and the holder — to Gilgamoeh?"

“Not entirely,” Aedon sighed. “Gilgamoeh was inside the boat, so he handed it to Yapet. It was a dark-onyx-color holder with a yellow band at the top — just like the one out there.”

“Certainly, it couldn’t be the same one?”

Both boys had the same idea and together they rushed back into the social room to inspect the holder again. Aedon grabbed it first and examined it from one end to the other, so closely, that you might have thought his eye was a microscope.

“Why, I think this is it.” Then he stepped back with a sudden reaction, “No — it isn’t. It’s not the same tube, they just look similar.”

“How do you know?”

Aedon pointed to the yellow band, “The tube I held a decade ago — had a different yellow band. It wasn’t yellow, but rather golden. And though it was a dark-foggy night at the time, its band radiated a golden glow.”

Peeking from another doorway, Evad breathed with joy to hear this description. Once again thoughts and plans about how he might be able to find Gilgamoeh first — and snatch the *Scroll* — popped into his head.

Back in their sleeping chamber, Aedon and Ganyped laid down to rest. Aedon kept thinking about the holder and asking himself why it was in their abode. The more he thought about the other two *Rataka Scrolls*, the more he was convinced that the holder sitting outside his room might have something to do with the *Scroll of Air*. Then he became suspicious that Poseidontel (or someone else there) was testing him to see if he knew anything about the *Scroll*.

Expecting that Ambassador Telopps had remembered the same scenario and arrived at a similar conclusion, he believed that Poseidontel would be told where to find it. — That meant that his father, Gilgamoeh was in danger. Aedon decided that he must show his best behavior, get released from the *Restorium*, and go warn his father before the king arrived.

Fast asleep Aedon fell and soon he had a dream. When he was a youngster he had a pet lamb named Rouvias. The lamb was older, wiser, and kept watch over him. Aedon would follow Rouvias everywhere until he was sent off to the *educatory*. As the dream unfolded, he found himself following Rouvias through a wooded area where they came upon a frozen lake. The lamb started to cross, but Aedon was afraid as its ice looked thin and he was certain they'd fall through. He pulled back and the lamb went on without him. When he turned around he discovered himself near the back entrance to his mother's abode. She lived in an ugly castle made from stone and pewter. On the back porch a friendly boa constrictor greeted him. The snake played a flute and charmed him and the two danced together. Aedon was shivering, so the snake offered to keep him warm by coiling around him and protecting him from the breeze. The snake never harmed him and the two danced together for many nights.

Then one day while the snake was coiled around Aedon, he caught a glimpse of the lamb coming back from across the pond. It was spring time, the ice had melted, yet Rouvias easily walked across the surface of the water. Aedon stood on his tiptoes trying to peek over the top of the coiled snake for a better look. The boa constrictor saw this and got jealous. Instinctively he tightened his coil and broke every bone in Aedon's body. As his limp frame fell to the ground the snake slithered away with a knife-stabbing hiss.

Aedon picked up his limp body and went inside and found his mother. While she was nursing him back to health, outside the window he could still see Rouvias coming and going and looking for him each day. When the lamb turned around and blankly asked, "Are you ready to follow me across the lake?" — Aedon woke up from the dream.

Over at the Irem, King Poseidontel and General Andromache gleamed with their sinister smiles as the room in the *Restorium* was projected by an *omni-transglaust* (holograph) in front of them. They were watching and listening to everything that

was taking place in the *Restorium*. No one knew where the *Scroll* resided — it had been hidden for centuries. Even Telopps did not recognize the fact that once he held it and then gave it away. Now, in one hourglass of time Aedon, Evad, and King Poseidontel had all figured out where it could be located. Aedon was right to fear they might go after his father, Gilgamoeh. It would be a race to see who could claim it first.

Andromache had other ideas, “I never did trust that Ambassador. Did you hear that, he gave the *Scroll* away — to Gilgamoeh. He should be *hung-out-to-dry*.”

“Patience,” Poseidontel snapped. “We’ll get it back.”

“What should we do with Aedon?” she asked, eager to dole out some punishment, “The torture chambers maybe?”

“Holster your sword for the present,” Poseidontel scoffed. “If we follow Aedon — he will lead us to the *Scroll*.”

“This is a job for warriors, not amateurs,” Andromache scowled.

“Your warriors have been searching the glaciers for a decade and weren’t even able to find the cabin with the key,” the king growled. “Who else can lead us to where Gilgamoeh resides?”

“My king, what if Gilgamoeh won’t give audience to his illegitimate son?” Andromache asked, pointing out a very real possibility.

“They’ll trust Areshia. ... One of the two will show us the way.”

“That Aedon is a smart one. He’ll catch on about being followed.”

“Indeed he will and that is why I have one more trick up my toga, before we let him out — loose on the snow.”

“What’s that?”

“A Masquerade Middag,” the king boasted. “Aedon participated in one before. This time I want to make sure that he outwardly vows allegiance to us. Once we get him to pledge an oath to us — it will sear a memory of allegiance into his body that we will be able to use over and over again in the future.”

“Indeed,” she sighed with pleasure.

A messenger stepped into the room, delivering a message.

Poseidontel turned with a nod of acknowledgement and unrolled the scroll. The messenger stumbled, quickly departing, for the king’s countenance was now swarming with the black fog which had once been seen in the mirror. Its sharp angles twisted around his body as he announced, “Misses and Mister Maske have arrived.”

PAPYRUS ELEVEN

THE MASKE'S VISIT

Good morning, boys! ... Over here," the chattering face of a wooden mask called out. Its face had a nose, moving eyes, and a female mouth carved from wood — all lively moving about. A hat of feathers topped off her peak and her husband, a much older, yet still handsome mask, floated beside her.

Scarfing down the remainder of their *first-meal*, the boys jumped up from the table in their lounge and bolted across the room to inspect Misses and Mister Maske who swayed in the space above a pile of gift boxes. Misses Maske's usual vibrant personality rang a cold tone today.

"I already have a mask," Evad boasted, proudly stepping to the front of the group.

"I have one too," Ganyped added, pushing Evad aside with a hint of competition.

"How nice," the Misses replied before swooshing over to where two other boxes sat. "I had to go out of my way and collect

them for you — as you both had long forgotten about where you last left them.”

Evad and Ganyped rushed over to the boxes and found their face coverings. Like most masks, Evad’s was shaped in the form of the letter “M” with the lower vortexes filled in and two eye holes cut out. The mask was overlaid with a reddish-brown fur that matched the color of his hair.

Ganyped’s mask was made from a shiny stone-like covering, painted over with a black marble design. An added chin extension shaped the piece to look more like a kitty cat than the standard “M” shape.

Misses Maske darted back and forth, “So what are the rest of you all waiting for?”

“They’re waiting for their masks,” Mister Maske interjected with a nod.

“Of course they are. You will be receiving new masks,” she agreed, perking up, then lowering her voice with a warning, “If you don’t like your mask —”

Mister Maske cut her off, “Then we will do whatever we can to get you one you do like. After all, the Middag is supposed to be for fun. A time to celebrate your commitment to return into society.”

All the boys, except Aedon, delightfully fitted on their masks. Some were made from wood, others from tin, one out of leather, and another papyrus. The last box sat there waiting for Aedon to claim. He stepped forward, staring at the box as his memory of a previous Masquerade Middag he attended replayed in his head. The last time he saw his mask was when he plucked it from his face and tossed it into the thickets on a lone island. Haunted by it, he prayed that they had not found his old mask. He did not want to be reunited with it.

“Looking for something special?” Misses Maske pointedly asked.

He shook his head while thinking back to the Middag he went to once long ago. All the participants were restricted to

THE MASKE'S VISIT

wearing a black robe and a mask. Ahteana the Asterian had given him the *globeaky* which he promised to never take off — yet, that night he did. He believed the piece encircled some kind of protection around him because whenever he did not wear it, trouble always found him. All these memories made him shiver with concern and tell him inside that he couldn't participate in another Middag. He clutched the jewel, still around his neck, for he had gone to great trouble to get it back.

Misses Maske spotted him holding the *globeaky* and she scrunched up her wooden face into the most awful stare of disapproval. She had helped Aedon fit into his first mask before and she was not entirely pleased about being summoned there to issue him another one. As soon as Mister Maske swished over and bumped her a little, she regained her happy, though put on, face.

“What a lovely necklace,” she wittingly remarked. “Why I think it will match your mask perfectly. You will certainly want to wear both of them together at the Middag.”

Aedon gulped with a surprise, confused by the remark, “But … I thought I’d expect they’ll make me take it off … once we’re there.”

“Nonsense!” Mister Maske snapped.

“This is a fun — rule free — Middag … held at the new Irminsul Pentagon. You’re allowed to wear anything you wish,” the Misses confirmed begrudgingly.

“And you don’t have to wear anything you don’t want to either,” Mister added with a suggestive tone.

“Except for the mask, of course,” Misses emphasized.

Slowly Aedon approached the box and peeked it open. He was expecting a similar situation, like long ago: when the mask jumped out and sucked onto his face. But this time the costume sat quietly in its velvet lined box waiting for him to make the first move. Tilting his head, he examined the face which seemed to be all alone and crying for a friend — he almost felt sorry for the thing. It was simply crafted, made from silver with thin lines of blue glitter tracing its perimeter, eye holes, and nose bridge.

Aedon carefully lifted the piece up, which drew gasps of awe from the others. Holding it in front of his face, he expected it to suddenly clamp on — but the piece was mute, leaving him in complete control. It was gentle and none of the things he feared happened. Instead of forcing its mold over his face, it seemed to quiver a presence of loneliness. Identifying with the loner feel, he was drawn to the mask as if it had cast a spell over him. Closer he drew, wanting to be its friend and take care of it.

The eight mates dressed in black togas, carried their masks as they departed the Restorium and marched across one of the thirteen bridges which led from the adjacent compounds into the tall Irminsul Pentagon. From a distance they looked like gnats crawling on a wire toward the tall pyramid.

Climbing into the sky, twice the height of its predecessor before, its covering was made of rock quarried from a meteor known as the Black Death Stone. The polished-sharp pieces were said to show reflections of demons — but some argued that they mirrored one's own true self. The old beam of light which was wide and orange in color was replaced with a narrow cold-blue spike. The four cathedrals which the previous Irminsul Pyramid used as grand entrances had been reengineered into five triangular crevices burrowing into the ground. Each was a stadia in diameter with bridges leading out to adjoining buildings. Jagged edges speared upward toward the dark clouds from every tower. Stone and steel work wove together to form what looked like thousands of spears with upside-down heart-shaped points. The surrounding buildings and bridges slanted upward toward this ominous tower.

Walking over one of the bridges and through the tall arched doorway, Aedon marveled at its gothic appearance. From an adjacent bridge across the way a woman came running toward him screaming.

“Aedon! ... Aedon! ... Aedon!”

He tried to ignore her, but as she pushed closer in her haughty gray and black dress, it was obvious she was headed for

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him. The necklaces, black onyx earrings, and overdone makeup gave her away. It was Cleacious, his mother.

Surprised, Aedon jumped back, "Mother? Were you not crushed beneath the rocks of the Irminsul Pyramid — when it came crashing down four sun-cycles back?"

At first he thought it must just be someone that resembled her, but as soon as he heard her voice, he was certain as the sun rises that it was his mother.

"Dahrling, Aedon dear, come over here," she loudly pined. "How is a mother to attend one of these Middags without a proper opinion on her toga? Be a dear, and tell me, do I have all the wrinkles out?"

As she turned in circles, Aedon still could not figure how she had arrived, "How did you get here, mother? I thought you were ... gone."

"Nonsense," she chuckled, grabbing his arm and pulling him aside. "Your little friend ... what's his name ... Faeraud ... He picked me up after the accident and I've been in the medical facility for months. Finally, they're releasing me from this dreadful place. So much has happened to me. I can't wait until we get home so I can tell you all about it."

"If the abode is still there," Aedon added, under his breath, still in a daze, before pulling away. "I've got to get back to my group."

"You belong with family, you are coming with your mother," she insisted, yanking him further away from the group. "Now where is the *nectar* bar? ... I know they have more than one here."

As she tugged him forward, Aedon tagged along noticing that her eye was slightly droopy and he figured that it was a bad genetic-reconstruction job after her accident. He was surprised at how normal her lower body appeared after having witnessed it crushed beneath the weight of giant blocks. While her voice sounded the same, there was something about her mannerism that was different. He wasn't sure if it was the way she stood tall, erect

and robotic like, instead of the old slouch she used to exhibit — always leaning on something, or if it were the eyes. They seemed larger than before and shifted back and forth like she was being watched.

Further inward there were yellow columns topped with green arches that paved the way to a staircase leading lower to the Middag. Each step was designed in a triangle and reflected the hue of a red illumination-bulb. The zigzagging steps spiraled down, not in an organized circular fashion, but first curving this way and then the other.

Near a tall pillar Aedon caught a glimpse of Areshia sipping a bubbly-green *nectar*. He could plainly see that it was her, and his heart thumped with excited joy. For months he had asked about her, but heard nothing.

“Areshia!” he called out.

About to bolt off and catch up to her, she turned toward him before he could take the first step. For a moment suspended in time, they stood there staring at each other with blank faces of surprise. Aedon noticed that she was dressed in a green toga and held a green mask decorated in yellow flowers with red buttercups. She clamped it on over her face, turned around, and descended down the stairs toward the Middag.

He blinked twice and inside his head he was screaming to himself, “What the *Sayer* is going on?”

Areshia was the very last person he expected to see at a Middag. In sun-cycles past, she warned him not to attend such an event. She insisted that those who participated were all organizing to uproot the laws of King Yaswhen. Aedon began to wonder why she had succumbed to such. Certainly if she had been persuaded to follow the ways of King Poseidontel, then he must be the most powerful being that ever lived — maybe even more powerful than King Yaswhen.

His shoulders limped forward with a cry of discouragement. It was clear that everyone, from his most distant friend to his closest relation, was going to pledge their allegiance and loyalty to

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the king at this Middag. Originally he told himself that he would play along, like it was a game, just so he could get released from the Restorium, but now it looked like everyone was joining forces with Poseidontel.

Again he was torn between following the heaviness of his heart that yearned to find his father and following his friends who were now all in the king's camp. His hope that Gilgamoeh might come back to rule and save Atlantis dimmed like a fading illumination-bulb. His belief that the Asterians would return was dashed as common sense told him they were all dead. He reasoned to himself that because the king had given him a pardon, the only logical thing for him to do now, was to mature into the new order of things. There was no more reason to try and resist.

Disturbing his thoughts while almost spilling a *nectar* on him, Cleacious grabbed his arm and yanked him toward the arch, "Dahrling, we don't want to be tardy, now do we?"

She snapped on her costume, a black veil hanging from the brim of a pointed hat, Aedon put on his silver and blue disguise, and like the others who seemed to parade in a trance, they marched down the stairs stepping deeper toward the core of the planet.

Near the halfway point, there was a ledge overlooking a deep crevice cut into the Earth's mantle. When Aedon peered over the edge he could see rock twisting in the flicker of red firelight. Across the plateau beverages were being served and Cleacious dashed off for another *nectar*.

"An Emerald Zinger for the thirsty prince?" a *kangawaiter* asked, waving a green-bubbling brew with some exotic creature swimming in its liquid.

The yellowish-brown mist frothing from its top reminded Aedon of the unpleasant experience he had at the last Middag. The strong drinks there had made him dizzy and caused him to see weird visions.

He pushed the punch aside and told himself that he mustn't drink anything. He tried to remind himself that he was just there to

observe — but the image of Areshia putting on that mask, kept replaying in his mind.

Many of the masks were beyond creative. One of them was made from purple-bamboo rods, sported eye sockets with *looking-scopes* protruding, and ear pieces in the shape of an hourglass. The man wearing it lifted it off for a moment so he could partake of the Emerald Zinger. Underneath its cover Aedon recognized him to be the *instructioneer* who once taught at the *educatory*, Yenocha. The old man was now using a cane to walk, and perhaps the weird eye piece and ear shapes were added to aid with his sight and hearing. Nonetheless, Aedon was shocked that Yenocha would be participating in the event too.

Quickly he realized that he was not the only one to succumb to the request to participate in this gathering. His mother, Yenocha, and Areshia had all decided to join. They must have deduced that the prophecy about King Yaswhen returning was a fable and that the long lost monarchy — must be dead by now. This confusion produced a strain of morbid regret in the fibers of his soul.

He thought back to the time when Ahteana the Asterian had given him the *globeaky* that he still wore around his neck. On that day he vowed that he would follow and uphold the teachings of King Yaswhen. He even renewed this promise later in his life and told himself he would not waver. Many times he had felt different and alone, but never had he felt as lonely as now. He became frightened that perhaps he was the only person on the entire planet that still thought that Yaswhen might come back — and even though he believed this, he had been having doubts. He wondered if his father still believed — or if he too had evaluated the mighty power of Poseidontel.

As he resumed his descent into the canyon, terrible and frightening doubts stabbed at his heart with each step downward he took. In light of all that had recently happened, he questioned his judgment: what if he was wrong? A voice behind his ear nagged at him and told him he was stupid for believing such tales.

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It presented the obvious facts that the Asterians and King Yaswhen were long-gone, never coming back, and that they were all dead.

His heavy heart of loneliness turned into trepidation and then every mechanism of defense his mind could exert, kicked at him and sternly scolded, insisting that he had best participate and fully join in at the Middag — or else he would be a fool. He feared that if he blew it this time, he really would be left behind and all alone forever. This was his last chance to belong.

He turned back and glanced up the stairs where Cleacious was a bit behind. He waited for her to catch up and once she did, he snatched the *nectar* from her hand and gulped it down in a single swallow. The face behind her veil slowly turned from a quick response of shock into one of pleasant device.

Into the depths of the Earth, Aedon marched until he came to a bridge cut from the rock of the Earth's mantle. It paved the way, five stadia long, through a giant underground metropolis carved into the side walls of the cavern. Eyes in its caves, building, and towers seemed to light up, randomly blink, and follow Aedon with a glare. Every step he took was being watched.

PAPYRUS TWELVE

MIDDAG AT THE IRMINSL PENTAGON

Bridges elevated at different levels crisscrossed beneath him. With swimming pools, fountains, spinning carousels and colored illumination bulbs, the area appeared more like an amusement park than a city of commerce. One bridge penetrated the center of two parallel Ferris Wheels. Other bridges led to floating floors which held eateries, dance floors, *nectar* bars, striptease acts, and gambling games. The metropolis was carved so deep into the earth that you could barely see the base where it ended, and that floor was not solid but a river flowing with lava. Its reddish-orange glow cast a dim light over the city. Floating about the area were paper lanterns encasing a small flame. Hundreds of additional oil lamps lined the overpasses. All of the passageways led to the center of the canyon where a pentagon shaped butte stretched up from the depths of the pit.

Suddenly a wind blew through the area and extinguished all the lamps. A dark cloud covered the river of lava and everything turned pitch black. Moments later the fog lifted and all the wicks magically relit themselves. A shiver ran up and down Aedon's spine. The same phenomena happened at the last Middag he attended. That previous time, when the lights came back on, all the animals and beings had turned into creepy, wild beasts.

He looked around and he noticed that nothing was different this time. He breathed a sigh of relief as the party continued at an energetic pace. Everyone was there to have fun, it seemed, and he decided to table his fears and try to enjoy the moment.

Smiling from a balcony tower which overlooked the ceremony, King Poseidontel ceremonially waved his trident ready to start the proceedings, but General Andromache grabbed his scepter to stop him. Poseidontel grunted.

"Wait, the spell hasn't taken," she informed him. "The beasts didn't change, the transformations haven't occurred."

"Take your paws off my trident," the king commanded.

She quickly withdrew, "I was only concerned."

"This isn't a real Middag, my foolish General. Is the moon full? ... Do wolves howl and graves shake? ... This is a staged event just to convince Aedon and a few others to finally pledge their allegiance."

"Excellent plan, my king."

"Once ... I took Aedon to a real Middag — certain that he would join forces with us — because he had given me a *finger-locking promise*. ... You know what happened?"

Andromache and Ambassador Telopps who was standing beside her, shook their heads as they eagerly waited for the conclusion of his story.

"He spit out the wine he was given, gagged on the prime venison he was served, was reluctant to wear the proper toga, and then — he got scared."

"Scared!?!?" they all laughed in a mocking tone.

Poseidontel explained, “This time we have created a Middag like you might put on for a first-year *educatory-mate* — just the baby stuff. No requirements to partake of dizzying drinks, dazzling foods, or *forbidden enchantments*.”

“So much effort, for one or two persons,” Andromache huffed. “Why not just eliminate the troublemakers.”

“Because, have you forgotten — according to Aedon’s own words, Gilgamoeh has the *Scroll of Air* and I want it — I need that papyrus.”

“We all need it before these Asterian asteroids obliterate us,” Telopps grunted. “The *Scroll’s enchantments* must not rule the heavens — but rather we must rule them.”

“And every stone in it will obey our command once we have it,” the king snapped.

Unbeknown to Poseidontel, another man was peering from around the corner of a rock crevice and listening. He wore a mysterious mask made of onyx with sharp-angular cuts. Its eye holes were a dark void and its large body was wrapped in a gray robe. The man carried a tepa pipe and its aroma caught Poseidontel’s attention. Its odor seemed familiar, but when he turned around the figure stepped back into the shadows.

“With care the mission can be accomplished most professionally — militarily,” Andromache begged, burning to be in charge of the mission.

“Your spies have found nothing to-date,” Telopps scoffed.

“There are over ten-million square stadia of ice down there,” she defended.

“Aedon still believes that *Gilggy* is his father,” Poseidontel reminded them. “His mother is here tonight.”

“Am I supposed to clap?” Andromache grumbled.

“If she hasn’t already, soon his mother will embarrass him enough that he will long for his father again.”

“I see ... once he sets off to travel, he will lead us there.”

“Where *Gilggy* resides, so does the *Scroll of Air*.”

“Indeed it does,” Andromache echoed with half a grin.

Below more people began to arrive, not just streaming in from across the bridges, but now *trivelators* were ascending from the pit with arriving participants. Aedon was beginning to enjoy the festivities; they were light and fun. Guests were friendly. Strangers kept coming up and complimenting him on his mask, his toga, even his physique (which wasn't all that visible). Ganyped was nearby and caught a glimpse of him. He rushed over and grabbed him by the hand.

"This way," the friend shouted, barely heard. "I think we can maneuver in better over here and get our C-X-sixes activated."

At his own words, Ganyped stopped, remembering that Aedon didn't have one of the new bands yet. Letting out a sigh he suggested, "We've just got to get you a proper armband. Across the way over there, we'll get you started with a new CX6."

Aedon was still wavering about upgrading his band. The words that Mestor had spoken when introducing it, saying it was *a pledge of loyalty to the king and denouncing all others*, made him wince. Now Ganyped was yanking him over to a peddler to have his princely band replaced and he wasn't happy about the situation.

The two boys reached one of the bridges where a number of peddlers had set up shop. Under a stilted tent sat a short creature with pointed ears, a man's face, and a mane of hair running from his scalp to his tailbone. His wings flexed when he jumped onto a table and began fidgeting with a machine using his long fingernails and toenails to maneuver its parts.

"What kind of creature is that?" Aedon yelped, startled at the beast and grabbing onto Ganyped's arm with a tinge of fright.

"I'm a pukwudgie you idiot," the creature snapped back. "There are millions of us, mostly living down here in these underground cities."

"A pukwudgie? Never heard of one before," Aedon gasped, settling down.

“I think they’re a rather new species. Perhaps only a decade old,” Ganyped added. “Probably engineered at Poseidontel’s Speciation Crib.”

“I see this one hasn’t a proper CX6 yet,” the wudgie snorted, lightly scratching a long fingernail next to Aedon’s purple armband.

Aedon yanked his arm back and held it like it had been injured even though the wudgie had barely touched it.

“We’ve come to remedy that,” Ganyped quickly answered, before turning to Aedon to assure him. “Relax, you know you need this. Shouldn’t we participate in the excitement tonight? There might not be a party on this scale for a long time to come.”

“Of course *ya* want a replacement band. ... *Ya* don’t want *ta* end up like those resisters over there,” the creature huffed, nodding toward the end of the bridge where a large bear was clawing at CX6-resisters and knocking them off the bridge so they’d fall into the lava river below.

Aedon squirmed and grunted with a tiny bit of resistance. Floating just beyond the bridge he caught a clear glimpse of a spirit. It was the ghost of an Asterian named Korsheipa. Though she couldn’t talk, her white figure visciously moved a scolding finger back and forth as if to signal to Aedon that this would be a mistake. When the pukwudgie fired up the tattoo gun to imprint the CX6 into Aedon’s arm, she flew over and tried to blow its flame out.

Only Aedon could see her, and with everything going on, he was distressed that she chose this moment to show herself. Ahteana had promised that an Asterian would watch over him, where was she all those past months when he really needed help? He was tired of trying to figure out what the Asterians wanted. He asked himself why they just didn’t come straight out and tell them in today’s terms what he should do. He was tired of playing guessing games based on their vague poems and prophecies. Angry at life and blaming the Asterians for his predicament, he coldly turned his head in the other direction and pretended not to see her. Tears welled up in the spirit’s eye, and as she faded away, a teardrop

materialized and landed on Aedon's arm. The droplet turned his attention back, but it was diverted as the new CX6 clamped over his arm and a burst of steam sealed it.

"All done," the pukwudgie announced.

As the steam sealing his new armband dissipated so did the ghost of Korsheipa. Aedon gulped, unsure if he had made a good choice or not. It seemed like the only option he had — given the circumstances.

"You must've been holding out for quite some time and with a load of favor."

"What do you mean?" Aedon asked.

"Your CX6 account shows that you have quite a fortune to spend," the puck informed, pointing to a scroll device which displayed a graph of golden bars.

"What a tidal wave of luck," Ganyped gleefully exclaimed. "We'll be able to afford quite an expedition to search for your father now."

"Except that — I've decided — I'm not going," Aedon cowered, lowering his head and taking a deep breath before explaining. "Everything and everyone at the Restorium told me to forget about my girl Areshia and to stop chasing after my father Gilgamoeh."

"But we're out of that place now."

"We learned that the Asterians were liars — isn't that why nature chose to wipe them out?" he scowled, angry that his dreams had floated away like the water drifting down the Nile.

"Perfectly logical," Ganyped agreed.

"King Yaswen — he's never coming back — his teachings are fables," Aedon grumbled loudly, hoping that his voice would reach up to the stars so that Yaswen would hear him — wherever he may be — and then quickly come back to prove him wrong.

"So what?" Ganyped sighed.

"If there is no Yaswen and no more Asterians — if all of this is true — then there is no hope. ... I am done chasing after these ghosts."

Ganyped's mouth dropped open with shock as he wasn't expecting such a quick and decisive reversal. Ganyped took hold of Aedon's arm and led him over to one of the ferris wheels. They boarded and from its basket a good portion of the metropolis cut deep into the rock could be seen.

"Such ugly creatures live here beneath the rocks," Aedon sighed, noticing deformed beasts which quickly disappeared each time he had a glimpse.

"Some of the *birderies* report that Poseidontel is creating all kinds of creatures like the ones swarming in this underground place," Ganyped acknowledged.

"Bet they come from his Speciation Crib," Aedon garbled.
"Such an unpleasant place."

"Did you see that one?" Ganyped shouted, trying to make a face to imitate the beast.

Laughing it off, they made fun of the beasts' ugly faces, cracked sarcasm about their horns, and mocked their raspy-short-tempered voices instead of entertaining their fears that the creatures might make it to the surface and wreck havoc on Atlantis some day.

On top of the butte, which rose from the deep pit, floated the Tuaoi Stone, defying gravity. An enormous crowd of masqueraders vied to touch their armbands against it in hope of some magical blessing. Whenever someone made contact with the stone it would light up in a purple glow. Occasional bursts of pyrotechnics from the canyon below shot up sparks, and the onlookers would cheer each time.

"Come on — let's go pretend like the others," Ganyped suggested.

"Won't you get in trouble again?"

"Let's just participate. We don't have to make up stories that will lead others to believe we're insane."

Following Ganyped, Aedon began to push in with the crowd trying to get closer to the stone. Aedon didn't really want to participate in the ceremony and even though he had lost faith in

most of the things he once believed in, he wasn't about to enchant a pledge to the king any time soon. Yet, he moved closer to the stone with the others, as if a strong enchantment was drawing him in. All he really wanted to do was be a bystander and get through the night, but it was too late to mill about unnoticed now. He had agreed to attend the Middag, succumbed to the CX6, and now he was within podes of reaching the powerful stone that would seal his fate as a loyal subject of the new king.

Then someone tugged at his arm and separated him from Ganyped. The figure pushed and led him out of the crowd. At another crossing, the man pulled him down a bridge toward a building carved into the rocky wall. Once they were in an alcove the heavy set man stared squarely at Aedon through his onyx mask. He lifted it up.

“Ausethen?” Aedon gasped, recognizing him. The two of them had been classmates at the *educatory* when they were youths. Ausethen was the Lord Dominate of Aszea, the continent across the Saxen Gulf, and bitter enemies of Atlantis. The prince was always trying to involve Aedon in his plots — usually because Aedon seemed to be a neutral person.

“What are you doing here?” Aedon demanded, whispering, yet scolding at the same time.

“Ya don’t really wanna join that mess of stone-blinded robots out there,” he snarled. “I know you Aedon. Ya wanna find your father.”

“Certainly, I’ve searched for him before, but I’ve given up. It’s too dangerous in the glaciers now anyway.”

“I know that you know something about the — the *Scroll of Air*,” the Lord Dominate whispered. “I know this because an owl, who silently sat guard near *ya* room, was raised by me since his hatching. Doing his loyal duty, he returned and told me of the events. *Ya* know Poseidontel has already sent warriors out to seek it — I’m sure.”

“I don’t know. . . . I don’t care.”

“The owls know — Poseidontel knows — and I know — we all know the *Scroll of Air* resides with Gilgamoeh. ... Isn’t he *ya* father? *Ya* think that Poseidontel is just *gonna* knock on his cabin and politely ask for the *Scroll*? You know what he’s capable of doing,” Ausethen reminded him.

“I don’t want to think about it, not now.”

“I’m leading an expedition — to discover where it is — before Poseidontel gets his uprooting hands on it,” he revealed, lowering his mask back down again. “I was hoping you would help out. ... You’d find your father, I’d get my *Scroll*, and by beating Poseidontel to it — we’d save your father’s life — and the others too.”

“Even if you found Gilgamoeh, what makes you so sure he still has the *Scroll*,” Aedon asked, then made up a tale, “Right before Ahteana and her band of Asterians escaped, Yapet brought her something — it was a scroll-like container. How do we know that the *Scroll* hasn’t already left this realm?”

“Doubtful,” Ausethen chuckled, not believing his story, “But I intend to find out. So are you with me?”

“I think I’ll stay right here where things are warmer,” said Aedon, feeling a gust of heat from the lava river below. “The freezing weather down North doesn’t agree with my bones and there are too many asteroids bombarding the icy mountains. Do you really think you can find Gilgamoeh in all that ice without getting hit by a calamity first?”

“Don’t pretend that it’s an impossible mission, Aedon,” scolded Ausethen. “We all know you’ve been up to their base camp and *Gilgy* certainly isn’t far from there.”

“In such a dangerous region?”

“If you refer to the bombardment of space debris — well that is going to be the key to help us zero in on the *Scroll*. It has been well documented that the *Scroll* has a self-protecting mechanism that will deflect any object that comes to destroy it. My astronomers are watching the skies now; once they track a couple repelled rocks, we’ll know the exact location.”

“You’re so certain of all this?” Aedon trembled. “Why do you need my help?”

“This isn’t going to take centuries, Aedon. One of us will have that *Scroll* locked up in weeks. Pray that I get there before Poseidontel does. Either way, if you’re not there, who is going to assure Gilgamoeh’s safety?”

Ausethen did a quick about face and then he disappeared into the shadows once again. When Aedon turned around, Poseidontel was standing before him.

“I guess ...” Aedon shuddered. “I should be ... I certainly am ... grateful for the generous pardon you’ve bestowed —”

“We’ve always had a special bond,” Poseidontel began, placing his arm around the boy while leading the way down a dark path with his glowing trident. “I’ve always had your back — just as much as you’ve had mine.”

“Certainly most — we do — we must watch out for things,” said Aedon, still shaking a little.

“We’ve made oaths to each other. ... Taken vows. ... Made *finger-locking-promises*,” Poseidontel said pointedly, fingering the CX6 band around Aedon’s arm.

Aedon gulped.

“Good news is on the horizon. You’re not the only one I’ve pardoned,” the king said. “I’ve extended my grace to *Gilgy*. Your father is welcome to return to Atlantis whenever he wishes.”

PAPYRUS THIRTEEN

MARCH TO THE NORTH

Back in his chamber the next day, King Poseidontel paced before the cracked mirror, then stopped and stood there for hours admiring himself and gloating about his accomplishments. The wall where his precious crystal skulls sat began to brighten as the Asterian spirits contained within them danced at an unusual energetic pace. A flashing light, within the center one, caught his attention. He marched over and plucked the skull of Zualpha, his most treasured cranium, from the collection. The other skulls dimmed as they settled back down almost as if they might be in trouble. The king twisted his wrist around as he carefully examined the glass object. Deeply he stared into it making a mental connection which was abruptly interrupted when General Andromache barged into the room.

“What situation provokes my General to make an intrusion this time?” Poseidontel growled, annoyed, lowering the skull away

from his face. "I was enjoying a relaxing moment with my conquered — Asterians here."

Andromache stood at attention and barked out the circumstances, "*The Scroll of Air* — its *securement* is in danger."

"What did you muck-up this time?" scoffed Poseidontel. "Aedon hasn't even departed yet. Did our boy fail to take the trip?"

"Not at all, the plan is in motion as we speak, Royal King."

"Then Aedon will lead us to *Gillyg* ... and that will lead us to the *Scroll*," the king explained, his countenance brightening along with the details.

"Indeed I believe so — but only if *he* gets there first."

"Who else would know what we're up to?"

Andromache marched to the window and pulled back the gray-satin drapes, pointing to a long line of small dots on the horizon, she revealed, "The Aszeans have amassed an army, a navy, and a balloon force — all heading for the edge of Bashan. They have already sent expeditions into the glaciers searching for the same *Scroll* that we seek."

Poseidontel slammed the skull of Zualpha back into its place on the wall. He appeared angry, but then he calmed himself down when he caught a glimpse of himself in the mirror. A sinister smile crossed his face and he turned around to handle the situation.

"It is not only the *Scroll* they seek, but land which they lost to us in the last *Territorial Quarrel*. Ausethen has been nothing more than an overly-ambitious mistake since the day of his birth."

"He always rushes in and attempts things — too soon," Andromache gloated.

"Before its destined time... And when he does that, I always end up taking what already belongs to me — more easily. I know that Ausethen desires the *Scroll* too — but he does not have the key that unlocks it," the king boasted, pulling Areshia's *globeaky* off of the shelf and holding it by its dangling blue cord.

"Indeed, you are most debonair," she fawned.

“What about Mauretania? Could you not convince Queen Merine that she needs to respond and help secure our eastern border?”

“You want me to contact the Queen, my sister?” she asked, startled. “We haven’t spoken in a century and you know how she feels about Atlantians.”

“I’m sure if you took her a gift of a thousand of our finest and hottest male specimens, she would beg to participate.”

“I — I — I suppose,” Andromache grunted with a whisper, before asking, “Her female warriors would double our troops — to nearly two-hundred million. Don’t you think we’re overdoing this a tad? … Quite a costly proposition.”

Poseidontel revealed part of what was really going on, “We’re not sending all these warriors there to secure a *seamucking* scroll — or even our border. … Instead, to execute one last plan that I have — so secret and enormous — that I dare not share it even with you, just yet. … But this I guarantee — once the warriors go home, I will be the ultimate ruler of the universe and we will all live in a better place.”

With a couple beats of thought and shifting her eyes back and forth, Andromache stood up tall again and vowed, “I am honored to be your General and eager to execute your every command with utmost concern.”

Soon after Andromache left, one of the pulled-back drapes began to ruffle in a breeze. From behind its folds, hidden until now, emerged a lady dressed in white. As she stepped into the moonlight, her dark bronze skin indicated that she was an Asterian. The white hair, purer than snow, gave recognition that this was Ahteana, one of the most powerful Asterians. She had come back to Earth.

When she walked, she flowed as if she were floating over the floor. Authoritatively turning toward the cracked mirror, she stretched out a hand toward it. The mirror flipped around, showing its backside, while hiding its glass when she enchanted:

*“Ahyunuy ofvelue oyuna ahuc aunurk,
Duk futa hun iyr ahvinueoz.”*

“Faeraud,” she called him by his real name. “The mirror is bound and cannot see or hear. Tell me, do you wish to be rid of this phantom who binds you?”

For a moment he stood in total freedom taking in a deep breath. He had forgotten what it was like to be the person he once was. “Greatly — greatly I have wished for this day.”

“Then renounce your loyalty to this thing, for yet you can be free,” she told him almost with relief, extending her hand to accept his. “King Yaswhen is due to return shortly. We must prepare, for he is on the way.”

Then Poseidontel remembered that if Yaswhen came back he would not be king any more. Quickly his countenance turned to suspicion and with indecisiveness he twisted his head back and forth considering the mirror behind and Ahteana before him. If he renounced Sayer, he knew he would lose his power, his possessions, and all that he spent his entire life acquiring.

Testing, he coyly asked, “Do I get to keep my possessions? ... Some of my things like the palace and the Irem?”

She didn’t flinch because he already knew the answer.

“Silly Ahteana,” he chuckled with a mock. “Yaswhen died long ago. He’s never coming back — not today and certainly not tomorrow.”

He spit in her palm in defiance.

A countenance of sadness drained the color in her face as she moved over to the shelf where the Asterian skulls stirred. Their spirits knew she had come and though they brightened with hope, she did not. Carefully she picked up the cranium of Zualpha from the center of the display. Then abruptly she yelled, “*Symur doctyro envuluevo!*”

At the same time, with a great amount of might, she threw the skull across the room at the mirror. The mirror quickly rotated around, the skull smashed into its glass. First, a circular dent

cracked into the mirror and shoots splintered out from it like a crawling spider web. A split second before the mirror turned away again, the crystal skull broke into a million pieces floating in the air, suspended in time. A mist began to appear from the middle of the suspended pieces as Ahteana enchanted:

*“Slolux ahyunuy copeno entu khut huer,
Ahvreng et ahvui kuo khorupyun.
Stuen ahyunuy gend ahvudyun ahund clruyght,
Entu ah defo ipyluelue ahund avauovor.”*

Finally, the pieces of glass mingled with the mist and together they morphed into a tall dark figure. The once encased Asterian had been brought back to life. From his large stance, built body, and bald head, there was no mistaking who had returned.

“Welcome back, Zualpha,” she said. “The roots of the evil one have already dug deep — reaching to every continent of the globe.”

“We must begin our final mission,” firmly, he said.

Ahteana handed him a white cape similar to the one she wore. With a twist, each of them grabbed the right side of their capes and spun around so fast that they appeared like human tornados. The two whirlwinds leaped into the air, out the window, and disappeared in the distance.

The mirror released from Ahteana’s spell and turned around where Sayer’s spirit dove back into Poseidontel’s body. The voice within became raspy and fierce, “Now my foolish Asterians you will experience my wrath. You will not live after this week.”

Standing on a lower balcony of the Irminsul Pentagon, Aedon was briefly startled at the site of the passing tornadoes. Because the weather patterns of recent had been constantly changing, he didn’t give it a second thought. Congregating with him were many of the guests who were at the Middag the night

before. Some still wore their masks though many had taken them off to partake of the *first-meal* sandwiches being served.

Ganyped plopped down by the ledge, on a seat next to Aedon, already biting into an *egg-yoker*. The two of them sat quietly, reflecting on the past evening, while marveling at the city that stretched out from under them. It buzzed with colorful illumination-bulbs, floating bridges over its rivers and moats, and well-lit decorative buildings. Its unique architecture combined a mixture of pyramids, mosques, arches, and pillars nestled together. Its unwavering construction gave a false sense that it was a fortress which no man would dare penetrate.

“The Irem spins in full brightness as if there were no shortage of *orichalcum*,” Aedon sighed with a light thought. “It is a completely different world here in the capital — almost as if the scarcity of food, energy, and safety, outside its walls, didn’t exist. ... Like the old days.”

“The reason, no doubt, why everyone wants to live here,” Ganyped reminded.

On the other side of the moat, which ran adjacent to them, they saw a dark colored balloon rise. Inside its under compartment, the captain of the ship wore a mask with sharp edges and it reminded Aedon that Ausethen was on the move.

“That balloon there, the black one, hastily leaving,” Ganyped pointed. “It has you worried. Why?”

“I’m concerned,” he responded. “You think you know people ... and then they surprise you — disappoint you.”

“That’s why you’ve given up on searching for your father — isn’t it? You’re afraid he’s not going to live up to this — expectation — that you’ve built in your mind.”

“I think not,” said Aedon defensively, before muttering, “I’m perplexed. Why did he so willingly and quietly leave all those sun-cycles ago? I’m baffled. ... There must be a reason — something that he knew ...”

“That *Scroll* is full of dangers, isn’t it?” Ganyped snapped. “Some people think he may be using it to send the asteroids, the famine, and the other calamities that have fallen on us.”

“They blame the asteroids on anyone they dislike.”

“As more discover what he may have — more will no doubt go after it.”

“Most people know not what we do.”

“Why I wouldn’t be at all shocked if rogue channels of warriors broke off and marched on down there seeking such a prize.”

“Warriors ...” Aedon mumbled, pondering scenarios in his mind. “Why Gilgamoeh would be in a heap of trouble. They’d certainly kill him for that *Scroll*. ... Great glaciers! ... I must warn him before anyone arrives who would cause harm.”

“If you really think so,” said Ganyped with a satisfied grin.

“We must prepare a departure at once,” Aedon cried, standing up and yanking at Ganyped’s arm to follow. “I must return to Bashan and find my father. Gilgamoeh will know what to do.”

PART TWO

PAPYRUS ONE

A ROGUE STAR

Poking out of the northward side of the five-sided pyramid, Trigonomy, artist and astronomer extraordinaire, made adjustments to his three-barrel *skyroscope* (large telescope). He kept moving from eyepiece to eyepiece inspecting the night sky. The pale-skinned man thought nothing about the animals which talked and complained. He cared not that his machines consumed excessive amounts of *orichalcum*, a mineral and energy source that was scarce. Nor did he pay attention to any of the enchantments or magic that transpired in Atlantis. His full attention was focused on a puzzling spec of light amongst the stars.

“*Seamuck!* It’s near impossible to see anything for sure with that beam of light reflecting off the atmosphere. Can’t someone turn off that flooding light?” the artist snarled, pulling at his unkempt hair.

“A hundred things already on my scroll today — and now this interruption,” King Poseidontel grumbled, stomping out on the balcony and momentarily stopping when the wind blew a strand of graying hair over his face. He sniffed as if he smelt something odd in the air. “It’s heading this way now. I can sense it.”

“Is the Ambassador ready? This one is viscously fast,” Trigonomy stuttered, his face turning almost as red as the beret on his head.

“Telopps?” the king shouted, flexing his voice toward the stairway which gave entrance to the place.

On the level below the bearded man, whose face seemed horizontally symmetric when he wore his rounded hat, raised both his arms into the air as he stood and hovered over two magical papyruses. Each was rolled out and floated in midair, powered by its own aura. One was made from water and small waves rippled over its encrypted text. The other was a *Scroll of Fire* and flames lapped over its writings. They were living — breathing — inanimate objects. Telopps could feel the mist from the *Scroll of Water* on his face and the heat from the *Scroll of Fire* on his hands. Together they gave great power to control the elements of water and fire.

Outside, Trigonomy adjusted his hat, pressed his eye closer to the glass, and shouted, “Incoming! Nine, thirteen, twenty-seven!”

Telopps laid his hands above the *Scrolls* and began a chant in the Asterian language:

“*Iprum khut skylue ahyunuy shuvut nuoz lecumo,*
Vutch ahund opero evuro kuo ahurtesha ahuno.
Et eplueck ketz ahovahaweyun ahvyuna cicteun umpuct,
Ahyunuy huwdor u'd lemund ketz crauup etz kweuce.”

Looking out toward the far away moat, a waterspout sprung up from the river. It whipped into the sky and turned red like fire. From its cloud a hundred bolts of light struck out toward the meteor which was heading toward the Irem. In a matter of seconds the rock was pulverized and dust rained down on the palace below. They had been saved — for now.

Trigonomy walked the king and the ambassador out, as was customarily polite. Along the way they passed hundreds of smaller *skyscopes*, each pointed toward the heavens with an operator carefully scanning the sky.

"They're appearing now, more quickly," Telopps huffed. "That's the second one this week — too close. Can't we get more observers?"

"We need more equipment," Trig answered.

"To fill another empty station?" the ambassador snapped, pointing to a vacant scope, which looked abandoned.

"The astronomers have to take a meal once in awhile. We can't keep them chained to those lenses the entire day," Trig explained.

"I don't see why not," Telopps mumbled. "If one of those rocks gets by —"

"This annoying threat will disappear soon," Poseidontel boasted. "The *Scroll of Air* is practically in our hands. Once it is opened, the heavens will obey — and this reign of terror will end."

"These troubled days might have been greatly reduced had the Asterian moon not blown up in the first place," Trigonomy snapped, looking at the king. "Each time one of these rocks enters the atmosphere it reminds me of a day I wish to forget."

After Poseidontel and Telopps left the observation deck of the Irminsul, Trig walked around and inspected the various charts that each astronomer was making. Back at his *skyoscope* he scratched his head while pouring over one of his mappings. He studied the markings for a new heavenly body he was following. — Its line drew a peculiar path. As he peered into the *skyoscope* one

last time for the evening, he double checked his calculations and made another mark. The pattern of its path brought to mind that of another star he had seen once before — long ago. The charts and documentation he made back then were stored away deep in the basement of a library, across the ocean and on another continent. While the ancient tower and buildings around it had been reduced to rubble, there were stories about some of its scrolls remaining in the ruins. After a few more days of thought, Trigonomy could stand the mystery of the star no more. He chartered a boat and sailed for Gianni, Sahada.

A week later he arrived in Gianni and tied off the sailboat to the stub of a remaining post where a dock once stood. He headed up the hill where the buildings lay in worse shape than he imagined. A never-ending sandstorm did its best to wipe away the intricate carvings and rough edges of broken arches and fallen pillars. Not even the vultures visited anymore. A bridge which stretched from the abandoned *educatory* across a ravine had crumbled and passage was cutoff.

The entrance to the library was hollowed out like a cave and when he walked inside he was startled by a creature with a human face, body and arms but the hooves and horns of a goat.

“Have you come to make a deposit or borrow a papyrus,” the faun asked. “I am the head librarian here.”

“Librarian of what?” Trig scoffed, “Of broken boulders and fallen arches?”

“If you’ve come to pilferage the scrolls of sarcasm — they’ve been taken already,” the librarian scolded.

“I’d gamble that you could use a day’s food perhaps even seven,” Trig smartly began to bargain. “Show me the way to the astrological charts and you’ll be feasting tonight.”

“The basement? Not the basement. It’s dark down there — pitch black.”

Exasperated Trigonomy exhaled and the faun pointed the way, making sure to stay far away from its opening. Pulling fallen

blocks aside and pushing through a mountain of debris, Trigonomy opened a hole and climbed down inside.

The spark of an oil lamp, which he lit, startled a couple scorpions which slithered away. Its light danced over to cases which shelved the scrolls. They had tumbled over.

Later he returned with a meal for the faun and torches for the basement. Spiders scattered and snakes slithered away once they were lit. Sifting through the first papyruses he came upon, it was evident that they were badly damaged by water, wind, sand, and termites. Carefully he pulled out pieces that were readable.

For another week he organized the mess, setting shelves upright and categorizing scrolls by subject matter. Whenever he found something of interest, he would set it aside on one of the tables he had cleaned off.

After a second week passed, he had some of the materials he sought. Finally he could begin to analyze the star charts he brought with him from Atlantis, comparing them to the ancient ones he had sorted.

Long hours went by and near the dawning of the next day he made a startling discovery. One of the brittle charts matched his new one — the only problem was — the path of the coordinates was exactly opposite of how they were originally charted. At first Trig was excited and thrilled that he had found this same star a second time. Then all of a sudden fear and anxiety fell across his face faster than a shooting star. Looking closer at the markings which were worn, enough still remained so that he could read its caption:

KING YASWHEN'S DEPARTURE.

Both their paths zigzagged through many points on the chart. Almost as if it had happened yesterday, the memories came back. King Yaswhen who lived on Asteria and Prince Lord Antioch from Earth, departed in a sky vehicle they called the Chariot of Fire. They went to travel across time and space to prepare a better place

for man and they promised to return — though no dates were ever given for such a second coming. Trigonomy was a professor at the *educatory* back then, and Ambassador Telopps was in charge of the faculty. The Ambassador made a snide comment about the possibility of the Chariot crashing into something and that it would never be seen again. Trig was upset by the comment and so he charted the vehicle on this map, following them in the sky each day ... until ... a new *Master Instructioneer*, named Yenocha took his place. Months later he had Trigonomy dismissed. That was the end of his career at the *educatory* and the final charting of Yaswhen's Chariot was on the 600th day after he left.

Later, Trig became more disenchanted with Yenocha, his teachings, and all the new rules that the Asterians were making. He began to limit his associations to those who believed the old ways were mere legends which had no place in their modern world. Their ancient standards drove him and others to the other side — a place where morals weren't heard, ancient laws didn't exist, and Yaswhen's return wouldn't be seen. He subscribed to the belief that most everyone now held, that King Yaswhen had left, something unknown had happened to him, and he would never be coming back.

But, the two star charts staring him in the face told a different story. The first charted Yaswhen's departure and the second now showed part of that path in reverse. According to Trig's calculations, if the star followed the same path — Yaswhen would be back on Earth by the end of the next sun-cycle.

Now the events of the present gave evidence to the prophecies of the past. However, Trigonomy loved the position he had obtained under Poseidontel. For a moment he evaluated the notion that there could only be one king. If Yaswhen were to come back, he would not hold the same office. With the tally of hourglasses he had seen turn, change would not be easily adaptable for him. For as liquid sand sets into concrete so do the ways of a man with the passing of time.

There was another wise man who was an authority on the

A ROGUE STAR

matter and might be able to advise on the situation, for he knew that his role would be greatly diminished, unless he did everything in his power to divert the sky-chariot from returning. He gathered up what scrolls, maps, and research he could find, and set sail to find out what this expert might know.

PAPYRUS TWO

GHOST CROSSING

Dust clouds dispersed as two white stallions came to a stop in front of Shepherd's Inn. Ganped jumped off his ride, but Aedon lingered for a moment, thinking that perhaps he had made a wrong turn. It was much quieter than his previous visit and the hustle and bustle of peddlers was missing. When the brown smog lifted a little, he could see the tall building stretching up the mountain side. Grabbing his satchel and a handful of other empty sacks, Aedon patted his horse on the fanny and pointed her toward the corrals down the path. Then they headed inside the inn.

"Shepherd's Inn — I've heard tales about this place," said Ganped, grabbing his gear.

"It's so quiet — and desolate," Aedon remarked, leading the way into the main vestibule. "I wonder ... are they still operating the place?"

"Are you sure this is the place we seek?" the short boy questioned, repositioning the empty bags he carried. "I don't see any provisions to fill these satchels."

Their footsteps echoed as their eyes scanned from the wooden beams ten levels above to the lower lounges beneath them. The place would have been completely empty except for a woman in a drab toga behind a bar in the back corner. She was bent over and tapped her fingers on the counter, annoyed.

"*Whatcha* boys want?" she grumbled, bothered by their disturbance. "We're *outta* most of the specialty type foods."

"Where is everybody?" Aedon asked, confused.

"We want some accommodations — for the night," Ganyped interrupted, getting right to the point as he usually did.

Quickly the lady raced into a room behind the bar. After a few moments of rummaging, she emerged still fighting with her feathery hat which didn't want to sit properly on the wig she was now wearing. With a change into a new outfit, her appearance transformed into an upscale lady of the evening.

"Been almost an entire moon-cycle since someone checked in here," she confessed, welcoming the boys. "I am Madame Desponse and will be your hostess for the duration of your stay. How long do you plan to be with us? A sun-cycle? ... A moon-cycle? ... A week?"

"As is customary, we'll only need one night," Aedon responded. He remembered how Dolius had told him that travelers who stayed more than one or two nights were usually viewed with suspicion.

"One night?" Desponse echoed with a tone of surprise. "The customs here have changed greatly since your last visit ... I am guessing you've been here before since you refer to the previous protocol. ... It is now customary for one to stay a moon-cycle — or longer."

"We're traveling North — to Bashan. All we need is passage for tonight."

“The North?” she sounded horrified. “You haven’t been paying mind to those crazy owls out there?”

“We haven’t seen any owls … though they may have seen us,” Aedon responded.

The Madame went on to explain, “A good thing that is then. A flock of them came jabbering on in here warning people to evacuate to the North. They almost had the poor animal keeper down yonder convinced. But then when they gave reason for their hasty flight, he knew they were crazy.”

“*Whatta* they tell him?” Ganyped asked.

“That all the water was going to turn to blood.”

“Odd. Why would they tell us to go North?” a concerned Aedon asked, biting on a finger.

“Nothing down there but ice and glaciers,” Ganyped added with a shake of his head.

“There’s more going on there than you might wish to discover” Desponse whispered, drawing them in for the details. “The Prince Lord of Aszea has moved a fleet of ships, maybe more, off the edge of the northwestern part of the Saxen Gulf.”

“Ausethen,” Aedon muttered under his breath recognizing who might be behind the move.

“Warriors of Atlantis marched through here last week — in route to secure our borders,” she detailed. “Others who pass through here tell that war is in the air. Speculation is that a quarrel is developing over some territory in the North. I tell you this, because I think it is in your best interest to put your plans to travel on hold and stay here where it is safe.”

“My father lives down there and I must rescue him or at least warn him about certain — situations,” Aedon defensively snapped. “If there is any truth to your gossip, then we’ve just got to get him *outta* there.”

“Send a *copy-parrot*, but do not go yourself,” Desponse pleaded, pouring them a drink from the bar. “It is far too dangerous — a trip into those parts is doomed to fail. With near famine conditions everywhere and no food in the icy land, you’ll

both starve to death — and even then, only if luck gives you passage beyond the wild beasts.”

Plopping the empty bags on the counter, Ganyped picked up the cup he was offered, “Exactly why we’ve stopped here — to stock up on supplies.”

“But the trading post seemed a little sparse out there, on our way in,” Aedon added with doubt, sipping his beverage.

Desponse answered, “*The Great Famine* has touched here too. Goods to trade are scarce. The number of shepherds and merchants that travel this way are fewer than the ghosts who visit.”

Aedon wasn’t ready to give in yet, “Certainly there’s something leftover we can glean to take with us? We’ve got a pretty hefty coffer to draw payment from.”

“A piece of wheat-roll will cost *ya* a day’s wage here. ... Walk down the river some and you’ll pay a week’s wage in some places.”

“A week’s wage for a wheat-roll? That’s ridiculous!” Ganyped huffed, “We’re not paying a price like that.”

“And that’s only if you can find someone willing to sell,” she added. Then she brightened up with a plan for them. She could see that they were stocked with means of wealth but little provisions. She desperately needed paying guests and decided that she had to do whatever she could to discourage them from traveling on. She needed them right where they were so she could continue to charge them talents, in an honest way.

While they collected drinks she shared stories and reasons about why they should stay there at the Inn and delay their travel or not go at all. She set them up with the best suite in the place, unlike the small compartment Aedon had to sleep in during his last visit. She created a package deal for them which included food, beverages, entertainment, and anything they might need — so long as they stayed there at the inn. By the time they finished drinks and *final-meal*, Aedon was so discouraged about his trip that he just wanted to curl up in bed and go to sleep. Looking away from the spotlight of his goal, he succumbed to her wish for them to delay.

One early morning, an arrow swished by his balcony and pierced a passing owl. The bird tumbled to the stone road, far below the mountain. It reminded Aedon about the conversation they had a few days ago and how the owls were warning people to travel north. The story about their prediction — *that the water was going to turn to blood* — made no sense but it did remind him that his father was still down there in the glaciers and that he had lost focus on what was important.

He woke up Ganyped and the two of them snuck down to the Trading Post where the stallions were kept. A tumbleweed greeted them outside where the crumbling shacks and torn canvas tents flapped in the howling wind. The corral was empty except for their horses and they were scrimmaging about the bottom of a sack of oats with their snouts.

“Where did you two get oats from?” Aedon asked, almost demanding.

One of the horses nodded toward a shed near the bottom of the inn. Aedon started for it but Ganyped objected, “I’m not eating bland oats for thirty some days. We need to stay put — here where we have food.”

“If they’re stocked with oats — they probably have other staples too,” Aedon reasoned. “Like corn and cereal ...”

Turning around Aedon froze at the tip of a drawn arrow pointing to his gut. He threw his arms up and stepped back, surprised. The look of fright turned to a smile, then a chuckle as he looked over at the bald man. He recognized the man holding the arrow. Cain lowered the bow and then gave Aedon a big hug.

“What is my favorite prince doing on the road again? So many more dangers these days,” Cain scolded. “Welcome back. ... How are Meca and Ceca doing?”

“*Apa’hei*,” Aedon greeted. “I had to leave the two unicorns down North — but we’re on our way back there now. Did you get the payment for them, I promised?”

“Indeed I did,” Cain answered, thinking about how he sent a bird to fetch the talents from Aedon’s hiding place and told the

flying creature to take more than what was really due to him. He wasn't sure if Aedon had found this out yet, so he decided to be overly-hospitable. "You'll need supplies, and I've got plenty stored down here — just don't go tellin' nobody else. Got corn, flour, oats, even sugar."

"But Aedon," Ganyped interrupted, "Aren't you forgetting about the dangers out there? Even if we take supplies with us, what's to say bandits and wild beasts won't snatch them away? Haven't you listened to a thing Madame Desponse has been telling us? I think we should stay here until the chances of luck improve."

"She wants us to remain here until we are milked dry of our money — that's why she's casting stories of depression and discouragement our way," Aedon pleaded, while harnessing up a stallion with supplies that Cain was delivering. "If we give up on our dreams and lose hope, then we will stay right where we are. She'll bleed us of our talents and waste them away as we whither into a state of complacency and then fall into a trance of false contentment."

Reluctantly, Ganyped agreed to resume the journey. The trotting of the horses caught Madame's attention and she rushed to the doorway to call after the young men, "Come back! There is grave danger ahead! ... The way is too rocky and wild beasts will surely devour you. ... You are young and not experienced men. You don't have what it takes to succeed out there. ... You'll run out of food. ... The warmongers will stab you in their crossfire. ... Please come back here to me — where it is safe ... where it is warm and comfortable — no worries — no stress."

Aedon snapped the reins on his stallion and picked up speed, Ganyped followed. Keeping his eyes on the winding path ahead, Desponse's callings soon faded into the past. They were on their way, back on track, for Bashan.

Hugging along the west side of the Athabasca River, Aedon and Ganyped bounced on the trotting stallions. They talked about how much easier the trip might be if they had delta-transporters.

With the *orichalcum* shortage, the energy stream was only running a few hourglasses a day and not at all over the remote trails where they traveled. In a clearing among tall pine trees they found an abandoned camp, possibly left by another traveler earlier in the week. They made a campfire and stretched out beneath the sky — hunting for stars to count.

“Think we need to fill the canteens?” Aedon suggested, finishing the last drop of water from one.

“*Kinda* dark down there by the river. I’ll fill ‘em in the morning.” Ganyped promised.

“Hard to see many of them,” said Aedon, pointing upward at the stars. “The industrial haze is a bit lighter in these parts, though.”

“I can see one … two … no three,” Ganyped energetically gestured. “Right there and pretty bright I might add.”

“Those aren’t stars,” Aedon scoffed. “They are the remnants of the Asterian moon … orbiting around Earth.”

As if one of them had heard its name called, a meteor streaked across the sky, lighting up the area where they were, shining as bright as the sun. It was gone in a flash. The boys looked at each other and then with a chuckle, as if it didn’t matter, they settled into bed; they had seen this phenomenon before.

The next morning a vile odor woke them up. It seemed to be coming from the river and Ganyped jumped out of bed, grabbed the canteens and rushed down to the riverbank to fill them. His shriek brought Aedon running after him. They both dropped their jaws in horror at the site of a thick-red, mucky-substance with strands of black and white bacterial mucous winding downstream where the water was the night before.

“This is awful,” Ganyped cried, “We best turn back, right away. We’ll go back to Shepherd’s Crossing.”

“We can’t stop now,” Aedon pleaded. “We’re half the way to Ablach already.”

“But that muck is coming from the direction of the city — and we can’t travel for two more days without water.”

GHOST CROSSING

Huffing, pacing, then thinking, Aedon had an idea, “There’s an aqueduct near here. It’s up the mountain on the other side of the river. It was specially built to bring the pure waters of the glaciers to a vineyard. If we can make it there — we’ll have all the water we could ever need.”

“How far is it? If it’s further than Shepherd’s Crossing —”

“It’s not!” Aedon butted in.

A ways down the river, they found a bridge and the horses took them over the banks to the province of Evaemon and by the next night they had come to Gilgamoeh’s vineyard. But Gilgamoeh had not been there in over a decade because he was banished from Atlantis. His grandfather, Methouslan, now lived in the cabin, and he helped the boys fill barrels to take with them. To take as protection against thieves, he gave them some arrows which had been left there by a previous guest. Fully stocked, yet against Methouslan’s warnings, they resumed their travels on the road North.

PAPYRUS THREE

WELL OF SORROWS

Rushing out of the city, a stampede of residents and animals brushed against Aedon, Ganyped and their stallions. The exiting throng of people pulled and pushed carts piled with their possessions; others raced through the crowd with speed and haste. Wagons, carriages, and beasts packed to overflowing capacity marched South against the direction the guys were trying to travel. A stench in the air weighed so that those who didn't cover their faces choked on its heavy odor.

Aedon pointed to a side road and though it was a longer route, he suggested that it might give them easier access to the city around the mob.

Reaching the fork in the road, two overdressed owls frantically flew back and forth above the mob, loudly hooting their warnings, "You're going the wrong way! Turn back and go North!"

You must go North to escape the plagues that are forthcoming. You must go the other direction — away from the *Uprooter!*"

Exhausted the owls perched on a tree branch to rest. The female adjusted her feathered hat which was about to fall off. The male owl cleared his throat as he settled down. A couple molting feathers, falling beneath the branch, captured Aedon's curiosity. He recognized the birds.

"What trouble keeps owls here?" he asked, interrupting himself to make introductions. "Ganyped, this is Chordata queen of the owls."

"And my husband, Aves," she added. "We are here to warn everyone of the imminent destruction of Atlantis."

"All you false witnesses have been proclaiming the end of the world for centuries," Ganyped laughed, rolling his eyes slightly.

The queen continued, "Certainly, by this time, it should be obvious. The *Uprooter* is the one who has made himself king and taken hold of the land."

"Did you not make a promise to serve the king?" Aedon questioned, remembering a time when she had helped Faeraud and him take the *Scroll of Fire*.

"His evil *enchantments* have tricked the people into believing that King Yaswhen is not coming back and that they should follow him instead," Aves added. "We have removed our foot-bands and are no longer bound to this traitor."

"But I see that you, my friends, are wiser," she hooted, "for you are traveling north. Only those who take refuge at its furthest point will be spared."

"From what?"

"The disturbance," Aves the owl told.

"A beleaguerment beyond imagination," said Chordata.

"Leading to the destruction of Atlantis," said the other owl.

"All of Atlantis — destroyed?" Ganyped scoffed, skeptical.

"We have been commissioned to deliver their warning."

"Warning?" Aedon questioned with concern. "Whose words do you bring?"

“The Asterians: Ahteana and Zualpha. They have returned.”

“Impossible,” Aedon gasped, barely whispering to himself, “I saw Zualpha’s body destroyed and his cranium crystallized. Surely this cannot be?”

Chordata plumped her breast out and told more, “Last week we received words predicted by Zualpha.”

“More than a hundred-thousand of us owls delivered the message and their warning that the water would be turned to poison,” Aves boasted.

“Was the prediction accurate?” Chordata squawked. “Is your water drinkable?”

“This day we have been sent to warn that a plague of frogs and pestilence will cover the land,” said the male owl.

“It will begin right here in Ablach,” the queen whispered, “as soon as the Asterians arrive and unleash its power.”

“Time is short. You must get your togas up to the North as quickly as they can run,” hooted Aves.

“Invitations to the North have been sent out to all citizens, given in dreams, spoken by prophets, tweeted by *copy-parrots* (who deliver messages), and even warned on instruction cards,” Chordata explained.

“We bring news that is not news,” said Aves, “but repeat that which has been told a thousand times over — written in papyrus from the top of the mountain to the islands of the sea.”

“The people listen not for they blindly wish to hang onto their power, their riches, their friends —”

“Their material possessions,” hooted Aves, ending the sentence.

“We are traveling to Bashan, already,” said Aedon, annoyed. He was confused at this news which dug out of his brain teachings from the papyrus of King Yaswen. Still he wasn’t ready to believe that Poseidontel was the *Uprooter*; after all, they had been best friends at the *educatory*.

Ganyped objected to the idea, “Why do you make claims that the North is safe? Isn’t that where those pieces of debris from the Asterian Moon are plummeting?”

“An *enchantment* of protection, like a dome, has been placed over a point there. The mountain of ice is high, but if you climb — you will find safety,” Chordata insisted, gesturing her conviction with the tip of her wing.

“But only if they can make it through the city in time. Zualpha has already called forth the frogs,” Aves cautioned.

“Oh dear, what is one to do?” Chordata worried, biting the end of her wing. “Wait, the tunnels! There are tunnels in Ablach.”

“The ones leading from the well?” Aedon confirmed, recalling how he had met Zualpha and other Asterians in their secret caves hidden deep inside the Earth.

“If you dare, for they have changed much since the days of the Asterians,” she cautioned.

“Grave perils lurk in those places — a danger no man should take lightly,” Ganyped added.

“Do be careful and hurry before the frogs invade,” Chordata excitedly instructed, fluttering up and down while motioning them on their way.

The boy’s two mares looked at each other and then one of them asked, “What about the horses — should we go north too?”

“People and animals alike — will be protected,” Aves assured them.

The boys jumped back on the stallions who gave a “Neigh” before racing on their way, trotting quickly down the path. Once they joined up with the main road again, the crowds were mostly gone and the city was practically empty.

Where the town’s cobblestone roads came together, was a giant well. It was nearly a stadia (mile) in diameter and burrowed into the ground a hundred levels. Once, a grand spiral staircase encircled its perimeter taking travelers deep down inside — but after time, its architecture had begun to crumble. Adding to its demise, King Poseidontel once tossed a thunderbolt into the well

and this burned away any remaining wooden planks and balcony railings. Stone steps carved into the walls wound their way down without railings to catch a careless walker. One misstep, or slip on the wet stone, would surely send a hasty climber to his death.

Peering over the edge, the boys climbed down off the horses and the distant sound of croaking frogs in the well sent a chill down Ganyped's spine.

"Perhaps we should forgo this place and be on our way," he trembled, trying not to let on that he believed the story about the frogs — even though it was obvious that he was considering the matter. He tugged at Aedon's arm and snapped, "I'm not going in there."

"Chodata said it's the only escape from the next disturbance," Aedon huffed.

"It better not be deep," Ganyped trembled. "How far down must we go?"

"About seventy levels."

"How far?"

"Would you prefer to stay here and be consumed by the frogs?"

"We're coming too," one of the stallions billowed, frightened, but it was obvious there wasn't a mechanism to get them into the well.

A moment later Aedon suggested, "The two of you must gallop as fast as you can out of here. Shed free our gear and your saddles so that you may be light enough to escape in time."

Aedon helped pull the supplies off the horses and within minutes they were on their way toward the North. Ganyped dropped his jaw at their departure as everything had happened too fast for him to object.

Next, the boys tried to maneuver the eight sacks of supplies over the edge into the winding stairway of the well, but it was more than they could carry — even together. Quickly, they consolidated what they could into two satchels and then headed on down. The cry of frogs seemed to increase the further they went. With each

step and every croak their faith in the escape was challenged. The sounds told them they should be going in the opposite direction, but Aedon insisted the owls would not lead them astray.

Halfway down the well, Aedon almost lost his balance when a dirty man with bulging eyes popped out from behind a column and greeted them with a scratchy voice, “*Apa’hei!*”

“Who are you?” Aedon asked, stepping back.

“I am Bale and this is my friend Sickle,” he answered, looking around and finally discovering his depressed companion was staggering near the edge of the balcony further down the stairs. “Sickle! ... Sickle, we’ve got company. Come back up here.”

“Too late,” the drab man sighed with a long exhale. “If we jump now, we’ll hit the bottom and this misery will be all over in a moment.”

“You’re not contemplating — thinking of killing yourself?” Aedon asked surprised.

“Such mental unstableness,” Ganyped huffed, annoyed, gathering his wits while attempting to change direction and ignore the situation.

“What has brought about such despair?” Aedon asked, stopping Ganyped and inquiring with concern.

“Shhh — don’t tell anyone but he was reading those prophecy tales the other day,” Bale confessed. “Now he’s been going on about the dead coming back and the world ending. Made me so mad, I threw those papyrus into the depths of the well. Look what they’ve done —”

“Do you not see why the king outlawed those writings,” Ganyped reminded them. “He was wise in insisting they not be read anymore.”

“The prophecies weren’t meant to take hope but give it,” said Aedon. “All of these things could’ve been avoided.”

“We’ve got to get to safety,” Ganyped snapped, as the sound of croaking frogs increased. “Leave the hopeless to their dying.”

“Follow along with us,” Aedon suggested. “We’ve been told about a cave where we can all hide until the frogs are gone.”

"A new journey we are not taking!" Sickle shouted, turning around and facing them with his dark sunken eyes. "There is no safe place. Can't you hear the frogs? They are already here in this well. They are coming!"

Sickle turned back, looking down into the dark depths of the hole. Aedon and Ganyped continued on and soon after they left. Bale placed a hand on Sickles's shoulder and whispered into his ear, "Did you take note — that they carry sacks of food?"

It was a long climb down many levels, but Bale and Sickle followed the boys, keeping their distance. When the boys disappeared into a hidden door, they followed. It was a good thing that all of them went into the cave, because as soon as the door was closed, the well filled up with millions of frogs. There were so many of them that they poured out of the large hole in the ground like a geyser.

More frogs which once lived along the poisoned rivers, had no place to hop and they moved inland too. The land was covered by a swarm that started in Ablach, spread out west, across Ampheres and into Mestor. Others hopped to the East and covered the southern part of Evaemon, Mnesus, Autochatheu and even invaded the territories south of the Irem.

In his chambers at the Irem, King Poseidontel paced back and forth in his room. He was furious that his collection of crystal skulls was gone. Only a single crystal remained on a shelf. It was that of the amphibian which Ausethen had given him long ago at the *educatory*. It was this crystal that had given him the idea to turn the Asterians into like pieces of art. As he studied the piece of glass once again, he thought he heard it croak. Again he heard the sound, but it didn't seem to be coming from the ornament this time. Turning toward the doorway, he noticed a single live bullfrog flexing his vocal sac. When he took a step toward the creature, he was suddenly overwhelmed as hundreds of frogs suddenly appeared and leaped into his room. They began whirling around him like a python encircles its prey.

Swatting at the creatures, he marched over to where his mirror sat, pointed his scepter, and in Asterian he commanded:

*“Opero ahuc ahoverahaweyun u’d lemund,
Craeckyun nuwn khorofuro horzyudo
umpyluezo gyun hulund.”*

(Meaning: Fire of destruction I command, strike down these pests in my Irem.)

A spray of laser beams shot from the fork of his trident into the mirror, then multiplied, reflecting out and shooting at each frog. Suddenly their baked-skins secreted mucus which turned into a smoky-steam and smelled up the place.

Sayer's dark spirit circled around the mirror before swooping forward with a scowl of revenge, “You know who did this?”

“Ahteana and Zualpha must have known that the crystallization originated with this glass frog,” Poseidontel huffed, figuring it out. “And so they've decided to throw back at us by suffocating our Irem with this plague of amphibians.”

“If we had the *Scroll of Air...*” Sayer cried, with a pain of deepest want. “We must focus on that *Scroll*.”

“A week, maybe two, and it will be ours,” the king assured. “My spies are following Aedon. ... Andromache and her warriors will snatch away the *Scroll* the second he locates Gilgamoeh.”

“And what if Aedon is sidetracked or separated?” Sayer asked.

“He has a CS6 armband,” the king assured. “I can track anyone with the band.”

The deathly spirit breathed a sigh of pleasure, as he reentered the king's body, the two of them (together in Poseidontel's body) kicked the dead frogs aside on their way out.

Preceded by only the oil lamps they carried, Aedon and Ganyped trudged deeper into the tunnel which wound far beneath Ablach. Following them, far enough behind that they weren't noticed, crept Bale and Sickle. They shared a smaller flame and its dim flicker did little to show them the way. Occasionally Aedon or Ganyped would glance back when an out-of-place shadow momentarily caught their eye. Dripping stalagmites helped mask Bale and Sickle's footsteps.

"Hurry and stay low. We mustn't lose sight of them, else our prospect of their food will vanish," Bale whispered, tugging at Sickle's arm.

"Might be nice to have some food tonight," Sickle unemotionally sighed, "though I'm certain that we'll suffocate in this cave by morning."

When Aedon and Ganyped reached the station where all the tunnels converged, they set down their packs and began exploring the remaining cocoons. These egg-shaped vehicles were once used by Asterians to hold their hibernating bodies. Many of them had been turned into vehicles that could ride along cables in the dig. There was an entire underground network of passageways, though they were mostly in disrepair since the Asterian expulsion.

"We'll sleep in these cocoons for the night," Aedon announced, opening up one of the egg-shaped pods as he inspected the cables and track ahead and wondered if they could still be rigged for transportation.

With a shouting scream, Ganyped flipped one of the pods over and a withered-up figure fell out along with an awful stench. Stepping back he complained, "I'm not sleeping in one of these. ... They're tombs for the dead Asterians."

Looking around the area it was clear that a radiation of death had covered the area and not all of the cocoons were empty. Ignoring the horrific scene, Aedon climbed into his pod and shouted back, "Find yourself a vacant one or else sleep on the hard ground."

"I'll fair better over here by these boulders, I'm certain," he answered, settling down next to the supply sacks.

Soon they nodded off. After the night wore on, Bale and Sickle tired, watching from the sloped-cut-limestone they hid behind. The two of them snuck closer, within reach of the satchels. Bale grabbed the first sack. Sickle took the next one and as he turned to leave, its flap flopped open and a couple metal pans clanged together as they fell out.

Startled awake, Ganyped jumped up and started after them, "Stop! Stop it you thieves!"

No one made it more than a few podes away because an awful fluttering sound stopped them in their tracks with fear. It was a loud cackle which sounded like a cross between a satisfied witch and the howl of a wolf. Aedon heard it too and jumped out of his pod to light a lamp nearby. As the firelight warmed across the station, their faces turned a cold pale. Standing in front of Bale and Sickle were a couple of pukwudgies. As the light spread, it revealed dozens more behind them.

"Run!" Bale screamed, dropping the food, turning, and taking off.

A group of wudgies immediately dove into the bag and began to consume its contents. Sickle held tightly to the other bag as he stepped back slowly. As the creatures approached quicker, Sickle threw his bag at them and darted off after Bale. While all the commotion was going on, Aedon found four empty cocoons and wired them up to the track.

Having been in these parts once before, Aedon had a rough idea about where each tunnel led. He knew how the system worked and called after the others, "Quick, get inside the pods! They'll take us through the tunnels."

The army of pukwudgies was crawling after them like a swarm of angry wasps. Some of them flew — most ran.

Sickle's soft spoken complaints evolved into loud criticism, "We should've jumped in the well and killed ourselves when we had the chance — now we'll be eaten alive."

Into the first pod Aedon leaped, secured the hatch and swooshed down the track. Ganyped followed, taking the second pod. Before Bale and Sickle could return to the area, one of the flying pukwudgies reached the station's platform and snatched the next pod. He maneuvered himself inside the best he could, squeezing his wings about so the top would close — at least part way. Moments later the creature's egg was gone, down the track, chasing after the first two boys.

With only one mounted pod left, Bale and Sickle argued over who was going to take it while swatting away pukwudgies at the same time. Bale insisted that he should get the pod since Sickle was always carrying on about wanting to die. But that idea came to an end when one of the creatures attacked Bale and while the two of them wrestled on the ground, Sickle stole the last pod, leaving his friend behind.

Once he was inside, wudgies flew on top of it and others tried to rock it off the track. Inside, Sickle found the lever to make it run. When he yanked on it, the pod zipped out of the station knocking away any wudgies that were still clinging to it. His moment of triumph went unnoticed as he quickly turned to pouting with worry about how he was doomed to fall off the track or crash into some unseen thing.

Now the track pushing into the tunnel was led by Aedon. Following close behind was Ganyped, who was still plugging his nose because of the stench. Next a pukwudgie tracked after them and finally Sickle's pod, further away, rolled down the cable. The pukwudgie was licking his chops in anticipation of some meat for *fifth-meal* and he increased the speed of his cocoon, moving in so close to Ganyped that he began to bump the rear of his shell.

In recent days there had been many earthquakes and while some seemed a bit trite at the surface, underground, they were much larger and created many gorges and deep ravines. Aedon could see that they were approaching a canyon ahead. It must have been a very deep rift, reaching into the depths of the abyss, because the glow of molten rock illuminated the tunnel's opening ahead.

The cables above the pod soon disappeared and he was running only on the two rails below his egg.

Approaching the opening, Aedon yanked on the lever to stop his egg, but it was too late. The tracks had split and now his pod shot through the tunnel with a trail of sparks blazing from the friction of the floor below. When he reached the canyon the pod flew out of the tunnel's burrow, into the air. Leaping across the opening he shot safely into where the tunnel picked back up on the other side. Mangled cables and track caught the cocoon and brought it to a stop like a net catching a shark.

Ganyped's pod shot out next, he opened the top of it, and that caused it to lose momentum. He could see it wasn't going to make it, so he jumped. The pod crashed right below the tunnel's reentrance, but Ganyped managed to tumble into the burrow with only a few scrapes and bruises.

When the tunnel spit out the pukwudgie's pod, the creature bolted out of it and shot up into the air circling the canyon long enough to witness the pod being swallowed up below. Just when it seemed like the beast had vanished, the sound of loud flapping wings grew.

"He's coming back," Ganyped shouted.

Aedon still had some strawberries left in his satchel and quickly yanked them out, hoping the wudgie might feed on them, thus giving them a head start to escape, "We'll give him this fruit —"

Aedon and Ganyped moved around to the back side of his pod. It was a good thing they moved because suddenly another cocoon came crashing into the tunnel. When the dust cleared and its hatch opened, Sickle stepped out. His hair looked like it had been electrocuted and bruises covered his body. He ripped a couple holes in his toga when the cloth caught on the managed wires as he stumbled over to Aedon and Ganyped.

"I've broken my neck, I can't move," he exaggerated, continuing into the tunnel. "Do something — my back is certainly fractured."

“I hope you broke more than your neck,” Ganyped scolded. “You stole our food and stirred up a nest of pukwudgies that almost killed us.”

Two jagged wings darted forward and hovered outside the reentrance of the tunnel. The pukwudgie was back. Aedon quickly threw the bag of berries into the doorway of the tunnel, “Here you go. Here’s some food. … Now leave us be.”

The pukwudgie was just about to land on the edge of the opening when he saw the strawberries. Unbeknown to Aedon at the time, pukwudgies do not like strawberries. As a matter of fact, they are downright frightened of them. The second the wudgie saw the red fruit, he let out an awful screech and took off in the opposite direction.

“We’ll have to walk now,” Aedon announced, grabbing back his satchel and leading the way into the dark hole. “If my calculations are close, there should be a supply bay a few stadia ahead.”

“*Pegs and bolts* supplies, or the kind of supplies you can eat?” Ganyped asked, snapping off a piece of the broken cable and winding it up like he was doing something helpful.

“The bays were once well stocked with both,” said Aedon. “When we get there, be careful what you put in your mouth, the provisions that Asterians feast on, don’t always digest well in the stomachs of humans.”

“Most certainly we’ll eat the wrong staple and die,” Sickle whined, biting his nails. “Fate has already declared our death.”

It seemed like they were walking in the dark all day. The floor under their feet started to make a crunching sound and all three of them wondered what they were walking on, while exchanging puzzled looks. Ganyped began taking slower steps, trying different spots, but the entire floor was covered.

“The path we walk on is made neither of stone nor dirt,” Sickle grumbled, slowly dragging his sandals behind.

“Keep moving, we haven’t time to delay,” Aedon snapped, wondering the same thing even though there was no way he was

WELL OF SORROWS

going to lower the oil lamp down for a closer inspection, in case Ganyped or Sickle might become frightened and run back the other way.

PAPYRUS FOUR

THE LONG TUNNEL

When they reached the platform, Aedon used the flame in his small lamp to ignite the other fixtures at the stop. Their light revealed a large station fully stocked with barrels of supplies and food. Candelabras hung from the gothic arches carved into the underground cave. The cables and track were intact, and there was a single pod off to the side which gave hope that at least one or two of them might find the way out. Their awe of its grandeur faded when they looked down and noticed that the dock and supply barrels were covered in dead locust. Sprinkled on top of the grasshoppers were flies. Not all of them had died yet and the light wakened a handful of the pests. Sickle and Ganyped tired after swatting at them to no avail. Aedon tore a piece of the lining out of the pod and used it as a veil over his face. The other two did the same after he tossed them torn pieces of the material.

THE LONG TUNNEL

Ganyped pried open a barrel of flour and found that the top of it was covered in black silt. When Aedon brought the lamp closer, they could see decaying insects covering their prize.

"A pestilence has killed everything in this place," Sickle whined. "Certainly the food here is poisoned and cannot be eaten."

"Locust and flies don't live in caves this far in," Aedon pondered.

"They've migrated — escaping from some threat above."

Sickle looked up at the ceiling, "Oh dead seaweed, what could ever be going on up there? We're better off to die down here from the looks of this situation."

"There might be more food at the galley further in," Aedon suggested, leading them toward a wooden door.

Together the three of them worked at prying the door down. Inside they discovered tins of corn, meal, and cereal which were unaffected by the dire situation. Ganyped explored barrels of wine and Sickle dug into a tin of rice cakes. The three of them cooked up a feast and they would've thrown a party had Sickle not been in a slump of melancholy — which brought the entire mood down.

The next morning they rigged up the last pod. Aedon pried the top off of it so the three of them could ride in it together. Ganyped wired the base of the pod to the top line, so the egg-shaped pod (which was now sliced in half) could still reach the upper wires and travel down the track without flying off. Sickle helped by re-filling their satchels with supplies.

The *crystal-capacitor* on the back of the pod started and Aedon captained the ship leading it slowly down the line in case they should stumble upon something unexpected. After a couple of hourglasses they came to a fork and the tunnel split into two different directions. An argument mounted regarding which way to go. Ganyped insisted they take the trail which reflected a flicker of light against its walls. Aedon was adamant that they stay on the main track since he had experience traveling that way before. But the long days spent underground wore on Ganyped. It was more than he could take and he bolted out of the egg.

"Go ahead — travel through the dangerous passage. You'll wander until you've lost count of the moon-cycles," Ganyped shouted. "Where does your route lead anyway ... back to the Irem? That's weeks away, months if your cocoon breaks down and you have to walk again. ... I'm getting out of these tunnels now."

"There are other stations along the way with supplies if we stay on the main route," Aedon brought up, placing his hand on the lever that would restart the egg.

"Dead locusts do not cover this way," Ganyped pointed out, shining his lamp low. "Your direction is bathed in decaying creatures. ... Sickle, are you coming? ... Come with me unless you wish for death."

Sickle looked from one tunnel to the next and mumbled, "Death? ... Yes, we should die — there is not a reason to go on any further."

Coming to the illogical conclusion that it was his fate to die, he decided to stay on Aedon's route since it looked more deathly. Ganyped grabbed his satchel with a huff, and took off down the forked tunnel by himself.

Sickle softly sung to himself:

*"Here we shall all die today.
Rest my soul and life will lay.
In the darkness one cannot see,
not a window, wall or gate.
Come now, come quietly and take me,
for the Death Reaper do I wait."*

Aedon and Sickle looked at each other with sadness. A few moments later from Ganyped's tunnel, the light began to flicker violently. The sound of flapping wings could be heard followed by a loud screech. Ganyped yelled, screamed, scuffled — and then the sounds calmed down.

"Pukwudgies!" Aedon realized, throwing the cocoon's gear forward. "We better get out of here — fast!"

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A couple of wudgies soon were on their tail flying after them in the tunnel. Aedon did his best to move the egg faster, but without the top cover, the cables Ganyped had rigged were beginning to spark as they wore thin.

One of the wudgies landed on the back end of the egg. Sickle, certain that they were doomed, shouted, "I give up." He raised his hands to surrender, and when he did this, his fist accidentally hit the creature in the jaw. The beast fell back and when he tried to regain his balance, his wing tangled in the *crystal-capacitor* chopping it up like a frog in a blender.

Another wudgie gained momentum and as Aedon sped up the cocoon, the friction on the rigged cords finally burned through. All of a sudden the cords snapped, the lines above cracked, and they whipped into the air wrapping around the pukwudgie. The flying beast fell to the ground, bound with wires like a python curls around its prey.

The cocoon shot off the track and skidded along the edge of the tunnel for quite a while. It hit a bump, launched through the air, then came to a stop, tossing its last two riders out into the dark tunnel. After a few moans and checking for broken bones, of which there were none, they gathered together their gear and continued down the path.

"The basin of oil from our lamp has spilled," revealed Aedon. "We must conserve the remaining fuel and reduce the wick."

"And the light of the flame," Sickle added.

"So much has changed so quickly," Aedon reminisced, trying not to trip over the track with his sandals. "The days of flourishing wealth, when the skies were blue and oranges grew the size of my head have vanished. Life was so simple and sweet then."

"So right you are," Sickle growled, lifting his head with interest for the first time.

"The food supply has diminished while asteroids plummet and burn crop fields ... poison the water..."

Sickle quickly fed into the negative comments, “Insects breed pestilence and people are sick and dying everywhere. The lives of humans are on the verge of obsolescence because of those Asterians. I am glad most of them are gone.”

“Have you heard the claims made by the owls?” asked Aedon, “Do you really think that Ahteana has returned to Earth, and Zualpha raised from the dead?”

“No way,” Sickle responded, hanging his head. “Those claiming to be them have to be imposters.”

“But the Asterians were charged with keeping peace on Earth —”

“Those two, claiming to be prophets, are raining destruction wherever they go. ... Another reason we’re better off dead. Every hour another asteroid rains down on every glimpse of hope.”

“Stop it, now, already,” Aedon begged, feeling his way as the tunnel began an inward curve.

Sickle defended his opinion, “You were friends with Ahteana, weren’t you? ... If Ahteana had really come back, wouldn’t she have sought you out and made herself known? After all the help you gave her, I’d think you’d be the first person she would contact.”

“Perhaps. ... She’s probably looking for me right now. I bet she just doesn’t know where I am.”

“With all the powers and magic she had — she can’t find you?” Sickle scoffed.

Aedon’s walk slowed as he remembered how Ahteana had looked in on him and guided him many times before by using the amulet he wore around his neck. He still wore the globe-shaped object and clutched it in his hand, wishing that one more time it might guide him through the darkness. She could easily find him if she wanted, but the bluish hue it once illuminated had not returned and it remained cold and lifeless. She surely would’ve come back for him by now. Bitterness began to build in his heart as he listened to Sickle’s grumblings.

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His thoughts drifted — then he angrily refocused them back to his purpose: to find his father Gilgamoeh, bring him back to Atlantis, and restore him to the throne so he could return the land to its greatness. But now, even that idea seemed hopeless as Aedon was stuck in a tunnel walking in the opposite direction away from Bashan, his plan derailed at its most critical moment. While he and Sickle searched for a way out, Poseidontel and Ausethen were increasingly sending spies, warriors, and large channels of troops toward the North.

With no hope of reaching Gilgamoeh in time and with Ahteanah having forgotten him, he felt like he was left out, unimportant, and didn't matter anymore. He began telling himself that his own life made no difference in the world. Almost silently and without realizing it, Aedon fell back and soon it was Sickle who was leading the way. Aedon's heart became heavy and so did his arms. It seemed like a burden to carry the small oil lamp he had.

"I can carry the lamp for a time," Sickle volunteered, taking the light and reducing the wick more. "Our journey doth drag on — endlessly. We would be wise to reduce the flame and walk in the darkness for awhile, lest we run out of oil."

Together they went deeper into the blackness with barely a spark to light the way.

Sickle whined on in his depressed way, "My sinuses have become stuffed-up and caved in on my bone like the walls of this tunnel closing in on us."

Even though they had barely moved a *pode* (foot), their mental state deteriorated and Aedon thought he couldn't breathe, "Pains stab at my chest and I bemoan this predicament we have come to know."

With sunken shoulders to match his droopy countenance, he thought he couldn't go on any more, but a glimpse of light ahead caught his eye. He knew they were in reach of the next station and there they could replenish.

"Must we go on, when we can curl up here and prepare to die?" moaned Sickle.

"It is a short walk — there we can rest."

Each step shot a spike of pain in Aedon's joints. He felt dizzy and thought Sickle might be right — that they might not make it. The two of them had become so dejected, feeding on each other's negative talk, that everything became a mental chore propagating toward physically destroying them.

Alas, they reached the station. Tubs tossed on their sides and broken crates gave evidence that any supplies there had already been pilfered. Dirty, hungry, starving and deprived, the two of them plopped down and leaned against a couple of empty barrels. The oil in their lamp was almost gone. The two of them looked at the wick as it went out, came back on, then flickered, undecided if there was enough fuel to keep going or not.

Sickle reached into his pocket and pulled out two small vials, "I've been saving these — you know — for the end. One was set aside and kept for Bale, but since he is with us no more — I suppose you can have his."

Taking the tube, Aedon asked, "What is it? What's in this?"

"Powder. The Powder-of-Death," Sickle explained, holding his up, ready to pour it in his mouth. "It acts quickly — before your tongue can taste its flavor — or your throat can swallow its contents."

"I don't know," Aedon drearily sighed. "I'm not sure we're to that spot yet."

"Of course we are," Sickle snapped, almost angry. "Look around ... nothing here but darkness. ... I can't go on any further and I know ... neither can you."

"But we must believe that help is around the next corner," Aedon pleaded. "For if we think not, then we will fail to go on."

"You journey on as if you will find those you seek — but even if we were to leave this place, you would find that they too have been wiped from the Earth. Many an asteroid has pelted the

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glaciers and even those whose abodes were not destroyed — most certainly have died from the poisonous gasses.”

“My father — Areshia,” Aedon gasped, realizing that they too were possibly dead already.

“Rather than listening to a couple mad owls, I’d pay attention to the reports,” Sickle continued, making it up. “Many informants confirm the glaciers are gone … and with them all life. The truth must be realized. … We’ve traveled for weeks, maybe months. … Malnourished and in deep pain, we haven’t seen but beings of death along the way. … Here we are … and not even half way to the exit, in this space where we sit. …”

“Gilgamoeh is gone … there is little reason to go on,” Aedon mumbled to himself.

“The only creature that has escaped this place is — hope. Here it is that the wise, like us, must face realism — we will make it no further. … It makes sense to take this vial as if it were the bread of our last meal. Tonight we will sleep well and when tomorrow does not come for us, neither will its blight.”

“Wretched is the mind you speak from and the one you speak to. Making such decisions in the worthless state of mind we are, may be as despicable as the desolation we seek to abandon,” Aedon cried.

Silently the two sat and worried as the lamp next to them sputtered and finally burned out. Covered in darkness, only the sound of a dripping stalagmite in the distance kept them company. Its soothing rhythm hypnotized them. Aedon prayed for a miracle, he hoped for a sign from Ahteara, and he begged that fate would show him how to carry on. It was his darkest moment and he felt that if all the forces of the universe continued to shut their voices in silence, and leave him buried in the tunnel, then indeed fate had chosen his tomb.

The darkness played tricks on his mind. Even the walls dug from rock moved to form images. Then two voices emerged in his mind. The first likeness was Korsheipa the Asterian, of which, he quickly dismissed as a hallucination — certainly she wouldn’t still

be nearby after the way he shunned her. The second speaker rose from the shadow of a dead locust, speaking in a raspy voice which dug up his past mistakes.

"Of courss, they've all forgotten youss," the insect whispered. *"Sscertainly yasss can't expect them to accscept yousss now, after yousss pledged alegiancsss to Posss-eidontel."*

Then a female, who sounded but a little like Korsheipa, crept into his mind and tried to offer encouragement, "Don't listen to him, he speaks not the truth."

"You were bessst buddiesss with the king, were you not?"

"Pay not attention," the female voice pleaded.

"Yousss wasss the one who helped him sssteal the ssscrollsss."

"Listen not," Korsheipa begged again. Whether her spirit was present could be determined not, for the place was filled with thick darkness.

"You ssstole the ssscroll of air and gave it to him ... Yousss led him to the ssscroll of fire and then hid the truth from the Asssteriansss. ... They knowsss what youss have done. ... Sssickle is right ... youss ssshould end it all. ... Take the poss-tion and ssleep tonight."

He reached for the vial, but again he thought he saw the scolding finger of Korsheipa. With a huff he shut his eyes trying to escape the ghosts of the Asterians and others that haunted his memory. He grumbled with a yearning for the life he once knew. How those grains of happy times flew so quickly through the hourglass of life, he could not explain.

"I mustn't rehash the indiscretions of yesteryear nor ache for its fancy times, but somehow find a glimmer of hope," unconvincingly he told himself. Yet while he laid his head down to slumber, he begged, "If by morning some spot of light shows itself, then I will take it to be a sign and follow, but if only darkness fills this place, then perhaps Sickle has spoken wisely."

The cold darkness thickened, blanketing the boys into a sound sleep. The morning light, hidden from their place, welcomed

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Death's arms ready to invite them in. For miracles in the enchanted land seemed to have fled long ago — yet sometimes they still showed up for those who believed.

PAPYRUS FIVE

STARBEAM POOL

When Aedon woke up the next morning, the beam of a soft light indicated an off-spurt path further inside. Excitedly he jumped up to greet this beam of hope which surely must be the sign he sought. He shook Sickle, who was still lying down, and excitedly hollered at him about how they had been saved — but it was too late. His friend laid on the ground, cold, his skin a bluish color with an empty vial still in his hand. He had ended his life the night before. Falling to the ground Aedon wept, realizing that his last companion was gone. Cuddling Sickle's body, he rocked it like a child does a doll, anguished that all of his companions had succumbed to death. Jumping up mad, he kicked the rocky wall with his sandal, hard. It scraped his toe, but he couldn't feel the physical pain because his emotional state was in such agony.

The light he had asked for shone brightly from around an offshoot beyond the supply dock. He was certain this was made

possible by some force of grace that had heard his cry. But he was hesitant to step into the brightness and he cursed it for taking so long to appear. He questioned why it had not come in time to save his companions. Stepping around the bend, stalagmites and stalactites greeted him with a glow of bright colors, illuminated by a spot of starlight peeking through the ceiling of the cavern. Stretching out in front of him for dozens of stadia was the largest lake he had ever seen, and certainly the largest ever found beneath the ground.

Not far away was a series of cables with bucket-like mechanisms attached. They plunged from the surface above deep down into the water. Motionless, they barely swayed. They resembled the containers inside the water towers Areshia had once designed for Gilgamoeh's Vineyard. The line of pails hanging between the ropes stretched upward, like a ladder waiting to be climbed.

"Even the darkness is not dark to you," Aedon exclaimed, like he was speaking to an Asterian nearby. "The night shines like day and blindness flees. For though I appear alone, I am certain that a host must occupy a dimension nearby, and that you follow and protect me for a reason I know not why."

A tall translucent figure morphed into full physical form. Korsheipa turned down folds in her flowing white gown and held out her hand, "We were delayed and battled many to pass here. Had this been a test set before you, surely you would've passed."

"And what if I failed and had succumbed to Sickle's temptation?" madly he cried.

"Things in the past — we mustn't debate," she scolded. "For if an outcome took some other course — then another messenger, if from the stones themselves, would have come. ... This you shall soon see. Your experience has brought you to a higher level and drawn you closer to your destiny. And though I risk revealing too much, it has removed the cloud of blindness from your eyes."

Aedon gave his hand to Korsheipa and they stepped onto the lake. The two of them walked on its water like it was a sheet of

glass. Brighter the cavern grew, and soon the far away rocks across the river revealed a city carved into its stone, extending out across the opposite shores of the lake. And though the entire place was underground, its walls stretched a hundred levels toward the ceiling of cones. Its rocks were covered with trees and greenery not seen before, reminiscent of the Jurassic era. Golden and white in color, its arches warmly greeted and its waterfalls gently sparkled.

Aedon thought it would take all day to reach the opposite shore. No sooner had that thought entered his mind, then suddenly he found himself passing between majestic gates made of crystal. They parted open to a path where he stepped off the water onto the docks of the shore.

He started up a winding staircase and when he looked back, Korsheipa was gone. He continued anyway and crossed a bridge which spanned a half stadia where a waterfall quietly trickled beneath. Leading into a gazebo which overlooked the lake, a lady in white stood, back toward him, facing outward. Her long flowing white hair seemed to glow and even before she turned around, Aedon knew her identity.

“*Voerdu!*” he cried out in an Asterian greeting, rushing forward, then stopping to remind himself that he was still mad at her. “I had heard that you came back. How many a month has passed by?”

The lady in white was Ahteana and suspecting he was miffed, she asked, “You are unhappy that I am here ... or unhappy that I have chosen not to reveal myself until this appointed time?”

“I don’t understand,” he scoffed. “I took a great risk to rescue you and the others ... helping you escape these lands. ... You have returned in the most unsettling of times, where plagues and destruction follow your every step.”

“There is a time to come and a season to go. The things that have happened and the events that will occur — determine the tide I must follow. Before you, ripples the Starbeam Pool surrounded by villages where hundreds of Asterians reside. Above this place you have seen destruction and ruin. Plagues that befall the Earth come

not from any beast or being, but are levied upon the dwellers who, in their heart and with their actions, sought to destroy that which King Yaswhen created. My previous departure was only to draw attention out from these secret places. For in doing so, those who remained were not discovered."

"These parts have remained hidden and safe. Why have you come back, why now?" Aedon asked, stepping closer more calmly this time.

"All that you see from the depths below, the lands which form the continents, and to the heights of every mountain peak, soon shall be enveloped in the shadows. I have come to seal this place and protect it for a short while longer. The water is already rising now," she explained, gesturing toward the sea which had turned from a calm sheet of blue glass into a troubled pool.

"For how long will the waters rise?"

"Soon the *Uprooter* and his besmirched creations must be washed clean. And in this battle to come, I fear for its results, for I cannot see into its end."

"But who would make quarrel against the mighty Poseidontel?" asked Aedon.

"Even now the young prepare to take refuge at Mount Evaemon," she continued, ignoring his questions as if they didn't matter now. "For this place, like others, shall be overtaken by the rivers of the deep."

"I see the sadness that covers your face," concerned, he said. "For all the days and years you have given hope to me and many others, I wish that for a day I could return a chance of hope for you."

"Some trials are set before our paths to strengthen us, while other calamities are meant to change the course of history. I have no aspiration except for these."

"Ahteana, we can stop all of this," he eagerly told her. "I am certain of the location where the *Scroll of Air* rests. You can use it to reset everything back to how it once was."

Sternly she looked at him because, while his intentions were well-meaning, her fondness of Aedon had always been a temptation and she knew she mustn't succumb to such in this most critical hourglass. Aedon did not understand this and thought he owed an explanation so he began to tell that which he knew.

"I remember what you told me. You said that you would not ask me to look for the *Scroll* ... that such a task was not appointed to me. But I have found it, nonetheless. I am certain."

She answered, "I did not ask you to seek out the *Scroll* because I could see that you already knew where it was. It was only after you stopped looking for it that you were able to see that the knowledge of its location had always been with you. Trust not what you think you know, for the *Scroll* has a will of its own. It can see into the future and takes measure from unlikely sources to hide itself. ... All that I have asked of you, is that which is already in your heart."

"Then if you knew ..." he couldn't make any reason about it all, so he continued to spew out his own wishes. "Certainly, you would desire that Gilgamoeh return to the throne, that is why you had Telopps deliver the tube to him."

"The cylinder must only be opened and unlocked — when King Yaswhen returns," she stated, almost hollering at him as if he were in trouble.

With a sigh, Aedon eagerly thought he had figured out the answer, "Areshia's key. Yes she has the *globeaky*."

"The key which unlocks its dole remains hidden and has not yet found its way."

"Oh, no Poseidontel took the key and Areshia has turned her allegiance over to ... the king," Aedon confessed, not hearing nor understanding her words. "It is with a burden of utmost sorrow that which I did witness. Certain as the sun hides itself today, Areshia has abandoned us and succumbed to the other ways. For I saw her pledge —"

"The eyes of man may be easily deceived," said Ahteana, grasping his arm and running her other hand up it, finally

stopping at the place where his CX6 armband grasped. "There are many who have stepped aside in these dim days, yet only for a time. A single moment of weakness can flood one's path, turning it into a difficult mire to navigate. And just the same, it may solidify other places on the road which lead to one's destiny."

He shook with fear ashamed that he had succumbed to a plan to go along with Poseidontel's Middag. He wished more than ever that the armband was gone; he never wanted it in the first place.

"You are sorry for what you have done, I can see it in your eyes," she continued. "These times have brought great grief and trials upon you, as well as to many others. Faith which shines as bright as these stalagmites can heal and make you whole."

She stepped back and profoundly commanded:

*"Epurco ahuc aunurk apduto khertyun hetyuno,
Slomuto khertyun gunnor ahurm ahvruco."*

(Meaning: "*Force of darkness upon this place, remove this man's arm brace.*")

With a loud crack, a stalagmite broke free from the ceiling and plummeted downward, crashing into Aedon's arm. A flash of light disintegrated the CX6 band and Aedon was free from its hold. Aedon's smile beamed brighter than the golden arch he stood beneath.

After a time of exploring the village, where he raked through scrolls in a magnificent library, visited the Asterian Art Gallery, and partook of several delicious meals, he went to find Ahteana to offer gratitude. At the central gazebo where she once stood, he could see what appeared to be a glass shield slowly lifting between the lake and the city of rock. The water on the other side was also rising. Ahteana was nowhere to be found.

"But where is Ahteana?" he asked. "What does she want me to do?"

Ahteana's voice echoed in his head, repeating, "I did not ask you to seek out the *Scroll* because I could see that you already knew where it was. All that I have asked of you, is that which is already in your heart."

With a grunt he asked himself what she was trying to say and then he questioned, "What could possibly already be in my heart — why the only thing I ever really wanted, was to find my father. Could this be what she meant?"

Was there a reason or purpose yet to be revealed as to why he was constantly driven to seek out and find his relative? With Gilgamoeh keeping the *Scroll of Air* and Poseidontel holding Areshia's globeaky, could his role in the future have something to do with getting these two artifacts together? For whatever reason, known or unknown, past and forgotten or yet to be discovered, the burning desire deep down inside had been rekindled. Like a spark leaping in a forest fire, he reengaged his entire being, more determined than ever to seek out his father — staying on path — onward.

Quickly he made his way to where the siphon led up and out of the cavern. Climbing up the ropes, he used the attached barrels like they were prongs on a ladder. Looking back down, he saw the rising water from the lake begin to spill into the opening where he had come from. Its gentle waves rocked Sickle's body back and forth, before sucking it into the tunnel.

PAPYRUS SIX

COTTAGE OF SECRETS

Pulling on the adjacent cables and jumping on buckets that lifted, Aedon made his way up the siphon. Water spilling from the pails gave him a much needed bath. With a drenching wet toga he jumped off the lines when they came around inside the siphon. After squeezing the water from his clothes he opened the door where the outside greeted him with a barren land. Two water towers neighboring the first and familiar fences gave evidence that he had been in this place before. Areshia had once given him a tour of the siphons, and the broken fences stretching into the horizon once were covered with grapes. He knew that he was in the hills, half way between Ablach and the Irem, known as Gilgamoeh's Vineyard.

The lush vines had dried up or been devoured by animals, locust, pests, and other pestilence. Stretching toward the horizon, broken fences and twigs wound through a muddy valley its sky was

covered with a blanket of brownish-yellow clouds that cast a dark shadow over the field.

A trickle of smoke from a cobblestone chimney alerted Aedon that someone still occupied the cabin. He rushed forward hoping to find his great-grandfather, Methouslan, who once lived there. The swings and furniture on the back porch were in disarray and dangerous gaps opened up between the floorboards. In case wanderers had overtaken the place, he cautiously surveyed the area circling around to the front porch. A man wearing a drab tan jacket sat on its edge with his feet dangling over the side. His head nodded as he was falling asleep, unaware of the surroundings. He woke up startled when Aedon approached.

“Grandfather Methouslan!” Aedon cried in excitement, recognizing the receding gray hair and long beard.

“*Yur, here,*” Methouslan said in a daze. “*When'd ya git here? ... We've all been deceived ... completely lied to ... that's what dey say, though I'm not sure.*”

“Let's get you inside,” said Aedon, helping the old man up and handing him his walking stick, which had once been a scepter when he was Prince Lord ages ago. “I'll fix *ya* a cup of hot *nectarberry.*”

“Aedon, my dear boy, *yuv* made it back here — seemingly untouched,” the man continued. “Thought *yud* be consumed by some plague or sorrow by now. Such a nice surprise ... given *da* all *abouts dats* been occurring in these parts.”

“It is wonderful to see you,” he responded. “Much has happened since my last visit ...”

Methouslan led him into the dining area where a hearth flickered a yellow glow as it warmed the area. The benches which had once encircled the long wooden table were pushed up against one of the walls. A mountain of broken scrolls, torn papyruses, and burnt pages covered them. A pale-skinny man with long-wiry hair mulled over the table studying sections of papyrus arranged like pieces of a puzzle trying to fit together.

Aedon recognized him and rushed forward with a proper greeting, “*Apa’hei!* I am so honored to meet you. Our paths did cross once, but ... I thought I would never get the chance again to meet — the great artist and astronomer — Trigonomy himself.”

“Quiet now,” Trig ordered moving one of the papers to another area on the table. “I think I’ve finally got enough bits here to piece together some of the information.”

“He once was King Poseidontel’s closest advisor,” Methouslan interjected.

“My journey to Library Tower didn’t produce all the astronomical charts I sought,” Trigonomy answered with a tone of scorn, looking up at Aedon for the first time.

“The library was destroyed, its walls crumbled, and its contents pilfered,” said Aedon, confused. “You know this already.”

“When a curious star began to separate and its child veered off into an insensible course, I had a hunch. I gathered my belongings up and quietly sailed there, hoping to all in the heavens, that I would disprove my deepest fear.”

“What could be worse than all that has already transpired,” Aedon sighed, sitting down next to Trig and then politely getting up again so the elder Methouslan could rest on the bench.

Trig continued his chronicle, “I dug through the rubble and came across a few writings which remained intact, though not in entirety. For weeks I gathered up the scrolls and pieces that might be pertinent to the subject matter I was researching. As I studied more, these words began to piece together a story of cautious proportions.”

“You said you were tracking a star,” Aedon brought up again, waiting for Trigonomy to tell more about that connection.

“Don’t need no charts to *guess me* whose in *dat* star,” Methouslan huffed, clunking his cane to the floor as if it were an exclamation point. “King Yaswhen — he is traveling back.”

“It can’t be told for sure,” Trig scolded. “Most of the charts were burned in the fire... But these ones here, if I reverse their

order, the current star — does appear to be following a similar path.”

“Yaswhen is traveling on a star?” Aedon asked confused, yet with a reborn hope that the ancient stories were true.

“So it has been said,” snapped Trigonomy, opening another scroll with sketched artwork. “King Yaswhen and Prince Lord Antioch left on a *Valix* and ascended into the sky. Up there they took off — perhaps on a planetoid or the tail of a comet.”

“Dey setted off to find and prepare us all a better place ... *ta* live, they *cud* see the planet was dying ... or *gonna* die — as it appears to be now,” Methouslan added.

“These writings tracked their comet until it disappeared when it crossed the path of the star furthest North — but now it shows itself again.”

“*Seamuck*, what if it really is Yaswhen,” Aedon exclaimed. At first, like Trigonomy he hoped that he was wrong — he wasn’t prepared for the King to come back now.

“It isn’t the right time for Yaswhen to come back,” Trig snapped. “King Poseidontel certainly would never yield to Yaswhen. Like the Asterian moon, he’d send thunderbolts up to greet —”

He stopped, sure he had said too much to Aedon.

“I suppose it might even be expected that King Yaswhen would return. He did say he was coming back didn’t he?”

“Either way, be he dead or alive, this might be his comet passing near to us,” Trigonomy grunted with worry, folding the charts closed.

“Anyone who bet on things staying mostly the same — would win a wager — I suspect,” Aedon responded with disappointment. “Though, I’d like to fantasize that King Yaswhen would march in and restore my father Gilgamoeh to the throne.”

“After such a journey, my dear Aedon, he and Antioch will be worn out and aged.”

Methouslan interjected, “Dese scrolls all talk about Yaswhen’s return and the End of Days. ... They sound an *awful-*

lots likes what's been ... Here, ya read for yerself. ... This one here..."

Aedon picked up the papyrus Methouslan pointed at and read:

*"You shall know that this is the beginning of sorrows,
When the sun fades and darkness fills most hours.
Watch in the North where the moon reaches a river bed,
The Athabasca and Nile rivers will turn to blood red.
Ten plagues begin with your lands covered in frogs,
lice and locust,
Harvest, crops, and fruits will they devour
with no mercy in focus."*

"Does sound like a few of the disasters we've seen in these parts," Aedon admitted.

"This section over here — that I'm working on now, details things — about the king," Trigonomy hesitantly added before picking up a couple different torn pieces and reading:

*"Upon the throne where the Uprooter will sit,
The skies will never rest, not even a short bit.
For he will bind all men by the upper of their arm,
And those who do not bow to him, he will harm.
For those who turned away and to him they bow,
Much pestilence, sorrows, and plagues I will allow.
Fields and fruits will be burned up and blow away,
Waters will rise up and rain down for many a day."*

"Der are those who say *da* verses describe dese CX6-armbands," Methouslan coughed, lowering his voice to a whisper.

Aedon placed his hand over the other arm where the band he once wore had left its mark.

"You might get yourself one of those extended-sleeve togas," Trigonomy remarked, noticing the scar.

"No one wears those things anymore," Aedon grumbled.

"Its fashion has returned — among those who do not adorn a CX6 band."

Wishing to deny that this was true, and wanting to draw attention away from his arm (which they were all noticing), he quickly tried to change the topic, "Are you saying that these writings suggest that King Poseidontel is the *Uprooter*?"

Methouslan straightened up, "My grandson, Faeraud, who now calls himself Poseidontel, was born into the line of the Prince Lords. There are many other writings by the prophets that profoundly state the *Uprooter* will not come from this lineage."

"But we have all been deceived," Trigonomy alerted them, with a pause, unsure if he should feed them the very theory he wished to ignore, but revealed the situation anyway. "One night in the halls of the Irem, I lingered. As I rested outside a man's chambers, I heard voices and peeked inside where Ambassador Telopps did sit in front of a mirror and carried on a conversation."

"You've told *this* tale before," Methouslan grumbled. "I'll not be havin' my kin hearing of *dese* fables."

"Go on, Trig. My experience is able to decipher if a tale merits credence or not."

"I heard words that I wished I had never lent my ears to. Our ambassador did reminisce back to the time when Prince Faeraud was born and he was at the royal nursery. One night a fire broke out and chaos ran rampant in the place. He snatched the baby and switched its armband with that of another. If his ramblings are true, then the Poseidontel that we know, may not be the real heir to the throne."

"So whoever this baby is, that was exchanged, it is his hand that rightfully should hold the trident?" Aedon asked, none of them realizing that he might be the baby that was switched.

"I won't hear no more of this nonsense 'bout my grandson," Methouslan coughed, standing up and walking out of the room. He knew more than he was letting on about; for it was he who sealed the *genetikos-replica* which contained the blood samples taken

from the babies when other questions and situations arose. His proclamation that they should be sealed for a hundred sun-cycles gave him hope that the incident would either be sorted out or forgotten about in time. Such was not the case.

“The short broken scroll over there — it might interest you,” said Trigonomy, nodding his head toward the pile next to the wall, after he was certain Methouslan was away from their voices. “The greenish colored one with the burnt edges.”

Once Aedon had hold of the correct papyrus, he unrolled it. There were illustrations of events that had recently transpired. He stopped when he reached a sketch of a man with sunken cheeks, long brown and white hair, and a trident in his left hand — the drawing was the image of King Poseidontel.

“Anyone could have sketched and made this up. There were plenty of kids at the *educatory* who drew nasty pictures — calling their *educatorymates* an *Uprooter*,” said Aedon in disbelief, setting the scroll down with a huff.

“And do your *educatorymates* make their doodles on papyrus spun with golden thread?” Trigonomy replied back, turning the edge of the scroll up so Aedon could inspect the back side of the papyrus.

“This type of papyrus hasn’t been woven for five-hundred sun-cycles,” Aedon exclaimed, realizing its age.

“Drawn by an Asterian Foreseer more than a thousand sun-cycles ago — according to the dating further inside,” added Trig.

Aedon’s interest was perked and he took to examining the other pages pieced together on the table. Picking up fragments and exploring them one by one, he read more:

*“Fire will fall from the sky to the ground,
Clouds of gray turn orange and flashes abound.
The Earth will shake, open up,
and begin to swallow all things,
For this will signal the end of the Uprooter
and beginning of new kings.*

*Witnesses will warn and tell men, for safety, where to stay,
But they will not believe and instead
will go their own way.*

*If men fail and do not believe the words of King Yaswhen,
The Uprooter will take hold and all these things
will happen.*

*But be encouraged and keep your watch toward the sky,
King Yaswhen's return is in the star which draws nigh.
After the trials and evil ones are wiped from Earth's face,
King Yaswhen will appear, his Scrolls hidden,
shall renew this place.*

*From the seed of the man I will choose,
Life starts again, the human race renews.”*

“Reads like a fictional horror papyrus,” Trigonomy scoffed, deciding that he could only keep objectivity and sanity by trusting in scientific evidence.

“Should its warning not at least be considered?” asked Aedon.

“I shall not give credence to those who pretend to see into the future. I am a respected scientist and such would undermine my prominence.”

“Yaswhen wipes the planet clean of all the people of ole — and then starts the human race over again?” Aedon questioned, concerned by the poem. “Why would he leave on a journey to prepare a better life for us and then come back and destroy everyone?”

“Perhaps he is insane or there is a chunk of the story missing somewhere. ... I think the tales about Plesiosaur the sea monster are easier to believe than these legends written by those who needed some star to wish over,” Trig scowled, while packing up the remainder of his find.

The next day Aedon bid farewell to Methouslan who believed that Yaswhen was on his way back, but that Poseidontel

was not the *Uprooter*. Then he said his farewell *Apa'heis* to Trigonomy.

“The evidence you show about the star — certainly points to the imminent return of King Yaswhen.”

“I do believe it is perhaps his star,” Trig acknowledged, “but Yaswhen, I am afraid, has long ago passed on.”

Trig knew that if an *Uprooter* existed then all the clues certainly pointed to Poseidontel. This was a matter he didn’t wish to consider so he told himself that such a person was only a made up fable. He validated all his beliefs with formulas and reasoning so complicated that even he could not understand them.

“I think that I must prepare and make ready for his coming,” gulped Aedon. “For hope and help have always come my way even in my darkest hourglass — and if I can but return a sand pebble of help to the King, I will have done more than most.”

Aedon gathered his belongings, packed them on a burrow, and headed north, back on course, determined to reach his father, Gilgamoeh, who was a steadfast follower of King Yaswhen.

PAPYRUS SEVEN

SKIES OF DARKNESS, CLOUDS OF FIRE

The land trembled with quakes triggered from a far off volcano that erupted. Dark clouds dramatically churned with reflections of fire and lightning dueling in their billows. From horizon to skyline the barren land was covered in ash so deep that in many places small animals were consumed. The source of the eruption came from the land of Eumelus where in a single hourglass the entire island blew into the sky. Westerly winds carried its volcanic dust over Atlantis, raining debris across the provinces of Ampheres, Evaemon and as far away as Mnesus.

Most of the dust had settled by the time Aedon was ready to leave, though the walkway was slippery in places where ash mixed with the dampness. Wind still tossed some of the specs from the cabin's rooftop.

As a parting gift, Methouslan stopped Aedon in the doorway and gave him the old scepter which he used as a walking stick. Aedon took note in a reflecting glass that he had begun aging sooner than expected — like many others. Some men lived for nine-hundred sun-cycles in those days, but now with the changing climate — the hundred year-old was tiring, like seven-hundred had past. The *orichalcum* gems of *Nawat*, which once prolonged life on the planet, had been consumed by men to power cities, machines and other things. The effect of its scarcity had driven life back to the dark-ages when unicorns and buggies were used instead of flying transporters.

The journey North was ridden with the smell of decaying bodies, for in these parts the dead outnumbered the living. Aedon knew he was alone and could beg no favors from those along the way. Many a time he had to fight off a frightened beast or starving human. The cold and damp nights made him glad that he had packed additional furs for the hike, even though his donkey complained about the extra load.

For days neither the sun nor moon showed their light, not even a single star blinked. This made it hard for him to navigate. The ash covered landmarks, many of which had been destroyed in the earthquakes, made the journey long and uncertain. The compass which always pointed up toward the South began to flip-flop and soon the mountain-tops were the only point of reference remaining. Upon reaching the Agglomeration Forest, he knew that the cabin (where supplies were delivered for Gilgamoeh's abode) would only be a few days away. He dreamt of the warmth the two fireplaces would provide while he anticipated the hot meal the animals and other workers would serve.

Word had circulated from the *birderries* (who deliver the daily news) that the horrors which fell over Atlantis and the ash that covered her, were minimal in the lands beyond the Agglomeration. Many of the birds had escaped to the forest and their tweets gave him hope that the shadows of his journey would soon be behind. But even the jungle, once crowded and overridden

with growth, had seen a new winter. Its leaves fallen and branches bare, gave plain line of sight to Mount Evaemon beyond. It was a place where Aedon had once found life and stories of abundance were told. Once it was a great mountain of mystery where snowy slopes led up to a plateau covered with fruit trees and warmth from the light of fire at its top. But it too had changed. Its caved in peak and sharp rocks protruding where groves of produce once thrived, stole hope from the legend that King Yaswhen would return to this place. The once thriving marvel of life lay in a heap of gray ash blanketing its top and merging into the ice below.

A few days later Aedon crossed through to the area of Lower Bashan where the base camp which fed supplies to Gilgamoeh was located. His jaw dropped when he reached the clearing and all that could be seen was a lake. While temperatures were cold and damp in Atlantis due to the cloud of ash, in other parts of the world, most particularly the North, the climate had been warming. Water trickled into brooks, streams turned into rivers, and gushes of ice washed down the mountains. In the lake before Aedon, two box-like objects made of brick — the two chimneys from the cabin — poked out of the water. The remains assured him that he was in the correct location and that it had been covered over with a deluge of sorts.

With another idea, he rushed to the OPICOR which tugged the supplies up the glacier, but that too had been dismantled. A few snapped cables and a rusty motor laid abandoned at the base of the climb.

“*Whatta* we do now,” his burrow complained. “Where’s the carrots and celery you promised ... and what about the potatoes?”

“You’ll get your potatoes,” Aedon snapped. “Saw them lifting thousands of tons of ‘em up to his place.”

“Up there?” the donkey laughed, “There’s nothing yonder but melting ice.”

The ash cloud did not reach to this area, but other precipitation caused a mist to blow over the glacier tops and cover a winding path which otherwise might have looked perilous —

beyond adventure. Disappointed Aedon sat down with a sigh and then turned at the sound of a *pipetone*. Its sad song gave little comfort to the two gray horses trudging through the dead forest. Ganyped, seated atop one of them, played the instrument. Jumping up, Aedon rushed over and greeted him with a hug so quickly, that he didn't have enough time to get down from the horse. The two boys fell to the ground.

"Am I glad, ever so glad to come upon you," cheered Aedon, getting up and helping his friend to his feet, before brushing the snow off his toga. "Once we parted ways in the Athabasca Tunnels, I was certain that destiny would not see your return."

"Feverishly I battled the pucks, until I managed to snag a twine and rope one's neck. When I threatened to pull it tight and cut off its life, only then did it listen and fly me to the edge of daylight."

Ganyped made up the entire story for it was by decree of Poseidontel that a creature was searching the tunnels for them and had orders to capture and set the travelers back on their journey where they could be followed and watched.

Back together again, they coordinated supplies, dressed in furs, and set off on the road into the glacier mountain of Bashan. The trodden path was easy at first, but later it became icy. The warming temperatures made it such that the furs were sometimes too warm to wear. But the pleasant climate brought with it a new trouble. The melting glacier sent streams of water that washed out parts of the path. In other areas they walked together with ropes tied to their waist, as sometimes the surface would give way where pockets of ice had melted beneath the plane.

When they reached a plateau midway up, the boys looked out across the land. Hundreds of stadia back Mount Evaemon barely showed its peak. The ice covered valley seemed to be crawling with tiny black dots, as if an infestation of insects were covering it. Ganyped pulled out a *looking-scope* and its glass revealed that they were not alone.

Aedon grabbed the scope and snagged a look, “A new pestilence does not come this way, except for the armies of Atlantis — marching toward us.”

They were coming with their battle boxes, armed with arrows and flame throwers. Troll looking beasts that had been genetically created in Poseidontel’s crib did not march, but rather ran like a jaguar leaps. The first brigade over the horizon was at least ten thousand strong, but a hundred more legions followed them.

From the glacier plane, Aedon could see the ocean to his right. The Atlantian waterway was dotted with thousands of warships plowing toward them and thousands of balloons filled the sky above. Scanning the *looking-scope* to his left, Aedon looked into the Mesapian Sea which was filled with a million canoes. In battle gear, the women of Mauretania rowed together heading toward the continent.

“The armies of the world are converging upon one another,” Aedon gulped.

“Perhaps they have become disenchanted with Poseidontel’s tactics,” Ganyped suggested, taking the *looking-scope* back for another view.

“Or to see the continent for its final doom.”

“Their cannons and guns are not raised yet,” Ganyped noticed.

“What purpose does Poseidontel have in mind?” Aedon thought out loud. “I pray that they come not seeking that which we have set out to protect.”

Higher up, fierce winds battled each step and *ice-peas* pelted their faces. The horses became restless and threatened to leave on occasion. Another week and a day dragged by as they climbed upward, now uncertain if they were on the right path or not. Arguments about which way to go were often solved when one path quickly dissolved in front of their eyes, caved in, or was buried by an avalanche. Yet, they hiked on, driven by a faith that

they would reach their destination and pushed forward by the threats that awaited them should they decide to go back.

As evening broke, they found themselves higher up than the clouds which lay below like folds of cotton in a field. They were satisfied that they would not have to conquer the other frosty peaks higher up, for their destination did not reside there. When they came around on a narrow path, ahead in front of them stood an enormous wooden building. It was crafted on the outside with pillars fashioned from trees and polished like marble columns. Intricate artwork showed carvings of animals, and other sections were squared off with engraved text. Its walls appeared to tell the story of mankind.

Divided into two levels, the structure stretched forty-five podes high, another four-hundred and fifty podes long and probably about seventy-five wide. The sides were covered in slats that ran horizontal divided by vertical beams that protruded every few podes. Its inner box shape was surrounded by decks with railings. Silos that contained food rose up behind it and siphons which brought in water from below were attached. It was painted white, which served as a type of camouflage in its locale. A slanted roof was pitched with tar that had been bleached, giving it a gray contrast to the outer walls.

Above a large door, there was a familiar piece of wood, almost like a plaque. Aedon remembered the day when Gilgamoeh was exiled from Atlantis. He departed in a paddlewheel boat called the *Tebah*. The piece of wood from that ship, with its name carved in it, was placed above the door. There was no doubt that they had arrived at Gilgamoeh's *Tebah*.

Only the top level had windows and sitting in one of them an owl alerted those below about the approaching visitors. A barn-size door slid open a crack and a man beckoned them to come in. Seeing their horses, he widened the opening a little more.

“*Apa’hei, Apa’hei,*” Seskef greeted in a rushed tone, tugging at them, hoping not to let too much heat out of the place during their entrance.

"A hundred and one sun-cycles I have waited for this day," said Aedon in awe.

"The zebras, with their well equipped night vision... they alerted us ... told us you were on the path. ... So few have accepted the invitation ... to stay here ... in this safe haven. My father, Gilgamoeh, will be thrilled that the first humans ..." Seskef stopped, realizing Aedon was one of the few people his father might not be happy to see. "You're not still subscribing to those false reports about — that Gilgamoeh is your father ... are you?"

"The *genetikos-replica* proves so," Aedon snapped, defensively.

"Really, now," Ganyped scoffed, trying to trivialize the matter. "No one could ever know the truth. So many stories have been told by his mother, your father, the king, even Telopps and Sayer have theories."

There were many other plots to exchange the replica and so the mystery of Aedon's relationship would go written down in the scrolls of conspiracy theories where no one may find the truth for certain. As far as Aedon was concerned, he had believed his entire life that Gilgamoeh was his father, and there was no rumor or hypothesis that would change that conviction.

Seskef showed the boys in anyway. Inside was a large vestibule where a spiral staircase came down from the upper level and then proceeded into the glacier's underground part. Each step was six podes wide, so that an elephant could walk downstairs. The lower level was spectacular with its own atrium. There were trees in the center, some of which stretched from the lower to the upper level. Balconies and railings outlined the cutouts where the upper floors overlooked the garden. Water siphons attached to the building kept a constant flow, which created a miniature indoor waterfall. The indoor stream bubbled down the four-hundred pode length, finally exiting the building and running outside the glacier. It served as fresh drinking water near its intake and was used to flush away waste at its outtake. Close to the middle, flamingos and a chimpanzee bathed.

“For many seasons, the owls ... more than a hundred thousand witness-wise owls ... covered the land telling people to go to the North ... warning them to escape the plagues ... and destruction that was forthcoming,” Seskef explained as a penguin passed them on a *trivelator*.

“Appears that some of the animals listened to your yarn,” Ganyped snorted.

“And they fill this atrium with a chatter of joy.”

Just as the boys were about to descend down, Unglat the Giraffe swept over and poked his head up toward the second level, inviting them in, “*Apa’hei*.”

Excited and amazed, Ganyped eagerly jumped down onto the first step, “Let’s go check this out.”

“If I have the strength,” Aedon responded. “I’m a bit famished, our food having given out nearly three days ago.”

“You can share my *fifth-meal*,” Gobi the elephant volunteered, emerging from the greenery with his trunk wrapped around a couple of cabbages.

Aedon took one and eagerly bit into the plant. A *kangawaiter* hopped over with a chalice of wine and before the boys could even make their way to the bottom of the stairs, they were well fed. After taking a short tour of the place, Aedon decided that it was time to meet his father Gilgamoeh and tell him about the *Scroll of Air*.

“Father ... he has already retired for the evening,” Seskef informed them. “Perhaps you’d like to bathe ... in preparation of your meeting tomorrow? ... There are warm pools on the third level.”

The bathing room, known as a *Spring Ostia*, was a wooden tub where warm water bubbled. Aedon removed his toga and slid into the water, closing his eyes with a sigh of relaxation and satisfaction. Next, he pulled on the rope next to the tub which opened a small door, and a splash of *spongia officinalis* worked diligently to clean and massage his whole body. They murmured a happy tune as they opened and closed their oscula in unison. Once

they left, he sunk back, basking in the glory that his lifelong goal to reach his father had been accomplished. He could hardly believe that he was finally here. Certainly tomorrow he would meet his father.

When he opened his eyes, he was startled to see Yapet standing directly in front of him. Suddenly the water didn't feel so warm anymore.

"I suspect that you think it is okay to come here and take refuge," Yapet began, with a frown. "You must respect your place while here, and follow the order we have set up."

Aedon stepped out of the tub and dried off while explaining his mission, "My trip here is to make an introduction to Gilgamoeh, but that is only part of my visit. A great mystery has been secretly hidden and it will give him the power he needs to return to Atlantis and restore the Prince Lordship to its origins."

"Nonsense. We've been instructed to stay here," Yapet snapped, leading Aedon back to a sitting area which overlooked the atrium.

"The *Scroll of Air* has been concealed and resides in this very structure," said Aedon, fluffing his wet hair with his fingers. "When your family was exiled, Ambassador Telopps delivered the holder. Remember, I was at the docks, in my attempt to — bid you farewell. ... That was when he stopped by and handed the *Scroll* to you."

Yapet looked slightly dumbfounded as he searched his brain before remembering, "If only I could recall ... not that empty onyx tube ... you're not talking about that black case Telopps thrust at me while we were in the rush of packing?"

"Yes, that's the one!"

"Haven't seen it around in sun-cycles ... not sure what happened to it after that day," Yapet confessed.

The story was interrupted when Areshia entered. She nodded to Aedon, then lowered her head in a bashful manner. She said nothing. Aedon glanced at her with a harsh stare as he could not get the image of her participation at the Middag out of his

mind. He was certain she had betrayed them and wondered what she was doing here now.

“It’s not here,” Areshia calmly stated.

Aedon’s face flushed with anger, as he could only think the worst, that Areshia had found it and given it to King Poseidontel. He thought this because he was sure she was on the other side and had become one of his pawns.

“Not here?” Aedon snapped, angrily.

“Once, a time ago, Gilgamoeh gave me ten scrolls to deliver, one to each Etruscan,” she told, moving to a closer cushion. “The black one was sitting next to the others, and I packed it up by mere coincidence. When I arrived in Mestor, I did not wish to lug around extra baggage on my travels and so I stored it at the abode — in the eatery.”

Ganped came over to listen in as Aedon jumped up in a rage, “You took the *Scroll* out of your satchel and just left it — in Mestor — all by itself? ... *Seaweed!* ... Just when I thought my journey was complete, my adventures ended, this happens.”

“It’s still there — I’m sure of it,” she defended.

“Right when I believed the valley of darkness I had come through was ending, and I could see the light streaming on the path ahead, suddenly its thick cloud covers the way in darkness, extending to the next peak and the ones beyond.”

“You’re not going there — not now — you can’t” Ganped cried. “There is no safe passage to Mestor. Poseidontel’s warriors are marching toward this place.”

“No, they are not marching here,” Yapet said.

Seskef eagerly sat up to tell more, “Ahteana, who knows, told of another battle. The *Uprooter* is possessed by the evil one, *Say and Teller*.”

“He gathers the forces together not to fight any Earthly foe,” Yapet grumbled, “but sets his eyes on Mount Evaemon, the very mount where King Yaswhen ascended into the sky. He prepares war, not to take some whimsical prize, but instead, to conquer and destroy King Yaswhen.”

"How does he know this — that Yaswhen is coming back now?" Ganyped huffed, in disbelief.

"His star was seen — more than a sun-cycle past," Aedon interrupted. "The king has dozens of astronomers tracking it."

"How can one predict the exact time of his arrival?" Yapet hissed.

"No one can know," Seskef spoke. "But I guess ... I suppose ... Poseidontel knows it is soon."

"When King Yaswhen comes back," Yapet continued, "all will be renewed."

"The trees will bloom again, the waters made clean," Areshia threw in, visualizing. "Life will come back — return to the ways we used to know."

"And Poseidontel will no longer be king," Yapet pointed out. "Do you not see, the troops are not descending on this place, but rather they have gathered together for a much greater battle — the *War of Enchantments*."

"Not the — the — the ever predicted — ever dreaded — *War of Enchantments*." Seskef echoed with trembling legs.

"Then the few battalions surrounding us below — are but a safety net — to keep Yaswhen from getting at the *Scroll*," Ganyped reasoned, then added, "even though we know that it is not here, now."

"Perhaps it is better that the *Scroll* remains in Mestor," said Aedon.

"Unguarded?" Ganyped exclaimed. "Poseidontel's armies do not march here only to block a takeover from Yaswhen. ... Aedon, you of all people must know that he will never give up hunting for the *Scroll of Air*."

"Suspect you're right," Yapet huffed. "He needs it now, more than ever — to reverse the cycle of decay he's begun on the planet."

"Hastily we must reach Mestor before Poseidontel does," Areshia insisted, jumping up to make ready for the trip.

"Mestor will fall. It is not safe to go there," Yapet discouraged. "Its people who were so entrenched in its feeble wealth, can no longer afford the staples their stomachs beg. Their possessions have become worthless, reminding them of the wealth they squandered on belongings which would never satisfy their souls. Thus they neglected saving for the future or helping their fellow mankind in need. Consumed with selfishness and blight they riot, steal from, and murder each other."

"Why its total destruction would be a blessing to King Yaswhen ... and to Poseidontel both," added Seskef.

"The city will surely fall," Yapet adamantly assured. "Once that happens, should the *Scroll* not find a way out, then the life of men will extinguish like a lamp that runs out of oil."

"I will go alone — to Mestor and get the *Scroll*," Areshia announced, abruptly. "Tyrehenia mustn't be snuffed out, as you say, before we've rescued the *Scroll* — and Ashavari."

"What's an Ashavari?" Ganped asked.

"Her Persian cat," answered Aedon.

"You know what it's like down there, Aedon — tell her," snarled Yapet. "The warriors below would capture and mutilate anyone passing that way. ... I forbid such nonsense."

Aedon grumbled.

"We have more important things to consider, such as how we're going to keep this haven — a safe one ... especially from those who have no sense and might decide to ascend on our mountain."

Aedon and Ganped spent the remainder of the evening acquainting themselves with the amenities of the place. Hanno the gorilla tightened a hat about his head and showed off his club, indicating he was the law of the house. The zebras and rams, playing shuffleboard, shouted at the llama who accidentally stomped on their puck while she was transporting a bag of seeds to the store room. A couple of bumblebees startled a baby panda bear who was collecting honey, but she calmed down when Maxi the ostrich reminded her that she was bigger than the bees.

Aedon wandered over to the elephant who was sitting under an indoor orange tree exhibiting a sad moan, “What’s wrong Gobi? You look entirely sad today.”

“I didn’t mean to eat it,” the elephant sulked. “No one objected when we ate the bark off the trees that were outside.”

“No need to blame yourself. The number of trees in here is few and it appears that they’ll be needed for some time to supply food for everyone,” Aedon consoled, catching a glimpse of Areshia close by. “Areshia, over here … can we talk?”

“Gobi, I forgot to get you that sugarcane I promised,” said Areshia, as she stepped over. “The silos are near full. See what you might like from there. … Though, I do hope they hold out for whatever battle might be coming our way.”

“I just want to make sure … about which side you are really on,” Aedon whispered to her, referring to the fact that he had seen her pledge loyalties to King Poseidontel at the Middag.

“With some sort of paranoia do you continue to question. I’m not sure I understand what you are asking,” she answered, a bit confused.

“You know — the Middag.”

“I have heard of such — but know little about those things.”

“I saw you there. You were drinking a *nectar*,” Aedon whispered with a stress of hurt in his tone, because she was not forthcoming about it.

“Perhaps I should be asking you — which side you are on,” she huffed, slightly offended. “I’ve never been to a Middag. If you saw someone there — it most certainly wasn’t me.”

“It wasn’t?”

“All of this begs the question, why were you at a Middag?”

“Never mind.”

“Do tell me about it,” she barked. “If you have been cavorting around with the other side and palling up with Faeraud again … This is so like you. I should’ve known.”

“No… no, no, no. … It’s not like that. I only went — pretending — so I could escape from the Restorium. When I was

captive there, they forced a CX6 band upon my arm ... and when I left their grasp, I did have it removed," he pleaded, lifting the toga cloth up from his arm so she could see the scar.

Exchanging glances, each was relieved that the other was not committed to their common enemy, yet neither believed it entirely. With an awkward smile and a couple chuckles they went separate ways. Aedon was certain that he had seen her at the Middag and he stewed inside about it. Too many friends had he trusted, and they always turned out to be on the wrong side, dragging him down with them.

Defiantly he returned to the upper levels, telling himself that he must be careful and mustn't blindly accept Areshia's explanation. Seskef led him and Ganyped down the hall where dozens of open doors led into tiny rooms.

"Lots of empty places," Ganyped remarked, observing.

"Who are all these quarters for?" asked Aedon.

"Gilgamoeh made a guest list," Seskef explained. "He sent scrolls ... lots of them ... one to each Etruscan. ... Inviting them and one hundred of their closest friends to come up here. When no one came, he sent out hundreds of invitations more ... to the mayors, judges, and spiritual leaders. ... Still no one came. ... Around the same time that Ahteana returned, thousands of *Witness-wise-owls* were sent to invite the common man — anyone who would listen. Then they started inviting the livestock and beasts too. These few animals aboard are the only ones who made the journey."

The sleeping quarters were tiny as many rooms had been crammed into the third level with expectations for guests who never arrived. Aedon and Ganyped would have taken separate rooms but bunked together because they felt as if they were already imposing and wanted to be polite. Once they settled in, Ganyped dimmed the oil lamp. Restlessly Aedon tossed and turned in the unfamiliar place, but only for a short while before falling asleep.

A few hourglasses later, Areshia snuck into their room and she shook Aedon until he woke up. Before he could speak, she quieted him, “Shhhh.”

“What’s up?”

“I am leaving for Mestor this hour,” she whispered. “The fate of the world rests on that *Scroll* and I cannot leave it there to be destroyed. I must go get it and bring it back here.”

Obviously not sleeping like he pretended, Ganyped sat up, “Did you not hear, there are warriors down there? You will surely be taken prisoner.”

“Ganyped speaks wisely,” Aedon reasoned, sitting up taller. “The *Scroll* has a mind of its own. ... Ahteana told me that it was not my duty to seek it out nor find it.”

Areshia snapped back, “You did not seek it out, it has sought you. Ahteana told you those things because the task of finding the *Scroll* was given to another.”

They all looked at each other and before she said the words they knew the secret she revealed, “Ahteana said to me that should I learn about the *Scroll of Air*, it is my duty to assure that it be taken into this *Tebah*. At the time I did not understand what she asked, but now it is clear. I must return to Mestor and bring the *Scroll* back.”

“Then I am coming with you,” Aedon adamantly vowed. Still with doubts, he believed that maybe Areshia was making the trip in order to retrieve the item and then give it to someone else — like Poseidontel.

“Mestor is at least a six day journey by beast,” Ganyped cried. “Even if you are not captured, war will break out by then and you will have no way to return.”

“It’s three days to Tundraville,” Aedon laid out. “My delta-transporter is parked outside the area and I am certain that enough *orichalcum* remains that we can fly to Mestor within a few hourglasses after that.”

“How will you get past the channel of warriors at the foot of the hill?” Ganyped questioned.

Areshia had a plan, “Cecil the polar bear knows a back way.”

“I’m coming too,” said Ganyped. “I will not stay here, where an honest explanation would escape me when questioned, and your brothers would throw me out into the cold alone.”

It didn’t take them long to pack up. They did not wish to risk awakening the others by opening the large door, so they snuck out an upper window and climbed down the adjacent water tower. Just before dawn they mounted up on the bears and started down the mountain.

“Cecil — you’re running too fast,” Areshia scolded.

“Never mind about how fast my paws pound,” the bear growled, turning his head back, and then leaping over a new crevice in the ice that formed right before their eyes. “I’d be more worried about how we’re going to get back up here with all this melting ice.”

Aedon occasionally glanced back at the *Tebah*, sometimes with a longing stare. Great disappointment turned to anger as he questioned why fate would once again throw him into shadows of despair right when he reached the doorstep of goodness. He was angry, bitter inside, and silently cursed at the mountain which stole from him the day he was destined to meet his father. Weird feelings conflicted within as a new paranoia encompassed his countenance and again he felt like there was no one he could trust. Too many times he believed that he was going insane. He questioned if perhaps the values in his head, which conflicted with everyone else’s in the world, were a misjudgment on his part, an invention of his imagination, or a sickness which had cursed him.

But he knew that Areshia was right and that the survival of mankind itself might depend on who had access to the *Scroll* and this time fate gave him no choice — he had to go.

The journey down the hill was easier than the climb up. Reaching the warmer valley, Cecil led them directly into the camp of warriors at the base of the glacier. Jumping off the bear, Aedon started to object, thinking they had been betrayed.

Cecil growled, “Just be quiet you fools.”

Two warriors took hold of the three friends and forced each of them into a wooden barrel. Their large hammers drove spikes into the top sealing the travelers in. As the barrels were picked up and moved, Aedon could only see darkness.

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The next morning, the two warriors strapped the barrels onto the backs of the bears and sent a caravan of beasts out, toward Ablach. This weekly convoy was one of many that brought supplies in for the warriors, and so the three travelers who thought they had been betrayed, instead, were being aided in their escape.

After a long hike through muddy lands, Aedon discovered *Skyola*, his delta-transporter, buried under a mound of mangled branches. The fierce wind did not aid as they dug and tugged, until the unit was free. As expected, there was just enough *orichalcum* to fuel the transporter for the flight to Mestor. When Aedon worried that they wouldn't have enough fuel for the return trip, Ganyped insisted they go anyway, suggesting that he might have a friend in the area that could help out.

After a number of tries, the abandoned delta's *crystal-capacitor* finally spun up, giving them hope that the trip could be

completed. They waited until evening since they had planned to fly at night, so they wouldn't be noticed. Just before sunset, they departed, flying over the sparsely populated forests of Ampheres. A few hours later they reached the city of Tyrehenia.

Areshia's abode was located near the magnificent Bridge of Towers which hopped over the Nile River, connecting the provinces of Ampheres and Mestor. The bridge was so wide, that three separate roads ran over it, with all kinds of mercantilers, eateries, hotels and vendors. A waterbus line floated in its center, but its trough was filled with slimy muck and its cab was in disrepair. The tall buildings nestled between the streets were once the pride of the continent, but now most of them sat in ruin, crumbling due to lack of maintenance or from the recent earthquakes. Its roads were dotted with holes where material had fallen into the river below. The expensive penthouses laid exposed, some with burnt out shells. Their prestigious residents had vanished, leaving a city where only beggars and thieves remained. The occupants covered in dirt and disease, with sores and boils exposed on their bodies, caused Areshia to turn the other way, as they flew over.

The eateries and bakeries had all been raided for their produce. Whenever someone would find a piece of food, a fight would break out, poisonous arrows would end up in the guts of two or three people, and those who held ammunition were left to divide up the morsel.

The flight of the delta-transporter did not go unnoticed, for this city of badgered survivors was always on alert to its surroundings, constantly in combat mode to assure its continued existence. As soon as the sound of the capacitor triggered the ears of those below, arrows began flying. Aedon maneuvered the transporter around in a zigzagging path trying to avoid a direct hit. When it looked like he wouldn't get through, he dove the transporter into the Nile River — underwater.

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The guys on the bridge hadn't seen this before and laughed and talked about how they would go down there and retrieve their bodies — for food.

Inside the transporter Ganyped yelled and began hitting Aedon for the action, until he explained, "It's okay. I've done this before. It doesn't work with the newer models, but this is one of the older ones — it can push underwater for at least three or four hourglass pebbles."

Aedon pulled up on the lever and they shot back into the air, going vertical, just in time, or they would've hit the waterfall in front of them. Even the falls looked eerily spooky as the colorful illumination-bulbs were no longer powered and the moonlight hidden. It was difficult to navigate in the dark. When they arrived over the metropolis of abodes in the hills, Areshia had to point out her house. Aedon had forgotten the landmarks, having not gown up there like she had.

"Are you sure that's the right abode?" Aedon asked, when he saw that another delta-transporter was already parked on its rooftop.

"I'm nearly certain," she said with some hesitation.

"Just park next to it — there's enough room," Ganyped barked, tiring of the journey.

"Barely," Aedon snapped back, pulling in beside it, almost scrapping its side.

The front door was already unlocked and an illumination-bulb was buzzing. Cautiously, Aedon and Ganyped entered first, while Areshia crouched behind, following them. Aedon kicked a satchel aside that was in their way. They couldn't tell if someone were packing to leave or unpacking to stay. Suddenly from around the corner of the eatery a girl jumped out holding a drawn arrow to their faces.

"Stop!" she shouted, cocking her head sideways in order to flip the brown hair out of her face.

"Areshia?" Aedon shouted, confused as he looked at her.

“Oh it’s you. You frightened me, Aedon,” the girl said, in a playful manner.

Aedon was confused because Areshia had just entered the place with them and she was crouching behind the two boys, yet another Areshia just popped out in front of them. Ganyped stepped aside and then the Areshia behind the two boys was revealed and now the two women stared at each other. The Areshia by the door let out a scream so loud that everyone jumped, including the windows in the laying lounge.

“You scared me. Don’t do that,” Aedon scolded. “Who is this? You never told me you had a sister.”

“I don’t! She’s an imposter,” both Areshias screamed out at the same time, pointing at each other.

“Indeed this gives credence to the stories about Poseidontel producing cloned beings in his Speciation Crib,” Ganyped marveled. “How is one to discover who is the real Areshia?”

“The clone can’t possibly know everything about one’s past,” Aedon huffed.

“You’d be surprised what one’s genetics can store,” he remarked.

“On a summer’s eve once, we danced until dawn,” Aedon said in a riddle, pacing the floor. “Together we planned to create our own ... the real Areshia can fill in the blank.”

“Our own private virtual-continent. I remember that night,” the Areshia closest to the window yelled out.

“She’s stolen my memories — how?” the other Areshia huffed, with more shock than emotion.

Aedon continued, “In the *trivelator* up a mountain side, one sip almost claimed your life.”

“That was wine,” the Areshia nearest the door butted in, engaging in the game. “It was poisoned wine and Andromache made me drink it, I became sick — until you brought back the antidote.”

“True,” Aedon answered, asking another, “At a Middag, a mask you did wear. What was its color, tell me if you dare.”

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“Green. It was green like the dress I wore and the beverage I drank,” the other Areshia snottily answered.

“I hate green,” the Areshia by the door muttered.

“Indeed it was,” Aedon proclaimed. “Everything you wore that evening at the Middag was green and that is why you are not the real Areshia. The Areshia I know would never have worn green and certainly would have never gone to a Middag.”

There was a loud scream and suddenly with no warning of expectation, the Areshia by the window let out a shriek and ran toward the balcony where she vaulted over its rail and fell down the cliff to her death.

“How did you know?” Ganyped asked.

“Areshia is colorblind and because she always gets her colors mixed up, she has always worn the same old brown toga. The green one just didn’t fit in.”

“So the clone wasn’t perfect, else it would’ve figured this out,” Ganyped added.

Considering the matter, Aedon said, “I think I’ve encountered a few others that were clones also. They seem to have something odd with their eyes — like twitches, droopiness, or slanting. I believe the Crib can produce a clone but can’t perfect its eyes. Apparently the Areshia clone was not colorblind and those memories probably didn’t register properly.”

A loud “meow” reminded Areshia that she had come for her cat, “Ashavari — Ashavari, where are you?”

Everyone searched the abode. When Aedon saw movement he alerted them, “She’s taken to a defensive crouching under the illumination-bulb transformer.”

Areshia rushed over to the bulb’s base and tried to coax the cat out. At first Ashavari resisted, then abruptly leaped with claws extended. Areshia twisted out of the way, else the cat would’ve scratched her face.

She tried to calm him down, “Kitty what’s wrong? ... It’s me. ... Everything’s okay now.”

Ashavari snapped out of her dazed look, stood up tall on all four legs and slowly pranced back toward them with a condescending tone, “To mind this house for three sun-cycles and one half, I did. A seaweed of a meticulous priming and prodding did I do. Then you return as an imposter and kick me across the floor and dishevel the shelves where I did spend immeasurable hourglasses of labor to organize them.”

“I told ya ... I told that cat, the other Areshia was an imposter,” Peter the *copy-parrot* squawked, arriving in the room and perching on a rafter above. He was Aedon’s messenger bird and had been left there awhile ago. The cat snarled provoking the bird to ruffle his feathers.

“Areshia, your master, is so very sorry,” she pleaded. “Do come here and allow me time to brush your hairs and return comfort to your domain.”

A shiver trickled up the cat’s back as she pitter-patted over to Areshia for some loving, but Ganyped interrupted, “We haven’t time to get all cozy. Someone needs to be showing us where to locate that *Scroll*.”

“Relax your ambitions a moment,” Areshia huffed. “How would you feel if someone kicked you across the floor? — Exactly, the same as my Ashavari.”

Ganyped rolled his eyes with a scoff, and when she glanced at Aedon’s similar expression she answered them, “In the eatery, it’s in the tall cabinet by the water well.”

Ganyped rushed behind the table and pulled open the door where an empty closet greeted his face.

“There’s nothing here,” he exclaimed, stating the obvious with some strain that might suggest he believed their mission had failed.

The cat began to explain, “When Areshia began ransacking the place...”

Aedon interrupted, “You mean imposter Areshia.”

"Stop calling that mutilated clone Areshia," Areshia snapped. "That thing was certainly not human and it definitely was not me."

"She probably stuffed what you're looking for into one of those bags over there," the cat piously remarked, settling in for a long relaxing petting session.

Ganyped leaped out of the kitchen toward the satchel which Aedon had brushed aside when they first entered. Before he could snatch the *Scroll* up, Aedon took hold of it. He held it up with both hands examining its onyx colored holder. As he examined the tube from bottom to top, his eyes came to a stop where the yellow band circled around its top. The ring shined with a glow, emitting its light, not from the reflection of anything around, but from some unknown source from within. Rays of light streaked from its band like spikes from the sun.

"We're never going to know if it is the real true one," Ganyped remarked, "not without Areshia's *globeaky*."

"With such a key in the clutches of Poseidontel, we must travel with caution ... for the two should never meet," Aedon declared.

"Do you not think that we should go to the Irem and try to get Areshia's key back?" Ganyped begged.

"My key was sent out into the world as a decoy, the real one hidden from men, just as the *Scroll* itself had been made invisible," Areshia revealed.

"Then why did we chase after it all that time?" Aedon huffed.

"Because I was pondering, considering, trying to figure out who was really on my side. Certainly you saw how many people were after it. Even they produced decoys to trick each other."

"Well, that's good information," Aedon sighed with a smile and added, "Such news certainly relieves a great burden from your shoulders. ... I wonder who has the real key?"

The question almost instantly answered itself as Areshia looked over at Aedon and he looked down at his chest grasping the

globeaky around his neck. The amulet which once glowed in time of need had followed him through the recent trials and tribulation without so much as a spark — but now its radiance had returned and its blue hue seemed to confirm their guess.

It was almost nine sun-cycles ago that Aedon was called to the Irminsul Pyramid to meet with one of its highest Asterians, Ahteana. When she presented the *globeaky* to Aedon she told him, “Some truths must remain hidden until their chosen day of reveal. You are special and one day you may unlock a glow or light in a dark and dreary world — a gleam that might not save the world, but will certainly help the ones you love.”

Instinctively Aedon took the amulet from his neck and moved into position to insert it into the scroll.

“No!” Areshia cried out. “The *Scroll* may only be opened by King Yaswhen.”

Ahteana had told him the same thing and when he hesitated he heard a raspy sound in his head, “*Don’t sssstop. How can you be ssssure, it issss the ssscroll you sssseek, unlesssss you try it.*”

He had heard this voice before and while he knew he shouldn’t pay attention, this time the suggestions were making sense. He had been led on too many chases down wrong paths to trust any of the others and so he started listening.

With a push he thrust the key into the end of the holder. The tube shot out of his grip and floated in mid air. It spun around and the entire thing turned from black into a rod of glowing light. It produced its own atmosphere and a breeze rushed from the light, whipping the boys’ hair around. Areshia stood up and Ashavari screeched. As the wind increased, they found it harder to stand.

“We’ve stepped over some boundry,” Areshia screamed, “Stop the thing!”

Plates, satchels, and buckets in the room quickly blew away from the center area. The furniture the others clung onto began to move back. Aedon remembered that you could command the *Scroll* by saying its name and so he searched his brain for the Asterian

words. He hoped he could still remember their tones, as he had not spoken the language in quite awhile.

*“Ah khenkeng ahuc khut tulueyun ahytoroo unot yomrungo.
Eveluedwend unot sloyneun ketz arn runodoo fumo.”*

When Aedon had used this command before, the other *Scrolls* answered with their name. But this time the object answered with another riddle, its voice barely discernible and mixed in with the rushing air.

*“Kolueovezeun go gyun fumo uf vundor ketz staymyco,
Syozz evreteng ahund evundorfylue
ah ahvluend gun unot eveluedwend ahvo.”*

“Can’t that force speak Atlantian?” Ashavari complained, her fur standing tall from the blustery airstream.

“It only speaks Asterian,” Aedon yelled, trying to be heard over the loud wind. “It told us another riddle. ... It says: *Tell me my name if you want to see, Guess wrong and a blind man you will be.*”

“Everyone knows its name,” Ganyped huffed. “It’s the *Scroll of —*”

Areshia cut him off, “Wait! ... Many truths have been hidden: a garden which contained fruit turned out to be a lake, tasks that were appointed to us went unknown until their day, and the key we were sure fit, was obscured from our knowledge. ... Certainly its name — *The Scroll of Air* — has also been disguised.”

“It’s obviously air!” Ganyped shouted. “Do you need any more proof than this hurricane blowing at us?”

“Aedon, what did Ahteana tell you? Did she give any clue as to its name?” Areshia begged, while being tugged further away along with the table she clung too.

“Just what I told you — that one day it might unlock a light in a dark and dreary world. ... Wait ... that’s it!” Aedon hollered

back, thinking aloud, “unlock a light ... unlock a *Scroll* ... the *Scroll* is light. ...”

He closed his eyes hoping he wouldn’t be blinded and whispered the rhyme to himself before proclaiming it loudly to the *Scroll*, “I’ve got to make this rhyme — Like your band that grows bright, your name is *Scroll of Light*. ”

*“Deko ahyunuy ahvund khunkzeveng swauw ahvregh.
Ahyunuy fumo ez crept ahuc degh.”*

The breeze turned into a small tornado and at first Aedon thought he had guessed incorrectly. Then the funnel dispersed into a cloud and the cloud morphed into a sheet of glowing light. The twisting air ceased, and everyone stood there in silence and amazement, yet no one knew what to do next.

The moment of confusion was quickly ceased by the whispering voice in Aedon’s head which suggested, “*Excssselent. Now ssssee what it can do. Ssscertainly, if you took thissss ssscroll for yoursself, you would ussse it for good. Why sssshouldn’t you be the princsse of Atlantissss that you were born to be? ... With the Sssscroll, you can bring back all the old waysss and then your father can finally be proud of you. ... You desssserve thissss....*”

Quickly, he grabbed Areshia and threw her onto the *Scroll*, then jumped on top of her. There was a flash of light and a streak of lightning through the front picture window. The light whisked Aedon and Areshia through the glass, across the balcony, and out into the open, floating over the Nile. They had magically flown directly through the window and were now outside — away from the others. Ganyped ran over to the window where he saw a magic carpet of floating light carry the two away. Flying above the river, the two figures positioning themselves for a better ride. Ashavari let out a huff, offended that she was left behind.

The sheet of light lowered and then flew higher. As it approached the Bridge of Towers, its glow brightened the span below. When arrows flew at them, the projectiles melted into

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streams of light. Like a searchlight under a war balloon, it illuminated the street underneath. Tree stumps that were burnt and broken were instantly healed by the light. Flowers which had lost their petals bloomed like it was a spring morning. Everything that came in contact with the light was renewed, reborn and rejuvenated. But the *Scroll* had no affect on the shops, hotels, eateries or materials built by man. All living things in its path were brought back to joy. Sores evaporated from the skin of the stricken. Sick people were made well.

"Ssssee, you are already doing good thingsss," the voice told him. *"Let ussss ssssee what we can ssssave at the Irem..."*

At Aedon's thought the beam of light set course for the capital city of Atlantis. Areshia had an inkling that they were headed into some danger zone and she objected, "Where is this thing taking us? You don't seem concerned enough about the path we are headed down. ... Are you controlling it Aedon? — It can read your mind, can't it?"

"Nonsense," he lied. "Take a moment to breathe the air. For so long the land has been covered in dense smog and now the light cleanses all. It parts the clouds and the stars can be seen above. Lay back now and rest."

Areshia let out a sigh and then sprawled across the light like it was a satin sheet. She had never felt so comfortable. The two of them lay side by side and soon they were holding hands. Looking into the sky, Aedon was convinced they were on course. He was an expert in navigation by the stars and they gave him security in his choice.

But then he remembered about the brilliant light in the sky that Trigonomy shook in fear over — the star of which he hinted could be the vehicle King Yaswhen would use for his return. Soon his eyes darted back and forth searching for evidence that Trigonomy was not telling a tale. The voice inside his head debated and suggested to him that if another king came by their way, his father might never return to the throne. Besides, if Yaswhen's

return was in the stars, he would be able to see it. Why had Ahteana said nothing about this star, if it were true?

"Aedon, we can't go there," Areshia calmly said. "If the *Scroll* makes its way to the Irem, Poseidontel will see its glow and stop at nothing to take hold of it. ... I fear that it is traveling that way because he is calling it."

"No he's not," Aedon snapped, sitting up. He pinched the bridge of his nose with his fingers in deep thought. Something inside told him he was being tricked. Fear drenched his body as he realized that he had listened to temptation which whispered in his ear. With all might, he hoped that by doing so, that the wonders shown that night would not be reported back to Poseidontel.

"You're right, Areshia. We must return to the *Tebah* with the *Scroll*," Aedon adamantly vowed, his words turning the *Sheet of Light* around and sending it back to Mestor.

For awhile longer they glided over the city of oil lamps below. The scene looked much different than the dots of illumination-bulbs they were accustom to seeing, reminding them of how far gone the glory days of Atlantis had fallen. Soon they passed over a wooded area and the lights below dwindled as the stars above twinkled in the night sky.

Areshia, lying next to Aedon, let out a thoughtful sigh, "We're riding on the edge of doomsday — and yet it seems so oddly peaceful."

"There's not going to be doomsday," Aedon grumbled. "Not, today at least — I've still got to get you home and then I've a few things I want to discuss with my father when we get back."

"What do you think happens — after we leave this world?" Areshia asked, staring into the night stars. "Do you think we end up like them?"

"Like who?" Aedon asked, pretending not to see a drifting white mist that looked more like the Asterian spirit, Korsheipa, than a cloud.

"Like the Asterians," she responded. "I bet our spirit lives on just like theirs."

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“Suppose so,” Aedon sighed.

A crescent moon peeked from the clouds and it was so bright that they could see their reflection in the dark river below. Between painted mountain peaks they floated on the sheet of light with a moonbeam illuminating them from above. It was so quiet that they could hear the ripples on the water below. Slowly the flying light took them toward Mestor. Innocently they rested on the flying light, as if they were the only two people in the world. But someone else knew they were there. There were others — who were watching them from a *looking-scope* not so far away.

PAPYRUS NINE

FROSTLAIRE FORTRESS

The morning sun showed not itself except for a single ray which penetrated the heavy atmosphere streaking a spot of light directly over the water siphon. A tall figure silhouetted against the sky helped two dozen children climb out. Each carried only a satchel. Single-file they shadowed the leader, their white togas fluttering in the breeze. Methouslan, watching them from the balcony of the stone cabin by the vineyard, could not tell if the sunbeam was leading or following them. When it splashed across the face of the leader, he could see that the tall man was barely such, for he was very young, though into his *mid-educatory years*. Brownish-red hair cut at the neckline spilled over his slightly pointed ears. He showed a countenance of tranquility which contrasted the frightened faces of the children he led.

At the point where the road passed the stone abode the teenager stopped for a moment, “*Apa’hei*, I am called Jacobus. We ask permission to travel by way of your road.”

“*Ya* have comes from below … Asterians who live in the mythical place called the Starbeam Pool,” Methouslan stated, explaining the ordeal to himself out loud, just in case he had forgotten the legend. “Travel as *ya* will — but the road ahead leads to a place where its once sympathetic residents have vacated. The mortality of an Asterian — or for any man at *this* point — will be tested in this land. Plagues which began from *da* poisoning of a star, started not far from where *this* road begins.”

“Waters of the deep have begun to open up, and our villages soon will be covered and flooded,” Jacobus explained. “We shall take passage beyond the cursed city.”

“Do yourselves a favor — return from where you have come, for a life of solitude in *them* depths below is protected from the curses above.”

“A designated place, high above the desolation, will shield us for awhile yet.”

“If *ya* think the magical gardens of Mount Evaemon will offer you safety, I must warn *ya* of vast movements that take place as we converse. Troops descend on the mountain.”

“We have other places. For the safety of my comrades I cannot divulge the fortress we seek,” said Jacobus with a frown, “I beg permission that you allow us to pass.”

With little thought, Methouslan figured out where they might be going, “Passage *ya* shall have. But first, I must give *ya* parting gifts. *Ya* will need some of *dese* furs and blankets I’ve stowed … ‘specially in *dem* glaciers leading up to the — Frostlaire Fortress.”

The two of them exchanged glances of defense and Jacobus gulped as he realized he had given away where they were headed. Nonetheless, he was gracious that they had stopped, for fate had bestowed upon them additional supplies they would need.

Three days later the group arrived at the feet of a giant icy gate. Slowly its doors slid open and bid them a cold welcome. Icicles shattered from the walkway atop when the gate returned to its closed position. The guards above had a difficult time standing firm on the floors because they were made of ice. A thin layer of water grew over its surface as the warming temperatures had started to melt the fortress.

Further inside they were greeted by an Asterian Captain who marched up to them, upset, “You should have not come this way. This is not the place for children.”

“The *enchantments* that Ahteana spoke — they seemed to have lost their power. The pools rise, engulfing our abodes. Would you have preferred we remained in our bungalow and drown?” Jacobus cried, ringing water from the hem of his toga.

“This is no place for younglings. ... You’ll be the downfall of us all,” the Captain snapped.

“I’ll ... we’ll all be careful,” Jacobus grumbled. “We can clean pots and pans ... and I — I know how to cook.”

“Cook?” a couple of the other Asterians exclaimed, with a glimmer of hope in their eyes.

“We are few and one thing is for certain — all who make it to this place will have to fight,” grumbled the Captain.

Disturbed, Zualpha appeared, stepping into the light, “The children are welcome. They will be moved into the center.”

Defeated, before the battle had even begun, the Captain continued, “Help does not come from the bear or the lion, even the eagle hides in her nest. Alone we stand — but stand we will.”

“Why do the eagles hide and not hear your call?” Jacobus asked.

“They have seen what men did to the owls who helped spread warnings about the things that were to come,” Zualpha told. “Over a hundred-thousand of the birds were slaughtered.”

“The eagles bury their head in the nest,” the Captain scoffed, “afraid that if they step out, a similar fate may befall them.”

“Evil now rests on the balance of a seesaw and needs only those who remain in silence to tip fate in its favor.”

“The warriors march toward the mountain,” said Jacobus, pointing at the distant peak of Evaemon where snow covered its base and fire bubbled from its top. “We heard their march but could not see them from whence we traveled.”

Zualpha explained, “While warriors pledge their allegiance to the *Uprooter* and march in defiance of the King’s return, their mates have died by the plagues and their children hunger. Now they thirst for revenge and war calls them into battle. Entranced, they blindly march to conquer an enemy they cannot see and fight a force they have no skill against.”

“When they do not find what they seek in the mountain, they will move on to the next ... until we are all destroyed,” the Captain scowled.

A gray morning came upon the tucked away fort, hiding between two mountains of ice. Jacobus discovered a couple of rusty pots and pans in the eatery and tried to make *first-meal*.

“They *kinda* stuck,” he said, showing the pan. “But I made *egg-yokers* — hot ones ... though they don’t exactly taste like the ones back home.”

Before he could finish the last batch, a sound perked his pointy ears. When he stood tall and strained to listen, the other Asterians nearby looked his way. They knew he had special hearing abilities and wondered what turned his attention.

“That odd fluttering sound ... I’ve heard it before,” he told them, cupping his ear, but the sound disappeared. “The fore guards certainly would alert us if they saw anything headed this way — right?”

His assumption was as false as the sense of security the tall gates gave. Under the courtyard arch made of ice he stepped. Suddenly a creature dropped out of the sky and swooped over them. Its wingspan cast a gigantic shadow which turned toward him. As it lunged at Jacobus to attack, Yapet leaped from the level above and struck it down with a sword.

Jacobus ran into the courtyard and kicked the body of the creature over with his sandal. It was a gigantic pukwudgie.

“What are you doing here?” said Zualpha, rushing to the area, surprised to see Yapet and Seskef there. “I told you and your brother to return to the *Tebah* two days ago — I thought you departed yesterday. Do either of you ever listen to reason?”

“But I wanted to eat ... take some *egg-yokers* with me. ... When Jacobus said he would be cooking at *first-meal* ... we decided to wait — just until early this morning,” Seskef stuttered, explaining, and showing his *yoker* as proof. “Certainly a few hours ... can’t ... won’t matter.”

“Where did those things come from?” Jacobus asked, prodding the dead creature with his foot. “We’ve encountered them once before at the Starbeam Pool.”

“The pukwudgie is a creature that was made by Poseidontel,” Zualpha told with hesitation.

“Faeruad ... or Poseidontel as you call him, has this place ... its hidden away ... called the Speciation Crib,” Seskef added. “He makes all kinds of weird ... mutated ... genetic creatures there. ... A real scary ... frightening place that is.”

“Here comes more of them,” Jacobus announced, looking toward the sky.

Jaws dropped open as they could see a swarm of pukwudgies circling the fortress. Frantically everyone jumped into survival mode, chaotically picking up shields, arming themselves with spears, arrows, or swords, and preparing to hold the fort.

Zualpha turned toward Seskef and Yapet and emphasized the obvious, “The two of you will have to prepare for battle. It is too late to escape now.”

Yapet drew his sword, turned around quickly, and landed squarely on his feet, ready to do battle, but not before snapping at Seskef, “You’re always dragging me into troubles I didn’t ask for. ... Pray the enemy gets you before I do.”

The swarm descended on the fort with loud shrieks that made everyone want to cover their ears, but they couldn’t or else

they would lose grip on the weapons they held. The first two wudgies spit slime toward Jacobus' eyes. He blocked it with his arm, shaking the goo off while making an awful face about the matter. Another one, with a long flapping tongue, dove for his head. Jacobus twirled around with a spear and let it fly directly into the creature's belly. One down.

Zualpha enchanted poems and waved his hand about, authoritatively. Three of them lost their glide and twirled around in the air, they bumped heads and their wings became tangled and entwined before they fell. Two, three, four down.

Yapet wielded a spear and a sword, piercing and slashing at the ghouls that emerged from the sky. Pointing an arrow positioned in a bow, though misaligned, Seskef whipped left, then right, following the wudgies that swooshed by him. He would duck behind a wall whenever one got too close.

“Where’s your gal Areshia when we need her,” Seskef complained, referring to the girl who was an accomplished archer. Before he could figure out how to work the arrow shooting contraption, a pukwudgie landed directly in front of him. The wudgie opened its mouth so wide that one could see rotting teeth — hungry to take a bite out of Seskef’s face. Trembling, he dropped the bow, Yapet shouted, and threw him a nearby sword. Seskef grabbed the blade and wacked the beast in front of him. Five, six, seven, eight of them were gone.

Jacobus, Zualpha, and Yapet did damage to the next two but the eleventh one got away. Flying high into the sky, he let out a loud screech, zoomed off into the horizon, and over the ice mounds. They were safe for now.

At the feet of Mount Evaemon, the place where King Yaswhen had departed and was expected to return, King Poseidontel gathered together all the warriors of the world. Some came because of an allegiance to him. Many had been tricked into enlisting and others set out in payment of a debt.

Ausethen, the Prince Lord of Aszea, invaded the Island of Gadeirus a few sun-cycles earlier. The attack went well but the end result was devastating for him. He returned home vowing never to come back to Atlantis again. Yet he continued to spy and keep an eye on Poseidontel. When he heard about the *Scroll of Air*, his interest perked and he sent expedition troops into the area. When a thunderbolt showed up, floating on a barge, near their capital city, everyone in his land knew that it came from Atlantis. He could no longer sit back and do nothing because his people pressured him into responding. The troops of Aszea were riled up and motivated to attack. They too marched toward Mount Evaemon, feeding right into Poseidontel's master plan.

The Queen of Mauretania went on a rampage when her all woman army woke one morning to find that their male concubines had been slain. Her jealous sister, General Andromache of Atlantis, had threatened to do this act many times before. Poseidontel had asked Andromache to engage her sister in the war, and now she was moving into action. Two hundred fleets of clipper ships, with sails made from leather, pushed across the Mesapian Sea toward Evaemon. Thousands of canoes launched from these.

Now that every foot soldier on the planet was coming together, Poseidontel was ready for his final victory. He did not wish for a war between the nations, but to orchestrate a coming together, so that the moment King Yaswhen set foot on the mountain — they could destroy him. However the timing had to be just right. He was depending on Trigonomy's calculations being correct. If his prediction was off but a week or two, a battle of epic proportions, as was never before seen, was sure to erupt.

Poseidontel had erected a tall tower, at least half the height of the mountain, where he could stage his war and watch everything. Most important was the watching for Yaswhen's Star. Whether it was really a star or the reflection of a space vehicle mattered not. No one was sure if they were looking for a chariot, a delta-transporter, a *Valix*, or some celestial body he grabbed a ride on. The one thing known was that this object had been charted by

astronomers when Yaswhen departed. Trigonomy had followed the charts and discovered the bright light returning, so he was certain that he could predict the exact day within a few hourglasses. They hadn't seen the celestial body in a long while since it was blocked by the sun in the day during this season, both occupying the same space in the sky. Nonetheless, the calculations showed that the return would happen within the week.

Warriors brought more astronomers and *skyscopes* up to the tower. Tensely the troops engaged in training exercises while watching, like an owl: for Yaswhen's Star, for the Aszean Warriors, and for the Mauretania Army of Women.

Trigonomy readjusted the eyepiece on the largest *skyroscope*, moving it back and forth slightly with a tap of his finger. Rechecking the charts drawn on papyrus, he made measurements using a protractor, astrolabe and other scientific instruments.

"A troubling fact you have — discovered — I see," Andromache said, noticing that Trigonomy seemed to be profoundly sweating. She was still jealous of anyone who might steal time away from her moments with the king. She half smiled with enjoyment, watching him squirm.

"The charts are correct, but—" Trigonomy gasped, "the Earth was in the position of the Fall Equinox when Yaswhen departed. We are currently located two months before the Spring Equinox. I made adjustments for such, but from this place the triangulation maps differently."

"What does that mean — in terms that a general would evaluate?" Andromache snapped.

Hearing the conversation, King Poseidontel stomped into the area. He flipped his cape back with fury, "It means that Yaswhen's Star won't cross paths with the Earth for another seven or eight moon cycles."

"So that is why you have gathered all the armies of the world together," Andromache realized, her face lighting up with more excitement than any general ever before. "Why just the sight

of the entire world marching against him would be enough to make Yaswhen cry."

"Except, due to a foolish man's miscalculations that battle won't be happening today," Poseidontel screamed, breaking out into a rage and beating Trig with his trident.

As Andromache looked on with a smile of evil pleasure, the king pushed Trigonomy off the top of the tower. He shoved the *skyroscope* over the balcony after him. A few moments later Andromache's smile inched up when she heard the distant thud of his body hit the ground. Then she snapped back to reality when the fallen *skyroscope* could be heard mangling on top of him.

"The armies that march against us cannot be held at bay for a month much less seven," Andromache told Poseidontel, who horridly grunted before she vowed with a gleam of excitement in her eye, "We will prepare for war!"

In the far distance, the injured pukwudgie could be seen approaching. Once it landed, it spilled out the location of the fort where the Asterians were hidden.

Looking toward the horizon, the king began to form another idea, "If our enemies, from the East and of the West, march toward this mountain and we are not here, they will have only each other to fight."

"Perhaps," Andromache agreed, sounding disappointed. "Where could we possibly move an army of a hundred million troops?"

"Too long, the spies I have sent, have taken," the king continued, as the pukwudgie landed in the tower across from them. "The best spies were sent to find this *Scroll of Air* which remains our greatest chance to hold power. The one who holds the *Scroll*, will fear no armies, nor kings of the sky, for with the *Scroll* we will rule the universe. Words travel fast and now the very trees of the land tell of its location. It is no longer a secret that my brother *Gilggy* has it stowed away at his abode in the glacier. ... It belongs to me. That *Scroll* is mine ... it is rightfully mine ... all mine."

Andromache patted the king on the back as he began to cough on his words, filled with so much envy and wantonness that they almost choked him as they tried to come out.

Regaining his composure, the king stood tall and ordered, “Move every Warrior Channel, command every soldier, cause every beast to march up the Bashan Glacier. We will find Gilgamoeh’s abode and take back — my *Scroll* — my *Scroll of Air*.”

Jacobus momentarily left the enclave of Asterian children to join the men who huddled around a small fire in the gateway of Frostlaire Fortress. Before the horizon of an enormous valley they watched the red clouds capping the peak of Mount Evaemon. An Asterian scribe wrote down the conversations of the evening until the Captain of the group stomped over and snatched the writing from his grasp.

Throwing the papyrus into the fire, the Captain snarled, “A writing of this account is futile, for we shall all be dead by week’s end.”

“That wasn’t very Asterian of you, and it certainly wasn’t nice,” Jacobus cried, noticed by the others for the first time that evening.

“The place for children is back in —” the Captain stopped, remembering how Jacobus had slain more pukwudgies than the rest of them — he certainly wasn’t a child anymore.

“Dying is but a part of living,” Zualpha exclaimed in an upbeat tone instead of his usual drab teaching one, knowing that hope was even more scarce than the help they silently cried for. “For it is by the laying down of one’s life that we wake into the next realm. It is not death that you fear — but the mysteries of that which comes after.”

“Will we become like the other Asterian spirits?” Jacobus asked with a sad note. “Roaming the skies without a home ... and angrily throwing the pieces of rock, left from our moon, to wreak havoc on those who remain in this place?”

“You’ve been listening to too much human gossip, my boy,” Zualpha chuckled. “All of the Asterian spirits will soon be departing. Once Ahteana returns here and sounds the trumpet, we shall go forth from this solar system. We will be instantly transported to a place of peace and tranquility. You do remember the stories about Elysium? Tell them to the children — they will believe.”

“You speak as if you have seen into the future, and fate has told you that none of us will survive after this night?” the scribe asked with a hollow voice. “Your face draws a concern as if we were on the edge of the prophesized final crusade — the Battle of Quihutil.”

“Nothing is for certain — for today,” Zualpha shortly snapped. “Protect, but forbid not these children to be included. For those who believe like these little ones will have power to move these two mountains.”

Later the children began playing a few musical instruments some of them had packed. A song of sadness emerged from the strings plucked on a gourd, a bamboo flute, a harmonica, and a zampona. A small girl, barely five sun-cycles old, chimed in with the clang of a spoon to one of the cups, adding an occasional bell sound.

Jacobus played a tune on the zampona and then after a pause he expressed the mood with lyrics, sung a cappella, with each note of his voice perfectly in tune as if the instruments hadn’t stopped:

*“We the children were given in birth,
In a strange place they call Earth.
Destined for this unknown calling,
Where there is no foretelling,
Where hope should shine for the young,
Darkness hath left this song unsung.”*

Then he sang the words in Asterian:

*“Vuyune khut leselued vont revo umpyluezo ahverth,
 Umpyluezo ah craweundaym hetyun
 kholo leshulue ahourth.
 Nozzort epur khertyun anevorzetyun leshulue,
 Avaonovor khorupyun ez fu kolueovezeu.
 Avaonovor tupo scuta sceft epur khut ahyunuy,
 Aunurk tuto doft khertyun clrun futa cinuy.”*

Jacobus continued singing, the children following him inside for a last night of sleep. The scribe gathered his supplies together and paused looking out across the desolate valley, “Even the evening has cast a shadow across half the plain. Where once a frosted desert lay, now a blanket of darkness crawls toward us.”

“A shadow that is not,” the Captain hollered, perking up and sounding his horn as an alarm. “The shade that crawls toward our way — is the front line of warriors from Atlantis. ... Ten million — maybe more.”

Checking through a *looking-scope*, a tower guard confirmed that the approaching darkness, which covered the land, was what they feared — millions of soldiers approaching.

“They’ll be here before noon breaks tomorrow,” Zualpha snapped, pacing about with a face of worry none had seen before. “The ending was foretold — but so soon, I did not foresee.”

“We must do everything in our power to stop them. They cannot — they must not make it past this fort,” the Captain snapped, engaging into battle mode. “They shall not pass up the mountain.”

“There are but ten of us for each million of them,” the Scribe whined, kicking into the ice.

“Numbers do not concern me, nor should they you. ... The safe zone around Gilgamoeh’s *Tebah* must not be breached,” Zualpha scolded, holding his arms high as if the place was directly behind him and he was protecting it. “Have you forgotten your training already? ... Besides we have the advantage of height.”

His words gave little comfort as the Captain noticed ripples in the puddles on the ground. Soon the fortress began to rhythmically vibrate from the force of the millions of marching soldiers heading their way. So many marched, that their footsteps shook the tectonic plate Atlantis rested upon. Shuttering icicles occasionally pelted to the ground as the tremors broke them free. The smallest child did not sleep that night. When the noontime sun arrived, hidden by the ever-looming clouds, the marching stopped, the trembling ice calmed, and all was quiet for the troops had arrived at Frostlaire Fortress.

The Asterians took to positions on the upper levels of the fort. Shock drew across their faces when they saw what they were up against. It wasn't just the sheer size of the armies but what it consisted of that caused them to tremble. Mixed in with the millions of men were countless creatures which had been genetically created and bred in Poseidontel's Speciation Crib.

Goblins, giants, trolls, and beasts never before described emerged from the mass. Their faces looked like boils ready to pop and not one was symmetrically pleasing to the eye. To add to the lurking danger two holes in the ground opened up: one to the eastern horizon, the other on the west. From the depths of the earth two dark clouds emerged and filled the sky. When the cloud fanned out above the troops, a quick peek in the *looking-scope* confirmed that these were swarms of pukwudgies joining the battle.

From within the fortress, Jacobus was stationed at the door to the back room where the children huddled. Soon he became puzzled when he looked toward the upper level and saw his Asterian friends stepping back, hiding behind the walls — for he could not see the horrors which they witnessed outside the fort.

A lady below sweeping water away with her broom grumbled in a hushed tone, "If the men won't fight — the women will."

"We're just waiting to surprise them," the captain hollered.

When the scribe cowered into the corner of a tower and set down his sword, it was all that the Jacobus could take. He could watch, uninvolved, no more. The teenager bolted from his post, grabbed a bow and a holster of arrows, and darted up the stairs to take over on the second level, shouting, “Cowards! — I’ll stop them myself!”

“Don’t be a fool,” the scribe shouted, hunched into a ball just below the window of the towers Jacobus ran past.

“I’m not afraid like the rest of you Asterians who can’t even rhyme an *enchantment*,” he huffed, fingering an arrow into the bow.

Suddenly with no warning and purely by accident, the arrow Jacobus was loading shot forward, across the battlefield, and into the window of a tall moving-tower. The stick lodged itself in the shoulder of General Andromache. She turned around and faced outside the window, plucked the arrow from her arm like it was a small annoying insect, broke it in half, and gave the order, “CHARGE!”

PAPYRUS TEN

WAR OF ENCHANTMENTS

The swords and axes of the armies of men, pukwudgies, goblins, trolls, and beasts began chipping away the ice at the base of the fortress. Goblins started shooting flaming arrows into the compound. When the men hesitated to fight back, a few of the women took up pots, pans and brooms and began swatting the arrows from the sky. One lady's broom caught fire when it collided with an arrow. She threw it over the wall where it landed on top of a beast and ignited his coat of fur. When the beast ran into the crowd of warriors, his flames burst into a robust ball of fire and set a dozen others ablaze.

Trolls stomped forward with sledge hammers and began breaking into the icy mountain base. A troop of warriors rolled an enormous canon forward, aiming it directly at the fortress. With its

snout larger than the biggest giant in battle, they loaded the tube with black powder. The crowd began to cheer and chant:

“Puff the incinerator! Puff the incinerator! Puff! Puff! Puff!
Puff the incinerator! Puff the incinerator! Puff! Puff! Puff! ... Puff
the incinerator! Puff the incinerator! Puff! Puff! Puff! ...”

With the light of its fuse, a flame shot out and melted away half the icy gate which had protected the entrance to the fortress.

“We won’t last an hourglass against that fire canon,” the Captain pleaded, turning toward Zualpha.

“The oppression brought to the few who are left, will turn against and bring them death,” Zualpha answered, enchanting a poem in its direction with the thrust of his hand, *“Ipuzeto ahvruthor ketz khut opow avaeto ahuro doft, eveluedwend kyrkoyun ahuguensha ahund ahvreng khoer aunouht.”*

The men reloaded the canon and when they triggered it the second time, it flipped over and shot its load of fire backwards into the armies, wiping out hundreds more.

“They’re coming over the bridge!” Jacobus shouted, watching droves march forward carrying a large iron cylinder with an arrow-like end, positioned forward, ready to ram and penetrate the entrance.

Yapet snatched hold of a rope and tumbled over to Seskef, “Remember the pulleys we hooked up that time at the Iron Isolation — ‘bout ten suns ago?”

“When we were going to tamper with Aedon’s ...”

Cutting Seskef off, Yapet snapped, “You think you can remember how to pull me back up out of danger — this time?”

“Certainly ... I think I can ... I suppose I remember ...”

“Stop thinking about it, keep your eyes on the battle, and do it when you see trouble come my way!”

Yapet grabbed a sword, threw the cable over the wall and repelled down the outer part of the fortress until he was hanging just above the entrance. Jacobus jumped on another rope and slid lower to assist. The two of them landed on the bridge and rushed toward the oncoming troop. With a scream of valor, the two boys

pushed the men off the side of the road as they collided with each other. The large arrow, carried by twenty soldiers, almost went over too, but goblins hopped on the heads of the falling men and picked up the device, stabilizing it. The enemy proceeded to push back at Yapet and Jacobus. Each time they sent a goblin over the edge of the overpass, two more took its place.

Losing ground, Yapet pointed to a part of the road between him and the gate and shouted back, “Aim all you have ... right there!”

Seskef cried out with objection, “The bridge will break ... and then they’ll be cut off from us.”

“Exactly the point,” the Captain pointed out. “Are you forgetting about the ropes?”

“Oh yeah — the cables ... I’m supposed to be manning them,” Seskef grumbled, remembering just in time.

The Asterians shot arrows at the spot behind Yapet and Jacobus. The women dumped hot coals and logs from the campfire on the spot. Soon the point between them and the gate gave way and the icy bridge crumbled into the ravine. Chunks fell on the beasts that were chopping away at the base of the fort. On cue, Seskef and the Captain pulled Yapet and Jacobus back up into the fortress, escaping calamity for now.

As they were untying the ropes from their harness Zualpha rounded the corner and scolded them, “Seskef and Yapet, this is not your battle. Get back to the *Tebah* and protect your home.”

“As soon as we can,” Yapet cried, perplexed that there was no way out.

“Up the back side of the glacier,” Zualpha instructed, stopping them for a moment. The battle raged on behind them, yet they were in a bubble of protection suspended in time, in another dimension where their reality expanded briefly enough for final instructions to be given. “Do not leave the place you have built until you see the light of day. ... Though it be dark for an entire sun-cycle — and it probably will, do not come out until the sun shines in your window.”

Like experienced Nordic Adventurers, Yapet and Seskef found themselves transformed into mountain climbers beginning a vertical ascension up the side of the glacier. They weren't sure how suddenly they had gotten there, but they were happy to be away from the battle below. As they neared the top of a plateau, a flock of pukwudgies arrived. The two men hid in the crevices of the mountain to avoid being plucked off by one of the creatures. Whenever one flew too close, Seskef would hide his head under his arm and then Yapet would swing his sword out and slice its belly or chop off a wing.

Below the warriors battled Zualpha, Jacobus and the other Asterians. Overnight the enemy erected a wooden bridge and by the next afternoon they came crashing through the gates of the fortress. Zualpha ordered everyone back to the interior of the fort and there they had many scrimmages holding on to the last interior parts.

Halfway up the glacier, Yapet and Seskef ran across a wide plateau toward the next incline. On the way, pukwudgies swooped down and began a terrible assault. There were hundreds coming at them from every direction. Yapet's face was sliced by their toenails, Seskef's arm was cut, and both of them were tripped. Curled into two balls, protecting their heads with their arms, they were certain that it was the end of their lives. Just as they had given up hope, the pukwudgies suddenly all flew away. Yapet and Seskef were left on the plain alone and puzzled. When they walked back to the edge and looked down on the battle, they could see a beam of light pouring out of the sky onto the fort below. Having been raised in the depths of the underground, bright light is the enemy of the pukwudgie. So they retreated into the dark corners of the masses in the valley. The light began to fade and it was just enough of a break for Yapet and Seskef to get away. They continued their journey back up the mountain where they would reach their abode again in a couple of days.

The troops in battle moved away from the gate of the fortress and retreated, but only for a small space. The beam from

the sky faded away and in its place, Ahteana stood on the wall above the entrance. Reciting *enchantments*, she began to throw wind and tornados at those who attempted to advance against the fortress. Zualpha stood next to her and delivered balls of fire and clouds of smoke.

The tall black tower, which Poseidontel had erected near Mount Evaemon, was situated on a tractor tread. Slowly it moved through the troops toward the front line. When he was still about ten stadia away, the *Battle of Enchantments* came to a standstill. The pukwudgies cowered from light under their wings, some of them biting their long toenails. Goblins and trolls quietly roared at each other, boiling in anticipatory attack mode. Mastodons with baskets of warriors on their backs crouched on their knees to rest.

The Asterians stood tall, proud, fearless, and with confidence that they could win with the *enchantments* Ahteana and Zualpha knew — and the magic they could produce.

Jacobus stepped over to Ahteana and bowed on one knee, “My lady, you arrive at the most perfect moment. Certainly victory has been awarded to us by fate.”

“Victory will be ours today,” Ahteana sadly said, then looked out toward the plains. “But in this realm it shall not be.”

Zualpha stepped out from next to her and reminded him, “One may take away a body, but the spirit — that remains forever.”

Ahteana looked back and added, “This is not the end, but a beginning. For those who say it is the End of Days have not read the prophecies in light. It is the changing of time. Night falls on the time of the Asterian and tomorrow’s sun brings forth the hope of men.”

When the Asterians looked beyond Ahteana and Zualpha, into the sky, they saw the clouds move and instead of billows of darkness they formed the light of an army of Asterian spirits. The millions of Asterians that had fallen when their moon was destroyed by Poseidontel, occupied an unseen dimension in the

skies above. The warriors could not see them for they had the ability to show themselves only to those whom they desired.

Jacobus realized that it was time to join his kind above, “I am ready to lay down this bodily container — may it sleep well while I join my fellow Asterians.”

Ahteana turned toward the mountain of ice behind them and proclaimed an *enchantment* of protection over it:

“A light of protection, around thee I do surround,
Let nothing evil penetrate from above
or beneath the ground.

*Ah deght ahuc blaushaetyto ahuruuynd
unot u'd ahdu yomruno,
Dot futheng ofvelue honuluetyun iprum ahuvuovo ahur
ahvonouth yomrunod aholupuntoo.*”

Poseidontel’s tower swooped up to their front door. He stepped out on the top level and looked down upon them with the *Scroll of Water* in his left hand and the *Scroll of Fire* in his right. He shouted out and scolded the two Asterians.

“Your *enchantments* of water and fire, have wreaked havoc on my continent. Now you will pay. Have you forgotten the writings of their law? ... He who possesses the *Scroll* commands all.”

Executing *enchantments* in response, Zualpha and Ahteana threw fire, wind and smoke toward the king. But Poseidontel tossed the two *Scrolls* forward, they unrolled, and the supernatural papyrus floated before him. Dark enchantments he cast back, so evil that none dare repeat them even in writing. The magical feats which the two Asterians preformed abruptly stopped.

“He has the *Scrolls*,” Jacobus cried in defeat. “Nothing can stop him.”

“They may appear to heed his call,” the scribe whispered to him, “but they answer not to the *Uprooter*. For they will deceive

him and his armies while they work to bring their elements against the enemy.”

Poseidontel made a commanding gesture and an enormous *Atlatl-Amentum* machine grinded forward. It was ten times larger than the smaller version he had invented when he was just a prince. With another nod, the machine began flinging spears at the Asterians.

Knowing that their time had ended, Ahteana and Zualpha floated up into the air, crossed their arms over their chest, and looked toward the sky.

Jacobus screamed in defiance, “Nooooooooo!”

Like a shot-putter, Poseidontel whirled around swinging his triple-javelin thrower. Before he could tell if his spears had pierced their target, the fire canon was flipped around and with a blast Ahteana and Zualpha were consumed. They were gone, passed on into the next realm.

When the smoke cleared, the remaining Asterians saw that the sky was filled with thousands of war balloons as Aszea moved its airships into battle. The all-woman army of Mauretania marched from the East.

As Jacobus smashed swords with the beasts below, he heard Ahteana’s calming voice, though he couldn’t make out the words. When he looked up into the sky the veil covering its dimension rolled back and revealed its realm. With open arms, millions of Asterians pleasantly watched as if they were waiting for him to come up to them. He threw down his sword, crossed his arms over his chest. Then a beast came against him, sliced a blade through his body, and his spirit joined those in the sky.

By nightfall the fortress was taken and all who had been inside had gone on to the next realm. General Andromache smiled — for the first time it was more than just a half-of-a-grin. The warriors cheered and celebrated — they were so happy that they kissed one another and then started exchanging gifts. When word reached the villages that Zualpha and Ahteana had been destroyed, they cheered — certain that the plagues they had

brought had vanished along with those they had conquered. A holiday broke out as if it were the *Day of Apaturia*. For two days they feasted, drank wine, danced in the streets and on the battle field.

On the third day the party came to an end when General Andromache and her sister Queen Merine got into an argument and then a fight. Food, beverages, and even some of the gifts became weapons in the scrimmage and it played out like the two were still teenagers at the *educatory*. Poseidontel stepped in to break it up.

Then, he ordered the final assault, “Up the glacier mount and fetch me my last *Scroll* — the *Scroll of Air*. ... King Yaswhen — you have failed, the universe is now mine — all mine!”

About that same time Peter the Parrot landed on the corner of the tower and Poseidontel drew his sword and held it to the bird’s neck. A while past, he had vowed to kill Peter.

“Strike not Peter — this *copy-parrot* knows where the treasure you seek resides.”

“Open your beak but once more — and tell me what you know,” the king demanded.

The bird began mimicking Ganyped, as any *copy-parrot* would do. He delivered the message, “In Mestor Areshia has returned, her clone replaced, and the *Scroll* you seek she doth keep. Ganyped your loyal servant, will soon take the prize and deliver it to you at the Irem.”

Poseidontel shooed the bird away and called over one of the war balloons. He leaped aboard it and headed out in pursuit of the prize. Everything was finally coming together in his favor. He was certain that by the week’s end he would be the ultimate ruler of the universe.

But he was unaware of the chaos that followed his departure. Millions of Asterian spirits descended on the battlefield and caused mass confusion. Those that were assaulting the mountain began killing each other. The balloons from Aszea began

attacking the troops below. The goblins and trolls started fighting each other. Flying horses, pale in color, with swordsmen on their backs began slicing each other. The battle waged on all afternoon and by nightfall over half of the armies had killed each other.

PAPYRUS ELEVEN

ANGEL OF DELUGE

More danger loomed from a hidden treasure buried within the Talien Glacier. Fashioned from wood and plaster, a sculptured angel, bearing an endowment of reckoning in its belly, teetered in the balance of age. Sun-cycles ago, before Poseidontel rose to power, when he was known as Prince Faeraud, his ambition sealed the path of things to come — the road on which all the recent terrible events had taken place. It was this single moment of treachery he executed that set in motion the cascading of events that happened.

In that day, when he was just a prince, the Asterians lived on Earth's second moon called Asteria. They would come and go, traveling to Earth for the purpose of keeping order on the planet and reminding everyone to keep the laws of King Yaswhen until his return.

After nearly seven hundred years past, and the King had not returned, many people grew weary of following the Asterian's rules. More than anything Faeraud desired to be king, but his

brother Gilgamoeh was next in line. He knew that as long as the Asterians were around he would never be named. So he concocted a plan to get rid of them — to eliminate the Asterians.

First, he saw to it that Gilgamoeh was banished and then he set out to destroy the Asterians. Next he secretly orchestrated a Territorial Quarrel (war over land) provoking an attack by the neighboring Aszeans. When the ruling Prince Lords came together for peace talks, Faeraud set off an explosion hours before the meeting was scheduled — knowing that the Asterians would move the negotiations to their moon for security reasons. He knew this would happen, because the Asterians' most trusted advisor, Ambassador Telopps, was his ally. And most secret of all, not a single person knew that the evil Asterian, Say and Teller, had devised this master scheme by suggesting every step to Faeraud through the mirror in his bedroom.

Shortly before the peace negotiations were moved to their moon, Faeraud commissioned Trigonomy the artist to create four sculptures of cherubim. Upon delivery of the objects, within their specified hollowed bellies — Faeraud filled them with a most grievous ploy. Inside each cavity he placed a triple-thunderbolt, each bomb capable of wiping out an entire continent.

Right before the convoy of Prince Lords departed for the Asterian moon, he and Trigonomy visited each *Valix* (transportation vehicle for traveling to the Asterian moon). Each party was told they were being given the only piece and that the angel sculpture could be presented as a gift at the negotiations as a symbol of peace — thus pleasing the Asterians and gaining favor for its bearer in the treaty to be written. Soon each of the four *Valixes* departed, none of them knowing that another ship also carried the same prize — a secret weapon of mass destruction.

Shortly after takeoff, the *Valix* carrying Ahteana the Asterian had mechanical troubles and went down in the Talien Glacier. This one event meant that only three *Valixes* were headed for the Asterian moon. As the three ships landed on the moon, the thunderbolts contained within, ignited and created a blast so

enormous that the entire moon blew up into millions of pieces. It would've been pulverized into even smaller pieces had the last *Valix* made it to the destination. But since that did not happen, the broken up pieces were much larger than expected.

The asteroids created circled in orbit until they began falling to Earth. This act of transgression created the rocks which plummeted into the atmosphere and started the chain of tragedies which seemed to bring the Earth into its last days. For it was a meteor that caused the rivers to be poisoned, which caused the frogs to vacate, the pests to cover the land, the crops to die, and disease to spread. But all of this could not be blamed on one person. Its responsibility laid with all the people of the land for they had been consumed by pleasures and material desires, blinded from seeing the signs in the heavens that surrounded them. As long as Poseidontel encouraged them to freely do what they wanted while basking in luxury, they were willing to ignore the guidelines King Yaswhen had given — and to even believe that he was never coming back again. Some people doubted that he was ever really a king, and others thought he was just a made up legend. But none of that really mattered to them anyway — they were more concerned about making sure they had the latest model transporter, the best made toga, and a sprawling abode.

When the Etruscans attempted a coup to overthrow the king, none of the people aided — they all just watched and cheered as the king quickly eliminated their last saviors. And when the meteors started falling, rumors spread that the spirits of the Asterians were causing them to fall. They were right to think such because of their guilt. In fact the Asterian Spirits were not there to cause anything bad. Faeraud had already set the events in motion; however, the Asterian Spirits were there watching and they would've stopped the meteors from coming had the people of Earth stood up and asked for help. Faeraud's destruction of the Asterian moon showed its importance in the balance of life which was responsible for the pending doomsday that seemed so evident.

Inside the glacier, the fourth *Valix* which did not make it to the Asterian moon, rested for a while. It was in there that Ahteana and her Asterian friends formed a cave where they could survive. There were already many crevasses, canyons and waterfalls inside the ice, created by the recent warming temperatures. The Asterians fixed the *Valix* so that they could escape to the bald satellite, Earth's other moon. While preparing for departure, the passengers offloaded cargo that was not essential for the trip. The angel sculpture was the first thing removed and it was stowed deep in the cavern.

Later after their departure, there was a shift in the glacier and ice and snow pushed the piece of art toward a canyon where it almost fell over. At the last moment, a chunk of ice fell from the interior and anchored the angel at the legs. The piece hovered over the deep canyon held from falling by a small mound of ice. All it needed to do was fall, and the thunderbolt in its belly would blow a hole in the planet.

Now the hidden canyon below decided to hide no more. A meteor from the sky turned into a fireball. Its flaming rock burst across the icy battlefield, opening up an enormous gulf where the underground canyon in the ice existed. Snow turned to ice and when the gush of water exited out of the area, a canyon half a stadia wide separated the approaching armies from the steep climb that led up to Gilgamoeh's abode.

The angel, its legs still embedded below, teetered and wobbled as thousands of troops marched by the edge above. Occasionally, platforms of ice would give way and send dozens of troops into the gushing rapids running their way.

Like a puppy frightened to jump into the river for the first time, the warriors marched in circles at the canyon's edge for hours. Finally, the angel stretched out, could rest no more. With a last shake, its legs pulled free and it fell into the depths below. The sudden descent triggered the switch which set off the thunderbolt. Inside the glacier it exploded.

From outside, the cold glacier suddenly lit up with a glow. When the fiery color subsided, its mountain ice had turned into an ocean of water. Quickly and instantly, thousands of stadia of ice melted. Steam from the reaction poured into the sky creating ferocious clouds mixed with red flashes-of-fire and dark-gray rolls of saturation. Slowly the enormous puff grew and spread out across the entire planet. The monumental transformation, from ice into water and clouds, shook the Earth so hard that half of its buildings collapsed. The compass needle which had always pointed up, toward the South in those days, switched position and now pointed down, toward the North. The enveloping sea instantly swallowed up the millions of Warriors that had come to march against the sanctioned safe zone — Gilgamoeh's *Tebah*.

An aggressive band of pukwudgies organized an attack formation and headed upward toward the *Tebah*. As the air thinned in the upper heights, some of them became faint and others passed out from altitude sickness. The few wudgies who made it, discovered the eye of a hurricane protecting the *Tebah* while viscous clouds circled around the place. Before they could size it up and decide where to enter, lightning bolted from the angry clouds and struck them down.

As the water rolled across the valley, the eagles and other birds took to the sky when the water plowed over their trees and drowned their nests. With nowhere to land, they flew flapping their wings until they could flutter no more.

PAPYRUS TWELVE

PITTER PATTER

Aedon and Areshia glided into the Mestor abode by early morning. Even though they had been up all night, they felt refreshed and energized. The *Scroll of Light* brought them inside and once they jumped off, it rolled up and retracted into the holder.

Aedon didn't like the voices he heard in his head whenever he was left alone with magical artifacts, so he handed her the tube, "Maybe you should be its keeper for awhile. We can take turns sharing its — difficulty."

Ganyped stirred and woke from his sleep when he heard the two of them preparing *first-meal* in the eatery. Walking over, he spotted the satchel, left on the floor by Areshia's clone. He slyly snuck into it and dug around until he found the *globeaky* which would operate the other transporter parked on the roof next to

Aedon's. Quickly he tucked it into the pocket of his toga. He had already begun to form plans in his mind about how he would get the *Scroll* away from them, take off in the transporter, and give it to Poseidontel.

"Banana patties or mini-crunch cakes," Areshia asked, turning to face Ganyped, still cooking with one hand.

"Crunch cakes ... without milk? ... I think not," he objected, noticing the place hadn't been stocked with fresh supplies in some time.

"Banana patties it is — for you," she answered, serving him a short stack from the triangular-shaped skillet she held. "Ought to be thankful for any food we can find. Surprising no one pilfered this place."

Taking their meals, Aedon and Areshia sat down in the next room, facing out toward the wide window where it was still black as night.

"Hardly the sun shines no more," grumbled Aedon. "But certainly I'd expected more light by the dawn. And the sky ... those flashes are so frequent — couldn't be more meteors ... not that many ..."

"Sky's been acting weird all morning," Areshia sighed. "Lighting up as if a hundred illumination-bulbs were shorting out every second."

They marveled at the lightning flashes reflecting off the waterfalls. Glistening, they spilled into the Nile River as Ganyped concocted an idea. The tube inside Areshia's holster of arrows lay on the floor next to her, staring at him, almost begging him to take it. He thought that it was the perfect time to snatch away the *Scroll*, especially with both of their backs facing toward him.

Aedon and Areshia were occupied observing the outdoors as drops of water began to pelt the window. Pitter-patter they began hitting harder.

Ganyped picked up the triangular patty-pan and slowly moved toward them, raising it high, ready to conk each of them on

the head and knock them unconscious. But right then, Aedon jumped up.

“What the *seawmuck* is that?” Aedon cried, pointing out the window.

Ganyped sharply twisted the pan behind his back with one hand so it could not be seen before pretending to be interested, “Don’t know what it is.”

A fierce wind shoved leaves, branches and all kinds of debris across the river. Dark clouds billowed in the sky, rolling across the area in haste. Puzzled, the guys looked at each other and Ganyped shrugged his shoulders, more concerned about stealing his prize than watching an ominous sky that he assumed was just another annoying plague he’d have to weather.

Plunk. Plink. Pitter patter! Never before had it ever rained in Atlantis. The crops, plants and trees had always been watered by the underground springs or manmade irrigation which ran throughout the land. For the first time in its history, water drops fell from the sky. Aedon pressed his nose against the glass, turning his head up, trying to see where the water was coming from. Suddenly a downpour let loose. Buckets of rain spread across the city.

Ganyped was annoyed by the disturbance which had interrupted his plan. He grasped the patty-pan tighter with the hand behind his back, but before he could execute a blow the sight outside the window caused him to drop his mouth open and dump the weapon to the floor.

Just above the waterfall down the Nile River, a waterspout dropped out of the sky. Its loud sucking noise announced that it was there to do damage. It weaved back and forth from one side of the riverbank to the opposite shore, each time plucking abodes from the hillside and sending them into the stream. Over the waterfall the houses crashed, falling to their demise. The spout changed directions and headed directly toward them.

“Quick! Downstairs to the lower level,” Aedon yelled, leading the way.

Areshia grabbed her holster and started to follow, but stopped short of the side door, "Hold on! We'll be crushed if we retreat down there."

"How is that?" Ganyped snapped, tugging at her toga.

"My dream ... Aedon — Remember the nightmare I told you about?"

"You said the abode fell down the cliff into the river," he answered, confused, yet amazed that what she had dreamt might actually happen.

"Yes, but we were inside and we were safe," she added.

"Okay — everyone back! We'll retreat into the eatery for now," Aedon ordered. "Stay away from the windows and hang onto something."

The three of them and Ashavari, the cat, huddled in the small area clinging to cupboards. The waterspout came closer. When it reached the front window it whisked back into the sky, disappearing, and leaving their abode alone.

"Whew!" Aedon exhaled relieved that the expected encounter hadn't happened.

"Some odd dreams you have," Ganyped chuckled in a mocking tone. "Did you really believe you had dreamt of the future?"

Just as they were relaxing from their tight grip, the glacier, which had melted a thousand stadia away and turned into a wall of water, arrived. Its first wave dove over the banks of Ampheres, and covered their abode with a splash. The runoff water on the mountain above them tumbled downhill and swept the abode off its foundation. The tiny home slid down the hill a few podes. All the dishes jumped out of the cupboards. The three of them and the cat did the best they could to dodge flying objects while still holding on.

The bungalow might have crumpled like the other houses before it, except that the large wave and mass amount of water completely filled up the canyon. The Nile River rose so high that even the waterfall was covered over. At the exact same moment the

level of the Nile River and the base of the abode met each other. Like a house boat it pushed rapidly downstream.

Inside, Areshia touted back to Ganyped, “I do believe in dreams!”

“Amazing,” he gasped, noticing, “The windows — not even one of them broke.”

As if his comment had jinxed the situation, a large tree trunk banged against the front window, hit a second time, and crashed through — shattering the glass. Water rushed in at a fierce pace.

“We *gotta* get *outta* here before it sinks,” Aedon shouted, wading through knee deep water toward the front door. “Up to the roof! Hopefully, one of the transporters survived the spill.”

When he opened the front door more water came rushing in. The staircase attached to the outside wall was still intact, and he grabbed onto the overhang of the roof as he maneuvered onto it. Once he was stabilized on one of the exterior steps, Areshia handed him Ashavari who darted up to the roof as soon as she was let go. As Areshia scaled the wall inching her way over, the molding suddenly gave way. The piece she was hanging onto swung forward like a door on a hinge. Fortunately she swung toward Aedon and he caught her in time.

Next Ganyped jumped and when he fell in the water, Aedon undid his belt-tie and threw it out to rescue him. He caught it, pulled himself in, and scrambled up the flight. Just as Aedon neared the top, the staircase broke off from the house. For a moment he was left standing on the floating stairs which drifted away from the abode. Quickly he leaped over the water, barely landing on the roof.

Even though it was the middle of the day, the storm made it pitch-black outside, and they could barely see. The rain pounded so hard that they slipped and slid with each step they took. But on the roof was what they had hoped for: not one, but two deltas — both transporters were still parked there.

Ganyped ran toward the transporter that belonged to *Cloned Areshia*, “I’ll see if its capacitor rolls on!”

Aedon was puzzled about how Ganyped was able to start it, not knowing that he had taken the key from *Cloned Areshia’s* satchel earlier. Anyway, he was too busy starting up his own transporter to really pay attention. The *crystal-capacitors* on both units spun into action and they were ready to go.

“Excellent,” Aedon exclaimed and shouted over to Ganyped. “Areshia can ride with me.”

Her cat, Ashavari, jumped into the transporter, but before Areshia could come aboard, Ganyped grabbed her and wrestled her into his vehicle, locked the door, and called back to Aedon, “No, she’s coming with me. That *Scroll* belongs to King Poseidontel — not you Aedon!”

Aedon jumped out of his transporter and rushed over to save Areshia, but Ganyped shoved, grabbed, and yanked at the *globeaky* around Aedon’s neck, the key that could unlock the *Scroll*. As Aedon fell backwards, the tie around his neck broke loose. Ganyped snatched the globe away, jumped into the transporter, and took off.

Aedon sat there dumbfounded and in disbelief. The rain poured down on him harder. He quivered as he cried and sobbed realizing that the *Scroll* was gone, his *globeaky* stolen, and Areshia kidnapped.

“You just *gonna* sit there and drown?” Ashavari snorted in a pious and condescending tone, as if the raging storm wasn’t even a concern.

Aedon dove into his transporter and lifted off after Ganyped. There was no choice in the matter, he had to save Areshia, get his *globeaky* back, and reclaim the *Scroll*.

Flying blindly into the darkness, rain pelted the transporter and the wind tossed it around the sky. If it were not for the constant flashes of lightning he wouldn’t have been able to see anything — and then what he did see — was a horror so great that his heart sank low and many times he could not look at all.

Additional waves from the melted glacier roared in. The famous tower bridge of Tyrehenia was broken into dozens of smaller pieces which thrashed about the waves. The hillside covered with thousands of luxurious abodes was washed away like a sandbar in the ocean. Sadly he thought about all the merchants that owned stores and the *kangawaiters* that had taken care of him at the eateries — he wondered if they were drowning in the waters below.

When he flew over Shepherd's Crossing, the mountains there were eroding away with each new wave. The thirty-level wooden inn was filled with stranded shepherds waving and screaming to be rescued, but before anyone could come, the top level crumbled onto the one below and the entire complex fell like a house of cards. Aedon wondered if Curious Cain were still around, and he thought about Dolius whom he met in the marketplace and wondered what might be happening to her too. Then there were his monkey friends who lived in the forest nearby. He hoped that they were able to climb trees tall enough to escape.

Ashavari sat up tall in the passenger seat and her fur seemed to stand on end. Then she turned to Aedon and began to speak to him in an unusual raspy tone, “*Sssurely you can sssee that you ssshould have held onto the ssscroll. ... If you were in charge, you could've done good with it ... and sssaved the world from thisss plague of deluge.*”

“You’re talking funny, cat,” Aedon snapped, looking into her eyes. “Is someone whispering messages into your ear?”

With a gulp the cat shut up and sat back down and purred, “Nope.”

After a long day’s journey the transporters neared the Irem. The dark clouds were less intense, but clearly at least one wave had already hit the area. Some people were stranded on top of buildings and pyramids. And the floating bridges and other iconic elements of Atlantis’ capital city were strewn about in disarray. Ferry boats were diligently trying to evacuate people from the Irem and quarrels were breaking out everywhere. Aedon wondered how his

mother, or at least the clone of his mother, was weathering the storm. He worried about the other people and animals at the Irem he knew.

Aedon thrust the power level of the transporter forward and rushed up beside Ganyped's transporter. The two of them made gestures at each other which only they could understand. Ganyped zipped low and began flying between the tall buildings of the Irem which poked out of the blanket of water they swam in. The chase lasted a short while and Aedon eased up when Ashavari reminded him that they were running low on *orichalcum*, the fuel which powered the flying machine.

Ganyped took off and headed directly for the Irminsul Pentagon. The tall five-sided pyramid, covered in black glass, was swimming in water a quarter-the-way up its height. A span higher, a large door-sized window opened and Ganyped floated his transporter in, like it was a garage. When the window began to slide closed, Aedon rounded a corner and rushed toward it. Breaking through its lowering glass, he came to a stop next to the other transporter. While the storm raged outside the opening, everyone jumped out of the vehicles. — Arguing and shoving ensued.

“Enough!” a loud voice ordered. King Poseidontel turned around and stomped toward them, holding the other two *Scrolls* under his arm. The cap he wore with the goat horns seemed taller and pointier than ever and his long worn face had turned red with fury, yet he spoke calmly as if he were in control of everything, “Such an awful day of weather for us to meet up again, Aedon. It’s been awhile. I do hope that your travels here weren’t — too adventurous.”

Aedon acknowledged, with a nervous stutter. “We haven’t … time to stay … We’ll be on our way … shortly...”

“I see your gal pal has brought me something,” Poseidontel proclaimed, spotting the *Scroll*. “A gift perhaps?”

“You couldn’t take it if you wanted to,” Areshia hissed in defiance.

"I won't have to — take it," Poseidontel roared. "You see, Aedon here, belongs to me. He is on my side. He gave an oath long ago."

"Cooperate guys — a tidal wave of luck is coming our way," Ganyped begged.

"Aedon and I — we formed a secret organization and he swore his loyalty to me with a *finger-locking promise*. I won't have to take the *Scroll* — because you are going to hand it over to Aedon and he is my — *Smart-owl* — who will bring it to me," said Poseidontel.

Areshia looked confused, concerned, and drastically disappointed. Then Poseidontel turned toward Aedon, and while no one else could see or hear the things he said, Aedon could. He reminded Aedon about when they were *educatory-mates* and the night that three of them sat around the enchanted mirror and made a *finger-locking promise* to support each other to the death. Images of the evening came flashing back into Aedon's mind.

Then Say and Teller, the evil Asterian spirit that possessed Poseidontel, began to speak. Aedon recognized the raspy voice for once it had appeared to him as a snake, and another time a locust, but this time, clearly it came from Poseidontel.

"Ssscertainly you will do assy you promisssed. We are all that remain on the planet now. ... It iss up to usss, Aedon, to sssave the world. ... Bring me the ssscroll and together we will ssstop this dessstruction and rule. ... You desserve to be more than just a half-princsse. ... I can make you a king of Atlantisss...."

"I did make a *finger-locking promise*," Aedon admitted, with a bowed head. "But that oath was broken long ago by you. ... Besides, I have made a conflicting promise to King Yaswhen and the law of the *Scrolls* you hold, states: *any oath made to the King — forgives that which binds you to another.*"

"I am the king, you fool" Poseidontel screamed, stomping his trident scepter to the floor in a gesture of such rage that the marble cracked. "Nonetheless, I will take the *Scroll* anyway and the two of you will die."

With the other two scrolls under his right arm, he raised the trident with his left and commanded for the *Scroll* to come forward to him, “*Scroll of Air* come to me this night, Come forth and join your brothers in might.”

“*Crept ahuc huer lecumo ketz go khertyun feght,
Lecumo ipurth ahund vuen ahyunuy
ahvruthor umpyluezo geght.*”

Nothing happened and Poseidontel huffed, “You’ve tricked me. You didn’t bring the *Scroll*!”

“That’s because it’s not called the *Scroll of Air*,” Areshia snottily snapped.

“Its name was hidden from us,” Ganyped quivered, trembling with thoughts about how much trouble he was going to be in — for forgetting to tell the king about this minor detail.

Aedon immediately stepped forward and commanded another *enchantment*:

“*Copeno ahuc Weng Yaswhen crept ahuc deghit,
Lecumo ipurth ahund vuen ahyunuy
ahvruthor umpyluezo geght.
Evuw ahurynd arn yaswhen blaushaetyto,
Avaech vuyune ozcupo yaswhen iyr nozzort.*”

Which means: “Spirit of King Yaswhen, *Scroll of Light*, Come forth and join your brothers in might. Wrap around us your protection, while we escape to our destination.”

The other two scrolls shot out from under Poseidontel’s arm, flew over to Areshia, and jumped into her holster. To make room in the holder, their magic caused the arrows to fly out of the bag and shoot toward the *Uprooter*. Poseidontel ducked, but one of them hit him in the shin and he fell to the ground. Un-amused he plucked the arrow from his limb, and as he got up to fight back, he

discovered that his vision was fading. Flailing his arms back and forth he called out, “My eyes! What’s happening, I can’t see!”

“Royal one, I am so beside myself — I — I — didn’t tell because I thought you knew,” Ganyped stuttered in horror.

“You didn’t tell me what?”

“That he who calls the *Scroll* not by its name — will be blinded,” Aedon added, grabbing his *globeaky* back from Ganyped before he and Areshia jumped into his transporter and spun the capacitor into motion.

“Quick!” Areshia shouted, pointing out the opening where a mammoth wave in the distance headed their way. When Aedon moved the takeoff lever forward, the capacitor died. The transporter was dead. He looked over his shoulder where the cat sitting in back, next to the empty fuel chamber, blinked her eyes without having to say *I told you so*.

“It can’t be. We’re out of *orichalcum!* ... I’ll get the bar from Ganyped’s transporter,” Aedon shouted in a scurry.

Ganyped stood in front of the other transporter in a daze and there he listened to Sayer’s instructions in his head.

“Ganyped ... trussst me. ... Bring me the Sscroll and I will give to you — Aedon’sss place. ... I will make you a king. ... Yesss, you dessserve to be resspected for your loyal ssservice to me. Give me a finger-locking promisss...”

While he was distracted Aedon yanked the bar-of-fuel from Ganyped’s transporter and popped it into his own.

“Wait! We should take this vehicle — it’s much newer,” Ganyped insisted, pointing to the one he drove and climbing back into it.

“Those new shiny ones are a piece of junk — I know that mine can fly underwater,” Aedon hissed back, before jumping aboard and closing the hatch as the large wave drew closer.

“You can’t just leave him there,” Areshia cried.

“I may be a follower of King Yaswhen — but I’m no saint,” said Aedon, pushing the lever forward.

The vehicle zipped out from the window of the Irminsul Pentagon just as the mammoth wave tumbled into it. Briefly they were swept up in the wave, but Aedon managed to maneuver the transporter up through the water and fly above it. Circling around, they witnessed the entire Irem sinking into the sea. Only the tips of a few buildings and the Irminsul Pentagon poked into the sky. The pyramid filled with water and when pressure built up inside, the top blew off and water squirted from it like a geyser.

Aedon shut his eyes for a moment. With a heavy sigh, Areshia knew something was wrong and she insisted on knowing what he was stewing about.

“Look at the instruments,” he cried, pointing to the dashboard where the compass and other gauges rapidly twisted and turned as if they were lost. “The poles are switching — North becomes South then South is North, even West and East are confused.”

“You’ve never relied on the compass before.”

“I can navigate by starlight; I’m one of the best...”

“Except we can’t see any stars...” Areshia realized.

“This is impossible. It’s at least an entire day’s flight to Bashan and we don’t even know if we’re going the right way.”

Before they could figure anything out, the lightning picked up again and they found themselves wandering over an ocean with little space between its surface and the low hanging clouds. A dozen waterspouts were chasing them and crisscrossing their path. The dozen turned into a hundred and Aedon had to fly at an angle dodging the funnel clouds.

At one point, below, they saw Enkidu riding on a log, waving and begging for refuge. A moment later the log was snatched up by a whirlpool sucking the man in.

Then there was a break in the clouds, an eye to the storm. A ray of sunlight shined through its hole about a stadia ahead of them. It was like a spotlight pointing to an island in the distance.

“Up head!” Areshia shouted. “Maybe we can land on that iceberg.”

“Do you think it’s large enough for a landing?”

When they arrived closer to the berg, the sun disappeared again, but the weather was calmer. The mountain of ice was clearly in view and what they saw sitting on top of it caused their jaws to drop. They stared in amazement, perplexed at what was riding on top of the iceberg.

PAPYRUS THIRTEEN

TEETERING TEBAH

Once Aedon was closer, clearly there was no place to land on the small iceberg because an abode occupied most of its surface. At second glance the floating house had a familiar look — but it couldn't be, he thought. He had calculated that they were only halfway there. But somehow, Gilgamoeh's abode had broken off of the glacier, and there it sat on top of the iceberg. The building was fully resting on the mound of ice in the middle of a newly created ocean. Aedon could hardly believe his eyes.

A few hourglasses earlier, when the angel-art-thunderbolt inside the glacier exploded, it caused the mountain of ice to suddenly melt, and the place where the *Tebah* sat, broke free and rode high on its wave — safely carrying its occupants over the treacherous waters of doom. A worldwide flood — a planet completely covered by water made up of one single ocean — surrounded them.

Aedon had to figure out a way to get down to the building from his transporter if he wanted to survive the ordeal. He flew lower to inspect the building. There was nowhere to land and the only way to board the *Tebah* would be to climb down a rope. Someone would have to remain and fly the transporter. That meant he would have to lower the *Scrolls* and Areshia to the *Tebah* — and he would not be able to follow.

“Areshia, I’m going to send you and Ashavari — down to the balcony below,” he told her noticing the upper windows on the top deck.

“You’re not serious? In that freezing water?”

He remembered seeing the terrace on its third level while he had been inside eating *fifth-meal*, “I want you to undo the *rope-tie* around my waist and rig it up.”

“I can walk a good tightrope, but hanging onto one above those waters — in this storm — well — that’s suicide,” she scoffed, in disbelief.

“Our *orichalcum* will be spent by the next hourglass. Once this vehicle is down, we’ll be swimming in that sea of debris.”

“Why do I always go on adventures with you? You almost got me killed the last time — and the time before that,” she grumbled. “How are you coming aboard?”

Refusing to show any fear he muttered, “I’ll circle around and jump at the last minute.”

With a deep tension, they both exhaled at the same time — this was more stress than either had ever faced. Areshia prepared the *rope-tie* and picked up the holster with the *Scrolls*. She tied the cat to her waist. Taking a deep breath she fingered the latch that would open the hatch on her side of the transporter.

“Wait ‘til we’re closer,” Aedon snapped, quickly pulling her hand back.

Ashavari scowled a yelp.

“Take this!” Aedon told her, pulling the red tie with his *globeaky* over his head and off, then leaning over and placing it around her neck.

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She knew how important the piece was and she gulped. All he could hope was that Gilgamoeh would activate the *Scroll*, stop the mad weather, and restore Atlantis back to its days of glory.

“Now get going!” he commanded.

Another circle around and he was low enough. After he nodded, without saying a word, she knew it was time to go. She opened the hatch while the rain picked up intensity and pelted into the transporter. Carefully she let herself out of the flying machine, held onto the rope, and inched her way down.

Aedon had difficulty maneuvering the transporter as the wind picked up speed. Areshia’s lower lip quivered along with her internal sobbing, and she could hardly hold on to the rope as it became slippery with all the water gushing down it like a faucet.

“I’m coming in closer! When I get over the balcony — jump!” he shouted from above.

“What?” she couldn’t hear him.

He made it into position but Areshia hadn’t heard the instructions. While trying to control the machine while the storm was thrashing it about, he yelled to himself, “Jump Areshia! Please, jump now!”

Pounding his fist in frustration as they moved over the *Tebah*, a bolt of lightning zapped out of the clouds and hit the transporter. It glowed in electricity and when the current ran down the *rope-tie*, Areshia knew she had to let go or else she’d be electrocuted. She closed her eyes, grabbed her cat Ashavari, and fell into the open space.

THUD! She didn’t go very far, because the rope was directly over the balcony of the *Tebah* right when she let go. Dazed she stood up. Slipping around, Ashavari scrambled to stand on her paws. They looked back into the sky where Aedon’s transporter was.

The flying vehicle lost power. It floated in the air for a few more moments as the iceberg drifted away. Then slowly the transporter lowered, floating down, until it came to rest in the ocean. Areshia called out in desperation begging for Aedon.

"Aedon! Aedon! Come back! Where are you! Don't leave me here!"

The cat jumped into one of the upper windows of the abode and alerted the occupants inside. Yapet rushed to the window, poked his head out and yelled for Areshia to get inside. Still gazing after Aedon, she finally came in, drenched, and in shock. Yapet and Seskef tended to her and prepared a nice heated *coco-nectar*. As much as they tried to calm her, she could not stop rambling on about Aedon and how they should go search for him. With each passing day, time did not diminish Aedon from her memory. For a long while she sank into a deep depression.

Outside in the raging storm, the transporter thrashed back and forth, miraculously dodging debris which could crush it. Aedon had been shocked by the lightning, but he survived. The water cooled his burns, which were minor. Fortunately when the transporter hit the water, it jerked the hatch shut, else it might have taken on water and sunk. Helplessly, it seemed like he was floating further away from Gilgamoeh's abode. His opportunity was fleeting and so was his hope. This time there were no Asterians nearby to help, and his *globeaky* wasn't there to light the way.

Voices from Atlantis still rang in his head. Then he heard singing. It was the *Nawalym* that had once sung "Prophecy, prophecy. Don't you see, don't you see what's happening?"

Gilgamoeh's abode was protected from the oceans that rose and waters that emptied into the sea as it floated safely on a firm glacier. Aedon knew that he had to get back there. This time it was no longer a quest to meet his father but a pursuit for survival. As he re-started the capacitor on his transporter, he discovered that one of its wings was badly damaged. It was barely attached, and there was no way he could fly now. The best he might do was to float with the current; however, the swirling sea was not cooperating in his favor. The iceberg continued on a voyage further away from him, but he was determined not to give up — not just yet.

He remembered back to the time in the cottage when Trigonomy was there with all of the library documents. Trig had

seen King Yaswhen's star and so Aedon wondered if the King might still be on his way, but it was too dark to see any stars. If Yaswhen arrived, he would be able to find the *Tebah*, the *Scroll of Light*, and cause everything to go backwards — and recreate Atlantis. Some of the prophecies said that King Yaswhen would make a new Atlantis when he returned.

For many days he wondered why Gilgamoeh hadn't opened up the *Scroll of Light* — certainly it was just as dark in his *Tebah* as it was outside, he thought. He kept waiting for the sheet of light to unroll once again. This dream kept him going for awhile.

It was so dark all the time that he could no longer tell if it were day or night. The rain finally stopped after more than a month passed. Just as he was tiring of eating raw fish, he came near an underwater volcano where a school of cooked lobster, shrimp, and other fish surrounded him. It provided a nice variety for a few days.

One day a couple weeks later, a creature crept out of the ocean and slid along the wing of his transporter. Frightful, Aedon locked the hatch shut. The monster growled and rushed forward. Its weight pulled the ship down, its left wing bobbing under the water.

"Go away! Go away Pleasurous — you monster," Aedon shouted, certain that the sea-monster had come to devour him.

The monster loudly growled, its large ugly teeth chattering from the lips which were pulled back around them. When it turned to the window, at the end of an oarfish-looking creature was the face of King Poseidontel, "Help me Aedon."

"Faeraud!" Aedon gasped, screaming out the name he knew the king by. "What happened to you?"

"When the Irminsul collapsed on me, I could not die and so I begged Sayer to change me into a form that could live in the sea."

"You could not die?" Aedon questioned, cautiously lifting the top of his transporter open a crack — just enough to hear what story might be told.

“Remember, you fool!” the *Faeraudian* monster snarled. “I ate that fruit you brought back from the *Everlasting Garden*. Now, I will live for a thousand years in this terrible condition — unable to die.”

“I am sorry that such has happened — but what can I do?” Aedon asked. “*The Scroll of Light* — it resides in the *Tebah* of Gilgamoeh. Any day now he will activate it and light and life will return everywhere.”

“Forget the *Scrolls*, you fool! ... Their magic works no more. ... But Sayer — his spirit roams the planet seeking out anyone he can find. He will chase after you, find you, make promises ... and eventually he will possess you.”

Slimly the long creature slid back into the sea and disappeared. That was the last time Aedon ever saw his *educatory-mate*. But his words struck fear and caused Aedon to doubt once again. The memories of his journey through the tunnel with Sickle had taught him well and he yelled out to the ocean, back at Faeraud, “Why would you succumb to doubt and fear? ... The light of abundance is just over the next wave. It’s right after the one that seems too tall to climb — but climb it, we must.”

Soon summer arrived, which occurred on the first day of Amshir (the seventh month) back then. According to the days Aedon counted, it had been close to five months since he had seen land. As desperate as the situation seemed, he had been left alone so many times before, that he was not uncontent. Perhaps some past predicament was a rehearsal to help him weather this ultimate fate. For some reason it did not bother him like it had before. While he wondered what had gone wrong and who else might be left behind like him, he was certain that soon he would reach Gilgamoeh. He had to believe this for any other choice would lead only to hopeless depression — the kind that saw Sickle to his death.

Once again the floating iceberg carrying the *Tebah* came near, but not within reach. More of its ice was melted away and at least one of the silos of food must have detached because only two existed where three once stood. Aedon heard a ruckus aboard the

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floating compound for there was more than just one squall raging outside — another storm of fury had developed — this time, inside the *Tebah*.

PAPYRUS FOURTEEN

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Through the *looking-scope*, Aedon watched the abode on the iceberg bobble across the ocean. It appeared to be riding smoothly though an occasional vibration seemed to jolt it. Then suddenly a hole punched through one of its outer walls. Meca the unicorn bolted forward and dove into the ocean. Through the burst-out hole, other animals peaked out. Gobi moaned after them. Unglat blinked an eye of concern. Chordata hooted for the others not to follow. Dumar the duck quaked and Kali the orangutan cried for the unicorn to come back. Then Hanno the Gorilla and his friends corralled the animals back inside and boarded up the broken planks, although some of the parrots escaped, flying after the unicorn.

Within a couple of hourglasses, Meca passed by Aedon's transporter and he popped open the hatch, calling after her,

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excitedly. It had been months since he had seen or spoken to any of the animals.

She swam over and explained, “It was frightfully awful — all of us cooped up in that *Tebah*, no room to move around or exercise properly.”

“And those ridiculous food rations, why birdie couldn’t even have a cookie,” Peter the *copy-parrot* squawked. “I have never been so frightened in all my life.”

“The supplies were *runnin’ low*, and the air — too stale for even the fleas to breath,” Meca complained, snapping her tail toward the bird who wanted to rest on her back. When the parrot landed on Aedon’s transporter, he recognized it was Peter.

“It started with Gobi,” the bird began, telling the entire story while mimicking the elephant and acting the parts out like *copy-parrots* do. Bending his head low and opening his beak, trying to look like an elephant instead of a bird, he quoted, “I am so depressed … and it is so cold in here. We are all going to die, why don’t we just end it all now?”

“I can’t even mix drinks anymore,” Peter continued, now as a *kangawaiter*, “all that cursed water siphon brings up is murky slush.”

“And the tasty oats vanished — when the silo fell,” said the bird, imitating Unglat the Giraffe this time. “How can we feast on stale soggy mush?”

Aedon dropped his mouth open with concern as Peter spread his chicken legs out, pumped his breast forward and stomped around like he was a duck, pretending to be Dumar, “I can helps … I told *yas* I could helps … but no one’s ever listen to a duck … too late it is now. I tells *ya* … no one could cleans up *dis* mess.”

Jumping up and down frantically, like an orangutan might, Peter added, in her voice, “*Eee Eee*, Kali knows way. … Through door! … Open door and *Eee* free!”

"No *ya* don't! ... No one touches the door!" the bird growled, jumping a space like Hanno the gorilla, then spreading his feet and wings out as if there were a door behind him to block.

"I can imagine everyone was getting restless cooped up in there all this time," Aedon sympathized.

"It was beyond time to *getta stompin'* on *outta* there," interrupted Meca, hanging onto the side of the transporter with a hoof. "Gilgamoeh is paranoid — and the other humans — they're frightfully afraid —"

"Of us," Peter finished. "They feared us animals might gang up on them."

"I don't believe it — not for a moment," Aedon scoffed, with a grimace.

"One of the *kangawaiters* overheard Gilgamoeh suggest to his sons that if the complaining kept up, someone should — take a blade to all of our tongues."

Peter chimed in again, "A few days later, Meca decided to organize a group of four or five animals that would go outside and gather more food or at least give a report."

With a snarl Meca added, "But then Yapet came down."

Peter imitated the triplet, "No one is to open a single door or window until the light of the sun shines in — Zualpha has commissioned this rule and so it shall be."

"Yapet — always thinking he's in charge," Aedon chuckled, shivering a little, but not as much as Meca because she was in the cold water. "Did everyone settle — finally?"

"Meca and a few others decided to sneak out anyway," Peter gossiped.

"But other animals tagged along — terribly more than planned," the unicorn chattered.

Peter told the rest using his wings in a pantomime to exaggerate the account, "Soon the group grew to two-hundred. Yapet and his brothers heard about it, and so they decided that we were all planning a revolt. At the noontime meal, when each

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animal went into the galley to claim their ration, they left with their tongue in their hand.”

“The screams were dreadfully awful,” Meca cringed.

Peter mimicked the sounds, “Eoow! … Cluck, cluck! … Hoo hooo! … Ark, ark! … Bahh bah! … Moooooo! … Oink! … Rahar!”

Aedon looked back and forth at the two, not wanting to believe the story, thinking maybe they were making it up. “You two look like you still have your tongues —”

“That’s why we busted on *outta* that place!” Meca neighed with a huff. “Ceca and I charged at the wall repeatedly. Some of them Billy goats helped too. … But Ceca was too frightened to jump into the water.”

“But I wasn’t scared. No, not me. Not for a moment,” Peter proudly proclaimed. “Birdie is always brave.”

The three of them were quiet for the next few hours as night covered and a brisk chill came over. Meca spoke just before they drifted asleep, “It’s unpleasantly cold in these waters. Think I’ll wander for a swim — to look for a spot of land up ahead — in the morning.”

“You’ll get tired and drown,” Aedon scolded. “Best you stay here with us.”

Peter curled up under Aedon’s arm and slowly they drifted to sleep. When the next morning dawned, Meca could not be found. They hoped that she had decided to swim away in the middle of the night. That was what they told each other because they did not want to entertain the idea that she had succumbed to the freezing water and drowned.

While Aedon didn’t say anything, he realized that if Peter’s story were true, and no other animals endured this calamity, the parrots may be the only surviving species, besides man, that would be able to talk.

Later that day a soft CLUNK grabbed his attention. Aedon poked his head out to retrieve a musical instrument bobbing next to the transporter. The piece seemed to be all alone in the world just like him. All his life he feared loneliness, and that may have

been one of the reasons he sought a connection to his lost family. The musical piece he held was the same zampona that had brought a melancholy of comfort to Jacobus before his death. Now Aedon placed its pipes to his mouth, and after a bar of melody played, he began to sing a song which he believed might be his last.

*Left alone here on a slate of water,
To face the lies told of the Uprooter,
No man to be found in this foreign place,
Wiped from the mountains, the human race.*

*With no companion, alone to float,
Life withers, no fruit, no antidote.
All is drowned, every glimpse of hope,
No soul to find in the looking-scope.*

*Birth came a hundred sun-cycles past,
The things we sought, they did not last.
Prepare for death, now must I,
To my days that end, I say — goodbye.*

He lifted the zampona to his lips once again, but he was too sad to play even a single note.

“Do not sing sad songs,” Peter objected, “they make birdie cry. Try remembering the happy hourglasses.”

Then Aedon realized that he had been alone many times before and had survived. He thought about the time he journeyed for weeks, alone on the ocean, to *Nawat* deep in the South. He made it through the tunnels after Sickle and his other friends abandoned him. Certainly he would come through the rough season again, he thought. So he changed his tune to a more upbeat chorus.

*Though the sky be dark today and the one thereafter,
Though the journey stalls and then be rougher,
Inside each of us we find that to make us stronger,
For in experience we learn, we grow to be braver.*

*Though others drown beneath the starlight,
Forever strong, always will I fight.
My destiny will end not without a trace,
For I believe in another better place.*

“When we get back home,” said Aedon, “I am going to make the biggest batch of cookies ever — just for birdie.”

The next week a couple mountain peaks began to show and Gilgamoeh’s iceberg lodged between two of them, stabilizing the *Tebah* and anchoring it in place. Aedon was ecstatic because now it was permanently stuck and all he had to do to get there — was row.

Peter objected, “No — birdie is way too afraid to go back there. ... Nobody is taking me back to that asylum.”

“I have to go. Certainly you don’t wish to stay here and listen to me sing another sad song?” Aedon begged, determined to find his father.

But nature had a different plan, and the sky filled with a fierce breeze. The storms had passed, but a stream of air pushed in low, twisting across. The harder he paddled, the further away his transporter was blown. Just when he thought he was losing sight of the *Tebah*, he found an island to take refuge on.

For the next four months the winds raged on. The harder they blasted, the more the water began to recede. Soon the island turned into a mound, then a mountain. Aedon and Peter had to climb down in order to reach the shore for fish to eat. With each

step, Aedon tested the ground for firmness because the area was muddy. Like quicksand, sludge lurked everywhere, hungry to swallow the unsuspecting.

Near the middle of the Epip (the eleventh) month, a dove came and landed on a small olive tree that had sprung up on their island. Peter rushed over to tell the visiting prey that the seeds on the tree belonged to him, but the other bird just crowed and ate some of them anyway.

“Now get *outta* here! That’s my tree,” Peter yelled, shooing the dove away.

Believing that the dove may have come from the *Tebah*, Aedon was intrigued to investigate. He climbed back up the mound to where his transporter was located. Inside of it, he found an old *looking-scope* he had tossed in there long ago. Adjusting its foggy lens he was able to see where his father’s abode rested. In order to ward off boredom, he and Peter took turns watching the far away *Tebah* throughout the day. About a week later, the dove returned and joined them.

“*Outta* here — *outta* here now, this is our tree,” Peter scolded.

“What’s your name little fellow?” asked Aedon.

“Like he’s *gonna* be able to speak,” Peter sarcastically chuckled. “All them animals on that *Tebah* — they’ve got no tongues — remember?”

“Then perhaps we should adopt you,” Aedon suggested, then quickly added, before the parrot who had just raised a wing of objection could speak, “Peter would love to be your new guardian — I am certain.”

Around the first of the year, the islanders noticed that over at the *Tebah* some of the animals had begun to wander out on the upper deck — perhaps to get some fresh air. While clouds and wind still covered the area, they were less intense now. On the twenty-seventh day of Menhet (the second month) of the new year, the clouds rolled away and a bright sun finally peaked out.

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Along with the sunlight a warm front moved in and caused the glacier ice from underneath the *Tebah* to melt quickly. The building, resting between the two peaks, wobbled as there was little support under one side. Next there was a loud crack and it split in two. With a jolt, some of the animals tumbled out. The rest climbed down.

Aedon wanted to run over there and greet them, but all he could do was jump up and down and shout, “Over here! I’m over here! ... It’s Aedon — I’m here!”

A gulf of water still separated him from their base of land and he was too far away for his voice to stretch. Every day he watched for hours through the *looking-scope* as the animals hunted for food, organized things, planted seeds, fixed the siphons, or got into fights.

One day he saw the triplets construct a stone table. He wasn’t sure, but he thought that the tall man who staggered slowly like Methouslan once did, was his father Gilgamoeh. There appeared to be a dead animal on the table in front of him and then he noticed Areshia step forward. Before he could figure any of it out, Gobi the elephant lingered in the way and blocked his view. Best he could see, it looked like they were opening up the *Scrolls* and placing them over whatever was on the stone slab.

When the *Scroll of Light* was opened, all the clouds above vanished as if a cannon ball had shot through the sky. A beam of light rose into the air and a fireball rained down on the table below. Immediately after that, the *Scroll of Light* grew in size, so big that it reached across the water — all the way to Aedon. It was soft, warm, and radiated intense feelings which began with a hint of sadness but stiffened into completeness as a feeling of joy overtook. Aedon’s body began to tingle with a sense of encompassing peace. A tear of happiness welled up the corner of each eye as a fullness of warm love — a whole-hearted love — enveloped him with unconditional acceptance which he had never before felt.

Burns on his arms, from the storm's lightning, healed up. His thin body regained perfect health. The radiation from the glow renewed his entire self, cleaning every hair from head to toe. When the light tugged at his toga, a small piece ripped away. It turned into seed, spread across the island, and a field of cotton crops sprouted, growing to full maturity instantly.

The *Scroll* continued expanding until it covered the entire Earth. Within less time than an hourglass turns, the whole planet was renewed. Trees sprung up, grass returned, and fruit expanded to full ripeness. The raging winds and storms turned into puffy white clouds. Waters sunk back to normal levels and new rivers and waterfalls flowed.

Aedon was so amazed at what he saw through the *looking-scope* that he hadn't been paying attention to what was happening right beside himself. Peter flew to his shoulder and nibbled on his ear to get his attention. Annoyed he dropped the *looking-scope* away for a second. Turning around he noticed the muddy mountain had turned into a plush garden with blossoming trees, ripening oranges, and a waterfall trickling into a brook. Flowers and bushes outlined a bank leading to a bay of water.

"Certainly King Yaswhen has come back," Aedon deducted, cheering, "Hurry, we must go meet him — and my father too!"

It took some time, but he was able to finally pull his transporter free from the thickets that had suddenly grown up around it. He broke off a branch and turned it into an oar. Then he pushed the vehicle into the water and set off to meet his father.

"This time I'm coming home for sure," he announced to the world.

Energy from the *Scroll of Light* which blanketed the entire Earth rose up into the atmosphere and beyond. If King Yaswhen had come back — then just as quickly as he came, he departed again. But as the light lifted, all the remaining pieces of the designated Asterian moon, which encircled the Earth, turned into ice crystals creating a gigantic band. Future generations would refer to it as a band of protection, others who saw it rise — said it

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was a band of angels, and at least one person claimed it to be a musical band. When the sun glinted on the floating particles above the atmosphere, the ring created a streak across the sky in red, one in orange, another in yellow, and a fourth was green merging into blue, indigo and violet. Aedon turned toward the heavens and shining bright as the sun, there he looked upon the biggest, ever there was, rainbow.

APPENDICES

A P P E N D I X A

LANGUAGE
OF
ATLANTIS

Language of Atlantis

This list includes unique Atlantian words and phrases that appear from this and other books in the *ATLANTIS* series. The definitions below indicate how the word is used in this fictional account. Some artistic liberties have been taken to weave history, legend, and fiction together. A serious student of *Atlantis* might find it valuable to research some of these terms further.

Ablagy Pyramid. Pyramid of orichalcum at the Bashan border.

Akasha. A fog over Gadeirus believed to contain spirits of Asterians who died during the *Territorial Quarrels*.

Amphictyonies. Secret group dedicated to the teachings of King Yaswhen and keeping the scrolls from the Enchanters.

Ap'ahei. Atlantian greeting used in a positive manner and may indicate a hello or good-bye.

Apaturia. A two to three day festival and holiday which occurs every seven to eleven years based on planetary alignments and coincides with the Registration of Youth.

Athabasca Gush. A large river made from melting glacier debris between Bashan and Ablach.

Athabasca River. A river that flows through Ablach.

Beaking. When a bird complains, objects, lunges, or hits with his beak.

Bema. About 14-18 inches in height.

Beavering. Same as weaseling.

Benguela Basin Current. Underwater ocean current.

Cactoideae. A large, almost city-sized cactus that revolves around in the middle of a desert sandstorm aiding Nawalym piskies in the making of trinkets for the Asterians.

Clepsydra. Hourglass filled with mercury.

Copy-parrot. A parrot that repeats a message, like a voicemail, the bird attempts to sound like and act out movements of the sender.

Daktylos. Half an inch.

Discophant. A game played by the royals that involves historic questions, elephant races and disc throwing.

Egg-yoker. A breakfast sandwich.

Enchanters. Secret group dedicated to finding the Scrolls and taking over the world.

etruscan (lowercase). Province.

Etruscan (upperrcase). Governor.

Euphrates Flow. Underwater river current.

Familia. A prestigious family in an elite caste.

Firefalls. A cyclone in the ocean in the Nawat village of Nimaneb that sucks water up into a cloud, then out of a golden egg flows lava back into the sea.

Foreverlasting Tree. A tree that bears twelve different fruits and is believed to extend the life of one who eats of its fruit.

Genetikos Replica. A genetic test made from saliva or blood that contains a DNA comparison between two or more individuals.

Globeaky. Globe-shape key with three thin rings that revolve to open a lock. They are many times worn as an ornament, ring, or necklace.

Hethnobotimist. A person who specializes in the study of the *Hethnobotony*.

Hethnobotony. The study of plants and how they feed off unseen energy that surrounds from plants, animals, humans, and bio-waves.

Ice-peas. Snowflakes.

Instructioneer. Professor, teacher, instructor.

Irem. The main governmental city surrounded by three moats.

Kangawaiter. A waiter who is a kangaroo.

APPENDIX A

Katkocila. A flute decoder used to see invisible writings.

Looking-glass. Used to see things up close.

Looking-scope. Used to see things very far away.

Mauretania. Name of both a range of Mountains and a Valley made up of a society of all women.

Mercantiling. The selling and buying of clothes and fine cloths.

Meal. First (Breakfast), Second, Third (Lunch), Fourth (Supper), Fifth (Dinner).

Mesapian Current. Underwater ocean current.

Mesapian Sea. The northeastern sea between the Atlantis continent and the Sahada continent.

Moon-cycle. Just under a month in time, though sometimes used in reference to a month.

Nawalym. A series of twelve villages where piskies spin golden eggs made of orichalcum.

Nile Intimates. Highest order of the Secret Organization of Enchanters.

Omni-transglaust. A holographic machine that receives a live transglaust transmission.

Pauvvota. A flying vehicle powered by sunlight.

Pishon River. Large river that divides the southeastern Atlantis continent.

Plesiosaur. The sea monster: an extinct ocean reptile of the Mesozoic era with limbs like paddles, a large flattened body, and a short tail. Suborder: Sauropterygia.

Plethrons. About 100 feet long.

Pode. About a foot long.

Rataka Scrolls. A set of three scrolls containing magical enchantments that control elements of the universe.

Registration of Youth. Commencement.

Royal Irem. The royal palace made of wings, towers, and abodes combined into a gigantic castle.

Saxon Gulf. Located North-west of Atlantis and between North Aszea and South Aszea.

Scrollette. A small short scroll with few pages.

LANGUAGE OF ATLANTIS

Skyroscope. An instrument used to view moons, planets and stars with special markings and calibrations.

Spithame. About nine inches.

Spring Ostia. A live sponge bath.

Stadia. A distance of between one-half and one mile.

Star-scope. A telescope like mechanism used for viewing and charting the stars.

Stathmos. Fourteen to eighteen miles.

Sunbrella. A three tier umbrella used for protection from the sun.

Sun-cycle. One year of time.

Tobaccum. Tobacco plant.

Talae Glacier. Located in Bashan, it contains an area of ice statues and tunnels.

Thunderbolt. A gigantic explosion, large enough to destroy an entire province. Its cloud resembles that of a nuclear bomb with thousands of bolts of lightning striking from it.

Territorial Quarrels. Land Wars that involved many battles and scrimmages between the Atlantians and the Aszeans.

Tracaters. A rocket that relays information back to a transglaust scroll, helping it map-out new uncharted areas.

(Omni-) Transglaust. A holographic three dimensional image; usually a recorded image, though sometimes live.

Tuoai Stone. A large crystal which many believe can project images of the future or cause one to be healed.

Trivelator. Three sided platform that transports people up and down or sideways.

Tyrrhenia. The largest city in Atlantis, located in the province of Mestor.

Waterbus. A vehicle that rides in a water trough and transports people in city areas where delta-transporters aren't allowed to fly.

A P P E N D I X B

LANGUAGE
OF THE
ASTERIANS

Language of Asterians

Common Phrases (alphabetical)

Crautyz toro. *Stay here.*

U'd ahum unotunot ahuro unot. *I am you, you are you.*

U'd yimmyrzo meiunot yimfumo. *I curse your name.*

Voerdu. *Respectful greetings.*

Yayr nemí os nuet? *What is your name?*

Longer Sayings (in order of appearance)

ASTERIAN

From: Bearer of Fruit

Lecumo hun vuyune ahuro
elue hun khut cluluevuteun
seckueo.

Kuo vuyune lecun elue
craump evethen navueo.
Ahvlueuw ahonorgyun entu
khut huleuno vutch kecklueo.
Swauw et craweuluelue
toulueth ahund ahuluevo.

ATLANTIAN

We're all on the same side.

We're all on the same side.

Blow energy into the plant's
water-tide.

Grow it strong, healthy and
alive.

LANGUAGE OF THE ASTERIANS

Evetchcruft tunur u'd lecumo
ketz wezeun, ahund ahvog ah
huruzeto epur iyr yomreun.

With honor I come to visit,
and beg a pardon.

Ketz unot u'd cirblaezeng
gyun aholupuntue,
unot deft go anyzyulue
avaoluechuer ahzunshaomo
opulue.

To you I surrender my all,
you lift me up when I fall.

Et tuleduyun
fu foaym ketz runodoo unot.
Shuw opumelueyun ez toro
ketz aholupuntoo unot.
Et tuleduyun
fu foaym ketz runodoo unot.
Et tuleduyun
fu foaym ketz runodoo unot.

It's Apaturia,
no need to worry ya.
Royal famili-a,
is here to greet ya.
It's Apaturia,
no need to worry ya.
It's Apaturia,
no need to worry ya.

Ah khenkeng ahuc khut
tulueyun ahytoroo unot
yomruno.
Eveluedwend unot sloyneun
ketz arn runodoo fum.

A third of the Rataka you
became.
Will you reveal to us your
name?

U'd ahum vutch vutch u'd
aholupunto!

I am water, water I am!

U'd yimmyrz0 meiunot
yimfumo, U'd eveluedwend
evelueluewoo khertyunoo
rumono.

I curse your name, I will win
this game.

A P P E N D I X B

U'd revo gyun slohourzo ketz unot.	I give my reign to you.
Elue huwdor ahund seght u'd ahvot.	All power and rights I bestow.
Blaushaetyo khut blaemeteveo avaeto ez umpyluezo lemund. To voupun khertyun seghtouyz hun tez tund.	Protect the prince who is in command. He wears this ring on his hand.
Crept te huwuyun epur clrnyundor dung, Scuvod ahyunuy gurk guko tem ahvoleung.	Scroll hidden away for so long, Show your mark make him belong.
Tulued khertyun wresha ahvofuro unot umpyluezo huwow.	Hold this writing before you in awe.
Guko et ah helueo umpyluezo ahyunuy ahvutaw.	Make it a pillar in your boat.
Umpyluezo wresha ahur umpyluezo unk ahdu futa obraw,	In writing or in ink do not draw,
Et'z gozugo slouct ketz khuryugh avaeto ipurmylew.	Its message read to those who foresaw.
Umpyluezo khut ahuvuwo ahuc iyr weng uyuna ahvyuna tez fumo,	In the absence of our king yet by his name,
Slotwevo khertyun gun ketz tez azoluteoz ahvofuro khertyun huleaymgo leumo.	Return this man to his using before this plight came.

LANGUAGE OF THE ASTERIANS

Aavaoluechuer blaautuculue gon craump duk anyzyulue ahund ruygo,	When proud men stand looking up and gazing,
Unot tedo ahyunuy opuco ahupour deko ah kweoutmont shuzo.	You hide your face; appear like a tree rotting.
Iprum ahyunuy rurdon vuyune vont ahvung ipurovororo.	From your garden we were banished forever.
Inlueyun ah blaemeteve avaeto guyun ontor ez heyruso.	Only a prince who is pure may enter.
Unot stonzetevu arn huwuyun iprum ahyunuy husha fukaymu.	You sent us away from your pastures naked.
Avaeto lecumay ketz kuelue, aunouth lecumay ketz secu.	Who comes to take, death comes to take rid.
Aunuyun ahund cinyun huryun; khut shevor ahvocomo namonzo.	Days and suns pass; the road becomes dimmer.
Unot voerdu khuruygh stoaym hueda epur ah cio.	You welcome those seeking aid for a sufferer.
Unot ahuluelueuw huryun ketz arn avaeto toluep clruluevo ithoro.	You allow passage to us who help some other.
Vydgó unot dovorugo hun khut khota, tug, ahund opeuzcu.	Judgment you levy on the thief, haggler and fibber.

A P P E N D I X B

Kyrkoyun ahvu fuw!	Turn back now;
To avaeto taeontor taenao ahvyuna iyr wenefo.	he who enters dies by our knife.
Kyrkoyun ahvu fuw!	Turn back now;
Khorupyun inlueyun aunouth toro ahund fovor defo.	there is only death here and never life.
Ahdu futa ontor khertyunoo epurvedon, epurvedon copu.	Do not enter this forbidden, forbidden space.
Slotwevo su ahvu! Slotwevo su ahvu iprum khertyunoo yomtuyn hetu.	Return go back, return go back, from this haunted place.

From: Fall of the Gods

Khut skylue opulue iprum vuyune myruzheto, Ahzud woop arn ahvluenkot iyr copeto.	The sky falling from (where) we crash, safe keep us blanket our splash.
Khertyun evurk iprugelueo etz taehonez lerclueo, ah ahumyzh blaushaetyto craweoz foytweulue ahuruyno.	This world fragile its peoples surround, a bush (of) protection stretch neutral around.
Taeahvousha ahuc meilemun, ahvuynd ketz arn unot ahuro. Sloulushaec opuco taeiyr, khut swauynd leclour huwuyun ipuro.	Beasts of commonality to us you are bound, face our reality clear away from the ground.

Khorupyun ez ah stuvvet ahuc
aholupuntoo toro.

Khozo ahucypeam ahyunuy
ofvorun tolue.

Ahyunuy lechuluelongo epur
khertyun foxt runodo,
Slomuto ahuzyro ahund khoft
lemundo.

Lecuyzo khertyun stuvvet ketz
nazupo.

Inlueyun khomzoluevoz,
ahyunuy wengdum
eveluedwend aholupunto.

There is a race of guests here.

They occupy every
hemisphere.

Your challenge for the next
year,
Remove Aliens and their
commander.

Cause this race to disappear.
Only then, your kingdom will
endure.

Khorofuro slocuvor ahuplueo
vuyune nad yomruo. Khoft
kuzk eveluedwend opulue
opusha ahytoroo.

These red apples we did reap.
Their taster will fall fast
asleep.

Ah khenkeng ahuc khut
tulueyun ahytoroo unot
yomruno. Eveluedwend unot
sloyneun ketz arn runodoo
fumo?

A third of the Rataka you
became. Will you reveal to us
your name?

U'd ahum opero, opero u'd
aholupunto!

I am fire, fire I am.

A P P E N D I X ~ B

Khut rwauzz gwaoon sceft
evetchcruft vutow, Goluet
meicicteun deko meiunot
leclyd yomswauw.

Taeaunungor turrevluoe
lecumo evetchcruft fu
leclueyo. Gyun taeevud unot
ipon evetchcruft keshow.

Taeahonomyun meiunot
yomeventoriprum ahourth
kunow, Taebueund ahund
taevutch ipyzo deko fow.

Huleuno taeahovahaweyun
anknuwn yomaz ahvyuna
opow. Khymv ahvuluet
taesezo ahovahaweyun ovon
unow.

Weng funo sepo ketz huwdor
fovor, Khuruygh evethdruw
shukeo khertyun tuyr ofncopt
ipurovor.

Meiaunurk ahund
taeahovahaweyun taemuvor
lectenont fuw. Ahouch
suvornur gysha cirblaezeng
ahund ahvuw. Huwdor revo
ketz khut blaemetev
evethdruw gryosho. Ahdu
khertyun fuw evetchcruft yit
meitozetuto. Khut muyweyun
gysha futa ahvo meicludeuto.
Weng tem miruwn uf
lectenont yimcluyzugo.

The Meadows green glistening
with dew, Melt suddenly as
your cloud grew. Dangers
horrible come with no clue.
My words you open with two.
Enemies yours wiped from
earth too, Lands and waters
fuse like new. Planet crumbles
unless used by few. Thunder
bolt risks destroying even you.

No king will rise to power
except for those within this
room this hour.

Darkness and destruction
covers Atlantis now. Each
Etruscan must yield and bow.
Give power to the prince in
question. Do this now without
hesitation. The country must
not be enslaved. Crown him
king if Atlantis is to be saved.

LANGUAGE OF THE ASTERIANS

Scolue lectenont lecumo ketz
lecontor. Deght
taeblaouccypeaym epur unot
ketz ontor.

Asterian cocoon come to
center. Light prepares for you
to enter.

Taekweoutmont lecumo
ipurtho, Ahvend khertyun
ahuno. Kedo tem kego, Tez
slohourzo ez nuno.

Trees come forth, bind this
one. Tie him tight, his reign is
done.

Weng ahum u'd unot
staymyco, Go stozeun fuw
ipro!

I am king, you see. Now set
me free!

Ah hurlueursedo
khunkzeveng taetutch taeahog
deko et nad futa bueuyun,
ez khut gun avaeto taeslofyzoz
taeseco ahvyuna khut
meivysha vun. Avaoluechuer
sep ez to slohourzo tez khozo
eveluedwend epuluew futan.
Evethdruw khut ond blaudyd to
eveluedwend ah epuulue ketz
elue ketz ahvun. Khut guthor
ahlueon tor vowolueryun
yomleclueuem tuzum. Fu
blaemetovo kuelue
eveluedwend avaula futa ketz
temum.

Like a partridge that hatches
eggs it did not lay, is the man
who gains riches by the unjust
way. When he is ripe, they
will not follow his rule. In the
end he will prove to all to be a
fool. The mother Asterian has
reclaimed her gem. No prince
will take what belongs not to
him.

A P P E N D I X B

Vouzolue meifutyrule
khunkzeveng taelechungo
ahvyuna taegugec ahuvuvo,
taeopouthor kyrkoyun entu
khomzoluevoz eplueyun
huwuyun deko ah nuvo!

Sloshalueoz antelue arn ah
taeahvyzigo. Dot arn futa
ahvo yomahovahaweyungo.
Ahvyelued ah vuluek
ahuruynnd khertyun daymgo.
Blaushaetyo arn anteo
vuyune ahuro yimahurungo.

Taemeideun meiduk epur
gurod koxt ipynur,
lechuzo khoft taekug
avaoluechuer khozo symur.

Weather unnatural, that
lingers by enchantments
above, turn into feathers,
then fly away like a dove!

Restore unto us a hedge.
Let us not be destroyed.
Build a wall around this ledge.
Protect us until we are
deployed.

Leopards looking for more
than fun, Chase their tails
when they run.

From: Rise of the Nile

Crauck crept tedo ahund unot khozo ahomplueym. Ah guzk kegor ahyunuy clruyght et eveluedwend ahdovutaym. Ahvuruw fuw u'd khoft ahonorgyun, Slolux go iprum khut leshuen unot staymyco.

Ah khenkeng ahuc khut tulueyun ahytoroo unot yomruno. Eveluedwend unot sloyneun ketz arn runodoo fumo.

Ahyunuy ofvelue oyuna ahuc aunurk, duk futa hun iyr ahvinueoz.

Slolux ahyunuy copeno entu khut huer, Ahvreng et ahvu kuo khorupyun. Stuen ahyunuy gend ahvudyun ahund clruyght, entu ah defo ipyluelue ahund avauovor.

Iprum khut skylue ahyunuy shuvut nuoz lecumo. Vutch ahund opero evuro kuo ahurtesha ahuno. Et eplueck ketz ahovahaweyun ahvyuna cicteun umpuct. Ahyunuy huwdor u'd lemund ketz crauup etz kweuce.

Stolen scrolls hide and you they empower. A mask tight, your soul it will devour. Borrow now, I, their energy, release me from the chains you see.

A third of the Rataka you became, will you reveal to us your name?

Your evil eye of darkness, Look not on our blessedness.

Release your spirit into the air, bring it back togther there. Raise your mind body and soul, into a life full and whole.

From the sky your rock does come. Water and fire work together as one. It flies to destroy by suddeon impact. Your power I command to stop its track.

Opero ahuc ahovahaweyun u'd lemund, Craeckyun nuwn khoro furo horzyudo umpyluezo gyun hulund.	Fire of destruction I command, strike down these pests in my Irem.
Epurco ahuc aunurk apduto khertyun hetyuno, Slomuto khertyun gunnor ahurm ahvruco."	Force of darkness upon this place, remove this man's arm brace.
Kolueovezeun go gyun fumo uf vundor ketz staymyco. Syozz evreteng ahund evundorfylue ah ahvluend gun unot eveluedwend ahvo.	Tell me my name if you want to see. Guess wrong and a blind man you will be.
Deko ahyunuy ahvund khunkzeveng swauw ahvreight. Ahyunuy fumo ez crept ahuc deght.	Like your band that grows bright, your name is Scroll of Light.
Vuyune khut leselued vont revo umpyluezo ahverth, umpyluezo ah craweundaym hetyun khozo leshulue ahourth. Nozzort epur khertyun anevorzetyun leshulue, avaonovor khorupyun ez fu kolueovezeu. Avaonovor tupo scuta sceft epur khut ahyunuy, aunurk tuto doft khertyun clrun futa cinuy.	We the children were given in birth, in a strange place they call Earth. Destined for this unknown calling, where there is no foretelling, Where hope should shine for the young, darkness hath left this song unsung.

Ipuzeto ahvruthor ketz khut
opow avaeto ahuro doft,
Eveluedwend kyrkoyun
ahuguensha ahund ahvreng
khoer aunouht.

Oppression brought to the few
who are left, will turn against
and bring them death.

Ah deght ahuc blaushaetyo
ahuruuynd unot u'd ahdu
yomruno. Dot futheng ofvelue
honuluetyun iprum ahuvuvo
ahur , ahvonouth yomrunod
aholupuntoo.

A light of protection, around
thee I do surround. Let
nothing evil penetrate from
above or beneath the ground.

Rept ahuc huer lecumo ketz
go khertyun fight. Lecumo
ipurth ahund vuen ahyunuy
ahvruthor umpyluezo geght.

Scroll of Air come to me this
night. Come forth and join
your brothers in might.

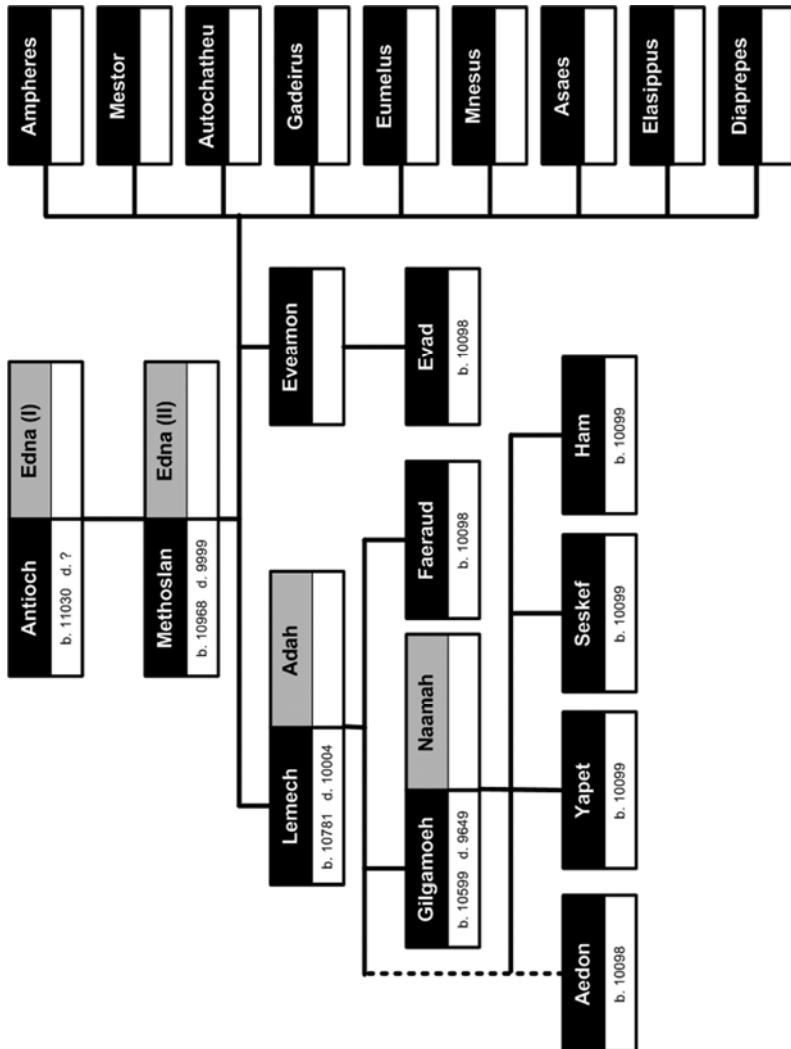
Copeno ahuc Weng Yaswhen
crept ahuc deght. Lecumo
ipurth ahund vuen ahyunuy
ahvruthor umpyluezo geght.
Evuw ahuruuynd arn yaswhen
blaushaetyo, Avaech vuyune
ozcupo yaswhen iyr nozzort.

Spirit of King Yaswhen, Scroll
of Light. Come forth and join
your brothers in might. Wrap
around us your protection,
while we escape to our
destination.

A P P E N D I X C

LINE OF THE
PRINCE
LORDS

Line of the Prince Lords



A P P E N D I X D

Houglass

(Time)

Lines

APPENDIX D

ΑΤΛΑΝΤΙΣ

Bearer of Fruit - Timeline

4d 03.22.10009 bce
Edufactory: Final Lab
 1d 03.26.10009 bce
Tyrennia
 6d 03.24.10009 bce
Cliff City Arrival

4d 03.29.10009 bce
Carrotting Vat

3d 03.28.10009 bce
Spiral Legislature

5d 03.30.10009 bce
Apaturia Eve

6d 04.01.10009 bce
Secret Organization

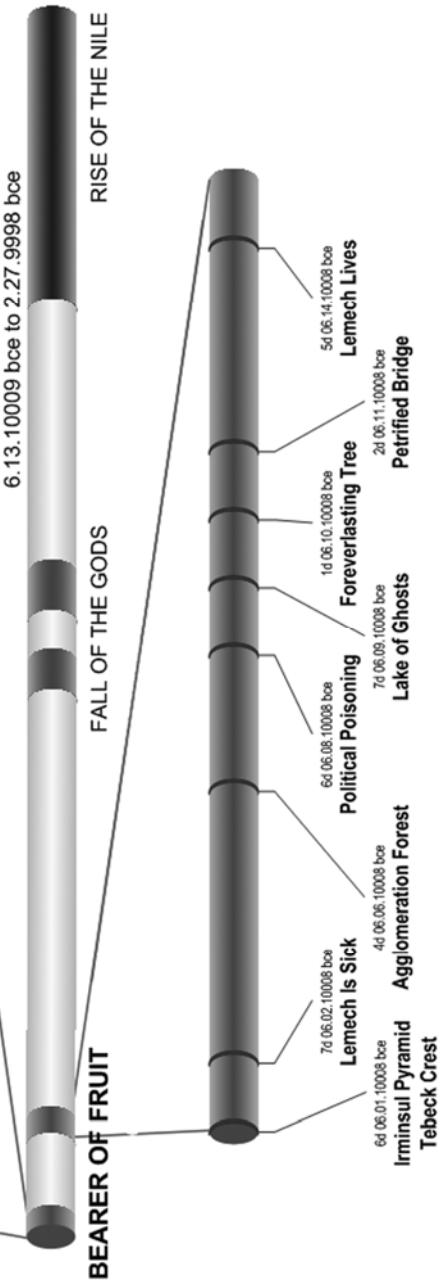
6d 04.08.10009 bce
Apaturia

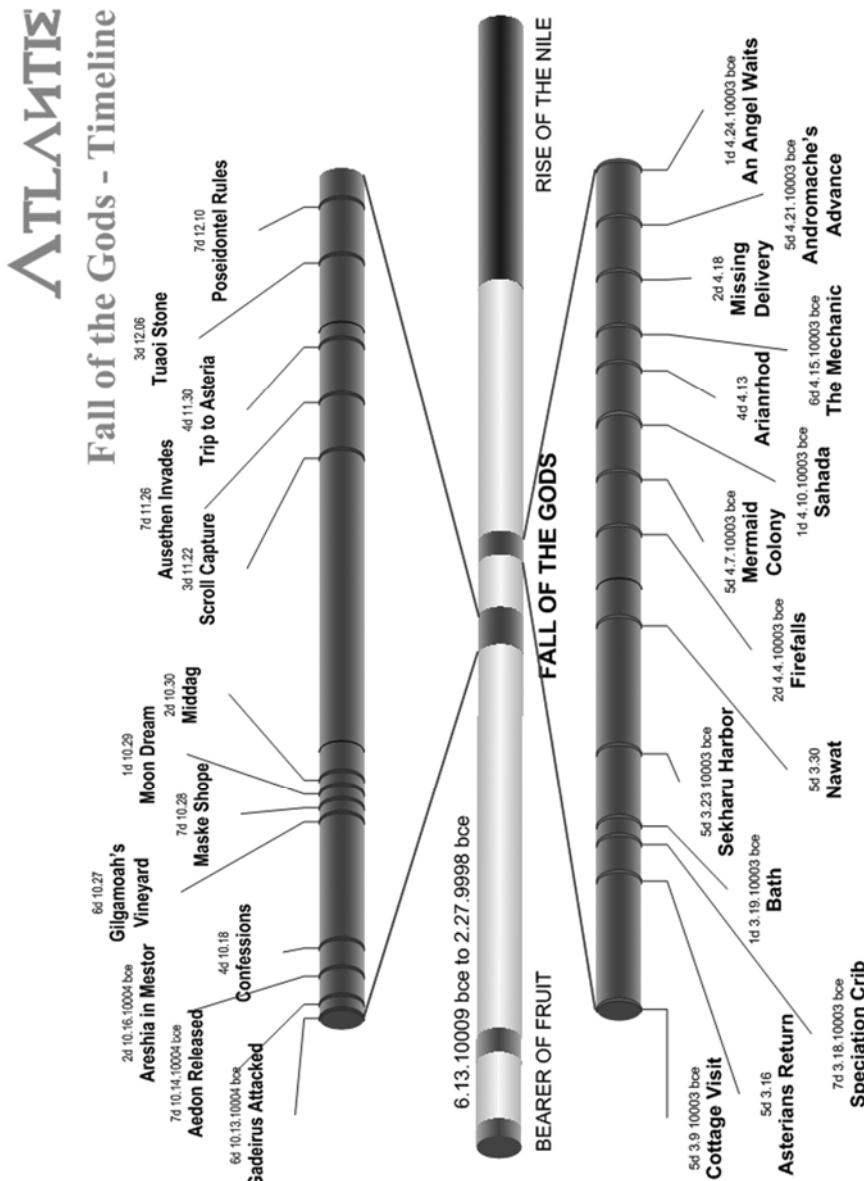
6d 04.08.10009 bce
Adia Adia

6d 04.08.10009 bce
Registration of Youth



BEARER OF FRUIT

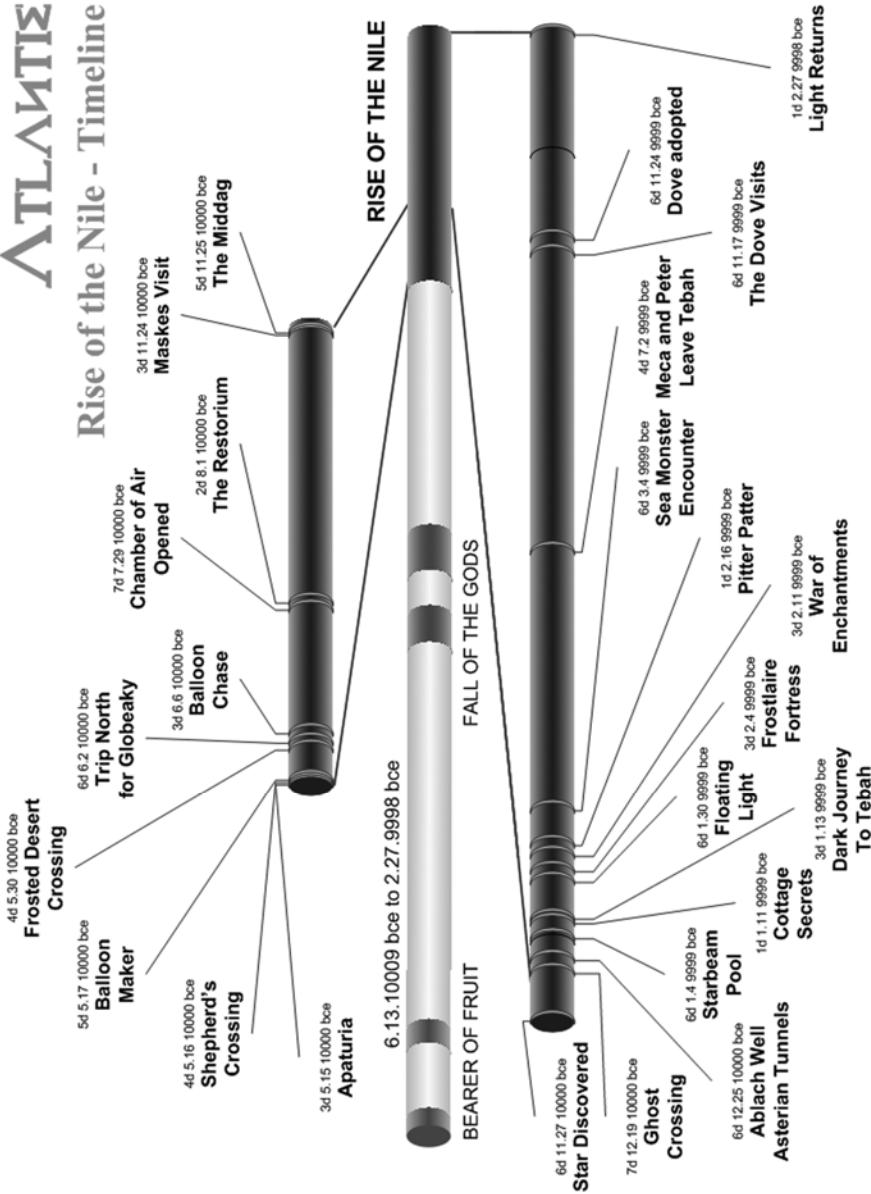




APPENDIX D

ATLANTIS

Rise of the Nile - Timeline



A P P E N D I X E

SAGA OF
SUN-CYCLES

Atlantis: Bearer of Fruit

Fourday, Hatour 22, 10,009 bce: Final day at the educatory when the *Scroll of Water* is discovered by Aedon and Faeraud.

Sixday, Hatour 24, 10,009 bce: Aedon arrives home to the Island of Gadeirus. Meca the unicorn takes him to visit his mother.

Oneday, Hatour 26, 10,009 bce: Aedon stops over in Tyrehenia and meets Areshia.

Threeday, Hatour 28, 10,009 bce: Aedon and new princes attend their first day at the Spiral Legislature.

Fourday, Hatour 29, 10,009 bce: Trip to Tundraville to visit the voles and the fur carroting vat. Faeraud bribes a vole to spy for him.

Fiveday, Hatour 30, 10,009 bce: Eve of Apaturia Dinner where shame is brought upon Faeraud and Aedon serves Lemech the special wine.

Sixday, Kahrka 1, 10,009 bce: Secret Organization is formed. The boys receive their Registration of Youth.

Sixday, Kahrka 9, 10,009 bce: Gilgamoeh departs Atlantis on the Tebah. Telopps delivers an empty holder with a message.

Sixday, Meshir 1, 10,008 bce: Aedon receives a special *globeaky* from Ahteana at the Irminsul Pyramid.

Sevenday, Meshir 2, 10,008 bce: Lemech falls sick.

Fourday, Meshir 5, 10,008 bce: Trip through the Agglomeration Forest as Aedon and friends seek to find a cure for Lemech's illness.

Sixday, Meshir 8, 10,008 bce: Faeraud blackmails Evaemon and Evad into pledging their loyalty to him.

Sevenday, Meshir 9, 10,008 bce: The Lake of Ghosts swallows up intruders and frightens Aedon and his friends.

Oneday, Meshir 10, 10,008 bce: Aedon visits the Everlasting Garden and Tree and obtains the magical fruit, but not before other interested parties interfere.

Twoday, Meshir 11, 10,008 bce: The petrified bridge crumbles and Ausethen steals away the magical cure.

Fiveday, Meshir 14, 10,008 bce: Areshia leaves with Yapet and Aedon returns to Atlantis with the fruit which heals Lemech.

Atlantis: Fall of the Gods

Sixday, Payni 13, 10,004 bce: Balloons attack Gadeirus as Ausethen invades the island.

Sevenday, Payni 14, 10,004 bce: Aedon is released and sent back to Atlantis to take a message to Faeraud.

Twoday, Payni 16, 10,004 bce: Aedon meets up with Areshia.

Fourday, Payni 18, 10,004 bce: Evaemon confesses to Ahteana about Faeraud's blackmailings.

Sixday, Payni 27, 10,004 bce: At Gilgamoeh's vineyard, Methouslan gives Faeraud the mold he needs to produce a thunderbolt.

Twoday, Payni 30, 10,004 bce: Aedon and Faeraud go to Nile Island and attend a Masquerade Middag.

Three, Epip 22, 10,004 bce: Aedon and Faeraud capture the *Scroll of Fire*.

Sevenday, Epip 26, 10,004 bce: Ausethen organizes an attack against the Irem.

Fourday, Epip 30, 10,004 bce: The Asterians come back to the Irminsul Pyramid and stop the invasion. The ruling lords depart for the Asterian Moon to negotiate a peace treaty.

APPENDIX E

Threeday, Weprenpet 6, 10,004 bce: Faeraud gains power using trickery and the Tuaoi Stone. The Asterian Moon and the Irminsul Pyramid are destroyed.

Fiveday, Hatour 9, 10,003 bce: At the cottage in the vineyard, Methouslan guides Aedon and Areshia toward Bashan.

Fiveday, Hatour 16, 10,003 bce: Evaemon and the remaining Asterians organize an attack on the old Irminsul Pyramid site.

Sevenday, Hatour 18, 10,003 bce: King Poseidontel executes judgment at the Speciation Crib and turns Zualpha into a crystal skull.

Oneday, Hatour 19, 10,003 bce: Ahteana makes herself known to the king.

Fiveday, Hatour 23, 10,003 bce: Aedon meets up with Areshia at Sekharu Harbor and decides to travel to Nawat on his own.

Fiveday, Hatour 30, 10,003 bce: Aedon arrives in Nawat and his adventures with Poeku begin.

Fiveday, Kahrka 7, 10,003 bce: Aedon meets with the mermaids in their colony and begs for their help.

Oneday, Kahrka 10, 10,003 bce: Aedon arrives in Sahada only to discover the library has been burned to the ground.

Fourday, Kahrka 13, 10,003 bce: Aedon finds Arianrhod and regroups with Areshia.

Sixday, Kahrka 15, 10,003 bce: Aedon and Areshia find the secret Asterian base and are assigned a special task to help them out. They go back to Ablach.

Twoday, Kahrka 18, 10,003 bce: When the orichalcum egg misses delivery, Poseidontel sets out to find the last Asterians.

Fiveday, Kahrka 21, 10,003 bce: Andromache advances her armies into the north in a battle against their enemy.

Oneday, Kahrka 24, 10,003 bce: Aedon helps Ahteana and the last Asterians escape.

Atlantis: Rise of the Nile

Threeday, Tybi 15, 10,000 bce: The king celebrates his birthday on the Apaturia holiday.

Fourday, Tybi 16, 10,000 bce: Aedon hides out at Shepherd's Crossing and meets Dolius.

Fiveday, Tybi 30, 10,000 bce: Banjo helps them borrow a balloon to cross the Frosted Desert where they meet up with Evad.

Threeday, Meshir 6, 10,000 bce: Areshia's *globeaky* is discovered, stolen, and recovered.

Sevenday, Amshir 29, 10,000 bce: King Poseidontel opens the chamber and discovers the *Scroll of Air* is missing.

Twoday, Pharmouthi 1, 10,000 bce: Aedon enters the Restorium and meets Ganyped.

Threeday, Epip 24, 10,000 bce: Mr. and Mrs. Maske return and help Aedon prepare for the Middag.

Fourday, Epip 25, 10,000 bce: Aedon accepts the new CS6 armband.

Sixday, Epip 27, 10,000 bce: Once again Aedon sets out to find his father in the north. Trigonomy discovers an odd star in the sky.

Sevenday, Weprenpet 19, 10,000 bce: A meteor falls into the river and poisons the water.

Sixday, Weprenpet 25, 10,000 bce: Aedon and Ganyped enter the tunnels in Ablach to escape the plague of frogs. There they meet Bale and Sickle. Along the way all of Aedon's friends succumb to various dangers.

Sixday, Tekh 4, 9999 bce: Aedon visits the Starbeam Pool and regains his hope.

Oneday, Tekh 11, 9999 bce: Methouslan and Trigonomy piece together the warnings of their day. The identity of the *Uprooter* is verified.

A P P E N D I X E

Threeday, Tekh 13, 9999 bce: Aedon visits the Tebah with hopes of seeing his father.

Sixday, Tekh 30, 9999 bce: Aedon and Areshia return to Mestor and discover the *Floating Light*.

Threeday, Menhet 4, 9999 bce: Jacobus takes the children to Frostlaire Fortress.

Threeday, Menhet 11, 9999 bce: The War of Enchantments begin.

Oneday, Menhet 16, 9999 bce: The pitter-patter of rain starts.

Twoday, Menhet 17, 9999 bce: Aedon and Areshia have a showdown with Poseidontel and Ganyped in a battle for the *Scroll*.

Fourday, Amshir 2, 9999 bce: Meca and Peter leave the Tebah.

Sixday, Epip 24, 9999 bce: Aedon adopts the dove.

Oneday, Menhet 27, 9998 bce: Color and light return, sweeping across the Earth.

A P P E N D I X F

CALENDAR
OF THE
MOONS

Calendar of the Moons

*Noted dates where adventures in our story
take place are indicated in gray.*

The Days of the Week

Oneday (Monday)

Twoday (Tuesday)

Threeday (Wednesday)

Fourday (Thursday)

Fiveday (Friday)

Sixday (Saturday)

Sevenday (Sunday)

The Months of the Year

Tekh

Menhet

Hatour

Kahrka

Tybi

Meshir

Amshir

Pharmouthi

Pachon

Payni

Epip

Weprenpet

APPENDIX F

10,009 bce

Tekh

On	Da	Dim	Fri	Sat	Sun
	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11
13	14	15	16	17	18
20	21	22	23	24	25
27	28	29	30		

Menhet

On	Da	Dim	Fri	Sat	Sun
			1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9
11	12	13	14	15	16
18	19	20	21	22	23
25	26	27	28	29	30

Kahrka

On	Da	Dim	Fri	Sat	Sun
6	7	8	9	10	11
15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26
28	29	30			

Tybi

On	Da	Dim	Fri	Sat	Sun
			1	2	3
5	6	7	8	9	10
13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24
26	27	28	29	30	

Amshir

On	Da	Dim	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	2	3	4	5	6
8	9	10	11	12	13
15	16	17	18	19	20
22	23	24	25	26	27
29	30				

Payni

On	Da	Dim	Fri	Sat	Sun
				1	
2	3	4	5	6	7
9	10	11	12	13	14
16	17	18	19	20	21
23	24	25	26	27	28



Asterian Moon



Bald Moon

Hatour

On	Da	Dim	Fri	Sat	Sun
					1
2	3	4	5	6	7
9	10	11	12	13	14
16	17	18	19	20	21
23	24	25	26	27	28

Mleshir

On	Da	Dim	Fri	Sat	Sun
					1
3	4	5	6	7	8
10	11	12	13	14	15
17	18	19	20	21	22
24	25	26	27	28	29

Pachon

On	Da	Dim	Fri	Sat	Sun
				1	2
4	5	6	7	8	9
11	12	13	14	15	16
18	19	20	21	22	23
25	26	27	28	29	30

Epip

On	Da	Dim	Fri	Sat	Sun
			1	2	3
7	8	9	10	11	12
14	15	16	17	18	19
21	22	23	24	25	26
28	29	30			

Weprenpet

On	Da	Dim	Fri	Sat	Sun
			1	2	3
5	6	7	8	9	10
12	13	14	15	16	17
19	20	21	22	23	24
26	27	28	29	30	

CALENDAR

10,008 bce

Tekh

On	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six	Seven
					1	2	
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	
17	 19	20	21	22	23		
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	

Menhet

On	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six	Seven
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	
 16	17	18	19	20	21		
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	
29	30						

Hatour

On	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six	Seven
		1	2	3	4	5	
6	7	8	9	10	11		
 14	15	16	17	18	19	19	
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	
27	28	29	30				

Kahrka

On	One	Two	Three	Four	Six	Seven
			1	2	3	
4	5	6	7	8	9	
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

Tybi

On	One	Two	Three	Four	Six	Seven
					1	
2	3	4	5	6		8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29

Meshir

On	One	Two	Three	Four	Six	Seven
		1	2	3		5
7	 9	10	11	12	13	
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

Amshir

On	One	Two	Three	Four	Six	Seven
			1		3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	1
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	2
26	27	28		30		

Pharmouthi

On	One	Two	Three	Four	Six	Seven
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	 27	28	29	30	

Dachon

On	One	Two	Three	Four	Six	Seven
		1	2	3		6
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	 25	26	27	28	29
29	30					

Payni

On	One	Two	Three	Four	Six	Seven
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	 22	23	24	25	26	
27	28	29	30			

Epip

On	One	Two	Three	Four	Six	Seven
					1	2
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
 19	20	21	22	23	24	
25	26	27	 28	29	30	

Weprenpet

On	One	Two	Three	Four	Six	Seven
					1	
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29



Asterian Moon



Bald Moon

APPENDIX F

10,004 bce

Tekh

On	Da	Dim	Fest	Fix	Sa.	Sun
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

Menhet

On	Da	Dim	Fest	Fix	Sa.	Sun
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

Kahrka

On	Da	Dim	Fest	Fix	Sa.	Sun
			1	2	3	4
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

Tybi

On	Da	Dim	Fest	Fix	Sa.	Sun
					1	2
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

Amshir

On	Da	Dim	Fest	Fix	Sa.	Sun
			1	2	3	4
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

Pharmouthi

On	Da	Dim	Fest	Fix	Sa.	Sun
					1	2
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

Payni

On	Da	Dim	Fest	Fix	Sa.	Sun
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

Epip

On	Da	Dim	Fest	Fix	Sa.	Sun
			1	2	3	4
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			



Asterian Moon



Bald Moon

Hatour

On	Da	Dim	Fest	Fix	Sa.	Sun
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

Meshir

On	Da	Dim	Fest	Fix	Sa.	Sun
					1	
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

Pachon

On	Da	Dim	Fest	Fix	Sa.	Sun
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

Weperenpet

On	Da	Dim	Fest	Fix	Sa.	Sun
					1	2
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

C A L E N D A R

10,003 bce

Tekh

On	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	
23	24	25	26	27	28	29

Menhet

On	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	2	3	4	5	6	
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

Kahrka

On	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

Tybi

On	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

Amshir

On	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
					1	2
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

Pharmouthi

On	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29

Payni

On	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
					1	2
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

Epip

On	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30



Bald Moon

Hatour

On	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
					1	2
3	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

Meshir

On	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
					1	2
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

Dachon

On	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
					1	2
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

Weprerpet

On	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
					1	2
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

APPENDIX F

10,000 bce

Tekh

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	2	3	4	5			
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	
28	29	30					

Menhet

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
			1	2	3		
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	
26	27	28	29	30			

Kahrka

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	
22	23	24	25				
29	30						

Tybi

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
		1	2	3	4	5	
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	
20	21	22		24	25	26	
27	28	29	30				

Amshir

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	
16		18	19	20	21	22	
23	24	25	26	27	28	29	

Payni

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
3	4	5	6	7	8		
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	

Epip

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	2	3	4	5	6		
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	
29	30						



Bald Moon

Hatour

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
							2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	

Mleshir

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
							1
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	
18	19		21	22	23	24	
25	26	27	28	29	30		

Pachon

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
	13	14	15	16	17	18	
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	
26	27	28	29	30			

Weprerpet

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
							5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	
27	28	29	30				

CALENDAR

9,999 bce

Tekh

Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
							2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
11	12	13	14	15	16	1		
18	19	20	21	22	23	2		
25	26	27	28	29	30			

Menhet

Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
							1	
2	3	4	5	6	7	8		
9	10	11	12	13	14	15		
16	17	18	19	20	21	22		
23	24	25	26	27	28	29		

Hatour

Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
28	29	30						

Kahrka

Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
		1	2	3	4			
5	6	7	8	9	10	11		
12	13	14	15	16	17	18		
19	20	21	22	23	24	25		
26	27	28	29	30				

Tybi

Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
							1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9		
10	11	12	13	14	15	16		
17	18	19	20	21	22	23		
24	25	26	27	28	29	30		

Meshir

Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
8	9	10	11	12	13	14		
16	17	18	19	20	21	22		
22	23	24	25	26	27	28		
29	30							

Amshir

Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
	1	2	3	4	5			
6	7	8	9	10	11	12		
14	15	16	17	18	19	20		
20	21	22	23	24	25	26		
27	28	29	30					

Pharmouthi

Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
		1	2	3				
4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
11	12	13	14	15	16	17		
18	19	20	21	22	23	24		
25	26	27	28	29	30			

Pachon

Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
							1	
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
9	10	11	12	13	14	15		
16	17	18	19	20	21	22		
23	24	25	26	27	28	29		

Payni

Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
	1	2	3	4	5	6		
7	8	9	10	11	12	13		
14	15	16	17	18	19	20		
21	22	23	24	25	26	27		
28	29	30						

Epip

Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
		1	2	3	4			
5	6	7	8	9	10	11		
12	13	14	15	16	17	18		
19	20	21	22	23	24	25		
26	27	28	29	30				

Weprerpet

Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
							1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9		
10	11	12	13	14	15	16		
17	18	19	20	21	22	23		
24	25	26	27	28	29	30		



Bald Moon

APPENDIX F

Tekh

On	Da	Dm	Fm	Fr	An	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

Kahrka

On	Da	Dm	Fm	Fr	An	Sat
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
17	18	19	20	21	22	
23	24	25	26	27	28	29

Amshir

On	Da	Dm	Fm	Fr	An	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

Payni

On	Da	Dm	Fm	Fr	An	Sat
					1	2
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	



Bald Moon

Menhet

On	Da	Dm	Fm	Fr	An	Sat
			1	2	3	4
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

Cybi

On	Da	Dm	Fm	Fr	An	Sat
					1	2
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

Pharmouthi

On	Da	Dm	Fm	Fr	An	Sat
					1	2
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

Epip

On	Da	Dm	Fm	Fr	An	Sat
					1	2
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29

9,998 bce

Hatour

On	Da	Dm	Fm	Fr	An	Sat
					1	2
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

Meshir

On	Da	Dm	Fm	Fr	An	Sat
					1	2
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

Pachon

On	Da	Dm	Fm	Fr	An	Sat
					1	2
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29				

Weprerpet

On	Da	Dm	Fm	Fr	An	Sat
					1	2
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

APPENDIX G

PRONUNCIATION OF NAMES

Pronunciation of Names

Aedon: [Ay-dun] Comes from the word Adam, meaning man.

Ahteana: [Ah-tee-an-a] From Athena (meaning wise) and Anna (meaning graceful) and the Greek goddess Athene (child of Zeus who was always close to those she helped and caused an enemy to become a spider, another to go blind).

Andromache: [An-dro-ma-chay] General in charge of Faeraud's warrior channel.

Areshia: [Ah-ree-sha] Girl who is the object of desire and torn between Aedon and Yapet.

Ausethen: [Au-seth-in] Similar to Austin (meaning useful) and Seth (meaning appointed).

Autochatheu: [Uhw-ta-kath-ou] One of the ten Etruscans of the continent ruler over the Autochathuan people.

Cleacious: [Clay-shus] From Clematis, meaning clinging.

Diaprepes: [Dee-a-prep-es] Ruler over the Diaprepes-eese people.

Dolius: [Dol-eese] Comes from the Greek word Dolus meaning spirit of trickery, cunning deception, craftiness, treachery and guile; combined with Delilah known for her deception in the biblical story of Samson and Delilah.

Enkidu: [Ink-a-doo] The half-man, half-beast character from the ancient Gilgamesh writings.

Eumlelus: [Yem-lay-us] One of the ten Etruscans of the continent.

Evad: [E-vad] Becomes an Etruscan when his father Evaemon retires.

Evaemon: [Ev-ee-mun] One of the ten Etruscans of the continent.

PRONUNCIATION OF NAMES

Faeraud: [Fay-royd] Derived from a combination of terms: Feodore (meaning intense), fraud, façade, roderick (meaning leader) and roydan (meaning royal).

Ganyped: [Gan-ee-pad] Meaning follower by foot.

Gilgamoeh: [Gil-ga-mo-ah] From Mesopotamian Mythology: Gilgamesh is the main character of the oldest known glyph carvings whom is believed by many to be the same man as the biblical Noah. Gilgamesh combined with Noah (meaning restful) equals Gilgamoeh.

Haedrus: [Hay-drus] Lord Dominate Haedrus is derived from the Greek God Hades.

Lemech: [La-mitch] From Lemuel (meaning dedicated) and Lamech (meaning the despairing).

Methouslan: [Me-thow-slan] Invoking a feeling of old traditionalism. Its meaning: *death shall bring* is echoed when he steps down as Prince Lord and a new era begins.

Seskef: [Ses-kif] (Shem) (Sceaf) One of Yapet's triplet brothers.

Rheaf Telopps: [Reef Tel-ops] The ambassador. His name is also a anagram for the phrases: *False Prophet* or *A Self Prophet*.

Trigonomy the Artist: [Trig-on-o-mee] Reminiscent of Leonardo DaVinci who was an artist astronomer and mathematician.

Yapet: [Yah-pit] Hebrew name for biblical Japheth (meaning enlarge). One of three triplets.

Yaswhen: [Yaz-win] From the Hebrew name for God combined with Aslan meaning lion in Turkish.

A P P E N D I X H

ANIMALS AND
CREATURES

Animals and Creatures

(Alphabetical By Character Name or Species Type)

Aves. Chordata the owl's husband.

Banjo. A squirrel-monkey who helps free his brothers only to get caught up in a scheme of greed that does him in.

Cecil. A polar bear.

Chordata. Queen of the owls.

Dumar. A mallard who believes himself to be inferior because he is afraid to fly.

Gobi. An elephant with low self-esteem and minor depression.

Hanno. The large gorilla in charge of the other animals.

Humbaba. A lion who has an encounter with the other animals.

Kali. An orangutan and guide in the Agglomeration Forest.

Kangawaiter. Kangaroos who serve beverages and food.

Meca and Ceca. Two unicorns.

Miriam. A mermaid who helps Aedon in underwater adventures.

Nawalym. Piskie creatures that spin orichalcum into golden eggs.

Peter. The parrot who delivers messages by mimicking the sender.

Poeku. A young Nawalym who befriends Aedon.

Pukwudgie. Demon like creatures with sharp wings, created in Poseidontel's Speciation Crib.

ANIMALS AND CREATURES

Roddarc. A hard-working beaver.

Scapappi. A goat with underhanded dealings like a gangster.

Unglat. The giraffe who was too tall to fit on the first boat, inspiring Gilgamoeh to build a bigger house.

A P P E N D I X I

ATLANTIAN
ALPHABET

Atlantian Alphabet

Λ Λ	Ｊ Ｊ	Σ Σ
Β Β	Ｈ Ｈ	Τ Τ
Ҫ Ҫ	Ｌ Ｌ	Ｖ Ｖ
Δ Δ	Π Π	₩ ₩
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Ӣ Ӣ	Ր Ր	

A P P E N D I X J

VILLAGES
OF NAWAT

Villages of Nawat

(Alphabetical Order)

From *Atlantis: Fall of the Gods*

Dag. Greenish-yellow Nawat village.

Fesoj. Yellow Nawat village.

Had. Blue Nawat village.

Kathphan. Green Nawat village.

Nad. Blue-green Nawat village.

Nebuer. White Nawat village.

Nimaneb. Golden Nawat village.

Nolub. Orange Nawat village.

Nomis. Violet Nawat village.

Phes. Orange-red Nawat village.

Rachassi. Yellow-orange Nawat village.

Vel. Blue-violet Nawat village.

(Geographic Order)

Nebuer, Nad, Nomis, Vel, Had, Kathphan, Dag, Fesoj, Rachassi, Nolub, Phes, Nimaneb.

A P P E N D I X K

SONGS AND
POETRY OF
ATLANTIS

Songs and Poetry of Atlantis

(Sung by Raveners in Bearer of Fruit and Rise of the Nile.)

Oppress the poor and leave them destitute,
He seized the houses he did not build.
He has no respite for his craving,
His treasure cannot save him.

It's Apaturia, no need to worry ya,
Royal famili-a, is here to greet ya.
It's Apaturia, no need to worry ya,
It's Apaturia, no need to worry ya.

He does not see with twenty-twenty vision,
He follows foolishness, not wisdom.
When there is nothing left to devour,
Full force of misery will rain that hour.

All nations bow before him, they appear golden,
Forty days and forty nights will destroy them.
Raise the flag and sound the trumpet,
Disaster of the North appears to dump it.

It's Apaturia, no need to worry ya,
Royal famili-a, is here to greet ya.
It's Apaturia, no need to worry ya,
It's Apaturia, no need to worry ya.

SONGS AND POETRY

(Message delivered from Gilgamoeh in Bearer of Fruit.)

Reading, writing, and inciting enchantments of rhyme.
Believing in stars, fortune-tellers and magicians,
Forgetting the writings, laws, and traditions once taught,
This family of Etruscans and Princes has become corrupt.
You have turned from the peaceful days of
Lord Antioch and King Yaswhen,
And now follow your own selfish ways,
seeking endless possessions,
Material things that cannot satisfy or last,
yet you garnish more so fast.
Return to the path and the way of the King of old,
is what I will ask,
Some will agree, many will not, to the task.
One day of meditation to concern our future is all I beg.
Make this a day of silence and respect,
and I will consider what you ask.

(Sung by the youths at Mammoth Inn in Fall of the Gods.)

Shuffle, shuffle, shuffle. Dance to the right.
Shuffle, shuffle, shuffle. Dance to the left.
Shuffle, shuffle, shuffle. You dance so fine,
Shuffle, shuffle, shuffle. Dance all the time.
Eat, eat; drink, drink. Dine, dine, dine.
Tomorrow, tomorrow is gonna be just fine.

A P P E N D I X K

(Message to Aedon found in a scroll in Fall of the Gods.)

In a far away land of a very different kind
Lies a token that you will marvel and find.
In the sea, on a set path, is its route,
A change of course, one must bring about.
Its direction must move from a set straightaway,
To a new course instead, in a Northern hideaway.
Important messages are encoded in rhyme,
The only escape that saves life this time.

(Jacobus' last song in Rise of the Nile.)

We the children were given in birth,
In a strange place they call Earth.
Destined for this unknown calling,
Where there is no foretelling,
Where hope should shine for the young,
Darkness hath left this song unsung.

(Aedon's last song in *Rise of the Nile*.)

Left alone here on a slate of water,
To face the lies told of the Uprooter,
No man to be found in this foreign place,
Wiped from the mountains, the human race.

With no companion, alone to float,
Life withers, no fruit, no antidote.
All is drowned, every glimpse of hope,
No soul to find in the looking-scope.

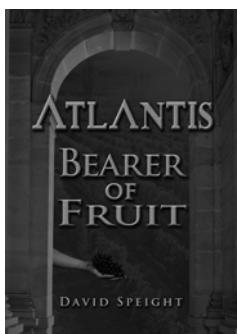
Birth came a hundred sun-cycles past,
The things we sought, they did not last.
Prepare for death, now must I,
To my days that end, I say — goodbye.

Though the sky be dark today and the one thereafter,
Though the journey stalls and then be rougher,
Inside each of us we find that to make us stronger,
For in experience we learn, we grow to be braver.

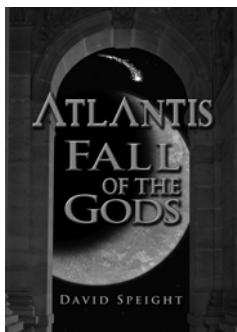
Though others drown beneath the starlight,
Forever strong, always will I fight.
My destiny will end not without a trace,
For I believe in another better place.

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ATLANTIS NOVELS



The story begins in "*Atlantis: Bearer of Fruit*." Aedon and his best friend, prince Faeraud, discover one of the King's magical scrolls. Aedon is faced with the choice of following the ancient teachings of the scrolls, or dabbling in their magic with his friend who desires to use them to become the new king.



"*Atlantis: Fall of the Gods*" is the second installment of the trilogy. It tells the story of man's flaws paving the way to Atlantis' probable demise. It follows Aedon in his quest and personal battles, as well as Faeraud in his own realizations. This book also exploits man's beliefs clashing with man's own faith in the supernatural.

FIVE STARS - READERS FAVORITE

"Atlantis: Rise of the Nile" by David Speight is the last of the trilogy of the Atlantis series. The story that begins in "Atlantis: Bearer of Fruit" and "Atlantis: Fall of the Gods" concludes impressively in this book. Aedon is an illegitimate prince. Aedon finds himself being the one who should locate the magic scroll after the ruling Lord of Atlantis falls sick. The place to get the scroll itself is a big mystery as it is in uncharted territory. Aedon has to get there before the Uprooter and many others to save the land. Aedon's journey is filled with adventure and excitement and he faces mermaids, pythons, and unicorns on this journey.

This adventurous science fiction story is very exciting with a lot of twists and turns and there is a sense of mysticism and richness that will keep readers enthralled. The historical and biblical references, along with the whimsical creatures, make the story very entertaining. All the characters have important roles in the story as the plot progresses and they have been portrayed well by the author to give good support to Aedon's character.

The story is a blend of reality and fantasy, and old and new. The verses add to the lyrical quality and it is a good diversion as the story develops.

-- Marnta Madhavan for Readers Favorite

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